


The Role of Municipalities in Advancing Women's Equity in Canada



A reflection paper prepared for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO
By Meghan Brooks
Ottawa, Canada, November 2018

 <p>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</p> <p>International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR</p>	<p>This article was developed in collaboration with the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR.</p>
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To quote this article:

Meghan Brooks. "The Role of Municipalities in Advancing Women's Equity in Canada", the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's IdeaLab, November 2018.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

About the author

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Summary

Women’s inclusion is fundamental to a progressive, sustainable society. According to the World Economic Forum, it will take 170 years to close the world’s gender gap. Issues facing women are not just “women’s issues”, they are importantly men’s issues—everyone’s issues. In Canada, women who obtain education and employment continue to face a gender wage gap. They also carry a disproportionate burden of family and caregiving responsibilities that limit their time and financial flexibility. Women are at risk of violence and other health inequities and, despite a long history of women’s activism and engagement, their voices continue to be marginalized.

Municipal governments are not only well placed to apply a gender lens to city planning and decision-making, but have an imperative to do so in order to adequately serve residents. By bringing women to the table, delivering gender-specific programming through an intersectional lens, gender mainstreaming governance and using data to inform decision-making and track progress, municipalities can enhance the inclusiveness of their communities and institutions. By supporting local governments and their partners, the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD), as part of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR, promotes the development of promising practices and mobilizes the wealth of knowledge on gender inclusiveness that already exists in Canada.

To learn more:

Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination

<https://en.ccunesco.ca/networks/canadian-coalition-of-municipalities-against-racism-and-discrimination>

International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR

www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/fight-against-discrimination/coalition-of-cities/

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HOW LONG MUST WE WAIT?

According the World Economic Forum (2017), it will take 170 years to close the world's gender gap. That is almost two more centuries, eight more generations...

Can we afford to wait that long?

Women's inclusion is fundamental to a progressive, sustainable society. While closing the gender wage gap would be profitable for Canada, earning an estimated \$105 billion dollar growth in GDP (gross domestic product), improving equity for women across all aspects of family, economic, social and political life has the opportunity to bear incalculable benefits to us all (PwC 2016). A World Economic Forum (2017) report on the global gender gap ranks Canada 16th out of 144 countries in the areas of health, education, economy and politics. Canada ranked first in the report for educational attainment, but a disappointing 105th for health and survival. While this measure is only one assessment of life in Canada for women, its disparities mirror life in this country for many.

Women experience life in Canada differently than men for many reasons. Women may be pushed to take on roles and responsibilities based on what is "expected" of women (yes, gender roles). Women may also face particular challenges resulting from patriarchy and uneven power relations. Moreover, many of the institutions that have shaped Canadian life, including municipalities, have been created by men and informed by a colonial perspective. The design of services and public spaces therefore does not always take into account women's specific needs and perspectives.

One of the biggest challenges to addressing gender inequity, and especially inequality faced by women, is that many Canadians believe that women are already equal. In a report by McKinsey & Company Canada (Devillard et al. 2017), a majority of male employees reported no gender inequity issues to solve in the workplace. Seventy-five per cent of men either agreed or strongly agreed that women are well represented at senior levels. The closer employees were to the front line, the fewer workers believed that prioritizing gender diversity is a business imperative.

And yet, we see a woman on a Board of Directors and believe there is parity in leadership. We see a woman return to work, or not return to work, after having a child, and applaud choice. We see a young woman graduate from a trade and see equal opportunities in the workforce. We see a woman bravely escape violence and believe we have done enough. However, as research and real life show, we have much work to do in order to make Canada a place where all women, including self-identified women, have full access to resources and opportunities.

“Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is a human rights principle, a precondition for sustainable, people-centered development, and it is a goal in and of itself.” (UNESCO 2014, 11)

WOMEN’S GAINS AND FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN CANADA

Feminism, or the belief that women have been historically disadvantaged and this ought to change, inspires much engagement and action on the part women and men. Feminist movements (also known as Women’s Movements) have deep historical roots in Canada and, while seen to form three distinct waves over time, are overlapping and share a multi-focused nature.

The first wave of feminism—the suffragist period—emerged in the early 1800s and brought gains in rights and political power. In Canada, many early activists prioritized women’s suffrage and political reform. The push for women’s equality was recognized by the courts at the turn of the 20th century. One defining milestone is the 1929 affirmation of women as “persons” under the British North American Act (passed in 1867 by British Parliament to create the Dominion of Canada at Confederation). The movement for women’s votes also gained momentum across the country at this time. While Caucasian women could vote in federal elections by 1918, it was not until 1960 that all people in Canada, including Black, Asian and Indigenous women, could vote.

The second wave of feminism—the protesters period—took shape in the 1960s and expanded conversations to include the workplace, reproductive rights, sexuality and family. The Fair Employment Practices Act of 1951 was the first legislation to address persistent exclusion and inequality. Three decades later, the federal government implemented the Employment Equity Act (1986) to remove barriers to employment for women, as well as other under-represented groups. In 1970, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) inquired into, and reported on, steps that might be taken to ensure women had opportunities equal to men in all aspects of Canadian society. This blueprint for government action—and feminist activism—was the first success of the second wave of Canadian feminism and a watershed in Canadian history.

