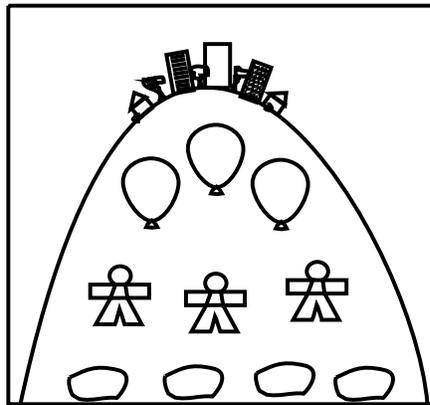


Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa

Report on Recommendations to City Council



January, 2002

**Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services
in Ottawa**

Acknowledgements

The Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa would like to thank Status of Women Canada for funding this project, and the City of Ottawa for providing in-kind support including allowing staff to devote paid time to the project. The Working Group would also like to thank former Regional Councillor Diane Holmes for her continued support.

The day to day management of the project was overseen by the Steering Committee which included: Connie Delahanty from the Older Women's Network, Fran Klodawsky from Carleton University, Caroline Andrew from the University of Ottawa, Colleen Pellatt and Judy Flavin from the City of Ottawa and Pegi Cesar from First United Church and Bonnie Klemm member at large. Judy Flavin served as the chair of the Working Group as a whole. The Working Group was fortunate to have two dedicated staff people employed on the project: Pat Harewood and Alette Willis. Kenna McCall, a consultant contracted by the City of Ottawa, provided much needed expertise to the Working Group.

A large number of people have been involved in the Working Group over its two year span. The Working Group included both municipal staff and community members. City staff included: Carole Dequanne, Cathie Wood, Daniel Presse, David Pepper, Ginette Roberge, Jocelyne A St. Jean, Joyce M Potter, Laurie Fenton, Lois Emburg, Marisa Spicer, William Rooney, Daria Slocinska, Marcia Aronson, Lisa Ashley, Kamila Tomcik, and Lyne Gillespie. Community members included: Christine Turkewych, Denise Lemire, Diana Davis, Dianne Urquhart, Michele Bougie, Denise Lemire, Ann Rose, H el ene Marleau, Galina Gurova, Helen Saravanamuttoo, Margot Arseneau, Maria Neil, Michael Birmingham, Sandy Onyalo, Shellie Bird, Valerie Collicott, Willow Scobie, Bernice Perry, Yvonne McKinnon, Sonia Breerton, Marianne Wilkinson, Sheila Pepper, Izabela Aurelson, Penny Leclair, Samina Hashmi, Krissie Duhan and Cathy Thornley.

The Working Group also wishes to thank the community groups who helped us recruit women for our focus groups and the 160 women from across the city who took the time to participate in our research project. Many thanks also to the approximately one hundred people who came to our community forum and helped make it such a big success.

Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa
Report on Recommendations to City Council
Executive Summary

The Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa was established in November 1999 to provide advice to the Regional government after its endorsement of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) declaration on Women and Local Government. It was set up to undertake a study with a view to evaluating the current situation and proposing improvements in women's access to services and employment. Central to the Working Group's mandate has been the recognition of the diversity of women in the City of Ottawa, and a commitment to represent this diversity both in the Working Group itself and in the assessment of women's access to services.

The Working Group consists of representatives from various City departments, from a diversity of women's groups, members of faculty at both the University of Ottawa and Carleton University as well as members of the public at large. The objectives of the Working Group are to evaluate the existing situation, and to propose improvements, where warranted, to the structures, policies and programs of local government in Ottawa, so as to ensure that the diverse needs of women are met.

The Working Group conducted twenty focus groups, consulting with over 160 women of various ages, ethnicities, care-giver responsibilities, income, and abilities. The Working Group also held a Community Forum in which over 100 people from City councillors and staff, to representatives of community groups and individual members of the community, met with focus group representatives and the Working Group to discuss how women's access to municipal services could be improved. A report was released in August that summarises the findings of the focus group. This report and its appendices are available on-line at:

<http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~candrew/womenhome.html>.

Based on the focus group findings and subsequent consultations with City staff, community groups and the public, a set of recommendations were developed. These eleven recommendations are outlined in this document.

Recommendations

A. In developing public information and awareness campaigns, we recommend that the City consider the diverse needs of Ottawa women.

