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OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS



[2014 BC MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS]

Report on voter turnout, engagement efforts, best practices, and results in the election for Electoral Area A, and the City of Vancouver.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2014 Municipal Elections took place from November 4-15 across British Columbia. Canadian citizens over 18 years of age, resident in the province for at least 6 months headed to the polls to vote for mayors, councilors, directors, park commissioners, and school board trustees. Students had the opportunity to vote in their respective municipalities of residence, with UBC residents eligible to vote the Director of Electoral Area A (a position that sits on the Metro Vancouver Board, and on the Mayors' Council for Regional Transportation), and for Vancouver School Board Trustees.

This report outlines the motivation behind the voter engagement campaign, the events held, and the outcomes observed at the polls with respect to voter turnout and election results in City of Vancouver, and the Point Grey peninsula.

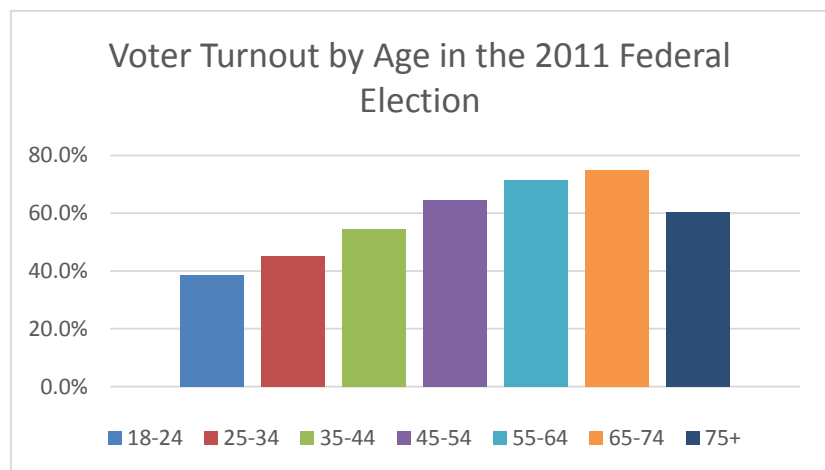
BACKGROUND

As the table below demonstrates, youth voter turnout in Canada is extremely low, with only 39% of Canadians aged 18-24 actually showing up at the polls in the last federal election¹. Studies also show that each new generation is voting proportionately less than the last.² Given the need for greater representation of youth across various levels of government, the Office of the VP External has been working with Elections Canada, Elections BC, Metro Vancouver and the City of Vancouver to work towards better youth engagement across the region, province, and the nation.

To greater familiarize itself with the issues around civic engagement in general, the Office of the VP External was represented by the Associate VP External and the University & Government Relations Advisor at the Inspire Democracy conference hosted by Elections Canada in May 2014. In preparation for the upcoming election season, the AMS partnered with the City of Vancouver, Dept. of Corporate Communications in June during the official launch of the Vancouver Votes campaign to target raising the standards of voter turnout across the municipality among the different age groups.

The AMS was asked to represent the interests of youth in this campaign, and had the opportunity to stress the need for a lot more young Canadians to go to the polls and seize the opportunity to have their voices heard in one of the core facets of representative, democratic society. With representatives

from the media groups catering to various demographics present, the AMS was able to spread the



¹ Block, C., Larrivee, D., & Warner, S. (2012, April 1). "Estimation of Voter Turnout by Age Group and Gender at the 2011 Federal General Election." Retrieved November 24, 2014.

² Loewen, P. (2013). "[Generational Change: Looking at Declining Youth Voter Turnout over Time.](#)" Retrieved November 25, 2014 from [Inspire Democracy's website.](#)

message about the importance of youth representative in the electoral process to a wider audience, an opportunity that is seldom afforded to the society.

Over the summer, the AMS proposed and, in partnership with the city of Vancouver, organized a workshop and presentation for the Union of British Columbia Municipalities annual conference, held in late September 2014 in Whistler. In partnership with the City of Vancouver, the Vice-President External and representatives from the city and Elections Canada led a panel presentation and moderated discussion on the issue of increased civic engagement, especially among youth. The event gathered around 70 elected officials, their staff and other conference attendees and featured dynamic conversations on the specific problems faced by each community. Participants were also invited to propose potential solutions to these issues.

