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Workforce Diversity Management in Ontario Municipalities

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**WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN ONTARIO
MUNICIPALITIES**

MPA Research Report

Submitted to:

The Local Government Program
Department of Political Science
The University of Western Ontario

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ABSTRACT

Changing demographics in Canada have resulted in increased workforce diversity. This diversity refers to differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Municipalities in Ontario have begun to recognize the need to make changes within their organizations in order to cultivate workplaces that embrace diversity and manage it effectively. However, though many have recognized its importance, few have implemented workforce diversity management policies. Diversity and change management literature suggests that there are four critical factors that contribute to the successful implementation of a workforce diversity management strategy. These include responding to a wake-up call; creating buy-in from all levels of the organization; the existence of a diversity champion; and the consideration of internal and external environmental forces. By conducting an analysis of nine mid-sized Ontario municipalities, this purpose of this study is to determine why some have implemented a workforce diversity management policy, while others have not.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Hudson Institute's 1987 study, *Workforce 2000*, forecast a considerably different labour force in the next century (Johnston & Packer, 1987). The study projected shrinkage of traditional sources of labour while a new workforce of women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and older workers would fill the void (Shin & Mesch, 1996, p. 292). Since the 1980's, organizations have been grappling with these changes. A diverse workforce brings "an appreciation for human capacity and individual differences; it also brings human resource challenges" (Condrey, 2010, p. 163). Examples of these challenges include reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, flexible work hours or job sharing for individuals with families, and religious accommodations for those of varying faiths. Unless organizations develop a culture in which differences are understood, valued, and respected, diversity is likely to create conflict, resentment, and low morale. Unmanaged cultural change will result in decreased organizational effectiveness.

Managing workforce diversity is particularly essential for municipal governments. Public service is about advancing the interests of community residents. "These interests are advanced by countless interactions between citizens and the state in the daily work of governance" (Condrey, 2010, p. 160). As governments attempt to reform themselves, it is imperative the workforce diversity management strategies be utilized in order to succeed in the new public sector environment. "The movement of managing diversity in the workplace is at a critical stage. Given the realities of the changing workforce and workplace, diversity issues will not go away. Organizations of the future will need to develop systematic efforts to managing diversity" (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998, p. 235). Although diversity issues are complex, studies have shown that diversity management initiatives can be successful in improving attitudes and

relationships among a demographically diverse workforce (Ellis & Sonnenfeld, 1994; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Robinson & Dechant, 1997).

Despite the awareness that workforce diversity management is important for success in today's local government context, not all municipalities in Ontario are on board. The intention of this paper is to review diversity and change management literature and apply a conceptual framework to case studies of nine municipalities in Ontario in order to better understand why some have responded to the need for diversity management policies, while others have not. While there is an abundance of change management and diversity literature currently available, it primarily focuses on monitoring and research in the United States, and on large private sector organizations. Its scope is limited when it comes to the Canadian public sector, specifically local government, where more research is needed. This study provides a snapshot of the workforce diversity management initiatives in Ontario public sector organizations at this time. This research will be used to understand the forces that either advance or hinder workforce diversity management initiatives. It may also be used as a benchmark for future studies in Ontario.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

The term *workforce diversity* is defined as “the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment setting” (Cox, 2001, p. 3). Workforce diversity means that individuals hold different cultural assumptions about how to work constructively, and about the role of work in their lives. Diversity includes any perceived differences among people including age, geographic origin, religion, educational background, sexual preference, gender, and language, in addition to ethno-racial categories (Rangarajan & Black, 2007, p. 251). As the workforce changes, the *one-size fits all* approach to management that

was effective thirty years ago is arguably no longer an appropriate strategy for ensuring maximum employee performance (Ricucci, 2002). It is expected that “the extent to which these demographic workforce shifts are effectively and efficiently managed will have an important impact on the competitive and economic outcomes of organizations” (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998, p. 236). Accommodating diversity can be challenging, but it is beneficial for organizations to cultivate a diverse workforce and to assist members of diverse groups to succeed.

Workforce Diversity Management

Workforce diversity management refers to the “systematic and planned commitment on the part of organizations to recruit and retain employees from diverse demographic backgrounds” (Kirton & Greene, 2009, p. 159). According to Triandis, Kurowski and Gelfand (2002), “Managing diversity means changing the culture – that is, the standard operating procedures. It is more complex than conventional management, but can result in more effective organizations” (p. 773). The history of workforce diversity management in the United States began with the affirmative action policies of the 1960’s. These policies were based on the premises that “women, blacks, immigrants, and other minorities should be given employment as a matter of public policy and common decency,” and that “legal and social coercion are necessary to bring about the change” (Thomas, 1990, p. 107). Affirmative action “might be called ‘hiring by the numbers’ because of its focus on increasing the representation of the designated groups through targeted hiring” (Agócs & Burr, 1996, p. 32). In Canada, the roots of workforce diversity management began in 1984 with the Abella Commission. Judge Rosalie Abella recognized that several disadvantaged groups were being denied the full benefits of employment. These findings led to the Employment Equity Act in 1986, which was later amended in 1996. Abella considered using the term “Affirmative Action,” but instead created the term “Employment Equity” for the Canadian context (Abella, 1984, p. 6). Although discrimination was prohibited under human rights statutes, the Employment Equity Act was created to ensure that changes were made to the

traditionally white male dominated workplace. Lack of workforce participation by minority groups was seen as systemic in nature, and the Employment Equity Act was created to challenge this system. While Employment Equity is a legislated requirement of the federal government that applies only to federally regulated employers, diversity management is a voluntary strategy with no restrictions.

These policies were seen by some to weaken the system of meritocracy and to discriminate against individuals who did not fall under a minority group category. Affirmative Action in particular was considered to have resulted in under-qualified staff being hired by managers attempting to be inclusive. Despite these contentions, these policies were a vital first step in challenging the status quo and allowed minority individuals into a labour force from which they were previously excluded. Today, the realities of the workforce have changed and emphasis has shifted toward getting the most out of diverse employees. Employment Equity starts externally and is enforced through legislation, whereas diversity management starts internally, through the efforts to create an atmosphere of equality and a fully inclusive organizational culture at work (Gordon, 1995). Diversity management means integrating all employees effectively and allowing them to succeed in a supportive environment. Diversity management refers to the “voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs” (Mor Barak, 2011, p. 235). Managing diversity is “premised on recognition of diversity and differences as positive attributes of an organization, rather than as problems to be solved” (Shen, Chanda, D’Netto, & Monga, 2009, p. 235). Workforce diversity management is not just in relation to numbers, but it is concerned with equitable workplace policies and practices that minimize systemic discrimination, or the patterns of behavior, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization that create or perpetuate disadvantage for non-majority individuals (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2001). Workforce diversity

management not only seeks to address the broad systemic challenges, but also to influence the organizational culture of the organization. The purpose of workforce diversity management is to create a high achieving diverse learning organization. The end result should be “a discrimination free workforce with a climate of collaboration, trust, shared power and health, where barriers are removed and systems are in place for continuous learning and change” (Finefrock, 2009).

Why Municipalities Implement Workforce Diversity Policies

Several researchers have attempted to understand what drives public sector organizations to implement diversity management policies. Pitts, Hicklin, Hawes and Melton (2010) argued that organizations implement policies for three reasons: as a response to environmental uncertainty, as a result of environmental favourability, and in order to adapt to environmental norms and mimic the actions of peer organizations (p. 4). Essentially, what this means is that municipalities implement policies because they have to, because they can, or because everyone else is doing it. Mighty (1996) also wrote about the adoption of diversity management policies and stated that those with higher levels of education have likely had greater exposure to diverse views, acquired more knowledge about different peoples, and become more tolerant and open to diversity. According to Ng (2008), age is also expected to correlate with attitude toward diversity. Younger individuals are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward diversity because of their socialization and acculturation in an era that is more tolerant of diversity than older generations. Perhaps communities with young, highly educated residents are more likely to appreciate the merits of having a diverse workforce and be committed to diversity management programs.

Demographic trends are diversifying the workforce in new ways and have influenced the increase in workforce diversity management programs. This demographic diversity is nothing new, but what has changed is the “extent to which these differences now coexist in the realm of

work, as well as the widespread desire, from both the majority and minority, for all groups to have their differences acknowledged and appreciated” (O’Leary & Weathington, 2006, p. 3). This diversity “is accentuated by changes that are increasing the proportion of the workforce that is made up of nontraditional workers – particularly women but also older people, people with disabilities, and people with nontraditional sexual orientations” (Mor Barak, 2011, p. 84). In Canada, especially, immigration has accounted for a large transformation of the workforce. Birth rates in Canada are low, and the country’s population is not increasing naturally. Baby boomers have begun to retire, leaving huge gaps in the workforce that many cities and towns are struggling to fill with qualified employees. The federal government has responded with immigrant attraction strategies. As Albiom (2002) stated, the Canadian government has projected that growth within the workforce will occur primarily through immigration, while the domestic production of professionals and skilled trades will only replace the aging workforce. Interestingly, Rangarajan and Black (2007) stated that increases in ethnic populations are primary reasons cited for embracing diversity initiatives in the workplace. This is largely because “it is tangible, data-driven evidence of environmental change” (p. 249). Hur, Strickland, and Steganovic (2009) contend that “demographic characteristics of municipalities affect their concerns about diversity and related issues, and their consequent adoption of diversity management practices” (p. 502).

