



insight

ISSUES AND IDEAS FOR GREATER PHILADELPHIA'S LEADERS

VOLUME 6



2013

The background of the cover is a close-up photograph of a sailboat's sail. The sail is made of a vibrant orange and red fabric, with a yellow rope running vertically along the right side. The rope is secured with a dark, textured knot or stopper. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue sky.

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally
Lessons from the 2012 Leadership Exchange to Toronto

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ON THE COVER:
HARBOURFRONT CENTER



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PRINTER: SQUARE ONE

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THIS VOLUME OF INSIGHT WAS UNDERWRITTEN
BY THE WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION.

TORONTO

PHILADELPHIA

BY THE NUMBERS



Size
Demographics
Population*
White/Not Visible Minority
Black/African-American
Asian
Hispanic/Latino
Foreign Born
Median Age
Median Household Income
Unemployment
Education
No high school diploma
High school diploma/High school certificate or equivalent
Some college/University certificate or diploma below the bachelor level
Bachelor's degree/University certificate, diploma or degree
Employment by Industry
All Industries
Goods-Producing
Construction
Manufacturing
Service-Providing
Wholesale Trade
Retail Trade
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities
Information
Financial Activities
Professional and Business Services
Education and Health Services
Leisure and Hospitality Services
Other Services (except Public Administration)
Real Estate
Owner-occupied Housing
Commercial Vacancy
Economic Contribution
GDP (billions)
% of Nation
Airport
International Connections
Total Passenger Traffic
Tons of Cargo

	City of Toronto	City/County of Philadelphia	Greater Toronto Area	Philadelphia MSA
	392 sq. miles	134 sq. miles	3,668 sq. miles	5,118 sq. miles
	2,615,060	1,526,006	6,147,930	5,965,343
	53%	41%	60%	68%
	8%	43%	7%	21%
	33%	6%	28%	5%
	3%	12%	2%	8%
	50%	12%	12%	n/a
	38	34	38	38
	\$52,833	\$36,251	\$64,128	\$60,259
	9.2%	10.8%	8.3%	8.6%
	20%	14%	20%	9%
	24%	36%	26%	32%
	6%	16%	5%	17%
	30%	13%	26%	20%
	1,266,897	626,418	2,960,040	2,566,259
	196,449	34,266	548,740	292,077
	61,301	9,496	178,720	Not Disclosable
	126,455	24,720	340,850	Not Disclosable
	1,070,617	486,259	2,411,300	1,935,201
	38,619	13,966	113,920	105,516
	120,353	46,441	313,420	287,173
	54,122	83,024	158,250	475,679
	61,219	11,964	113,790	49,314
	143,217	41,386	306,020	193,800
	224,220	77,651	460,210	383,701
	220,434	193,538	476,890	522,858
	108,329	57,954	235,760	221,534
	51,215	20,740	114,320	86,742
	54%	54%	69%	68%
	5.3%	14.8%	7.0%	17.5%
	\$152	\$78	\$296	\$347
	8.7%	0.5%	16.9%	2.4%
	143	37		
	31,934,395	30,775,961		
	482,486	419,702		

NB: Because of near parity of the US and Canadian Dollars, monetary figures for the US are in USD and for Canada in CAD.

* Canada Population data is from 2011

** Toronto CMA data from 2010



“DIVERSITY OUR STRENGTH”

Toronto’s ‘newcomers’ are essential to its growth

by Bill Hangle, Jr.

One could accurately say that there are two sides to the immigration coin in Toronto: an economic side, and a cultural side. The economic angle is clear: Toronto’s economy can’t function without immigrants, and the region’s business leaders want more. The cultural angle is likewise clear: what was once an almost entirely Caucasian population is growing increasingly diverse, a trend that promises only to accelerate.

But perhaps what’s most interesting is how the economic and cultural sto-

ries mesh – in fact, they really can’t be separated. To capture the economic benefits of immigration, stakeholders say, Toronto has had to embrace the task of encouraging cultural integration. It’s a lesson worth considering for Americans, particularly in the wake of the 2012 Presidential election which highlighted the growing power of non-white voters, and led many to conclude that our nation may finally find the appetite to grapple with immigration reform.

