

10-13-2017

Keynote Address: Meaningful Inclusion Creates Opportunity

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Citation Information

Smith, Gillian. "Keynote Address: Meaningful Inclusion Creates Opportunity." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 54.4 (2017) : 991-996.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60082/2817-5069.3180>

<https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/ohlj/vol54/iss4/2>

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Keynote Address: Meaningful Inclusion Creates Opportunity

Abstract

There is no city in North America that has a greater opportunity to create economic prosperity for many in the way Toronto does. If we don't keep our eye on how to take advantage of the benefits, we risk squandering that opportunity. Let's take stock of Toronto. We're booming. Toronto is one of the top cities in North America in the number of construction projects on the go. People are choosing to move to our city in staggering numbers—roughly 120,000 people per year make Toronto their home. We have a financial sector that is one of the most sophisticated in the world, a tech sector whose market growth is second only to Silicon Valley, and the potential to have the fifth largest human health sciences cluster on the planet within the next ten years. The challenge that Canada has, and Toronto has most acutely, is that opportunity is not shared as well as it could be. This is particularly true for our city's underrepresented communities—particularly youth and newcomers to Canada. Toronto has an overall unemployment rate of 6.7 per cent. Unemployment rates for youth and newcomers, however, stand at an unacceptably high 18 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. At the Toronto Region Board of Trade, I work with 12,000 different business leaders, many of whom tell me they are desperate because they simply cannot fill all the positions they have available.

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Cover Page Footnote

Gillian would like to thank Jamil Jivani and the Citizen Empowerment Project for the opportunity to address the Creating Opportunities Summit at Osgoode Hall Law School.

Special Issue

Keynote Address: Meaningful Inclusion Creates Opportunity*

GILLIAN SMITH[†]

THERE IS NO CITY IN NORTH AMERICA that has a greater opportunity to create economic prosperity for many in the way Toronto does. If we don't keep our eye on how to take advantage of the benefits, we risk squandering that opportunity.

Let's take stock of Toronto. We're booming. Toronto is one of the top cities in North America in the number of construction projects on the go.¹ People are choosing to move to our city in staggering numbers—roughly 120,000 people per year make Toronto their home.²

We have a financial sector that is one of the most sophisticated in the world, a tech sector whose market growth is second only to Silicon Valley,³ and the

* An earlier version of this keynote address was presented at the Creating Opportunities Summit. The Summit took place on 26-27 January 2017 at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Toronto.

[†] Ontario PC Party Candidate for University-Rosedale and former Chief Marketing Officer for the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Gillian would like to thank Jamil Jivani and the Citizen Empowerment Project for the opportunity to address the *Creating Opportunities Summit* at Osgoode Hall Law School.

1. See Pete Evans, "130 highrise building projects in Toronto lead North America," *CBC News* (21 January 2014), online: <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/130-highrise-building-projects-in-toronto-lead-north-america-1.2504776>>.
2. Toronto Region Board of Trade, *Toward a Toronto Region Economic Strategy: Economic Vision and Strategy Report of the Toronto Region* (Toronto: bot.com, 2014), online: <www.bot.com/portals/0/unsecure/Advocacy/2014_TRBOT_ICPPaper.pdf> at 7.
3. "Global IT firms are relocating to Toronto – Here's why" (18 November 2016), online: <www.investinontario.com/spotlights/global-it-firms-are-relocating-toronto-heres-why>.

potential to have the fifth largest human health sciences cluster on the planet within the next ten years.⁴

The challenge that Canada has, and Toronto has most acutely, is that opportunity is not shared as well as it could be. This is particularly true for our city's underrepresented communities—particularly youth and newcomers to Canada.

Toronto has an overall unemployment rate of 6.7 per cent.⁵ Unemployment rates for youth and newcomers, however, stand at an unacceptably high 18 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.⁶

At the Toronto Region Board of Trade, I work with 12,000 different business leaders, many of whom tell me they are desperate because they simply cannot fill all the positions they have available.