A number of legal instruments exist to ensure and promote the rights of women in Canada. As they relate to government, individual human rights are protected under Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) which states that an individual cannot be discriminated against on the basis of sex and that all protections of the Charter apply to both men and women. Employment Equity legislation seeks to ensure that women have equitable access in

employment. Individual rights are also protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act, as well as Provincial and Territorial legislation.

The third wave of feminism—in which we are thought to currently work—emerged in the 1990s. It increasingly incorporates a variety of women’s perspectives on politics and everyday life. With the gradual acceptance of feminist perspectives, efforts have not only sought to bring further attention to inequalities raised by earlier feminists, but also to embed feminist and women’s goals into institutional and social practices.

Feminist movements have secured tremendous victories for women in Canada, but these victories have not always included *all* women. At the turn of the 21st century, Canadian and international scholars developed the concept of intersectionality to understand diversity within and across groups. Today, many activists and scholars argue that women are more than their gender and sex and that taking these additional identities into account is critical to equality.

The term “intersectionality” first emerged in the women’s movement in an analysis of African American women’s equality struggles. The concept evolved to articulate the idea that patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but bound together. We can therefore apply the concept of intersectionality as a tool to help us understand how power is unequally distributed in society (Brooks and City for All Women Initiative 2015).

WOMEN IN CANADIAN CITIES

Canadian women have long organized to re-define their place in society and demand equality and justice. Women, grassroots organizations and their allies have led movements in Canada on national, provincial, and local scales. Today, women represent over half (50.4%) of Canada’s population (Statistics Canada 2015). They have increased their presence in the labour market by 60% since 1950 and have posted significant legal gains. Even though women’s activism has resulted in fundamental protections in Canada, we know that significant gains remain to be made.

Over the past few decades, changes to Canada’s social welfare system and labour market have hampered progress toward greater gender inclusivity. While advances have been manifest in terms of equality legislation in the late 1990s (for example the Equality Act of 1982), cuts to social services not only reduced the level of federal investments in social, health, and educational services, but also lowered the standards and consistency of social policy and programs in Canada.

Geography also matters in the quality of life of women and the various opportunities, supports and services at their disposal. Every year, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (McInturff

2017) publishes a report on the “Best and Worst Places to be a Woman in Canada.” While the contexts and histories of cities are unique (and no ranking cannot fully take into account the experiences of a diversity of women), it usefully suggests that measurement is important to understand issues and progress.

WOMEN AT A GLANCE

- Women comprise 50.4% of the Canadian population
- Senior women could reach 24% of the total population by 2031
- In 2011, 18% of women and girls lived in rural places
- About 4% of women reported Indigenous identity in 2011 (61% First Nations, 32% Metis, and 4% Inuit)
- The Indigenous female population is growing significantly faster than non-Indigenous female population (20% vs. 4% from 2011-2014)
- One in five women (21%) are immigrants, and the number is on the rise
- Almost one in five women (19%) identified as belonging to a racialized community (the largest groups are South Asian 24%, Chinese 22% and Blacks 15%)
- Women are most likely to experience physical assault and sexual assault and are more likely than men to experience any violence
- Hates crimes motivated by sexual orientation more than doubled in Canada from 2007 to 2008, and were the most violent of all hate crimes
- Over 2 million women (14.9%) over the age of 15 reported at least one disability that limited their daily activities in 2012.

(Statistics Canada, various sources)

KEY ISSUES FACING WOMEN

Today, the issues women face are complex and overlapping. They reach into every aspect as economic, political, family and social life. Examining the major issues women face requires mental flexibility and an appreciation of entanglement. Forms of marginalization and exclusion often re-inforce one another. Women themselves are also as complex and varied as the issues they face. Their full range of identities, experiences and histories uniquely affect their lived realities. Issues facing women are not just “women’s issues”, they are importantly men’s issues—everyone’s issues. Experiences of women’s inequity, although sometimes perceived as isolated or acute incidents, can have significant lifelong effects.

“There is much left to talk about if we want to say that men and women are truly equal and given equal opportunities in Canada” (Landry 2016).

Several of the most pressing issues women face are explored in this paper. The topics are necessarily broad to capture the shared experiences of women and, where possible, draw in an intersectional lens to illustrate diversity of experience. There is no one place to start an exploration of barriers. There is no single path leading to a solution. By engaging in the messiness of cause and effect, we begin to see the deep-rootedness of gendered exclusion and the multifaceted actions it will take to achieve true equity for women in Canada.

While this paper focuses on women in Canada and the role municipalities can play in advancing equity, conversations on gender equity are much broader in scope. Gender refers to “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. It can result in stereotyping and limited expectations about what women and men can and cannot do” (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 7). Gender and gender identity are spectrums that carry a range of experiences and levels of advantage and disadvantage. The contents of this paper also do not address the specific issues facing girls.

