

March 8, 2017

To Mayor Watson and Ottawa City Council,

On this International Women's Day, we the undersigned want to express our support for declaring Ottawa a Sanctuary City.

As organizations dedicated to ending violence against women and promoting gender equality, we understand the importance of removing barriers that women face in accessing the services and supports they need to live safe, healthy, full lives. Every day, we work with women trying to leave violent or abusive situations, living in poverty, struggling to feed, house and care for themselves and their families. Some of the women we work with and/or their family members have precarious immigration status and as a result, they often do not access the city services and supports they need for fear that information about their immigration status might be shared with immigration enforcement and put them at risk of detention or deportation. This can include not accessing women's shelters, counselling services, public health services, food banks, emergency services, city recreation programs, and even public transit.

We know from experience that immigration status compounds the inequality women already face, and that this can have negative and dangerous consequences for their safety, health, wellbeing, and dignity, and that of their families. We are committed to undoing these harms and building a city that is safe and inclusive for all women. We believe the City of Ottawa should do the same.

Declaring Ottawa a Sanctuary City, and taking concrete steps to ensure the successful implementation of such a policy, would be tremendous step forward in building the inclusive city we all want. Council has the ability to make this a reality – we hope you will seize the opportunity.

Signed,

Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women  
City for All Women Initiative  
Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes  
VAW Management Committee  
Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre  
Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity  
Carlington Community Health Centre  
CFS Ottawa  
Cornerstone - Housing for Women  
Family Services Ottawa  
Harmony House  
Immigrant Women Services Ottawa  
Interval House of Ottawa  
Jewish Family Services Ottawa

Kind Space  
Maison d'amitié  
Minwaashin Lodge  
Nelson House  
Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre  
Ottawa Victim Services  
Planned Parenthood Ottawa  
Rae of Light Havens  
Sexual Assault Network of Ottawa  
Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa  
Somerset West Community Health Centre  
Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre /  
Chrysalis House  
Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments