

September 18, 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:

We are writing to you today to express our support for the proposed development and resourcing of a Gender Equity Strategy and a Gender Equality Office for Toronto. In doing so, Toronto will join the ranks of other major Canadian and international municipalities including Ottawa, Montreal, Vancouver, Vienna, Boston, New York and Los Angeles in addressing ongoing systemic discrimination against women, Two Spirit, nonbinary and trans members of our communities.

We recognize that the city has implemented processes to that begin to shift policy and budget decision-making from one that did not consider gender at all, to one that begins to center the experiences of diverse women, Two Spirit, nonbinary and trans people. Equity tools that are applied to budget decisions across all divisions and that center the experiences of women and low-income people 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 gender mainstreaming tools, however, do not go far enough.

At its very core, a Gender Equity Framework acknowledges and analyses the underlying 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 and immigration status, amount and source of income, family status, dis/ability, sexual identity and orientation, 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.

Governments that successfully use a Gender Equity Framework in both budgetary decisions and policy development make a strong commitment to collecting, understanding and publishing disaggregated data through an investment of time and resources. To fully understand this data, there must be robust ongoing engagement processes in place with diverse women who are impacted by budget and policy decisions that include design, implementation and evaluation processes. Community-driven indicators, measurements and accountability mechanisms are essential to achieving successful outcomes and positively impacting people's lives.

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.

The persistent, substantial and unacceptable wage gap between women and men in Toronto is 22%. In other words, on average women working in Toronto are making 78 cents to the average male dollar, a gap that widens when gender intersects with other social, cultural and economic identities. Women are generally the poorest members of a household, the poorest people in a neighbourhood, and the poorest citizens of a City. Higher proportions of diverse women are concentrated at the lowest ends of the income ladder. That Toronto has the highest child poverty rate in Canada is really an indicator of our City's rate of poverty among mothers.

While census data only captures the experiences of women and men, there is plenty of anecdotal experience that shows these disparities exist and are exacerbated for Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people. Incomes are less able to keep up with rising costs for housing, food, transportation and other basic needs for themselves and their children. As a result, women and gender diverse people are disproportionately reliant on City services including housing, transit, childcare and community programs to make ends meet. Increased fees for services including transportation and recreation, growing waitlists for childcare subsidies and social housing disproportionately impact women, Two Spirit, nonbinary and trans people.

A recent UN study shows that the most dangerous place for a woman is in her home¹ and is highlighted by recent local high-profile cases of gender-based violence and femicide. Women who are escaping gender-based violence cite the lack of affordable, quality housing as the number one reason why they cannot leave abusive relationships. With women's shelters operating consistently at 99% capacity, hundreds of women, their dependents and youth are left with no safe place to go. The homelessness crisis in our city impacts women, Two Spirit, nonbinary and trans people in specific ways, including higher risk of sexual assaults and child apprehensions.

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,

1. Leila Sarangi, National Coordinator, Campaign 2000
2. Angie Arora, Professor, Immigrants and Refugees Program, Seneca@York Campus
3. Rupaleem Bhuyan, Associate Professor, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto
4. Jessica Brancati, Community Member
5. Alyssa Brierley, Executive Director, CERA, Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
6. Chris Brillinger, Executive Director, Family Service Toronto
7. Joyce Brown, Executive Director, Working for Change
8. Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change
9. Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, OCASI, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

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>



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For People. For Change.

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10. Monica Forrester, Manager, Indigenous Programs & Peer Outreach Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project
11. Sadia Jamshed, Community Member
12. Faelix Kayn, Nonbinary / Trans Inclusion Consultant
13. Farrah Khan, Consent Comes First, Ryerson University
14. Wendy Komiotis, Executive Director, METRAC: Action on Violence
15. Shalini Konanur, Executive Director, SALCO, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
16. Cornelia Mazgarean, Barrister and Solicitor
17. Harmy Mendoza, Executive Director, WomanACT
18. Deepa Mattoo, Executive Director, Barbara Schliker Commemorative Clinic
19. Sheila Monteiro, Barrister and Solicitor
20. Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Care of Earth, Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
21. Shelley Nicholls, Executive Director, Sistering
22. Emily Paradis, University of Toronto and Maytree Fellow
23. Wendy Porch, Executive Director, CILT, Centre For Independent Living
24. Silvia Samsa, Executive Director, Women's Habitat of Etobicoke
25. Neethan Shan, Interim Executive Director, Urban Alliance on Race Relations
26. Eva Simone, Trans Advocate / Peer Educator
27. Lee Soda, Executive Director, ACSA, Agincourt Community Services Association
28. Anjum Sultana, Millennial Womxn in Policy
29. Effie Vlachoyannacos, Community Member
30. Anna Willats, Coordinator/Faculty, Assaulted Women and Children Counsellor/Advocate Program, George Brown College



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