

Bulletin from UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley • Vol. VIII No. 35 • September 1, 2008 • ISSN 1496-9009

Labour Day message: a reflection of the diversity we embrace

September 1, 2008, is Labour Day. It represents the unofficial end of summer, and a day to celebrate the achievements of working

people by participating in traditional activities such as parades, picnics, and more.

It is also a time to pause and reflect on our accomplishments as union activists, and on the challenges of the future. Labour Day

provides a window on the state of our union and a reflection of the diversity we embrace, not just in major centres like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, but across Canada.

Today, more than ever before, the face of Canada has changed and continues to evolve. Earlier this year, Statistics Canada

(StatsCan) released a detailed analysis of data collected in the 2006 census with regard to ethnic origin and visible minorities.

The study makes what we have already been tracking as a union abundantly clear: our communities

and Canadian society are continuing to become more ethnoculturally diverse at an increasingly rapid rate.

It is no surprise that our workplaces are becoming equally as diverse.

Much of the change is due to successive waves of immigration, and many newcomers to Canada find their first opportunities here in workplaces such as the types of retail, manufacturing, and service industries our union represents.

The 2006 census records more than 200 different ethnic origins in Canada today, as opposed to just 25 reported in the 1901 census. Canada's visible minority population has grown steadily over the last 25 years, from 1.1-million (4.7% of the general population) in 1981 to more than 5-million

(16.2%) in 2006. In fact, the latest census shows the visible minority population to have grown by 27.2% since the

2001 census, five times faster than the 5.4% rate for the population as a whole. *(For more figures from the study, see over.)* If current immigration

trends continue, Canada's visible minority population will continue to grow much more quickly than the rest of the population.

According to StatsCan's population projections, members of visible minority groups could account for roughly 20% of the population a decade from now.

What does this mean to us as trade unionists? Quite simply, it means we – UFCW Canada and the labour movement in general

– have to ensure the integration of new Canadians into their unions at all levels – stewards, representatives, and leadership. Not just because it is the right thing to do, but to ensure our survival as a vital and essential labour movement that defends working people’s rights. We need to provide our members – *all* of our members – with the representation and services on which they rely. At the same time, we need to become a more welcoming and inclusive union by breaking down barriers that exist while ensuring full and meaningful participation of all members.

It also means genuine and sustained community involvement. We must become strong partners and real friends of the communities to which our members belong if they are to become part of a growing and progressive UFCW Canada. As various stories published here in *DIRECTIONS* in recent months have clearly shown, our outreach to diverse communities has resulted in new members from those same communities. By working shoulder to shoulder and becoming a bigger part of the lives of our members, we shall continue to improve those lives.

In solidarity,

Wayne Hanley, National President

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Diversity, by the numbers

StatsCan’s study of ethnocultural and visible minority data, referenced in UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley’s Labour Day message (over), show clear trends from the most recent and earlier census figures. In the tables below, V.M. is used for visible minority population, G.P. for general population.

1) Growth of visible minorities as a percentage of the general population:

Census V.M. % G.P.

1981 1.1-million . . 4.7%

1991 2.5-million . . 9.4%

1996 3.2-million . . 11.2%

2001 4.0-million . . 13.4%

2006 5.0-million . . 16.2%

2) Growth of visible minorities as a percentage of recent immigrants:

1981 55.5%

1991 71.2%

2001 72.9%

2006 75.0%

3) Self-identification of visible minority populations, 2006:

Population % V.M. % G.P.

South Asians 1.3-million . . . 24.9% . . . 4.0%

Chinese 1.2-million . . . 24.0% . . . 3.9%

Blacks 784,000 . . . 15.5% . . . 2.5%

Filipinos 411,000 . . . 8.1% . . . 1.3%

Latin Americans . . . 304,000 . . . 6.0% . . . 1.0%

Arabs 266,000 . . . 5.2% . . . 0.9%

Southeast Asians . . . 240,000 . . . 4.7% . . . 0.8%

West Asians 157,000 . . . 3.1% . . . 0.5%

Koreans 142,000 . . . 2.8% . . . 0.5%

Japanese 81,000 . . . 1.6% . . . 0.3%

For more, please visit Statistics Canada at www.statcan.ca.