

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Jamie Kramer, Accessibility Coordinator, Legislative Services, jkramer@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	March 29, 2021		
Report No.:	Corporate Services-022-21		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: **Women in Governance: Leadership and Mentoring Program at the Town of Cobourg**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council approve the creation of the “Women in Governance: Leadership and Mentoring Program” for the Town of Cobourg, as attached, and;

FURTHER THAT Council participate as both mentors and advisors to the participants through the programming, and;

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to bring a report to Council after the completion of the program.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

The inclusion of this new program falls under the following pillars of the strategic plan, as well as under the scope of the **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy** at the Town of Cobourg:

- **PEOPLE:** The Town of Cobourg supports and cares for the Social and Physical Well-Being of its Citizens.
- **PROGRAMS:** The Town provides efficient and effective corporate, community, and business and recreational services for its residents, businesses, and visitors.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

N/A

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this program is to engage more of our residents as well as develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities of persons in the community who have an interest in municipal government and leadership.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

This program is being developed under the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy as approved by Council.

5. BACKGROUND

The United Nations, a threshold of at least thirty percent (30%) of female legislators is required to ensure that public policy reflects the needs of women. At the very heart of this issue is the question of democracy. In the 2019 election, Canada came the closest they ever had with 28.9% women elected into the House of Commons. During the 2015 election, 26% of the elected officials were women. While there is improvements in each election, this has been seen more frequently at the federal level and not the provincial or municipal levels.

According to a 2013 study¹, there is a list of reasons why women do not run for office including:

- There is a media gender bias;
- Women are asked to run less often than men creating a “recruitment” gap;
- Women do not typically have access to the same types of networks as men, and;
- Women find it harder to raise the money required to run an election.

The acknowledgement of the gap between women, men, and those identifying on the gender spectrum in elected positions or leadership positions in administration, does not denote acceptance of this situation or state that all women will experience this/these issues if they were to run for office.

The Women in Governance: Leadership and Mentoring Program at the Town of Cobourg will assist in our Town to encourage women to participate in all levels of government. It is aiming to encourage more women to learn about the different aspects of participating in all facets of government, as elected officials. The purpose of mentoring is to tap into the existing knowledge, skills, and experience of current Councillors or senior employees and transfer these skills to those who may not have as much, or any experience, in order to assist with advancing their careers.

The expectation is that other municipalities will be able to use this program as a foundation and create their own governance program in the future.

¹ http://www.revparl.ca/36/3/36n3e_13_Driedger.pdf

6. ANALYSIS

The full program document is attached as **Appendix A**. It outlines the twelve (12) week program for women and gender non-conforming individuals to learn more about working in the government as a public servant. The program is unpaid and will match a community member with an elected official.

The goals and objectives of the program are:

1. Provide more insights to the public on the integral elements of being a public servant.
2. Provide practical experience with the daily workings of the Town of Cobourg.
3. Provide networking and personal development opportunities for women and gender non-conforming individuals that reside in the Town of Cobourg.
4. Gain resident input on issues of interest to the participants.

The program works to be inclusive to all genders by incorporating training and speaking opportunities for the Councillors and staff members who identify as male during the course of the twelve (12) weeks. The aim of the program is to provide an overview of the inner-workings of municipal government from Council reports to finance to transit to parks and everything in between.

Participants will be required to fill out an application form and will be selected by Deputy Mayor Séguin, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Chorley, and the Accessibility Coordinator.

This program will be announced to the public on March 31st, 2021 at the end of Women's History Month which is a global celebration of women, even though the Government of Canada recognizes Women's History Month in October, to start recruitment. The participants will be selected at the beginning of May 2021 with the program running from May 31st to August 27th, 2021 inclusive.

After this first cohort of participants, there may be opportunities to expand the pool of mentors to include Councillors and/or staff members who identify as male as well as have participants who identify as male through another stream, including expanding to incorporate members of Administration.

The program will incorporate the procedure laid out in the Volunteer Policy and Procedure which is currently in process of being updated.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

There are no budget or financial impacts beyond "in-kind" through Staff time Police Clearance checks, as per Town of Cobourg policy, [are exempted from fees for Cobourg residents for the volunteer background checks](#). If there are nominal fees required for participation and/or to honour the speakers, funding for this will be taken out of the EDI Strategy budget as approved at the 2021 Budget Meeting.

Depending on the success of the program, suggestions from participants, and additional resources that are found on how to expand the program in the future, there may be a budgetary consideration for Council during the 2022 budget deliberations.

However, Staff will continue to look for funding and partnership opportunities where possible as this program expands, whether through more participants or to other identities.

8. CONCLUSION

The Women in Governance: Leadership and Mentoring Program at the Town of Cobourg is the first step towards creating a more inclusive environment through the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.

There are many opportunities for this program to expand, be adapted, and to incorporate everyone who wishes to participate.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	<u>Women in Leadership Mentoring Program - Corporate Services-022-21.docx</u>
Attachments:	<u>Women in Governance Leadership and Mentoring Program - Town of Cobourg.doc</u>
Final Approval Date:	Mar 18, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk/Manager of Legislative Services - Mar 18, 2021 - 11:46 AM.

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Mar 18, 2021 - 5:46 PM