



# Report on Findings from Women and Gender Equity Strategy Consultations

*August-October 2019*

*City of Ottawa*



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## Executive Summary

In 2018, Ottawa City Councillors Deans and McKenney, in collaboration with City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) and other community organizations and networks, advocated for a focus on women and gender issues in the City's decision-making structures, workforce, policies, programs and services. On December 5, 2018, Ottawa City Council approved the development of a Women and Gender Equity Strategy (WGES) and appointed a Council Liaison for Women and Gender Equity. The Strategy is a long-term commitment to addressing women and gender equity gaps and barriers in municipal policies, strategies, services and workforce.

Upon the recruitment of a Women and Gender Equity Specialist in June 2019, a broad and comprehensive WGES public engagement plan was designed to solicit the perspectives of both City staff and equity seeking community groups. Input was received from more than **590** staff and residents on existing women and gender gaps and needs and WGES priorities, as follows:

1. **70** City staff participated in focused discussions (August 2019);
2. **150** community members from equity seeking groups participated in focused discussions (August to October 2019);
3. **170** residents participated in WEGS Public Engagement Forum (Sept. 30, 2019);
4. **150** residents participated in a bilingual Engage Ottawa online survey (September and October 2019); and
5. **150** residents attended 2SLGBTQ+ Public Forum (January 2020).

Eight thematic priorities emerged from what was heard from City staff and residents. Several priorities were focused on specific issues or related to City service areas: housing, safety, gender inclusive city and representation. The other priorities apply across the focused priorities and can be implemented at Corporate level. These crosscutting priorities were gender-sensitive data systems, gender inclusive resident engagement, training and awareness raising and resources.

1. **Housing** emerged as the service area of focus for WGES with the highest priority. Lack of emergency and affordable housing disproportionately affects women and girls, especially Indigenous and senior, and gender diverse people. Women from Indigenous and immigrant backgrounds and transwomen continue to experience stigma and discrimination from some Housing frontline staff. Use of a gender lens in Housing processes and procedures is key to ensure that women, especially from equities seeking groups, are prioritized.

2. **Safety** emerged as an important issue for women and gender diverse persons. Women working in City male dominated service areas, in non-office jobs, and on night shifts do not always feel safe. Effective policies on sexual and gender-based violence, including a solid and transparent accountability mechanism, need to be in place to educate City staff and motivate survivors to report violence.
3. A **gender inclusive City** is a commitment that would allow persons of all genders to access services equitably and participate fully in society. The City is not perceived as welcoming by persons from all gender groups. Lack of explicit messaging on gender diversity, lack of gender-neutral washrooms and stigma from some frontline staff prevent gender diverse persons from fully engaging in City facilities and events.
4. Although women compose a fair percent of the City's workforce, they are over-represented in temporary and part-time positions and concentrated in social services. Key City service areas remain male-dominated. Work is needed to achieve equitable **representation** of women from equity seeking groups such as immigrant, Indigenous, and Francophone. The City can support policies and programs that encourage women and girls to enter male-dominated service areas.
5. The lack of a gender lens in City data contributes to lack of gender mainstreaming in City policies and strategies is. **Gender sensitive data** includes qualitative and quantitative data on barriers facing different gender groups in accessing services and participating in the City's workforce.
6. The City can improve its **resident engagement** to enable women from all backgrounds to engage in important City plans and strategies. Poverty, lack of access, child and other care responsibilities can prevent women from participating in City public engagement events. Residents from all gender groups could be better represented in City's printed and online materials.
7. City management and staff need **training and awareness raising** on women and gender equity concepts. Lack of awareness among City frontline staff is underpinning the experiences of stigma and discrimination of women and gender diverse persons in City facilities and services. The City can build on its Equity and Inclusion Lens to develop gender tools for use by Council and City staff. Non-traditional engagement activities can be used to initiate dialogue among staff and between staff and management on women and gender needs and issues.
8. In order to achieve a women and gender inclusive City, **resources** need to be earmarked to achieve women and gender equity priorities.

A draft WGES will be presented to the Council Sponsors Group for approval and the final WGES documents will be presented to Council for approval before the end of 2020.

## Background

In December 2018, City of Ottawa Council approved the development of a Women and Gender Equity Strategy (ACS2018-CCS-GEN-0028). A Council Sponsors Group was established to guide the development of the Strategy. The Group is chaired by Councillor Kavanagh, Women and Gender Equity Council Liaison, and includes Mayor Watson, the Chair of the Community and Protective Services Committee, Councillor Sudds, Councillors Deans and McKenney and members of senior management.

