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# LEADERS & LEARNERS

THE VOICE OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/L'ASSOCIATION  
CANADIENNE DES ADMINISTRATEURS ET DES  
ADMINISTRATRICES SCOLAIRES

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### Upcoming Events

- A pan-Canadian Summit on Connecting ECD with Schools is in Montreal on January 29-30, 2009. A pre-summit meeting for senior educational leaders is on January 28, 2009. Details are at [www.councilecd.ca](http://www.councilecd.ca).
- The 2009 CASA Annual Conference will be in Calgary next July.

## Message From The President: Engaging All Students In Our Democracy

*“Rosa Parks rode the bus so that Martin Luther King could march. Martin Luther marched so that Obama could run and Obama ran so that we could fly.” ~ Anonymous*

**C**an you think of a time in the last three decades when so many people, young and old, have been so enthralled by the democratic election process as we just witnessed in the United States? While our own federal election has come and gone in the same fall season, with substantially less engagement, there is little question that citizens around the world, including our students, are actively talking about democracy and change and opportunity.



Jim Grieve  
CASA president

**Audrey Osler** once observed that “children are citizens, not citizens in waiting.” As educational leaders serving children and parents in every community in Canada, it falls to us to help teachers and administrators create the best possible environments for learning and working in our schools. Each of us strives to ensure that every child, at the end of every day, can say, “Today I learned, I grew, I felt included and, most of all, I felt valued.”

There is nothing more exhilarating for a superintendent or director of education than to spend time in schools and classrooms where principals and teachers are enabling students to experience human rights, to develop per-

sonal identities, to speak and write about their hopes and dreams, and to be made aware of possibilities every day. Where students are validated and affirmed as human beings they are empowered, and they can then begin to see themselves as successful learners.

This is an important and wonderful time to be leaders in Canadian education. It is such a privilege to be the country, the province, the community

where parents around the world bring their children to learn. It is during deep downturns in the economy that our most vulnerable children and their parents rely on us more than ever to create safe, welcoming places to learn that stimulate imaginations, build academic skills and insist upon social justice.

The democratic process in the historic United States election has raised huge expectations and opened doors to limitless possibilities for all children. How amazing it is to be an important part of giving each student the wings to “fly”!

Thank you for all the work you do every day on behalf of the children of Canada.

## Message From The Executive Director: Learning The Value Of Participating In Democracy

**E**ducation is everything that our students learn as they grow and become active participants in society. The lessons of the classroom are gathered from textbooks and resources, and also from what happens in our world. Some of the materials of curriculum are dull and just concepts or facts that must be mastered. Other materials are vital and actively involve students; these provide information that becomes part of life.

This has been a significant year for education to engage in learning about politics and the democratic process that touches our lives. Young people have had access to some very exciting developments and to some very exciting politicians.

The campaigns before the Canadian election started with a focus on environmental issues and moved to a very serious regard for maintaining the economy and supporting quality of life. The drama of the American election intensified as their economy faltered and moved dangerously close to depression. The call for change in that country took on a very serious tone, as it became a plea for a saviour to remedy economic conditions as well as changing the approach to international affairs, including the two ongoing wars.

In Canada, the voters did not see a proper alternative and maintained the status quo. In the United States, there was more urgency and dissatisfaction, and the result was significant change. The Americans took a historic step in selecting a new and youthful president—the first black American president.

Elections provide wonderful learning moments and this year's elections offered an abundance of them.

## Recognize A Colleague With The EXL Award

**C**ASA members who show exemplary leadership ability and who enhance school administration are eligible for the EXL Award. The award, jointly sponsored by Xerox Canada Limited and CASA, has been presented since 2002.

If you work with an outstanding CASA member or know a leader in our field who deserves to be recognized, why not nominate them for the 2009 award? You can share your sugges-



The EXL award.

Our curriculum should take advantage of what society has offered and we should have our students focus on questions such as


- What are the societal conditions that bring about change in government?
- How do political parties develop a national platform?
- What are the characteristics that make a leader attractive to millions of voters?
- How important are the regional considerations in a Canadian election? In an American election? Are they the same?
- Is there a difference between the Canadian and American political process? Which one is more effective?

There are endless issues to discuss following an election. Those discussions in our schools develop the societal interests of our students and encourage leaders of the future.

