

Law Amendments Committee Statement - Students Nova Scotia

Re: Bill 1: An Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2011, the Elections Act - October 18, 2021

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, committee members, and witnesses.

I would like to begin my statement by acknowledging that we are situated in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

My name is Lydia Houck and I am the Executive Director of Students Nova Scotia, a non-partisan alliance of student associations from colleges and universities across the province.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to the committee today regarding Bill 1. Students were pleased to see this bill brought forth by government, as the implementation of fixed dates would drastically increase the predictability of our election cycle. However, I am here today to present student concerns regarding the proposed timing of this date, and how it may **inadvertently act to disenfranchise many of the student voters who call Nova Scotia home.**

Nearly 1 in 10 Nova Scotians are between the ages of 18-24, with over 55,000 students attending university or community college here. These statistics position students and youth as key contributors to the province in terms of economy, culture, research and innovation. Additionally, we rely heavily on students when it comes to maintaining and growing the population, particularly given our aging demographic and high interprovincial migration rate; 55% of university students and a growing number of college students come from outside of the province to study here. Students Nova Scotia has consistently seen that recruitment and retention of youth is a priority of the province, further highlighted by the current government's emphasis upon population growth. Retention efforts must begin by engaging students and youth within all aspects of society, which includes at the ballot box.

As we are no doubt all aware, voter turnout rates have steadily decreased in our province in the past few decades, with this summer's election returning turnout levels only slightly higher than the all-time low. When data on voter turnout is broken down by age group, it is typically lowest among youth, leading many to the false assumption that this is solely a reflection of voter apathy. Students Nova Scotia's membership have consistently observed that this is simply not the reality. During this summer's election, our membership led a non-partisan student voter mobilization campaign, and a consistent refrain from potential student voters was that **informational and accessibility barriers were the primary deterrents to casting their ballot.** Low voter turnout among certain segments of the population tell us that more work needs to be done in understanding the unique voting barriers those demographics face, and more importantly, how they can be addressed.

This responsibility is referenced within the Elections Act itself - that "The Chief Electoral Officer may implement public communication, education and information programs, including information for new electors, to make the electoral process better known to the public, **particularly to those persons and groups most likely to experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights.**" Given that



students are one such group, it is logical that additional support and accommodations must be made available to aid them in navigating these processes.

Indeed, students face a number of unique barriers in getting out to the polls not experienced by the general population. Many postsecondary students are likely to be first-time voters, and while voting may be complicated or intimidating for anyone, it is particularly so for those with no prior voting experience or limited interaction with civics education. In order to encourage habitual voting, it is paramount to engage youth from the first time they are eligible to vote, a priority reflected within the Elections Act, through the option for the Chief Electoral Officer to "(make) materials available to education entities for students who have reached voting age or will soon do so."

Indeed, one strategy utilized by Elections Nova Scotia to engage youth voters in 2017 was direct outreach to Nova Scotians who had recently turned 18, asking for their consent to be added to the list of electors. Using this strategy, 22% of those contacted chose to be added to the list, and 70% of those added ultimately voted. These findings confirm a few key realities:

- That engaging voters from when they are first eligible to vote is critical to participation.
- That youth are interested in engaging with elections provided they are given the support and the opportunity to do so.

Given this, combined with the reality that first-time voters are overrepresented within the postsecondary sphere, Nova Scotia has a responsibility to provide additional support to students in order to increase voter turnout among our youth population, and that these individuals should be considered when determining ideal timing for election dates.

Much of this information is conveyed to students through programming on campuses, which is vital in minimizing barriers for first-time voters. During the most recent provincial election, which took place outside of the school year, student leaders worked to engage virtually, providing information on eligibility, registration and voting options, as well as opportunities to connect with candidates and platforms. Though students who we did engage reported these resources greatly demystified the voting process, the simple reality is the vast majority did not become engaged, in huge part due to the timing of the election. **Permanently transitioning to summer elections would eliminate or greatly diminish these critical supports for students in perpetuity.**

A final validation for the role of on-campus programming in voter turnout can be found by contrasting youth voter rates in the 2011 and 2015 federal elections. Elections Canada's Vote On Campus program, introduced in 2015, allowed students to vote directly on campus within their current or home riding, vastly simplifying the voting process. This introduction co-occurred with a significant increase in youth voter turnout. In 2011, 55% of 18-24 year olds voted; in 2015 (the first time the program was made available) the turnout rate increased to 67%. This increase speaks at least in part to the desire of youth to get out to vote provided it is accessible and they have clear information; it further contradicts the belief that low youth voter turnout is driven by voter apathy. Again, such initiatives would no longer be possible if election dates were permanently set in the summer months.



Having established the challenges that exist even for those who reside in Nova Scotia year-round, we must acknowledge that a summer election date has even more serious implications for those coming from outside of the province to study. As previously mentioned, our aging demographic and high interprovincial mobility increase our reliance on students as a source of long-term population growth. 30% of those attending university in Nova Scotia - tallying over 13,000 students - reside here for the majority of the calendar year, yet in the case of a fixed July election, would be ineligible to vote should they choose to return to their home for a portion of the summer months. Thus, a summer election acts to permanently disenfranchise the very students we recruit to study - and, hopefully to stay.

Even among those who may have local addresses, allowing them to vote from out-of-province, the only voting method available is a write-in ballot, which as a means of voting, has the highest barriers to access. This inaccessibility is further exacerbated by the transience of the student population; the majority change their place of residence year-to-year, which increases the challenges of accessing and providing documentation to confirm one's local address.

In contrast, an election date throughout the academic year maximizes participation among Nova Scotia students, as well as those coming from out-of-province to study here. It diminishes accessibility and informational barriers to voting, allowing for electoral information and support to be made available through student leadership and administration in a centralized location, quite literally meeting them "where they are at". These considerations are integral in determining the ideal timing for a fixed election date in the province.

We recognize that there are numerous justifications presented for a summer election date, including ease of identifying polling locations and staffing capacity. Although valid consideration, **we must ask ourselves whether operational concerns trump the importance of accessible voting options** for all Nova Scotians. In the case of the former concern, fixed election dates would greatly increase the capacity to plan in advance for polling locations. Additionally, many offices look to students when recruiting poll workers, which may in fact make achieving staffing levels easier during the school year.

It should be noted that of the 12 Canadian provinces and territories, all of which have fixed election dates, 10 have set those dates in fall, with the remaining opting for spring dates (between March and May). This convergence is no doubt the result of a range of considerations, but the fact remains that when selecting election dates, **every other province and territory across Canada has deliberately selected an date outside of the summer months and by extension, during the academic year.**

In 2017, a report was released by the New Brunswick Commission on Electoral Reform, which made recommendations on how to improve the electoral system in the province. The report included several recommendations relating to engagement of students and youth:

- That additional investments will be made to increase turnout of younger voters
- That Elections New Brunswick explores scenarios and initiatives to help increase registrations and voter turnouts by students on university, college campuses and high schools.



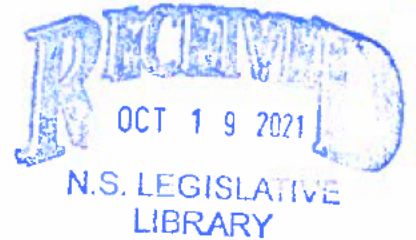
Following the Commission report, fixed election dates were shifted further into the fall in the province, in part to maximize opportunities for postsecondary participation. We are hopeful that a similar emphasis can be placed on ensuring election timing is as accessible for students here in Nova Scotia, further encouraging the next generation of leaders within our province to become engaged with our democratic processes from the very first time they are eligible to cast their ballot.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our appreciation that the discussion of fixed election dates is taking place, as such a measure is critical to ensuring a strong and functioning democracy. Democracy relies upon participation, and if certain groups are significantly less represented within our political system, we have a collective responsibility to examine the factors diminishing that engagement and to work to address them.

Ultimately, it is our belief that **the greatest consideration in setting a fixed election date should be ensuring it is one that will maximize participation across all segments of the population**, and it is our sincere hope that the date selected will reflect these shared priorities. We appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today, and look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Students Nova Scotia is a not-for-profit and non-partisan advocacy group that represents Nova Scotia post-secondary students. Our members study at Acadia, Saint Mary's, and St. Francis Xavier Universities, as well as select campuses of the Nova Scotia Community College.



Law Amendments Committee Follow-up Submission - Students Nova Scotia

Good evening,

Thank you for the time and opportunity to speak in front of the committee today regarding the proposed implementation of fixed election dates across Nova Scotia; as mentioned, StudentsNS is strongly in favour of an election date throughout the academic year.

I wanted to further follow up in relation to the ideal timing of that date, to provide a few pieces of information that may be valuable for the committee to investigate further. During today's presentation, we acknowledged that the vast majority of Canadian provinces and territories have implemented a fall election date, with most of those falling in October. Following this precedent would allow for outreach to students throughout the entirety or majority of the campaign period, and would further allow for the inclusion of election related programming throughout orientation week and back-to-school programming. As such, StudentsNS believes that a fall election date would be ideal for many student voters.

