



**Comments and recommendations for the policy
*Promoting the Equal Involvement of Women and Men in the Montreal Community***

Submitted by the YWCA of Montréal

Regarding the City of Montréal's project:

Promoting the Equal Involvement of Women and Men in the Montreal Community

**Presented to the *Commission permanente sur le développement culturel et la
qualité du milieu de la vie de la ville de Montréal***

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YWCA of Montreal

Founded in 1875, the Women's Y is a non-profit organization focused on its mission to help women achieve their goals. The Women's Y offers programs and services that reflect the needs of women in our community, and supports their personal and leadership development.

Thanks to the exceptional commitment of its many volunteers and a dynamic team of professional employees, the Women's Y serves a diverse community of women in an atmosphere of mutual support and solidarity. For more than 130 years, the Women's Y has been a stable presence in our community offering quality services in response to the emerging needs of women. Social and community services, employment and entrepreneurship services, a centre for women's health and well-being, a residence and hotel, a volunteer centre – the Women's Y is all this and more. It is essential and effective social action.

YWCA of Montreal's participation and involvement

The YWCA of Montréal has actively and continuously supported the *Conseil de Montréalaises*, we have helped elaborate the policy promoting the *Equal Involvement of Women and Men in the Montréal Community*, and we have supported the representation of women in politics. In order to develop these various advancements, the YWCA has collaborated with the *Table de groupes de femmes de Montréal*, the *Comité femmes de la CRÉ*, and others.

Introduction

First and foremost, the YWCA of Montreal celebrates the publication of the policy *Promoting the Equal Involvement of Women and Men in the Montreal Community* proposed by the city of Montréal. The equality between men and women is a very important issue and we are pleased that the City of Montreal is moving forward in putting this policy in place. As an involved and committed women's organization, the YWCA looks forward to the changes the policy suggests and hopes that the City continues to promote and implement the new measures until they are adopted by all.

Although we support the policy, we would like to see some changes in order to more effectively incorporate a global vision of equality and essential feminist values, as well as demonstrate change by creating a structure to fit the proposed measures to promote equality.

The YWCA of Montreal would like to see all aspects of the policy clearly express the following concepts. These fundamental values have been

successfully implemented in other cities around the world and Montreal should apply them to its policies as well.

1. *Promotion of a global vision of equality*

To fully incorporate a global vision of equality into the policies and administration of the city, this value must be essential to all aspects of planning and implementation. One source of inspiration on this matter is the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. We must ensure that these values are fundamental within the policy and are understood and respected by all municipal employees. One city that has successfully adopted this approach is Munich, as they:

- Carry out research on the question of gender with regards to urban planning and use this information for the development of local policies.
- Integrate the dimension of equality between men and women in all municipal policies, from the conception to the realization.
- Prepare a strategy with regards to equality and the inclusion of the gender dimension.
- Sensitize public opinion by diffusing an image of men and women that come from discriminatory stereotypes.
- Support organizations that value diversity, human rights and offer a respectful workplace that is welcoming and free of all forms of discrimination, including gender.
- Promote gender equality in work with partners and other ministers.
- Assure that all programs reinforce these capacities, knowledge and that the training is conveyed to civil society.¹

2. *Incorporate and base this policy on a feminist approach*

Feminism is not only an ideology but is rooted in social justice, equality, respect and fairness. Promotion and education are needed to inform citizens as well as municipal employees of the feminist theory behind the fight for equality. All those involved in policy making and implementing the plan of action must be aware of the values behind these changes.

We would like to reiterate the concept of equality that the Quebec government expresses in their *Politique gouvernementale pour l'égalité*

¹ Politique municipale d'égalité femmes/hommes – Études des expériences étrangères : Rapport final. (Convercité, 2006) 6.

entre les femmes et les hommes and would like to see it at the root of any municipal policy. An excerpt of their vision of equality is as follows:

For the past few years, we have understood equality to be a concept that proposes that women and men have equal conditions with which to fully exercise their rights, to reach their potential, as well as to contribute and to equally profit from political, economical, social, and cultural development.

