

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 22, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Trustee G. Gibeault
SUBJECT: Motion Re Voting Age

RECOMMENDATION

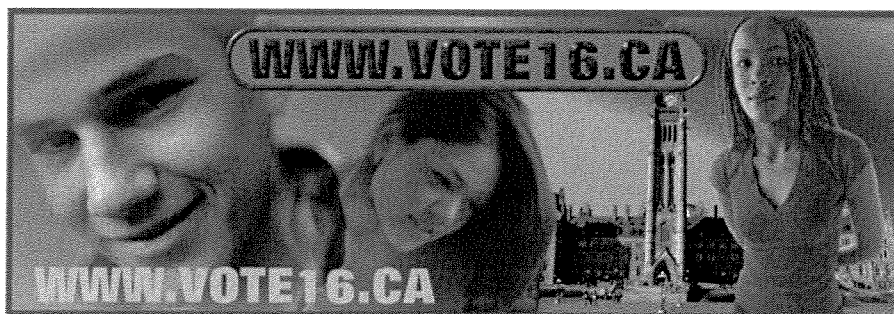
That the Edmonton Public School Board endorse Bill C261, currently before the House of Commons, which advocates the lowering of the voting age in Federal Elections from 18 to 16 and that a letter regarding this endorsement be sent to the Bill's sponsor, MP Mark Holland.

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Notice of the above motion was served at the March 8, 2005 board meeting.

GG:mmf

ATTACHMENT #1 – Background Information



December 14, 2004
For Immediate Release:

All-party team pushes for youth voting rights

A group of MPs from each of the four federal political parties is joining forces to support a bill to lower the federal voting age to 16, and to encourage youth to be more involved in the electoral system.

Belinda Stronach (Conservative), Stéphane Bergeron (Bloc Québécois), and Nathan Cullen (NDP) will be working to support Bill C-261 introduced by Liberal MP Mark Holland on November 4. Bev Desjarlais (NDP), the sponsor of a previous bill on this subject, is also an active participant.

"Interest in this bill cuts across party lines," says Holland. "This is about empowering youth and encouraging their participation in the electoral process. It's also about showing that members of opposing parties can put aside their differences to work together constructively for a common purpose."

Desjarlais introduced a similar bill in February 2001, but under old rules for private member's business, it was debated but not put to a vote. Under new rules, Holland's bill is expected to come to a vote early in the new year. Its first hour of debate at second reading is will occur early in February.

"In the previous Parliament, I was pleased to reintroduce a similar bill that was initiated by Nelson Riis," says Desjarlais. "Declining voter participation is a serious problem in our democratic system. Enfranchising 16 and 17 year olds would reinvigorate and strengthen democracy and would go a long way toward stopping this downward trend."

"I have worked with young people on issues of public policy and long realized that they have ideas, talent and a willingness to contribute equal to those Canadians who are older," says Stronach. "The new Canada is the future, and lowering the voting age is a step in providing fresh oxygen to our political process. All Canadians interested in a stronger and more vibrant democracy should encourage their MP to vote for this bill."

"In our society, a 16 year old can hold a driver's license, he can work and thus must pay taxes," says Bergeron. "Under the principle of no taxation without representation, we should give 16 and 17 year olds a say in how their tax dollars are

spent. A youth of 17 could be called to serve under the flag, even to fight to defend Canada, putting his life on the line. Why should we refuse this 17 year old the right to choose those who will be called upon to direct the destiny of the country for which he is prepared to risk his life?"

"As the youth critic for the NDP, I'm very enthusiastic about this initiative," says Cullen. "I see this bill as a starting point for a broader effort to engage youth in the democratic process."

The MPs will be encouraging members of their respective caucuses to support Bill C-261. They'll also be communicating with youth organizations to encourage their participation in this initiative.

