

# Ministers' Table on Gender Based Violence

## Meeting Summary – February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026

The second meeting of the Ministers' Table on Gender Based Violence was held in Halifax on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026. This meeting was focused on the importance of housing for survivors and those experiencing gender-based violence.

The meeting included 22 community members (with 2 members unable to attend), ten government department delegates, six Ministers, and numerous senior government leaders.

Departments were represented by Ministers, Deputies and other Senior leaders from the Department of Justice, the Department of 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, the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Growth and Development, and the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

### Setting the Stage:

Minister Leah Martin, Minister Scott Armstrong, Minister John White, Minister Barbara Adams, Minister Brendan Maguire, and Minister Twila Grosse provided opening remarks, emphasizing:

- Gender-based violence is a public safety emergency impacting the province,
- The need for safe and affordable housing for people experiencing gender-based violence and having access to safe, affordable housing empowers people to leave unsafe situations and break the cycle of violence, and
- Appreciation of Table Members contributions, commitments, and voices



### Discussion Areas:

The meeting agenda focused on four key areas:

1. How We Work Together Guidelines

2. Creating a Housing System that works for Survivors Part 1; Panel with Community Members and Government Partners
3. Creating a Housing System that works for Survivors Part 2; Facilitated Conversations
4. Federal Bill C-16 Update

### **1. How We Work Together Guidelines:**

At the first Ministers' Table, Members of the Table discussed how the table should operate to ensure trust, transparency, and accountability. From this discussion the "How We Work Together" guidelines were created and presented to Table Members at the second meeting, with the goal that the guidelines act as is the essential document, the backbone, for how the Table works, and how Table Members interact with each other, ensuring productive, meaningful collaborative relationships between government and community.

The four sections of the guidelines were presented, and the purpose of this discussion was for Members to provide feedback and to ensure there was alignment on the guidelines. Four sections were presented and discussed:

1. Purpose, Scope, and Guiding Principles
2. Accountability, Outcomes, and Decision Making
3. Communication and Confidentiality
4. Memberships and Terms

#### ***Action Items:***

Feedback from this discussion will allow for revisions to be incorporated into the guidelines document to bring forward for agreement at the third meeting in May.

### **2. Housing Panel:**

Minister Leah Martin facilitated a 4-member housing panel. Panelists included two community-based partners: Nicole Mann, Executive Director, The Naomi Society and Pam Glode-Desroches, Executive Director, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, as well as two Government staff: Kimberely White, Project Executive, Department of Growth and Development and Ian Mullan, Director Strategy, Homelessness and Supportive Housing Department of Opportunities and Social Development. The goal of the panel was to discuss advances for coordination, prevention, and responses in creating a housing system that works for survivors and those experiencing gender-based violence. A variety of themes emerged from the panelists including the intersectionality of individuals experiencing gender-based violence and culturally appropriate housing supports, and the lessons and best practices around creating a housing system that works for survivors.

#### ***Action Items:***

This discussion identified priority policy and system issues to further explore.

### **3. Housing Facilitated Conversation:**

1. Table members participated in a facilitated conversation on housing to discuss priority areas of work, current gaps, and highlighting what is needed in future housing strategies. This conversation was facilitated by Tammy Bernasky, Table Member and Shiva Nourpanah,

NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The discussions focused on the key impacts and gaps that need to be addressed.

The members discussed in small groups then brought forward their discussions for a larger group discussion. Key themes emerged, including:

- Barriers underserved and underrepresented groups face
- Necessity for culturally appropriate resources: Operating through a culturally sensitive lens and considering how a strategy would apply for Indigenous people and other cultures
- Lack of affordable housing and funding: Table Members identified that public housing needs more investment, and funding needs to be shared in an equitable and inclusive way
- Need for government and community collaboration: Housing is a shared responsibility, and both community and Government have roles in the prevention of gender-based violence

***Action Items:***

The conversation generated will allow for potential collaborative action groups and be brought forward at future Table meetings.

**4. Federal Bill C-16 Update**

The day ended with a presentation to Table Members about the Federal Gender Based Violence update on Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims' Act. This presentation was conducted by Tanisha Blackmore, Director of Policy and Corporate Services. The presentation focused on the widespread changes occurring as well as an overview on sections including Coercive Control and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Femicide, Intimate Images, Protection of Children, Mandatory Minimum Penalties, and Victims Rights. Table Members offered reflections on what within the systems need to be in place to support effective implementation.

A large group discussion occurred and key themes emerged, including:

- Specialized training: A need for specialized training, tools and resources for Judges and police officers as well as the need to build out appropriate resources for training.
- Assessment and data collection is important for implementation.
- The importance of cultural differences with the Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities and how this will be implemented.

***Action Items:***

Feedback collected on the Bill will be shared with the federal government, which is currently seeking input as the Bill proceeds through second reading in the federal legislature.

**The third meeting of the Ministers' Table on Gender Based Violence is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**