



Gender-based Violence in Politics: Best Practices for Local Governments in Ontario

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Talk Overview

1. What's the problem and why does it matter?
2. How has the problem been addressed in Canada to date?
3. What should be done at the municipal level in Ontario to address the problem?

A Global Problem: Violence In Politics

- Global statistics:
 - 82% of women politicians reported psychological violence
 - 44% received threats of physical violence, including death, rape or beatings against themselves or against family members
 - 66% reported sexist insults on social media
- Targets include: elected officials, clerks, administrators, political staff, electioneers, party volunteers, journalists, human rights workers, etc.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians, 2016

United Nations



General Assembly

**Resolution adopted by the General Assembly
on 17 December 2018**

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/73/582)]

- 73/148. Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment**

Deeply concerned about all acts of violence, including sexual harassment, against women and girls involved in political and public life, including women in leadership positions, journalists and other media workers and human rights defenders,

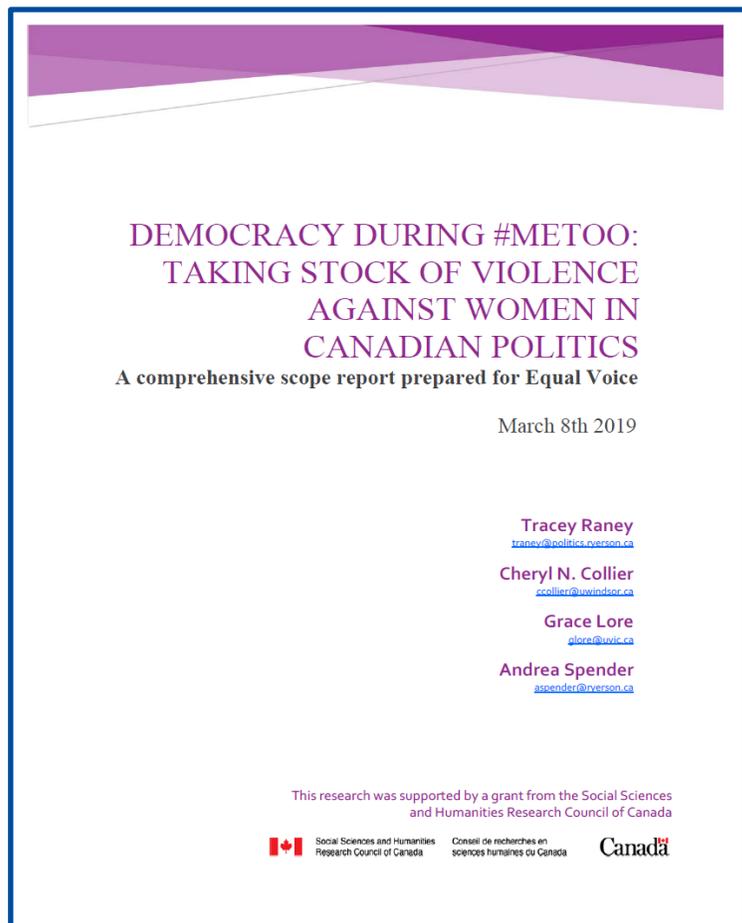
Violence & Harassment in Local Politics: International Research

U.S. and Sweden: the more power a woman has in local politics, the more likely she will experience violence and harassment (Herrick & Franklin 2019; Håkansson 2021)

U.S.-based research (Herrick *et al.* 2021):

- Women mayors more likely to be targeted by physical and psychological violence compared to men mayors
- Women mayors who are: directly elected, in traditionalistic political cultures, and elected in “**strong mayor**” systems are more likely to experience psychological violence compared to other women and men mayors.

Canadian Research on GBV-P:



Collier, Cheryl N. and Tracey Raney. 2018. "Understanding Sexism and Sexual Harassment in Politics: A Comparison of Westminster Parliaments in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada. *Social Politics*. 25(8): 432-455.

Raney, Tracey and Cheryl N. Collier. Forthcoming. "Evaluating Sexual Harassment Rules in Canada's House of Commons." (with Cheryl N. Collier). In *Gender and Violence Against Political Actors*, eds. Elin Bjarnegård and Pär Zetterberg. Temple University Press.

Forthcoming edited volume, *Gender-Based Violence in Canadian Politics in the #MeToo Era*, University of Toronto Press.