Workforce diversity management is especially critical in the public sector. The public service is Canada’s largest enterprise both in terms of workforce and spending (Public Policy Forum, 2007, p. 1). In order to effectively serve the public, the public sector workforce must accurately reflect the make-up of its citizenry. “Representative bureaucracies achieve many important objectives including ensuring that diverse groups are represented in making policies and allocating benefits” (Kellough & Naff, 2004, p. 62). A key challenge is “ensuring that public services promote excellence and continued representativeness by effectively attracting the talent and diversity that increasingly characterizes Canada” (Public Policy Forum, 2007, p. 8). It is the

responsibility of the public sector to implement society's values of equity and respect for all citizens. Government has the responsibility not only to enact policies that will promote equal opportunity for its own workforce, but to play a leadership role in setting a model for the private sector as well (Shin & Mesch, 1996, p. 293). Proper diversity management in the public sector ensures decisions and services are more responsive to agency clientele, particularly members of minority groups. This is particularly essential for local government, as it is the closest to citizens. Local government staff, public boards, commissions (including police and fire), and elected bodies must be able to understand diversity issues within their community and adapt services to match the needs of the population.

Environmental factors also contribute to whether or not municipal governments implement diversity management strategies. Two recent legislations in Ontario have impacted local government organizations in this regard. The first is the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act (AODA) of 2005. This Act assists Ontarians by "implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025" (Service Ontario, 2005). The second piece of legislation is Bill 168, which amended the Occupational Health and Safety Act. This bill requires that employers must prepare policies with respect to workplace violence and harassment, develop and maintain programs to implement their policies, and provide information to workers on the contents of these policies and programs (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2011). Each of these legislations may be catalysts for municipalities to adopt workforce diversity management strategies. Or, conversely, they may become top priorities, causing voluntary efforts on workforce diversity management to be pushed aside in favor of legislated mandates.

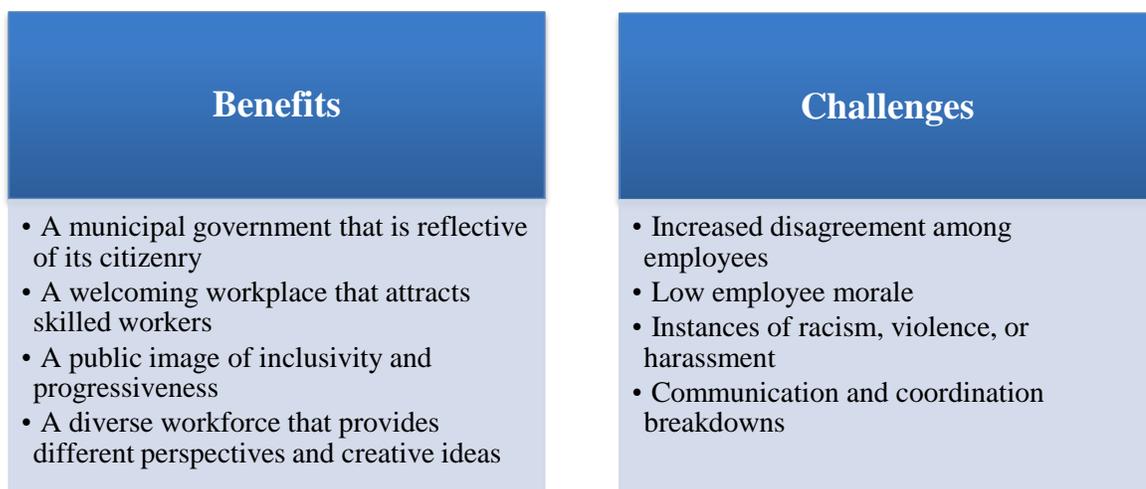
Diversity initiatives created by other levels of government and non-governmental organizations may also be an influential factor. The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement

(COIA) has resulted in several successful collaborations between provincial and municipal governments. One example is the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative. Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the goal of the LIP is for each community to create an immigrant settlement plan to be adopted by Council in order to incorporate diversity into the strategic plans and visions of Ontario municipalities (Tossutti, 2010). A second initiative is the Municipal Immigration Information Online (MIIO) program, or the Newcomer Portals. Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI), this program gives municipalities resources to create websites to improve newcomer access to municipal information or services (Ontario Immigration, 2011). A third initiative is the Canadian Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Coalition of Canadian Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD). With 46 Canadian municipalities as members of the Coalition, it invites municipalities from across Canada to sign a declaration of commitment to developing, implementing, promoting and enforcing anti-racism and anti-discrimination strategies, policies and procedures; examining equity at a systemic level; and taking steps to eliminate barriers (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2011).

If an organization does not develop a culture in which differences are understood, valued, and respected, diversity will likely create challenges. As diversity increases there is potential for employees to feel alienated, causing distrust or conflict between groups that may culminate in instances of racism, violence, or harassment. Increased diversity within a group can “lead to breakdowns in communication, coordination, and cohesion, which in turn make it more difficult for members to work well together” (Pitts & Jarry, 2009, p. 505). Workforce diversity management helps organizations avoid future discrimination-based legal action. Rather than waiting for a “diversity crisis” to take place before a change is made, organizations should be proactive in systemically managing diversity (Friday & Friday, 2003, p. 867). There are also multiple internal benefits to diversity management in the public sector workplace (see Figure 1).

The payback for organizations that plan for the anticipated workforce and accept cultural diversity management include “employee retention, increased productivity, less absenteeism, better morale, and improved services rendered to customers” (Mathews, 1998, p. 177).

Figure 1: Benefits and Challenges of a Diverse Municipal Workforce



Implementation of Workforce Diversity Management Strategies

Valuing and managing diversity requires a holistic approach to human resource (HR) management. This includes “generating respect for group differences in attitudes, values, and behaviour – thereby creating an environment in which everyone has an equal chance at participation and, importantly, career advancement” (Shin & Mesch, 1996, p. 292). Since managing diversity is a voluntary corporate approach, “the composition of diversity management programmes varies widely from one organization to another” (Agócs & Burr, 1996, p. 30). The first step to creating a workplace diversity management strategy is to have a clear rationale for the strategy and to communicate its importance to all staff. Rangarajan and Black (2007) noted “the failure of human resource managers to justify their reasons for implementing a diversity program may result in guilt, feelings of incompetence, and dissatisfaction with the workplace” (p. 258). Front-line employees, managers, elected officials, municipal partners and community residents

will not endorse the initiative if they do not believe in its necessity or understand its value. Diversity management is not a quick fix, but is an ongoing process that involves changing the organization's central beliefs and core assumptions about people and behaviour (Dobbs, 1998). Leadership commitment is central to motivating the organization to want to change. Those who will be implementing the diversity plans must be confident that they have the support and backing of the municipality's CAO and Council.

Before workplace diversity management strategies can be created, the organization's "cultural environment, management, and evaluation systems should be examined to ascertain if existing personnel and human resources process will support or hinder diversity" (Mathews, 1998, p. 175). This audit includes surveying employees to identify attitudes and opinions, age profiles, the number of women, men, and ethnic minorities employed and their location in the organization (Kandola & Fullerton, 1998). One of the challenges of audits is that to a certain degree ethnic diversity is self-defined and some employees might not categorize themselves as minority members (Brammer, Millington & Pavlin, 2007). Similarly, monitoring and research on disability in the workplace is difficult because of the social stigma associated with it and similar challenges of individuals defining their disability (Stone-Romero, Stone & Lukaszewki, 2006). In addition to internal environmental factors, assessing the external environment is also useful as it compares the organization with others and sets benchmarks. The data collected is beneficial as a baseline for future program evaluations. Though the audit process is lengthy and requires significant resources, its benefits are invaluable.

Part of the diversity strategy should include the formulation of a diversity policy. "A written, enforceable diversity policy, stating the systemic action steps and behaviours expected by all employees is a must as it relates to effectively managing the organizational inputs of all individuals" (Friday & Friday, 2003, p. 877). Diversity policies are valuable because they provide municipalities with a written commitment to diversity and include a plan for diversity

management. One element that may be included in the diversity plan is a requirement for staff to participate in diversity training programs. This training is integral to the strategy and will ensure that employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to create an inclusive work environment. Diversity training should be viewed no differently than any other type of training in which an organization invests. “It should be viewed as a necessary tool to manage members’ behaviours and their ability to work productively with diverse individuals” (Friday and Friday, 2003,p. 873). Further examples of diversity initiatives that could be included in the plan are: flex hours to allow employees to accommodate family responsibilities; hiring guidelines to assist in attracting and hiring a diverse workforce reflective of the community; or the formation of a cultural committee that holds ethnic food days or religious celebrations. There is no standard workforce diversity management plan, as each plan must be designed to meet the specific needs of the municipality.

Diversity initiatives may pose challenges because of the negative attitudes of some employees. Those that are overtly opposed to diversity may attend the diversity training program with hostility or antagonism. Some employees may feel that the training “indicates that they are ignorant and racist” and attempts to increase awareness may be “perceived as insults” (Rangarajan & Black, 2007, p. 258). One factor that has been found to affect an organization’s resistance to change is employee age and tenure. “An aging workforce that has become accustomed to seeing things through particular lenses may be reluctant to embrace new ideas” (Rangarajan & Black, 2007, p. 257). A possible way to mitigate this is to create employee ownership of the initiative by involving staff in each step of the planning, implementation, and evaluation process through focus groups, workshops, meetings, and feedback mechanisms.