The issues below are connected and reinforcing. While they do not represent *the* path, they illustrate a path to understanding how inequity affects women.

- Even women who obtain education and employment continue to face a **gender wage gap**. This means that women with equal levels of education and experience earn less income than men in similar jobs. Even though the wage gap is measured as a snapshot in time, the effects of the gap compound over a woman’s lifetime and leave her vulnerable to further inequity.
- Women’s labour often extends beyond the workplace into homes. Women carry a **disproportionate burden of family and caregiving responsibilities** that limit their time and financial flexibility.
- Risk of **violence and other health inequities** are also concerns for women. Unfortunately, poor education outcomes, reduced income and employment opportunities and challenging family needs can render women vulnerable to illness and harm.
- Despite a long history of women’s activism and engagement, **women’s voices continue to be marginalized**, re-enforcing male-centric systems and ways of looking at the world. Women from marginalized communities face even greater barriers to inclusion. Without the opportunity to voice concerns and lead change in government, education, employment, services and family life, women will not be fully included.

1. Gender wage gap and its lifelong effects

“All over the world, women earn less than men. Sexism affects the jobs women have access to, the money they earn, and the way society values their work... Too often governments make policy and spending decisions without duly considering what the outcomes will mean for women and how they will impact the gender gap in resources and opportunities” (Oxfam Canada 2017, 2).

Over the last 40 years, there has been a dramatic reversal in the representation of women in universities. Today, women are generally more educated than men; with 60% of graduates being women. The proportion of women with a university degree has grown twice as much as the proportion of men, such that women outnumbered men by a sizable margin in 2015 (over 6%). Not all women have enjoyed the same gains when it comes to educational opportunities. Women with disabilities are half as likely to obtain a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with women without disabilities (15.7% versus 30.7%, respectively). While over 50% of Indigenous women have post-secondary education, the number is lower than for non-Indigenous women (65%) (2011).

Despite increases in educational attainment, women are more likely than men to experience unemployment, under-employment and precarious employment. There is a clear disconnect between increasing educational opportunities and labour market outcomes for women. The disconnect is even more pronounced for a diversity of women. The unemployment rate for Indigenous women is 11.2%, almost double the rate of non-Indigenous women (5.8%), and this rate almost doubles for women with no degree or certificate (19.8%). The median income of Indigenous women is about 25% less than non-Indigenous women, and there is also considerable variation across groups, with Métis earning more than Inuit and First Nations.

Women in Canada continue to earn far less than men. The gender wage gap measures the difference between the earnings of men and women. On the surface, one may assume that the wage gap simply reflects the smaller proportion of women in the labour market or the greater number of women in part-time employment. In fact, wage gap data comparing men and women with equivalent educations working in the same industries confirms a persistent gap. Even though more and more women are completing higher education and entering the workforce, there remains a significant wage divide between men and women in Canada. Even women working in high-earning and female-dominated fields (like nursing) earn less than men.

In 2015, women earned 87 cents for every dollar earned by men (OECD 2018). While the wage gap has been decreasing over several decades, it remains significant. The income gap exists across a diversity of women but is more pronounced for Indigenous, Racialized and Women with Disabilities. If a woman begins her career at a lower pay rate, then she will have lower lifetime

earnings. This means that she will not have the same resources to support her family, personal health, social interests, and retirement. It can also affect women's ability to afford housing, leave violent situations, access services and support their families.

There are several barriers unique to women that continue to limit their economic well-being. Women are more likely than men to work in part-time jobs (comprising about two-thirds of employees) and one quarter of these women cite childcare as the reason. Women are also more likely than men to experience work absences and interruptions—both long-term, scheduled absences related to childbearing and short-term, sporadic absences related to a child's illness. Previous research has documented the stigmatization of work absences and interruptions, as well as fewer subsequent promotion opportunities and earnings increases. It suggests that women may face more discrimination and sexism in the workplace than do their male counterparts, but also that women's work is valued less.

While a growing number of women are trained in traditionally male-dominated fields (for example, science, technology, mathematics, trades), many others continue to be streamlined to pursue female-dominated employment. Canadian women are still more likely to work in traditionally "female" fields like teaching, nursing, social work, sales, service and administration. In 2015, 56.1% of women worked in those fields, compared to 17.1% of men. The representation is not much different from 1987, when those figures were 59.2% and 15.7% respectively. Female-dominated occupations tend to be compensated at lower wage rates than male-dominated occupations—even when they involve the same skill level.

Higher levels of educational attainment are integral to economic well-being, as they tend to insulate people from unemployment. Interestingly, higher levels of educational attainment matter more for women's employment than they do for men'. In the past, women were told that getting more education would lead to greater economic equality. While the income gap has lessened with the increase in women's levels of education, it has not been eliminated (even in female dominated fields). Women are over-represented in low-paying occupations and under-represented in high-paying ones. Differences in how female-dominated occupations are valued, relative to male-dominated jobs, also contribute to the gender-based pay inequality. Stereotyping in school needs to be addressed to encourage more women to enter male dominated fields. By doing so, we not only diversify the knowledge and skills in these fields, positioning them to be more productive and innovative, but also improve the earning potential of women.

