

RESEARCH ON CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES AND INCLUSIVE SERVICES

PARTNERSHIPS FOR MUNICIPAL INNOVATION – WOMEN IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP (PMI-WILL)

SUBMITTED TO THE

**FEDERATION OF CANADIAN
MUNICIPALITIES (FCM)**

SUBMITTED BY
SEASONOVA GROUP INC.

8 JULY 2022

CONTACT

E: jhoanna@seasonova.ca

W: www.seasonova.ca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research has been undertaken for the Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) Project.

PMI-WILL is implemented in partnership with FCM's member municipalities, provincial and territorial associations (PTAs), as well as in collaboration with Local Government Associations (LGAs) and key stakeholders in each of the five implementation countries. It is funded by the federal government through Global Affairs Canada.



Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Methodologie and Research Scope.....	5
Section 1.0 Gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives in local governments	5
Gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives directly supporting residents.....	5
Focus Area 1: Accessibility and persons with disabilities	5
Focus Area 2: Health, wellness and recreation	7
Focus Area 3: Gender-based violence.....	9
Focus Area 4: Food security.....	10
Focus Area 5: Municipal services for children	12
Focus Area 6: Municipal services for youth.....	13
Focus Area 7: Municipal services for older adults (seniors)	15
Focus Area 8: Municipal services for racialized and newcomer populations	16
Focus Area 9: Reconciliation and Indigenous Peoples.....	18
Section 2.0 Case Studies	19
Case Study 1. Halifax Regional Municipality: Participatory Budgeting	19
Case Study 2. Safe City Initiative	22
Section 3.0 GDEIB Benchmarks Observations	26
Section 4.0 Conclusion	30
References.....	32

Executive Summary

The provision of equitable municipal services to all residents ensures that no one is disadvantaged, and all have access to the full extent of services and programs that municipalities can offer without barriers. Central to this approach is ensuring that local governments consider and respond to the diverse needs of its residents, including women and marginalized groups. Part of their marginalization is the continued underrepresentation in the workforce including in the municipal workforce and in leadership positions including in elected office. The challenges may also come as a result of inadequate access to government programs and services provided by local governments such as limited access to public parks and recreational facilities, uncleared or lack of sidewalks, lack of access to affordable housing, or reduced options for public transportation.

The purpose of this environmental scan is to highlight various gender-responsive and inclusive approaches from local governments across Canada, including both urban and rural centres. Through desk research of publicly available documents, a total of 50 initiatives from 41 municipalities were identified using the GBA Plus approach by considering geographic representation, priority populations, and a diversity of themes and focuses. To determine to what extent the initiatives support women and marginalized communities, the research applied the Global Diversity Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) to assess whether they align with global best practices.

This summary highlights the significance of providing equitable municipal services to all residents, emphasizing the need to address the diverse needs of women and marginalized groups. It acknowledges the underrepresentation of these groups in both the municipal workforce and leadership positions, as well as challenges related to access to government programs and services. It then outlines the purpose of an environmental scan, which aims to identify gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives in Canadian municipalities. The scan identified a subset of 50 initiatives from 41 municipalities, focusing on supporting residents, particularly women and marginalized groups. These initiatives are categorized into nine key focus areas, including (1) accessibility, (2) health, (3) gender-based violence, (4) food security, (5) services for children, (6) youth, (7) older adults, (8) racialized and newcomer populations, and (9) Reconciliation and Indigenous Peoples.

1.0 Introduction

The provision of equitable municipal services to all residents ensures that no one is disadvantaged, and all have access to the full extent of services and programs that municipalities can offer without barriers. Central to this approach is ensuring that local governments consider and respond to the diverse needs of its population, including women and marginalized groups that may experience a disadvantage in all aspects of society. Research has shown that marginalization is a complex issue that involves multi-layered socio-economic considerations and challenges that need to be addressed with care and informed intentional efforts (Montesanti et al., 2016). Factors that lead to marginalization, include but are not limited to, disadvantages and discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, gender and gender expression, wealth, immigration status and sexual orientation. Women and marginalized groups

often face challenges, barriers and systemic issues -- which include biases, systematic discrimination, exclusionary policies or practices, and challenges when accessing local government services. People on the margins of any community are typically susceptible to heightened vulnerability and are disproportionately affected by barriers to socioeconomic status, power, and privilege. Such barriers could include a lack of access to higher education or occupational underrepresentation, poverty, poorer health outcomes, violence, and constant barriers when accessing services. In addition, “the COVID-19 pandemic and the conditions it has created, exposed and exacerbated the deep disparities that exist across gender, race, ability and class lines” (City for All Women Initiative, 2020). As “cities are microcosms of complex and interconnected inequalities”, efforts by local governments have the potential to address inequities and respond to the diverse needs of all its residents (City for All Women Initiative, 2020). Understanding the needs of residents in all their intersectional diversity, and the barriers and gaps they experience are key to providing the most appropriate services and programs. Gender responsive and inclusive approaches (including but not limited to Gender-Based Analysis Plus) are essential tools to assess the differentiated impact that policies, programs, and initiatives

1.1 Methodology and Research Scope

The research focused on different gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives by local governments in Canada. The case studies were informed by key informant interviews from elected officials and municipal staff.

Furthermore, the research applied the Global Diversity Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) on one initiative per focus area, for a total of 14, as a way to provide an example of how the benchmarks can be used to assess whether they align with global best practice standards

It then elaborates on two case studies highlighting best practices in participatory budgeting and inter-agency collaboration to address gender-based violence. The participatory budgeting example was selected because it is a tangible way to engage grassroots women and marginalized populations in decision-making.

Section 1.0 Gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives in local governments

The following information outlines the gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives that were reviewed as part of this environmental scan.

Gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives directly supporting residents

Focus Area 1: Accessibility and persons with disabilities

“There are 6.2 million Canadians aged 15 and older who have a disability” (Choi, 2021). Ensuring that local governments are able to extend accessible services such as transportation, considerations in the built environment such as parks, sidewalks and buildings, and accessible information and communication technologies (ICT) contribute to the safety, health, and wellbeing of persons with disability. There are many municipalities across Canada that have developed mechanisms such as accessibility plans and standards.

For example, the **City of Victoria** (BC) has an Accessibility Framework that states their commitment to “identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across its services, programs and infrastructure, in order to benefit the community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities” (City of Victoria, 2020, p. 8). The Framework focuses on ensuring that accessibility is promoted in urban policy, design, planning, operations, and development through building the City’s own capacity but also increasing partnerships with accessibility service providers. The Framework also aims to remove barriers and increase the participation of persons with disabilities in accessing services, and in engaging in public decision making. For example, the Framework was informed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee where members were “limited to people with lived experience or accessibility challenges and may also include individuals representing a broad range of under-served and equity seeking groups” (City of Victoria, n.d.).

Similarly, the **City of Kenora** (ON) has been working towards its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2019-2022) and the approach centres on human dignity, independence, and the prevention and removal of barriers to accessibility. The Plan supports the Government of Ontario’s goal to make Ontario an accessible province by 2025 and is consistent and compliant with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Kenora is also committed to upholding the Ontario Building Code to ensure accessible and barrier-free design for “newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated” (City of Kenora, n.d., p. 5). The Plan predominantly focuses on services for residents including transportation, design of public spaces, and improvements to city infrastructure. It also includes support to employees with disabilities, and increasing staff capacity to offer accessible services such as providing training and developing policies and standard operating procedures (City of Kenora, n.d.).

Accessible Public Spaces Design Standards

Brant, ON | Rural Community (Population: 39, 474)

In alignment with provincial legislation, the **County of Brant’s** (ON) Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment) came into effect on January 1, 2016. The Standards mandates all new construction or major building changes related to recreational trails or beach access routes, outdoor public eating areas, outdoor play spaces, outdoor paths of travel, parking areas, and service-related elements such as service counters. The goal of the Standards is to ensure that “public spaces in the County of Brant can become accessible, inclusive and barrier free, allowing anyone who wants to use and enjoy them the opportunity to do so” (County of Brant, 2013).

This is a promising practice as the Standards offer clear and comprehensive guidance (including dimensions, surface/materials details, and diagrams) on accessibility requirements involving: pathways, trails, and exterior walks; seating and rest areas; signage and way signage; playground equipment; stairs; concession counters; fixed queuing guides; waiting areas; pavilions and shelters; bridges and ramps; overhanging and protruding objects; shade; lighting; washrooms; accessible parking; passenger loading and drop off zones; curbs and ramps, and accessible pedestrian signals. The document also includes guidance on consultations.