The government endorses the opinion of the *Conseil du Statut de la femme* with regards to its ideal of equality between women and men – one that wishes to not only correct the inequalities associated with sex, but the elimination of all forms of discrimination on this basis. This ideal is manifested by an equality of rights, responsibilities and possibilities. These are the basis for the development of men and women and the liberty of choice.

Furthermore, in order to attain equality, all analyses and actions must be founded on the following values; justice, liberty, solidarity and peace, as well as values that guarantee a genuine liberty of choice and individual and collective actions.

The pursuit of equality does not aim to attack all problems that women and men may face, but rather, it seeks to attack those that are based in inequality or systemic discrimination that puts them at a disadvantage in economical, social, political, judicial, or health situations.²

3. *The implementation of a structure that promotes women's participation in policy and decision making for the city*

Women must have an active role in policy-making and their participation must be integral to the structure of its administration and governance to ensure an ongoing engagement on the behalf of women. An excellent example of a city that included women in their municipal planning is Bristol, as demonstrated below:

Women actively participate in the elaboration of local policies (7-8 times a year) through the framework of the *Women's forum*. They work with the *Equality*

² Quebec, Ministère de la Famille, des Aînées et de la Condition féminine, Pour que l'égalité de droit devienne une égalité de fait : Politique gouvernementale pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes. (Québec : Ministère de la Famille, des Aînées et de la Condition féminine ,2006) 26 – 27.

department of the city and organize meetings with municipal councillors and city employees to create a gendered approach to local decision making. Women's voices are equally taken into account during citizen panels as well as a conference called "Women's' SAY" that is held every two years.³

4. Gender Based Analysis (GBA):

Finally, we would like to ensure that GBA is applied to all aspects of the policy and used when creating plans of action and implementing measures. As the policy describes, GBA is "a recognized approach that makes it possible to gather and interpret comparative quantitative and qualitative data with respect to current situations and needs specific to women and men".⁴ We would like to emphasize the importance of applying this analysis to all of the city's boroughs and ensuring that the results spur changes.

General Comments and Recommendations

Comments

The policy does not guarantee that the existing measures and the new measures will receive the investment from the city to be successfully implemented. The time-line and the budget must be reconsidered in order to support the measures that are needed.

Time-Line

The policy recommends that implementation measures are to be applied over a "medium term or in some cases, 10 year horizon".⁵ This time line is vague and not clearly aligned with specific objectives. We propose that an action plan for the policy follows a 5-year time line as this is feasible, realistic and shows genuine commitment to change.

As an example of the importance of a shorter time frame, we have looked at hiring policies. Five years is a realistic perspective to see a significant increase in women employees throughout the City. The statistics have shown that in the 12 years between 1994 and 2005 the representation of women as part of the City's staff grew from 31% to 39%, which represents an annual growth of

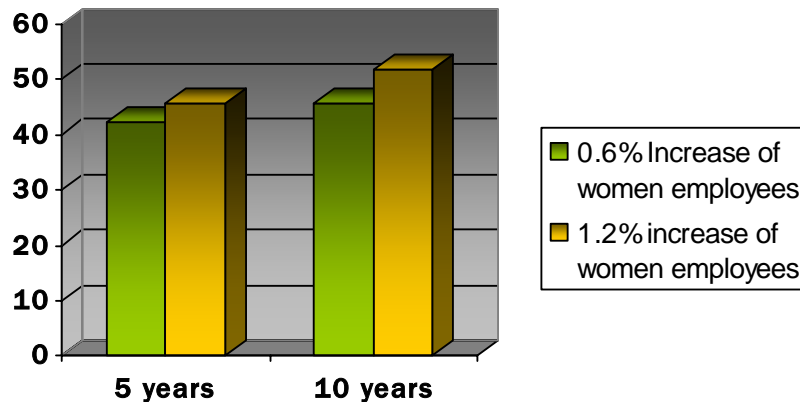
³ Convercité, 14.

⁴ Promoting the Equal Involvement of Women and Men in the Montreal Community: Policy and Implementation measures. (City of Montreal, 2007) 9.

⁵ City of Montreal, 7.

0.6%⁶. In order to make a significant difference and to closer match women’s representation of 52% of the population of Montreal, the presence of women employees must increase by at least 1.2% a year, which would then reach 45.7% in a shorter period of 5 years.

