



Hot Pink Pathways to a Women- Friendly Vancouver

Outcome Report
August 2018



Status of Women
Canada

Condition féminine
Canada

WOMEN
TRANSFORMING
CTIES.org



ABOUT THE PROJECT

This forum is part of “Action on Systemic Barriers to Women’s Participation in Local Government,” a multi-year project led by Women Transforming Cities and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. The project aims to find ways to improve gender and diversity equity and inclusion within local governments. Status of Women Canada is funding the project.

Co-sponsoring Organizations

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) promotes social justice and equality for all women. CRIAOW recognizes women’s diverse experiences and views. It helps to build women’s knowledge. It works to reduce regional isolation. And it helps link researchers and groups that work to promote social justice and equality for all women.

Women Transforming Cities (WTC) is a non-profit society that believes that cities that work for women and girls, work for everyone. Our mission is to transform our cities into spaces that work for all people by empowering self-identified women and girls, in all their diversity, through community engagement, inclusive policies, and equitable representation. We promote and support women to become elected officials and recognizes that women can transform our cities into just and inclusive places as workers, planners, mothers, and informed citizens.

We would also like to acknowledge Adler University’s generous contribution to the forum through providing a venue that helped this event to be a great success.

INTRODUCTION

Women play important roles in city life. Many women have run for elected office in Vancouver, and many are running in the upcoming 2018 election. This forum explored the experiences of these women, and aimed to understand the opportunities and challenges women face in municipal politics.

Women run for office for many different reasons. The panelists had personal experiences which shaped their decisions to run. The panelists were:

- **Niki Sharma:** former Park Board Commissioner and Chair with Vision Vancouver who also ran for City Council
- **Adriane Carr:** two-term City Councillor who also co-founded the BC Green Party and has run for office provincially and federally
- **Carrie Bercic:** Vancouver School Board trustee and OneCity's first elected official
- **Diana Day:** Indigenous activist and COPE's candidate for School Board in the upcoming election
- **Melissa De Genova:** City Councillor and former Park Board Commissioner with the Non-Partisan Association (NPA)

Several panelists had dealt with sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination when they ran for office. Niki Sharma described how the media and the public focused on her South Asian heritage during her campaign. While she was proud to be the first South Asian woman elected to

Park Board, she wished her qualifications were also highlighted. She was publicly called a racial slur during a campaign, which led to an open conversation about race. Niki emphasized that candidates are often seen as their ethnicity first, and that we need to talk about why our elected representatives don't reflect the diversity of our communities.

Melissa De Genova experienced sexism and ageism when she first ran for office as a young woman. People told her she should wait to run for office until she was older, after she was married and had raised her children. She sees many women who would make excellent elected representatives, but they say they can't run because they have young children. City Councillors do not get parental leave and she had to juggle motherhood responsibilities with her work as a councillor which was extremely challenging.

Similarly, Adriane Carr was also a young woman when she started in politics, and had older men talk down to her and call her a "lamb amongst wolves." She would prepare thoroughly for debates and answer every question, and her male counterparts would dramatically rip up the question sheet and deliver their political talking points instead.



Diana Day and Carrie Bercic were both motivated to run for office after their children went through the public school system. Diana struggled to find culturally-appropriate education for her children that prepared them for post-secondary education. Too many Indigenous children are falling through the cracks of the current system, and Diana would like to see more supports in place for vulnerable students. Another intersection of Diana's identity that posed a challenge to her candidacy was simply being an indigenous women, making her the target of implicit and explicit bias.

Carrie's children have special needs, and Carrie volunteered in their schools for many years. Carrie noted that most parent volunteers are women. Several panelists also mentioned time, money, and party politics as barriers to running for office.

Women tend to do more childcare and domestic work, often while doing paid work, and feel like they do not have time to run or be an elected official. Adriane described how women can sometimes take a few years to decide to run for office because they think through every consequence it would have on their lives. Men tend to make the decision much quicker.

Campaigning is expensive, especially if candidates need to raise a certain amount for their political party, or campaign to win both the party nomination and general election. Women are still paid less than men for same work in many fields. Melissa described an experience working on a Mayoral campaign, before she ran, where she was paid less than a man even though she put in more hours. People are still often treated differently based on gender.

Nearly every panelist said that it is important for women to speak up and use their voices. Niki stated that she will no longer apologize for taking up space at a table that wasn't set for her. Carrie emphasized that women need to be able to rip up the question sheet and be loud if they want to be.

Following the panelists, the Mayoral candidates spoke. These speakers were:

- **Shauna Sylvester:** founding Executive Director of SFU Public Square and Director of the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at SFU
- **Wai Young:** former Member of Parliament with the Conservative Party, business and community leader, founder of new Coalition Vancouver party.

Shauna spoke briefly about her upbringing, including how her brothers had their education paid for but she did not because of her gender. She described many issues currently facing Vancouver. People

experiencing mental health issues or drug addictions should be safely cared for and housed. Seniors also deserve good housing and respectful health care. Shauna shared that 50% of single women over the age of 65 live in poverty. Vancouver also needs to ensure young people can stay and afford to live here. Shauna highlighted that working together as a community is powerful.

Wai shared that as a child she was one of three Asian students at school, and had rocks thrown at her. She praised how far Vancouver has come in the past 50 years, which is why she is able to run in this election. Wai wanted to run as Mayor with the Non-Partisan Association (NPA), but was told she could not, so she chose to start her own party. Wai spoke about creating a level playing field for women. Women are at times appointed simply to fill a gender quota, and can become tokens. Women are as strong, smart, competent, and passionate as men and we should create a world where we no longer need to discuss women's issues, because the barriers women experience now will be removed.