The City recruited a Women and Gender Equity Specialist in June 2019 to lead the Women and Gender Equity Strategy (WGES). A Community Working Group, co-chaired by the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), is also contributing to the development of the Strategy. The Working group was established in February 2020 with a mandate to provide sectoral inputs and community representative feedback to the WGES development process.

## Public Engagement

During the period August-October 2019, extensive public engagement was undertaken with Ottawa partners, stakeholders, residents, City staff and social service providers to collect feedback on existing women and gender gaps and needs. WGES public engagement was designed so that both City staff and intersectional community groups could contribute to shaping the WGES, with a variety of venues and methods used to increase participation and accessibility.

The discussion and consultations consisted of focus groups with staff and residents, a public forum, an online survey, and 2SLGBTQ+ public engagement:

### Focus group discussions with City staff

In August 2019, **three** focus group discussions engaged more than **75** City staff and managers from **9** City departments and service areas.

### Focus group discussions with community members

Between August and October 2019, **five** focus group discussions engaged more than **150** community members representing City partners and stakeholders as well as intersectional and equity seeking groups, including:

- 2SLGBTQ+ service providers
- Community Health Resource Centers
- Francophone communities

- Indigenous communities
- Racialized and immigrant service providers
- Service providers serving older adults
- Violence against women (VAW) service providers and shelters
- Women and gender advocacy networks
- Youth

Consolidated feedback from the focus group discussions with staff and community informed the 8 draft WGES priorities.

### [WGES Public Engagement Forum](#)

Over **170** community members participated in a WGES Public Forum held on September 30, 2019 at Ottawa City Hall. Participants provided feedback on the 8 draft WGES priorities consolidated from focus group consultations. They were asked to vote for 3-4 main priorities out of the 8 and to identify key strategic actions that the City should consider for the WGES under each one. They were advised to focus on service and policy areas under the municipal purview. Breakout sessions provided the opportunity for more in-depth input and feedback on the development of the Strategy.

### [Engage Ottawa online survey](#)

An online survey was shared through the Engage Ottawa platform inviting residents to help build a strategy that is reflective of the needs of our city. The survey was open for 2 months between September and October 2019 and was filled by **150** residents. Data from the survey is incorporated in the findings of this report.

### [2SLGBTQ+ public engagement](#)

In November 2019, Community and Social Services hired Wisdom2Action, a consulting firm, to work with Ottawa 2SLGBTQ+ community organizations and consolidate data available on Ottawa's 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Wisdom2Action conducted intensive consultations with the community, key service providers, stakeholders and funders to identify the service needs and gaps related to 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Ottawa and to inform a data strategy.

The forum was attended by more than **150** community members. Participants of the forum were asked to provide feedback on service needs and gaps of 2SLGBTQ+ communities under specific themes. Wisdom2Action consolidated the findings from the thematic discussions of the forum and stakeholder in-depth interviews into a report. Relevant findings from that report are included in this document.

## Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles for the WGES were proposed by staff and residents across the consultations:

**Intersectional:** Acknowledge the experiences of different groups of women and different gender groups. Discrimination and gender are interconnected and cannot be examined in isolation.

**Accountable:** Everyone has a collective responsibility to promote women and gender equity.

**Evidence-based:** Actions and decisions are based on data, research, and best practice approaches to gender equity.

**Collaborative:** Partnership and collaboration at all levels are crucial to social change.

**Inclusive:** Recognition of the different gender identities and expressions is at the heart of making the City gender inclusive and equitable. Gender equity can only be achieved if gender stereotypes and unconscious biases are challenged.

## What We Heard on WGES Priorities

The data collected through all the public engagement avenues described above was put together and analysed for themes that would inform priorities for the WGES. Eight priority areas emerged:

- priorities focused on specific issues or City service areas like Housing, Human Resources and Facilities. They are:
  - Priority 1: Housing
  - Priority 2: Safety
  - Priority 3: Gender inclusive city
  - Priority 4: Representation.
- crosscutting priorities that apply to all focused priorities above and could be implemented at the corporate level. They are:
  - Priority 5: Gender-sensitive data systems
  - Priority 6: Gender inclusive resident engagement
  - Priority 7: Training and awareness raising
  - Priority 8: Resources

Women and gender issues and barriers, along with related strategic actions, were derived from the data for each priority, as detailed below. Some proposed strategic actions did not fall under municipal jurisdiction but were included in the report for the purpose of advocacy with provincial and federal levels of government under WGES.