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For further information:

**Richard McGuire, Office of Mark Holland
(613) 995-8614**

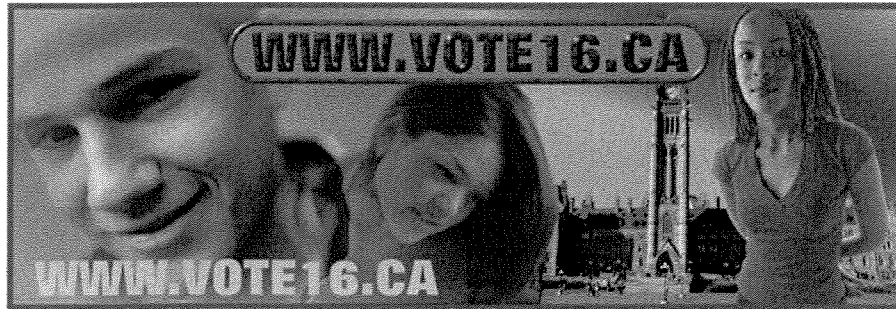
**Stéphane Bergeron, M.P.: Contact Frédéric Lepage, Media Relations,
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(416) 998-0132**

**Jerry Toews, Office of Nathan Cullen
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(613) 992-3025**

See also [Poll on Youth Attitudes](#)



Arguments for Bill C-261

December 14, 2004
For Immediate Release:

Bill aims to reverse declining voter participation by involving youth early

Reverse declining voter turnout

In the 2004 federal general election, voter turnout at 60.9 per cent was the lowest in history. This declining turnout mirrors the trend in other countries, and is a reflection of changing demographics. Voter turnout decreases among younger electors.

This trend will continue as the population ages unless something is done to reverse it. Those who become active voters usually continue to vote throughout life. Conversely, those who don't vote when they are young often don't develop voting habits in later years. Encouraging youth to participate when they are still in school and taking civics classes should help to develop voting habits that will stay with them throughout life.

Making politics relevant for youth

Many young people believe that politics is not relevant to them because politicians ignore youth. This disillusionment leads them not to bother voting, which in turn makes them a marginal influence on politics. This is sometimes referred to as a "cycle of neglect."

About 2.6 million Canadians, 12 per cent of the population, are aged 18-24. By expanding the youth cohort of voters to include 16 and 17 year olds, they will have greater collective influence. Politicians will be then pay more attention to youth, making politics more relevant to them. This should help to develop a "cycle of participation."

16 year olds have other serious responsibilities

Society already entrusts 16 and 17 year olds with other important responsibilities – some potentially involving life or death. At 16, one can drive a car, drop out of

school, or be tried in court as an adult. At 16 one can join the Canadian Forces Reserves, and at 17 one can join the Canadian Forces and die for Canada. That a young person can be sent to war, but not vote for his or her local Member of Parliament is an aberration.

Canadian political parties allow membership and voting rights at age 14. This means that a young person can play a role in choosing the Prime Minister or Party Leader in a party leadership contest, but cannot choose a candidate in a general election.

Many 16 year olds work and pay taxes, yet they have no say in choosing a government that sets taxation levels and chooses how tax dollars are spent.

There is no knowledge test to vote

In today's age of mass media, young people are typically as well informed or better informed than their elders. MPs visiting high schools often find their audiences ask more knowledgeable questions and give more thoughtful opinions than do forums of older people. This refutes the tired argument that 16 year olds lack the knowledge or maturity to vote.

In any case, voting is a right based on citizenship – not on knowledge or capacity. There is no knowledge or means test. A mentally ill or uneducated adult is not denied the right to vote. The idea that voting should be restricted to those possessing particular knowledge is an elitist, undemocratic and dangerous notion.

18 is an awkward age of transition

Eighteen is an awkward age for people to begin exercising voting rights because it is an age of transition. Many 18 year olds are leaving home for the first time, starting university, or beginning new jobs. Moving to a new riding often discourages people from voting because they may not know the candidates, the issues, or how to be registered to vote. At 16, most young people are more settled, living at home with their families, and going to high school. This is a more stable environment in which to first exercise the right to vote.

Other arguments

- In Germany, where 16 year olds are allowed to vote in certain local elections, the voter turnout for 16-18 year olds has been, at worst, only slightly below the national turnout average. In some cases, 16-18 year olds have turned out to vote at the same levels as 35-45 year olds.
- Politically active youth still living at home may encourage their families to vote as well, thus increasing voter turnout rates.
- In mock elections in high schools, students generally show a great interest in voting.
- Since general elections are held about every four or five years, with the voting age at 18, an individual may not have their first opportunity to vote until they are 22.