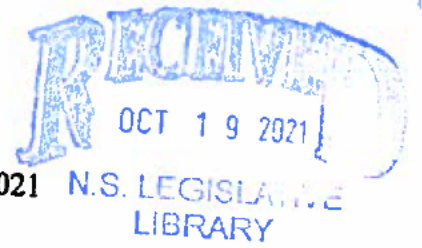
However, we do acknowledge the concerns that there may be potential overlap with federal and municipal elections should the election be set in this time period, although the Act would give the Chief Electoral Officer the ability to select a different date if such an overlap exists. One model that addresses this challenge well is that of Saskatchewan, wherein the election date is fixed as the last Monday in October, **except** in the case where the election period would overlap with a federal election period; in this instance, the provincial election would be postponed until the **first Monday of the following April**.

A similar such measure in Nova Scotia could allow the province to follow the lead of the vast majority of other provinces in the implementation of a fall date, with the knowledge that a spring election could take place should such an overlap occur.

I thank you again for your time and consideration, and am happy to follow up with any additional materials or information that may be of interest.

Sincerely,

Lydia Houck



Law Amendment Committee – October 18, 2021

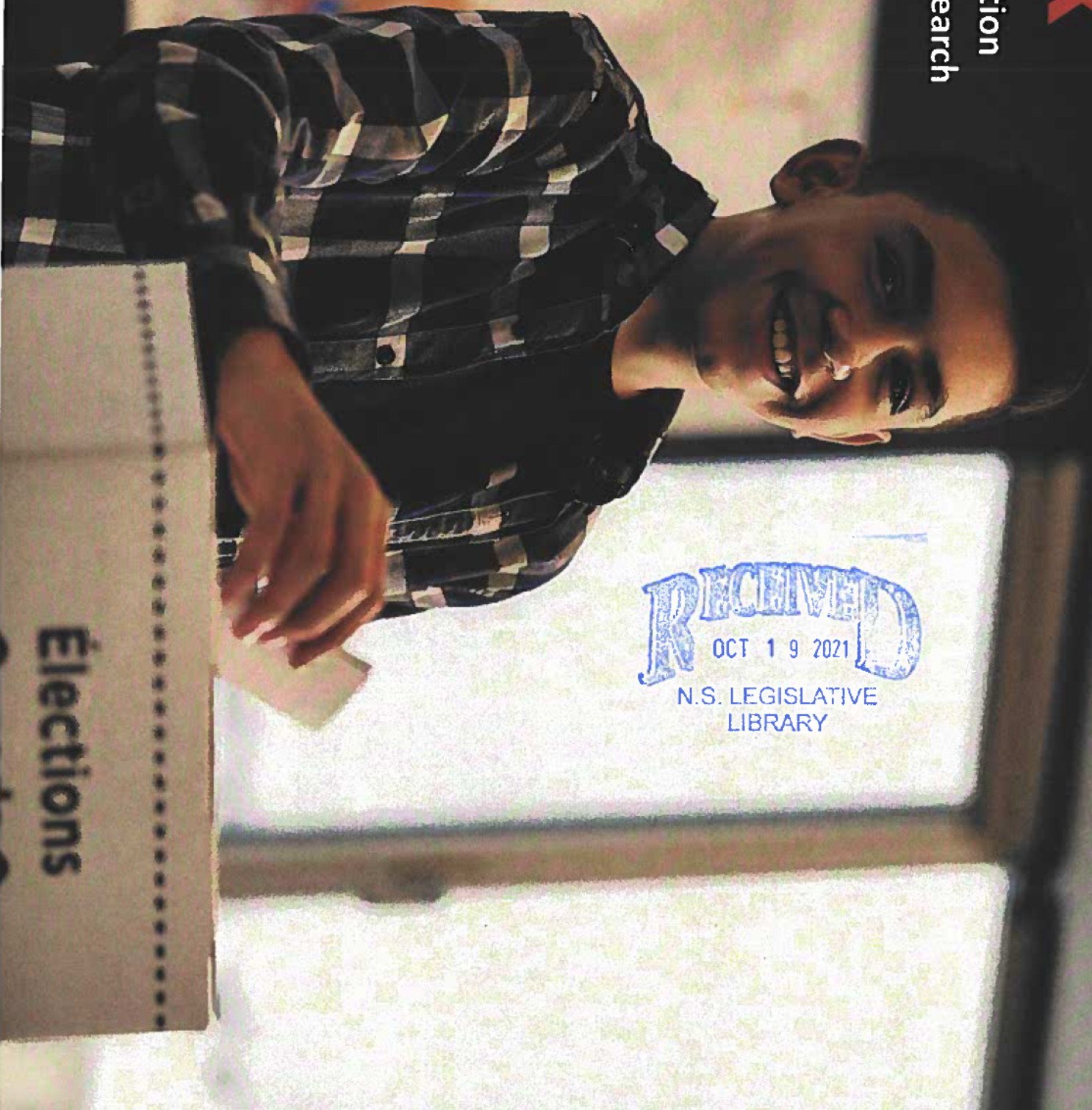
1. Good evening chairman, and members of the committee. My name is Kyra Campbell. I am 20 years old, and I live in New Minas, located in the Annapolis Valley. I am currently attending StFX University, where I am pursuing an Honours degree focused on Public Policy and Governance and Development Studies.
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 disproportionality 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.



Youth Voter Participation and Student Vote Research

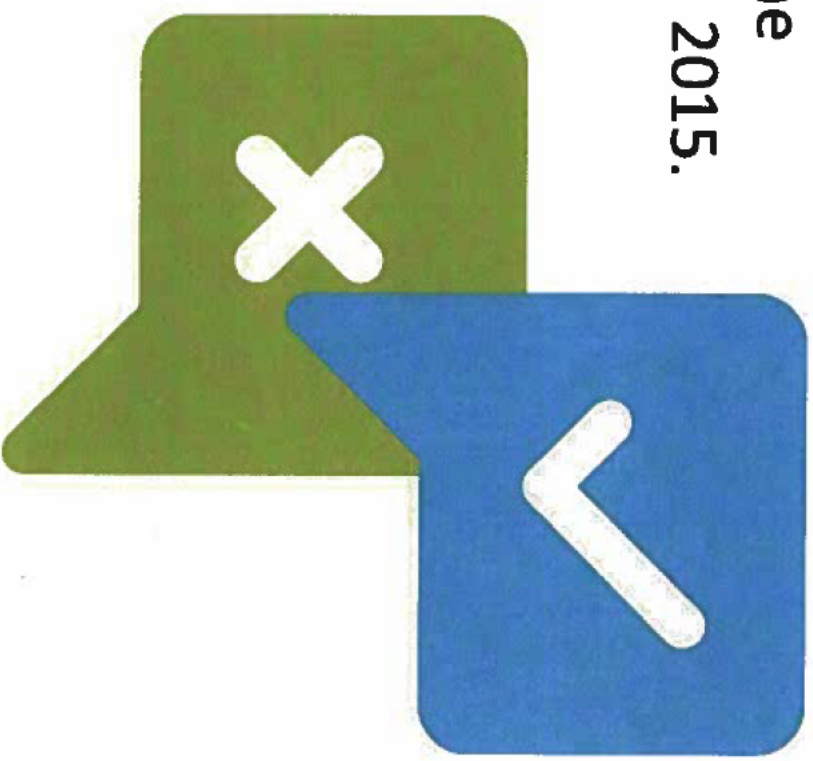


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NATIONAL YOUTH SURVEY

In order to better understand youth voting habits and barriers to voting, Elections Canada commissioned the National Youth Survey in 2011 and 2015.



