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SPEAKERS

Diya Mehaisi, Andrew Yang, Andrew Bisnauth, Georgina Parker, Bev Fields, Peggy Nash, Adelaide Santos, Rebecca Kraft, Yovana Jamwant, Maya Abramson, Simon Webb, Diba Saliani, Jonathan Nanfara, Deshreeni Puhambugoda

M Maya Abramson 00:04

Welcome to the first episode of the On The Record Podcast: Fall 2022 Edition. Today, we'll be taking you through the TMU Week in Review. We're looking at what happened this week and how TMU students are reacting to those events.

G Georgina Parker 00:17

First up, Premier Ford announced earlier this week that Monday, September 19 would not be a holiday for the province of Ontario, in honour of Queen Elizabeth's funeral. Some are on board with that decision, while some were really hoping for the day off.

A Andrew Yang 00:31

Also, this semester kicked off the previous week with an orientation week for incoming students. We'll be recapping the week's events and talking to students and coordinators about what worked well, and what could be improved for next year's cohort.

M Maya Abramson 00:42

I'm Maya Abramson.

G Georgina Parker 00:44

I'm Georgina Parker.

A Andrew Yang 00:45
I'm Andrew Yang.

M Maya Abramson 00:46
And that's what's coming up on today's TMU Week in Review. On Thursday, September 8, England's royal family announced the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Last Tuesday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that September 19 would be a federal holiday. Therefore, federal government employees will have the day off on Monday while the Queen's funeral takes place in England. While many hoped this would mean a day off for all Ontarians, Premier Ford announced shortly after that Ontario would observe the day as a national day of mourning rather than a holiday. So, students and most workers are still expected to go about their day normally.

G Georgina Parker 01:25
At 1pm on the 19th, there'll be a province wide moment of silence. In accordance with this, the TTC announced Wednesday that they will be pausing transit service for 96 seconds on Monday afternoon; one second for every year of the Queen's life. The bell at Old City Hall will also ring 96 times on Monday, once every minute starting at 1pm.

M Maya Abramson 01:45
Here to talk to us about this is Peggy Nash, chair of the centre for labour management relations advisory committee at the Ted Rogers School of Management, and a former NDP Member of Parliament for Parkdale-High Park. What are the ramifications of the death of the British monarch for Canadians?

P Peggy Nash 02:03
Well, the British monarch is our head of state, represented in Canada by the Governor General, and her provincial and territorial representatives. And so with the passing of the Queen, we have a new head of state in the person of Charles III.

G Georgina Parker 02:23
And were you expecting or surprised that Justin Trudeau announced a Federal holiday or that Premier Ford decided to not have a provincial holiday for Ontarians when the Queen died?

P Peggy Nash 02:35
Well, if you think about the fact that the Queen is our head of state, represented through the Governor General, I guess it makes sense for him to call a federal holiday. And it only applies to

Governor General, I guess it makes sense for him to call a federal holiday. And it only applies to federal government employees, not to private businesses or federally regulated businesses. But I was not surprised that the province decided not to follow suit. They were getting lobbied heavily by businesses not to call a holiday. And I think also the reality is that for most Canadians, they don't feel the same connection to the British monarch that previous generations did.

M

Maya Abramson 03:36

Why do you think that might be?

P

Peggy Nash 03:37

Well, Canada has changed. Well it's changed demographically, obviously, and many Canadians did not really grow up in that same constitutional monarchy system.

M

Maya Abramson 03:57

Do you feel that young people like including TMU students at our university are too detached from the monarchy to really feel the effects of this loss?

P

Peggy Nash 04:08

You know, everybody has their own individual reaction. I think a lot of people on a personal level, feel a sense of sadness or a recognition of the end of an era. I think a lot of people have felt a variety of emotions some, you know, ranging from respect to admiration for the Queen. However, I do think that there is a growing number of people in Canada and in many other countries who are critical of the British Monarchy for obvious reasons. For the legacy of slavery and colonialism, the violence and the theft in many cases of peoples around the world. And so I think there are mixed emotions. I think that while some people may feel sadness, grief, a sense of loss, just a sense of affection, that there are many others who look at the British monarchy in a much more critical eye, and some people feel both. So, you know, while the Queen was technically our head of state for over 70 years, because it is mostly a symbolic role I think that while people know who she is, they know of her family, they know some of the history, there is less of a visceral connection, than I think there used to be in Canada and less of a connection, than I think there is in the UK.