Municipalities can work on multiple fronts to decrease the gender wage gap and its effects. Not only can they ensure pay equity practices within their administrations, but also value, train and promote women across all levels of the organization. Ensuring equitable hiring and promotion of not just women, but a diversity of women, promotes program innovation, creativity, inclusion

and growth. By recognizing the unique challenges women face, local governments can invest in women and collaborate to eliminate the structural barriers that limit opportunities. Municipal policies that take the gender wage gap and associated stereotypes into account design more inclusive and more effective programs and services. They ultimately improve local economic and social wellbeing. Without municipal leadership to address the wage gap and its causes and effects, it is unlikely that significant progress will be made to change the lives of women in Canada.

“...The pay gap exists in every province and in every major occupational group, though there are variations. The gap in annual earnings between men and women has barely budged over the past two decades, even as education levels among women have surpassed those of men” (Grant 2017).

2. Disproportionate burden on women’s time and money

Women still tend to have greater responsibility for children and other family members as well as for the smooth functioning of the home. Women spend more time than men caring for their children. In 2010, women spent an average of 50.1 hours per week on unpaid childcare, more than double that spent by men (24.4 hours) (Milan 2011). Women also spend more time than men on domestic work including cooking, cleaning, laundry, yard work, maintenance and shopping. In 2010, while women spent 13.8 hours per week doing housework, men spent 8.3 hours (Milan 2011).

Accessible, low cost and appropriate subsidized childcare is critical to the economic and social wellbeing of families and the growth of Canada’s economy. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), childcare costs in Canada are among the highest in the world. Compared to other similar national economies, Canada spends almost 20% less on childcare funding (Statistics Canada 2015). Childcare funding varies across Canada, with the lowest costs in Quebec. The majority of childcare is still taken on by women, despite growing numbers of women who return to the workforce after having children. Providing affordable childcare is necessary to alleviate poverty for women. When childcare is affordable and safe, women are more likely to return to the workforce, earn higher incomes, and benefit from more economic stability. Paid maternity leave has alleviated some financial stress as has a growth in inclusive policies and programs in workplaces across the country. By supporting women to remain in the workplace and earn income (if they desire to do so), women are better able to navigate the financial challenges of building a family.

As a result of the wage gap, inequitable employment opportunities, and additional unpaid labour demands in the household, women are at a heightened risk of living in poverty. In 2012,

over 1.5 million Canadian women lived in poverty (Canadian Women’s Foundation 2017). There are many reasons why gender and poverty are connected. Structural causes of women’s poverty can include lower wages, inadequate pensions, cuts to social assistance, and a disproportionate level of family responsibilities (Morris and Gonsalves 2005). Women are also differentially affected by poverty depending on their age, background, race, sexual orientation, and other facets of identity. Indigenous women, racialized women, women with disabilities, single mothers and immigrant women are more likely to be poor. Older adult women are more likely to live in poverty than older adult men, and the effect of this disadvantage is magnified by higher life expectancy rates among women.

The effects of women’s poverty reach far beyond the lives of the women affected. Poverty affects children as they become more likely to have poorer health and educational achievement. Poverty is also a factor in criminal activity as individuals turn to alternative ways to support themselves and their families. Health care costs also increase as women and their dependents seek added healthcare resources to cope with the health effects of malnutrition, mental health concerns, and susceptibility to other diseases. Poverty also limits women’s choices for shelter and contributes to a vulnerability to violence.

Municipal governments play an important role in supporting women and families by delivering services, including childcare. Designing and implementing programs that meet the needs of women and their families, can help women return to the workforce if they wish to do so, and engage in unpaid care with fewer financial burdens. Municipal programs have the greatest impact on the everyday` lives of women and their families as they are local and tailored to the needs of communities. By recognizing the disproportionate burden women carry, local governments can lessen the challenges women face and, in doing so, reduce vulnerability to poverty and increase well-being.

“Unpaid work in the home includes all the activities people do to look after each other and manage their households. Because it is unpaid and involves private households, it is not officially recognized as “work”. Feminists have demanded that governments measure and value unpaid domestic labour, and provide supports for those who do it.” (CRIA W Luxton)

3. Risk of violence and health inequity

Violence against women has a harmful impact on the lives of women, their families, and communities. Violence against women is a serious and persistent problem, one with which many women live. Women in Canada are at a 20% higher risk of violent victimization than men when all other risk factors are taken into account (Boyce 2014). Violence against women infringes upon a woman’s fundamental right to bodily integrity and freedom from torture and cruel,

inhuman or degrading treatment. These rights are enshrined in human rights treaties ratified by Canada. Violence against women also constitutes a form of gender discrimination (Johnson and Colpitts 2013).

