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Date: 11/26/2025 6:04:11 PM
Subject: Memo: Report Back - Advancing a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy (RTS 18037)
Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Report Back_Advancing a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy - RTS 18307 (2025-11-26).pdf

Hello Mayor and Council,

Attached please find a memo from Margaret Wittgens, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services regarding a report back on a Council motion from November 5, 2025, "[Advancing a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy](#)." As per the motion, information in the memo includes:

- ongoing national, provincial and municipal initiatives,
- opportunities for the City to participate in or amplify public awareness campaigns, and
- options for a City statement or public commitment for reaffirming Council's dedication to ending gender-based violence and supporting those affected by it

Should you have further questions, please send them to Margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca and she will ensure a response through the weekly Q&A.

Thank you,
Sandra

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MEMORANDUM

November 26, 2025

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Donny van Dyck, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy & Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Andrew Naklicki, General Manager, Human Resources

FROM: Margaret Wittgens, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Report Back: Advancing a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy

RTS #: 18307

PURPOSE

This memo reports back on a [November 5, 2025 Council motion](#) titled “Advancing a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy.” The motion directs staff to prepare a memo in advance of the 2025 *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence* outlining: (1) ongoing national, provincial and municipal initiatives, (2) opportunities for the City to participate in or amplify public awareness campaigns, and (3) recommended options for a City statement or public commitment for reaffirming Council’s dedication to ending gender-based violence and supporting those affected by it.

The motion also directs staff to provide updates on the Sex Worker Safety and UN Safe Cities work, which will be included in a separate memo to Council in 2026.

BACKGROUND

Gender-based violence (GBV) is widely recognized as a public safety crisis in British Columbia. The prevalence and persistence of this violence, including rising rates of intimate partner violence, has highlighted the need for systemic interventions at all levels of government, including municipal. The City of Vancouver has long recognized this need and demonstrated its commitment to addressing gender-based violence through various actions.

In January 2018, Council approved the Women's Equity Strategy 2018-2028 ([January 17, 2018; RTS 11780](#)), which includes addressing safety and violence against women as a priority area. As part of its Phase 2 work ([March 10, 2021; RTS 14338](#)), the City signed onto [UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces](#), a global flagship initiative by UN Women in 2019. Following the release of the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* final report¹, the City responded by reviewing and aligning with the 231 Calls for Justice ([July 19, 2022; RTS 15198](#)). The City also addresses gender-based violence through initiatives to improve the health and safety of sex workers.

The [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#) is a global campaign from November 25 to December 10 that raises awareness and calls for action to end gender-based violence and promote human rights. The official theme for 2025 is technology-facilitated abuse and violence. The [National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women](#) is on December 6 and falls within this 16-day period.

DISCUSSION

The November 5 Council motion directs staff to report back on several areas as follows:

Ongoing Initiatives

There are several key initiatives aimed at addressing gender-based violence at all levels of government. See Appendix A for an environmental scan of the ongoing national, provincial and municipal initiatives, including those of the City of Vancouver.

Public Awareness Campaign

The *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence* is a high-profile public awareness campaign. In the past, the City of Vancouver has participated in the *16 Days of Activism* by highlighting non-profit partners dedicated to supporting survivors and victims of gender-based violence. The City has also marked December 6 annually by lowering flags at half-mast and recognizing the day on social media.

For the 2025 *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence*, planned activities include:

- A social media post marking the start of the 16 Days of Activism on November 25;
- Updates to the City's [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence webpage](#);
- Resources for people experiencing gender-based violence on the City website;
- Social media post for the City and Mayor and Council to mark December 6 (National Day of Remembrance and Action);
- Illumination of City Hall and Burrard Bridge in orange on December 6; and
- Flags at half-mast on December 6.

¹ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. Retrieved from <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.

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Margaret Wittgenst, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services



Q8A.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at margaret.wittgenst@vancouver.ca and we will provide response through the weekly Council

FINAL REMARKS

In 2026, staff will review and scope items B and C of the motion, which pertain to the development of a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Strategy and the associated resource requirements. This scoping will be aligned with and consider other ongoing City initiatives, including but not limited to the Trans, Gender-Diverse, Two-Spirit (TGDS) Safety and Inclusion Action Plan, Women's Equity Strategy, Sex Worker Safety, and the UN Safe Cities and Safe

Public Spaces Initiative.

The motion also directs staff to report back with updates on Sex Worker Safety and the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative. Further updates will be provided to Council in a separate memo as part of the broader City-wide Equity Program update in Q1 2026.

