



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Toronto Fire Services – Diversity Goals and Metrics
Supplemental**

Date:	November 8, 2013
To:	City Council
From:	J.W. Jim Sales, Fire Chief and General Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	p:\2013\ClusterB\FIR\cc130032

SUMMARY

This report introduces a revised candidate selection process, developed to increase diversity in Toronto Fire Services (TFS.) This report also provides further elaboration on measurable goals to benchmark TFS' progress towards diversity goals, and outlines service standards in diversity recruitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fire Chief and General Manager, Toronto Fire Services, recommends:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

Financial Impact

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report in Fire Services' 2013 Approved Operating Budget. Any resource requirements identified in the future will be included in Fire Services future operating budget submissions.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of January 15, 2013, City Council directed the Fire Chief/General Manager, Toronto Fire Services consult with the Chief of Police regarding the Framework, structure and successes of the Toronto Police Diversity hiring program, to prepare an update to the Toronto Fire Diversity hiring program, and to report to the Executive Committee by the end of the second quarter of 2013 with a plan on how to increase the diversity within Toronto Fire Services to better reflect the population of Toronto (motion number 258.)

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX27.1>

In considering the Toronto Fire Services (TFS) Report on Diversity at its meeting of July 3, 2013, the Executive Committee requested the Fire Chief report to City Council on the long term diversity goals.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-59656.pdf>

At its meeting of July 19, 2013 City Council adopted the Fire Chief's report, dated July 12, 2013 entitled "A Path to Diversity" and directed the Fire Chief to provide further elaboration on the establishment of measurable goals to benchmark progress the fire services is making.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-60272.pdf>

In reviewing the 2014 service levels, at its meeting of September 18, 2013, the Community Development and Recreation Committee requested the Fire Chief develop service standards in diversity recruitment and report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in early 2014.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD23.10>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

City Council directed the Fire Chief/General Manager, Toronto Fire Services (TFS) consult with the Chief of Police regarding the framework, structure and successes of the Toronto Police Diversity hiring program, to prepare an update to the Toronto Fire Diversity hiring program, and to provide a plan outlining how to increase the diversity within Toronto Fire Services to better reflect the population of Toronto. TFS was subsequently requested to provide long term diversity goals, measurable goals to benchmark progress and to develop service standards in diversity recruitment.

This report responds to these recommendations adopted by City Council and the Community Development and Recreation Committee.

COMMENTS

As demonstrated in the Vision and Mission Statements, in order to meet the diverse needs of our communities, TFS is committed to being a pro-active leader and to building a cohesive, equitable and unified workforce.

The biggest challenge lies in the diversity of the Operations Division. A number of barriers have been identified such as the lack of applications received from women and visible minorities, as well as the lack of diverse graduates from the Pre-Service Firefighter Education and Training Community College Program.

To encourage applications from these groups, the TFS diversity strategy is aimed at outreach and community consultation. TFS has been involved in numerous initiatives geared to removing barriers to employment with TFS and to promote and increase diversity. These initiatives are based on a review of best practices which have identified areas of focus for TFS, namely:

- the cost of the Pre-Service Firefighter Education and Training Community College Program and the lack of certainty of securing employment after graduation as a barrier to potential candidates;
- the Pre-service Program does not have sufficient diversity intake;
- TFS need to increase our internal cultural capacity to create a better understanding of cultural differences and how they can impact delivery of services; and,
- partnerships with other City divisions could be used to support and further diversity initiatives.

Initiatives To Date

Initiatives undertaken by TFS and geared to promoting and increasing diversity reflective of best practices include:

- Continued to conduct regular community outreach resulting in a 74% diversity rate of total contacts.
- Created a training course for recruit firefighters aimed at increasing cross-cultural awareness.
- Partnered with a female applicant who had failed the physical testing numerous times despite a high level of fitness and athleticism to address the challenges presented by the Physical Abilities Test for female candidates, resulting in the production of a video to assist all female applicants in this regard.
- Mitigated barriers presented by the Written Aptitude test by partnering with an outside agency specializing in preparing candidates for the firefighter aptitude tests, which resulted in training that is now provided as part of the TFS career awareness course.

- Partnered with Toronto Employment and Social Services, and Parks Forestry & Recreation to offer a combination of Career Awareness Program courses and transferable skills training to ensure candidates had minimum qualifications for a career with TFS.
- As approved by City Council at its meeting of March 31 and April 1, 2010, TFS partnered with Centennial College to deliver a Pre-service Firefighter Program with an enhanced curriculum and a guarantee of 65% diverse intake. The partnership goal was to increase the number of diverse individuals who received pre-service fire fighter training.
- Reviewed best practice in fire services across Ontario, Canada and the United States and hosted a workshop on diversity for Fire Chiefs and staff from across the Greater Toronto Area and Ontario to discuss fostering pro-active relationships with multicultural communities.
- Attended close to 900 community events in 2012 and hosted over 500 organised tours of fire halls and facilities, over and above contacts made with school groups and community groups by the Fire Prevention and Public Education Division.
- Met with an Advisory Committee consisting of professionals with significant expertise in the area of diversity in employment. In consulting the committee, TFS gained valuable insights regarding improving processes, exploring partnerships and maximizing available resources.