At that time we are **still** not at 52%, but the possibility of attaining that objective is much closer and more feasible.



Budget

The proposed budget to implement the policy is such that “new projects must be provided at zero cost, that is, executed at no expense or rolled out gradually as budgetary priorities are reviewed, but still within existing budgets”⁷. We believe that in order to show a commitment to following through with this policy, there must be a budget to correspond with the suggested measures. All measures have costs, whether they are in dollar value or human resources, and we recommend a re-organization and prioritizing of funds if the current budget is unable to support the new projects.

Statistics

Throughout the policy, the use of statistics is not clear and some seem to be used to inflate the progress of the City by taking mediocre statistics out of context.

For example, with regards to governance, the policy proudly shows that in 2005, 35.2% of its elected officials were women.⁸ This percentage represents all elected officials. This is misleading since all officials do not hold the same decision-making weight. It can be argued that the borough councillors, the city councillors, and the mayors have different responsibilities and decision-

⁶ Annexe 4 : Portraits statistiques 1994-2005 de la présence des femmes à l’emploi de la ville. 2007, September 17, 2007 <http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/femmes_ville_fr/media/documents/Annexe_4_Portraits_statistiques.pdf>

⁷ City of Montreal, 7.

⁸ City of Montreal, 8.

making power. Adding them all together to find the percentage of elected officials is confusing since each level of official should be looked at separately.

In the section, *The City as an Employer*, it is written that, “the operation revealed that women occupied 39.7% of municipal jobs, compared to 16.3% in 1987”⁹, which implies a great gain. It does not include information regarding what positions these women hold, nor does it mention their wages, which are very important factors regarding equality in the workplace.

Another example is in the section *Services Available to Women*, where the policy demonstrates that some departments have effectively catered to the specific needs of women. They boast that through the home ownership assistance program women represent 77% of the “heads of single-parent households”¹⁰ accepted into the program. While this is certainly a high percentage, it does not mention income levels, and it is still slightly lower than representation of single mothers in Montreal, which is 80% of all single parents. It is important to note that single parent families headed by women are more susceptible to live below the poverty line.¹¹ These women are in great need of housing assistance.

Recommendations

R: Ensure that the policy is implemented and all measures are taken within the next **five** years.

R: Allocate a realistic budget to this policy and ensure that the measures undertaken are completed successfully.

The City as an Employer

Comments:

We would like the City to develop a hiring policy that is favourable to women and applies Gender Based Analysis (GBA). The City must also implement an effective succession plan and create a working partnership with the unions and professional associations.

The policy plans to:

⁹ City of Montreal, 11.

¹⁰ http://www.fafmrq.org/federation/2007/05/statistiques_su_2.html

¹¹ Des différences, des similitudes : Un portrait socioéconomique des femmes et des hommes sur l'Île de Montréal en 2001. (Conférence régionales des élus de Montréal, 2004) 15.

1. ***“Introduce new measures to promote the integration of women into non-traditional trades at the Ville de Montréal. A true partnership must be established between Montréal and the unions, which play a critical role in this regard”.***¹²

We fully support the suggestion to introduce new measures to integrate women into non-traditional trades within the city of Montréal, but the proposed measures are vague. The lack of women in blue-collar jobs is a persistent example of gender inequality and action must be taken to increase accessibility and training for women in these positions. As mentioned in the policy, this must be done with the full cooperation and support from the unions.

One way to encourage women to work in these trades is to credit and recognize women for their skills. Only 1% of new female employees have *Cartes de compétences* for skilled labour compared to 16% of male employees, even though the women generally have a higher education and more training¹³. It is very important to ensure that women are getting more *Cartes de compétences*, and it is equally as important for men to complete their high school education in order to create standard workers qualifications and guarantee equal pay and benefits for all.

