THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AGENDA

WAC 4-2021

Wednesday, July 28, 2021

4:00 p.m.

Meeting will be held by electronic participation only

Due to efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to protect all individuals, there is no public access to Niagara Region Headquarters. If you are interested in viewing this meeting or would like to speak to an item listed on the agenda please contact the Office of the Regional Clerk at clerk@niagararegion.ca at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

Pages

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

3. PRESENTATIONS

   3.1. Women Owned/Led Businesses in Niagara — 3 - 27

   Blake Landry, Economic Research & Analysis Manager, Niagara Region

4. DELEGATIONS

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

   5.1. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Updates — 28 - 37

   Cassie Ogunniyi, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager

6. CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

   6.1. COM 15-2021 — 38 - 58

   National Child Care Plan: Local Impacts and Recommendations

   6.2. WAC 3-2021 — 59 - 63

   Women's Advisory Committee Minutes - May 26, 2021

7. OTHER BUSINESS

7.1. 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence Working Group Update

7.2. Women's Advisory Committee Work Plan

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend or participate in meetings or events, please contact the Accessibility Advisor at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 (office), 289-929-8376 (cellphone) or accessibility@niagararegion.ca (email).

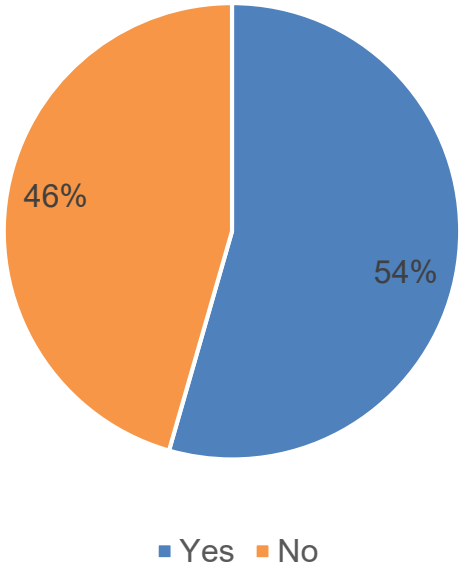
COVID-19 Impact On Women Owned Businesses In Niagara

Women's Advisory Committee
July 28, 2021

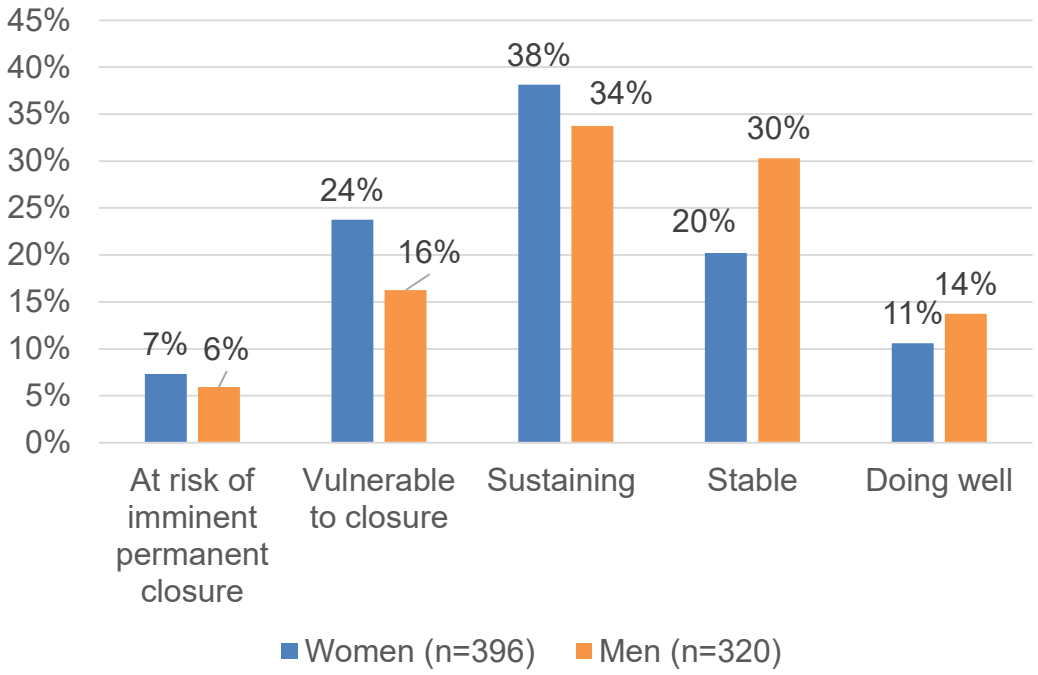
Blake Landry, Ec.D.
Manager, Economic Research & Analysis
Economic Development

Niagara Region

Businesses Fully or Partially Owned by Women (n=786)

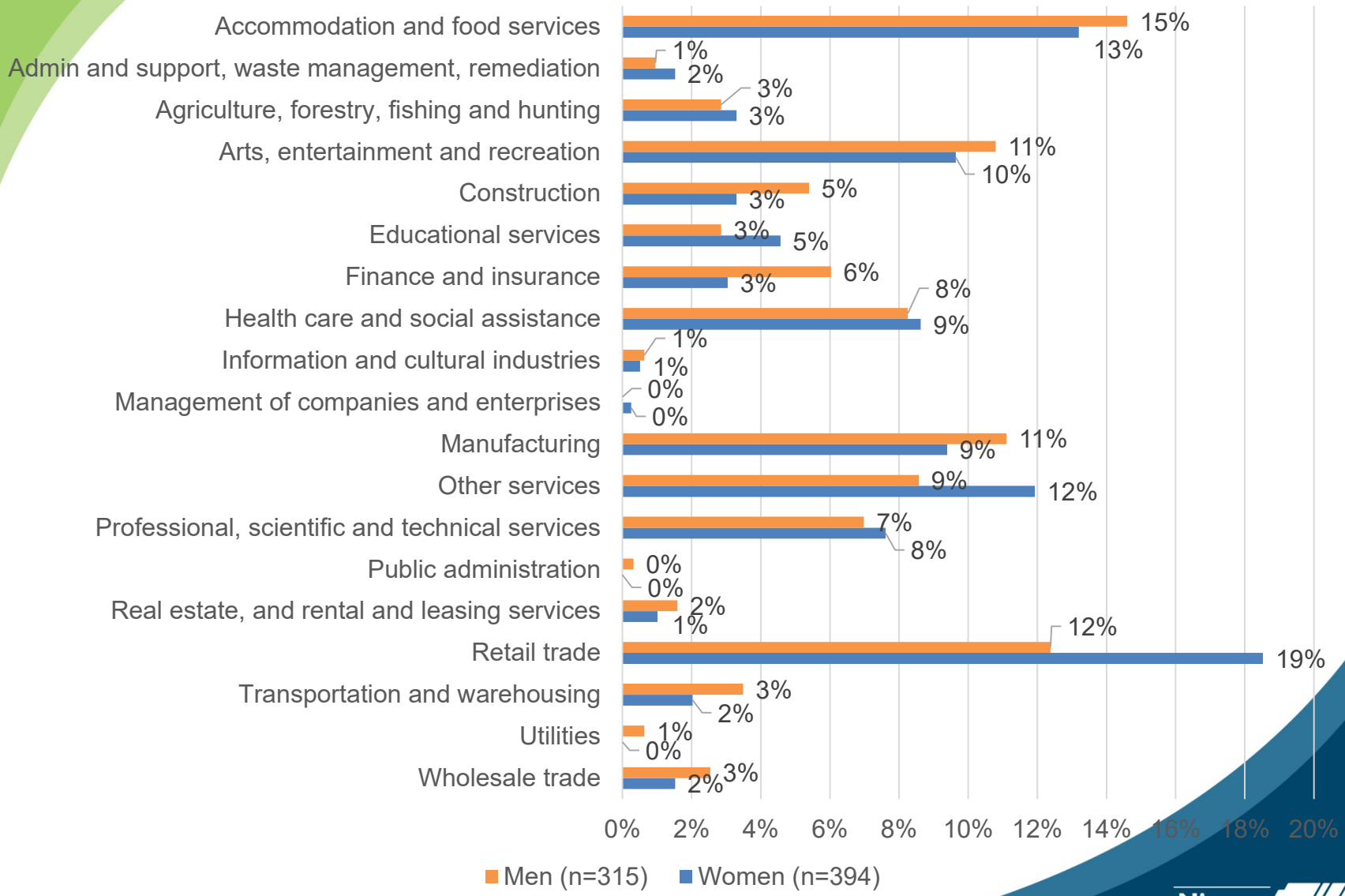


Business Current Status



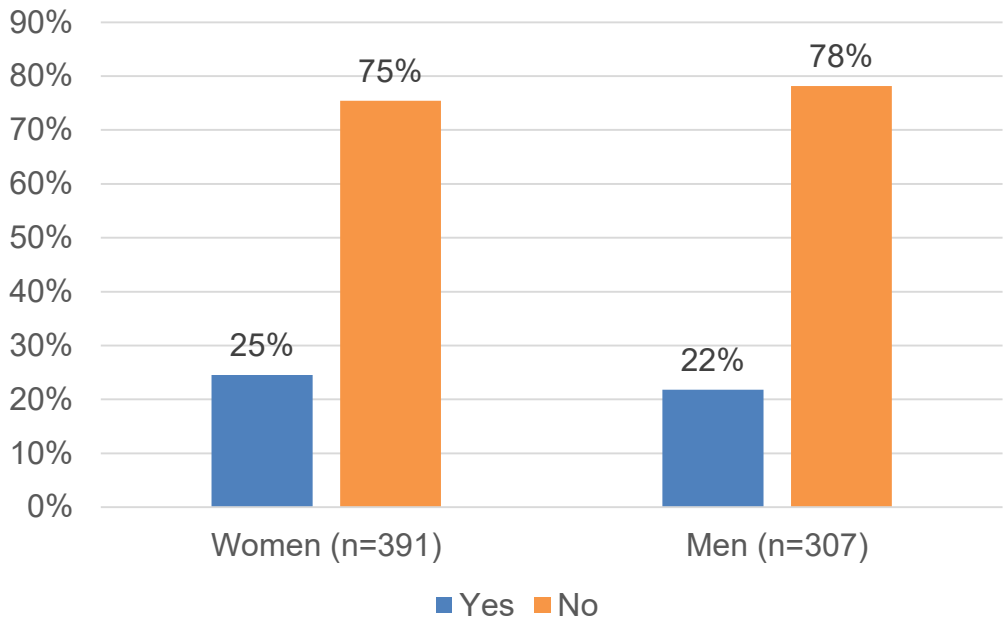
Niagara Region

Businesses by Sector



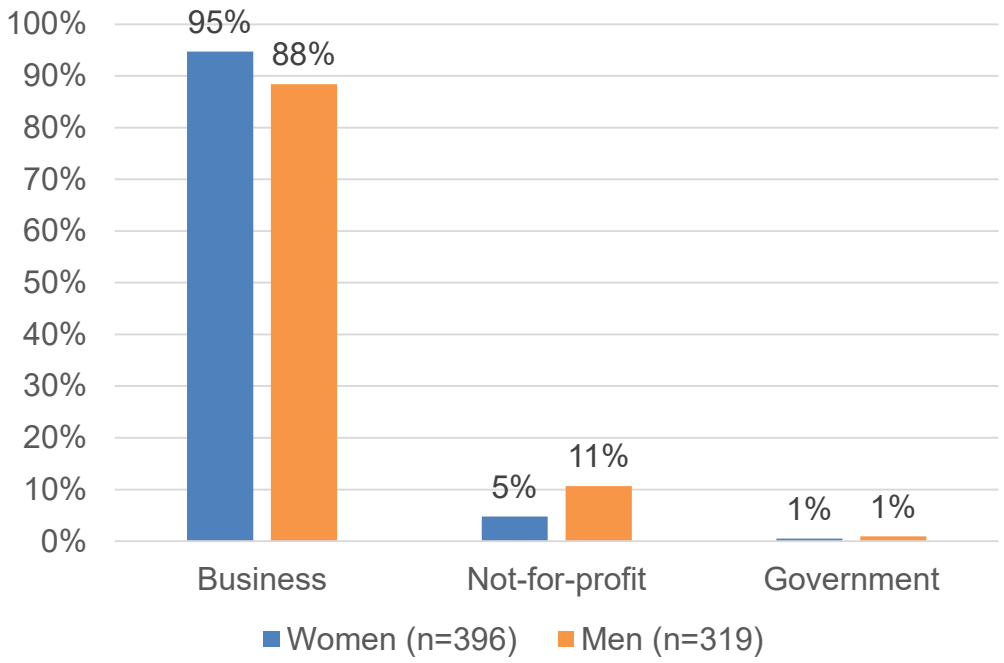
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Tourism Based Businesses



