

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



nawl
anfd

Celebrating the Legacy
Célébrer l'héritage



Defining the Future
Définir l'avenir



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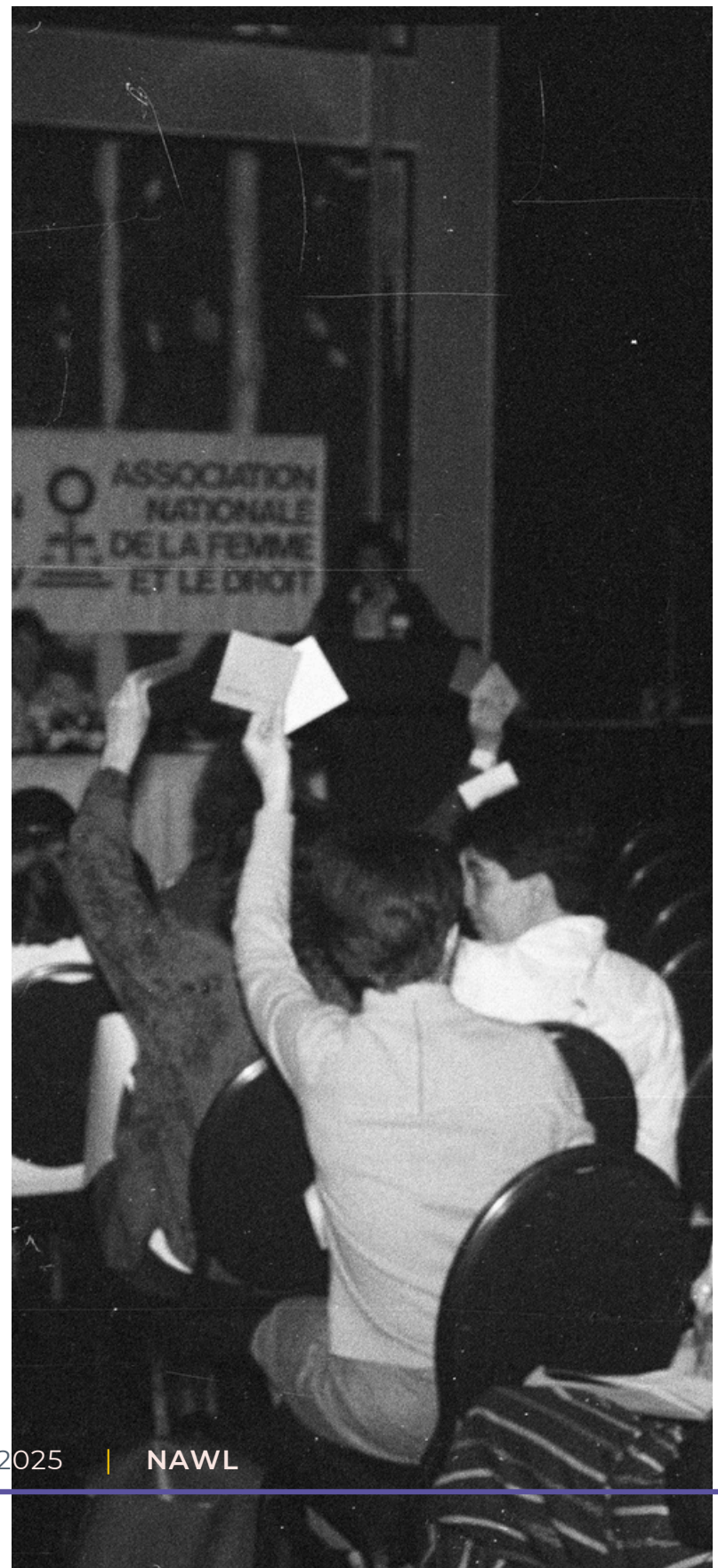
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ABOUT NAWL

The National Association of Women and the Law is a leading voice on feminist law reform in Canada. Since our founding in 1974, NAWL has been fighting to advance women's rights across the country. NAWL's intersectional feminist legal analysis and advocacy have impacted countless Canadian laws and policies — most notably in relation to family law, sexual assault legislation, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and sections 15 and 28 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In recent years, NAWL played a key role in shaping bills on gun control and publication bans for victims and survivors of sexual assault.

In 2024-2025, as we celebrated our 50th anniversary, NAWL was honoured to receive the Women, Peace and Security Civil Society Leadership Award from the Government of Canada, in recognition of our work towards ending violence against women.



OUR MISSION

NAWL works to achieve substantive equality and the realization of human rights for all women in Canada through legal education, research, strategic intervention, coalition work and feminist law reform advocacy, particularly at the federal level.

OUR VISION

Women's substantive equality is fully realized and supported by laws and policies in Canada; power is equitably shared in all areas of our lives.

OUR VALUES

Our organization and our work are rooted in intersectional feminism and human rights, informed by the following values:

- Anti-Oppression
- Reconciliation
- Gender Inclusion
- Allyship and Accountable Collaboration

OUR PRIORITY AREAS

NAWL helps change laws that negatively impact women's lives, and advance women's rights and substantive equality in the priority areas of:

- ending violence against women,
- fighting for reproductive justice,
- defending women's rights in the climate crisis, and
- advancing women's economic security and prosperity.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the volunteer members of our working groups, who dedicate their time and energy to guiding us through the legislative reforms affecting our four priority areas.

This year, through dedicated project funding, NAWL made exceptional strides in two priority areas: ending violence against women and advancing women's economic security and prosperity.

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The National Association of Women and the Law respectfully acknowledges that we conduct our work on the traditional, unceded, unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation. We extend our deepest respect and gratitude to the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples for their enduring contributions to this land.

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

The National Association of Women and the Law is a not-for-profit organization that operates as an incorporated entity. Its governance structure is overseen by a National Steering Committee composed of up to 12 volunteers, which serves as our Board of Directors. We are deeply grateful for the guidance, expertise, and dedication our Directors bring to advancing NAWL’s mission.