Therefore the City should:

1. In consultation with women in the community and appropriate Council Advisory Groups, develop a Corporate strategy on communications that embraces a diversity of women. This strategy should identify the different media needed to reach a variety of women in the community, languages, and the needs of persons with physical disabilities. Guidelines should be included regarding preparation of information in languages other than English or French.
2. As part of the Corporate communications strategy, review the range of materials currently available on municipal services, update as necessary and identify appropriate means of distributing these in the community, including making this information available at all major City facilities, through non-city service providers, through the internet or call centres and other interpersonal means, and a printed directory, with a view to improving women's access to information.
3. Request OC Transpo to review its current practices with reference to the issues raised in this report and in the report on focus group findings, with particular reference to increasing women's knowledge of the Transecure program and transit information services, enhancing security, and meeting the needs of the frail elderly and passengers with physical disabilities.

B. We recommend the City of Ottawa ensure its services are provided equitably

Therefore,

4. People Services should develop a strategy to facilitate clients' understanding of how a range of programs (such as Emergency Health and Social Supports, and Learning Earning and Parenting) work and enhance client access to information about a range of programs, the benefits available through them, and the eligibility criteria needed to access them.

5. Recognizing that cost continues as a barrier to many women's access to municipal services, People Services should consider the particular experiences and needs of women in implementing recommendations from the Task Force on Poverty and the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee.

C. We recommend the City of Ottawa consider women's diverse needs when making decisions regarding its programs and facilities.

Therefore, the City of Ottawa should:

6. Develop a Corporate policy to guide development and co-location of municipal services at venues located throughout the City according to the following criteria:

- a. Ensure that all new facilities are well served by OC Transpo, preferably located near to a rapid transit station.
- b. Investigate providing short-term child-minding and cultural interpretation services in conjunction the proposed services
- c. Ensure that facilities and services are physically accessible to everyone.
- d. Locate services, especially People Services such as social assistance services, where women can easily access them. In particular, rural women should have access to services in a manner that is equitable with urban women's access.
- e. Adjust the times that City facilities are open and staff are available to accommodate women's busy schedules.

7. Request all City departments review their current agreements with their community partners in order to find opportunities to improve women's knowledge of municipal services through these partners, and fund those community organizations accordingly.

D. The City of Ottawa take a leadership role in engendering governance

Therefore, the City of Ottawa should:

8. Develop a Corporate strategy on community consultation on its programs and services that includes continuing consultations with women on planning and evaluating facilities, services and programs, for example through consultations on the Official Plan and People Services' Human Service Plan.

9. That Human Resources consider the need for cultural awareness training for municipal staff, to foster both an inclusive workplace environment and improved quality of service to the diversity of people in Ottawa, and make recommendations on this matter as part of the 2003 budget process.

10. Council request that the City Manager's Office coordinate an interdepartmental review of the report and recommendations of the Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services and report to Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee in 2002.

11. Council support in principle measures to improve women's access to municipal services and involvement with municipal governance and continue in a partnership model with the community.

The following report elaborates upon the above recommendations and gives some specific suggestions that came out of our series of consultations with women in the community, which illustrate how these recommendations might be fulfilled.

Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa

Report on Recommendations to City Council

December 19, 2001

Introduction

In November 1999, the Regional government of Ottawa-Carleton endorsed the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) declaration on Women and Local Government. The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government, clearly underlines the importance of municipal services for women.

- *Local government is in a unique position to contribute to the global struggle for gender equality and can have a great impact on the status of women and the status of gender equality around the world, in its capacities as the level of government closest to the citizens, as a service provider and as an employer.*

Having ratified the IULA Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government, the City of Ottawa has committed to four items as a service provider:

- *Women have the right to equal access to the services of local governments, as well as the right to be treated equally in these services and to be able to influence the initiation, development, management and monitoring of services.*
- *Women have the equal right to sound environmental living conditions, housing, water distribution and sanitation facilities, as well as to affordable public transportation.*
- *Women have the right to equal access to the territory and geographical space of local governments, ranging from the right to own land, to the right to move freely and without fear in public spaces and on public transport;*

- *Local government has a role to play in ensuring the reproductive rights of women and the rights of women to freedom from domestic violence and other forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence and abuse.*

The Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services in Ottawa was formed to undertake a study with a view to evaluating the current situation and proposing improvements in women's access to services and employment. Central to the Working Group's mandate has been the recognition of the diversity of women in the City of Ottawa, and a commitment to represent this diversity both in the Working Group itself and in the assessment of women's access to services.

