

AGENCIES, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs), or other special purpose bodies, administer many essential government services. These institutions include both elected and appointed representatives and vary from largely independent institutions (e.g. the Toronto Public Library) to advisory boards and offices created for local or smaller projects. Additionally, there are corporations that deliver services and programs such as Toronto Hydro Corporation, Toronto Community Housing, Hydro One, and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation. In these cases, municipal, provincial and federal governments are sole or major shareholders. Citizens may also be nominated or appointed to the boards of certain external organizations, such as for example, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (City of Toronto, 2009).

Methodology

As in previous years, the study looked at appointments to ABCs made by both the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario.

Demographic data were provided by the City of Toronto for 173 appointments to municipal agencies, boards and commissions. Since the rates were calculated in 2010, the City of Toronto has not made any new appointments.

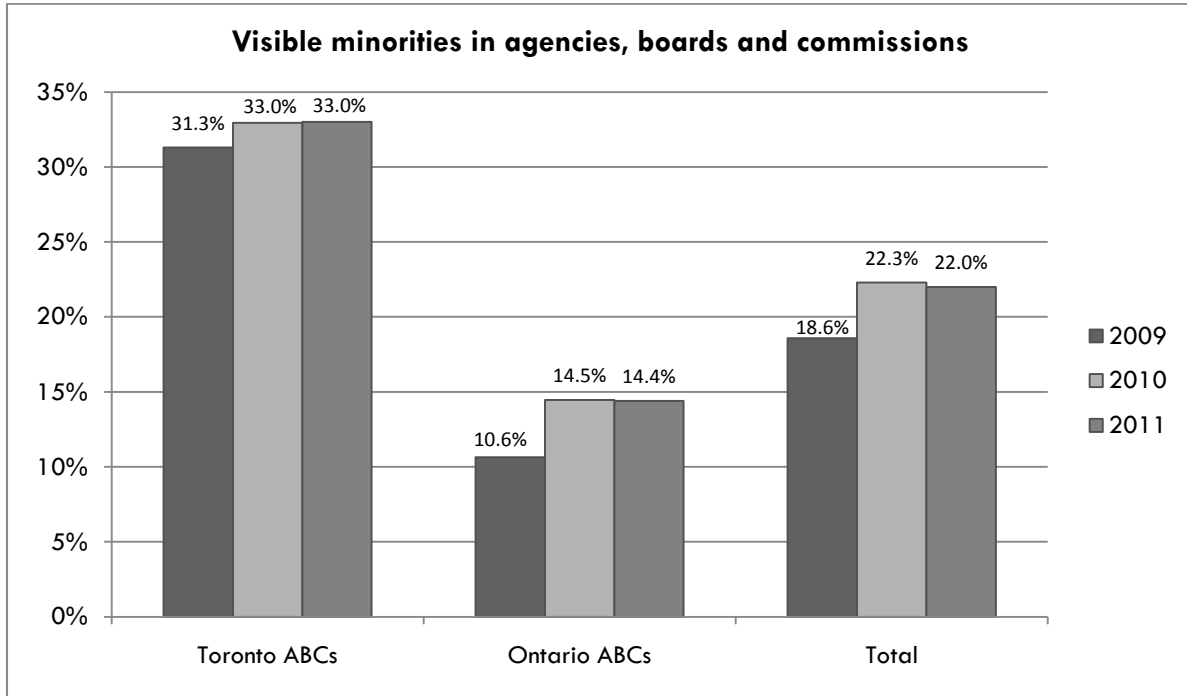
A total of 273 leaders were identified from the largest provincial ABCs, as determined by revenues reported in the financial report submitted by the Ministry of Finance for 2009-2010 (see Appendix 5). Of these, data were found for 250 leaders.

Findings

ABCs continue to demonstrate higher rates of visible minority leadership than other sectors. In 2011, 22% of all ABC leaders (93 of 423) in the GTA are visible minorities, compared to 22.3% in 2010 and 18.6% in 2009.

In municipal ABCs, 33% of leaders are visible minorities. Among provincial ABCs, 14.4% of leaders are visible minorities, an overall leap of 35.3% from 2009, when the rate was 10.6% (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Visible minorities in agencies, boards and commissions



Practices that Work in ABCs

Agencies, boards and commissions have undertaken explicit strategies to diversify leadership.

Count: What gets measured gets done

Tracking diversity in leadership is important to improving the number of visible minority leaders within an organization. The City of Toronto (2011) collects diversity data from applicants at all stages of the appointment process, so that it can track and evaluate its progress. The City of Toronto (2010) has reported that it has achieved greater diversity in its board appointments because it provides public reports on its diversity.

Set targets

In order to successfully evaluate progress, specific targets for diversity must be set. The City of Toronto (2011), for example, has established targets to increase the representation of visible minorities in agencies, boards, and commissions.

Lead: Make diversity a strategic priority

The City of Toronto has ensured that opportunities for appointments to ABCs and the application process were clarified and simplified (Maytree, n. d.). The City provides information about the application process on its website, advertises in a variety of languages, including in the ethnic press, distributes special brochures at diverse community events, has renamed the appointment committee, and has appointed the deputy mayor to oversee appointments. As a result, the proportion of visible minorities on ABCs has increased dramatically (City of Toronto, 2008).

Develop the pipeline

Developing the pipeline includes the long-term development of diverse communities and youth (Cooper, 2008), engaging immigrants in voluntary and activist activities, and communicating the importance of civic engagement in organizations (Andersen & Milligan, 2010, Gele & Harsløf, 2010).

Develop and sustain excellent human resource practices

Strategies to increase visible minority leadership include the redefinition of conventional concepts of merit and the consideration of alternative pathways to promotion (Nishikawa, 2009). Training and development initiatives as those recommended by the City of Toronto (2008) aimed at increasing the number of visible minorities in elected office – such as mentoring, coaching and job shadowing – would also help. Providing other support systems, such as training on effective communication and navigating bureaucracy, has helped level the playing field in the City of Toronto (Nishikawa, 2009).

Communicate to influence: Mainstream diversity

Both Toronto Hydro Corporation (2007) and Toronto Community Housing (n.d.) have committed to ensuring their procurement processes are fair and equitable. Furthermore, Toronto Community Housing's policy ensures equitable access to the purchasing system for small companies owned by visible minorities.