BAY ST GEORGE STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 1991

President's message

Moving into our new home is a joyous occasion for this women's organization; so, I wanted to write a warm-fuzzy Thanksgiving Day letter, a let's "count our blessings" message. But as politicians are fond of saying, "Canadians are in a cranky mood" and the Prime Minister's comment that the pace of change seems too fast for us didn't help.

Rapid change is stressful. The direction toward which much of that change appears aimed, is even more troublesome. Every day it seems another ill-omen appears. The latest is a proposed properly rights provision the federal government wants enshrined in the constitution. Now that's ok, isn't it? Like your house, buy, sell, give it away. So what's the big deal?

"Big deal" is an apt description. Property rights provisions in the U.S. Bill of Rights were used to strike down laws limiting work hours, child labour and protecting the right to union activity and involvement. If such rights are inshrined in the Canadian law, you can bet your cranberry sauce business interests and other critics of Canada's social safety net approach will be no 'kinder or gentler' than our neighbours to the South.

Business could argue that Canada's Environmental Protection Laws are interfering with their property rights. When the effects of "right to pollute your own property" are felt by another property owner, it becomes someone else's problem, and expense. Sounds familiar...

What else? Property rights enshrined in our constitution could be used to deny women and children hard won protection and sharing of family assets if a marriage breaks down.

Many Canadians are looking for a social charter provision in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Something that will say who we are, what we're about what makes Canada unique among the democracies of this earth.

Continued on Page

Were Moved!

The Bay St. George Status of Women Council's newsletter is published four times a year and distributed to members and associates.

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JOYCE HANCOCK

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Bay St. George Status of Women Council, or its Board of Directors.

Letters to the editor and other submissions are welcome and every effort will be made to publish them, but we reserve the right to edit as needed.

Send all material or enquiries to:

BAY ST. GEORGE STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL P.O. BOX 501 STEPHENVILLE, NF A2N 3B4

WOMEN'S CENTER RELOCATES

For individuals who are still wondering where we are because our sign is still on Main Street in an obviously vacated building - we've moved!

The Bay St. George Women's Center is now located at 54 St. Clair Avenue in the former St. Augustine's Group Home. Thanks to a special C.M.H.C. program, we have been able to assume the mortgage on this house and property.

Women who have seen our new Center are simply delighted with this acquisition. We have more than doubled our space. We are finally wheelchair accessable and have an enormous back yard where children can play.

In addition, there are three bedrooms located in the downstairs section and we have already had women stay with us. This part of our Center has come to be known as the "Women's Shelter", and we are so excited at being able to address some of the needs of area women around temporary shelter.

Consider this an invitation -- call or drop by, our number is still the same and the atmosphere is still homey and comfortable. An unlimited supply of coffee and conversation is always available. See you soon!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

Many Canadians are looking for a social charter provision in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Something that will say who we are, what we're about what makes Canada unique among the democracies of this earth.

What the federal government offers instead is a property rights provision that will practically ensure challenges to social legislation at every turn.

Those challenges could end up in the Supreme Court of Canada. Ultimately, what those property rights provisions really mean would be decided by the courts.. Courts are not held accountable. Parliament, however, unreliable, is and it doesn't make sense to me that we'd accept less say in the laws that govern us; or that we would endorse including a provision in our Charter that would practically guarantee it.

Calling Canadians cranky and suggesting we don't handle change well are easy outs for politicians. These are feeble attempts to trivialize legitimate concerns expressed across this country. Worse, it's patronizing in a way women recognize only too well. Just a remake of the old, "there, there little woman; don's worry, I'll take care of the important stuff. Trust me."



Not this time. Pass the turkey, please.

Jual Often Sarah Ogletree

1991 PROVINCIAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The Corner Brook Status of Women Council will host the 1991 Provincial Women's Conference on November 8 - 11 at the Glynmill Inn in Corner Brook. The conference agenda also includes staff development sessions for Women's Centers and Transition houses. Conference sessions also include topics:

- Feminism and feminist Process
- Parenting, money management
- Pay equity, business planning, stress management
- Spiritually
- Women and addictions
- Job market re-entry and non traditional careers

Guest speakers include Dawn Black, Federal NDP MP and Elly Danica author of "Don't: A Woman's Word".