Intersectionality necessarily needs to be taken into account in examinations of the impact of violence on women and women's health. Many factors interact with gender to raise the risk of violence and although they may not be direct causes of violence, they contribute to risks of victimization. For example, women under the age of 25 experience the highest incidence of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, femicide, and criminal harassment (stalking). Aging, pregnancy and disability also present situations of vulnerability for women. Women over the age of 65 are more likely than men of the same age to be victims of violence by marital partners. Lesbian and bi-sexual women are twice as likely as gay and bisexual men to be experience violence. Violent victimization rates are also higher for women with mental health concerns. Indigenous women are twice as likely as non-Indigenous women to experience violence.

The rate of homicide perpetrated against women by intimate partners in 2015 was more than five times the rate of homicide involving male victims. Violence is the leading cause of women seeking shelter including transition homes and emergency shelters. Violence against women not only happens in places of residence (35%), but in places of work (30%). Women who work in male-dominated workplaces or work in the sex industry are also at greater risk of experiencing violence. The frequency of evening activities—which could include working, attending night classes, attending evening meetings, volunteering, going out to bars, clubs or pubs, going out to restaurants, shops, or sports events—is also associated with a higher rate of violent incidents for women.

Women who face violence experience both immediate and lasting effects. Violence has serious consequences for women's physical, emotional, and reproductive health, physical safety, financial security, and ability to provide a safe and secure environment for themselves and their children. For women, the consequences and impacts of violence include physical injury, hospitalization, miscarriage, anxiety, depression and even death. Rape and other forms of sexual violence can also lead to long term consequences such as post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, and substance abuse.

Violence is not the only threat to women's health and well-being. Even though their life expectancy is higher than that of men, women face challenges accessing healthcare and health-related services. Women's mental health can be affected by stress, rising workloads, violence, fear, discrimination, food insecurity and other challenging, yet common, experiences. Some women particularly at risk of poorer well-being include older women, refugee and immigrant women, women living in poverty, racialized women and women with disabilities. For example, Indigenous women are twice as likely as non-Indigenous women to have a disability (8% vs. 4%).

Almost half of Inuit households have experienced food insecurities (43%), while almost a quarter have gone without food (23%).

Municipal governments and their partners work on the front line protecting women. By ensuring that health services are accessible, family friendly, affordable, located near public transportation, culturally appropriate and sensitive to women’s concerns, gender equity in health outcomes will increase. If women are not safe and well, they cannot go to work, care for their families and participate in community life. By taking action to protect women’s health and safety, local governments create more vibrant communities, stronger economies and cultural cohesion—all of which enhance quality of life for everyone.

Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

A disproportionately high number of Indigenous women have been murdered or have gone missing in Canada. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police released a report (2014) that shows Indigenous women are at a higher risk of being victims of violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts. In 2011, Indigenous women made up approximately 11.3% of the total number of missing women while they represented only 4% of all women in Canada. Furthermore, between 1980 and 2012, Indigenous women were over-represented in the number of female homicides (16% of all female homicides).

In 2016, the Government of Canada launched a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The National Inquiry is independent from government and mandated to examine and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQ individuals in Canada.

Today, Indigenous women and their allies raise awareness of the violence and inequity experienced by Indigenous women and seek change in government and other institutions. Municipal governments are invited to work to address several Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and to equitably support Indigenous community members through policies and programs, forging inclusive collaborations and working with police services.

4. Silencing women’s voices

Women’s representation remains a key focus for gains in Canadian municipalities and other levels of government. Without gender balance, women face obstacles to participating in the democratic process. It also limits their ability and power to influence policies and governance practices. Women’s participation and representation contributes to the strengthening of

Canada's democracy and the effectiveness of its institutions. It also promotes greater diversity of thought and experience, enables the construction of more inclusive and meaningful citizenship, and generates the conditions for the empowerment of marginalized groups.

The United Nations (2005) defines 30% as the minimal percentage of elected women required for government to reflect women's concerns. In Canada, women represent only a small percentage of mayors and councillors at the municipal level (18% and 28% respectively). Based on these numbers, Canada would need 1,408 more women in elected office to reach the 30% target (Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2015). Some reasons identified for lower levels of women's participation include inadequate information, a lack of connections, discrimination, family responsibilities, and a lack of inclusive policies (Federation of Canadian Municipalities no date).

In 2015, the federal government achieved its first gender-equal Cabinet of Ministers. Canada is currently ranked 64th for the representation of women in Parliament by the Inter-Parliament Union (2018) and as of December 2017, women represented 27% of elected members. Where you live in Canada significantly influences women's representation, as women are more likely to be elected in urban areas than in rural ones (Sculthorp 2017).

Representation of women in leadership positions is also an important goal for equity and improving women's lifelong opportunities. Partly as a result of employment equity efforts, gender parity continues to emerge in the public sector with respect to women's representation in leadership positions. It is important to note, however, that these gains have not always resulted in a broad diversity of women entering and affecting change in leadership. Women remain grossly under-represented in the private sector. In fact, women make up only 21.6% of Financial Post 500 board members (Canadian Board Diversity Council 2017) and hold less than 10% of the highest-paid jobs in Canada's top 100 listed companies (Rosenzweig and Company 2018). Women hold only 1 in 4 Vice-President positions and 1 in 6 CEO positions.