The Standards was collaboratively developed, with contributions from neighbouring municipalities, and support from both staff (including the Chief Building Official), and the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

GDEIB Assessment *Accessible Public Spaces Design Standards*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Indeterminable Structure: Progressive	Assessment: Indeterminable Learning: Proactive	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Focus Area 2: Health, wellness and recreation

There are many factors that contribute to the health and wellness of residents including the following main determinants of health: income and social status, employment and working conditions, education and literacy, childhood experiences, physical environments, social supports and coping skills, healthy behaviours, access to health services, biology and genetics, gender, culture, and race/racism (Canada, 2022). Although the primary responsibility of health falls within the jurisdiction of provinces and territories, local governments have an important role in contributing to the health and wellness of its residents directly through the provision of public health, paramedic services, recreational services, and long-term care homes.

For example, **Halton Region's** (ON) Health Department³ operates Sexual Health Clinics at five locations across the Region. All clinics are free and do not require a health card to access its services and programs. Medical professionals provide confidential health services including birth control and pregnancy services for youth and young adults including birth control counseling, emergency contraception, free condoms, and pregnancy counselling and supports, as well as health supports associated with sexually transmitted and blood borne infection services for all ages including HIV and STI testing. The clinics also offer free needle exchange supplies, harm reduction supplies, and naloxone overdose prevention kits. Accessibility was also taken into consideration as all five clinics are wheelchair accessible and have free parking, and language interpretation services are also extended to residents.

Consistent with the determinants of health, the **City of Yellowknife** (NWT) has an Access for All program that “provide(s) free access to drop-in recreational activities and Public Transit for low income citizens and/or families”. The program offers a one-year (annual) transit pass⁴, and a one-year Family Flexi Pass membership to recreational facilities and drop-in programs to residents and families with low incomes. Similarly, the Comox Valley Regional District in partnership with the City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox, and the Village of Cumberland launched a pilot program that helps ameliorate financial barriers for youth looking to access recreational programs. Through the Leisure for Everyone Accessibility Program (LEAP), children and youth from low-income households aged 18 and under are eligible for up to 52 free drop-ins per year at recreational programs provided by local governments.

HRM Washrooms & Drinking Fountains Strategy

Halifax, NS | Urban Centre (Population: 439,819)

Research has shown that “physical activity has been a good and effective choice to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health” and having public washrooms and water fountains promotes active living and the exploration of the outdoors (Marconcin et al., 2022). In 2020, the **Halifax Regional Municipality** (NS) launched the HRM Washrooms & Drinking Fountains Strategy as a decision-making framework regarding washrooms and drinking fountains in recreational parks operated by the municipality. It aims to ensure that HRM is strategic in how to identify and prioritize the locations of these facilities in existing and future parks (HRM Halifax, 2020). The Strategy also “outlines costing information and recommendations for upgrades and new washrooms and drinking fountains that are prioritized

³ Halton Region serves residents and businesses in the four distinct municipalities of the City of Burlington and Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville by providing shared programs and services including: economic development, services for children and seniors, emergency planning, housing and infrastructure, water and waste management, public health and paramedic services.

⁴ Many local governments have similar programs for affordable transit such as those in Hamilton, Ottawa, or Winnipeg.

across various parks throughout the municipality”, with a significant investment of public funds (Ibid., p. 5). In fact, the Strategy includes a recommendation “to prepare annual business plans for washrooms and drinking fountain projects for consideration in the annual capital budgets” (Ibid., p. 1).

Several factors were considered in developing the Strategy, but not limited to universality, gender, seniors, tourism, seasonality, and families. The application of an intersectional lens helped determine the needs of diverse segments of the population. A consultation was also conducted with staff and some of the key discussions highlighted matters related to: safety, maintenance, aesthetics, cost, hours of access, accessibility, and amenities. As a result, universal design and accessibility also played prominently in its recommendations.

Municipal staff also recognize, in light of the pandemic, that access to public washrooms and drinking fountains goes beyond recreation needs, but also include equity considerations especially for more vulnerable populations. Access to public washrooms is an essential infrastructure, and HRM recognizes that more in-depth analysis for these considerations are needed in future review of the Strategy.

GDEIB Assessment *HRM Washrooms & Drinking Fountains Strategy*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Not applicable Structure: Indeterminable	Assessment: Best Practice Learning: Not applicable	Community: Progressive Services & Products: Progressive

Focus Area 3: Gender-based violence

“Gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive, deadly and deeply-rooted human rights violations. It is a significant barrier to individual and community safety and wellbeing” (Public Safety Canada, 2020). “Gender-based violence (is) defined as violence that is committed against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender” (Cotter and Savage, 2019). In Canada, more than 11 million have been physically or sexually assaulted since the age of 15 (Ibid.). Studies from Statistics Canada show that “(young women and women who are a sexual minority (will) most likely experience unwanted sexual behaviour in public”, while sexual minority men are more likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviour in public compared to heterosexual men (Ibid.). “Further, women who identified as belonging to an Indigenous group (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) were more likely than non-Indigenous people to report experiencing violence since the age of 15 (55% versus 38%, respectively)” (Ibid.).

Many local governments are engaged in addressing gender-based violence. One of the most common ways are public awareness campaigns such as flag-raising ceremonies and proclamations made at city hall to commemorate Sexual Assault Awareness month (April), the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence (Nov 25-Dec 10), and the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (December 6). Here are examples from Canadian municipalities:

- The **Regional County Municipality of Argenteuil** (QC) has a public awareness campaign called “*Domestic violence is not always obvious*” to encourage individuals experiencing intimate partner violence to urgently seek help as a response to an increasing number of domestic violence cases especially at the height of the pandemic.
- The **City of Moose Jaw** (SK) proclaimed May 12 as *Moose Hide Campaign Day* which is an Indigenous-led grassroots national movement of men, boys, and all Canadians who are taking a stand to end violence against women and children.
- The **City of Charlottetown** (PE), in partnership with the provincial government, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Provincial Community Chaplaincy, and the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, released a video series in 2017 entitled “Make it Your Business” – which focuses on bystander intervention videos to intervene safely when witnessing violence in the workplace and in public spaces.
- The **City of Edmonton** (AB) partnered with community organizations like Men Edmonton and Hollaback Alberta to target men and boys as active allies and participants to address gender-based violence through the “This is What it feels like” public campaign to address street harassment.

Indigenous Women & Girls and Two-Spirit People Coming Home Report

Saskatoon, SK | Urban Centre (Population: 266,141)

The City of Saskatoon’s Indigenous Women & Girls and Two-Spirit People Coming Home Report is a substantive piece of research which was rooted in the Indigenous way of knowing, of

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge-Keepers including listening to grandmothers and aunties. The process is rooted in a decolonizing perspective, ethical framework, intersectionality, and trauma-informed practice. It was very much informed by the intersectional perspectives of Indigenous women and girls, and Two-Spirit individuals with lived experiences of not only Indigeneity but as survivors of gender-based violence. The report was guided by the City of Saskatoon’s MMIWG2S Advisory Group and a diverse group of researchers who also include team members from Indigenous communities. It was developed to identify tangible actions for the City of Saskatoon to respond to the Calls for Justice contained within the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place* (2019).

Through this report, the voices of Indigenous individuals and families with lived experiences were amplified. The report and its recommendations “are intended to inform the City of Saskatoon’s long-term strategy and action plan on how to improve the quality of life and health and safety for Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people experiencing all forms of violence, trauma and/or exploitation” (City of Saskatoon, n.d., p. 10). This report highlighted how the City of Saskatoon can create a space for Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit (IWG2S) to build trust, and support IWG2S in all aspects of making Saskatoon a welcoming and inclusive home for everyone. It identified the structural constraints and systemic barriers that contribute to the violence and exploitation experienced by IWG2S, and also identified approaches to increase their safety and security including who to partner with for sustained change such as hiring an Independent Representative of Matriarchs and coordinating services throughout different municipal departments/units.

GDEIB Assessment *Indigenous Women & Girls and Two-Spirit People Coming Home Report*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Progressive Structure: Progressive	Assessment: Indeterminable Learning: Best Practice	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Focus Area 4: Food security

The pandemic is exacerbating the global hunger crisis. “The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are exposing the existing flaws in food systems, many of which stem from gender inequalities and the unfair treatment of women and girls. Women and girls are the majority of food producers and food providers for their households, but their contributions are frequently unseen” (CARE, n.d., p. 2). Domestically, “in 2017-18, 1 in 8 households in Canada was food insecure⁵, amounting to 4.4 million people, including more than 1.2 million children” (PROOF, 2022). Statistics Canada (2020) found that “female lone-parent families were the most likely to experience food insecurity (25.1%), followed by male lone-parent families (16.3%) and couples with children (7.3%)”. Over 360,000 of Canadian households reliant on government benefits as their main source of income were food insecure (Ibid.). Food insecurity was highest in Nunavut, and is also tied with housing insecurity, and poverty.

