

TWCA Toronto Women's City Alliance
Making Equality Matter.

Municipal Literacy Toolkit



A guide to help women and girls
advocate for their rights in Toronto



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Women, Equity and Municipal Policy

The City of Toronto's policies, programs and decision-making don't reflect the reality of women's lives. If everyone is treated the same, women's needs cannot be met by policies and programs—treating people the same when their lives are different is not equality.

The Toronto Women's City Alliance (TWCA) created this toolkit to help politicians, residents and city staff understand the impact of city services—or lack thereof—on women's lives. It can also be used to learn about ways to create change by using a gender equity lens and advocating for equity in policy and services, i.e. different needs may require different approaches.

How does the City of Toronto touch women's lives? Women use the city differently than men because their employment, family and child rearing roles, poverty, interests and safety concerns are different than men's. Other concerns include fear of harassment or violence, travelling with strollers, child and elder care responsibilities, housing and public space use. The reality for diverse women in Toronto is that they face poverty, violence, poor diets, homelessness, slum landlords, underemployment,

precarious work, lack of affordable childcare services, and restrictions on their movements due to safety concerns and unaffordable TTC fares. These disparities are even more pronounced for First Nations, Inuit and Metis women, racialized women, women living with disabilities, and transwomen.

What is Gender Equity and a Gender Equity Lens? Gender equity ensures the development of programs, policies and budgets that are fair and meet the needs of both women and men. A Gender Equity Lens is a systematic framework for asking questions and analyzing the impact of the City's policies, services, and practices on different communities of women and girls. When cities are designed and run using a Gender Equity Lens, policies, programs, and decision-making address systemic gender inequality and discrimination. Gender Equity leads to Gender Equality.

Why is Gender Equity in Municipal Policy so Important?

- More than 50% of Toronto's population identify as women

- While women and girls from different communities face intersecting disadvantages, overall women and girls are still the most disadvantaged groups in our society.
- Including women in decision making and investing in women and girls increases both economic growth and social welfare.
- More equitable representation and a broader understanding of the issues that affect all segments of the population result in better policy and practices for everyone.
- Equitable policy positively affects women's well-being without adversely impacting other groups.

 **LINK:** Click here to access **A New Deal for Women: What Women in Toronto Need**

 **LINK:** Click here to access **Communities in Which Women Count: TWCA Women's Equality Report Card**

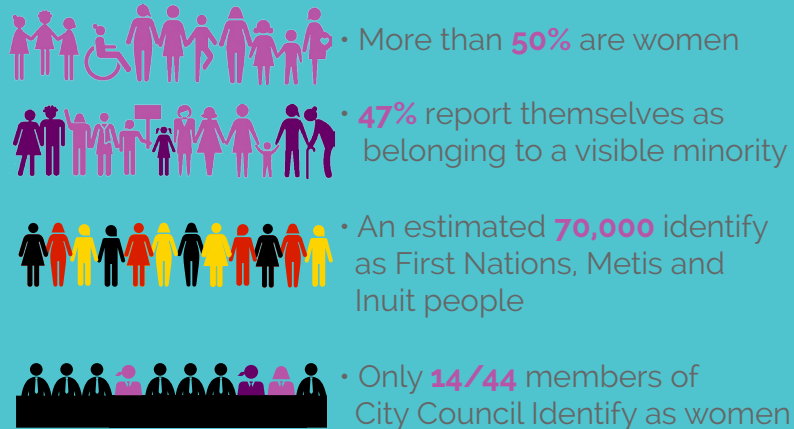
All of our city services touch women's lives, but TWCA's experience led us to focus this toolkit on 6 major areas:



How City of Toronto Works

Who is Our City?