Women must also be supported in their efforts to work in these positions. It is difficult to work in an environment that is stereotypically male-oriented and acceptance by their employers and co-workers is imperative to their success in this line of work. The excerpt below, taken from the article *Recherche d'emploi: une détermination du tonnerre*, by Françoise Guénette explains women's difficulties in these trades:

Without great determination, many women end up quitting. Amongst the 88 non-traditional workers interrogated by Francine Burnonville for the records of the FTQ, 63% confirmed that they were victims of injustice because they are women, 46% have experienced sexual harassment by their employers, their supervisors, their colleagues, or their clients. 84% used tools that were not well-adapted or that they felt uncomfortable using. As well, 71% of women interviewed felt that they worked harder than the men. The sociologist specifies that, “in the most difficult work places, such as correctional services, 10% of women abandon their positions after one year”. What is the most common? Little daily humiliations, over-protection, sexist jokes that are repeated ten times a day...and the fear of provoking negative reactions from their colleagues or employees, so,

¹² City of Montreal, 12.

¹³ *Annexe 4 : Portraits statistiques 1994-2005 de la présence des femmes à l'emploi de la ville.* 2007, September 17, 2007 <http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/femmes_ville_fr/media/documents/Annexe_4_Portraits_statistiques.pdf>

these women prefer to share their complaints anonymously.¹⁴

2. “Conclude agreements concerning the application of the Pay Equity Act”.¹⁵

Resolving pay equity is a main objective for the section *City as an Employer*. Solving this matter is well past due, as it should have been rectified at the latest in 2005.¹⁶ The city of Montreal is falling behind the schedule determined by the Quebec government in 1996 regarding the implementation of pay equity in the workplace, which states:

[In 1996] Quebec passes the *Pay Equity Act*, a proactive piece of legislation that applies to private sector employers with 10 or more employees and all public sector employers and employees (note that private sector employers with less than 10 employees are still covered by the [Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms](#)). The *Pay Equity Act* requires that adjustments in compensation required to achieve pay equity must be determined or a pay equity plan must be completed by November 2001. Differences in compensation must be corrected by November 2005.¹⁷

Permanent status

Along with pay equity, new measures must also increase the number of women with permanent status. Men are given permanent promotions almost twice as often as women are.¹⁸ This issue must be addressed and a new measure must be included in the policy in order to act on this problem and invest equally in both women workers and men workers.

Immigrant women

The proposed policy does not focus on the integration of immigrant women into the workplace. It is clear that the minority population (including immigrants, ethnic minorities, visible minorities, and indigenous people) is under-represented amongst City employees. Within the City of Montreal, “13% of staff identified as a minority (visible minority, ethnic minority or indigenous)”.¹⁹ This percentage falls extremely short of the real representation

¹⁴ Françoise, Guénette. *Recherche d’emploi : une détermination du tonnerre*. (Gazette des femmes : Vol. 21, no 4, 1999) <<http://www.gazettedesfemmes.com/recherche/?F=recherche&idt=10044&affart=3135>>

¹⁵ City of Montreal, 12.

¹⁶ Québec, Commission de l’équité salariale. *Working towards pay equity*. September 25, 2007.

<<http://www.ces.gouv.qc.ca/publications/loibrefa.htm#Who%20is%20covered%20by%20the%20Act?>>

¹⁷ Canada, Department of Justice. *History of Pay Equity in Canada: International Commitments, Government Legislation and Policies*. September 25, 2007. <<http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/payeqsal/1100.html>>

¹⁸ Portraits statistiques, 2.

¹⁹ Portraits statistiques, 2.

of these populations in Montreal considering that immigrants comprise 27.6% of the population and visible minorities represent 20.7%.²⁰ The City of Montreal must take these numbers into consideration and adapt their processes accordingly in order to fully integrate these populations, while paying special attention to women as they can be doubly discriminated against.

Family-work conciliation

Another issue that is very important to women today is family-work conciliation. This is not mentioned at all throughout the policy. The City has over 12,000 workers with at least one child at home, and over 2,000 workers with pre-school aged children.²¹ With these numbers, a family-friendly work environment would certainly be welcome. Family-work conciliation has a particular impact on single parents, and more specifically women. For the age group of 35-44 year olds, there are more than 400 single mothers compared to 176 single fathers working for the City of Montreal.²² In order to promote healthy families, the City must explore the idea of flexible work schedules to help parents better support their children.