Meet Our Board (2024-2025):

Julia Tétrault-Provencher (Chair)
Kerri A. Froc
Lise Gotell
Elizabeth Johansson
Danica Jorgensen
Sabaa Khan
Jennifer Khor

Angela Lee
Cheryl Milne
Vrinda Narain
Sarah Sinclair
Zahra Taseer
Amanda Therrien (until June 2024)

Learn more about the members of our National Steering Committee on our website.

Message from the Chair of the National Steering Committee

As Chair of the National Steering Committee, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the exceptional work carried out by the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) in 2024 and 2025. This year has been marked by major advances, inspiring mobilizations, and an unwavering commitment to substantive equality and fair treatment for all women in Canada.

What I have seen over the months, more than ever, is the commitment and unity of a team and a sector. If we have been able to accomplish so much, it is partly thanks to the financial support of our partners and the Department for Women and Gender Equality Canada. This support has enabled NAWL to develop structural projects, conduct inclusive and wide-ranging consultations, and make our demands heard at the highest levels of decision-making.

I am thinking in particular of our campaign to amend the *Divorce Act*, including to stop accusations of parental alienation in family courts. In 2024-2025, we stepped up our political actions by holding targeted meetings with members of Parliament, ministers, and senators, submitting briefs, testifying before parliamentary committees, and participating in numerous awareness-raising events across the country. These efforts helped to shift the public and political discourse on this crucial issue.

We have implemented large-scale projects such as *Responsive Approach to Divorce Act Reform* (RADAR), which aims to reform the Divorce Act to better meet the needs of survivors of gender-based violence, and *Vision for Opportunity, Inclusivity, Civic participation and Economic empowerment* (VOICE), which advocates for greater economic security for women through concrete legislative reforms.

NAWL has also been dedicated to the growth and commitment of the Chanterelle Alliance for Feminist Legal Reform, which now brings together 120 feminist organizations working from coast to coast to coast. The Alliance is determined to share their knowledge and resources, coordinate their demands, and amplify their collective and individual work on a national scale. In these times when good news is hard to come by, I am pleased to say that our network is stronger than ever.

We know that all this work has a real impact. It helps change laws, protect women and gender-diverse people, and build a more equitable society. To ensure the continuity of these efforts, sustainable operational funding is essential. Ambitious public policies, substantial legal reforms, and institutional accountability cannot happen without stable investments in the feminist organizations that are doing this work on the ground.

In these times of economic turmoil, there is an urgent need to adopt policies that strengthen women's financial resilience and protect their access to the labor market. At the same time, immediate action is needed to combat the epidemic of violence against women and gender-diverse people, which is rampant across the country.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to our team, our partners, our donors, our directors, and everyone who supports our work. Together, we continue to build a fairer legal system and a future where true equality is reflected in concrete actions.

Julia Tétrault-Provencher
Chair of the National Steering Committee
National Association of Women and the Law



2024-2025 AT A GLANCE

OUR TEAM IN 2024 - 2025

Tiffany Butler, Executive Director

Suzanne Zaccour, Director of Legal Affairs

Thaïs Laborde, Director of Communications and Operations

Amanda Therrien, Feminist Lawyer and Researcher

Chelsea Giesel, Project Manager

Forest Malin, Community Engagement Coordinator

Amalie Ascanius, Office Administrator

Cassandra Talbot, Office Administrator

Student interns:

Melissa Mapa

Kirat Kaur Gill

Samantha Hills



WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS YEAR WITH YOUR SUPPORT

With your continued support, NAWL achieved significant reach, influence, and organizational growth throughout 2024-2025.

83

meetings with public officials

5

federal and provincial law reform briefs

5

expert testimonies before parliamentary committees

1

intervention before the Supreme Court of Canada

10

events organized

17

external events, workshops, guest lectures

63

media interviews

11

media statements and op-eds

3

podcast interviews

3

press conferences

2

bilingual toolkits

18K

active users on nawl.ca

1,220

new subscriptions to the newsletters

120

members of The Chanterelle Alliance for Feminist
Law Reform

432

people trained on parental alienation accusations

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Femicide and violence against women and girls continue to rage unabated across Canada, requiring urgent and ongoing intervention. Violence against women is shaped by racism, homophobia, transphobia, colonialism, and ableism, which means that ending violence against women requires a systemic and intersectional approach.

Legislative interventions that aim to prevent and respond to violence against women must also be framed to address women's poverty and economic security, which structures and shapes women's experiences of violence, especially for racialized women, disabled women, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, and women with precarious immigration status.

Ending violence against women also requires addressing both the historic and ongoing impacts of colonialism. The voices and needs of Indigenous women and communities must be at the centre of this work and NAWL calls upon all governments, institutions, and individuals to work collectively towards enacting the Calls for Justice outlined in "Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report of the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls."

This year, NAWL's dedication to ending violence against women spanned a variety of key areas, including reforming family law and strengthening gun control legislation.

KEY PROJECT: RADAR - RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO DIVORCE ACT REFORM

The Responsive Approach to Divorce Act Reform (RADAR) project is a three-year initiative funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). The project, set for completion in March 2026, aims to assess how the *Divorce Act* can better respond to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence, particularly marginalized women, and to develop a collaboratively informed position paper to guide future legislative reform.

As part of its collaborative process, NAWL conducted consultations with family lawyers and legal experts, as well as community organizations who work with marginalized survivors of gender-based violence. These consultations took place between December 2024 and March 2025 and were held in Montreal, Calgary, Whitehorse, and Toronto. These sessions focused on reviewing the 2019 amendments to the *Divorce Act*, gathering direct feedback from frontline service providers, identifying ongoing legislative gaps and exploring potential reforms.

“I just wanted to say that I thought [the Toronto] consultation was absolutely excellent, as I did the Whitehorse session. The backgrounder, the PowerPoint slides and ... facilitation were superb.”

