

Ministers' Table on Gender Based Violence

Meeting Summary – November 25–26, 2025

The first meeting of the Ministers' Table on Gender Based Violence was held in Halifax on November 25 and 26, 2025. It marked an important milestone that brought together community leaders and government partners to advance a coordinated, whole-of-society response to gender-based violence in Nova Scotia.

Over the two days, the Table, made up of 24 community members, six Ministers, representatives from nine government departments, and senior government leaders, established a strong foundation for shared priorities and concrete action.

Government departments included the Department of Justice; Opportunities and Social Development; the Status of Women Office; the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs; the Office of L'nu Affairs; the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism; Health and Wellness; Education and Early Childhood Development; and the Office of Addictions and Mental Health. Participation at the Ministerial, Deputy Minister, and senior leadership levels reinforced the cross-government commitment to this work.

Tuesday, November 25 – Meet and Greet Reception

The meeting opened with a meet-and-greet reception to build relationships and establish a shared sense of purpose ahead of formal discussions.

The Drummers from Home offered an energizing drumming ceremony, performed by five members.

Leah Martin, Minister responsible for the Status of Women Office, and Scott Armstrong, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, shared opening remarks and personal reflections on the importance of this work.



This initial gathering set a respectful and collaborative tone, allowing members to connect across sectors and communities before starting the more formal meeting discussions.

Wednesday, November 26 – First Table Meeting

The first formal meeting of the Ministers' Table began with cultural ceremonies that grounded the day's work in shared values and accountability.

Elder De-Anne Sack offered smudging for participants and shared a story and song.

A libation ceremony was led by Ayo Adejebi, alongside Table members Colin Campbell and Tracy Dorrington-Skinner, with libations poured into two plants presented to Minister Martin and Minister Armstrong.

Setting the Stage

Ministers Martin and Armstrong provided opening remarks, emphasizing:

- the importance of a coordinated, cross-government and community-driven approach;
- the need to build on existing work and lived expertise; and
- the expectation that the Table would move beyond discussion toward meaningful action.

Their remarks highlighted a shared understanding that this Table is a working body, focused on action, outcomes, and accountability.

Discussion Areas

The meeting agenda focused on three areas:

1. Vision for the Table (priorities and outcomes)
2. Guiding Principles (how members will work together)
3. Opportunities for Legislative Review and Modernization

1. Vision and Priority Outcomes

Discussions on the vision centred on the outcomes Table members want to achieve for individuals, families, and communities affected by gender-based violence. Members noted alignment between their priorities, government commitments, and recommendations from previous sector-led reports.

Five priority areas were presented to the Table:

- legislative and policy reform
- prevention, education, and public awareness
- safety and policing

- housing, health, and economic security
- systems coordination and integrated service delivery

These priorities will guide the Table's work moving forward and provide a framework for identifying specific actions and measures of progress.

Action Item:

Housing was identified as a key priority across-government and community that needs to be addressed as a gender-based violence issue. Following the meeting, John White, Minister responsible for Housing, was invited to the next meeting. Senior leadership responsible for Housing from Department of Growth and Development will be engaged in the work of the Table on an ongoing basis.

2. Guiding Principles and How the Table Will Work

Members discussed how the Table should operate to ensure trust, transparency, and effectiveness. Draft operating guidelines were introduced, and an Action Group was established to further develop and refine them.

Action Item:

The Action Group will refine the operating guidelines, including:

- membership and terms,
- purpose and scope of the Table,
- participatory governance and decision-making,
- communication and confidentiality, and
- accountability and outcomes.

These guidelines will be brought back to the full Table for consideration.

3. Legislative Review and Modernization

Members also explored opportunities for legislative reform, using the Domestic Violence Intervention Act and Emergency Protection Orders as starting points for the discussion. Conversations focused on identifying gaps, implementation challenges, and areas where legislative modernization could better support safety and prevention.

Action Item:

An Action Group was created to examine opportunities for legislative review and reform, with an initial focus on domestic violence-related legislation.

Next Steps

Action Groups will advance work on operating guidelines and legislative reform, and the priority areas identified at this meeting will inform future agendas and work plans.

The second meeting of the Ministers' Table on Gender Based Violence is scheduled for Thursday, February 19, 2026.