All the content below was provided by participants in the public engagement processes conducted for WGES.

## Priority 1: Housing

*Housing* refers to prioritizing adequate emergency and permanent affordable housing for women and gender diverse persons. The following summarizes what was heard.

### Housing: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers

#### Housing for women:

- Lack of emergency and affordable housing disproportionately affects women. It especially impacts women with young children and refugee, Indigenous, senior and trans-women.
- Lack of housing increases the risk of violence and limits women's access to other important services. In particular, lack of housing has serious implications for women fleeing violence. Many women remain in abusive relationships and environments because they fear becoming homeless.
- Shelter capacity is insufficient. The reduction of federal and provincial funds allocated to shelters serving women puts pressure on the City to make more shelter space available. Due to lack of funding, shelters have limited the scope of their services and reduced their operating hours. This has resulted in extremely long housing waitlists.
- Emergency and community housing units, where women and extended families live, are in need of maintenance and repairs. In many cases, these units are not accessible.
- Funding allocated to hotel/motel rooms as an option for emergency shelter is not sufficient. This option is not ideal for women with children or immigrant women because of unaccounted safety risks.

#### Housing policies and procedures:

- Eligibility criteria for emergency and affordable housing lack an equity lens. Existing criteria do not consider the special realities of equity seeking groups of women such

as single women, senior women, Indigenous women or gender diverse persons, including transwomen and youth.

- The application process for affordable housing is complicated. Low income, Indigenous and refugee women may become ineligible if their intake forms are not filled out correctly. Because caseloads for housing support workers are huge, there is limited support for women to fill out paperwork.
- Victims of gender-based violence are disproportionately women. Existing housing policies are not sensitive to trauma and may further expose women to violence and trauma in order to complete the application process.
- Women suffering from domestic abuse may opt to remain in abusive relationships to prevent separation from their children by Children's Aid Society when they apply for emergency housing.
- A gender bias about homeless youth assumes that only young Indigenous females could be fleeing violence. This limits the options for male youth and their access to services.
- Homeless male and female youth are obligated to leave shelters during the day even if they are unemployed. This exposes them to the risks of violence, drug addiction and crime.
- Operation agreements between the City and landlords for subsidized houses are ending, which creates uncertainty for current tenants who may not continue to receive subsidies.
- There are no measures in place to ensure non-discrimination by landlords of affordable housing against gender diverse persons or same sex couples.
- Social assistance (subsidies) for housing does not match market costs; therefore, low-income women cannot afford safe and accessible rentals.
- There is a lack of safety measures and policies to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in temporary housing. Vulnerable women and youth who are subject to abuse and violence inside shelters may refuse to report it due to fear of losing their shelter.

#### Housing: Potential Strategic Actions

- Apply a gender lens to affordable and emergency housing eligibility criteria and application processes. Policies that could be reviewed include the housing vacancy tax, policies related to renter/tenant rights such as landlord registration or licensing, and market controls on house prices.

- Develop affirmative action to prioritize women with layered and complex vulnerabilities such as transgender women, women with disability (visible and invisible) and women with children.
- Housing for women needs to be prioritized in corporate strategies and plans.<sup>1</sup>
- Explore innovative options to respond to women homelessness. This may include Airbnb/short-term rentals, collaborative housing for single senior women, intergenerational housing, fostering of naturally occurring communities, and mobile housing subsidies not linked to projects. This may also include fostering new models of inclusive housing and wraparound services. Removal of legal or other barriers to these proposed solutions is equally important.
- Review zoning laws and building codes so that a mandated ratio of subsidized housing units for single senior women and single mothers is required from every new development.
- Use a gender lens to review current safety measures in shelters and make use of available community resources.<sup>2</sup> This can include the following:
  - Recruit Housing staff who reflect the diversity of community groups they serve.
  - Train and coach Housing staff on integration of women and gender equity in frontline work.
  - Work with partners to support the Children’s Aid Society in integrating a women and gender equity approach to cases of Immigrant and newcomer women.
  - Integrate safety measures when planning affordable housing and temporary shelters. This includes addressing issues of lighting, proximity from transit, and availability of snow plowing.
  - Work with staff and residents of community housing to prevent gender-based violence, especially for seniors, and address barriers to reporting of abuse or sexual assault.