Pamela Cross, Participant

In preparation for the consultations, NAWL developed a backgrounder to the *Divorce Act*, outlining the most recent reforms and the context in which they were introduced, which was shared with participants in advance. NAWL received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the document and the potential impact it could have on advocating for clients who have experienced family violence.



Suzanne Zaccour leading a RADAR consultation.

NAWL is currently analyzing the feedback received during the consultations, which will shape the recommendations for legislative amendments to the *Divorce Act* and the position statement that NAWL will develop. These documents will be shared with lawmakers and the public to raise awareness of the need to reform divorce law to better meet the needs of survivors.

ADVOCATING TO STOP PARENTAL ALIENATION ACCUSATIONS

Since 2023, NAWL has led an ambitious nationwide campaign urging the federal government to stop parental alienation accusations in family courts. We united a coalition of over 250 organizations across Canada, organized a press conference, wrote to the government, and launched a public campaign.

Building on this extensive foundation, NAWL continued this campaign in 2024-2025, significantly influencing national and provincial discourse on parental alienation accusations through a series of high-profile interventions, with the ultimate goal of advancing legislative reforms.

WHAT IS “PARENTAL ALIENATION”?

Parental alienation is a pseudo-scientific concept often used when a child does not want to see their father; the mother is then accused of “alienating” the child by making them believe that the father is dangerous. In other words, the mother is considered to have brainwashed the child to exclude the father from their life.

WHY IS IT AN ISSUE?

Despite their weak empirical basis, parental alienation accusations have become pervasive in Canadian family cases. These accusations are almost systematically made by abusive fathers against their ex-partner. In practice, this controversial theory is used to silence mothers and children who disclose family violence committed by the father. Instead of believing and protecting mothers and children, courts across the country are using the theory of parental alienation as a justification to ignore children’s wishes. As a result, they often separate kids from their mother and force them to live with their father, even when there is a documented history of family violence.



OUR ADVOCACY EFFORTS: SPRING 2024

In May 2024, NAWL testified before the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), as part of its study on coercive behaviour. We emphasized the urgent need to stop the use of parental alienation accusations in family courts, highlighting how coercive control extends into the family justice system to undermine the safety of women and children. We stressed that there can be no justice or safety for victims of coercive control if they are deterred from leaving or denouncing a violent partner due to the fear of losing their children because of family courts relying on harmful myths and stereotypes.

NAWL also submitted a brief to FEWO calling on the committee to recommend legislative reform to protect survivors. The brief highlighted that stopping parental alienation accusations would strengthen, rather than weaken, courts' ability to assess the child's best interests by preventing harmful, unscientific interventions that often punish protective mothers and overlook family violence.

SUMMER & FALL 2024

Throughout the summer and fall, NAWL engaged in an extensive series of meetings with Members of Parliament, Senators, and stakeholders as part of our advocacy campaign. In total, we held 71 targeted discussions with elected officials and senior staff from the departments of Justice, Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Finance, and other relevant offices.

NAWL's advocacy for legislative reform was further amplified by a report published by the United Nations in October 2024, which called on Canada to legislate to "prevent the use of the parental alienation syndrome, or parallel legal maneuvers, in the Canadian legal system." The recommendation was released by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in a report evaluating Canada's progress in furthering the rights of women. The Committee also criticized Canada's lack of studies on the impact of its 2019 *Divorce Act* reform.

On December 18, 2024, NAWL had a constructive meeting with the Honourable Arif Virani, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, to present our proposal and discuss possible solutions. However, the prorogation of Parliament from January to March 2025 prevented any legislative activity from progressing forward at that time. During this period, NAWL pivoted to increase advocacy work at the provincial levels.



Meeting with the Honourable Arif Virani, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, to discuss *Divorce Act* reforms.

WINTER 2025

In January, NAWL testified on Ontario's Bill 173, the *Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024*, and submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. NAWL emphasized that recognizing intimate partner violence as an epidemic must be coupled with swift and decisive action to address the ways in which abusers utilize the legal system post-separation to continue their manipulation, abuse, and control of women and children.

That same month, NAWL submitted a brief to the Independent Systemic Review of British Columbia Legal System's Treatment of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence. The brief explained that while NAWL's proposed amendments to the *Divorce Act* would protect survivors of intimate partner violence from accusations of parental alienation when accessing the family court system as part of divorce proceedings, amendments to provincial family legislation are necessary to extend the same protections to unmarried or separated individuals. We were thrilled that our recommendation was included in the report coming out of that systemic review.

The need to stop accusations of parental alienation within family court has gained significant political traction thanks to NAWL's tireless advocacy. Various Members of Parliament and Senators have now raised the issue of parental alienation accusations through speeches, petitions, and during Question Period.

SHARING OUR KNOWLEDGE

In addition to its law reform work, NAWL has actively participated in several events and panels to raise awareness about the harms of parental alienation accusations, particularly in the context of family violence. In May 2024, NAWL gave a presentation to the Executive Directors of the Elizabeth Fry Societies, highlighting the connection between parental alienation accusations and the criminalization of women. In October 2024, we delivered the plenary address at the PATHS Conference 2024: *Reflecting on the Past, Envisioning a Future Without Abuse*, on the topic “Why We Need a Ban on Parental Alienation Accusations.” In January 2025, we participated in the panel *Navigating Parental Rejection: What You Need to Consider When Children Resist Contact*, organized by the York Region Children’s Aid Society, reaching over 200 lawyers and professionals.

Finally, NAWL gave numerous interviews on parental alienation accusations and published several op-eds in respected media outlets, both in English and in French. This important advocacy work continues into 2025-2026, and we remain motivated and dedicated to achieving a legislative solution.



Tiffany Butler, MP Rachel Bendayan and Suzanne Zaccour, meeting to discuss legislative reforms, including on parental alienation accusations.