G

Georgina Parker 06:04

And so how do you think Ontarians as a whole are feeling about Premier Ford's announcement?

P

Peggy Nash 06:12

Well, I don't know how Ontarians as a whole are feeling. But I think there there have been mixed reaction. I think there's a lot of people who say 'no, we should not get a holiday

mixed reaction. I think there's a lot of people who say, 'no, we should not get a holiday, because we don't feel that attachment'. On the other hand, I think a lot of people would really welcome another day off work, not necessarily because they want to remember the queen, I think a lot of people are feeling overworked and underpaid. And another holiday would be very welcome. I do know that the business lobby was pressing hard with the with the province and with the federal government to not have provincial or a federal mandated holiday. They were arguing that many businesses are just getting back on their feet and some still haven't fully recovered from the pandemic, and the last thing they need is the expense of another paid holiday. So I think the premier listened to that; he has called for a minute of silence. I mean, some will argue we don't have Remembrance Day as a paid holiday for the purpose of being able to commemorate veterans in the school system in the workplace. And that will probably take place in many, many workplaces, there will be commemorations. And there will be some who argue that it should have been a holiday because the Queen is our head of state. Or because people just really would like additional time off.

G Georgina Parker 08:05

We wanted to see how TMU students felt about the lack of holiday on Monday. We were also curious if TMU students felt personally affected by the death of the Queen. So we took it to the street.

M Maya Abramson 08:15

First, we spoke to Jonathan Nanfara, a social work student in second year.

J Jonathan Nanfara 08:20

I mean, you know, she's, she's someone I've known for, like, my whole life, you know, since I was born. She's definitely like a very substantial figure in our society, especially in Canada. But like, I'm not really affected, you know, rest in peace to the Queen, but, you know, I'm not gonna like, it's not going to keep me up at night.

G Georgina Parker 08:40

Then we spoke to Adelaide Santos, a fourth year student in the procom program.

A Adelaide Santos 08:45

My grandma's pretty sad about it. I'm pretty unaffected. I work at SickKids and I have to work on holidays and weekends. And I'd have to work if it was a holiday.

M Maya Abramson 08:57

Here's what Simon Webb a first year, sociology student had to say.

S

Simon Webb 09:02

I was honestly I was kind of hoping they'd make it a holiday on the eighth, the day that she actually died, because that was my birthday. So I was really hoping that like I would be able to not go to school or work again on my birthday, and we'd get something out of it. But, you know, other than like, the fact that like, the day that she died was my birthday, I would say that I'm not too affected. My grandmother, funnily enough is also upset about it. She's like, to the extent that like she was like wearing black until the funeral. Other than that, and like really just having to hear about it all the time, which is like really, honestly, like, I don't need to hear about it that much. I feel like I guess it's kind of it's weird for people to like, think about because she has been alive and been the Queen for so so long. But also like she has been alive for so so long. Like it had to happen eventually. And I think yeah, it's it's it's gonna have happen.

G

Georgina Parker 10:01

Next up we spoke to you Yovana Jamwant from the class of 2025 in business law.

Y

Yovana Jamwant 10:08

I mean, I think it sucks. I've I personally want the long weekend. And since we're still with the Crown, if they're gonna get it, we might as well get the day off too. And I'm not like personally affected but it's just kind of it's it's iconic thing the Queen dying so I feel like we should be a part of it too.

M

Maya Abramson 10:25

Finally, we spoke to a second year acting student, Deshreeni Puhambugoda.

D

Deshreeni Puhambugoda 10:30

Honestly, like, why do we need to respect her death. She's just another colonizer like, there's really no reason for us to drop everything to respect her. That's what I think. I would like for her to return all those jewels on her crown to my country and every other country that she stole it from. I think the royal family is just glorified celebrities, so I don't really care about them.

M

Maya Abramson 10:55

Evidently, TMU students have mixed opinions on what they hoped for Monday, but still questions remain in terms of what the Queen's death means for Monday and for a potential holiday in the future. We asked Peggy Nash what the future might hold?



G

Georgina Parker 11:07

What do you expect the day of the Queen's funeral to look like for Ontarians?