The structural silencing of women's voices at decision-making tables limits not only the opportunities for women in those environments, but the inclusivity of the products and services delivered. Women leaders influencing high-level decision-making will pave the way toward gender equity. Hearing more women's voices at the table increases opportunities for mentorship and networking, and encourages other women to seek advancement opportunities. With respect to the bottom line, companies with the most diversity are significantly more likely to have financial returns above industry standards.

Municipal governments can empower women by removing barriers to not only participation in community organizations, but elected office. When elected officials reflect the population they

serve they are more likely to advocate for the most effective and appropriate programs and services. Having a diversity of women in politics also ensures that a broad range of lived experiences is captured, as forms of exclusion often intersect. City government must also create a place for a diversity of women across all levels of the organization, including senior leadership and management. As it is the public service developing policies and delivering city services, it is critical that a gender inclusive lens be applied to all initiatives from the outset. By creating safe spaces for women's voices, ideas and concerns, municipal governments can be leaders in change.

UNESCO AND CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO'S EFFORTS FOR CHANGE

Women's equity is a thread that runs through UNESCO's work. Gender equality is one of two UNESCO global priorities, while equitable and sustainable development is an overarching objective. Inclusive social development (which includes women's equity) supports "inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and promoting ethical principles." Efforts to enhance women's equality also support UNESCO's mission to "create and use knowledge for just and inclusive societies." The Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) is also taking strategic action to promote equity and peace in Canada at the city-level (CCUNESCO 2014).

In 2015, The United Nations General Assembly adopted the "2030 Agenda" which contains a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide development agendas. UNESCO was actively involved in the development of the goals and is committed to contributing to the implementation of the cross-cutting priorities of gender equality, human rights, and poverty eradication (Brooks, 2016). The social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda and its targets on social inclusion, the eradication of extreme poverty, the reduction of inequalities, inclusive policies for cities, as well as inclusive and participatory decision-making, resonate within UNESCO's mandate.

"Gender equality and the empowerment of women are both a goal of, and a tool for, sustainable development." (UCLG Women 2015)

UNESCO contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through its programs and networks. In addition to acting as the lead agency for SDG 4 (Education) it contributes to others such as promoting peace and inclusive societies, promoting well-being, empowering women and girls, reducing inequality and making cities inclusive and safe. UNESCO's networks, including its International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities- ICCAR, contribute to achieving the SDGs. The Bologna Declaration, adopted in 2016 by the

ICCAR Steering Committee in 2016, highlights gender equality as a core element in ICCAR's work (paragraphs 4 & 11).

Launched by UNESCO in 2004, the **International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR** is a 500-plus member network of cities across continents that advocates for global solidarity and collaboration to promote inclusive urban development free from all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against women. Composed of seven regional and national coalitions this platform connects cities and encourages them to cooperate and work together.

The Role of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD)

The largest network of municipal governments working to eliminate discrimination and foster inclusion in Canada is the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD). The network is one of seven regional coalitions from around the world that form the International Coalition of Sustainable and Inclusive Cities - ICCAR led by UNESCO. The main objective of CCMARD is to provide a platform to broaden and strengthen human rights through coordination and shared responsibility among local governments, civil society organizations, and other democratic institutions. To date, CCMARD has over seventy signatory members. CCUNESCO facilitates CCMARD in Canada and coordinates its activities.

CCMARD promotes inclusion by encouraging the integration of equity and diversity matters into the policy, planning, and programmatic aspects of municipal government work, as well as supporting initiatives with communities. CCMARD's operational framework consists of Ten Common Commitments that are crucial for achieving inclusion and equity objectives. The Ten Common Commitments define necessary areas of action; notably employment, education, housing, policing, cultural activities and civic engagement. Membership in CCMARD is based on a common desire to achieve two goals: to share experiences and to strengthen policies to achieve greater inclusion. CCMARD is uniquely placed to raise awareness of the issues facing women in Canada and to empower municipalities to take action. It is also well positioned to advance the implementation of objectives set forth in the Agenda 2030 and to provide examples of promising practices that make a difference.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

When women are meaningfully engaged in municipal governance and services, we create communities where change is possible. Municipal governments are not only able to apply a gender lens to city planning and decision-making, but have an imperative to do so to

adequately serve their residents. Local women's organization and their partners, educational institutions, private organizations and other key stakeholders have long worked with municipal governments to raise awareness of the issues facing women. As such, there is a wealth of knowledge on promising practices, resources and tools for inclusion. The following recommendations summarize several key insights drawn from the experience of organizations and individuals dedicated to women's equity.