Leaders of education districts across Canada should make sure that students learn the value of participating in the democracy and look deeply into its processes.



Frank Kelly  
CASA executive director



**The only way to make sure people you agree with can speak is to support the rights of people you don't agree with.**

**—Eleanor Holmes Norton**

tion with the executive director of your provincial association. The national award recipient is selected from the provincial nominations and is announced during the opening ceremonies at CASA's annual conference.

The official nomination forms can be found on the CASA website at [www.casa-acas.ca](http://www.casa-acas.ca).

## Democracy 250: Students Celebrate The Roots Of Our Democracy

As mentioned in previous issues of this newsletter, CASA is able to present its conferences in part because of the generous support of its sponsors. One of the sponsors of the 2008 Summer Leadership Academy was Democracy 250, an initiative and organization established to recognize Nova Scotia's pioneering role in shaping the evolution of democracy in Canada. This country's first representative government was established in Nova Scotia on October 2, 1758, when the Nova Scotia House of Assembly met for the first time in a modest wooden building in Halifax.

Democracy 250 aims to recognize the importance of this significant achievement internationally, nationally and within the province of Nova Scotia. The initiative celebrates Canada's democratic traditions and achievements of the past 250 years. It aims to do this by generating a greater appreciation of the value and importance of how democracy has positively influenced the lives of Canadians and the prosperity of this young nation. A key objective of Democracy 250 is to instill in students and youth a sense of the value of democracy and the importance of voting.

In this issue of *Leaders & Learners*, Democracy 250 co-chairs **Russell MacLellan** and **Dr. John Hamm** speak about their experiences, primarily with school-aged children and youth, in leading this year-long initiative. Russell MacLellan first entered politics as a Liberal MP in 1979. In 1997, he became the leader of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party. He was the province's 31st premier from 1997 to 1999, then sat as an opposition MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) until resigning in 2001. John Hamm is a physician who became leader of the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Party in 1995. He was Nova Scotia's 32nd premier from 1999 until 2005, when he retired from politics.

You can learn more about Democracy 250 at [www.democracy250.ca](http://www.democracy250.ca) and [www.d250.ca](http://www.d250.ca).

*When you first became involved in this Democracy 250 experience, what did you hope to see the initiative achieve, with particular emphasis on the role this campaign would play in the lives of school children and educators in Nova Scotia and across Canada?*

**Russell MacLellan:** First of all, we were here to celebrate the legacy of the province of Nova Scotia being the site of the first parliamentary democracy in Canada and celebrate

the 250 years of parliamentary democracy in Canada, which as I say started here.

Then we started to say, look, we're very concerned about the declining voting rate, which could affect our democracy. We pledged that we would do everything we possibly can within our mandate to talk to as many young people—and particularly young people—and others as possible about the connection between voting and our democracy.



A young gentleman exercises his right to vote in the D250 mock polls at the IIHF Hockey Championships Fan-fest in Halifax in May 2008.

*All photos courtesy of Democracy 250*

**John Hamm:** When we undertook to celebrate what is a very important special moment for Nova Scotia, we realized that if our democracy is to continue strong then the declining participation rate among electors is something that obviously should attract our attention and it certainly did.

Part of what we undertook to do was to educate younger people of the value of our democracy and the importance that they become participants. With that in mind, we had a significant number of what we called youth encounters that allowed Rus-

*(Continued on page 4)*



**Democracy does not guarantee equality of conditions – it only guarantees equality of opportunity.**

**–Irving Kristol**



## Democracy 250, continued

*(Continued from page 3)*

sell and me and our team here at Democracy 250 to engage in particular high school students. We did this with several hundred high school students both from Nova Scotia and from across the rest of Canada and in some cases involving high school students from outside of Canada.

What we found when we discussed these issues with them is that young people are extremely well informed about issues. They can discuss very competently the environment, the war in Afghanistan, the status of health care in the country, the issues around crime in the streets.

But what they told us, and this is not just one or two students, this is almost a universal comment from students, is they don't know enough about the democratic process. They certainly didn't know very much about the history of the evolution of democracy in Canada, they don't know how a law is passed and they don't even know the difference between political parties. We view that as something that must be addressed.

Part of what we have concluded is that there is a very significant role for the school system to provide that specific information. Certainly young people are getting the information about issues but they're not getting the information that allows them to decide how they're going to take that interest in an issue and impact the outcome of that issue.