PREVENTING INTIMATE PARTNER GUN VIOLENCE

Throughout 2024-2025, NAWL continued to advocate for stronger gun control legislation to protect women and children in situations of domestic violence. Although Bill C-21, an *Act to Amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (Firearms)* received Royal Assent on December 15, 2023, the provisions specifically addressing domestic violence had yet to be brought into force, pending the drafting of new regulations.

On November 25, 2024, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, NAWL held a press conference on Parliament Hill, in partnership with PolySeSouvient and the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, addressing the urgent crisis of intimate partner gun violence. NAWL urged the government to fully implement the domestic violence provisions of Bill C-21, without further delay. This call for action was punctuated by personal testimonies from family members of recent femicide victims, who participated in the event and shared stories about the loss of their loved ones.

On that same day, NAWL, PolySeSouvient and the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability testified before the Status of Women Committee as part of their study on gender-based violence and femicides. This testimony further emphasized the federal government's delay in implementing the domestic violence provisions of Bill C-21 and the ongoing harm endured by women and children as a result of this inaction. NAWL urged the committee to recommend that these life-saving measures be implemented without further delay and called for family law reform, like stopping the use of parental alienation accusations, to ensure that women are able to leave abusive relationships.

On December 5, the eve of the 35th anniversary of the École Polytechnique massacre, NAWL and PolySeSouvient participated in a press conference with the federal government announcing the launch of the Assault-Style Firearms Compensation Program. Additionally, the government announced its expansion of the buyback program to include over 300 additional firearms, and committed to tabling regulations for the implementation of the domestic violence provisions within Bill C-21 in the new year.

In March 2025, NAWL participated in a press conference alongside the Honourable Rachel Bendayan, Associate Minister of Public Safety, and other advocates, announcing the long-awaited coming into force of several of the domestic violence provisions. New regulations stated that effective April 4, 2025, if a Chief Firearms Officer (CFO) has reasonable grounds to suspect that an individual who holds a firearms licence may have engaged in an act of domestic violence or stalking, they must revoke the licence within 24 hours. Additionally, individuals who are convicted of an offence in which violence was used, threatened or attempted against their intimate partner or any member of their family will be refused a firearms licence. The government also announced the refusal or revocation of a firearms licence if an individual is subject to a “protection order.” However, these provisions will remain inoperable until the Government adopts regulations to define “protection order.” NAWL emphasized the urgent need to define what constitutes a protection order under these domestic violence provisions, in order to protect the safety of women and children across Canada.

While more work remains to be done to fully implement all of the new measures with respect to improved protections for women and children contained in Bill C-21, NAWL celebrated this significant progress, acknowledging that these long-overdue safeguards are essential in creating a path forward towards a Canada that is free from gun violence.



Press conference with partners addressing the urgent crisis of intimate partner gun violence.

IN CONVERSATION WITH NAWL: ADDRESSING THE EPIDEMIC OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

On November 21, 2024, ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, NAWL hosted an event on Parliament Hill providing an overview of the urgent reforms needed to address gender-based violence in Canada. With the listening ear of legislators, NAWL highlighted the crucial need for the domestic violence provisions of Bill C-21 to be brought into force. We also shared stories about the impact of parental alienation accusations and emphasized the importance of legislative reform to protect women and children. Our guest speaker Meseret Haileyesus, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Women Empowerment, discussed her organization's efforts to end economic abuse in Canada.

This powerful event brought together 11 Senators and Members of Parliament, with representation from all official political parties, as well as staffers from the Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Justice. Through this event, we aimed to cultivate an atmosphere of collaboration and explore collective solutions for our shared goals of safety and wellbeing for women in Canada. Serving as an opportunity to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones, organizing events on Parliament Hill has now become an important tool in NAWL's feminist law reform toolbox.



Members of Parliament and Senators at NAWL's breakfast event.

LAW REFORM EFFORTS TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: BRIEFS & TESTIMONIES

REFORMING QUEBEC'S FAMILY LAW TO PROTECT UNMARRIED MOTHERS

In May 2024, NAWL testified before the National Assembly of Quebec on Bill 56, *An Act respecting family law reform and establishing the parental union regime*. While NAWL was supportive of the government's efforts to engage in this long overdue reform, we highlighted that the bill's lack of spousal support and income sharing, as well as its limited scope, failed to meet the intended goal to protect unmarried parents. NAWL recommended including access to spousal support and applying the regime more broadly to ensure real economic justice for women and children.

STRENGTHENING CIVIL PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

In October 2024, NAWL submitted a brief to Quebec's National Assembly Committee on Institutions on Bill 73, *An Act to counter the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and to improve civil protection and support for victims of violence*.

The bill included various measures to help victims of sexual or domestic violence, including:

- Improving protections for victims of non-consensual sharing of intimate images, including creating a simplified process to quickly prevent or stop the sharing of an intimate image.
- Strengthening the civil protection order, notably by making it easier to obtain for victims of family, domestic or sexual violence.
- Improving the civil justice system, in particular by allowing measures to support victims and by prohibiting the use of certain myths and stereotypes in judgments involving sexual or domestic violence.

NAWL supported this bill, but in our brief, we proposed a few key measures to improve it. Particularly, we recommended broadening access to a court order preventing the distribution of an intimate image. We also recommended adding another myth to the list of those excluded from judicial reasoning: the idea that victims denounce sexual or domestic violence to influence their child, or to gain an advantage in family litigation. However, our recommendation was not included when the bill was adopted in December 2024.

REDUCING BARRIERS FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

In November 2024, NAWL participated in a consultation table on sexual violence hosted by the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime. The purpose of this roundtable was to bring together diverse stakeholders to discuss the current barriers faced by survivors attempting to access the criminal legal system. We highlighted key barriers such as the undercharging of sexual offences, limited access to victim compensation funds, the lack of legal representation for survivors, and the chilling effect on survivors' freedom of expression caused by non-disclosure agreements, publication bans, defamation or malicious prosecution civil claims, and accusations of parental alienation in family court.

