

Young blood should be taken seriously in politics

Written By DMYTRO BASMAT

What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word 'politician'? Many people envision a politician as someone in their older years, with a higher education, and a long list of accomplishments behind them, typically in law, or business. If I were to ask you this question 30 years ago, you probably would have envisioned a man, likely white and in his 50s or 60, in the position. That has changed to where a record number of Ontario MPPs are women, and whereas an equal number of men and women sit in federal cabinet positions. Diversity in government has also grown and now represents society more accurately. Yet, governments still do not accurately represent our population through age.

Federally, in the House of Commons only five of 338 MPs are under 30 years of age, that's 1.4 percent of MPs. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that more than 1.4 percent of the population is aged 18-30. Our country, our province, and our communities are in desperate need of youth representation in politics. We build up our communities for the next generation, the Millennials and the Generation Zs of the world, yet most of the decisions are made by people that may not understand what the next generation's needs are. This is why we need youth in politics, to shine a light on the true needs of the future.

Before filing my nomination for public school Trustee in Caledon as a 19 year old, I discussed the issue with MPP Sam Oosterhoff, who is the youngest MPP at Queen's Park at just 20 years of age. Sam told me that while many people will be supportive of my candidacy, many people will think I am too young. And he was right because I occasionally get the question 'Aren't you a bit young to be running?'. The answer to that question is 'no, because we need someone that is going through the dilemmas that youth are facing to bring new ideas to the table'.

It's a straight, tough response but one that is needed in today's day in age.

Ask yourself, how can a generation that didn't experience many of the problems that young adults nowadays go through figure out solutions to said problems? How can politicians tackle the issue of living in your parents' basement into your late 20s, without knowing the constraint young adults face with employment? How can they solve the increased mental health problems youth experience, even though they lived in a time when talking about mental health was frowned upon? Your guess is as good as mine.

We need an increase in young politicians to not only represent our society properly, but to come up with new innovative ideas that will sustain the generations to come. Let's avoid governments that have no one under 30 in them. Let's ensure that just like with gender and race our society can accurately depict what living in 2018 looks like. Our community, our children, and young generations deserve better, and we can make it happen.