

Youth focused on affordability, climate in this election: Future Majority

By Brock Weir

Action on affordability and climate change are top of mind for area young voters, according to Future Majority.

Future Majority is an organization for youth led by youth with the goal of boosting engagement among younger voters. They take a two-prong approach connecting with young adults: face to face conversation and relational organizing, which tasks them with engaging with friends, classmates and colleagues around voting and the issues that matter to them.

As Ontarians head to the polls on June 2, the group has been hard at work canvassing young voters to see what issues matter to them this time around, and their findings are not that removed from voters at large.

Future Majority runs a couple of focus groups to get the pulse of young people and the issues that matter to them, says spokesperson and university student Elijah Santana. What we are seeing are significant concerns about the environment in regards to action on climate change. We're seeing concerns about increasing unaffordability across the Province, particularly in the housing sector, and there's also the mental health aspect to it: increasing access to mental health resources and expanding our mental health programs within the Province.

Santana is a more recent member of Future Majority.

The mission of the group really spoke to him in raising political awareness and getting more young people involved in the political process in a non-partisan way.

This is done through canvassing events, reaching out through social media, outreach to media organizations and also through a website called VoteTube where young people are able to ask party leaders questions about the issues that matter to them, things that impact them, and have them actually respond.

In the Federal election last year, Future Majority was able to run some local youth events to kind of attract young voters to remind them that the election is coming up and they should register to vote and get out to vote. They did things like pledge drives, reminding people of the date they have to vote, the steps they have to take to vote, and also making clear the importance of voting for young people.

I think a lot of people think their vote doesn't matter, they are uninterested or apathetic to the political process, but young people make up 30 per cent of Ontario's electorate and they are concentrated in key ridings that party leaders need to speak to [in order] to have a majority government, particularly in Mississauga, Brampton and Newmarket-Aurora.

To challenge the idea that the youth vote might not matter, Santana says it isn't hard to find examples of action when young people come together to push for change.

It does actually influence policy platforms in subsequent elections, he says. For example, in the last Federal election, young Canadians raised the issue of climate change over and over and now we're seeing all parties include climate action on their platforms. It is clear that when we show up to the poll in that regard we do hold some power to push for better and young people participating can influence elections [and] they can really make themselves heard among political leaders.

I think for quite a while politics has been dominated by the middle-aged to older crowd who tend to show up to vote more, but politicians look for votes. If young people are voting, that is where their policies will shift to.

For more information on Future Majority, including how to get involved, visit futuremajority.ca.