



MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT

Presented to: Law Amendments Committee, Nova Scotia Legislature

Presented by: Mark Coffin, Executive Director, ANSSA

December 1st, 2011

Response to amendments to the act introduced on November 16th

Changes in the definition of "Ordinarily Resident"

ANSSA welcomes the changes in definition of "ordinarily resident" where discriminatory sections against unmarried students have been removed. The previous legislation dictated that an unmarried student could only vote at their family home during a municipal election. Under the old legislation, a student does not have the option of voting in the community where they live and study. The new legislation allows a student the option to choose where they vote – either at home or at school.

This is a huge step forward for making young people full and valued citizens within their communities. It makes it legal for unmarried students to not only vote, but also run in a municipal election where they are studying. ANSSA appreciate these amendments.

The logical next step

Under The Act, the "ordinary polling day" is on the third Saturday in October. This means that anyone who is not ordinarily resident in a municipality prior to mid-July cannot vote in the election. Municipal elections always happen in mid-October. Under a strict interpretation of The Act, it means that any student who had left the municipality for the four-month (May – August) summer period is ineligible to vote.

In order to make municipal elections more accessible to youth, ANSSA recommends either:

1. Adjust the ordinary polling day to a time within the academic year that is at least three months after the beginning of September (preferably during the period between January and March).
- or
2. Change the language in the legislation such that the three-month residency requirements are relaxed for students to one month, to increase eligibility for the mid-October ordinary polling day.



The Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations (ANSSA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization representing over 35,000 students at six post-secondary institutions across Nova Scotia. ANSSA's mandate focuses exclusively on post-secondary education. ANSSA is committed to advocating for a high quality system that is accessible and affordable to every qualified student.

ANSSA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS INCLUDE:

Cape Breton University Students' Union
St. Francis Xavier University Students' Union
Dalhousie Student Union
Saint Mary's University Students' Association
Atlantic School of Theology Student Union
Acadia University Students' Union



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