

ANNUAL REPORT

2014 / 2015

National Association of Women and the Law

Equality Now!

nawl | anfd

2339 Ogilvie Road, P.O. Box 46008, Gloucester, ON K1J 9M7



MANDATE & ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

The National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL), founded in 1974, is a not-for-profit feminist organization that promotes the equality rights of women through legal education, research, and law reform advocacy.

We recognize that each woman's experience of inequality is unique due to systemic discrimination related to race, class, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, and other factors. In our view, a just and equal society is one that values diversity, and is inclusive of it. We are committed to working collectively and in coalition with other groups to dismantle barriers to all women's equality. To this end, the general objectives of NAWL are to:

- Achieve equality before and within the legal system
- Eliminate violence against women
- Ensure a decent standard of living for all women through legislative reform
- Guarantee employment and pay equity
- Remove barriers that limit access to equality for all groups of women
- Establish a fairer deal for women and children in the event of divorce
- Ensure reproductive choice and monitor new reproductive technologies

When it was fully operative, NAWL worked on its own and in collaboration with other women's equality-seeking organizations to impact public policy on a wide range of issues, including pay equity; same-sex marriage; custody and access; the use of arbitration in family law; the criminal response to rape and sexual assault; the provocation defence in murder cases; immigration; women's human rights; social assistance; and women's reproductive rights.

For the last 40 years, NAWL has focused its efforts on women's equality rights in Canada. In coalition with other women's and equality-seeking organizations, we have achieved many victories including:

- Adoption of sections 15 and 28 in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Amendments to the Criminal Code regarding sexual assault laws, rape shield legislation and criminal harassment legislation
- Positive changes to family law and to the Divorce Act
- Advancement of equality rights for lesbians

In 2006, NAWL was defunded when the federal government [removed](#) 'advocacy,' 'equity' and 'access to justice' from Status of Women Canada's (SWC's) mandate, thereby preventing it from funding feminist research and advocacy work.

In October 2007, NAWL announced that it was forced to lay off staff and shut down its national office. Since then, NAWL's National Steering Committee and a group of feminist consultants have kept the organization alive on a volunteer basis; however, its capacity has been greatly diminished.



GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & PARTICIPATION

NAWL is an incorporated non-profit corporation that is governed by a National Steering Committee made up of a maximum of 12 volunteers. Since its founding in 1974, NAWL has used its unique research and educational strategies to raise public awareness about legal issues affecting women.

NAWL has a nationwide membership of lawyers, law students, academics and other individuals who share a commitment to gender equality.

NAWL briefs and papers are developed by working groups, with membership open to any equality-seeking individual who has demonstrated knowledge and skills on the topic that is being addressed. Every effort is made to include diverse community perspectives within all working groups and to include both French-speaking and English-speaking members.



NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Jane Bailey
Anne Levesque (Co-chair)
Lisa Cirillo
Sasha Hart

Martha Jackman
Cheryl Milne
Amy Salyzyn (Co-chair)



NAWL CONSULTANTS

Interim Executive Consultant
Julie Shugarman

Administrative Consultant
Pam Mayhew



MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

In 2014-2015, NAWL continued operating with a skeletal structure. While committed to remaining administratively sound, the National Steering Committee decided that, in keeping with the direction set the previous year, we would spend as few resources as possible given an inability, without state funding, to do the research and advocacy work the organization was designed to do. Consistent with the decision made in 2013/2014, NAWL ceased all fundraising activities, including its annual letter campaign in the fall.

Despite an extremely reduced structure, in 2014/2015 **NAWL continued to work toward its vision of providing feminist law students with the skills necessary for advancing systemic law reform remedies** at the federal level.

The NAWL Charitable Trust for Research and Education, with generous support from Shirley Greenberg, is close to completing work on the development of an **online Feminist Law Reform Course** for broad access through the NAWL website. To this end, over 80 edited video clips have been developed, closed captioned and in some cases subtitled, for various modules of the online course. A number of students, lawyers and law reform experts donated their time and expertise to develop these videos and ensure their accessibility. The video clips are accompanied by suggested readings, discussion questions and assignments. Course modules cover a broad range of topics, including:

- Foundational concepts in equality law and policy
- Funding the law reform process
- The federal law reform process
- Lobbying
- Members of Parliament
- Parliamentary Committees
- Writing Opinion Editorials
- Filing Access to Information Requests
- Media Relations
- Working in Coalition

It is our hope that by the New Year, **this free and highly practical course in law reform advocacy will be launched and that it will strengthen work to advance women's equality in Canada.** In addition to work on the Feminist Law Reform Course, in 2014/2015 NAWL also worked to update its website in order to ensure a complete picture of the organization's activities and resources since defunding.