ADDRESSING HATE-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE AGAINST 2SLGBTQI+ COMMUNITIES

In December 2024, NAWL submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its study on Hate-Motivated Violence Against 2SLGBTQI+ Communities. Our brief emphasized that hate-motivated violence is one manifestation of a broader system of oppression that limits the ability of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals to live in dignity and safety. In considering the full context of hate-motivated violence, NAWL urged the committee to pay attention to the ways in which legislation can further the oppression of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals in a systemic way, and highlighted the federal government's role in mitigating the economic impacts of hate-motivated violence.

FIGHTING AGAINST MANDATORY MEDIATION

In March 2025, NAWL testified before the National Assembly of Quebec's Committee on Institutions regarding Bill 91, which proposed to create a Unified Family Court within the Court of Québec. NAWL raised deep concerns about the bill's introduction of mandatory family mediation by default.

We explained that mediation is dangerous for survivors and likely to lead to worse outcomes for women. While the bill provided for the possibility of asking for an exemption in situations of domestic violence, that avenue needlessly added steps for survivors and created the risk of being punished by the Court if they were thought to have made a false allegation of domestic violence. The possibility of a monetary sanction would have created a chilling effect on survivors asking for the exemption.

As a result of NAWL's and other feminist groups' advocacy, the bill was amended to make it easier for survivors to be exempted from family mediation and to remove the possibility of punishing "false allegations" of domestic or family violence. Our proposal to remove mandatory mediation altogether was debated but not adopted. While the bill as adopted was far from perfect, we are proud to have contributed to making the family justice system safer for victims in Quebec.

ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY AND PROSPERITY

Economic inequalities undermine the rights and security of women across Canada, as women's labour continues to be underpaid, undervalued, and precarious. As such, poverty is highly gendered, with women experiencing higher rates of poverty than men. Levels of poverty also differ among women, with racialized and disabled women experiencing some of its most extreme forms. The economic precarity faced by women renders them vulnerable to violence and exploitation and makes it difficult for them to thrive. Economic abuse also frequently accompanies coercive control, thus threatening women's economic security and their ability to escape a violent relationship.

NAWL is working to ensure that all women in Canada are able to live in dignity and safety by taking a holistic approach to advancing women's economic security. This means, among other things, advancing pay equity and pay transparency legislation, advocating for safe, affordable, and accessible housing, and enacting broad social safety nets that lift women and their families out of poverty.

NAWL adopted women's economic security and prosperity as a new priority area in 2024, as it deeply underpins all of our work, and requires urgent and dedicated law reform efforts to bring about substantive change for women in Canada.

KEY PROJECT: VOICE – VISION FOR OPPORTUNITY, INCLUSIVITY, CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In June 2024, NAWL received funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada through the Women's Program funding stream for our VOICE project. Set to conclude in March 2026, VOICE is an 18-month project that advances legislative reforms to strengthen women's economic security and prosperity. With a particular focus on addressing the unique challenges faced by low-income, rural and remote, racialized, and disabled women, the project seeks to identify and dismantle systemic legal barriers to women's economic success. Key project activities include developing and implementing feminist law reform campaigns; engaging directly in the legislative process through briefs, testimonies, consultations and recommendations; expanding and engaging The Chanterelle Alliance for Feminist Law Reform; as well as equipping other feminist organizations with the skills and knowledge to engage in feminist law reform.

Under this project, NAWL hired and onboarded three new staff. We also established a working group to assist in identifying priority areas and provide input on NAWL's economic security law reform efforts. There are many intersecting factors that impact women's economic security and prosperity, including systems of poverty, gender-based violence, accessible and affordable housing, disability and geography, among others. Working group members bring invaluable expertise and lived experience related to these various areas, making them uniquely positioned to identify persisting barriers and propose practical, impactful solutions.

The VOICE Working Group includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council
- Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association
- Yellowknife Women's Society
- Disabled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN)
- Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network / National Indigenous Women's Housing Network
- Accessible Housing Network
- Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment
- Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
- Family Services Toronto / Campaign 2000

In January 2025, NAWL convened the working group in Ottawa to further explore the goals and direction for the VOICE law reform campaign. Through this collaborative process, it was determined that reforming and improving income support benefits would have a substantial impact on strengthening women's economic security. As a result, NAWL's economic law reform campaign is currently tackling several key areas including improving the Canada Disability Benefit, addressing gender discrimination in the *Employment Insurance Act*, and exploring a feminist framework for a guaranteed basic income. The objective of the campaign is to strengthen Canada's social safety net to ensure that no one falls through the cracks. Through these strategic efforts, NAWL is committed to crafting gender-responsive legislation that transforms systems to be inclusive and contribute to equitable socio-economic outcomes for all.



VOICE working group members meeting to discuss strategy.

LAW REFORM FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

STRENGTHENING THE CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

In response to the government's proposed regulations outlining the parameters for the new Canada Disability Benefit, NAWL submitted comments highlighting how the benefit, in its current form, falls far short of its intended goal to reduce poverty and improve the financial security of working-age persons with disabilities. We also raised concerns that the current regulations could endanger the autonomy and safety of disabled women in abusive relationships.

NAWL proposed several recommendations to improve the benefit, including:

- Increasing the benefit amount to \$2,000-\$3,000 a month;
- Broadening eligibility by automatically enrolling individuals who receive any federal, provincial, or territorial disability-related benefit;
- Simplifying the application process and automatically enrolling Disability Tax Credit recipients for the Canada Disability Benefit;
- Basing eligibility on individual income, not on family income;
- Raising the income thresholds so recipients aren't penalized for working.

ADDRESSING GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Under the current Employment Insurance Act, individuals who receive maternity and parental benefits and subsequently lose their jobs may be ineligible for Employment Insurance regular benefits. This disproportionately affects women, at a time where they are particularly vulnerable economically.

