

The youth vote doesn't belong to Trudeau – or anyone else

These votes will go to the leader who listens to what young people have to say

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Ilona Dougherty

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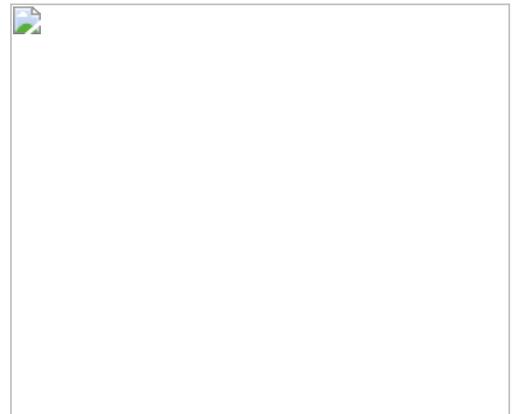
Wednesday, November 2nd, 2016

Youth and students from across Canada try to cross a barricade during a protest on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Monday, Oct. 24, 2016, to call for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to reject the Kinder Morgan tar sands pipeline. iPolitics/Matthew Usherwood

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Students from across Canada try to cross a barricade during a protest on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Monday, Oct. 24, 2016. Protesters were calling on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to kill the Kinder Morgan pipeline project. iPolitics/Matthew Usherwood

No matter what they do, millennials just can't seem to get political engagement right. When they don't vote, they're ignored by politicians.



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When they do show up and passionately express their views, they're encouraged to sit down and be more respectful.

Recently, [99 millennial activists got arrested on Parliament Hill](http://www.metronews.ca/news/ottawa/2016/10/24/99-arrested-during-kinder-morgan-pipeline-protest.html) (<http://www.metronews.ca/news/ottawa/2016/10/24/99-arrested-during-kinder-morgan-pipeline-protest.html>) and others symbolically turned their backs on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at an young workers event. Rather than condemn them, perhaps it's time we started viewing young people as the influential voting block they might have been in 2015 — and could be again in 2019.

A year ago, young people were momentarily celebrated for finally showing up to the polls, reversing a 20-year downward trend in youth voter turnout. Fifty-seven per cent of 18 to 29 year olds voted in 2015, [up from 42 per cent in 2011](http://www.samaracanada.com/research/active-citizenship/can-you-hear-me-now). (<http://www.samaracanada.com/research/active-citizenship/can-you-hear-me-now>)

Although the Liberals were quick to claim victory over this significant increase in youth voter turnout, a recent report from Samara Canada suggests that it wasn't an increased focus on young voters by the Liberals — or by any political party — that led young people to the polls.

In fact, in 2015 political parties did what they've always done. They focused on mobilizing older voters who are more consistent in their voting patterns, and ignored young voters: "Only 52 per cent of young Canadians reported contact from parties, compared with 82 per cent of the oldest cohort," says the Samara report. In fact, more young people came out to vote (57 per cent) than were contacted by political parties (52 per cent) during the campaign.

It's likely that a desire for change, highlighted about Trudeau and the groundwork laid by non-partisan get-out-the-vote initiatives actually made the difference in youth voter turnout in 2015 — not a change in tactics by political parties. Will young people make voting a habit and, if they do, who they will choose to vote for in 2019? It's anyone's guess.

If political parties make a conscious choice in 2019 to view millennials as a voting block and reach out to a lot more of them during the campaign then they did in 2015, it certainly could establish long-term voting habits and partisan preferences among young voters. But that strategy won't be effective if young people aren't valued as a voting block long before campaign time.

How will we be able to tell that young people are being seen as a valuable voting block by parties over the next three years? You might see smart politicians starting to show up where young people are. They might actually start listening to them. They might use what they hear to shift their policy priorities. And you might see the Liberal government start to spend more money on issues that

“Protesters getting detained on the Hill, a few young people turning their backs on the PM — these things don't necessarily signal a full-on revolt by millennials against the current government. But it could be a sign of things to come.

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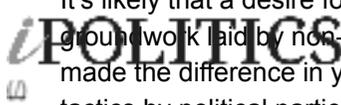
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[Justin Trudeau: Canada will only respond to concrete proposals from Donald Trump](http://globalnews.ca/news/3072173/justin-trudeau-canada-will-only-respond-to-concrete-proposals-from-donald-trump/) (<http://globalnews.ca/news/3072173/justin-trudeau-canada-will-only-respond-to-concrete-proposals-from-donald-trump/>)
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more money on issues that determine how young people vote.

