



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

May 1, 2009

Honourable Alfie MacLeod  
Speaker  
House of Assembly  
Province House  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alfie".

In accordance with Resolution No. 1221, passed by the House of Assembly on Thursday, November 23, 2006, the Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process is pleased to submit its draft report to the House Assembly of Nova Scotia.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michel P. Samson".

Michel P. Samson, MLA

Chairman

Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process



## STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

All of which is respectfully submitted to the  
House of Assembly this 1<sup>st</sup> day of *MAY*, 2009

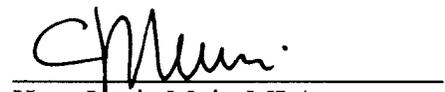


Michel P. Samson, MLA  
Chairman

**I concur**

  
Hon. Mark Parent, MLA

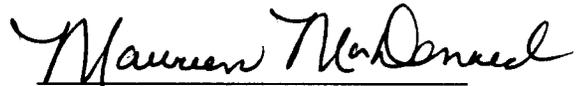
**I concur**

  
Hon. Jamie Muir, MLA

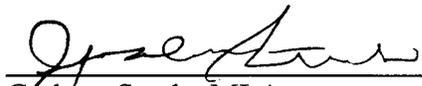
**I concur**

  
Keith Bain, MLA

**I concur**

  
Maureen MacDonal, MLA

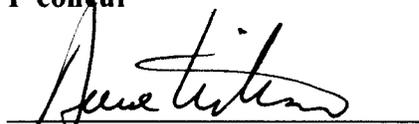
**I concur**

  
Graham Steele, MLA

**I concur**

  
Charlie Parker, MLA

**I concur**

  
H. David Wilson, MLA

**I concur**

  
Harold Theriault, MLA

**Report of the Select Committee on**

**Participation in the**

**Democratic Process**

**2009**

**(Draft edition)**

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## **Message from the Chairman**

After extensive consultation, focus groups and hearing presentations from Yarmouth to Sydney, the Select Committee for Participation in the Democratic Process is making seven recommendations aimed to help encourage voter engagement.

The cornerstone to strong representative government is healthy participation by citizens. Our committee worked hard to try to find ways to help make sure people become more engaged and committed to voting.

The select committee, with three members from each of the three parties in the legislature, held eight meetings and focus groups across the province to gather information and glean insight as to why voter turnout in Nova Scotia, like much of the world, has been dropping drastically over the last two decades. We also heard presentations from a number of interested parties, from Democracy 250 to the Department of Education and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

Through conversations with Nova Scotians, and attention to previous research and antidotal evidence we were able to offer seven suggestions to try to stem to loss of voters. We feel that these recommendations can help reverse the trend and start building toward a more engaged public with better turnouts at the poles.

We feel including more elections learning in the school curriculum, building on the success of Democracy 250, and encouraging regular school visits to the Legislature would help young Nova Scotians get a better idea of how government works and understand the work of their elected officials.

To this end, we feel allowing elected officials better access to schools, both during and between elections, expanding the role of Legislative Television to include educational programming would help achieve this goal.

Other helpful changes would be to revise the Elections Act to make voting as user-friendly as possible and to change the rules used by the House to encourage a more modern approach to the legislative process.

The committee recognizes a change in the trend of fewer voters will not happen immediately, but hopes that the recommendations can be a stepping stone toward a gradual move to greater participation.

It's in everyone's interest to have a more engaged population, people who realize the importance of each and every vote. Sometimes people are quick to feel like they can't change things and that they don't have a say in how things are run. It's important that we do everything we can to help them see that each and every vote is important. Everyone does have a voice in how things are run, they just have to make it heard.

I was honoured to be asked to serve as Chairman of this Select Committee. This report and the recommendation attached would not have been possible without all those who offered input,

made submissions or presentations and the assistance and guidance of our partners Elections Nova Scotia, Democracy 250, the staff of the Nova Scotia Legislature and Communications Nova Scotia.

## **Acknowledgements**

The committee wishes to thank all those Nova Scotians who gave of their time to be active participants in its work. It would also like to thank Democracy 250, Elections Nova Scotia, and the other participating organizations for their help in gathering information and public feedback. Even though it may be some time before positive change can be realized, this was a starting point to engage our citizens in embracing the electoral process and engaging more Nova Scotians in discussion on the importance of our democratic privileges.

## **Executive Summary**

How do we encourage the public to become more engaged in the electoral process?

Decline in voter turnout is a problem both in Nova Scotia and in many other jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally. Between 1968 and 2005, voter turnout declined in five major democracies, including Britain and the US. In Canada overall voter turnout for federal elections declined by almost 20 per cent between 1962 and 2008. Last fall's federal election had the lowest turnout in Canadian history.

Voter turnout has also declined in almost every province in the country since 1990. In 2003 Nova Scotia had an all-time low voter turnout of under 60 per cent. A number of variables affect voter turnout from election to election, making it difficult to evaluate causes: weather, changes in riding boundaries from election to election, and changes in poll location all play a part.

The Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process was struck in 2007 to look deeper in the numbers, identify barriers to voter participation, and recommend solutions. Because we were trying to find out why people are not engaged in the processes of governance, we moved beyond the usual means of gathering information. We used open hearings, focus groups, Facebook feedback, and written submissions to reach people who would not usually attend public meetings. We interviewed sitting MLAs about trends and opinions in their electoral districts. We examined literature from governments, academics, and mainstream media.

Some reasons for public disengagement seem universal in western democracies. They fall into nine categories:

- regional variations  
play a part both provincially and federally
- urban and rural differences  
turnout is traditionally higher in rural ridings; the trend of rural outmigration had changed the urban/rural balance
- sense of complacency  
fewer people vote when there is no crisis or strong issue, when the incumbent is expected to be re-elected, or when their candidate or party has little chance

- socioeconomic status  
the more educated and better off a person is, the more likely they are to vote
- one's age and place in the lifecycle
- relative stability or mobility of the population  
a more mobile population feels disconnected and so are less likely to participate; many Nova Scotians work out west or have moved to Halifax for work or post-secondary education
- relative convenience of voting  
people less likely to vote if polling stations are not conveniently located or have been changed to a new location, if voting times conflict with work, or if they lack of childcare, etc.
- growing cynicism with the political process  
as people become better informed they tend to become more cynical towards government; voters won't bother if they feel that their vote makes no difference to what happens in the world
- race and ethnicity, language, and religious affiliation  
some segments underrepresented at the polls, both nationally and provincially  
minorities feel excluded when they do not see themselves reflected or even present in the governance process and when they don't see their communities helped through the political process

These factors do indeed account for diminishing voter turnout in Nova Scotia. We heard about them all from Nova Scotians at a series of public consultations throughout the province. When we didn't hear enough from groups underrepresented among voters in Nova Scotia, we sought them out: African Nova Scotians, aboriginals, youth, and seniors. We heard some interesting perspectives on what is wrong and how we can improve it.

### **African Nova Scotians**

Many African Nova Scotians say that they feel like second-class citizens. They do not feel that their issues have been addressed by successive provincial governments, especially in terms of education, community infrastructure, and health issues. They say that very few candidates actually come out to African Nova Scotian communities to campaign, especially in rural areas. They say that once elected, candidates are almost never seen in their communities.

What would make a difference? Some say that more diversity among candidates, especially visible minorities, would make a difference. Some say that sensitivity to their communities and issues would make a difference. Some say that education and encouragement about participation in the process would make a difference. They noted that the D250 initiative did not extend to rural African Nova Scotian communities. They say that being invited to these focus groups is a good first step, but that the process needs to be continued.

### **First Nations**

Most provinces have experienced a low and declining First Nations turnout for provincial elections. Statistics from the 1993 provincial election show a 45 per cent turnout of on-reserve First Nations voters. Yet turnout for band elections is consistently high in Nova Scotia, at over 90 per cent.

What accounts for this? First Nations people do engage, but only when they perceive it to be of importance to their day-to-day lives. Many feel that provincial politics isn't relevant to them. Their relations with Canada are mainly governed by the federal government, so they tend to pay more attention to federal politics than provincial.

No provincial First Nations organization chose to participate in our consultations, but some students and one adult attended focus groups. The adult noted that western party democracy is foreign to aboriginal culture. They see it as divisive to take sides on issues. They feel that governing through a council of elders seeking consensus works better. (The non-partisan model currently being used in Nunavut is similar to our municipal model.) In general, however, the adult suggests that this lack of engagement in voting stems from an underlying scepticism of the system on many levels.

### **Youth**

The largest decline in turnout is among those born after 1970. Youth are less likely to join a political party, less likely to vote, less interested in politics, and know less about politics than those in the older age groups. However, they are just as likely to get involved in things like petitions, protests, and volunteering. So apathy cannot account for lack of engagement in the political process.

Do they find traditional ways of participating unsatisfying? Irrelevant? What are their preferred methods of engagement?

We know that when democratic participation is emphasized in the home, young people are more likely to vote. Students who participated in the focus groups showed that with more information and encouragement, they would more than likely vote in the next election. For this reason, our first four recommendations are focused on engaging youth.

### **Seniors**

Our final three recommendations will help address the concerns of seniors, in particular, but also the concerns of all Nova Scotians. We will all benefit when the process of casting a vote is clear and convenient. We will all benefit when we understand how government works, how decisions are made. We will all benefit when we understand what our government is doing and why. We will all benefit when we can have confidence that our elected leaders are fit to govern.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

How do we encourage the public to become more engaged in the electoral process?

