

# **Speaking Notes**

By

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To

**The Community of Federal Visible Minorities**

Ottawa City Hall – Jean Piggott Room  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon / Bon après-midi,

*Je suis ravi d'être parmi vous aujourd'hui pour discuter d'importants sujets dont l'équité en matière d'emploi dans la fonction publique du Canada et la diversité.*

I wish to thank the founding Members of the Community of Federal Visible Minorities for inviting me to speak to you.

*C'est toujours un plaisir pour moi de m'adresser à des départements, des agences et des employés du gouvernement, et de promouvoir les bienfaits de la diversité, de l'équité et du pluralisme.*

*Avant de commencer, je tiens à souligner qu'aujourd'hui est la Journée des droits de l'Homme.*

Indeed, December 10<sup>th</sup> commemorates the days in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As you know, the declaration comprises 30 articles that form a comprehensive statement of basic standards for human rights and freedom. One of the most important statements for minorities is found in Article 7 which states:

"All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination."

It is only fitting that the Community of Federal Visible Minorities meets today, December 10<sup>th</sup>, to discuss equal opportunities and Diversity in the Public Service of Canada.

I also want to mention that I am delighted to see the creation of this new organization which, in some respects, will replace the void created by the death of the NCVM. I know many of you have been working on this project for more than two years. I commend you for your leadership.

I am confident the CFVM will become a strong and active national body that will represent Visible Minorities in dealing with the challenges and aspirations within the Federal Public Service.

I understand the CFVM's seeks to:

“help create a barrier-free, inclusive, and representative federal public service where Visible Minorities can individually and collectively realize their professional aspirations, based on the principles of merit and in full respect of their rights.”

The CFVM certainly has the potential of becoming the voice of Visible Minorities in the Public Service across the country.

## **OUTLINE**

Today, I wish to briefly review Canada’s diverse population in numbers. I will look at new national statistics on Public Service Renewal. I will then build the business case for Diversity.

And finally, as requested by the organizers, I will discuss the concept of an Office of the Commissioner of Diversity that I have long advocated for. I will share my views on this Office and offer some of my thoughts on it based on talks I’ve recently had with a number of high-ranking officials.

## **CANADA’S DIVERSITY**

The 2006 Census revealed that more than 5 million Canadians, or 16.2 percent of the total population, are Visible Minorities. What is more, between 2001 and 2006, the visible minority population increased at a much faster pace than the total population. Its rate of growth was 27.2%, five times faster than the 5.4% increase for the population as a whole.

The figures from the 2011 Census on Visible Minorities are not out yet, but I predict they will show us that Visible Minorities account for close to 20% of the population now.

In fact, a study published by Statistics Canada in March 2011 projects that Visible Minorities could account for 29 to 32% of our population by 2031. What this means is that in 25 years, Canada’s visible minority population will have almost doubled.

What is more, some projections show that Visible Minorities will account for 63% of the population in Toronto and 59% in Vancouver by 2031. Here in Ottawa, it is expected to almost double from 19 to 36% in the next 20 years.

So, it is obvious, Canada is becoming increasingly more diverse. And this trend is not about to slow down.

Jeffrey Ritz, a Sociology professor of ethnic and immigration studies at the University of Toronto, believes that “the growing size of Canada’s diverse population could force politicians and citizens to pay attention.”

We need to acknowledge this as a society and act accordingly.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE STATISTICS 2010-11**

We all know that our Public Service should more clearly reflect this diverse mosaic. Regretfully, we are not yet there.

The good news is that the most recent statistics show that the representation of Visible Minorities is inching upward year after year. In fiscal year 2010-2011, the number was 12.6%, a 1% increase from the previous year. Within the executive ranks, 2011 was the first time Visible Minority numbers surpassed their estimated workforce availability. Indeed, Visible Minorities represented 7.8% of Core Public Administration Executives. Again, this is a half percentile point increase from the previous year.

Things are also improving on the hiring front. Statistics show that Visible Minorities accounted for 21.2% of all new public service hires. This is 8.8% above WFA. Madam Maria Barrados, past President of the Public Service Commission at the time, notes that "this increasing trend will help to address current and future gaps for Visible Minorities in the public service."

Furthermore, the percentage of applicants to advertised processes and appointments to indeterminate positions in fiscal year 2011-2012 was 21.4% for Visible Minorities. The number of appointments was 22.3%. This is outstanding news, considering the fact that the workforce availability is 12.4%.

As the Clerk of the Privy Council Wayne Wouters said not long ago, we "need to be more diverse -- to have a public service that truly reflects the population of Canada. Not so much because we just need to "look" that way. It's more because we need to bring together a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and cultures in order for us to provide the best advice to our political leaders and to better deliver services to Canadians."