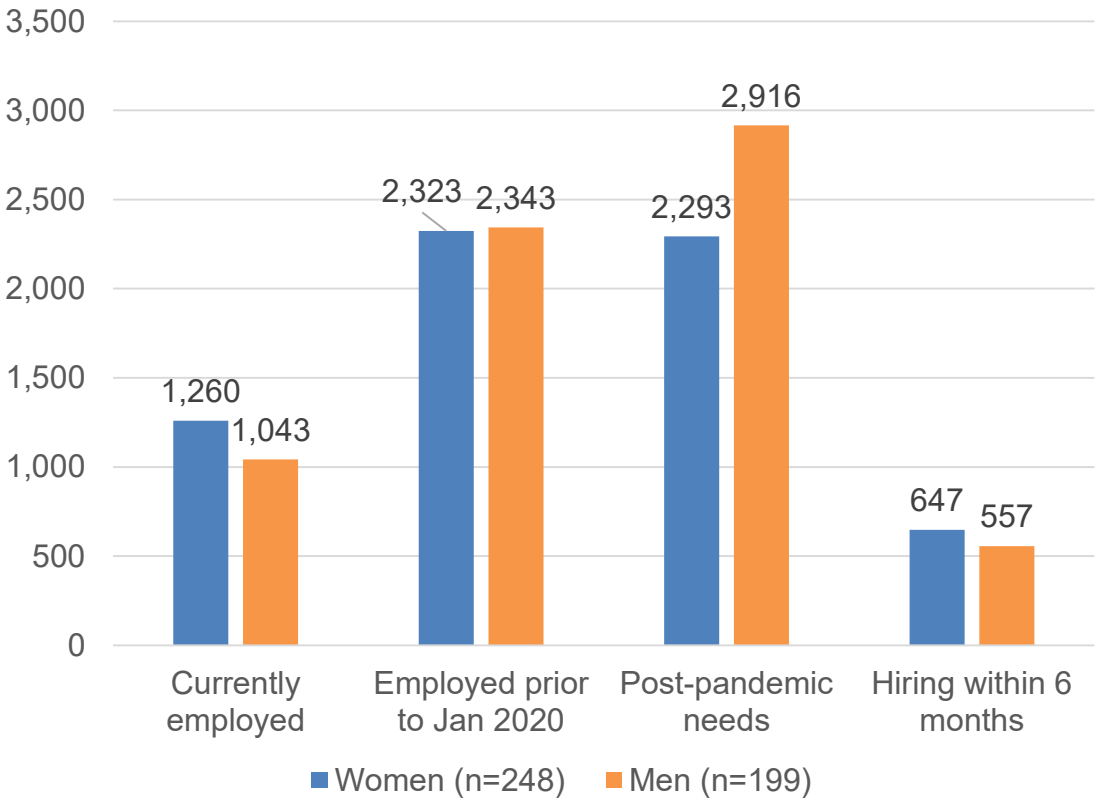
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Organization Type



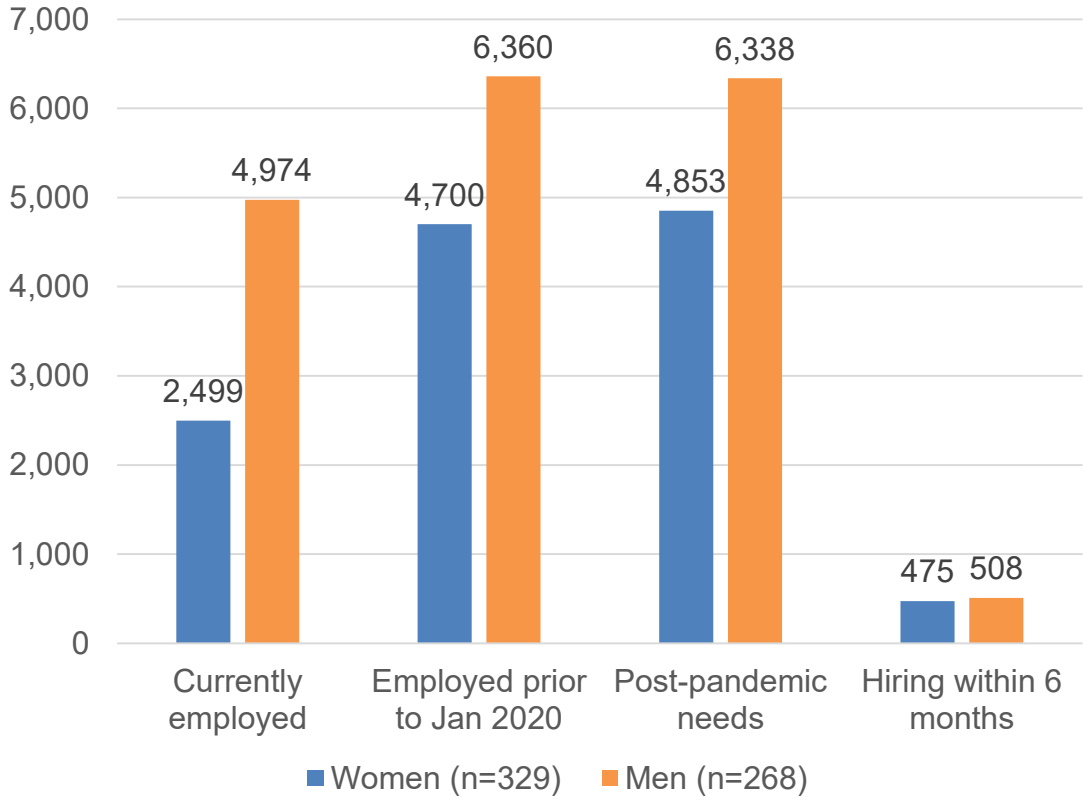
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Part-time Employment



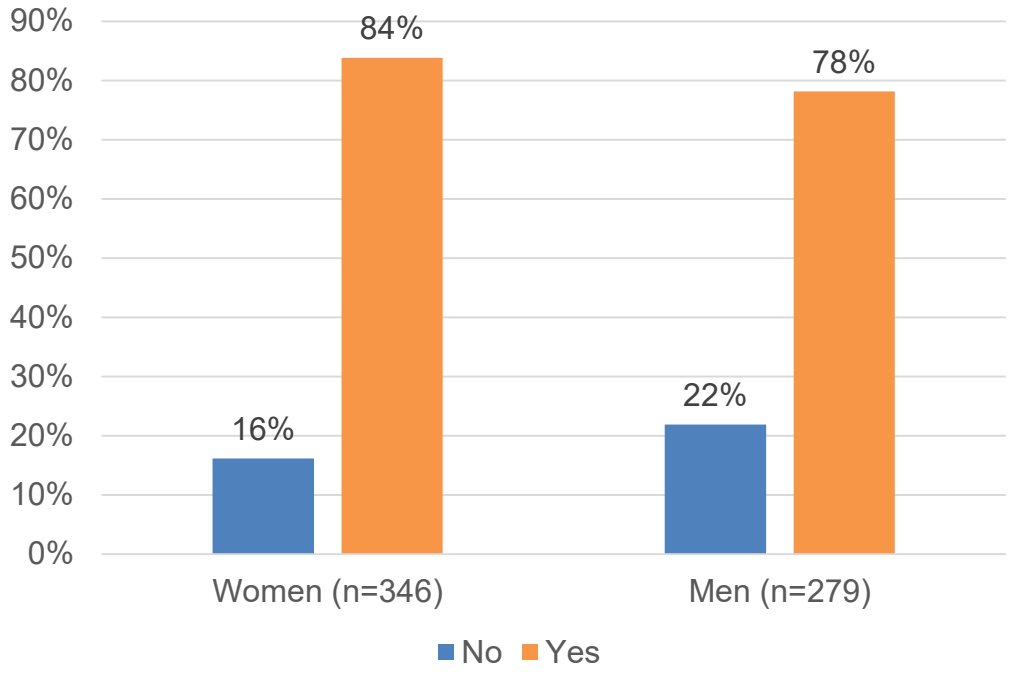
Niagara Region

Full-time Employment



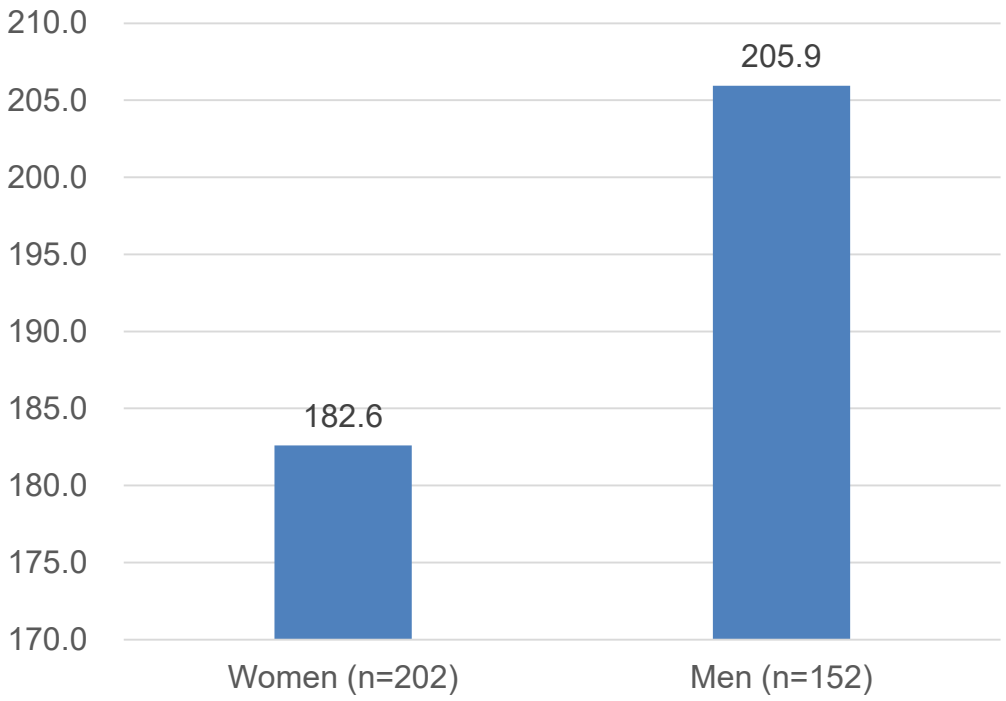
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Businesses That Have Lost Revenue



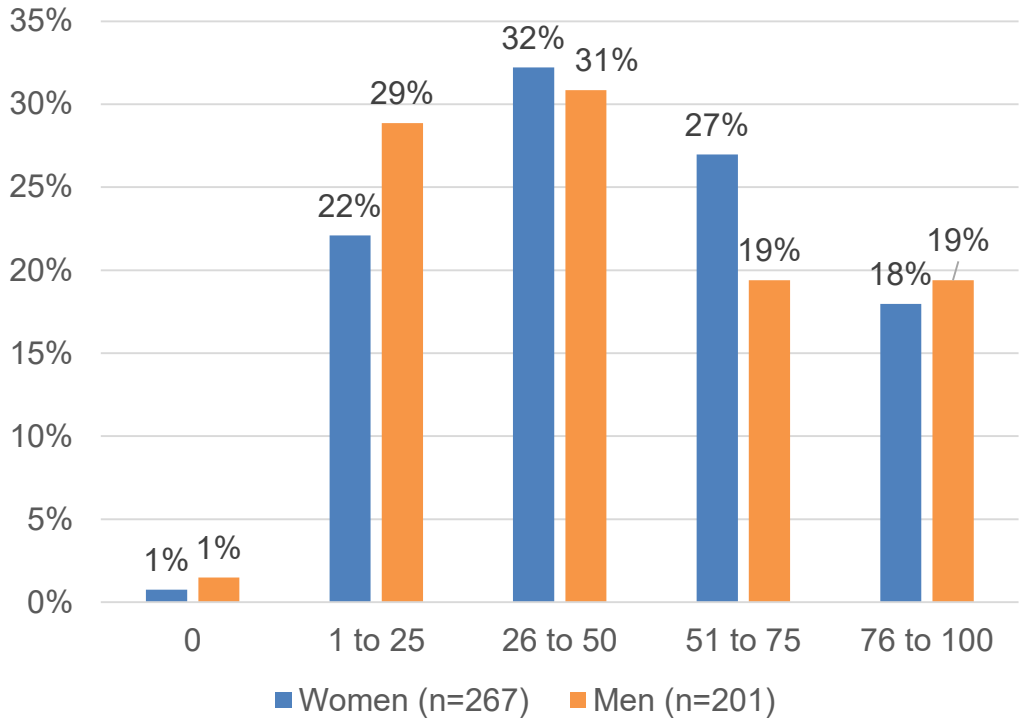
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Estimated Lost Revenue ($millions)



