

May 20, 2015

To: Toronto & York Area CURC members and supporters,

It's been awhile since our last Toronto & York Area CURC (TYAC) email update. Since then, we've broken out of the deep winter freeze and spring has arrived! Positive change is also in the air when it comes to Canada's political scene. In Alberta, Rachel Notley led her party to an historic election victory and the NDP now forms a majority government in that province. And things are also looking up federally with two recent polls showing Thomas Mulcair and the NDP trending upwards.

But there's a lot of work to do to make sure the Harper government is defeated next October and your TYAC Executive continues to stay active. At our AGM in April, Erin Harrison, Ontario Regional Director of the Canadian Labour Congress noted the strategic importance of GTA ridings in this election. She strongly encouraged CURC supporters to sign up for the CLC *Time for Change* event in Toronto on June 23rd and to get involved in helping win a new government.

The importance of this election was also highlighted at the Toronto Retirees Meeting in March which focused on election organizing and featured NDP MP Peggy Nash. Other speakers included our very own Vice President Michael Lyons on affordable housing and the Ontario Health Coalition's Natalie Mehra on healthcare.

And labour is not alone. One example of the kind of organizing taking place across the county is *Seniors Vote*. This new and growing collaboration among national and local seniors groups is focused on issues such as pensions, healthcare reform, and affordable and accessible housing. Members of the TYAC executive are already working with *Seniors Vote* in Toronto to plan activities for the International Day of Older Persons on October 1st.

Unfortunately the situation on the provincial front is much less positive. The Ontario Health Coalition has initiated a province-wide campaign calling on the Liberal government to account for its hospital closures and spending cuts and highlighting serious concerns with the government's lack of direction on homecare. Meanwhile the Wynne government has done a sharp about-face and announced it intends to privatize a majority interest in Hydro One even though the Liberals sought no mandate for this

sell-off of public assets during the last election and is rushing ahead with no public hearings.

In closing, I want to thank those of you who were able to join us at our April AGM. The well-attended meeting enjoyed several films from the 2014 CLIFF collection and the discussion led by Frank Saptel about using film effectively to get our message out as seniors and union retirees. I also want to say a particular thank you to departing Executive members David Rapaport and Roger Carter - who may be leaving the Executive but we know will continue their work as activists! - and welcome new members, Sue Craig and Alan Lennon.

In solidarity,
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**Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC)
Toronto and York Region Area Council Email Update**

May 20, 2015

It's Time for Change: This Year Let's Make a Better Choice!

Labour Organizes for Fall Federal Election

The results of two recent polls have put an extra bounce in the steps of activists organizing to defeat Harper's Conservatives next October. The latest Nanos poll indicates that support for the NDP has been moving upward since February and puts the Conservatives at 32.9%, the Liberals at 31.3% and the NDP at 25.2%. Last week's EKOS poll is even more encouraging with results suggesting the NDP, Liberals and Conservatives are in a virtual three way tie with Conservatives at 30%, NDP 29.1%, and Liberals 27%. The NDP surge, up from 19% in February, is part of a clear pattern over the past few months. For more details on the EKOS results, go to <http://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2015/05/federal-race-transforms-into-three-way-tie/>.

The NDP win in Alberta may be part of the shakeup, but analysts argue it is not the only reason for the federal NDP's strong showing. Polls reveal that Harper's rating is sharply down, with the EKOS poll indicating that more than 60% now disapprove of the way he is leading the country while 57.8% think the Government of Canada is moving in the wrong direction.

It's good news. But with five months still to go before voting day next October, nothing can be taken for granted. That's why labour and other activists continue to make organizing for the federal election a top priority. Last winter, the Canadian Labour Congress kicked off their national campaign with cross-Canada workshops, including one in Toronto that drew hundreds of participants. Since then, both the Toronto Retirees Network and the Toronto Area CURC AGM have also featured discussion of the upcoming election with a focus on seniors' concerns. At the TRN meeting in March, MP Peggy Nash highlighted the NDP strategy on aging saying their philosophy was "Nobody should grow old in poverty, insecurity and isolation."

