Intersectionality: Inclusiveness in Policymaking

An equity/intersectionality lens in policymaking recognizes women and girls as a diverse group with distinct and varying needs. For example, policies may impact women and girls differently based on their education levels, immigration status, or sexual orientation; an equity/intersectionality lens measures possible impact disparities in order to ensure that policies benefit all women and girls.

Key Concern: While women and girls make up 51% of the City’s population, policymakers do not always consider the impact of policies on women and girls, or the diversity of their needs and capacities.

The City’s Incentive: An equity/intersectionality approach requires ongoing engagement with community stakeholders, resulting in stronger community acceptance and commitment to City policies.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Create and use an equity/intersectional lens assessment tool for policy development and evaluation.
- Collect disaggregated data that reflects the diversity of women and girls and their needs.

Women, Girls, Equity, and Intersectionality: Background

Policies and policymakers frequently fail to acknowledge that women and girls have diverse social locations and identities as a result of social categories such as race, class, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender performance, Indigeneity, and immigration status (Statistics Canada, 2014). Consequently, policies do not address structural forces of oppression that include racism, sexism, and ableism.

The City should adopt an equity lens based on the concept of intersectionality; this concept considers the diversity of experiences that women and girls live and the relationships, or intersections, between the many facets of their identities. Intersectionality has its roots in Black feminism, Indigenous feminism, and queer and postcolonial theory (Hankivsky, 2012). It also indicates that privileging some inequities over others and failing to acknowledge their
interconnected nature often results in the marginalization of some women and girls. This marginalization exacerbates existing unequal power dynamics between different social groups (Ferree, 2009). Adopting an intersectional approach allows policymakers and stakeholders to examine the impact of these intersections and the power relations supporting inequity that frequently go unexamined (Hankivsky, 2012).

Assessment tools can guide policymakers and relevant community stakeholders in applying intersectionality to policies and programs (see the City of Toronto’s Equity Lens). The City should work with intersectionality experts to create an assessment mechanism to ensure that policies benefit all women and girls, and address the barriers that prevent women and girls from participating as equal members of the community.

References

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Transforming the Experiences of Aboriginal Women and Girls in the City

Aboriginal women and girls in Vancouver are the most likely population to live in poverty and become victims of violence (Brzozowski et al., 2006). The recommendations below specifically address Aboriginal socio-economic wellbeing; however, issues including safety, housing, and childcare impact Aboriginal women and girls together with all women and girls in Vancouver.

Key Concern: Aboriginal women and girls disproportionately live at risk of poverty and violence.

The City's Incentive: Strengthening dialogue, community research, and partnerships with Aboriginal women and girls are aligned with existing City initiatives for Aboriginal communities.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Require leaders and all those who interact and work directly or indirectly with Aboriginal women and girls to develop culturally safe approaches to services.
- Review the core funding requirements of services specifically for Aboriginal women and girls and enhance their compatibility with Aboriginal approaches to social development strategies. Ensure funding requirements emphasize program sustainability.
- Award grants to increase the number of culture, community, identity and capacity building projects run by Aboriginal women and girls.

Aboriginal Women and Girls: Background

62% of Aboriginal people in Vancouver feel that they are often perceived by non-Aboriginal people in negative and distorted stereotypes (Environics Institute, 2011).
Aboriginal women and girls should be able to access services without fear of judgment. Cultural Competency Training for employers and employees increases awareness of Aboriginal issues and enhances Cultural Safety. Cultural Safety has evolved by bringing Aboriginal Peoples and service providers together to move from a concept framework of cultural competency to strategies that guide policies and practices to protect the rights of Aboriginal women and girls (Brascoupe & Waters, 2009). Knowing the historical context of Aboriginal women and girls would frame their experiences and inform the actions necessary to decrease their medicalization and criminalization.

“Just as policies are created, monitored and implemented by individuals, their outcomes are lived by individual Indigenous girls.” (Clark, 2012)

Programs for Aboriginal women and girls need long-term investment. When successful programs close their doors due to funding, the inability to provide consistent services jeopardizes the security and safety of those that rely on them. Further, employees who build trust with clients should be supported to stay in those positions so continued development and attachment can be made to community. The systemic structures of power affect the relationship individuals have with their community. Developing Culturally Safe strategies for program requirements can strengthen the capacity of the service providers to deliver programs to Aboriginal Women and Girls, and achieve greater trust and more sustained outcomes to resisting threats to their experiences (Brascoupe & Waters, 2009).

