

# Memo

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**Date:** August 30, 2011  
**File:** 0615-20  
**To:** City Manager  
**From:** Women's and Community Advisory Committee  
**Subject:** 2011 Community Forum: Women: Voices for Action!

Report Prepared by: Corine (Cory) Gain, Women's and Community Advisory Committee Liaison

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receives, for information, the Women - Voices for Action! Forum Report dated August 21, 2011 as attached to the Report of the Women's and Community Advisory Committee dated August 30, 2011.

## **Purpose:**

Further to Council Resolution R474/10/05/31 endorsing the Women's and Community Advisory Committee 2010 Work Plan and the conduct of a 2010/11 Community Forum, this report is submitted to Council as the report on the outcome of the forum.

## **Background:**

The "Women - Voices for Action!" Community Forum was held Friday, April 15, 2011 from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at the Ramada Hotel & Conference Centre, 2170 Harvey Avenue. The goals of the forum were to gather input for recommendations to City Council; provide direction for the Committee's work and to identify barriers for women to participation in the community. The 2011 forum themes were volunteerism, newcomers and leadership. The agenda took the format of three panel presentations each followed by a break-out session for group discussion and information gathering.

## **Considerations not applicable to this report:**

**Internal Circulation:**

**Legal/Statutory Authority:**

**Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:**

**Financial/Budgetary Considerations:**

**Existing Policy**

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External Agency/Public Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
Alternate Recommendation \_\_\_\_\_  
Personnel Implications: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by:



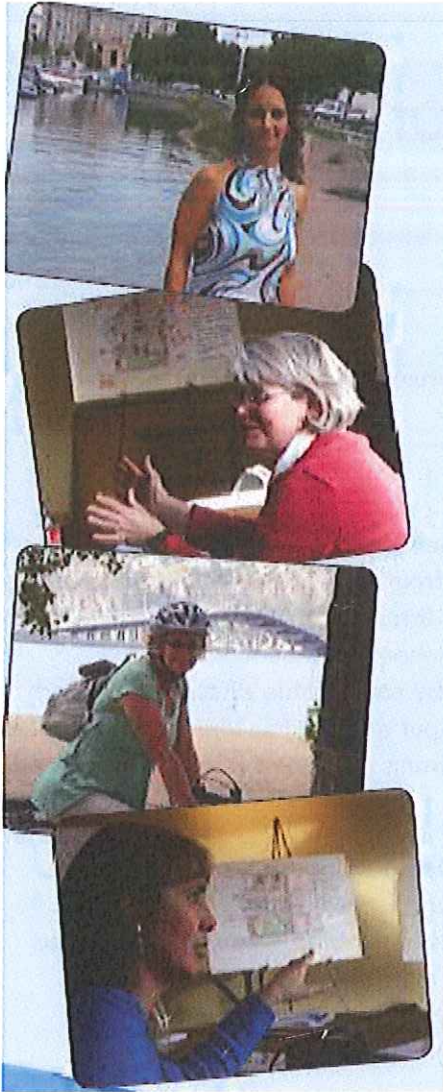
C. Gain, Women's and Community Advisory Committee Staff Liaison

Approved for inclusion:



R. Mattiussi, City Manager





# WOMEN -VOICES FOR ACTION! FORUM: REPORT

8/21/2011

Women's and Community Advisory Committee



# Women -Voices for Action!

## Forum: Report

### RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council receives, for information, the Women -Voices for Action! Forum: Report from the Women's and Community Advisory Committee dated September 2011.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Women's and Community Advisory Committee identifies areas where the City of Kelowna can further its objectives of being a safer, healthier and more equitable community. Input from our community has been sought on a wide variety of topics through two focus groups and two public forums. The most recent forum, entitled "Women -Voices for Action!" held April 2011, had three themes: newcomers to our community, volunteerism, and women in leadership. Panel presentations were followed by round table discussions on each topic. A large group discussion was facilitated at day's end to encourage input about other topics of interest to participants. Approximately 80 participants learned about existing programs and services and shared ideas for improvement and change.

- **Newcomers to the Community:** Five types of barriers were identified and included cultural matters, isolation, survival concerns, information needs and transportation. Suggestions aligned along two themes. The first is the notion of diversity training, a public awareness campaign, expanded access to information, and small neighbourhood events. It was suggested that more resources be available in various languages. The second theme is enhanced partnership involving Immigration Canada, local nonprofits serving immigrants, Welcome Wagon, and church/faith groups as well as enhanced programs that support families and individuals.
- **Volunteerism:** Four sets of challenges need to be addressed and include engaging a greater number of individuals, valuing volunteers as people as well as for their contributions, recognizing the costs of volunteering to both organizations and individuals, and effectively matching volunteers to opportunities. Creating and promoting the "volunteer experience package" was suggested as was the need to enhance the volunteer infrastructure in a way that builds community capacity and makes what is available more readily known and accessible.
- **Women in Leadership:** The meaning of leadership was described to include "we" messages that emphasize collaborative input. Concerns were expressed about lack of opportunity and practical support that assists women to move beyond current leadership at home to more male dominated spheres.