And this is the case at all ranks of the Public Service, and particularly in very senior positions. At my request, Mr. Wouters wrote to me about a year ago and provided me with disconcerting statistics on the representation of designated groups within the deputy minister community.

As of November 2011, there were 79 Deputy Ministers in the Federal Public Service. There were 52 men and 27 women.

However, there is only 1 Deputy Minister who identified as a person with disabilities, three Aboriginals and only three Visible Minorities, which represents only 4,1%.

The Clerk wrote to me and said:

“The small size of the deputy minister population poses many challenges in achieving and maintaining representation. However, I remain committed to the importance of this goal and to building a diverse and representative workforce at all levels.”

I think we should be encouraged by the Clerk’s commitment to this issue.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE RENEWAL**

I couldn’t agree more with the Clerk of the Privy Council. It is imperative that the entire federal public service lead by example – in its words and actions. It should, and must, set the standard for all employers. After all, it is Canada’s:

- 1) largest employer with 255,000 employees;
- 2) most national employer, with 1600 points of services across the country; and
- 3) most international employer with staff in more than 150 countries worldwide.

Yet, despite recent initiatives to hire, retain and promote Visible Minorities and Aboriginals, the Public Service is still not truly representative of Canada’s population.

And I believe that racism is a large part of the reason why the federal service’s progress in achieving equitable representation for Visible Minorities is so slow.

The reality is that racism has been a part of Canada’s past and it is a part of our present. And it remains a problem – one that is largely invisible, hugely underestimated and wholly pervasive. Many Canadians deny that fact. They are wrong.

Grant it: deputy ministers, department heads and human resources managers are working hard to eliminate racism in the Public Service, promote the business case for Diversity and increase the representation of Visible Minorities and Aboriginals within its ranks. Their intentions are good and their efforts are commendable, but the progress towards true representativeness is not happening fast enough.

## **HOW ARE OTHER COUNTRIES DOING?**

However, we must recognize the extraordinary effort of our Public Service in creating a truly inclusive and diverse workplace. If we look at the United Kingdom and Australia – two countries that are the most similar to Canada – we are leading the pack.

For instance, the Civil Service in the UK, which comprises only 1.7% of the total UK workforce, employs 424,000 people. In the UK, the equivalent of a Visible Minority is referred to as an ethnic minority. In terms of official data collection within the UK, an “ethnic minority” person has been defined as anyone who had classified themselves in

any category other than "white." It is essentially the same definition as a Visible Minority in Canada.

The percentage of ethnic minority civil servants has increased by more than half since 1999, to 9.2% in 2011, despite making up nearly 11% of the population. Women represent 53% of all employees. 8.3% of civil servants are disabled.

Within the Civil Service, there are 4,900 Senior Civil Servants. Women represent 33% of these posts and ethnic minorities a mere 3.6%.

Furthermore, women, people from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are under-represented in both elected offices and appointments to public boards. However, a lot of work is going on to address this.

In the UK, there is a Commissioner for Public Appointments whose mandate, since 2002, stipulates that he must promote equality of opportunity and diversity in the procedures for making public appointments.

However, as of March 2011, ethnic minorities held less than 6.8% of posts on public Boards.

Another country Canada shares many similarities with is Australia. One of the Australian Public Service Commission's core values is to provide a workplace that is "free from discrimination and to recognize and utilize the diversity of the Australian community it serves." It also clearly states that it must "provide a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community when applying for employment."

In June 2012, the Australian Public Service had 168,580 employees. More than 57% were women; 2.1% were indigenous Australians; 2.9% were disabled; and 15.7% were of non-English speaking background. Australia does not include visible minorities or ethnic minorities as one of their employment equity groups like Canada and the UK.

But like Canada, Australia is also committed to diversifying its public service. In early 2012, the Australian Public Service established a "Diversity Council." Its mission includes providing visible, strategic leadership on diversity issues. It aims to motivate improvements in diversity outcomes, including employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians and people with a disability." Both of these groups continue to be significantly under-represented in the APS workforce.

The 9-member Council is chaired by Dr. Ian Watt of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and meets quarterly. It met for the first time on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and agreed on an initial range of strategies designed to:

- bring visibility to Diversity issues;
- share and promulgate best practices; and

- monitor agency performance in improving workforce diversity.

Between the three countries, Canada is the closest to having a public service representative of its visible minority population. Canada also seems to be the country with the most initiatives to achieve this goal.

Indeed, the Public Service of Canada has many programs, initiatives and committees to help address this issue. And Canadians are fortunate to have a number of laws that protect the rights of minorities including the Employment Equity Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

## **THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY**

However, despite these laws, Visible Minorities are not given the same opportunities in the workforce. Many employers still ignore, or fail to understand, the business case for Diversity. I will briefly underscore why embracing Diversity is now – and will continue to be – crucial to the prosperity of our nation, communities and workforce, both in the private and public sectors.

