# BUILDING ON A HISTORY OF ACTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION TO ACHIEVE AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE

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The City of Ottawa's commitment to diversity and inclusion began when City Council approved an Equity and Diversity Policy in 2002. The policy demonstrates the City's commitment to have an inclusive and representative workplace that is reflective of the community's diverse population. The designated groups identified in the City's Equity and Diversity policy are women, Aboriginal Peoples, members of visible minority groups, people with disabilities, and Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, and Trans individuals. To this end, the policy brought a change in City business operations, focusing on equity as a model of doing business.

Since 2002, the City has had diversity plans in place to ensure equitable and inclusive employment practices. There is a Corporate Diversity Plan approved by Senior Management that is supplemented by individual Departmental Action Plans. While there is a legislative requirement to ensure the principles of equity and diversity are maintained for federally regulated employees at the City of Ottawa, the majority of the City is provincially regulated. For this reason a corporate approach and strategy was adopted by Senior Management and was guided by the principles of the Employment Equity Act. In addition, the City of Ottawa is a member of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD) and the City of Ottawa ensures that the programs, policies, training, and initiatives that it implements relate to CCMARD's Ten Common Commitments.

As a first step to establish a diversity plan, the City conducted a self-identification survey and collected data according to diversity group to determine its workforce demographics. The City of Ottawa ensures its database is kept up to date by capturing data on new employees upon hire. The City then undertook an Employment Systems Review (ESR) of its employment policies, practices, systems, and procedures to identify barriers to employment for members of the diversity groups in occupational groups that showed levels of under-representation (resulting from the self-identification survey). The recommended actions from the ESR formed the basis for the development of a Corporate and Departmental Diversity Plans.

The departmental diversity plans identified initiatives that focus on outreach, recruitment, hiring, promotion, and succession plans; awareness raising and training; promotion of a welcoming and inclusive environment; and, where appropriate, ensuring the employment equity database is comprehensive. The focus of the Corporate Diversity Plan demonstrates the City's commitment to ensuring its workforce is qualified and reflective of the community's diverse population. The initiatives undertaken in the implementation of the Corporate and Departmental Plans recognise that

people have different qualities, skills, qualifications, experiences, and cultures and that valuing and making the most of these differences improves the workplace for individuals and enhances the overall performance of the City.

To demonstrate its commitment to diversity and inclusion, the City plays an active leadership role in four key community working groups: HIO (Hire Immigrants Ottawa), OLIP (Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership), EARN (Employment Accessibility Resource Network), and AWG (Aboriginal Working Group). In 2011, the City of Ottawa joined the CCMARD network in an effort to reinforce the work it was already doing in the area of anti-discrimination. While the City had been developing diversity plans for several years outside of the context of CCMARD, it was encouraged to see a focus on many of the same areas. For this reason, membership seemed to be a natural fit. Becoming a member of CCMARD also provided an opportunity to re-energize local citizens and groups and to mobilize them in existing and new efforts. Unlike some municipalities that join the Coalition to kick-start the development of an action plan, the City of Ottawa, having already begun significant work, took advantage of the opportunity to underpin and highlight its work both within the city and beyond its borders.

The City of Ottawa is recognized as a municipal leader in attracting, retaining, and successfully integrating diversity groups. In fact, for the third consecutive year, the City of Ottawa was recognized as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers based on an evaluation of its workplace diversity and inclusion initiatives. The numerous diversity and inclusion initiatives result from the multiple, well developed action plans the City of Ottawa has in place for the implementation of its programs. All of these plans support one of Council's Strategic Priorities "to maintain a diverse, high-performing, client-centric workforce." It is our hope that moving forward the City of Ottawa can continue to share its practices through its partnerships and membership in CCMARD.