THE BARRIERS TO VOTING



Motivational Factors

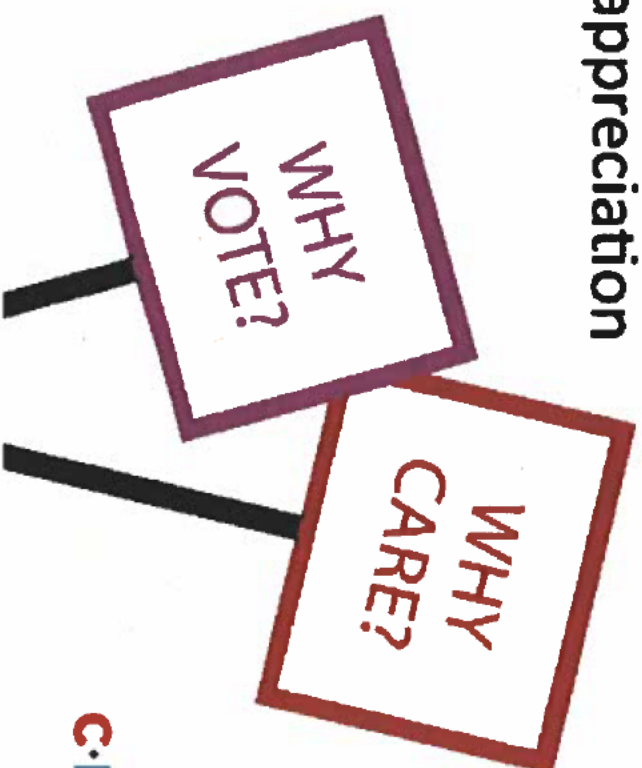
“Getting to the door”

Access Barriers

“Getting through the door”

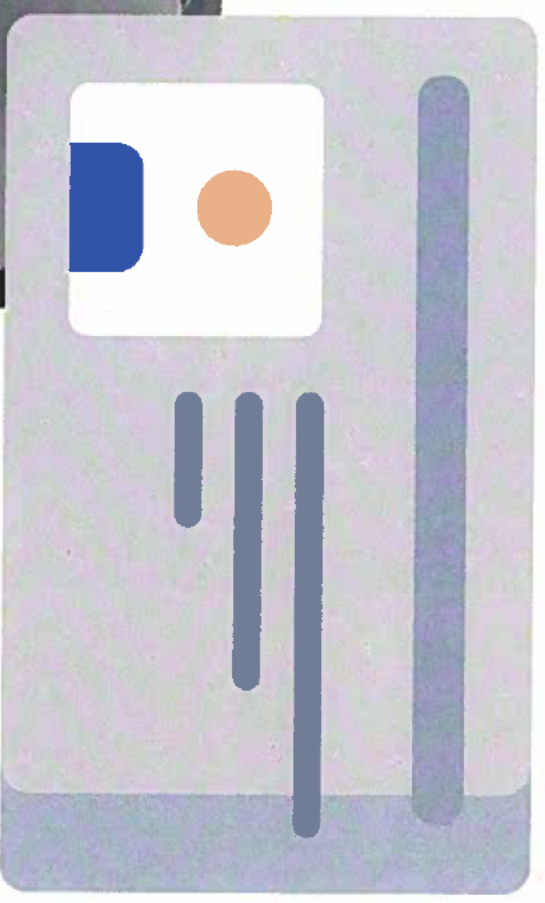
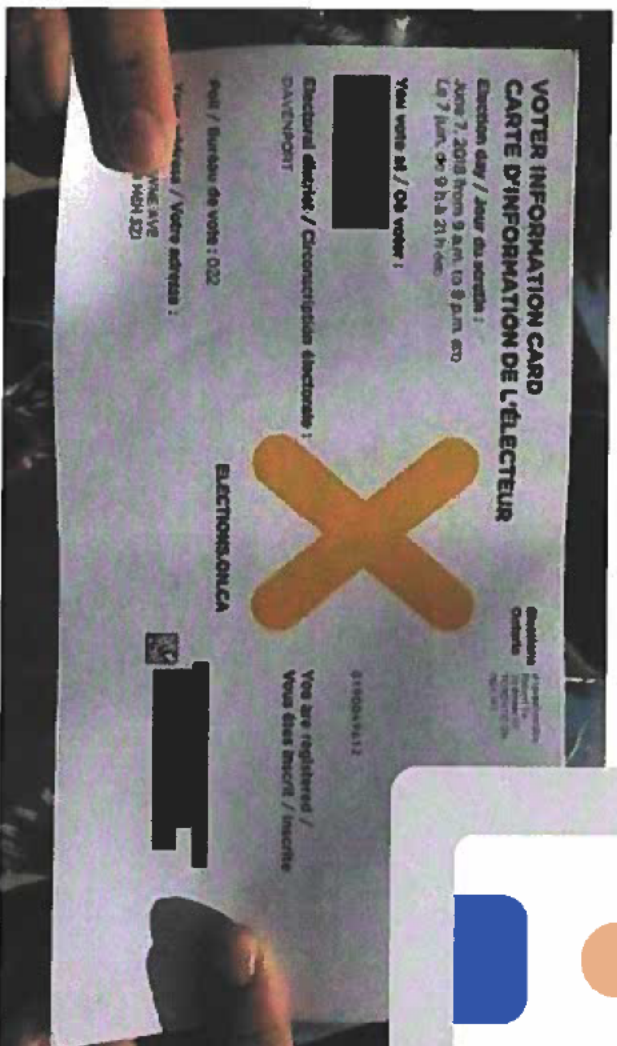
MOTIVATIONAL BARRIERS

Interest	lack of interest in politics
Knowledge	not knowing enough about politics
Cynicism	a belief that voting will not make a difference
Relevance	a belief that no party spoke to issues that youth care about
Civic duty	lower sense of appreciation for voting



ACCESS BARRIERS

- Knowing when, where and how to vote
- Voter ID
- Site/method accessibility
- Language/literacy



PROFILE OF A YOUNG VOTER

YOUNG NON-VOTERS

- Lower levels of knowledge about politics and the electoral process
- Less agreement that voting is a civic duty
- Less interested in politics
- Belief that all political parties are the same
- Fewer political influencers
- Didn't know when, where to vote
- Too busy

YOUNG VOTERS

- High level of political knowledge
- Believes that voting is a civic duty
- Interested in politics
- Discussed politics while growing up
- Contacted by candidates or parties
- Influenced by family and politicians

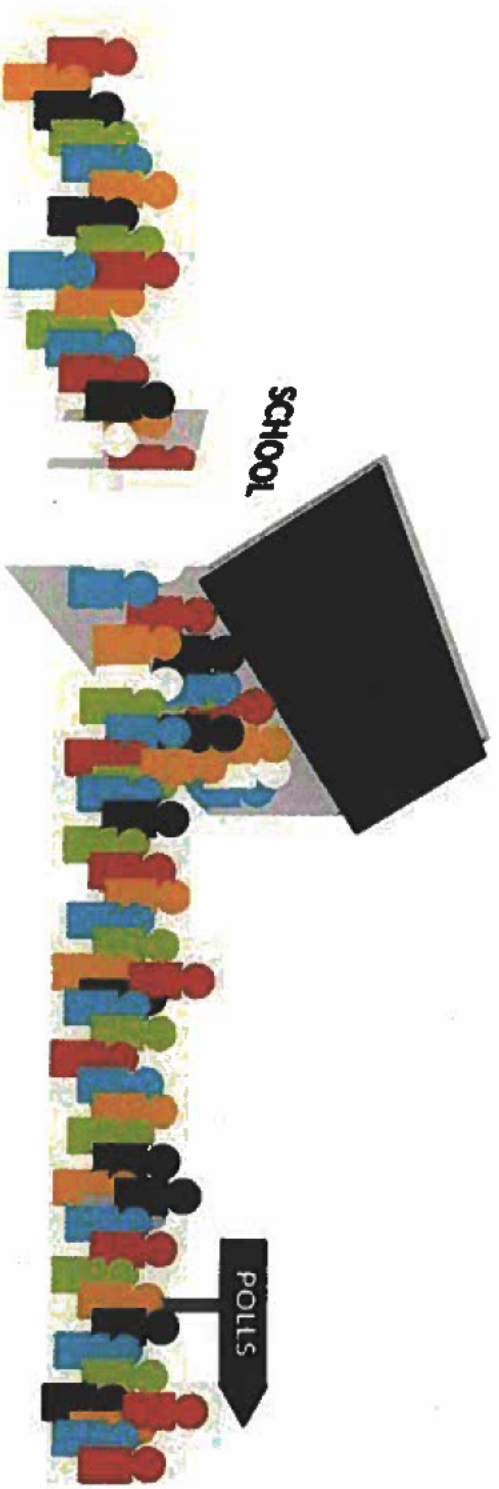
I AM A
VOTER



THE VALUE OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Young people who voted were much more likely to say:

- They learned about government and politics in high school (65% voters vs 46% of non-voters)
- Participated in a mock election, such as Student Vote (49% voters vs 39% non-voters)

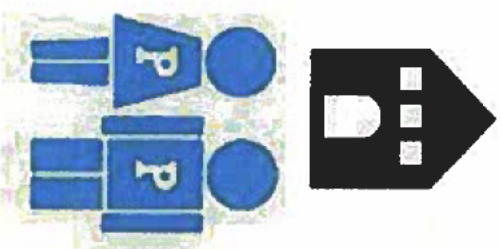
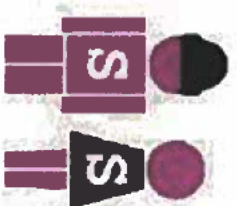
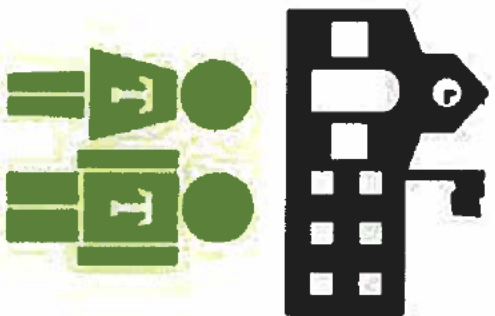


2015 PROGRAM EVALUATION

Elections Canada commissioned an independent evaluation of the Student

Vote Program to study the impact in the context of the 2015 federal election.

