

News @ 25

OSSTF District 25 Teachers' Unit

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President's Message, Voting Matters

by
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In a perfect world, any government we elect would know what is needed and would provide it but we know that nothing is ever that simple! As educators, we work at creating a good learning environment for our students; this good learning environment begins in the classroom, extends to the school and to the election of a government that supports public education. As teachers in Ontario, we know what is best for education and we need to work at achieving the best. Please consider supporting a candidate who supports public education by arranging to have his/her sign placed on your lawn, and/or by contributing financially to the campaign, and/or by donating some of your time to work the phone lines or distribute campaign material. I am aware that, like many voters, we are caught up in the business of everyday life or in the case of teachers, simply trying to survive the first month of a new school year. But as we have learned in recent years, as educators, the work we do during election time has a direct impact on our students and our classrooms! It is important that we work to help protect public education.

Why? you ask...let's look at a little history...Governments may come and go but in some cases the effects of poor educational decisions remain - sometimes for a long time after the government in question has been replaced! Many of us remember the Social Contract of the NDP Premier Bob Rae; this initiative of 1993 imposed a wage freeze and mandatory unpaid days of leave, better known as Rae Days. Not only were there no increases in salary, but in addition, teachers who were still working their way up the salary grid were frozen on the grid for three years. Beginning in 1995, the Harris Tories created a crisis in education. As professionals, we were unprepared for the depth of the attack we faced. Billions of dollars were cut from education, major curriculum reforms were implemented quickly and without proper support, a remarkably faulty funding formula was implemented, principals and vice-principals were removed from our unions, the Labour Relations Act

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replaced the Education Act and the government-dominated College of Teachers was created. And who can forget the Professional Learning Plan (PLP) established by the Tories in 2001, better known as teacher testing?

Finally in 2003, the Tories were defeated. The Liberal government has taken important steps to restore public education. The Liberals have made changes to the Ontario College of Teachers which gives practicing teachers a majority on the governing council; they have repealed teacher testing; the Liberals have improved the Teacher Performance Appraisal system for experienced teachers; they have created the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) which provides new teachers with valuable in-class support during their first year. In addition, the Liberals have provided \$23 million for Professional Development and they have added two more PA days. But...there is still significant work to be done and we need to choose leaders who are committed to bettering public education. To that end, please help by working for a candidate who supports public education. Voting matters...make it count on October 10, or at the advance polls.

Don't let John Tory keep
Mike Harris' promise:
crisis in education.



"Now just step back a bit, my dears, while I finish my job."

Political Action

Make Democracy Better -- Vote for
MMP on October 10 !

by Stephanie Kirkey,
1st VP, Political Action

On October 10, 2007 every Ontario voter will get to vote in an electoral reform referendum to adopt a better voting system. MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) would mean more voter choice, fairer election outcomes, better representation, and more party accountability. OSSTF as an organization supports a move to MMP for these very reasons.

The MMP voting proposal comes from the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, a group of 103 randomly selected voters – people like you and me – who studied our electoral system for seven months and rejected the current First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) system. These people were not politicians or party insiders, and didn't have any axe to grind.

These average citizens overwhelmingly – by 92% – voted to recommend to their fellow citizens an alternative electoral system called Mixed Member Proportional (MMP).

Under the proposed MMP system voters will have one ballot and two votes – a party vote for a preferred party and a local vote for a preferred local candidate. The two marks allow and encourage positive political choices. All voters matter equally, very few votes are wasted, local representation is guaranteed, and parties generally get the share of seats in the legislature they actually deserve – no more, no less.

Under Ontario MMP, 90 members of the provincial parliament will be elected from single-member ridings in the usual way. A further 39 members will be elected to province-wide at-large seats. These will be allocated on the

principle that each party and its voters must achieve, overall, a share of the legislature as close as possible to their share of the province-wide party vote.

In this way Queen's Park will welcome, in the near future, more Conservative members from Toronto, more Liberal members from Eastern Ontario, a larger contingent of New Democrats, and Canada's first elected Greens.

The MMP system proposed is simple, sensible and fair. Political parties will be required to make public their candidate lists and nomination methods well before Election Day. We will continue the tradition of geographic representation but strengthen it with proportional representation, increased voter choice and increased candidate and party accountability.

Other countries have found in proportional voting a strong tool to promote the election of women and visible minorities. Parties nominating lists of candidates for the at-large seats have strong reason to offer an appealing diversity of accomplished men and women from various occupations and cultural groups.

Winner-take-all voting systems, like the one we currently have, usually give majority power to a single party which has not won majority voting support. MMP will distribute legislative power in direct proportion to the choices of voters, leading to broader-based government and broader public consensus on government policies.

By voting yes on October 10, we will be telling politicians that we want fair representation for all and true majority governments. How many of us at some point have decided, reluctantly, to vote for candidates or parties in order to “block” other candidates or parties from winning? Or how about if you support a party in a riding where its candidate hasn't a hope of ever getting elected? Aren't you tired of

feeling like your vote was wasted, if you even bothered to vote? We have a huge opportunity on October 10. Please take the time to become more informed about MMP and the referendum, and pass the information on to your family members, colleagues and friends. The websites below are a starting point, and provided much of the information contained in this article.

See you at the polls!

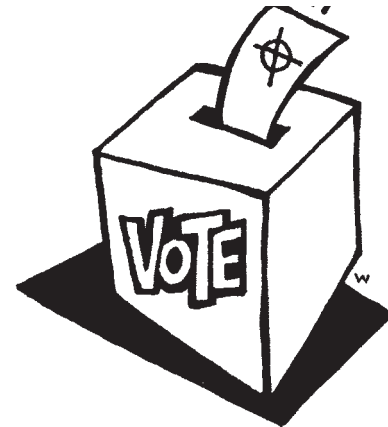
www.citizensassembly.ca

www.voteformmp.ca (VOTE for MMP is multi-partisan campaign to make this important reform happen.)

www.elections.on.ca

VISIT THE OSSTF DISTRICT 25 WEBSITE REGULARLY (WWW.OSSTF25.ON.CA) FOR:

- A LINK TO THE OSSTF PROVINCIAL 2007 ELECTION & REFERENDUM PAGE
- INFORMATION ABOUT OUR 2 PRIORITY RIDINGS: PHIL MCNEELY IN OTTAWA-ORLEANS AND JIM WATSON IN OTTAWA WEST-NEPEAN AND HOW YOU CAN HELP
- INFORMATION ABOUT THE ELECTORAL REFORM REFERENDUM AND THE MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL VOTING SYSTEM (MMP)



OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has 50,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, teaching assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, attendance counsellors, and many others in education.