

September 17, 2019

Re: EX 8.7 Creating a Gender Equity Strategy and Gender Equality Office for Toronto

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of the Executive Committee:

The Toronto Women's City Alliance (TWCA) supports the staff recommendations for item EX8.7 "Creating a Gender Strategy and Gender Equality Office for Toronto." We have had longstanding engagement with members of City Council and city staff and are pleased to see a report that builds on the extensive work on equity work that has been accomplished at the City of Toronto.

TWCA is a volunteer-led organization that has been working to end the growing silence and invisibility of girls and women's voices in the City of Toronto. Since 2004, TWCA has promoted equity and equality by making audible and visible the voices and issues of diverse women and girls in Toronto, with respect for their racial, cultural, linguistic, age, economic, physical and sexual diversity.

We recognize that the city has implemented processes to shift policy and budget decision-making from one that is gender-blind, to one that begins to center the experiences of diverse women, Two Spirit, non-binary and trans members of our communities. Equity tools that are applied to budget decisions across all divisions have been in use for the past three budget cycles. A similar tool is being piloted in the poverty-reduction workplan. We commend the work staff have done to begin to implement these processes.

These equity tools, however, do not go far enough.

At its very core, a Gender Equity Framework acknowledges and analyses the root causes of disparities that different groups of people face based on their social, cultural and economic identities. It recognizes that revenues and expenditures of City budgets and policy decisions impact women in particular ways and that these effects are compounded when gender intersects with other identities that can include Indigenous identity, race, culture, religion, language, citizenship, amount and source of income, family status, dis/ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, geographic location in the City, among others. The goal of a Gender Equity Framework is to redress and remedy these systemic disparities through fair taxation and fair allocations of public resources.

A successful Gender Equity Framework for both budgetary decisions and policy development need the support and insight offered by ongoing robust engagement with diverse women who are impacted by budget and policy decisions. Community-driven indicators,

measurements and accountability mechanisms alongside a strong commitment to collecting, understanding and publishing disaggregated data through an investment of time and resources are essential to the design, implementation and evaluation processes.

The urgent need to adopt the recommendations before you cannot be understated. The report before you outlines the number of ways that women and gender-diverse people experience inequities and marginalization in Toronto.

Adopting these recommendations before you will place Toronto among other major Canadian and international municipalities including Ottawa, Montreal, Vancouver, Vienna, Boston, New York and Los Angeles in addressing ongoing systemic discrimination against women in diverse communities, nonbinary and trans members of our communities.

We are pleased to see the allocation of resources being dedicated to addressing systemic gender disparities and gender-based violence. We urge the Executive Committee to adopt the report and recommendations before you and put Toronto on the path to becoming a leader in achieving gender equity.

Sincerely,

Sonja Greckol, on behalf Toronto Women's City Alliance (TWCA)

¹ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2018/November/home--the-most-dangerous-place-for-women--with-majority-of-female-homicide-victims-worldwide-killed-by-partners-or-family--unodc-study-says.html>