*Were there any moments that stood out for either of you as examples of why it is so vital to engage these*



Girl Guides pose as Joseph Howe in Province House as they participate in the Democracy 250 anniversary celebrations.



Local students sport their Democracy 250 tri-corner hats as they take part in the celebrations of the 250th anniversary of representative government in Nova Scotia.

*young people on the topic of democracy and voter participation?*

**John Hamm:** It's interesting—here's a story that I've told more than once. It's something that impacted me. This was one of the encounters we had with university students. We were sitting around talking about the same issues we talk about in the high school encounters and talking about the value of democracy and what democracy has contributed to our lives.

In the midst of all of that, there was a young man who had been sitting very quietly in the group who stood up and said, and he addressed both Mr. MacLellan and me, "I don't know if the people here understand exactly what this is all about. I'm from Egypt. You know, in Egypt we don't have the freedoms that people enjoy here in Canada. For example, if you decided you would publicly criticize the government, there'd be a strong possibility you'd simply disappear and no one would look for you."

And that was a very powerful statement. I think it opened the eyes of the other young people in the room to the importance of a democracy that gives us the freedoms and the protections that we enjoy here in Canada.

*That's amazing that he could share that story and have such a powerful impact*

*(Continued on page 5)*



**In politics, an organized minority is a political majority.**

—Jesse Jackson

## Democracy 250, continued

*(Continued from page 4)*  
*on the other participants.*

**Russell MacLellan:** It's obviously something that he feels every day because it was a burning issue with him. The thing that really has impressed me most of all were the comments of the students in the seminars that we've had. After they were over, they were asked to express their comments on what they got out of the gathering, their feelings and so on, and they were just glowing. There were a few adverse comments, of course, but most of all they thought that this was a tremendous initiative, that they got a lot out of it, and that they wished that a lot of their fellow students had the chance to hear what they've heard and experience what they've experienced. To me, that was very gratifying.

*What are some of the potential benefits offered to the young participants attending these forums and taking part in the conversations?*

**John Hamm:** What we hope will be a result of the encounters is that the young people who participated will become advocates with their peers. We can't sit down and engage every single student in Nova Scotia or, an even greater challenge, beyond Nova Scotia. By influ-



At the D250 Youth Town Hall in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Democracy 250 co-chair Russell MacLellan speaks with local students about the issues that are important to youth today.

encing these student leaders, we feel that we will make an impact, that we will generate an interest in our democracy that they will share with others.

But what came out loud and clear is that there is a role for schools because with the changing society that we now live in, a lot of the things that perhaps we learned at

home are no longer, for many young people, being passed along at home. That opens the door to schools taking on the challenge of talking about such things as the democratic process, talking about the structure of government, talking about how bills are made and talking about citizenship engagement.




Democracy 250 co-chair John Hamm shares a laugh with young Nova Scotians at the Yarmouth Youth Town Hall.

These are the kinds of things that came out in the discussions we had with young people and I do believe there is a role for schools to take this on in a very serious way. Many of the students made the comment that they simply don't get civics anymore in schools and I believe that a return to the teaching of civics in the public school system in Nova Scotia or even across the country would pay huge benefits in the long term in strengthening citizenship participation and strengthening democracy that has given us so much.

*What do you feel is the relationship between democracy, rates of voting participation and active citizenship and access to quality public education, particularly in a young nation like ours?*

**Russell MacLellan:** I think it's very significant. As John has mentioned, civics is not taught in our schools. Until John initiated it a couple of years ago, we didn't have a Canadian history course in all of high school in Nova Scotia. This is not helping. They need that connect. As John mentioned earlier, they know the issues, they discuss the issues, they just haven't made the connection between the fact that if they're going to

*(Continued on page 6)*



In true democracy  
every man and  
woman is taught to  
think for himself or  
herself.  
—Mohandas K.  
Gandhi



## Democracy 250, continued

*(Continued from page 5)*

make a difference in the issues, they have to vote. Not only to vote but it has to be an informed vote. I think those with whom we met understand that.

Really, democracy is a right, it's a freedom. There are other freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and of course the rule of law—but, as we told these students, democracy and the right to vote is the most important right of all because if we lose that, we will eventually lose the other freedoms as well as the rule of law. Preserving democracy, which requires your informed vote, is absolutely paramount.