2.2 CHANGE MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

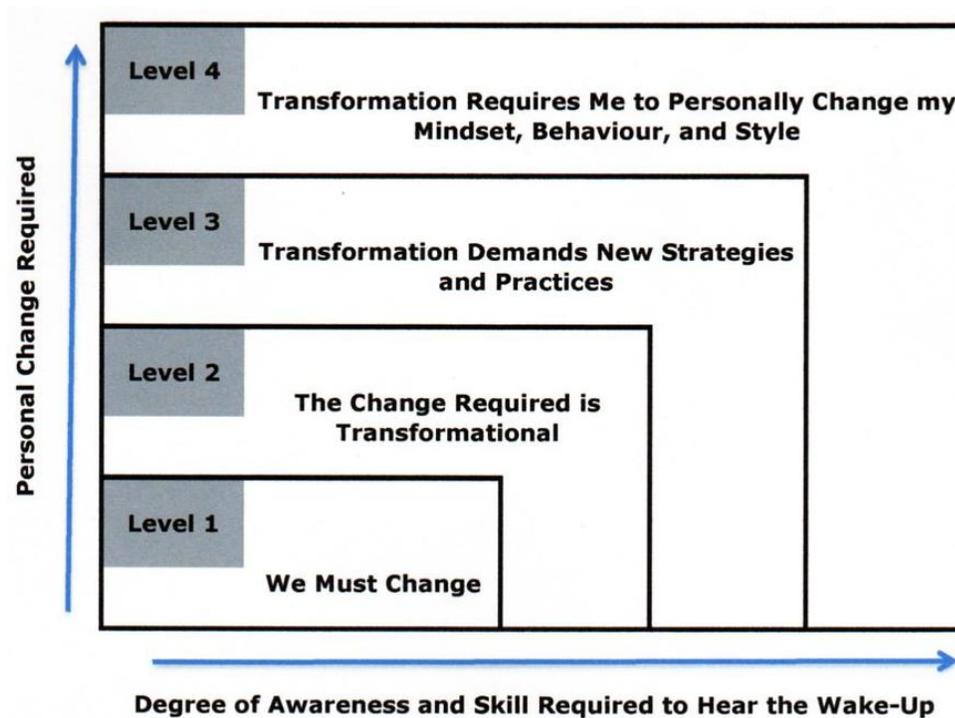
Public sector organizations are faced with rapid rates of change that have “produced a major reorientation of structures, systems and management methods” (bin Idris, Eldridge, 1998, p. 343). According to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001), change and how to lead it successfully has become the foremost topic on the minds of organizational leaders. The future success of organizations depends on how successful leaders are at managing change. Those that prosper have the “capacity to effectively solve problems, rapidly adapt to new situations, readily identify new opportunities and quickly capitalize on them” (McInnes, 1999). However, change management is not an easy task, and large-scale change initiatives are not always victorious. Ironically, people both “fear and seek change” (Kitchen & Daly, 2002, p. 47). Major organizational changes can anticipate resistance, “especially if proposed changes alter values and visions related to the existing order” (Trader-Leigh, 2002, p. 138). Change “creates initiative overload and organizational chaos, both of which provoke strong resistance from the people most affected” (Abrahamson, 2006, p. 127). In order for change to be successfully managed, several factors must be taken into consideration. According to change management literature, these factors include responding to a change catalyst, creating buy-in for the change, the existence of a change champion, and taking into consideration the environment and context in which the change will occur.

The Change Catalyst

Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001) wrote “change is catalyzed by a number of forces that trigger first awareness and then action” (p.15). Change does not just happen out of the blue, but is often a response to a catalyst or wake-up call. Organizations must be aware of their environment in order to acknowledge and respond to this call for change. According to these authors, the “pain of the mismatch between the organization and the needs of its environment creates a wake-up call” (p. 39). These catalysts illuminate what is necessary for the organization to move forward and formulate what is needed for the organization in the future. In order for

organizations to flourish, “leaders must hear the wake-up call, understand its implications, and initiate a transformation process that attends to all the drivers of change” (p. 39). Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001) discussed the four levels of hearing a wake-up call (Figure 2). The levels show increasing amounts of awareness and the sequence in which awareness of the need for change develops.

Figure 2: Levels of Wake-up Calls for Transformation¹



As leaders move through the levels, they realize that without putting themselves overtly into their organization's change process, the full potential of the transformation will not manifest. “They now acknowledge that they must transform themselves to become a model of the desired change” (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001, p. 59). However, the authors stress that the wake-up call is not heard solely by the leaders. Employees on the front line, who are closest to the customers,

¹ Anderson and Ackerman Anderson, 2001, p. 58

will often hear it first while working with the public. Yet while these employees may hear the call, without the response of the leaders, the change is not likely to move forward (p. 42).

Creating Buy-In

Gaining commitment to a new way of doing things is challenging. Organization designs for major change often “result in failure or a struggle between forces supporting change and those resisting change” (Trader-Leigh, p. 140). It is important to realize that managers and employees view change differently. “For senior managers, change means opportunity. But for employees, change is seen as disruptive and intrusive” (Strebel, 2006, p. 45). In order for people to buy-in, they must see that they will benefit from the change. Many of the difficulties experienced by organizations attempting to manage change are a result of “leaders not attending to the cultural, behavioural, and mindset components of transformation” (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001, p. 16). Organizational culture refers to the pattern of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that guide employees’ actions (Sniderman, Bulmash, Nelson, & Quick, (2010). One’s mindset is the lens through which a person sees the world. Changing mindsets is necessary for sustained change in behaviour and culture, as it helps employees understand the rationale behind the change. The mindsets of employees set the culture in an organization based on how the organization has operated in the past, how the employees view their leaders, and whether or not the staff will buy-in to the change.

Researcher John Kotter (1996) wrote about creating a sense of urgency around change. If there is no urgency, then staff will feel ambivalent toward the change and not be motivated to participate. Establishing a sense of urgency is crucial to gaining needed cooperation. “With complacency high, transformations usually go nowhere because few people are even interested in working on the change problem” (p. 36). A sense of urgency can result from examining the

environment, “identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, and major opportunities” (p. 21). When the criticality of the change is obvious, individuals are more likely to buy-in and support the change. In addition, creating a vision that is understood by all is integral to successful organizational change. “Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future” (Kotter, 1996, p. 68). Organizations that “lose touch with their core purpose, vision, and values have no inspiration to fuel their process of change” (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001, p. 45). Allowing those affected by the change to participate in creating the vision will build strong commitment and ensure alignment with the vision. Vision plays a key role producing change by helping to direct, align, and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people. “Without an appropriate vision, a transformation effort can easily dissolve into a list of confusing, incompatible, and time-consuming projects that go in the wrong direction or nowhere at all” (Kotter, 1996, p. 7). Shen et al. (2009) contend that top management commitment to the change should be reflected in the organizational vision in order to “remove psychological and operational barriers” to organizational change (p. 245). Creation of a simple purpose and vision statement ensures an opportunity for understanding and creating buy-in for the long term.

Many mistakes in change management programmes can be “linked directly to, and have causal connections with, breakdowns in communication” (Kitchen & Daly, 2002, p. 46). Creating buy-in for change requires that all aspects of the change be communicated throughout the organization. All stakeholders must be told why the change is needed and how it will be achieved in order for them to be able to buy-in. Kitchen and Daly (2002) state that communication is important because it “is used as a tool for announcing and explaining, and preparing them for the positive and negative effects of the impending change” (p. 50). Leaders need to identify multiple methods for getting the message out, including meetings, e-mails, print, discussion groups, and briefings. Effective communication of the organization’s vision for change enables staff to “align

their actions to support organizational goals, to coordinate and maximize resource use, and to stay motivated” (Lippitt, p. 19). Moreover, “communication comes in both words and deeds. Nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with the verbal communication” (Kotter, 1996, p. 10).

Champions of Change

According to Kotter (1996), major transformations are often associated with one highly visible individual (p. 45). These individuals, or, *champions of change*, motivate and inspire members of the organization to be committed to change. Change champions are those staff members who can “envision, lead, or implement strategic policy changes of a far-reaching, transformative or integrative nature” (Caldwell, 2001, p. 39). The influence of such change advocates “may explain why similar organizations react differently to the same environmental stimuli or performance outcomes even when similar levels of resources for change are available to both” (Ginsberg & Abrahamson, 1991, p. 174). Champions of change are often leaders within their organizations. Leadership is “the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of the others in the accomplishment of a common task” (Chemers, 1997, p 8). The leader may or may not have any formal authority. Leading is fundamentally different from managing, though managers may often be great leaders. “A true leader is able to exact some increment of compliance from followers beyond what subordinates must provide to a manager under the threat of discipline” (Siegel, 2010, p. 143). Champions “try to get people behind their concepts whenever possible, and to co-opt or neutralize serious opposition if necessary” (Ginsberg & Abrahamson, 1991, p. 178). Though change champions are often individuals, they may also be committees or groups that pressure leaders for change. If a change process is to proceed, a “sound and appropriately supported argument for change must be heard, understood, and accorded legitimacy by organizational decision makers who have the power to enact change” (Agócs, 1997, p. 922).