Toronto has a diverse population of **2.97 million**

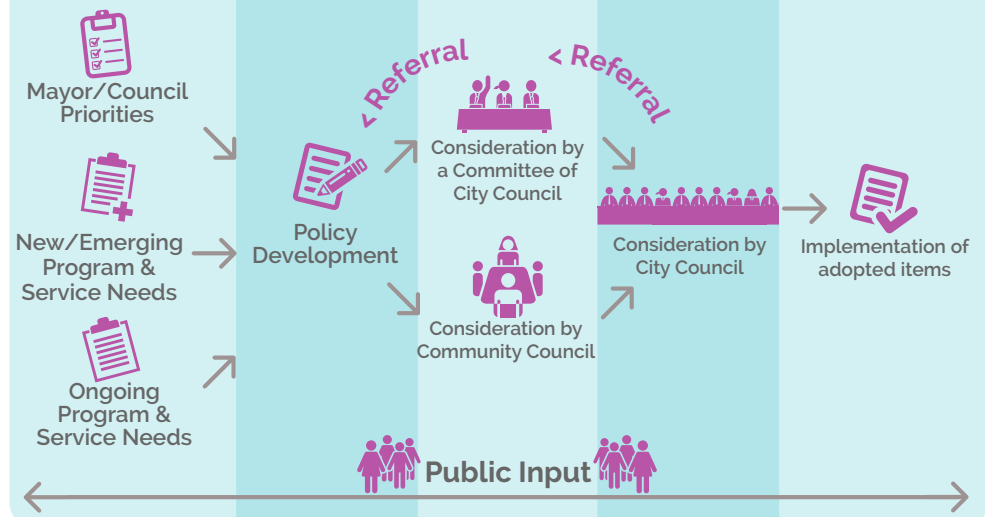
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- More than **50%** are women
 - **47%** report themselves as belonging to a visible minority
 - An estimated **70,000** identify as First Nations, Metis and Inuit people
 - Only **14/44** members of City Council Identify as women



LINK: Click here to access a **Ward Map of Toronto** from the City of Toronto's website

Toronto City Council is responsible for providing local services such as water supply, parks, garbage collection and roads. They also issue permits for buildings and development as well as licensing and inspecting certain businesses. City Council also indirectly oversees other major services delivered through its agencies and corporations, such as the Toronto Police Service, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), and the Toronto Public Library.

Municipal Decision Making Process



Toronto's City Council is made up of the Mayor and 44 Councillors. The Mayor is elected by voters from across the City. Each Councillor is elected by voters in one of 44 wards (a geographic area of the city). The term of office for the Mayor and Council is four years. Currently, there are only 14 female councillors; of those, only 1 is a racialized woman.



City of Toronto Budget

The City's annual budget sets out how City Council will use its revenue to provide services for Torontonians.

The majority of Toronto's income comes from property taxes; a much smaller portion comes from the municipal land transfer tax and various user fees.

Both homeowners and tenants (through rent) pay property taxes.

City of Toronto Budget Glossary:

Capital Budget: This is the budget for building things like libraries and recreation centres. The City has a 10-year capital plan. It can borrow to pay for some capital projects that last more than 10 years.

Operating Budget: This is the annual budget for providing services, staff and activities, and it **MUST** be balanced every year. This means that the City cannot spend more than it collects in revenue. To make sure that the budget balances, the City underestimates its revenues and usually has a yearly surplus.

Rate-supported Budget: Solid waste and water. Solid Waste (Garbage) fees pay for solid waste services and water fees pay for water services.

User Fees: Fees charged by the City for the use of its services (e.g., TTC fares, development charges and fees for city permits, recreation fees).

Revenue: Income received by the City of Toronto including taxes, rates, transfers from other levels of government, fines and interest income.



Budget Allocation

Some of Where Toronto's Budget Goes



LINK: Click here to access The City of Toronto's detailed **2016 Operating Budget**

Why is it important for women?

How City Council allocates money affects spending on ALL services and infrastructure.

City Councillors have a responsibility to be aware of how the City's spending impacts women, and this must play a role in their decisions about voting for the budget.



Check out your City Councillor!

Do they support subsidized childcare spaces? Meal programs? Affordable housing? What is their record of voting on these issues?

Toronto needs gender-responsive budgeting!

Applying a Gender Equity Lens to the City budget can move the City toward a Gender-Responsive Budget (GRB) if gender gaps are identified and steps are taken to eliminate these.

A gender gap exists when women and men's needs are not equally met and/or when women pay disproportionately through their income for the same service.

Here are some ways in which this can work:

Example 1: More women use public transit. GRB would allocate resources to reflect this consideration in the safety, design, and accessibility of public transit.