NEXT STEPS

Council could bring forward a motion directing staff to add December 6 to the City's Official Celebrations and Observances beginning in 2026 and onward. Recognition of December 6 as an official Day of Observance includes a series of actions, including an official proclamation, social media posts, and illuminations of City Hall and the Burrard Street Bridge.

Options: City Statement or Public Commitment Reaffirming Council's Dedication to Ending Gender-Based Violence

Council members may participate in the 16 Days of Activism by sharing City and partner organizations' social media posts, helping to amplify reach of this important messaging.

Appendix A:
Ongoing Initiatives Addressing Gender-Based Violence

Name	Title	Description
National		
Government of Canada	<u>Federal Gender-Based Violence Strategy</u>	<p>Announced in 2017, the federal GBV Strategy is the Government of Canada's response to gender-based violence, aligning and coordinating existing federal initiatives and programs.</p> <p>Building on its foundation, the 10-year <u>National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence</u> was launched on November 9, 2022, by the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women.</p>
Provincial		
Government of BC	<u>Safe and Supported: British Columbia's Gender-Based Violence Action Plan</u>	Launched in 2023, the provincial GBV Action Plan consists of four pillars: (1) Increasing safety and supports for survivors, (2) Lifting up Indigenous-led approaches, (3) Breaking cycles of violence through prevention, healing and accountability and (4) Learning from and monitoring our progress.
Government of Ontario	<u>Ontario-STANDS: Standing Together Against gender-based violence Now through Decisive actions, prevention, empowerment and Supports</u>	Launched in 2023, Ontario-STANDS is a four-year cross-government action plan focused on prevention. The four pillars are: (1) Intervening early, (2) Strengthening service coordination, (3) Investing in local community-led, culturally responsive solutions, and (4) providing educational supports to promote healthy relationships and disrupt attitudes fostering gender-based violence.
Municipal		
City of Vancouver	Missing Person Protocol Pilot	As the City's response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People (<u>July 19, 2022; RTS 15198</u>), the Indigenous Relations team has been piloting an internal protocol to notify staff who work in public-facing, frontline roles of missing persons and their information provided by Vancouver Police Department.
City of Vancouver	Sex Worker Safety	Since 2013, the City has continued its efforts to reduce the harmful effects of marginalization and stigmatization of sex workers and improve the health

		<p>and safety of sex workers through ongoing interdepartmental and inter-municipal collaboration and response to issues impacting indoor and outdoor sex workers. This includes regularly addressing arising issues related to Health Enhancement Centre (HEC) licenses, and identifying opportunities to improve equity considerations in City by-laws. Additionally, stakeholder and community engagement and a review of actions were completed to develop a Sex Worker Safety Framework. Staff also now regularly meet with the VPD through the COV-VPD Sex Worker Safety Committee. Further, staff recently provided feedback to the VPD's 2025 Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines. Since 2021, the City has also funded the Kingsway Community Station, supporting street-based sex workers in the Kingsway Corridor.</p> <p>Additional updates to be included in a broader City-wide Equity Program update in Q1 2026.</p>
City of Vancouver	Sex Worker and Gender Safety Grants	Since 2022, the City's Community Services Grants program has prioritized support for NPO partners supporting Sex Worker Safety and Gender Based Violence programs through multiyear grants. In 2025, funding was expanded and is currently \$810K per year (March 10, 2025; RTS 17704) on a 3-year term.
City of Vancouver	Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit (TGD2S) Safety and Inclusion Action Plan	<p>The Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit Action Plan (RTS 16122) is a renewal of the 2016 Trans, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit Inclusion Strategy (July 13, 2016; RTS 11065). Community Spaces & Safety is one of the priority areas with proposed actions to prevent and respond to GBV as it impacts TGD2S communities. The TGD2S Safety and Inclusion Action Plan will be brought to Council in Q1 2026.</p> <p>Additional updates to be included in a broader City-wide Equity Program update in Q1 2026.</p>
City of Vancouver	UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces	UN Safe Cities is a multi-year, global initiative that recognizes gender-based violence in public spaces as a universal issue that requires place-based and community-driven solutions. A scoping study and engagement have been completed and used to

		<p>inform ongoing City priorities and strategies, incorporating a gender safety lens.</p> <p>Further updates to be included in a broader City-wide Equity Program update in Q1 2026.</p>
City of Surrey	<u>Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group (SVWG)</u>	Formed in 2013, the Surrey Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group (SVWG) takes a proactive approach and has conducted research and initiated and completed several collaborative planning and monitoring projects.
City of Prince George	<u>Resolution endorsed at the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Convention</u>	In September 2025, City of Prince George brought forward a resolution to petition the Province of BC to declare gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and human trafficking an epidemic and update BC's Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. The resolution was endorsed.