

Provincial and Municipal Agencies, Boards, and Commissions

Overview of Research

Many important government services are administered through separate agencies, boards, and commissions, and other special purpose bodies which have different relationships with governments. These organizations are governed by boards which may include elected and appointed representatives and range from large highly autonomous institutions (e.g., the Toronto Public Library; Toronto Police Services Board) to other, much smaller, advisory bodies that are involved with local projects and facilities.

In addition, municipalities and the provincial and federal governments are the sole, or a major, shareholder in a number of corporations that deliver vital services and programs. Examples include Toronto Hydro, Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Hydro One and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation.

Finally, governments also nominate or appoint citizens to the boards of certain external organizations (for instance, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority). General agencies, boards, and commissions in Toronto include: the Board of Health, Exhibition Place, Toronto Atmospheric Fund, Toronto Parking Authority, Toronto Police Services Board, Toronto Public Library Board, Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto Zoo (City of Toronto, 2009). Provincial Corporations include some of the largest corporations in Canada, such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO).

The processes for government appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions have garnered considerable attention in recent years. For example, the Public Policy Forum undertook a review of federal level Governor in Council appointments and recommended reform and implementation of best practices (Public Policy Forum, 2004). The study noted that although much of the federal government's work is delegated to 170 agencies, boards, and commissions, equitable and transparent appointment processes are essential. While acknowledging the legitimate role of the alignment in political philosophy with the current government, they also insist on the importance of representation and the qualifications of the candidates in the selection process. Their recommendations include a number of process changes to expand the pool and to promote diversity, as well as improving training and accountability (Public Policy Forum, 2004).

Although there has been virtually no research specifically on diversity in agencies, boards, and commissions, these institutions are among the largest corporations in the country and are thus considered major employers. In addition, they hold considerable influence over policy implementation and decision making and are major service providers in the GTA.

According to the Toronto City Appointments Report for 2003-2004, only 22% of the 15 participating appointments in the City of Toronto were held by visible minorities (Toronto City Summit Alliance, 2007). This report was based on a self-identification survey of appointments to 15 of the 89 boards in the City of Toronto with a 60% survey return rate. The City devised a targeted strategy, and, as the numbers below show, achieved almost a 40% increase in representation in under five years.

Methodology

For the City of Toronto agencies, boards, and commissions category, information was provided by the City of Toronto Strategic and Corporate Policy Division in their 2007-2008 City Appointees Report. A total of 147 senior executives in City of Toronto agencies were included.

For the provincial agencies, boards, and commissions category, we referred to the Financial Report submitted by the Ministry of Finance for 2007-2008 to gather the names of the boards of Ontario agencies, boards, and commissions. In total 235 individuals were identified. All individuals were identified through an online search of names and demographic data.

Findings

Table 19 analyses the visible minority representation among Toronto and Ontario appointments to the agencies, boards, and commissions. Within City of Toronto, 31% of board members are visible minorities compared to only 11% among Ontario agencies, boards, and commissions included in our study.

Table 19: Visible Minorities in Toronto and Ontario Agencies, Boards, and Commissions

Agencies, Boards, and Commissions	Total Number	Total Analyzed	# Visible Minority	% Visible Minority
City of Toronto Agencies, Boards, and Commissions	156*	147	46	31%
Ontario Agencies, Boards, and Commissions	272	235	25	11%
Total	428	382	71	19%

**Derived from reported response rate*

Visible minorities in the City of Toronto agencies are better represented (31%) than in provincial agencies (11%). It would seem likely that this is the result of the concerted efforts to recruit and place visible minorities in these roles in the City of Toronto agencies, boards, and commissions appointments, as described below.

Leading Practices

To address the under-representation of visible minorities in leadership positions on City of Toronto's agencies, boards, and commissions, a concerted effort for 2006-2007 appointments was undertaken to outreach to different ethnic groups. Strategies included:

- Advertising in East/Southeast Asian newspapers;
- Attending Maytree information sessions and specialized conferences;
- Consulting with youth groups;
- Sending announcements to numerous ethno-cultural groups; and
- Creating a brochure on diversity in public appointments for the website.