In September, the AMS attended and promoted the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions and Elections BC for Canada's Democracy Week; where students were given the opportunity to hear from a wide range of



FIGURE 1: AN EXAMPLE OF THE FULL SET UP OF POP-UP CITY HALL (VANCOURIER.COM)

perspectives on why voting matters from a panel of individuals representing different organizations in the region. At this time, Elections BC also staffed a voter registration booth to encourage our students to register as voters. The event held in the Norm Theatre saw the room filled to seating capacity, with some audience members left standing. Additionally, the AMS held discussions with Metro Vancouver's Chief Election Officer for Electoral Area A throughout the election process, particularly for promoting the locations for voting in Electoral Area A.

KEY APPROACHES

After hosting the Student Union Development Summit in August 2014, some of the major key issues surrounding voter engagement for the AMS were identified, especially those shared by other institutions across the country. The Office of the VP External built upon its partnership with the City of Vancouver to arrange for Pop-Up City Hall to be brought to UBC during the second week of September. This project was designed to engage students on key issues concerning municipal elections and provide them with the opportunity to register to vote at one of a few handy kiosks provided.

The booth included a street team from the City of Vancouver, along with a fire engine and personnel from the Vancouver Fire Department who actively sought out student traffic to register and get informed about the process. The organizers deemed it a large success due to the numerous amounts of students who were given information at the booth; at least 100 of whom took the opportunity to register on the spot, and others who were already registered to vote from previous elections/referenda learnt more about this years election.

Closer to the election season, the AMS coordinated with the City of Vancouver for a large release of promotional materials providing information about the elections. This took the form of stickers, buttons, postcard flyers, and large format posters. These were widely distributed across campus and received a lot of traction among the student population. Approximately a month before the start of the election season, the Office of the VP External released a massive online information platform on OutreachAMS for students to get informed about the voting process.



FIGURE 2: MARIA HARRIS AND DANIEL WOOD AT THE ELECTORAL AREA A CANDIDATES' FORUM

Information was sorted by municipalities in the Lower Mainland in order to provide information to voters about the candidates running for election, the specific voting locations, and the dates of advance voting. As a member of the Alliance of BC Students (ABCS), the AMS co-released a video targeting the issues concerning voters in the election, which was released on OutreachAMS. An analytics review of the site revealed that during the election period, it was the second most visited page on the entire website, receiving over 450 distinct visitors in a two week period.

During the election period, AMS street teams were used to distribute promotional material designed by the AMS to raise awareness about the election in general, and more specifically about the voting process in Electoral Area A. These materials took the form of postcard flyers, stickers, and large format posters. These were distributed in the bus loop, outside certain residences, and in Buchanan, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, and Allard Hall.

The AMS also organized an Electoral Area A All Candidates' Forum with candidates Maria Harris and Daniel Wood in the AMS Art Gallery on November 12. Attended by an enthusiastic group of approximately 30 people, the event helped students and other residents of the area understand more about the position of the Director and about the platforms of the two candidates. The AMS was also

OUTREACHams

happy to partner with the UBC Pre-Education Club to present an All Candidates' Forum for those contending for school trustee positions on the Vancouver School Board. The event was held in the same place just before the Directors' forum and had similar attendance and enthusiasm in learning about the issues faced in Vancouver's public education system. Refreshments were provided at both events, and advertisements were made through the aforementioned promotional materials, OutreachAMS, and Facebook events.

Finally, the CBC had reached out to the City of Vancouver during the election period requesting a contact among youth representation to cover the different factors affecting youth voter turnout. As a result, the Associate VP External conducted a video interview with the CBC covering the issues surrounding the youth voter turnout, the outlook for the municipal elections, and the reasons

surrounding voter apathy. The interview was held on campus and, aside from the issues mentioned above, included an additional online promotion for OutreachAMS.

