

LABOUR AND COMMUNITY GROUPS ENDORSE MMP

On September 27, 2007, the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance (ACLA), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Ontario's two largest ethno-racial labour organizations, along with the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO) and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), announced their support for Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP). Racism and discrimination still exist in the electoral process in Ontario. Electoral Reform is seen as a necessary step to increase representation from racialized communities in the provincial legislature.

"MMP would mean fairness for racialized workers and communities," said Jenny Ahn, Co-President, ACLA. "Under MMP, election results would be fairer. Parties get no more or no less power than they earned at the ballot box. Racialized people represent over 19% of Ontario's population and we will have greater leverage to use it to influence and shape a MMP legislature or form a political party to advance our rights as citizens."

"People of colour are currently NOT equitably represented in the legislature at Queen's Park as compared to our presence in the province's population," said Ajamu Nanagwaya, Vice-President, CBTU. "Proportional representation electoral systems, such as MMP, have been shown to elect more people of colour and women than the first-past-the-post system, which is currently in use in Ontario and the rest of Canada."

Governments in countries with proportional representation (PR) systems such as the MMP invest more resources into universal programs such as healthcare, unemployment insurance, education, old age pension, housing, and family and children. With universal social programs the standard of living for all Ontarians, is likely to become higher than under the current electoral system.

"Between 1980 and 2000, the poverty rate for non-racialized communities fell by 28%, while it rose by 361% for racialized community," stated Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, OCASI. "This is totally unacceptable; until there is better representation of racialized groups in places of power our communities will continue to experience ongoing, disproportionate poverty. MMP is the reform we need to address this disturbing trend."

"We are concerned that the issues affecting racialized communities are not adequately addressed by the government," said Karen Sun, Executive Director, CCNCTO. "Ethno-racial communities are making up an ever increasing percentage of the population and our views need to be represented in a healthy democracy. This may be a once in a life time chance to change the way our electoral system works."

Since the Mike Harris regime the province has scrapped the enumeration process, making it difficult for people of colour, as well as seniors, renters and people with language needs to exercise their right to vote. Our electoral system needs further repairs beyond MMP to ensure greater civic participation and a higher voter turnout.

The groups represented today, urged racialized communities to take a stand for strong democracy by voting for MMP on October 10th.