Increasing the number of culturally enriching projects delivered by Aboriginal Women and Girls will allow for more ease of access for individuals to control and develop relevant initiatives. Individuals will be able to exercise self-determination, in the way that strength-based programming has proven to build on capacities intrinsic to Aboriginal values (Brascoupe & Waters, 2009). Building the capacity of women to lead community initiatives will strengthen Aboriginal women and girls’ identity, belonging and visibility in community, creating places to practice culture, language or Indigenous garden projects, and positive cultural spaces and educational opportunities.
References


Authorized by Women Transforming Cities International Society, registered sponsor under LECFA, info@womentransformingcities.org
Environmental Initiatives: Increasing accessibility to City programs

Municipal green initiatives, such as reducing energy consumption, composting, or buying local, can impact different citizen groups in unique ways, with some experiencing a greater financial or scheduling burden. The City of Vancouver needs to explicitly include women when developing green programs, as women are often responsible for unpaid household labour in addition to employment outside of the home, which limits their accessibility to programs.

Key concern: Women’s greater domestic and childcare responsibilities and economic barriers limit their access to green policies and programs.

The City’s incentive: Considering women’s and girls’ needs in environmental initiatives will boost the City’s progress in their goal to become the world’s greenest city by 2020.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Review green policies through an equity/intersectional lens that includes all women’s work and responsibilities.
- Increase women’s and girls’ access to recreation and community centres, including dedicated spaces and programs.

Women, Girls, and Environmental Initiatives: Background

The City of Vancouver has set out to become the world’s greenest city by 2020, but what are some missed opportunities to consider women’s accessibility on issues around jobs, recreation and health (City of Vancouver, 2011)? While the policy targets the whole population, women are generally responsible for most of the unpaid work in the home, such as recycling, cleaning, food security, and daily transportation choices (Milan et al., 2011). Therefore, in order to achieve the Greenest City goals, an equity lens (including gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status) should be applied to the green policies.
Vancouver community centres and parks are spaces to engage citizens and promote healthy living; these facilities need to be accessible to women and girls. Initiatives should reduce financial barriers for affordable recreation and include appropriate women-only programming, childcare options, and baby-changing facilities (Australian Sports Commission, 1999; Ponic et al., 2011). Changes to the built environment, such as improved street lighting and street presence, quality of paths and trails, and scheduling of programs are some possible strategies to remove barriers for women (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, 2012). Programming should also reflect the needs of women and girls in the community, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Specific policies and funding programs at recreation facilities and in the outdoors help support women and girls so they have more opportunities to improve health outcomes for themselves and their families (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, 2012).

References
Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (2012). Actively Engaging Women and Girls.

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Increasing Immigrant and Newcomer Women and Girls’ Access to Services and Support

The City of Vancouver needs to be a safe place for all women and girls. Having access to essential social services is crucial to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of non-status, refugee, and immigrant girls and women, and women with precarious immigration status. City Council should make Vancouver a sanctuary city and provide support services to all women and girls regardless of immigration status. The City should also appoint an immigrant advocate to encourage women and girls’ public participation.

Key Concern: Women and girls comprise over half of Canada's population and immigrant women comprise 20.3% of the total female population in Canada (Chui, 2011). But, their safety and access to services is at risk due to the stigma attached to their status in Canada.

The City’s Incentive: Improving the city for immigrant and newcomer women and girls strengthens the City’s commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, a value that the City emphasizes in its mission statement.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Make Vancouver a Sanctuary City for all women and girls regardless of immigration status.
- Appoint an immigrant advocate to highlight important issues and solutions for newcomers and engage their participation in the decision-making process.

Immigrant Women and Girls with Precarious Status: Background

Violence against women is a global problem, with immigrant women and girls experiencing greater violence and discrimination due to additional factors such as ethnicity, class, immigration status, isolation, and language barriers. Lack of access to health services, women's shelters and women's centres further exacerbates the violence
and isolation immigrant women face. For example, immigrant women fear reporting abuse and violence to police due to the threat of deportation or lack of knowledge of their rights and Canadian systems.

