

# The Hot Pink Paper Campaign

## Where Are We Now?

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## Executive Summary

### *Introduction*

Women and girls continue to face systemic challenges in society. On average, women do not earn the same amount of income as men, are disproportionately burdened with the unpaid work of child care and elder responsibilities, and are more likely to work part-time or for fewer hours. Their experiences with a city's policies, programs and services are affected by their gender, and by other things such as their age, their income, and their lives as Indigenous people. Because of these and other differences, women's and girls' experiences need to be uniquely considered in the development of municipal public policies, programs, and services.

In 2014, working with other women-serving organizations around Vancouver, Women Transforming Cities (WTC) created the Hot Pink Paper (HPP) Campaign as a way of drawing attention to challenges facing diverse women and girls in the city. The HPP outlined 11 important issues facing women and girls in Vancouver, and proposed up to 3 action items for each issue area. The full list of issue areas and action items is available at: <https://www.womentransformingcities.org/pink-paper-report-cards-and-commitm>. WTC asked candidates running for office to commit to pursuing the action items, with the goal of encouraging municipal policy solutions created by women, for women.

### *How is Vancouver Doing in Meeting the Needs of Women and Girls?*

This report assesses how Vancouver is doing around three issue areas that received broad support during the HPP Campaign: (1) Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls; (2) The Environment; and (3) Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing.

Vancouver has made **minimal progress** on important action items related to addressing **Violence Against Women and Girls**. The three action items in this area were to: (a) develop and implement a comprehensive Violence Against Women and Girls Civic Action Plan; (b) provide a fully accessible, centrally located Women's Hub; and (c) work with both the Provincial and Federal Governments to end violence against women and girls.

Vancouver has adopted some initiatives, such as the Health City Initiative, that use a gendered lens. The work of the municipal Urban Aboriginal People's Advisory Committee, in collaboration with Vancouver City Council, to develop a plan for responding to the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Girls and Women, is promising. Overall, identifiable progress has not been made on the first two action items, and limited progress has been made on the third.

Competition, communication challenges, and disagreement about priorities were described as key barriers to making more progress on the issue. Moving forward, a strong feminist

movement, more meaningful collaboration between community organizations and municipal governments, and strategies for confronting neoliberalism, are important for ending violence against women and girls.

Vancouver has made **moderate progress** on addressing important action items related to **The Environment**. The two action items in this area were to: (a) review green policies through an equity/intersectional lens; and (b) increase women's and girls' access to recreation and community centres, and playing fields, including dedicated spaces and programs.

The Green City Action Plan (GCAP), and Vancouver's Environmental Committee and Citizen Advisory Board which were, as of last year, required to be made up of 50% women, are important steps forward related to the first action item. Vancouver has taken tangible steps to base more of its environmental policies on an intersectional framework, but relatively minimal progress has been made towards increasing female access to recreation/community centres.

Other urgent priorities, infrastructure limitations, and interjurisdictional tensions are creating ongoing barriers for achieving the action items related to the environment. Inter-departmental collaborations, citizen engagement, and consciousness raising are important components of moving forward on addressing environmental concerns.

Vancouver has made **minimal progress** on addressing important action items related to providing **Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing**. The three action items in this area were to: (a) generate a housing strategy that addresses the distinctive and diverse housing and homeless circumstances of women and girls; (b) implement sustainable low-income housing options that focus on women and children; and (c) encourage other governments to reinvest resources toward housing strategy development, and housing supply and maintenance.

Efforts are being made with regards to each of the three action items identified, but progress on each of the action items is minimal. There is no gendered housing strategy, ongoing affordability issues despite increases in rental housing availability, and a lack of gendered attention to housing issues from other levels of government.

Funding, broader housing challenges, and lack of understanding about the serious effects of inadequate housing for women and girls, are key barriers to progress on this issue. The application of an intersectional lens in policy development and analysis is the critical step forward for achieving action items in this area.

The full report includes an overview of the information that led to the assessment, an outline of key challenges and barriers that have prevented further progress to date, and literature-based suggestions about possible steps forward for achieving outstanding action items that will improve the lives of women and girls.

## Introduction

The Hot Pink Paper (HPP) campaign, spearheaded by Women Transforming Cities (WTC), and in collaboration with multiple community organizations, was created as an advocacy tool for informing the City of Vancouver's 2014 municipal election. 11 core issue areas related to women's and girls' wellbeing in the City were identified, and one to three action items were proposed to address each issue. The HPP campaign was developed using a concept called intersectionality, a research and action framework that examines power relations between people, and asks how peoples' gender, race, sexual orientation, or other social positions and identities impact their experiences in society, and with public policy decisions. Women Transforming Cities (WTC) used an intersectional lens when developing the HPP campaign because they recognize that women's and girls' experiences and needs can vary based on their education, age, race, income, class, immigration status, ability, gender and sexual identity, and/or other social positions and identities. Using an intersectional lens to guide municipal policy development pushes us to consider all women's and girls' experiences.

During the campaign, candidates from each local political party, including Vision Vancouver, the Green Party, COPE, One City, and the Non-Partisan Association, were asked to indicate their support for the policy recommendations outlined in the HPP.<sup>2</sup> All candidates supported three key issue areas:

1. Violence Against Women and Girls
2. The Environment
3. Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing

Two years have passed since WTC asked candidates about their commitments to issues affecting women's and girls' wellbeing, so it is time to take stock of how Vancouver is doing with the action items related to these three issue areas. This report evaluates Vancouver's policies and programs related to the above three issue areas by asking:

- How is Vancouver progressing towards achieving the action items proposed in the HPP campaign?
- What have been the barriers to making more progress on the action items?
- How can Vancouver improve its progress on the action items?