If it does, it stands to gain a great

deal, if Toronto’s example is any guide. Canada has long relied on immigrants – or, as some prefer, “newcomers” – to fuel its economy, and Toronto is the heart of the influx. Almost half the nation’s immigrants end up in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and half of the GTA’s residents are foreign-born. Declining birthrates among native Canadians means these newcomers collectively represent the only real growth in the region’s labor market.

But newcomers are also new Ca-

nadians, and even as they boost the economy, they are helping create a new Canada.

“We are building more cricket pitches than baseball diamonds,” said Ratna Omidvar, the head of the immigration-focused Maytree Foundation and a member of the prestigious Order of Canada. Born in Tanzania to Indian parents, Omidvar arrived as a teenager three decades ago during an era when newcomers were expected to set their past aside and “become Canadian.” Since then she has seen the immigrant story change dramatically. “We still use the word ‘visible minority’ to describe people who look like me,” she said. “It’s false terminology, because we are the majority in this city.”

Today, she said, while immigrants are fueling prosperity, prosperity in turn is fueling rising and changing expectations among immigrants.



Ratna Omidvar

Newcomers still expect to work hard and embrace core Canadian values, she said, but they also expect to retain important ties to their native culture and habits, even as they reap the rewards of their labors. “There is a natural timeframe that goes like this: ‘Come to Canada, work hard, and your children will succeed,’” Omidvar said. “That narrative is no longer a [good] marketing strategy for this country. People want success in their own time.”

Zabeen Hirji, head of human re-

sources for the Royal Bank of Canada, has seen the same trends. Businesses like RBC are embracing newcomers in multiple ways, she said – as workers, as customers, and increasingly as executives and leaders. “This important to our economy,” she said. “It’s not whether we need immigration – it’s how we attract the best and the brightest. Immigrants today have choices.”

“As Canadians, we say we’re very ‘tolerant.’ But I don’t want to be ‘tolerated!’ That’s not a positive thing!”

Thus, even as the workplace diversifies, she says, the pressure is growing on the mainstream culture to become ever more inclusive and welcoming to newcomers. “As Canadians, we say we’re very ‘tolerant.’ But I don’t want to be ‘tolerated!’ That’s not a positive thing!” Hirji said with a laugh. “As you think about [immigrant] cultures within organizations and the country, it’s evolving. We are adapting some of the cultural norms of the people coming to our country.”

NEW WORKERS, NEW MARKETS, NEW CHALLENGES

For a bank like RBC, Hirji said, newcomers are understood as essential to success at multiple levels. “We have a vested interest in immigration,” said Hirji. “This is important to our clients. The success of Canada really drives the success of our business.” An estimated 100,000 newcomers arrive in the GTA each year. Labor force growth is entirely from immigrants. The new arrivals not only boost existing businesses and economic sectors; they also create



Zabeen Hirji

new and potentially lucrative markets for housing, goods and services.

RBC has responded with efforts both to hire more immigrants and to attract more newcomers’ businesses – two mutually-reinforcing tactics. Almost a third of RBC’s employees are now “visible minorities,” up from 7% in 1987. The bank’s “diversity and inclusion strategy” helps some move into management, where 15% are visible minorities.

“It’s the right thing to do, and it’s the smart thing to do – it is really a business imperative,” Hirji said. “We have hired hundreds of bankers that are new immigrants, and what we’ve found is that while they may not know the Canadian banking system, they know the banking systems of the countries they’re from. A lot of our clients are from those countries. They have been key in helping us win that business because they understand, they empathize, and they can help us integrate people.”

Having new Canadians in RBC’s staff and leadership has helped the bank implement newcomer-friendly policies, she said, such as credit access for people without formal credit histories. The hope is that those policies will help RBC become the bank of choice for new arrivals. “As [newcomers] integrate and accumulate more wealth, we want to be there for them right from the start,” Hirji said.

RBC is by no means alone in seeing immigrants as a vital source of both

workers and customers. The bank is a member of the Toronto Region Immigration Employment Council (TRIEC), a broad coalition of businesses, public agencies, and advocates that promotes regionally the same inclusionary strategies that RBC uses internally. TRIEC's influence is felt all the way down to the neighborhood level.

"What TRIEC has done has trickled down to organizations like us," said Ahmed Hussein, programs and services director for Thorncliffe Neighborhood Office, a community service nonprofit based in an immigrant-heavy Toronto community. "I'll give you an example. A couple of months ago, a car dealership came to us and said it was interested in hiring three individuals with certain languages. It said, 'Even if they don't have the experience in sales, we will train them.' "So we looked in our database and found people with sales experience from those communities," Hussein said. "They actually increased the sales volume of that dealership."