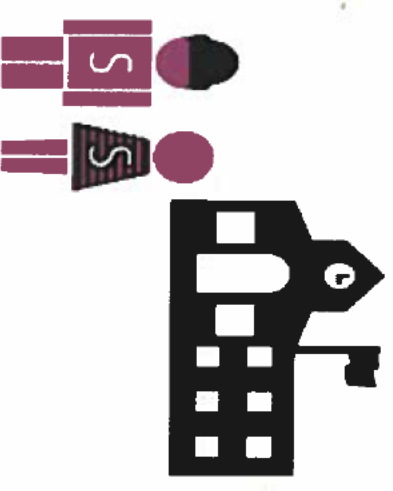
The evaluation analyzed the impact of the program on teachers, students and parents.



STUDENT OUTCOMES

- ✓ Improved critical thinking skills
- ✓ Increased knowledge of politics and elections
- ✓ Greater intention to vote in the future
- ✓ Increased confidence in speaking to family and friends about politics
- ✓ Enhanced sense that voting is a civic duty

FUTURE VOTER



IMPACT ON PARENTS

90%

felt the program **increased** their families' opportunities to **learn more** about elections and politics

58%

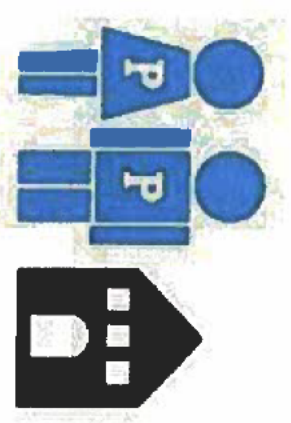
felt that the program **increased their own interest** in politics

50%

stated that they **knew more about politics** because of their child's involvement

28%

reported that their child's participation **positively influenced their decision to vote**



TEACHER FEEDBACK

100%

will likely participate in
Student Vote again



100%

Reported being satisfied with the resources and support

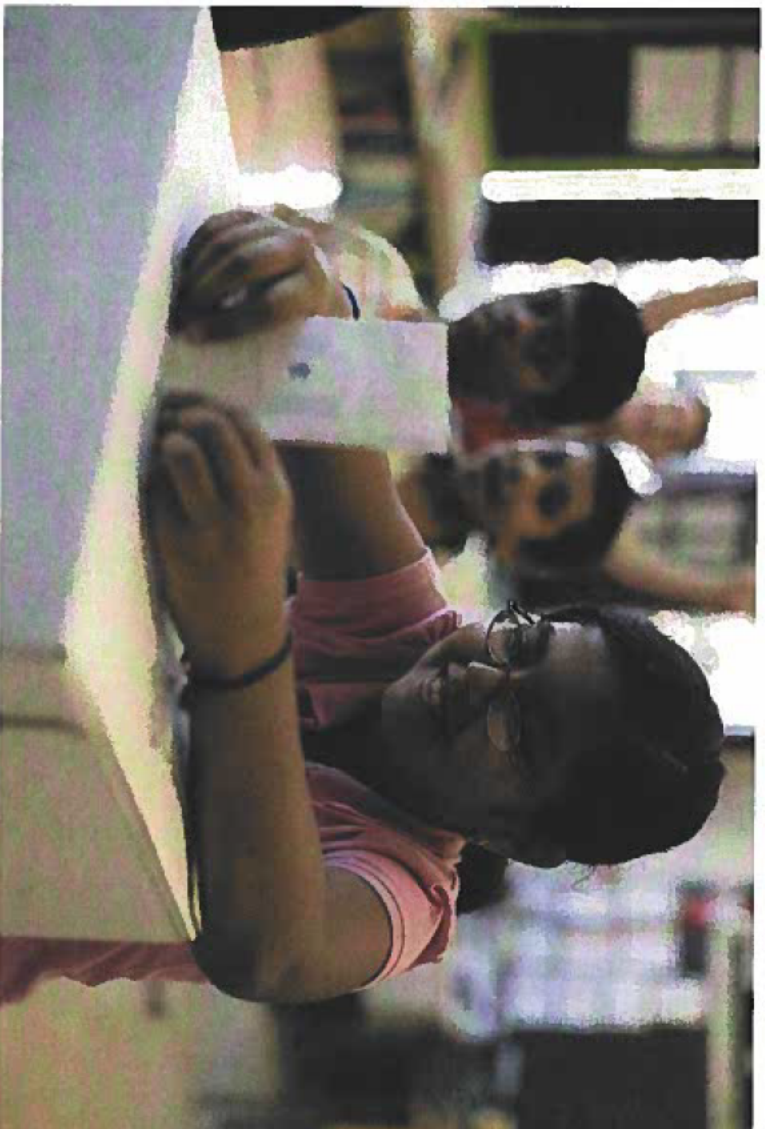
96%

said it **increased their confidence** in teaching government and civics

96%

Reported a **significant impact** on students' political knowledge and interest, critical thinking skills, civic duty and voting intentions

2019 PROGRAM EVALUATION



Abacus Data conducted an extensive evaluation of the Student Vote program during the 2019 federal election. The results are based on 12,922 survey responses among students and teachers, as well as site visits and interviews.

EDUCATOR FEEDBACK

Over 90% of educators agreed the Student Vote materials and activities had an impact on key measurements, for both elementary and high school students.

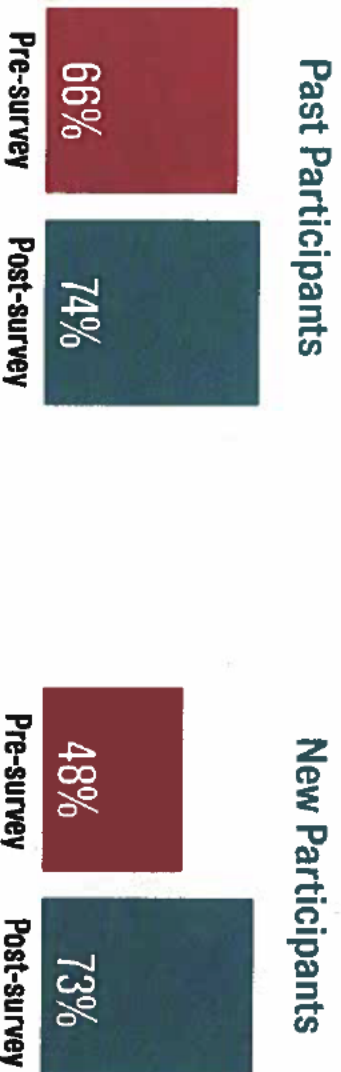


99% of educators indicated they would participate in a future Student Vote program.

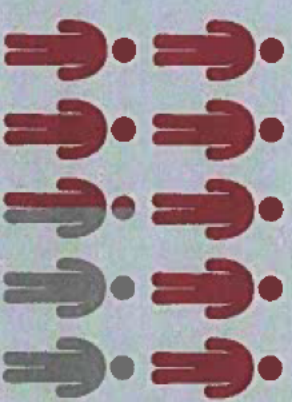
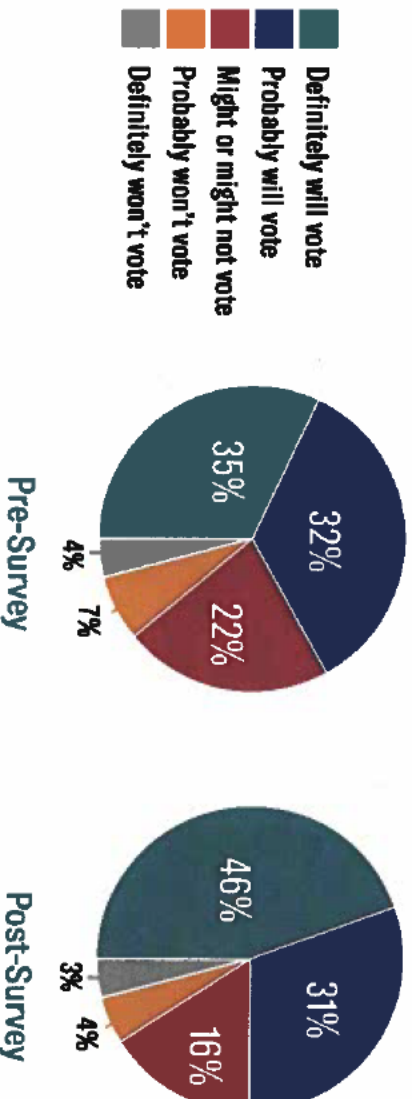
Source: Abacus Data (2019)

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Percentage of students that said they understood how politics and elections work in Canada

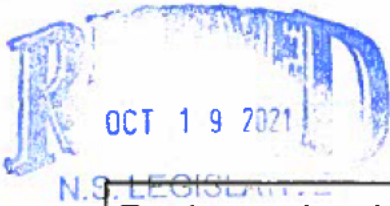


Will you vote in the future?



75%

Three-quarters of students said they felt **more prepared to vote** in the future after participating in the program.