To answer these questions, we spoke with public figures, including elected officials from City Council and elected boards, and leaders of community organizations. We also spoke with people who helped developed the HPP Campaign. A list of the 20 people we spoke with is

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<sup>2</sup> The candidates' original commitments to the HPP are available on the WTC website at: <https://www.womentransformingcities.org/pink-paper-report-cards-and-commitm>

included as Appendix A. The guiding questions we used in our discussions are included in Appendix B. After looking at each of the three issue areas in turn, we provide a holistic assessment of the HPP campaign, recommendations for steps forwards, and overall conclusions.

## How Is Vancouver Doing in Meeting the Needs of Women and Girls?

### 1. Violence Against Women and Girls

The HPP Campaign identified violence against women and girls as a core issue in Vancouver. An elected official told us that in aspiring to becoming an inclusive city, women and girls must be able to walk down the street without fear of harassment. Recommended action items in the HPP paid particular attention to Aboriginal women. Three action items were recommended:

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

#### *Assessment*

There has been *minimal progress* on the implementation of the action items related to addressing violence against women and girls. There has been progress concerning the third action item, but people we spoke with agreed that few steps have been taken towards achieving the first and second action items.

No one we spoke with identified any steps that have been taken towards the first action item, the creation of a Civic Action Plan. However, one elected official noted that the City does keep violence against women and girls in mind when developing civic spaces; for example, by paying attention to roads and lighting. One elected official also stated that violence against women and girls is a forefront issue facing the City of Vancouver and that even though there is not a specific Civic Action Plan, the City has developed a series of initiatives that adopt a gendered lens, including the Healthy City Initiative, the Engaged City Strategy, and the creation of an Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

Related to the second action item, there is disagreement about whether or not there have been efforts to pursue the creation of a Women's Hub. A community member stated that a request made to the municipality to allow an old, unoccupied art building to be used as a Women's Hub had been denied. However, an elected official was unaware of any request for a Women's Hub

having been made. Regardless, we did not learn of any concrete steps that have been taken towards the development of a Women's Hub.

Steps have been taken to uphold the third action item of working collaboratively to end violence against women and girls. First, the municipal Urban Aboriginal People's Advisory Committee is working in collaboration with Vancouver City Council to develop a plan around the commission on the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Girls and Women<sup>3</sup>. Women's organizations in Vancouver were invited to participate in discussions about the Inquiry, and about gathering information that will assist in developing a plan that will meet the needs of the Inquiry. An Inquiry is an important step towards protecting the safety of Aboriginal Women. The Inquiry was cited multiple times in discussions with community members and elected officials as a way of advancing Aboriginal women's and girls' safety.

Second, a community member noted the importance of Sister Watch to the third action item. Sister Watch is a local Vancouver Police initiative that was designed to combat violence in the Downtown Eastside by making the area safer for women and girls. In 2011, two projects – Project Tyrant and Project Rescue – arrested prominent drug dealers in the area. According to the Vancouver Police Department website, there has been no reported activity surrounding the Sister Watch Initiative since 2013.

Several people we spoke with agreed on the important role of police in achieving the third action item. One community member noted the value of hiring more female police officers for raising the visibility of women's priorities. An elected official explained that the police force has made a significant effort to hire more women officers. The elected official estimated that women make up about 35 per cent of the Vancouver Police Force. Some community members nevertheless noted concerns about women's experiences of trying to access help from police. One community member suggested that cases of gendered violence were not always taken seriously. Another community member noted that sexual assault cases continue to place too much blame on the victim. The community member also stated that more women's groups need to be active participants in the justice system to change the system's prejudice against women and girls.

One community member suggested that self-defense programs for women and girls would be useful, and that such initiatives should be a part of a Civic Action Plan. A community member also suggested that more needs to be done in response to the third action item given ongoing concerns about the wellbeing of highly marginalized women and girls, especially in the Downtown Eastside.

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<sup>3</sup> Despite ongoing issues affecting the national inquiry, Vancouver's proactive efforts to engage meaningfully with the inquiry are important.

Overall, no identifiable progress has been made on the first two action items, and limited progress has been made on the third action item.

### *Challenges and Barriers*

Competition, communication challenges, and disagreement about priorities were described as barriers to making more progress on the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls. For example, current funding structures often require organizations to compete with each other for scarce resources. When there are many priorities, there is not an established way of creating common ground. As well, there was disagreement amongst the people we spoke with about the value of a Women's Hub. An elected official noted that more universal public services should receive priority, while several community members suggested that a Women's Hub would serve as a critical place for women and girls to go to feel safe when walking the streets of Vancouver.

The issue of miscommunication is highlighted by the above-noted disagreement concerning whether or not there had been a request made for the creation of Women's Hub. It is connected to a lack of engagement between citizens and local politicians identified by community members, a point discussed in more detail in the final section of this report.

There was also concern expressed by community members and elected officials that a fundamental challenge to making progress on the issue of Violence Against Women and Girls is the "severe contempt" and "lack of vision" for women's and girls' issues in society. One community member stated that violence against women and girls has not been given much support, partly because it is an uncomfortable issue that the public does not like speaking about, and partly because it is still not seen as an actual concern in some peoples' eyes. An elected official asserted that violence against women and girls continues because of misogynist and sexist attitudes, which many fear are becoming more normalized. Certainly, this barrier is not unique to the City of Vancouver. The Federal government has yet to be successful with the policy promise of creating a national Violence Against Women Action Plan.

