



Canadian Federation of University Women

White Rock/Surrey

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June 30, 2023

Mayor Nathan Pachal
20399 Douglas Crescent
Langley BC V3A 4B3

Dear Sir:

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Surrey/White Rock, an affiliate club of a national, non-partisan, voluntary, self-funded organization with almost 100 clubs across Canada and over 5000 members. We work to improve the status of women and to promote human rights, public education, social justice and peace in Canada.

In this letter we will use the acronym "VAW-P" to represent part of a spectrum of gender based violence that includes physical, psychological and symbolic actions or threats against women that result in, or are intended to result in, harm or suffering against women simply because they are women.

At the National AGM of CFUW in August, 2022, the following resolution was passed by the membership:

RESOLVED, that CFUW urge all levels of government to fund, develop and implement action plans to end Violence Against Women in Politics (VAW-P) including but not limited to:

- 1. the creation of a policy framework identifying and addressing the root causes of VAW-P.***
- 2. the establishment of a broad regulatory framework for social media companies to ensure they address the online increase of VAW-P.***
- 3. encouraging all political parties and politicians to take public stands against violence and harassment of women in politics.***

There are studies and growing evidence that attacks occur globally and locally - not based on a person's political views, but on their appearance and sexuality. These attacks occur at all levels of government and are the result of deep rooted prejudice, structural inequality and antiquated gender role theory. They are motivated by a desire to repress, deter, control or otherwise coerce the political rights of the victims because of the victim's gender. A study by UN Women in 2016 found that **political parties are the most common perpetrators of VAW-P.**

There is a growing sense that VAW-P is more prevalent as more women enter the political

landscape and as online political interactions increase.

Social media companies, as well as government, continue to disregard the impact of online and offline abuse contributing to women leaving politics due to traumatic experiences and feelings of insecurity.

Recent highly prominent examples of the impact on women politicians:

MP Catherine McKenna from 2015 to 2021, left politics due to continuous harassment and threats to her and her family.

MLA Melanie Mark, the first Indigenous woman elected to the B.C. legislature in 2016, resigned in 2023 and stated *"This place felt like a torture chamber. I will not miss the character assassination."*

In the fall of 2021, the Government of Canada allocated funds to create a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence. This is a commendable first step but more positive and specific actions need to be taken at all levels of government and within political parties and social media companies.

CFUW Surrey/White Rock urges you to take action and implement plans in your areas of influence to end Violence Against Women in Politics.

We ask for your personal support and effort to address this critical issue. We would be pleased to meet with you to hear your views of possible actions and to share our perspectives.

Sincerely,



Bonita J. Thompson, K.C.

Vice President

CFUW Surrey/White Rock

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