

OTR Podcast - Episode #3 (Final Edit)_mixdown

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people, election, vote, year, week, soccer, organization, toronto, literally, play, municipal elections, engaged, game, promote, running, voter turnout, voting, government, municipalities, young

SPEAKERS

Ghazein Mazara, Lara Fajardo, Andrew Yang, Georgina Parker, Marah Shaheen, Sireen Sadiq, Myer Siemiatycki, Maya Abramson, Ivymae Perez

A Andrew Yang 00:08
Welcome to the On The Record podcast.

M Maya Abramson 00:11
Toronto's municipal election is two weeks away and things are ramping up. Youth voter turnout has historically been pretty low. Will this election be any different?

A Andrew Yang 00:20
The TMU Bold soccer teams have been well decorated recently taking home multiple Player of the Week titles. We spoke to Ivymae Perez, the player of the week recipient for the Bold's women's soccer team.

M Maya Abramson 00:31
I'm Maya Abramson.

G Georgina Parker 00:32
I'm Georgina Parker.

A Andrew Yang 00:33
And I'm Andrew Yang.

M

Maya Abramson 00:34

And that's what's coming up for today's TMU Week in Review.

G

Georgina Parker 00:50

The City of Toronto has a municipal election coming up in just two weeks. Torontonians will head to the polls on Monday, October 24 to cast their votes for the next mayor, city councilors and school board trustees. Voter turnout in the last Toronto municipal election was only 41% and youth voter engagement has historically been a problem for politicians.

M

Maya Abramson 01:10

So are TMU students engaged in this election? Are they planning to vote? And why are young people so often disengaged from the political process? To get some answers we sat down with Myer Siemiatycki, professor emeritus in politics at TMU.

M

Maya Abramson 01:25

Compared to other demographics, youth engagement in voting is significantly lower. Why do you think that is?

M

Myer Siemiatycki 01:30

Well, I think there are a whole number of factors for that. You know, one obvious one is youth don't see themselves reflected in the people running for elected office or to a large degree, the policies and the promises that are being made by local politicians. So I think over the heading into this election, we've lost on city council, the three youngest members of Toronto City Council, who I think were in an age cohort of their 30s and 40s. So the typical age of an elected politician in Toronto is closer to retirement age than to labour market entry age, let alone student undergraduate age. So I think there's that disconnect that's going on. The other thing is, when it comes to policies and platforms, I don't think that candidates for the most part are speaking the same language in terms of the interests, the needs, the priorities of young people. So it's kind of understandable that young people would not see how this connects relates to them. So that leaves the last piece, which is why aren't we doing more to promote the significance and importance of local government? And of course, this vote this generational voting gap, plays out and representation gap plays out not only municipally it reproduces itself and manifests itself also provincially. And federally it's at it's at all levels of government. So it raises questions about what kind of grassroots youth oriented organization mobilization, are we doing education are we doing to promote the importance of voting and civic civic participation, and clearly, we're not doing anywhere, anywhere near near enough. I have to do a shout out, however, to one really important TMU organization, The Democracy Exchange, which is based at Ryerson, and whose mandate not only for our campus, but in truth, the entire country because it engages at federal provincial and local elections is to promote participation with a

special emphasis on young people. So there are some organizations that make it their business to try to inform promote, activate young young people to engage in the political process, but it's very much an uphill battle.

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Georgina Parker 04:50

Why do you feel that municipal elections sometimes get forgotten about by voters?

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Myer Siemiatycki 04:55

Well, I think there are a variety of reasons for that. And you're absolutely right think that historically municipal elections run the lowest voter turnout rate of all of our levels of government and, and the good and really bad news is that it's starting to equalize across levels of government, which you'd think is a good thing, except actually, it's a really terrible thing, because it's equalizing at the lowest common denominator. So we saw it the most recent provincial election, voter turnout reached a historical low of 42%, which is not much higher than you get at at municipal elections. That's not the kind of equality that I think we should be interested in, I think we should be interested in a high bar rather than a low bar parody of voter turnout. But there's a whole bunch of reasons. It doesn't get the same media and public attention that that the other two levels of government get. But I'll add another wrinkle to this, which is, it's it is hands down the hardest level of government to understand and to be an informed voter at. So one way I can try to explain that is provincial and federal elections are literally kids play its color by number like each candidates run on parties, parties have their own colour, they have their own leader, you go you get a ballot, there are three or four names on the ballot, it tells you what their party is, what their colour is, it's easy to know who stands for what, at the local level, it I'll just say, flat out, it's impossible to be an informed voter. Nobody can know who all those names are on the ballot, that you've gotten the dozens of people who want to be the next mayor of Toronto, the handful of people who want to be the next councillor and the handful of people who want to be your school trustee, it's impossible to know who these people are. So sadly, a very rational thing to do in that kind of the universe is don't vote, because you'd be casting an uninformed vote and who wants to say, oh, yeah, I'm the person who casted the idiot vote. I didn't know what I was doing. Nobody knows what they're doing. So there's a real systemic problem for above and beyond low media coverage. And that is all true. And how does this system work? Exactly? The ballot itself is a turn off because of the nature of local elections.

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Maya Abramson 07:57

Do you think youth are interested in politics?