### *Steps Forward*

A strong feminist movement, more meaningful collaboration between community organizations and municipal governments, and strategies for confronting neoliberalism, are important for curbing violence against women and girls into the future.



Feminist movements are effective in bringing about change by changing the way people think about gender.<sup>4</sup> Initiatives such as the HPP Campaign are therefore important for highlighting the need to address violence against women and girls through local policy. Complementary social movements that have helped bring about important changes, such as advancing LGBTQI2S rights, can be important allies in work to end violence against women and girls. Besides strong social movements, better opportunities for women's organizations and municipal officials to work together are important for developing common understandings and solutions to pressing problems. Finally, it is worth noting concerns about the role of neoliberalism in making gender invisible in public policy. The risk of overlooking gender in policy development is that resulting policies fail to address specific gendered experiences and realities, and therefore cannot overcome gendered issues effectively.<sup>5</sup>

Together, a strong feminist movement, more collaboration between government officials and community organizations, and attention to the exclusion of gender as an important consideration, may help to further advance the priority of addressing Violence Against Women and Girls. The commitment of the HPP Campaign to intersectionality helps to ensure that the experiences of diverse women continue to be highlighted.

## 2. The Environment

The Environment was another core issue identified in the HPP Campaign. Environmental policy often fails to consider gender, but Women Transforming Cities is adamant about ensuring that environmental policy takes on an intersectional lens. The two recommended action items related to the environment were:

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

### Assessment

Based on our conversations there appears to have been *moderate progress* made on both of the action items related to the environment. Regarding the first action item of reviewing green policies through and equity/intersectional lens, several people we spoke with noted that Vancouver has made considerable commitments and progressive stances on environmental issues. The Green City Action Plan (GCAP) was cited in multiple discussions as having significant

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<sup>4</sup> Weldon, 2013

<sup>5</sup> Collier, 2012

support, particularly surrounding Vancouver’s efforts to become the world’s “Greenest City”. A community member noted that the GCAP advisory board includes individuals from various disciplines and gives the plan a base level interdisciplinary focus. Vancouver’s Environmental Committee and Citizen Advisory Board were, as of last year, required to be made up of 50% women, which will hopefully improve the City’s capacity for including intersectional considerations in environmental action. Indeed, an elected official explained that the municipality’s environmental department is currently attempting to apply intersectionality to all its work.

Related to the second action item of increasing women’s and girls’ access to recreation, several people we spoke with highlighted positive steps taken by the Parks Board, including its adoption of inclusionary policies such as all-gender washrooms and all peoples’ swim times. Similar policies have since been adopted by Vancouver’s libraries. The Parks Board has worked to change access to recreation and community centres, and to dedicated playing fields. The Board has made a notable commitment to spaces and safety, working in partnership with most community centres in the city. The City has also adopted an *access without fear* policy which tries to ensure safe service access for undocumented migrants, though the policy does not apply to civic services governed by separate Boards, such as police services, parks and libraries. There are also several specific programs in Vancouver that help to increase women’s and girls’ access to recreation and community centres. One elected official gave the example of the Equal Play program, which received a grant from the City, and that aims to increase access, participation, leadership and representation of women in soccer.

Even though Vancouver has taken tangible steps to base more of its environmental policies on an intersectional framework, relatively minimal progress has been made towards increasing female access to recreation/community centres. There is moderate progress, but given key challenges and barriers described below, significant progress has not been made.

### *Challenges and Barriers*

Other urgent priorities, infrastructure limitations, and interjurisdictional tensions create challenges for achieving the action items related to the environment. Both community members and elected officials noted that environmental issues are not currently a priority for the City. More pressing issues such as the housing, addiction, and mental health crises are overshadowing issues related to the environment. Related to this challenge is a tendency to focus on “quick wins” with local initiatives, which often tend to prefer simple solutions over longer-term strategies for addressing more complex issues. This makes it difficult to gather enough support for attending to the intersections of gender and the environment. For example, there are several environmental-related policies in the City, yet few incorporate the needs and experiences of women and girls. Integrating gender and other dimensions of diversity across

existing policies is a long and difficult process. Essentially, although the environment cuts across multiple issues, including the areas where Vancouver is experience “crisis-level” challenges, a community member stated that from the organization’s perspective, current government structures make it difficult to consider the overlaps between issues.

A second challenge relates to infrastructure limits and resource allocation. Large demands placed on recreation facilities by a growing population mean that while increasing access for women and girls is a concern, so too is increasing access for everyone. An elected official explained that family access receives more attention than do gender considerations. Overall, intense densification within the City has led to significant access issues for all groups, especially people who have historically been marginalized. Community members and elected officials we spoke with agreed on the need to build more recreation centres to accommodate everyone. A community member saw this as a planning issue whereby insufficient land is being dedicated to green and recreation space. Another person we spoke with noted this as a resource allocation challenge. Specifically, resources are more commonly dedicated to improving recreation centre infrastructure than to improving access.

A third challenge affecting efforts to make progress issue area is the fact that addressing environmental issues is often understood as being the responsibility of the province. This creates ongoing disagreements about which government should address specific issues. Related, an elected official explained that limited and decreasing funds available in the parks and recreation budget has made it difficult to address issues of access through fee reductions. Additionally, skyrocketing land prices have made it very difficult to procure more land for recreational use.