The issues surrounding the decline in voter turnout are systemic, global, and long-standing. The committee acknowledges it may not be possible to turn this trend around in the short term. However, we recommend the following actions as starting points to encourage public engagement in the electoral process, starting with four focused on youth:

### **1 Include more elections learning in the school curriculum**

That a working committee be struck with representation from the Department of Education, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Elections Nova Scotia, and the Office of the Speaker to explore what currently exists in the P–12 curriculum, how it is being implemented, and to see what, if any, changes need to be made in order to ensure that all Nova Scotian public school students are exposed at some point in their schooling to the mechanics and importance to a healthy society of the electoral process.

Democracy 250 focused specifically on improving turnout among young people (under 30) in Nova Scotia. They found that the biggest factor in young people not voting is a basic lack of knowledge of how government works overall, and more specifically how the voting process works. We found the same thing. Almost everyone said that we must return some form of education around the governance process to the public school curriculum.

While public school teacher have many opportunities to cover governance topics through the P–12 curriculum, only one required course in Grade 11 covers how the electoral process or forms of governance work. Every other course or topic is elective. Teachers who themselves have an interest in the political process tend to cover this material, and other don't. Yet when schools held talks by veterans, mock elections, and model parliaments, the interest in voting increased amongst the student body.

### **2 Build on the success of Democracy 250 in a new format**

That the work of Democracy 250 be continued in the form of an Office of Democratic Renewal, either to be located in an existing body such as the Office of the Speaker or Communications Nova Scotia, or as a working committee across departments such as Education and Elections Nova Scotia. Additional resources would support this office in terms of staff and budget.

Young people who had participated in workshops held by D250 thought that having two former premiers engage them directly on issues they were interested in, as well as the process itself, was extremely empowering. They had a sense that adults were not just listening to them, but were taking their concerns seriously. The students who had engaged in the D250 initiatives said that they would like to see more programs in this area in the school; many of those students of voting age said that they would definitely vote in the next election.

### **3 Encourage regular school visits to the Legislature**

That the Office of the Speaker work with the Department of Education to create a more regular program of school visits to the Legislature.

#### **4 Allow elected officials better access to schools, both during and between elections**

That while most school boards and individual schools welcome elected officials into the schools, some are reluctant to. To this end there should be a province-wide policy covering access of elected officials to schools both in and outside of election periods.

Students shared other concerns that affected their interest in voting. Many felt that they had a lack of knowledge about the candidates. This is not helped by some school boards not allowing politicians into the schools during a campaign. Many students said that they want to hear what their elected representatives have to say and to feel engaged with them outside of the weeks of a campaign. Those MLAs who were active participants in their district's schools noted that the students were very attentive and had lots of good questions for them whenever they spoke to a class. The students echoed this comment, saying that such interaction made them feel like someone was listening to them.

#### **5 Expand the role of Legislative Television to include educational programming**

That the role and dissemination of Legislative Television be expanded to provide not just the proceeding from Question Period, but also educational programs concerning the process of government in Nova Scotia. To this end we recommend that the Office of the Speaker should undertake discussions with the province's cable providers and with the CRTC to determine whether or not Legislative TV could be carried on the basic cable package, perhaps on the community channel.

We heard about dissatisfaction with the political process as a whole. Cynicism among the electorate is a factor in the decline in voter turnout. This is often attributed to greater access to information about government and politics, which makes people more critical of the system. We heard this, too. Some participants say they have stopped voting because they feel that their votes don't count for a variety of reasons which can generally fall under a lack of trust. Many vote out of a sense of civic duty rather than a belief that their votes actually mattered. Many vote so as not to dishonour the sacrifice of those who fought to preserve our right to vote. We heard that politicians need to listen much more to their constituents and to be more visible in their districts between elections.

We got the overwhelming sense of a lack of communication between the government and the public. Although there are mechanisms in place to communicate and much is attempted, it was generally felt that the message wasn't reaching the public. Both youth and adults felt that if they had a better understanding of how exactly the process of government worked—not just in the House, but on a day-to-day basis—then they would have a better idea of how decisions are made. They are looking for information beyond what is presented to them in the news media.

## **6 Revise the Elections Act to make voting as user-friendly as possible**

That, while it is not this committee's intent to review the Elections Act, a committee of experts be struck by a resolution of the House of Assembly and under the leadership of the Chief Electoral Officer of NS with the appropriate resources to do an overall review of the Elections Act of Nova Scotia with the intent of modernizing the Act, making it as voter-friendly as possible, while maintaining the integrity of confidentiality and impartiality that it currently embodies.

We heard many comments about the voting process itself. Election rules for the three levels of government vary, and this confuses voters. Every group we spoke to identified problems with the voting process that caused someone they knew not to vote last October. We heard about problems with access to polling stations and suggestions for locations of polling stations in public places like libraries, campuses, and shopping malls. Many requested alternative methods of voting such as e-voting. We heard from the chief electoral officer that poll placement is rigidly mandated under the existing Elections Act and that new voting methods are not allowed.

Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current electoral first past the post system. Although this issue is beyond the mandate of our committee, so many participants mentioned it that we raise it as a topic for further study.

## **7 Change the rules used by the House to encourage more seemly behaviour**

That the Committee on Assembly Matters review the current rules used by the House and make any changes necessary to better address some of the concerns raised during the public consultations.

Behaviour in the legislature has a direct negative impact of the public's perceptions of politicians. Many participants mentioned a generally poor perception of politicians. This opinion was reinforced by the attack ads aired by the various federal parties during the last election. These ads played a significant part in the decision not to vote for some students and adults. Included also in the negative perception of politicians is their behaviour in the House of Commons and the Legislature. Many said that seeing this childish behaviour made them question the ability of politicians to govern.

## Report of the Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process

### Background

In the 2006 provincial election in Nova Scotia, voter turnout reached an all-time low of 59.89%, down from 65.79% in 2003. This was not a one-time anomaly. Voting rates have been declining steadily since the 1970s. However, it was enough to start alarm bells ringing among politicians on all sides. In 2007 the Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process was struck to find out why Nova Scotians were staying away from the polls in such large numbers.

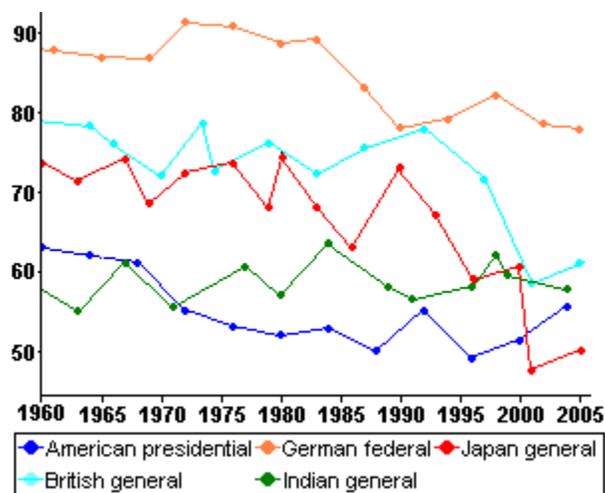
Because of the nature of the problem, i.e., finding out why people are *not* engaged in the processes of governance, the committee moved beyond the usual means of gathering information. To talk to people who are not engaged, it would be necessary to reach out in ways other than the usual public consultation meeting process. Thus, this report summarizes the findings drawn from a variety of sources: an in-depth look at the literature from governments, academics, and more mainstream media; public consultation in the form of open hearings, focus groups, Facebook feedback, and written submissions; and interviews with sitting MLAs about the trends and opinion in their specific electoral districts.

### The Problem

Decline in voter turnout is perceived to be a problem not just in Nova Scotia, but in many other jurisdictions nationally and internationally (see for example, Blais and others 2003). Although there is some evidence that turnout doesn't necessarily have an effect on the results of an election (see Rubenson and others 2007), the literature and anecdotal evidence indicate that although low voter turnout may not affect outcome, it does point to a lack of engagement of citizens within a society. This disengagement is symptomatic of a whole host of societal ills (for good discussions of this, see Nadeau and others 2000; Gidengil and others 2004; Putnam 2000).

As we can see from the table below, between 1968 and 2005, voter turnout has declined in five major democracies, including Britain and the US.

**Table 1: Voter Turnout by Year in Selected Western Democracies (1968–2005)** (Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance website)



In Canada, between 1962 and 2008, overall voter turnout for federal elections declined from 79.0% to 59.1% (-19.9%)<sup>1</sup>. Interestingly, voter turnout rates in the 2006 federal election, despite it being a winter campaign which overlapped the holiday season, were up approximately 5% from the all time low of 60.9% in the 2004 election. Elections Canada did a lot of advertising to get out the vote in 2006, especially targeting young voters. It is difficult to pinpoint whether or not this was the reason for the higher vote, but it does appear to have at least heightened voters' awareness of the campaign. However, last fall's election resulted in the lowest turnout in Canadian history.

Provincially, turnout has also declined in almost every province in the country since 1990 (compiled from provincial Electoral Offices' websites)

Nfld / Labrador	-21.62%	Manitoba	-12.46%
Nova Scotia	-15.50%	Saskatchewan	- 7.31%
New Brunswick	-12.60%	Alberta	-18.91%
PEI	+ 3.14%	BC	- 5.84%
Quebec	-25.08%	Yukon	- 4.64%
Ontario	-12.30%	NWT	- 9.38%
		Nunavut	-17.39% (1999–2008)

The exception to this has been PEI, which has seen a slight (3.14%) increase.