Wendy Driscoll

Teachers and students across Nova Scotia have a lot to say about a summer fixed election date.

Info - wdriscoll@gnspe.ca

Seeing our student population excitedly going to get their federal votes in was so nice to see as a social studies teacher, and my students had a blast prepping and running the election and then another group of students enjoyed doing the official count. If the set election date stays in the summer, all students in Nova Scotia will miss out on these real time learning opportunities, which makes a subject like politics which can sometimes not be as "interesting" for students more interesting. I had a student actually thank me for involving them because they finally felt like they understood what the buzz was about. I had grade 9 students asking their parents if they could stay up to watch the results! But none of them had much knowledge on the provincial election that had taken place just a month before that.

- Amy Jo Comeau, Teacher, Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education

Totally agree with you on this one!!! We need elections to be during school months so we can engage our youth with politics and elections.

- Lynda Shovellor, Teacher, Halifax Regional Centre for Education

I couldn't agree more that invaluable learning opportunities would be missed if elections only took place in the summer months. Not only would it likely lead to lower voter turnout (and, sadly, that may be by design) but it also prevents students from engaging in the election process through visitation from candidates who are invited to speak, the opportunity to see the flurry of activity that takes place around polling stations in the 24 hours leading up to the election, the availability of current news stories that impact the outcome of the election (scandals, of course, but also announcements that are being made related to policy as well as commitments made by incumbents seeking support), and, finally, the public discourse that is taking place in communities in the weeks prior to election day. If you plan to cite any of these responses, I give you permission to use my name/words to support your presentation.

- Matt Campbell, Teacher, Sydney Academy

We have participated in the CIVIX program for the past few elections and it has really been beneficial for the students to complete the unit in conjunction with the election...in years where there wasn't an election the kids were definitely less engaged.

- Michelle Brown, Teacher, Churchill Academy

I emailed my MLA my concerns about fixed summer election dates provincially and how I feel like it is a step backwards for student engagement in the electoral process.

- Karen Binder, Teacher Madeline Symonds Middle School

I participate in the CIVX program and run it for Central Kings. I have done so for the past four elections and have incorporated it as a learning opportunity and as a life skill to teach our students about Federal, Provincial and Municipal politics. I encourage my students to participate and seek employment at polling stations. Some of them did so in the last election. The knowledge they gain from the CIVX experience is valuable as a life skill. This year, with the federal election being so early though, it was extremely difficult for our students to become as engaged. I witnessed the difference and reduced buy-in from the students as many of the activities I typically would do had to be trimmed. Calling the election in July would erase any possibility for student engagement, but furthermore, I believe that voter turnout will also suffer. This past summer with Covid there was an anomaly. Fewer people were going elsewhere and were in Nova Scotia to vote. In a typical election year this would not be the case!

I recall a conversation with a former student who voted for the first time several years ago. This was pre-Citizenship Education 9. I ran into them as I was entering the polling station to vote myself. They were proud to be able to cast their ballot for the first time, but their excitement quickly faded when they discovered they had spoiled their ballot by placing their name on it. When I told them that I was teaching Cit Ed and what we cover, they commented that they wished they had such a course when they were in school. Students who learn through CIVX become aware of their rights, but also their responsibility to properly vote as adults. We hope that the lessons learned in Grade 9 carry through to adulthood. Our students in Grade 9 will be the next generation of 18 year old voters. Future generations will have limited knowledge if this learning opportunity is lost with the passing of this Bill.

- Darryl Macdonald, Central Kings High School

I have been a CIVIX Student Vote school leader for over a decade now. The level of learning and engagement that occurs with this program is phenomenal. We are able to engage students in the electoral process and make the act of voting and the importance of civic action all the more meaningful.

We know that youth represent the lowest demographic group who regularly vote in elections. Part of the motivation behind the Citizenship 9 course was to address the voter apathy and disengagement of young people. The ability of schools to bring in candidates, to conduct real time votes at school and to see the results posted on election night serves to create understanding and meaning for students in a way that few other learning experiences can.

Taking this real-time learning opportunity off the table and denying educators the chance to teach students about provincial politics and elections first hand is a real loss. I hope you are able to persuade the government of this. I fully support the idea of a fixed election date, but please emphatically request that this date be during the school year when the best chance for meaningful learning happens.

- Peter Murphy, Teacher, Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education

I 100% agree with you! The work Civix has done in creating quality resources for us all to use has been so helpful in engaging my students in the political process. I like the idea of fixed election dates but the summer is ridiculous!

- *Darcie Moore, Teacher, Chester NS*

I fully support a fixed election date , however, I am concerned that a summer election in Nova Scotia will permanently deny students and teachers in our province a valuable learning opportunity. I know that having an election in the summer means that school buildings could be used as polling places and that this sounds a lot easier logistically. However, I feel that the gains here are not nearly as significant as the losses experienced by students and teachers if they are denied this learning experience forever.

While most are not of voting age, young people know what they think is fair, equitable and just, and they know when actions speak. - It is my opinion that fixing an election date outside of the school year demonstrates a disinterest in having our young people engaged in the political process.

- *Wendy Driscoll, Teacher, Bicentennial School*

A junior high student:

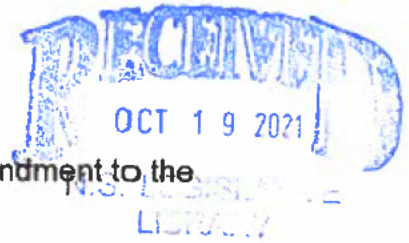
I was far more engaged with the federal election this year because I was in school, than the summer election when I was not. I was able to talk about issues with my class when we did the Student Vote in class.

Two high school students:

"I am incredibly concerned about the move to hold fixed elections mid-July as it would eliminate the opportunity for the student vote in schools. The student vote has fostered my interest in politics, especially helping me learn about local candidates. It gives me hope that although we cannot yet vote, someone will still hear the voice of the students in our schools. I beg you to consider a different election date that would coincide with the September-June school year so this amazing program can continue to run."

"Student Vote helped me develop tools that I plan to use in the future when I will finally be able to vote in elections. Voting for the first time can seem like a daunting task for me and my peers. I believe we need to encourage and support all young people to get more involved in Canadian politics so that voting in the future will not be scary, it will be something to look forward to.

Student Vote does exactly this, and I believe it would truly be a huge loss for students to take this away."



Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to Bill No. 1 - an amendment to the Elections Act to allow for a fixed election date.

I'm Jo-Ann Roberts, co-president of the Green Party of Nova Scotia. Participatory democracy is a founding principle for Greens in Nova Scotia and for Greens around the world.

I love coming into this building...it has such a long history of democracy and responsible government, I can imagine Joseph Howe, standing here during his Supreme Court hearing in 1835 and defending the freedom of the press. Charles Dickens sitting in the gallery at the opening of the Nova Scotia legislature in 1842.

The Nova Scotia House of Assembly has met every year since 1819, making this the longest-serving legislative building in Canada. So, it is not surprising that when we are in this place it is easy to be lulled into taking our democracy for granted. We shouldn't. Democracy is in trouble in Nova Scotia.

In our last election, which was held in the middle of the summer, more than 3-hundred and 36 thousand Nova Scotians didn't vote. 336-thousand, 6-hundred, and 29 to be exact. Close to 56% of eligible voters. Our voter turnout has been in decline for 15 years. It hasn't been over 60% since 2006. In the 1970s and 80s (with one exception, November 1984) voter turnout was between 75 and 80%.

That should worry all of us, but to those of you who are elected to represent eligible voters and protect our freedom and democracy, it should be of the greatest concern. Voting is an indicator of citizen engagement, and it is a characteristic of an engaged citizen. And by every account, declining voter turnout numbers are not a healthy sign for any country or province.

We are not alone in the country in seeing our voter turnout drop...11-million Canadians, almost a third of all eligible voters, didn't vote in the last federal election. I'm currently researching and writing a book on Saving Democracy. Obviously, it is a subject I am passionate about.

I applaud the government for introducing fixed election dates. It makes the public less cynical about politicians and levels the playing field for other parties who wish to take part in an election. Of course, that is only if fixed election dates are truly fixed and can't be overruled by the party in power with no penalty, as we saw in the last federal election. To make this legislation truly groundbreaking it should lay out the circumstances where it would be appropriate for the Premier to ask the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the House of Assembly on any date other than the fixed election

date and prescribe a penalty if it was determined a request for dissolution was made which did not meet that criteria prior to a fixed election date. I would ask this committee to consider making these improvements to the bill prior to third reading or as amendments in the future.

Finally, you have heard a number of strong arguments about the date you have chosen and I must admit I was stunned when I heard I would be voting on July 15th, 2025, and the third Tuesday in July every fourth calendar year thereafter. What!? You've got to be kidding me. And we wonder why the public thinks poorly of politicians. Of 28 occupations that were ranked by the level of respect by the public in Canada this year, elected officials ranked 24th, below bankers and lawyers, and journalists.