Another TRIEC partner is George Brown College, a community college based in downtown Toronto whose close collaboration with local employers has made the region's dependence on newcomers abundantly clear. "We need immigrants," said college president Anne Sado, noting that Ontario's shortfall of skilled workers is projected to reach 190,000 by 2020.

But by the same token, Sado said, immigrants – even those with professional skills and experience – need institutions like George Brown and



networks like TRIEC. Even highly qualified newcomers face obstacles; they frequently lack of language skills, Canadian workplace experience, or Canadian-recognized professional credentials (about half of the many immigrants with postsecondary degrees work at jobs for which they're overqualified, Sado said).

"What employers are really looking for is the soft skills – communication, problem solving, teamwork."

And perhaps most important is the college's ability to connect students with internships, mentors, professional networks, and other opportunities to gain invaluable "field experience" in Canadian workplaces. "Employers *expect* graduates to have the technical skills. What employers are really looking for is the soft

Ahmed Hussein

skills – communication, problem solving, teamwork – understanding the cultural environment," Sado said. "Soft skills are not just language skills."

NEW CULTURES: INTEGRATING, DIVERSIFYING, PARTICIPATING

From where Ratna Omidvar sits, those "soft skills" are essential not only to success in the workplace but to full participation and inclusion in public life. And for newcomers, getting them is not easy, even in an immigrant-friendly country like Canada.

"I've been in this country for thirty years or so, and I'm still taken aback by what I don't know," Omidvar said. "Let me give you an example. I come from a country which is crowded. People have to talk a little loudly to be heard, and people stand closely to each other. I never heard of 'personal space' before I came to Canada and someone very kindly pointed out to me, 'You're infringing on my personal space.'" Omidvar laughed at the memory. "I had to ask, 'What exactly does that mean?'"





Anne Sado

Similarly, Omidvar said, what seems like polite conversation to a newcomer may seem intrusive to a native. “Many immigrants come from cultures where it is normal to be curious – ‘Where do you live? What kind of car do you drive? How much did it cost? How much do you earn?’ These are all very normal questions [in some places] – but not in Canada!” Omidvar said. “You have to learn a lot, and you have to unlearn a lot.”

Businesses and service providers can foster that cultural integration, she said. Among TRIEC’s signature initiatives is a professional mentoring program that offers a structured, two-month framework that pairs native Canadians with immigrants who share their professional background. One mentor was Julia Deans, the former chair of the Greater Toronto CivicAction Alliance. “I’m literally getting a chill up and down my spine when I remember the process, and how it felt when someone calls and says, ‘I have a job, and my family is going to be safe,’” she said.

Zabeen Hirji said the Royal Bank of Canada not only participates in TRIEC’s mentoring program but also runs an internal version of its own.

“The learning for the mentors can’t be underestimated,” Hirji said. “When you’re working with a real person and connecting in a real human way, the ‘ah-hah’ moments are quite powerful and have a multiplier effect. It changes the behavior of that mentor going forward. It enables them to be more inclusive.”

And while it isn’t easy to quantify how the overall society is handling this diversity, Omidvar sees many promising indicators, including rapidly rising rates of cultural intermarriage among immigrants’ children. “The parents may care, but the kids don’t seem to,” Omidvar said. “That has to be good news for us.”

Toronto’s immigrant community faces many problems familiar to America’s; there is the tendency to settle in isolated enclaves, for example, or the persistence of language and social barriers. What’s more, policymakers in Ontario are still grappling with the fundamental challenge of how to attract immigrants with the kinds of skills employers will need five, ten, and twenty years down the road.

“Without immigration at much higher levels than we have now, we won’t have the labor force we need.”

“In a time when the nature of our labor force is changing, our economy is changing, the province is looking at how we get the best immigrants in Toronto,” said Deans. “Without immigration at much higher levels than we have now, we won’t have the labor force we need.”

All this must happen in a time when economic uncertainty threatens to sour the traditionally welcoming attitude of Canadian citizens and businesses. “In difficult economic times, it’s really about how you engage busi-

nesses and help them see how immigrants can help them grow,” said Hirji.