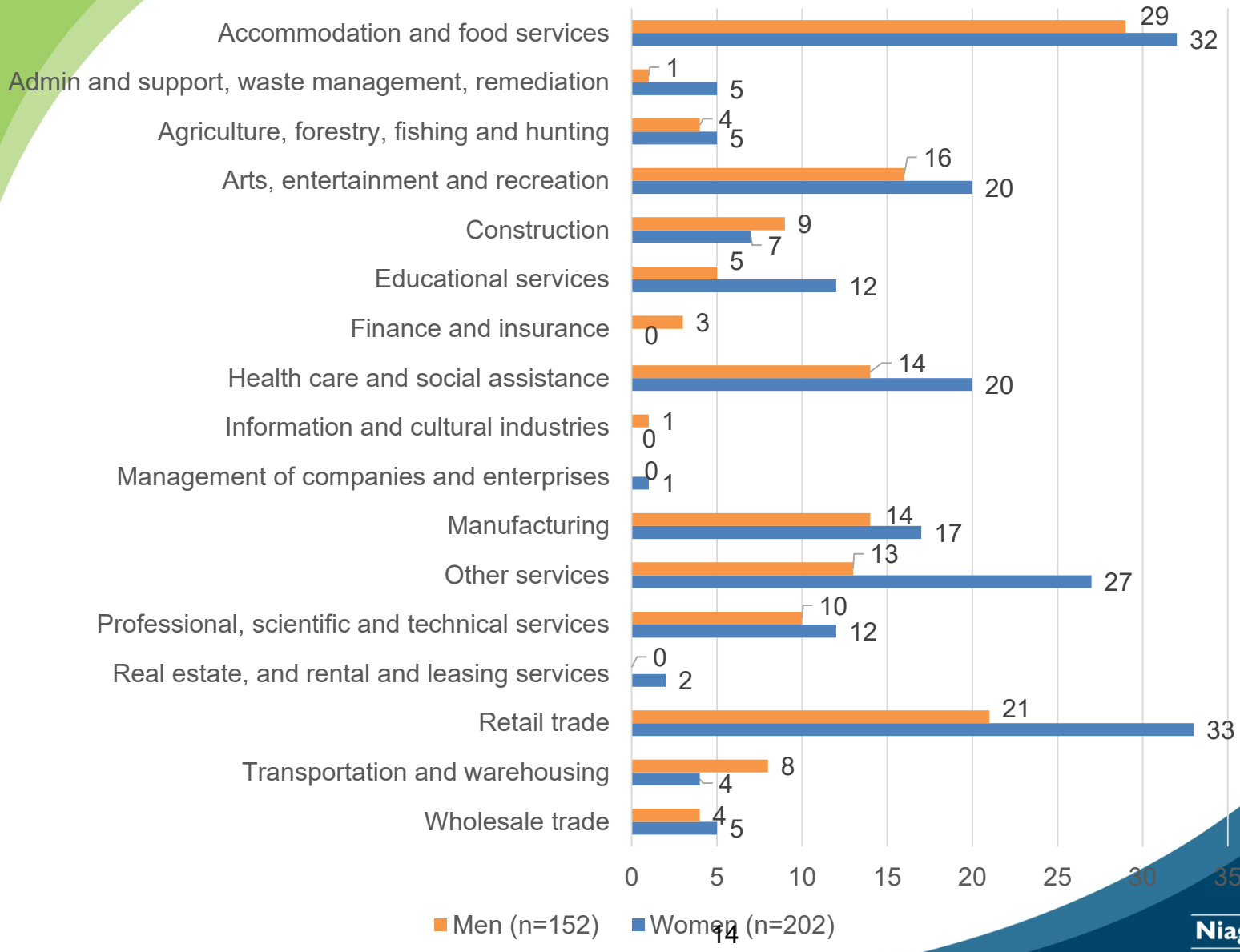
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Estimated Percentage Range of Lost Revenue

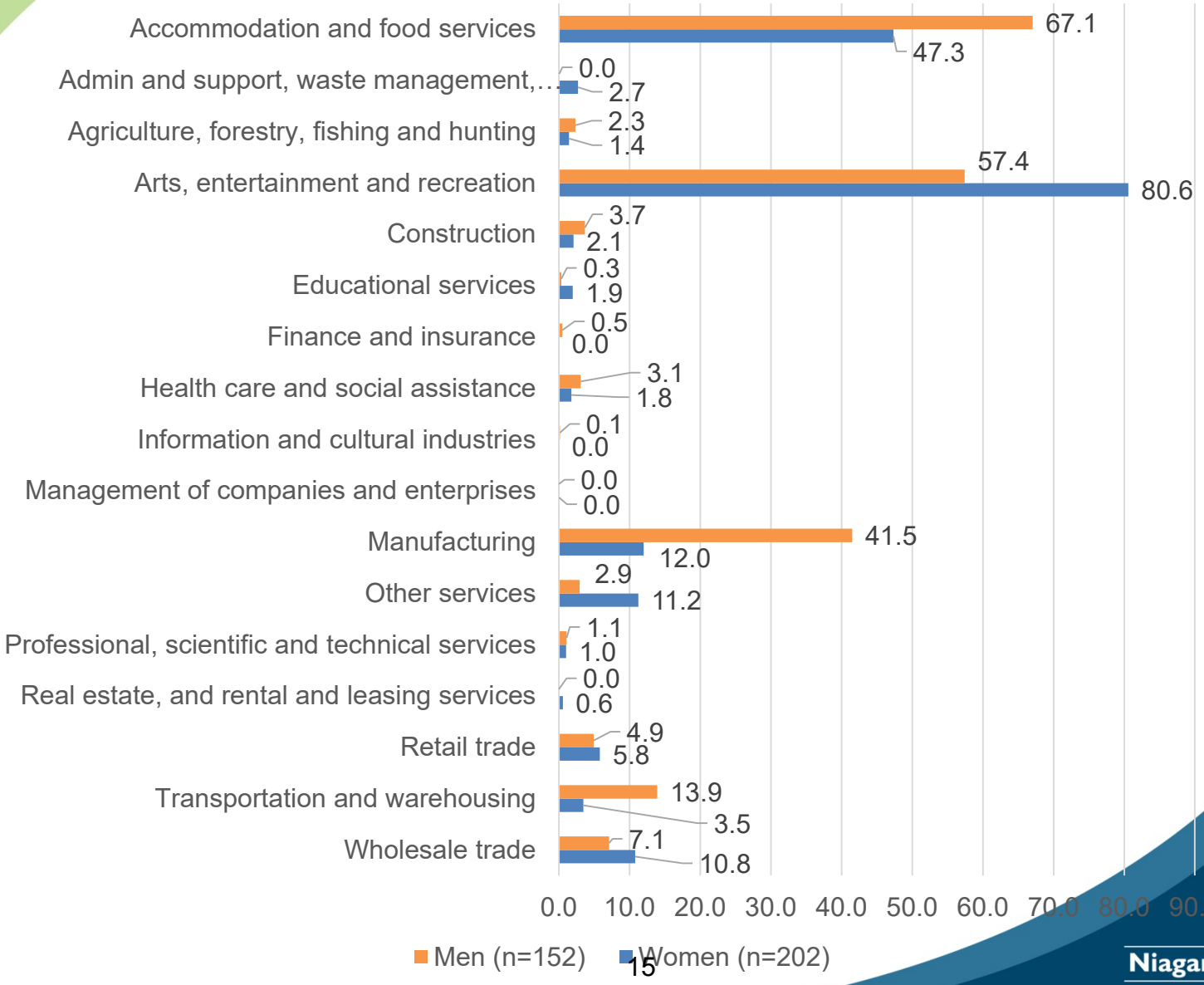


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Businesses Reporting Estimated Lost Revenue by Sector

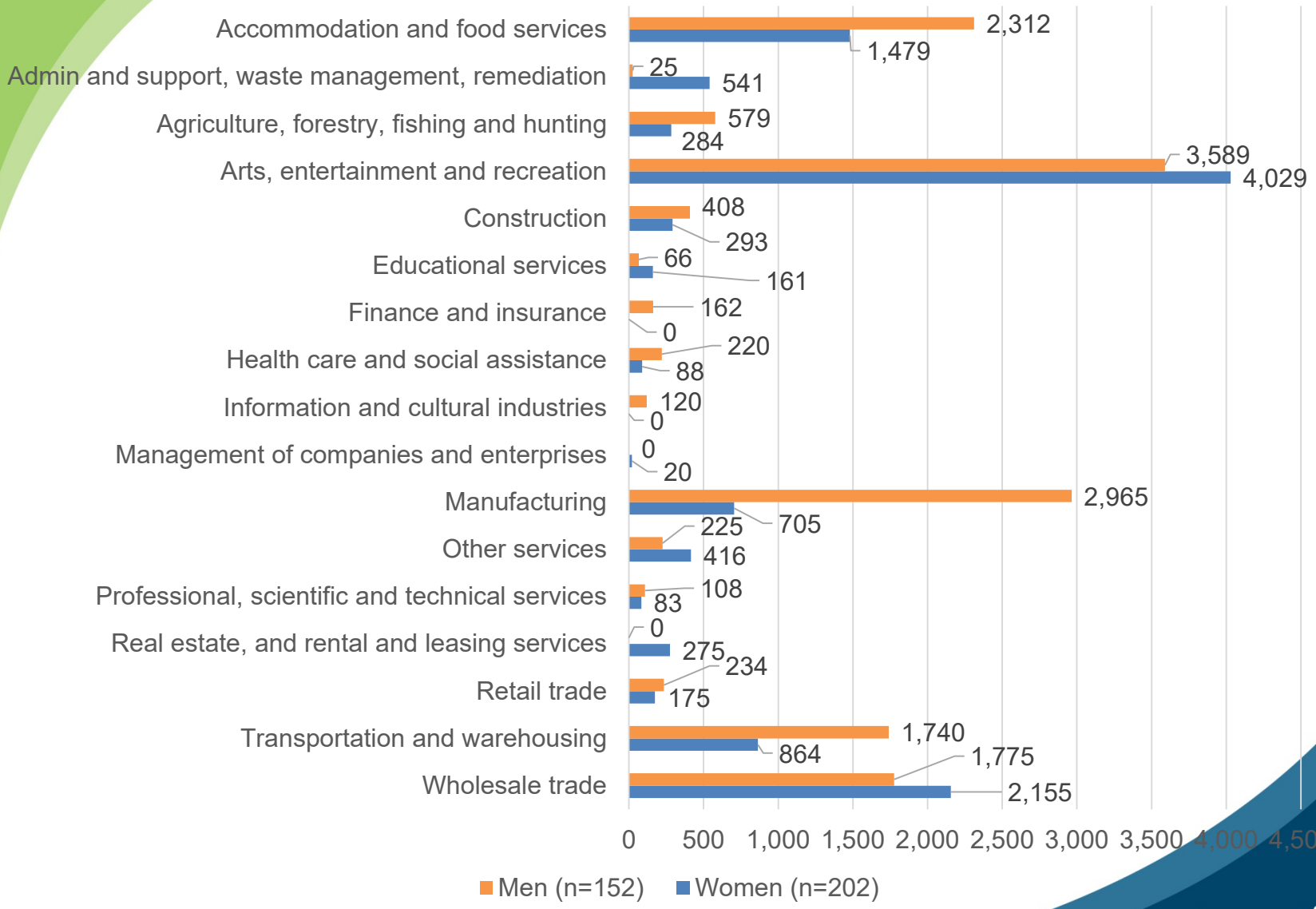


Total Estimated Revenue Lost by Sector ($millions)



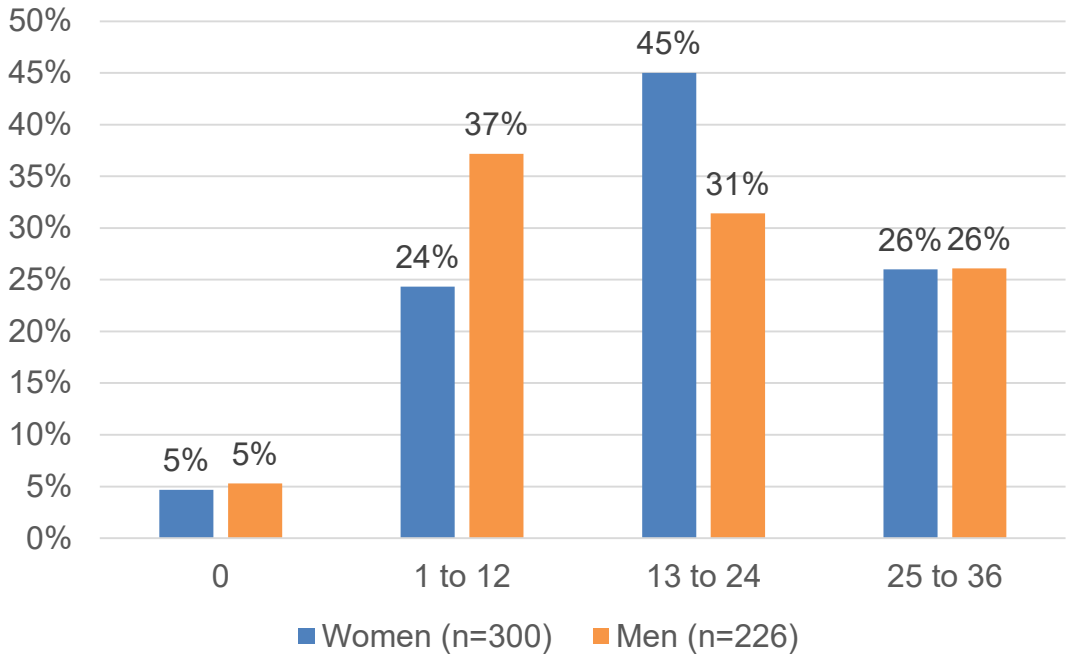
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Average Estimated Revenue Lost Per Business by Sector ($thousands)