Interestingly, although overall the percentage is down since 1990, voter turnout has increased over the last two Saskatchewan provincial elections. The high turnout in the 1991 election reflects the NDP's sweep into power; they were re-elected in the next two elections (1995 and 1999 – a minority government). In 2001 Premier Roy Romanow stepped down, and this may be reflected in the higher turnout in that election (Elections Saskatchewan), although the NDP did win a slim majority. In 2007, the higher voter turnout numbers have been attributed by Elections Saskatchewan to a record number of voters using the advance polls (43,730).

### **Why the Decline in Voter Turnout?**

Although there is no doubt that overall voter turnout is declining in every jurisdiction, it must be noted that for a number of reasons, it can be extremely difficult to compare elections and to therefore determine an accurate picture of voter decline. A number of variables can affect voter turnout from election to election. This makes it necessary to first identify if numbers are actually down, or if that is a perception based on overall percentages of voter turnout. By comparing the number of eligible voters in each district and in each individual poll with the numbers who actually voted across elections, it appears that, although the problem may not be quite as severe as the overall percentages show, nonetheless, voter turnout has reached all-time lows not just in Nova Scotia but in jurisdictions across the country and internationally.

For instance, the weather on election day plays a role, especially in winter. Many voters simply do not vote if it is raining, snowing, or icy, or if bad weather is predicted. Changes in riding boundaries and voters lists from election to election, as well as changes in poll location and

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendices for tables of federal, provincial, and Nova Scotian elections statistics.

numbers all have an effect. This was borne out in the MLA interviews; many stated that feedback from their constituents show how important poll location and accessibility is to voters. One example of this is a fisher on the South Shore whose polling location had been moved from his village to another further down the shore; he stated that after being out on the water at 3 am, he wasn't about to drive 45 minutes when he docked 12 hours later just to vote. Elections Nova Scotia officials also reported a number of anecdotal observations from feedback they had received on election day. (See Appendices for a full list of these.) These range from complaints about polling stations located in churches, to long line-ups, to not liking the poll workers.

A number of other reasons seem to be universal between provinces, federally, and in other western democracies. They fall into the following categories:

- Regional variations play a part, both provincially and federally, and between urban and rural constituencies (Blais and others 2004; Elections Canada 2007; Pammett 1991; Pammett, Leduc 2003; Studlar 2006). Traditionally, turnout is higher in rural ridings, although with the increasing problem of rural outmigration, this is beginning to change. This is tied to the relative stability or mobility of the population: in general, rural populations have been more stable, and homogenous, e.g., turnout in districts with a high percentage of Acadian population tends to be the highest in the province, as discussed below. However, members of a more mobile population tend to feel disconnected from the politics of their adopted home, and are often unable to vote in their district of origin, so are not as likely to participate (Black 2001; Scott and others 2006; Stasiulis 1997; White and others 2006; White and others 2008). This is particularly significant in Nova Scotia where so many have gone west for employment purposes or to Halifax to either work or pursue post-secondary education. In fact, the electoral districts with the highest voter turnout are consistently rural, and those with the lowest turnout are in areas of urban Halifax with a large population of students and immigrants:

**Electoral Districts with High Voter Turnout  
in 2006 Provincial Election (70+%)**

Argyle	70.25%
Inverness	70.69%
Queens	71.63%
Clare	82.45%

**Electoral Districts with Low Voter Turnout  
in 2006 Provincial Election (Below 55%)**

Halifax Clayton Park	48.84%
Halifax Needham	49.85%
Halifax Citadel	50.91%
Halifax Fairview	51.78%
Cole Harbour Eastern Passage	52.39%
Dartmouth North	52.76%
Truro-Bible Hill	53.06%
Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville	54.46%

Hants East	54.64%
Cumberland North	54.90%
Halifax Atlantic	55.16%

- There is a sense of complacency amongst the electorate, i.e., fewer people vote when there is no real sense of crisis or strong issue, or when the incumbent is expected to be re-elected. Alternately, when one or two parties are particularly strong, individuals supporting other parties may not bother since there is no chance for their candidate to be elected (Blais and others 2004; Elections Manitoba 2004; Gidengil and others 2004; Nadeau and others 2000).
- Socioeconomic status plays a role, i.e., the more educated and better off a person is, the more likely they are to vote (Blais and others 2004; Elections Canada 2007; Nevitte and others 2000; Putnam 2000).
- One's age and where one is in the lifecycle have an effect. In general, the older you are, the more likely you are to vote. This point is one of the major focuses of the committee, as well as D250. Participation rates among young people have been steadily decreasing since 1970. Some have suggested that this is the major reason behind voter turnout and that unless we address it voter turnout will not increase (Adsett 2003; Eagles, Davidson 2001; Elections Canada 2008; O'Neill 2007; Rubenson and others 2004; Turcotte 2005). (See below for a longer discussion of this point.)
- The election process itself can be problematic. The more difficult it is for people to vote because of such things as lack of convenient polling stations, conflicts with work, lack of childcare, etc., the more likely they are to not bother. A number of MLAs also indicated that voter feedback suggests that changes in location and/or fewer polling stations in a district had a direct impact on voter turnout.
- There is a growing cynicism with the political process as a whole; people are becoming better informed, and with this growing awareness comes a greater critical attitude towards government. Individuals feel that their vote makes no difference to what is happening in the world, so they don't bother voting (Black 2001; Blais and others 2004; Elections Manitoba 2004; Gidengil and others 2004; Lavoie 1998; Segal 2004).
- Race and ethnicity, language, and religious affiliation affect voter behaviour. Both nationally and provincially, some segments of the population appear to be particularly underrepresented at the polls. African Canadians, aboriginals, and other minorities of colour can feel excluded from the electoral process. This can be traced to two factors: 1) there are very few individuals from these groups standing for office, and so these communities do not see themselves reflected or even present in the governance process, and 2) historically little has been done to help these communities through the political process, and the belief that their vote makes little difference lingers (Alfred and others 2007; Bedford 2003; Elections Saskatchewan n.d; Lin 2001. The entire November 2003 issue of *Electoral Insight* is dedicated to aboriginal participation in the Canadian electoral process.)

- Although not well explored in the literature (Demont 1994, 2002; MacLeod 2006), anecdotal evidence suggests that without a direct incentive to vote, such as the traditional patronage system, some individuals see no point in doing so. Jeffrey MacLeod in particular explored the ramifications of John Savage's platform of ending patronage in Nova Scotia upon his government and suggests that while the promise of ending patronage resulted in his landslide 1993 win, it was his attempts to do so that eventually defeated his government four years later. This comment was heard from some of the older participants in the public consultations, but it must be noted that while they identified it as a possible contributor to voter decline, most felt that the days of so-called pork barrel politics are gone, and properly so.

## **Findings from the Public Consultation Process I: Feedback from African Nova Scotians, First Nations, and Youth**

### *African Nova Scotians*

There is virtually no literature dealing with the African Nova Scotian population and voter turnout, so the committee invited a number of representatives from that community to participate in the focus groups. The feedback supports the above comments as to why they do not vote.

Some African Nova Scotians suggested that they feel like second-class citizens; they do not feel that their issues have been addressed by successive provincial governments, especially in terms of education, community infrastructure, and health issues. They also say that during elections very few candidates actually come out to African Nova Scotian communities to campaign, especially those in rural areas and that, once elected, are almost never seen. As well, there is a feeling that if there was more diversity among candidates, especially those of visible minorities, it would make more of a difference. For instance, the point was made that it is uncomfortable for many African Nova Scotians to walk into a meeting of predominantly white people. This extends to poll workers as well.

However, what is even more important to African Nova Scotians is sensitivity to their communities and issues. The example was given of Minister Barry Barnett and his portfolio of African Nova Scotian Affairs. Participants respected the fact that his first move was to tell them that, as a white person, he needed to hear from them as to what they needed from the office, rather than trying to implement programs from his own perspective.

Some African Nova Scotian participants felt that the D250 initiative did not extend to rural African Nova Scotian communities; however, D250 has indicated that all requests from these communities for events were met. Nonetheless, if low turnout among black voters is to be addressed, then a process needs to be put into place to encourage members of this community to participate. It was strongly felt that being invited to these focus groups was a good first step, but that the process needs to be continued.

### *First Nations*

In most provinces and federally, First Nations people were not able to vote until the 1960s; in the following 40 years, there has been a major shift in self-perception among Canada's indigenous peoples. They are decreasingly seeing themselves as Canadian and increasingly seeing themselves as nations in their own right. This is reflected in the literature, which shows that in virtually every province, there has been low (and declining) First Nations turnout for provincial elections (Albert and others 2007; Bedford 2003; Lin 2001). However, it is important to understand that the data that has been kept deals with First Nations living on-reserve only; there has been very little tracking the voting patterns of First Nations individuals living off-reserve, apart from one study dealing with indigenous youth, which will be discussed below.

In Nova Scotia, the most recent statistics that were found (from the 1993 provincial election) show a 45.2% turnout of on-reserve First Nations individuals. Since their relations with Canada are mainly governed by the federal government, First Nations individuals tend to pay more attention to federal politics than provincial. According to surveys, many feel that provincial politics aren't relevant to their day-to-day lives. However, turnout in band elections is consistently high at over 90%.

One First Nations adult and a number of students participated in the public consultation process for this committee. The adult noted that the western form of party democracy is foreign to aboriginal culture. They see it as both divisive and ridiculous to take sides on issues, and feel that their way of governing through a council of elders works better. (This can be seen in the non-partisan model currently being used in Nunavut where individuals are elected by each community as representatives to the legislature, similar to our municipal model.) In general, however, the adult suggested that First Nations people are not engaged in voting because of an underlying scepticism of the system on many levels. This was echoed by the First Nations youth who participated.

