



Good Morning Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Esmahan Razavi and I am here on behalf of Equal Voice Alberta South. We are a regional chapter of Equal Voice, an organization dedicated to electing more women to all orders of political office throughout Canada. We do this because we believe that it is an issue of fundamental fairness and more and more, we are seeing this sentiment echoed everywhere. In fact, over the last few years conversations about women's issues are taking place all over, with calls for a more equitable world becoming louder and more prominent in public discourse. So, the pursuit of a more equal society persists; this is good news, and frankly, long overdue.

But appetite alone is not going to help us achieve gender parity.

The only way to achieve our goal is through intentional and sustained action. We know this from the work that we do in the political realm. And that is why, on behalf of Equal Voice Alberta South, I am proud to offer our full support for the City's Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Madam Chair and members of the committee, to live in a more equitable world we must first build it. Critics of this strategy may say that we have already achieved gender equity.

However, the fact is while the dial *seems* to be moving, Canada sits at a dismal 60th place out of 193 countries when comparing the number of elected women worldwide. The fact is the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2017 states it will take 100 years before we achieve gender parity in government. The fact is out of the 10 provinces and three territories in Canada there is not a single female premier today.

Recently, Equal Voice partnered with Abacus Data, a national polling and research firm, to conduct a national survey of over 2,100 Canadians to uncover views and perceptions about women in politics. At the most fundamental level, a challenge with tackling the issue of increasing women's participation in politics, is the perception that there is no issue.

Abacus Data asked the question: When it comes to the number of women elected at federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, do you believe there are too many women, the right amount, or too few? While 42% of respondents feel there are too few women in politics, 54% think there are the right amount and 4% think there are too many. Thus overall, 58% of respondents thought there were enough or too many women in politics.

So, Madam Chair, we at Equal Voice understand that to create change we must shift public perception by raising awareness and acting with clear intent. And we are grateful that the Strategy being presented acknowledges this by looking at practical ways the City can support all of the people who live here, both as an employer and as a municipal government.

As advocates for women in the political realm, we are proud to be working with the City of Calgary on a program called *She Governs*. Through this program, high school aged young women will be invited to sit as councillors for a day. Equal Voice and the City of Calgary are working with Youth Central to select these young women. We are excited about this initiative and its potential to encourage young women to participate in civic politics.

We all have a responsibility to work to make our city a fairer and more equitable place. At Equal Voice, we take this responsibility seriously. And we hope that you will demonstrate that the City is serious too by supporting this Strategy.

Thank you for your time.