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<sup>1</sup> Including the Official Plan, City Strategic Plan, 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, and other relevant strategies such as the Reconciliation Action Plan, Youth Engagement plan, and City’s Immigration Strategy.

<sup>2</sup> Such as Housing Options in Ottawa: A Guide for Older Adults, The Council on Aging of Ottawa, 2019. Available at <https://coaottawa.ca/housing-options-in-ottawa/>.

## Priority 2: Safety

For the purpose of WGES, *Safety* is defined as freedom from all forms of violence that are based on gender identity, including sexual, physical, emotional, and psychological violence. This priority includes both City staff and residents. The following summarizes what was heard.

### Safety: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers for City Staff

- Some female City staff feel unsafe in the workplace, especially in male dominated service areas.
- Not all City policies consider violence against women or gender-based violence as part of safety.
- Standardized safety measures are not in place to protect female City staff, especially those working late night shifts. Some recreation facilities assign night shifts to very young female part-time staff.
- Female City staff who have non-office jobs, like OC Transpo drivers, are more at risk of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Sexual and gender-based violence accountability mechanisms are lacking. The existing reporting system on sexual and gender-based violence is not efficient nor transparent.

### Safety: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers for Residents

- City processes requiring data and paperwork from women fleeing violence are not trauma-sensitive and may subject gender-based violence survivors to further violence.<sup>3</sup>
- City surveillance measures that aim to detect sexual and gender-based violence can marginalize, stereotype, and police certain oppressed communities.
- Sexual assault and violence affect all women from of all ages and backgrounds. Some senior women in long term care can also experience sexual and gender-based violence, for example.
- Gender diverse persons do not feel safe when they are forced to use binary washrooms.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Ottawa Community Housing policies require gender-based violence survivors who lack the required legal documents to obtain signatures confirming child custody from their partners, who are also the violence perpetrators.

- Women may experience being blamed for domestic violence when they report it. This decreases the likelihood that a woman will seek help in future. Women may also opt to remain in abusive relationships in fear of triggering a Children's Aid Society investigation.<sup>4</sup>
- Human trafficking is a serious issue in Ottawa.<sup>5</sup> The criminal justice response to women survivors of human trafficking is perpetrator-focused rather than victim-focused. This impacts Indigenous women and girls disproportionately.

#### Safety: Potential Strategic Actions

- Develop City safety and sexual or gender-based violence prevention standards and guidelines tailored to different City departments and service areas.
- Hold discussions between management and staff on what is needed to support staff who have survived sexual or gender-based violence.
- Train senior and middle managers in the City on sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response to become more aware of safety issues affecting their staff.
- Use successful models of engaging men in raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence among City staff and engage male senior management.
- Develop reliable and effective accountability systems to ensure that sexual and gender-based violence cases are addressed and sexual and gender-based violence related policies are enforced.
- Ensure that all City programs and initiatives involving City staff or residents include clear guidelines on how to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.
- Work closely with organizations that serve diverse populations to address systemic challenges that perpetuate gender-based violence.
- Allocate more funding to support transgender/2SLGBTQ+ specific safety strategies.

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<sup>4</sup> There is a greater risk of this for Indigenous women due to a history of colonization, residential schools, and past trauma with child welfare involvement. Publicized incidents of sexual assault while in Police custody also create a message for Indigenous women that it is not safe to go to the Police.

<sup>5</sup> Around 95% of all human trafficking victims are women. Sex trafficking is 5 times higher in Ottawa than in other communities in Canada (see Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2016, by Dyna Ibrahim, Statistics Canada, 2018, available at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-005-x/2018001/article/54979-eng.htm>).

- Introduce sustainable policies for gender and gender-based violence education for Police and other gender-based violence frontline City staff, with focus on neighborhoods where gender-based violence is prevalent.
- Work closely with provincial authorities and school boards to integrate gender-based violence in school activities and curriculum.
- Fund projects at neighborhood level, especially those where sexual and gender-based violence crimes are more frequently reported.
- Use a gender lens in mental health services.
- Mainstream gender-based violence as a key component in City data strategies.
- Develop a Corporate Action Plan to respond to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry Report.<sup>6</sup>

### Priority 3 – A Gender Inclusive City

*Gender Inclusive City* refers to both gender sensitive and welcoming City facilities and gender equity in City’s workforce. The following summarizes what was heard.

