

**From:** [Ann Decter](#)  
**To:** [Executive Committee](#)  
**Cc:** [Andrea Gunraj](#)  
**Subject:** My comments for 2019.EX8.7 on September 18, 2019 Executive Committee  
**Date:** September 17, 2019 6:12:30 PM

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To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the September 18, 2019 Executive Committee meeting on item 2019.EX8.7, Creating a Gender Equity Strategy and Gender Equality Office for Toronto

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

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

The Canadian Women's Foundation is a national leader in the movement for gender equality in Canada. Through funding, research, advocacy, and knowledge sharing, the Foundation works to achieve systemic change that includes all women. By supporting community programs, the Foundation empowers women and girls to move themselves out of violence, out of poverty, and into confidence and leadership.

Launched in 1991 to address a critical need for philanthropy focused on women, the Canadian Women's Foundation is one of the largest women's foundations in the world. With the support of donors, the Foundation has raised more than \$90 million and funded over 1,900 programs across the country. These programs focus on addressing the root causes of the most critical issues and helping women and girls who face the greatest barriers.

The Canadian Women's Foundation aims to be inclusive of diverse people across gender and sexuality spectrums. We focus our efforts on supporting those who face the most barriers and have least access to relevant services. This includes people who identify as women, girls, trans, genderqueer, non-binary, and 2SLGBTQI+.

As a Toronto-based national foundation, we are encouraged that the City of Toronto is examining the implementation of the Gender Equity Strategy and encourage Executive Committee to continue to move forward. The Foundation fully supports the recommendations of the Chief People Officer, People and Equity, to develop a City of Toronto Gender Equity Strategy by 2021, to establish a City of Toronto Gender Equity Unit in 2020, and to include \$333,132 in the 2020 Operating Budget to provide the resources needed to do this work. A gender equity lens in city planning, building, programs and services translates to better quality of life and opportunities.

The need for a Gender Equity Strategy in Toronto is evident in the gender differentiation of key indicators. The majority of Torontonians living on low incomes, taking the TTC to work (58.5%) and leading single-parent families (84%) are women. How has this been taken into account to date in transit planning and social housing strategies? The average annual income for women is \$42,807 compared to \$62,667 and the gender wage gap is 78 cents on the dollar for women overall. How does that impact thinking about income

supports and delivery?

Building gender equity can translate into better quality of life and opportunities, period. It's not just the right thing to do to uphold human dignity and rights and comply with the law, it's a very smart use of resources and energy. Research from Canada and around the world demonstrates that when we work hard and hold ourselves accountable to reducing barriers and discrimination against women, girls, trans, and non-binary people, in all their diversities, everything gets better. Families get healthier and stronger; workplaces become more fair; entire communities become safer and more accessible; and policies, laws, and institutions make better decisions. The benefits are experienced by those most affected by gender inequities, of course, but there are strong ripple effects too. It's not just win-win, it's "win times one hundred", and we need it now more than ever.

By making gender equity a focus, studies show that municipalities like the City of Toronto experience many improvements. This includes safer and more accessible public spaces, better city planning, better municipal services, more effective transit options, and better programs for individuals and families. Incorporating an intersectional gender equity approach into urban design processes and resourcing can lead to innovative, people-centered solutions to common city problems—unaffordability, inequities, growth outpacing systems, and more. When done right, a gender equity focus is a powerful tool to make cities friendlier, more hospitable, and safer places to live, work, and get together.

A gender equity policy is a starting place for the City of Toronto to establish how its policies, programs and services can ensure that all Torontonians benefit from and can grow in a city that understands their needs and responds to them appropriately. Starting at the level of the Mayor and working through the application of a gender equity lens in hiring processes, as well as retention and promotion, ensures that the city staff at all levels respond to the needs of its residents.

### **The Montreal Experience**

The City of Montreal has had an established gender equity policy in place since 2008 and has many laudable processes that bring the city closer to achieving gender equity. This includes the [Conseil des Montrealaises](#), an arm's length body that provides advice to elected officials on policies and programs. Thanks to the work of the Conseil des Montrealaises, there have been [numerous briefs](#) (most available in English and French as a reflection of the languages most spoken in Montreal) presented to the elected officials at the City of Montreal that bring an intersectional and a gender analysis to the city's work.

In particular, the briefs on work-life balance among elected officials identifying as women, as well as the advancement of women managers, reflect the important work that needs to be done in order to establish a working environment that is safe and welcoming to all women. This includes making it easier for women to run for public office. The City of Montreal, in partnership with the Conseil des Montrealaises, runs an annual simulation of the City Council, with city councilors acting as coaches for women who are considering a career in city politics.

### **Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

The Canadian Women's Foundation is also working in partnership with many cities across Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to understand the barriers to election of women. The project [Toward Parity in Municipal Politics](#) makes it clear that cities have much work to do to increase the number of women elected, as well as including much more diversity among all elected officials. This starts with the Mayor being clear on their commitment to diversity and inclusion and must be backed up with considerable internal monitoring and tracking of the internal processes as they relate to

elected officials or employees of the City. Even in a city council as diverse and as close to parity as Montreal's, there remain barriers to women's participation, highlighted by this tongue-in-cheek demonstration by Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce Mayor Sue Montgomery <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/montreal-city-council-gender-sue-montgomery-1.5135001>

### **Intersectional Gender-based Analysis**

We recommend that policies, programs and services at the City be developed with an intersectional gender-based analysis in mind, and this should include the programs and services that the city establishes. Gender-based analysis is a way to track gender-differentiated impacts of policies - intended and unintended - and fundamental to a gender equity strategy. City officials and employees should be trained on how to include this in their work and implementation should be monitored.

Consideration needs to be given to how physical space is lived and what it says about gender equity. The development and operation of transportation systems, parks, recreation centres and libraries, would all benefit from intersectional gender-based analysis. Through its partnership with Metrac, for example, the TTC has added Designated Waiting Areas and the Request Stop Program, safety measures that benefit everyone at risk of violence.

### **Implementation of the Gender Equity Strategy**

The importance of having an overall policy that tracks and monitors progress cannot be understated. It is essential that this be informed by women-centred and women-led organizations in the city, as well as by stakeholders, residents and those working with populations that are often marginalized by systems. Applying a gender equity lens to city planning represents a major shift and will require the expertise of individual Torontonians and organizations with scarce resources. The expenditures on community consultation need to be considered carefully and planned well to allow for fulsome accessibility. Barriers to participation for underheard residents need to be removed by providing, for example: translation, ASL, childcare, food, honorariums, barrier-free space, and digital options to submit information. A policy that is enriched by the expertise of those working directly with and those most affected by, the policies, programs and services in place for residents, is going to achieve results that make a difference in the lives of Torontonians.

The Foundation fully supports establishing a City of Toronto Gender Equity Unit to lead development of the strategy, including "tools and strategies for addressing intersectional gender equity in key areas such as housing, shelter, governance, transit planning, recreation, urban planning, youth, violence against women, affordable child care and budgeting". These areas are the heart of life in the city. Application of a gender equity strategy can lead to a safer, healthier city with reduced poverty and violence, increased opportunity, stronger neighbourhoods and vibrant community life - a better city for all.

We look forward to your adoption of the recommendations and to opportunities to support Toronto's Gender Equity Strategy in the future.

Sincerely,

Andrea Gunraj

Vice President, Public Engagement

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Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10