

New non-profit group for youth launched in Caledon

Written By JOSHUA SANTOS

A new non-profit youth organization has been established in Caledon.

Youth Activists Inc. is a grassroots group focusing on the development of young leadership skills, community organizing, and advocacy for youth related issues within the province of Ontario, according to their website.

Dmytro Basmat, founder and executive director of Youth Activists Inc. said the idea was formulated during the municipal election when he ran for a school board trustee position.

He realized the influence young people have on community issues from mental health initiatives or LGBTQ+ activism among many others, during his campaign.

"These are all issues that young people thought as important, and I realized that as a young person, we can have a lot of influence in the community," said Basmat. "I decided that, win or lose, I was going to create this non-profit because frankly we need more young activists here locally and, in the province, standing up for things young people believe in."

Basmat placed second with 1,606 votes for the office of Peel District School Board Trustee. Stan Cameron was re-elected 8,015 votes and Amandeep Singh placed third with 1,523 votes, according to the official Town of Caledon election results.

The organizations' headquarters are at Martha Street in Bolton. They're working closely with representatives of Che's Youth Centre to get new members.

"We're trying to increase our membership," said Basmat. "We would love help from the community, we would love interaction from the community. We're not 100 per cent sure if we're looking for board members but membership in general in the group is our number one priority."

"Honestly, I don't think there's enough for young people to do in this town right now, and that's why we created this as well, to give youth an opportunity to not only be leaders in our community, but give them a chance to interact with one another."

Once off the ground, the plan is for the group to host seminars, trainings and overnight camps that will give teenagers an opportunity to learn how to lead in their communities, all while serving different interests. Their program will reportedly be devised based off modern leadership training, but will also be driven through personal influence.

He hopes to get through to children at schools through trustees in various educational institutions throughout Caledon.

"I think young people aren't being heard on issues," said Basmat. "I also think, by creating this non-profit, it's going to give them an opportunity to develop the skills needed to stand up for what they believe in. That's why we cater to our tagline of ignite your passion, because we want to make sure young people, with different interests can be passionate about what project they want, if it's about healthcare or environmentalism, as long as it's beneficial to society."

The group is in the planning stages of establishing their framework. Basmat said they hope to have a launch in the upcoming months at a possible banquet.

His passion for empowering youth comes from the idea that youth are not being heard in the province and community, according to Basmat.

?During the municipal election, there were ups and downs,? said Basmat. ?Certainty a lot of people didn't believe young people should be able to run. The 1500 people that voted for me believed in young people and they believed in a change for our community here. That's where the passion comes from. Inspiring people to believe that young people can make a difference in our community.?

He said they plan to advocate on provincial issues such as changes to OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program) for post-secondary students.

The provincial government removed complementary tuition grants and replaced them with 10 per cent off tuition. They've also removed the grace period that previously enabled students to begin paying back their loan within six months of finding a steady career, among many other changes.

Basmat said the organization drives primarily towards giving leadership skills to high school students while also advocating for all interests prevalent to young people.

He helped re-introduce and advocate for a Peel Youth Charter in May 2018 ? a document signed by elected officials representing over 1.5 million. He is a full-time politics and governance student at Ryerson University.