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## Apathy is Boring, but common

**Google "voter apathy" this week and you'll find links to stories about the dismal turnout for Tuesday's federal election.**

By Surrey Now October 17, 2008

Google "voter apathy" this week and you'll find links to stories about the dismal turnout for Tuesday's federal election.

A paltry 59.1 per cent of Canada's 23,401,064 eligible voters bothered to cast a ballot; nearly 10 million more stayed home.

That's the lowest voter turnout ever for a Canadian federal election - and the records go back to 1867. The previous low was 60.9 per cent for the 2004 election.

Scott Nicoll is a guy who knows his way around politics. A lawyer who lives in White Rock, Nicoll is the former president of the now defunct Surrey Electors Team that dominated Surrey city council for a dozen years. He's also active in provincial and federal politics.

During the federal campaign, Nicoll worked for Liberal Brenda Locke in her failed bid to unseat Conservative Nina Grewal in Fleetwood-Port Kells. Tuesday's low voter turnout has him worried about the future of democracy in Canada.

"Voter apathy is something we're going to be talking more about going forward," Nicoll said Thursday.

"It's particularly bad among young voters. There was almost no youth involved. If you went into the campaigns, there was hardly anyone under 40 involved."

Voter apathy among young Canadians is the raison d'etre of Apathy is Boring, a national organization headquartered in Montreal. AiB uses art and technology to engage youth in the electoral process.

Executive director and founder Ilona Dougherty said she expects the number of young people who voted in Tuesday's election was less than in 2006. She said youth voter turnout in the early years of this decade was down around 22 per cent, but rose to about 44 per cent for the 2006 federal election.

"Young people don't feel the issues that are important to them are being addressed. They also feel that politicians don't go to them, to where they are," Dougherty said.

AiB has a kit it sends to candidates with advice on attracting young voters and Dougherty said getting them involved early is crucial.

"It's been proven statistically that if you don't start voting at 18, the likelihood is you'll never start."

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