“Ordinance to Promote Gender Equality and Intercultural Cohesion for a Diverse Setagaya”

Status of Petitions to the Mayor under Article 11 (FY2023)

1. Number and Overview of Petitions to the Mayor

There was one petition to the Mayor in FY2023.

(1) Date of Petition

November 14, 2023

(2) Overview of the Matters Raised

At the “Seminar on Laws and Systems Related to Divorce,” held on September 9, 2023, the lecturer was heard giving guidance on “improperly evading property division” and “taking a child without a legitimate reason.” Audio of these remarks was circulated on social media. This could expose Setagaya City to risks such as lawsuits from participants who concealed assets as instructed and were consequently subject to legal penalties, as well as claims for damages from people harmed by improper concealment of assets. The petitioner therefore requested that Setagaya City hear the lecturer’s account of the facts and publish it; discontinue “women-only” divorce seminars from the following fiscal year onward; and investigate whether approximately 80 participants in seminars led by the lecturer between 2020 and 2023 had engaged in “improperly evading property division,” and publish the results.

(3) Petitioner

Resident of Setagaya City

(4) Relevant Department

Civic and Cultural Affairs Policy Department, Human Rights and Gender Equality Division

(5) Whether the Matter Was Referred to the Setagaya City Committee for Handling Complaints Concerning Gender Equality and Intercultural Cohesion

No

(6) Date the Result Was Notified

January 25, 2024

(7) Overview of Setagaya City’s Response (Answer) in the Notice of Results

[Results of the Investigation, etc.]

① The seminar is limited to women because, when divorce brings major changes to daily life—including work, housing, and child-rearing—women are relatively more likely to face difficulties and barriers. This relative disparity is also evident in the number and nature of cases handled through the responsible division's consultations on domestic violence (DV) and related matters. Against this background, the seminar is designed to encourage active participation, particularly by women experiencing domestic violence, economic exploitation, and similar hardships, by providing a learning environment in which participants with similar circumstances can feel secure and be encouraged to take part.

② In response to concerns that remarks were made during the seminar that could encourage certain inappropriate conduct, the City has already interviewed the lecturer to confirm the facts. The examples and specific content discussed during the lecture do not represent the City's official position, and the lecturer has apologized for remarks that could cause misunderstanding.

③ To prevent misunderstandings among participants in the seminar held in 2023, the website of La Place, the Gender Equality Center that organized the seminar, announced that participants could contact the center to receive an explanation of the correct information and an apology. Participants were asked to contact La Place themselves because some may currently be experiencing domestic violence and may be under constant surveillance by the abuser.

④ It is difficult to investigate the participants in seminars held from 2020 through 2022 because the matters arose more than a year before the petition was submitted and, given the nature of the seminars, registration could be anonymous and no records of the lecture remarks were kept. In addition, the City has no authority to investigate whether participants engaged in improper evasion of property division or similar conduct, and participants are under no obligation to respond.

[Measures to Be Taken]

For seminars held from the following fiscal year onward, the City will offer either online sessions in which participants' faces are not visible, without distinguishing by gender or other attributes, or separate sessions for men and women that reflect their respective needs and circumstances. The City will also carefully confirm seminar content with the lecturer in advance and improve the seminar by clearly publicizing its purpose and intended audience in ways that avoid misunderstanding.

[Referral to the Committee for Handling Complaints]

In light of the investigation results and the measures taken, the City has already indicated how it will respond to seminar participants and the direction for improving the seminar. Therefore, this petition does not warrant referral to the Committee for Handling Complaints for review.

2. Trends in the Number of Petitions to the Mayor

Fiscal Year		Complaints	Opinions	Consultations	Total
FY2023	Number of cases	1	0	0	1
	(of which: referred to the Committee for Handling Complaints)				(0)
FY2022	Number of cases	0	0	0	0
	(of which: referred to the Committee for Handling Complaints)				(0)
FY2021	Number of cases	0	0	0	0
	(of which: referred to the Committee for Handling Complaints)				(0)
FY2020	Number of cases	0	0	0	0
	(of which: referred to the Committee for Handling Complaints)				(0)
FY2019	Number of cases	1	0	0	1
	(of which: referred to the Committee for Handling Complaints)	(1)			(1)
FY2018	Number of cases	1	0	0	1
	(of which: referred to the Committee for Handling Complaints)	(1)			(1)