In October 2014, NAWL worked in collaboration with our colleague Alison Dewar's law firm, Raven Cameron Ballantyne and Yazbeck (RCBY) LLP, to fund the **Alison Dewar Scholarship in Equality, Labour and Human Rights law at the University of Ottawa.** The scholarship, launched last year, provides financial support for a female student enrolled in the Common Law faculty who is interested in pursuing a career in some combination of women's equality and union-side labour, workers' rights, or human rights law.

The first scholarship was awarded this year to Morgan Teeple Hopkins, a young woman who has worked as an organizer for the Public Service Alliance of Canada, a steward for CUPE, and recently wrote a paper analyzing the *Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act* from different feminist theoretical perspectives. Her volunteer involvement is impressive and includes time in a free legal clinic specializing in immigration and refugee law (conducting country of origin research on gendered violence for female refugee claimants' applications) and co-founding the Feminist Legal Collective.

"As a feminist law student committed to practicing union-side labour law, I am inspired by the feminist politics that motivated Alison's legacy." – Morgan Teeple Hopkins

In 2014/2015, NAWL continued to receive and respond to a number of requests to sign letters, co-author briefs and join various coalitions. Two examples of these are noted below:

- NAWL joined Up for Debate, a campaign formed by an alliance of over 100 organizations from across the country, representing over 3.5 million Canadians. The campaign calls on all federal political parties to make meaningful commitments to change women's lives for the better, at home and around the world. Up for Debate worked to create a national conversation on gender equality and women's rights in the lead up to the federal election. For more information see: upfordebate.ca
- Along with the Coalition for Gun Control and 15 other organizations, NAWL submitted a Joint Brief on the Impact of Bill C-42 on Women's Safety to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The brief outlined the manner in which recent amendments to firearms legislation proposed in Bill C-42, if enacted, would put women's lives at risk. In particular, the Brief outlined how the Bill weakens controls and would make it easier for legal guns to be diverted to illegal markets. The brief argued that the proposed measures would increase the risk of gun-related domestic violence and suicide, particularly youth suicide, and could result in an increased number of gun deaths.

Finally, the NAWL NSC is looking forward to the possibility of renewed state funding commitments for women's equality advocacy and research in the coming year.

Thank-yous:

NAWL's work in 2014/2015 was made possible by the ongoing generous support of unions, law professors, law students and volunteers. We would not have been able to continue our work without the commitment of these groups and individuals.

We would also like to thank:

Derek Hogue from Amphibian Design for masterfully building our Feminist Law Reform Course site and ensuring it is as user friendly as NAWL's main website, which he rebuilt for us two years ago. The incredible creative team at the Public Design studio for working with us on the design of the Feminist Law Reform course website. Tamir Israel, the staff lawyer at CIPPIC, for continuing to provide us with stellar pro bono legal advice on intellectual property issues. Karen Cooper, our generous and highly skilled non-profit and charity lawyer, for her ongoing patience and advice regarding the activities of the non-profit as well as the Charitable Trust. Angela Mooney for her commitment as one of NAWL's website problem solvers.

Pam Mayhew, for her invaluable work to help ensure NAWL's administrative viability and the members of NAWL's National Steering Committee who continue to dedicate themselves to ensure that NAWL has every opportunity to survive as an organization. To Julie Shugarman, whose deep integrity, innovative thinking, passion for women's equality and tireless efforts have kept NAWL alive in the face of immense pressures and challenges and have inspired us all not lose hope. Without you, none of this would be possible.

Finally, we would also like to express our condolences to the family of Andrew Chisholm, who passed away this year. Andrew provided NAWL with helpful insight, guidance and consulting support on our website.



CHARITABLE TRUST FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

NAWL established the NAWL Charitable Trust for Research and Education in 1983 with the purpose of promoting and understanding the status and role of women in Canadian society among the general public. The Trust prepares and disseminates research and education regarding legal issues in all aspects of the social, economic and political life of Canadian women. It assists in the protection of women's civil rights and liberties by charitable means, as well as in the relief of poverty. Unlike NAWL, the Trust is a registered charity and all donations are tax creditable.

The Charitable Trust is composed of six members appointed by NAWL's National Steering Committee. The Trustees are responsible for decisions regarding the allocation of funds.



THANK YOU!

**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR
INVALUABLE SUPPORT:**

Shirley Greenberg
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions
Shirley E. Greenberg Chair for Women and the Legal Profession
NAWL Members and Donors