### *Steps Forward*

Inter-departmental collaborations, citizen engagement, and consciousness raising are important components of moving forward on addressing environmental concerns. Close collaboration between municipal departments, across the core council and relevant boards, and with actors from across sectors, are essential to recognizing and responding to the gendered implications of environmental decisions. Engagement with community members is important when attempting to recognize gaps in policy.<sup>6</sup> As well, including diverse populations in policy discussions can help create more equitable opportunities for women and girls through public policy.<sup>7</sup> Organizational shifts to enable broader collaboration, increasing women’s access to senior positions in the city, and increasing local and contextual knowledge in specific environmental areas may help further the City’s capacity for addressing environmental concerns from an intersectional perspective.

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<sup>6</sup> Corburn, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Buckingham et al., 2005

A deeper understanding of decision-makers about the ways that social relations of gender connect with environmental issues is also important.<sup>8</sup> In other words, recognizing the importance of women’s and girls’ needs related to environmental issues, and recognizing the cross-cutting implications of environmental issues, is essential. There is a need to define gender in each context and examine what its engagement with power means.<sup>9</sup> Strengthening and supporting women’s organizations could help in this regard, as could ensuring that institutional arrangements and networks allow women to voice their concerns and rights directly to decision-makers.

### 3. Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing

Access to adequate and affordable housing was also identified as a priority issue in the HPP Campaign. The action items recommended for the issue area were:

1. 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.
2. Implement sustainable low-income housing options that focus on women and children.
3. 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.

#### Assessment

Based on our conversations, it seems that there has been *minimal progress* on any of the action items related to the issue of access to adequate and affordable housing. It is likely no surprise that women’s and girls’ access to adequate and affordable housing is still of grave concern in Vancouver. The city is experiencing a serious housing crisis, which is placing individuals in situations where they are financially unable to rent or buy. City Council is focusing its efforts on mitigating the negative implications of the inflated housing costs, as well as reducing street homelessness. Housing in the City of Vancouver “ranks among the least affordable in the world...with more than 90% of the city’s detached homes retailing for more than \$1M Canadian Dollars.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Arora-Jonsson, 2014; Green et al., 1998

<sup>9</sup> Arora-Jonsson, 2014

<sup>10</sup> Kassam, 2016

Related to the first action item of creating a gendered housing strategy, there seems to be some agreement that the broader housing crisis is overshadowing the need for a housing strategy that addresses women's and girls' distinctive and diverse housing needs. A community member explained that while the issue of affordability is one that is felt by most, individuals in vulnerable situations – especially women and girls – are most seriously impacted. For example, lone parents, who are disproportionately women, and women living in violent situations, are uniquely affected and have specific housing-related needs. In one conversation we had, a community member explained to us that, “geographically and spatially, women have a different urban geography; different cities, issues, and concerns of use come about because of their gender”. What must also be considered are the several gender divisions regarding housing, including: pay and equity, violence against women, safety, and the gendered division of labour, all of which play into women's distinctive patterns of use within cities. These distinct needs and issues are the reason for requiring a concrete framework within the City of Vancouver that uses a gender-specific outlook. Overall, there is grave concern about the consequences of inadequate and unaffordable housing, given the serious risks borne by women who cannot leave violent situations if there is nowhere to go.

There are efforts being made towards developing a more robust housing strategy. However, community members from different organizations expressed concern that housing policy development is currently carried out in ways that neglect the needs of women and girls throughout the city. One community member explained this as a problem of failing to understand unique housing needs. One community member suggested that the municipal government focuses on reactive, rather than proactive politics, and that this contributes to the lack of long-term planning. An elected official we spoke with acknowledged that “truly affordable housing should meet the needs of women and girls whilst eliminating homelessness and poverty”. Another elected official noted that housing is indeed seen as a critical issue. The elected official noted that significant headway has been made, and that the City is trying to implement programs to the best of its ability. An example of such a program is a partnership between the City of Vancouver and the YWCA, which prioritizes supportive housing for women fleeing domestic violence situations by redeveloping city spaces. A community member told us that “In Vancouver, in order to deal with the housing crisis, the municipal government teams up with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to try and solve problems and develop solid [housing] plans”. These housing projects are permanent social housing developments above existing city spaces including the library, and the fire hall. However, another community member noted that these projects are only minimally funded by the municipality, and are individual initiatives that do not amount to systemic changes to housing affordability and adequacy.

Also related to the first action item, a mid-term review of the City of Vancouver's housing strategy is underway. According to people with whom we spoke, the review is considering ways to better address the needs of women and girls regarding housing, including by placing a special

focus on single-parent women-led family housing. However, we were unable to find any publicly noted progress on this issue.

Related to the second action item of introducing sustainable, low-cost housing options, the need to re-expand access to rental housing was emphasized by people with whom we spoke, including changing related funding programs to include women and girls. An elected official noted that the City of Vancouver will continue to work on implementing sustainable low-income housing options that focus on women and children by increasing the development of family housing units. An example of expanding access to rental housing is the mandated increase in the development of rental housing by 1,000 units a year. This is having a large impact on vacancy rates, but is not having an impact on rental costs, which are still extremely high based on the median incomes of individuals who need to access the units. The City of Vancouver has also mandated the development of a minimum share of family-sized units (2 to 3 bedrooms) to counter the urge of private developers to focus on one-bedroom units, which a community member explained are more beneficial to the goal of profit maximization.

In terms of the third action item of encouraging both provincial and federal governments to re-invest in housing, there was a sentiment among people with whom we spoke that this includes the need for significant provincial and federal government investments to support the purchase and development of affordable housing in and near the downtown core. Housing location is important given the related needs of women and girls related to accessing city services and public transportation. Both a community member and an elected official noted a recent increase in provincial and federal attention on housing, but that this new attention has not included a focus on women and girls. An elected official noted that the City is working hard to bring together all three levels of government to re-develop Vancouver's housing strategy, but that until all parties fully commit their involvement, the City is unable to adequately address all of the diverse needs identified.