Recent changes in federal immigration policy have created barriers in migrants’ access to official refugee, resident, or citizenship status (Cohen, 2013; CCR, 2013), while an increased frequency of deportation and detention prevent precarious migrants from accessing essential services due to fear of deportation and detention (No One is Illegal, 2014; Keung, 2013). In February 2013 and 2014, the Cities of Toronto and Hamilton became Sanctuary Cities, granting universal access to municipal services irrespective of immigration status. We ask that the City of Vancouver become a sanctuary city to ensure that all individuals can access municipal services such as health care, housing, food, education, and emergency shelters and services. This policy will not only support women, but also their dependent children, since children have limited access or no access to school while they or their families live under the threat of deportation.

BC receives an average of 40,000 immigrants and 2,000 refugees each year (CIC, 2010; ISS of BC, 2014). Many of them flee from violence and torture and face numerous barriers and difficulties as newcomers. An immigrant advocate, similar to the City’s former Child and Youth Advocate, could liaise with newcomer support organizations to identify service gaps, and encourage newcomer women and girls to share their opinions about the issues that affect their communities. Creating space for first generation immigrant women and girls to take a leadership role in the City would bring a diverse and inclusive perspective and legitimize their presence in public sphere.

References

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Stop Violence against Women and Girls

Vancouver is known internationally for the prevalence of violence against women, particularly against Aboriginal women. Anti-violence policies and programs are critically needed to keep women and girls of all ages safe.

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress toward equality, development and peace.” Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General (UN, 1999)

Key Concern: The City of Vancouver must strengthen its funding of anti-violence policies and programs in order to make women and girls safer.

The City’s Incentives: Women comprise 51% of the city’s population. Women and girls disproportionately experience abuse and intimate partner violence. The majority of voters and taxpayers are women, and would support these anti-violence initiatives with their vote.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Violence Against Women and Girls Civic Action Plan.
- Provide a fully accessible, centrally located Women’s Hub.
- Work collaboratively and effectively with both the Provincial and Federal Government to end violence against women and girls.

Violence against Women and Girls: Background
In 2011, 8 of 10 victims of police-reported intimate partner violence were women, with Aboriginal women experiencing greater rates of violence compared to non-Aboriginal women (Sinha, 2013). The City should take concrete steps to reduce violence against women, by enacting the following recommendations:

1) Develop and implement a comprehensive Violence Against Women and Girls Civic Action Plan.
a) **Conduct a women-centered safety audit** within all municipal departments, committees, policies/programs and neighborhoods.

b) **Appoint a Women’s Representative to hold a new seat on City Council.** The Women’s Representative would work in collaboration with women’s groups with mandates to ensure there is proper oversight including a gender lens audit and ensuring violence against women’s issues take a high priority on the city’s agenda.

c) **Provide education for all people about the root societal causes of violence against women and girls.**

2) **Provide a fully accessible, centrally located Women’s Hub.** This public gathering space would allow women and girls to come together to heal and receive specialized programs such as victim services, counseling, legal advocacy, assertiveness /safety training and alternative, cultural-based therapies that advocate for, and support women and girls at the time they experience violence in their lives. **The Women’s Hub** would allow all women and girls to affirm their participation in public life, to receive mentoring, to learn about their health and wellbeing, and to dream!

3) **Work with both the Provincial and Federal Government to decrease violence against women and girls.**

   a) Lobby for a Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women’s National Inquiry and work towards centering Indigenous leadership and solidarity, beyond reconciliation.
   
b) Ensure elementary schools to post-secondary institutions entrench government-subsidized anti-violence education within core curriculum/programs.
   
c) Implement a municipal **social housing strategy** that better helps women escape violence.
   
d) **Apply evidence-based research** to policy reform to decrease violence against women in sex trade work/prostitution/human trafficking within the City of Vancouver.
   
e) Work with women’s groups to develop effective **anti-violence education programs for men and male youth** who have committed violence against women.

References


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Recognizing Women’s Right to Adequate Housing

The City of Vancouver must make adequate housing available for all women and girls. Guaranteeing adequate housing requires attention to seven key factors: security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and, cultural adequacy (CESCR, 1991). Meeting these conditions has complex social, economic, and environmental implications, yet failure to respond adequately not only compromises basic human rights, but is economically costly and inefficient.

Key Concerns: Federal and provincial governments are withdrawing from traditional roles of ensuring housing provision. The City must take the lead and develop creative and progressive policies to provide housing solutions for women and girls.

