

**A n n u a l R e p o r t
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**National Association
of Women and the Law**

Equality Now!

nawl | anfd

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



MANDATE

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

NAWL's activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Lobbying for changes to federal and provincial laws and regulations
- Producing publications on legal issues affecting all aspects of women's lives
- Consulting with government officials on legal issues of concern to women
- Providing legal expertise in the service of the Canadian women's movement
- Advocating for gender equality in the courts and the legal profession
- Sponsoring national biennial conferences that formulate policy positions on such critical issues as the feminization of poverty, international perspectives on women and the law, and family law matters
- Hosting workshops and consultations on gender bias in the criminal justice system, family law and in the legal profession
- Promoting feminist scholarship through our Charitable Trust for Research and Education
- Organizing public education activities through our regional caucuses on legal issues affecting women
- Promoting feminist perspectives on current legal issues through the media

For the last 39 years, NAWL has focused its efforts on women's equality rights in Canada. Since that time, 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



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.

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
Alison Dewar
Samantha Kolapak
Raphaëlle Laframboise-Carignan

Martha Jackman
Anne Levesque
Lisa Cirillo
Leslie Robertson
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MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

In 2012-2013, NAWL focused the majority of its time on advancing the **Women and Law Reform Clinic project** that was commenced in 2011, following the completion of a McLean Foundation funded feasibility study and with the financial support from feminist philanthropist Shirley Greenberg.

The NAWL clinic was envisioned to respond to women's access to justice issues by providing the support and expertise needed to organizations and individual lawyers working on systemic law reform remedies for their clients. The unique resource center model NAWL established included training a new generation of young lawyers in much needed law reform skills necessary to advance equality rights in the context of a parliamentary democracy.

After receiving endorsements from 36 members of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Common Law and obtaining key in-kind support from the Dean of Common Law, NAWL entered into formal partnership discussions with the University. NAWL came into these discussions with a well-designed and innovative model for clinical legal education, as well as a commitment of \$300,000 in matching funding which we had raised from private philanthropy and a large Canadian foundation. NAWL committed to raise approximately \$420,000 in funding in addition to this – a target we were confident we could meet. We asked the University to consider providing \$150,000 a year in funding for the clinic over a 3-year period, accounting for approximately one third of the clinic's projected 3 year budget.

In approaching the University to partner with us in the clinic project, NAWL was seeking a financial commitment from the University, both as an expression of institutional support, and in order to assist in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the clinic.

We were extremely disappointed to report that in May, 2013 the Women and Law Reform Clinic project was ultimately denied funding by the University's Central Administrative Committee. In response to a letter from NAWL, President Rock cited concerns about space and the amount of money requested as the reasons the project was denied funding. NAWL has since commenced discussions with another law faculty. A feminist law reform clinic at another institution would, by design, require an entirely different governance model and budget from what was being proposed at the University of Ottawa. NAWL will continue to explore alternative and innovative models for offering clinical law reform experience to feminist law students while working to advance women's equality in Canadian society.

In addition to working on the Women and Law Reform clinic project, in 2013, **NAWL joined West Coast LEAF in speaking out on Trinity Western University's proposal to establish a "gay free" law school.** We wrote to the Federation of Canadian Law Societies, outlining why such a proposal on the part of TWU was clearly discriminatory and antithetical to training the next generation of lawyers to live up to their role as guardians of the public interest, which includes protecting and respecting the equality rights of Canadians.

NAWL also added its voice to the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada in 2012, **calling for the resignation of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Rona Ambrose** following her support of Motion 312, which was nothing more than a backdoor attempt to reopen a legislative discussion about the legality of abortion in Canada. We wrote to the Prime Minister to remind him that, as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Minister Ambrose has an obligation not only to understand but also to ardently defend, the constitutionally guaranteed equality rights of women in Canada, including their reproductive rights.

In keeping with NAWL's work on women's economic rights in the context of family law, **NAWL posted a public legal education piece on its website about the *Eric v Lola* decision,** in which the Supreme Court of Canada found in 2013 that not extending spousal support and the division of property upon relationship breakdown to common-law couples, or *de facto* spouses, is constitutional. Quebec remains the only province in Canada that requires couples to be married or in a civil union to qualify for spousal support at separation. It is not, however, the only province to exclude common-law couples from the division of family property post-relationship.

In 2012, **NAWL also completed a significant governance review process required in order to transition the organization to the new *Canada Not For Profit Corporations Act***. This review process, led by National Steering Committee members Amy Salyzyn and Anne Levesque, will culminate in the NSC asking the membership to pass a set of amended Bylaws and Articles of Continuance at the 2012 AGM.

Finally, in the last year, **NAWL also completed a significant migration of its website** to a new content management system. This work was undertaken in order to ensure that NAWL retains its online presence and is in a position to continue to make its publications available to a broad audience.

Thank-yous:

NAWL's work in 2012/2013 was made possible by the ongoing generous support of unions, law faculties, individual donors and volunteers. We would not have been able to continue our work to advance women's equality in Canada without the commitment of these groups and individuals.

We would also like to thank:

Andrew Chisholm for continuing to provide us with much needed consulting support on our website and Derek Hogue from Amphibian Design for masterfully rebuilding our site with greater usability, structural integrity and longevity.

Angela Mooney for her outstanding commitment as our second NSC intern.

Pam Mayhew, for her continued invaluable work to help ensure NAWL's administrative viability and, finally, the member's of NAWL's National Steering Committee who continue to dedicate themselves to ensure that NAWL has every opportunity before it to survive as an organization.

**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
Canadian Labour Congress
CUPE-SCFP

NAWL Members and Donors