

PROVIDE VISIBLE MINORITIES WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Unfamiliar: Many visible minorities do not participate in the political process in Canada. Some are simply unfamiliar with party platforms and voting procedures; others have had negative experiences with the political process in their country of origin and may be reluctant to participate in Canada.

Improvements: The Committee heard several witnesses suggest improvements for the participation of visible minorities in the electoral process. All governments and chief electoral officers need to improve the presentation of information on voter qualifications, registration procedures, voting procedures, the location of polling stations and other matters. Chief electoral officers should be disseminating more information about the electoral process to visible minorities. Multilingual information pamphlets on political parties and platforms from Australia and Sweden were brought to the attention of the Committee. A similar approach could be used to provide information on the electoral process to visible minorities who are new Canadians. The ethnic press could also play an important role by providing information and encouraging people to vote.

RECOMMENDATION:

All chief electoral officers and governments should provide more information on the electoral process.

RECOMMENDATION

9



ENCOURAGE MORE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PARTIES

Greater Involvement: "We do not feel that enough efforts are being made to encourage the involvement of Black people so that they can be upwardly mobile in all areas of politics - municipal, provincial or federal". (Jamaican Canadian Association)

The Committee accepts the validity of this position. At the same time, many Members have significant numbers of visible minorities in their constituencies and each has tried to encourage their participation in the political process with some success. The problem is one that could be easily solved. On the one hand, there are visible minorities who want to participate and on the other, political parties wanting them to participate.

Reasons cited for low levels of participation included the high financial costs of participation and exclusion by cliques within party organization. There is also the probably incorrect perception that most candidates are selected because of their prominence in some other field of endeavour. When prominent personalities are actively sought as candidates, it receives considerable publicity. In fact, the majority of candidates for all parties have been working in constituencies or communities for many years.

RECOMMENDATION

10