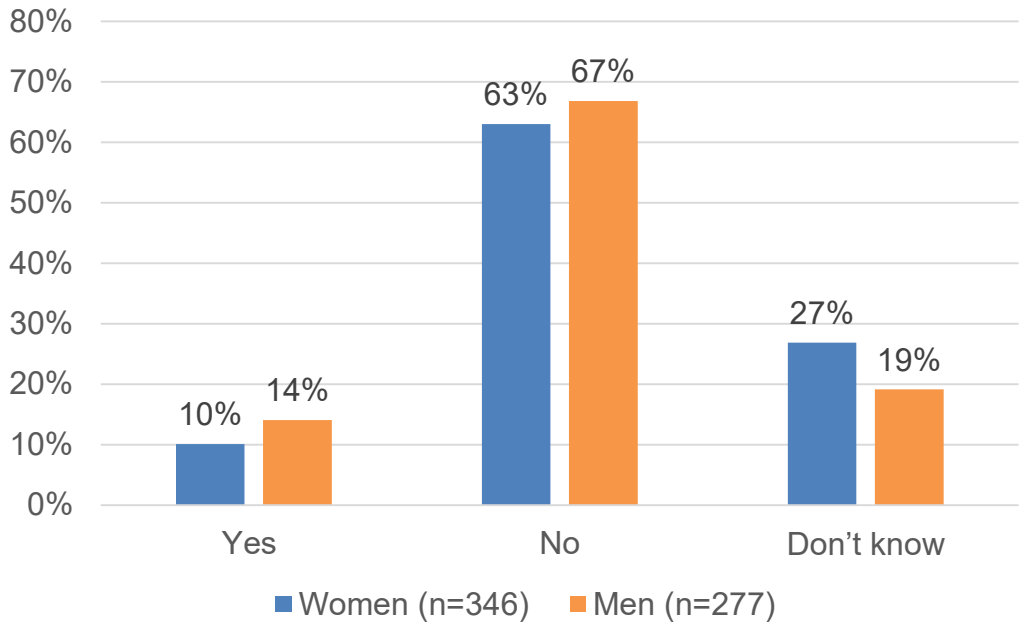


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Estimated Length to Recovery in Months

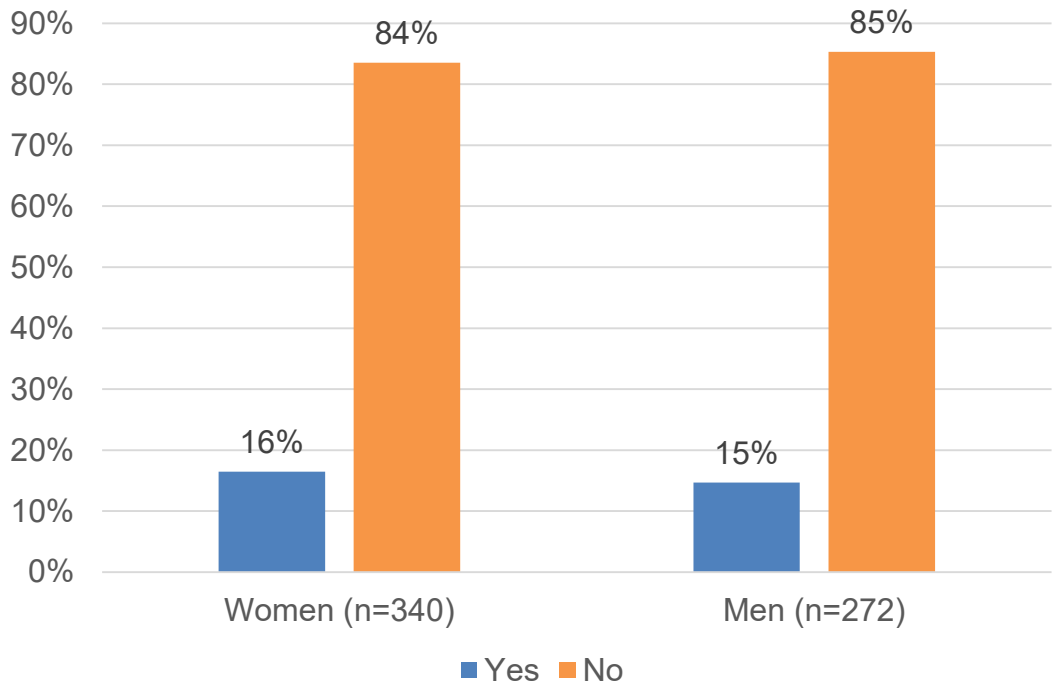


Plans to Reduce Physical Footprint Within 2 Years



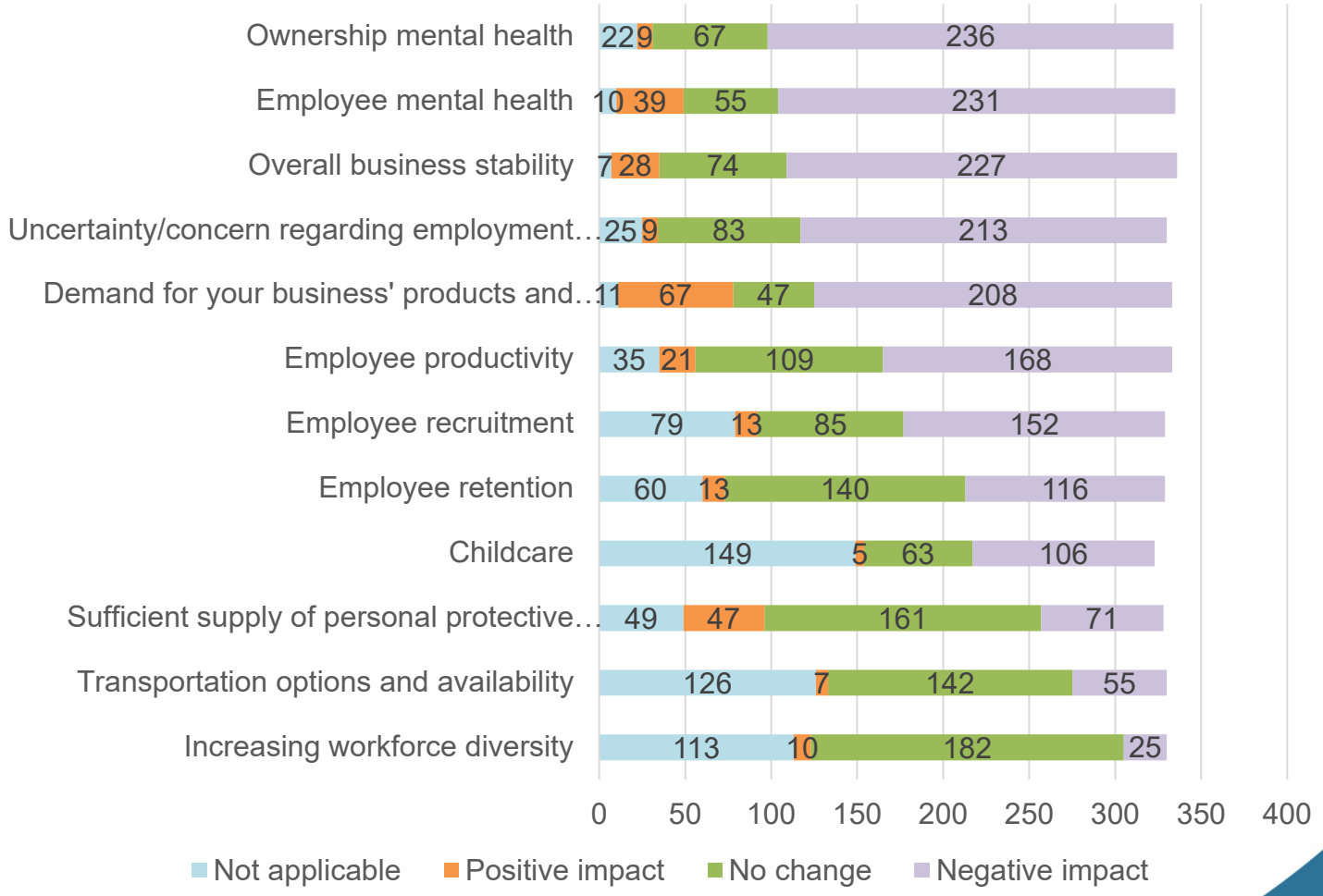
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Plans to Relocate Business Within 2 Years



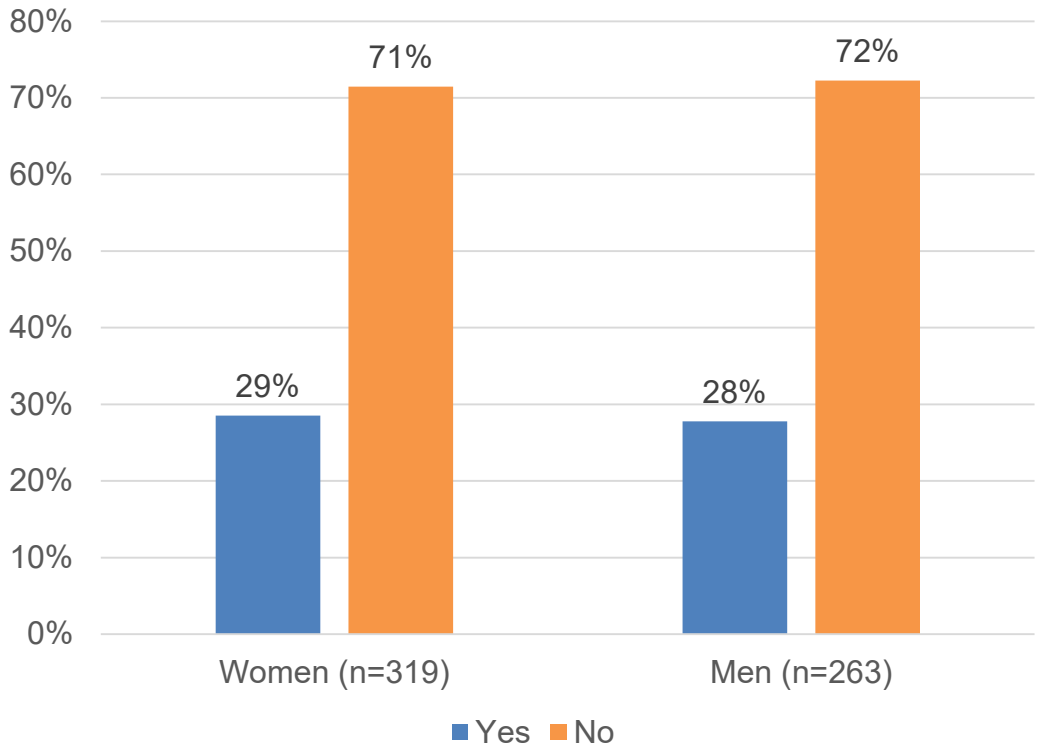
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Topics Affecting Business Workforces, Women

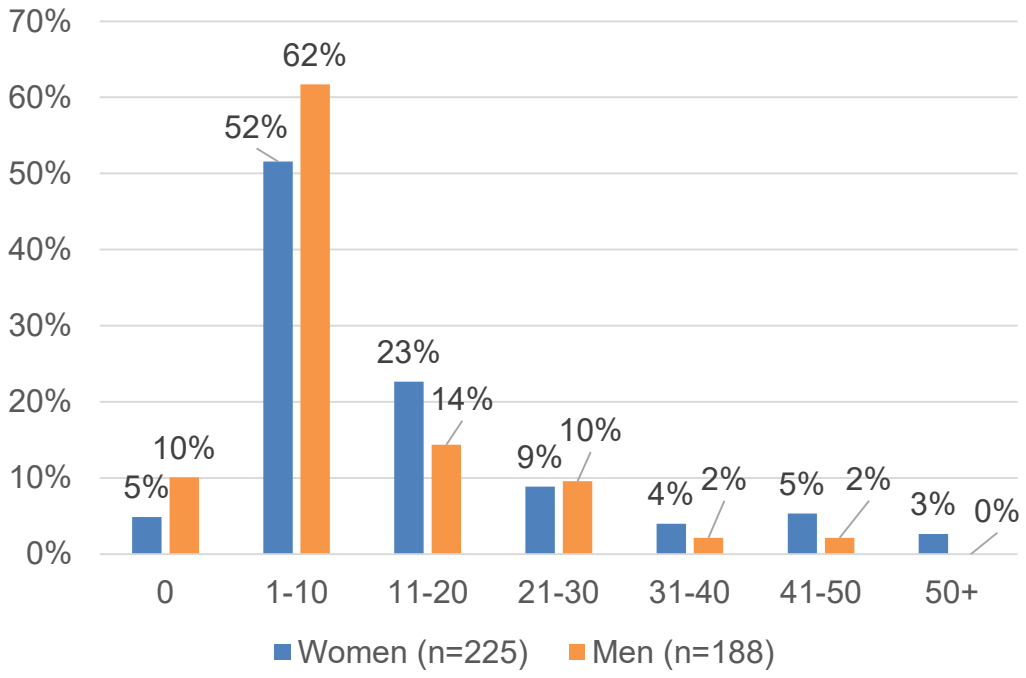


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Businesses With Equity and Inclusion Programs