Some provinces, such as Saskatchewan and BC, are trying to increase First Nations turnout in provincial elections through the use of pamphlets and targeted meetings. It is too early to say if these methods are working. There is also work being done on recruiting First Nations candidates in these provinces.

First Nations youth were the target of one Canadian Policy Research Networks project (Albert and others 2007). Its findings showed that there was no consistency among aboriginal youth across the country, in terms of participating in the democratic process. However, there is some evidence that the more closely they identify with their First Nations culture, the less likely they are to participate in non-First Nations electoral processes. Those youth living off-reserve tended to give many of the same reasons as non-First Nations youth for participating or not.

### *Youth*

One large national study has shown that the largest decline in turnout is among those born after 1970 (Pammett, Leduc 2003); a number of studies have shown that it is the decline in the number of young people voting federally that has created the overall decline in voter turnouts in federal elections (Adsett 2003; Gidengil and others 2003; O'Neill 2007; Turcotte 2005). Those young people who do vote tend to pay much less attention to local issues and candidates and more to specific party platforms. Further, what is said during an election campaign makes more of a difference to this demographic than it does to older voters.

In general, those born after 1970 tend to have a different set of priorities than older voters, concentrating on economic issues and education rather than on health care or any particular scandal, although there is some dispute about this finding in some of the literature (Adsett 2003; Canadian Council on Learning 2006; Eagles, Davidson 2001; Turcotte 2005). So low voter turnout among youth may well be less due to apathy than due to specific party platforms on the

issues that interest them. The one issue that does seem to resonate with them is the environment, which is becoming increasingly important to all Canadians and all political parties.

One large study suggests that young people are not more apathetic, but that the pattern of engagement is different for this demographic (O'Neill 2007; Turcotte 2005). They are less likely to join a political party, are less likely to vote, are less interested in politics, and know less about politics than those in the older age groups. However, young people are just as likely to get involved in things like petitions, protests, and volunteering. Therefore, their method of engagement is more individual and private. This may be because they find traditional ways of participating to be unsatisfying and irrelevant

Many studies show that young people participating in civics education may not vote when reaching the age of eligibility, but that they are more likely to vote as they get older (Canadian Council on Learning; Eagles, Davidson 2001). Further, if they vote in one election, they are likely to continue to vote in others. However, the trick is to get them to the polls the first time. Some participants, especially youth, thought that lowering the age of eligibility to 16 would encourage more young people to vote, reasoning that if one is deemed responsible enough to drive at that age, one is responsible enough to vote. There were many, including students, who had a counter opinion to this; in general, it was felt that if the voting age was lowered to 16, this would open the door to having to lower it in other respects, such as the legal drinking age. While all agreed that some 16 year olds are certainly mature enough to vote responsibly, it was generally felt that most are not.

The findings from the youth focus groups support what the literature and the D250 data say about the larger population. Those who participated were for the most part enthusiastic to discuss this issue, and even those who chose not to vote had well-thought-out reasons for not doing so.

The committee heard from a number of students who said that they found the whole voting process intimidating, because they had no knowledge of how it works, nor did they know where to turn to find it. If their parents voted, they were more likely to vote. However, at least half of the focus group attendees said that their parents didn't vote, so it wasn't a priority for them. If democratic participation is emphasized in the home, young people are more likely to vote. One question that needs to be examined, therefore, is whether or not the parents of young people (i.e., Boomers) are also disengaging and therefore not emphasizing the civic duty to vote. Some participants pointed out that both the culture of the individual school and the culture of the community that the school is located in play a part in encouraging young people to vote. The more involvement the community as a whole has in the school (i.e., politicians and other civic officials coming into the schools), the more engaged students in the school are likely to be with civic matters. This can include such things as volunteering or taking part in school-level governance such as student government.

In Nova Scotia, Democracy 250 has focused specifically on improving turnout among young people (under 30) in Nova Scotia. They were very generous in providing the findings of their work with this committee; the findings from the youth focus groups support what the literature and the D250 data say about the larger population. The biggest factor in young people not voting is a basic lack of knowledge of how government works overall, and more specifically how the

voting process works. The one comment that was heard from virtually every individual, young and old, who participated in the data gathering process for this committee (and for D250) was the need to return some form of education around the governance process to the public school curriculum.

While the Department of Education showed in their presentation to the committee that in fact there are lots of opportunities and material currently available covering this topic, the fact remains that there is only one required course in grade 11 in which there is any possibility of discussing how the electoral process or forms of governance work. Every other possible course is an elective. Some teachers said that they are already stretched to the maximum trying to cover all the required material in the current high school curriculum; as became very apparent through the focus groups, unless they themselves have an interest in the political process, often this material simply does not get covered.

However, the committee also heard that providing some form of civics education in grades P–9 can also be effective and is more easily built into the curriculum. It was evident from the focus groups that in those schools where things like talks by veterans, mock elections, and model parliaments were held, the interest in voting increased amongst the student body. The workshops held by D250 were also mentioned a number of times. Young people thought that having two former premiers engage them directly in a dialogue about the issues they were interested in, as well as the process itself, was extremely empowering. They had a sense that adults were not just listening to them, but were also taking their concerns seriously. The students who had engaged in the D250 initiatives said that they would like to see more programs like this in schools; many of those students of voting age said that they would definitely vote in the next election. It should be noted that the recommendations brought forward by D250 in their final report strongly echo those of this committee.

The first provincial election in which voter age was tracked was 2006. Interestingly, the three urban electoral districts of Halifax Citadel, Halifax Clayton Park, and Halifax Needham had the lowest voter turnouts in the province, but the highest number of young people. In Halifax Citadel (overall turnout 50.91%) the largest turnout was in the age group of 18–24, followed by 25–34, while in Halifax Clayton Park (overall turnout 48.84%) and Halifax Needham (overall turnout 49.85%), the highest turnout was among those 25–34. In Halifax Chebucto (overall turnout 56.37), the second-largest turnout was in the 18–24 range. It would seem that, in these districts, it might be useful to find out why older people aren't voting and why young people are.

Students in the focus groups also brought up a number of other concerns that had an impact on their interest in voting. Many felt that they had a lack of knowledge about the candidates; many school boards will not allow politicians into the schools during a campaign. In fact, while most boards and schools were eager to participate in the committee's public consultation process, some were not. Many students indicated that they want to hear what their elected representatives have to say and to feel engaged with them outside of the weeks of a campaign. Those MLAs who were active participants in their district's schools noted that the students were very attentive and had lots of good questions for them whenever they spoke to a class. The students echoed this comment, saying that such interaction made them feel like someone was listening to them.

Many of the students in the focus groups, especially NSCC students, said that they would be very interested in getting involved as poll workers during elections. The money paid to poll workers was an incentive, but they were more interested in finding out first hand how the electoral process works. They noted that they had no idea how to go about getting on a list of potential workers; when told by committee members that they would need to contact their MLA or constituency office of one of the other parties, they said that they found this intimidating. The general consensus was that it would be better if poll workers were hired by an outside body, rather than identified by the political parties. This speaks to many youth participants' reluctance to be too closely identified with one political party or another.

Students identified for committee members some of the causes for apathy among their peers. There was a generally poor perception of politicians in general, which was bolstered by the attack ads aired by the various federal parties during the last election. Most students (and adult participants) felt that these ads served no purpose except to frustrate and irritate the voter. One pointed out that they didn't focus on the issues, which is what campaigns are supposed to do; she called them "smoke and mirrors" that make the party sponsoring them look worse than the person or party being smeared, while at the same time saying nothing about either party's platform. Attack ads appear to have played a significant part in some students choosing not to vote in the election.

Tied to this perception of politicians was the behaviour of politicians in the House of Commons and legislature. Many said that seeing such childish behaviour made them question how able politicians are to actually govern effectively. They noted that if they behaved like that in class or on the job, they would be expelled or fired. This comment was echoed many times in the adult focus groups as well. The behaviour in the legislature has a direct negative impact of the public's perceptions of politicians.

Youth also felt that their particular issues have been ignored by politicians. These include such things as tuition costs limiting their access to postsecondary education, job availability, and especially the environment. Many students indicated that they didn't follow politics even during election campaigns, because they felt that their opinions and issues weren't important to adults. Further, they felt that most politicians do not follow through on election promises; what is the point of voting, some said, when between elections you're ignored by the people you elect?

In general, the students who participated in the focus groups indicated that with more information and encouragement, they would more than likely vote in the next election.

### **Findings from the Public Consultation Process II: Feedback from the Adult Focus Groups, Public Presentations, and Written Submissions**

Many of the observations concerning voter process voiced by the students were echoed by the adult participants. In particular, general perceptions of politicians and the inclusion of some form of education about the governing process in the public school curriculum, as discussed above, were perhaps the two most common themes heard by the committee. Other concerns were also articulated, which can be summed up under the following three headings:

### *Dissatisfaction with the Political Process as a Whole*

Just as youth have become cynical about the whole political process, so have adults. There is an air of cynicism overriding many of the responses from focus groups, public hearings, and written submissions. Some participants say that they have simply stopped voting because they feel that their votes don't count for a variety of reasons that fall generally under a lack of trust. Many note that they feel that politicians promise one thing during elections and then renege as soon as they get into power. Thus, there is a sense that politics is more about gaining power than about governing.