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For further information:

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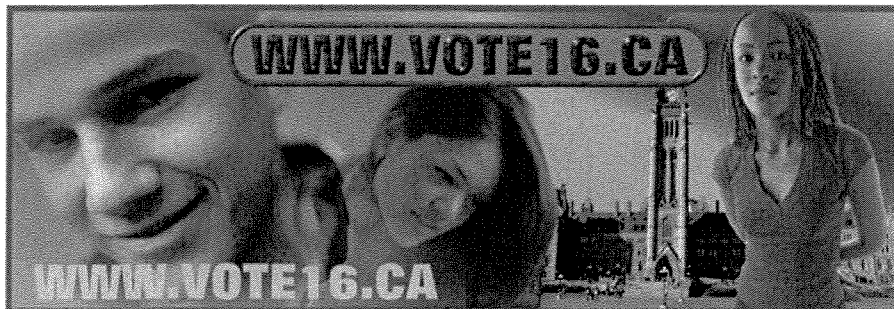
**Stéphane Bergeron, M.P.: Contact Frédéric Lepage, Media Relations,
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**Melissa Hunter, Office of Bev Desjarlais
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See also [Poll on Youth Attitudes](#)



February 26, 2005
For Immediate Release:

All-party team of MPs to visit West in campaign to lower federal voting age to 16

A team of Members of Parliament from each of the four federal political parties will visit Vancouver, Edmonton and Winnipeg from February 28 to March 2 as part of a cross-country campaign to lower the federal voting age to 16.

The MPs, who support Liberal MP Mark Holland's private member's Bill C-261 to lower the voting age, are also interested in the broader issue of how young people can be better engaged in the electoral and political processes. By lowering the voting age to 16, youths can be introduced to voting while they are still in high school and taking social studies or civics courses, and are often still living in their own communities.

The MPs hope that by engaging your people early, the trend of declining voter turnout can be reversed. They also hope to counter cynicism about politics by showing that MPs from different parties can work cooperatively on an issue of common concern.

The MPs will be visiting high schools, doing other events, and meeting media.

Joint sponsors of the **Vote16.ca** initiative are the following MPs: Mark Holland (Liberal, Ajax-Pickering), Belinda Stronach (Conservative, Newmarket-Aurora), Stéphane Bergeron (Bloc Québécois, Verchères-Les Patriotes), and Nathan Cullen (NDP, Skeena-Bulkley Valley).

Ms. Stronach will only be available for a portion of the Vancouver visit, but other Conservative MPs will be joining the tour in other cities to emphasize the cross-party nature of the initiative. Local MPs, whether or not they support Bill C-261, have also been invited to participate.

Bill C-261 lowers the federal voting age to 16, while keeping the age to run as a candidate at 18. The bill had one hour of debate at second reading on Feb. 1, and is expected to come up for its second hour and a vote in early to mid April.

In an unusual cross-party show of support, the bill was jointly seconded by 20 MPs

from each of the four federal parties – the maximum allowed – and additional MPs asking to second it had to be turned away.

A website at <http://vote16.ca> gives background information about the bill in both official languages.

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**A schedule of events during the tour is attached.
For further information or to arrange interviews:**

**Richard McGuire, Office of Mark Holland, MP
(613) 995-8614**

February 28, 2005

Confirmed events for Vancouver and area are the following:

(Media are invited to all unless otherwise stated – schedule is subject to change)

9 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. – Burnaby South Secondary School, 5455 Rumble St., Burnaby, BC, V5J 2B7 – discussion with students linked through teleconferencing with several other Burnaby high schools.

10:10 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Media availability, Burnaby South Secondary School, 5455 Rumble St., Burnaby – the MPs will answer media questions about the Vote16 initiative.

12:30 p.m. to 1:20 p.m. – Magee Secondary School, 6360 Maple St., Vancouver, BC, V6M 4M2. Discussion with students.

2:10 p.m. to 2:55 p.m. – Rockridge Secondary School, 5350 Headland Dr., West Vancouver, BC, V7W 3H2. Discussion with students. (MPs except Mr. Bergeron)

2 p.m. to 3 p.m. – Kitsilano Secondary School, 2550 West 10th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V6K 2J6. Discussion with students in French (Mr. Bergeron only)

**Outside those scheduled events, the MPs will be available for a limited number of interviews with media and guest appearances on television and radio shows prior to
4 p.m.**

* * *

March 1, 2005

Confirmed events for Edmonton are the following:

(Media are invited to all unless otherwise stated – schedule is subject to change)

8:45 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. – Ecole J.H. Picard, 7055 – 99 St., Edmonton, AB, T6E 3R4 – Discussion with students, **bilingual English/French.**

9:45 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – W.P. Wagner School, 6310 Wagner Rd., Edmonton, AB, T6E 4N5. Discussion with students.