Environment and Context

In the “context of massive global forces that move technology, culture, capital, and labour across national boundaries on an ever-broadening scale, cities are becoming focal areas of transformation” (Stren & Polèse, 2000, p. 9). All organizations are affected by their environments, or the “dynamics of the larger context within which they operate” (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001, p. 17). Kitchen and Daly (2002) wrote that both external factors and internal environmental factors drive change or impinge on organizational ability to manage change. External factors may include “new technology, changes in the marketplace, changing customer expectations, competitor activities, quality and standards, government legislation, and prevailing political values and economic cycles” (p. 48). Internal factors do be aware of are “management philosophy, organizational structure, culture, as well as the systems of internal power and control” (p. 48). In today’s operating reality, local governments are being called upon to do more with less. The financial recession, coupled with the downloading of responsibilities from higher levels of government has left municipalities struggling for resources. Governments are attempting to follow a more business-like model and are focusing on efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Further, increased technology means that governments are operating in a fish bowl. Access to information including Council minutes, corporate policies, and feedback posted on social media sites has made transparency and accountability issues more imperative. As environmental complexity increases, government organizations must attempt to be more nimble, proactive, and innovative. They should be proactive in responding to environmental change and setting new trends rather than reactive to the change long after it happened (Anderson, Ford & Hamilton, 1998, p. 31).

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A review of existing diversity and change management literature suggests that diversity initiatives are necessary in the public sector workforce, but that success in implementing this change may be dependent on several key factors. The conceptual framework developed based on the literature review sees the success of workforce diversity management plans linked closely with the organization's ability to manage change (Table 1).

The literature reveals that a wake-up call often triggers change management processes. In the context of diversity management, increased workforce heterogeneity is cited as a major catalyst for the need for organizations to manage diversity. This heterogeneity may be detrimental to the organization if it is not valued and managed as an asset. In some cases, the wake-up call may be workforce conflict, low employee morale, harassment complaints, or even legal action that pushes the organization to implement diversity initiatives. Additionally, public sector values may be considered catalysts. Public administrators must contribute to building a collective, shared notion of the public interest, be representative of the communities they serve, provide a discrimination free workplace, and understand the needs of a diverse public. Acknowledging and responding to wake-up calls begins the change process.

Once the organization recognizes that change is needed, buy-in is essential. Not only is it important for all members of the organization including operational staff, management, and directors to be on board, but also for elected officials, public boards, and community residents. Part of creating buy-in is to be clear about the purpose of the change and the value diversity management will bring to the organization and to the community, while being sensitive to the fact that change is harder for some than others. To alleviate apprehension, it is important to stress that an inclusive workplace will benefit everyone, not just minority groups. When the value of diversity is understood, mindsets will change, and a culture of inclusion that values individual differences will emerge. Creating a sense of urgency, or timeliness around change will motivate individuals to begin to change in order to be proactive and prevent a possible future crisis.

Further, a vision statement is necessary to create buy-in for diversity management initiatives. It aligns all staff to the mission and gives them something to strive for. This is a vision of the future where diversity permeates every aspect of the organization. Involving stakeholders in the development of the vision will give them a sense of ownership and make the change sustainable. This can be done through workforce surveys, focus groups, and workshops. Effectively communicating the change process is vital in order for all to understand, accept, and participate in the change process. Communication should be done through several vehicles including e-mail, verbal discussion, and printed documents such as diversity management policies that include plans for action.

A champion, or change advocate, brings staff on board and maximizes employee commitment to transformation. This may be an individual or a group of individuals. Champions are important because they take on a lead role in envisioning and implementing policy change, and are integral to managing resistance. Leaders are different from managers in that they do not enforce participation, but inspire it. Champions can be senior managers or operational staff that bring top-level leaders such as the CAO or City Council on board. In many cases, Human Resource Managers are change advocates when it comes to implementing workforce diversity management policies. These leaders give the change legitimacy and provide unambiguous signals of commitment.

Organizations are continuously interacting with complex environments. Diversity management literature shows that environmental factors such as community demographics including population size, educational attainment, age, and visible minority percentage affect the adoption of diversity plans by municipalities. Population decline has led the federal government to initiate aggressive immigrant attraction strategies, creating more culturally diverse workforces in Ontario. Increases in technology have led to the growth of and access to internet-based tools that have allowed organizations to showcase their diversity initiatives online through programs

such as the Newcomer Portal initiative. Initiatives such as the LIPs, the UNESCO Declaration of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination, and Ontario legislation including AODA and Bill 168 have also brought workforce diversity management under the radar of Ontario municipalities. Further, initiatives in neighbouring communities may entice some municipalities to make the change, as it is seen as a public image building endeavour. The ability of the municipality to adapt to contextual forces is essential to the success of the organization.

Table 1: Conceptual Framework: Factors that Affect the Adoption of a Workforce

Diversity Plan

Wake-Up Call/Catalyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A trigger for change • Must acknowledge the wake-up call and respond • Examples: Increased workforce heterogeneity may cause conflict or legal action; public sector values may initiate a sense of responsibility to be more representative of and better able to respond to the public
Buy-In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy-in is essential from all staff, elected officials, public boards, special purpose bodies, and residents • Be clear about the purpose of change and the benefits of diversity • Create a sense of urgency to prevent complacency • Change mindsets from 'diversity is a challenge' to 'diversity is an asset' • Create a vision of an inclusive workplace • Communicate change effectively throughout the organization
Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be an individual or a committee • The existence of a champion increases the likelihood of change being successful • Takes a lead role and manages resistance • Inspires participation • Gives the change legitimacy
Environment/Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External community demographics: population, educational attainment, age, visible minority percentage, etc. • Declining birth rates has led to increased immigration • Technological advancements • Other governmental and non-governmental diversity

- initiatives, provincial legislation
- Actions of competitors (image-building)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to examine the reasons why some municipalities in Ontario have implemented workforce diversity management plans and policies, while others have not. The first step was to compile a list of Ontario municipalities with populations of between 100,000 and 400,000. The intent was to investigate mid to large sized municipalities outside of the Greater Toronto Area. Toronto was not included in this study because its large size is not useful for comparison in this context. From the original list of twenty-one municipalities that fell into the desired population bracket, nine were chosen for this research (see

Table 2). These municipalities were chosen to represent varying geographic locations throughout Ontario, including Southwestern Ontario, Southern Ontario, Northern Ontario, and Northeastern Ontario (see Appendix 1).

Table 2: Municipalities Chosen for Study

Municipality ²	Population ³	Diversity Management Plan/Policy
Chatham-Kent	108,177	No
Greater Sudbury	157,857	No
Guelph	114,943	Yes
Kitchener	204,668	Yes
Lambton	128,204	No
London	352,395	Yes

² The municipalities shaded in grey are those that have a formal workforce diversity management policy.

³ Data from Statistics Canada 2006 Census.

St. Catharines	131,989	No
Thunder Bay	109,140	No
Windsor	216,473	No

Some cases were chosen because their situations were unique in terms of community demographics, or successes with diversity management. Others were chosen because they did not appear to have an interest in workforce diversity management. Of the nine chosen, three have an official workforce diversity management policy; two have expressed interest in creating one; three do not have a policy, nor buy-in to create one; and one has no policy but several informal workforce diversity management initiatives.

The case study method was chosen in order to examine local situations and apply the conceptual framework. Each case shows real experiences with managing workforce diversity in the current operating environment. Though it is a small number of cases, the results are valuable in providing a snapshot of workforce diversity management in municipalities working in Ontario's current climate of change. Each municipality was handled as a separate case study and was examined through the lens of the conceptual framework.

Primary research for this study was undertaken through in-depth interviews and through an examination of the diversity management documents available from each municipality. Key informants from each corporation were chosen based on their knowledge of the topic and their experiences managing diversity and change in the workplace. Positions of interviewees varied and included employees in Human Resources, Organizational Development, and Social Planning departments, as well as elected officials. The names and job titles of the respondents were kept confidential. In some cases, multiple sources were interviewed when the information gathered from single sources was not sufficient. E-mails were sent to each interviewee including ethical information pertaining to the study, as per the University of Western Ontario's ethical research

guidelines. All respondents were interviewed by e-mail, in person, or by telephone. The interview method was chosen because the small number of questions did not necessitate sending out a large survey. The same questions were asked of all interviewees (see Appendix 2), and responses were intended to provide context not otherwise captured through written documents. This approach facilitated faster interviews that could be more easily analyzed and compared.

Secondary data was gathered about the communities using Statistics Canada. This information included population percentages of persons whose mother tongue is not English or French, immigrants, visible minorities, Aboriginals, and persons age 15 and up with a college diploma or university degree. The median age of residents was also recorded. This data is important for analyzing the environment external to the organization. In addition, data was collected from online sources about participation in other diversity initiatives such as the Local Immigration Partnership Program, The Newcomer Portal program, and the UNESCO Coalition of Canadian Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination.

Limitations of this study include the inability to obtain demographic data on workforce make-up, including managers and Council members. All information gathered through interviews is based on the respondent's perceptions and may not align with the reality of the organization. The project time was limited, and therefore this research is not exhaustive.

4.0 CASE STUDY DATA

Due to the range in community demographics (see Table 3) municipalities in this study face differing realities in terms of workforce diversity management. The majority of communities have received funding from higher levels of government for participation in diversity initiatives such as the LIP and Newcomer Portals. Almost half have signed the UNESCO Declaration (see Table 4).

