

**TORONTO & YORK REGION LABOUR COUNCIL
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2006**



**“The 2006 Federal Election -
What does it mean for working people?”**

The 2006 election will be remembered as one of the most intriguing political exercises in years. Canadians turned out in large numbers to register both their anger with the ruling Liberals and their fear of Conservative right wing social and economic policies. The NDP gained nearly half a million new votes and ten new seats, including Peggy Nash and Olivia Chow in Toronto, and former Labour Council President Wayne Marston in Hamilton.

The threat of a Conservative majority did not materialize in the crucial last five days of the campaign as urban voters took a step back and chose either Liberal or New Democrats. Not a single Tory was elected in Toronto, and few in the GTA. Across Canada, however, the results underscore the need for Canada to adopt a fair voting system of proportional representation. And the wisdom of the timing of the election is still up for debate.

There is no doubt that Stephen Harper government will be dangerous, even without a majority. But it is important to recognize that prior to their minority status, the Liberals in fact drove a heavily corporate agenda - huge tax cuts for the wealthy, destructive trade deals, and continental integration. Canadian troops went to Afghanistan and Haiti, CBC workers were locked out, and Ottawa refused to repair the shredded EI system. The real irony is that the fraud investigated by Gomery pales in comparison to the hundreds of millions diverted from our tax base since Paul Martin created the "income trust" loopholes.

We will need champions in Ottawa to expose and oppose the deepening corporate rule of our country. For Labour Council, the election of progressive CAW labour leader Peggy Nash was a significant victory. It is the first time the NDP has ever held this federal seat, and 13 years since a Toronto labour leader has sat in the House of Commons. She will be a powerful voice addressing issues such as EI reform, affordable housing, Kyoto, protecting jobs, the impact of trade deals, funding for culture and the New Deal for Toronto.

Harper's right wing ideology and his admiration of George Bush's America is a major concern for many Canadians. He may try to appear moderate in some areas, while allowing provincial surrogates like Klein or Campbell to lead the charge against public healthcare and standards of universality. With the Liberals in disarray, and nobody wanting an immediate election, Harper may move on an issue by issue basis to effect his program. We can expect him to use Quebec as the excuse for devolving far more power to the provinces and drastically reducing the federal role in social or environmental programs.

We have plenty of experience in dealing with right wing governments, and have learned that focussed and tough resistance is the only way to limit the damage they can inflict. We have to be both visible and organized on the ground. A united front of the left, including labour, community and our political allies from English Canada and Quebec can challenge the Harper government, and set the stage for its eventual defeat.

During this difficult process, we will be in opposition mode. But we need to continue talking to our members and all working families about the kind of Canada we do want, and how the incredible riches of our country and its people could be used to build a better future.

The Executive Board recommends that:

1. Labour Council congratulate sisters Peggy Nash and Olivia Chow on their election as MP's.
2. Labour Council work with the CLC, the women's movement and our affiliates to defend and expand the national childcare program and any other social programs endangered by the Conservative government.
3. Labour Council continue to oppose the corporate agenda of economic, military and political integration of Canada with the United States and its global world order.