In collaboration with Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal and the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF), NAWL proposed recommendations to address this gender discrimination, including:

- Repealing subsection 12(6) of the Employment Insurance Act to remove the 50-week cap on combining Employment Insurance regular benefits and special benefits for maternity or parental leave; and
- Amending subsection 10(10) of the Employment Insurance Act to add maternity and parental leave benefits as a reason to extend the benefit period to 104 weeks.

These critical issues are at the heart of our VOICE law reform campaign, and NAWL continues to advocate on them to bring about substantive change that will support women's economic security and prosperity.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTION: AHLUWALIA V. AHLUWALIA

In February 2025, NAWL appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada as an intervener in a case that could shape legal protections for survivors of intimate partner violence. In *Ahluwalia v. Ahluwalia*, the Supreme Court was called to consider the creation of a new tort of family violence — a legal tool that could help survivors seek financial compensation and hold abusers accountable. Currently, victims of intimate partner abuse can seek damages under separate torts such as assault, battery or intentional infliction of emotional distress. However, the appellant (Ms Ahluwalia) argued that a single tort would improve access to justice by making survivors' legal claims simpler and easier to prove.

NAWL supported this important legal development, but we wanted to ensure that the new tort, if recognized, would be carefully defined to avoid the risk of backlash. We intervened to tell the Supreme Court how, without proper safeguards, a new tort could be weaponized against survivors. NAWL urged the Supreme Court to ensure that the new tort of family violence serves the interests of survivors, rather than becoming another tool of abuse.

NAWL is grateful to its legal team: Suzanne Zaccour (NAWL), Amanda Therrien (NAWL), Helen Richards (Ross Nasser LLP), and Lauren Grammer (Ross Nasser LLP). We also thank our National Steering Committee members and the Violence Against Women Working Group, in particular Lise Gotell and Jennifer Koshan, as well as Deanne Sowter, for their invaluable expertise and contributions.



Amanda Therrien and Suzanne Zaccour intervening before the Supreme Court of Canada.

STRENGTHENING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN CANADA

Strengthening the feminist movement in Canada is central to NAWL's mission. As a legal organization, we are committed to partnering with other feminist, Indigenous, and social justice organizations in a manner that recognizes our own privilege and power. We aspire to be good allies: to listen and learn, to foster mutual respect and to amplify the voices of those in our movements and communities that have been systemically silenced or disadvantaged. This requires us to be generous with our own expertise and to value the distinct expertise and experiences of allies working alongside and with us to advance substantive equality in Canada, all of which are essential to building a more inclusive and powerful feminist movement across the country.



LEADING THE CHANTERELLE ALLIANCE FOR FEMINIST LAW REFORM

Through dedicated funding under our VOICE project, NAWL focused on growing and engaging The Chanterelle Alliance for Feminist Law Reform. Co-founded in 2022 by NAWL and Luke's Place, The Chanterelle Alliance is a national network of feminist organizations advancing a robust, proactive feminist law reform agenda in Canada. Together, we aim to share knowledge and resources, coordinate demands and amplify our collective and individual work nationwide to build a safer, more just world for all women, and trans, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people. The work of The Chanterelle Alliance is framed by intersectional feminist principles, with an emphasis on anti-racism, anti-oppression and a commitment to reconciliation.

Over this past year, NAWL has grown The Chanterelle Alliance membership to 120 feminist organizations, an increase of 30%. Approximately 79% of our membership speaks English, 16% speak French and 5% speak both languages. As such, NAWL strives to offer communications for the Alliance in both official languages, and provide interpretation services for our events. From September 2024 to March 2025, NAWL organized eight events including a federal political briefing, a discussion on the impacts of prorogation on law reform initiatives, and a panel discussion exploring third party regulations for the 2025 federal election.

In January 2025, NAWL launched a dedicated monthly newsletter for The Chanterelle Alliance. The newsletter serves as a hub for resources and information, promoting both Alliance and member-specific activities, including sector opportunities, upcoming events, campaigns and resources. NAWL publishes a French and English version of the newsletter, with a total of 365 member subscribers. The Chanterelle Alliance Slack workspace also serves as a point of connection, collaboration, and resource sharing. The direction of The Chanterelle Alliance is guided by the input of its advisory group, which meets quarterly. Overall, The Chanterelle Alliance is a strong, engaged and thriving network that is well equipped to advance feminist law reform.

ADVOCATING FOR THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY (WAGE)

In March 2025, NAWL and other feminist organizations worked collectively to denounce the fact that the new Canadian Government eliminated the Minister for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE). Our collective statement emphasized how this regressive step undermined decades of progress toward gender equality and political representation in Canada, and called for the Prime Minister to reinstate this critical cabinet position.

Circulated widely, the letter received over 400 signatories and garnered widespread media attention. Feminist organizations continued to advocate, until the WAGE Minister was reinstated following the April 2025 federal election, serving as a potent reminder of our collective strength.

EMBRACING ALLYSHIP AND ACCOUNTABLE COLLABORATION

Throughout 2024-2025, NAWL staff actively engaged in both sharing our legal and feminist law reform expertise as well as deepening our own knowledge through collaboration with peers and allies across Canada and internationally.

We provided assistance in drafting and submitting briefs to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO) study on coercive control for AFEAS, the Elizabeth Fry Society of New Brunswick, the Centre des femmes de Laval, and Women’s Shelters Canada. Additionally, we supported organizations from Western Canada to send Indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ delegates to attend the Civil Societies Organizations conference. We also provided expertise in the case committee for the Women’s Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF) on *Droit de la famille – 241080*, a Quebec Court of appeal case regarding the removal of parental authority in a situation of domestic violence.

NAWL also engaged in a wide variety of speaking engagements throughout the year. We participated in panel discussions, delivered keynote presentations, gave guest lectures and led workshops, offering insight on issues such as coercive control, systemic barriers in STEM, housing insecurity, and invisible work.