Overall, it is clear that efforts are being made with regards to each of the three action items identified, but that progress on any one of the action items is minimal. There is no evidence of a gendered housing strategy available, ongoing affordability issues despite increases in rental housing availability, and a lack of gendered attention to housing issues from other levels of government.

### *Challenges and Barriers*

Funding, broad housing challenges, and lack of understanding about the serious effects of inadequate housing for women and girls, are key barriers to making more progress on the issue of housing.

Funding support from all three levels of government is critical for the implementation of housing strategies to alleviate some of the pressures that the City of Vancouver faces regarding women's and girls' access to adequate, affordable, housing. This is partly because of the extraordinary cost of urban land; a cost that the municipality cannot bear alone. Inter-jurisdictional financial support must be matched by a recognition of the complex, intricate challenges that women and girls face regarding housing; challenges that are only thoroughly revealed using an intersectional lens. A related issue is the City's limited options for generating revenue. Municipal funds are collected from two sources: 4% of all tax dollars from residents, and property taxes. Together, these funding sources are not proving adequate for addressing the breadth of challenges facing the City. One elected official explained that "the City of Vancouver is being bombarded with poverty, homelessness, and unaffordability" in ways that can only be alleviated with new investments. As one elected official noted, "the problem is money, and the City only has so much". Funding limitations are compounded by the broad range of identified groups throughout the City who have trouble accessing adequate, affordable housing, and by private investors' motivations to develop the most lucrative forms of housing, rather than what is needed for women and children, an issue described in more detail above.

Related, and as noted above, the breadth of Vancouver's housing issues is another challenge to achieving the action items outlined in the HPP Campaign. The "million-dollar home" issue is overshadowing challenges facing people living with low-income, who struggle to find affordable apartments, let alone purchase million dollar properties. One community member suggested that "the hyperbole ... that gets attention in Vancouver, and especially in the media, is not about individuals unable to rent". Instead, the focus is placed again on the struggles of middle and upper-middle class people and families.

A third challenge relates to a seeming lack of understanding about the serious effects of inadequate housing for women and girls. For example, a 0.5% tax increase designed to contribute directly to crises facing the City provoked widespread public backlash. One community member suggested that if these initiatives are not marketed well, and if the general public is not aware of the significant barriers women and girls face in accessing adequate, affordable housing, they may be less inclined to support targeted public initiatives (and funds). Another community member pointed out that when women have inadequate access to housing, so too do their children. The consequences of inadequate housing for children can be severe, such that this link merits constant attention. A related issue relates to the question of how homelessness manifests in women's lives. In the 2016 Vancouver Homeless Count, men represented 76% of the homeless population surveyed.<sup>11</sup> However, as a community member noted, these figures do not take into account women in domestic violence situations who remain in unsafe living conditions in order to remain with their children, or women who are

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<sup>11</sup> City of Vancouver, 2016

“couch-surfing” between friends and family, or are in other situations where they are not considered *homeless* by the standards used in the survey. Without an intersectional analysis of homelessness, these women remain invisible. Thus, without complementary data, community members with whom we spoke remain concerned about the City’s ability to “focus and give due attention to every group”.

### *Steps Forward*

There was general agreement amongst people with whom we spoke that the application of an intersectional lens in policy development and analysis is the critical step forward for addressing the above-noted challenges. One community member explained that “the implemented policies are good. There just needs to be more language to recognize women, and to legitimize a movement towards...gender sensitivity”. It is clear that the housing crisis is an overwhelming issue that is affecting nearly all citizens living within the City of Vancouver. If an intersectional lens is used in policy development, measures to address the City’s housing crisis will generate more positive outcomes for women and children. As discussed by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA), undertaking an intersectional lens is especially important in recognizing Aboriginal women’s needs regarding access to housing. A more thorough examination of Aboriginal women’s experiences, as well as the experiences of domestic abuse survivors, will more accurately demonstrate the manifestation of the housing crisis, and will highlight the importance of integrating women’s considerations into housing policy development and decision-making.<sup>12</sup>

### Concluding Thoughts

Across our conversations, there was considerable agreement about the importance of addressing the needs and experiences of women and girls in municipal policies, but also about the challenges for so doing. During the development of the HPP Campaign, many candidates for elected office responded very seriously to the issues raised by the Campaign, and to the action items put forward. At the time, some council candidates discussed the influence of their identity as women on their decision to run for office, and on their priorities for governing. Despite conceptually supporting the need to address issues facing women and girls however, there was also considerable agreement surrounding issues hindering the City’s efforts in this regard, including the breadth and severity of competing priorities, the structural barriers that make inter-departmental, inter-jurisdictional, and inter-sectoral collaborations difficult, and the reactionary nature of politics.

