



Dear City Council,

YWCA Toronto is the largest multi-service nonprofit organization serving women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in Toronto. As a provider of childcare and programming for girls and gender diverse youth, we are seeing firsthand the changing complexities and harms associated with online platforms.

There has been a dangerous rise of antifeminist ideologies in online spaces and technology-facilitated gender-based violence occurring, and we are witnessing the detrimental impacts on the mental and emotional wellbeing of the children and youth who access our programs and services. Staff at our Girls Centre have highlighted the harmful effects of social media on program participants, including early exposure to sexual content, increased risk of sexual harassment, and experiences of racist, sexist and homophobic online violence. Recognizing the evolving digital landscape, we have expanded our healthy relationship and consent education programming to include discussions about online relationships, digital safety and strategies for navigating gender-based harms online.

We support the recommendations for mitigating the harms associated with digital culture outlined by the Board of Health. However, we also call attention to the gendered realities of this issue. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, exploitation, and violence, disproportionately impacts girls and gender diverse youth. We urge City Council to explore specific mitigations for these types of gendered digital harms.

We also urge City Council to recommit to the creation and implementation of a Gender Equity Strategy and to incorporate measures to mitigate gender-based online harms for girls and gender diverse youth within it. We also encourage the City to fund organizations that work to prevent and mitigate online harm through digital literacy and education.

To strengthen accountability and ensure timely action, we urge Council to report back by Q1 2027 with implementation options and timelines for the development and rollout of the Gender Equity Strategy, including measures to address gender-based online harms experienced by girls and gender diverse youth.

YWCA Toronto is committed to supporting City Council in your efforts to explore and address this issue. We are available to meet to share our expertise on this matter and work collaboratively to support girls and gender diverse youth.

Please reach us at executiveoffice@ywcatoronto.org to arrange a meeting.

Deepa Mattoo, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Toronto

Sami Pritchard, Director of Advocacy and Communications, YWCA Toronto

These comments are being submitted for distribution to City Council ahead of City Council Meeting 43, on July 29, 30, and 31, 2026.

RE: Item - 2026.HL34.6 Endorsement of the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health Position Statement on Digital Culture and Child and Youth Well-Being

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.HL34.6>.