Harassment and Violence in Ontario's Municipalities

- Multiple allegations against sitting councillors include: belittling, bullying and harassing behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual assault, property damage, sexist, racist, homophobic comments
- Some elected officials found to have breached the rules by the Integrity Commissioner are running for office in 2022
- Some reports of harassment against municipal candidates during this election cycle



Image: <https://Ottawa.ctvnews.ca>

'Councillors Acting Badly': OMAA survey results (2017)

- **77%** reported being harassed or bullied in their municipality
- **76%** reported being harassed or maligned by a member of Council
- **35%** used an Integrity Commissioner
- **45%** felt pressured to ignore the issue and/or downplay it
- **24%** said the issue was successfully resolved

Consequences of Violence in Political Workplaces

Individual harms:

- Loss of sleep/appetite, difficulty concentrating, PTSD, strained colleague and family relationships
- Decreased self-esteem, job satisfaction, and team morale

Democratic harms:

- Reputational damage to political institutions
- Public trust in democratic governance eroded
- Representational deficits

Plan International: 2022 Global Survey of Girls & Young Women

- 1 in 3 girls/young women don't believe politics is open to young women
- 1 in 5 say they have personally been discouraged from participating in politics
- 40% agree that women politicians suffer abuse and intimidation and that they are judged for how they look and dress
- 46% say women in public life are not treated fairly and that women politicians suffer abuse and intimidation



LINK: <https://plan-international.org/publications/equal-power-now/>

In Canada this year, only 12% of girls expressed an interest in becoming an elected official; 9% aspired to be Prime Minister



Canadian House of Commons: Timeline

2014

- **Allegations of sexual misconduct in Canada's Parliament**
- ***House of Commons Policy on Preventing and Addressing Harassment***

2015

- ***Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual Harassment Between Members***

2018

- **Legislative context: Bill C-65**
- **Minor amendments to MP Code (2017/2018)**

2021

- ***Members of the House of Commons Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy***
- **Federal election: media reports of violence & harassment**
- **Reviews of Code/policy**

Federal Policy Comparison

	<u>STAFF POLICY</u>	<u>MP CODE</u>
Prevention-focused	✓	✓
Covers range of behaviours	✓	✗
Mandatory training	✓	✓
Independent investigator	✓	✓
Clear timelines for investigations	✓	✓

Improvements Needed in House Policies:

- Vexatious/false claims are grounds for investigation & punishable
- Not fully impartial
- Limited transparency
- Weak punitive measures

Municipal Legislative Framework

- Bill 68: *Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2017*
 - Required municipalities have a Code of Conduct & appoint an Integrity Commissioner (or make arrangements for a commissioner from another municipality to fulfill the duties)
 - Penalty options: reprimand or 90 day salary suspension (s.223.4(5))
- Anti-harassment policies must comply with *Ontario Human Rights Code & Occupational Health and Safety Act*

Bill 5, Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, 2022

- Would require councillors and local board members to comply with workplace violence and harassment policies
- Would permit municipalities/local boards to direct the Integrity Commissioner to apply to the court to vacate a member's seat if the IC has determined the member violated the code's provisions on violence/harassment
- If the seat is vacated, the member would be ineligible to run over the next two election cycles.

Manitoba: Council Members' Codes of Conduct Regulation (2020)

- Mandatory content in all Codes of Conduct:
 - Must reflect values of respect, professionalism, and accountability
- All Codes of Conduct must include:
 - Clear timelines & an impartial investigatory process for complaints
 - Processes to weed out vexatious/late complaints
 - An appeals process (Minister to appoint an appeals director)
 - A range of sanctions, including censure/reprimand, apology, mandatory training, suspension, salary withholding, and a fine up to \$1,000.00
 - Investigation results reported to council *in camera*; vote on council's decision of any sanctions held in an open meeting

5 Considerations Beyond Bill 5:

1. Clarify complaints protocol, re: IC/workplace investigator roles, ensure preliminary reports, and provide timelines at all stages of the process
2. Mandate accreditation and training for all ICs
3. Codify a broader range of sanctions, including removal from office
4. Make anti-harassment, anti-racism training mandatory for all elected members and municipal employees
5. Balance the need for privacy with that of transparency

Ongoing research:

- **Municipal Codes of Conduct Project:** examination of Integrity Commissioner's reports, analysed through a gender lens
- **Multi-Level Democracy Project – 2022 Survey of Ontario Municipal Voters**
 - going into the field this fall
- More research and data needed on this topic at the local level!



THANK YOU

Resources:

National Democratic Institute's #NotTheCost campaign

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Toolkit on Violence and Harassment in Politics (coming soon)

Co-edited volume on: *Gender-Based Violence in Canadian Politics in the #MeToo Era* with University of Toronto Press (coming soon)

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