

June 21, 2022

**Women's Advisory Committee  
City of Vancouver**

Dear Mayor and Council,

**Re: "Street Care, Not Street Sweeps: Ending Daily Displacement in Vancouver"  
(Motion B.3)**

**Note: This letter was intended to be submitted on behalf of the Women's Advisory Committee in support of Motion B.3, which was originally scheduled to be heard by Council on June 22, 2022. While we understand that Motion B.3 will no longer be presented to Council, we still wanted to raise our voices in support of the underlying objectives of Motion B.3.**

As Vancouver community members who form the City's Women's Advisory Committee, we write to express our collective support for Motion B.3 and its goals to end the oppressive practice of Street Sweeps. Street Sweeps harm women and other people of marginalised genders, especially those who are Indigenous and/or disabled.

The practice of Street Sweeps targets people who are most in need of access to public space, including poor people, those experiencing homelessness/precarious housing and people whose health conditions and/or labour are criminalised or stigmatised.

Street Sweeps are not only a form of direct state violence that undermines the rights, security and dignity of those targeted. Like all forms of state violence, Street Sweeps also erode the broader safety of those impacted by prioritising purported cleanliness over building relationships of trust between authorities and community members.

For example, we know that sexual and gender-based violence is underreported. Victims and survivors often cite lack of trust in police/authorities, including fear of retaliation or of repercussions, when asked why they did not report violence. Rather than supporting greater safety and trust in the community, the practice of Street Sweeps perpetuates a cycle of displacement which not only diminishes the dignity and safety of vulnerable women but also can endanger their lives.

We therefore strongly support Motion B.3 and urge Council to prioritise the development and implementation of a community-led alternative to Street Sweeps and to allocate necessary staff and financial resources to realise the objectives underlying Motion B.3 as quickly as possible. In particular, the Women's Advisory Committee highlights the following recommendations in order to address the harm of Street Sweeps and urgent gaps in infrastructure for people of all genders, particularly in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood of Vancouver:

- A non-punitive alternative to the practice of Street Sweeps developed in coordination with various stakeholders and community partners with intimate experience and knowledge of the issues in the DTES
- The development of revised directives related to the confiscation and storage of personal possessions belonging to those who rely on public space, to mitigate the harmful impacts of forced confiscation and restore a sense of dignity and safety
- Improved public outdoor amenities in the DTES including permanent seating areas, hygiene facilities (i.e. washroom trailers – ideally for all genders), garbage disposal sites, covered cooking facilities and cultural programming sites

We call on the Mayor and Council to ensure staff are empowered with all necessary resources - including political will - to work in partnership *with* communities and those most impacted. By adopting Motion B.3, the City commits to enabling peer-led programming and initiatives to care for the residents and public spaces of the DTES. We encourage the City to act with urgency to seize this opportunity to take concrete action in partnership with community stakeholders.

Thank you and we look forward to future opportunities to work with the Mayor and Council to highlight the needs and perspectives of women and other people of marginalised genders as the City works toward its goal of becoming an inclusive city.

Regards,

Women's Advisory Committee