The Working Group consists of representatives from various City departments, from a diversity of women's groups, members of faculty at both the University of Ottawa and Carleton University as well as members of the public at large. The objectives of the Working Group are to evaluate the existing situation, and to propose improvements, where warranted, to the structures, policies and programs of local government in Ottawa, so as to ensure that the diverse needs of women are met.

The Working Group conducted twenty focus groups, consulting with over 160 women of various ages, ethnicities, care-giver responsibilities, income, and abilities. It also held a Community Forum in which over 100 people from City councillors and staff, to representatives of community groups and individual members of the community, met with focus group representatives and the Working Group to discuss how women's access to municipal services could be improved.

This document outlines ten recommendations that the Working Group has developed through its consultation process and which it believes will improve women's access to municipal services and will improve everyone's quality of life in Ottawa in general.

Recommendations

A. In developing public information and awareness campaigns, we recommend that the City consider the diverse needs of Ottawa women.

A lack of information about municipal services was one of the largest barriers experienced by women we spoke to. Many did not know about services applicable to their needs, and more fundamentally, many did not know how to find out about City services. In certain cases, having insufficient information about City services put women's safety and well-being at risk.

Although lack of information was a pervasive problem, certain women experienced more difficulty in finding out about services than others. In order to provide information more equitably the City needs to consider using a wider variety of media, printing it in different languages and providing information in a wider variety of locations in the community.

Therefore the City should undertake the following three recommendations:

1. In consultation with women in the community and appropriate Council Advisory Groups, develop a Corporate strategy on communications that embraces a diversity of women. This strategy should identify the different media needed to reach a variety of women in the community, languages, and the needs of persons with physical disabilities. Guidelines should be included regarding preparation of information in languages other than English or French.

Discussion

Women in our focus groups made a number of innovative suggestions regarding ways the City could make information about municipal services accessible to a wider diversity of women. Some of these suggestions are outlined below; however, it is important that the City regularly consult with a broad range of women in order to ensure that its public awareness campaigns are accessible to as many women as possible.

Use a variety of Media. A variety of media need to be used in order to ensure

information about City services is accessible to a diversity of women. Women suggested the City advertise on radio and television in general, and target specific programs and newspapers that cater to particular ethnic and/or language communities. Women suggested targeted mail-outs of separate packages for specific groups such as seniors, students, or mothers. Printed materials are not accessible to all, so some women suggested the City provide workshops on services at different community centres.

Provide Information in Many Languages. Language as a barrier is a particular problem for women. Because many women who come to Canada spend a number of years as full-time care-givers in the home, they have fewer opportunities than men to learn English or French, and yet, as primary care-givers are largely responsible for the well-being of their households. Women felt that printed information about all City services should be provided in multiple languages.

Language poses a barrier both in terms of written materials and in terms of accessing information by phone or in person. A number of suggestions were aimed at improving this situation: hiring more multilingual staff people, providing more language training to staff, and providing more cultural interpreters to women accessing municipal services. Alternatively, the City could facilitate phone access to information through supporting community organisations in forming services similar to the Somali Women's Information Line.

Use accessible formats. The City needs to ensure that women who are visually impaired or hearing impaired can access information on municipal services. These needs are partially addressed through using a variety of media in public information campaigns; however, physical aspects of printed materials need to be taken into account. The City should consult with elderly and visually impaired women to develop a format for printed materials that is accessible. This might include enforcing a certain size and type of font, and requiring that print be in black on white or white on black.

2. As part of the Corporate communications strategy, review the range of materials currently available on municipal services, update as necessary and identify appropriate means of distributing these in the community, including making this information available at all major City facilities, through non-city service providers, through the internet or call centres and other interpersonal means, and a printed directory, with a view to improving women's access to information..

Discussion

Enable women to access information on all city services wherever any city services are offered. Women lead complex, busy lives. We spoke to many women who wanted to be able to access information about all city services wherever they accessed services such as: libraries, community centres, pools, employment centres, and arenas. They also wanted to be able to get information about related services from any City staff person they came in contact with.