The City's Incentive: A truly livable and just city requires housing for all, with particular attention to the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable. Public service costs—policing, health services, and temporary shelter provision—will decrease when affordable housing becomes available.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Generate a housing strategy that addresses the distinctive and diverse housing and homeless circumstances of women and girls, such as vulnerability to violence, income inequality and family responsibilities.
- Implement sustainable low-income housing options that focus on women and children.
- Request that the federal and provincial governments reinvest resources toward housing strategy development, and housing supply and maintenance, with a focus on supporting the diverse housing needs of women and girls.

Women, Girls, and Housing: Background

Women and girls experience distinct and gendered issues around access to adequate housing. More specifically, the discrimination and disadvantage women and girls confront on a daily basis shape their housing needs and concerns. Housing policy at the municipal level must...
address women’s and girls’ income inequality, vulnerability to gendered violence and sexual exploitation, family responsibilities, and employment opportunities. The City of Vancouver must develop housing policy that reflects women’s and girls’ lived experiences, and these solutions must be sustainable and family-friendly.

The idea of public housing must be reintroduced into the public debate, stressing the success that affordable public housing units in other jurisdictions have had in alleviating women and girls’ housing concerns. Municipalities face jurisdictional challenges in addressing the current housing crisis across Canada. It is imperative that our municipal government compels the federal and provincial governments to work together efficiently and creatively to end the housing crisis. Their collaboration must include a reinvestment of resources toward housing strategy, supply, and maintenance that considers the needs of women and girls.

References

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Access and Safety:
Improving Transit for Women and Girls

Access to affordable and safe public transportation is a key issue for women and girls. Addressing this need has social, economic, and environmental implications ranging from public health and well being to Greenest City 2020 targets. The City must take a leading role in making public transit accessible and safe for all women and girls.

Key Concern: Women & girls make up 53% of transit users, but their unique needs in terms of service and accessibility are under prioritized.

The City’s Incentive: The success of Greenest City 2020 (including transit ridership goals and improved air quality) and the Healthy City Strategy depends on greater access to safe, affordable transit service.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Create and maintain safe, accessible, affordable, public transit.
- Make Vancouver a free transit zone after dark.
- Improve transit in off-peak hours, including late night transit service.

Women, Girls, and Public Transit: Background

Women and girls make up 53% of transit users as an overall percentage of trips (Translink, 2013). Yet, transit planning models neglect the needs of women and girls, particularly with regard to the need for transit in off-peak hours, including late-night transit service. In most cities, including Vancouver, transit systems contribute to “an unfair distribution of accessibility and reproduce safety and environmental inequities” (Vasconcellos, 2001, p. 5; Levy, 2013, p.48). Increasing transit use creates many additional benefits for cities, including lowering greenhouse gas emissions (Markle, 2014). One way to support women in off-peak shift work would be to make Vancouver a free transit zone after dark.
A marked increase in transit use will only be possible with the development of a safe transit culture. Women and girls bear the brunt of unwanted sexual attention and sexualized violence. Transit safety refers to the experience of riders and drivers, as well as the conditions in which riders wait to board transit.

Unsafe transit culture in Vancouver has been documented through an increase in arrests for sexual assault and through an online campaign to draw attention to predatory behaviour that many women and girls encounter on transit (CBC News, 13 Jan 2014; Harassment on Translink). Efforts to create a safe transit culture and address sexual harassment on transit must be multi-faceted. City leadership is an important element to shift the culture toward one in which women and girls are legitimate users of public space. The City should consult with the public and relevant stakeholders about improving transit safety and hold the Board of Translink accountable and responsive to public concerns.

References

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Child Care

Access to quality, affordable child care is critical for families, particularly women and young children. Due to the lack of sound public policy and adequate public funding, child care is out of reach of most Vancouver families. Yet, the evidence is clear that investment in early care and learning has significant social and economic benefits for all. The City of Vancouver already supports the $10/Day Plan (Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, 2014). It is time that the City strengthens its commitment.

Key concern: Parent fees are too high, caregivers’ wages too low, and there are only licensed spaces for about 20% of children. These factors make it very difficult for young families to live and work in the City.

City’s Incentive: The City should work with communities to ensure that implementation of the $10/day Child Care Plan becomes a provincial and federal priority. Vancouver and 31 other BC local governments support the $10/Day Child Care Plan but they do not have the resources or mandate to implement it alone.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- Work with communities to promote the $10/Day Child Care Plan.
- Tell the provincial and federal governments that Vancouver expects the $10/Day Child Care Plan to be implemented in BC.

