

# ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS TORONTO URGE ACTION ON GENDER EQUITY DURING MUNICIPAL ELECTION

## #VoteEquityTO

We need greater municipal investment to address the systemic inequities growing in Toronto along racial, gender and neighborhood lines. Women, Black, Indigenous and racialized communities, people living with disabilities, and people on fixed incomes have been disproportionately impacted by the increased cost of living and COVID-19. This municipal election we are calling on all city council and mayoral candidates to prioritize gender equity and invest in poverty and violence reduction.



## HOUSING AND SHELTER

Access to safe and affordable housing transforms lives. No one should ever feel forced to stay in a violent relationship because they cannot afford to leave. No one should have to make the choice between putting food on the table or paying their rent. Toronto is in desperate need of affordable, accessible, and safe housing options for women and gender diverse people. Shelter and supportive housing waiting lists continue to grow, market rent is becoming less and less affordable, and ‘renovictions’ and ‘demovictions’ are on the rise.

- 1. Increase affordable, accessible and safe housing options for women and gender diverse people.**
  - a. Create a Toronto Housing Commissioner’s Office.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Increase funding to the Toronto Tenant Support Program (TTSP), expand the program to include ‘renovictions’ and ‘demovictions’, and increase tenant hotline service hours of operation.
  - c. To address overcrowding, implement the enhanced new shelter model with its focus on housing, and its complimentary shelter and health framework, first announced five years ago.<sup>2</sup>
  - d. Create new processes to document and eliminate housing discrimination toward newcomers, racialized, Indigenous and Black Torontonians, residents on fixed incomes, and/or people living with disabilities.
  - e. Increase access to social housing for low-income families.

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1 <https://right2housingto.ca/rights-approach-to-housing/why-toronto-needs-a-housing-commissioners-office-now/>  
2 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56c4a231d51cd428ca552a3a/t/6307a2d1fb35fb0d901aa007/1661444819412/TAEH+TSN+Statement+re+New+Housing+at+Bond+Hotel+-+August+24+2022+-+FINAL.pdf>

## TRANSIT AND INTERNET

We believe access to safe, affordable and accessible public transit is a human right. A study by WomanACT has shown that almost one-half of transit riders have experienced some form of harassment in the last year and that women are far more likely than men to experience sexual harassment. Toronto needs a plan to make the TTC safer. And during the pandemic, it has become clear that access to the internet is a means of safety and should be considered a public good.

- 2. Ensure the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is safe, accessible and affordable, particularly for women and gender diverse people, people living with disabilities and low-income individuals, and that all resident can access the internet.**
  - a. Demand the TTC develop a strategy to ensure riders, particularly women and gender diverse people, are free from violence and harassment, this includes hiring specific, trauma-informed support staff and increasing TTC service levels outside of peak hours and at night.
  - b. Implement lower TTC fares, including fully funding the Fair Pass discount for low-wage workers, lengthening the 2-hour fare window, and expanding free transit to people receiving social assistance and high school students.<sup>3</sup>
  - c. Establish a municipal broadband network and provide free public wi-fi.
  - d. Provide deeply subsidized internet and technology packages to all low and moderate-income people.

## DECENT WORK

The economic inequity exacerbated by the pandemic was felt most deeply by women – in particular, racialized, Indigenous, trans and newcomer women, women living with disabilities, and caregivers. The care economy is a feminized industry that is chronically underfunded and underpaid. We need meaningful action to address gender and racial pay disparities and investments that ensure care work is decent work.

- 3. Enhance wages and implement better working conditions for frontline and nonprofit workers, a largely feminized and racialized segment of the workforce.**
  - a. Create a comprehensive workforce strategy for the child care sector and support child care budgets that provide decent and comprehensive wages and benefits to ECEs and other child care workers.
  - b. Ensure all infrastructure investments are attached to community benefits agreements that create decent work opportunities for women, racialized community members and people living with disabilities.
  - c. Hiring of child care workers and other workers should be limited to direct hire and not through Temporary Help Agencies to ensure adequate quality of service and pay.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

Gun violence, gender-based violence and femicide are on the rise. Poverty and economic disparity are root causes of violence – when these two concerns go ignored, violence rises. Investing in programs and strategies that work to eradicate gun and community violence must be a priority for the City of Toronto. Programs must also be trauma-informed and culturally appropriate so as not to reproduce harmful stereotypes and support diverse community members in meaningful ways.

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3 (these are from TTC Riders) [www.ttcriders.ca/farereportlaunched](http://www.ttcriders.ca/farereportlaunched).

4. **Increase funding for trauma-informed and culturally-responsive approaches to community safety.**
  - a. Resource Toronto’s Gender Equity Strategy adequately and ensure priorities identified by residents and expert organizations are reflected in the Strategy.
  - b. Create a specific fund that provides cash payments to survivors of violence to help rebuild lives in safety.
  - c. Recommit to Toronto’s drug strategy and increase funding to expand and resource programming and services for harm reduction.
  - d. Create accessible, affordable and diverse counselling and mental health supports for women and gender diverse people.
  - e. Rapidly increase funding and implementation of programs that eliminates the reliance on police to address mental health, houselessness, gender-based violence and gun violence.

## COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Adequate municipal funding can provide youth with reliable access to safer spaces, programs that build positive social and life skills, and equitable housing opportunities. Government funding for girls’ programs continues to be non-existent. Funding youth and girls’ programs can help drive safety for girls and positively impact their mental health, confidence, and more. The financial responsibility of ensuring safer spaces for youth cannot fall solely on the nonprofit community.

5. **Ensure access to free recreation programs across the city for girls and youth, including food programs.**
  - a. Commit to the next Poverty Reduction Strategy and ensure full and comprehensive resource allocation and measurement.
  - b. Deeply invest in the expansion of nonprofit and public child care centres and actively work towards a publicly funded, licensed, universal child care system.
  - c. Fund specific recreation programs for girls and trans youth.
  - d. Ensure geographic equity for community centres across the city and prioritize the build of new community centres in racialized neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup>
  - e. Expand year-round access to critical amenities in public parks as places of respite, such as washrooms and water fountains across the city.<sup>5</sup>

Click [here](#) to sign our petition and tell candidates that you are campaigning for an Equitable Toronto. Click [here](#) to see the list of our #VoteEquityTO campaign partners.

[www.VoteEquityTO.ca](http://www.VoteEquityTO.ca)

[#VoteEquityTO](#)

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4 “From Social Planning Toronto’s (SPT) platform.”

5 “Ibid.”