I asked myself, What's the rationale for a summer election? Who benefits? As you've heard it leaves out using the experience to teach students more about democracy and our electoral system. We know that in a province that has tourism as one of its biggest industries that it is a very busy time of year. And for those who are not in the tourism business, it is the time of year when families take a vacation together. I've heard the argument made that if voting is important you'll make the effort. I agree, but with a dropping voter turnout, this is hardly the time to start putting it on the shoulders of voters to make voting a higher priority.

I went back over the 64 provincial elections that have been held in Nova Scotia since 1758. Only 7 of them were in the summer, 5 in August and two in July. So, again I had to ask myself why would this government want to have a fixed election date in July? Surely it wouldn't be because summer elections have been good for the Progressive Conservative Party? So, I checked recent history.

-On July 27, 1999, the PC's under John Hamm, won a majority government. They defeated the Liberals who had been in a minority government. (sounds a bit familiar)

-Four years later, 2003, another summer election, another PC win, only this time it was a minority government.

-We all know the results of the election which was just held on August 17th. The PCs won a majority and defeated a Liberal minority government.

-You have to go back to August 22, 1933 to find a summer election that elected a Liberal government.

-The Liberals also won the election on July 27, 1920 That also happened to be the summer women were able to vote for the first time so I'm sure they turned out in strong numbers.

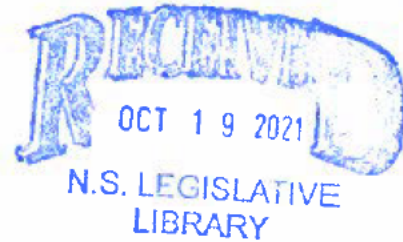
So if you are making your calculations based on recent electoral history you would say a fixed election date in the summer gives the Progressive Conservatives an advantage. That is the wrong reason to set a fixed election date in the summer.

Now as I said, we only have 7 elections in our history to examine. The final two are pre-confederation 1847 and 1851 and the parties were different, so it's hard to include them. Obviously, whatever the results politicians decided summer elections were to be avoided.

Every other province and the federal government seem to agree. They have all set fixed election dates for the spring or fall, none of them are in the summer.

I urge this committee, for the sake of democracy, to amend this legislation so that it includes a fixed election date in the spring or fall which will encourage citizen engagement and provide a level playing field for all parties.

From: molly hurd [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 5:05 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Re: presentation today



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

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Submission to Law Amendments - October 18 2021 - Bill 1 - "Fixed Elections"

"Providing authentic , real-life experiences and materials not only helps create a sense of purpose, it allows learning that is deeper, more meaningful and often more memorable than that from secondary sources such as textbooks, educational films or websites."* The Student Votes program, held in schools concurrent with provincial and federal elections, provides one of the most authentic learning situations imaginable, whereby students learn civics in real time, taking advantage of class visits with candidates, debates, researching various platforms through authentic materials, and finally conducting a simulated election.

I challenge the members of this committee to think back to a memorable learning experience from their own school days, and I am guessing that many if not most of those experiences will be rooted in an authentic situation that involved hands-on activities - a model UN, a drama production, a simulation game, or an inspiring speaker. If we want our future citizens to be involved in our democracy, what better way to educate, inspire and motivate them to participate than the Student Vote program? By declaring the fixed election date to be in the middle of the dog days of summer, thereby precluding childrens' involvement in Student Votes (or similar program) I can only conclude that this government is not interested in voter participation, either for the present or the future. This is a cynical ploy to suppress the vote, which sadly it seems that Conservatives believe will benefit them.

Molly Hurd

Retired teacher, member of Educators for Social Justice, author of "Best School in the World: How students, teachers and parents have created a model that can transform Canada's public schools" *

On Mon, 18 Oct 2021 at 10:47, Office of the Legislative Counsel <legc.office@novascotia.ca> wrote:

Please contact the Office of the Legislative Counsel at 902 424 8941 in order to secure a time for this evening.

Thank you,

From: Leigh Muething [REDACTED]
Sent: October 17, 2021 9:25 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Fwd: Submission to Law Amendments Committee for Bill No. 1

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

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Leigh Muething (he/ him/ il)
Grade 9 Citizenship, Grade 10 - 11 ELA
Horton High School



I work and live in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We are all Treaty people.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Leigh Muething [REDACTED]
Date: Sun, Oct 17, 2021 at 9:17 PM
Subject: Submission to Law Amendments Committee for Bill No. 1
To: <gordon.hebb@novascotia.ca>

Dear Mr Hebb,

Here is my submission to the Law Amendments Committee for the meeting regarding Bill No. 1. Please ensure that this is included in the meeting as well as in the public record of the meeting.

To: Mr. Gordon Hebb.

Office of the Legislative Counsel
CIBC Building, Suite 802
1809 Barrington Street

Regarding: Bill No. 1 – Elections Act (amended)

Dear Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

My name is Leigh Muething. I am a teacher at Horton High School in Greenwich. I teach Social Studies and English Language Arts. One of my key focuses is educating students on how they can engage with political issues in positive and informed ways and have a voice in society. One of the ways that I do this is through the Student Vote Program run by Civix Canada. This program engages students in understanding the election process, researching political platforms and then voting in school. The results of the vote are published online and students can see them as they would in a regular election.

As an educator, I have seen so many students become energized about politics and voting through this program. Some become involved in student politics and become leaders in our school community. Some become engaged in specific political issues that they learn about. Many of them become excited about voting in elections in the near future.

I am very concerned that the proposed fixed election date legislation (Bill No. 1) could damage this momentum. Holding future elections in mid-July would mean that we could not hold provincial Student Votes. Teachers across the province would lose an incredibly valuable learning tool and means of engaging their students in a real-life process.

Figure 4: Voter Turnout Since 1960



As you can see above, Elections Nova Scotia has noted that voter turnout has been steadily decreasing since 1960. With voter turnout so low (55% provincially in our last election) we should be ensuring that every opportunity is being made to engage youth to turn this around in the near future. Lori Turnbull (director of the School of Public Administration and an associate professor of political science at Dalhousie University) has pointed out that research is showing that "...people who start voting at a young age are far more likely to continue voting through their lifetime." (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/voter-turnout-provincial-election-1.6146321>) This is my hope. This is my goal. This is the purpose and aim of Student Vote and dedicated educators across the province. The current proposed election date of mid-July could threaten this.

I hope that you will consider these points carefully. I hope that you will consider changing the fixed election date to a time during the school year where educators would have time to plan and deliver Student Vote effectively. If we truly want a democratic system with increasing numbers of engaged citizens we must work together as decision-makers and educators to ensure this. This is one of those key pieces that could help us do this.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

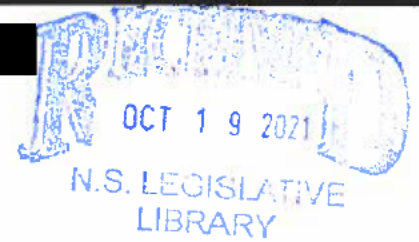
Sincerely,

Leigh Muething
Horton High School

Leigh Muething (he/ him/ il)
Grade 9 Citizenship, Grade 10 - 11 ELA
Horton High School

I work and live in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We are all Treaty people.

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

From: John LeDuc [REDACTED]
Sent: October 17, 2021 11:38 AM
To: Hebb, Gordon; Office of the Legislative Counsel
Cc: Premier; garyburrillmla@gmail.com; info@carmanekerr.ca; info@iainrankin.ca
Subject: Bill no 1 - Election s Act (amended)

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

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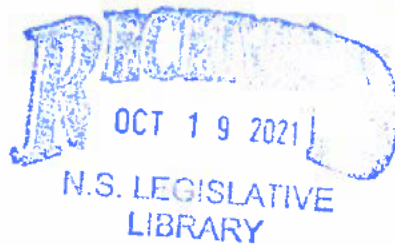
Hello,

Please consider this a written submission to Law Amendments Committee (LAC) concerning Bill No 1 Election Act (amended)

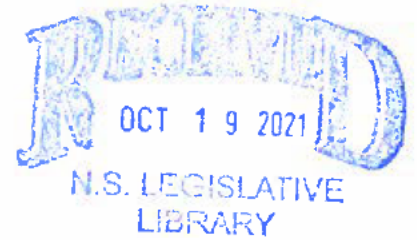
We would like to congratulate the government for establishing a fixed election date for Nova Scotia provincial elections through an amendment to the Elections Act. This is an important step in improving procedural fairness and accountability which are foundations to our democratic system. It is also important to recognize that Nova Scotia is the last jurisdiction to establish fixed election dates and speaks to our unfortunate history of partisan politics and reluctance by all parties to strengthen democracy by improving procedural fairness and accountability in governance. The intent of Bill 1 is very positive with the caveat that the proposed date for fixed elections in July needs to be re-considered.

We would ask that the LAC consider recommending amending the proposed date for fixed election from the third Tuesday in July to a more inclusive date in October for the following reasons.