"When we apply a gender lens to city planning and decision making, we are asking about differences and inequities between women and men (girls and boys), as well as diversity and inequities among women. We recognize that no service or plan is gender neutral. We ask city decision makers to identify gender biases so as to ensure services address the needs of both women and men, and promote equity." (CAWI and City of Ottawa 2017)

1. Bring women to the table

Ensuring the inclusion of broad range of stakeholders at every stage of municipal government work (planning, consultation, implementation, and assessment) enhances the effectiveness of the design and delivery of programs. In order to get the best results, municipalities need to build trust among women. Communities and women's groups can be involved at different levels and government can maximize their impact by recognizing their expertise, being open to feedback, acting on suggestions and reporting on how feedback is used. Getting women of different backgrounds to the table also entails appropriate, tailored outreach and planning to ensure equitable and representative participation.

Municipal government can bring women to the table to have a voice in concrete ways:

- Apply gender-oriented communications campaigns
- Gender-sensitive budgeting to promote women's participation in consultation and planning initiatives
- Provide information, training and funding for women to run for elected office (for example, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities prepared a guide for women candidates)
- Implement mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for women in municipal government to facilitate professional growth
- Establish a commission or committee on the status of women in your municipality
- Use traditional women's venues for outreach
- Ensure consultations are accessible, conveniently located and provide support for participations (childcare stipend, public transportation tickets, etc.)
- Ensure that a diversity of women are equitably represented on all municipal committees

- Apply a gender lens to workforce planning and succession management to encourage representation of women at all levels of the municipal workforce.

Promising Practices

The Women’s Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) Committee is a City of Edmonton initiative, supported and endorsed by City Council that fosters and promotes equality, opportunity, access to services, justice and inclusion for women in the city. WAVE is comprised of fifteen volunteers from diverse backgrounds and experiences and is among the first of its kind in Canada. It is helping to ensure that the unique perspectives of women and girls are included in the conversations that shape the city.

The City of Burnaby participated in and supported the Young Women Civic Leaders project (2013 - 2016) that worked to promote and encourage the full participation of young women of diverse backgrounds at all levels of civic, political and community life. This project was led by the Justice Education Society of BC and was funded by Status of Women Canada.

The City of Montreal, in collaboration with the *Conseil des Montréalaises*, has been organising *Cité Elles Mtl*, a two-day and half event that includes training, networking and a model council session for women interested in governance and municipal politics since 2015. Inspired by the experience of SimulACTIONS of the *Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie*, *Cité Elles Mtl* is a unique occasion to create an inspiring experience for women representing Montreal’s diversity.

2. Deliver gender-specific programming and apply an intersectional lens

Peoples’ unique experiences of advantage and disadvantage are best understood as facets of identity. Applying an intersectional lens to the work of municipal governments carries significant benefits. An intersectional analysis provides a more comprehensive approach to the study of the ways in which advantage and disadvantage connect in our lives. Applying an intersectional lens to municipal work enables effective responses to emerging and persistent social issues and ensures the highest quality of service to all members of the public.

Municipal government can apply an intersectional lens to their governance and programming in concrete ways:

- Ask what barriers individuals with a range of identities may experience as you design programs and policies

- Ensure consultations include a diversity of identities (for example, ensure consultations with women include Women with Disabilities, Racialized Women, Women living in poverty, Indigenous Women, etc.)
- Identify opportunities to provide intersectional services or programming to the public (for example, services for members of the trans community with disabilities, cultural services for Indigenous women living in poverty, or municipal election preparation courses for Racialized Women)
- Train municipal staff to recognize their own intersectionality and appreciate that individuals differentially experience advantage and disadvantage
- Support public-private partnerships to help women entrepreneurs succeed and grow
- Use women-specific communications to raise awareness of local resources available to support women in need (for example, information on support for the victims of violence, affordable housing)

Promising Practices

The cities of Lethbridge, AB, Vancouver, BC, Ottawa, ON, Toronto, ON and Stratford, PEI came together through the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) to develop “Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities” (Brooks and City for All Women Initiative 2015). The project partners applied an intersectional lens to their work to create an inclusive resource to support other municipalities enhance programs, policies, procedures and services.

Quebec City has developed a prevention and information project on domestic violence for immigrant women. The project aims to inform immigrant women of their rights and where they can get help. It includes various tools, trainings and information sheets. It seeks to increase feelings of security and belonging for women.

In 2012, the City of Longueuil introduced an information session on gender equality in relationships. The awareness program entitled « Quand on s'aime, on s'aime égal » (When we love, we love equally) has since been coordinated by the Longueuil agglomeration Police service and is delivered to participants from francization groups or community organizations in collaboration with shelter homes for women victims of conjugal violence in the area.

3. Gender mainstream municipal governance

Gender mainstreaming is the inclusion and application of the principle of equal treatment and opportunities between women and men. The goal of mainstreaming is to fully integrate gender equity considerations into program strategies and activities including policy, advocacy, research,

benchmarking, capacity development, evaluation, and assessment. It necessarily takes into account existing inequities and tracks progress towards goals. Gender mainstreaming goes beyond the concept of gender neutrality, which actively conceals gender differences and women's specific needs and interests.

Municipal governments can promote equity for women through mainstreaming in concrete ways.