#### Gender Inclusive City: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers for City Staff

- Staff feel that City’s organizational culture is not always welcoming for all gender groups. Both staff and residents reported that women do not always feel welcome and/or can feel discriminated against in City facilities.
- Implicit and explicit gender biases prevent women and gender diverse staff from career advancement in the City.
- Women are not equitably represented in all City work areas. Immigrant/racialized and Indigenous women face systematic barriers to entering City’s workforce.
- Gender stereotyping and binary perceptions of gender roles are still prevalent in some City departments. There is also a perceived lack of acceptance of gender diverse persons.
- The stereotypes around women’s roles as care givers and women’s characteristics such as “too sensitive”, “weak” and “less capable” are perceived as still dominating the corporate culture. For that reason, women’s competencies can be questioned or second guessed, especially in male dominated professions.

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<sup>6</sup> See report at <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.

- City service areas that are female dominated do not necessarily reflect gender equity, as gender stereotyping still prevails in these areas, too. For example, men are not expected to be care givers while all women are expected to have children.
- Some service areas do not accommodate specific gender needs of female staff. Women have left fulfilling jobs because their team would not accommodate their need for more flexible work hours.
- In order to be considered for promotions, female staff feel obliged to work overtime and beyond working hours. Female staff feel that they are required to prove they can carry management responsibility, while at the same time being expected to continue providing care at home.

### Gender Inclusive City: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers for Residents

- Systematic discrimination<sup>7</sup> continues to be experienced by some community groups. Transwomen, Indigenous and immigrant women continue to experience stigmatization from City service frontline staff.
- Lack of gender-neutral bathrooms in City facilities creates barriers to fully participate in public spaces/events for gender non-confirming community members.
- Online platforms used by the City to engage residents are not inclusive. When City information or applications for services are exclusively offered online, women who may not be fluent in English, savvy in use of computers, or in possession of adequate technology can end up being excluded.
- City awareness-raising and public engagement materials are provided in English and French only, which means that information on City services may not be accessible for residents who are not proficient in either language.
- The City tends to portray mostly traditional families (heterosexual couples and children) in its promotion materials.<sup>8</sup> Single women and men, gender diverse persons, and same sex couples and families do not find themselves represented.

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<sup>7</sup> *Discrimination* refers to identity-based stereotyping and stigma that affect the availability and quality of services provided. It is experienced by different groups differently, e.g. seniors (inaccessible consultation platforms), Indigenous people (racism, sexism), transwomen (from other women), immigrants (racism), 2SLGBTQ+ (within Inuit communities).

<sup>8</sup> This includes City printed materials such as pamphlets, brochures, posters, City signage, and images on the City website (Ottawa.ca).

## Gender Inclusive City: Potential Strategic Actions

- Concrete policies that include standard definitions of work flexibility measures should be enforced at the corporate level. Revisit the City's work parameters to allow increased flexibility and support women's career advancement.
- Foster a work-life balance culture that allows care givers from all gender groups to advance in their careers. Recognize best practices on work flexibility that can also be used to develop corporate work-life balance measures and policies.
- Introduce workplace measures to respond to the needs of gender diverse staff and clients. Standardize the design of City offices and facilities to include gender-neutral signage and bathrooms. Use explicit messaging and signage in City offices and facilities to confirm that the City is a welcoming environment for residents from all gender groups.
- Document and disseminate success stories of City staff and managers who were able to defy gender stereotypes in the workplace.
- Develop clear policies on City staff who are gender transitioning.
- Develop a more gender inclusive communication and public engagement strategy.
- Engage City staff in learning and awareness raising activities on the use of gender-neutral language.

### Priority 4: Representation

*Representation*, for the purposes of WGES, refers to representation and contribution of all women in the organization by providing equitable access to work opportunities, including leadership roles and other under-represented occupations. The following summarizes what was heard.

#### Representation: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers

- Some City service areas are either male or female dominated, which does foster gender equity. For example, social services are female dominated and Public Works and OC Transpo are male dominated.
- Non-equitable gender representation enhances existing biases and stereotyping.<sup>9</sup> It also hinders integration of women and gender equity in City services.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, there is a misperception among CSSD staff that caregivers are all women. It is also a common perception in Emergency and Protective Services that women have inherent barriers to work as paramedics or fire fighters.