There's a Canadian-based global engineering firm involved in building the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit line that just hired its 500th engineer and they need more.⁷ An international management consultancy cannot find enough data scientists to keep pace with their workload. We have a critical nursing shortage in Ontario.⁸ And in three short years, Canada will face a 200,000-person shortage of IT workers.⁹

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4. "TO Health! announces its evolution and Summit to make Toronto region cluster Top 5 in 10," *NewsWire.ca* (24 February 2016), online: <www.newswire.ca/news-releases/to-health-announces-its-evolution-and-summit-to-make-toronto-region-cluster-top-5-in-10-567358801.html>.
 5. Statistics Canada, "Labour force characteristics, unadjusted, by census metropolitan area (3 month moving average) (Toronto (Ont.), Hamilton (Ont.), St. Catharines-Niagara (Ont.))" (5 May 2017), online: <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/lfs04f-eng.htm>>.
 6. Patrick Gill, Toronto Region Board of Trade, *Building Infrastructure, Building Talent: 147 Job Openings Over 15 Years – A Generation of Jobs*, October 2016 (Toronto: bot.com, 2016), online: <www.bot.com/Portals/0/unsecure/Advocacy/TRBOT_Talent_Study_2016.pdf> at 16.
 7. See generally, Crosslinx Transit Solutions, *Apprenticeship Plan: Eglinton Crosstown LRT Project* (9 May 2016), online: <www.thecrosstown.ca/sites/default/files/approved_cts_apprenticeship_plan.pdf>.
 8. Trevor Greenway, "Ontario facing nursing shortage: union," *Toronto Metro* (24 March 2014), online: <www.metronews.ca/news/ottawa/2014/03/24/ontario-needs-another-17000-nurses-says-union.html>.
 9. Daniel Tencer, "Tech Jobs Will Boom In Canada, But Country Lacks People To Fill Them: Study," *Huffington Post* (3 Decemeber 2016), online: <www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/03/12/it-jobs-skills-shortage-canada_n_9440872.html>.

We have people without jobs and jobs without people.¹⁰ There is a fundamental mismatch between labour market demand and how we're orienting, training, and re-skilling our labour force.

This mismatch doesn't hit communities evenly—there are those, such as youth and newcomers, who have an even harder time accessing opportunity. For a city like Toronto, this simply doesn't make any sense.

Without access to the right education, employment, and training, these communities risk falling even further behind by losing access to practical workplace skills and the opportunity to connect their potential with a job market that so desperately needs their talent.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, an estimated 1.1 million people are expected to retire from the labour force in Canada over the next five to ten years, meaning Ontario faces a labour shortage of 564,000 workers by 2030.¹¹

Young people need to move up the career ladder faster than any previous generation, and will need to develop the necessary training and skills to do so effectively, ensuring their success. Employers will need to foster training, internship, and apprenticeship programs to cultivate the talent needed.

Newcomers bring diverse entrepreneurial talents, unique cultural perspectives, and community networks, and our rapidly growing youth population represents the future of so many industries, providing businesses with the opportunity to tap into new markets and contribute mightily to our global competitive advantage.

These facts make it imperative for our region's businesses to harness the strength of its most valuable resource—our people.

I. TALENT NEEDED TO BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE

We have a historic commitment for billions of dollars of infrastructure investment over the next fifteen years.¹² In fact, if you tally up the planned investments to be made by industrial, commercial, institutional, and governmental investors,

10. Rick Miner, Miner Management Consultants, *People Without Jobs – Jobs Without People: Ontario's Labour Market Future* (February 2010), online: <www.collegesontario.org/research/research_reports/people-without-jobs-jobs-without-people-final.pdf>.

11. City of Toronto, "Why Hire Youth?" (2017), online: <www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=8baec3ee76512410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>; The Conference Board of Canada, *Ontario's Looming Labour Shortage Challenges*, 25 September 2007 (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2007), online: <www.workforcecoalition.ca/downloads/conference_board_report.pdf> at 5.

12. Gill, *supra* note 6 at 24.

and add to that residential construction, there is almost half a trillion dollars of building investment planned for our region.¹³

This is an unprecedented opportunity to fix our region's transportation infrastructure challenges, among other things. Infrastructure fixes will help all of us get around the region more efficiently so that we're, hopefully, not spending hours on transit or in traffic trying to make it to the one, two, or more jobs that we need to afford to live in the city.

The real and lasting opportunity afforded by this infrastructure investment is the creation of a generation of highly-skilled, well-paying jobs; engineers, skilled tradespeople, all the support systems like accountants and payroll that keep workers in the field. The list goes on.

