



DiverseCity

THE GREATER TORONTO LEADERSHIP PROJECT

Excerpt from David Pecaut's speech at the Canadian Club Launch

(As published in the Toronto Star, Saturday, January 31, 2009, page IN6)

Worth repeating

Make diversity work for Toronto

*This is an edited excerpt from a speech about the DiversityCity initiative by **David Pecaut**, head of the Toronto City Summit Alliance, delivered this week to the Canadian Club.*

What we're going to talk about today is how to take Toronto from a wonderful spirit of tolerance, a wonderful acceptance of diversity to a much higher plane, a plane at which we embrace the full potential of what this city's diversity can bring to us and to the world.

Diversity asks one question: "How do we get the leadership of the Greater Toronto Region to reflect the composition of our city and the talent that is sitting in this room and throughout this city that is waiting to be unleashed?" DiversityCity is about tapping that talent.

The Greater Toronto Area is now the most immigrant-intense city in the world with 44 per cent of the 5 million people born in the GTA foreign born. Vancouver is 38 per cent immigrants, Sidney, Australia is 31 per cent, Los Angeles is 31 per cent. New York, the great melting pot, is only 24 per cent. We are twice as immigrant-intensive as New York City and its city region! We are also 40 per cent visible minority in the GTA: South Asians, East Asians, Latin Americans, people of Arab descent, and many, many others.

This incredible diversity enriches our lives and it powers our economy. In fact, all net new growth in our labour force will come from new immigrants. But our diversity is not reflected yet in our leadership – across the public, non-profit and private sectors. Diversity City is about how we can ... turn our diversity deficit into a diversity dividend. We need to do that for several reasons:

First, from a social inclusion point of view, it is important that people who come from visible minority backgrounds see that the leadership of all the organizations they participate in is open to them and reflects their concerns.

Second, diverse leadership is crucial to our prosperity. Whether you're in the private sector, the non-profit sector or in government, your markets are filled with people from visible minority backgrounds. If you're looking at the domestic market and 40 per cent is from a visible minority background, how do you serve that market if leaders in your organizations don't understand that market and don't at least have people sitting around the table who come from those families and cultures? And internationally, as we are an export dependent economy, we must be increasingly able to understand the passions and concerns of the people around the world.

Third, we need access to talent not just now, but on an ongoing basis. And if we show the world that visible minorities and diversity are our passion in our leadership then we will find talent coming to us – from across the continent and from around the world. Diversity works. We've seen the power of it. You feel it. The academics are saying it works.

What can it mean for us? It can be quite simply Toronto's most profound contribution to the world. It can drive our prosperity, and can be a beacon for the world by showing how diverse leadership can create a more prosperous and socially richer civil society.