1. The proposed July date is at the height of summer holidays where the public is focused on travel ,family affairs,well earned vacations etc. and as such not fully engaged in civic matters and the electoral process. The establishment of a fixed election date must be established with a goal of improving civic engagement, thoughtful deliberation of issues, and increased participation in the electoral system. This is why no other province, territory or the federal government has a fixed election date in July and August. (see chart below -source Wikipedia)



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: October 17, 2021 8:01 PM
To: gordonhebb@novascotia.ca
Subject: Bill regarding fixed election dates in Nova Scotia



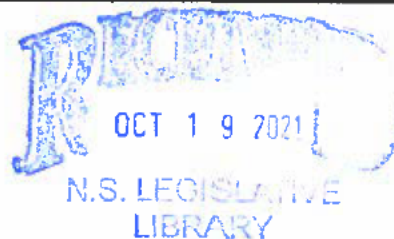
Sir; to the Chairperson of the Law Amendments Committee and members;
I wish to advise that while I have very little problem with a fixed date for provincial elections in Nova Scotia, I do have significant concern in the choosing of a summer date. If you want a greater voter turnout, which would be a healthy wish, then posing a summer time vote will not produce that result. The summer vacation period is not the time to hold the election. People are away on holiday, either in their own province or elsewhere and there is little opportunity to study the election platforms when vacationing, nor to pay much attention to the election in general terms. Is that what you want? It appears on the surface that your intention is to see a low voter turn out, and surely in the name of a healthy democracy, that is not your idea of a good election. The summer time can also be a period when extremes of heat are present and that, in turn, can be a deterrent to turn out, to say nothing of storm and hurricane season also having an impact. The other consideration is of course the hiring and training of poll workers to conduct the vote. It is a challenge at best to hire enough workers, and trying to do so in the summer period will bring with it more issues. I expect that a mechanism will be in place in the event of a lost vote of confidence, or a minority government scenario, in which the four year fixed date would be altered.

I encourage you to reconsider the date of the election and to choose a fall date after school and university students are back in class.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my view by email. Sincerely, Francene Cosman, [REDACTED]

Proud supporter of the AGNS

From: Laurie A. Macdonald [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 9:15 AM
To: Hebb, Gordon
Subject: Bill No. 1 - Elections Act



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Good morning,

I am writing to protest the introduction and passing of *Bill No. 1 - Elections Act*.

While I agree that a fixed election date for the province of Nova Scotia is a good idea, I am strongly opposed to a date set in the summer. Getting people out to vote is challenging enough at the best of times, but in the summer, as we saw this year, it is even more challenging. As I am sure you will agree, people are less engaged in politics in the summer. In a province with over 200 beaches, there are too many other distractions when the weather is warm.

As an elementary school teacher, I am opposed to a fixed election date set in the summer for another reason. For the past 5 years, my classes have participated in federal, provincial, and municipal elections through the CIVIX programme. They were very engaged in the process and this, in turn, encouraged their parents to be more engaged. Many went to watch their parents vote, parents that might not have voted otherwise.

We missed that opportunity this summer.

If provincial elections are set for July, that opportunity will be lost to a generation of our students. Civic and Social Responsibility will be lost concepts, even more so than they are now.

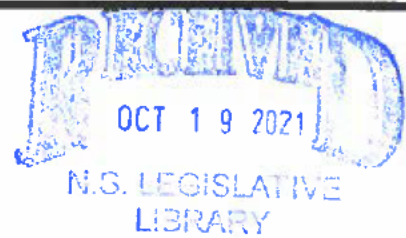
Please do not allow the date to be set for July.

Sincerely,

Alison MacDonald (she/her)
Intern School Counsellor
Grade 4 Teacher
Maple Ridge Elementary School

Kasserian Ingera?

From: Zach Ackerson [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 9:55 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Re: Law Amendments



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

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To the Honourable Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

Bill 1, to amend the Elections Act, should be reconsidered. The base idea of fixed elections dates makes perfect sense, and catches us up with the rest of the provinces; the Houston government has this correct.

The issue lies in the proposed date in July. There are myriad issues with this time in the year, including alienating post-secondary students who are influenced by legislation and may one day take up residence in our province, almost guaranteeing low turnout in a province with already dismally low turnout rates, and especially limiting educational experiences related to the opportunities a concurrent election during the school year offers students and educators.

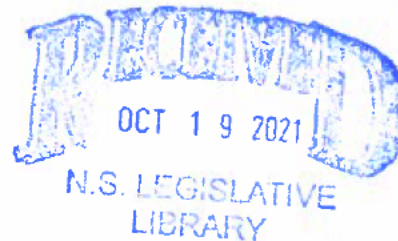
As a high school citizenship and politics teacher, I use elections during the school year as an engagement tool, often leveraging Student Vote Canada's resources to make learning authentic and engaging for students. To lose the prospect of provincial elections during the school year will cause real issues in our civil society. Student Vote programs are statistically proven to boost the likelihood of students going on to vote when they have graduated, and I am sure the Houston government, with their renewed concern with civic education issues, does not wish to hamper student engagement and the creation of future electors.

To the honourable members of this committee, I humbly ask you to reconsider the proposed fixed election date in July, in the name of civic education in our provincial school system. A fixed date in the fall would serve all citizens better, and most certainly the students and educators of this province.

Sincerely,

Zachary Ackerson

Submission to the Law Amendments Committee.



In reference to the proposed law to have a fixed election in July. These are my thoughts and the effects this timing has on many people in the province.

- 1) Many families plan vacation time around this time of year. For example: A campaign worker must give up any vacation plans for at least 5-6 weeks prior to the election day. Besides affecting the campaign worker it may affect his/her families and other families from afar who may choose to visit at this time.
- 2) In our area many people (voters) move to the beach on week-ends and sometimes during the week as soon as weather permits. Knocking on doors with no one home and leaving election information is not productive for anyone. Just more flyers littering the neighbourhood.
- 3) Summer elections at this time may not be a great time to find campaign workers as the economy tends to find a job for most wishing to work.
- 4) Candidates trying to host events will have difficulty arranging them around school closings, kid's sports, summer camps, and holidays.
- 5) Credit for establishing the next election date must be extended to the present government. The recent summer election call created unnecessary hardships for many folks who already had summer schedules planned well in advance to the election call.

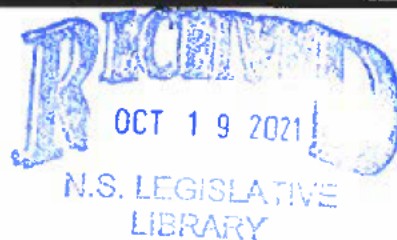
In addition to the proposed law an addendum needs to be added. This addendum would include provisions for changes to this law. The changes would require the support of the Governing Party and the Official Opposition. This addendum will require a grace period of at least a 2 weeks after an election date is announced. The need for the grace period is to provide a level playing field. This grace period can be used to find suitable office space, installation of internet, production of flyers, sign production and organization of campaign teams. Presently the governing party has a one week advantage over the opposition parties as they know when the call will be made.

In summation the establishment of a fixed election date deserves credit given to the new government. The timing I feel is best served by moving it to the fall or earlier to the spring. No government should be allowed to call a snap election without announcing a grace period and approval by the Official Opposition Party.

Submitted by:

Cecil Smith

From: Cecelia Callaghan [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 1:00 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Bill No. 1 - Elections Act



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To: legc.office@novascotia.ca
Office of the Legislative Counsel
CIBC Building, Suite 802
1809 Barrington Street

Regarding: Bill No. 1 – Elections Act (amended)

Dear Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

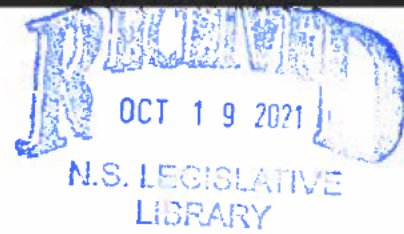
My name is Cecelia Callaghan. I am a 16 year old student at [REDACTED]. I am writing about my concerns for the proposed fixed election date in mid-July. This would mean that our Student Vote will not go ahead in the future. The Student Vote has been an opportunity for me to expand my knowledge of the political parties and candidates. It's given me a chance in school to do my own research and to form my own political opinions.

This was something in school that allowed me to investigate real-world issues based on my interests while connecting it to something happening in current events. Student Vote helped me develop tools that I plan to use in the future when I will finally be able to vote in elections. Voting for the first time can seem like a daunting task for me and my peers. I believe we need to encourage and support all young people to get more involved in Canadian politics so that voting in the future will not be scary, it will be something to look forward to. Student Vote does exactly this, and I believe it would truly be a huge loss for students to take this away.

Please reconsider changing the proposed fixed date to a time during the school year.

Thank you for your consideration,
Cecelia

From: Anna Benoit [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 1:44 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Bill No. 1 - Elections Act (amended)



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Office of the Legislative Counsel
CIBC Building, Suite 802
1809 Barrington Street

Regarding: Bill No. 1 – Elections Act (amended)

Dear Members of the Law Amendments Committee,

My name is Anna Benoit. I am 16 years old and a grade 12 student at [REDACTED]. I am incredibly concerned about the move to hold fixed elections mid-July as it would eliminate the opportunity for the student vote in schools.