Example 2: Property taxes have a regressive impact on low-income women. GRB would explore progressive methods of taxation, which can have significant effects: Consider that over 50% of lone-parent women with young children are low-income and that the majority of seniors are women living on fixed incomes and are overtaxed by market value property taxes.

How to have your say during the budget process:

The budget process usually begins in November prior to the budget year. Once city staff have presented the budget to the City's Budget Committee, members of the public have a chance to read through and make their voices heard. After the Budget Committee hears deputations and makes a decision on City spending, the budget goes to City Council for a final vote, usually in January of the budget year.

Feeling fired up? There's lots that you can do!

- Attend budget townhalls
- Organize your own community townhall and invite local City Councillors
- Give your experience in a budget deputation and/or write to the Budget Committee
- Organize a townhall and invite your City Councillor



LINK: Click here to access the ***City of Toronto's Budget Committee Agendas***



LINK: Click here to access the article ***Toronto budget fails to address poverty reduction***

Budget Activity:

Pretend to be the Mayor of Toronto and design your own \$11 billion budget! What city services would you provide?



Women and City Planning

City Planning or Urban Design is the process of planning how our city grows physically, economically and socially. The City of Toronto Planning Department:

- Determines how our neighbourhoods grow and change
- Determines where housing will be located
- Determines employment opportunities, e.g., where businesses, retail, parks, and factories can be built
- Develops Transportation policies
- Sets guidelines on how buildings are designed, including height, amenities, and environmental considerations.

Why is it essential to consider the needs of women and girls when planning our city?

Women's needs can be met when planning incorporates women's everyday travel and activity. Retail and employment zoning should reflect the diversity of work and work locations that women engage in. For instance, many women engage in part-time and shift work to accommodate caregiving and domestic

demands. This work may include home businesses such as catering or day care, and should be reflected in zoning laws.

Neighbourhood planning should consider access to jobs, childcare facilities, community centres, grocery stores, social services, doctor's offices, and hospitals. Affordable housing must include the range of complex family needs including multi-generational, sole parent, blended families, senior women, and women with disabilities.

Toronto's Official Plan: Toronto's Official Plan sets the vision for where and how Toronto will grow until the year 2031. When City Planning reviews a new condo development or shopping centre, the developers must build according to the City's Official Plan and Zoning Bylaws. Detailed Site Plan and Development agreements govern most developments in the City.

The City of Toronto is in the process of reviewing its Official Plan, which includes updating key policies and guidelines. Currently, there is no mention of women in the entire Official Plan.

Since we know that diverse communities of women live differently in the City, planning new and changing neighbourhoods must consider how all people access the services, amenities and infrastructure needed to live, play and work.

Advocacy in Action:

