

ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS

MAYTREE FOUNDATION INITIATIVE URGES ADOPTION OF NINE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE GREATER DIVERSITY IN CIVIC APPOINTMENTS

New publication, *Diversity Matters – An Action Plan for Inclusion in Public Appointments*, supported by Toronto Mayor David Miller

TORONTO (10 January 2007) – Agencies, boards and commissions in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) now have a new tool for promoting greater diversity in civic appointments. abcGTA, an initiative of The Maytree Foundation, today announced the publication of *Diversity Matters – An Action Plan for Inclusion in Public Appointments*. The action plan highlights nine practices aimed at dismantling barriers to potential applicants who can bring an increasingly diverse set of experiences, skills and perspectives to civic life.

"Citizens who receive civic appointments can make an enormous contribution to city-building by providing valuable advice to local government on how to most effectively deliver public services," says Toronto Mayor David Miller. "Unfortunately, the backgrounds of people traditionally selected to serve on municipal agencies, boards and commissions have not typically reflected the demographic diversity of the communities they represent. With this in mind, I urge all GTA municipalities to use this important publication as a practical guide in their appointments process to help remove systemic barriers to full citizen participation."

Diversity Matters identifies nine key practices for agencies, boards and commissions to follow in recruiting for civic appointments:

1. **Commit to diversity** – Political leadership must entrench an unequivocal commitment to diversity in public statements and communications.
2. **Address diversity in appointments policy** – Establish a transparent and accessible appointments process that does not exclude qualified applicants from the application process.
3. **Establish a baseline** – Determine the demographic composition of a constituency and identify barriers to civic participation.
4. **Establish change targets** – Set quantifiable targets for progress measurement.
5. **Create public appointments unit** – Establish an internal unit responsible for ensuring the appointments process is managed consistently and appropriately.
6. **Provide training** – Provide training and tools to members of agencies, boards and commissions to ensure diversity promotion is practiced in daily governance.
7. **Recruit qualified, diverse candidates** – Increase the overall number of qualified applicants, focus on skills and experience as primary selection criteria, and have diversity be taken into consideration.

8. **Support diverse agencies, boards and commissions** – Accommodations should be made to ensure individuals from diverse backgrounds are not discouraged from civic participation due to restrictive factors, such as cultural holidays, child-care needs, etc.
9. **Report on progress** – Since diversity promotion is a long-term initiative, progress reports are essential to measure against set targets and sustain a commitment to diversity over the longer-term.

“Across the GTA, there are many gifted and qualified civic leaders in immigrant communities who would make valuable additions to any agency, board or commission,” says Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director, The Maytree Foundation. “However, many don’t know what civic appointments are available to them or the application process makes appointments inaccessible. The resulting civic appointments typically do not represent the diversity of our communities. The practices outlined in *Diversity Matters* help ensure that multiple points of view are included in civic governance.”

The GTA's agencies, boards and commissions represent the interests of a growing number of multicultural communities. According to the City of Toronto, by 2017 half of the GTA population is projected to be comprised of immigrants, up from 44 percent in 2001. By 2017 the proportion of visible minorities will also increase to over 50 percent compared to 36 percent in 2001.

“Without bold, new ways to hold municipalities accountable for ensuring greater diversity in civic appointments, the experience, knowledge and skills of these immigrants and minorities are likely to be under-represented,” continues Mayor Miller. “More than that, the GTA will miss countless opportunities to leverage their expertise to our collective benefit.”

According to research, civic diversity can improve organizational effectiveness to help seize opportunities for improved services and products, enhance decision-making and capitalize on public perception of social consciousness and progress. In fact, some of these recommendations are in practice, both locally in the GTA and abroad in other countries, and are seeing success.

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An electronic copy of *Diversity Matters – An Action Plan for Inclusion in Public Appointments* is available for download at: <http://www.abcgta.ca/diversitymatters.html>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ABOUT abcGTA

abcGTA, a project of The Maytree Foundation, works to ensure that the people who live and work in the GTA find voice and are able to reflect their perspectives and issues on governance bodies of publicly funded and voluntary agencies, boards and commissions.

abcGTA has created a directory of nearly 200 visible minority candidates from across the GTA who are qualified, willing and ready to serve on boards of public institutions and voluntary organizations.

For more information: www.abcgta.ca

ABOUT THE MAYTREE FOUNDATION

The Maytree Foundation is a private Canadian charitable foundation established in 1982. The Foundation is committed to reducing poverty and inequality in Canada and to building strong civic communities. The Foundation seeks to accomplish its objectives by identifying, supporting and funding ideas, leaders and leading organizations that have the capacity to make change and advance the common good.

For more information: www.maytree.com