

2006 Election



Election Day
January 23, 2006

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Robert Bernard from the 'Go Vote' coalition speaks with Canada AM on Monday.

Day of Action hopes to boost youth awareness

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CTV.ca News Staff

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, student Dave McGuire thinks Canada's politicians have missed out on a potentially powerful constituency -- young voters.

McGuire told CTV's *Canada AM* on Monday his concerns aren't addressed by the parties, who don't seem to go out of their way to reach his

age group.

It's something the Go Vote Coalition wants to rectify with Monday's Day of Action -- a national series of events designed to get Canadians under 30 to the federal polls and boost youth interest in the political system.

The mobilization of young voters has been in the works since December, and its program includes events with a bit more pizzazz than your average candidates' debate.

"Politics in a Pub," will give voters in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Edmonton the chance to hang out it a bar and ask questions to candidates in a youth-friendly atmosphere.

Other events include a "Voters are Hot" rally and a speech on democracy by a Bosnia war veteran in Toronto; a federal election "walk-in clinic" in Fredericton; and high-school assemblies throughout the country.

As one of a growing number of young people not interested in national politics, McGuire blames his lack of interest on the parties, saying they have dropped the ball when it comes to making their messages relevant to young Canadians.

"I don't think the parties advertise to teens," he told 18-year-old Lucy Scholey, who interviewed youth voters in the Dartmouth-Cole Harbour riding for *Canada AM* on Monday. "They might think it's too expensive or not worth it, or might not know how."

In McGuire's demographic -- 18 to 24 -- voter turnout was 25 per cent in the 2004 federal election. That was far lower than the national voter turnout of 61 per cent.

Most young people are already active and involved on their communities, it's just a matter of showing them how their vote can make a difference on a broader scale, Go Vote co-ordinator Shelley Smith told *The Canadian Press*.

"What we believe is that young people aren't apathetic, it's that young people don't see necessarily that they have an impact on the federal political process," Smith said.

"We know that youth are active, that youth want to be involved, that really it just takes providing young people with some resources and helping

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Canada AM: Robert Barnard from 'Go Vote' coalition 3:55

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them."

In a speech to journalism students at Toronto's Centennial College on Monday, NDP leader Jack Layton urged the audience to "lend" him their votes, saying he is the best option for young people who feel disconnected with the political process.

He said the Liberals have done little to make change in Toronto, or to reach out to "young people or people who are struggling on the margins." He vowed to work with youth groups to improve the gun crime situation, and supports lowering the voting age to 16.

Layton also invited Conservative-leaning young voters to consider his party, saying there is a reason they took the word "Progressive" from their party's name. He suggested students of all political stripes tend to be more progressive than their older counterparts.

Montreal-based youth group Apathy is Boring is launching a public service announcement in Cineplex Odeon movie theatres to coincide with Day of Action events. It encourages voters to "find an issue, find a party."

The Go Vote campaign's Robert Barnard told *Canada AM* on Monday that his group recommends young voters -- who might not have experience with any of the parties -- select an issue they care about first and the right candidate will follow.

"Issues are really more important to young people than candidates are," he said. "That gets them passionate."

Once an issue and candidate have been selected, all that is left is to find a polling station, which can be done by entering a postal code into Elections Canada's website, said Barnard.

For those who haven't voted before, the process can seem much more complex than it is, he said.

To learn more about where each party stands on the issues go to [CTV.ca's special election coverage](#).

Youth vote less than older counterparts:
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 Young voters seek issues that matter to them

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