Many who voted did so with a certain sense of resignation; they voted out of a sense of civic duty instead out of any belief that their votes actually mattered. The thought was voiced often that many had died to preserve our right to vote and that to not do so would be to dishonour their sacrifice.

Many expressed dissatisfaction with the current electoral first-past-the-post system. The general feeling is that the current system leaves too many people unrepresented, especially in a minority government situation. One person noted that the first-past-the-post system works in a two-party system, as used to be the case here in Nova Scotia, but not when three or more parties are running. Many noted that Stephen Harper and the Conservatives were voted into power with only slightly over 20% of the popular vote, which means that almost 80% of those who voted had their votes ignored. Although electoral reform is beyond the mandate of this committee, so many participants made mention of this that some exploration of electoral reform as has been done in other provinces in Canada might be considered by the legislature.

Some participants noted that life is more busy today, so people tend to focus more on their lives than on political matters. Abetting this is a sense of complacency among voters. This point was highlighted during the Acadian focus groups; participation among Acadians has always been in the 80% and over range. As one person noted, Acadians lost their freedom once and don't intend to let it happen again. Civic engagement at all levels, including voting, is the best way to ensure this.

### *Public Perception of Politicians*

As noted above, many adult participants mentioned the generally poor perception of politicians. They echoed the students' distaste for attack ads, saying that they wanted to know what parties' platforms were, not what they thought of the opposition. The disrespectful behaviour of politicians in the House of Commons and legislature was also raised repeatedly. There was a general desire that politicians be able to see that their behaviour in the legislature has a direct negative impact of the public's perceptions of them.

There was an overwhelming sense that politicians need to listen much more to their constituents and be more visible in their districts between elections. While there is an awareness that in today's climate there are no easy answers to the problems that governments face, some felt that

governments too often take the expedient route instead of doing what the electorate really wants. This goes together with an overwhelming sense of a lack of communication between the government and the public. One participant noted that politicians don't explain well enough what it is that they can and can't do, such as gas regulation or decisions surrounding funding in communities. As well, some felt that it was time that politicians and bureaucrats started thinking outside the box in terms of existing problems, such as a shortage of medical professionals in the province. The example of President Obama was raised a number of times; what resonated with people appeared to be his message of a different way of governing, one which may be more inclusive and less divisive along party lines.

### *The Electoral Process*

Because this public consultation process followed hard on the heels of both a federal and a municipal election (fall 2008), there were many comments about the voting process itself. However, it must be noted that the rules that Elections Canada implemented for this election are not those of Elections Nova Scotia; the identification requirements are not the same for provincial and municipal elections as they are for federal. Having said that, virtually every group the committee spoke to identified huge problems with this process and linked it directly to either their or someone they knew not voting last October. It may well be that the decline in voter turnout in the federal election was in part due to the problems encountered at the polls themselves.

There was a great deal of discussion around ways to make voting more convenient. These included such things as putting polls in places where the people are, such as libraries, shopping malls, and campuses, increasing the number of mobile voting opportunities, allowing people living elsewhere to vote in their home ridings (e.g., students attending school in Halifax being able to vote in their hometowns), and changing the election day from Tuesday to Saturday. As well, it was generally felt by both young people and adults that some form of electronic voting would encourage more people to vote, mainly because of the convenience of it. However, many also noted that during the recent municipal election, there were some issues where e-voting was piloted, most significantly around security and anonymity. Nonetheless, all felt that it was something that should be further explored.

As noted above, many participants pointed out that a major underlying factor to the whole issue of voter turnout is that of a decreasing sense of civic engagement among the population overall. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find people to volunteer, including as election workers. Many suggested that they would be interested in getting on the list, but that they didn't know how; currently, that responsibility lies with the various constituent, party, and riding offices. Some were uncomfortable with having to call one of these offices, and asked if it wouldn't be possible for an outside agency, such as Elections Nova Scotia, to advertise and hire individuals for the election period. There were also concerns raised about the small amount of training given to poll workers.

## What Other Jurisdictions Are Doing

Having seen what Nova Scotians have to say about their thoughts around the decline in voter turnout, and before getting to the Committee's recommendations, it may be helpful to see what other jurisdictions in Canada have done about this problem. BC, Ontario, PEI, New Brunswick and Quebec have struck commissions to explore the issue, although all have done this within a larger framework of electoral reform. However, since the mandate of this Committee is dealing specifically with voter turnout and not electoral reform per se, what is significant to the findings is that there wasn't any noticeable increase in voter turnout in the provinces who have had elections following the final reports of the various commissions and/or citizens assemblies, etc. In fact, in Ontario, a lot of effort was made to get out the vote in the last provincial election, only to find that turnout was again down. On the other hand, Saskatchewan has seen an increase in the last two provincial elections; the province has been targeting specific groups such as Aboriginal voters in an effort to increase participation. It is difficult to make direct connections between advertising, etc., and voter turnout, but targeting does seem to be a more effective method.

In July 2008, at the request of the Committee, Elections Nova Scotia sent out an e-mail questionnaire to the Chief Electoral Officers across the country and on the federal level. They were asked to answer the following six questions:

1. Do you have a formal body in place to consider the question of decline in voter turnout? If yes, what/who and how are they going about it re: public consultation?
2. What have the rates of voter decline been in other provinces over the last 25 years?
3. Have your election websites had lots of hits?<sup>2</sup> (provide stats if possible)
4. In your opinion, what have you done to increase voter turnout that has/has not worked?
5. For those of you who have put measures in place and had had elections since then, have these measures resulted in an increase in voter turnout?
6. What are your feelings about why voter turnout is declining (if it is) in your jurisdiction?

Answers were received from PEI, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Elections Canada. Their summarized responses for questions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 shown in the chart below. Voter Turnout in the last 25 years has been included in a separate table below in the appendices.

In general, while a number of initiatives have been put in place in other jurisdictions, there is no concrete evidence that these have had a direct influence on voter turnout.

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<sup>2</sup> There is a big difference between a website hit and a website visit: Most web pages consist of many files, and each time one of these is opened, a **hit** is recorded. For example, the page opened before you may have been produced from HTML file, along with some other files that contain side menu, copyright message, graphic file, and so on. So when the Internet user visits this page, there are several other hits that are produced by him or her. On the flip side of website hit is the term **visit**. This is basically the number of times your website has actually been clicked by users and browsed by them, irrespective of the number of files that have been downloaded during that browsing session. So when you visit a page, it counts to only one visit in the web logs of the site owner. For this reason the number of hits will be higher than the number of visits. A **unique visitor** is one who visits your site more than once a day, and a **repeat visitor** is the one who visits the website a second time, irrespective of the time gap in between.

	<b>Question 1</b>	<b>Question 3</b>	<b>Question 4</b>
<b>PEI</b>	No	Aug/07–Jul/08 = 208700 visits / 1320560 hits	N/A
<b>Quebec</b>	No, but academic study in place to develop a profile of actual elector participation in 5 general elections (1985–2007), & effects of socio-economic conditions and factors relating to the timing of elections, age differences among electors, and electoral competition	During last electoral period (Feb 21–Mar 30/07 = 1609115 hits (#s of visits not available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance polling increased to 2 full days</li> <li>• access to voting in a public or private residential facility</li> <li>• mobile polling stations</li> <li>• domiciliary voting</li> <li>• voting at the returning officer offices</li> </ul> Not sure yet of long-term effects of these measures.
<b>Ontario</b>	No	Aug 19–Oct 13/07 = 21140491 hits (# not available for visits)	Introduced measures that have had a direct or indirect impact on voter turnout: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended advance poll days and hours</li> <li>• Extended voting hours</li> <li>• Put in place Student Vote initiative</li> <li>• Increased and improved signage at polls</li> <li>• Allowed voting day registration</li> <li>• Hired liaison officers for the following communities: aboriginal, students, homeless, shelters, and community</li> <li>• New target revision and registration initiative</li> <li>• Revised size requirements for polls (esp. rural)</li> <li>• High Density polls</li> <li>• New NRC card initiative (providing voters with more info re: voting locations, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Manitoba</b>	No	Outside of election time, average of 1500 visits per month. During 2007 election period, website had almost 60,000 visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Advance polls:</i> In 2007 any voter could vote in advance polls, resulting in an increase of people who took advantage of advance polls: 2007 = 42,775; 2003 = 18,762</li> </ul> Advance polls also available in places like shopping malls and the Winnipeg airport. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>New legislation:</i> apt. bldgs of over 100 units had their own polling station, and rural voting areas made smaller so more polls available.</li> </ul>
	No	Oct 07 = 2 million hits Nov 07 (prov. election) = 2 million hits (# of visits not available)	A number of new communications initiatives tried: <i>Aboriginal Persons:</i> brochure developed, and advertising on northern radio stations using aboriginal voices in