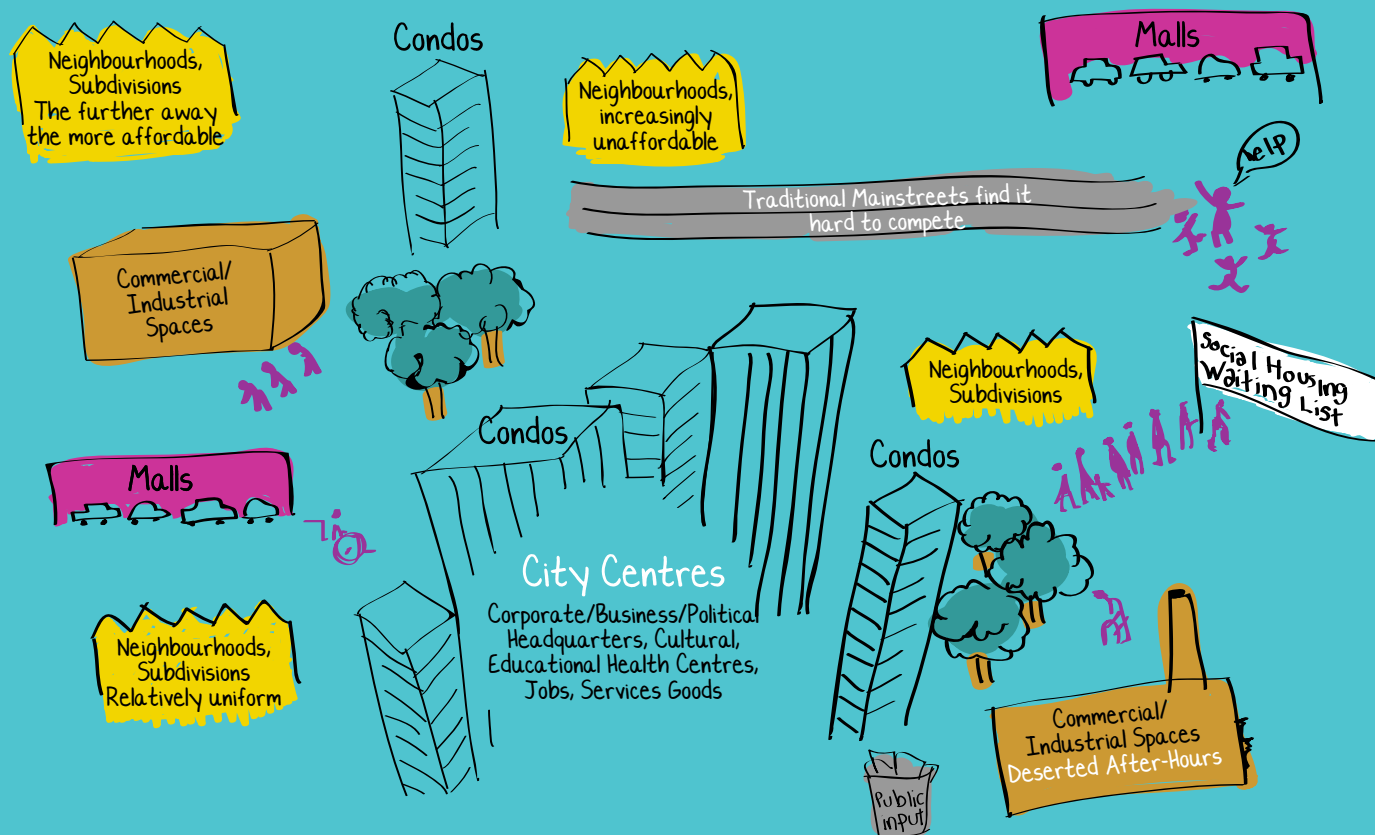
TWCA is deeply involved in the City's Official Plan Review. Several of our recommendations on Housing, Transportation, Safety, Employment, and Social Services have been incorporated into the City's recommendations to the Province.



LINK: Click here to access the **Toronto Official Plan** on City of Toronto's website



LINK: Click here to access **Women-friendly Policies for Toronto's Official Plan** on TWCA's website



Urban planning still tends to separate everyday living functions. This requires travel, which costs money and time. Women have less of both. Planning must incorporate the full range of residents, voices, experiences and everyday social service needs.

Employment Lands Policy

TWCA has successfully worked to have social equity criteria included in parts of Toronto's Official Plan: A mandate for equitable access to employment opportunities, especially for equity-seeking groups, has been added.

The Employment Lands section now recognizes the full diversity of employment activities happening in non-traditional employment areas such as caregiving in homes and work in public spaces.



LINK: Click here to access **Amendments to the Official Plan for Economic Health & Employment Lands Policies** on City of Toronto's website

Urban Design & Safety: The City of Toronto sets out urban design guidelines to fulfill the goals of the Official Plan. The Guidelines translate into the design of streets, parks, open spaces and buildings. While many of these guidelines focus on aesthetics, safety and accessibility must be integral goals of urban design.

Women and girls are more likely to be targets of sexual assault and harassment. Therefore, the design of public spaces (e.g. sight lines at transit stops, lighting in parks) must ensure that women and girls can access city services and amenities free from the fear and threat of violence and harassment.

Advocacy in Action:

In consultation with women in Toronto in the 1990s, the Safer City Guidelines incorporated the perspectives of women's safety into urban design. TWCA advocates for the inclusion of an updated version of the Safer City Guidelines for the City's Urban Design staff.

The City of Toronto Planning Department must incorporate the voices of women and girls in all planning decisions so that our City and neighbourhoods enable all residents to thrive.

City Planning Activity: Blue-Sky Thinking

Pose the following question to your group:

1. Waking up on a bright spring morning, what would you like to see around you? Think about the room, building, neighbourhood, and city as potential focus points.
2. Draw a map of your community. Map the positive and negative places and then blue-sky together. Ask, "Wouldn't it be nice, if..."
3. Have the facilitator draw the images on a large sheet of paper on the wall.