10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. – **Media Availability** - W.P. Wagner School, 6310 Wagner Rd., Edmonton, AB, T6E 4N5 – the MPs will answer media questions about the Vote16 initiative.

1:00 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. – Louis St. Laurent School, 11230 – 43 Ave., Edmonton, AB, T6J 0X8. Discussion with students.

2 p.m. to 3 p.m. – Dinwoodie Lounge, 2nd Floor, Students Union Building (SUB) 8900 – 114 St., University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2J7 -- Informal discussion with youth activists from different party youth wings and others about ways youth can be better engaged in politics. (MPs except Mr. Bergeron)

2 p.m. to 3 p.m. – École Maurice Lavallée, 8828 – 95 St., Edmonton, AB, T6C 4H9. Discussion with students in French (Mr. Bergeron only)

Outside those scheduled events, the MPs will be available for a limited number of interviews with media and guest appearances on television and radio shows prior to 4 p.m.

* * *

March 2, 2005

Confirmed events for Winnipeg and area are the following:

(Media are invited to all unless otherwise stated – schedule is subject to change)

9 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. – **Media availability**, Windsor Park Collegiate, 1015 Cottonwood Rd., Winnipeg, MB, R2J 1G3 – the MPs will answer media questions about the Vote16 initiative.

9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – Windsor Park Collegiate, 1015 Cottonwood Rd., Winnipeg, MB, R2J 1G3. Discussion with students. (All MPs except Mr. Bergeron)

9 a.m. to 11 a.m. – Collège Saint-Boniface, la Salle Martial-Caron, 200, avenue de la Cathédrale, Saint-Boniface, MB, R2H 0H7. Workshops in French with students from various Winnipeg francophone schools (Mr. Bergeron only).

11 a.m. to 12 noon – Collège Saint-Boniface (all MPs) la Salle Martial-Caron, 200, avenue de la Cathédrale, Saint-Boniface, MB, R2H 0H7. Discussion with students from French and English schools (bilingual).

2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. – Sisler High School, 1360 Redwood Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2X 0Z1. Discussion with students.

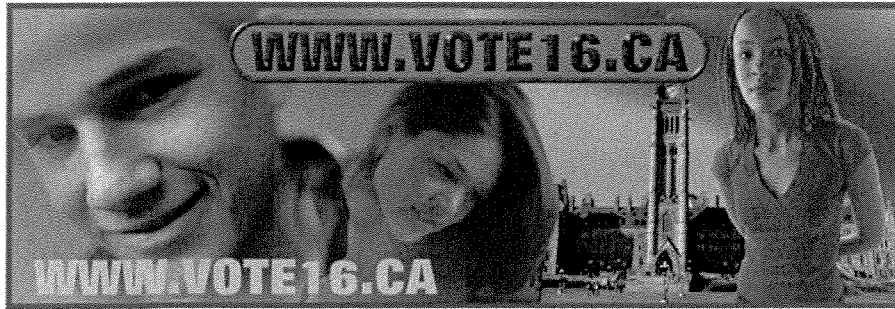
Outside those scheduled events, the MPs will be available for a limited number of interviews with media and guest appearances on television and radio shows prior to 2 p.m.

All MPs speak English. Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Cullen also speak French.

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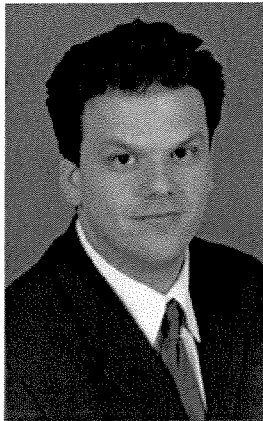
For further information or to arrange interviews:

**Richard McGuire, Office of Mark Holland, MP
(613) 995-8614 – office**



The Vote16.ca Team

Vote16.ca is the joint initiative of a group of Members of Parliament drawn from each of the four political parties represented in Canada's House of Commons.



