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Canadian Scan on Domestic Violence Prevention Policies at the Municipal Level

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report

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**CANADIAN SCAN ON DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICIES
AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL**

September 2018



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Table of Contents

1.0 Scope of the Project	1
2.0 Methods	1
3.0 Preliminary Findings: Summary	1
3.1. Gender Based Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative in Edmonton	2
3.2. Gender Equity and Equality Strategies in Vancouver	2
3.3. Winnipeg Safe City	2
3.4. Toronto Public Health in Collaboration with All City Divisions	3
3.5. Examples of Other Policies that were Excluded.....	5
Appendix 1: List of Municipalities Included in the Review	6
Endnotes	7

1.0 Scope of the Project

The purpose of this project is to conduct a preliminary national scan of municipal websites to identify council adopted policies, plans, frameworks, strategies or initiatives that focus on preventing domestic violence and/or sexual violence (referred to as “policies” in this report).

2.0 Methods

The following key words were used in the online search (each combination was used for each municipality): ‘domestic violence’, ‘violence against women’, ‘intimate partner violence’, ‘gender-based violence’, ‘intimate partner violence’, ‘sexual violence’, ‘spousal violence’, ‘conjugal violence’ AND ‘strategy’, ‘plan’, ‘framework’, ‘initiative’, ‘program’, ‘policy’, ‘taskforce’.

Only policies that have gone through a city council process and have been approved/endorsed in the last 15 years (2013-2018) were included in the review. Ten provinces and three territories were included in the search, with municipalities being chosen based on the following criteria: a) Capital of each province/territory, and b) Next largest most populous city/town in that province. (See Appendix 1 for list of municipalities). Due to small populations within the territories, the capital alone was selected.

The following plans have been excluded from the current review:

- National and provincial government plans;
- Internal workplace policies for the City organization and/or departments;
- Documents/programs endorsed by communities and funded or supported by the municipalities but not endorsed by City Council;
- Individual projects, campaigns and initiatives that are one-offs and are not part of the City plan;
- Broader strategies that mention domestic violence and/or sexual violence but do not specifically focus on those issues (e.g., Crime Reduction/Prevention Strategies, Social Plans, Community Safety Plans, Healthy City Strategies).

3.0 Preliminary Findings: Summary

Out of 25 municipalities reviewed, only four municipalities had municipal level policies that met the inclusion criteria. These are:

1. City of Edmonton, *Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative* (2017)
2. City of Vancouver, *A Gender Equality Strategy* (2005) and *Women’s Equity Strategy* (2018)
3. City of Winnipeg, *Winnipeg Safe City: Working for a City Free from Violence Against Women and Girls* (2013)
4. City of Toronto, *Action on Intimate Partner Violence against Women* (2015)

3.1. Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative in Edmonton

In 2015, the City of Edmonton launched the Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative to “reduce and ultimately end gender-based violence and sexual assault in the city”.¹ The operating budget for 2016-2018 states that the goal of the initiative is “to support actions and programs to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault in Edmonton by working with key stakeholders and community partners to increase awareness and understanding of gender-based violence, advance innovative solutions and demonstrate leadership to change the conversation on gender-based violence”.² In 2017, the City released a report with findings from a survey of 600 Edmontonians who were asked about their perspectives on sexual and gender-based violence. The data will be used to support further development of the initiative.³

As outlined in the most recent Terms of Reference, (approved by City Council in March 2018⁴), “the initiative is about building a multifaceted movement for social change, shaping attitudes, raising conversations, and building awareness to prevent all forms of gender-based violence targeting the root causes; inequality and discrimination.”⁵ Current desired outcomes include the following:

1. Increase awareness of, and understanding about, gender-based violence.
2. Increase commitment to end gender-based violence in public, private and nonprofit organizations.
3. Increase engagement of men and boys as allies in ending gender-based violence in our community.⁶

In 2016, Edmonton joined the United Nations Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative and, after Winnipeg, became the second city in Canada to support this innovative approach to prevent and address sexual violence.⁷ In 2017, a scoping study⁸ was released with the goal to develop an action plan to advance recommendations from the report. The action plan is expected to be released in 2019.