In 2005, I raised over \$500,000 to fund the largest and most comprehensive study ever conducted in Canada on barriers to the advancement of Visible Minorities in both the public and private sectors. I spearheaded this multi-year research project which was conducted by the Conference Board of Canada. The study proves the business case for Diversity, within individual organizations and within societies as a whole. The Report, entitled “An Employer’s Guide – Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities”, is easily accessible online.

Allow me to summarize some of its findings.

First, diverse and inclusive societies attract the best talent. Smart and creative people want to live and work in places and organizations that are technologically advanced. They also want the opportunity to learn from other skilled and educated people.

Above all, these creative people seek tolerance. A feeling of acceptance is important to them – very important. They look for places to live that are diverse and inclusive. Countries, Professor Florida believes, are going to have to stop thinking of immigration as a gate-keeping function and start thinking about it as a talent attraction function, necessary for economic growth.

Second, Diversity enables a country’s companies and its governments to reach out more effectively to other countries. Most Visible Minorities in Canada and in other western nations are foreign-born. As such, they provide compelling business opportunities. They enable companies to access foreign markets through their knowledge of, and connections to other countries. Likewise, they can help policy makers and diplomats to

better understand the cultures and values of other countries, smoothing the way to more productive, mutually beneficial relationships among nations.

Diversity is part of our social DNA – it is part of who we are as Canadians. We need to make it part of our business and corporate DNA too. According to a Canadian Values Study conducted just a few years ago, Diversity has emerged as “a bona fide, embraced Canadian value.”

In this nationwide survey, Diversity was cited more than any other factor as the characteristic that makes Canada unique – way ahead of other characteristics such as universal health care, the weather and even hockey.

Rajesh Subramaniam, current Senior Vice President of Global Marketing and Customer Experience at FedEx, once said the following: “We don’t do Diversity because we are a nice company or it’s a good thing to do. We do it because it makes good business sense – it’s in our corporate DNA.”

Our Public Service has to make Diversity part of its DNA. And if we don’t have the necessary tools, or independent watchdog to ensure employment equity, Visible Minorities and Aboriginals will continue to be under-represented in the Public Service.

## **THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF DIVERSITY**

Which brings me to the issue I was asked to address today: the creation of the Office of the Commissioner of Diversity. This is a concept I promoted as recently as last year.

Indeed, for many years, I have advocated in favour of the creation of this Office to make sure that Employment Equity becomes an integral part of all departments in the Public Service.

As you know, there are a number of Officers of Parliament. They include, among others, the Lobbying Commissioner, the Official Languages Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner. Since Diversity has become such an integral part of Canada, why not a Diversity Commissioner that would be accountable to Parliament and modeled on the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages? I will say more about this in a moment.

However, in recent months, I have reevaluated the situation and have had talks with a number of senior officials including the Clerk of the Privy Council, many Deputy Ministers, official in the Prime Minister’s Office, former President of the Public Service Commission Maria Barrados and others. I have come to the conclusion that this may not be the appropriate time for the creation of such an office.

But first, allow me to refer to a speech I gave in May 2011 in which I argued in favour of the creation of the Office of the Commissioner of Diversity.

## **MISSION AND MANDATE OF THE OCOL**

As you know, the mandate of the Official Languages Commissioner is to “take all measures within his power to ensure that the three main objectives of the *Official Languages Act* are met.” These three objectives are:

- 1) the equality of English and French in Parliament, the Government of Canada, the federal administration and the institutions subject to the Act;
- 2) the preservation and development of official languages communities in Canada; and
- 3) the equality of English and French in Canadian society.

The Commissioner’s role also includes protecting “the right of all Canadian, whether English- or French-speaking, to equal opportunities for employment and advancement in federal institutions.”

Moreover, the Official Languages Commissioner supports Canada’s linguistic duality in both the public service and in Canadian society by raising our awareness of the benefits of bilingualism. It accomplishes this by working with community organizations and convincing those subject to the *Official Languages Act* to give French and English the attention they deserve.

Furthermore, to fulfill its mission, the Official Languages Commissioner also engages in a number of other activities. For instance, it receives complaints from the Canadian public when someone feels a federal institution has not respected its rights under the *Act*.

## **WHAT WOULD A DIVERSITY COMMISSIONER DO?**

For many years, I believed that the Official Languages Commissioner could serve as a model for the Diversity Commissioner.

Like the Official Languages Office, the Office of Commissioner of Diversity could have been a creature of Parliament. The Officer would have been accountable to Parliamentarians.