A special youth agenda has been added, our Executive Director, Joyce Hancock and Youth Program Coordinator, Sharon Whalen will participate as facilitators at the Youth Workshops. We are hoping that high school girls from this area will consider attending for more information, please contact our Women's Center at 643-4444 or Karen Collins at the Corner Brook Women's Center at 639-8522.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I didn't want to ask for Social Assistance. I was desperate, sick, no money, no job, and no one to help me get the medicine the doctor had prescribed for me.

Welfare paid for my drugs. I thought they should know why I was asking them to help me. I answered all their questions about money, and where I lived, and who I lived with.

But there was one form called <u>Reporting Requirements and</u> <u>Release of Information</u>. I had to sign if I wanted assistance. It says they can invade my life and my family's life today, tomorrow or even long into the future. They can talk to anyone to get information. I felt bad enough asking for help, but I felt worse when I got it.

I don't know enough about the law to know if that form is legal. But I know one thing for sure, It isn't right.

Name with held by request



GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Authorization to Investigate and to Release Information

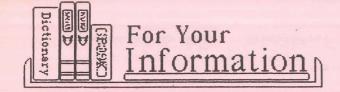
- 1.3 I authorize the Department of Social Services to conduct any investigation and to obtain information from any person (corporate or non-corporate), at any time and in any reasonable manner that it considers necessary, to determine and verify my eligibility, or the eligibility of my spouse (legal or common law) or dependent children, for assistance under the Newfoundland Social Assistance Program.
- 2. As examples, but without limiting the generality of paragraph one immediately above, I understand that the information to which that paragraph applies includes information concerning my, my spouse's and my dependent children's needs, income, assets, employment records, marital status and medical records and the amount of my, my spouse's and my dependent children's entitlement to benefits under other programs that provide similar assistance.
- 3. I authorize any person (corporate or non-corporate) that possesses information, either now or in the future, of the kind mentioned in paragraph one above to release that information to the Department of Social Services when requested to do so by a representative of that Department.
- 4. As examples, but without limiting the generality of paragraph three immediately above, I understand that the persons in possession of information to which that paragraph applies include Health and Welfare Canada, Revenue Canada Taxation, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Workers' Compensation Board, Canada Pension Plan, any bank, credit union or other financial institution, my employer and the employer of my spouse or dependent children.

NOTE TO NAME WITHHELD:

On September 17th the Minister of Social Services, Bill Hogan stated that this form would no longer be used. A check with the regional Social Services office in Corner Brook verified that the form was indeed still being used.

NEWS FROM THE WOMEN'S CENTER





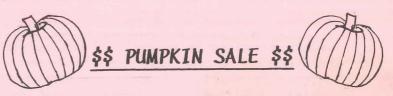
AU REVOIR MARIA

If there is still someone who isn't aware that Maria will be having her baby in the near future, this news item will confirm the truth. Maria will be taking some time for her increasing family and needless to say we will miss her so very very much.

MARIA RENOUF is considered by the Board of Directors and the women who avail of our Center, as that vital and necessary person in any organization. That ever present smile and quite competent manner whether doing financial reports or sewing the beautiful curtains that make our Center so homey and welcoming, such is the essence of our Maria.

Now it is time to share her with her partner David, daughter Pamela, and the bundle that makes reaching the typewriter so difficult.

Somehow we know she won't be away too long. But for now, Au revoir Maria!



During the month of October, we would like to encourage our members to purchase a pumpkin from the Stephenville Rotary Club. This organization has decided to donate the proceeds of their 1991 pumpkin sale to the Literacy Council and the Women's Center.

This is indeed welcomed news as we continue to renovate our new Women's Center. So think pumpkin pumpkin pie, pumpkin cake, pumpkin soup - share your recipe ideas; but keep buying.



SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks guys! Discovering that our new Center had a major leak caused us but a moment of dispair. Thanks to JEROME RENOUF, LEO DELANEY, and GARY COFFIN, what would have been a catastrophe in the months ahead, was simply a repair job for three capable carpenters. It was also great having your company for a few days.