- Although women comprise an equitable percent of the City workforce overall, they remain over-represented in non-managerial, part-time and temporary positions.
- Leadership, as defined by corporate organizational culture, can be prohibitive for women. Women who are not willing to work overtime and long hours during the day or on weekends are self-perceived or perceived by senior management as less likely to qualify for management positions.
- Indigenous, newcomer and immigrant women are underrepresented in the City workforce. Some of the reasons for this include:
  - Bilingualism may not be a skill available to Indigenous, newcomer and immigrant women.
  - The City does not acknowledge all certifications obtained by immigrant women. Women are less likely to have available time and resources to go through degree accreditation or education bridging programs.
  - Immigrant and refugee women have limited access to language and professional training in the absence of childcare support.
  - Barriers to accessing employment in the City such as racism, ableism and ageism are more commonly experienced by women and gender diverse persons.
- Recruitment processes and guidelines do not sufficiently reflect City's non-tolerance of racism and gender bias. There are no accountability mechanisms that allow women to report subtle gender bias in the recruitment and hiring of City staff.
- Representation of women in City committees is still tokenistic.
- Women staff's voices are not always recognized.

#### Representation: Potential Strategic Actions

- Conduct assessments to identify specific barriers that present women from entering male dominated City service areas.
- Take affirmative actions to increase the representation of Indigenous, immigrant and racialized women, including in City's student programs. This also includes broadening the scope of internships to include service areas other than social services.
- Support and fund programs that encourage young women to join non-traditional work sectors such as emergency and protective services, public works and

transportation.<sup>10</sup> Towards that end, promote a work environment in these areas that is more welcoming to gender diversity.

- Showcase and disseminate best practices from City service areas or other cities where inclusiveness and gender diversity have been achieved. Use these best practices to raise awareness among staff and management.

### Priority 5 - Gender Sensitive Data Systems

*Gender Sensitive Data Systems* refers to the collection and use of data disaggregated by gender and other intersectional identities and to collecting data on the specific issues that affect each gender group in City departments, practices and social service provision. The following summarizes what was heard.

#### Data Systems: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers

- City's data collection is still binary in some service areas (meaning that sex is used instead of gender in data collection tools).
- Some City data requirements increases client vulnerability and profiling. Data on gender identity is sensitive, but in some cases, clients are required to disclose their gender in order to receive services.
- Some residents and community organizations partnering with the City are increasingly required to collect more data on clients. The rationale and added value of these data requirements are not always clear.
- Data collection processes as pre-requisite to receiving City services create burdens and barriers for low-income women.
- City data collection and analysis systems are primarily quantitative in nature, focusing on counting numbers rather than gathering stories and case notes. This creates huge gaps in knowledge for City policy makers resulting in gaps in programming. For equity seeking groups, qualitative data collected on women and girls from equity seeking groups is particularly important.
- City data collection systems do not accommodate the special needs of trans persons.

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<sup>10</sup> A good example is the CAMP FFIT program implemented by the City to encourage more women and girls to become firefighters. See more at <https://www.fswow.ca/camp-ffit>.

- Violence against women and Indigenous organizations do not feel comfortable collecting data as required by the City, as that has the potential to retraumatize Indigenous or other service users.
- Current data on Indigenous people is not representative, so the actual number of Indigenous people served/in need of service is not captured. Data collected by non-Indigenous service agencies is based on the clients that self-identify as indigenous.
- City data systems do not acknowledge the intersectional aspect of communities or clients. This may contribute to the fact that Francophone, immigrant, and Indigenous women and girls are underrepresented in City data.
- City's standardized departmental computer software does not use inclusive language when requesting demographic information.
- Some City departments are moving towards systematic implementation of demographic questions but are still operating within a binary. Ottawa Public Library does not collect data on gender and library cards do not include this data.
- Data requirements from City service providers and multiple funders are not aligned. Service providers are stretched to provide different sets of data that are not all sensitive to women and gender equity. In addition, data cannot be aggregated to inform policies.

#### Data Systems: Potential Strategic Actions

- The demographic data categories in City service uptake forms could be revisited and standardized, especially when requesting information on gender identity.
- Introduce common standards across the City, the development and application of a City-wide non-binary data strategy, the application of an intersectional lens, and creating safety for people to provide information.
- Conduct in-depth and regular gender analysis of the City workforce to assess gender representation based on service area, work level, and leadership. This can include regular analysis of self-identification surveys for new City employees and sharing these results with the public.
- Address representation from an intersectional lens so that representation of different groups of women and gender diverse persons (Indigenous, racialized, francophone, with disability, etc.) is taken into account.
- Consult with partners on effective methodologies and data collection tools to assess the quality of City services from a women and gender equity perspective.

