

Youth aim to 'shake up' civic engagement in COVID-19 recovery

COVID-19 has changed the world and, as we look ahead to what a post-virus world might look like, local youth are spending their downtime looking at ways to advocate for a meaningful recovery at all three levels of government.

Future Majority, a grassroots organization spearheaded by younger Canadians ' millennials and GenZs ' have used this unusual time of working and learning at home to find their voice and will come together for a virtual town hall next week to connect the leaders of tomorrow with the decision-makers of today on the issues that matter to a fast-growing voting bloc.

Future Majority is currently focused on a 'Green & Just Recovery' campaign, which aims to 'shake up' Canadian politics in terms of our post recovery strategy.'

'This really looks at taking a more sustainable and equitable approach to tackling issues such as climate change, racial inequality and mental health care,' Future Majority's Aisha O'Gilvie tells The Auroran. 'We have a volunteer team from York Region and we're kind of fed up with the response not only locally but federally in terms of the actions taken.'

York Region returning to Stage 2 of the Province's plan to re-open Ontario has only helped fuel their drive to have a lasting impact, says O'Gilvie.

Their virtual Town Hall, which will be held November 12 at 6.30 p.m.is not the first roundtable they have spearheaded. A York Region event this past June brought a number of volunteers together and, working in tandem, they have fanned out on social media and through other channels to grow their numbers.

'Getting a group of like-minded people who have worked on past campaigns, and some people who have never heard of us but are getting more involved and engaged, especially in current times, was really the thing that got us all rolling,' says O'Gilvie. 'One of the issues we've specifically tried to emphasize are a lot of those issues that are on a wider-scale that align nationwide. We have been focused on those nationwide issues to attract greater attention, to attract more people, and also to highlight the unique situations that are currently happening in York Region.

'When the pandemic first hit, I don't think anyone had any anticipation of how long this would last. I think coming into this second-time-around we're really looking at addressing those key issues and really trying to narrow in on things that are important.'

Future Majority points to an Abacus Data poll from this past September that indicated nearly 70 per cent of young Canadians under the age of 30 want to see 'bold changes' from governments coming out of the pandemic, including transitioning to a low-carbon economy to address climate change.

Further studies, they say, pointed to student mental health being in decline with more reported instances of depression, panic attacks and anxiety.

'Coupled with the threat of climate change, an economy damaged by COVID, and historic levels of student debt, it is no surprise the status quo is being questioned by Canadian youth,' they say.

And this is something York Region organizers are hearing at the local level as well.

'This is a time that regardless of whether mental health is your main priority, whether it is racial injustice, or economic troubles, I think the one thing we can all unite on is we're going through this for the first time and it's a very different situation from what we thought we would be in,' says O'Gilvie. 'Looking ahead, how are we going to get to a new normal? It is definitely not going to be similar to what it was pre-pandemic.'

For more information on Future Majority, including how to register for next week's Town Hall event, visit futuremajority.ca or www.facebook.com/events/1047457869014657.

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