Next Steps

TFS is dedicated to the creation of a diverse workforce and will continue to review all aspects of the hiring process and outreach. Led by the TFS Division Chief of Staff Services who oversees recruitment, TFS will focus efforts on diverse groups in the community and will undertake additional strategies to increase diversity:

- Re-launch Fire Chief's Council on Access, Equity and Diversity with Quarterly meetings being held. (Target completion Q1 2014)
- Create a TFS Senior Staff Committee on Access, Equity and Diversity to continue to develop diversity initiatives. (Target completion Q3 2014)
- Conduct an Employment Systems Review to identify barriers to identify employment barriers to four designated groups (women, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities) and support and direct its equity planning by suggesting alternative employment policies. (Target completion Q2 2014)
- Create a Document Management Policy designed to more effectively manage the tracking of candidate status throughout the recruitment and selection process. (Target completion Q4 2013)

- Deliver cultural competency awareness training to all TFS staff. (Target completion Q3 2014)
- Market TFS mentoring video to female demographic and offer as an online streaming video. (Target completion Q1 2014)
- Continue to offer Aptitude testing and Career Awareness courses. (Target completion – ongoing.)
- Continue diversity intake of Centennial College Program and meet with other community colleges to look at new path forward for TFS training. (Target completion Q4 2014)
- Continue to seek out opportunities to showcase TFS diversity. (Target completion – ongoing)
- Continue targeted outreach contacts. (Target completion – ongoing)
- Review Collective Agreement policies and practices regarding promotions to ensure processes are fair and equitable. (Target completion Q4 2014)
- Participate in Career Fairs and community gatherings and leverage partner support through printed material distribution and posting.(Target completion – ongoing)
- Seek out a partnership with the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A in order to best leverage their demographic and utilize their resources to attract candidates. (Target completion Q1 2014)
- Manage communications (both internal and external) through the TFS website and social media presence. (Target completion – ongoing)

In addition to these activities designed to market TFS careers to diverse groups and to mitigate barriers, TFS will make changes to the candidate selection process to attract additional applications from within these groups, and better address long term diversity goals.

TFS' two-stream recruitment process allowed Operations Firefighter candidates to apply with either minimum requirements or with a pre-service qualification course provided by numerous Ontario community colleges. The course is a three semester community college certificate program which prepares students for a career in fire services by teaching core fire fighting skills and techniques. Students who successfully complete the course require fewer training resources once hired by fire services improving the cost-effectiveness of recruit training programs.

The cost of the course can vary from college to college, and in some instances course costs can total up to \$18,000. The cost of the course and the commitment to full time studies without the certainty of securing employment, posed a barrier for many candidates, particularly in the target groups. Based on recommendations from the Auditor General, TFS is moving to a system which requires all candidates to have the pre-service qualification prior to hiring. This has the potential to restrict some candidates from applying to work in the service.

In the proposed new candidate selection process, candidates will now be able to apply for employment with TFS without the pre-service requirement, and provided they meet and maintain current standards and job requirements, candidates will be given a conditional job offer contingent on their successful completion of the pre-service curriculum at an Ontario community college. This change will be a key component of the TFS diversity hiring strategy as it eliminates barriers with respect to uncertainty of future employment, and provides processes through the Fire Services Credit Union to allow for student loans to complete the required college courses. It is anticipated that applicants through this process will be available for hiring in mid-2015.

While the partnership with Centennial College and the Pre-service Firefighter Program was a success in increasing diversity intake, graduates of the program may apply for employment with fire services across Ontario. Currently, individual fire services impose application and testing fees. Candidates applying to more than one fire service may find the cost of these fees a barrier to seeking employment with more than one fire service. Also, regardless of having graduated from the program, some graduates may not necessarily qualify for employment as fire fighters given the physical and medical requirements of the career.

TFS has been consulted on, and will also be participating in, a new program of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) designed to standardize testing for applicants. This program will allow applicants to secure credentials transferable across Ontario fire services for less cost with a one-time application and testing fee. This will also identify candidates that are suitable for a career in the fire services before they are subject to the costs associated with taking the college courses.

TFS will review the success of these changes after an initial implementation period of two years and make adjustments and improvements as required.

Diversity Recruitment Service Standards

Based on the above activities, TFS has developed the following service standards to be used to measure the success of TFS' diversity recruitment efforts:

- Following implementation of the new candidate selection process, increase of women and visible minorities in the Operations Division from 166 to 274 (5%). This is a multi-year goal which will be monitored annually and further reviewed for future years' goals;
- Increase 2013 level of Outreach contacts of women and visible minorities from 2,224 to 2,446 (10%) in 2014, and further review for 2015 to set future years goals;
- Based on the 2013 applicant pool, increase applications from women and visible minorities from 376 to 395 (5%) in the next recruitment hiring campaign.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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