



To the Regional Chair and Members of Council:

I am writing on behalf of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce's Women in Niagara (WIN) Council, an advisory body made up of volunteers that help with programming and advocacy for women in business in Niagara. For many years, the Council has worked to support Niagara's women in business through networking, bursary awards for professional development, advocacy, and more.

It was with great enthusiasm that we saw Councillor Huson's motion proposing the establishment of a Women's Advisory Committee at the Regional Municipality of Niagara, and we wish to offer our full support to the motion and express our willingness to support such a committee, should you choose to pass the resolution.

One key purpose of the WIN Council is to address the challenges that women face in business, particularly the one million Canadian women who are self-employed. While the number of Canadian female entrepreneurs is growing, they are, on average, younger than male entrepreneurs, and make 58% less money than their male counterparts. Female business owners are less likely to engage in international trade or innovation.

Women face similar challenges in governance. Of 123 municipal elected officials in Niagara, only 34 are women. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Parliament has 88 women, out of 338 members, and that is a record number. Ontario has reached a staggering high of 49 female MPPs, or just under 40 percent of the legislature. Nowhere have we yet come close to gender equity. This gap must be closed.

Why should we encourage more women to enter business and politics? Quite aside from the reasons of justice and equality, it is beneficial to companies, the economy, politics, and our society when women are more involved and better-represented. A 2009 study found that increasing women's participation in politics leads to greater investments in education, while another in 2015 showed that companies with strong female leadership on their boards offer a return on equity that is 10.1% annually vs. 7.4% from companies without. The McKinsey Global Institute has said that gender balance in the political sphere promotes gender balance in the workforce, and achieving that balance could add almost \$12 trillion to the world economy in ten years.

Niagara should have its share of that economic growth. We should invest in empowering women and encouraging their participation in public life not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is an investment in stronger and more prosperous communities. We see the formation of a Women's Advisory Committee as a vitally important first step, and one that will help us identify the future steps we need to take in order to unlock the potential for Niagara's community and economy that the full participation of women can offer.

I hope that you will accept this message and support the resolution.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicole Regehr".

Nicole Regehr  
Chair, Women in Niagara Council