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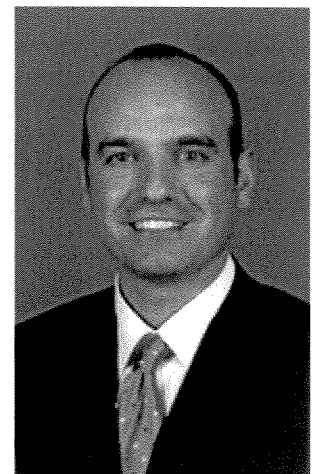
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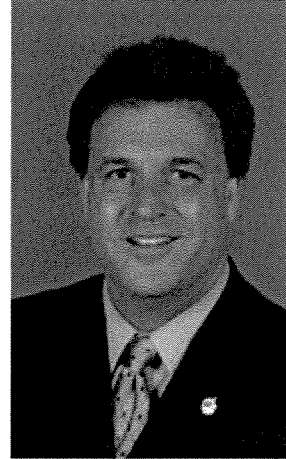
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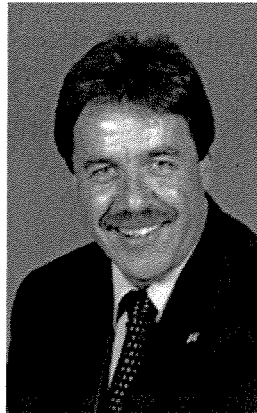


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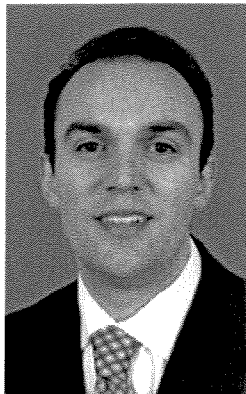
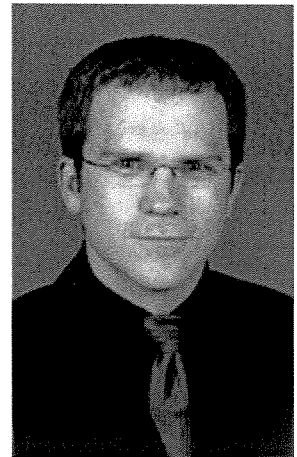
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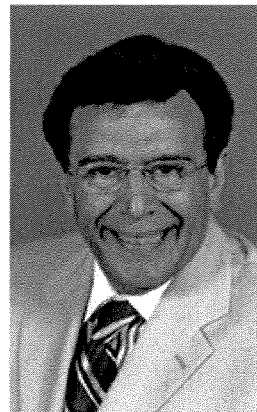
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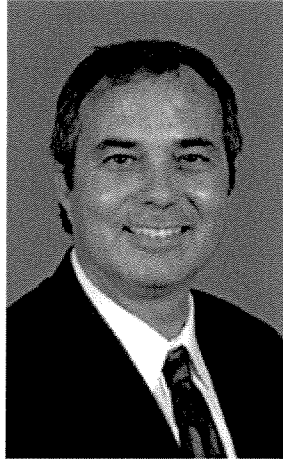


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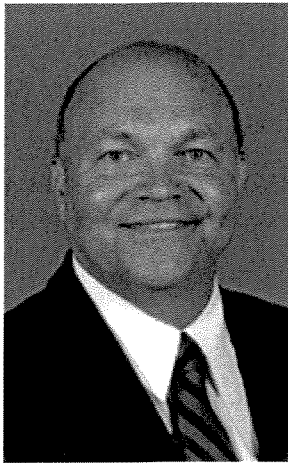
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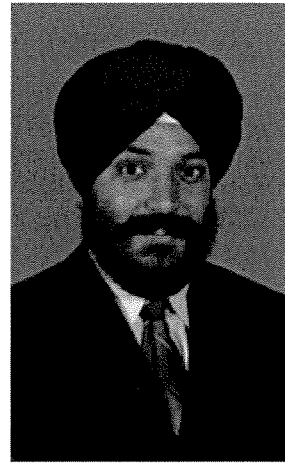
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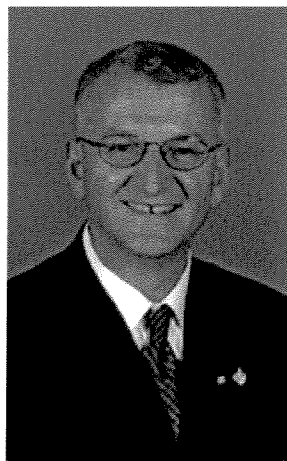