Table 3: Municipality Demographics⁴

Municipality	Mother Tongue other than En/Fr	Immigrant Pop.	Visible Minority Pop.	Aboriginal Pop.	Pop. 15+ w/ Univ, College Degree	Median Age of pop.
Chatham-Kent	10.14%	9.99%	4.21%	2.14%	7.12%	41.2
Greater Sudbury	7.79%	6.62%	2.08%	6.08%	10.81%	41.1
Guelph	19.61%	20.98%	13.75%	1.12%	19.64%	36.4
Kitchener	26.39%	22.89%	15.26%	1.21%	13.14%	36.6
Lambton	8.12%	11.47%	2.62%	4.52%	8.77%	42.8
London	20.32%	21.46%	13.61%	1.43%	16.58%	38.2
St. Catharines	18.60%	20.76%	9.87%	1.45%	12.69%	41.7
Thunder Bay	13.98%	10.65%	2.91%	8.10%	12.42%	41.7
Windsor	29.28%	27.65%	20.82%	1.83%	14.65%	37.5

Table 4: Other Diversity Initiatives

Municipality	LIP	Portal	UNESCO Declaration
Chatham-Kent	Yes	Yes	No
Greater Sudbury	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guelph	Yes	No	No
Kitchener	Yes, under Waterloo Region	Yes, under Waterloo Region	No
Lambton	Yes	Yes	Process initiated
London	Yes	Yes	Yes
St. Catharines	No	Yes, under Niagara Region	No
Thunder Bay	No	Yes, under Northwestern Ontario	Yes
Windsor	Yes	Yes	Yes

⁴ Data from Statistics Canada 2006 Census.

Each municipality is operating in a different environment and context, making their experiences with workforce diversity management unique. The following case studies look deeper into the situation of each organization and attempt to uncover why some municipalities implement workforce diversity management policies, and others do not.

4.1 CHATHAM-KENT

Located in Southwestern Ontario, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent operates under a single tier government system that was created in 1998 with the amalgamation of 23 communities, 13 public utility commissions, and 5 police forces (Chatham-Kent, 2011a). The municipality has a strong African-Canadian heritage, as it was a vital link in the Underground Railroad during the American Civil war, when thousands of slaves escaped to freedom in Canada (Chatham-Kent 2011b). Chatham-Kent has the lowest percentage of residents with a college diploma or university degree of the cities researched for this study, and has the second lowest median income after tax. The municipality is keen to economically diversify the area. In addition, many international workers arrive in Chatham-Kent during the warm seasons to do farm labour. These migrant workers face transportation, health, and other issues (Chatham This Week, 2007).

Currently, the municipality of Chatham-Kent does not have a workforce diversity management policy, but hopes to write one in the future. The organization recognized that it was a priority when it noticed a recent increase of racism-oriented complaints being made to Human Resources (Interview 1). In addition, the Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership has identified immigration as a strategic goal for the community. As the community increases its diversity, the need for a workforce diversity management strategy will grow. When asked what the greatest hindrance to the creation of a workforce diversity management policy has been for the municipality, one staff director stated that the operating environment has made it difficult:

The amalgamation in 1998 of 23 municipalities left us with a lot of work. We needed to create new policies, collective agreements, and strategic plan. We were starting

from scratch. This was our first priority. We created an anti-violence and anti-harassment policy first, because of legislation, and we also created a gender policy. Then we started thinking about a diversity policy, but we don't have one yet (Interview 1).

Though the amalgamation occurred thirteen years ago, the municipality is still feeling its effects.

The Human Resources Department recognizes that diversity is important for the organization and has championed the participation in a pilot program offered by Ryerson University. "Ryerson will provide training for Chatham-Kent staff in supervisory positions to learn tools to understand difference and how to integrate diversity into divisions" (Interview 1). Chatham-Kent has agreed to participate so that Ryerson can fine-tune its program. How long it will be before Chatham-Kent initiates its diversity management planning is unknown. "We are expecting that the LIP research will confirm the need for a diversity plan. This will help create buy-in from council and support the argument to put resources toward it. The diversity policy is in line, but it is not currently our top priority" (Interview 1).

4.2 GREATER SUDBURY

Greater Sudbury is the largest city in Northern Ontario by population, though the number of residents has declined in recent years due to youth out-migration. The city has the lowest percentage of immigrant and visible minority populations of the municipalities researched for this study, though it has a high Aboriginal population, at 6.08% (Statistics Canada, 2011a). "Diversity is considered to be an important part of the present and future of Greater Sudbury because the city's population is aging and the only population growth is within the Aboriginal and multicultural communities" (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 14). The City of Greater Sudbury does not have a workforce diversity management plan or policy. Similar to Lambton, interview respondents equated such policies solely with hiring practices. A member of the Human Resources Department stated, "The major reason is because we strive to recruit on a level playing field, which is more difficult to do when you have to meet a quota" (Interview 2).

The respondent further indicated that Greater Sudbury is responding to recent legislation by working to “ensure that our hiring and employing practices are in accordance with the new integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act,” but that the City does not have plans to create a diversity management policy (Interview 2).

Greater Sudbury is a unique case because despite its lack of diversity initiatives internally, it has a strong commitment to diversity in the external community. The City has a Diversity Advisory Panel that provides feedback to senior staff and Council on initiatives that increase the profile of diversity. However, the majority of the panel’s work has been targeted at the wider community (Interview 3). In 2004, the City obtained funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage for a multiculturalism project, *Diversity Thrives Here!* (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 15). The project “encourages community initiatives that embrace diversity with the ultimate goal of creating a community in which all citizens, particularly Aboriginal, Francophone, immigrant and multicultural groups, have an effective infrastructure of services to meet their needs” (Immigration Sudbury, 2010). This suggests there is buy-in from the organization for diversity initiatives, yet it has not turned the focus inward to address issues of diversity within its own workforce.

In the past, the corporation had a champion for workforce diversity initiatives, but the individual is no longer with the organization. According to one respondent:

The Diversity Advisory Panel held some very successful aboriginal awareness sessions with senior staff and council. A relationship developed between the Director of Human Resources and the Panel to continue dialogue on improving diversity initiatives within the municipal framework. The Director has since retired and his replacement has had a lengthy collective bargaining process as well as an election to work through. We are anticipating the re-establishment of that relationship.

Greater Sudbury understands the importance of diversity in its community. It has responded to the catalyst of population decline by seeking to attract new, diverse members to the area. The

organization has also responded to AODA legislation by updating its hiring practices. The next step is for the Corporation to move beyond the assumption that workforce diversity management is strictly about meeting quotas, and for its diversity efforts in the external community to be mirrored within the organization.

4.3 GUELPH

The Corporation of the City of Guelph has implemented a *People Practices Strategy*, which is the City's blueprint for achieving organizational excellence through exemplary people practices (City of Guelph, 2009, p. 3). This strategy came about in response to the strategic planning goal of being a community-focused, responsive, and accountable government (Interview 4). The strategy includes the goal of achieving a "well workplace". To accomplish this goal, the City assists employees with balancing their career and personal lives by offering things such as workplace childcare, flexible retirement options, and flexible work arrangements (City of Guelph, 2009, p. 5). In tandem with this strategy, the city is also creating a more in depth diversity plan that includes training, the creation of a Diversity Advisory Committee, and a review of the city's hiring practices to ensure they are barrier free (City of Guelph, 2009, p. 6). An informant from the city of Guelph stated that these initiatives are "generally recognized as best practices among top employers, and the corporation is recognized as a top employer in the city" (Interview 4).

In order to generate buy-in for the plan, the process involved focus groups with every sector of the organization, with a "sample of staff drawn to represent our different associations, ages, genders, and lengths of service" (Interview 4). The items in the strategy are a direct reflection of the items discussed in focus groups by staff. In addition, part of the strategy is to ensure that "every change initiative has a *People Transition Plan*, which includes communication, and identifying how employees will be affected before, during, and after change" (City of Guelph, 2009, p. 14). Proper communication helped to promote the value and benefits of the plan

to all organizational members. The Human Resource Department is the definite champion of the plan, and uses it to “frame all discussions regarding HR practices” (Interview 4).

An environmental scan was done prior to the creation of the document. The City of Guelph is the fifth fastest growing city in Canada with a population growth rate of about two percent per year (City of Guelph, 2003, p. 2). As the population is changing, the corporation made a decision to change and grow with its community. Further, local top employers were researched to compile an inventory of top employer practices, and a review of other municipal employment practices was conducted (Interview 4). The City of Guelph has specific policies for managing change, and strives to provide each employee with a “challenging, rewarding, enjoyable, and fulfilling career” (City of Guelph, 2009, p. 4). The City of Guelph prides itself on being a top employer.

4.4 KITCHENER

The City of Kitchener is located in Southwestern Ontario and its history includes the settlement of a large German Mennonite population. The city’s demographics are quite diverse, with the second highest immigrant and visible minority populations of cities in this study. It can be said that the City of Kitchener’s official focus on diversity began in 2006 when it adopted *A Plan for Healthy Kitchener, 2007-2027* as the community’s roadmap for the future. This plan articulated priorities identified from community consultation, of which diversity was included. In 2008, city staff developed the *People Plan*, which identified five strategic areas of focus: learning, safety and wellbeing, inclusion, appreciation and fun, and community stewardship (City of Kitchener, 2008). This plan “describes the city’s vision as a work environment that is truly inclusive, where diversity is embraced, and multiple viewpoints are represented and respected” (Interview 6). The plan includes diversity training, an employee culture survey which measures

progress in employee satisfaction with corporate culture, a diversity committee, and workplace language coaching (City of Kitchener, 2008).