3.2. Gender Equity and Equality Strategies in Vancouver

Developed by the Women’s Task Force in 2015, the Gender Equality Strategy for the City of Vancouver includes preventing gender-based violence as one of the key issues that it aims to address; however, only minimal actions specific to this goal are included in the report.

In contrast, the Women’s Equity Strategy for 2018-2028 has specific actions to address violence against women in Vancouver including joining the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative, along with a commitment to replicate a scoping study completed by the City of Winnipeg (see below). The strategy was released in 2018 and is currently underway.

3.3. Winnipeg Safe City

On December 10, 2013, Winnipeg joined the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative,

becoming the first such city in North America to do so. This program was launched by UN Women in 2010 as a global response to sexual violence against women and girls. It is co-led by the Manitoba Status of Women and the City of Winnipeg⁹ in partnership with many City departments, the provincial government, the University of Winnipeg (the first campus to join this global initiative), community organizations and UN Women.¹⁰ The Winnipeg Safe City Steering Committee was created in 2013 to oversee the project. In 2016, the committee produced a report on the initiative “to guide the ongoing and evolving work of the steering committee.”¹¹ The Winnipeg Safe City program involves four areas of work¹²:

1. Data collection and analysis (national and local statistics; focus groups with local women).
2. Developing partnerships with local people who bring knowledge, experience and expertise in public safety, urban planning, gender equality and violence against women and girls.
3. Designing and sharing public awareness materials to improve understanding and awareness of the causes and consequences of sexual violence.
4. Building organizational and institutional capacity to better understand, prevent and respond to gender-based issues, including violence and safety in public spaces.

Two geographic areas within the city were selected to be part of the initiative: (1) a three kilometer area comprised of five inner city and downtown neighbourhoods and (2) the University of Winnipeg campus. Both sites have been thoroughly analyzed and numerous recommendations have been compiled together from the various data sets.¹³ Although no action plan was publicly available outlining the strategies that the City of Winnipeg will take as a result of joining the initiative, the scoping report provides an overview of actions taken during 2013-2016. The City of Winnipeg’s role was:

- to appoint Councillor Cindy Gilroy as co-chair of the steering committee (2013);
- partner with the Winnipeg Committee for Safety, an advisory committee for City Council (2016);
- provide a “coordinator to support Winnipeg Safe City program design, research, promotion and intervention development” (2016).¹⁴

In October 2016, a number of new initiatives to support safer public spaces for women and girls were launched as part of the initiative, which was described as follows: “Winnipeg Safe City works with local levels of government, communities and the police to generate innovative approaches to preventing and reducing harassment and sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces, so they can move more safely and exercise their right to enjoy their cities.”¹⁵

3.4. Toronto Public Health in Collaboration with All City Divisions

In 2015, the City of Toronto published a *Staff Report for Action on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Against Women*. The action plan was developed by Toronto Public Health (TPH) in memory of a public health nurse Zahra Abdille (and her sons, aged 13 and 8) who were murdered by her husband on November 29, 2014. The action plan aims to “enhance Toronto Public Health capacity for prevention, early identification, and response to IPV” and includes ten overall goals (Figure 1) that will require “collaboration with other City agencies and divisions and community partners”.¹⁶ In

addition, Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health made numerous recommendations to the provincial government, Toronto Police, Status of Women Canada and Statistics Canada with specific actions.¹⁷

Figure 1: TPH Action Plan on Intimate Partner Violence against Women (IPV)

