



WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

May 12, 2026

A meeting of the Women's Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 5:36 pm via electronic means.

PRESENT: Ellie Lawson, Chair
Morrell Andrews*
Katsy Concepcion
Nazma Lee
Serena Mohammed
Alida Oegema Thomas
Shirin Shushtarian
Olga Shcherbyna

ABSENT: Alaina Chun (Leave of Absence)
Molly Needham (Leave of Absence)

ALSO PRESENT: Alexis Greenwood, Vancouver Public Library Liaison
Tanya Fink, Social Planner; Staff Liaison

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE: Tamara Tosoff, Meeting Coordinator

*Denotes absence for a portion of the meeting.

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 Katsy Concepcion
SECONDED by Morrell Andrews

THAT the Women's Advisory Committee approve leaves of absence for Alaina Chun and Molly Needham, for this meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Nazma Lee
SECONDED by Katsy Concepcion

THAT the Women's Advisory Committee approve the minutes from the meeting of Tuesday, March 3, 2026, as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Motions

Motion: Endorsing Terms of Reference for City of Vancouver Gender-Based Violence Task Force

The Chair introduced the motion. Following discussion, it was

MOVED BY Morrell Andrews
SECONDED BY Alida Oegema Thomas

WHEREAS

1. On November 5, 2025, Vancouver City Council unanimously passed a motion, developed in collaboration with the City of Vancouver's Women's Advisory Committee [WAC] entitled, "[Advancing a Gender-based Violence Prevention Strategy](#)";
2. This motion directed staff to develop recommendations for a City of Vancouver Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy, including establishing a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Task Force composed of representatives from the City, the Vancouver Police Department, community-based organizations, survivors, and subject matter experts, and ensuring that the drafting of the Task Force's Terms of Reference (TOR) be co-developed with the WAC;
3. Community organizations, such as (but not limited to) Battered Women Support Services Association (BWSS) continue to provide community-based and survivor-centred expertise and recommendations to the WAC, including a proposed TOR for the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Task Force;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT the Women's Advisory Committee endorse the substance of the proposed TOR prepared by BWSS (Appendix A) with the following addition:

That a representative of the healthcare sector (e.g., Vancouver Coastal Health, Provincial Health Services Authority, BC Women's Health Foundation, etc.) working in sexual assault services, response, or prevention serve as a full participant on the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Task Force;

- B. THAT the WAC call upon the City of Vancouver to action these TOR, with specific focus on Task Force composition and Leadership (co-chairs being one community

representative and one City of Vancouver representative), ensuring adequate representation and co-development of this work with community members, survivors, and City staff;

- C. THAT the WAC request that City of Vancouver staff working on the City of Vancouver Gender-Based Violence Strategy report back by the July 14, 2026 meeting of the Committee to finalize the co-developed TOR.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Motion: Immediate Reinstatement of Sex Worker Planner Position

The Chair introduced the motion. Following discussion, it was

MOVED BY Olga Shcherbyna
SECONDED BY Serena Mohammed

WHEREAS

1. In April 2026, the City of Vancouver eliminated one of two Sex Work Social Planner Positions;
2. These two positions were established in 2018 following the recommendation of [Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry](#) (2012), which specifically called for the City of Vancouver to “create and fund two community-based liaison positions;”
3. These positions were created to prevent violence, reduce vulnerability and strengthen communication and relationships between sex workers, police, community organizations and the City. With the elimination of one of these positions, the City loses vital expertise, capacity, and coordination that has demonstrably improved safety and trust between sex workers and public institutions;
4. This loss also comes at a time when support organizations are reporting an [increase in violence](#) against sex workers and a decrease in sex work-specific support services, including the partial or full closure of two Vancouver sex worker support organizations PACE Society and WISH Drop-In Centre;
5. The City of Vancouver will be hosting FIFA World Cup 2026 matches in June and July 2026, which comes with additional risks of sex workers being displaced from street-based work, and/or disconnected to services due to a heightened police presence and surveillance across the city. According to the City of Vancouver's [FIFA Human Rights Action Plan \(Draft 1\)](#), sex worker safety and education is at the forefront of protecting and advancing human rights in the city. However, the elimination of one of two sex worker positions significantly limits the capacity of the City to respond adequately;
6. The findings from the [UBC AESHA study](#), which followed about 1,000 sex workers across Metro Vancouver over several years until 2025, show repeated barriers to

indoor workspaces, safety planning and access to justice, particularly for street-based and migrant workers;

