



# Think Tank Family Justice



**Evaluation Report  
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# Think Tank on Access to Family Justice Evaluation Report

Evaluation data was collected by the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women using the online service Survey Monkey. An email containing a link to the survey was sent out to all attendees of the ‘Think Tank on Access to Family Justice’. A reminder email was sent out again approximately six days after the initial email request.

Of the total number of attendees (n=41) 26 responses were received from registered attendees for a response rate of 63%. This number excludes responses from the ten ‘helpers’ that were in attendance. The total response rate including helpers was 58.8%.

The ‘Think Tank’ was well received by all in attendance. Over 70% were extremely satisfied with the opportunity to meet with other stakeholders and over 96% (all but one respondent) expressed their satisfaction.

| Overall, were you satisfied with your opportunity to meet with other stakeholders face-to-face at the think tank, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, or dissatisfied? |                  |                |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options   | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Extremely satisfied  | 70.4%            | 19             |
| Moderately satisfied   | 25.9%            | 7              |
| Slightly satisfied   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| Slightly dissatisfied  | 0.0%             | 0              |
| Moderately dissatisfied  | 0.0%             | 0              |
| Extremely dissatisfied   | 3.7%             | 1              |
| <i>answered question</i>   |                  | <b>27</b>      |
| <i>skipped question</i>  |                  | <b>0</b>       |

This overall positive response is also seen in the responses to Question number 10: Was the event better than what you expected, worse than what you expected, or about what you expected?

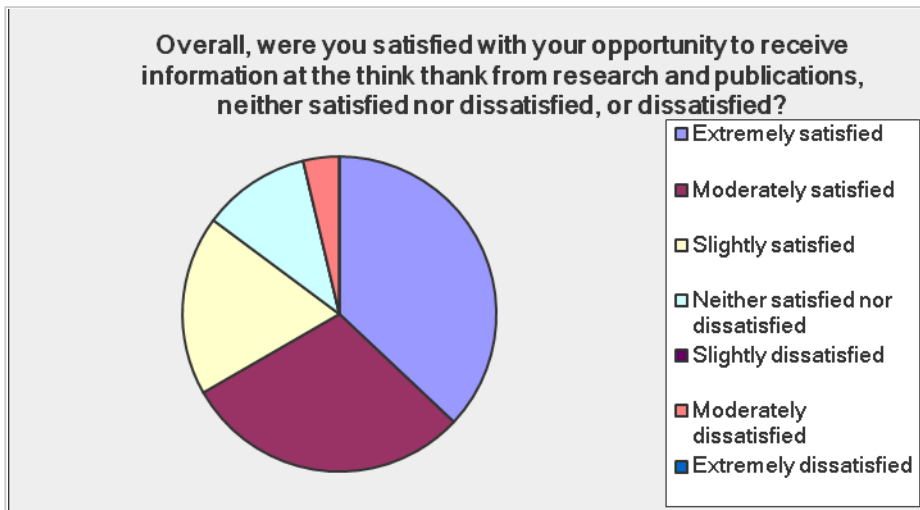
| Was the event better than what you expected, worse than what you expected, or about what you expected? |                  |                |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options   | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Much better  | 55.6%            | 15             |
| Somewhat better  | 29.6%            | 8              |
| Slightly better  | 7.4%             | 2              |
| About what was expected  | 7.4%             | 2              |
| Slightly worse   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| Somewhat worse   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| Much worse   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| <i>answered question</i>   |                  | <b>27</b>      |
| <i>skipped question</i>  |                  | <b>0</b>       |

Likewise, over 96% of respondents felt that the day was either *very* or *extremely* well organized. 88% felt that the information was presented in a *very* clear or *extremely* clear way, and 76% indicated that the information presented would be *very* or *extremely* useful to their job.

59 % of those who responded indicated that they were extremely satisfied with the opportunity to receive information from other participants; while 40% indicated that they were moderately satisfied, making for a very gratifying total of 99%.

Finally, 91% of respondents were either extremely or moderately satisfied with the overall event.

There was some room for improvement in the response to question 3: Overall, were you satisfied with your opportunity to receive information at the think tank from research and publications, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, or dissatisfied?

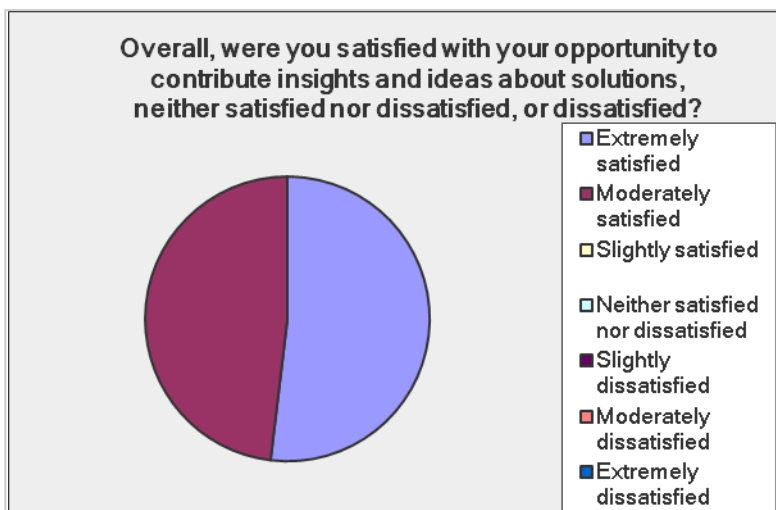


In answer to question number 4 - Overall, were you satisfied with your opportunity to ask or respond to questions, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, or dissatisfied? 48% of respondents indicated that they were extremely satisfied and 44% indicated that they were moderately satisfied.

