

## **Statement of the Board of the St. John's Status of Women Council/ Women's Centre**

October 23, 2019

In the course of the current conversation regarding the article published in the Independent on October 11, 2019, we have heard concerns from our community about the state of activism in this province. We note that it is not appropriate for the Board or the SJSOWC to comment on personnel matters, therefore we will not be commenting further on the resignation of former Executive Director, Jenny Wright. At the time of Ms. Wright's resignation, the Board released a [statement](#) which represented our thoughts at the time and continues to reflect our thinking today.

In the midst of the ongoing dialogue, the Board would like to affirm and amplify its position on advocacy in our community. It is critical that feminist organizations (and indeed all community groups) have the ability to call out government and police and hold them to account for their actions. It is a fundamental democratic principle and central to how we make society more just and equitable. As an organization that fights for some of society's most marginalized women, we will continue to use our position to raise their voices and advocate for necessary changes to our institutions. This is a core tenet of our work.

We stand alongside fellow community partners who speak truth to power, who seek justice and equity, because only together can we achieve these goals. We are committed to bridging divides, building stronger relationships and supporting each other in the good work we do every day. There is room--and more importantly, a need--for many women's voices in our communities: strong voices and diverse voices. This community is stronger if we work together and the women we support are better served when we work collaboratively.

We echo the statement released yesterday by First Light and call for the complete dismantling of systems of colonial oppression. We support their calls for a civilian body of police oversight and for the allocation of the necessary time, talent and resources to the crisis of gender-based violence in our province.

Yesterday, we started the process of reparation by meeting with Minister Haley and her officials, who heard our concerns and committed to building a stronger working relationship. We impressed upon them the importance of sustainable funding to enable SHOP to continue its valuable work. We hope to also meet with Chief Boland in the near future. It is clear that the relationship to date has been strained and we look forward to working respectfully and professionally with the Chief and his team to rebuild a foundation of trust and provide responsive services to our participants.

## Background:

The St. John's Status of Women Council/Women's Centre is a feminist organization that since 1972 has worked to achieve equality and justice through political activism, community collaboration and the creation of a safe and inclusive space for all women in the St. John's area.

Through our front-line work, we see firsthand how laws can oppress and cause harm to women who are Indigenous, women who are transgender and queer, women who are engaged in sex work, women experiencing homelessness, women engaged in drug use, women who have survived violence, and many of society's most marginalized, criminalized and vulnerable women. The St. John's Status of Women Council has and will continue to advocate for law reforms that protect those we serve and promote equity and equality for all.

To learn more about the work of our organization, please see our 2018/19 Annual Report here: <https://sjwomenscentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2018-2019-AGM-Report.pdf>