

**EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2007**



SETTING AN AGENDA FOR OCTOBER 2007"

How does Labour Council help frame a political agenda leading up to provincial election on October 10th? There are many different views on the correct election strategy, but the reality is that most of our affiliates will be connected to the approach adopted by their provincial leadership. However, the work we have done collectively in the last year has been widely recognized as effective political bargaining, combining both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary efforts around the Minimum Wage.

The RESPECT campaign which grew out of that struggle contains the essence of a popular set of demands for working people. Is it possible to use those demands to frame the political debate in communities and workplaces across Toronto? Certainly the feedback from our town hall meetings indicate that people feel disrespected by the political process today. And there is a growing sense that corporate globalization needs to be challenged here at the local level.

For many, the phrase "Respect my right to a stable full-time job" speaks volumes about the new economic reality. It touches on manufacturing job loss, the increase in temp agencies and the spread of poverty level wages. The demand to be able to join a union without fear or intimidation points to the need to restore card-check certification. The call for housing, childcare and education is in stark contrast to the broken school funding formula and the backlog of affordable housing. Newcomers are still frustrated by the lack of recognition for their skills, and anyone without a job survives on a threadbare benefits system.

Could these demands, including a \$10 Minimum Wage now, represent an effective mandate for bargaining with a new government? If there was a minority government, would this be the checklist that could be used to negotiate an accord, along with an end to privatization schemes? Within this context, the RESPECT campaign could conceivably play a significant role in the next three months.

But its impact would be made much stronger if it was accompanied by a change in the electoral system itself. FairVote Canada has garnered impressive cross-party support for electoral reform. Labour Council has endorsed the proposal for Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP), and will be calling for its adoption in the October referendum. Under MMP, everyone's vote will finally count in determining the make-up of the Legislature, and governments will no longer be able to count on false majorities to implement flawed policies of corporate lobbyists.

Taken together, the two elements could shift the political landscape in Ontario. At this stage, nobody can predict the outcome of this fall's election. Our movement needs to focus on a strategy that builds more power for working people. By demanding RESPECT and a FAIR VOTE together, we may just be able to do that.

The Executive Board recommends that the Labour Council:

- a) consult with affiliates and community allies about incorporating the RESPECT campaign demands in their strategies for the 2007 election
- b) mobilize at every level to win the MMP referendum
- c) focus its efforts on key ridings where the RESPECT demands would find most currency with residents and voters