P

Peggy Nash 11:14

Well, I think some people will be watching the ceremonies live at 6am. Especially a lot of seniors, who felt that the Queen more was a defining feature of their whole lives. They may get up early and watch the Queen and certainly there are a number of Canadians who are very monarchist and they will be following this closely. Many others might see parts of the ceremony or the services on the news or via social media. And then I think some workplaces, many workplaces, including Provincial government offices will have a moment of silence to remember the Queen. And I think you know, there are many people for whom the Queen doesn't feel particularly relevant, or they are in fact antagonistic to the symbol of the British monarchy and so likely they will not be tuning in at all.

M

Maya Abramson 12:36

And how does the death of the Queen impact the sessions of Ontario's Parliament?

P

Peggy Nash 12:40

Parliament? Well the Ontario Legislature will not be sitting. Federally, the Prime Minister of course and the Governor General and a number of provincial representatives will be in London for the service. I believe that parliament is still sitting on Monday, but perhaps not. I'm not sure about that. They may have decided not to suspend parliament for that day, as recognition of the Queen. That's probably more likely.

G

Georgina Parker 13:22

Do you think that we will like we should expect a holiday like Victoria Day or something similar to that to honour Queen Elizabeth II in the future?

P

Peggy Nash 13:33

Well, I think that there are many people who just think we don't get enough time off work and would really like an additional holiday. And I'm very sympathetic to that. In terms of honouring Queen Elizabeth, who is more relevant to living Canadians than Queen Victoria, perhaps there will be a move afoot to recognize Queen Elizabeth rather than Victoria, on that spring holiday. Whether we should have an additional holiday, I suppose there will be the argument that if we didn't have a holiday for the Queen's funeral, we're unlikely to get a brand new holiday to commemorate her on an annual basis.

A

Andrew Yang 14:30

Oh look a week to new students kick off their school year with a week full events, freebies and new friends because that's what orientation is all about. Right? Courtesy of TMU's very own student union, this is the first in person orientation since 2019. We spoke to Andrew Bisnauth, the associate director of campus and community engagement, about his experience in orchestrating TMU's week of welcome for incoming students.

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Georgina Parker 14:54

So what's your role when it comes to TMU's orientation week events?

A

Andrew Bisnauth 14:57

So for orientation I help oversee the entire planning process. So a bit of brainstorming, the training over the orientation team, development of the calendar and then advising and guiding the students staff, but also professional staff as well. And then also do some of the coordination campus wide. So risk assessments, room bookings, marketing. So we pretty much have our hands in every single thing when it comes to orientation.

A

Andrew Yang 15:27

Yeah, and how does the team, the orientation team determine what sorts of activities will take place during o-week?

A

Andrew Bisnauth 15:33

Yeah, so a lot of them are really based on what's been successful in the past. So if we see that events are really well attended, have done really well in terms of our quality of, of hosting those events and facilitating those activities, then we try to bring those back. But a large part of it, I would say at least 75% of those are up to the students that we bring in. So we have a team of about 10 student staff and we really want to hear from them about what they're interested in, what they think students that are their age or similar, might want to see, and then we let them sort of share with us what that looks like, and then build that calendar together. And so it really is a collaborative process between our staff sort of, with these traditional events that happen every year, the kickoff, SLC live, some of the concerts that we do, and then sprinkling in some of those new things every year from the student staff that we bring in.

G

Georgina Parker 16:33

And so what, if any, were some of the sorts of activities that were held this year, specifically steered towards international students, BIPOC students, 2SLGBTQIA+ students?

A

Andrew Bisnauth 16:46

Yeah, so over the last five years or so we've really like expanded the number of programs that we have for different community based groups of folks that identify with a specific community. So this year, we do have an international student event assistant who, who plans and coordinates all of the events for international students. And so there are about 10 events, specifically for international students, that includes the ISS welcome party, life in Canada, so a lot of events that help welcome students to Canada, but also teaches them and advises them on things that they might need; bank accounts, how to access health insurance, phone plans, credit cards, all those things we try to share with with students that have never been here before, just to get them a little bit more acclimated and comfortable with their environments. For BIPOC students, we hosted a ton of mixers, and just a lot of events that helped bring those communities together. And so the last couple of years, we've noticed that students really want to be with students that identify like them, where they could find themselves represented in the events or the people that are in the events. And so things like drag brunches, 2SLGBTQ+ mixers and ally mixers. We did host a black identified student orientation. And so that had a few events as a part of it. So a melanated mindfulness event, and some events that focused a little bit on the academics and how to finance your your education. And so that's just a little bit. But we also host a lot of events for mature students, Muslim students, students with disabilities, indigenous students, there's a lot of events that we've started to introduce over the last couple of years, mostly based on need and sort of what our students are telling us. That helps to, you know, introduce students to different programs and services that might cater to them specifically, but also so that they could find their own community on campus.