There is a movement that has been gaining momentum with regards to community gardens and local food production as a way to alleviate some of the pressures of food insecurity. Local

⁵ According to Statistics Canada (2020), “food insecurity exists when household members report having issues with the quality or quantity of food consumed (moderate food insecurity) or having experienced reduced food intake or disrupted eating pattern (severe food insecurity)”.

governments are in a unique position in that community gardens also promote active living and can contribute to people’s sense of belonging at the neighbourhood level. Municipalities can also pave the way for earmarking plots of land and assist in making community gardens possible through navigating zoning and code requirements.

For example, in the **City of North Vancouver** (BC), their focus has been on eating locally grown food, contributing to food security of its residents, and to environmental sustainability. “The City supports local food through farmers markets, community gardens, urban farms, community organizations (such as the Edible Garden Project) and other initiatives that connect consumers and growers” (City of North Vancouver, 2021). They also work with local community organizations to increase residents’ access to food. For example, the City is a signatory of the North Shore Community Food Charter which aims to integrate food systems in the local area, including the use of a Food Map tool.

In the **Town of Riverview** (NB), the local government runs a community garden which includes 40 in-ground plots, 21 raised beds and 3 wheelchair accessible beds available to residents for rent at \$25 plus tax per plot for the year. This initiative is run by their Parks, Recreation and Community Relations. It aims to cultivate a community garden that is safe and welcoming for residents to gather, be active, and share their knowledge and gardening experience as a way to build community and a sense of belonging, promote active living, and increase access to fruits and vegetables. The Town has a one-page document that is accessible for interested residents which outlines how to register, the community guidelines, instructions on how to tend the plots, and considerations associated with health and safety precautions associated with COVID-19. The Town also created an easy to use online registration system for the plot rentals. They are also using this opportunity to engage its residents by asking volunteers to help with the gardens.

Community Gardens Development and Operations Policy

Kingston, ON | Urban Centre (Population: 132,485)

Launched in 2016, the City of Kingston has instituted a Community Gardens Development and Operations Policy which is administered by the City’s Recreation and Leisure Services branch. The Policy Statement is very clear in that: “(t)he City of Kingston recognizes community gardening as a means of providing active and social opportunities to enhance health and well-being, connecting people to nature, providing protection and use of public open spaces, environmental education and reducing food insecurity” (City of Kingston, 2016, p. 1). This policy also comes after Council has made food security a strategic priority in 2015 as part of its Sustainable Kingston Plan. The policy provides “guidelines for the development and operation of Community Gardens on municipally owned lands” (Ibid.). Inclusion is central to its operations as equal access to the community gardens is a guiding goal. For example, accessibility

considerations are a prominent consideration including accessible parking.

With regards to the operations of the community gardens, the City “will maintain an annual fund to support the development of new community gardens and the enhancement/ maintenance of existing Community Gardens” (Ibid.). The City will also provide information on how to develop and maintain community gardens, including other potential sources of funding. The City will also support in raising public awareness to encourage more residents to participate and ensure sustainability of the initiative.

From an equity perspective, aside from promoting health, providing more access to food helps residents who may be more vulnerable such as those from low-income households. The Policy also considers accessibility, including accessible garden beds, and is committed to ensuring equal access to all Kingston residents.

GDEIB Assessment *Community Gardens Development and Operations Policy*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Indeterminable Leadership: Not applicable Structure: Best Practice	Assessment: Not applicable Learning: Indeterminable	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Focus Area 5: Municipal services for children

For the most part, the provision of social services is within the purview of provinces and territories in Canada by virtue of the *Constitution Act, 1867* (Cameron, 2009). This includes social services for the wellbeing of children. However, “Ontario is unique within Canada in that municipalities play a central role in the planning, funding and administration of early years and licensed child care services” (OMSSA, 2018). One area where there is jurisdictional overlap is in the area of recreation programs which is more commonly provided by local governments.

With regards to municipal services for children, for example, **Middlesex County’s** (ON) Child Care Fee subsidy program helps low-income families receive funding to enable access to childcare. To be eligible for support, applicants must have children between 0 and 12 years of age, be a resident of Middlesex County, be working or going to school, or have a child referred by a recognized referral agency or physician for developmental reasons. As the program is provincially mandated with capped funding, the County of Middlesex is currently on a waitlist situation, as there are no funds to place new children or families. The program has also established a priority waitlist for parents whose family incomes are under \$20,000 followed by those under \$30,000. This ensures that the subsidy program prioritizes families who need the support the most.

Culturally appropriate programming is necessary for services offered to marginalized populations. For example, the Kenora Anishinaabe-Kweg Aboriginal Head Start Program in the **City**

of **Kenora** (ON) aims to support urban Indigenous children and their families with culturally appropriate childcare that implements the Seven Grandfather Teaching of Respect, Love, Honesty, Courage, Humility, Wisdom, and Truth. Their program aims to revive the Ojibwe language and culture especially amongst urban Indigenous children and families. It also considers Canada’s Food Guide for Indigenous People to ensure culturally appropriate foods are extended to children. The program strives to work with and support parents in order to support and build their growth and capacity. In alignment with the primacy of community within Indigenous cultures, the program also works with the children’s extended family and invites collaboration and input from Elders, cultural teachers, and knowledge keepers.

Summer Club Companion Policy for Children with Disabilities

Magog, QC | Rural community (Population: 27,430)

The **City of Magog’s** (QC) Summer Club Companion Policy for Children with Disabilities seeks to support and provide positive experiences for children aged 5 to 12 with differing abilities through a summer club day camp that provides a safe, fun, and accessible environment for children. Approximately 20 children living with a disability participate annually. The policy promotes integration and inclusion for children living with a disability to enable their active participation in all activities provided at the camp. A companion is assigned to each child while at camp, and their role is to ensure the child’s safety, help them adapt and fully participate.

The policy specifies the City’s responsibilities such as: providing support to applicants, forwarding the applicants in a confidential manner to the evaluation committee, providing the decision of the application to the families, providing the information to summer camp leaders, and ensuring that the children with disabilities are able to participate fully. If there is reasonable doubt as to why a child could be considered inadmissible to the Summer Club, the City would consult with professional agencies and community organizations that work with the child on a regular basis for further guidance. If after the consultation, a child is still deemed inadmissible, the City then contacts the parents or legal guardians of the child, informing them of the negative decision, and the case analysis that has led to the decision. Where appropriate, the City further works with the parents or legal guardians and partner organizations to find alternatives to the summer club that can meet the child’s needs adequately.

GDEIB Assessment *Summer Club Companion Policy for Children with Disabilities*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Proactive Leadership: Best Practice Structure: Best Practice	Assessment: Indeterminable Learning: Indeterminable	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Focus Area 6: Municipal services for youth

The **City of Dorval** (QC) created a Youth Advisory Committee in November 1988 for the purpose

of reaching more youth to encourage civic engagement. The committee can have up to 15 young residents between the ages of 12 and 17. The committee meets quarterly, and they discuss youth-related projects, make recommendations to Council, and are involved in the planning, development, and implementation of programs and activities relating to the needs of young people. For example, Dorval has a program called [Teen Zone](#) which offers a community hub for youth to socialize and engage in different activities including an open drop in space as well as structured programming. According to their website, the Teen Zone is “(a) place for youth, created by youth!” ([City of Dorval, 2017](#)).

The Youth Live Program from the **Halifax Regional Municipality** (NS) provides youth with the opportunity to develop both employment and life skills. The Program is for youth between the ages of 16 to 24 who are unemployed and are not attending school full time. It offers 24 weeks of paid employment for the participants as well as job readiness workshops to improve their employability skills. The program offers valuable experience to hone various skills such as leadership, customer service, organization, and cash management. It also gives young people the opportunity to receive their certification in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), First Aid Training, and Food Safety. In addition, co-op employment opportunities are available within the municipality’s Park and Recreation Services.

Mental health program for children and youth

Hamilton, ON | Urban Centre (Population: 569, 355)

The **City of Hamilton’s** (ON) Public Health Services offers an outpatient mental health program for children and youth under the age of 18, as well as their families. Through this program, the City provides free and confidential medical support with regards to: social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; self-harm; suicidal thoughts; anxiety; depression; grief; gender and sexuality; family conflict and family separation; trauma; fire setting; and school difficulties. The program is also explicit in offering “culturally-responsive services and/or translation services, including American Sign Language Services” to residents who may need them. Consistent with ensuring cultural safety and the *do no harm principles* in data collection, the City is also transparent to communicate that they are committed to protecting “the personal health information of all their clients, and asks for consent before sharing any of their information” ([City of Hamilton, 2022](#)).