- Apply standardized gender terminology and outcome measures to allow for data comparisons.
- Re-assess self-identification data requirements for service users, use the Do-No-Harm principle and employ culturally appropriate processes in data collection. The collection of data, especially data on gender identity, could be waived as a pre-requisite for urgent and important social services.
- Use a gender lens to re-assess the design of City surveys and assessments.
- Consider consent as being at the heart of data collection by City service providers.
- Train City data staff on using a women and gender equity lens in data collection, analysis and reporting to ensure City reports mainstream women and gender equity.
- Consider adding qualitative aspects to City surveys and assessments so that the lived experiences of women and gender diverse persons that are not captured in numbers are also shared.
- Use a gender lens when collecting neighborhood level data that looks at needs. This will ensure that City programs can be targeted and tailored to specific gender needs in the community
- Data collection on Indigenous persons or communities needs to be Indigenous-led and facilitated. Data sources and collection must be overseen, and data collection methods should be reviewed, by the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition prior to being used to ensure that they are culturally appropriate.

## Priority 6 – Gender Inclusive Resident Engagement

*Gender Inclusive Resident Engagement* refers to representation of intersectional groups of women and gender diverse persons in meaningful and inclusive engagement. The following summarizes what was heard.

### Resident Engagement: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers

- Seniors are not engaged enough in equity discussions in general, and gender discussions in particular. Senior women are also care givers, not only younger women. There are older adults who care for older parents and for grandchildren in the absence of affordable and available childcare. This causes a lot of pressure on senior women and limits their participation in their communities.
- Senior adults cannot participate in many City consultations because their needs are not being accommodated. Consultations are either in far places or inaccessible locations for seniors.

- Senior males have smaller social networks after their female partners pass away. Senior women find ways to remain socially engaged with family, friends and communities. Transwomen are at risk of social isolation.
- Young persons are not motivated to engage on City online platforms or participate in City engagement events. Youth friendly language and engagement tools are lacking.
- Men and trans persons are more difficult to engage in consultations, and therefore little is known about their challenges.
- The City is usually cooperating with the same organizations and partners and may be missing out on some good organizations with extensive gender equity experience.
- The City does not engage residents systematically in the process of developing new plans and strategies. Engagements planned by the City are usually seasonal and not regular.

#### Resident Engagement: Potential Strategic Actions

- Create a participatory City platform where community members, organizations and allies can participate in systematically shaping WGES. Members can represent all community groups and have experience working on gender equity issues and with all gender groups.
- Expand the conversation on women equity to always include gender diverse persons.
- Collaborate with non-profit organizations that provide gender-based services in developing guidelines and policies to integrate women and gender equity in City work.
- Improve outreach to community organizations who have long experience working on gender equity issues and diversify the City's partnerships in this area.
- Use gender sensitive approaches to engage men and transmen in City consultations. Best practices can be used to encourage men's engagement in women and gender consultations.
- Train more male City staff on facilitation of City consultations and focused group discussions in general and on women and gender equity specifically.
- City staff in charge of policy formulation and budget development need to engage more closely with communities through field visits and consultations conducted in communities, not on City premises.

- Engage senior women in paid care (at neighbourhood level) opportunities such as childcare. This could prevent isolation and it would also mean that seniors continue to be productive. It would also make childcare more available and affordable.
- Hold regular meetings and dialogue between City management and front-line staff to discuss women and gender equity issues.
- Capitalize on community seniors with vast expertise to volunteer for the City in public engagement facilitation and outreach.

### Priority 7 - Training and Awareness Raising

This priority refers to awareness raising and learning activities for City staff to enhance their ability to apply a women and gender lens in their work. The following summarizes what was heard.

#### Training and Awareness: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers

- There is lack of awareness among City staff on general gender equity concepts and sexual and gender-based violence. As a result, some City staff are still questioning the added value of having a gender strategy or the need for gender sensitive data and services.
- City staff and management still carry misconceptions around gender roles and abilities.<sup>11</sup> Frontline City staff lack the knowledge and skills to work with persons from gender diverse backgrounds.
- Staff who have policy, strategy and data related job profiles may lack the knowledge and skills to integrate women and gender equity in their work.
- A practical gender analysis tool is lacking to guide City and staff in their work.

