

Chalk Talk

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PLEASE SHARE *CHALK TALK* WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES!!!

Letter from the Editor

Dear Educators,

"I don't vote. On Election Day, I stay home. I firmly believe that if you vote, you have no right to complain."

— **George Carlin, American comedian**

This quote about voting is part of a famous rant which shows George Carlin at his cynical best. A lifelong fan, I grew up watching Carlin, who underwent a transformation from the 'hippy-dippy weather man' in the 60's to the insightful social commentator with a keen eye for hypocrisy that emerged in the 70's. Agree with him or not, his observations and opinions made you think and inspired public debate. He used humour to take on the tough issues in a provocative, and often, controversial way.

I've watched Carlin's performance several times on **YouTube** where he makes the case in support of his controversial view on voting and have concluded that I can't agree with him. He defends his position by saying that he "who did not vote -- who did not even leave the house on Election Day -- is in no way responsible for what these politicians have done and have every right to complain." On the contrary, I believe, that by voting, we have earned the right to complain, if and when, our elected officials stumble.

With the increase of voter apathy and declining voter turnout rates, this debate has become an important one. Voters aren't perfect, but they do make their voices heard and demonstrate their commitment to their community and interest in how we are governed. By not voting, we choose NOT to participate in the democratic process and forfeit the impact we might have had. Like those who won't speak up before but complain when things aren't to their liking, non-voters' complaints ring hollow.

Conversely, an uninformed electorate is as undesirable as an unmotivated one. I cringe when I hear that voters choose according to name recognition or by who is leading in the polls. Knowledge of the issues is critical. This week's issue features new resources to help educate students on voting.

CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing access to classroom resources on a range of topics. We invite you to visit our website at www.4edu.ca to view the many **free** teachers' resources on offer.

[Let us know your thoughts.](#)



Mary Kovack

CIVICS MADE EASY!

Democracy in Ontario, and indeed in Canada, is at a crossroads. Overall voter turnout rates are in serious decline. Fifty years ago, eighty percent – four out of five – cast their ballot in federal elections. Now that number hovers at sixty percent or three out of five. The percentage of eligible voters who actually cast their ballot in the most recent Ontario 2007 provincial election hit an all-time record low of 52.6%. Despite numerous changes instituted to boost declining voter turnout rates that meant four million out of 8.4 million eligible voters declined to exercise the most basic of democratic rights.

When the youth vote is examined, the picture is even more worrisome. Often, the turnout rate for first-time voters at both the federal and provincial levels is less than 30%. If the situation is not addressed – and done immediately and effectively – we will shortly be in a situation in which more people decline to vote than exercise their franchise.

The right to vote is at the core of our democracy. To function effectively, it requires a knowledgeable and active citizenry and that depends on educating our youth at both the elementary and secondary school levels to ensure that that they will be informed and prepared when they become eligible to exercise their right.



NEW! In early 2011, Elections Ontario, in association with Elections Canada, will launch two printed, election tool kits for Grade 5 Social Studies and Grade 10 Civics courses. For more information about these curriculum-based classroom resources and how you can pre-order your own free copy, see below.

For more information about elections and voting:

www.elections.on.ca

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Exercise Your Right!



Exercise Your Right to the newest Civics and Social Studies teaching resources. These easy-to-use, curriculum-based resources help make it easy for your students to understand elections, government, civics and voting. Suitable for grade 5 Social Studies and grade 10 Civics.

Grade 5 Social Studies — Election tool kit

Grade 5 students are at a remarkable place in their journey to adulthood and in the prime years for shaping knowledge, values, and even making decisions about behaviour that will stay with them throughout their adult life.

Based on the grade 5 Social Studies curriculum this kit is integrated to include strong elements of literacy and numeracy with a focus on elections, government, civics and voting. This 48 page resource kit* is ready to use and contains teacher notes and background, easy-to-implement student activities and blackline masters of student worksheets. [*Alternate formats available upon request.]



Grade 10 Civics Course — Election tool kit

Elections Ontario hopes to inculcate a mindset that voting is not only important, but essential to the working of a vibrant and dynamic democracy.

This 48 page resource kit* is based on the grade 10 Civics course and is designed to help teach informed, purposeful and active citizenship. In a series of relevant, informative and fun activities and questions through ten guided lessons, students will learn how the political system works and importantly, how they can impact that system. These activities provide teachers with a significant portion of the coursework and make it easy to incorporate the real-life applicability that teachers of this course want. [*Alternate formats available upon request.]