And to those who, like Omidvar, look beyond immediate economic needs at broader cultural questions, Canada still has a long way to go before it can be called fully inclusive. “The elevator takes you to the first floor or the second – it does not take you to the penthouse,” she said. “We have a growing phenomenon of what we would call ethnic enclaves [and] self-imposed segregation. I think the answer to that is public space, the public realm. Schools, parks, libraries, boards of trade, civil society, organizations – we have to use creative social engineering strategies to bring people together.”

At stake, she said, is the prosperity not just of the immigrant community,



Julia Deans

but of the entire region – a lesson that is just as applicable to Philadelphia as to Toronto. “You have to attract people, and you have to retain people. There’s no point in attracting people if they don’t stay. So, what do you need to make them stay? Quality of life – schools, safety, seeing themselves reflected in places of power and privilege,” Omidvar said. “Those are the things that matter.”



WHERE DO-IT-RIGHT MEETS GET-IT-DONE

The Quandary of Toronto's Port Lands

by Bill Hangley, Jr.

The convoluted story of Toronto's massive Port Lands redevelopment plan can be summed up this way: after years of planning and politicking, it remains hung up between do-it-right and get-it-done.

It wasn't that long ago that the future seemed clearer. In 2010, following a decade-long public process, a comprehensive plan for the 1,000-acre Port Lands – a flood-prone peninsula of brownfields and industrial sites poking into the heart of Toronto's harbor – was approved and funded and ready to go. But in 2011, the plan was swept away by a surprise assault from a new mayor with an agenda of his own. A hard-fought political battle revived the plan, but its future remains uncertain.

Today, the Port Lands plan, perhaps the most ambitious of Toronto's many waterfront revival projects, remains entangled in the competing interests of planners, advocates, politicians, developers, and businesspeople. It isn't completely stalled, but remains a cautionary tale for any city that delves into the costly, controversial world of waterfront development.

That includes Philadelphia. The Delaware waterfront is much smaller than Toronto's long lakeshore. It includes much less publicly-owned land and is subject to much less pressure from commercial developers. But the two waterfronts share many characteristics: both include large swaths of essentially obsolete industrial spaces, cut off from their city by aging highways, holding out great promise for residential and commercial development if they can only be cleaned up and repurposed.

As in Toronto, supporters of the Delaware waterfront have a plan in place, developed over many years through a complex public process. As in Toronto, that plan faces constant pressure from all sorts of commercial and political interests. Like Torontonians, Philadelphians hoping to

unlock the potential of the Delaware waterfront must constantly negotiate the battle between do-it-right and get-it-done.

If the Toronto experience is any guide, there is no easy way to win that battle. But waging it carries some unexpected benefits. If there is a bright future for the Port Lands, it will be because of, not in spite of, the intense public debate of the last two years. At a panel discussion on a warm sunny afternoon, Leadership Exchange participants heard from representatives of both the do-it-right and get-it-done camps, as well as from the man charged with balancing their interests.

DO IT RIGHT: "THERE WAS A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY."

Ken Greenberg is the champion of do-it-right. He was part of the Port Lands planning process from early on and remains an unapologetic supporter of the notion that waterfront renewal needs to be thought of as a multi-generational project with transformational capacity whose high price tag is worth the cost.

An architect and planner with a long history in Toronto, Greenberg was taken by surprise when the plan, developed by a public planning agency known as Waterfront Toronto, had its legs kicked out from under it. "Basically the story is, there was a false sense of security," said Greenberg. "When we had the municipal election in 2011, one of the first things the new mayor said was, 'Let's get rid of the plan.'"

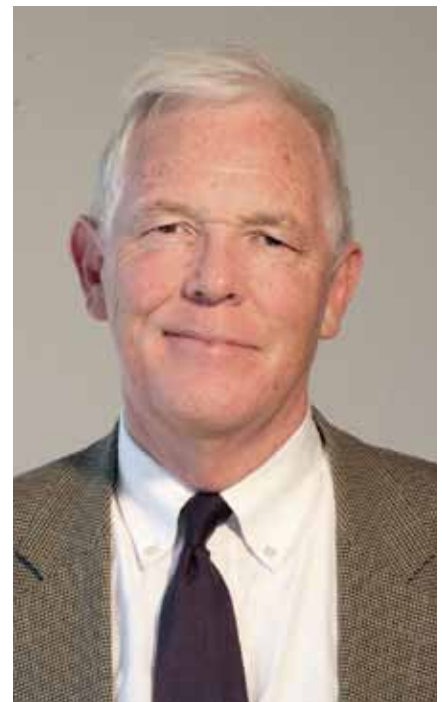
Greenberg has always seen the Port Lands plan as more than just an opportunity to clear some land for new use. It was a vision to serve the "triple bottom line – economy, society, and the environment," and create entirely new communities, complete with schools, jobs, day-care centers, parks, and residents from every walk of life. "That's what peo-



ple liked," he said. "The image was of a place that would be simultaneously publicly generous, very green and highly urban."