It could have reported to Parliament with the same powers and privileges as the Official Languages Commissioner. It could have held federal Departments accountable on issues of representation and challenge Deputy Ministers and senior management on matters of Diversity and Employment Equity.

The Diversity Commissioner could have played a key role in raising awareness of the benefits of Diversity, Equality and Employment Equity across Canada.

It could have accomplished this through a variety of programs and initiatives – like the Clerk’s priorities for action going forward – and could have included advocacy groups, diversity training, research and data compilation, and education. It could have also helped the government foster a vibrant, tolerant and diverse workplace.

The Office of the Commissioner of Diversity could have enforced accountability, confronted and challenged Government agencies and departments on its Employment Equity numbers and monitored the advancement of Diversity and equal opportunities in the Public Service.

These are only some of the roles and responsibilities I believed a Diversity Commissioner could have undertaken.

### **WHY THE CHANGE OF HEART?**

In fact, this leads me to why I have taken a step back to pause, reflect and take the time to further review and study the concept of an Office of the Commissioner of Diversity.

Last week, I met with Daniel Watson, the newly appointed Chief Human Resources Officer. Mr. Watson understands the business case for Diversity. Nobody in the Public Service understands these issues more than him. He is, in my view, the ideal person to serve in this Office. In fact, I think Daniel Watson would be an exceptional guest speaker for your group. Perhaps you may want to consider him for your next event.

At our meeting, he explained to me that Canada does not need a new Officer of Parliament to deal with matters of Diversity. He had some very encouraging news to tell me, which I am delighted to share with you today.

He explained to me that the “feeder groups” for EX-positions currently have substantial numbers of highly-qualified, competent Visible Minorities in them. In other words, there is presently a large pool of Visible Minorities waiting to be promoted to executive positions. And many in EX-1, 2 and 3 are awaiting national promotion upward to Assistant Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister. This is great news.

Mr. Watson also told me that in most categories Visible Minorities are at, or exceed, the workforce availability.

He argued, among other things, that what Visible Minorities in the Public Service really need is a comprehensive and effective mentoring system. He told me that when he first started in the Public Service, he had a mentor that taught him the ropes and took

him under his wings. The guidance he received from this individual was a significant key to his professional success. Look at where he is now! I, too, believe that mentoring is essential.

Consider this: David Thomas, a U.S.-based researcher on minority advancement and career progression, found that "people of colour who advance the furthest all share one characteristic." That characteristic is a "strong network of mentors and corporate sponsors who nurture their professional development."

I recommend that managers and executives within the public service become a mentor to a talented visible minority employee. And I don't mean in name only. I mean working with this individual at least five hours a week to show them the ropes and help them to become more effective managers.

In my view, mentorship is an important step to create a work environment that attracts, hires, retains and promotes Visible Minorities.

Furthermore, as you know, the Public Service is downsizing at this time. The current economic climate is not very conducive to promoting the idea of a new Diversity Commissioner. Such an Office would certainly require a multi-million dollar budget.

It is, therefore, for these reasons that I no longer see the need to push for the creation of the Office of the Commissioner of Diversity.

Rather, I think we should turn our attention to other projects and initiatives. And a good place to start is here tonight with the Community of Federal Visible Minorities.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I have indicated earlier, we have made progress over the years in matters of Diversity here in Canada and, in particular, in the Federal Public Service.

But we are not reaching our full potential yet. This is where the CFVM can contribute to advancing the causes of Visible Minorities and promote Diversity, Equality and Pluralism. You are in a unique position where you can affect real change in the Public Service. More importantly, I know your group will help:

- Promote the advancement and inclusion of Visible Minorities at all levels of the FPS;
- Identify issues of interest and concern to visible minorities and raise these issues to the attention of senior decision-makers;
- Organize professional development activities to advance the profile and role of visible minority public servants; and
- Monitor results and advocate for accountability in matters relating to the progress of visible minorities under federal legislation.

In closing, I wish to quote our Governor General David Johnston. One month ago, he spoke to an audience at the Canadian Club of Toronto. This is what he said:

“Saying yes to diversity is saying yes to modernity, to opportunity, and to the very future of our country.”

I regret not being able to stay with you and answer questions, but the Senate is sitting exceptionally at 6pm this evening. I must return to Parliament Hill for my duties as Deputy Speaker.

Before I conclude, I want to, once again, commend the founding members and all of you here this evening for joining forces. I am happy to know that Visible Minorities in the public service can rely on the CFVM for support and guidance.

I understand you will be adopting the group’s “Terms of Reference” this evening. I hope your deliberations will be fruitful and will, in time, lead to a concrete plan of action for the CFVM.

Thank you very much.