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<sup>12</sup> CERA, 2002; Clough et al., 2013; WHEN Canada & CERA, 2008



One community member stated that the City Council is not disengaged with women and girls' issues. Rather, the number of priorities to which the City must attend is inexhaustible, effectively making the achievement of all of the action items outlined by the HPP Campaign, including the ones considered in this report, impossible. Two elected officials we spoke with noted that pervasive sexist attitudes and limited public interest in discussions about gender and public policy, make pursuing intersectional policies politically challenging. Given that many members of the public do not seem to recognize gender as a policy issue, some people with whom we spoke felt that the City has made significant efforts to ensure gender representation in the policy process. For example, the 2005 Gender Equality Strategy was renewed in 2016 by Vancouver's Women's Advisory Committee, and issues raised by the Hot Pink Paper Campaign are being used as a reference point for women and girls' issues. We are hopeful that when the Gender Equality Strategy comes before Council (anticipated at the end of 2017), it may include recommendations arising from the HPP Campaign. Funding limitations are a key issue related to the broader challenge of competing priorities. Many community members and elected officials commented on the lack of funds available for achieving key action items. Funding shortages are particularly acute in discussions about addressing challenges with access to adequate and affordable housing. Another way of thinking about challenges related to funding is to consider the fact that limited funds make it difficult for external organizations to hold the City accountable for its progress on important policy issues, or to work on achieving policy change. Resource limitations create barriers for governments, but also for community organizations involved in developing the HPP Campaign. Two community members noted this as a substantial barrier to advancing women's issues in the City. In other words, if women's organizations were more financially stable, they would have to spend less time trying to keep their doors open, and would have the resources and time available to do more work on important gendered issues such as those raised through the HPP Campaign. Limited funding also hinders possibilities for meaningful citizen participation, which often involves resources for providing childcare, transportation, and other services required for removing participation barriers.

Challenges with collaboration were also raised in various conversations. In some cases, these referred to challenges with working across municipal departments, as with including gendered considerations across environmental policy portfolios. In other cases, collaborative challenges related to aligning policy priorities across levels of government. This remains a key challenge in housing policy. A final cross-cutting challenge relates to governments' tendency to get caught up in a constant state of reacting to issues, rather than undertaking preventative policy development. For example, the only action item where considerable progress was noted was in relation to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. After the federal election in 2015, the Prime Minister publicly announced his commitment to holding an Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women. This, coupled with increased scrutiny on the issue in the 15 years since the arrest of Robert Pickton, who preyed on (disproportionately Indigenous) women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, means that violence against Indigenous women and girls finally gaining the prominence it merits as a policy issue. So, while broader attention on the



issue is finally coalescing, it is long-overdue, and is thus an example of the tendency for reactionary politics to prevail.

There are significant macro level barriers to making progress on the issue areas identified in the HPP Campaign, as well as barriers to achieving the specific action items considered in this report. Everybody we spoke with acknowledged the importance of considering women's and girls' needs and experiences, as well as the large-scale impediments to achieving the full inclusion of women and girls in cities. The strength of the HPP Campaign are its commitment to highlighting women's and girls' needs using an intersectional lens, and its efforts to draw community organizations across the City together to advocate for the diverse needs of women and girls. These ongoing efforts will push us ever closer to achieving women's and girls' equitable social, economic and political power in cities and beyond.

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## Appendix A: Conversation Participants

To prepare this report, which evaluates Vancouver’s development of policies that attend to the experiences of diverse women and girls, we spoke with individuals who were authorized to speak publicly on behalf of their respective organizations, or as public figures. We also spoke to people who were involved in creating the HPP campaign. We provided everyone with a letter explaining the purpose of the conversation, and clearly explaining that they were under no obligation to participate. We asked everyone to provide us only with publicly available information, and for their agreement to be identified below. We have not included specific names in the body of the report, referring to people only in large groupings (i.e., as “elected officials” and “community members”) so that individuals’ contributions cannot be identified. The guiding questions used in our discussions are attached in Appendix B.

### *Elected Officials*

- Geoff Meggs, Vision Vancouver
- Adriane Carr, Green Party
- Andrea Reimer, Vision Vancouver
- Stuart MacKinnon, Parks Board

### *Community Organization Representatives & HPP Campaign Participants*

- Sharon Gregson, Collingwood Neighbourhood House Society
- Tiffany Myrdahl, Women in Cities International & WTC board member (2012-2015), Simon Fraser University
- Mia Edbrooke, Committee member of HPP, Women’s Monument Action Committee
- Gyda Chud, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
- Irene Tsepnopoulos-Elhaimer, Women Against Violence Against Women
- Stephanie Drake, Adler University Student
- Christine O’Fallon, Former WTC Board Member & Women Transforming Cities
- Janice Abbott, CEO Atira Women’s Resource Society
- Ellen Woodsworth, WTC
- Pete Fry, Green Party Candidate 2014 Election
- Margot Young, Housing Justice Canada & University of British Columbia
- Chris McDowell, Remember Our Sisters Everywhere
- Ingrid Kolsteren, Vancouver and District Labour Council Women’s Committee
- Miranda Mandarino, Chair, Women’s Advisory Committee
- Connie Hubbs, Community Member
- Anita Romaniuk, Parks Board Candidate (COPE)

## Appendix B: Discussion Questions<sup>13</sup>

### *Questions for Elected Officials*

1. Do you remember how you learned about the Hot Pink Paper campaign?
2. In your role as an elected official, what are the primary issues facing women and girls in the City of Vancouver? What about the primary issue from your party's perspective?
3. What is your party's vision for an inclusive City of Vancouver that is accountable for both women and girls?
4. During the 2015 campaign, you/your party committed to (x) of the 11 issues identified in the Hot Pink Paper Campaign. We'd like to ask you a few questions about three of these: (1) violence against women, (2) the environment, and (3) affordable housing.
5. Can you tell us about why you committed publicly to the issue of the environment/adequate housing/violence against women and girls?<sup>14</sup>
6. Has the City has been able to fulfill the action items associated with each issue?
7. Can you tell me about specific policies, actions, initiatives that are helping to achieve the action items?
8. For action items that haven't been addressed or fully completed, why not? What challenges/barriers does the City faced in trying to implement the action items? Have there been any other achievements for women and girls, besides key action items, that you can identify? What is the City doing to address the outstanding action items?