In 2010, the city's Diversity Committee developed the *City of Kitchener's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion*. This document "formalizes the city's dedication to the principles of diversity, access, equity and inclusion internally, and also in the programs and services offered to the community" (City of Kitchener, 2011). Initiatives of the *Commitment* include: an internal gap analysis of corporate activities as they relate to diversity; a communications strategy to increase awareness of staff responsibilities; developing a screening tool to eliminate institutional barriers; and a focused community consultation regarding the city's progress (City of Kitchener, 2011). When asked if there was a particular wake-up call that set diversity initiatives in motion, one staff member responded:

There was no specific event that catalyzed our action in the area of diversity and inclusion. It naturally arose out of conversations with stakeholders and consultations with Kitchener residents, who have consistently identified diversity as a priority for our city, as well as consultations with staff, who likewise identified inclusion as a priority for our workforce (Interview 6).

The *People Plan* cites environmental factors such as the Canadian labour shortage as an influential factor, stating, "Over the next 15 years, as much as 63 per cent of our current management team alone will likely retire. It goes without saying then that we should be planning for how we will attract and retain the best and brightest" (City of Kitchener, 2008, p. 4). Because Kitchener's *People Plan* was developed through extensive consultation by staff from all departments, buy-in was achieved throughout the process. Further, Kitchener communicated its vision to all staff:

When the People Plan was launched, copies were distributed to all staff and e-mails were sent. Presentations were made to most of the corporate committees. Most importantly, senior staff visited all major divisions of the organization. Small events with free coffee were held where staff had the opportunity to pick up copies of the plan and discuss it (Interview 6).

Similarly, a major launch for the *Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion* document is being planned for November 2011.

Diversity initiatives at the City of Kitchener have several champions. A Diversity Committee exists that is made up of a variety of staff from across the organization. Currently the committee is overseeing the development of a “champions” network, “the purpose of which is to engage staff who are committed to the principles of diversity and encourage them to actively communicate these principles and take responsibility for sharing these throughout the organization in many areas” (Interview 6). Also, “both the CAO and the Mayor have been especially vocal advocates for diversity, and so have been several Councillors and managers” (Interview 6). However, the informant wanted to stress that it is important for all staff to be champions: “Our approach to diversity and inclusion is to infuse these principles throughout the entire organization. All staff have a variety of responsibilities in ensuring a respectful, inclusive and safe environment for colleagues and citizens” (Interview 6). The City of Kitchener is a leader of workforce diversity management in Ontario municipalities, and has worked to ensure that all staff members are actively engaged in the principles of diversity and inclusion in their work. The organizational change has been well received due to the high level of staff involvement and the support of senior leadership and Council.

4.5 LAMBTON

The County of Lambton is located in Southwestern Ontario and is an upper-tier municipality made up of three First Nations communities and eleven lower-tier municipalities (County of Lambton, 2011). Lambton is one of the few communities included in this study that does not have a workforce diversity management plan, nor has plans to develop one. When asked if a plan or policy existed, one elected official stated that diversity management strategies “contain common sense employment practices that Lambton County does now but are not

wrapped up in an overall policy” (Interview 7). One senior manager explained further by stating that “With the demise of employment equity under the Harris government, the majority of employers went back to what they did best – finding the best quality candidates. Lambton does not target specific groups” (Interview 8). These responses seem to indicate that power holders at the County of Lambton are unsure of the purpose of a diversity management plan and are equating it strictly with hiring practices. When questioned about the County’s commitment to workforce diversity, one front-line staff member said:

Management and Council would not really know what that entails, but it is more of a lack of education about it and its importance rather than a deliberate decision not to have one... I would say that no, this kind of plan hasn’t been a priority for the County. However, with the demographics slowly shifting, an awareness is coming too, and initiatives like the LIP will hopefully help to bring diversity issues to the forefront (Interview 9).

Currently, the main diversity champions for the organization are the LIP staff. “With the Local Immigration Partnership, there have been a lot of discussions on the issue” (Interview 7). However, despite these discussions, there has been no commitment from the top of the organization. Diversity management will not be a priority for the organization until management and Council buy-in and agree that it is a priority.

Contextually, it is worth noting that at 4.52%, Lambton has the third highest Aboriginal population of the nine communities in this study. Its immigrant and visible minority populations are low, however, which may explain the lack of diversity management initiatives by the County of Lambton. “This kind of plan hasn’t been a priority for the County given that Sarnia-Lambton’s demographics have been so homogeneously white for so long” (Interview 9).

The County of Lambton is beginning to understand the importance of diversity in the community as well as the Corporation. Recently, a motion was brought forward at County Council for Lambton to become a signatory of UNESCO’s CMARD declaration. The motion did not pass, but was referred to County staff for further investigation because one council member

felt that the term “discrimination” was not defined adequately in the declaration (Interviews 9 and 7). Further, the organization is working toward cultivating a more diverse workforce. Sarnia-Lambton “has the largest program in Canada to help youth with disabilities find summer work” (Dobson, 2011). Representatives from the County of Lambton HR Department have also shown interest in diversity by attending LIP sessions on hiring and retaining immigrants. Perhaps a future catalyst for workforce diversity management will be the inability of the organization to find suitable job candidates. “The County of Lambton is already feeling the labour market strain that we all hear is approaching, so if creating an inclusive and welcoming workplace is not on their agenda now, then it will be shortly” (Interview 10).

Based on the interviews, the biggest hurdle for the implementation of workforce diversity management plans in the organization seems to be getting management and Council to respond to the increased diversity in their environment and buy-in to the importance of such initiatives. While champions of diversity do exist within the organization, plans will not be put into place without commitment and resources from those in power. The organization needs to make the leap from thinking of diversity management simply as a hiring practice, toward seeing it as a way to cultivate an environment where differences are valued and all employees are encouraged to succeed.

4.6 LONDON

The City of London is located in Southwestern Ontario and is the largest municipality included in this study. London’s population has a high percentage of immigrants and visible minorities. It is also a very educated community, with 16.58% of its population having a college diploma or university degree (Statistics Canada, 2011a). London is an example of a City that implemented a workforce diversity management plan because *it had to*. When asked about the city’s wake-up call, an interview respondent from the city’s CAO office stated that the plan was

created as a direct result of actions made by the former mayor, Dianne Haskett. Haskett was the mayor of the City of London from 1994 to 2000. In 1995, Haskett refused to issue a Gay Pride proclamation, causing the Homophile Association of London Ontario (HALO) to file a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. It was determined that Haskett had discriminated against HALO and she was fined \$5000. This controversy painted the City of London as an intolerant community. The mayor had put her personal beliefs above her duties as an elected official, and the City felt it was imperative to make it clear that the mayor's beliefs were not the beliefs of the City of London. As a result, the City formed the London Diversity and Race Relations Advisory Committee (LDRRAC) in 1999. This is a committee of individuals, appointed by City Council, to "provide leadership on matters related to diversity, inclusivity, equity and the elimination of discrimination in the City of London" (City of London, 2011). According to the interview respondent, this committee found that the "inflexible stereotype of London being dominated by a white, religious elite was difficult to counter" (Interview 11). The LDRRAC committee became a champion for diversity in the organization and recommended that a Workplace Diversity Statement and Plan be created as part of the City's workplace strategic priority.

Consultations with all levels of staff and management began in 2006 through a series of facilitated roundtable discussions to define the City's corporate values and to identify the characteristics of a supportive diverse workplace. Employees identified and ranked a "more supportive workplace" as the number one Workplace Strategic Priority (City of London, 2008, p. 2). Researchers also found that the workplace was undergoing significant change and that "many London region employers report they are already attracting fewer qualified applicants for job postings" (City of London, 2008, p. 3). The shortage of skilled workers was expected to grow, making diversity an even more pressing issue. After the extensive information gathering process, London's Diversity Statement and Plan were implemented in 2008. The plan includes several

aspects of diversity management. First, the City adheres to inclusive hiring practices and ensures managers involved in the recruitment process have received diversity awareness training. Second, the plan includes increasing opportunities for employee development. Training for employees includes a “Respect at Work” module, a “Discovering Diversity” workshop, an “Ability Awareness” workshop to educate about barriers faced by persons with disabilities, and a “Retirement Preparedness” strategy that includes co-operative learning placements. In addition, a Diversity Task Force was created to identify further training opportunities and to ensure the Diversity Plan continues to be implemented. Lastly, the City’s Plan includes celebrating diversity by holding a World’s Fair for employees, and by implementing a multi-ethnic calendar (The City of London, 2008).

The backlash from the legal action against the mayor created a sense of urgency within the organization that something needed to change. For organizations, workforce diversity management can sometimes be a risk management issue. For the City of London, implementing a diversity management policy was a way to counter its reputation of being non-inclusive after legal action was taken against the mayor. The city was at risk of losing support and of being branded as discriminatory by the external community. The fact that over ten years passed between the catalyst and the implementation of a workforce diversity management plan shows that change is not easy, and that it takes time to cultivate a workplace culture of tolerance and inclusion. The City of London considers its plan to be a success and is now committed to long term diversity planning and management.