In general, most respondents seemed pleased with the facilitation process with 42% extremely satisfied, and 46% moderately satisfied with the process. Some respondents remarked on the length of time taken to explain the process, but there was also very positive feedback on the techniques that were chosen:

- *I thought the choice of Open Space was brilliant and enabled us to "think outside the box."*

Most respondents also seem to have been satisfied with the opportunity to share their insights and observations. In response to question number 8: Overall, were you satisfied with your opportunity to contribute insights and ideas about solutions, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, or dissatisfied?



For future reference, planners may want to consider including more background information on what is happening in other jurisdictions.

| <b>Overall, were you satisfied with your opportunity to hear about approaches and solutions implemented in other Canadian jurisdictions, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, or dissatisfied?</b> |                          |                       |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Answer Options</b>   | <b>Response Percent</b>  | <b>Response Count</b> |
| Extremely satisfied   | 25.9%                    | 7                     |
| Moderately satisfied  | 48.1%                    | 13                    |
| Slightly satisfied  | 11.1%                    | 3                     |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  | 11.1%                    | 3                     |
| Slightly dissatisfied   | 3.7%                     | 1                     |
| Moderately dissatisfied   | 0.0%                     | 0                     |
| Extremely dissatisfied  | 0.0%                     | 0                     |
|   | <i>answered question</i> | <b>27</b>             |
|   | <i>skipped question</i>  | <b>0</b>              |

Almost 78% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to take part in a follow up event. This positive response was also seen in the additional comments:

- *People really want to see something happen with this information so next steps are extremely important.*
- *“Think Tank” is a first step.*
- *We need a working committee to take this to the next level*

Thinking “outside the box”, working together across boundaries, and putting children first seem to have been some of the key themes of the day. Some of the comments in the qualitative section of the evaluation were as follows:

- *Want to see multi-disciplinary approach extend beyond those in legal field*
- *Need protocols in place that enable this (multi-disciplinary approach)*
- *We all need to get behind this - these children are bearing the brunt of the system’s financial shortfalls*
- *Child/Youth Advocate needs to be a top Priority!*
- *Message still not getting to all players that the kids are affected*
- *Kids need access to social workers*

It should be noted that no priority setting exercise was conducted at the “Think Tank”. Although participants were encouraged to “vote with their feet”, high interest is not synonymous with high priority and attendees may have attended a group discussion out of interest and not necessarily because they felt it was a high priority topic to be addressed. As such, the comments in the qualitative section of the evaluation might be expected to include topics or opinions that were not captured in the group discussion notes that are included in the Final Report. Respondents to the evaluation were asked to add any comments or ideas that might not have been captured during the “Think Tank”.

It appears that the majority of attendees' opinions and ideas for future steps were captured during the discussions at the "Think Tank". No new ideas or topics were found in the comments section of the evaluation. As well, the types of comments that were made in the qualitative evaluation section mirrored what attendees at the "Think Tank" shared in different discussion groups. So for example, the majority of comments found in the evaluation were about the need for a Child Advocate in PEI, and for the justice system to work in a more collaborative way. Both of these themes were also reflected in the discussion group topics.

With the exception of **Question 18** (17 responses) which asked for general comments on the event, the only other questions to elicit a substantial number of additional comments were questions 20, 9, 22 and 25:

**Question 20** (11 responses) which asked for comments on the need for advocacy for children in the family justice system.

- *It should be automatic that when there is a permanent hearing under the Child Protection Act, every child should have access to a lawyer, regardless of their age.*
- *Crucial - one step govt could take that wouldn't cost a fortune but would make a big difference*
- *Best interests of the child are paramount - we have lost our link to the Children's Secretariat but it is now going into a new phase - important to connect with new Chair and have a justice voice at the table.*

**Question 19** (7 responses) which asked for comments on professionals working together.

- *Multi-disciplinary not just legal services like Jacinta (Gallant)'s developing collaborative law group*
- *I was surprised at how little collaboration exists.*
- *Pre-trial triaging should not be left only to lawyers and judges--even though that seems to be the position held by those advocating for this--very good--innovation.*

**Question 22** (7 responses) which asked for discussion about children and family members affected by violence.

- *This needs many working together but is SO important.*
- *A domestic violence court option for PEI families must be a high priority for PEI*
- *Again, not a new suggestion but I would like to see more supports available for children and the non-offending parent including mental health and family therapy.*

**Question 25** (7 responses) which asked for discussion about creating incentive programs for lawyers to provide pro bono service/help to clients.

- *Integrate with mental health and other supports for clients who need pro bono so the lawyer can handle the legal piece knowing the client is supported in the other problem areas in his or her life, which often impact on the client's ability to manage a negotiation or legal process.*

- *Pro bono is crucial and needs to be measured, both to support those who provide a lot and shame those who don't*
- *Seems that those who now give are not recognized enough*

It is interesting that the majority of comments and the discussion group topics that received the most interest were not, strictly speaking, narrowly defined “justice issues”, but were instead larger social issues.

- *For myself more new resources found, though I would have liked to have seen more people outside of justice system, at the forum (social workers, addictions, mental health, etc.), the reason being I believe we have to look at issues that have arisen before we get to the issue of justice.*

Justiciable issues do not happen in a silo; they are both the cause of and the result of larger socio-economic problems and issues. In order to adequately address the complex issue of increasing access to justice in family law we need to take a multi-disciplinary and integrated approach. We need to formulate an “ecosystem response” and we need to support the most vulnerable members of our society, especially children. Hopefully this evaluation will help us establish next steps.