



**Written Submission, City of Calgary Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services**  
*Submitted May 2, 2018*

Thank you to the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services for inviting Equal Voice to speak on behalf of the Notice of Motion for Gender Equity and Diversity.

Equal Voice is a national, bilingual, multi-partisan organization dedicated to electing more women to all levels of political office in Canada.

Founded in 2001, Equal Voice regards the equal representation of women in Canada's Parliament, in our provincial/territorial legislatures, and on municipal and band councils, as a fundamental question of fairness for women in terms of their access to Canada's democratic institutions.

As such, Equal Voice strongly supports this motion.

Over the past year, Equal Voice has worked with Councillor Gian-Carlo Carra to encourage this important initiative, which is bigger than any one of us as individuals or groups within the City of Calgary. More specifically to our mandate, we support the call for the City of Calgary to join the "Diverse Voices for Change" initiative facilitated by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which works to increase the number of women from diverse backgrounds participating in local government, leadership roles and decision-making positions.

We also call on the City of Calgary to join other leading communities, like Halifax, Montreal, London, and Edmonton, in this program to support elected officials to engage with urban Indigenous, racialized, and under-represented immigrant women in creating a more inclusive municipal decision-making system. At the end of the initiative, municipalities will have worked in partnership with community organizations to implement strategies, recommendations, policies and procedures to strengthen the voice of women from diverse communities.

Leaders within "Diverse Voices for Change" set up campaign schools, organize public meetings, recruit potential candidates to run in municipal elections, advocate for gender-based analysis plus practices and policies within local government, and use the news media to promote women's participation in municipal government.

This type of work is directly related to our own work within Calgary and throughout southern Alberta. Just last weekend, Equal Voice Alberta South hosted a multi-partisan workshop for female candidates. This was the first workshop of the #SheLeads campaign, designed to encourage more women to run in upcoming elections. It was well attended from all parts of the political spectrum, encouraging us to host more #SheLeads workshops over the coming year. We know women of all background want to be more involved politically; our goal is to give them the tools to do so.

That said, we are a small group and this is a big city. We look forward to the potential "Diverse Voices for Change" will bring to Calgary, building outreach opportunities city-wide.

Calgary currently lags behind the rest of the country when it comes to gender equity and diversity in municipal government. We lack appropriate representation of women, especially marginalized women,



in leadership roles and in the decision-making process. This motion is Calgary's opportunity to improve, and a chance for our city to become a leader in gender equity and diversity across Canada.

There are some significant barriers to women participating in local government, and several are addressed in this motion. There are some excellent tools for gender mainstreaming that are used at a federal level, but these tools are not used to the same extent at a municipal level. Calgary has a chance now to embrace some of these tools and begin to lead in terms of gender equality and diversity. The Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tool is a good example of a proven methodology that can be implemented at the local level. As well, the City does not currently have a mechanism by which to actively encourage and support women to participate in local government. Equal Voice is excited at the prospect of Calgary participating in the next phase of the "Diverse Voices for Change" program.

This motion will give the City a formal process to encourage more women to participate in local government, and to share their unique views and experiences in the decision-making process.

The mandate of Equal Voice is to get more women elected to political office, and encouraging more women to be actively involved in local government is a logical first step. The more comfortable women are in stepping up at the local level, be it a committee, advisory board, or other municipal leadership role, the more likely they are to run for office themselves. Our young people need these women to act as role models so they themselves will be more comfortable to one day be active in local government.

Our governments should be a clear and accurate representation of the population they represent, and this notice of motion is an important first step in making that happen.

Equal Voice Alberta South encourages the Standing Policy Committee to embrace this motion on Gender Equity and Diversity, and we look forward to continuing to work with the City to encourage diversity in all aspects of our local government.

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