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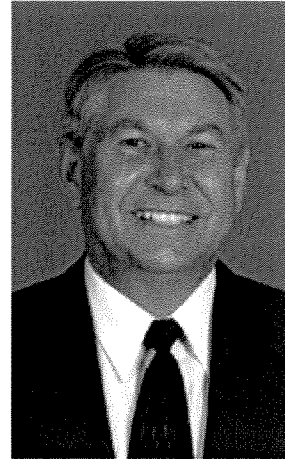
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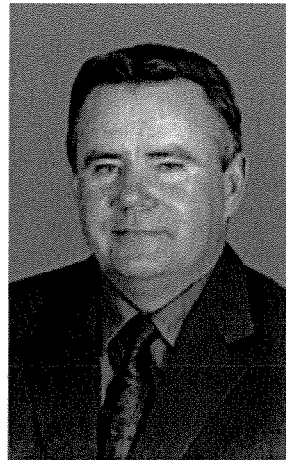


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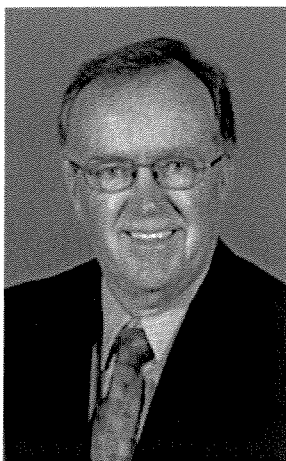
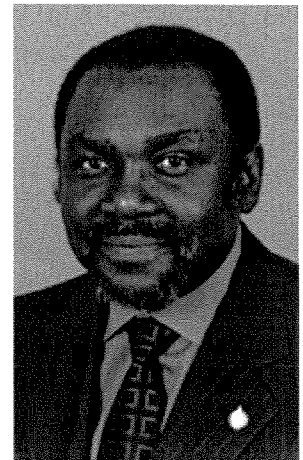
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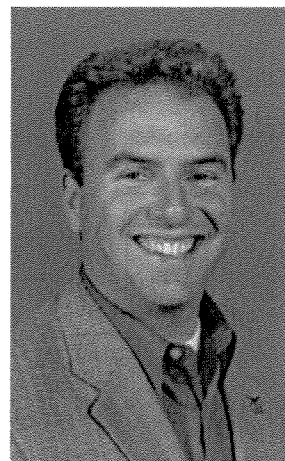
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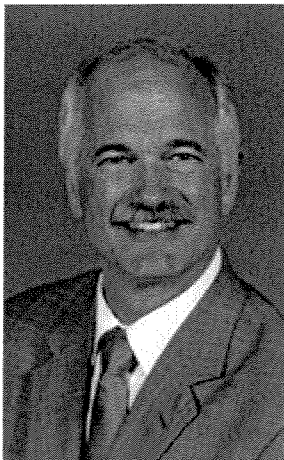
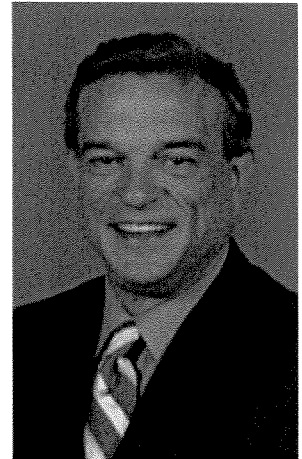
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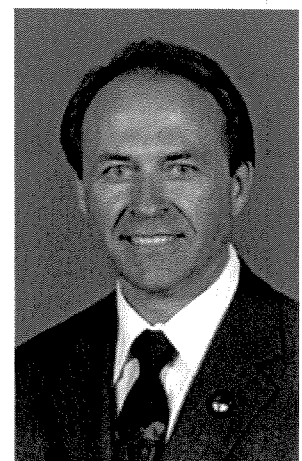
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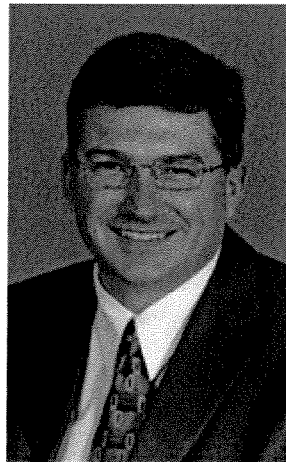