Among the plan's core elements was a major environmental reconstruction project meant to recreate the Don River's ancient entrance to Lake Ontario. It proposed replacing a flood-prone, concrete drainage ditch with an estuary of bulrushes and native grasses, allowing the Don to wind along a natural floodplain through a new landscape of housing and parks. "The plan was rooted in the behavior of the river," Greenberg said.

It was always an expensive vision





Toronto's waterfront at Sugar Beach

– north of \$2 billion in all – whose economic benefits needed to be measured not in years, but in decades. But it went through a long public process designed to smooth over the many



John Campbell

points of contention and address the needs of its many stakeholders. By the time Waterfront Toronto's Port Lands plan made it to City Council, as part of its larger "Making Waves" plan, there were promises of major fi-

nancial support from multiple levels of government.

"In 2010, the plan is approved [by City Council] there's a giant sigh of relief – we've spent all these years working on this," Greenberg said. "And then, the vulnerability."

"I do not want wait a quarter of a century," said the mayor.

It turned out that the new mayor, Rob Ford, had plans of his own – plans he promised would be faster, cheaper, private-sector driven, and just as "spectacular" as the original Waterfront Toronto plan. Ford called the Port Lands plan a "boondoggle" favored by "elites" entranced by visions of a "socialist utopia." Ford and his brother Doug – a City Councillor – hired a private firm to develop their alternative plan without any public input. Its guiding principle was to sell waterfront land quickly to private developers and let them drive the process. The concept included a giant shopping mall, an "ice palace," and a Ferris wheel, and they claimed it could be complete in ten years. "I do not want wait a quarter of a century," said the mayor.

To the Fords and their supporters, this new vision was about circum-

venting expensive, self-interested planning agencies like Waterfront Toronto. They promised that their approach would quickly start putting taxes back in the city coffers.

But to a do-it-right guy like Greenberg, the Ford plan was the ultimate insult from the land of get-it-done. "Their idea was, let's put these lands on the chopping block," he said of the Fords. "This is an administration that's all about paying the least possible amount of taxes, having the lowest amount of public services possible, which looks with a very skeptical eye at anything which is so generously public. It really does represent a different ideology, which you'll recognize from the Tea Party in the US – that things public don't really matter that much."

The Fords' announcement kicked off a whole new round of intense public debate. Supporters of the original Waterfront Toronto plan mobilized and pressured City Council to reject the Ford plan, which it eventually did, in part because of the many unanswered questions about its actual costs and timeframe.

But Council also agreed to put representatives of City Hall on a new planning team and take the

signers, but, planning and design ain't that important. What's truly really important is activity," Berridge said. "What makes a waterfront is getting people there."

Once that activity cycle kicks into gear, waterfront advocates can start attracting both private sector interest and public support for ongoing infrastructure investments. "You've got to make sure you have some energy and activity there that will attract the kind of funding commitments you want," he said. "Where are the universities? Where are the cultural attractions? Where are the office buildings? Waterfront Toronto is turning much more in that direction now because I think they recognize that that's how you fulfill your economic mandate."

THE BALANCING ACT: "OUR BIGGEST ASSET IS THE PUBLIC TRUST."

If the balance to be struck is between comprehensive long-term visions and achievable short-term projects, John Campbell is the man responsible. Asked what that task is like, the smooth-pated Campbell joked, "I used to have a full head of hair."

Like Greenberg, Campbell, a former private developer and now the CEO of Waterfront Toronto, sees the potential for tremendous returns from the original, ambitious Port Lands plan. "You only get one chance every few generations to do waterfront development, so you better do it right," he said.

But like Berridge, he returns constantly to the notion that it's economic rewards that justify major public investments. "If you create a quality of space, it leads to a quality of life that can help attract the best and brightest talent. That's what I call the economic long game," he said.