Women and Transit

In Toronto, women outnumber men in their regular use of public transit to get to and from work. According to the 2006 Census, public transit is the regular mode of transportation for 28% of women with paid employment to get to and from work, compared to 17% of men. However, for women of all ages and backgrounds, it is often too expensive. Women frequently walk with their children because they cannot afford fares. For many women, the routing and scheduling of buses is inappropriate.

Availability and Affordability: In Toronto, 70% of TTC costs are covered by riders through fares—the highest percentage in North America. This means that the increasing costs of the transit system fall disproportionately on the shoulders of riders, the majority of whom are women.

Many women struggle to afford the cost of transit and must sometimes choose between transit fares and food or going to medical appointments, especially when they need to make multiple stops.



Physical Accessibility: Physical access is challenging for many women, especially those with children and mobility devices like strollers and walkers. Many subway stations are not equipped with elevators and women report that the elevators that do exist are often not working. The TTC's information line doesn't provide updated information on the status of elevators, leaving women stranded. Elevators are also not located in easily recognizable locations so when they are available and working, they are often hard to find.



Geographic Accessibility: Many women and girls live far from the city centre where housing is more affordable, but they face long commutes to the downtown core. They need frequent, accessible and affordable transit close to their homes, workplaces, and their children's schools. Transit must also operate during the hours that students, shift and late night workers need to get to and from work or school safely.

Safety: Safety on transit is a major problem, particularly for women. The 'Request Stop' program—which is open to people of all genders—is designed for women's safety but many women report that not all bus drivers are willing to let them out between designated bus stops.

On a daily basis, many women and girls face sexual harassment and assault while travelling on transit. These incidents often remain unreported. Transit planning and management must include the voices and experiences of women and girl transit riders so that the design, lighting, routes, scheduling, and stops in our transit system reflect their safety concerns.

Transit must also be appropriate for the needs of diverse communities of women and girls—ensuring that transit is near schools, recreation, community services, healthcare, accessible and affordable housing. This means thinking about women living with mental health challenges, seniors, and women with disabilities, young mothers and newcomer women, and ensuring that transit services provide a network of support in every community.

Advocacy in Action:

TWCA has been working with the TTC and the City of Toronto to incorporate the perspective of female transit riders in transit planning. TWCA has participated in the consultations for the new transit stations that are planned along the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit line and advocated that the stations be fully accessible to all transit riders. We also advocated for improved safety considerations, including lighting and adequate visibility in the design of bus stops, waiting areas and exits in and out of the station. TWCA has been an active voice in challenging City Council to ensure gender parity on the board of the TTC.



LINK: Click here to access the article
We need more women on the TTC board

Transit Activity

Take a trip in her shoes: Divide into pairs or groups of 3-4. Imagine a day in the life of one of the women listed below. Describe their day and where they might need to go from the time they leave their house to the time they get home in the evening.

Woman 1: Single working mother with two children living in Scarborough. The younger child's daycare centre is a 20 minute bus ride from her home, and her son's elementary school is a 15 minute walk from her home.

Woman 2: An older woman who uses a mobility scooter living in North York. She sees a doctor downtown once a week. Her options are to arrange wheel-trans or use a TTC route that is accessible.

Woman 3: A 19 year-old university student living in Rexdale who works a part-time retail job.

Now answer the following questions:

1. How many trips did she take in the day? If transit costs \$3 per trip, what is the total cost of her trips?
2. What affected the planning of her transit routes? Did she have to take a longer trip to get to an accessible vehicle?
3. How did her sense of safety affect her transit route and options?

Have each group take turns describing the transit trip(s) their women took. Discuss the factors affecting their trip. As a group, discuss how transit could be planned better to reflect women's usage. Ask the group to discuss how they might approach City Council or the TTC to better plan transit that reflects the needs of women and girls. What changes could be made to improve transit for women and girls?



Women and Housing

Canada has endorsed housing as a human right, which makes the supply of housing a social responsibility and not something to be left solely to market forces. Canada is the only G8 country without a national housing strategy and Canada's government remains in violation of women's human rights.