The student vote has fostered my interest in politics, especially helping me learn about local candidates. It gives me hope that although we cannot yet vote, someone will still hear the voice of the students in our schools.

I beg you to consider a different election date that would coincide with the September-June school year so this amazing program can continue to run.

Sincerely,

Anna Benoit
[REDACTED]

From: Abby Crossley [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 3:01 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Bill No. 1 – Elections Act



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

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Dear Members of the Law Amendments Committee my name is Abigail crossley and I am 16 years old student at [REDACTED] and I strongly think that if you were to set the date of the voting for mid-July then it would not be fair for people that are still in school or that travel in the summer time are voice would not be heard and the people under age would not have a voice with the Student Vote I felt like I had a voice if you were going to set a date march 15 would work better to run Student Vote in schools

Sincerely: Abigail crossley

From: NeetaKumarBritten [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 3:29 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Bill NO. 1



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

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Bill NO. 1

My name is Jaxson Cormier and I am a student at [REDACTED].

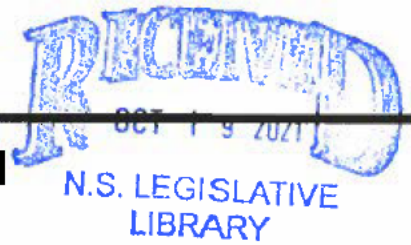
I am writing to you about the Student Vote in which I took part in.

What is good about Student Vote is that we get to learn about election issues and actually cast our vote.

If elections were in the summer, we would not learn about Student Vote.

When I casted my ballot I felt happy.

Fixed elections are great! Just need a new date.



From: Tammy Jakeman [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 3:41 PM
To: Barbara Adams
Cc: mlabradjohns@gmail.com; gregmorrow4gt@gmail.com; Smith, Kent; melissa.mlaoffice@gmail.com; info@patriciaarab.ca; office@angelasimmonds.ca; ClaudiaChenderMLA@gmail.com; Lisa Lachance; Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Summer Fixed Election Date

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

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Good Day Ms. Adams and members of the Law Amendments Committee, I write this email out of concern for the proposed Bill 1 your government is pushing forward, with the intent of making the third Tuesday, in the month of July, Nova Scotia's fixed election date. While the need for fixed election dates is very much needed, I believe you know as much as many others, this is not going to work out well for many reasons.

Having just come out of a summer election, we know all candidates struggled to get volunteers. You yourself commented to me in passing how foolish it was of the Liberals to call a summer election while we stood on Horne's Rd near your home, while we spoke about the lack of volunteers we had!

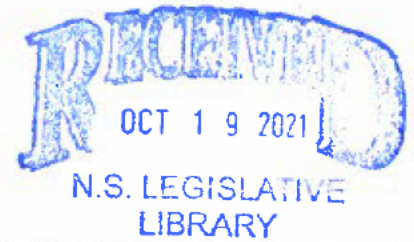
As an educator I am very concerned what this means for my students. To fully engage our students in the student vote program, there are weeks of teaching that happens. However in the month of June the focus in jr high, becomes getting our grade nines ready for their exams and the transition to high school. For high school students it's about graduation and those final exams in the month of June. With an election date that would happen between July 15-21st each year, the 30 day writ period would begin during exams and graduation. There would no longer be a student vote as the student vote program, has voting happen as close to the election date as possible. This will not help in encouraging these future voters to become active in the process.

Finally, we both know that summer elections lead to continuous low voter turnouts. The last thing voters will be interested in, is spending time on hot summer days exercising their civic responsibility. Youth voters are working as many hours as they can. Those with the economic means are taking vacations. And those who are barely surviving, feel so disenfranchised, they don't care!

As a former candidate you campaigned against, an educator, and an elector/constituent in the riding of Eastern Passage, I am imploring you and your government to NOT use July as the month for fixed elections in Nova Scotia!

With regards,
Tammy Jakeman

From: Merydie Ross [REDACTED]
Sent: October 18, 2021 5:17 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Bill 1 - Law Amendments Committee Submission



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

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To the Law Amendments Committee,

I disagree with Bill 1 and its proposed fixed election date of the third Tuesday in July. As a candidate in our recent summer election, I feel strongly that we experienced low voter engagement due to the election taking place during the summer. While knocking on doors and in other voter engagement activities, we were frequently informed that voters were away on vacation, not home because they were at their cottage or at the beach, or were not even in the riding for part, most, or all of the election. Volunteer availability was constrained by vacation plans and other seasonal commitments, which impacted our capacity to connect with more voters. And perhaps worst of all, myself, volunteers, and students lamented the fact that we lost many opportunities to engage with students that would otherwise have been available in some form, had the election taken place during the school year.

With summer elections, there is no opportunity for candidates to visit schools and classrooms, or for schools to host candidate debates. There are no student groups or other opportunities for post-secondary institutions (such as our local NSCC Lunenburg Campus) to help structure pathways and disseminate information for newly eligible student voters to learn how, when, and where to vote, and to have fun voting for the first time with their friends. In contrast with my own experiences of other elections taking place during the school year, I feel that summer elections squander the opportunity to engage and cultivate new generations of voters in learning and practicing healthy voting habits at a young age.

While in high school at Park View Education Centre, I recall our school hosted a candidates debate between local candidates for MLA in the 2006 provincial election. This made forming an opinion as a young person on who I and my peers would like to vote for, had we been of the voting age, exciting and dynamic. Consequently, so too did speculating about who would win the election and how the election results would impact our soon to be post-grad future. In university, I volunteered on campus with my friends and a student group, as well as at the local campaign office, and with much excitement, attended on campus candidate events. On election day, I carpooled with my friends to vote for the first time, making election day a thrilling and celebratory occasion. In a previous fall provincial election in Nova Scotia, I was one of the volunteers at the campaign office to orient a class of elementary students to our campaign. The class had walked from their school to our headquarters, then proceeded to walk to and visit with the other candidate's offices, before walking back to school and holding their own mock election, voting for the candidates on the local ballot. To this day, I too, remember voting in a mock election in elementary school, which reflected the election of the day. I feel these experiences have helped shape me into the person I am today and helped inform my belief in the importance of voting and participating in democracy, and none of these fun and valuable learning experiences would have happened during a summer election.

While this bill and the comments made last week in the Legislature by Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, The Honourable Becky Druhan seem to indicate that she feels Nova Scotia's students receive enough civics education without elections taking place during the school year, I disagree. Based on my own experiences as a student, campaign volunteer, and candidate, I believe that for students, nothing brings democracy to life more than learning from and participating in the real life events unfolding day to day in the world around us. We need fixed elections in Nova Scotia, but I feel that Bill 1 does not appropriately address the democracy deficit in our province, and

that holding elections in July will not increase turnout amongst young voters, families, and first time voters. With the last two provincial elections having reached historic lows in voter turnout, I believe that this bill ultimately does a disservice to voters by further disenfranchising an already disengaged population. Nova Scotians deserve to have a fixed election date that supports strong voter turnout by all demographics in our diverse population.

Thank you for your time and consideration on my behalf.

Most sincerely,

Merydie

Merydie Ross
(she/her)



To the Members of the Committee on Law Amendments:

Last year I spoke before this committee regarding Bill 242 which created access zones around facilities which committed abortions. During my speech, I indicated that I felt the Bill set precedent that could eventually result in the denial of free speech on any divisive issue in any location. I feel that my words are prophetic. Bill 11 is nigh identical to Bill 242. It merely broadens the current access zones to include all protestors that seem unpopular to the current regime. How much further will this go? These topics are unpopular, difficult, and emotionally divisive no matter where they are discussed. The right to freedom of expression and assembly, the right to protest, is a constitutional freedom.

As I also reminded the Committee last year, it is already in the Criminal Code of Canada that harassment and other such aggressive, threatening behaviour is not allowed. It is also illegal to block public areas. If this behaviour is already criminal, what is the purpose of Bill 11? It seems it is to reduce the efficacy of protest for people who do not hold the popular opinion.

If one can hold a sign in an access zone in favour of certain measures, but not against, it is regulating a person's right to freedom of expression, not patient safety. Therefore, I find this Bill represents an egregious trespass upon the civil rights of individuals. It is not the place of the legislature to stop the people from giving their opinions when they are to be public servants.

I would advise the Committee members then to be cautious. This bill should be stopped. You were warned last year. You have been warned again today. I fear if this trend continues, someday it may be you that is muzzled by the regime.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ruth Robert



**Bill #1
Elections Act (amended)**

**CHANGES RECOMMENDED TO THE
LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE**

PAGE 1, Clause 1, proposed subsection 29A(2) - delete "July" in the third line and substitute "October".

PAGE 1, Clause 1, proposed subsection 29A(3) - add "or by reason of a public health emergency" immediately after "election" in the fourth line.

PAGE 1, Clause 2 - delete "July 15" in the second line and substitute "October 21".