This Program also offers two entry points to access mental health support. Single sessions that are brief mental health counselling have a low barrier entry where residents can complete a self-referral online registration form. The City aims to respond in 1-2 business days to schedule an appointment. In a time where there is collective trauma associated with the pandemic and the renewed focus on the issues of racism and discrimination, as well as the limited availability of mental health resources in some jurisdictions in Canada, this direct and self-referral way to access the program is commendable. If residents need longer-term counselling and therapy, the process for application was also stated clearly on the City’s website which aligns with principles of plain language and accessibility. A referral is needed from Contact Hamilton to ensure that the support is directed to the most appropriate services.

The Program’s website also offers relevant information to ease the burden of residents. They

provide information about their approach to care, what residents need to do before the visit, what to expect during the visit, and how feedback from residents will be used to improve service delivery.

GDEIB Assessment *Mental health program for children and youth*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Not applicable Structure: Best Practice	Assessment: Indeterminable Learning: Not applicable	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Focus Area 7: Municipal services for older adults (seniors)

Initiatives that provide older adults (or seniors) with personalized care to ensure their health and safety support their independence and affirms their dignity. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the detrimental effects of isolation on the mental, psychological, emotional and overall well-being of individuals which acutely impacted older adults. These challenges exacerbate pre-existing marginalization experienced seniors in all their intersectionality, including sex, gender, race, ethnicity, language, and differing abilities. Different levels of government have taken active steps to mitigate these challenges in order to better support the quality of life for older adults in Canada.

Launched in 2021, the **Regional County Municipality of Argenteuil** (QC) has a peer program which offers a free automated call service for its senior population, especially for those who may live alone to ensure their health and safety. The peer program affirms independent living for seniors and allows them to stay in their homes longer while minimizing health and safety risks. The automated calls are made daily at a predetermined time, seven days a week. If no response is received, protocols are followed to identify if the senior is in distress and if emergency services are required. Since the beginning of the program across Quebec, many Seniors have been helped and saved from life threatening situations.

Another example of a municipal initiative for seniors is from the **City of Iqaluit** (NU) called the Elder's Qammaq. This program offers a drop-in centre that is dedicated for Indigenous Elders and it provides a safe and welcoming space to congregate and socialize. Administered and supported by the local government, it is a recognition of the needs of its local population and the importance and centrality of Elders in Indigenous communities. The centre provides organized activities and special events five days a week for 3.5 hours a day. It also provides opportunities for Elders to come together, socialize, cook and share a meal, and explore their creativity through art. Through these programs, Indigenous culture and traditions are supported and encouraged to flourish.

Towards an Age-Friendly Community

Abbotsford, BC | Urban Centre (Population: 147,700)

The **City of Abbotsford's** (BC) Towards an Age-Friendly Community was created to supplement their 2017 Age Friendly Strategy. Abbotsford's goal is to ensure that seniors and older adults living with a disability, chronic illness, or in precarious situations such as homelessness are able to receive the help, support, and resources they need. The Strategy focuses on the need for equitable and fair treatment of seniors

- Addressing the diverse and unique challenges faced by seniors in housing, healthcare, and food security
- Mental health and social inclusion are important aspects that contribute to their overall wellbeing

In addition, the Strategy aligns their goals and objectives with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Age-Friendly Cities Project to identify age-friendly communities which includes the following eight (8) domains: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services. The Strategy also looked at the basic needs of seniors such as transportation, housing, seniors' mental health and social inclusion, coordinated access and the spectrum of care including those in long-term care, and supporting vulnerable seniors including those who may be experiencing housing insecurity, low income, food insecurity, or elder abuse. The Strategy also looked at the population of seniors in Abbotsford, considering their intersectionality including their ethno-cultural diversity, Indigeneity, and differing abilities.

GDEIB Assessment *Towards an Age-Friendly Community*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Indeterminable Structure: Best Practice	Assessment: Best Practice Learning: Indeterminable	Community: Progressive Services & Products: Best Practice

Focus Area 8: Municipal services for racialized and newcomer populations

As of 2020, immigrants and newcomers to Canada, account for approximately 21.5% of Canada's population (Statista, 2021). They are an integral part of the Canadian society and economy, accounting for almost 100% of the Canadian labour force growth (Canada, 2022). Most immigrants to Canada are racialized and marginalized as they face inequities, and systemic racism in almost all sectors including in health, education, employment, and the criminal justice system (Canada, 2016; Grenier, 2017). Inequities, discrimination, and racism are, unfortunately, common experiences to Indigenous, Black and racialized populations across Canada (Gerami, 2020). With the renewed focus on equity and anti-racism, several jurisdictions across Canada are undertaking initiatives to address these inequities and marginalization.

One example is the **City of Saskatoon's** (SK) Anti-racism education which is a public awareness campaign designed to raise awareness on the many forms of racism, the social, economic, historical, and political factors that contribute and influence it, and the various ways to actively address and prevent racial discrimination and inequality. Its campaign entitled '*I am the Bridge*

Anti-Racism Campaign' aims to spark dialogue on racism and inspire residents to speak up against racism, be open-minded, and welcome all people from different cultures.

The Performing Arts Internship and Co-op Program for Black and Indigenous Youth from the **City of Brampton** (ON) is another great example of how local governments support racialized and newcomer populations. This program helps dismantle some of the economic barriers faced by Black and Indigenous youth in pursuing training or career opportunities in the performing arts. Designed by and for Black and Indigenous youth, the initiative contributes to increasing cultural understanding, promotes opportunities for mentorship and professional development, and prepares youth for leadership opportunities within the field of creative arts. Managed by the City of Brampton, and in partnership with Algoma University and local school boards, this initiative strengthens the City's diversity and inclusion strategy that focuses on attracting and retaining a growing number of diverse talent and of youth that is reflective of the community.

Free of Fear Services for All Policy

London, ON | Urban Center (Population: 543,551)

The **City of London** (ON) enacted its Free of Fear Services for All Policy in 2018, and its purpose is "to enable London residents with uncertain or no immigration status to access City services without fear that the City will ask for and provide information on the immigration status of individuals to other public institutions or orders of government". The policy enables all residents to meaningfully access services provided by the municipality, and to expect respect from City staff. The policy is led by the City's Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Division, and it has adopted a Non-Disclosure practice by City staff to ensure that the City's services are provided to every resident without the requirement to provide proof of immigration status. Many of the City's services and resources can be accessed with proof of identification only, and which in some cases can be simply a utility bill or service bill with one's current address on it to prove residency. The policy also provides a framework on compliance as "the City's Senior Leadership Team is collectively and individually responsible for directing compliance with this policy" (City of London, 2021). It also explicitly states that managers are "responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of and compliant with this policy and that no other policies or procedures are developed that contravene this policy" while "employees are responsible for providing services to all residents in a respectful and meaningful manner and not enquiring about immigration status directly or indirectly unless legally required to do so as an eligibility requirement for access to specific services" (Ibid.).

GDEIB Assessment *Mental health program for children and youth*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Best Practice Structure: Best Practice	Assessment: Indeterminable Learning: Indeterminable	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Focus Area 9: Reconciliation and Indigenous Peoples

Canada's history of colonialism and assimilation policies such as the Indian Residential School (IRS) system and the "Sixties Scoop" has significantly damaged relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. The path to reconciliation is a long and complex process and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015) has been offering a path forward. Much is left to be done in this process of healing and restoration to address oppressive practices that have created significant inequities.

The Tawâw Project is one of the ways that the **Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo** (AB) is striving to engage in meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities. Meaning 'come in' in the Cree language, Tawâw is a tri-party partnership between the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, the McMurray Métis, and Wood Buffalo Housing to create 22 beds for homeless Indigenous individuals and families. The project will be converting two housing buildings into transitional and supportive housing spaces and community partners, including Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations, will provide the services needed for the full operation of the shelter. When residents are ready to leave the shelter, they will be able to transition to other Wood Buffalo Housing units as part of this program.

Access to clean water is a fundamental human right (see United Nations Resolution 64/292); yet in many Indigenous communities and reserves across Canada, access to clean water is not a reality. As of May 28, 2022, there remains 34 long-term drinking water advisories in effect in 29 Indigenous communities (Canada, 2022). Although a federal responsibility, local governments have pursued collaborative efforts to provide clean drinking water to Indigenous communities. Through the Comox Valley Water Treatment Project, the **Comox Valley Regional District** (BC), partnered with the K'ómoks First Nation (K'ómoks) to effectively manage water resources in the region to supply clean drinking water to both communities. This collaboration has also enabled Indigenous Peoples to engage in long-term planning and environmental protection goals.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: Ongoing Action Plan

Kamloops, BC | Rural community (Population: 90,280)

The **City of Kamloops** (BC) and the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (TteS) community have been on a journey of relationship building and reconciliation which was formalized through a letter of understanding (LOU) that was signed in 2019. It "outlined each community's commitment to preserving and promoting Secwépemc values, including protecting TteS cultural heritage resources" (City of Kamloops, 2022). The "2019–2022 Kamloops City Council Strategic Plan includes direction to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities" (Ibid.) and an instrumental component of this is the Kamloops' Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: Ongoing Action Plan. In particular, the Strategy works towards the implementation of the LOU and of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This action plan focuses on seven actions that focus on language and culture.