On June 23rd, the CLC returns to Toronto as part of its

Time for Change Tour. You can sign up for this event at <http://canadianlabour.ca/event-calendar/all-events/time-change-tour-toronto>. It has also launched the 2015

Better Choice website at <https://betterchoice.ca/> where you can find updates on four central election issues: good jobs, retirement security, health care and child care.

Two Million Seniors Demand Action

National Coalition Issues Open Letter on seniors' Agenda

According to *Seniors Vote*, a nationwide collaboration of seniors' and advocacy associations that includes CURC and CARP, over 65% of older Canadians turn out to vote regularly. With this **strong voting constituency** in mind, the coalition has issued an open letter to federal and provincial politicians identifying pension and healthcare reform, as well as access to appropriate and affordable housing, as key concerns for older Canadians. In April, *Seniors Vote* met with representatives of all political parties to discuss these

concerns. Future plans include community based actions on October 1st to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nation's International Day of Older Persons. Since this occurs during the federal election campaign, it will be a great opportunity to press all parties about where they stand. More information on

Seniors Vote initiatives can be found at <http://unionretiree.ca/two-million-seniors-demand-action-on-a-seniors-agenda/>.

Moving Forward On Affordable Housing

Toronto CURC joins call to make affordable housing a priority

By Michael Lyons, Vice President, Toronto Area CURC Executive

In the 25 September 2014 issue of this newsletter, just prior to the municipal election, we noted that politicians weren't discussing the glaring need to vastly increase the stock of affordable housing, including public housing, co-ops and other types of non-profit housing.

What a difference a few months can make. The TYAC Executive, working with other advocacy groups in the Co-op and Non-profit Housing sector, are continuing their campaign to make affordable housing a priority. The final mayoralty debate was devoted to the issue and now Mayor Tory claims he understands the necessity to provide more affordable housing as soon as possible. He has appointed Councillor Ana Bailao to deal with the issue and make recommendations to Council.

As well, at least two bills have been introduced in the Ontario Legislature (one has passed second reading and is at the committee stage). It seems that Tom McMeekin, the Minister responsible for housing may be interested in establishing a comprehensive provincial housing policy (but probably not before the federal election).

Which brings me to my final point: we have to convince our unions, the CLC, the OFL and Labour Councils that it is vital to make the need for affordable housing a major federal election issue. We need to get commitments from all Parties and candidates to implement a federal housing policy without delay after the election!

NOTE: Since writing this piece, Mike has moved forward on behalf of TYAC to set up meetings with Councillors Bailao and McConnell, as well as NDP MPP Cheri Di Novo. TYAC has also submitted a resolution on affordable housing to the upcoming biennial CURC Convention in June.

It's Time to Take a Stand! Stop Hospital Cuts and Home Care Privatization

Ontario Health Coalition Organizes Regional Days of Action

Recent alerts from the Ontario Health Coalition have highlighted the devastating cuts to hospital services

and outright hospital closures taking place in many communities across the province. April's provincial budget did nothing to allay concerns. According to the OHC, "For 9 years in a row the Ontario government has set funding levels for hospitals at less than the rate of inflation. For the last 4 years, funding has been frozen at a 0% increase." The results can be seen in "accelerated privatization of services, hardship for patients and unsafe hospital overcrowding that now ranks among the worst in the developed world."

The OHC has also flagged serious concerns with the Ontario government's announced plan to reform homecare, noting the "Home Care Roadmap" does not "contain any concrete commitment to provide access to care for people in need...does not establish clear public coverage for any level of home care services." It also warns that the pro-privatization slant of recent panel recommendations is "absolutely not in the public interest".

For copies of OHC press releases, information on current campaigns and regional days of action, and to become a member and make a donation, go to www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca.

Stop Hydro Privatization!

Wynne's announces plan to sell 60% of Hydro One

For more on Premier Wynne's recently announced plans to privatize a majority interest in Hydro One, read the attached May 4th Toronto Labour Council Statement and go to www.KeepHydroPublic.ca