Women, Girls, and Child Care: Background

Without sufficient operating funds from government, child care operates as a user fee service with limited subsidies for low income families. Vancouver families pay an average of $15,132 per year for care for their toddler, frequently making child care a family’s second highest expense after housing (Westcoast Family Information and Referral, 2013). This cost makes it very hard for young families, especially mothers, to live and work in Vancouver. While the City has worked hard to increase the number of child care spaces, there are still not enough to meet demand and the spaces that do exist are not affordable for many families. College-trained early childhood educators, the vast majority of whom are women, do not earn a living wage and many have no choice but to leave the field for higher paying jobs, which undermines

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
the quality of care that families and children can access.

Recent Canadian studies show a $2.54 return for every $1 invested in quality child care programs (The Centre for Spatial Economics, 2009). Affordable and high quality child care encourages children’s healthy development, allows mothers to enter and remain in the labour force, enables families to move out of poverty, and benefits the economy by reducing social costs and increasing tax revenues.

The $10/Day Child Care Plan offers a concrete solution to the current child care crisis. Almost 2 million British Columbians support the Plan. The Plan includes a system that offers full-time care for $10/day and part-time care for $7/day, with no user fees for families with annual incomes under $40,000. This will move many Vancouver families with children out of poverty. Early childhood educators will receive a living wage. Businesses will benefit from a more stable workforce and from women’s increased spending power. Finally, the Vancouver Board of Education will have the resources to deliver quality child care that Vancouver’s children and families need and deserve.

References
Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC. (2014). The plan for $10/day child care.

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Women, Wages and Work

Women face high levels of employment insecurity, as they disproportionately participate in part-time, temporary, and precarious employment and shift work. Women who are single parents and/or belong to other equity seeking groups face even more financial insecurity. Women do the overwhelming majority of the housework, child care and volunteer work for which they are not recognized nor given credit and are therefore an invisible part of the functioning of our cities. The working conditions and low incomes of women have a direct impact on the high rates of child poverty. The City can improve women’s working lives by implementing supportive policies and acting as a model employer.

Key Concerns: Women in precarious employment face financial insecurity. They are also underrepresented in higher paying and non-traditional occupations. They also face personal risks related to inadequate transportation.

The City’s Incentive: Providing supportive policies would stimulate the economy and align with the City’s Equal Employment Opportunity Program.

We ask that the City of Vancouver:

- Make the City a living wage employer, requiring that all City contractors also pay a living wage, and amend the City’s Ethical Purchasing Policy to make living wages a selection factor.
- Expand public transit services and provide safe transportation to all workers at times when there is no public transportation.
- Hire, train, and retain women and other equity-seeking groups for jobs in which they are under-represented.
- Formally recognize unpaid and volunteer work.

Women and Work: Background

Women in Vancouver earn 30% less than men, and 15% of women live below the Low
Income Measure (CCPA, 2014a). A living wage for Metro Vancouver is $20.10 for a dual-earner couple with two children or a single parent with one child (CCPA, 2014b). The living wage provides a modest living in a rental apartment with no savings for retirement, children’s post-secondary education, or vacations. Most City workers already earn a living wage so the cost to implement and expand the living wage mandate is low. The City should follow the lead of the City of New Westminster and phase in a requirement that all contract employers also pay the living wage. In addition, the City should amend its Ethical Purchasing Policy to include living wages as a selection factor.

Safe, affordable, and accessible transit is very important for women and girls. The lack of buses and sky trains, particularly late at night, forces some women to wait after the end of a late shift – sometimes for hours – before the first bus in the morning. They may have to walk long distances to transit, and when using transit are also vulnerable to assault. The City should address these issues for the whole population by expanding public transit services, and ensure its direct employees are safe by providing taxi fares when transit is not operating.

Lastly, women and other equity-seeking groups are under-represented in higher paying and non-traditional jobs. Inclusive hiring practices such as pre-employment training can ensure women meet the qualifications for positions in which they are underrepresented, and ongoing workplace education creates a supportive culture for all workers.

References

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2014a). The best and worst place to be a woman in Canada.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2014b). Working for a living wage: Making paid work meet basic family needs in Metro Vancouver.

