



Chalk Talk

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

Letter from the Editor

Dear Educators,

People need to be passionate about issues in order to be motivated to go out and mark a ballot. There is a strong message in this about the general disassociation with politics. The question is, what is going to change that?

— Harry Neufeld, B.C.'s chief electoral officer

These comments were made by Harry Neufeld last May after the voter turnout for B.C.'s provincial election was a record low of only 51% of eligible voters. [Link to the G&M article in the 'news' section below.] This low turnout was unexpected, as pollster's surveys predicted that over 90% in-



tended to vote and that there had been heavy advance turnout.

This outcome, after Mr. Neufeld, in his capacity as chief electoral officer, had pulled out all the

stops to encourage higher voter turnout — increasing the polling hours, advertising heavily, and updating the voters' list. How disappointing. How maddening.

Experts put forward many reasons — apathy, forgetfulness, election fatigue — but none of them are very satisfying. Voter turnout has been trending down for many years. I'm beginning to worry that we're taking our democratic system for granted. Even worse I suspect that we don't understand the system and how important we are to ensuring its strength. As we have witnessed on both sides of the border and overseas in recent years, democracy can be very fragile.

This week's issue of **Chalk Talk** features an exciting program for high school students about how government works. CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing 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.

[Your feedback is welcome!](#)

Mary Kovack

FORUM is for Teachers Too!

Take part in the annual Forum Teacher's Conference that is organized in conjunction with FORUM in April. Don't miss this unique opportunity. For more details go to the FORUM website, www.forum.ca.

FORUM FOR YOUNG CANADIANS



Established in 1975, Forum for Young Canadians is Canada's longest running and most successful youth program about Canadian government and our government institutions and of the meaning and responsibilities of citizenship.

Each spring, FORUM brings 450 students from across Canada to Ottawa where they spend five days on Parliament Hill and experience first-hand how Canadian government works. During their stay at FORUM, students gain a greater knowledge and deeper understanding of the constitution of Canada, the process of government and its interaction with the people of Canada, and of the meaning and responsibilities of citizenship.

FORUM students meet the nation's leaders, interact with decisions-makers, and debate contemporary issues. ... **and FORUM is FUN!**

FORUM is a program of the [Foundation for the Study of Processes of Government in Canada](#).

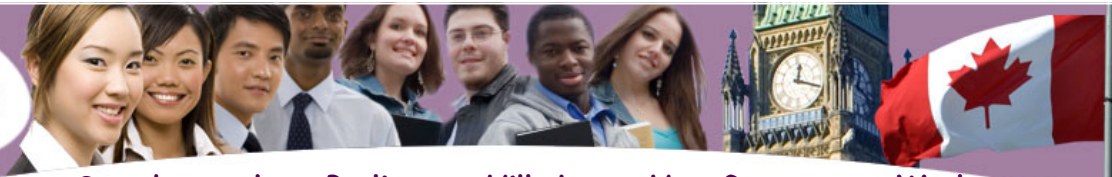
For more details on this program, see **Website of the Week**, below, and read what students say about their FORUM experience. Also, read an excerpt from an essay written by 2009 FORUM alumnus, Christopher Bernard who was selected to be part of the Prime Minister's delegation to attend the commemoration ceremonies for 65th anniversary of D-Day.



FORUM ALUMNI

- Seamus O'Regan, co-host, CTV's CANADA AM
- Ruby Dhalla, MP - Brampton-Springdale
- Rod Bruinooge, MP - Winnipeg South
- Stuart Hickox, Founder and Executive Director of OneChange
- Marc Chalifoux, Executive Vice President, Historica-Dominion Institute
- Amy Marlene Robichaud - 2009 Winner of CBC's Canada's Next Great Prime Minister

Forum



Spend a week on Parliament Hill. Learn How Government Works.

The FORUM experience brings students to Ottawa for a one-week intensive academic adventure that immerses them in the exciting world of national politics and public affairs. FORUM is a bilingual, non-partisan and AMAZING program to develop **leadership** and to learn about parliamentary democracy, how government works and how YOUR STUDENTS can make a difference in shaping Canada's future.

WHO: Up to 125 students (aged 15-19) from across Canada, at each session. Groups of 15 students are escorted and supervised throughout by adult Team Leaders. Since 1976, over 16,000 students have lived the FORUM experience.