A

Andrew Yang 18:55

Right. And in terms of o-week, this year, how do you feel those events that were catered toward those students in those groups? How do you think they went overall?

A

Andrew Bisnauth 19:01

Overall, I think they went really well, especially the ones that were geared towards those who identified as 2SLGBTQ+, we found that that the response and the participation was overwhelming. So where we anticipated maybe 50 or 60 students, we were seeing 100, 150, 200 students coming out. And on a campus like ours, where space is really limited, you notice that so you notice that if you put an event where you're expecting 50, but 200 show up, you see that in the space and you see that in the lines, and you see that in your your giveaways running out really quickly. And so those events were really successful. They've been successful for a really long time. And yeah, we will continue to do those because they they really impact students in really meaningful ways.

G

Georgina Parker 19:54

And so specifically in terms of students, I guess it could be anybody but maybe steered a bit more towards students with disabilities. How did accessibility play a role in planning this year's orientation events?

A

Andrew Bisnauth 20:07

Yeah, so the way that we looked at it was sort of twofold. So we know coming back from two years of a pandemic, with all of our sort of restrictions being lifted, there were going to be some students that were maybe a little bit apprehensive about how to participate in events like this. And so we really tried to prioritize outdoor spaces, large spaces that we were hosting events. So you saw a lot of our events, either in the quad Lake Devo, Nelson Mandela walkway, but also in some of the largest spaces within the SLC. So the sixth floor, eighth floor, fourth floor, the amphitheater, we tried to use these big air spaces to make students feel a little bit more comfortable, whether they had a mask on or not, that they would feel a little bit more comfortable. When it comes to accommodations and students with disabilities, there are certain things that we do to make students feel welcome. And so for our larger events, we always have an ASL interpreter. And so whether we're asked to or not, that's something that we always do, because we never know who's gonna show up. We do what everybody else does in terms of, you know, having students sort of email us what their needs are. But we do take it one step further in terms of dietary restrictions, and just doing some of those checks on our end, as we start to plan events. What is the layout look like? What are the activities look like? Can everybody participate fully in the in the activities that we have? And then if they can't, what are we doing to rectify that and make sure that everybody can participate fully. And so a lot of it has to do with layouts, and just making sure people can navigate the campus really well. But when it comes to some of the activities that we're planning, do we have alternatives for students that might be in a wheelchair, or might have other mobility devices that we need to account for to navigate the campus. So things like the inflatables, making sure that if students can't crawl through it, or there are other inflatables that we have available that they can participate in other activities that they can participate in, and then working that way, but definitely, if students contact us, we work with them to figure out what we can do to make this experience a lot more enjoyable for them, but that they could participate in everything as fully as possible.

A

Andrew Yang 22:30

Right, and I'm sure you've done a lot of this, looking back at this year's o-week and orientation overall, what do you think could be changed and or improved for next year's orientation?

A

Andrew Bisnauth 22:41

Yeah. And so we do this every year, trying to gain feedback on what we did well, and what we can improve on. So we have, we do a pretty big survey at the end of orientation, just to get as much feedback as we can from participants specifically. But on our end, it's always a work in progress. And so we haven't perfected what orientation looks like. I think the things that we think top of mind are, how do we create a really welcoming experience when students get here? So that first step onto campus, how do we make sure that students know they're on our campus, know that they feel welcome and that they belong, and then how do they navigate campus? So we have a ton of buildings, we use a lot of acronyms, there are a lot of programs and supports that are available for students. How do we share that with students in a way that sticks in their heads so that when they need it, they know where to access it, but that they could find it by navigating campus? And so things like that are what we're thinking about. And then the last piece is sort of the communication that goes out to students. And so how do we communicate effectively to students? How do we house information in places that they can find

it, and just make that transition period a lot easier for students as they navigate this new world, navigate a new campus, city, country, how do we ensure that we make that as easy as possible for them?