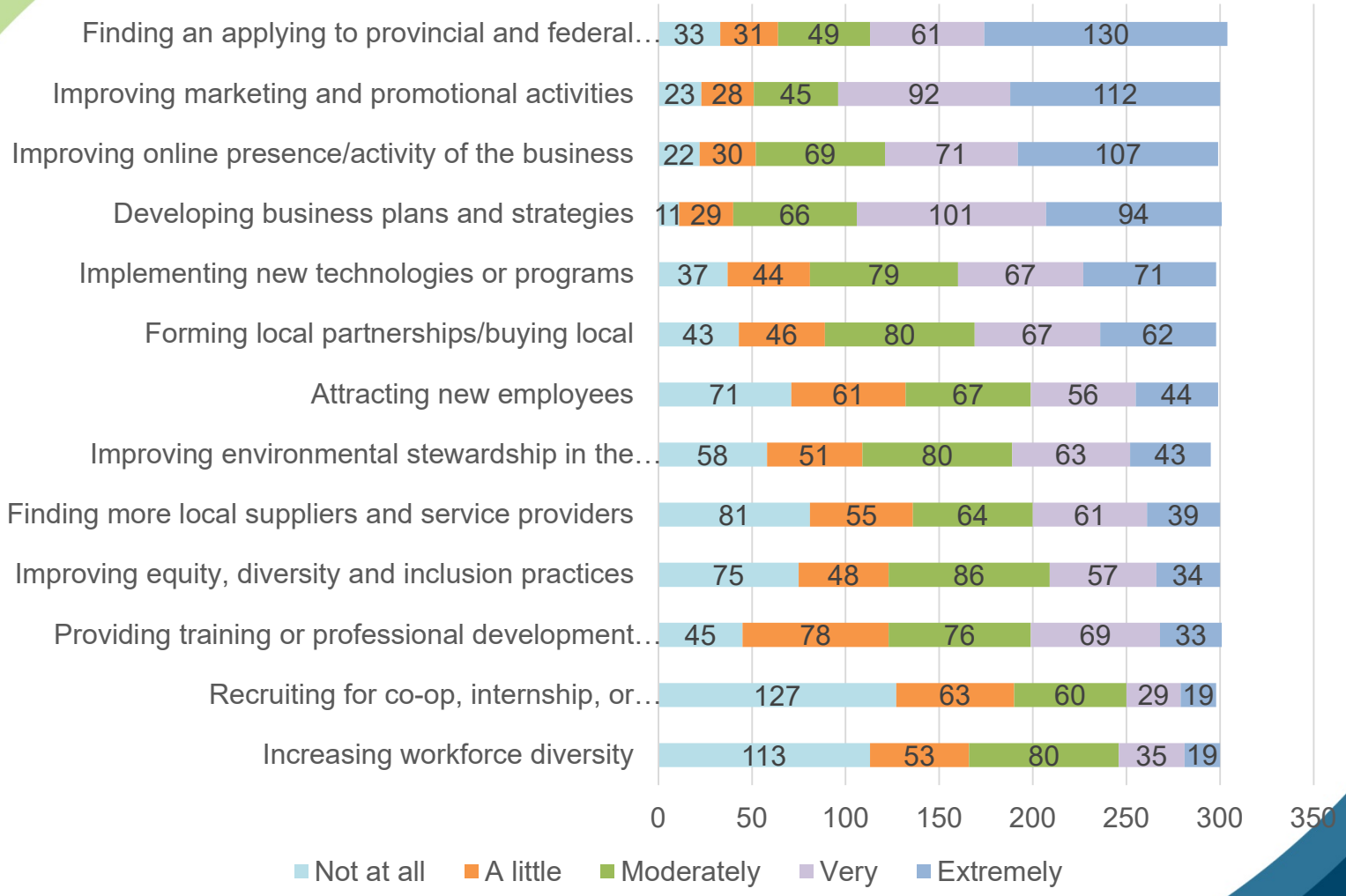


Percentage of Budget For Staff Training and Development



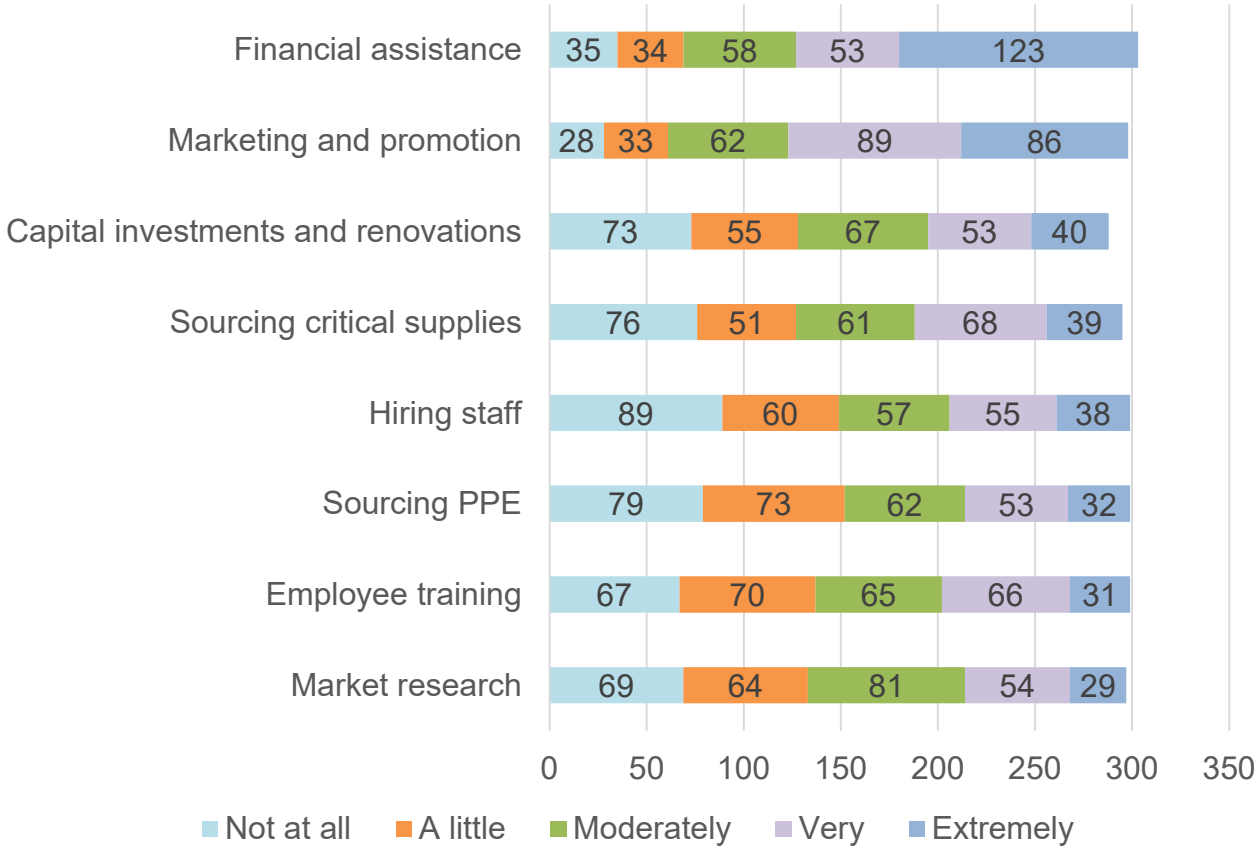
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Business Priorities For 2021 By Importance, Women



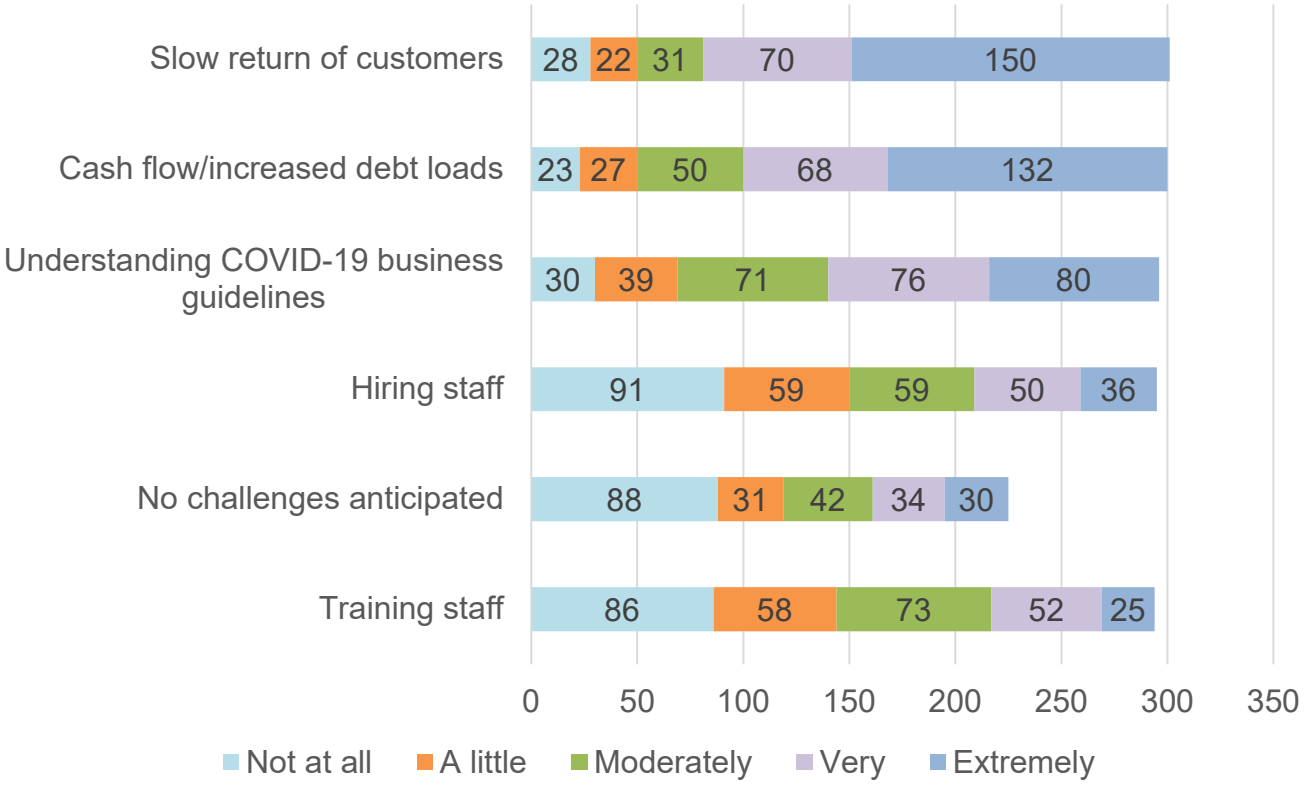
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Top Needs Within 6 Months, Women



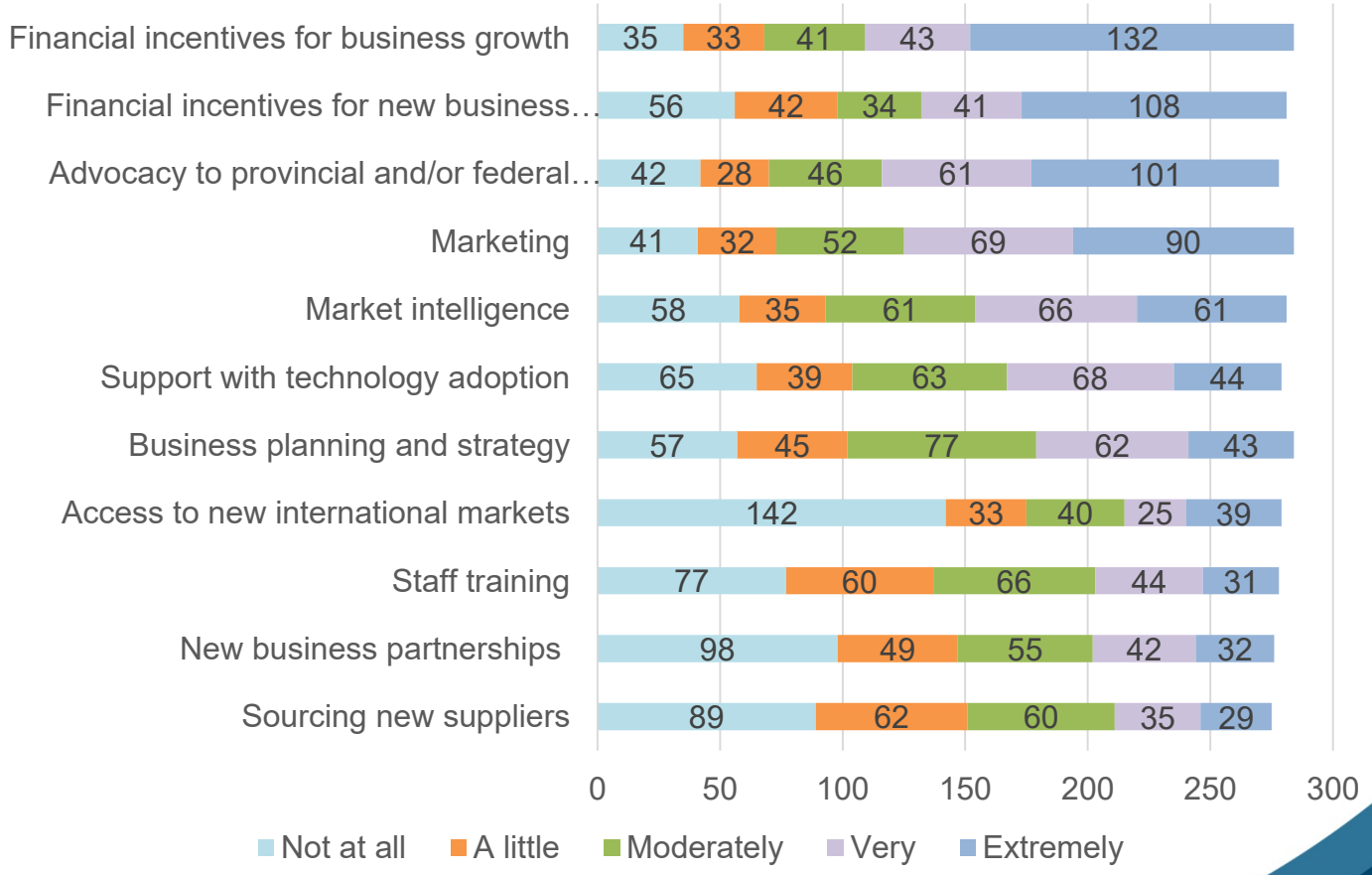
Niagara Region

Biggest Obstacles to Business Recovery, Women



Niagara Region

Type of Assistance Required, Women



Niagara Region

Questions

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update

Women's Advisory Committee | July 28, 2021

Cassandra Ogunniyi,
Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion Program Manager