Bring information to where women are. In order to develop an effective public education campaign, the City must consider where women are likely to be, and ensure that information gets to them. To reach a wide diversity of women, information campaigns should include buses and bus shelters, community centres, centres of worship, malls, and nightclubs. Many women spend the majority of their time in the home, and women suggested that a directory of City social services be mailed to houses, similar to the directory of recreational programs. Women also suggested that the City provide an information officer at each City facility who would be able to answer questions on a variety of services.

Improve phone access. The City's central information number needs to be advertised more widely. Most women we spoke to did not know about it. Women suggested putting this number at the front of the phone book along with emergency numbers.

Many women are juggling school, employment and caregiving and find that the time it takes for them to get answers from the City via phone is too long. Small children require constant supervision, which is incompatible with being passed from person to person, being put on hold or having to negotiate a series of push-button menus. In order to improve this situation, women suggested providing all City staff with a comprehensive data base so that they can refer

people with problems outside of their jurisdiction to the appropriate person, and having information officers in each department available outside of normal 9 to 5 hours. Encouraging staff to return phone calls and reducing hold times would also make phone access easier for women.

Specific Suggestions

- i) A comprehensive *211 service could be developed with the financial support of the City and in consultation with a diversity of women. The *211 service should be provided by “real people” in a variety of languages.
- ii) A directory similar to the City’s “Blue Book” could be made available to the public so that women can reach the appropriate City staff person for their needs. This directory should include: The name of each program, a descriptive blurb, contact name and telephone number. Both internet and hard-copies of this directory should be made available.
- iii) The City should investigate ways and means of providing New Canadians with the information they need regarding City services, such as through Federal immigration services and/or community groups that work with newly arrived Canadians.
 - a) The City could use information from Immigration services in order to mail a kit of information to Newcomers in their own language.
 - b) Immigration services or community groups, in cooperation with the City of Ottawa could provide workshops on how to access certain municipal services (such as 9-1-1).
- iv) The City should work with schools and their student bodies to develop better means of providing information on services to young women for example:
 - a) The City could make regular contact with student council representatives so that they can include information on City services in their newsletters, announcements and assemblies.
 - b) City staff could make annual visits to schools to speak to students about City government and City services.
 - c) City staff could liaise with high school civics teachers to incorporate more information on the municipal level of government into their courses.

- v) The City could provide a map interface on their web-site (similar to the MLA listing service) so that women can click on their area and find out about programs, services and facilities.
- vi) Provide a database of programs and staff so that staff members can pass clients on to the appropriate program or staff person.

3. Request OC Transpo to review its current practices with reference to the issues raised in this report and in the report on focus group findings, with particular reference to increasing women's knowledge of the Transecure program and transit information services, enhancing security, and meeting the needs of the frail elderly and passengers with physical disabilities.

Discussion

Women feel particularly vulnerable travelling on public transit, especially at night. Having accurate information about where they are, when buses are coming, and what routes connect is not a luxury but is essential to women's safety and peace of mind. It is especially important to women travelling by public transit at night that they know how long they have to wait for a bus. While Transecure is designed with safety in mind, the majority of women we spoke to did not know about it. Young women were particularly concerned about their safety on the transitway and in their neighbourhoods. They felt that alarm boxes and closed circuit television cameras were not enough to ensure their safety and called for a physical presence by police and OC Transpo security.

Older women were afraid of taking buses because of the risk of falling during abrupt starts and stops. In terms of accessing public transit itself, again language can be a barrier, especially to the older women who had newly arrived in Canada, many of whom do not know how to take the bus and take taxis instead at considerable expense. Information on how to access public transit should be offered in multiple languages. Also measures need to be taken to aid visually impaired women in accessing public transit.

Several women we spoke to had had difficulty accessing low-floor buses because of a lack of information regarding which buses on the schedule would be accessible buses. We would like to commend OC Transpo on providing this information on-line and to its phone line

information officers.