A

Andrew Yang 24:06

Right, and I think this is common knowledge. And we were just talking about this earlier that this is the first in person orientation we've had since the beginning of COVID. So that was 2019. How do you feel this year's orientation events went with being the first in person orientation? And over three years, I think,

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Andrew Bisnauth 24:26

yeah, so the last one was 2019. Last year, we did do about 40 to 60 events in person, but definitely this year was a lot different. I would say it was a really big success. And I think a lot of the planners would say that as well. So the student engagement, I think we really felt that two years of of students being indoors, not in classes, all of that stuff, the engagement was tremendous, really, the turnout was great. We did see a lot of students that are wearing their second or third year attending and you could tell by the OneCards that they were showing us that they were upper year students that were coming just to experience orientation, because maybe they didn't have an opportunity to do that in the past. So yeah, I think it went overall really well. Again, there's still stuff that we have to work through, but a lot of folks have been sharing that this was one of the most successful orientations ever, that we were able to like work through some of the challenges that we've seen in previous years, and fix those things and just come out, and really show what our campus could do in terms of welcoming and creating that sense of belonging for students.

G

Georgina Parker 25:37

Do you have any advice for first years coming into o-week or even just, I guess this year was a bit different because we had people that weren't just first year's coming in, but I guess people going into o-week, would you have any advice, any suggestions for them?

A

Andrew Bisnauth 25:50

Yeah, and my advice is always the same. For the most part, it's trying to engage in as much as you can. So listening to podcasts like this, coming through to different events that are happening on campus, there's always something happening last two weeks, the Week of Welcome from the TMSU. But there's always a lot of events happening on campus, a lot of ways to get involved, whether it's student groups, or course unions or different projects that just seem to pop up. And so engaging as much as they can in in any of those activities and building those friendships, gaining that experience, and then sharing that with the new students that are going to join us next year. And so any way that our students can engage in the things that we have going on on campus, not just you know, coming to class and then going home after, I think it's going to benefit everybody, it'll benefit them, it'll benefit our community, and it'll benefit all of us in terms of the culture that we're trying to build on campus.

A

Andrew Yang 26:44

But who better to speak about o-week than the students themselves? Here's what TMU students and staff thought about o-week 2022.

B

Bev Fields 26:51

My favourite were all the queer events that were run. It was really interesting to meet all those different community members and know that there's a community at this school for people like me, without having to really go search and look for it. I think more events where we just got to talk and socialize, there was a creative BBQ and that was really great, but there weren't a ton of program-specific social events. It was a lot of conversation, and people came in and spoke. But we didn't get to talk to each other as much as I would have liked to. The mixers that I did go to are great, but they weren't program specific. They were specific to like your community group. I think program-specific mixers like that, where you just get to go and walk around and talk to people would be awesome.

R

Rebecca Kraft 27:31

I loved SLC live. And I know that's probably a common answer, but it was so cool because there was so much to do, and everyone was there. So I was able to meet new people, I met a new friend there, and because I'm in The Creative School I was mainly on the eighth floor the whole time. So I got to see the drag show and the student fashion shows and the live performances and it was all just amazing. So that was a super fun day. Honestly, it was pretty great. I can't think of anything like too specific off the top of my head, there was definitely like one thing is that there was definitely a lot of stuff going on that it was almost like so hard to decide what to do. But I think that TMU should just continue to like create opportunities during o-week for people to meet new friends. Because I think that's one of the most important things to do during orientation week is meet new people. And then you have those people for the first couple weeks of school and everything. So I would just say that basically.

D

Diya Mehaisi 28:22

Orientation, it was very rich. And I think the students, they took the maximum advantage out of that. I saw it all, most of TMU department they participated also in this orientation. And I believe, you know, like they give the general ideas, you know, and the basic information which the students need, and especially on their first year. But I believe you know, like every year is going to be like a new addition to our orientations. And by the end of the day, all of that is going to be like big benefits for our students.

A

Andrew Yang 28:51

Diba Saliani is a first year international student who says that promoting diversity during o-week brings that next-level welcome factor.

D Diba Saliani 28:58

Yeah, like it's really important for first year students because like, I'm an international student, and I like it was a whole new country for me. So it was really important for me to be able to meet new people. I saw like they were having little desks for different countries. So I think that was really nice.

A Andrew Yang 29:16

So there you have it. Week two of the fall semester is officially in the books. What will happen next? Only time will tell.

G Georgina Parker 29:23

And that's it for this week. Tune in next Friday for a new episode.

G Georgina Parker 29:27

For On The Record:

M Maya Abramson 29:28

I'm Maya Abramson.

G Georgina Parker 29:29

I'm Georgina Parker.

A Andrew Yang 29:30

And I'm Andrew Yang.

M Maya Abramson 29:31

This has been TMU Week in Review. Thank you for listening to our first episode.