



West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund

555 – 409 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC, V6C 1T2

t: 604.684.8772 westcoastleaf.org

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COPE, Executive Committee
c/o Rider Cooley & Connie Hubbs, Co-Chairs
via email: cope@cope.bc.ca

Green Party of Vancouver, Board of Directors
c/o Anthony Hughes, Chairperson
via email: anthony.hughes@vangreens.ca

NPA Vancouver, Board of Directors
c/o Gregory Baker, President
via email: president@npavancouver.ca

OneCity Vancouver, Organizing Committee
c/o Alison Atkinson & Anna Chudnovsky, Co-Chairs
via email: info@onecityvancouver.ca

Vision Vancouver, Executive Team
c/o: Michael Haack, Co-Chair, mbhaack@gmail.com

Dear Executives:

As we near the upcoming municipal election in Vancouver, we are calling on all political parties to prioritize substantive gender equality in their campaign platforms. We write in support of the non-partisan project [Hot Pink Paper Campaign 2018](#), as well as to emphasize the practical commitments that can bring the values of gender equality into reality in Vancouver.

West Coast LEAF is a BC-based legal advocacy organization. Our mandate is to use the law to create an equal and just society for all women and people who experience gender based discrimination. In collaboration with community, we use litigation, law reform, and public legal education to make change. In particular, we aim to transform society by achieving: access to healthcare; access to justice; economic security; freedom from gender based violence; justice for those who are criminalized; and the right to parent.

In Vancouver, a cross party effort in Council recently resulted in the unanimous adoption of the [Women's Equity Strategy](#), which commits to addressing key areas impacting inequality in the City and the adoption of strategies to create change. We urge all parties to commit to implementing the policy in their election platforms. We also urge parties to take important next steps to operationalizing gender equality on the municipal stage, including creating in depth action plans for each area of the Women's

Equity Strategy; creating mechanisms for the collection of comprehensive gender disaggregated data; and building in accountability mechanisms to ensure meaningful results.

In addition, we urge municipal parties to commit in their platforms to action on the following specific issues impacting women and all those experiencing gender based discrimination:

1. Revise the definition of affordable housing for “for profit housing” in the [Rental Incentive Guidelines](#) (RIG) to ensure that affordability is aligned with the reality of economic inequality in Vancouver. Nearly half of children in families headed by single women in BC live in poverty, compared to about 10% of children in two-parent families, and around a quarter of single-parent families — predominantly headed by women — face moderate to severe food insecurity. Poverty is a serious issue facing many in Vancouver, particularly single mothers and their children. A gender based analysis reveals that the RIG disproportionately impact women, as women are least likely to be able to afford units at the high threshold set in definition of “affordability”. Further, we call on municipal parties to commit to ensuring family housing units are built as part of the Affordable Housing Strategy, and that developer incentives under the RIG incorporate incentives to build family friendly housing.
2. Work with the Province to continue momentum towards universal child care. Child care is essential to women’s equal participation in the work force and more broadly to economic equality. In our view, child care is a human right for women and children (as per our 2016 report [High Stakes: The impacts of child care on the human rights of women and children](#))
3. Commit to electoral reform. We are calling on all parties to run at least 50% self identified and diverse women and non-binary people. Representation is essential (although by no means sufficient) to gender equality. Importantly, good governance mandates that the governed can see themselves reflected in their governments, which requires not only gender parity but also diversity in terms of race, indigeneity, national origin, ability, and sexual orientation.
4. Work with the Vancouver Police Department to ensure that Access without Fear policies are meaningful. While Mayor Robertson designated Vancouver as a Sanctuary City in 2014, municipal police have yet to implement a policy for their officers to ensure that this promise becomes a reality. West Coast LEAF is concerned that this delay leaves survivors of gender-based violence with precarious immigration status more vulnerable because they are less likely to report violence to the police in fear of deportation. Police protection must be meaningfully accessible and equally available to all without fear.

We would be pleased to meet with any and all parties to discuss these priorities further. I look forward to hearing from you about your plans to incorporate these recommendations into your platforms.

Yours truly,



Kasari Govender
Executive Director