WHERE: In Ottawa, Canada's capital. Most seminars and simulations are held on Parliament Hill. [Accommodations are in a downtown hotel.]

WHEN: Students participate in one of four sessions, in February, March or April. Each session is 5-days long.

Application forms are now available online for the Spring 2010 sessions at www.forum.ca. Space is limited. **NOW is the Time to Apply!**



Encourage your Students to Apply to FORUM Today!



Here's what **STUDENTS** say about **FORUM**

"I loved the week! I believe Forum changed my life, and I cannot stop talking about it. I only wish it was longer!"

"I loved my Forum experience and would go back in the blink of an eye. Keep up the great work and thank you."

"Forum was such an amazing experience, but what made it truly exceptional was not all the places we went to, or the people that we listened to, it was the people that I met there. Thank you so much for this fantastic experience."



"I absolutely loved Forum. It reshaped my entire view of Canadian government and society, and gave me a new dedication to learn French, factoring greatly into my decision to attend McGill this fall. Keep up the fantastic work!"

"It was amazing -- by far the best week of my life hands down."

"Forum was an excellent life experience. I've created a strong passion for politics and I owe it all to FYC. It is a great place to meet people who share similar interests."

Forum can take you places you never dreamed of!

[EXCERPT — Christopher Bernard, 2009 Forum for Young Canadians participant and Grade 11 student at l'École Secondaire le Carrefour in Gatineau, Quebec, provided a personal account of his trip to France with the Canadian delegation attending the ceremonies commemorating D-Day, on June 6, 2009]

Everything began with a simple little e-mail. Yet, within just a few days, I was aboard the Prime Minister's plane headed for France so I could take part in the events commemorating the 65th anniversary of the June 6, 1944 D-Day landing in Normandy.

When I got to school on Monday, June 1, 2009, I had no idea that very soon, I was about experience one of the most unbelievable moments of my life. But that is what happened. When I opened my e-mail, I saw I had a message from the Forum's Executive Director, Ms. Dawn Pickering. I opened it right away and found out this was an invitation to be part of Canada's delegation during an official visit to France by Prime Minister Harper... WHAT! But it was true. WOW! Without hesitation, I grabbed this opportunity and I immediately started doing all I could to participate in this incredible project. I contacted the Executive Director of the Dominion Institute, Mr. Marc Chalifoux, who was responsible for this commemoration project. Following a brief interview, he told me they would get back to me by around noon the next day.

Never had I spent what seemed like such a long morning in school. Seconds felt like hours. The noontime hour finally arrived, and I got the news from Mr. Chalifoux: yes, Christopher, you're coming to France. And we are leaving this Friday! OH MY GOD! While the morning before I got the news had felt like a whole day, the rest of the week before we were to leave Friday morning felt like an entire year. But finally, we made it to the day of my very first plane trip... and on the Prime Minister's plane, no less! [READ MORE ...!]

[To read the entire essay, [click here](#) or go to www.forum.ca and select Announcements/Testimonials.]



Christopher Bernard's Excellent Adventure — pictured here with Prime Minister Harper and WWII Veteran at Canadian cemetery in France during D-Day Commemoration Ceremonies, June 6, 2009

Education News and Related Articles

[Civic duty? Why bother? The battle against voter apathy](#) -- David Parkins for **The Globe and Mail**, Thursday, September 24, 2009

Harry Neufeld, chief electoral officer for B.C., has heard every excuse under the sun for why people don't vote. But when he got up on May 12, election day in B.C., he was optimistic that voters would show up at his polls. Advance turnout was high. And a pollster's survey before the election showed 94 per cent of British Columbians intended to vote. They lied. The day ended with a record low turnout: Just 51 per cent of eligible voters made the effort to cast a ballot. "I can't say I wasn't disappointed," he said this week. Mr. Neufeld frets for the electoral process like a parent struggling with a wayward child. But his passion for the job comes with strictly neutral limits: He increased the polling hours, advertised heavily, updated the voter's list. He couldn't make people care. And more people than ever got up on election day and decided not to bother. A new report sheds some light on why voters opted to stay home. But it also offers discouraging news for campaigners who are preparing for a possible fall federal election. In the aftermath of the provincial election, BCStats commissioned a poll to delve into why people didn't vote. The reasons ranged from the innocent "I forgot" to the petulant "My vote doesn't count." To read more [click here](#).

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