<p>Prevention of IPV</p> <p>Goal 1: Expand parenting education and support</p> <p>Goal 2: Expand education on healthy relationships from middle childhood to adolescence</p> <p>Goal 3: Address social and cultural norms that perpetuate IPV</p>
<p>Early Identification of IPV</p> <p>Goal 4: Increase staff capacity to identify and respond to clients affected by IPV</p> <p>Goal 5: Ensure equitable access to TPH programs and services</p> <p>Goal 6: Increase TPH capacity to address IPV in the workplace</p> <p>Goal 7: Increase the public's capacity to identify and respond to women affected by IPV</p>
<p>Response to IPV</p> <p>Goal 8: Increase access to resources and services that protect, support, and empower women</p> <p>Goal 9: Foster coordination and collaboration</p> <p>Goal 10: Improve surveillance and research on IPV</p>

The plan was endorsed by the Board of Health, and City Council unanimously “adopted the recommendation that the City Manager work with the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, the General Managers of Shelter, Support and Housing Administration and Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and other relevant City divisions and agencies to collaborate with the Medical Officer of Health to identify opportunities for implementing the intimate partner violence action plan”.¹⁸

In 2016, the Acting Medical Officer of Health released a report entitled *Progress in Implementing the Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan, 2016-2019*.¹⁹ This update includes additional recommendations to the provincial and federal governments as well as the Toronto Police with a focus on LGBTQ2S communities. Both the initial plan and the implementation update state that “there is no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year’s budget”.²⁰ The final report states that the goal is to “facilitate long-term implementation within TPH and across other City divisions and agencies. The plan is considered a living document that will be reviewed annually and enhanced as necessary to fill identified gaps, and to ensure unique issues faced by certain vulnerable populations are addressed. This process has begun with a focus on the Indigenous and LGBTQ2S communities, and will continue in the future with other vulnerable groups.”²¹

3.5. Examples of Other Policies that were Excluded from this Report

Toronto District School Board

The Toronto District School Board has a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office that was established in 2009 and has initiated numerous policies and initiatives since then, for example:

- Gender-Based Violence Policy (2010)²²
- Safe and Positive Spaces (2009)²³ as part of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009)²⁴ and more recently the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (2014)²⁵

City of Toronto Internal Policies

In 2013, the City of Toronto developed an internal city-wide policy entitled *Addressing Domestic Violence in City Workplaces Policy*. It was endorsed by the Occupational Health & Safety Coordinating Committee and includes *Guidelines for Implementing the Domestic Violence Policy*.

Other

Examples of one-off initiatives and policies include the following:

- The City of Surrey: A partnership with the BC Lions & the Ending Violence Association of BC to support a campaign that addresses the issue of violence against women (approved by the Council and funding attached).
- In 2015, the Council of Fredericton stated that they would create and implement a Comprehensive Intimate Partner Violence Strategy; however, no updates were found.
- St. John's (NL) created Angel's Street Project to name streets in an effort to generate awareness about VAW as well as a Pet Safe Keeping Program to protect pets in homes with domestic violence.

Appendix 1: List of Municipalities Included in the Review

#	Province/Territory	#	Municipality
1	Alberta	1	Calgary
		2	Edmonton
2	British Columbia	3	Vancouver
		4	Surrey
		5	Victoria
3	Saskatchewan	6	Saskatoon
		7	Regina
4	Manitoba	8	Winnipeg
		9	Brandon
5	Ontario	10	Ottawa
		11	Toronto
6	Quebec	12	Montreal
		13	Quebec City
7	New Brunswick	14	Fredericton
		15	Moncton
		16	St. John
8	Nova Scotia	17	Halifax
		18	Cape Breton
9	Prince Edward Island	19	Charlottetown
		20	Summerside
10	Newfoundland	21	St. John's
		22	Corner Brook
11	North West Territories	23	Yellowknife
12	Yukon	24	Whitehorse
13	Nunavut	25	Iqaluit