In a perfect world, waterfront development would pay for itself. Campbell said that the basic business model for Waterfront Toronto is to invest in infrastructure and other projects that raise the value of city-owned waterfront properties, use the proceeds from sale of those properties to invest in

more infrastructure, create more value, sell, re-invest, and so on.

But the reality for the Port Lands – as with many other waterfronts – is that the initial capital investment needed is far too high to be paid for by nearby land sales. In the Port Lands' case, the cost of creating the Don River estuary is so large that there's little chance of recapturing it from the sale of Port Lands properties.

Campbell still believes that the project remains an overall economic winner for the city, well worth the investments – but the basic vulnerability Berridge sees will not go away anytime soon. It will always be possible for opponents of something as costly as the Port Lands plan to claim that it isn't worth the money.

So what a big waterfront project like the Port Lands plan needs is protection. The time-honored method is to create an institution like Waterfront Toronto that can stick around even as political players come and go. "I've been through three prime ministers, fifteen cabinet ministers and three mayors so far," Campbell said. "You have to have a vision that people can buy into, so it survives the winds of the various administrations that want to come in and change it."

But what Campbell has learned from the tangle of politics that stalled the Port Lands plan is that nothing can replace truly broad-based public support. For all the thought and process that went into creating Waterfront Toronto's initial Port Lands plan, he said, it wasn't until the Fords came out and challenged it that a truly citywide debate about the waterfront's future began.

"Interesting silver lining to the cloud, isn't it?" Campbell said, "Before, we had a problem getting citywide attention. This brouhaha actually gave us citywide attention. Coming from the private sector, I was quite surprised and nervous about public consultation. But it's turned out very well."

Or, as Greenberg put it, "One of the things we say these days is that Mayor

Ford is the greatest community organizer this city has ever had. The truth is, in 2010, when the plan passed in City Council, I would say that the knowledge about the waterfront was one-tenth of what it was after he tried to attack it."

Now, Campbell says, Waterfront Toronto is newly-attuned to a broader constituency. He knows he can't just rely on the people that traditionally support and drive these sorts of projects – educated, older, and white, which Campbell jokingly calls the "stale, male, and pale" problem. "We're trying to do outreach to the public, and we've been successful in part," Campbell said. "We have not been successful in reaching first-generation immigrants and young people. It's a problem."

Campbell needs this support because his organization is now responsible for creating a revised Port Lands plan that is acceptable both to the supporters of the original proposal and to its critics in City Hall and elsewhere.

That is no simple feat. As of this writing, the city has approved the outline of a revised Port Lands plan that would accelerate the sale of some of its properties, retain some of its remaining industry, and spend less restoring the Don River estuary. But many details of this revised plan and its funding are still to be determined, and private developers armed with proposals of their own – most recently involving casinos – can be counted on to keep emerging from the woodwork.

That means more work for Greenberg, Berridge, and Campbell, all of whom agree that it is possible to both get the Port Lands project done and do it right. Likewise, it means more work for the public, which has learned through this process that it has significant power to shape the waterfront. Planners and politicians alike know that they cannot stray too far from the plans the public supports, Campbell said. "I would say now that our biggest asset as a public entity is the public's trust," Campbell said. "As long as you're not doing things behind closed doors, that'll keep everybody honest."





TORONTO'S TIFFINS

HOT LUNCH WITH A SIDE OF WORLD CLASS

by Steven T. Wray

If you want to know what makes Toronto world class, consider the humble tiffin.

On its own, a tiffin is nothing more than a re-useable metal container for hot meals, ubiquitous in India but relatively scarce in North America.

But in the hands of a socially conscious entrepreneur with access to underemployed immigrants, a market of hungry customers, and a high-tech business incubator, the tiffin becomes a symbol of a thriving, 21st century global city. In the unlikely young company known as Tiffinday, we see all the threads that make Toronto a place Philadelphia can learn from.

Tiffinday is the brainchild of Seema Pabari, a Torontonian of Indian descent born in Kenya. Bored with her “soulless” marketing job, she began looking for a new business opportunity. Her neighborhood, Crescentville, was full of Southeast Asian women looking for part-time work they could do while the kids were at school. She had a vision: why not start a company that delivered hot, homemade Indian lunches to local workers?

“I was told it couldn’t be done,” Pabari told the Leadership Exchange. “But I’m from Southeast Asia.”