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

The table below lists the items requiring funding resources to support the voter engagement campaign during the election period. The Office of VP External had requested Council's authorization for \$3030 to be withdrawn from the Municipal Elections Subsidiary Fund (with a total of \$5000 in available funds) for funding said resources. The total actual expenditure surrounding the voter engagement campaign amounted to \$1700.

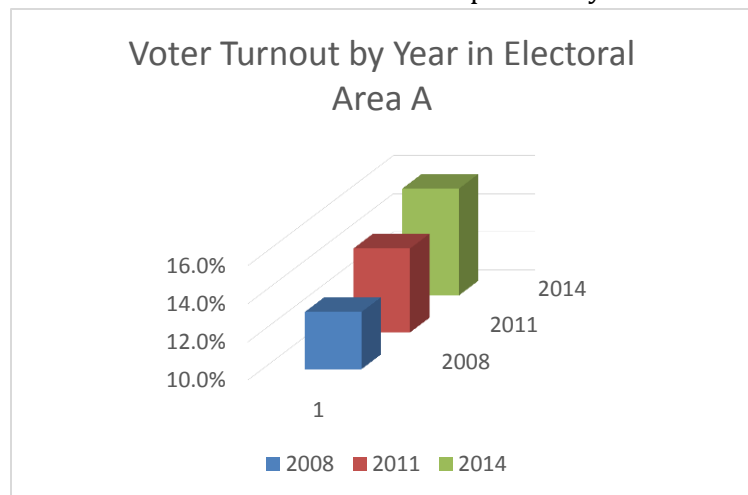
Items	Amount (CAD)
Event Catering (AMS Catering)	800
Promotional Materials (East Van Graphics)	395
AMS Street Team	505
Total	1700

The AMS was able to come in significantly under budget with the wide range of methods employed through partnerships, coalition campaigns, and original promotions and events to generate interest in the elections. With over 3000 pieces of materials printed, and a further 1750 partner materials distributed, a large number of students were engaged in the engagement campaign than before.

OUTCOMES

Voter turnout across the Lower Mainland saw a substantial increase this election. With a 44% voter turnout, the City of Vancouver saw the largest crowd at the polls since 2002 (50%)³. There were a total of 181,707 ballots cast in Vancouver and Electoral Area A. The previously mentioned Vancouver Votes program had set a target at 40%, a goal that was clearly surpassed.

Gregor Robertson was re-elected mayor to his third consecutive term in office. Maria Harris was re-elected as Director of Electoral Area A. In Area A, 938 votes were cast for Director from 6009 registered voters, setting turnout at 15.6% up from 14.4% in 2011 and 13% in 2008. Advance voting in Vancouver was open from November 4-12 from 8 am to 8pm at 8 voting locations in the city. On the



³ Clarke, M. (2014, November 16). Vancouver voter turnout highest in more than 10 years - British Columbia - CBC News. Retrieved November 25, 2014, from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-voter-turnout-highest-in-more-than-10-years-1.2837024>

general day of voting, 120 voting locations were open. City officials employed meticulous planning when deciding on where to place voting locations. It was noted that voting locations were chosen in areas that fell under the norm of daily activity for most individuals, in order to make voting more accessible and less time consuming. We did not feel the same way about the locations chosen for Electoral Area A, which were the Carey Center and University Hill Secondary School. Our recommendation for the next election would be that they consult the student unions before determining the voter stations.

In addition to the extra efforts used to target voter apathy, issues surrounding the election played a large factor in increased voting drives. Questions like the fate of transit and the Broadway Line, public education, housing affordability, etc. contributed to the large turnout witnessed. One of the key lessons learned from this election season is the evident fact that voters valued stances on particular issues (by personal relevance) rather than slate affiliations, familiarity, or social outlook.

CONCLUSION

The 2014 Municipal Elections were a case study in what organizations can do when they put their efforts to targeting civic engagement and voter apathy. The real test of effectiveness would be seeing a positive trend with the upcoming federal elections in 2015. Voter apathy is a symptom of disengagement with the democratic process as a whole, and with sure efforts that can change.