**John Hamm:** What generated our interest in all of this was an examination of the voting profiles in recent Canadian elections. It's no secret that we are having fewer and fewer Canadians voting as time goes on. The greatest falloff is when you look at the demographics of where the change is occurring. Primarily it's with younger voters.

A number that we have used on a number of occasions is in the last federal election, prior to the one we just had a few weeks ago, 1.2 million fully qualified voters between 18 and 24 didn't vote. Now that's about 76 per cent. That means between ages 18 and 24, only 24 per cent of fully qualified voters are bothering to go and cast their ballots. Research tells us that those who don't get into the voting habit early are far less likely to take up the habit later on. A democracy, to be strong, requires a broad base of participation. If we lose that broad base of participation we will lose our democracy to special interest groups.

*It sounds like this has been quite a moving and personal experience for the two of you. What has been the most meaningful aspect for you during this year-long celebration of democracy's roots in Canada?*

**Russell MacLellan:** For me it's just been the general opportunity to speak to young people, and on certain occasions to adults as well, to voice our passion for de-



Students from Chester Area Middle School (above, pictured at Province House in Halifax) and from across the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (below) took part in Pizza & Politics programs this spring.




mocracy, what we feel is necessary to preserve our democracy, and that we want them to have the same feeling that we do and to share the importance of preserving our democracy. Not only preserving but strengthening. It's been a wonderful experience.

**John Hamm:** One of the things that was very encouraging to me was the uptake among young people. We did these encounters mostly with high school students but also with university students, with elementary school students and even with young professionals. What was really encouraging was the enthusiasm that they demonstrated once you got them involved in a discussion about what this country is all about, how it got to be this way and what their role is in creating for this country a bright and prosperous future.

The encouraging part is that the message is well received. As a politician, sometimes you have a message that is well received and sometimes you have a message that is not well received. It's always very gratifying when you have a message that has been well received and this one was extremely well received among young people.

*What advice can you share with our readers, who are senior education administrators, on making sure that the students in their districts are afforded similar opportunities to learn about democracy and the political process, and to encourage students to become interested and remain engaged in that political process, like the students from*

*(Continued on page 7)*



**Democracy is not being, it is becoming. It is easily lost, but never finally won.**  
—William Hastie

## Democracy 250, continued

(Continued from page 6)

*Nova Scotia and the ones you met from across Canada?*

**Russell MacLellan:** I would say to them please, please, please support the equivalent of a civics program in the school system. It is absolutely vital to give the young people an idea of our democracy and our form of government. It doesn't have to be a separate course. It could be part of another course, it can be lectures, but it also would be nice if there were hands-on exercises, a mock vote and things like that.



Students from Shannon Park Elementary enjoy a school presentation of the history of democracy through music by members of Symphony Nova Scotia.

re-engaging young people in the process that gave us our country.

The Democracy 250 celebration that we're talking about out of which all of this arose is supported by all political parties. This is a non-partisan approach. All parties are unanimous in agreement that this is a serious issue for all of us. I believe that those of us who have been involved in politics and are now backing away understand as well as anyone how important all of this can be and also appreciate the very valuable role that schools can play in all of this.

**Russell MacLellan:** We need support and help in what we're doing. The more people, the more organizations

It is absolutely essential to make that connection and take away the mystery of voting and participation in our democratic system. I think this is essential. I feel very sad that it's not in our school system and I hope that that changes.

**John Hamm:** I want to echo what Russell has just said. The feedback that we had was absolutely phenomenal. Students have said they have an interest in this.

I believe that the education system can contribute a tremendous value to our country by




A young man tries a tri-corner hat on for size as provincial reenactors look on during the Democracy 250 anniversary celebrations at the Grand Parade in Halifax this October.



During a tour of Province House in early September, Sergeant-at-Arms Ken Greenham shows students from the Historica Encounters program the Royal Mace.

that we have bringing this issue to the forefront, the better our chances of reaching as many people as possible and the democratic future of our country really depends on this being put forward.

*That's very true. It's been an exciting year for politics here in Nova Scotia, across the country and, indeed, across the continent. Thank you for sharing your thoughts on the experience with Democracy 250.*



**Voting is one of the few things where boycotting in protest clearly makes the problem worse rather than better.**

—Jane Auer



## CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd



**John Forbeck**  
Ontario

John was recently appointed superintendent of education—operations for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. For the past four years, he has served as a school superintendent of education and held various system leadership roles. His system portfolio responsibilities have included compensatory education, community and continuing education, strings program, archives, profiling excellence and school revitalization.