More specifically, the action plan includes the following initiatives:

- Learning implications and outcomes of implementing the UNDRIP.
- The Cultural Heritage Working Group which includes Council and staff, to develop plans to preserve and protect Indigenous culture and heritage.
- The Joint Recreation Working Group which includes Council and staff, to discuss options for TteS recreational programs and facilities to be funded from the sanitary sewer agreement.
- Both Councils undertake joint efforts to share information on cultural heritage and history with their staff and the general public.
- Cultural awareness and diversity training for City staff, and commemorative days such as Orange Shirt Day, Canada Day, and September 30 Day of Truth and Reconciliation.
- Repatriation of cultural objects in the City’s collection back to the TteS
- Le Estcwéy (The Missing) which is a records search and initiative to create a repository for all records from the Kamloops Indian Residential School.
- Development of Consultation Protocol, Indigenous Procurement Policy, Cultural Heritage Protocol, Cultural Heritage Policy, and Cultural Awareness and Diversity Training

GDEIB Assessment *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: Ongoing Action Plan*

<p>FOUNDATION</p> <p>Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Best Practice Structure: Best Practice</p>	<p>BRIDGING</p> <p>Assessment: Best Practice Learning: Best Practice</p>	<p>EXTERNAL</p> <p>Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice</p>
---	--	--

Section 2.0 Case Studies

This section includes two case studies of exemplary gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives from Canadian municipalities, namely:

- Participatory Budgeting from the Halifax Regional Municipality, and
- Safe City Initiative from the City of Winnipeg.

These initiatives focus on community engagement, participation, and collaboration especially with marginalized populations. It demonstrates how local government works with relevant stakeholders, within municipalities, across different governmental actors, and community stakeholders that advocate for and provide frontline services to residents.

These case studies provide a more in-depth description of these initiatives, how they came to be, the actors involved, the challenges and successes they encountered, and the lessons learned from their implementation. This section provides an opportunity to learn more about these initiatives as they delve deeper into the process, methods, and means of achieving tangible solutions to real world complex problems to explore and assess the initiatives’ transferability in other municipalities.

Case Study 1. Halifax Regional Municipality: Participatory Budgeting

Halifax, NS | Urban Centre (Population: 439,819)

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) (NS) is a thriving and multicultural city with a rich and unique history that features the Mi'kmaq Peoples as its original inhabitants, and waves of immigration from European settlers, Black Loyalists who arrived following the American Revolution between 1782-1785, Black refugees who migrated between 1813-1816 following the War of 1812, and the Trelawney Maroons who were exiled from Jamaica in 1796 following the wars the waged against the British government in Jamaica (ANSA, 2022; Grant, 2015; Nova Scotia Museum, 2014). Descendants of these groups still live in communities across HRM today; including but not limited to the Preston townships, Hammonds Plains, Beechville, etc. In more recent times, there has been an influx of immigrants from all continents around the world, as well as a rural-urban migration from within the province and from the nearby Atlantic provinces.

With an intersectionally diverse population, government leaders need to provide different ways for its population to engage in decisions that affect them. Exploring and implementing innovative and creative ways enable a greater reach and provide an opportunity for more and diverse residents to fully participate as part of their democratic engagement and social inclusion. Directly hearing from residents helps better inform policies, programs, and services, and ensures that government initiatives adequately meet the diverse needs of the population.

Participatory budgeting is an approach taken by some local governments to collaboratively arrive at decisions with residents and community organizations, particularly on budget capital and expenditures. It is a type of budgeting process where the allocation of funds or resources are co-determined with residents through a democratic deliberation process usually through a voting process. This method of budgeting shifts the power associated with capital expenditure from municipal leaders to community members; therefore, empowering people, strengthening democratic processes, building stronger communities, and creating a fairer and more equitable administration and allocation of public resources. The first documented use of participatory budgeting can be traced back to 1989, in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. This approach has since been used in thousands of cities worldwide with positive results such as reducing poverty rates, decreasing child mortality rates, promoting transparent and accountable governance, and generally improving public services (Local Government Association, 2016; Wampler & Touchton, 2014).

Participatory budgeting was introduced in Halifax in 2013 by Councillor Waye Mason of District 7 - Halifax South Downtown. It was introduced to involve and engage community members to vote on how to allocate the ward's discretionary capital budget on projects that matter to residents the most in order to promote positive social change in the community. In partnership with COLAB, a social impact agency that designs and facilitates strategic processes, they planned a public-led participatory budgeting process that determined how District 7's \$94,000 discretionary budget would be spent in the community. Cllr. Mason explained that the participatory budgeting process enabled women and marginalized populations to be directly involved in the decision-making process. It was a deliberate and intentional effort to demonstrate that their views and voices are valuable and directly result in municipal decisions.

Prior to the inception of this process in the district, funds from the budget would have been allocated to groups that may already have had connections with previous councillors or knew how to navigate the municipal system which would have excluded newer or lesser-known

organizations from accessing the funds.

“When I was elected in 2012 and was given this money, capital funds, to use at my discretion, I began researching participatory budgeting that was already being done at bigger cities like New York in a bid to see how we could have the residents of my constituency decide on how they wanted to use the funds...”

Councillor Waye Mason, District 7, Halifax South Downtown
Halifax Regional Municipality

Though the use of participatory budgeting is not mandatory for HRM councillors, it is, however, becoming a preferred budgeting method for other councillors including Cllr. Lindell Smith of District 8 - Halifax Peninsula North, Cllr. Shawn Cleary of District 9 - Halifax West Armdale, and Cllr. Sam Austin, District 5- Dartmouth Centre, to mention a few. Cllr. Lindell Smith explains that the participatory budgeting process has helped provide funds to small and local grassroots organizations and not-for-profit groups such as youth groups, women shelters, immigrant and newcomer organizations, and mental health and addiction support groups that would otherwise have to compete for funding with bigger and more established groups such as United Way, for example.

Participatory budgeting has enabled better access to funds by diverse groups and ultimately better served the needs of individuals from what the funds are used to accomplish. In some of the districts, the fund is divided into two streams:

- a lower funding stream usually between \$2,000 to \$3,000 per project, and
- a higher funding stream for projects and initiatives needing up to \$10,000.

This is done to ensure fairness and equitable allocation of funds. Community members gather on a predetermined voting day, listen to proposals from groups requesting funds which enables awareness-raising of the local initiatives available in the community, and cast ballots on what they consider important to better serve their needs and the community. The projects with the most votes are allocated the funds, and they continue to disburse the funds in sequence until all the capital budget has been distributed.

This method of budgeting, though extremely beneficial in community engagement and equitable access to government resources, has not come without its fair share of challenges. Cllr. Mason explains that the proposition for the use of participatory budgeting was initially met with a lot of resistance and opposition from the City Council. However, persistence and determination paid off and has led to the process being more increasingly used by Councillors across the municipality, as the benefits of it were made evident. It has been a rewarding and empowering process as community residents regardless of background, stature, or citizenship have been able to equally engage in voting and in participation. This is especially true for groups that have been excluded from the democratic process such as newcomers, international students, children and youth, and traditionally marginalized communities including Indigenous and racialized groups, persons with differing abilities, and individuals who are either of low income or differing literacy rates. Participatory budgeting has allowed everyone to participate, and it prides itself as a low-barrier process. Everyone is encouraged to vote in response to the information provided by the groups applying for the funds.

“...Once, a Syrian (newcomer) family attended the participatory budgeting (voting night) and they commented on how this was the first time they were able to vote... This is one of the reasons we do this - to give people a voice.”