Specific Suggestions

i) OC Transpo should ensure that women know whether they have missed their bus and how long they have to wait

a) OC Transpo should provide hard-copy bus schedules at every bus stop.

b) To remind people about OC Transpo schedule changes, a logo could be placed on bus fare boxes a couple of weeks before the change.

b) All buses should have numbers at the back.

ii) OC Transpo should take steps to improve client knowledge about Transecure

a) Drivers could make announcements about the program on buses

b) Recordings about Transecure could be provided when you dial 560-1000.

iii) OC Transpo should take steps to aid the elderly and visually impaired in reading bus numbers.

a) Replace orange and green numbers on buses, which elderly women and the visually impaired have difficulty reading, with higher contrast numbering (black on white or white on black).

b) OC Transpo drivers need to come to a complete stop at bus stops so that women with visual impairments can read the number on the bus.

iv) Steps should be made to protect frail and mobility impaired passengers on buses

a) Priority seating should be enforced on buses

b) Bus drivers should wait until everyone is seated before leaving the curb. Conversely women should be allowed to wait until the bus has stopped before getting out of their seat to exit the bus.

iv) Phones with direct lines to taxis could be provided at Transitway stops so women can call taxis if they have missed their last bus.

B. We recommend the City of Ottawa ensure its services are provided equitably and transparently

Women felt that transparency in service provision – in terms of having full and clear information about programs, policies and decision-making processes – was an issue of fairness. In this context, information provision is an equity issue. A number of recommendations and suggestions outlined above go a long way towards providing fair access to information. However, the City of Ottawa should undertake the following two additional recommendations:

4. People Services develop a strategy to facilitate clients' understanding of how a range of programs (such as Emergency Health and Social Supports, and Learning Earning and Parenting) work and enhance client access to information about a range of programs, the benefits available through them, and the eligibility criteria needed to access them.

Discussion

Women seeking to access people services felt that information was sometimes purposefully held back because the City did not want to pay for it, or, simply because some case-coordinators are more informative than others. In order to ensure everyone has equal access to these services, women desired transparency in service provision. They want everyone to have equal access to information about the services' existence, the benefits available and the eligibility criteria required to access them. Only with full transparency in service provision would women feel confident that the allocation of resources was fair.

Specific Suggestions

- i) Case-coordinators could outline all the services that the City offers during their first meeting with a client.
- ii) The City could provide full information on all services, benefits, and eligibility criteria via the Web and in hard-copy at libraries and on request.
- iii) Case-coordinators could be allocated time with clients to explain how decisions are made regarding cases.

5. Recognizing that cost continues as a barrier to many women's access to municipal services, People Services should consider the particular experiences and needs of women in implementing recommendations from the Task Force on Poverty and the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee.

Discussion

Women from a wide range of backgrounds listed cost of participation as a barrier to their access to City services and participation in City programs. Poverty is a problem that a number of women in our community face. Women are more likely to be heads of single-parent households and these households are more likely to have income below the poverty line. The City should take steps to ensure all women can access its services regardless of income.

We recommend that women's particular needs be kept in mind while the City implements the recommendations from the Task Force on Poverty. In addition, women we spoke to made the following suggestions.

Specific Suggestions

- i) Subsidies could be offered for low income women so that they and their children can access recreational programs.
- ii) Transportation could be provided to women having babies who do not have anyone to drive them to the hospital, so that they do not need to use ambulances.
- iii) The City, with input from the community, could re-examine and renegotiate with OC Transpo the support (monetary and other) currently given to particular groups (ie. seniors, mums, disabled etc).
 - a) Free bus-passes or tickets should be provided with employment training programs.
 - b) Children under 10 years of age should be allowed on for free.
 - c) OC Transpo should have a family fare that would include two adults and three children.
 - d) OC Transpo seniors' rates should be based on retirement status not on age.

C. We recommend the City of Ottawa consider women's diverse needs when making decisions regarding its programs and facilities.

Once women have the information they need, the next step often involves physically accessing the City facilities where these services are offered. Women lead complicated lives with many needs and many responsibilities. The City needs to take this into account when making decisions regarding the placement of facilities, services and programs.

In general, to improve accessibility, women wanted to have more services located in the communities where they live and work. Women with mobility or other impairments had specific needs in terms of physically accessing municipal facilities. Women also felt that municipal services could be usefully co-located with other services, including information provision. However, three items emerged from the focus groups that women found particularly useful when accessing municipal services: public transit, child-minding and cultural interpretation. We recommend that the City of Ottawa consider implementing the following seven policy changes.