### Suggestions/Recommendations

In order to move community feedback forward, a number of suggestions have been identified for consideration by the City of Kelowna Council.

### Newcomers to Our Community

- Provide front line City of Kelowna staff with diversity training. For example Safe Harbour and OKtoSay
- Place a prominent link on the City of Kelowna website to the "Community Information Search" homepage (<http://kelowna.cioc.ca/>) to assist residents in accessing information about programs and services available in our community
- Review the City of Kelowna website from the perspective of a welcoming and inclusive community with multi-cultural content
- Make available to residents the list of City of Kelowna staff who speak languages other than English
- Encourage the Kelowna Airport and Tourism Kelowna to review and expand the welcoming and inclusive content of their information centers from a newcomer's perspective
- Request Kelowna Transit Services, Community Transit Training, to expand their target groups to include newcomers / immigrants

### Volunteerism in Our Community

- Place a prominent link on the City of Kelowna website to the "Volunteer Opportunities Search" homepage (<http://kelowna.cioc.ca/volunteer/>) to assist residents in customizing volunteer profiles and in accessing information about volunteer opportunities available in our community
- Increase funding and support for volunteerism through the Social Development Grants with a particular emphasis on engaging newcomers and women in voluntary leadership positions
- Approach the RCMP to review costs and timelines for volunteer criminal records checks and fingerprinting

### Women in Leadership

- Continue to support training that promotes successful involvement by women in municipal governance e.g. Standing Committee on Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government, Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- Review criteria for eligibility for Social Development Grants to ensure that organizations that support and encourage women in leadership will have opportunities to apply for grants

### Other Issues

- As an employer, adopt the Living Wage and supportive Human Resource approaches within the City of Kelowna and encourage its use by business and nonprofit organizations within our community
- Work towards expanded transit routes and services
- Work towards increasing the supply of affordable housing and childcare options.
- Continue to hold public events that seek input from women in our community

### Next Steps

- Submission of report to City of Kelowna Council;
- Distribution of report;
- Influencing the committee's priorities and resulting work plan for 2012; and
- Informing the topics of focus for future initiative seeking community input.

## PLANNING

The committee as a whole planned a public forum "Women -Voices for Action!" held April 15, 2011 at the Ramada Inn. The objectives were to build on themes identified during the 2009 forum, enable people to attend individual sessions, and involve numerous women as presenters. A panel of presenters was dedicated to each of the three themes of Newcomers, Volunteerism and Leadership. In addition to the \$3,000 budget approved by the City of Kelowna, generous support from the following made this forum possible: Kelowna Kia, Kootenay Coffee Company, Moteas Tea House, Laptop Depot, Maggie's Cafe, Kelowna Women's Resource Centre, and Nanny Sitters.

## COMMUNITY INPUT

The forum agenda began with Mayor Shepherd addressing each of the three themes from a City of Kelowna perspective. A panel of presenters was dedicated to each of three themes: newcomers to our community, volunteerism and women in leadership. Round table discussions followed each panel presentation. A large group discussion at the end of the day provided an opportunity for participants to broach other topics of interest.

The content of this report is based upon comments, ideas and suggestions captured by recording secretaries onto flip charts. Transcriptions were produced that resulted in summaries around emergent themes. Specific recommendations were developed to move these issues forward within our community and with support of City Council.

### Newcomers to our Community

Panel members provided context for round table discussions. This context outlined the variety of local organizations, programs and services that currently support newcomers in their adjustment of Canadian culture. A representative from a nonprofit organization, The Bridge Youth and Family Services, described their experience in making their programs and services welcoming to people with diverse cultural backgrounds. A newcomer shared her personal experience settling into our community over a period of several years. Participants provided feedback to two questions. What is the barrier to your participation in the community? What can we do to ensure a welcoming and inclusive community?

#### Barriers

Participants identified five types of barriers for newcomers adjusting to Canadian living in Kelowna.

- Cultural matters topped the list and included language, social differences, religious diversity, prejudice and lack of inclusiveness.
- A closely related set of issues was identified concerning isolation, lack of confidence, fear, and lacking a sense of community.
- Survival concerns ranked third and included affordable housing, family finances, employment, recognition of educational accreditation, family support and childcare.
- The need for information was emphasized with comments about bureaucracy and knowing where to start, differences in laws and policies, and learning about programs and services.
- Transportation was specifically mentioned numerous times.

## Suggestions

Suggestions for improvement aligned along two themes.

- The notion of diversity training, multi-cultural tolerance and inclusiveness was encouraged with specific references to involving schools, newspapers, a public awareness campaign, information at the airport and tourist centers, communication through a community bulletin, and small neighbourhood events that welcome everyone within that community rather than focus on an immigrant event. It was suggested that more resources be available in various languages.
- Partnership development and enhancement were discussed that involve Immigration Canada, local nonprofits serving immigrants, banks/Okanagan College/UBCO dealing with international students, Welcome Wagon, and church/faith groups. Support for immigrants on an individual and family level was considered to be important such as: the Buddy and Host Programs, free parenting classes, more English as Another Language classes held evenings and weekends with child care provided, in-home volunteer visits, and volunteer interpreters.