Councilor Lindell Smith, District 8, Peninsula North
Halifax Regional Municipality

Some valuable lessons learned from utilizing a participatory budgeting method from HRM:

- How collaboration and partnership with local independent experts to develop the participatory budgeting process and based on research from other jurisdictions can ensure that the approach fits the local community, its residents, and their needs
- There is a need to be open-minded and willing to evolve and adapt to adequately meet the needs of the community and respond to challenges as they arise like the pandemic
- Intentionally reaching out to residents and grassroots organizations to invite them to participate in both applying for funding and in the voting process to ensure they know what kinds of projects are available, what organizations can apply, and how everyone can participate in the voting process
- Developing a clear vetting process for applicants to ensure that everyone on the ballot at voting night are in fact eligible to receive capital funding

Gender-responsive and inclusive practices:

- The importance of transparency and accountability on the part of the government and its representatives towards the community they serve
- Using experiments and evidence-based research to find an approach that provides the best solution for inclusive community development
- Intentional and targeted efforts to reach hard-to-reach, underserved, and marginalized populations
- Developing and implementing a low-barrier and easy to understand process to ensure everyone can engage in the decision-making process
- The importance of fostering better democratic processes that gives residents the power for their ideas and voices heard that results in tangible decisions and outcomes

GDEIB Assessment *Participatory Budgeting*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Best Practice Structure: Best Practice	Assessment: Not applicable Learning: Indeterminable	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Case Study 2. Safe City Initiative

Winnipeg, MB | Urban Centre (Population: 766,900)

In 2013, the **City of Winnipeg** (MB) became the first Canadian city to become a part of the United Nations Safe Cities and Safe Spaces Global Programme through UN Women. Winnipeg’s

Safe City Initiative is a program that aims to reduce and prevent violence and harassment against women and girls.

Winnipeg's Safe City Initiative completed a scoping study in 2016 that revealed that there are higher incidents of harassment and gender-based violence particularly experienced by Indigenous women, girls, Two-spirit individuals, as well as marginalized groups including Black women, racialized women, women living with a disability, and newcomer immigrant women. This was made even more evident following the murder of Tina Fontaine, an Indigenous teenage girl, who was abducted and eventually murdered. Though she was a youth in care of the Manitoba Family Child Services and had been reported missing by her family members, the system failed to protect her.

The Safe City Initiative aims to address the critical problem of gender-based violence and aims to contribute to efforts to addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. As a result of this initiative and the recognition of gaps in providing safe spaces, actions have been taken by the City of Winnipeg in partnership with key stakeholder organizations including other governmental actors such as the provincial government and law enforcement and community stakeholders, to create safer spaces for women and girls.

The Safe City Initiative is not a single-focused initiative, however, but rather an amalgam of initiatives related to the theme of addressing gender-based violence which includes though not limited to the following:

Heart Medicine Lodge

In partnership with the Manitoba Status of Women provincial department, funding was provided to Ka Ni Kanichik, an Indigenous-led grassroots community organization established by Indigenous community leaders and Elders, to design and lead programs and services that are necessary to bring about positive social transformation for Indigenous communities and individuals. The Heart Medicine lodge is the first healing program in Canada specifically designed to provide support and resources for Indigenous women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence including sexual violence and assault. The services provided through this program are culturally based and appropriate for Indigenous women and are available to all who identify as women over the age of 18. Some of the services include the following:

- **Healing program:** This is a 12-week closed-group program focusing on trauma and its effects, empowerment for Indigenous women, cultural identity, and an inward look into the strengths of Indigenous women to help and support their healing process
- **Sharing circles:** An open program that focuses on using the power of shared stories in a culturally safe space to support the healing journey and process
- **Advocacy:** Providing legal and medical support needed by survivors as well as accompaniment to appointments and in navigating systems and service providers
- **Traditional ceremonies:** The use of Indigenous traditional ceremonies to help with the healing journey of survivors such as a sweat lodge
- **Elder Support and counselling services** are available in person

Winnipeg Transit Request Stop Program

This aspect of the Safe City Initiative in Winnipeg focuses on transit. It includes a variety of

approaches such as training provided to bus drivers, making explicit that bus drivers are able to stop in between designated stops outside of rush hour when requested by a passenger to lessen their walking distance or when bus drivers notice someone running towards a bus who may be fleeing a perpetrator or a potentially dangerous situation.

“Transit systems have more incidents of violence and sexual violence cases (than other public spaces). So, we (City of Winnipeg) work together with the transit service to provide sensitivity training to bus drivers, advising them on how to recognize signs of someone in distress... If a woman for example is running to catch a bus, bus drivers have been trained and taught to not just drive off, as there might be a reason, they are running to catch the bus.”

Councilor Cindy Gilroy, District of Daniel McIntyre
City of Winnipeg

Vehicle-for-hire training and Code of Conduct

This initiative was developed to train new cab drivers who are predominantly newcomers to Canada with regards to Canadian law and cultural norms especially surrounding sexual harassment and sexual violence. This was developed as a result of complaints regarding miscues and misinterpretation from cab drivers and passengers that have escalated to sexual harassment such as being friendly or engaging in conversation as being misinterpreted as a sexual/romantic interest. A code of conduct was developed for all drivers of vehicle-for-hires such as cab drivers and Uber drivers operating in Winnipeg. Together with the training offered and the Code of Conduct, drivers can be held accountable for inappropriate behavior or misconduct, and simultaneously able to receive information about cultural norms and expectations and Canadian law regarding sexual harassment and violence. New drivers wanting to run a vehicle- for-hire service in Winnipeg must take the training and familiarize themselves with the Code of Conduct.

Third-party reporting framework

It is well established that “very few incidents of sexual assault are reported to police” (Justice Canada, 2021). Winnipeg’s third-party reporting initiative comes as a response to this phenomenon as the Safe City Initiative discovered or validated the experience that women who were sexually assaulted were more comfortable reporting these incidents to local stakeholder community organizations than law enforcement agencies. As a result, a third-party reporting framework was developed through collaboration and partnership with the Klinik Community Health Center, Ka Ni Kanichihk, and the Winnipeg Police Services and six (6) other community organizations that provide support and services to survivors of gender-based violence. This third-party reporting framework offers survivors the option to remain anonymous while still being able to file a report to the police through a community organization. Though formal evaluation of the efficacy of this program is currently underway, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is an increase in the reporting of sexual assault cases through this mechanism.

“...For example, a survivor can provide information about a crime to a trained staff from a supporting community organization who then relays that information to law enforcement, while keeping the survivor’s identifying information anonymous. Law enforcement receives official documentation about the sexual assault, and it is stored in such a way that patterns or themes from repeat offenders may become apparent... If law enforcement wishes to contact the survivor for any reason, they would reach out to the community organization representative to do so. It is always the choice of the survivor to remain anonymous or to become involved in a formal investigation.”

Staff member,
Winnipeg Committee for Safety

Bystander intervention Lunch and Learn sessions

The City of Winnipeg also conducted lunch and learn sessions that offered training on bystander intervention for City staff. It includes sensitivity training to better recognize workplace harassment and how to develop safe intervention skills to act when witnessing a potentially harmful incident. A program called **‘Women at Work’** was also created for City staff where intersectionally diverse women within the municipal workforce can discuss the challenges they face at work and provide recommendations on how to develop a safer workplace. The City also strives to have equal representation of women throughout the City’s workforce, so that workplace and organizational culture can shift and be more inclusive.

The Safe City Initiative faced many challenges, however. For example, a change in government has shifted the leadership of the initiative from the province to the City due to changing priorities. The Initiative also lacks a consistent source of both human and financial resources to continue its much-needed programming and coordination efforts.

“...With the exception of a small yearly allowance to host stakeholder meetings and community consultations, the Winnipeg Safe City Initiative existed without any direct funding until late 2021. The work of all the stakeholders involved was done “off the side of the desk”, out of a strong vision for creating a city that is more equitable, safe, and accessible for women and girls. Thankfully, the initiative has some funding from the Mayor’s Office and will be utilizing it to develop a multi-year strategic plan that includes more community consultation, short and long-term actionable items, and measurable outcomes.”

Staff member,
Winnipeg Committee for Safety

Lessons learned from implementing this initiative:

- Being the first Canadian municipality to join the Global Safe City Initiative, challenges were encountered in finding transferable data to the Canadian context from the United Nations system, especially considering the urban Indigenous population of Winnipeg. The mixed methods Scoping Study was conducted to address some of the data gaps to ensure that the stories and lived experiences were integrated into the analysis.
- Education and training were identified as critical areas needed to build a safer community. This included early education on consent, public awareness about sexual

violence and its prevalence, and education on the justice system.

Gender-responsive and inclusive practices:

- Intergovernmental and interagency collaboration and partnerships are needed to address complex issues such as safety and gender-based violence.
- The Safe City Initiative was a collaboration and partnership with different levels of government, community organizations, and grassroots communities. It also benefited from strong champions who played a vital role in either setting the Initiative into motion or continuing it when leadership and priorities shift.
- Using a culturally appropriate approach in addressing sexual harassment and violence especially with regards to working with Indigenous population and communities.
- Feedback from the Scoping Study was used to directly inform initiatives to improve safety for women and marginalized groups.

GDEIB Assessment *Safe City Initiative*

FOUNDATION	BRIDGING	EXTERNAL
Vision: Best Practice Leadership: Progressive Structure: Best Practice	Assessment: Indeterminable Learning: Progressive	Community: Best Practice Services & Products: Best Practice

Section 3.0 GDEIB Benchmarks Observations

The Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) is an approach that focuses on results, and provides an opportunity to progressively address growth and development. Its application can be used to work towards: creating a better and equitable world for everyone; advancing an inclusive culture; and improving organizational effectiveness.