7. [The City of Vancouver has historically been a leader](#) in municipal approaches to health and safety for sex workers and communities impacted by sex work, and the prevention of sexual exploitation, including the development of the municipal [Sex Work Response Guidelines](#);
8. In November 2025, Vancouver City Council unanimously approved a motion to develop a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy and Task Force, committing to proactively addressing and preventing Gender Based Violence in the City of Vancouver, in collaboration and sustained partnership with community organizations;
9. Leaders of Community Organizations such as WISH Drop-In Centre Society, PACE Society, SWAN Vancouver, Living in Community Society, and RainCity Housing have [raised concerns](#) that the elimination of this critical position will have long-term and negative impacts on the safety of women in Vancouver, including women who are already disproportionately vulnerable to violence and harm.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Women's Advisory Committee call on the City of Vancouver to reaffirm and demonstrate its commitment to sex worker safety by immediately reinstating this critical position and ensuring that the longstanding relationships and trust built between City staff and sex workers are maintained.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. Working Session Updates

None.

3. Liaison Updates

All liaisons present provided updates, in addition to previously circulated updates, and responded to questions and comments.

4. Subcommittee Updates

The Committee discussed the Childcare Subcommittee and next steps.

5. New Business

None.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Nazma Lee
SECONDED by Ellie Lawson

THAT this meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
(Morrell Andrews absent for the vote)

Next Meeting:

DATE: Tuesday, July 14, 2026
TIME: 5:30 PM
PLACE: Cascadia Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall
/ Teams Meeting

The Committee adjourned at 6:53 pm.

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DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

City of Vancouver Gender-Based Violence Task Force

Prepared by BWSS - June 2025

1. Purpose

The Vancouver Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Task Force is established to provide strategic guidance, cross-sector coordination, and survivor-centred policy recommendations to the City of Vancouver in its efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW). The Task Force will serve as an advisory and action-oriented body to help implement Vancouver's commitments to gender equity and public safety.

2. Objectives

- To advance survivor-centred public safety strategies that address GBV and VAW across systems.
- To identify gaps in prevention, intervention, housing, legal, and justice system responses.
- To support the design and implementation of a municipal GBV response framework.
- To recommend the adoption of standardized risk assessment tools across relevant municipal and provincial services.
- To integrate trauma- and violence-informed, gender-responsive approaches into city planning, policy, and budgeting.
- To align municipal efforts with provincial and federal strategies, including the National Action Plan on GBV.

3. Composition

The Task Force will be composed of representatives from the following:

- Survivor-led and feminist anti-violence organizations (e.g., BWSS, DEWC, Justice for Girls, etc.)
- Indigenous women's organizations and Two-Spirit leadership
- Racialized and immigrant women's organizations
- 2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations
- Community-based housing and mental health service providers
- Legal experts in GBV, VAW, and public safety
- Representatives from the City of Vancouver (Public Safety, Housing, Social Policy)
- Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and BC Corrections (as non-voting members)
- Youth representation and lived experience advisors

Co-Chairs: One community representative and one City of Vancouver representative

4. Guiding Principles

- **Survivor-centred:** The safety, autonomy, and dignity of survivors are paramount.
- **Intersectional:** The work must address how race, gender, class, immigration status, disability, sexuality, and age shape experiences of violence and access to safety.
- **Collaborative:** Solutions must be developed in partnership with community, government, and systems actors.
- **Accountable:** The Task Force will be transparent in its work and accountable to impacted communities.
- **Action-oriented:** The Task Force will prioritize the implementation of measures and monitor progress, rather than solely issuing recommendations.

5. Deliverables

1. **Initial Recommendations Report** (within 90 days of first meeting)
 - GBV response framework
 - Housing and exit strategy pathways
 - Risk assessment protocol proposal
 - Prioritized implementation actions
2. **Implementation Plan**
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Timeline and milestones
 - Evaluation and accountability mechanisms
3. **Annual Progress Report**
 - Outcomes, gaps, and next-phase goals

6. Term and Meeting Frequency

- The Task Force will convene for an initial 18-month term, with potential for renewal.
- Meetings will occur monthly, with additional working group sessions as required.

7. Secretariat and Support

- The City of Vancouver will provide administrative and logistical support.
- BWSS and community partners will serve as strategic leads for content development and survivor engagement.