Coordinator's message

Finally the moving is complete, the smell of fresh paint permeates the building, and the energetic voices of women (and on some occasions men) compose the sights and sounds of my days at the new Center.

Change is sometimes disconcerting; even frightening. Many of my summer days were filled with apprehension as we first contemplated, then investigated and finally decided to relocate our Women's Center.

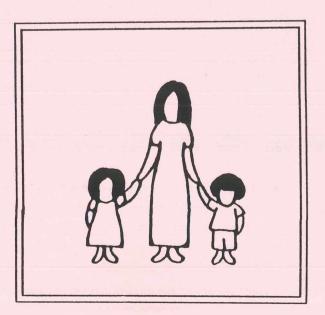
I have been privileged to be involved with a grassroots Women's Movement which began early in 1985. I can remember when as a fledging group of women we decided to locate our Women's Center on Main Street. We wondered how the community would feel about our presence? We hadn't long to wait, as our Peace Walks, political involvements, and day to day commentary on timely events, caused people to expect a unique and usually different perspective on events of the day. Of course, what they were getting was a women's perspective, indeed a feminist analysis, in a community not known before as particularly keen on seeking women's experiences on policy or decision making.

Now we have decided to involve ourselves in yet another concern for area women, that of housing. We can now provide shelter for short periods of time to women and or women and their children in the apartment located in the lower level of our Women's Center.

It is simply wonderful to have more room which of course means the involvement of more women. Last Tuesday in one area of our Center during, a full Board Meeting, our president inquired as to the origin of more than a usual amount of door opening in the downstairs section of our house; I realized that there was also a Single Parents Meeting taking place! We could not have imagined this luxury of space!

Now my apprehension dissolves as I realize my work load has meerly increased, meaning of course more women continue to seek the comfort, support, and expertise of the Bay St. George Women's Council.

In Sisterhood





JOYCE Our Executive Director, HANCOCK expressed gratitude to the local Women's Council for their assistance in providing her the opportunity to attend the annual summer course on Human Rights. The contribution of a bursary from the Newfoundland and Labrador Law Foundation, and educational leave from her employer made Joyce's attendance at the university of P.E.I. possible.

The course was sponsored by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation and sessions included the Canadian Charter, Federal and Provincial Human Rights Codes, Regional Protection of Human Rights, as well as the reality of human rights in the developing world.

Several highlights for Joyce was meeting Grand Chief of the First Nations, Ovide Mercredi, Canadian Supreme Court Justice Gerald La Forest, Commissionaire, Bertha Knapper of the Royal Commission on Reproductive Rights, and past director of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, Professor John Humphries.

Special thanks to JESSIE FUDGE of the St. Augustine's Group Home Board for his kindness in accommodating our Council during the process of our assuming the mortgage on what is now the Bay St. George Women's Center.

SHELTER COMMITTEE FORMED

A new committee has been put in place to develop policy and guidelines for the use of the apartment contained in our new Women's Center. The CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing corporation) special program has allowed us to assume the mortgage on the former St. Augustines Group Home. We will now be providing shelter for temporary periods to women in our Bay St. George communities. Several categories of women in need of temporary shelter have been identified and a legal change in our incorporation and mandate will now allow us to do a little more in the area of housing.

The committee consisting of JUDY ELAINE HANCOCK, JOYCE GILLIS, HANCOCK, and MICHELLE SKINNER will be responsible for developing the guidelines and assisting women to access the shelter. For more information, pleases call the Women's Center (643-4444).

Classified

FOR SALE one Sharp SF-7200 Photocopier, warranty still in effect. Reason for sale: need for larger model, price \$ 700.00 or nearest offer.

Special thanks to our summer student JENNIFER O'KEEFE a 2nd year Community Studies student Stephenville Crossing. from Jennifer was our Centers "Jill of all Trades" for 8 weeks this summer, and spent a great deal of time helping us with our move. We are hoping she will be returning for her field placement.

And More Yews

BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

The Women's Center has copies, of this report recently released by the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The report examines "the influence of victim stereotypes and social biases on police response to women's complaints of sexual assault."