BREAKOUT DISCUSSION

Participants in this forum worked in many areas, with the most common being Women and girls, Housing, Childcare, and LGBTQ issues. Several participants added their own categories when asked about their professional backgrounds such as Drug policy reform/decriminalization, Sex worker rights, Cyber violence, Leadership, Capacity building, and Students.

Before breaking into groups, attendees had the opportunity to ask several questions from the speakers. Topics discussed included:

- The City's police budget
- The environment
- Party nomination processes
- Making public transit safer for women
- Ensuring a safe work environment for City employees

Attendees then broke out into small discussion groups to discuss specific issues and how they impact women. They also discussed the experiences of marginalized women, and how different women encounter different challenges. The subjects discussed were:

- The discrimination **Indigenous women and girls** face
- The lack of **affordable housing** and protections for low-income tenants
- Unaffordable **childcare** and not enough childcare spaces





- The underrepresentation of **women as elected representatives**
- **Violence against women** and the lack of safety in public spaces, including transit and cycling services
- The need for **environmental policies** to include women and girls
- The **gender pay gap** which impacts marginalized women even more
- The need to engage **young women in civic issues**
- The lack of supports for **immigrant, migrant, and refugee women and girls**
- The need for **intersectional** and culturally-safe City policies

After these discussions, all attendees came back to the large group, and a member of each small group shared the top recommendations from their group. These recommendations formed the 2018 Hot Pink Paper Challenge.

For more information on the **Hot Pink Paper**, visit <http://www.womentransformingcities.org/hot-pink-paper-challenge>.

This event brought together many women who are passionate about improving the City of Vancouver. The speakers and attendees showed dedication to their causes and a willingness to work across party lines to make the city safer, more equal, and more welcoming for women.

BY THE NUMBERS

In total, about 80 people attended the Hot Pink Pathways to a Women-Friendly Vancouver. WTC and CRIAW asked attendees to complete a short survey and answer some basic demographic questions about themselves.

The survey answers will help WTC and CRIAW know more about those who attended. A total of twenty-six people filled out the survey.

96% of participants identified as women with 35% caring for dependants.



96%

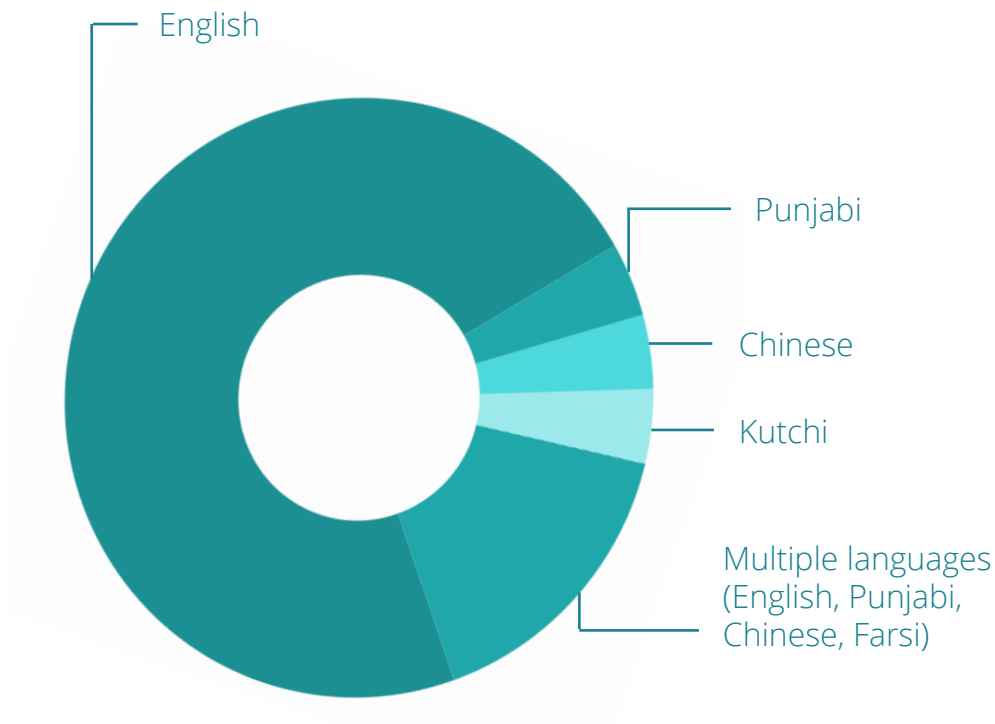
of attendees
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Chart 1 Languages spoken at home



Most attendees who completed the survey were of European backgrounds (42%) such as British, Irish, and Scottish. Only 8% of the participants did not live in Vancouver and half of respondents (50%) had been involved in Vancouver politics.



57%

of attendees had British, Irish, and Scottish backgrounds

42% of survey respondents were between the ages of 40 and 59; most other attendees were either 25-39 (27%) or 60 and older (23%). These results further illustrate the need to engage young women.



34%

of attendees were of Asian origins

Most survey respondents have a household income between \$100,000 and \$149,999 (19%) or above \$150,000 (27%), whereas 23% of participants household income is below \$40,000.



23%

of attendees' total household income was below \$40,000

19%

of attendees' total household income was between \$100,000 and \$150,000



50%

of respondents (50%) had completed a university graduate program. This is higher than average, and is likely because our event was held at a university.

8%

of attendees did not live or work in Vancouver