Overview

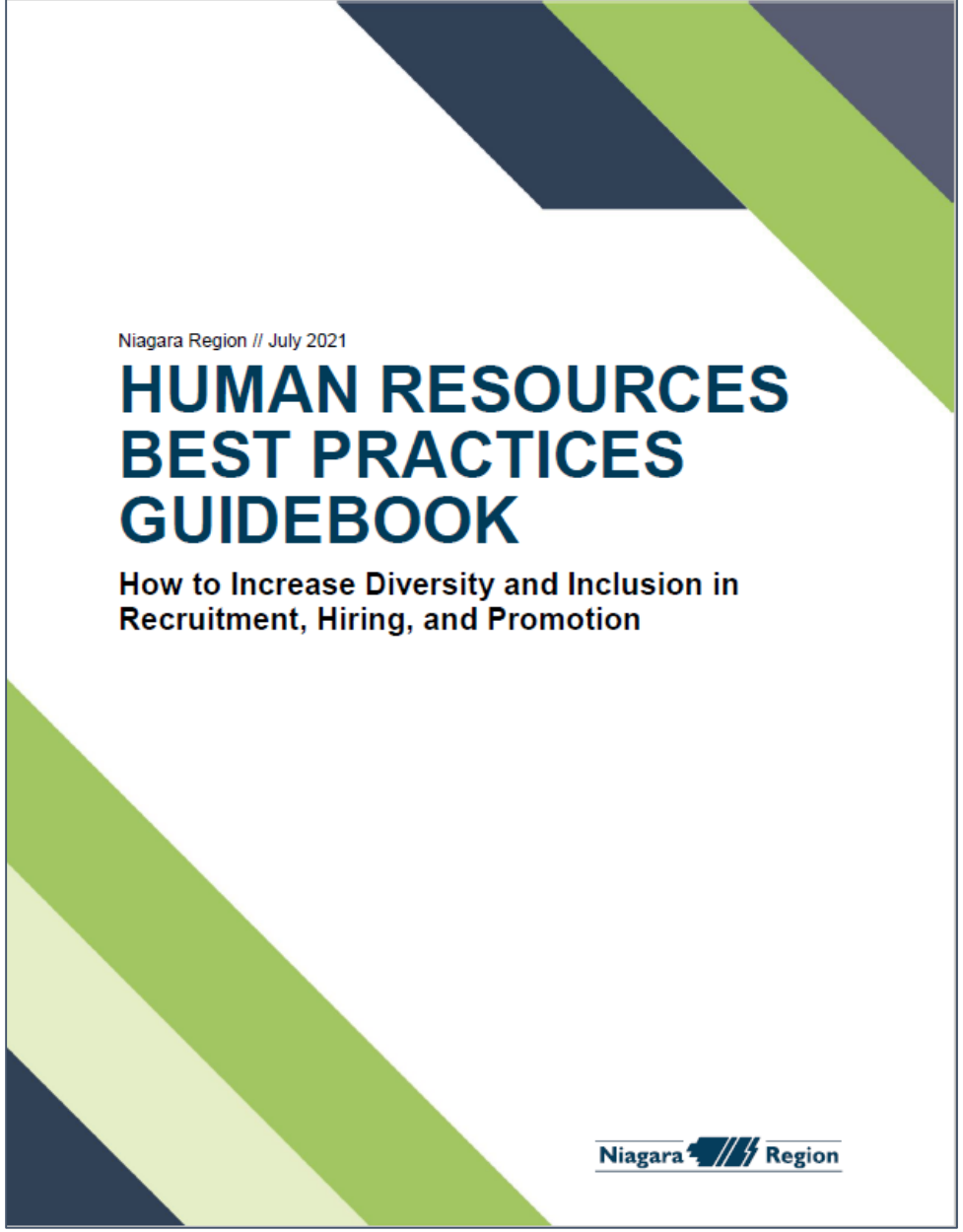
- DEI Best Practices
- Progress on data collection for DEI Action Plan
- Community Survey Questions
- Focus Group Progress
- Preliminary Results

DEI Best Practices

- Inclusive Hiring and Promotion
- Creating an inclusive workplace with accountability
- Providing a range of training opportunities for staff
- Creation and review of policy
- Communication and access to services
- Data collection for planning and monitoring
- Collaborating and engaging with community members

DEI Best Practices - HR

- Recruitment
  - Review job descriptions
  - Collaborate with local organizations
- Hiring
  - Selecting and shortlisting candidates
  - Interview process
  - Onboarding
- Promotion
  - Open communication
  - Mentorship and development



Goal 1: To Develop a 5 year DEI Action Plan by April 2022

Step 1: Current Assessment

- Jan – Mar 2021
  - Environmental Scan
  - Pulse Survey analysis

Step 2: Develop Vision and Plan for Engagement

- Feb – July 2021
  - Draft Vision
  - Engagement plan
  - DEIAC Selection
  - Data collection questions and tools

Step 3: Identify Barriers and Critical Success Factors

- June – Nov 2021
  - Conduct staff and community focus groups
  - Conduct staff and community survey
  - Data analysis and summary

Steps 4 &5: Create Strategy, Monitoring Plan, and Write Report

- Nov 2021 – April 2022
  - Strategy sessions
  - Write report
  - Finalize report
  - Action Plan and Report to Council

Community Survey

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee
- Aim of engagement – to hear from diverse voices of Niagara
  - Sense of belonging (i.e. I feel accepted in Niagara, My school is free from discrimination)
  - Experiences of discrimination (Have you experienced discrimination? If yes, I have experienced discrimination on the basis of: race, gender, age, and more)
  - Potential solutions/actions
  - Key areas of focus
  - Demographics (municipality, age, race/ethnicity, gender)
- Launch end of September
- Aiming for 600-1000 responses

Staff and Community Engagement

- Focus groups

Category	Number	In progress	Booked	Completed
Staff	17	0	3	14
Community organizations	10	6	0	4
Community members	6	2	3	1

- Observations

Preliminary Results – Focus Groups - Barriers

- Discrimination towards males in a female dominated work place
- “Old Boy’s Club” in male dominated work places
- Lack of representation/diversity in leadership and staff
- Challenges in navigating systems and accessing services
- Lack of data
- Lack of gender lens in policy and programs
- Accessing child care
- Poverty

Preliminary Results – Opportunities

- Training supported by conversation and action
- Gender neutral options on forms (particularly medical related forms)
- Providing resources for employees
- Reporting and seeing action, accountability
- Gendered bathrooms
- Mentorship opportunities
- Public Engagement
- Policy Review
- Improve Regional website

Thank you!

- Questions can be sent to:
- Cassandra.Ogunniyi@niagararegion.ca
- Ext. 3226

Subject: National Child Care Plan: Local Impacts and Recommendations

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, June 15, 2021

Recommendations

1. That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information;

2. That Regional Council **ENDORSE** the recommendations (Appendix 1 to Report COM 15-2021) to be sent to the Ministry of Education, drafted in a response to the national child care plan by Niagara Region Children's Services, as a member of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) Children's Services Network (CSN);

3. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to provide a copy of this report and its recommendations to the Minister of Education and to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO); and

4. That Regional Council **COMMUNICATE** the three recommendations specifically prioritized for Niagara, developed in consultation with local stakeholders and licensed child care service providers, in a delegation to the Minister of Education through a delegation at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference.

Key Facts

- On April 20, 2021, the federal government announced an investment of up to $30 billion over five years for a national child care plan, in part modelled after the Quebec $10 per day program.
- The next step to advance this plan, will be negotiations between the federal and provincial governments, to establish a funding agreement with set service targets.
- As a member of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) Children's Services Network (CSN), Niagara Region Children's Services was involved in drafting recommendations to be presented to the Ministry of Education (MEDU) in response to the federal national child care plan.
- These same recommendations were reviewed, in consultation with members of local stakeholder groups and licensed child care service providers, and the following three recommendations were specifically prioritized for Niagara:
    - The provincial government should develop a recruitment and retention strategy for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs),

  - Provincial allocations and capital expansion funds, at a minimum, should be maintained, and more capital and operating funds are needed to expand licensed child care, including both centre-based and licensed home child care and
  - Maintaining and enhancing child care fee subsidies is crucial to addressing affordability in child care.
- Through the CSN, Children's Services is advocating that municipal service system managers be involved in the development of a provincial response to the national child care plan, due to their critical knowledge of local community needs and relationships with community partners.

Financial Considerations

On April 20, 2021, the federal government announced an investment of up to $30 billion over five years, to build a high-quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care system across Canada, modelled in part after the Quebec $10 per day program. The next step will involve negotiations between the federal and provincial governments, leading to a funding agreement with service targets to demonstrate the investment dollars have produced the intended results. This could signal a significant change in approach, and investment in licensed child care in Ontario.

Previously, in August 2019, the provincial government announced child care funding changes, which came into effect as of January 1, 2020. Among the funding changes, municipal service managers were asked to cost-share Expansion Plan operating funding at a rate of 80/20 provincial/municipal (previously this was funded 100% by the province). This meant that Niagara Region Children's Services would be expected to plan to support all existing and any new spaces within its existing funding allocation (resulting ultimately in less funding per operating space as the system grows). This planned funding change was paused due to the pandemic but there is no indication from the province, at this time, that the original plan will not move ahead for 2022.

At this time it is unknown if any of the provincial funding changes will be reversed due to the potential influx of federal dollars. As well, it is unknown how long it will take for both levels of government to reach a funding agreement. Therefore, Children's Services continues to work to mitigate the anticipated budgetary impacts and maintain the current capacity of the licensed child care system to ensure access to affordable care for families when parents are able to return to work or school.

Analysis

The provision of quality licensed child care services supports early childhood learning which is vital to a child's development and offers an opportunity for the best start in life for very young children and the future workforce. As well, licensed child care services are recognized as essential to the economic wellbeing of a community by enabling parents to work or attend school. The global pandemic has demonstrated how crucial access to affordable licensed child care is to the economic recovery in Canada, in part leading to the federal government moving forward with a national child care plan.

On April 20, 2021, the federal government announced an investment of up to $30 billion over five years, intended to build a high-quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care system across Canada. Of the $30 billion investment, the federal government has committed up to $27.2 billion over five years, starting in 2021-2022, to be used to bring the federal government to a 50/50 share of child care costs with provincial and territorial governments. The budget earmarks another $2.5 billion for the Indigenous early learning and child care system to create new spaces, to build or renovate existing centres and to support after-school care programs on-reserve. The budget also sets aside money to renovate child care centres with the goal to make them more accessible for children with disabilities. Legislation is expected later this year to provide further details on the proposed national child care program. The next step will be negotiations between the federal government and the Ontario government, leading to a funding agreement with service targets to demonstrate the investment dollars have produced the intended results.

In Ontario, the provincial government has funding agreements with local municipal governments, as designated Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs), with responsibility for the local planning and managing of child care and early years services. Niagara Region, through Children's Services, is the CMSM for Niagara. In this role, Children's Services has service agreements with 61 service providers operating 175 licensed child care centres. Children's Services also administers child care fee subsidies for low income families and allocates additional resources to families and centres providing care to children with special needs. In addition, Children's Services directly operates five licensed child care centres and a licensed home child care agency.

Through its membership with the OMSSA Children's Services Network, Children's Services was involved in discussions with counterparts from across Ontario, and drafted a number of recommendations to be presented to the MEDU in response to the federal

national child care plan. These same recommendations were reviewed, in consultation with members of local advocacy groups and licensed child care service providers. The full list of recommendations are included in Appendix 1 to Report COM 15-2021. The following three recommendations were specifically prioritized for Niagara based on local input and observations of local need:

That the provincial government develop a strategy for the recruitment and retention of RECEs, and ensure they are compensated adequately in recognition of their years of education and critical role in licensed child care

For a number of years, as is the case across the province, Niagara has faced a critical shortage of qualified RECEs (requiring completion of a 2 year college program and registration in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators) to educate and care for children attending a licensed child care centre. The situation is even more pronounced for French language and Indigenous licensed child care centres, due to the need for qualified staff who also possess language and culture knowledge.

It is well recognized that the challenges with recruitment and retention stem largely from inadequate compensation. For many RECEs the base pay is minimum wage, far less than a living wage, and many are not entitled to benefits. The base pay in Ontario is currently enhanced through the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant (WEG), created by the previous provincial government to incrementally increase salaries to the same level as early childhood educators working in the school system. As well, licensed child care service providers may use their allocation from the provincial General Operating Grant (GOG), to increase RECE wages. The provincial government has continue to increase WEG funding in order to match the school board wage increases for RECEs working in a school setting. The average wage for a RECE working in a licensed child care centre in Niagara was $20.70/hour in 2020 (It is important to note that these hourly rates include GOG and WEG), compared to $27.75/hour paid to RECEs employed with local school boards.

An effective, multi-pronged recruitment and retention strategy is critically necessary not only to maintain the spaces currently licensed in Niagara but also to support any planned expansion that may come from additional federal funding. Feedback from local stakeholders and municipal service managers across the province states unequivocally that recognition of the profession, supported by appropriate and adequate compensation, is central to any effective recruitment and retention strategy. Furthermore, expansion of the existing licensed child care system is not possible until the critical shortage of qualified RECEs is addressed. In Niagara, most licensed child

care programs are not operating at their licensed capacity (i.e. the number of spaces permitted to operate by their provincially approved license), due to the shortage of qualified RECEs, and the system (based on pre-pandemic operations) would require approximately 25% (approximately 300) more RECEs to do so.

