

Candidate Profile – Mariana Mota



Name: Mariana Mota

Pronouns: She/Her

Biographical Overview:

Mariana Mota holds a Ph.D. and an M.A. (with Distinction) in Political Science and a B.A. in Economics. Originally from the Northeast of Brazil, she is a proud Latin American (and recent Canadian) who fell in love with Toronto over five years ago and has been striving to contribute to its diverse communities and working at the City of Toronto ever since. She currently manages a team of policy and research experts in economic development and culture. Prior roles include Senior Policy Advisor and Project Manager – leading a team of project coordinators managing over 150 mitigation and recovery initiatives that were part of the Mayor’s COVID-19 Task Force.

Dr. Mota is deeply committed to advancing equitable and meaningful change through work, in the workplace and beyond: she was recently elected to be on the Steering Committee of the Toronto Public Service Pride Network (a role she previously held for two years) and has co-founded a staff network to make the workplace more inclusive of racialized identities. Dr. Mota has also held hands-on volunteer roles with people experiencing homelessness, and advancing refugee resettlement. A firm believer that lived experience is central to successful inclusion, she served on the City of Calgary Immigrant Advisory Table alongside a diverse ethno-linguistic team to inform municipal strategic and action planning.

She brings a deep appreciation for intersectionality and a commitment to proactive allyship to the many communities that call Toronto ‘home’ and make it the vibrant, hyper-diverse city it is.

Why are you interested in joining the Board of Pride Toronto?

I believe that we are at a critical juncture given the ongoing debates on gender/sexuality identity in schools, flag raising and other important topics. I would like to offer my time, skillset, and knowledge – in addition to my lived (intersectional) experience – to help advocate and promote 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion as an unequivocal right in these challenging times. Pride Toronto is the ideal place to accomplish this with meaningful, strategic, and coordinated impact. It would be a privilege and an honour to join the Board of Pride Toronto and help make Toronto a place that is home for all 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

How will your experience, talents, and skill contribute to advancing Pride Toronto's Mission, Vision, and Values?

Pride Toronto's vision is also my own: everyone should feel safe, celebrated and embraced regardless of how they identify and who they love. I believe that my skillset will contribute to achieving this vision: I have extensive experience in strategic planning and local governance, having led the development and implementation of strategic plans. Through my work, I have often 'translated' community engagement into potential policy, programming, and advocacy actions. Finally, I believe in the power of coming together, having co-founded a staff network, served on steering committees and on advisory tables.

Pride has had a history of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and we are working to address and combat this. What is your experience in working against racism, particularly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism? What is your vision for Pride Toronto's external work in combating racism?

In a previous role, I acted as the divisional liaison for the City of Toronto Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, helping advance Black communities' economic and culture priorities. In that role, I supported the creation of the Mayor's Roundtable on Black Arts, convening Black leaders to identify actions to enhance Black arts in Toronto. Additionally, I led the development of an Equity Plan, engaging with community-focused offices for alignment with reconciliation and with efforts to address anti-Black racism. At Pride Toronto, I would propose the co-development of anti-racism principles as my vision would be rooted in intersectionality, solidarity, and allyship.

What is your experience in addressing and combating transphobia, transmisogyny, and transmisandry?

I believe that, although systems of oppressions need to be fully stopped, those who are oppressed must be prioritized: combatting transphobia/transmisogyny/transmisandry involves proactive efforts to ensure a trans-focused approach that prioritizes the needs of trans persons. As part of the Toronto Public Service Pride Steering Committee for two years, I advocated for a workplace inclusive of all identities. In my current role, in turn, I take on initiatives that are positive systemic interventions while focusing on the individual, such as human resource programs that provide meaningful short-term employment for youth (trans, Black and/or persons with disabilities) to advance career success.

Accessibility is a crucial aspect for Pride Toronto's celebrations, but we still fall short in providing a completely accessible Festival, especially for people with mobility issues, and the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. What experience, resources, and knowledge do you have in engaging and supporting these communities?

For three years, I was the Economic Development and Culture (EDC) Lead for the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which outlines initiatives to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in City of Toronto programs, services, facilities, communication, and more. Advancing the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is a requirement by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). It is an area of

continuous learning, but the role allowed me to have a better understanding of the impact of accessibility barriers on different communities and potential resources to address them.

Pride Toronto's Membership has voted to ban instruments and symbols of policing, including uniforms, cars and weapons, from participating in the Pride Parade and StreetFair. If elected to the Board, how would you ensure that this commitment is upheld?

As a Board Member, I would see my main function as advancing the priorities of Pride's membership. I would work alongside my colleagues to (a) ensure broad, positive, and effective media/strategic communications, (b) engage in conversations with relevant organizations across the city to collaborate and establish mutual commitments while ensuring that safety is upheld, (c) develop a plan of action for the days of the events. I would also explore the possibility of engaging with Pride in cities that have been through similar challenges, such as Vancouver and Calgary, to foster a community of practice.