- Integrate a gender lens into the design and delivery of services to ensure that the needs of a diversity of women are met is critical to a municipality's service goals
- Ensure women's representation on all committees and decision-making bodies
- Develop a corporate strategy on gender equity
- Review all municipal policies with a gender lens to ensure that they are written inclusively and reflect the distinct and varied experiences and needs of women
- Challenge and dismantle gender roles and gender stereotypes in the workplace through education and employee training
- Certify all employee policies and programs are family-friendly
- Work with police services to advance gender equity in police forces and policing services

Promising Practices

Status of Women Canada offers training on Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+), an analytical tool used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people experience policies and programs. The government of Canada has renewed its commitment to GBA+ as a way to close key gender gaps. Introductory online training is available. The City of Cochrane participated in a community led research project applying a GBA+ lens to the study of barriers facing women in the region. Entitled, "Let's Touch the Skies", the research explores the interconnectedness of marginalization and the role of municipal government planning in creating change.

The City of Vancouver released a Women's Equity Strategy in 2017. The Strategy, passed by Council, reflects the City's vision to make Vancouver a place where all women and self-identified women have full access to political economic, cultural and social life. The ten-year Strategy (2018-2028) identifies priority areas and contains actions for each. The Strategy is intended to align with other City strategies and plans.

Status of Women Canada commissioned research on the application of gender audits in policing. Audits serve as a tool to benchmark organizational capacity and commitment to institutional and operational gender mainstreaming and can lead to the implementation of gender sensitive policies, processes, and practices. The research report, "Gender Audits in Policing Organizations" (Montgomery 2012), presents case studies and tools to support organizations.

4. Use data to inform decision-making and monitor progress

Over the last decade, international organizations have focused on the question of measuring equality through data collection and analysis. It is also true that in today's municipal context, "what gets measured gets done." Collecting, tracking and analyzing data can help municipalities identify gaps and trends in their organization and communities. It enables proactive opportunities for growth and assists and attracting, retaining and motivating diverse employees. Data and assessment also helps to improve decision-making to better meet organizational and programmatic goals and strategies. When we demonstrate results, we show the value of women's equity for organizations.

Municipal governments can promote equity for women through mainstreaming the use of data in concrete ways.

- Apply a gendered analysis to all corporate data analytics
- Disaggregate data to understand varied experiences of individuals as a result of intersectionality
- Build data into reporting practices for strategic plans and initiatives
- Report on gender and other forms of diversity for municipal hires and workforce representation to ensure gender equity across all levels of the municipal government
- Build assessment into the design of programs and services for the public
- Use census and other forms of data on women to inform policies and program development. Basic data could include income, education, housing, employment, unpaid labour, violence and crime

Promising Practices

The City of Ottawa collects information on its workforce through a voluntary self-identification survey. Aggregated data is used to identify corporate goals for the representation of women and to benchmark key indicators and objectives for inclusion. The data is used to track career development opportunities and is disaggregated to understand unique workforce experiences collected in surveys and other tools.

The City of Toronto's "Talent Blueprint: Building a Great Toronto Public Service" is a workforce plan that explores four key focus areas: employee engagement, diversity, workforce capacity, and effective leaders. It uses workforce data to establish objectives and key actions to have engaged, diverse, high-performing, adaptive, and productive employees to meet the City of Toronto's current and future needs.

The City of Gatineau instituted an annual meeting of all services to ensure the integration of the measures contained in its CCMARD action plan (including the ombudsman, human Resources, police, Culture, strategic planning, urban planning and 3-1-1). The initiative allows participants to assess results for the year and raises awareness among those in charge of these services of the importance of working together.

MOVING FORWARD

170 years.

The time is now. Social change takes time, but it does not have to take another century for women to enjoy full equity. As the review of key issues reveals, the interconnectedness of systems in which women are marginalized is profound. Women's experiences of inequity have lasting effects on their lives. Accounting for the rippling effects of marginalization is truly the only way to appreciate what is at stake.

Creating the conditions for social development means mobilizing municipalities in new and exciting ways. Municipal governments can give voice to the issues women face and mobilize to remove barriers not only within their own programs and services, but also in the wider community. Human rights-related issues are a relatively new area of responsibility for municipalities. As a result, innovative strategies and tools are needed for the future. Enhancing equity for a broad diversity of women requires knowledge of how women from diverse backgrounds experience places across Canada. By recognizing and working with groups most at

risk of exclusion, municipalities and their partners can begin to close the gaps in opportunities and outcomes.

Taking concrete steps to remove specific barriers, meaningfully increase women's representation and dismantle existing systems of marginalization is the only way to create lasting change. Initiatives like CCMARD are great vehicles to achieve not only local and national goals, but also global ones. By supporting local governments and their partners, CCMARD encourages the development and sharing of promising practices. Our ability to mobilize the wealth of knowledge on gender inclusiveness that already exists in Canada will determine our future success in addressing social, economic, and political challenges of the future.

The question that remains is not whether it is time for women to share their talent, wisdom, energy and passion. The question is what we are willing to do right now to make it a reality?

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