GENDER SITS IN PLACE: THE POTENTIAL FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO CONTRIBUTE TO GENDER EQUALITY

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Gender matters in Canada– it has in the past, it matters today, and it is likely to do so in the foreseeable future. Municipal landscapes of gender equality and inequality vary across Canada and municipalities are potentially important players in contributing to gender equality. Initiatives that promote and sustain gender inclusive programs, practices, and outcomes are more likely to succeed when municipalities are part of broader networks, respect, draw insights from, and work with, community organizations and participate in multi-stakeholder initiatives. Working in CCMARD's 10 Commitment areas can facilitate gender mainstreaming and the practices that help to actualize this goal. Gender matters and it does so in place. Municipalities, therefore, have both the responsibility and the opportunity to build more inclusive communities that take gender seriously.

Gender matters in Canada– it has in the past, it matters today, and it is likely to do so in the foreseeable future. How gender matters depends on many factors including where you live, how you identify ethnically, whether or not you are racialized, live with a disability, are poor, and so on. At the same time, in arenas such as leadership, paid and unpaid work, and experiences of violence, women tend to live different sorts of lives than do their male peers (see Table 1; Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2004; McInturff 2013; McInturff 2014).

Historically there have been myriad efforts, by individuals, groups and governmental institutions, to bring residents closer to the goal of gender equality. Concerns have been raised recently about the sustainability of such achievements in the face of dramatic changes in the nature, scope, and intent of public policy interventions at all levels of government (Brodie 2010; Rogers and Knight 2011). Municipalities are potentially important players in contributing to gender equality.

The goals of this article are threefold:

- to highlight the most pressing issues related to gender in Canadian municipalities and how these issues have differential impacts;
- to consider the opportunities available in municipalities; and,
- to examine existing good practices.

MUNICIPAL LANDSCAPES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND INEQUALITY

The Best and Worst Place to be a Woman in Canada: An Index of Gender Equality in Canada's Twenty Largest Metropolitan Areas (McInturff 2014) is a unique contribution to knowledge

on gender issues. In this text, Kate McInturff analyzes data on how women compare to men in Canada's largest cities for five sets of indicators: economic security, leadership, health, personal security, and education. She reveals a tremendous range in how gender matters in each place but she also identifies more general trends about changing gender relations. Gaps are smallest in education (except in trades and apprenticeships) and health (except in relation to stress) *(7)*. In contrast, intimate partner violence is a phenomenon experienced disproportionately by women across cities and women are more likely to experience lower full-time employment, to work part-time, and are "nearly twice as likely to work for minimum wage" *(7)* (See also Table 1). Both formal and informal political participation are arenas where men are much more likely to be found than women as, "men outnumber women in senior management at the same rate as they do in the political arena – with three men for every one woman, on average" (McInturff 2014, 9). Although McInturff was unable to further disaggregate these findings given limited data availability, other evidence makes it clear that Aboriginal women, racialized women, women with disabilities, and female youth are much more likely to experience violence, poverty, and marginalization than are women who are white, middle aged, and able-bodied (Table 1; Khosla 2014; Klodawsky et al. forthcoming; Senese and Wilson 2013; Vecova 2011).

In Canada, when it comes to being female, some large cities are better than others (McInturff 2014). Across five indicators, there are narrower gaps in cities in Québec than elsewhere, while the opposite is the case in Alberta. The industrial profile of the latter province is one reason for the larger gender gap there: "The concentration of higher-paying, male-dominated industries, such as mining and construction, and low-paying female-dominated service sector jobs in Alberta contribute to the gap in wages and employment" (McInturff, 8). These data also raise interesting questions about the reasons for Québec's overall positive ratings, particularly the role played by its unique approach to childcare (Brodeur and Connolly 2013). Analysis of such questions will require more engagement from municipalities and from researchers to identify and document gender inequalities, support the sharing of data nationally, and investigate multilevel interactions.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUNICIPAL INVOLVEMENT

The municipal rankings in McInturff's (2014) report are not simply the straightforward result of provincial and other external influences. As CCMARD recognizes, municipal actions have a role to play in "combat[ing] racism and multiple forms of discrimination" (CCMARD 2005, 12). As noted in an FCM report (2004) on world-wide efforts to build cities "tailored to women," opportunities are multiple and involve activities geared to:

- electing more women;
- encouraging and supporting women's civic political engagement; and
- promoting gender inclusive leadership, administration and governance.