In Toronto, housing is neither affordable, available, nor appropriate for almost 20% of women and girls. Rents are high and, on average, women are poorer than men, especially lone parents, seniors, those living with a disability, victims of violence or belonging to a marginalized group. People often wait for many years for affordable housing. Many women are often forced to couch surf or stay much longer in the shelter system as a result.

Women-led single-family households, single women, and senior women are also more likely to be tenants than homeowners, often spending more than 50% of their income on housing.



The standard for affordable housing is **30% or less** of monthly income spent on shelter costs

Toronto Affordable Housing Waitlist 2013

Statistics from Wellsley Institute



90,000+ households needed

165,723 people are waiting for a home

In 2014, there were more high-rise buildings under construction in Toronto than any other city in North America. The majority of this housing is not affordable and doesn't include rental housing. Ownership housing is more profitable for developers, resulting in a shortage of rental housing and an escalation of rents. Since commercial rental properties are taxed at a higher rate than single-family homes, renters pay a higher rate of property tax than individual home owners through their rent.

Housing must also be appropriate for the diverse needs of women and girls— ensuring that housing is near services such as public transit, healthcare, childcare, employment opportunities, and recreational spaces. This means thinking about women living with mental health challenges, seniors, and women with disabilities, young mothers and newcomer women, and



ensuring that important services are close by or onsite in order to provide a network of support in every community.



LINK: Click here to access the article
The great divide in Toronto housing

Advocacy in Action:

TWCA has been active with other partner organizations to lobby the City and Province for the implementation of inclusionary zoning to ensure an increase in the supply of affordable housing. Inclusionary zoning means that the City can impose a requirement for affordable housing in development applications.


Housing Activity:


How do you think the following women would be affected by the absence of affordable and accessible housing?


1. A woman in an abusive relationship
2. A woman who couch-surfs
3. A woman who is forced to move into the shelter system, often far away from her community and support networks
4. An increase in property taxes for a female senior living on a fixed income

What does childcare look like in Toronto right now?


(Facilitators, put these up on flip chart paper around the room or Powerpoint slides)

 **61,000:** The number of licensed childcare spaces in Toronto as of January 31, 2014


 **16,381:** The number of children on the waiting list for a child care fee subsidy as of January 2014

 **24,932:** The number of children the available childcare fee subsidies can support.

 **346,320:** The total number of children aged 0-12 in Toronto, based on the 2011 census

 **18%** of Toronto's children are accommodated by the city's licensed childcare system

 **78.6%** The percentage of women ages 20-54 participate in the labour force in Toronto (2013 StatsCan data)

 Toronto has the most expensive childcare in Canada and the system is not meeting the needs of working women. The annual cost of childcare in Toronto can often be more than the cost of housing! **Without subsidies, childcare costs can be around \$24,000 per year.**

Women remain primarily responsible for bearing and rearing children. In households with a male and female partner, women are more likely to be at home to take care of children. In urban cities like Toronto without sufficient and affordable childcare and where many people have a smaller extended family network, women are forced to work part-time and take more days off work to care for sick children.

Similarly, without accessible and affordable childcare, women are less likely to be able to access English classes, schooling, or more well-paid and stable jobs. Women in one-parent households, and/or living on low-incomes are even more dependent on childcare services. In Toronto, the median income for women is \$15,000 less than that of men. Leaving the workplace or schooling for periods of time for child rearing hurts women's prospects for long-term financial security.



Advocacy in Action:

TWCA continues to advocate for a national childcare program, and we work towards municipal policy that supports this, e.g., giving deputations in favour of more subsidized childcare spaces.

Have Your Say!

Women need to speak out on the need for childcare! Lower fees and more subsidized daycare spaces in close proximity to women's homes or public transit are urgently needed. The City of Toronto gets childcare funding from the province and federal government. You can contact your MPP and MP to express your need for childcare. You can also organize childcare rallies at Queen's Park!

Childcare Activity:

Ask the group to take a minute to reflect on the following questions. Large groups can split up into pairs to discuss.

Think back to when you were a child.

Youth:

- Who was responsible for child-raising activities within the household?
- When you were sick, who took care of you?
- If your mother was working, were you in daycare?