4.7 ST. CATHARINES

St. Catharines is the largest city in the Niagara Region. It does not have a workforce diversity management plan or policy. As one interviewee stated, the reason is that “at this point, I do not believe we have determined there is a need for it. There are no plans for a policy in the

future at this point” (Interview 12). Despite the increased heterogeneity of the Canadian workforce, and diversity initiatives in nearby communities, St. Catharines has yet to experience a wake-up call that has put diversity management on its planning agenda. This community is similar to Lambton, in that it has no workforce diversity management plan, and no concrete plans to initiate one. The city does have a Mayor’s Committee on Community and Race Relations. This committee “is committed to the principle that all persons are equal and have the right to live, work and visit in an environment that respects diversity and is free of discrimination and harassment (City of St. Catharines, 2010). The committee holds annual cultural festivals, and an annual conference on racial issues. It operates mainly in the external community and has not made any recommendations in relation to how the corporation operates. In addition, the City of St. Catharines has a Municipal Cultural Policy that was written in 1999. However, for the purposes of this policy, the term “culture” means the arts, cultural industries and heritage resources. There is no mention of diversity or the organization’s workplace (City of St. Catharines, 1999, p. 4).

Lack of buy-in is cited as a major reason the corporation does not have any workforce diversity management initiatives. One interviewee in a supervisory position stated that it is difficult to generate buy-in for diversity issues from council because “people who do not have experience in these issues do not see them as important or relevant. Council’s focus is on building buildings, there is no discussion on how we do business or how we represent the community” (Interview 14). St. Catharines’ City Council is made up of twelve councillors plus the mayor. Currently, there is only one woman on council, prompting the interviewee to declare, “we haven’t even gotten past the gender diversity issue, how can we start a dialogue on other forms of diversity? (Interview 14).

The recent AODA legislation has led to success in the accessibility arena, as the city is now moving forward and is far more conscious of these issues. However, St. Catharines has not yet

begun this journey with diversity. Human Resources has also been working on other issues such as training and better communication systems. “But maybe they are still playing catch-up in the world of HR?” (Interview 14).

The Recreation and Community Services Department has spearheaded the renewal of the Cultural Policy and has identified issues of workforce diversity and inclusivity as topics for exploration and recommendation. Some front-line staff members can be considered champions of diversity as they have voiced concerns about the lack of awareness within the organization. “Changes to programming and engagement processes are needed, but transformation will be from small changes moving forward, and working hard at it” (Interview 14). Currently, the organization does not have a vision of itself as a diverse and inclusive workplace. There is no sense of urgency around change, and council seems to be content with the status quo. The respondent summarized the situation succinctly by commenting that “it has everything to do with leadership” (Interview 14).

4.8 THUNDER BAY

The City of Thunder Bay is the largest municipality in Northwestern Ontario. Its population is the sixth most culturally diverse of its size in North America (Government of Ontario, 2010). The City of Thunder Bay does not have an official diversity management policy, but has a Race Relations Policy, and several important workforce diversity initiatives. In 2008, the City of Thunder Bay introduced a voluntary workforce profile survey in order to compare the diversity of the corporation’s workforce with the diversity of the community. Employees voluntarily declared if they were members of one or more of the following groups: women, Aboriginals, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 12). The corporation found that its workforce was “fairly representative of the Statistics Canada Census Metropolitan Area data for Thunder Bay” (Interview 13). For

example, Statistics Canada reported that Thunder Bay has a 2.7% visible minority population, and the survey found that 3.8% of the City of Thunder Bay's employees are members of a visible minority group (Interview 13).

Since the 1990's the Corporation has been actively involved in diversity through committees, policies, public forums, and educational programs. Recently, various Aboriginal groups in Thunder Bay have indicated that they believe the Aboriginal population of the community is much higher than the 8.31% reported by Statistics Canada. "Thunder Bay is a regional centre for health care and education, and as a result, Aboriginal people are relocating from First Nations and smaller regional communities into the city" (Interview 13). "Thunder Bay's Aboriginal population has grown by more than 20 per cent within the past five years and continues to grow" (Smith, 2011). With this change in the community, the Corporation realized it should take further steps to ensure its workforce is representative of its constituents, particularly through employment outreach programs in partnership with the Aboriginal community. In this regard, one staff member stated, "Other communities such as Winnipeg and Saskatoon have been experiencing the same, and we wanted to be proactive rather than reactive to this change" (Interview 13). The organization undertakes a significant amount of marketing to connect with the Aboriginal community and to encourage applications. "A voluntary self-identification form is attached to our job applications so that we can track Aboriginal interest in our organization. Currently, we are piloting a diversity placement initiative where we host Aboriginal post-secondary students in various divisions within the organization" (Interview 13).

The City of Thunder Bay recognizes the obligation to promote diversity within its employment practices. It provides diversity training, bias-free policing training, Aboriginal awareness programs, and recently hired an Aboriginal Liaison Officer. In 2009, City Council approved the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Racism. The organization makes all change management initiatives a part of the Corporation's strategic direction. "Of course there are

always champions of new initiatives, and also those that don't come on board as quickly. Diversity is supported by senior management and City Council. In particular, councilor Rebecca Johnson has been the champion for diversity initiatives in the City of Thunder Bay" (Interview 13). Other groups in the external environment have also been champions of diversity. *Diversity Thunder Bay* is a local organization that undertook a yearlong community based research project to identify issues of racism and discrimination in the community. The City relies heavily on this organization for assistance with diversity initiatives.

4.9 WINDSOR

Windsor is the southernmost city in Ontario. Historically, the automotive industry changed Windsor from a relatively slow growing collection of border communities to a rapidly growing, modern industrial city (Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation, 2011). However, the economy of Windsor has declined extremely over the last decade due to factors such as technological advancements in auto manufacturing, reductions in trade barriers, the slowing of the US economy, the introduction of foreign automobile competitors, and outsourcing to foreign countries for reduced labour costs. The population of Windsor is declining faster than any other city in Canada, as residents leave the city to find employment elsewhere (Statistics Canada, 2011b). Demographically, Windsor is the fourth most diverse city in all of Canada (Immigration Windsor-Essex, 2011). It has the highest percentages of immigrant and visible minority populations of all cities included in this study.

Paradoxically, despite this diversity, the City of Windsor does not have a workforce diversity management plan or policy in place. When asked to comment, a respondent from the City of Windsor indicated that they would like a plan and that it has been on the city's radar for quite some time (Interview 5). The external environment has been the catalyst that has put diversity management on the city's radar. "In the past, the city did not have to worry about

attracting or retaining workers because there were so many good, high paying jobs in the region. Now, creating a good work environment that attracts skilled employees has become a concern” (Interview 5).

The champion for diversity initiatives within the organization is the Diversity and Accessibility Officer. The City also has a Diversity Committee that has acted as a champion for diversity initiatives both internal and external to the organization, including diversity training for staff, and the signing of the UNESCO CMARD Declaration. However, recently the Diversity Committee’s attendance has begun to dwindle. “The committee has had difficulties. It wanted to hire an expert to assist with the development of a workforce diversity management plan, but had budget constraints. There have been a lot of stumbling blocks” (Interview 5). It appears as though the mindset of the Committee and Council need to be changed so that diversity management is seen as a priority and all members are committed to the creation of a policy. Currently, the plan has stalled due to lack of vision, commitment, and financial resources.

5.0 ANALYSIS

The conceptual framework based on diversity and change management literature suggested that the existence of workforce diversity management policies depends on several key factors. Evidence that the conceptual framework is valid has been seen in each of the case studies, though there are some exceptions (see Appendix 3). Each of the municipalities that have a workforce diversity management policy heard a wake-up call and responded. Guelph, Kitchener, and London each defined their policies as a response to strategic priorities. In London in particular, the priority stemmed from a desire to overcome the city’s image of being non inclusive after the mayor was faced with legal action. Windsor and Chatham-Kent are examples of municipalities that have heard the wake-up call, but have not yet been able to respond with a diversity management initiative. Thunder Bay has also heard a wake-up call, but has responded

informally. Both Lambton and St. Catharines deny the existence of a wake-up call, and no meaningful corporate involvement is likely to emerge in the near future. This shows that hearing and responding to a wake-up call is absolutely necessary before organizational change can begin. However, the mere existence of a wake-up call is not sufficient to catalyze the creation of a diversity management plan. Leaders must hear the call and respond to it in order for change to occur and important needs to be met.

The municipalities with diversity management plans all had buy-in from management and Council. This approval from the upper echelons of the corporations allowed resources to be put toward diversity initiatives. Each of these communities allowed staff to participate in community consultations and focus groups in order to formulate goals and strategize. This participation ensured that all stakeholders understood the importance of diversity management initiatives. Being able to contribute and participate from the inception of the initiative allowed all members of the organizations to change their mindsets together and move toward a common vision with little or no resistance. This vision was communicated effectively throughout the organizations. A sense of urgency was felt that prevented complacency, particularly in the case of London. The municipalities with workforce diversity management policies see the practice as essential in order to attract the best and the brightest to the organization and the community. They have communicated the benefits of diversity and have linked them to organizational performance in order to generate buy-in and participation.

Chatham-Kent, Lambton, and St. Catharines did not have buy-in from their senior management or Council and have yet to formally commit to workforce diversity management practices. Greater Sudbury has committed to diversity in the external community but has not made the link to its relevance within the corporation. Thunder Bay has buy-in throughout the organization for diversity management initiatives, but has not formalized an official policy.