The local Women's Council has made the report available to the three area detachments of the R.C.M.P. and anyone interested can obtain a copy at the Women's Center at 54 St. Clair Avenue.

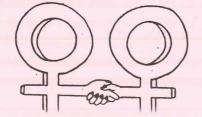


NEW DIRECTOR APPOINTED

The Board of Directors has ratified the appointment of a new director at their September meeting. MARY MACNAB formerally of Alberta, now living in Stephenville will replace Tammy Hansen who left the area in May.

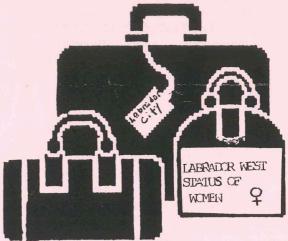
Mary has already been involved with the Council on a proposal to provide participatory workshops on problematic issues for women accessing the legal system.

have It is great to Mary Council's involved with our activities and her skills in communication, and administration are certainly welcomed. Mary will serve the remainder of Tammy's term of office and we hope she will offering herself for consider election in April 1992.



OUTREACH: Our Executive Director will be travelling to Labrador City on October 24th as the special guest of the Labrador West Status of Women Council. While in Labrador City, Joyce will be guest speaker at a Women's Dinner as well as facilitator of a day long session on feminist issues and feminist process.

Frances Fry, coordinator of the Women's Resource and Information Center has extended the invitation as a vehicle by which to share information and expertise on working on equality issues in rural parts of the province.



Chains

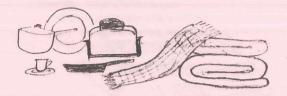
Whether by chains or by beautiful ribbons we are tied, it makes no difference. In fact, in all probability, it would be easier to break the chains because we associate ribbons with beauty and cannot see that they are tied around us to keep us in place.

Lydia Martinez (201)



News from the Women's Center (Continued)

DONATIONS NEEDED



Since the Bay St. George Women's Center has relocated to 54 St. Clair Avenue. We have been providing shelter to women in need of temporary housing. We have received no funding to furnish the Women's shelter and we are badly in need. Should you be able to provide any of the following items, please call or drop by the Women's Center during regular hours (643-4444)

> KETTLE CHILDRENS TOYS DISHES CUP TOWELS MATTRESS COVERS BATHROOM MATS MIXING BOWELS BEDDING TOASTER POTS AND PANS TOWELS/FACE CLOTHS FRYING PANS

We are not particular about color coordination, we simply want to make our Center and the Women's Shelter comfortable for the women and children needing to avail of this service. There are some bigger items like outside doors, etc, so monetary donations are also appreciated.





SINGLE PARENTS GROUP MEETING REGULARLY

The Single Parents Support Group which has been inactive for a great deal of the summer is now meeting regularly at our new Women's Center. Co-facilitators Sylvia Smith, and Yvonne Gillingham would be happy to hear from new participants. Don Russell of the local Mental Health Services is assisting the group (which includes women and men) in positive, pro-active sharing and participants are reporting that the groups meetings are a healthy and energizing activity.

Individuals wishing to participate can call the Women's Center at 643-4444. The only requirement is that you be a single parent.



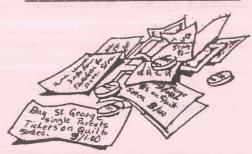
News from the Women's Center (Continued)

THANK YOU

A very special thank you to WES STRICKLAND for his work in providing the beautiful sign. Mounted on the corner of our new Women's Center on 54 St. Clair Avenue, the sign is noticeable to all who travel our street. Many have commented on the sign's attractiveness. The colors are the green, purple and white of the early suffragettes with the symbol for female (Q) centered on a white background. Two doves complete the sign, symbolic of an equality seeking women's advocacy organization whose guiding princples are peace, equality and justice.



TICKETS ON QUILT



We are presently selling tickets on a beautiful queen size quilt. The quilt was sewn by **CONSTANCE RENOUF** of Cape St. George who is well know for her quilt making. This is a fund-raising endeavor to assist in providing a t.v. and kitchen utensils in our Women's Shelter.

