



May 11, 2020

Hon. Dwight Ball, MHA  
Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Confederation Building, East Block  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, NL A1B 4J7

Dear Premier,

We are writing to you to draw attention to the immediate need for a gender-based analysis on COVID-19 responses, as well as a Feminist Recovery Plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted (and exacerbated) the gendered harms and gaps in healthcare, ecological, social, and economic policies in our province including:

- Daily gender-based violence;
- Challenges facing parents and caregivers;
- Poverty, financial insecurity and job precarity, systematically affecting some groups more than others;
- Low pay and high-risk levels for front line and “essential” workers, often women;
- Gendered wage gaps; and,
- the absence of voices of women and other marginalized genders in policy planning and decision making.

Women in our province were disadvantaged by structural inequality long before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the crisis has further increased the disproportionate barriers and challenges women face. For instance, 83% of the health workforce in NL is female, and women also form the majority of unpaid caregivers (Newfoundland and Labrador Strategic Workforce Health Plan 2015-2018); thus, when we talk (as an example) about a lack of Personal Protective Equipment during the pandemic, this issue impacts women most.

We are calling on you to engage with us and other organizations representing marginalized populations, in the development of a feminist recovery plan – one that centers the voices of marginalized women, and those most impacted by the pandemic, as we move forward. Therefore, first and foremost, we ask that you engage with women in this province, to understand the ways in which pre-existing structural inequalities have been intensified and compounded during this pandemic, as well as their ideas for innovative solutions moving forward. The economic situation we are facing is not like other recessions of the past so drawing upon the same lens to solve the problem, will not provide a long term viability solution or recovery plan - we need a new way forward - not the same way forward.

Our province's recovery plan must avoid austerity or fiscal consolidation measures which would only exacerbate the recession and further negatively impact the most vulnerable. It must protect and



maintain social services, especially services to support those experiencing domestic violence and in the case of COVID-19, we must repair the lasting damage that outsourcing of our long term care has inflicted on our seniors. Lastly, as we rebuild our economy, we must diversify from extractive, male-dominated industries and provide a progressive transition plan for our province.

Our five concrete, evidence-based recommendations include:

- 1) Engaging in Gender Based Analysis and centering the voices of marginalized women in recovery planning;
- 2) A central phone line (with texting capacity) for the province for victims of domestic violence and discussion of domestic violence at daily COVID-19 briefings;
- 3) An all-party Task Force on domestic violence; a concrete plan with actionable deliverables, and dedicated funding and resources to achieve those goals;
- 4) Establishment of a Living Wage of \$18.85 per hour for all workers in the province; and,
- 5) A long-term plan to increase the number of quality, publicly-funded childcare spaces so women can fully participate in work, education and civic life.

In support of our position, we offer these resources: Hawaii's Feminist Recovery Plan, content from our recent local panel and news conference on this topic, and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women's research document on Women and COVID-19 (all attached).

A feminist recovery plan is one that does not include a gender analysis as an afterthought, but rather, centers the voices and experiences of marginalized women in all conversations. When women are at the centre, society does better. We are connected to networks of women and women's serving organizations who would be best suited to play an advisory role in moving these discussions forward. We are willing and ready to partner in the development of a feminist plan for a more equitable province as we move through and past Covid-19.

We look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Winters".

Laura Winters, Executive Director, St. John's Status of Women Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula Sheppard Thibeau".

Paula Sheppard Thibeau, Chair, Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amanda Bittner".

Dr. Amanda Bittner, professor of political science and director of the Gender and Politics Lab, Memorial University of Newfoundland

cc: Hon. Carol Anne Haley, MHA, Minister for the Status of Women  
Hon. Ches Crosbie, MHA, Leader of the Official Opposition  
Hon. Alison Coffin, MHA, Third Party House Leader