According to the Government of Canada's Job Bank, 70 per cent of the top 50 occupations needed have a median wage that's more than double Ontario's minimum wage.¹⁴

In October 2016, the Board produced its *Building Infrastructure, Building Talent* study, which lays out a fifteen-year forecast of the Toronto region's labour market needs.¹⁵ In all, we estimate that 147,000 construction-related jobs will be created by 2031, a result of new investment and retiring workers—truly, a generation of jobs.¹⁶

Do we have the workforce required to build the infrastructure we need? Quite simply, no. There are significant expertise gaps, and the decline in new entrants is having a negative impact on the industry. The biggest challenges reside with low completion rates of apprentices in trades programs,¹⁷ older trainees, under-representation of women, a lack of interest from young people, and a perception of the trades as being too "blue collar." All these factors contribute to the sector's under-performance.

It will require a concerted effort on the part of employers, policy makers, and educators to source talent through our local post-secondary education system and put the talent needed by industry in place in time.

The Board has outlined eighteen concrete recommendations that can be implemented to create the pathways to these 147,000 jobs.¹⁸ Many of these

13. *Ibid* at 27.

14. *Ibid* at 15.

15. *Ibid*.

16. *Ibid* at 5.

17. *Ibid* at 18.

18. *Ibid* at 23-25.

recommendations aren't new, but most of them haven't been listed together, nor assigned to the decision-makers who can act upon them.

This is one of our best chances to include more, and different, communities in our collective prosperity.

II. TORONTO-WATERLOO INNOVATION CORRIDOR

We've known for some time there is something special emanating out of Waterloo, the regional node powering today's Innovation Corridor.¹⁹

Comprised of technology companies, financial services powerhouses, food, beverage and agriculture industries, and advanced manufacturing giants, this region represents a staggering proportion of Ontario's GDP and a notable tranche of Canada's GDP.²⁰ It's a region that needs our attention, and Toronto is its most important node.

A report by McKinsey & Company focused specifically on the opportunity to create a technology supercluster and one of the world's top innovation ecosystems.²¹ The window to capitalize on this opportunity is heart-stoppingly short. Other clusters—Boston, Berlin, Tel Aviv, London, Bangalore, and Sao Paulo—are all in the hunt, and they want to win.²²

We have an enormous advantage on our side: Canada's—and Toronto's—good standing in the world draws the best and brightest and is an advantage money cannot buy. We cannot squander this opportunity by ignoring the pathways to opportunity for those who choose to make Canada their home, nor for those born here.

Among the McKinsey report's dozens of recommendations for building the technology supercluster, many focused on smoothing the ingress of high-level talent from abroad, and the need for a coordinated talent strategy to engage educational institutions and government to shape education programs to meet the talent demands of the future workforce.²³

19. The Toronto-Waterloo Region Corridor is a technology cluster stretching 100 kilometers. Toronto-Waterloo Region, "The Corridor" (2017), online: <www.thecorridor.ca>.

20. McKinsey & Company, *Primer on technology superclusters and a fact base on Canada's Toronto-Waterloo Innovation Corridor* (Toronto: McKinsey & Company, 2016), online: <[http://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/McKinsey/Global Themes/Americas/Tech North/Toronto-Waterloo Innovation Corridor white paper - fact base-20161213.ashx](http://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/McKinsey/Global%20Themes/Americas/Tech%20North/Toronto-Waterloo%20Innovation%20Corridor%20white%20paper%20-%20fact%20base-20161213.ashx)>.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid* at 14.

23. *Ibid* at 14-16.

They recommended re-skilling programs, academic-corporate learning partnerships, and support for the Ontario government's Planning and Partnerships table to encourage skills growth through internship opportunities and teacher training.²⁴

In total, McKinsey projects that the success of this technology supercluster could result, by 2025, in a \$17 billion contribution to Canada's GDP and the creation of 170,000 new jobs.²⁵

III. CONCLUSION

With a concerted, focused effort to build our city, and to build a world-beating tech cluster, we have an opportunity to create 317,000 great jobs. If these jobs were added today, we'd have more than full employment in Toronto.

This will take a lot of work on the part of a lot of actors—the private sector, government, academia, and community groups—to make happen.

Toronto and its people are worth it. By including them in the opportunities we have at hand, we can make Toronto one of the planet's greatest places to live by making the pathways to opportunity clear and navigable to those who choose to make this place their home.

24. *Ibid* at 3, 9.

25. *Ibid* at 12.