6. Develop a Corporate policy to guide development and co-location of municipal services at venues located throughout the City according to the following criteria:

- a. Ensure that all new facilities are well served by OC Transpo, preferably located near to a rapid transit station.***
- b. Investigate providing short-term child-minding and cultural interpretation services in conjunction the proposed services***
- c. Ensure that facilities and services are physically accessible to everyone.***
- d. Locate services, especially People Services such as social assistance services, where women can easily access them. In particular, rural women should have access to services in a manner that is equitable with urban women's access.***
- e. Adjust the times that City facilities are open and staff are available to accommodate women's busy schedules.***

Discussion

a. OC Transpo. Public transit is so essential to accessing all other City services that women discussed access to OC Transpo in every single focus group, even though only four focus groups were specifically targeted at mobility issues. The City needs to work closely with OC Transpo to ensure that there is frequent, efficient bus service to all of its facilities.

b. Childminding and cultural interpretation. Women are generally the primary caregivers for children in our society. Not being able to access childcare can prevent women from accessing City services. In order to effectively access programs and resources such as those offered at employment centres, or meet with their case-coordinators, women require on-site child-minding for a couple of hours.

Besides child-minding and information provision (see A) cultural interpretation could also usefully be co-located at all City facilities so that women who do not speak either French or English are not dependent upon informal cultural translation from friends and family when accessing municipal services.

c. Physical accessibility. Physically, women have diverse needs and with the aging of the population the City needs to pay even more attention to ensuring that women can physically access its facilities and services. Indeed, the City government has a responsibility for ensuring that the City infrastructure itself is physically accessible to everyone. Women agreed that, for the most part, by-laws were already in place to help women with mobility impairments navigate Ottawa; however, many thought that these by-laws are not enforced enough.

d. Location. Women suggested that, similarly to the community policing approach, social assistance offices should be located at community centres, libraries, arenas, pools and other facilities in the community that a diversity of women frequent. Public health workshops in the community were also suggested.

Women in Ottawa would like access to more quality subsidised childcare. While only the province can control the overall quantity of subsidised childcare spaces, the City can provide more equitable distribution of these spaces. In providing access to childcare, the City needs to keep in mind the rural and urban needs, and the changing demographics of City neighbourhoods.

Women living in rural areas felt isolated and underserved. They felt that in terms of

equitability of access, they ought to have access to the same services as urban women. While some women wanted new facilities, such as an arena in North Gower, others felt that underused facilities in their communities could be used to provide more programs. Not only are City services not available in their communities, but women reported that the lack of public transit made it difficult for them to go elsewhere to access these services. The Working Group supports OC Transpo in its proposed extension of public transit to rural areas.

e. Hours. The hours that social services offices are open should be tailored to the clients. For example, young women in LEAP are expected to be in school during the day time so their case-coordinators should be available in the late afternoon and evening rather than 8 to 4. Other women regularly work evenings, nights or weekends and have a difficult time finding childcare at these times. This diversity of schedules needs to be taken into account by the City when planning service delivery.

Children also have schedules that mothers must accommodate when accessing City services. Mothers report that their young children are more likely to be tired and cranky in the afternoon therefore, if they have to bring their children with them, they need to access services in the morning. Elder women report that seniors programs usually only run on weekdays leaving them without activities on the weekends.

Specific suggestions

- i) The City could allocate more resources to enforcing by-laws preventing bikes and skateboards on side-walks, and protecting disabled parking
- ii) The City could increase the frequency of sidewalk maintenance:
 - a) The City should clean sidewalks of snow and debris more frequently.
 - b) The City should trim trees that hang over sidewalks more frequently
- iii) The City could establish satellite community social assistance offices similar to the community policing program.
- v) Childcare spaces, and subsidised spaces could be allocated according to demand; and areas with increasing numbers of children should be given increased numbers of spots.
- vi) Women in rural areas should have equal access to quality formal childcare.

- a) They could have access to the Andrew Fleck agency or a similar agency that is formal, regulated, and screens childcare providers.
- b) Formal childcare centres that provide before and after school programs and toddlers and preschooler care should be built in rural areas accessible to rural public schools.
- vii) Communities, in particular immigrant and allophone communities, should continue to have access to supported informal childcare so that their children can be looked after by people who know the culture and speak the language; and so that women who work in the home have access to income.
- viii) The City could support community resource centres in providing satellite services and outreach programs to rural areas, especially programs for new and expectant mothers, such as a Well-baby drop-in.
- ix) Rural areas could have summer park-programs with park-leaders such as the ones in the urban areas.

7. Request all City departments review their current agreements with their community partners in order to find opportunities to improve women's knowledge of municipal services through these partners, and fund those community organizations accordingly.