Windsor sees the value in having a policy, but does not have strong enough buy-in from the organization as a whole to commit.

The three organizations with workforce diversity management policies all have a champion pushing to keep diversity on the planning agenda. However, no single person was named as a champion for these organizations, rather diversity committees and HR departments were credited as champions of change. This suggests that larger champion entities may be more powerful at convincing upper management and council to buy-in to diversity initiatives. Greater Sudbury lost its champion, and has since been waiting for a new one to take its place. Thunder Bay has a champion who is committed to diversity initiatives, but has not made diversity policies a priority. Communities such as Lambton, Chatham, St. Catharines, and Windsor each have diversity champions; however, they have not been successful in generating buy-in for diversity management policies. This shows that the mere existence of a diversity champion does not necessarily correlate with the existence of a diversity management policy. Though champions may exist, there will be no workforce diversity management policy without the approval of upper management and council.

The case studies presented show that the environment is a very influential force upon municipalities. The City of Guelph is growing rapidly. To keep up with this growth, the City investigated best practices in neighbouring communities in order to create a change management strategy. Kitchener and London are facing labour shortages, and are attempting to attract and retain skilled employees. Chatham-Kent has struggled with pressures of amalgamation and legislative requirements and has not been able to respond to a need for diversity initiatives. Windsor cited its internal environment and credited stumbling blocks such as a lack of resources as a reason for its stalled workforce diversity management plan. Community demographics paint an interesting picture in terms of diversity management. Highlights are as follows:

- Kitchener, London, and Windsor have the highest overall populations of this study. Kitchener and London have workforce diversity management plans, while Windsor does not. Guelph has the third lowest population, but has a policy.
- Windsor has the highest percentages of immigrant and visible minority populations in the study, yet does not have a policy. Kitchener, London, and Guelph have the next highest percentages of immigrants and visible minorities, and have diversity management policies. St. Catharines and Lambton are in the middle range, but have no plans for diversity policies.
- The community with the highest Aboriginal population is Thunder Bay. The City has several innovative workforce management strategies in regard to Aboriginals, but does not have a formal diversity management policy. The communities with the next highest percentages of Aboriginals are Greater Sudbury and Lambton. These communities have made no attempts to create workforce diversity management policies.
- Guelph, London, Windsor, and Kitchener have the highest percentages of residents with diplomas or degrees. Of these four, Windsor is the only community without a workforce diversity management policy.
- The communities with the lowest median age are Guelph, Kitchener, Windsor, and London. Of these four, Windsor is the only community without a workforce diversity management policy.

For the most part, these communities fall in line with the conceptual framework. The municipalities with the largest populations, and highest percentages of immigrants and visible minorities are most likely to have workforce diversity management policy. The organizations operating in environments with highly educated, young residents are also most likely to have a workforce diversity management policy. The glaring outlier here is Windsor. This community is

the most diverse, and in the top three when it comes to high educational attainment and low median age, yet it does not have a workforce diversity management policy due to lack of commitment and leadership. Further, Thunder Bay, Greater Sudbury, and Lambton have the top Aboriginal population percentages. Of these three, Thunder Bay is the only City with specific workforce diversity management strategies pertaining to Aboriginals.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This research provides a foundation for understanding the existence of workforce diversity management policies in Ontario municipalities. Analysis based on a thorough review of literature as well as interviews of local government employees and elected officials has shown that while variations are evident, there are some common patterns. These recurring patterns are consistent with the study's conceptual framework which states that the response to a wake-up call; the creation of organizational buy-in; the existence of a champion; and consideration of the local environment are all factors that affect the adoption of a municipal workforce diversity management policy. Based on information gathered from the nine case studies, it has been determined that these factors are essential, but that each is not sufficient on its own. The existence of a wake-up call is necessary but is not in itself an adequate force for change. Leadership must respond to the catalyst in order for change to take place. Organizational buy-in is necessary for the successful implementation of a workforce diversity management policy. Those that have successful plans are those that have included valuing diversity as a critical aspect of their mission, vision, and strategies. This value cannot permeate every aspect of the organization without buy-in from upper management and Council. Further, the existence of a champion is necessary to combat resistance to change and drive the initiative forward. However, a champion alone does not have adequate power to create and manage change without back-up from leaders who provide legitimacy and resources. In general, internal and external environmental forces heavily influence

the decision to create a workforce diversity management plan. However, the City of Windsor case proves these forces are not always the deciding factor.

From this research, several recommendations can be made in order to guide municipalities embarking on implementation of workforce diversity management initiatives:

1. Diversity management issues must move beyond hiring practices. While equal opportunity employment programs are useful, they do not always address the qualitative impacts of having a diverse workforce. Along with hiring, organizational capacity and culture must also be addressed. Emphasis must shift from hiring to valuing diversity and incorporating it as an administrative strategy.
2. Organizations should be careful not to ignore wake-up calls. Some organizations in Ontario are in denial and assume that because there have been no major incidents or complaints regarding inequitable or hostile work conditions that there are none. Municipalities should be proactive in managing change in order to prevent future crises.
3. Aboriginals must not be neglected in workforce diversity management strategies. In particular, communities with high Aboriginal populations should be doing more to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff members and to include Aboriginals in community planning initiatives.
4. Workforce diversity management practices should be seen as a responsibility of the public sector in order to better respond to and accurately reflect constituents. Proper workforce diversity management in municipal organizations is a means of achieving social justice and of setting an example for other organizations in both the public and private sectors.
5. Municipal organizations should make an effort to be aware of their external environments, and the actions of neighbouring municipalities. As the environment

changes, many organizations are struggling to manage diversity. By establishing communication and networks with other local governments, organizations can draw on the strengths of successful diversity management programs and avoid pitfalls experienced by other corporations.

6. Leadership commitment is paramount. It demonstrates commitment to equity and strengthens the education, implementation, communication, and evaluation efforts of managing diversity.

Workforce diversity management policies are a way for local government organizations to be clear about what they expect of their staff, and how as an entire entity they will conduct and present themselves to the community. These policies are important and can lead to more responsibility and accountability on the part of the organization. This research has shown that only a few mid-sized municipalities in Ontario have acknowledged this by creating meaningful, innovative workforce diversity management policies. As the realities of the workforce change, local governments should respond by creating a workplace that is free from barriers and discrimination and where systems are in place for continuous learning and transformation. To conclude, it is the responsibility of each local government organization through its own volition to identify its own blueprint for what the emerging workforce and population diversity requires of it. Canada is the world's most diverse nation, and this reality should be embraced and valued by all public sector organizations.

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Interview 3: Sudbury, 18 July 2011.

Interview 4: Guelph, 15 July 2011.

Interview 5: Windsor, 25 May 2011.

Interview 6: Kitchener, 22 July 2011

Interview 7: Lambton, 12 July 2011.

Interview 8: Lambton, 12 July 2011.

Interview 9: Lambton, 20 July 2011.

Interview 10: Lambton, 21 July 2011.

Interview 11: London, 10 December, 2010.

Interview 12: St. Catharines, 15 July 2011.

Interview 13: Thunder Bay, 13 July 2011.

Interview 14: St. Catharines, 27 July 2011.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: MAP OF MUNICIPALITIES CHOSEN FOR STUDY



APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Does your organization have a formal workforce diversity policy or plan? If not, does it have any informal workforce diversity initiatives?
2. What was the wake-up call, or catalyst that drove your organization to implement workforce diversity management strategies?
3. Is there a diversity champion within your organization, or an individual/committee that pushes to keep diversity on the planning agenda?
4. How does your organization create buy-in from all levels of staff during change management? Has there been any resistance to diversity initiatives?
5. What is the operating environment of your organization? Are there other forces, either internal or external to the Corporation, which have influenced your decisions regarding workforce diversity management?

APPENDIX 3: CASE STUDY SUMMARY

Municipality	Diversity Policy	Wake-Up Call/Catalyst	Buy-In	Champion	Environment/Context
Chatham-Kent	No, but is planning to have one in the future	Increased harassment complaints to HR	Waiting for LIP to confirm a need	HR Department	Amalgamation; legislation requirements
Greater Sudbury	No, no plans to have one in the future, but has external initiatives	None	Commitment to diversity externally, but not internally	Retired staff member	Population decline; high percentage Aboriginal population
Guelph	Yes	Strategic planning goal to be a top employer	Staff participated in planning through focus group discussions. People Transition plan assists in dealing with change	HR Department	Rapidly growing population; compared employment initiatives with other municipalities
Kitchener	Yes	Consultations with staff and community residents	Consultation with community and staff. Communication events	Diversity Committee	Labor shortage
Lambton	No, with no plans to have one in the future	None	None	LIP staff, but no leader commitment	Attempting to attract newcomers
London	Yes	Legal action against mayor	Employees defined strategic priorities	London Diversity and Race Relations Advisory Committee	Highly educated, diverse community; labour shortage
St. Catharines	No, with no plans to have one in the future	None	None	Some staff see the need, but there is no commitment from the top	Has responded to AODA legislation
Thunder Bay	No, but has several workforce diversity initiatives	Increase in Aboriginal population	Support from senior management	City Councilor	Very high Aboriginal population; external diversity organizations
Windsor	No, but is planning to have one in the future	Rapid population and economic decline	The organization would like a policy, but needs more commitment to the vision	Diversity and Accessibility Officer	Extremely diverse population, lack of internal financial resources

