



WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 3, 2026

A meeting of the Women's Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at 5:42 pm, in the Cascadia Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall, and via electronic means.

PRESENT: Ellie Lawson, Chair
Alaina Chun
Nazma Lee
Serena Mohammed
Molly Needham
Olga Shcherbyna

ABSENT: Morrell Andrews
Katsy Concepcion (Leave of Absence)
Alida Oegema Thomas (Leave of Absence)
Shirin Shushtarian

ALSO PRESENT: Insp. Kelly Risebrough, Vancouver Police Department
Liaison
Gillian Guilmant-Smith, Vancouver Public Library Liaison
Tanya Fink, Social Planner; Staff Liaison

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Julie Emmerson, Meeting Coordinator

WELCOME

The Chair acknowledged we are on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. We thank them for having cared for this land and look forward to working with them in partnership as we continue to build this great city together.

Leave of Absence Requests

MOVED by Olga Shcherbyna
SECONDED by Ellie Lawson

THAT the Women's Advisory Committee approve leaves of absence for Katsy Concepcion and Alida Oegema Thomas, for this meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Olga Shcherbyna
SECONDED by Serena Mohammed

THAT the Women's Advisory Committee approve the minutes from the meeting of Tuesday, January 6, 2026, and Monday, January 19, 2026, as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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MOVED by Ellie Lawson
SECONDED by Olga Shcherbyna

THAT the Committee vary the agenda to hear item 3: Liaison Updates, before item 1: Motion.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY AND BY
THE REQUIRED MAJORITY

For ease of reference, the minutes are recorded in chronological order.

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3. Liaison Updates

All Liaisons present provided updates and responded to questions.

1. Motion

The Chair introduced the motion “Ensuring Adequate Funding for Supportive Spaces for Women in the DTES as a Key Public Safety Intervention.” Following discussion, it was

MOVED by Molly Needham
SECONDED by Olga Shcherbyna

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is actively implementing its 10-year Women’s Equity Strategy to break down barriers faced by women, girls, Two Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people in the City. This strategy includes multi-year initiatives with a particular focus on gender safety;
2. In November 2025, City Council unanimously passed the motion, developed in collaboration with the City of Vancouver’s Women’s Advisory Committee entitled, “Advancing a Gender-based Violence Prevention Strategy.” This motion includes the development of a Vancouver-specific Gender-Based Violence Prevention strategy and formation of a Gender-Based Violence Taskforce;
3. In February 2026, City Council approved the renewed Healthy City Strategy, which reaffirms the City’s commitment to building a healthier, more inclusive city for all residents;

4. Increasing and stabilizing safe women's spaces in the DTES contributes directly to a number of the Healthy City Strategy's key goal areas such as safe housing in community safety, care and support networks, belonging and connection;
5. The *The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* identified factors leading to women of the Downtown East Side (DTES) neighbourhood being at an increased level of vulnerability including inadequate housing, food insecurity, health inequities, extreme poverty, substance dependency and the dangers of withdrawal, while acknowledging the "full picture of the missing and murdered women' as being multilayered, with 'social disadvantage and social exclusion and wholly inadequate policy responses'";
6. The *Red Women Rising Report* found that Indigenous women and girls in Canada have been murdered or have gone missing at a rate four times higher than their rate of representation in Canada, and Indigenous women's rate of violent victimization is nearly triple that of non-Indigenous women, with 24 percent of homicide victims in Canada being Indigenous women;
7. Community spaces for women focusing on addressing these needs and providing emergency accommodation for women are integral in addressing the epidemic of gender based violence;
8. Dr. Kim Stanton's *Independent Systemic Review of BCs Treatment of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence* highlighted the failure to provide preventative interventions can lead to increased expenses, with an estimated \$7.42 billion dollars as the cost of intimate partner violence in the year of 2009 in Canada;
9. Dr. Stanton's report found sexual assault to be the most underreported crime in Canada, with an estimated 6% of sexual assaults reported to police;
10. Police and judicial intervention are reactive to the circumstances and needs of women in the DTES, not preventative;
11. Between 2023-2025 the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Greater Vancouver increased by 9%; and
12. In February 2025 PACE Society, WISH Drop In Centre and Sister Square, all providing essential, community support and safety interventions for women in the DTES, announced temporary closures due to funding and location restraints.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT the Women's Advisory Committee recommend that Council formally recognize that the work of community organizations operating shelter, drop in sites, and overdose prevention sites for women in the DTES be regarded as necessary public safety intervention and thus protected from funding cuts, including immediate funding to PACE Society, WISH Drop-In Centre, and Sister Square, allowing them to reopen as soon as possible;

FURTHER THAT the Committee recommend Council reestablish and stabilize core funding for all community-based organizations supporting women in the DTES;

AND FURTHER THAT the Committee recommend Council direct staff to work in good faith with such organizations to expedite permits or administrative measures required to operate and sustain the aforementioned necessary and life-saving services.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. Working Session Updates

None.

4. Subcommittee Updates

The Committee agreed to work on the Gender-Based Violence Task Force Terms of Reference at the next working session.

5. New Business

None.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Nazma Lee
SECONDED by Serena Mohammed

THAT this meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Next Meeting:

DATE: Tuesday, May 12, 2026
TIME: 5:30 pm
PLACE: Cascadia Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall
/ Teams Meeting

The Committee adjourned at 7:30 pm.

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