The research applied the GDEIB on 14 initiatives to show how they align with global best practice standards. Seven out of the 15 benchmark categories were used as being most relevant to the initiatives. More than half of the sample initiatives (or 8 out of 14) can be considered to be fully aligned with best practices towards equity, while slightly more than a quarter (or 4 out of 14) can be considered as progressive.

Most initiatives align with best practice standards in the areas of having a vision that aligns with diversity, equity and inclusion, and in the area of serving the community. On the other hand, the area of learning seems to be lacking the most which is not necessarily because training or learning was not included, but rather the best practice calls for mainstreaming these principles in all training, for all staff and stakeholders. The following table summarizes the GDEIB assessment on all 14 initiatives.

GDEIB assessment of gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives in local governments in Canada

Gender responsive and inclusive initiatives in local governments	Foundation: Drive the Strategy			Bridging: Align & Connect		External: Listen to and Serve Society	
	Vision	Leadership	Structure	Assessment	Learning	Community	Services & Products
“Toward Equity and Diversity: A Strategy for Belonging in the Municipality of the County of Kings (County of Kings, NS)	Progressive	Proactive	Progressive	Best Practice	Progressive	Best Practice	Progressive
Staff Council Relations Policy (Cobourg, ON)	Progressive	Indeterminable	Not applicable	Reactive	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Data for Equity Strategy: Supporting Equitable Services, Equity Priorities, Performance Measurement and Accountability (Toronto, ON)	Best Practice	Proactive	Progressive	Progressive	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Progressive
GBA Plus Training (Edmonton, AB)	Best Practice	Best Practice	Progressive	Progressive	Progressive	Indeterminable	Proactive
Ad-hoc Committee on Gender Diversity (Fredericton, NB)	Proactive	Proactive	Progressive	Indeterminable	Reactive	Indeterminable	Not applicable

Gender responsive and inclusive initiatives in local governments	Foundation: Drive the Strategy			Bridging: Align & Connect		External: Listen to and Serve Society	
	Vision	Leadership	Structure	Assessment	Learning	Community	Services & Products
Accessible Public Spaces Design Standards (Brant, ON)	Best Practice	Indeterminable	Progressive	Indeterminable	Proactive	Best Practice	Best Practice
HRM Washrooms & Drinking Fountains Strategy (Halifax, NS)	Best Practice	Not applicable	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Not applicable	Progressive	Progressive
Indigenous Women & Girls and Two-Spirit People Coming Home Report (Saskatoon, SK)	Best Practice	Progressive	Progressive	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best practice
Community Gardens Development and Operations Policy (Kingston, ON)	Indeterminable	Not applicable	Best Practice	Not applicable	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Best Practice
Summer Club Companion Policy for Children with Disabilities (Magog, QC)	Proactive	Best Practice	Best Practice	Indeterminable	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Best Practice
Mental health program for children and youth (Hamilton, ON)	Best Practice	Not applicable	Best Practice	Indeterminable	Not applicable	Best Practice	Best Practice

Gender responsive and inclusive initiatives in local governments	Foundation: Drive the Strategy			Bridging: Align & Connect		External: Listen to and Serve Society	
	Vision	Leadership	Structure	Assessment	Learning	Community	Services & Products
Towards an Age-Friendly Community (Abbotsford, BC)	Best Practice	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Best Practice	Indeterminable	Progressive	Best Practice
Free of Fear Services of All Policy (London, ON)	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best Practice	Indeterminable	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Best Practice
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: Ongoing Action Plan (Kamloops, BC)	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best Practice
Participatory Budgeting (Halifax, NS)	Best Practice	Best Practice	Best Practice	Not applicable	Indeterminable	Best Practice	Best Practice
Safe City Initiative (Winnipeg, MB)	Best Practice	Progressive	Best Practice	Indeterminable	Progressive	Best Practice	Best Practice

Notes:

- a) Indeterminable means that there is not enough information in the supporting materials to make a high-level assessment on where the initiative is against the GDEIB.
- b) Not applicable means that the GDEIB, in general, does not apply to the initiative.
- c) Four benchmarks were not included in the table because HR internal processes of attracting and retaining staff were not a focus of this research. Similarly, the benchmarks on communications and procurement were excluded as the best practice indicators associated with these two benchmarks would not be accurately assessed using publicly available information.

Section 4.0 Conclusion

The research highlighted gender-responsive and inclusive approaches that local governments in Canada are implementing to better serve and meet the needs of women and marginalized populations. These include both internally-focused and externally-focused initiatives that are interrelated. The first group of initiatives focuses on improving the operations of local governments, while the second group highlights services and programs that directly impact and/or interact with residents. The research includes initiatives from Canadian local governments, from both rural and urban areas, to show the range and breadth of possibilities.

Most initiatives have advisory committees with Council participation, City staff, and some members with lived experiences. In more progressive jurisdictions or areas where significant gaps have been identified, and therefore deliberate measures are required to address them, membership in the advisory committees is limited to residents with lived experiences.

Although both governments and civil society have done much work, much more work remains in moving toward equity and equality – which are societal pillars protected within the Constitution through the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, there are tensions between equity and equality, such as questions regarding fairness juxtaposed to affirmative action or equitable measures. Some initiatives also reflect the ongoing debate about gender neutrality as being more inclusive (often seen in language and washrooms). Still, the approach could also be deemed as not being gender-responsive.

It's also important to highlight that many initiatives, especially strategies focused on women and gender equality, were only recently launched. At the date of writing, only five municipalities have a Women and Gender Equity Strategy (WGES), which is at various stages of development and implementation. An interesting question is why only a handful exists at this point in history? And, how does gender parity in Council affect (or not) the likelihood of such a strategy? And what about the influence of members of the Council, the Mayor, and senior municipal leaders?

The WGES, being a relatively new policy tool within local governments, is a reflection of both a policy window for this kind of work after years of labouring by the women's movement. It also reflects societal changes with greater awareness and sensitivities towards gender equality and intersectionality. The recent emergence of WGES can also indicate a trickle-down effect as GBA Plus, although first introduced as GBA in the Government of Canada in 1995 from the United Nations, has now been more mainstreamed in federal, provincial, and territorial levels of government in Canada. Supportive structures are needed to ensure the success of these strategies, such as the need for meaningful and practical training, change management, leadership buy-in, alignment of structures such as policies and procedures, and a general culture shift to integrating equity and equality in the values and DNA of an organization.

From this environmental scan, we have also identified three areas that are needed to support governments at any level to develop and implement gender-responsive and inclusive approaches successfully, and they are:

- culturally responsive and meaningful public engagement,
- the availability of disaggregated data, and
- mechanisms for equity budgeting or appropriate resourcing of gender-responsive and inclusive initiatives.

Another vital pattern that emerged is that jurisdictions will have initiatives that impact women in their diversity despite not having a concerted WGES. Perhaps the most evident is initiatives that address gender-based violence, as women are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and sexual harassment. Age-based services such as those for children and seniors also impact women as care responsibilities are still predominantly shouldered by them, and women's life expectancy continues to be longer than that of men.

The initiatives reviewed also focus on intersectionality, although its usage and prominence remain variable. One of the most apparent indicators is when an intersectionality analysis such as GBA Plus or an Equity and Inclusion lens has been applied or if training has been made available about these approaches. There is variability regarding the extent to which various personal and social identity factors are specified within the initiatives. Some initiatives have taken more progressive approaches at being explicit about the role of intersectionality that goes beyond identifying diversity dimensions but invites local governments to recognize and challenge systems of oppression that create and maintain inequalities. Similarly, the initiatives reviewed have a recurring theme of improving relations between local governments and Indigenous and racialized communities, especially in working towards truth, reconciliation, and healing with the Indigenous Peoples and pursuing anti-racist approaches.

Overall, this environmental scan has identified gender-responsive and inclusive approaches in local governments that highlights the positive shift toward a more human-centric and rights-based approach which goes beyond jurisdictional responsibilities and compliance to legislative requirements. This shift is welcomed as society and systems grow in understanding of the inequities and inequalities that persist and the role local governments have to contribute towards achieving equity and equality for women and marginalized communities.