If you would like to purchase or volunteer to sell tickets, please contact the Women's Center. This quilt is done in two shades of the feminist color purple. Tickets are 50¢ each or 3 per dollar.

FIRST PLACE WINNERS



The Women's Center rowing team were the 1st place winners at the 1991 Regatta held at Long Gull Pond on July 28. Members of the winning team were ELAINE HANCOCK, MARIE GREEN, JOYCE HANCOCK, and MICHELLE SKINNER. Because our team has questioned an irregularity in the application of regulations, the championship has not yet been publically announced.

NEW STAFF

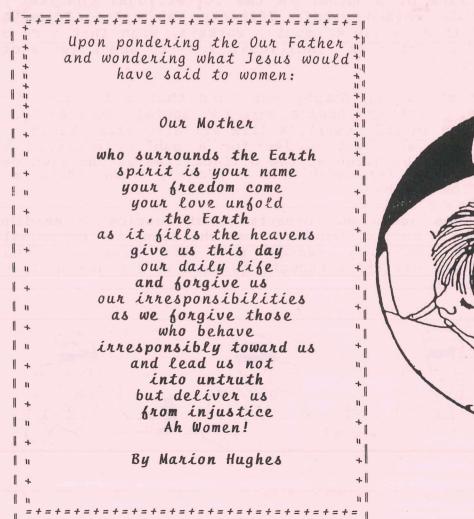
We have had two new staff members thanks to a special provincial project. **RITA GREENE** and **PATRICIA DOMINEY** have been with us since early August, and thanks to their assistance our new Center is taking on that "lived-in" look.

RAPE SHIELD DECISION BACKWARD STEP FOR VICTIM'S OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

The Federal Supreme Court decision to strike down a law protecting women from having their sexual history exposed in court during a sexual assault trial is a backward step for women. The Supreme Court has ruled that the law known as the Rape Shield Provision violated the right of the accused to a fair trial.

Nobody has provided examples and one would be hard pressed to even dream up a set of circumstances whereby a rapist right to a fair trial would be impeded by the rape shield provision.

Consider the irony: The federal government has announced a blue ribbon panel on violence against women and December 6 as a National Day of Rememberance on violence against women, and as a third gift to the women of this country (and a means to protect the perpetrators of sexual assault) we have the repeal of the rape shield provision which incidently was put in place to encourage victims of sexual assault (70 - 80% unreported at present) to report this crime.





WOMEN OUTRAGED AT SENTENCE

The Bay St. George Status of Women Council, along with other Women's groups and individuals in Western Newfoundland were outraged at the 2¹/₂ year sentence given to a Bay of Islands man who killed his 11 week old daughter.

This sentence sparked a great deal of media attention and letters and petitions were sent to Justice Minister, Paul Dicks. After waiting about a week (Paul Dicks called it "reviewing the sentence") the justice minister stated that the sentence fell within a normal range of sentencing for manslaughter.

Well, Mr. Dicks, we all knew that! The question was how the death of Cecily Murphy got reduced to Manslaughter charge in the first place? Plea bargaining, of course! That little talked about, much used legal "out", which expedites matters and draws attention away from the deplorable lack of judges, legal aid lawyers, prosecutors and court support workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, we all know that Cecil Murphy will be free in a few months. The lack of programs in the correctional institutions, overworked probation, and parole officers, and the unmanageable case loads of this provinces social workers, mean that very soon there will be an "at risk" individual free to abuse yet another child.

The death of Cecily Murphy was more that a failure of the justice system. Both the health care and social services systems who were involved in this family's life are also accountable. Mr. Dicks should have at least called for a public inquiry. This exercise would have highlighted the difficulties encountered daily by the individuals responsible for working with "high risk" families like the Murphys.

However, blue again our Department of Justice is sending a dangerous signal to the abusers of children in Newfoundland society. One can only assume that the winds of change anticipated by the realities brought forward in the Hughes Inquiry have passed over us.



WHY "TAKE BACK THE NIGHT" MARCHES?



For some reason the "Take Back The Night" marches have had more than the usual amount of discussion this year. Now, I think this is really great - discussions on the philosophy and history of that wonderful political statement and gesture of solidarity by women. However, I am a little concerned that as a women's community, we continue to be comfortable with the why? how?, and who? of "Take Back The Night".