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Electoral Reform

Women and girls work for cities; why don’t cities work for women and girls? In Canada, only 16% of Mayors and 25% of City Councillors are women, and the diversity of women in office does not reflect that of the general population (Status of Women Canada, 2014).

Key Concern: Women and girls are underrepresented among elected officials, and face professional and financial barriers to running for office.

The City’s Incentive: Taking concrete steps to providing women and girls equal access to civic participation and leadership roles aligns with the City’s Gender Equality Strategy.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:
- Run at least 50% women representing the diversity of our cities and ensuring Aboriginal candidates.
- Establish a ward system (elected representation by neighbourhood).
- Establish campaign spending and donation limits, and disclosure of all campaign donations.

Electoral Reform for Women and Girls: Background

Women are not getting elected in numbers equal to men, with even fewer female candidates from minority cultures. An equity/intersectional lens would support all women’s electoral representation. Women need role models and mentors to gain political experience. Electoral campaigns often reflect overwhelming male leadership and do not often consider women’s traditional paid and unpaid work as an important qualification for public office. Women do the majority of volunteer work and have comparatively less time, money and fewer powerful connections to mount a campaign. Encouraging women’s participation as candidates would engender a more inclusive and representative political process.

Most North American cities have a municipal ward system like the Canadian federal and provincial riding systems that represent certain areas of a city. In his report
to Vancouver City Council in 2004, retired Supreme Court Judge Thomas Berger recommended a ward system as a more democratic system that would eliminate the need for the party system and enable individuals to be elected (Berger, 2004). Women are often well known through their volunteer work in their neighbourhoods, which, along with their paid work, would help them become elected in a municipal ward system without requiring large amounts of money.

Candidates and parties that have the most money dominate elected offices as election campaigns are expensive. Women earn only $0.68 to every dollar that a man earns and too frequently lack personal finances and connections to money and power (CCPA, 2012). Women may also have additional costs such as child care. Establishing campaign spending and donation limits and the mandatory disclosure of campaign funds would contribute to a more equitable electoral process.

References
Engaging Youth in Vancouver

Youth in Vancouver have difficulty accessing the necessary resources, services and opportunities to become more active civic participants. Young women in particular feel alienated from formal political processes and are disengaged from civic duties. To ensure that the City of Vancouver serves its entire population equally and democratically, it must eliminate age and gender-specific barriers to political and civic participation and give youth and young women an equal voice in their city.

Key Concerns: Young women increasingly face marginalization and economic hardship because of their lack of representation in politics. We need better tools and systems to encourage civic leadership and political representation of young women to help address age and gender-specific issues in our community.

The City’s Incentive: Achieving Vancouver’s goal to become an engaged and healthy city that is inclusive and reflective of the unique voices of all youth depends on the involvement of young people as decision-makers.

We ask candidates and parties to make a commitment to:

- **Create a Young Women’s Civic Leaders Committee** to address gender-specific barriers to leadership and promote active civic engagement.
- **Establish Vancouver Youth Hubs** to provide better access to services, information and safe spaces to gather, and reinstate the CitizenU program so youth can combat discrimination and oppression in their communities.
- **Lower the municipal voting age to 16** to establish and maintain youth representation and civic engagement.

Young Women’s Civic Engagement in Vancouver: Background

In the Vancouver area, youth, and young women in particular, lack representation and resources to fully participate in civic life, which can limit their social, political, and economic equality (Justice Education Society of BC, 2013). Addressing the concerns of young women would increase engagement for all youth populations, thereby helping to make Vancouver a more vibrant and inclusive community. It is vital that the City of
Vancouver takes concrete steps to increase youth engagement and ensure young women can overcome gender-specific barriers that affect their political marginalization and economic hardship (Generation Squeeze, 2014).

Young women need encouragement to partake in governance through municipal level mentorship and capacity building programs that would enhance their leadership skills. Two solutions are the founding of a City of Vancouver Young Women Civic Leaders Committee and the re-instatement of the CitizenU, a program that allows youth to address various types of discrimination in their communities. Also, Vancouver Youth Hubs would support equality by providing better access to services, information, and safe spaces to get together that are affordable and accessible by transit (Youth Vital Signs, 2013). Lastly, decreasing the voting age to 16 may increase youth participation in the political process, which is crucial to encouraging long-term political involvement (Pacheco, 2008).

References