It must also be noted that not all jobs give the same value to women's lives – some women work in positions they enjoy, for which they are paid well and make the *choice* to work full-time to advance their careers. These women will also most likely have the means for quality child-care and have a support system to help with the children. On the other hand, other women work lower-paying jobs and do not necessarily choose to work full time and may not have the means or support system to help their children. It is important for the City to allow certain flexibility on all levels, in order to help those who have no choice but to work, and have families to care for as well.

Recommendations

R: Increase the accessibility of *Cartes de compétences* for women working in skilled labour in order to ensure that the female employees have equal access to jobs. All employees and employers must also be educated with regards to how to support, encourage and accept women in these non-traditional trades.

R: Apply the *Pay Equity Plan* as soon as possible, throughout all levels of the municipality. This is a priority in ensuring equity in the municipal work force.

R: The City must transform a large number of their temporary positions, which are mostly held by women, into permanent positions. The cooperation of the unions will be necessary to increase the availability of permanent positions for women.

²⁰ Montréal, *Immigration et minorités visibles*. September 15, 2007. http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/PES_Publications_FR/Publications/atl_2003_immigration_minorites.pdf

²¹ Portraits statistiques, 3.

²² Portraits statistiques, 3.

R: An efficient succession plan must be put into place immediately in order to benefit from the increase of retirements that will inevitably take place in the next few years.

R: The City must partner with community organizations in order to create a link between the City's employment opportunities and new arrivals to Montreal, as well as improve their hiring policies and recruitment methods in order to increase the number of women from immigrant populations in the workplace to better represent the population.

R: The City must address the issue of family-work conciliation and allow for flexible work schedules that encourage its workers with reasonable family responsibilities to balance both family and work without jeopardizing one or the other.

Services Available to female residents

Comments

The wording of the first sentence of this section is problematic. It states: "By and large, female Montrealers live in a different world than their male counterparts".²³ We would like to see this changed to "By and large, female Montrealers live in the *same* world as their male counterparts, but face different realities and needs". It must be clear that women and men share the same space, but because of systematic, long-standing inequalities, women are often found subordinate and policies must be put in place to rectify the situation.

The language used throughout the measures in this section can also be improved, as it is vague and non-committal. For example, measures begin with: "Pursue the application of...", "Continue to promote...", "Continue to apply", "Pursue the development of..." etc. These words do not encourage action. These measures should read: "Apply", "Promote", "Develop", etc. and demonstrate affirmative, immediate action.

With regards to the services available to women, the city must look more closely at the *needs* and *realities* of women in Montreal today. The needs of disadvantaged and immigrant women must be further analysed and practical, effective solutions must be found.

With regards to housing, the policy plans to:

²³ City of Montreal, 12.

1. *“Pursue the development of housing solutions (community, social, cooperative/affordable, different home ownership formulas); encourage initiatives such as the development of large-scale housing projects, contingent on the ongoing financing of major partners.” (P. 14)*

The issue of housing is very important and its significance will increase as the population ages. The needs of women must be looked at specifically through the context of poverty, old age, young single heads of households, and mental health challenges. The city must increase and maintain social, cooperative and affordable housing as well as tackle the problems *behind* the housing needs. Quality housing is very important and it must be integrated into safe communities. The city must increase the housing stock with different models of tenure in partnerships with other levels of government. The city must also increase access to funding in order to develop more units. And, to develop more units, the city must make more land available – for example, vacant city properties and illegal parking lots.

2. *“Continue to provide financial support to organizations that cater to newly arrived residents (less than three years) to help ensure their successful integration into the Montreal community” (P.14)*

With immigrants making up roughly one quarter of the Montreal population²⁴, it is clear that the City of Montreal must continue to build its partnerships with community organizations in order to facilitate the immigration process. In partnership with other levels of government, the city should expand services and meet the needs of newly arrived residents.

3. *“Improve sports and recreational services, especially to those offered to young girls and older women” (P. 14)*

We thank the City of Montreal for its partnership with the YWCA of Montreal Leadership and Community Service programs. These programs prove to be extremely important for the well-being and health of women and girls in the community. Recreational services must also be made available to underprivileged and immigrant women who may not have the access due to low income and or lack of awareness of the services offered. The city must also increase its public spaces in order to allow community groups more opportunity to gather and plan interesting activities. We agree with *Égale action: Égalité par l'activité sportive* when they promote activities for girls and women:

So that your daughter has the choice to play and be active.
So that each woman has the tools to participate and get involved.