On the first point we aren't doing too badly. The Liberals, the Greens and the NDP are all actively showing up and listening to young people. The Conservatives — perhaps distracted by their leadership race and by a long-held belief that young people won't vote for them anyway — aren't. (Conservatives could attract young voters if they put the work in, but that's a topic for another column.)

When Prime Minister Trudeau watched a group of young people turn their backs on him at a recent Q&A session, his most telling comment was the one he made as he left the stage: "I will see you next year." Despite a tense exchange, his commitment to youth engagement remains clear — even when it isn't easy.

The question remains, though, whether these kinds of interactions with young people — and actions by young activists like that climate change protest on Parliament Hill (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/pipeline-protest-parliament-hill-1.3819785>) — will have any impact on government policy.

There are some policy issues where young Canadians and older Canadians share similar views. There are others — like the environment — where we see a stark division between generations. A poll earlier this year by EKOS (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/ekos-poll-environment-youth-economy-oil-gas-1.3498263>) said that young Canadians worry more about the environment than the economy. A government's degree of engagement with the priorities of young voters can be determined by how it addresses these policy issues where public opinion is divided by age.

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More telling still is how the government spends. The national organization Generation Squeeze put it bluntly in their communications on the 2016 budget: 'More Hope for Older Middle Class than Younger Middle Class'. According to their calculations, "the Liberal government will spend over \$21,000 per person age 65+; over \$7,300 per person age 45 to 64; and around \$4,550 per person under age 45." Governments set priorities with money: The more public money flows to the priorities of young people, the more the government wants to keep its share of the youth vote.

Protesters getting detained on the Hill, a few young people turning their backs on the PM — these things don't necessarily signal a full-on revolt by millennials against the current government. But it could be a sign of things to come.

Having grown up in an era of slick marketing campaigns, millennials have a highly accurate 'bullshit detector'. Rehearsed talking points and empty promises don't move them. Neither does being told not to call out contradictions when they see them. As one young person who attended the event with Trudeau put it (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-protesters-young-workers-event-1.3820153>), "We are told to speak truth to power, then they put power in front of us and they expect us to sit quietly."

The Liberals would be wise to think about how much young voters matter to their re-election strategy in 2019. If they do matter, they should stop asking young people to be polite. Instead, they should respect their right to



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Donald Trump meeting with Shinzo Abe an attempt to settle Asian allies

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Environment minister says global movement to fight climate change 'irresistible'

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asking young people to be polite. Instead, they should respect their right to be politically engaged — and make sure young people see the impact of that engagement reflected in policy and budget priorities.

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Hue-Man • 17 days ago

Why doesn't iPolitics do its part and invite "young people" to express their viewpoints on political issues important to Canadians? Generic articles that describe the problem don't advance the cause. (Hint: addressing actual issues is hard work and I would expect their views are not dissimilar to those of "old people"!)
1 ^ | v • Share >

relayer76 • 18 days ago

Dear editor. It is nice of you to give this young journalist a chance but you need to do a better job of editing the articles you publish. The first 3 paragraphs of this article are broad generalizations that reveal the author to be immature and-or highly partisan.

My two 20 something kids thought the behaviour of these protesters was idiotic.
^ | v • Share >

dda • 19 days ago

Getting 'guidance' and stats analysis from "Generation Squeeze" is a Big mistake. Every time I criticize them, they 'change' their website around (and have now expanded to many). They appeal to the tech/online habits of the generation. One of the first things youth should do is to challenge and research their sources. Manipulation of data and 'statistics' is one of the oldest tricks in the book. Dr. Kershaw, while maintaining his organic farm, has grown an empire by studying statistics and crafting assumptions and agendas around them. Not the first, nor likely the last to do so.

He, however, has taken stats and aligned them with 'ageism'. What's the story with those stats in this article? What's included? What's not? Why has GenSqueeze, over time, played with the 'age' categories?

I have no criticism for the 'actions' of these young people, in fact I share many of their concerns, but I do caution them that they are vulnerable to 'misinformation' or 'manipulation of information' from ALL sides. Be diligent. Part of that is to be aware that there will always be consequences of your behaviour/your words (same for all of us)...some good, some not so good.

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<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/future-of-colombias-new-peace-deal-with-farc-rests-with-no-campaign/article32847123/?cmpid=rss1>

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not so good.

Always try to bring solutions, not just the problem, to the table.

^ | v • Share ›

Anne Peterson → dda • 18 days ago

I think it is older people who are vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation of information. All you have to do is look at trump followers to see that.