To date, the province does not have a province-wide strategy. At this time, its current effort is focused on promoting the Early Childhood Educators Qualifications Upgrade Program. This program provides financial support to individuals studying in the field, who work in early years settings, to obtain an ECE diploma and become eligible to apply for membership with the College of Early Childhood Educators. (However, many see this as of limited value, as the underlying issue of poor compensation remains unaddressed.) At this time, the province left it to CMSMs and colleges to develop and implement local recruitment and retention strategies. That said, Niagara Region Children's Services is working on a local strategy with Niagara College, and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Provincial allocations and capital expansion funds should be, at a minimum maintained, and community-based operating and capital funds are also needed to expand licensed centre-based and home child care, as further capacity is urgently required to address growing demands for licensed child care

Since the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) initiative was announced in June 2017, Children's Services received an annual amount of $7.8 million in expansion funding, and has subsequently increased the local licensed child care system by over 500 spaces for infants, toddlers and preschoolers aged 0-4 years. However, additional investments are needed to increase access and address the growing demand for licensed child care, particularly for infants, toddlers and preschool aged children. The table below shows the number of infants, toddlers and preschool aged children on a waitlist for a licensed child care space across Niagara as of May 2021. (Note: these numbers are likely an underrepresentation of local need, as many families, believing that licensed care is inaccessible, do not put their names on the central waitlist.)

Age grouping	Number of children on waitlist
Infants (0-18 months)	265
Toddlers (19-30 months)	400
Preschoolers (31 months-4 years)	388

In addition to the need for additional child care centre spaces, licensed home child care is recognized as an invaluable part of Niagara's child care system. Local stakeholders recently spoke to the value of this in Niagara both as an opportunity to increase local capacity and to provide the expanded hours (evenings and weekends) so critical for those who work in the manufacturing and hospitality industries. Some proposed that the provision of incentives would be helpful to encourage unlicensed home child care providers to enter into the licensed system. Furthermore, reducing provincially directed administrative barriers to home child care licensing requirements would create new capacity, support quality, and enhance oversight and accountability for services rendered to families. As licensed child care centre hours of operation do not meet the needs of families who require alternate hours of care (evenings, weekends, and overnight) it is imperative to expand local licensed home child care as part of the larger licensed child care system.

Maintaining and enhancing funding for operating costs and fee subsidies is crucial to addressing affordability in child care

In addition to capital dollars to expand the existing licensed child care system, additional funding is needed for ongoing operations. In August 2020, the provincial government announced funding allocation changes. Beginning on January 1, 2021, Municipalities would be expected to financially support the operation of any additional spaces within the existing child care budget allocation from the province. With the provincial government signaling a plan to hold to existing funding levels (and instead focus new investments into its Ontario Child Care Tax Credit initiative), as the system grows, the annual child care funding allocated to licensed child care service providers per licensed space would be anticipated to be reduced.

While Children's Services is working to mitigate the anticipated budgetary impacts, the lack of increased funding will likely cause some licensed child care service providers to increase parent fees for child care to make up for the reduction in annual funding and to address increasing costs associated with operating a licensed child care centre. Many families already struggle with the cost of licensed child care, therefore, along with investments to expand high-quality licensed child care spaces, funding is needed to ensure fees are affordable to parents so that they are able to access licensed child care and return to work or school.

The following table provides the lowest, highest and average daily per diems for each age group care category (as of January 1, 2020).

Per diems	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School Age*	Before School	After School
Minimum	$43.00	$30.50	$29.50	$28.50	$6.25	$8.50
Maximum	$70.99	$60.96	$56.39	$52.93	$18.00	$18.00
Average	$53.91	$45.38	$41.67	$39.26	$10.38	$13.32

*Full day rate for school age children (e.g. PD day)
The table does not include co-ops or nurseries unless they provide full day

As part of the national child care plan, the federal investment seeks to reduce fees for licensed child care to $10 per day, on average, within the next five years. While this plan unfolds, it is imperative that financial assistance with child care fees is not eliminated, because for many families, particularly those with multiple children, a daily child care fee of even $10 per child would still be too costly. Although the provincial government introduced the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit, many families are not able to pay child care costs up front and wait to receive the provincial tax credit when they file their taxes.

In addition to keeping the child care fee subsidy program, the regulatory framework guiding child care fee subsidies under Ontario's Child Care Funding Formula should be reviewed as it has not been updated since 2005, and based on the low-income cut-off (LICO) measure. Currently, a family income must be under the threshold of $20,000 to qualify to receive the full fee subsidy. An annual family income of $20,001 and above requires a parental contribution. According to Statistics Canada, the low-income measure (the LIM is an internationally used measure of poverty, widely used by OECD countries, and is considered a more accurate measure) after tax thresholds for a family of four in 2018 was $48,366. The table below shows the number and percentage of one parent and two parent families in Niagara (January 1 to December 31, 2020), by annual family income, in receipt of child care fee subsidy. To note, 459 one parent families (51%) are required to make a parental contribution for their child care fees.

Annual Family Income	Number of One Parent Families	Percentage of One Parent Families	Number of Two Parent Families	Percentage of Two Parent Families
$0 - $10,000	237	27.8	142	39.7
$10,001 - $20,000	156	18.3	19	5.3
$20,001 - $30,000	210	24.7	36	10.1
$30,001 - $40,000	169	19.9	51	14.2
$40,001 - $50,000	65	7.6	40	11.2
$50,001 - $60,000	11	1.3	34	9.5
$60,001 - $70,000	4	0.4	24	6.7

Annual Family Income	Number of One Parent Families	Percentage of One Parent Families	Number of Two Parent Families	Percentage of Two Parent Families
$70,001 - $80,000	0	0.0	7	2
$80,001 - $90,000	0	0.0	4	1.1
$90,001 - $100,000	0	0.0	0	0

It is important to note that prior to the global pandemic, on average there were 2500 children in receipt of a child care fee subsidy each month, with slightly more than 4000 children supported each year. In comparison, in 2020, just over 1200 children received a child care fee subsidy, 30 percent of the pre pandemic number of children supported.

It is well recognized that there is a connection between access to affordable and quality child care and labour force participation by women[1]. Child care challenges have become a barrier to work for mothers who disproportionately take on unpaid child care responsibilities when their family cannot find or afford child care. From 2016 to 2020, there were 6,200 (6.2%) fewer people participating in Niagara's labour force. Initially it was thought the decline was a result of the aging demographic in Niagara, however, the year over year change from 2019 to 2020 was unique. A closer look at the data shows that the biggest loss from the workforce was from the 15 to 25 years demographic (-15.6%), and females were affected disproportionately at -31.3% compared to males at -3.2%. Additionally, women dominate the labour force in the sectors which have been hardest hit by the global pandemic, e.g. accommodation and food services, retail etc. When the pandemic comes to a close and these sectors reopen, to enable a full economic recovery, women must be able to re-enter the labour force. As women begin to return to work they will once more be seeking affordable childcare.

While these recommendations have been prioritized locally, additional recommendations identified through discussions with counterparts across Ontario will be submitted to the provincial government through the Children's Services Network of OMSSA. Through this network, Niagara Region Children's Services is advocating that municipal service system managers, who possess critical knowledge about community needs and have relationships with community partners, be involved in the development of a provincial response to the proposed national child care plan.

[1] Niagara Community Observatory. (2020). The economic impact of COVID-19 on Niagara women in the workforce. Link to The economic impact of COVID-19 on Niagara women in the workforce.

Consultation with Local Advocacy Groups and Child Care Service Providers

Children's Services consulted with members of local stakeholder groups (Niagara Region Women's Advisory Committee, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce - Women in Niagara, and the Gender Equity Task Force), and licensed child care services providers to inform the aforementioned recommendations outlined in this report. These groups were consulted to gain feedback, discuss local priorities as it relates to child care, and to ensure that the recommendations in this report were representative of their concerns.

The local stakeholder groups emphasized the importance of expanding access to high-quality licensed child care spaces, recognizing that there should also be greater flexibility in the hours of child care available to families in Niagara. These groups noted that fee subsidies should be maintained and enhanced to ensure that families are able to continue to access child care, even with federal commitments to reduce child care fees, ultimately to an average of $10 day.

The development of a recruitment and retention strategy for RECEs was also expressed as critical to not only ensure that Niagara is able to increase its child care operating capacity to match its licensed capacity, but also to enable the expansion of available child care spaces in general. The quality of care within licensed child care spaces can be positively impacted when qualified staff are compensated fairly and adequately for their work. Studies have indicated that the ability of staff to support the needs of children in early learning and child care environments is influenced not only by their level of education and training but also by external factors, such as their work environment, salary and work benefits[2]. Improving RECE wages can support the overall stability of the child care system, be effective in the retention and recruitment of qualified staff, while also positively affecting the quality of care.

The licensed child care service providers outlined that their primary recommendation again focused on the recruitment and retention of RECEs. These professionals are the cornerstone of the child care system, and without having access to a well-compensated, and qualified workforce, licensed child care spaces would not be able to operate or expand. Child care service providers also identified the continued need for operating dollars to go in tandem with increased capital investments for expansion of licensed

[2] Employment and Social Development Canada. (2019). Defining and Measuring the quality of Early Learning and Child Care: A literature review. Link to Defining and Measuring the quality of Early Learning and Child Care: A literature review.

child care spaces. The service providers recognized the need to address the affordability of child care, by ensuring that fee subsidies remain available for families, and are enhanced to be more responsive to the changing financial needs of families in Niagara.

During both consultation sessions, the involvement of service system managers in the development of a provincial response to the national child care plan, was highlighted as a key element. In preparing this report, recently received written submissions from these same stakeholders were reviewed and considered (appendices 2 to 5 to Report COM 15-2021).

Alternatives Reviewed

This report is initiated by staff to provide Council with local considerations and recommendations as a result of the federal announcement of a national child care plan.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The provision of accessible and quality early learning programs and services supports Council's focus on Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth.

Other Pertinent Reports

- COM 19-2020 Update on Community Based Capital Program and Early Years Capital Program Projects
- COM 30-2019 School Based Child Care Capital Projects
- COM 01-2018 Community-Based Early Years and Child Care Capital Funding Application
- COM 15-2018 Update on Niagara's Licensed Child Care Expansion Plan
- COM 24-2017 Licensed Child Care Expansion Plan

Prepared by:
Sandra Noel
Manager
Community Services

Recommended by:
Adrienne Jugley, MSW, RSW, CHE
Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:
Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Pam Abeysekara, Integrated Planning & Policy Advisor and reviewed by Darlene Edgar, Director, Children's Services and Lori Bell, Manager, Children's Services.

Appendices

Appendix 1 National Child Care Plan Local Impacts and Recommendations to be presented to the Ministry of Education

Appendix 2 YWCA child care letter to Council

Appendix 3 Gender Equity Task Force child care letter to Council

Appendix 4 West Lincoln child care letter to Council

Appendix 5 Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce child care letter to Council

Appendix 1

Recommendations to be presented to the Ministry of Education

Through its membership with the OMSSA Children's Services Network, Niagara Region Children's Services was involved in discussions with counterparts from across Ontario, and drafted the following recommendations to be presented to the MEDU in response to the federal national child care plan:

- The Ministry of Education should reconsider previously announced changes to administrative funding and cost-sharing post COVID-19, and look to sustain, reopen and expand the child care system in Ontario
- Provincial allocations and capital expansion funds should be, at a minimum maintained, and community-based operating and capital funds are also needed to expand licensed centre-based and home child care, as further capacity is urgently required to address growing demands for licensed child care
- Request Service System Manager involvement in the development of a provincial response to the proposed national child care plan
- Incentives should be provided to encourage unlicensed providers to enter into the licensed system, to ensure oversight that currently does not exist
- Along with investments to expand high-quality licensed child care spaces, fees must be affordable to parents so that they are able to access child care
- Provincial government develop a strategy for the recruitment and retention of Registered Early Childhood Educators, and ensure they are compensated adequately in recognition of their years of education and critical role in licensed child care
- Maintaining and enhancing funding for operating costs and fee subsidies is crucial to addressing affordability in child care
- Province consider an increase of the fee subsidy threshold to match the Low-Income Measure After-Tax (LIM-AT), adjusted for family size and indexed to inflation
- Ministry of Education to take action to improve collaboration between Service System Managers and local school boards across Ontario

YWCA NIAGARA REGION
Hope for Homeless Women and their Families since 1927

April 13, 2021

Re. Report COM 6-2021- Managing the licensed child care system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dear Councillors,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this report on child care, which is critical to the social and economic recovery from the pandemic and to the future development of our communities. The YWCA Niagara Region appreciates our working relationship with Regional staff and many community partners who we work with to provide essential services across Niagara.

As part of a network of YWCA's across Canada and around the world, our organization serves women and children and families by providing emergency shelter, supported housing, life skills and support for families. Access to safe, affordable, quality child care is critical to our work and our vision of an equitable future where women and families thrive.

This report highlights how the pandemic has exacerbated decades of pressures and challenges in the child care system: a shortage of qualified staff, fewer child care spaces available, expensive health and safety requirements, and not enough subsidies to support the financial needs of local families. Of course these are not new challenges; the child care system has been under strain for decades. The pandemic has exacerbated the systemic issues but it has also highlighted how critical child care is to the social and economic health of all communities and for women to participate in the economy.