### *Questions for Community Organizations & HPP Campaign Participants*

1. Prior to the Hot Pink Paper Campaign, what were the main concerns and issues that your organization focused on surrounding women and girls within the community?
2. What does an inclusive City of Vancouver that is accountable to women and girls look like to your organization?
3. Did your organization foresee or predict any challenges associated with achieving the action items you proposed as part of the Hot Pink Paper?
4. Regarding each action item, how did your organization envision "successful" implementation of this item? Short term vs. long term?
5. Has your organization collected any evidence that the key action items were upheld (e.g., New related programs? New policy commitments?)
6. What is your organization's position on whether or not the action items have been fulfilled? Why (e.g., logistical challenges, funding/resource limitations, commitment)?

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<sup>13</sup> Not all questions were asked in each discussion. The questions simply served as a guiding template.

<sup>14</sup> For each issue area, we listed the related action items.

7. If the key action items have not been fulfilled, has your organization noted any related improvements that have been achieved related to the action items in the Hot Pink Paper Campaign?
8. What changes/steps are your organization calling for to fulfill these key action items? How do you call for these changes (e.g., press releases, direct contact with city council, serving on advisory groups, other)?
9. Would your organization change the key action items it proposed during the development of the Hot Pink Paper Campaign? And why?
10. Did your organization publicly support a Councillor and/or a party in the 2015 election? If so, was she/he elected?
11. Have the neighborhood Councillor liaisons in your organization's neighborhood opened a formal channel of conversation for the issues your organization supported in the Hot Pink Paper Campaign?
12. How does your organization communicate with city council? Your neighborhood Councillor liaison in particular?

## Appendix C: Select Annotated Bibliography

### 1. Violence Against Women and Girls

**Collier, C. N. (2012). *Feminist and Gender-Neutral Frames in Contemporary Child-Care and Anti-Violence Policy Debates in Canada. Politics and Gender, 8: 283-303.***

Collier's (2012) argument supports the importance of upholding gender in policy analysis. Using the problem of violence, she argues that there is greater risk associated with the omission of gender in anti-violence policy discourse. The problem, she points out, is that women and men are exposed to different forms of violence and thereby, policy responses will not adequately address and combat violence against women if they are not developed through a gendered lens. She also points out that "as Canadian activists have increasingly adopted state-friendly gender-neutral frames that de-emphasize feminist arguments of the gendered nature of women's policy arenas, they help facilitate government ignorance of the greater goals of ending women's systemic discrimination, even if feminist frames have not entirely disappeared inside social movement organizations' discourse" (p. 285). Her argument in support of the inclusion of gender in policy analyses supports the work of Women Transforming Cities through and beyond the HPP Campaign, which is clear that in all action items, there must be a gendered lens.

**Weldon, S. L. (2013). *Feminist mobilization and progressive policy change: Why governments take action to combat violence against women. Gender and Development, 21(2): 231-247.***

Weldon's (2013) study examines the relationship between feminist activism and governments in addressing violence against women. She concludes that the most important and consistent factor driving policy change surrounding violence against women is feminist activism. Her analysis finds "that countries with the strongest feminist movements tend, other things being equal, to have more comprehensive policies on violence against women than those with weaker or non-existent movements" (p. 236). Though her study focuses on the national scale, her findings provide important insight into how feminist activism can spur policy change, even at the municipal level. For example, the author's definition of "feminist activism" expands beyond feminist community engagement, to include focusing on the development of a movement. She finds that for movements to be successful in promoting progressive violence against women policies, the movement and the organizations within it must be non-partisan. She argues that "legislative insiders" are unable to produce effect policy change because they are part of political communities, which are generally not conducive to supporting matters that go against male domination.



## 2. The Environment

**Bel, G., & Mur, M. (2009). *Inter-municipal cooperation, privatization and waste management costs: Evidence from rural municipalities. Waste Management, 29(10): 2772-2778.***

Bel & Mur (2009) examine the complex character of municipal environmental management (MEM) in terms of integration and cooperation between different actors. A case from Sweden is examined in which the adoption of environmental management systems (EMS) may promote cooperation in MEM across a municipality by bridging professional culture and language gaps. The authors argue that in achieving environmental management and sustainable development goals, there are necessary strategic approaches to environmental management which call for cooperation between different actors of society particularly in communicating with local authorities, and that this cooperation can be facilitated through environmental management systems. The particular approach examined by the authors involves merging different committees into new larger units to foster political will to coordinate skills or professionals into new municipal departments. They find that because these mergers may be tainted with power hierarchies between 'harder' (engineering) and 'softer' (social service) departments, the adoption of MEM by itself cannot improve municipal environmental performance or quality. Instead, effective environmental policy implementation relies heavily on the content of the system, which may be provided by through an EMS.

**Buckingham, S., Reeves, D., & Batchelor, A. (2005). *Wasting women: The environmental justice of including women in municipal waste management. Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability, 10:4.***

Buckingham et al. (2005) undertake two case studies (Dublin, Ireland and West Sussex County Council, UK) to understand the opportunities and benefits of considering gender in Municipal Waste Management (MWM) policies. The results from Dublin showed that women or women's groups had not been specifically consulted in the city's Waste Management Plan strategy and officials seemed not to understand the importance of intentionally including women in these policies. The experience in West Sussex County, UK was much more inclusive, a finding that the authors attribute to the presence of more women in senior positions, the implementation of a feedback loop system, and a more inclusive and open recruitment process which allowed for more individuals with diverse perspectives and interests to provide input. The West Sussex County model included more gender sensitive initiatives, and was developed more locally from officers directly involved in MWM, and with little guidance the national level. The authors conclude that with a sufficient critical mass of women, and by emphasizing equal opportunities, modest changes in environmental management can be achieved.