## Volunteerism in Our Community

Panel members spoke about trends and opportunities, a nonprofit organization's challenge recruiting and maintaining volunteers, and personal experience as a volunteer. Round table discussions invited feedback on two questions. What is a barrier for participating in the community? What can we do to make Kelowna the number one 'give back' community?

### Barriers

Barriers can be summarized into four main areas: personal perspective, value, costs, and fit.

- There is a personal perspective to volunteering. People talked about fear of the unknown, a lack of self awareness regarding interests and skills, a lack of incentive, a sense of insecurity or low self esteem, being new to the community, needing to focus on family needs, and working multiple paid jobs. Burnout due to excessive volunteering was also mentioned.
- Value, in the context of volunteering, has several meanings. Volunteerism needs to be valued as unique from paid employment without being stigmatized, minimized, taken for granted, or demanded. People are looking for ways to make a valuable contribution through meaningful work that makes an impact in our community. They want their time and contribution valued through formal and informal recognition so that they feel appreciated and needed.
- Volunteering costs both the organization and the individual in terms of screening process, criminal records checks, fingerprinting, child care, transportation, and supports to volunteers that are often lacking such as mentorship, training, supervision, feedback, communication and technology, skills transfer, and succession.
- Finding a good fit between what an individual has to offer and what an organization needs was also identified as a barrier. Mismatching can occur regarding shift schedules, amount of time, length of commitment, flexibility, connection to the cause, and skill set to task.

### Suggestions

Ideas to make Kelowna the number one 'giving back' community centered on two themes: the individual volunteer experience and the infrastructure for volunteering.

- Individuals having positive volunteer experiences and organizations creating the "volunteer experience package" was a phrase coined to emphasize the importance of the personal side of volunteering. Volunteers, who are plugged in where they are passionate, who are appreciated, who are gaining new skills and who share stories about why they volunteer help personalize the "social face of volunteering". This approach could also include newcomers as volunteers and as leaders in voluntary roles throughout the community.
- The infrastructure for volunteering refers to developing a diverse and intergenerational volunteer force that includes newcomers and part-time residents, informing the public about individual and group volunteering, encouraging business partnerships, using social networking as well as other means of promoting volunteer opportunities, expanding a matching system of volunteers to organizations, linking volunteer opportunities on the City of Kelowna website, expanding the City's role in supporting volunteerism, enhancing the role of Kelowna Community Resources, holding volunteer fairs more often, establishing partnerships regarding resources and a volunteer exchange, evaluating overlaps, streamlining awareness and expanding public awareness campaigns, as well as addressing costs for criminal records checks.

## Women in Leadership

Three businesswomen talked about leadership from a personal perspective. Round table discussions focused on four questions: What does leadership mean to you? Who do you admire and why? What is a barrier to you becoming a leader? What do you need to overcome this barrier?

### Barriers

- When describing the meaning of leadership, participants spoke about the importance of clear messages, using "we" rather than "me", leading by example, making collaborative decisions, creating vision, delegating, supporting groups to move ahead, evaluating and adjusting to problems, listening, seeking input, and being transparent. Inclusiveness also means newcomers and visible minorities.
- The people most admired included: a mother for unconditional love and the importance of sisterhood, a former boss for direct communication, President Obama for courage, Mother Teresa for humility, Colin Powell for his direct approach, a nonprofit board member for caring, Bette Midler for sharing her feelings.
- Barriers for women becoming leaders included: overcoming fear of failure, lack of opportunity, lack of time, acceptance of current leadership at home and within the family, the perception that it is more difficult for women to advance as leaders because business is more male dominated, recognition that leadership is a burden, and contentment being a "worker bee". Women from countries where leadership is held predominantly by men face added challenges of re-defining their role potential within Canadian society.

### Suggestions

- Suggestions of supports to overcoming barriers lead the discussion towards thoughts of cheerleaders and personal supporters, belief in one's self, encouragement to ask for help, and additional education among women. This is particularly true for immigrant women.



## EVALUATION

Approximately 80 individuals, primarily women, attended. A total of 24 evaluation forms were completed.

There was a 70 percent or higher satisfaction rate reported by at least 84 percent of respondents on each of the following criteria: speaker presentations, facilitation, topics of discussion, flow of the day, ability to participate, opportunity to participate, venue, and food and refreshments.

Three open-ended questions sought additional feedback. The questions were: What did you like best? Suggestions for improvement? Is there anything else you would like us to know?

Overwhelmingly respondents commented upon the personal stories and accomplishments of outstanding women. Women commented about being able to gather as a group of women to network and to discuss issues of interest in our community. It was recognized that a wide range of ages and backgrounds added a great deal.

### Suggestions Topics for Future Forums

Several topics for future forums were suggested. These include: concerns for young males who are disconnected, mental health among women and mental health programs, people with physical disabilities and the services available to them, women as they age through their senior years, abuse of women and what the community does to address this issue, social networking, housing for single women, facilities for people with disabilities, and hearing from middle school students who are knowledgeable and passionate about global issues.