Discussion

Women frequently reported that networking, friends, family, neighbours and community organisations helped them to access services. The City of Ottawa should capitalize on these already existing relationships by bringing City services to where women are and by forming and strengthening partnerships with community organisations.

Attendees at the Community Forum strongly felt that the City should bring effective affordable services to where people already are in clusters, and promote partnerships with community resource centres, schools and existing networks. In this way, the City can also make use of existing buildings. Partnerships between the City and community could include: passing on computers to needy groups, linking private and city housing, and providing information through community organizations.

D. The City of Ottawa take a leadership role in engendering governance

In today's society, the only constant in change. As we move towards an increasingly globalized economy and as immigration continues, the need to accommodate a diversity of women in planning access to municipal services will grow. The tenor of the above recommendations is in part due to recent dramatic changes in the ethno-cultural demography of Ottawa. However, the women in Ottawa have always been a diverse group and there have always been multiple sources of diversity.

The City of Ottawa has been a leader in anti-bias programming and the community looks to the City to continue to play a leadership role in providing services that are accessible to all. Participants at the community forum felt strongly that the City has a continuing role to play in enabling the full participation of diverse women in the life of the City of Ottawa.

The diversity of women living in Ottawa has been emphasised throughout this document and many of the above listed recommendations contribute to the equality of access for all women. We maintain that the City of Ottawa – Councillors as well as staff people – need to keep in mind women's needs when making decisions, with an understanding that women themselves are a diverse group.

8. Develop a Corporate strategy on community consultations on its programs and services that includes continuing consultations with women on planning and evaluating facilities, services and programs, for example through consultations on the Official Plan and People Services' Human Service Plan.

Discussion

In the course of our research and the development of these recommendations, the Working Group on women's access to municipal services consulted with a wide diversity of women. In doing so we came across many innovative ideas of how to meet with the recommendations outlined in this document. Many of these ideas are captured in the "Specific Suggestions" sections throughout this report. However, as specific issues arise and the demographics of Ottawa continue to change, further consultations with a diversity of women will

be needed.

Beyond the concrete recommendations brought forward by the Working Group, our broad ranging consultation – conducting 20 focus groups with a diversity of women, holding a community forum and inviting wide participation in the Working Group itself – provides a potential model for incorporating women into the municipal decision-making process itself. The City should incorporate consultations with a diversity of women into its decision-making process

9. That Human Resources consider the need for cultural awareness training for municipal staff, to foster both an inclusive workplace environment and improved quality of service to the diversity of people in Ottawa, and make recommendations on this matter as part of the 2003 budget process.

Discussion

A number of women had experienced or witnessed discrimination from City staff, much of it out of ignorance. Moreover, the demographics of Ottawa's population are constantly changing. Many women we spoke to suggested that the City provide its staff with ongoing sensitivity training to help them to serve Ottawa's diverse community better. Further, it was suggested that staff who interact with the public a good deal, such as bus drivers and case-coordinators, be provided with conflict resolution training.

10. Council request that the City Manager's Office coordinate an interdepartmental review of the report and recommendations of the Working Group on Women's Access to Municipal Services and report to Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee in 2002.

Discussion

The recommendations in this report need to be implemented by many different departments of the new City of Ottawa. Some of the recommendations apply to the functioning of the City as a whole. For this reason, coordination is best carried out by the City Manager's Office.

11. Council support in principle measures to improve women's access to municipal services and involvement with municipal governance and continue in a partnership model with the community.

Discussion

The Working Group is pursuing a grant to conduct complementary work examining various models used around the world to integrate a gender lens into decision-making at the municipal level. The City's support of this research would be greatly appreciated.

Conclusions

In ratifying the IULA declaration on Women and Local Government, the municipal government committed itself to ensuring that women had equal access to local government and its services. We hope that the new City of Ottawa will continue to play a leadership role in engendering governance.

In developing an understanding of what barriers women experience in accessing municipal services and what might aid in removing these barriers, the Working Group benefited from its consultations with a large number of women. This document has provided a number of specific suggestions that women made in the focus groups as illustrations of how the recommendations might be fulfilled. Further suggestions and more information about the barriers and facilitators women in Ottawa have experienced in accessing municipal services are provided in the report on the focus group findings that was released by the Working Group in August, 2001. This report and its appendices are available on-line at:
<http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~candrew/womenhome.html>.