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the
**WOMEN'S
CENTRE**

May 2, 2018

MEETING OF THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Nevena Ivanovic, Women's Centre of Calgary

Speaking to item 7.1 on the Agenda, **Gender Equity and Diversity Scoping Report**, CPS2018-0362

The Women's Centre is a street-front, drop in space that has served 9,000 women last year. A very diverse community of women come to the Centre for basic needs, like food bank referrals and peer support; for workshops and opportunities to meet other women; and to learn about social issues. Over half of women who engage with us are living in poverty and visit the Centre to feel welcome and included in a variety of ways. In our advocacy work, we seek to give them a voice and represent their concerns at decision-making tables.

We would like to congratulate City Council on the decision to pass the Gender Equity and Diversity Notice of Motion in 2017. We were really encouraged to see a unanimous vote in favour of it, and we are excited to now see this important work move forward to address inclusion and diversity in the City. We are pleased to support the recommendations presented to this Committee by the Administration, in particular regarding the development of a formal framework – a strategy – that would ensure accountability and resourcing of future gender equity- and diversity-promoting work in Calgary.

Why do we think it is important for the city to move in this direction?

We know that programs or services are rarely neutral – that is, they impact different people in different ways. Public spaces and services are used differently by different individuals, based on their different and often complex needs, determined by their gender, race or ethnicity, Indigenous or immigration status, income, ability and sexual orientation.

For example:

- Women and men may use public transit in different ways, based on their different roles in the family and how much paid or unpaid caring work they are engaged in. Women, on average, may make more stops, need more time for transfers, or due to their lower income, and higher likelihood of living in low income if they are a lone parent, may be in greater need of a transit subsidy than male counterparts.
- People with disabilities face more challenges finding appropriate housing, and statistically, more women than men live with a disability in Canada.

- Another example would be the low availability of social housing units that are suitable for housing families, including lone-parent families with children, and large extended families that recent immigrants are more likely to have.
- People may also access information differently, making it difficult for some seniors, especially those with English-language barriers, or for low income people with no computer, to access Internet-based-only information about services.
- Public safety is experienced differently by women and men: we know that one in four women feel unsafe walking home at night, compared to one in ten men.

When any order of government sets out to plan or deliver services and programs, if they account for people's diversity, and their different needs and experiences, including any barriers that they might face, they will be able to deliver **better targeted, and thus both more equitable and efficient services, leading to better outcomes**. That matters – because large disparities between people, and unequal access and representation ultimately impact us all. **They impact the quality of decision-making in our society, the cohesiveness of our communities, and the ability of ALL people to access resources they need, and fully contribute to and participate in the economy and in the community.**

Calgary is a liveable and prosperous city – yet inequalities persist. The City has made efforts to address some of them. We agree that more is needed to address the gender dimension of inequalities. The Women's Centre believes that a great way to start chipping away at these equality gaps would be to start using a **gender plus lens** to guide the City's work, whether to plan new development, deliver everyday services that Calgarians depend on, appoint people to Commissions and Boards, or allocate funds every four years. We support the recommendation that this work needs to be set out within a holistic approach, recognizing the complexity of individuals and their multiple identities, and within a dedicated, organization-wide strategy that would ensure accountability and resourcing of future actions to advance equity and diversity in the City and the community.

We know from a wealth of research and examples, from Canada and internationally, that more equality benefits everyone, that equity is linked to resilience. This is true of national economies as well as business organizations – and of cities. We believe that if the City of Calgary commits itself to this inclusion and equity-oriented approach, it will become an even better place to live – for women and for all Calgarians, in all their diversity.

Thank you again for your forward-thinking decision to work on promoting gender equity and diversity in the City of Calgary.