Adult women:

- Who is responsible for child-rearing activities within your household?
- If you are working, are you accessing daycare? Is it affordable? Licensed?
- How does this responsibility impact your decisions around work (for example, where you work, how you commute, which jobs you choose to take)?



Community Recreation

Access to community recreation is vital for the health and well-being of women! Not only are the benefits of physical movement well documented, but community spaces bring people together and offer opportunities for interaction and community building, knowledge exchange and new skills development. These spaces are important for women who experience isolation due to poverty, immigration, cultural or language barriers.

Low income women report that cost is often a barrier to accessing recreational services for themselves and their children. When the City of Toronto voted to remove free recreational services for low income adults, 60% of participants were unable to register for activities. For many youth, even \$1 can make a difference to whether they're able to access after-school programming at their local community centre.



To be responsive to the needs of diverse communities of women and girls, recreation centres must:

- Keep track of participant demographics
 - Who attends programs at the centre?
 - Do some programs attract more boys than girls or vice versa?
 - Do both young boys and girls get equitable access to space at the centre?
- Engage in outreach so that women and girls in the community have meaningful input into programs
- Ensure that the centre is physically accessible for people with disabilities and the physical layout of the building creates a safe space for all
- Train staff to address the diverse and competing needs of different participants
- Locate the community centre close to public transit
- Provide onsite child care for mothers attending programs

Recreation must also be appropriate for the needs of diverse communities of women and girls—ensuring that recreation is near services such as public transit, healthcare, and affordable housing. This means thinking about women living with mental health challenges, seniors, and women with disabilities, young mothers and newcomer women, and ensuring that services are close by or onsite in order to provide a network of support in every community.

Community Recreation Activity:

Draw your ideal community centre (physical structure and programs). What would the structure look like? How can we make it an inclusive space?

Describe the types of programs you would have. What kinds of programs would be helpful for diverse groups of women, e.g., young women, seniors, newcomers, Indigenous women?

How to Get Involved

There are lots of ways in which you can have your say! Getting involved is a way of taking ownership of your municipal government, and making sure that it works for you! If you have a particular issue that is very important to you, you can take action in several ways:



- You can write, e-mail, tweet, call or visit your City Councillor to express your views.



- You can contact the City with any service requests, comments or complaints by dialing Toronto 311.



- You can also make complaints through the City's Office of the Ombudsman. For more info visit <http://ombudstoronto.ca/>



- In general, be sure to exercise your right to vote in municipal, provincial and federal elections! Change is possible, and you can help to make change through your vote.



- Let your family, friends, and community members know about it! The more people who care about and take civic action on an issue, the more likely it is to bring about change.



- You can follow the status of the issue in City Council, and hold your City Councillor accountable by contacting them.



- You can give a deputation in City Hall. This is your right as a member of the public, and you can express your views to any City Council Committee. If you cannot make it to give a deputation, you can send a written letter to the Committee.



- Organize a protest!



- Join TWCA and help us make Toronto a better place for women and girls! Visit twca.ca for more info.

Further Resources

City of Toronto Links

City of Toronto: www.toronto.ca

- Information on City programs and services
- All the work of City Council, such as Committee schedules, meeting agendas and decisions, and information about City Boards
- Contact information for the Mayor, all City Councillors and all City divisions
- Information about population demographics, events and activities in the City.

311 Toronto: <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=86d3ba2ae8b1e310VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

- A-Z list of City services
- Links for service requests, complaints, registration and payments

Office of the Ombudsman - City of Toronto: <http://ombudstoronto.ca/>

Community Organizations

Toronto Women's City Alliance: www.twca.ca

City for All Women Initiative: <http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/>

Women in Toronto Politics: <http://witopoli.com/>

Maytree Foundation Civic Literacy Training Toolkit: <http://maytree.com/blog/2014/05/how-governments-work-maytrees-civic-literacy-toolkit/>

Publications

Communities in Which Women Count: TWCA Women's Equality Report Card:

http://www.twca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/TWCA_June_2010a1.pdf

TWCA Official Plan Policy Review: <http://www.twca.ca/resources/>

A New Deal for Women: What Women in Toronto Need: <http://www.twca.ca/resources/>

Gender & Transit, Housing and Recreation Policy Video Series: www.twca.ca

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Making Equality Matter. www.twca.ca

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