Equally important to NAWL’s mission is our commitment to continuous learning. Our staff participated in events such as the West Coast LEAF webinar on intersectional approaches to pay equity and economic justice, the National Conference on Ending Homelessness and key sessions on feminist solidarity and international gender equality frameworks at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. These opportunities allowed us to learn from grassroots organizers, international allies, and civil society leaders, providing new and informed perspectives to integrate into our work. This reciprocal exchange — sharing our expertise while actively learning from others — is integral to strengthening the feminist movement in Canada, and building collective capacity for equity, justice, and systemic change.



Amanda Therrien speaking at an event on invisible work.

LEVERAGING INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Leveraging international human rights mechanisms has become an important tool in NAWL's law reform toolbox. It serves as a useful strategy to hold governments accountable to global standards, amplify feminist voices on the world stage, and build solidarity across movements and borders. Through participation in domestic and international events, NAWL has developed new strategies and strengthened networks to advance gender equality and human rights in Canada.



United Nations headquarters as part of UNCSW69.

DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In September 2024, NAWL participated in a four-day conference hosted by Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and the John Humphries Centre for Peace and Human Rights. The conference brought together civil society organizations from across the country to strengthen collaboration and develop a shared framework for meaningful engagement with the Government of Canada on international human rights mechanisms such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Over the course of the conference, participants identified barriers to engagement, including inaccessible decision-makers, consultations treated as “checkbox” exercises, and a lack of transparency and accountability regarding which departments are responsible for following up on and implementing international human rights recommendations. To address these issues, the coalition developed a set of shared principles grounded in respect, reciprocity, accessibility, and accountability, and outlined key considerations for government engagement, which were presented to representatives from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the department that oversees Canada’s domestic human rights portfolio.

Following the conference, participants continued to meet regularly and designed a prototype engagement framework that set out clear expectations for how the federal government should work with civil society in upholding its human rights commitments. Throughout 2024, the group advocated directly with the Department of Canadian Heritage regarding the implementation of this framework, and this work remains ongoing.

ADVANCING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In continuing to leverage international human rights mechanisms, NAWL attended the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW69) in New York City as a delegate for the Beijing+30 Network. 2025 marked the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which serves as a global agenda for women's empowerment. During this week-long conference, NAWL attended many events hosted by the United Nations and feminist non-governmental organizations discussing the global backlash against equality rights and the need for accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. A few noteworthy sessions included:

- Empowering Women: Addressing Economic Inequality, Health, and Feminist Climate Justice,
- Driving Actionable Change and Strengthening Global Solidarity Among Indigenous Women, and
- Parliaments and Beijing+30: Resisting Backlash and Shifting Paradigms Towards Gender Equality

This event also served as an invaluable opportunity to network with fellow Canadian civil society organizations, Members of Parliament, Senators, and Ministers.

Thank you to the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women for making possible NAWL's participation in the UNCSW69.



NAWL and feminist advocates at UNCSW69.

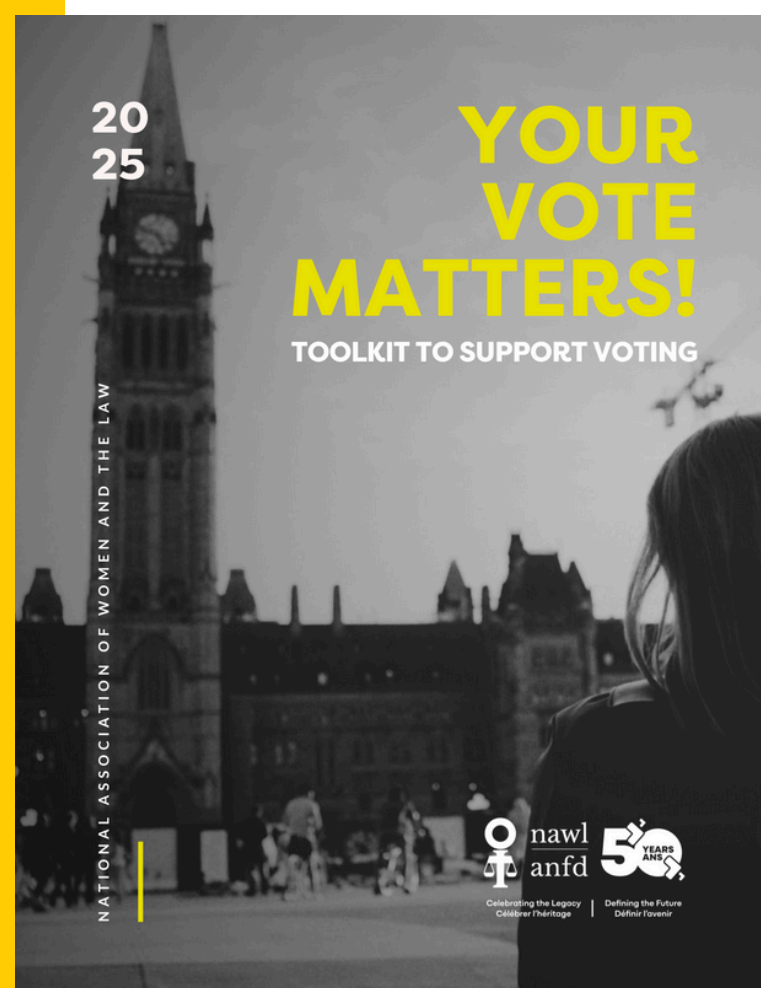
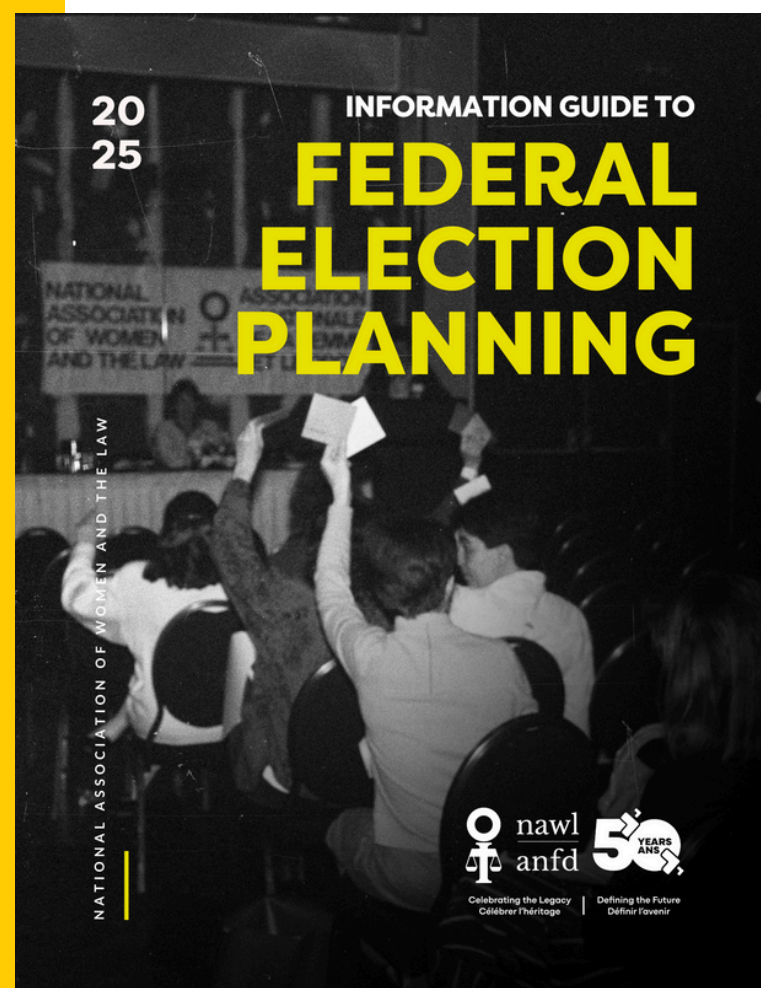
DEMAND BETTER: A NARRATIVE CHANGE CAMPAIGN

