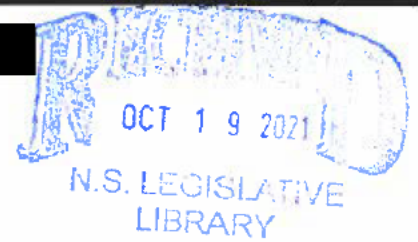


**From:** Neeta Kumar-Britten [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** October 18, 2021 9:08 AM  
**To:** Office of the Legislative Counsel  
**Subject:** Bill No. 1 Fixed Elections Dates



**\*\* EXTERNAL EMAIL / COURRIEL EXTERNE \*\***

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Bill No. 1

I am a Nova Scotia teacher. I wish I could be there to share concerns on the fixed election date and the impact on the Student Vote program and democracy education. I am, of course, teaching in Cape Breton today and am unable to join in person. Here are my thoughts:

Our environment. Our education. Our health. Our minds. Our bodies. Our money. Our choices. Our leaders. Our lives. Our democracy impacts all these things, and more.

"Student Vote" is a program offered through CIVIX Canada. Many teachers and students across Canada (current and former) know this program. I have facilitated this parallel election in my classroom every opportunity I have had to do so in the program's existence. I have taught 6-year olds how to debate the merits of cats versus dogs in a debate modeled after those in our House of Commons. I have held multi-day Model Parliaments in high school, and many of those students have gone on to public service as a result of their experiences. All of these activities were rooted in lessons learned from "Student Vote". Every municipal, provincial, and federal election that touched the lives of Nova Scotians has included our future voters.

From the website:

"Student Vote is an authentic learning program that provides students with the opportunity to experience the voting process firsthand and practice the habits of active and informed citizenship."

As if that weren't enough, it is even more. If you surveyed many of our elected officials as to why they decided to run for public office, many of them will tell you it was issue-driven. Something was going on in their lives that was worth fighting for on a higher level. They learned to navigate our system of democracy in order to become part of it.

In order to do so, they must have the privilege of knowing about it. Student Vote brings that privilege to school, regardless of socio-economic standing, of academic level, or of geographic location. Student Vote brings democracy education to Canada.

We lament the low-voter turnout in this country. We discuss the actual number of people who put Mayors, Premiers, Prime Ministers in their offices, and Councillors, Members of Legislative Assemblies, and Members of Parliament in their seats.

In November every year, we remember those who fought to keep our democracy intact. We need to do everything we can to preserve and strengthen that for which so many fought and gave the ultimate sacrifice.

In order to have people understand the power in their ballot, we need to teach them about how democracy can change their lives. In my experience and that of many of my teacher colleagues, students feel a great deal of empowerment when they cast that physical ballot on the day of their Student Vote.

In the weeks prior, they learn about such things as democracy and voting, rights and responsibilities, governments in Canada, informed citizenship, political parties, campaign communications, candidates and what they offer, political landscapes, debates, and the voting process.

The federal election date of September 20th in times of a global pandemic left teachers in an extremely difficult position as we were left with mere days to teach all of these concepts immediately as we launched a new academic year. In Nova Scotia, teachers were extremely disappointed to have missed a whole election with the August 17th date. Students in grade primary through to twelve missed an entire opportunity to learn about their province, the leaders, and their democracy, and to cast their Student Vote ballot.

Joseph Howe, who, as you know, played a major role in winning responsible government for Nova Scotia, would roll over in his grave if he knew that our governments were planning for a less-accessible democracy for all, including our future voters.

Our Nova Scotia government has done a wonderful and commendable thing by setting legislation for a fixed election date. If the date was amended to allow our youngest citizens, our future voters, the people for who we are stewards of a safe, fair, and just society, the future of Nova Scotia and Canada's electoral democracy would be much brighter.

This message to everyone at CIVIX and to all who participated in Student Vote:

"Thank you again for participating. You are helping to build the future of Canada's electoral democracy."  
- Stéphane Perrault, Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

Please allow us, teachers and students, to continue to be part of that future by sharing and talking about the message of a need for an amendment to the date of fixed elections in Nova Scotia.

Neeta Kumar-Britten  
Robin Foote Elementary School  
Westmount, Cape Breton Island  
Nova Scotia

Sent from my BlackBerry — the most secure mobile device — via the Virgin Mobile Network