



Law Amendment Committee – October 18, 2021

1. Good evening chairman, and members of the committee. My name is Kyra Campbell. I am 20 years old, and I live in New Minas, located in the Annapolis Valley. I am currently attending StFX University, where I am pursuing an Honours degree focused on Public Policy and Governance and Development Studies.
2. Choosing July for the fixed election date disenfranchises youth, as they have less accessibility and avenues to vote. One potential problem is that youth may be out of province working or on vacation. Historically, voter turnout amongst youth is substantially lower than that of older adults. Hence, it is crucial to give youth the best opportunity possible to get out and vote. The government can achieve this result by scheduling elections outside of the summer season. As an alternative, the government could schedule elections through the school year. The benefit of having elections during the school year is that youth could vote near or on campuses. Furthermore, the likelihood of youth being close to their home riding is greater during the school year. It is also likely that a provincial election is the first time that some youth may be voting. Assuming that the government wants to maximize voter turnout amongst youth, they should make it more accessible for them to vote. One major problem is that youth are unlikely to form a regular habit of voting if they miss their first election. This development fosters a weak political engagement foundation for youth, resulting in youth becoming disproportionately disengaged with the political process.
3. On the surface, it appears that fixed elections would lead to voter stability. However, fixed elections during the summer months generate the opposite effect. Hence, it does not make sense to call an election at this time of year. The main reason is that voter turnout is

traditionally lower in the summer months. For instance, in the recent provincial election, voter turnout reached 55.67 per cent. This level of voter turnout is the second lowest in a Nova Scotia provincial election. Nova Scotia's lowest voter turnout occurred in the May 2017 provincial election. One key point to make is that both elections happened after the university year ended. This trend demonstrates that voters are on track to becoming disengaged with the political process. Low levels of political engagement are associated with lower levels of citizen trust in governments, and the political process. Typically, summer elections aggravate low levels of political engagement because many youths are working away from home, often out of province. Furthermore, voting in an election is less likely to be a priority to many who take vacation during the summer months. Many people may perceive a summer election as the government failing to value strong democratic participation.

4. The decline in voter turnout is most significant amongst youth (aged 18-30) than any other category. Early civic education can be beneficial despite the legal requirement for voters to be 18 years old at election time. Specifically, high schools can help to educate and inform youth, years before they ever cast their first ballot. Civic education is significantly enhanced by having elections during either the fall or early spring. The main reason is that both high school and university students are in classes at these times. Having students in the classrooms during an election period keeps students informed. Schools can allow students learn about party platforms, candidates, and even hold mock elections to raise awareness about the importance of voting. Thus, when youth reach voting age, they are more informed decision-makers when they cast their ballot.