References

- African Nova Scotian Affairs. (2022). [African Nova Scotian Community | African Nova Scotian Affairs.](#)
- Al-Hakim, A. (2022). [House of Commons debates lowering voting age for Canadians.](#) Global News.
- Amelio, J. (2019). [Charter Application.](#)
- Antipova, A., & Momeni, E. (2021). [Unemployment in Socially Disadvantaged Communities in Tennessee, US, During the COVID-19.](#) *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 3.
- California Newsreel and Regents of the University of California. (2019). [Race: The Power of an Illusion.](#)
- Canada, Government of. (1982). [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.](#)
- Canada, Government of. (2022). [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology.](#)
- Canada, Government of. (2022a). [Guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.](#)
- Canadian Human Rights Commission. (2022). [About the Employment Equity Act.](#)
- Canas, E and Staples, W. (2018). Social Inclusion: [What does it mean for mid-size cities?](#)
- Cameron, B. (2009). [Political Will, Child Care, and Canadian Federalism.](#) *Our Schools/Our Selves*, 129-144
- CARE. (2020). [Left Out and Left Behind: Ignoring Women Will Prevent Us From Solving the Hunger Crisis](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). [Definition of Policy](#)
- Choi, R. (2021). [Accessibility Findings from the Canadian Survey on Disability.](#) StatsCan
- City for All Women Initiative. (2020). [A Municipal Gendered Recovery Plan for All 2020 Making the City of Ottawa Work for Everyone.](#)
- City for All Women Initiative. (2015). [Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities.](#)
- City of Abbotsford. (2021). [Towards an Age-Friendly Community](#)
- City of Brampton. (2021). [City of Brampton launches performing arts Internship and Co-op Program for Black and Indigenous Youth](#)
- City of Charlottetown. (n.d.). ["Make It Your Business" Video Series](#)
- City of Dorval. (1988). [Youth Advisory Committee](#)

- City of Dorval. (2017). *Teen Zone*
- City of Edmonton. (2017). *Gender-Based Analysis (GBA+)*
- City of Edmonton. (n.d.). *Gender Based Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative: “This is what it feels like”*
- City of Hamilton. (2022). *Public Health Services*
- City of Iqaluit. (n.d.). *Elders’ Quammaq*
- City of Kamloops. (n.d.). *Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc Relationship*
- City of Kenora. (n.d.) *Multi-year Accessibility Plan (2019-2022)*
- City of Kitchener. (2021). *Equity, Inclusion and Anti-racism Policy*
- City of Kingston. (2016). *Community Gardens Development and Operations Policy*
- City of Kingston. (n.d.). *Engage for Change*
- City of London. (2021). *Free of Fear Services for All Policy*
- City of Magog. (2017). *Summer Club Companion Policy for Children with Disabilities*
- City of Moose Jaw. (2022). *May 12 Proclaimed as Moose Hide Campaign Day*
- City of North Vancouver. (2021). *Local Food Report*
- City of Peterborough. (n.d.). *Accessibility Resources and Training*
- City of Prince George. (n.d.). *Advisory Committee on Accessibility*
- City of Oshawa. (2021). *Equity and Inclusion Lens Handbook*
- City of Saskatoon. (2019). *IWG2S* Coming Come*
- City of Saskatoon. (n.d.). *Anti-Racism Education*
- City of Toronto. (n.d.). *Data for Equity Strategy*
- City of Victoria. (2020). *Accessibility Framework*
- City of Victoria. (n.d.). *Accessibility Advisory Committee*
- City of Winnipeg. (2018). *Indigenous Peoples and Records: A Guide to Research at the City of Winnipeg Archives*

- City of Winnipeg. (2021). *Safe City Initiative*
- City of Yellowknife. (n.d.). *Access for All*
- Comox Valley Regional District. (n.d.). *New Water Treatment Facility Complete, Providing High Quality Drinking Water to Comox Valley Residents*
- Cotter, A. and Laura Savage. (2019). *Gender-based violence and unwated sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces: StatsCan*
- County of Brant. (2013). *Accessible Public Spaces Design Standards*
- Cushing, B. B. (2010). *Accountability and white anti-racist organizing: stories from our work.* Crandall, Dostie & Douglass Books.
- DiAngelo, R. (2011). *White Fragility.* *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3), 54–70.
- Elections Canada's Civic Education. (2022). *A Brief History of Federal Voting Rights in Canada*
- First Nations & Indigenous Studies, University of British Columbia. (n.d.) *Indian Reserves.*
- Flynn, A. (2016). *Participatory Budgeting -Not A One-Size-Fits-All Approach.*
- Gerami, A. (2020). *How Canadian Immigrants Are Affected By Racism* | Gerami Law PC.
- Giovanna, P. (2021). *Engaging Marginalized Communities: Challenges and Best Practices.*
- Godbout v. Longueuil (City), [1997] 3 S.C.R. 844*
- Government of Canada. (2022). *Social determinants of health and health inequalities*
- Government of Canada. (2022). *Infographic: Immigration and Canada's economic recovery*
- Government of Canada. (2022). *Ending long-term drinking water advisories*
- Grant, J. N. (2015). *Jamaican Maroons in Nova Scotia* | The Canadian Encyclopedia.
- Grenier, É. (2017). *21.9% of Canadians are immigrants, the highest share in 85 years: StatsCan.* CBC.
- Halifax Regional Municipality. (2020). *HRM Washrooms & Drinking Fountains Strategy*
- Halifax Regional Municipality. (n.d.). *Youth Live Program*
- Hernández, D., & Swope, C. B. (2019). *Housing as a Platform for Health and Equity: Evidence and Future Directions.* *American Journal of Public Health*, 109(10), 1363–1366.

- House of Commons. (2021). Private Member's Bill C-210 (44-1) - First Reading - Right to Vote at 16 Act - Parliament of Canada.
- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS). (2021). Municipal Voting Rights for Permanent Residents.
- Justice Canada. (2020). State of the Criminal Justice System.
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). How To Be An Antiracist.
- Kenny, C. (2015). End poverty in all its forms everywhere. *UN Chronicle*, 51(4), 4–5.
- Kenora Anishinaabe-Kweg. (n.d.). Aboriginal Head Start Program
- Local Government Association. (2016). Case study: Porto Alegre, Brazil.
- Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Inc. (2005). Thompson Urban Aboriginal Strategy
- Middlesex County. (n.d.). Child Care.
- Minow, M. (2021). Equality Vs. Equity. *American Journal of Law and Equality* 2021; 1 167–193.
- Montesanti, S. R., Abelson, J., Lavis, J. N., & Dunn, J. R. (2016). Enabling the participation of marginalized populations: case studies from a health service organization in Ontario, Canada. *Health Promotion International*, Vol 32, Issue 4, pp. 636–649.
- MP Associates, Center for Assessment and Policy Development, and World Trust Educational Services. (2021). Racial Equity Tools Glossary.
- Municipality of the County of Kings. (2021). Toward Equity and Diversity: A Strategy for Belonging in the Municipality of the County of Kings
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming Power and Place
- Nova Scotia Museum. (2014). Nova Scotia and the War of 1812.
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). Glossary of human rights terms.
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2019). Eliminating Racial Profiling in Law Enforcement.
- Ontario Municipal Social Services Association. (2018). Child Care and Early Years Services in Ontario.
- Petterson, Steve et al. (2020). Projected Deaths of Despair During the Coronavirus Recession.
- Public Safety Canada. (2020). The National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

R. v. Le, 2019 SCC 34, [2019] 2 S.C.R. 692

Regional County Municipality of Argenteuil. (2021). “Domestic violence is not always obvious”

Marguerite-D’Youville Regional County Municipality. (2020). Equity and Parity Policy

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. (2021). Tawâw project creates tri-party partnership to provide Indigenous housing

Senate of Canada. (1999). Final Report On Social Cohesion.

Senate of Canada. (2013). Reducing Barriers to Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion.

Sharkey, L. (2021). What’s Does BAME Mean and Should I Use It?

Statista. (2022). Immigration in Canada: Statistics & facts

Statistics Canada. (2020). Household food insecurity, 2017/2018

Statistics Canada. (2021). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population

Statistics Canada. (2016). Immigration and ethnocultural diversity: Key results from the 2016 Census

Social Inclusion Audit. (2019a). What is social inclusion?

Town of Cobourg. (2001). Staff Council Relation Policy

Town of Truro. (n.d.). Diversity Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Calls to Action

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. (2017). Glossary of Terms and Concepts.

United Nations. (2016). Identifying social inclusion and exclusion A. The concept of social inclusion.

University of British Columbia. (n.d.) Equity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms.

Wampler, B., & Touchton, M. (2014). Brazil let its citizens make decisions about city budgets. Here’s what happened. *Washington Post.*

Woods, L. L., Shaw-Ridley, M., & Woods, C. A. (2014). Can Health Equity Coexist With Housing Inequalities? A Contemporary Issue in Historical Context. *Health Promotion Practice, 15(4), 476–482.*

Yamoah, M. (2020). Fredericton city council adopts recommendations for greater gender inclusivity, diversity

Ziafati, N. (2020). Halifax’s mayor renews call to let newcomers vote in future municipal elections.