Initiatives that promote and sustain gender inclusive programs, practices, and outcomes are more likely to succeed when municipalities:

- are part of broader networks that connect them to research and good practices beyond their own jurisdiction;
- respect, draw insights from, and work with, community organizations that promote gender equality, human rights, and social justice; and,
- participate in multi-stakeholder initiatives that are centrally about inclusion and equity (Klodawsky et al. Forthcoming 2014).

A recent example that speaks to this approach is the *Women Transforming Cities* National Conference that brought together "municipal officials, urban designers and planners and women and girls interested in transforming…cities into places where women are more involved in electoral processes, and municipal governments are responsive to the priorities of women and girls in Canada's urban centres" (WTC 2013, 3). Key outcomes of the conference were recommendations targeted to each of the following: grassroots activists, the City of Vancouver, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Government of British Columbia, and the Federal Government (WTC 2013, 4).

The initiatives highlighted and promoted at the WTC conference are the outcome of efforts throughout the world, including across Canada, to develop, promote, and institutionalize policies and practices that use gendered analyses and set measurable targets for equitable outcomes for men and women across diversity. Given current disparities, much work remains (see Table 1). Such efforts must build on long-standing initiatives but also be open to new approaches, and recognize that patience and sustained commitment over many years will be required for success.

LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICES

Given the complex landscape described above, good practices are manifest in a variety of ways and some become apparent only after the fact. One such example is the Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa. This

Group was established in 1999 as the result of efforts by an Ottawa counselor (in concert with two academics) to gain Council support for an International Declaration on Women and Local Government. The ultimate goal was to promote a more systematic approach to achieving gender equality both within the City and in the City's interactions with its residents. The motion asked Council to support the Declaration as well as a research project to evaluate the current situation and propose improvements in women's access to services and employment. Importantly, the motion specified that the research project had to include the involvement of community representatives as well as City staff and academics. On one hand, the project became an opportunity for academics and community members to learn more about how decision-making takes place at City Hall. On the other hand, it enabled City staff to become more open to research emphasizing the need to consider both gender and diversity in a systematic way.

The research results became the basis of a further collaboration involving researchers, staff, and community representatives that, in 2004, resulted in the establishment of the City for All Women Initiative (Klodawsky et. al. Forthcoming 2014). This organization has, since inception, maintained an approach that reflects its roots in the Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services. It describes its mandate as having two components:

- to work with the City of Ottawa "to create a more inclusive city and promote gender equity"; and

- to provide a network of support for women in Ottawa to "develop their knowledge of how the city works while putting into practice skills such as facilitation, presentation and communications."

CAWI has worked with the full-diversity of women in the Ottawa community to carry out its mandate. One significant contribution has been the co-development of the Equity and Inclusion (EI) Lens (2009) and its accompanying resource material (the EI Lens Guide and the Diversity Snapshots) with the City of Ottawa. More recently, it has secured funds from Status of Women Canada to work with a series of women's organizations and municipalities across Canada to develop a "How To" handbook to help guide others in developing their own Equity and Inclusion Lens. Funds from Status of Women Canada also helped the two earlier Ottawa-based initiatives get off the ground (Klodawsky et. al. Forthcoming 2014).