Be prepared for Ontario's next general election in October, 2011.
Register at www.4edu.ca/tors/elections to receive your free print copy,
hot off the press, in early 2011!

In the News — In recent days, many Canadians went to the Polls to vote in municipal elections. Some were history-making, some were surprises and some were extremely close proving that every vote counts!

[Why the pollsters didn't get it right](#) -- ANNA MEHLER PAPERNY, The Globe and Mail, October 26, 2010 11

"There are political victories. And then there are political victories that are called eight minutes after polls close, a week after headlines trumpet a "dead heat." In the final weeks of the mayoral race, poll after poll put Rob Ford and George Smitherman in a dead heat, often within the margin of error as the two candidates duked it out on the street, on the subway and at one debate after another. Even Mr. Ford's internal numbers, which his campaign team boasted had given him a far greater lead than any other tests of the public's pulse, showed that lead dramatically narrowing in the final month of the campaign. According to the campaign, a poll they conducted Oct. 18 to Oct. 22 showed Mr. Ford in the lead by about 9 percentage points among decided voters, significantly closer than a month earlier, when the campaign's internal polls showed Mr. Ford 23 percentage points ahead. But on election day, Mr. Ford garnered 47 per cent of the vote compared with Mr. Smitherman's 36 per cent. And 383,501 Torontonians voted for the Etobicoke councillor who campaigned for seven months... Ryerson University politics professor Neil Thomlinson said the landslide for the Etobicoke councillor calls into question the way pundits and the media analyze polling data: Do you count everyone you phone up? Or only people who say they're "very likely" to vote? Do you rule out undecided voters altogether, or ask them where they're leaning?" [READ ENTIRE ARTICLE ...](#)

[Calgary's Naheed Nenshi becomes Canada's first Muslim mayor](#) -- JOSH WINGROVE, The Globe and Mail, Oct. 19, 2010

"If you don't know the name Naheed Nenshi, take note. A grassroots campaign driven by volunteers has delivered Canada its first Muslim mayor – Mr. Nenshi, who scored a staggering win in Calgary's mayor's race Monday ... To say Mr. Nenshi's campaign was austere is understatement – he delivered his speech in a basement that was donated by a supporter at the last second. Calgary's new mayor The 38-year-old Mr. Nenshi survived a smear campaign and a telephone failure in the crucial final days and hours, before running away with what was to be a close vote. His candidacy was branded the "Purple Revolution," named for his campaign colour and driven by a broad demographic that included strong youth support. He achieved what many observers thought impossible – a wonkish, even dorky, academic and visible minority elected to the helm of what is often called Canada's most conservative city after a campaign driven by charisma and sheer determination... His win also proves that the Internet is a key tool in politics and does indeed deliver support – Mr. Nenshi had far more Facebook friends than either of his main competitors, who themselves dismissed that support, saying it wouldn't translate into actual votes. Voter turnout was high, with early returns suggesting it could reach 50 per cent, well higher than the 33 per cent turnout in 2007." [Read article ...](#)

[Luciani wins Thorold mayoral race by four votes](#) — Local News By KARENA WALTER/QMI Agency, The Welland Tribune, October 26, 2010

Thorold's battle for mayor resulted in a margin of votes so small, it can be counted on one hand. Ted Luciani squeaked by Robert Gabriel by four votes, with 2,049 to 2,045. It was almost too close to call. Officially, it hasn't been called yet. "It puts new meaning to every vote counts," outgoing mayor Henry D'Angela, said at Thorold city hall, where polls were projected on a screen Monday night... The race for mayor was tighter than anyone could remember."

[Noyes expected to call for recount in Fort Erie race](#) -- JOHN ROBBINS, Niagara Falls Review, Oct. 27, 2010

"If defeated mayoral candidate Ann-Marie Noyes calls for a recount, it'll be up to members of the current council to decide whether to grant her request, says Fort Erie's town clerk. In unofficial results Monday night, Mayor Doug Martin beat his only challenger Noyes by just four votes. While both candidates assumed there would be a recount, clerk Carolyn Kett says it's not something that happens automatically. Instead, Noyes has to formally petition council for a recount, something she's expected to do as early as this morning."

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