^ | v • Share ›

dda → Anne Peterson • 18 days ago

Everyone is vulnerable, Anne, regardless of age. My point was to take 'ageism' out of the equation (re: relying on GenSqueeze) and to give these particular youth some support and and warn them of the pitfall that so many (of all ages) fall into.

Their youthful interest and enthusiasm is welcome - just don't want them to get as

discouraged and jaded as many of the 'older' eco/social advocates.

You are correct tho'....none of the pictures of Trump followers show many 'youth'...hopefully tho', the youth of the US are engaged and show up to vote.

Let's not dis/discourage/demean these youth in Canada who wish to participate. Many commentors here are doing just that.

^ | v • Share ›



Seething liberals vow revolution in Democratic Party

<http://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/seething-liberals-vow-revolution-in-democratic-party>

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<http://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/seething-liberals-vow-revolution-in-democratic-party>

Donald Trump's campaign was in contact with Russian officials: diplomat

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Rock Strongo 3.0 • 19 days ago

It's never too early for liberal youth to feel the sting of the policeman's truncheon.

2 ^ | v • Share ›

Out There → Rock Strongo 3.0 • 19 days ago

Or a conservative youth. Or any youth for that matter.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

Phil King • 19 days ago

Reading tea leaves is great fun eh? Not very useful, and not a "sign of things to come" but hey a lot of fun nonetheless.

As far as youth issues and the youth vote: when and if they ever show consistent interest in issues and voting that politicians can readily understand and react to, **then** politicians will also consistently pay attention.

Whinging about the lack of attention isn't enough.

That said, I think from a personal perspective Trudeau has an interest in helping young people, so he's probably going to do some of that anyways.

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dda → Phil King • 18 days ago

"then politicians will also consistently pay attention."

That certainly hasn't been the experience or the reality in politics for a long time (if ever). Politicians "pay attention" to the people who donate and vote for them. There are, I know, many very principled politicians that genuinely want to help out their country, but let's face it - money, not love, makes the world go around.

I think that Trudeau actually has the best of intentions (not so sure about the Party). If he is genuine, he may wish to rethink the 'composition' of the "committee". Right now it's him and the 'youth'. Maybe bring in reps from each party for dialogue. As it is, it looks like 'someone' is trying to form a larger 'youth arm' for their party. Dissenters not welcome.

^ | v • Share ›

Anne Peterson → Phil King • 18 days ago

The youth in my family show a consistent interest in issues and they are less prone to believe propaganda than others.

1 ^ | v • Share ›



Rock Strongo 3.0 → Phil King • 19 days ago

Universal suffrage should be repealed.

^ | v • Share ›

BrianDavion → Rock Strongo 3.0

• 18 days ago

only if by cancel you mean require people to have attended a civics class that teaches them how the government works before they vote? the class could teach things like "how Parliament is voted in" that include little things like "why coalitions are evil, and no you don't actually vote for the Prime Minister like a president"

2 ^ | v • Share ›

imhotep-12 → Rock Strongo 3.0 • 19 days ago

Yes, cancel the right to vote for Albertans.

3 ^ | v • Share ›

justop → imhotep-12 • 18 days ago

Perhaps at the same time you would consider canceling the right to vote to each and every person in Ontario who voted for the McGuinty/ Wynne government. :)

^ | v • Share ›

imhotep-12 → justop • 18 days ago

Only when, and if, a credible alternative is available :-)

^ | v • Share ›

GL • 19 days ago

If 'being heard' is looking for free this and free that, then politely listen, but there are responsibilities that must be met.

Governments have been dealing with 'youth' for decades and

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sometimes they satisfy them and sometimes they don't. We'll see where it all goes, I guess.

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ABH • 20 days ago

I don't know that anyone is condemning young people. But in my circles, some have criticised (correctly in my view) those involved in the "back turning" incident. The PMs message is succinct - by all means engage but do it by bringing your ideas forward. Childish antics speak to low credibility and only serve to diminish your position. I also appreciate that milenials may be more concerned with the environment than with the economy but in reality we (and ESPECIALLY the government) have to be concerned with both.

In my view that's simply the way that it is.

In so far as the people who were arrested for breaking through the barricade on parliament hill, I can't see what that has to do with the point of the article - certainly the government is not in the practice of directing officers to arrest people..... and yet the



tone is somewhat accusatory.

All in all a puzzling article in my view

7 ^ | v • Share ›

Anne Peterson → ABH • 18 days ago

It only works to bring you ideas forward if someone listens. My grandchildren are often more informed on issues than the people on these threads who often prove to be ideologues or old geezers where youth is concerned. As in: those young people can express themselves but they better be polite and obedient.