CCMARD'S CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

The CCMARD framework provides a useful guide for the anti-discrimination work of Canadian municipalities. Many of the most pressing challenges facing both female and male constituents in cities can be addressed through CCMARD's 10 commitments. Working in CCMARD 10 areas can facilitate gender mainstreaming and the practices that help to actualize this goal. In particular, the framework encourages work in priority areas that also are highlighted by the FCM: political and civic engagement and inclusive governance. Through its focus on collaborative work, CCMARD encourages municipalities to engage diverse stakeholders in the struggle for equality in the many arenas where municipal engagement can make a difference. Gender matters and it does so in place. Municipalities; therefore, have both the responsibility and the opportunity to build more inclusive communities that take gender seriously.

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TABLE 1: WOMEN IN CANADA AT A GLANCE: SELECTED STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Demographic Trends

- Most Canadian women live in large metropolitan centres (69.4%) (p.4).
- Women make up the majority of the senior population… By 2031, the number of senior women is projected to reach 5.1 million and account for close to one quarter (24%) of the total female population (p. 27).
- In 2006, 90% of immigrant women lived in the country's 33 largest urban centres, compared to only 68% of the total female population (p. 22).
- Ninety-six percent (96%) of visible minority women lived in metropolitan areas, compared with 63% of non-visible minority women (p. 25).

Economic Well-Being

- In 2008, women earned, on average, 83 cents to every dollar earned by men… (p. 15).
- Senior women's average income continues to be less than senior men's. In 2008, senior women's and senior men's incomes were $24,800 and $38,100 respectively.
- While earnings for both sexes rise with levels of education, the difference is greater for women. Women working full-year, full-time with lesss than a Grade 9 education averaged less than 35% of the earnings of female university graduates. In comparison, men with less than Grade 9 average about 44% of the earnings of male university graduates. Also note that even with equivalent education levels, men earned more than women (p. 15).
- Visible minority women are more likely to be in a low-income situation. In 2005, among visible minority women in families, 28% lived in low-income situations, double the percentage for their non-visible minority counterparts (14%) (p. 25).

Paid Work

- While about 73% of female employees worked full time in 2009, women were still more likely than men to have part-time jobs… (p. 12)
- A majority of women continue to work in traditional female occupations. In 2009, 67% of employed women had jobs in teaching, nursing and related health fields, clerical or other administrative positions, or in sales and services. Only 31% of employed men worked in these fields (p. 12).
- …The proportion of recent immigrant women with a university degree working in sales and services (23%) was three times greater than for their Canadian-born counterparts (7.4%) (p. 22).
- Women with activity limitations report lower personal incomes. The average personal income for women with activity limitations was $24,000, abut three-quarters that of women without such limitations ($32,100).

Families, Living Arrangements And Unpaid Work

- There were about four times as many female lone parents (1.1 million) as male lone parents (281,800) in 2006… (p. 6).
- …In 2006, 18% of Aboriginal women aged 15 and over headed families on their own, in comparison to 8% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (p. 20).
- In 2006, 25% of women aged 65 to 69 lived alone, in contrast to 14% of men (p. 6).
- Women spend more time than men caring for their children. In 2010, women spent an average of 50.1 hours per week on unpaid child care, more than double that (24.4) spent by men (p. 6).
- Women spend more time than men on domestic work. In 2010, while women spent 13.8 hours per week doing housework, men spent 8.3 hours (p.6).
- Women were almost twice as likely as men (49% compared to 25%) to spend more than 10 hours per week caring for a senior (p. 6).

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- About 41% of women with activity limitations attributed them to disease or illness. Men, on the other hand, were 1.5 times more likely than women to attribute their limitation to an accident (29% versus 20% respectively) (p. 29).
- Women with chronic physical conditions may also experience psychological problems, such as depression or anxiety. Twenty-five percent (25%) of men and 16% of men with activity limitations experienced psychological distress in addition to their physical health problems (p. 29).
- Women with activity limitations report lower levels of life satisfaction and much higher levels of stress. Only about a quarter (26%) reported being very satisfied with their lives, compared to 41$ of other women. Similarly, over one-third of women with activity limitations described their daily lives as highly stressful, compared to less than one-quarter of women without activity limitations (p. 29).

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Source: Canada. (Status Of Women Canada 2012)