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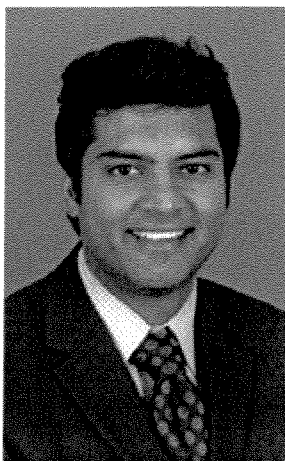
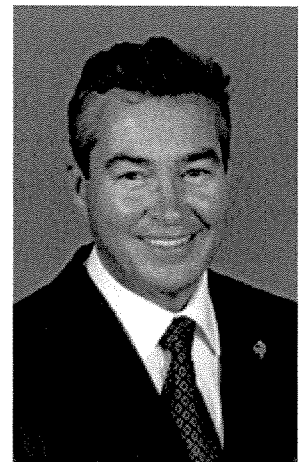
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C-261

First Session, Thirty-eighth Parliament,
53 Elizabeth II, 2004

HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA

BILL C-261

An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (voter and
candidate age)

First reading, November 4, 2004

C-261

Première session, trente-huitième législature,
53 Elizabeth II, 2004

CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES DU CANADA

PROJET DE LOI C-261

Loi modifiant la Loi électorale du Canada (âge des
électeurs et des candidats)

Première lecture le 4 novembre 2004

MR. HOLLAND

M. HOLLAND

SUMMARY

This enactment provides that Canadian citizens who are 16 years of age or older are qualified to vote.

It also provides that a person is not eligible to be a candidate unless he or she is a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years of age.

SOMMAIRE

Le texte a pour objet de donner le droit de vote aux citoyens canadiens qui ont atteint l'âge de seize ans.

Il prévoit également que seuls les citoyens canadiens âgés d'au moins dix-huit ans peuvent se porter candidat.

All parliamentary publications are available on the
Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire
at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Toutes les publications parlementaires sont disponibles sur le
réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire »
à l'adresse suivante :

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA

CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES DU CANADA

BILL C-261

PROJET DE LOI C-261

An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act
(voter and candidate age)

Loi modifiant la Loi électorale du Canada (âge
des électeurs et des candidats)

2000, c. 9

Her Majesty, by and with the advice and
consent of the Senate and House of Commons
of Canada, enacts as follows:

Sa Majesté, sur l'avis et avec le
consentement du Sénat et de la Chambre des
communes du Canada, édicte :

2000, ch. 9

**1. Section 3 of the *Canada Elections Act* is
replaced by the following:**

**1. L'article 3 de la *Loi électorale du*
Canada est remplacé par ce qui suit :**

Persons
qualified as
electors

**3. Every person who is a Canadian citizen
and is 16 years of age or older on polling day
is qualified as an elector.**

**3. A qualité d'électeur toute personne qui, le
jour du scrutin, est citoyen canadien et a atteint
l'âge de seize ans.**

Personnes qui
ont qualité
d'électeur

**2. Subsection 22(5) of the Act is replaced
by the following:**

**2. Le paragraphe 22(5) de la même loi est
remplacé par ce qui suit :**

Exception

(5) In the case of an appointment that is to
be made by a returning officer, if he or she is
unable to appoint an election officer who
meets the requirements set out in subsection
(4), he or she may, with the approval of the
Chief Electoral Officer, appoint a person who
is qualified as an elector but does not live in
the electoral district.

(5) Pour une nomination qui relève de lui, le
directeur du scrutin peut, s'il lui est impossible
de nommer une personne répondant aux
exigences prévues au paragraphe (4), nommer,
avec l'agrément du directeur général des
élections, une personne ayant qualité
d'électeur mais ne résidant pas dans la
circonscription.

Exception

**3. Paragraph 65(a) of the Act is replaced
by the following:**

**3. L'alinéa 65a) de la même loi est
remplacé par ce qui suit :**

(a) a person who is not a Canadian citizen
on the date on which his or her nomination
paper is filed;

a) les personnes qui ne sont pas des citoyens
canadiens le jour où elles déposent leur acte
de candidature;

(a.1) a person who is less than 18 years of
age on the date on which his or her
nomination paper is filed;

a.1) les personnes qui n'ont pas atteint l'âge
de dix-huit ans le jour où elles déposent leur
acte de candidature;

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