

To: Mayor John Tory and the Executive Committee  
From: Devika Shah, Executive Director, Social Planning Toronto, [dshah@socialplanningtoronto.org](mailto:dshah@socialplanningtoronto.org)  
Date: September 17, 2019  
Re: **EX8.7 Creating a Gender Equity Strategy and Gender Equality Office for Toronto**

Mayor Tory and Members of the Executive Committee:

Social Planning Toronto congratulates the People and Equity division of the City of Toronto on its recommendations outlined in item EX8.7, calling for the creation of an intersectional gender equity strategy and Gender Equity Unit for the City of Toronto. The staff report and recommendations provide an important path forward to address the multiple, deep, and pervasive inequities affecting women, girls, and trans and non-binary people, in all our diversity, across Toronto.

Despite what many people assume, gender equality does not only create advantages for women — it actually benefits **everyone**. For example, assessing priorities through a gender equality lens often results in an increased focus on the health and development of children. When children's lives are improved, all of us benefit from reduced crime, a healthier economy, reduced pressure on our overtaxed healthcare infrastructure, increased innovation, and much more. In fact, the Canadian Women's Foundation points to research showing that gender equality is a more reliable predictor of peace than a country's GDP or level of democracy.

Through our extensive work with diverse communities across Toronto in community-based research, policy analysis, community development, and civic engagement, Social Planning Toronto has long recognized the gender-based and intersectional nature of inequity across a broad range of policy areas such as housing, transit, child care, recreation, employment, and urban planning.

We are encouraged by several aspects of the staff report, including:

- the central role of extensive community engagement in the development of the strategy;
- the ongoing role of a community advisory group to provide expertise and oversight to guide the work;
- the essential role of data collection and a results-based accountability framework to assess progress on the strategy;
- the critical role of education and engagement with City staff, divisions, and structures to ensure success of the strategy; and
- the need for a resourced Gender Equity Unit to develop, support, and advance this work.

We live in challenging times. The decisions we make today can either bring us together to realize our full potential as one of the greatest cities in the world, or they can polarize us even further. City staff have presented an excellent opportunity for Toronto to demonstrate leadership in building a city where everyone can thrive. We urge the Executive Committee to adopt these recommendations, as a critical step in our ongoing effort to manifest "*Diversity, Our Strength.*"

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Devika Shah". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Devika Shah**  
Executive Director, Social Planning Toronto