For the past 29 years, John has demonstrated an unfailing commitment to strengthening his community while offering exceptional leadership in pursuit of academic excellence for students. He has a longstanding reputation for positive leadership and for building successful relationships.

A proud Hamiltonian, John has a long professional and personal history in his community.



**Roger Nippard**  
Alberta

Roger is the superintendent of schools for the Northern Lights School Division in Bonnyville. Prior to his appointment in 2007, he served as an assistant superintendent with the division since 2001. Roger also held various education positions, including assistant director—programs, partnership facilitator, vice principal and teacher, in Newfoundland between 1981 and 2001.

He received his post-secondary education at Memorial University and the University of Ottawa. He has presented at many national and international conferences.

Roger and his wife Marilyn live in Cold Lake and have three children. He especially enjoys outdoor activities, such as hunting, fishing, canoeing and camping; reading; playing and coaching many sports; and collecting sports cards and memorabilia.



**Jean McHarg**  
Ontario

Jean is an academic superintendent of education at Sudbury Catholic Schools. Since the introduction of the Commodore 64 computer into educational communities, Jean has had a keen interest in employing technology to engage students and prepare them for the future by infusing 21st-century learning skills into the curriculum. She is the lead for an exciting grade 7/8 one-to-one laptop program at her board.

One of Jean's passions is being a TRIBES trainer; she believes that this process sets the stage for differential instruction, collaborative learning and knowledge building.

Jean and her retired husband Bob live in Lively, Ontario. They enjoy spending time with their two grandchildren, fishing, travelling, and visiting friends and family across Canada.



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## Our Mission:

CASA will advance quality public education and excellence in system level leadership through advocacy and national collaboration.



## Our Beliefs:

CASA believes that:

- Cultural diversity is a unique strength that enriches our nation.
- Communication and collaboration with parents and other partners is integral to successful student learning.
- Quality public education provides the best opportunity for a nation to enhance the lives of all its citizens.
- Effective system, provincial and national level leadership enables and supports excellence in teaching and learning.
- A comprehensive education, equitable and accessible to all, is the key to meeting the diverse needs and securing a successful future for our youth.

Specific strategies to advance the mission:

- Establish position papers on specific topics as they relate to the beliefs and interests of the association.
- Recruit new people.
- Establish a national representation.
- Establish a three-tier public relations and publications strategy.
- Establish a funding team to create an operating budget.

## How To Put Your School Division In The Spotlight: Contribute To *Leaders & Learners*

Just as the front page of this newsletter states, *Leaders & Learners* is the voice of the Canadian Association of School Administrators. We want to hear your voice. Consider putting forth your ideas, articles and photos for future editions.

Maybe there is a success story happening in your neck of the woods and you want to share it. Perhaps there is an issue in education you would like to see discussed by a cross-country panel. You may want to share your reaction to what a panelist said at a recent CASA conference, at your provincial affiliate's meeting or at other education events. *Leaders & Learners* would like to hear about your ideas.

You don't have to worry about being a professional wordsmith to contribute. Your newsletter editor can help you. Your rough ideas can be written into full-length articles for you, and your submitted articles and photographs can be professionally edited.

Regular readers of *Leaders & Learners* know that in most issues we run a feature called "Faces In The Crowd."

It is a section in the newsletter set aside to allow our members to get to know one another a little better. This isn't always easy when CASA members are spread out across such a huge but sparsely populated country with only a few opportunities each year to meet in person. We hope that this feature helps to bridge the distances between us.

Do you know a CASA member who deserves to be in the spotlight? Is there a colleague that you would like everyone to meet? Maybe you'd even like to share your own story in a future "Faces In The Crowd." Don't be bashful! Please get in touch and share the news about your colleagues or yourself.

Regular editions of the newsletter come out six times a year, with a special double issue following the annual summer leadership academy. Give yourself at least six to eight weeks lead time if your idea is at all time sensitive.

If you have story ideas, questions, concerns or comments, please contact the editor, **Tara Lee Wittchen**, via email at [tarawittchen@eastlink.ca](mailto:tarawittchen@eastlink.ca).