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ABH → Anne Peterson • 18 days ago

I agree 100%. There are some young folks who are very knowledgeable, credible and creative. And the key is bringing your ideas forward. My little rant was to criticize those people who met with the PM and made a show of turning their back to him.

I was very disappointed to see that not from a partisan view but on principle: he was willing to sit and discuss policy and ideas and they frittered away an opportunity to do so.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

Phil King → ABH • 19 days ago

They're young. They haven't yet developed the wherewithal to formulate more complex ways of expressing themselves in public fora, and don't necessarily have a complex view of the issues.

They're idealistic and full of energy and hope, but not yet tempered by the common sense that comes with living with a great many expectations and responsibilities.

They are very much like the NDP actually, though I

...they are very much into the...
suspect some of the young people will actually grow up
some day, even if the NDP and its Peter Pan complex
never does. lol

5 ^ | v • Share ›

Anne Peterson → Phil King • 18 days ago

And where have complex ways of expressing
themselves in public fora worked. Not on the
Site C dam nor the environment, nor apparently
on the proportional representation issue, nor the
privatization issue, nor the free trade issue.
Many of these young people are more educated
than their elders and have studied political
science. and learned about these things and
thought about them.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

WatchingFromASafeDistance2 → Phil King
• 19 days ago

Phil, what the heck is your problem with the
NDP?

1 ^ | v • Share ›

Phil King →

WatchingFromASafeDistance2
• 19 days ago

My problem is with its partisan
supporters Watching.

I've spent the last few days dealing with
a handful of them that I actually find
worse than some of our CPC supporters

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Anne Peterson → Phil King
• 18 days ago

Are they not supposed to express their
opinions on these threads if those
opinions conflict with your opinions.
That's pretty fascistic don't you think.
Oh, oh, now you have to deal with me.
Well freedom of speech and all that can
be tough to take.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

Rock Strongo 3.0 → Phil King
• 19 days ago

Yeah, some people are so partisan and
annoying... *Rock's Inner Monolog: Yes,
I think Phil bought it...*

1 ^ | v • Share ›

imhotep-12 → Phil King • 19 days ago

Zealots are a major pain whatever their
cause.

4 ^ | v • Share ›

WatchingFromASafeDistance2 ↗

Phil King • 19 days ago

I still consider myself an NDPer and you don't seem to have a problem with me or do you?

Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater, for as you know, Trudeau's high poll numbers are NDPers supporting him.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

Phil King ↗

WatchingFromASafeDistance2

• 19 days ago

I consider you a centrist, non-partisan Watching. You just take whatever position makes sense to you.

What I object to is blind partisanship.



And from my perspective, despite brief lucid moments, it seems to me that the NDP has been more or less obstructive, destructive and otherwise useless for about 20 years now.

It's no longer the party I once voted for under Broadbent.

Keep in mind I've only voted Liberal twice in my life, and have voted for every major political party at least once in my life except for the BLOC.

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WatchingFromASafeDistance2 ↗

Phil King • 19 days ago

I would agree with you on one part, that being that it is no longer the party that I also voted for under Broadbent. It was far more dogmatic back then and now has moved far to close to the centre. I am hoping that someone like Avi Lewis might take control and steer it back to the left, where it belongs.

3 ^ | v • Share ›

Anne Peterson ↗

WatchingFromASafeDistance2

• 18 days ago

Me too. I watch Corbyn and Sanders and read about liberal plans in this country to privatize our infrastructure at great cost to us and am envious.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

Hue-Man ↗ Anne Peterson

• 17 days ago

I think people are starting to understand that there is no "free lunch" when public

assets are privatized. At the same time, there is a fundamental assumption that government does a bad job of running a business. Even when government does a good job, it fails to make headlines while government inefficiency and corruption receive blanket coverage.

Today, Vancouver International Airport (YVR) received CAPA Centre for Aviation's prestigious Airport of the Year Award at the Aviation Awards for Excellence, hosted in Amsterdam. This award is given to the airport that has been a strategic leader and has done the most to advance the progress of the aviation industry globally.

www.yvr.ca/en/media/news-releases/2016/yvr-recognized-as-best-airport-in-the-world

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Phil King →

WatchingFromASafeDistance2

• 19 days ago

I always revisit judgement with new leaders. They have a huge hand in what the party represents.

Cross your fingers they find someone relevant.

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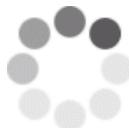
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BrianDavion → Phil King

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