In October 2024, NAWL and other feminist organizations from across Canada gathered in Gatineau, Quebec, to explore strategies for collective engagement in the 2025 federal election, and decided to launch a nationwide campaign. NAWL took an active role in the development of the campaign, including serving on the Communications Committee, and shaping the goals, research, branding, messaging, and overall strategic direction.

Demand Better, the narrative change campaign that emerged, challenged the false dichotomy between a strong economy and gender justice. It highlighted how policies rooted in gender justice and feminist principles, such as childcare, healthcare, and affordable housing, actually contribute to a strong and thriving economy. The goal of the Demand Better campaign was to increase awareness and shift public perspectives during the 2025 federal election, encouraging people to vote for progressive policies. The bilingual, nationwide campaign ran ads across a variety of platforms including billboards, radio stations, and social media. The campaign was endorsed by 88 organizations, including 28 members of The Chanterelle Alliance.

Additionally, NAWL created two bilingual election toolkits, one for organizations, and one for voters. The organizational toolkit provided an in-depth analysis of the legal parameters for charities and nonprofits during an election, including non-partisan guidelines and third party regulations. It also included practical engagement strategies such as candidate briefings, meet and greets, candidate town halls, and op-eds. The toolkit for voters promoted the Demand Better campaign messaging, and provided practical information for learning about the candidates in their riding, registering to vote, how and where to vote, as well as a voter checklist.

Through this campaign, NAWL not only helped shift the national conversation around gender justice but also equipped both organizations and individuals with the tools to actively participate in the democratic process. By challenging harmful narratives, fostering civic engagement, and promoting progressive policy visions, Demand Better exemplifies how strategic feminist advocacy can influence elections and build momentum for lasting systemic change.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT MARCH 31, 2025

	TOTAL 2025	TOTAL 2024
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CURRENT ASSETS

Cash	\$ 213,110	\$ 43,547
Accounts receivable	29,533	129,866
Prepaid expenses	15,544	9,319
Charitable Trust for Research and Education	11,476	72,716
	\$ 269,663	\$ 255,448

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	66,287	119,274
Deferred revenue	182,497	122,617
	\$ 248,784	\$ 241,891

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted net assets	20,879	13,557
	\$ 269,663	\$ 255,448

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2025

TOTAL
2025

TOTAL
2024

REVENUE

Government grants	\$ 946,558	\$ 651,002
NAWL Trust grant	100,000	—
Other income	3,307	12,068
Membership	980	540
Chambres des Notaires	—	4,492
Other grants	—	69,275

1,050,845 737,377

EXPENSE

Personnel	591,895	386,265
Professional services	265,485	225,881
Accounting and legal	94,099	62,982
Office operations	43,501	31,504
Travel and meetings	39,812	49,194
Publicity and promotion	6,948	17,788
Occupancy costs	1,783	8,519
Chambres des Notaires	—	5,197

1,043,523 787,330

NET REVENUE (EXPENSE) FOR THE YEAR

\$ 7,322 \$ (49,953)

Thank You!

We extend our sincere thanks to the NAWL members and supporters.

NAWL acknowledges the financial support of Women and Gender Equality Canada.



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada

Canada

NAWL acknowledges the financial support of the NAWL Charitable Trust for Research and Education.



National Association of Women and the Law
Charitable Trust for Research and Education

Systemic change is the foundation of lasting justice. It requires persistence, vision, and the courage to challenge entrenched structures, knowing that each step forward builds momentum for generations to come. Through decades of dedication, NAWL's work has transformed laws, shifted societal attitudes, and opened doors that once seemed permanently closed.

To witness this enduring commitment and the profound difference it continues to make, please watch the 'Rightfully Hers' mini documentary, created for NAWL's 50th anniversary, which celebrates five decades of unwavering advocacy and legal leadership.



nawl
anfd



Celebrating the Legacy
Célébrer l'héritage

Defining the Future
Définir l'avenir