Saskatchewan			<p>English, Cree, and Dene; also exploring creation of several aboriginal community relations officer positions</p> <p><i>Advertising:</i> improved existing ads, created a voter information guide to be inserted in free youth oriented / entertainment/ alternative newspapers in Regina and Saskatoon.</p> <p><i>Brochures:</i> a series of absentee voting brochures produced for travellers, members of the Armed Forces, and prison inmates; improved youth voter brochure</p> <p><i>Contact Centre:</i> Put in place for Nov 2007 election. Centre handled 12,000 calls during this time.</p> <p><i>Voter Information Cards:</i> Mass mailout 1 week before election and before the beginning of advance polls.</p> <p><i>Website:</i> improved in 2005</p> <p><i>Youth:</i> hired assistant for summer to update youth website, enhance the youth brochure, and research possibility of hiring 2 youth community relations officers for next election.</p>
Elections Canada	Yes	N/A	<p>It has a number of initiatives targeting youth, aboriginal, ethnocultural communities, and electors with special needs, including the homeless, as well as Canadians living abroad.</p> <p>Methods include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• peer-to-peer outreach activities in the field</li> <li>• adapted (translated) education and information materials</li> <li>• partnerships with organizations to conduct educational activities in schools and elsewhere in the field</li> <li>• information and specialized services</li> <li>• assistance to electors in the community</li> </ul> <p>The direct affect of these programs on voter turnout is almost impossible to measure, but positive feedback has been received on most of the programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Currently working with various stakeholders to develop ways to measure the impact of these programs on voter turnout.</p>

	Question 5	Question 6
PEI	N/A	N/A

<b>Quebec</b>	Yes, minor increase in 2007 election (70.42% to 71.29%) However, not possible to say if this increase was due to new initiatives; 2007 was one of the closest races in the province's history.	The highest turnout in Quebec history was during the 1995 referendum (73.52%). Clearly, electoral competition (very close race) and the stakes have influenced turnout. To date, decline is localized geographically with lowest turnout in the western part of Montreal where the electoral competition is very low.
<b>Ontario</b>	Despite these measures, voter turnout has still declined.	N/A (declined to respond)
<b>Manitoba</b>	Yes	Conducted major survey after 2003 election to explore why people do/do not vote: Three main reasons why people don't vote = 1) not interested at all (cynical about outcome, lacking info) 2) not able to vote at time of election (travelling, ill, no time) 3) From somewhere else, and not interested in provincial politics
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	Yes: increase in voter turnout of 5.07%. However, can't be specifically said to be result of new communications initiatives, although feeling is that they helped	Although voter turnout increased in 2007 election, more work needs to be done re: aboriginal and youth voters. Also more work needs to be done in schools on election literacy.
<b>Elections Canada</b>	Voter turnout increased nearly 4% between 2004 and 2006 elections; however, impossible to credit programs, although positive feedback has been received by those using them.	Particularly concerned about decline in youth vote, which appears to be a major contributor to decline in voting number overall. Studies show that a key factor in this comes from a lack of understanding of the importance of voting and becoming a candidate; initiatives have been put in place to combat this. Other factors in overall turnout decline are increasing levels of cynicism, declining sense of civic duty, lack of competitiveness among political parties and their platforms, and lack of political knowledge.

## **List of Recommendations**

The committee acknowledges that as is evident from programs implemented in other jurisdictions as discussed above, it is often not possible to determine in the short term the success or failure of efforts to increase the vote. This is in large measure due to the fact that the issues surrounding the decline in voter turnout are deeply systemic throughout the Western democracies. However, the committee believes that implementing the recommendations below, especially those tied to education, will encourage the public to become more engaged in the electoral process.

### **Recommendation #1**

That a working committee be struck with representation from the Department of Education, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Elections Nova Scotia, and the Office of the Speaker to explore what currently exists in the P-12 curriculum and how it is being implemented, and to see what, if any, changes need to be made in order to ensure that all Nova Scotian public school students are exposed at some point in their schooling to the mechanics and importance to a healthy society of the electoral process.

### **Recommendation #2**

That the work of Democracy 250 be continued in some form, either to be located in an existing body such as the Office of the Speaker or Communications Nova Scotia, or as a working committee across departments such as Education and Elections Nova Scotia. Additional resources would support this office in terms of staff and budget.

### **Recommendation #3**

That the Office of the Speaker work with the Department of Education to create a more regular program of school visits to the Legislature.

### **Recommendation #4:**

That while most school boards and individual schools welcome elected officials into the schools, some are reluctant to. To this end there should be a province-wide policy covering access of elected officials to schools both in and outside of election periods.

### **Recommendation #5:**

That the role and dissemination of Legislative Television be expanded to provide not just the proceeding from Question Period, but also educational programs concerning the process of government in Nova Scotia. To this end we recommend that the Office of the Speaker should undertake discussions with the province's cable providers and with the CRTC to determine whether or not Legislative TV could be carried on the basic cable package, perhaps on the community channel. As well, it is recommended that Legislative Television's on-line presence be strengthened in order to provide more accessibility for Nova Scotians.

### **Recommendation #6**

That, while it is not this committee's intent to review the Elections Act, a committee of experts be struck, by a resolution of the House of Assembly and under the leadership of the Chief Electoral Officer of NS, with the appropriate resources to do an overall review of the Elections

Act of Nova Scotia. The intent of the review is to modernize the act, making it as voter-friendly as possible, while maintaining the integrity of confidentiality and impartiality that it currently embodies.

**Recommendation #7**

That the Committee on Assembly Matters review the current rules used by the Legislature and make any changes necessary to better address some of the concerns raised during the public consultations.

## **Appendix A: Select Committee Members and Membership Changes**

### **Select Committee Members**

Mr. Michel Samson, MLA (Chairman)  
Richmond

Hon. Mark Parent (Vice Chairman)  
Kings North

Ms. Maureen MacDonald, MLA (Vice Chair)  
Halifax Needham

Mr. Graham Steele, MLA  
Halifax Fairview

Mr. Charlie Parker, MLA  
Pictou West

Hon. Pat Dunn  
Pictou Centre

Mr. H. David Wilson, MLA  
Glace Bay

Mr. Keith Bain, MLA  
Victoria–The Lakes

Mr. Harold Theriault, MLA  
Digby-Annapolis

### **Membership Changes**

During the Second Session of the Sixtieth General Assembly, the Committee underwent the following membership changes:

**Hon. Pat Dunn – Pictou Centre** was replaced by:

**Hon. Jamie Muir, MLA – Truro–Bible Hill**

## **Appendix B: Mandate and Focus of the Select Committee**

### **Mandate**

#### **Resolution No. 1221**

Whereas the percentage of Nova Scotians voting in provincial elections has declined over a number of years; and Whereas it is the desire of all Parties in the House of Assembly to increase public participation in the democratic process; and Whereas the Parties wish to enhance the effectiveness of our representative form of government;  
Therefore be it resolved that:

- the House establish a Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process;
- the select committee be composed of such members as the striking committee determines, with an equal number of members from each of the three Parties;
- the Government House Leader designate one of the members of the select committee as its chairman and the House Leaders of the Opposition Parties each designate one member of the select committee as a vice-chairman;
- the mandate of the select committee is to consider measures designed to increase the percentage of Nova Scotians voting in an election and to enhance the effectiveness of our representative form of government;
- the select committee shall file its report with the Clerk of the House by June 30, 2007;
- the House declares, pursuant to Section 36 of the House of Assembly Act, that the select committee is not dissolved by prorogation of the House and the select committee is authorized to continue its inquiries after the House is prorogued;
- that all powers of the House of Assembly Act applicable to committees apply and are in full force and effect during the sitting of the select committee;
- the House requests the Legislature Internal Economy Board, on behalf of the select committee, to appoint such members and staff as may be necessary to enable the select committee to carry out its duties; and
- the House requests the Legislature Internal Economy Board to provide the select committee, its members and its staff, with such facilities and funds as are required to carry out its functions as provided for by Section 80 of the Public Service Act.

#### **Focus of the Select Committee: Voting and Citizen Engagement**

Following discussions in the first two meetings of the Select Committee, it was decided that given the time frames that the Committee had to work within, the focus should be kept to the issues around voting and citizen engagement, and not electoral reform. It must be noted however, as will be discussed later in this report, that electoral reform is something that Nova Scotians want to also discuss.

## **Appendix C: Workings of the Select Committee**

### **Schedule of Committee Meetings**

September 27, 2007	Preliminary Information Session
October 11, 2007	Organizational Meeting
November 1, 2007	Organizational Meeting
November 15, 2007	Information Meeting
May 1, 2008	Dr. Paula Romanow, Research & Statistical Officer
June 12, 2008	Dr. Paula Romanow, Research & Statistical Officer
September 4, 2008	Dr. Paula Romanow, Research & Statistical Officer
September 18, 2008	Mr. Darce Fardy and Mr. Ian Johnson, Right to Know Coalition Mr. Tom McInnis, Election Commission
November 13, 2008	Department of Education Ms. Ann Blackwood, Director – English Program Services Mr. Bruce Fisher – Chignecto-Central Regional School Board
November 27, 2008	Intelivote Systems Inc. Mr. Dean Smith, President and Founder Mr. Stephen Beamish, Vice President of Business Development
December 4, 2008	D250 Co-Chairs Honourable John Hamm Honourable Russell MacLellan
January 15, 2009	Ms Christine McCulloch, Chief Electoral Officer
February 5, 2009	Nova Scotia Teachers Union Mr. David Harris, Provincial Executive Mr. Paul McCormick, Communications Officer

### **Schedule of Public Consultations**

October 20, 2008	Sydney
October 21, 2008	Antigonish
October 22, 2008	Truro
October 23, 2008	Amherst

October 27, 2008	Yarmouth
October 28, 2008	Bridgewater
October 29, 2008	Kentville
November 3, 2008	Halifax

### **About the Focus Group Sessions**

Because of the nature of the problem that the Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process was investigating, i.e., the disengagement of citizens in the electoral process, it was decided that traditional means of public consultation may not be totally effective in gathering information as those who are not engaged are not likely to participate in open public hearings. This was borne out by the low numbers of attendees in some locations.