**Corburn, J. (2003). *Bringing local knowledge into environmental decision making. Journal of Planning Education and Research, 22(4): 420-33.***

Corburn (2003) argues that community knowledge can provide critical political and technical insights that are often overlooked or simplified by professional and official knowledge. This article examines contributions of local knowledge to environmental policy interventions that seek to improve the lives of community members experiencing greatest risk. Most literature on the subject focuses on the problem with expert-centred dialogues, and overlooks the technical insights that communities can offer. In a co-production model of knowledge, science is understood in relation to its dependence on the natural world, historic events, social dynamics and material resources. Political decision making within this model works to deconstruct how science is conducted, communicated, and used. However, local knowledge, particularly in environmental politics, is challenged for overlooking structural/global dimensions of problem solving and romanticizing local culture. Four ways in which local knowledge contributes to environmental decision making were identified. These included pointing out epistemological flaws resulting from data aggregation, revealing heterogeneity in a population, highlighting information that is often discounted by professionals as 'a way of living', and uncovering contextual and inaccessible (tacit) knowledge.

**Green, S. Jokes, M., & Leach. (1998). *Questionable links: approaches to gender in environmental research and policy. In R. Jackson & Pearson (Eds.). Feminist Visions of Development. London: Routledge.***

Green et al. (1998) claim that women's control over natural resources is restricted because gendered interventions in relevant policies rarely occur. In particular, a lack of gendered considerations prevents us from conceptualizing the ways in which social relations of gender are intertwined with, and determine, environmental resource use. The authors examine these failures in the forestry, water and urban environmental management sectors. Regarding urban environmental management, the authors point out that most policy literature on the urban environment is sector-based, offering specific solutions to technical problems, which is unfit approach to dealing with complex environmental problems. The literature also indicates gendered patterns of resource participation, access and control, yet gender specifics are very rarely considered in policies. Where environmental policies have attempted to account for gendered experiences, they are often focused on women's experiences with work, economics, and the environment, and fail to consider women's dynamic interactions with the male world, thus assuming homogeneity in values and interest. The authors recommend drawing on feminist environmentalism, feminist political ecology, and gender, environment and development. These schools of thought consider how we could better attend to gender in environmental policy-making. They emphasize diversity within subgroups of women and men, and shift focus from gender roles to gender relations.

### 3. Access to Adequate and Affordable Housing

***Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA). (2002). Women and Housing in Canada: Barriers to Equality – Women’s Housing Program.***

This report by CERA (2002) outlines various issues distinct to women and girls regarding access to housing, as well as the dire need for reform of social housing initiatives at the municipal level. The inability to access safe affordable housing for women, as identified by CERA, often forces women to face other challenges such as domestic violence, as well as potentially losing their children due to their unstable living conditions. However, it is noted that these indicators are rarely visible within “homeless” counts as women do not always follow the traditional model of homelessness (i.e., living on the street). The report emphasizes the need for adopting a gendered approach to housing policy, and highlights the critical housing challenges facing Aboriginal women. The report recommends a more comprehensive homelessness census to better capture women’s experiences, and in turn encourage their incorporation into policy decisions. The report also recommends removing restrictions on mortgage insurance so that women in low income households can demonstrate credit worthiness in a broader variety of ways. The paper suggests that the right to adequate housing for Aboriginal women should be recognized by the federal government as an “Aboriginal treaty right”, with amendments made to the *Indian Act* to remove all discrimination against Aboriginal women and their children. Finally, the need for support from all levels of government for social housing projects is highlighted in the report.

***Clough, A.E., Drauhon, J., Glass, N., Nije-Carr, V., Rollins, C. (2013). ‘Having Housing Made Everything Else Possible’: Affordable, Safe and Stable Housing for Women Survivors of Violence. Qualitative Social Work, 13(5), 671-688.***

Clough et al. (2013) argue that safe housing and economic resources are two of the most critical concerns for victims of domestic violence. The research explores the diverse experiences of women experiencing domestic violence, or who are planning to leave these situations, and outlines the challenges they face in accessing adequate, affordable housing. The authors argue that stable, affordable housing is a critical factor in increasing safety for women in these situations, but that various barriers, including lack of housing resources within the municipality, act as a barrier to women’s ability to “leave their situations, or stay safe from their abusive partners”. The authors cite the 2008 global economic crisis as having had a significant impact on the availability and affordability of rental housing and related service provisions across North America.

***Women’s Housing Equality Network (WHEN) Canada & Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA). (2008). A Crisis Denied: Homelessness and Inadequate Housing in Canada. Universal Periodic Review of Canada.***

This submission by WHEN Canada & CERA (2008) to the Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights outlines several challenges that women and girls face in trying to access affordable, adequate housing, including: experiences with domestic violence, living in low-income, broad-based gender inequalities (wage gap, unstable income sources), and struggles with access to social assistance. The report argues that the Canadian government should “play a central leadership role [in addressing] the housing and homelessness crisis in Canada”, and should approach these issues from an intersectional perspective. The Women’s Housing Equality Network (WHEN) is a national organization focused on women’s housing equality issues. The network is a coalition of representatives from each province and territory, as well as individual women who are in adverse housing situations. For over 13 years, WHEN has emphasized “women’s housing, homelessness, and equality issues at the forefront of political, legal, and policy agendas across Canada”. They use a human rights-based framework, advocating for policies and programs to work towards “improving women’s access to housing that is safe, secure, stable, and affordable”.