Many men often inquire as to why they are not asked to participate. Often, as women's groups we struggle with the answer. There are many things men can do to "Take Back The Night", but first of all they must understand why women need to walk together.

Each year on the third Friday in September, thousands of women in hundreds of communities across Canada, as well as in other countries, publicly demonstrate against the violence that is a part of women's lives. This event termed "Take Back the Night" is not only a statement that women want to walk at night in safety, it also represents freedom from rape, assault, battering, harassment, pornography, racism, sexism, heterosexism, poverty, and murder. Women want to be safe on the street, in our homes, in our schools, and in our workplace.

We walk collectively on that 3rd Friday in September because as women we still cannot walk alone. It's really very simply: We could always walk protected by the men in our lives. But what we ask for ourselves is a society that allows us to walk alone, without violence, indeed; even without the fear of violence.

We walk to protest the violence in war, in pornography, and in all the systems put in place to protect us that have failed.

We walk as a political statement because we are saying: what we cannot do alone we can and will do collectively.

Yet even as we walk, march, sing, write briefs on violence and work in Transition Houses, etc; we are still burdened with the responsibility of educating our brothers and not offending those sensitive caring males with whom we have found some common ground.

My 14 year old son inquired as to what he could do to show his solidarity, I gave my usual answer ---

Men can continue to challenge the sexiest, misogynist attitudes of their peers. They can care for the children while women empower one another. They can start an anti-sexiest men's group whereby men can work to comfort and confront one another as they work to irradicate violence in alls its forms.

Yes my, kind gentle son, someday, you and I may walk together like we do every year for the Transition House fundraiser. But for now, I must join my sisters as we empower one another with our bold political statement "Women Unite, Take Back The Night".

By Joyce Hancock

Roses and Burnt Toast Awards

In this feature we want to highlight positive contributions to the status of women, hence the rose. Detrimental actions are awarded burnt toast. See if you agree with the awards. Send us your favorite nominations.



ROSE: To Stephenville lawyer FRED STAGG for his handling the legal aspects of our constitution, and mortgage, which has allowed our timely acquisition of a new Women's Center.

> TOAST: To **SUPREME COURT JUSTICES** who voted to strike down a law protecting sexual assault victims from having their sexual history exposed in court.





ROSE: To **STEPHENVILLE ROTARY CLUB** for their decision to donate the proceeds of their pumpkin sale to assist with cost of renovating the new Women's Center.

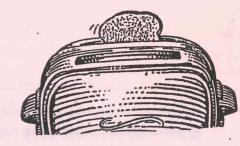
TOAST: To "WOULD BE KEEPERS OF WOMEN'S MORALS"- those reactionary, antichoice bartenders, who feel they must decide for pregnant women whether they can drink, what next:" Not serving men, because drinking may cause temporary impotence."

TOAST: To Provincial Justice Minister PAUL DICKS for his handling and commentary in dealing with the concerns of Women's Groups over the grossly inadequate sentencing in the death of an 11 week old girl. Recalling the comments of Sister Lorraine Michael "until it was discovered that males were abusing males the crime of child abuse was not even considered important in the province."





ROSE: TO MP **DAWN BLACK** for introducing a private members bill on June 3rd to establish a NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.



Coming Out of My Shell

Coming Out of My Shell is a compelling biography written by Ann K. Green, a participant in a community based literacy program in Newfoundland.

"The education, church, justice and social welfare systems failed me as a child, and they were not there when I needed them as an adult. I hope they will be there for anyone who reads this book and needs their support.

If you suffer from abuse, tell someone you can trust. When I went through it, I didn't talk about it because of the shame I felt.

No one has the right to abuse you or your children."

Ann K. Green

This book is one of the best educational resources I've seen on violence against women and children. I immediately purchased copies for each member of our Provincial Legislature.

> Wendy Williams, President Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

All Canadians could benefit from reading this book. It is a powerful and important reminder that the tragic revelations of the Hughes Commission shed light on only a fraction of the abuse that exists in society. I applaud and thank the author.

Barb Neis, Sociology Professor
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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