This is a time-honored tradition

in India, where wives cook their husbands’ lunches and hire “tiffin-wallahs” to deliver them to the workplace. Pabari figured that Toronto’s business district was full of potential customers. Expert cooks would be easy to find among Crescentville’s mothers and grandmothers. She could deliver the meals by bike or by car.

“I was told it couldn’t be done,” Pabari told the Leadership Exchange. “But I’m from Southeast Asia.”

The Leadership Exchange met Pabari at the MaRS Discovery District, the nonprofit startup incubator that helped bring her idea to life. Located in the heart of Toronto’s



The MaRS Discovery District

university district, MaRS (which stands for Medical and Related Sciences) was created to help commercialize publicly-funded medical research. It has since expanded to support a wide range of high-tech and socially-conscious startups – everything from sustainable energy projects to mobile music platforms.

MaRS helped Pabari get the resources and expertise she needed. Today, Tiffinday delivers hundreds of hot vegan meals each week to downtown workers. Her employees are her neighbors. Her customers – mostly young professionals, and mostly non-Indians - praise her lavishly in online reviews. She's on track to develop a \$2 million dollar business.

Tiffinday is, in its way, a microcosm of Toronto.

In our visit last July, the Leadership Exchange saw a city that's re-inventing itself, constantly seeking to leverage its assets to better com-

pete in a global economy and nurture diverse communities. Long a center of industry, Toronto now sees its future in a familiar blend of high-tech entrepreneurialism, financial and professional services, health care, education, arts, culture, and tourism.

A magnet for immigrants, it welcomes 100,000 of these “newcomers” each year. It is actively seeking solutions to the kinds of regional challenges Greater Philadelphians know well: unemployment and poverty; sprawl and aging infrastructure; budget shortfalls and deficits; contentious regional politics; even a feisty, seemingly endless battle about redevelopment plans for the old industrial waterfront.

The problems are as daunting there as here. But the Torontonians we met – planners, businesspeople, politicians, and advocates of all kinds – shared story after story of collaboration, innovation, and success.

We learned about Royal Bank's forward-thinking policies for turning “newcomers” into workers and customers. We visited Regent Park, where obsolete public housing has become a mixed-income community built around an arts and culture center. We saw Sugar Beach and other sparkling new development

projects that are bringing cultural and commercial life to the downtown waterfront.

We learned about Invest Toronto, an ambitious collaboration of regional planning agencies. We saw Ryerson University's thriving Digital Media Zone (or DMZ), a bubbling center for student-driven high-tech startups, smartly planted in a downtown shopping center where it reminds young people that there's more to life than shopping.

And in every case, we saw people working together.

Instead of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” the (Canadian) national motto is “peace, order and good government.”

To some degree, that reflects a Canadian way of doing things. Canadians may worry, for example, about spending and deficits, but their politics aren't dominated by a debate about the role of the public sector. Instead of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” the national motto is “peace, order and good government.” Rahul Bhardwaj, head of the Toronto Community Foundation, called that a “fundamental DNA difference” between the nations - one



Regent Park



which allows Canadian government, philanthropy, and business to more easily look past their short-term institutional interests and embrace a social bottom line. “The future of this city is about building social capital – creating opportunities for people to create social capital together,” he said.

But even if the cultural and political climate does differ, almost all of what we saw in Toronto has a clear counterpart in Greater Philadelphia. We have excellent advocates for immigrants, like the Nationalities Service Center and the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians. We have strong institutions supporting startups and entrepreneurs, like the University City Science Center. We have planning groups like Penn Praxis that can build broad-based public support for waterfront plans and other big projects. We have a deep roster of leaders from every sector who know how to forge durable public/private partnerships.

In other words, we didn’t see any-

thing being done in Toronto that we can’t do here.

The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia is committed to helping that happen. We plan to expand our Leadership Exchange into a year-round forum for ideas and collaboration. We pledge to do everything we can to help bring people to-

gether to find innovative, financially and socially savvy solutions to the many challenges we face.

And who knows? It might not be long before somebody’s showing up at your office with a steaming tiffin full of delicious home-cooked food. All the pieces are here – we just have to put them together.

DMZ building





SERVICE WORKERS: A REGIONAL ASSET?

by Bill Hangley, Jr.

