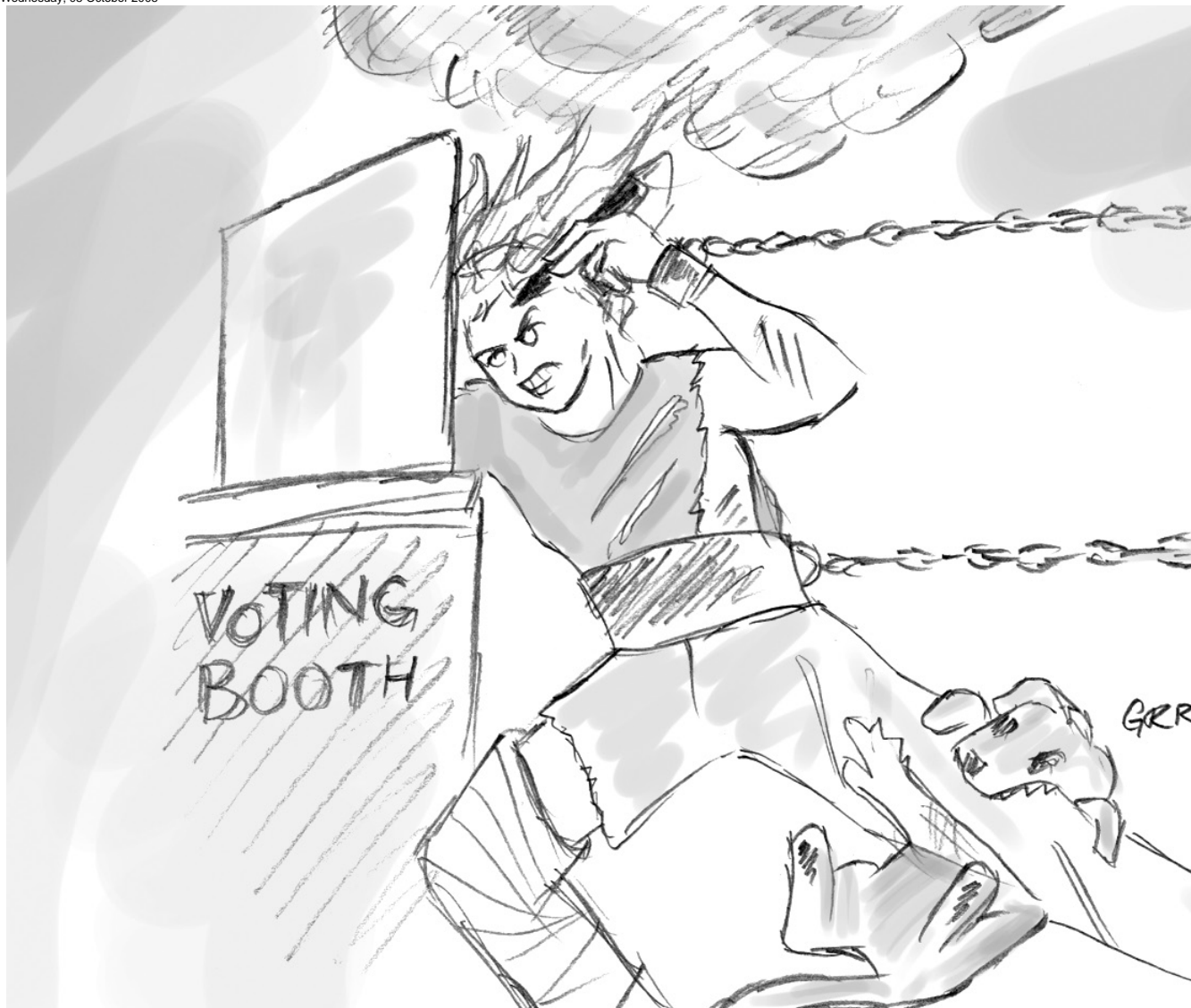


Stop making excuses and vote  
 Written by Subha Arulvarathan, Editor-in-Chief  
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Graphic By CASTO CHAN

When I flipped open the newspaper during my seminar's 20-minute break, I had to choke down a little gasp of shock. While my eyes eagerly scanned over the bold headline, the photo of Prime Minister Stephen Harper mid-gesture and the body of the article, I felt a pair of eyes glancing at me curiously. I directly met my classmate's gaze, although I had never talked to him before, and he asked me: "V guard. "Why do you care?"

"Why wouldn't I?" I quickly replied back. I became self-conscious as I peered at each page of the news section – Harper announces the Oct. 18 elections; Stéphane Dion outlines his plan to link the economy and the environment; Jack Layton focuses on "kitchen table issues"; Elizabeth May attempts to win her party's first seat. I tried to simultaneously process the information and filter out the idle chatter around me as students went on about some party they went to, or some movie they saw. Shouldn't I care about who becomes my country's leader for the next few years? Shouldn't I care about each party's platform on the economy, the environment and healthcare? Shouldn't I care about making an informed decision, and not made to feel guilty because of it an informed decision.

**The health of our democracy is at stake, especially if voter participation is on the decline**

Rather, it's easier to be swamped by a tidal wave of apathy – to be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of people when you travel to York, when you stand in line, when you sit in lecture or when you study in the library, all of which constantly reminds you that you are just one of thousands. The question often heard from students is: Why should I vote? The number of young voters aged 18 to 25 who said they were definitely going to vote in this election decreased by seven percent from the last election, according to a Dominion Institute survey conducted by Innovative Resear Marc Chailfoux, the executive director of the Dominion Institute. This is despite the fact the survey indicates nearly three-quarters of young Canadians are concerned about the low voter turnout, especially among their demographic. So why do young addition to the disillusionment and apathy I find pervasive and prevalent among the young people I know, the findings of the survey interestingly state that nearly 30 percent of youth between the ages of 18 to 25 don't feel comfortable voting because they don't know enough.

I completely understand that neither the parties nor Elections Canada make it easy to find the information you need – I myself have gotten lost trying to navigate the maze that is the Elections Canada website when trying to look up is essential for those heading to the polls but suck it up. Elections Canada offers several ways of fulfilling the voter ID requirement, making it far less complicated than people think it to be. The reality of the situation is that people have to stop making excuses for themselves and those around them. The health of our democracy is at stake, especially if voter participation is on the decline. Why do students feel their needs aren't being represent and hit the polls. What motivation are we giving to political parties to cater to our demographic when we don't even make the effort to vote? I find that voting is a privilege that only some Canadians take complete advantage of.

There are many countries where people have no real say in how their country is run (I immigrated from one of them). I am sick of people gambling with their future. I hope they come to the realization that the political party that comes into power has a lasting influence on how they live their lives, and the kind of country they will live in. Voting should be treated as an important duty, so make time in your ballot.

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