In order to address this problem, the committee decided to break from tradition and hold a series of focus groups in addition to the evening public consultation sessions in each location around the province. These were split into adult focus groups and student focus groups. The adult groups were made up of community representatives from a variety of organizations, concentrating on those who represent constituents in the groups who are typically under-represented on voting day, such as youth, African Nova Scotians, First Nations, those living in poverty, and the homeless. From the other side of the issue, community development organizations and seniors groups were also invited, because historically those involved in community and seniors tend to be the most engaged in the process. Representing another sector of the population which traditionally has very high voter turnout, separate Acadian and francophone adult and student focus groups were also held. Both were conducted in French. The student focus group was made up of students from the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial and was conducted by video conference.

Participation in the adult focus groups ranged from three to fifteen individuals per location. (No adult group was held in Truro or Bridgewater due to unavailability of participants.) The student groups were made up of youth from the province's school boards and Nova Scotia Community Colleges, as well as their teachers (university students were also invited, but were unavailable). They ranged in size from eight to twenty-seven and both students who were engaged and those who weren't, participated. (No student group was held in Amherst due to unavailability of students.) The community college groups especially provided a wealth of information to the committee.

### **Schedule of Focus Group Sessions**

Monday, October 20 - Sydney, NS

Youth Focus Group	Multipurpose Room, Cape Breton University
	NSCC Students from Marconi Campus
	Students from Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board

Adult Focus Group	Multipurpose Room, Cape Breton University
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Cape Breton County Economic Development Authority  
Waycobah Family Wellness Centre  
Cape Breton Senior Citizens' Council

Tuesday, October 21 - Port Hawkesbury / Antigonish

Youth Focus Group                      NSCC Strait Campus, Port Hawkesbury  
NSCC Strait Campus Students  
Students from Strait Regional School Board

Adult Focus Group                      St. Andrews Community Centre, Antigonish  
Representatives from La Picasse  
Antigonish Regional Development Association  
Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

Wednesday, October 22 - Pictou

Youth Focus Group                      Pictou Campus, NSCC  
Students from NSCC Pictou Campus

Thursday, October 23 - Amherst

Adult Focus Group                      Royal Canadian Legion, Amherst  
Cumberland African Nova Scotian Association  
Cumberland County Senior Citizens' Council  
Cumberland Regional Economic Development Association  
Pictou County Women's Centre

Monday, October 27 - Yarmouth

Youth Focus Group                      Burr ridge Campus, NSCC  
Students from Tri-County Regional School Board  
Students from NSCC Burr ridge Campus

Adult Focus Group                      Rodd Grand Hotel  
Annapolis County Senior Citizens Council  
Black Loyalist Heritage Society  
Juniper House Women's Shelter

Tuesday, October 28 - Bridgewater

Youth Focus Group                      Days Inn, Bridgewater  
Students from South Shore Regional School Board  
Students from NSCC Lunenburg Campus

Wednesday, October 29 - Kentville

Youth Focus Group                      NSCC Kingstec Campus  
Students from NSCC Kingstec Campus

Adult Focus Group                      Wandlyn Inn, Coldbrook  
Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association

## Kings County Senior Citizens' Council

Monday, November 3 - Halifax

Youth Focus Group                      NSCC Waterfront Campus  
Students from NSCC Waterfront Campus

Adult Focus Group #1                      Uniacke Room, NS Legislature  
Watershed Development Association  
Black Cultural Centre

Adult Focus Group #2                      Red Room, NS Legislature  
Community Action on Homelessness  
Community Links

Acadian Focus Groups (conducted in French)

December 6, 2008 - Ramada Dartmouth - adult

January 15, 2009 - Ecole du Carrefour (Dartmouth) - youth

These focus groups proved to be a rich source of information, especially the youth groups. Following on the work of Democracy 250 (D250), as well as the recent federal and municipal elections, the committee found that students and adults alike were appreciative of being invited to discuss their opinions on the issues surrounding voting and citizen engagement directly with committee members.

### **Notices of meetings and public hearings**

Notices of committee meetings and public hearings were sent to all members of the committee, staff of the caucus offices, legislative staff, government staff, and the news media. Print advertisements for the public hearings were placed in provincial English and French daily and weekly newspapers.

### **Transcripts**

Verbatim transcripts of the public hearings and briefings are available from the Legislative Committees Office, Third Floor, Dennis Building, 1740 Granville Street, P.O. Box 2630 Station M, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 3N5; Telephone 902-424-5787 or toll free 1-888-388-6489; E-mail: [legcomm@gov.ns.ca](mailto:legcomm@gov.ns.ca); or through the Nova Scotia Government website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca> .

### **Research Materials**

All research for the Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process was compiled by the committee's research and statistical officer, Dr. Paula Romanow, with help from Elections

Nova Scotia, the Legislative Librarian, and members of the committee. It was distributed to committee members and legislative staff by the Legislative Committees Office. This research took the form of examining the available literature and statistics on voter turnout provincially, nationally, and internationally to determine trends; interviewing sitting Nova Scotian MLAs in order to get a detailed and current picture of voter engagement / turnout in their individual ridings; holding public consultations and focus groups across the province; and interviewing other stakeholders as identified by committee members.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process wishes to extend its thanks to those Nova Scotians who appeared during the public hearings and focus groups, shared their individual stories with the committee, and voiced their concerns. Special thanks to the NSCC principals who made their campuses available for focus group sessions. Members also wish to thank those who telephoned, faxed, emailed, mailed, or hand-delivered additional submissions. Thanks also to the staff members who made the public hearing process possible and made it all run so smoothly.

**Appendix D**  
**Voter Turnout in Federal Elections by Province and Territory 1988–2006**  
 (Source: Canadian Council on Social Development/Elections Canada)

	<b>1988</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>% change 1988-2004</b>
Newfoundland & Labrador	67.1%	55.1%	55.2%	57.1%	49.3%	56.7%	<b>-26.5%</b>
PEI	84.9%	73.2%	72.8%	72.7%	70.8%	73.2%	<b>-16.6%</b>
Nova Scotia	74.8%	64.7%	69.4%	62.9%	62.3%	63.9%	<b>-16.7%</b>
New Brunswick	75.9%	69.6%	73.4%	67.7%	62.8%	69.2%	<b>-17.3%</b>
Quebec	75.2%	77.1%	73.3%	64.1%	60.5%	63.9%	<b>-19.5%</b>
Ontario	74.6%	67.7%	65.6%	58.0%	61.8%	66.6%	<b>-17.2%</b>
Manitoba	74.7%	68.7%	63.2%	62.3%	56.7%	62.3%	<b>-24.1%</b>
Saskatchewan	77.8%	69.4%	65.3%	62.3%	59.1%	65.1%	<b>-24.0%</b>
Alberta	75.0%	65.2%	58.5%	60.2%	58.9%	61.9%	<b>-21.5%</b>
British Columbia	78.7%	67.8%	65.6%	63.0%	63.3%	63.7%	<b>-19.6%</b>
Yukon	70.8%	70.4%	69.8%	63.5%	61.8%	66.1%	<b>-12.7%</b>
Northwest Territories	78.4%	62.9%	58.9%	52.2%	47.3%	56.2%	<b>-39.7%</b>
Nunavut	N/A	N/A	N/A	54.1%	43.9%	54.1%	<b>18.9%*</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>75.3%</b>	<b>69.6%</b>	<b>67.0%</b>	<b>61.2%</b>	<b>60.9%</b>	<b>64.7%</b>	<b>-19.1%</b>

N/A = data not available

\* For Nunavut, indicates % change from 2000 to 2004

**Appendix E**  
**Comparative Provincial Elections (1990–2008)**

<b>1990</b>						64.4%	
<b>1991</b>				80.12%			
<b>1992</b>							
<b>1993</b>	83.62%	80.70%	75.39%				
<b>1994</b>					81.58%		
<b>1995</b>				74.89%		63.0%	69.20%
<b>1996</b>	74.40%	85.84%					
<b>1997</b>							
<b>1998</b>			69.47%		78.32%		68.11%
<b>1999</b>	69.57%		68.12%	75.59%		58.3%	
<b>2000</b>		84.86%					
<b>2001</b>							
<b>2002</b>							
<b>2003</b>	75.52%	83.27%	65.79%	68.67%	70.42%	56.8%	54.17%
<b>2004</b>							
<b>2005</b>							
<b>2006</b>			59.89%	67.52%			
<b>2007</b>	62.0%	83.84%			71.23%	52.1%	56.75%
<b>2008</b>							
<b>Shift</b>	<b>-21.62%</b>	<b>+3.14%</b>	<b>-15.5%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>-10.35%</b>	<b>-12.3%</b>	<b>-12.46%</b>
	<b>Nfld/Lab</b>	<b>PEI</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>NB<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Quebec</b>	<b>Ontario</b>	<b>Manitoba</b>

<sup>3</sup> Electoral boundaries changed in New Brunswick between the 1991 and 1995 elections (58 seats down to 55 seats).