#### Training and Awareness: Potential Strategic Actions

- City staff and management awareness can be raised on basic gender equity concepts. This includes concepts of gender diversity and gender transition. Awareness raising should address gender social norms, values and attitudes towards a shift in organizational culture.
- Develop checklists and guides to aid City Council and staff to mainstream gender in City work.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, consultations revealed that some staff believe that female police officers and firefighters are getting their jobs solely because they are women, but they are not strong enough to do the job.

- Train City management and staff on women and gender equity at the team level. Middle management can be engaged with staff to discuss gender in a safe space.
- Use non-formal (out of classroom) activities to raise awareness on gender diversity and equity (such as diversity cafes, staff learning events, and public days on important gender occasions). In addition, explore the use of new methods of communication such as webinars and podcasts.
- Train the City's communication teams on use of representative gender sensitive language, use of non-binary imagery and gender sensitive messages.
- Include gender equity and equality concepts in new City staff orientation packages and training.
- Design gender equity educational materials and online training materials for use of City staff and Council.
- Share best practices in mainstreaming gender equity and lessons learned among departments as a motivation for change (including means to address gender transitioning). This could be included as a permanent column in the staff newsletter (In the Loop) to discuss all gender issues and news.
- The Equity and Inclusion Lens can be refreshed to accommodate needs for more gender specific content. Conduct a follow-up assessment on trainings and use of Equity and Inclusion Lens to identify progress and gaps.
- Include content on women and gender equity in all City communications. This includes adding a section in Council reports to address women and gender equity implications.

## Priority 8: Resources

*Resources* refers to prioritized resources and services for women and gender diverse persons. This priority was selected by 91% of participants in the WGES consultations. The following summarizes what was heard.

### Resources: Women and Gender Issues and Barriers

- Resources allocated to community services targeting women and gender diverse persons are not sufficient. Each year the need for social safety increases but the amount of funding provided by all levels of governments in the forms of grants and financial contributions is decreasing. The provincial government is making tremendous cuts and the municipal government is expected to play an active role in mitigating these cuts.

- Limited resources have disproportionately put racialized and Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ+ persons at risk. Funding for many programs addressing the needs of Indigenous women and youth has been withdrawn.
- Several community service providers no longer have Indigenous councillors and services for Indigenous women and girls had to be discontinued. Good practices such as emergency lines or regular calling systems for seniors living alone have been discontinued.
- Some gender services are time sensitive. Young females waiting for violence against women counselling or detoxification services cannot afford long waits.
- Funding cuts have directly impacted the service seeking behaviour of vulnerable residents. Fewer vulnerable residents seek services because they have a preconception that they will be turned away.
- Funding cuts have burdened community service providers and resulted in fewer women accessing essential services. Limitation of funding has resulted in loss and layoff of qualified and dedicated front-line workers.
- Programs targeting women coming out of the criminal justice system have limited supports and resources. This is a major barrier for these women to reintegrate into society.
- Other than in the areas of addictions and homelessness, the City's funding programs tend to overlook the gender needs of marginalized men living alone, especially gender diverse men and seniors.
- Programs that engage men in prevention of violence against women and gender-based violence lack funding

#### Resources: Potential Strategic Actions

- Prioritize allocation of social service resources for gender equity programs/services. Commitment to long-term funding of services for women and gender diverse persons allows these services to become sustainable and retain qualified and experienced front-line staff.
- Fund the recruitment of full-time female staff coming from intersectional backgrounds in Housing services.
- Examine budget planning processes using a gender lens, and integrate women and gender equity in City's existing procurement and budget accountability mechanisms.
- Allocate emergency funds for the urgent housing needs of women fleeing abuse or human trafficking.

- Earmark funds for social services that are culturally appropriate for Indigenous women and girls and recruit Indigenous social workers.
- Upscale the role of the municipal government to negotiate and mitigate the impact of provincial policies on social service provided for women at the municipal level.
- Prioritize programs and services that have proven successful to prevent or respond to gender-based violence, especially those that are provided in French language or serving racialized/immigrant women.
- Review the City's community funding from a gender perspective so that funding is sustained for social services sector that benefits women and gender diverse persons. This includes mental health services and services in rural areas.

### Next Steps

The City is planning the following future steps:

- City staff will further analyze the data collected during WGES public engagement and share with City service areas of focus to develop WGES.
- City staff will work in collaboration with community stakeholders and allies to draft WGES will be presented to the Council Sponsor Group for approval.
- An interim report on WGES development will be submitted to Council in Q2, 2020.
- The final WGES documents will be presented to Council for approval before the end of 2020.