Service jobs are now essential to urban economies throughout North America, and the story in Toronto is no different. About half the jobs in the Greater Toronto Area are service jobs. They employ a wide range of workers from every community in the region. They're essential to the knowledge economy that Kevin Stolarick and his University of Toronto colleague Richard Florida studied for the groundbreaking book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*.

But they also tend to be low-paying jobs with few prospects for advancement, and policymakers rarely focus on improving them. Service workforces, as sizeable and diverse as they may be, are rarely treated as important assets that can lure new businesses or improve regional prosperity.

"So many people are wedded to the idea of treating these people like disposable employees," Stolarick, of the Martin Prosperity Institute (MPI), told the Leadership Exchange. "They say they don't want to invest in them because they're not reliable, or

they're going to leave. Well, you get what you pay for."

Individual companies like Wegman's Food Inc. and the Four Seasons hotel chain have made strides toward raising the value and wages of their front-line service workers (sales floor staff and housekeepers, respectively) by providing them more training and responsibility than is the norm, Stolarick says. The result is more stable, effective workforces that interact well with customers – a win/win for the companies and their workers.

Stolarick's goal now is to see whether entire regions might benefit from the same approach. "We have really focused on trying to understand how to improve the value of the work and generate a regional advantage," Stolarick said.

A global city like Toronto "has large stocks of workers with the cultural familiarity with other markets," wrote MPI in a recent report. Many of the services those workers supply are "exportable," such as bookkeeping, data entry, telemarketing, and financial services. "Just as Silicon Valley hosts some of the world's most productive technology workers and Milan is known for its textile industry, Toronto can begin to secure global advantage through a concerted emphasis on improving service work," MPI wrote.

What's more, the MPI report notes, nothing prevents a city like Toronto

from implementing policies that raise the value and efficiency of the services they want to export. Improvements in transportation, for example, can make such services as deliveries or shipping more efficient and, thus, cheaper. Cities can even create "credentialing" programs for certain kinds of workers that raise their value – Toronto already credentials food service workers for safety, and Las Vegas has a training facility for hotel housekeepers, developed in cooperation with government and the hospitality industry.

MPI has a number of other suggestions – like a credentialing program for multi-lingual workers, or an annual "Service Award" to highlight the sector's big winners – and Stolarick is optimistic that a concentrated push by a given region could build the value of its service workers.

But he's also frank that it won't be easy, citing the example of Toronto's new food safety rules, under which a worker with safety credentials must be present wherever food is served. This new policy was expected to help credentialed front-line food service workers increase their earnings and professional standing. But in practice, employers just make sure their managers have the needed credential; so far, front-line workers have seen little change. "But the idea is still a good one," Stolarick said – one that's only begun to get the attention it deserves.



ANNE GOLDEN: CITY-REGIONS MUST AVOID THINKING SMALL AND ACTING CHEAP

According to the former head of Canada's leading nonprofit research organization, fractious politics and tight-fisted budgets mean that the Toronto region falls well short of its economic and cultural potential. "We are cosmopolitan, but we are not great, because of our unwillingness to invest," says Anne Golden, who ran the Conference Board of Canada for 11 years.

Golden, who retired in 2012, is a big fan of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), with its diverse communities, welcoming attitude, and bubbling entrepreneurial spirit. Nonetheless, she says, the region suffers from a bad case of what she calls a "Wal-Mart mindset" – thinking small and acting cheap.


That may not be quite fair to the ubiquitous superstore, famous for its highly centralized, single-minded management structure. The GTA suffers from the opposite problem, Golden says: multiple governments compete with and undercut each other, leaving the region unable to plan for and invest in its future.

"We won't be able to get our planning and economic development right if our governance arrangements conspire against collaboration," says Golden, pointing to transportation and infrastructure planning, along with tax and economic development policies, as the

biggest losers under the current system. "The five regional governments... lack the collective sense of purpose and momentum to address issues that could be handled more effectively on a region-wide basis."

Golden's frustrations shouldn't be surprising; she was at the forefront of an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to create a single "Greater Toronto" government, driven in part by the conviction that "city-regions" like the GTA are the engines of the global economy.

And while she still holds out hope for better governance, for now, she says, regions will have to depend on other, less formal, kinds of leadership. "There is no ideal model of metropolitan governance," Golden says. "The most exciting development is occurring outside of government... in some cities, like Toronto and Calgary, business leaders are stepping up."

Read a transcript of Golden's address at EconomyLeague.org/Toronto. 



Anne Golden





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