<b>1990</b>							
<b>1991</b>		83.33%		64.03%		76.4%	
<b>1992</b>					77.54%		
<b>1993</b>			60.21%				
<b>1994</b>							
<b>1995</b>		64.59%					
<b>1996</b>				59.11%	79.58%		
<b>1997</b>			53.75%				
<b>1998</b>							
<b>1999</b>		65.50%				70.50%	88.59%
<b>2000</b>					78.58%		
<b>2001</b>			52.83%	55.44%			
<b>2002</b>					78.13%		
<b>2003</b>		70.95%				68.54%	
<b>2004</b>			44.7%				100%
<b>2005</b>				58.19%			
<b>2006</b>					72.90%		
<b>2007</b>		76.02%				67.02%	
<b>2008</b>			41.3%				
<b>Shift</b>		<b>-7.31%</b>	<b>-18.91%</b>	<b>-5.84%</b>	<b>-4.64%</b>	<b>-9.38%</b>	<b>+11.421%</b>
		<b>Sask<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Alberta<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>BC<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>Yukon</b>	<b>NWT<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Nunavut<sup>8</sup></b>

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, voter turnout has increased over the last two Saskatchewan provincial elections. The high turnout in the 1991 election reflects the NDP's sweep into power; they were re-elected in the next two elections (1995 and 1999- a minority government). In 2001 Premier Roy Romanow stepped down, and this may be reflected in the higher turnout in that election, although the NDP did win a slim majority. In 2007, the higher voter turnout numbers have been attributed to a record number of voters using the advance polls (43,730).

<sup>5</sup> The 60.21% seen in the 1993 Alberta election was actually higher than most previous elections: 1989 – 53.6%; 1986 – 47.25%; 1982 – 66.0%; 1979 – 58.73%; 1975 – 59.58%.

<sup>6</sup> However, the difference between the 1991 and 2001 elections was -8.59%.

<sup>7</sup> Between the 1995 and 1999 territorial elections, the Northwest Territories was split in two and Nunavut created.

<sup>8</sup> In the two elections since Nunavut was created, voter turnout has increased because a number of voters in remote communities were able to vote by satellite phone in 2004. It was difficult to find actual voter turnout statistics for this election, but most sources indicated that virtually all of the eligible population voted.

**Appendix F**  
**Voter Turnout - An Anecdotal View**  
**Elections Nova Scotia**  
**June 2008**

Over the years, Elections Nova Scotia (ENS) has received feedback particularly from returning officers and directly from electors or potential electors as to why they did not intend to vote or hadn't voted at a particular election or didn't intend to vote in the foreseeable future. This information has been compiled by a number of staff from feedback received over a number of years. It is anecdotal in nature and where an explanation is possible it is given. In general, where possible, ENS has attempted to address this feedback and instituted standard controls to avoid some of the issues identified. Merely because a complaint has been made does not mean it is common or reasonable. Most of these anecdotal examples relate to physical aspects of the voting process rather than to philosophical objections to voting. Following are the anecdotes:

1. The location of the polling station from a previous or historical location has changed. The original building may no longer be there or be suitable due to disrepair or may not be available such as in cases where the building is a church hall and may have a prior commitment. Electors appear to feel a 'connection' to a certain place where they have voted and in some cases do not want to vote elsewhere.
2. Even though it is clear on the notification cards mailed to each elector where the polling station is located on election day, electors don't check the location on the card but take it for granted that they vote at the same location as they did in the last election. This results in the elector showing up to vote at a polling station that is either the wrong one or at a location where no polling station is being held for that particular election. In some cases the elector has left it too late to call to get correct poll location information and drive to the correct polling station and is unable to vote. Some become frustrated because they didn't bring their notification card, don't have correct information. They simply give up and go home.
3. Complaints have frequently been received by ENS staff when polling stations have been held in churches. Some electors do not want to go into a church that is not their own. This more frequently happens in rural areas where strongly held religious and political views still create a division in the community. In 2003 there were several polls held in a synagogue in the Halifax area and ENS received many telephone calls complaining about this location and in some cases people declined to enter the synagogue to vote. The same kind of feedback has been received in the case of other religions.
4. Some voters have entered a polling station in a church hall and complained about religious paraphernalia on walls and either declined to vote at all or voted and expressed offence. Voting has nothing to do with religion.
5. Complaints are also not uncommon where electors have refused to vote because the polling station was held in the main sanctuary of the church instead of the church hall. Rarely, if ever today, is voting held in an actual sanctuary and would not be condoned by ENS but returning officers do not necessarily tell ENS that a church sanctuary is the voting location.

6. Sometimes change in polling divisions has resulted in the amalgamation of two or more communities into one polling division. Many rural communities tend to vote for one particular political party. One community may for example vote Liberal while another community a few miles away votes Conservative. If these two communities were merged into one polling division, some electors will not vote because they feel that their votes won't count, especially if they reside in the smaller of the two communities that were merged.

7. Some electors are intimidated when entering a crowded polling location (this can happen if there are multiple polling stations present or if the polling location is busy) when they go to vote. Often these electors are elderly. They become confused and they don't know where to go or what to do. They may just leave without voting.

8. If an elector does not receive a notification card in the mail telling them that they are on the list and where to go to vote they will call to complain stating that they have lived here for x number of years and why are they not on the list, etc. In some of these cases the elector states that they refuse to vote because they feel that they should not have to be added to the list because they should already be on it and complain about the government in general.

9. The elector does not receive a notification card but finds out where the polling station is located on election day and goes to vote. However once there they find out that they must sign a declaration stating that they are qualified to vote and show identification. In some cases the elector becomes outraged that they have to fill out paperwork and leaves the polling station without voting. Some electors do not understand why they can't vouch for a friend or spouse and leave without voting.

10. The elector does not receive a notification card but knows where the polling station is located because their spouse or somebody else living in their house has received a card. That person goes to vote but is told that they have to show identification and sign a declaration. The person may not have identification and is turned away unable to vote. This is the incorrect procedure on the part of the DRO but this does happen in some cases. Efforts continue to address this issue in DRO training.

11. We have received calls that electors have been asked to show identification at the polling station even though their name is on the list of electors. The person may not have had any identification with them and therefore were told that they couldn't vote. This is also incorrect procedure as an elector does not have to show identification if their name is on the list.

12. In the past, particularly in rural areas, we have been told by returning officers of cases where electors have arrived at the polling station to vote but left without voting because they did not like the DRO hired for their polling station and would not approach that person.

13. ENS has received calls from electors requesting a drive to the polling station. Since this is not a function ENS performs we have directed the person to call the political party that they support to request a drive. We provide telephone numbers of all parties. Occasionally an elector has become extremely irate and stated that they just won't go to vote.

14. An elector who is disabled in a wheelchair or relies on a walker arrives at the polling station location to vote. Even though all polling station locations must be accessible there are some cases where the driveway is gravel and uneven and not easily traveled by wheelchair or walker or the ramp is too steep and the elector does not have anybody with them to assist them in getting to the polling station entrance. We have received calls telling us that when this happens often an elector won't even bother to maneuver the ramp or driveway and simply leave.

15. We have received complaints where electors state that the polling station location was unacceptable. In these cases the building used was the only location available to be used as a polling station. Complaints were that the location was not accessible, was unsanitary, in disrepair or in one case be a residence that allowed farm animals to roam freely in and out of the premises.

16. In cases where the only available polling station location is a residence, we received complaints that electors would not enter the house to vote because the people who owned the house were members of a different political party than that of the elector. These complaints are relatively old and from rural areas where people are judged by what political party or religion they belong to. No polling locations have been in residences in the last two general elections.

17. Electors use their lunch hour to vote and run out of time because they have to wait in a lineup at the polling station. The elector cannot or does not bother to return to the polling station to vote after work.

18. Electors do not go into the polling station to vote because they cannot find a parking place onsite or within a convenient distance. The elector becomes frustrated and leaves. Or the person may rely on a cane or walker and is unable to walk far and there is no free disabled parking space available.

19. Weather appears to negatively impact turnout. Many electors simply do not vote if it is raining, snowing or icy or bad weather is predicted.

20. We have had many cases where the DRO is late arriving and does not have the polling station set up on time. Some electors have already made arrangements to vote on their way to work because they cannot vote later in the day and they are unable to wait an extra 15-20 minutes in the morning while the DRO sets up the poll. This is an issue that only returning officers can address.

21. Electors occasionally complain that they are fed up and will not go to vote because they feel they have been harassed by party representatives who keep calling to find out if they are going to vote or if they want a ride to the polls.

22. In some cases electors are not patient and will not stand in line for any length of time and leave the poll without voting. Sometimes an elector uses a cane or walker and is unable to stand for any length of time, becomes tired and leaves without voting. This delay may be either in waiting to cast their ballot or waiting to be added to the list by the Revision Assistant.

23. Electors have complained that they feel harassed by agents standing outside the polling station who stop them before entering to ask their name or what political party for whom they intend to vote. In some cases, the elector leaves and does not enter the polling station.

24. Electors have chosen not to vote at the polling station and lodged complaints. This includes complaints that poll workers were rude to people who were slow moving through the voting process due to disabilities or age, or who had a difficult time with the English language.

25. Electors sometimes call ENS because they are unable to find the polling station and in some cases by the time directions are given it was too late for them to vote. Many people tend to wait until the last minute to vote.

26. Occasionally it is necessary to change a polling station location after the notification cards have been mailed. The elector may not have been notified and proceeded to the wrong polling station to vote. Even though a sign was posted on the old polling station entrance giving the new location there may not be enough time for the elector to travel there to vote or the elector just doesn't bother to go to the new location.

27. In one instance the polling station was located within an area that was blocked by a parade. Electors who were driving were not able to park close enough to the polling station and left without voting.

28. In another instance on election day a bridge connecting the main access to the polling station location was blocked due to construction and arrangements had to be made to use another polling location for electors in that polling division. This meant that electors had to drive an extra 20 minutes to vote and at least some decided it was not worth the effort.

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