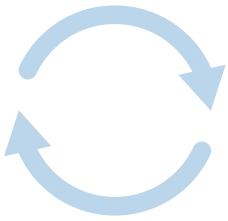


Pathways for Change

The time is right for something new.



Standing Together set out to work differently to understand domestic violence and map a forward path for Nova Scotia to build a future where people can live free from violence. The initiative embraced innovation, exploration, learning, and evaluation. This approach has produced a deep understanding of the context and promoted learning to inform actions and pathways for change.

The relationships Standing Together has fostered will allow the province to go forward with coordinated action from government and community organizations, building on what we have learned. We do not have to choose between prioritizing prevention and continuing to improve responses to violence.

Primary prevention and crisis response can work hand in hand to address what the Centre for Disease Control calls a “serious and preventable public health problem”.

In the last several years, we have all experienced unprecedented change locally and globally. People are having more difficult conversations in mainstream places. Collectively, citizens and governments have developed a deeper understanding of our interconnectedness and the complexity of many social problems. The pandemic has required government and community to respond and collaborate in new ways to meet emerging challenges. It has also shone a light on the experiences of domestic violence and many underlying vulnerabilities that contribute to individual, family, and community safety and wellbeing.

In Nova Scotia, gender-based violence (GBV) is being examined through the Desmond Inquiry and the Mass Casualty Commission and has entered conversations and media coverage in our province like never before. Social movements and awakenings about race, gender, and inequity – through local, national, and international attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), residential schools, Black Lives Matter, Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children – compel us to “do better” to address systemic racism, unequal access to resources and services, and silos in our systems and structures.

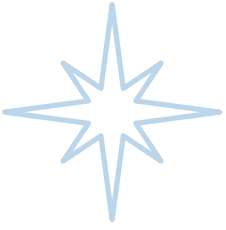
The time is right because, for the first time in our country’s history, we have two National Action Plans focused on GBV – a broad framework for all Canadians, and a plan to address GBV against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. We have an unprecedented opportunity to coordinate our actions, leverage knowledge and investments, and make meaningful, generational change. As framed in the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, “gender-based violence is rooted in gender inequality and is further intensified by systemic inequalities, such as sexism, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, colonialism, racism, ableism, classism, poverty, and a collective history of trauma.” The scope of the issue is significant, and so is our collective resolve to write a different story for future generations.



Collaboration & Change

Domestic violence is a complex and serious, but preventable, public health issue. By leveraging the relationships built during the first phase of Standing Together the province can continue to build on the trust needed to move forward to address domestic violence in Nova Scotia together. A commitment to coordination of supports available to survivors and their families, through strengthening and stabilizing the intervention sector, is a critical foundation for success. The forward path needs to continue to prioritize prevention at all levels; the stage has been set for this focus to be implemented effectively.

No organization holds the only solution to these complex challenges, and primary prevention will take more than a generation to be truly effective and start to demonstrate impact. We have a shared responsibility to make deep and lasting change. By strengthening relationships built on trust – between individuals, community, and government – we believe that we can create a future where young people will have safe spaces where they can express their feelings openly and honestly, find strength in each other, and learn how to model nurturing, loving, healthy, and safe relationships.



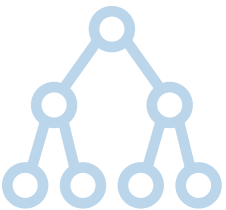
Prevention

Our focus is to prioritize actions and initiatives that get at the root causes of gender-based violence. The future we envision includes social norms and attitudes that encourage healthy relationships and equity, structures and systems that connect and support people, and communities where healing and wellbeing are prioritized. We want people to be safe and secure in their homes, in public spaces, where they work, where they play, and online.



Support

A stronger, more coordinated intervention and response sector can meet people where they are, ensure the right supports are available at the right time, and share the responsibility for long-term outcomes such as the safety, wellbeing, and economic security of survivors and those involved in gender-based violence. For prevention work to be successful, the intervention sector needs to know that they can expect stable funding and high levels of collaboration with government and other partners. Strengthening and enhancing supports for survivors and their families means addressing systemic barriers and inequities in terms of access, cultural safety, and responsiveness.



Leadership & Coordination

Continuing to prioritize prevention and improve supports are key elements that will continue to inform and adapt government's approach to being both forward-looking and responsive to emerging needs and contexts.

Key Activities



Prevention

- **Build on evidence-based programs to expand primary prevention work with men and boys.** This includes expanding the reach of school-based programs such as GuysWork to be delivered systematically to more male-identified students across Nova Scotia.
- **Increase awareness of resources and supports available.** Promote and normalize help-seeking, encouraging people to reach out earlier and prevent further harm.
- **Support Indigenous-led initiatives** that enhance safety, health, culture, and justice for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, aligned with addressing the MMIWG Calls for Justice.
- **Support government's efforts to advance gender equality** through foundational elements such as childcare, affordable housing, and healthcare. Apply a gender-based violence lens to these efforts to ensure a holistic intersectional approach is considered when designing solutions and supports.
- **Explore legislative amendments and policy changes** to reduce barriers, improve access to information, and increase options for survivors.



Support

- **Continue to invest in and support Indigenous and African Nova Scotian led supports and services** for survivors of GBV and their families.
- **Collaborate with the Violence Against Women sector** to develop updated funding models to stabilize the sector to strengthen capacity and enhance service delivery.
- **Strengthen capacity and prioritize healing and wellness** within the Violence Against Women response and intervention sector. Support the helpers to strengthen wellbeing and resilience.
- **Map core services and responsibilities** within the continuum of care for government-funded programs and services that support survivors and their families.
- **Coordinate existing GBV helpline supports** by working with existing service providers to streamline access, expand reach, and strengthen capacity.

Leadership & Coordination

- **Centre voices, perspectives, and needs of equity deserving communities.** Increase awareness of systemic barriers, challenges, and opportunities for equity deserving communities through sharing knowledge e.g. podcasts, blogs, and articles (CCC).
- **Strengthen data collection to track and monitor progress and understand gaps, in alignment with national gender equality indicators and frameworks.** Continue to gather and build evidence to support prevention efforts and impacts, including data collection by service providers, to improve service delivery. Exploration of gendered and intersectional elements from the housing needs assessment is underway. Communicate with Nova Scotians about the data and trends to raise awareness.
- **Conduct public opinion polling (2023) and develop a strategy to complete polling every four years to monitor trends in awareness, perceptions, and insights.** Collaborate with Atlantic provinces to conduct regional/provincial polling at regular four-year intervals to support the work of the Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network and GBV work in respective jurisdictions.
- **Develop a gender-based violence prevention unit** to continue to coordinate government and community's approaches to prevention and response.
- **Continue a “whole of government approach”** to provide leadership to and oversight of this framework, seek opportunities for alignment with strategic initiatives, and lead negotiation with Canada regarding bilateral funding agreements and multi-lateral opportunities to implement the GBV NAP in alignment with provincial priorities.
- **Create mechanisms for community and government to continue conversations** preventing gender-based violence and explore opportunities to accelerate our commitments to prevention through the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence. Reflect on progress, explore gaps, and understand changing context. Trust will continue to be built through relationships, communications, and opportunities for collaboration.

Nova Scotia Status of Women Office

novascotia.ca/standing-together