

 NEWS

# Study initiated to help Black Canadians in pursuit of elected office

By **Lincoln DePradine**

A collaborative project is being launched to examine Black Canadians' participation, inclusion and underrepresentation in the country's parliamentary election system.

One of the leads in the project, described as the "first comprehensive study" of its kind, is Operation Black Vote Canada (OBVC) – a non-profit, multi-partisan organization advocating and supporting African-Canadian involvement at all levels of politics.

OBVC, established in 2004, says its mission is to "simplify and demystify the path to public office and civic engagement".

The study, in the form of a survey, will be rolled out this fall. "I am very excited about this survey," OBVC chair Velma Morgan told **The Caribbean Camera**. "It will allow us to tailor our programs to best meet the needs of Black Candidates and our community."

The project is being done in a partnership in which OBVC is working with researchers from Carleton University, McGill University and the University of



Velma Morgan

Toronto.

"To date, researchers have devoted too little attention to the experiences of Black Canadians in electoral politics. Our collaborative partnership will provide new insights into Black Canadians' electoral under-representation and help us figure out

how to fix it," said Carleton University's Dr Erin Tolley. She's an associate professor of political science and the university's Canada Research Chair in Gender, Race and Inclusive Politics.

The project partners, in announcing plans for the survey, said that of an estimated 1.2 million Black people living in Canada, "just 19 Black Canadians have ever been elected to parliament"; and none has been a provincial premier "and only a handful" has ever served as mayors.

Morgan said the survey, which would

pinpoint barriers in the electoral political sphere for African-Canadians, will take several months to be completed and the results – together with recommendations on how to increase representation in elected office – will be made public.

"The team will identify Black Canadians who have run for and served in elected office at the school board, municipal, provincial, and federal levels over the past 20 years, and speak with them about their experiences," Morgan said. "A Black Canadians, key outcome will be



Dr Erin Tolley

the development of resources and training tools aimed at Black Canadian candidates and office-holders."

According to Morgan, "it is imperative that we have data on Black civic engagement and the barriers faced by Black Canadians at all levels of our government. This will allow us to provide better support for Black Canadians in their pursuit of elected office".

Black Canadians,

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 who have run for elected office at any level of government, have been invited to participate in the survey. They can do so by submitting an email to [blackcanadianpolitics@cunet.ca](mailto:blackcanadianpolitics@cunet.ca).

[carleton.ca](http://carleton.ca); or, by filling out a form at [www.blackcanadianpolitics.ca](http://www.blackcanadianpolitics.ca)

"We'll send you a

link to the survey and keep you updated on our work," the project team has promised.

LJI

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