Endnotes

- ¹ City of Edmonton. (2018). *Gender based violence and sexual assault initiative*. Retrieved from https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/gender-based-violence-and-sexual-assault-prevention.aspx, para 1.
- ² City of Edmonton. (2015). *2016-2018 operating budget*. Retrieved from https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PDF/Budget%20Overview%202016-2018%20Operating%20Budget.pdf, p. 81.
- ³ City of Edmonton. (2017). *Citizen perspectives on Sexual & Gender Based Violence*. Retrieved from https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PDF/GBVPExecutiveReport.pdf
- ⁴ City of Edmonton. (2018). *2017-2021 Council initiatives – terms of reference*. Retrieved from <http://sirepub.edmonton.ca/sirepub/cache/2/2rtspxmngfstwx4lnlvjcme0/71967309102018090859570.PDF>
- ⁵ City of Edmonton. (2018). *Terms of reference: Gender based violence and sexual assault prevention*. Retrieved from <http://sirepub.edmonton.ca/sirepub/cache/2/2rtspxmngfstwx4lnlvjcme0/71968509102018090726562.PDF>, p. 1.
- ⁶ City of Edmonton. (2018). *Terms of reference: Gender based violence and sexual assault prevention*. Retrieved from <http://sirepub.edmonton.ca/sirepub/cache/2/2rtspxmngfstwx4lnlvjcme0/71968509102018090726562.PDF>, p. 1.
- ⁷ City of Edmonton. (2016). *Safe cities and safe public spaces global initiative*. Retrieved from https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/united-nations-women-safe-citi.aspx
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- ⁹ City of Winnipeg. (2017). *Winnipeg safe city steering committee*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/WpgSafeCity/Committee.stm>
- ¹⁰ City of Winnipeg. (2017). *A partner in UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Programme*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipeg.ca/Clerks/boards/WpgSafeCity/default.stm> and
- ¹¹ Winnipeg Safe City Steering Committee. (2016) *Addressing sexual Violence against women and girls in public spaces*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/WpgSafeCity/pdfs/WinnipegSafeCityScopingStudy.pdf>, p.7.
- ¹² Winnipeg Safe City Steering Committee. (2016) *Addressing sexual Violence against women and girls in public spaces*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/WpgSafeCity/pdfs/WinnipegSafeCityScopingStudy.pdf>, p. 14
- ¹³ Winnipeg Safe City Steering Committee. (2016) *Addressing sexual Violence against women and girls in public spaces*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/WpgSafeCity/pdfs/WinnipegSafeCityScopingStudy.pdf>;
- ¹⁴ Winnipeg Safe City Steering Committee. (2016) *Addressing sexual Violence against women and girls in public spaces*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/WpgSafeCity/pdfs/WinnipegSafeCityScopingStudy.pdf>, p.74;
- ¹⁵ City of Winnipeg. (2016). *Province, City announce new initiatives to support safer public spaces for women and girls*. Retrieved from https://winnipeg.ca/cao/media/news/nr_2016/nr_20160930.stm#4, para 4.
- ¹⁶ City of Toronto. (2015). *Staff report for action on intimate partner violence against women*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-85930.pdf>, p. 1-2.
- ¹⁷ City of Toronto. (2015). *Staff report for action on intimate partner violence against women*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-85930.pdf>, p. 1-2.
- ¹⁸ City of Toronto. (2016). *Progress in Implementing the Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan, 2016-2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-98553.pdf>, p. 3.
- ¹⁹ City of Toronto. (2016). *Progress in Implementing the Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan, 2016-2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-98553.pdf>,
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- ²¹ City of Toronto. (2016). *Progress in Implementing the Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan, 2016-2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-98553.pdf>, p. 1
- ²² Toronto District School Board. (2010). *Gender-based violence. P071*. Retrieved from <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Innovation/docs/1762.pdf>
- ²³ Toronto District School Board. (2010). *Safe and positive spaces*. Retrieved from <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Your-School-Day/Safe-and-Positive-Spaces>

²⁴ Ontario Government. (2009). *Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy*. Retrieved from Toronto District School Board: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Innovation/docs/EquityEducationStrategy.pdf>

²⁵ City of Toronto. (2014). *The Toronto youth equity strategy*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/long-term-vision-plans-and-strategies/toronto-youth-equity-strategy/>

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