

DEPUTATION: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: NOVEMBER 24, 2015

**FOCUS: THE BLACK BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONALS COUNCIL
ADVISORY BODY**

**Chairman of the Economic Development Committee Councillor
Thompson and honorable Councillors of the Committee.**

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I am here in the capacity of Chair of the Black Business and Professionals Council Advisory Body of the City of Toronto, which was comprised of representatives of entrepreneurs and professionals of the Black community across the GTA. This group was convened in 2014 under the stewardship of then Deputy Mayor, Norm Kelly and you Councillor Thompson.

The economic growth and competitiveness of this region hinges on strengthening the business community as well as addressing the challenges faced by entrepreneurs irrespective of their sector or size of the firms. And the City has been in catalyst in working with the Black to address both opportunities for growth and the challenges faced in a tangible manner.

With tremendous support of the General Manager, Economic Development, Mike Williams as well as Chris Rickett and Nina Gesa of the Economic Development Division and a student Janet Tsang, the Advisory Body had the following accomplishments:

- 1. First, the roundtable discussions that were facilitated by the City from December 2014 to the spring of 2015 served almost as focus groups in which representatives of the community articulated their challenges faced in accessing business opportunities with the City.**
- 2. Second, based on the insights gained from the roundtables, the Advisory Group agreed on the need to build a profile of the size, sector and location of Black-led businesses. From 242 responses to the survey that was administered jointly by the City and the Advisory Group, the top three areas on which the community wish to focus are: (i) Youth entrepreneurs --- in our work with the City we have been able to work with other groups such as the Employment and Social Services group to have a holistic understanding of all of the services provided by the city. This has been a tremendous benefit to the community; (ii) A Targeted Marketing Program by the City to promote its services to Black entrepreneurs and professionals. Mr. Chair – one of the insights gained from this process is the wide range of services provided to all businesses, including the Black entrepreneurs and professionals. However, the marketing and communication of these services needs to be significantly improved for the benefit of all communities; and (iii) Future research to enlist participation from a greater diversity of Black-led businesses. The survey was run over a very tight timeframe in August of this year and the data collected are mainly from the Caribbean community. More needs to be done to obtain information on the African diaspora in the region.**

3. Third, the City has started to use diverse channels to communicate with Black entrepreneurs and professionals to have them participate in information sessions on areas such as the City's procurement process.

These are pivotal steps forward for our community. Much has been done to connect the dots between the City of Toronto and the Black business community. It is our hope that this is the start of journey of engagement for the mutual benefit of Black entrepreneurs and professionals and the City of Toronto.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Catherine Chandler-Crichlow: Chair of the BBPCAB