²⁴ Montréal, *Montréal en statistiques*, September 25, 2007. http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_dad=portal&_pageid=2076,2453845&_schema=PORTAL

To attain equality in participation and training²⁵.

Recommendations

R: The City of Montreal must increase the accessibility and quality of low-income housing by increasing funding for these projects, as well as increasing available land and property in order to create more housing.

R: Extend the criteria for funding organizations that cater to newly arrived residents from those who have lived here less than three years to 5 years in order to fully support their integration.

R: Improve sports and recreational services, especially to those offered to young girls, older women, immigrant women and women with low-income.

Economic Development

Comments

The YWCA opened up its Entrepreneurship Center for women this year as it recognized the growing role of women in the business sector and responded by designing services to help women meet their goals.

There are many reasons for the growth of women entrepreneurship in Quebec with regards to enterprises created by women. It is estimated that a third of the enterprises in Quebec are created by women²⁶. With regards to Montreal in 2006, around 76,199 enterprises with less than 50 employees were counted. Out of these, around 39% or approximately 29,718 enterprises belong to women in part or in whole²⁷.

We realize that a lack of knowledge regarding the needs of business women are felt throughout entrepreneurial practices and the different realities of these women, such as a vibrant multiculturalism, are not always take into consideration.

The City of Montréal must analyse their entrepreneurial structures from women's perspective. In addition, those working to support women entrepreneurs must be educated and given tools to help with regards to this subject. Such an initiative would benefit these women and would help them learn about services and programs that are already offered on the island of Montreal.

²⁵ *Égale Action : Égalité par l'activité sportive*. (Assemblée générale annuelle, 2007).

²⁶ Lègaré, Marie-Hélène et St-Cyr, Louise. *Portrait statistique des femmes entrepreneures*. Chaire de développement et de relève de la PME (HEC, 2000) V.

²⁷ Référence Canada, Répertoire des entreprises. Latest changes made : 10/23/2006.

Women entrepreneurs are also confronted by obstacles such as access to financing, which remains the primary priority for women entrepreneurs who depend on financial institutions, venture capital companies and business networks, as well as ministries and community organizations.

It is understood that financial institutions and conventional financial companies must apply a series of criteria that ensure they are adequately protected when issuing loans. Women must be prepared regarding the availability of tangible security, management experience, knowledge of the market, or significant assets for a down payment.

In order to bring about solutions, the YWCA of Montreal Entrepreneurship Center is involved in various initiatives that promote women's access to financing. We would like to help women gain the power to achieve through the development and success of their enterprise. The *Conférence régionale des Élues de Montréal (CRÉ)*, the *Compagnie-f* and the *Association communautaire d'emprunt de Montréal (ACEM)* join the YWCA in this vision in order to explore the possibilities and develop funds that are dedicated to women entrepreneurs in Montreal and take into account their realities and diversity.

The collaboration of the City of Montréal with regards to gaining support from the *Ministère du développement économique et de l'innovation et de l'exportation* for the first Montréal fund dedicated to women entrepreneurs will certainly contribute greatly to the development of our City.

R: The city of Montreal must take into consideration the growing number of women entrepreneurs that come from cultural communities and adapt its policies and programs to meet their needs (ex. training for workers that support entrepreneurs, promoting existing services and programs, etc.).

R: The backing from the City to gain the support of the *Ministère du développement économique et de l'innovation et de l'exportation* in the development of a fund dedicated to helping women entrepreneurs access credit is essential.

Conclusion

We would like to thank the City of Montreal for putting forth the policy *Promoting the Equal Involvement of Women and Men in the Montreal Community*. This is a step in the right direction in order to ensure equality amongst all those involved with the City of Montreal, as well as improving the quality of life of the citizens of Montreal.

We look forward to further collaboration with the City of Montreal and the other women's groups that our voicing their opinion regarding this policy. We

hope that our suggestions are understood and considered in order to improve the effectiveness and significance of its plan of action.

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