Toronto also took measures to improve its recruitment processes. All appointment applications were received online and compulsory information sessions were eliminated. A diversity survey was included in each application, which applicants could fill out on a voluntary basis. As a result

of its focused efforts, the City of Toronto increased visible minority representation on its boards dramatically from 21% in 2003-2004 to 31% in 2007-2008.

Providing strong support for board members, once they are appointed, is also critical in terms of training and creating an inclusive board environment. The Town of Markham provides training to its boards on both formal and informal governance with the goal of accommodating diversity around the board table. Markham's orientation includes how to navigate through formal meeting procedures and, in addition, how to effectively communicate in cross-cultural environments as part of its diversity training (Maytree, 2008).

Leadership in Action

Alok Mukherjee, Chair Toronto Police Services Board

Alok Mukherjee is currently Chair of the Toronto Police Services Board. Mukherjee has built a reputation as an equity and human rights advocate in the city.

Mukherjee was a partner of Partners in Equality and a member of the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action. He served as Acting Chief Commissioner and Vice Chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and as a member of the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. Mukherjee has also served as a member of the Board of Governors of Centennial College. He has been active in several community organizations, including the South Asian Fellowship, the National Association of Canadians of Origins in India, and South Asians Fighting Against Racism.

He is frequently called upon to speak and write on human rights, employment equity and anti-racist education issues.

An immigrant from India – coming to Canada in 1971 – Mukherjee encountered racial prejudice and discrimination early. There was a lack of recognition of his international credentials and teaching experience. As a result of these experiences, he became a community activist working for equity and fairness in educational, government and community organizations.

Mukherjee holds a PhD in English. He is the author of several books, the most recent being This Gift of English: English Education and the Formation of Alternative Hegemonies in India (Orient Black Swan, 2009).

Mukherjee's advice to aspiring leaders: "Be strategic in seeking change. Be knowledgeable about the formal and informal culture and processes of the organization you seek to change. Find allies who share your vision and support your efforts. Be persistent and have more than one approach in your change toolkit!"

Jennifer Lynn, Board Member, Ontario Trillium Foundation

Jennifer Lynn's extensive volunteer leadership has focused on organizations dedicated to diversity and Aboriginal issues, social services, education, and arts and culture. She was appointed to the board of the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2004 and serves as Vice Chair of its Governance Committee. Deeply committed to issues of social justice, equity and multiculturalism, she is committed to building a more inclusive and fair society through her professional work and community service.

At the forefront of significant initiatives to effect systemic and institutional change, Lynn is the Founding Chair of the Race Relations Advisory Council on Advertising. The work of the council resulted in the "Color of Your Money" program which was widely recognized for its value in corporate Canada's growing responsiveness to the rapidly changing demographic composition of Canada. She is also a founding member of the National Movement for Harmony in Canada.

Lynn is a special advisor on the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and a member of the Honorary Chairs Council for the United Way of Greater Toronto. She is the past Chair of the Board of the United Way of Greater Toronto and was instrumental in deepening the organization's relationships with ethno-cultural communities, including the establishment of its Chinese Leaders Task Force which initiated the United Way's first Chinese-language public service announcement campaign.

She has also served on the Executive Committee and as Vice Chair of the Governance Committee at the Royal Conservatory of Music and on the boards of United Way International and PhotoSensitive and in senior volunteer roles with Obsidian Theatre Company and Conestoga College.

She is President of LCI Associates Inc. LCI specializes in strategic communications, diversity solutions and public relations services. The firm works with government, business and non-profit organizations in connecting people, ideas and communities to achieve objectives through communications and relationship management strategies.

Lynn is the recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, the Province of Ontario Volunteer Service Award, and the United Way of Canada Chair's Award of Distinction.

Lynn's advice to aspiring leaders: Lead by example in a manner that inspires us to bring out the best in each other.