

Ottawa Council of Women

*Women working together
to improve the lives of women,
their families and communities*

March 28, 2018



Dear Mayor Watson and City Councillors,

Ottawa Council of Women – Advocating for a Gender Equity Lens in Ottawa

The Ottawa Council of Women (OCW) has a proud history dating from 1894. It is federated with the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario, the National Council of Women of Canada and with The International Council of Women. OCW is non-governmental and non-partisan. Our mission is to bring together like minded organizations and individuals, to study emerging issues and to prepare resolutions aimed at improving the condition of women, families and communities. We advocate on policy that is established democratically. Issues include gender equality, equal pay, health, child care, education, safety, civic affairs and social services.

On March 8, 2018, **International Women’s Day (IWD)** was celebrated around the world.

IWD has grown to become a global day of recognition of women's achievements and a call to action to support women's rights and to advance gender equality. This year's theme #MyFeminism, was inspired by the role that feminism continues to play in shaping Canada and countries around the world. **Feminism is simply about equality – equality for women, men and people of all gender identities. Achieving gender equality means that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.** From the early suffragettes to the activists of today, feminists continue to inspire others through their determination to make a difference. They are the activists, advocates, and allies who continue to lead the way towards positive change.

Local governments and organizations can make a difference by providing leadership and programs. Research shows that local and national women’s organizations are uniquely positioned to understand the needs of those that they serve and support. This leads to building better public policy and improving the lives of women.

Recent Research: “The Best and Worst Places to be a Woman in Canada 2017 -The Gender Gap in Canada’s 25 Biggest Cities” by Kate McInturff, Ph.D , Senior Researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.(October, 2017) [www. policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).

Ottawa ranks 11 out of 25 cities across Canada. Victoria ranks #1 and Gatineau ranks #2.

Exemplary Programs in Other Cities:

Gatineau: Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie launched Défi Parité. Five regional partner organizations collaborate to encourage participation of women in municipal politics in the Outaouais region. (agir-outaouais.ca)

2...

The Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) established in 2014 to ensure that city policies, priorities and decisions promoted gender equality in the city. WAVE works with city council to promote women's leadership and the full participation of women in local government.

Vancouver: "Women Transforming Cities" is a project to increase women's participation in local government. Vancouver and Surrey are working to make their municipal governments more diverse and inclusive. (womentransformingcities.org) In January, 2018, Vancouver City Council approved the "Women's Equity Strategy 2018-2028" with a focus on five priority areas: looking at city processes from the perspectives of women from all backgrounds; addressing safety and violence against women; accessible, quality childcare; safe and affordable housing; and women's leadership and representation.

Toronto: "Women Win Toronto" is a program of the Toronto Women's City Alliance, which is aimed at supporting women to run in the next municipal election in the city. (twca.ca/WomenWinTO)

Daughters of the Vote: More than 300 young women came to Ottawa to celebrate and encourage women's participation in Canadian political life. Women represented every riding in Canada. Sponsored and organized by Equal Voice, the women took their place on the House of Commons floor, delivering speeches and participating in the daily activities of a Member of Parliament. (daughtersofthevote.ca)

Ottawa has an opportunity to become a better city for all. Utilizing a gender equity lens for all policy and program decision making is key. Goals and targets should be SMART - Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Time sensitive.

We respectfully ask City Council to consider this request.

Yours truly,

Sheila J. Perry,
President,
Ottawa Council of Women
president@ottawacw.ca
www.ottawacw.ca