In Niagara the child care needs and pressures are well-known. For years we have read reports about waitlists, increasing costs, shortages of staff, and poor wages for workers. And as the report shows, the pandemic has created an even bigger problem with the loss of more than 6,660 licensed child care spaces - a massive loss which is likely only the tip of the iceberg, with many unlicensed, unregulated child care spaces not officially counted.

Now what are we going to do about it?

Over the last year, we have read research articles, op eds, policy discussions, politicians at all levels of government, from all political parties talk about child care policy. We have heard from Dr. Kate Bezanson a national expert on social policy speaking across the country about how child care is the critical social infrastructure that is necessary for social and economic recovery.

Locally, the Niagara Workforce Planning Board and Niagara Community Observatory have also analyzed the data to confirm that "women have overwhelmingly borne the brunt of employment losses in Niagara since the pandemic shutdown in March and continue to do so" and that child care will be critical to getting women back to work, contributing to the economy.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has reported on this in the She-covery report, as well as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, YWCA Canada, industry associations, banks and economic organizations across the country. Everyone is paying attention to the child care crisis and what further challenges are coming.

We have even heard this Regional Council pass a motion in Aug. 2020 affirming that "the economic recovery of the Niagara Region and Ontario is dependent on families having access to safe, reliable and affordable child care" and directing Niagara Region to advocate for child care as part of the pandemic recovery plan to the province and to work with the federal government to develop a national child care strategy.

Regardless of what the upper levels of government are willing to do, we need to find solutions for the economic and social recovery of our communities. As Dr. Robin Williams, Niagara's former Medical Officer of Health said on International Women's Day, "Everything is broken - what a time to fix it."

In light of this report being presented for information, we are suggesting the following next steps for Council's consideration:

- That the report be referred to the Planning and Economic Development committee for consideration. Child care is not just a social issue - it is an economic imperative.

- That the Region's Economic Development department get involved and work collaboratively with local area municipalities and economic development experts to get involved in the child care recovery plan.

- That the Region works together with the Women's Advisory Committee, business groups and chambers of commerce to develop a plan to advocate for Niagara's needs, further affirming Council's motion in Aug. 2020.

- Develop a child care plan for Niagara. While the Region's Children's Services department is responsible for the legislative responsibilities to license, monitor, enforce

and ensure compliance, it can also play a role in planning for the future that includes the three pillars of accessible, affordable and quality child care.

- Address the wage equity issue. In the development of a child care plan there must also be a focus on filling positions with qualified staff that are paid a fair living wage that reflects the value of their work as an essential pillar of our community. Wage inequity in the care sector has been a long-standing issue. For any child care plan to be stable and sustainable it must address this issue.
- Child care is the foundation of recovery planning and the future prosperity and equity of the entire region of Niagara. This is not only an issue for Public Health and Social Services Committee to receive information - it must be a full team Niagara effort to develop a targeted plan, actions and investment of time, focus and creativity.

Child care is a critical ingredient in all of the Region's economic objectives and strategic plans. It is an economic issue, a social issue, an equity issue, a business issue, and a future building opportunity. Child care is critical to Niagara's economic recovery, to get women back to work, to re-open businesses, to increase our output and opportunity and to achieve the bold future visions this council has set for itself: to achieve a prosperous, safe and inclusive community.

As always, the YWCA is here to work with you, as are many service providers, women's groups, business organizations and policy experts to address this pressing issue. As a YWCA and part of a national network that is actively advocating to address the issues of child care, we can help amplify the messages at a provincial and national level as well as support the development of local strategies.

If we want the community to recover from the devastating impacts the pandemic has had and for women to thrive, as has been stated, this is an essential component for success.

Thank you,

Elisabeth Zimmermann
Executive Director

And

Julie Rorison
Board President

April 20, 2021

Submitted via email

Niagara Regional Council
Office of the Regional Clerk
Niagara Region
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, P.O. Box 1042
Thorold, Ontario L2V 4T7

Dear Chair Bradley,

On behalf of the members of the Gender Equity Task Force please accept this letter in relation to the important issue of childcare in Niagara.

As stewards of our community we would like to invite you to ask the question "who benefits?" from the decisions you make. Social policy and corresponding public investments enshrine priorities and privileges the needs of some citizens over others.

Many studies highlight the social and developmental importance of childcare services for children directly. We would like instead to highlight the link between childcare and labour force participation.

While some may argue that direct payments to families for childcare is a preferred option, we ask you to examine who benefits from this approach? Direct cash payments for parents to find and pay for their own childcare may benefit families with the ability to discern for themselves high quality providers where children are safe from harm. However a system of subsidized childcare provides many more benefits to many more of Niagara's citizens by not only meeting the standard of no harm but also setting the conditions for children to thrive, establishing reliable childcare for parents who are working and contributing to the local economy through employment for childcare providers, opportunities for childcare operators and resources for labour market participation. A subsidized system of childcare levels the playing field for all families by ensuring equal access to high quality childcare.

We see a system of childcare as the better investment and the best way to ensure that the benefits of taxpayer funds are evident for children, families, job seekers and businesses.

Respectfully,

Gender Equity Task Force – Founding Members
Mishka Balsom
Rashmi Biswas
Elisabeth Zimmerman
Sarah Pennisi

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www.westlincoln.ca

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

April 27, 2021

Ann-Marie Norio
Office of the Regional Clerk, Niagara Region
1815 Sir Issac Brock Way
Thorold, ON
L2V 4T7

Sent via email: Ann-Marie.Norio@niagararegion.ca

Dear Committee Chair Greenwood, Public Health and Social Services Committee

Re: Request to Increase Licensed Child Care in the Township of West Lincoln

With full support of the Council of West Lincoln, I am writing to this committee to engage in conversation about the need for an increase in licensed child care in the Township of West Lincoln.

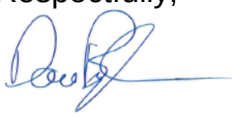
As highlighted in a recent report entitled the Early Learning and Childcare as Key Economic Infrastructure by Deloitte Canada dated March 26, 2021, child care is described as education that is provided using a curriculum-based program delivered by trained educators can provide several benefits including but not limited to:

- Benefits to Children: Investments can have positive impacts on the outcomes for children, including better behavioural/social skills, better mental and physical health, and better long-term labour market outcomes.
- Increase in the Labourforce Participation for Women: Expanding early childhood education can have a positive economic impact through a resulting boost in the labour participation of women.
- Benefits to Parents: Beyond increasing workforce participation for women, ELCC can help reduce parental stress, which benefits their mental health and in turn benefits their children, work performance, and standard of living.
- Promotion of Equality: There is also evidence that investments in ELCC disproportionately benefit lower income Canadians and this can help address socioeconomic challenges, such as income inequality.
- Decreased Reliance of Special Needs Education: There is evidence of the sustained impact of ELCC on reducing the need for special education in the US, the UK, Canada, and other advanced economies.

After a recent review of the available child care in West Lincoln, we as a Council see a need to increase the amount of licensed child care especially for the youngest of children. It is our hope that this letter will highlight the need for our community and will promote further consideration of planning for our community.

Children begin life ready for relationships that assist in early brain development. Relationships continue to be an intricate part of human existence. Not only will a successful quality child care program promote relationship building amongst its youngest clientele, it is imperative that a growing community such as West Lincoln can provide such opportunities to our residents.

Respectfully,



Mayor Dave Bylsma

Fully Supported by All Council Members as listed below:

Mayor Dave Bylsma
Councillor Shelley Bradaric
Councilllor Cheryl Ganann
Councillor Harold Jonker
Councillor Mike Rehner
Councillor William Reilly
Councilllor Jason Trombetta

cc. Regional Councillor Albert Witteveen

From: Niagara Region Website
Sent: Wednesday, 21 April 2021 14:30:40 (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Clerks
Cc: webincoming
Subject: Online Form - Enquiry from Region website

Enquiry from Region website

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

name
Mishka Balsom

phone
[redacted]

email
mishka@gncc.ca

municipality
St. Catharines

other mun

subject
Affordable Daycare

comments
To Chair Bradley and Members of Council: On behalf of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce and its membership, I would like to express the sense of urgency we feel on the question of affordable and accessible childcare. While this issue is long-standing, the pandemic has thrown it into sharp relief. In 89% of all Canadian households with a stay-at-home parent, that parent is the mother. A report from the Niagara Community Observatory and Niagara Workforce Planning Board indicated that between February and April of 2020, working mothers with young children had reduced their working hours at a rate four to five times that of men. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce's annual

Enquiry from Region website

Ontario Economic Report consistently finds, year after year, that the greatest single concern for Ontario's businesses is access to talent. A business community already starved of skilled and qualified workers cannot withstand such a massive departure of skilled and qualified workers from the labour force without economic loss. The lack of affordable and accessible childcare is an economic issue that holds Niagara's business growth and prosperity back. Parents represent a significant pool of talent which is strangled by their inability to find someone to care for their children at a price that makes employment economically viable for them. We urge you to grant this issue the priority it deserves and to work immediately with your provincial and federal counterparts to ensure that affordable childcare becomes a reality.

reply
yes

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https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/council/writtenletter.aspx

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

WAC 3-2021
Wednesday, May 26, 2021
Meeting held by Video Conference

Committee:	Councillors Butters, Huson (Committee Chair); I. Camillo, S. Hill, R. Ivri, N. Kalb, E. Kovacs, L. Lane, C. McGrath, N. Qureshi, R. Unrau (Committee Vice Chair), E. Zimmermann
Absent/Regrets:	Councillor Villella; H. Shaikh
Staff:	L. Gigliotti, Associate Director, Employee Services, V. Kuhns, Associate Director, Economic Development, A.-M. Norio, Regional Clerk, C. Ogunniyi, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, J. Smith, Human Resources Consultant
Others Present:	Gail Neff, Maureen Shantz, and Jean Tonogai, Canadian Federation of University Women St. Catharines

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Huson called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT

Committee Chair Huson read out the Land Acknowledgment Statement:

We begin this meeting by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe peoples many of whom continue to live and work here today.

This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties, is within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” Wampum Agreement.

Today, this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living in Niagara is directly related to the resources and friendship of the Indigenous people.

3. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Economic Recovery Planning

Valerie Kuhns, Associate Director, Economic Development, provided information respecting Economic Recovery Planning. Topics of the presentation included:

- Economic Recovery Planning
- Recovery to Resilience
- 10 Year Economic Development Strategy

5. DELEGATIONS

There were no delegations.

6. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

6.1 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

Jean Tonogai, Member, Maureen Shantz, President, and Gail Neff, Past President, Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) St. Catharines, appeared before Committee regarding the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and to provide information respecting their organization. The CFUW is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, promotion of education and the improvement of the status of women and their human rights. The CFUW is supportive of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign which is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. It was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. The CFUW expressed an interest in working with Niagara Region and the Women's Advisory Committee to increase awareness of the campaign.

6.2 Child Care Update

Ruth Unrau, Committee Vice Chair, provided an update respecting child care. Ruth advised that a meeting was held with groups interested in child care issues. Nine recommendations were brought forward and from those three priorities were identified in coordination with Niagara Region Community Services staff. The three priorities identified were:

- development of a recruitment and retention strategy for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)
- provincial allocations and capital expansion funds, at a minimum, should be maintained, and more capital and operating funds are needed to expand licensed child care, including both centre-based and licensed home child care and
- maintaining and enhancing child care fee subsidies is crucial to addressing affordability in child care

A report on this matter will be brought to the June 15, 2021 Public Health and Social Services Committee.

Committee Information Request(s):

Circulate the report on child care that will be presented at the Public Health and Social Services Committee meeting being held on June 15, 2021. R. Unrau

6. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

6.3 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Update

Cassie Ogunniyi, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager, provided an update on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)work being undertaken. Topics of the update include:

- Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities
- DEI Goals 2021-2022
  - Goal 1: to develop a 5 year DEI Action Plan by April 2022
- Advisory Committees
- Staff and Community Engagement
- Organization selection
- Focus Group with Women's Advisory Committee Members

Committee members were advised that additional information would be provided respecting the focus group as well as the list of organizations would be provided for feedback by Committee members.

7. CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7.1 WAC 2-2021

Women's Advisory Committee Minutes - March 31, 2021

Moved by E. Zimmermann
Seconded by N. Qureshi

That Minutes WAC 2-2021, being the minutes of the Women's Advisory Committee meeting held on March 31, 2021, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Carried

8. OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Platform for Information Sharing

Coletta McGrath, Committee Member, enquired if there was an opportunity to set up a platform where members could post items that may be of interest to the Committee. Cassie Ogunniyi, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager, advised that staff are looking into the development of a platform that would allow the posting of items by Committee members. Committee Chair Huson advised she would coordinate further with staff and provide an update at the meeting being held on July 28, 2021.

8.2 Committee Working Groups

Ruth Unrau, Committee Vice Chair, enquired about the opportunity to develop working groups to undertake additional work on initiatives such as the Economic Development Strategy and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

Moved by N. Qureshi
Seconded by N. Kalb

That a working group **BE FORMED** to assist the work of the Canadian Federation of University Women respecting the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign and;

That Councillor Huson, Naheed Qureshi, and Isabell Camillo, **PARTICIPATE** in this working group.

Carried

8.3 The She-Covery Project

Ruth Unrau, Committee Vice Chair, shared information respecting the She-Covery Project - Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and advised a meeting would be taking place on June 15, 2021 from 1-3:00 p.m. Ruth advised she would circulate additional information to Committee members as it becomes available.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 28, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

Councillor Huson
Committee Chair

Ann-Marie Norio
Regional Clerk