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Myer Siemiatycki 08:00

Yeah, I do. I think, you know, you know, politics is everything we do to try to impact the way we organize and run our lives together as a society. So it's about decisions that are made. It's about priorities that are set, it's about values, it's about programs and services. So I would say that, yes. If you think of the number of, of young people disproportionately, who are saying, we

would have a much more sustainable and healthier city, if more people got around town on a bicycle than in a car, that is a political act. It has political consequences, and it expresses, apart from a love of cycling or the fact that you can't afford a car, whatever else it has, it contains many things in that many things are contained in the decision to cycle but one of them is a decision on what kind of urban environment do you want? And what kind of mobility in an urban environment do you want? So, you know, those end up having real significant political manifesto implications. If you say it's the car above all, which we've been saying for close to 100 years in North America, then you get a certain kind of infrastructure and urban space and urban culture. If you say no, it's the bicycle, you get a very different kind of approach and orientation. You know, the, the, the the young women who have pressed on institutions like school boards and governments to make sanitary products available for free to all young women, they are engaged in a political act of claiming our right and wanting government to be the provider of that essential, right. So there's no question that young people are engaged and they've had progress. Of course, we've had any number of institutions that have now gone that route. So I would say that young people are very politically engaged. But, you know, our, our you know, the the election system we have, is, is pretty hopeless in tapping into young people's interests and aspirations and creativity. It's the election system that's wrong. It's not the young who are wrong.

G

Georgina Parker 11:11

We talked to some students to see if they're planning to vote and how informed they feel ahead of this election.

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Maya Abramson 11:16

First, we spoke to Laura for Harto, a second year student in creative industries.

L

Lara Fajardo 11:21

I know that it's coming up. I don't know exactly the day I've seen like ads around, but not as much as I wish I did. I think like a lot of people just feel like they don't have time. Like, honestly, I feel like I don't really have time, but I am interested in city politics. And I do want to make Toronto like better. I guess it's just sort of, I never really found the time to look for that kind of information. It's never really been presented to me.

M

Maya Abramson 11:45

Despite these concerns, Laura said they do plan to vote.

L

Lara Fajardo 11:49

My parents kind of like always taught me to to vote. I'm growing up because like, they're immigrants. So then they like from where they come from, like voting is a huge thing. So then they've just been instilling that from for me when since I was young, so ever since I was like,

18, I was so excited to vote. So I do plan on voting for this upcoming one too.

M

Maya Abramson 12:06

Mara Shaheen is a second year marketing student at TMU. She said she plans to vote but feels uninformed.

M

Marah Shaheen 12:13

I don't know who's I don't know who's running. And I don't know when that election is, I think, from what I heard, like people my age group, when they feel like no options are like to their liking. They just would rather not vote. I feel like that stops like people in our age group the most.

M

Marah Shaheen 12:29

Marah said she actually feels more interested in municipal politics than federal or provincial. I live in Mississauga. So I would like to know like what's happening in Mississauga, rather than like all over Canada, because that affects me like, directly, I guess.

M

Maya Abramson 12:43

Sireen Sadiq is a first year marketing student. We asked if she was planning to vote.

S

Sireen Sadiq 12:47

Honestly, I wasn't really. I don't mind. It's just because I don't know much about it. I feel like they advertise it. Yes. But it's not like engaging enough. Like, I don't know, it hasn't caught my attention.

M

Maya Abramson 13:00

Ghazein Mazara is doing a master's in law at York University. We asked him if he cares about municipal politics.

G

Ghazein Mazara 13:06

I, I don't, but I feel that I should care more. I think it's essential. And as residents of Toronto, I believe that city politics is what impacts us most on a day to day basis, whether it's the TTC public transit, its zoning laws, you know, where we can stay where we can work, where we can shop. These are very important factors and in our lives, and these are all decided at and the city bases at that level. I think there's a there's a few issues for sure. The fact that, you know, people aren't aware of what happens at a municipal level. They aren't aware of what is decided

exactly. And then you have general voter apathy, which you can't really blame voters for it. Because, you know, the general trend in terminology is nothing changes even if you vote for someone. So what's the point of voting? I think that needs to be combated for sure.

M Maya Abramson 14:05

We asked Myer Siemiatycki how young people can combat this lack of information and get engaged for students who want to know more and be more involved. What would your advice be to them?

M Myer Siemiatycki 14:16

I think I'd start by saying two things. Number one, check out The Democratic Exchange at our university, Toronto Metropolitan University. They've got a great website, they've got great resources, including a how to and why to vote, set of information about municipal elections. So that's one thing. A second thing is think about what issues matter most to you. And it could be affordable housing, it could be bike lanes. It could be why aren't there more live music venues in this city that are smaller scale like like, Why? Why is it? You know, the big arena style are nothing else little like why don't we have more art support for young artists, you will find whatever you interest you happen to have that kind of fires you up and really kind of motivates you. There is probably an organization in this city that is actively engaged on that issue. Certainly environmentalism, housing, policing, you name it. Transportation, transit riders, is a terrific grassroots advocacy organization of TTC and GO users connect with an organization that is advocating and promoting the values that you have yourself and that you care about yourself. And that's a really key way of I think getting into a network of political engagement and activism that can go well beyond elections, there's a lot more to democracy and civic engagement than elections. So that would be a second suggestion. And my final suggestion would be find out what Ward you are in, in your municipality. And go on to see on your municipalities website, they will have a site for the election that identifies who the candidates are. And those candidates who wished will have their their websites or their platforms on the sites, it may be harder if they don't, in which case, once you know who's running just Google each of their names, see what comes up? Who are these people? What do they stand for? Is there anything that that resonates for you in what they are promoting and and running to accomplish an elected office? So those are three things, check out the democracy change, check out other organizations and act and grassroots groups that have your concerns, and interests. And lastly, check out who's running in your in your ward, which is easily done through your municipalities website.

M Maya Abramson 17:44

Finally, in terms of this information, disconnect that we're talking about where people don't know who's running or who to vote for. Whose job is that to get that information across? Is it the politicians? Is it the municipalities? Is it that the people should be seeking it out themselves? Or is it a combination of all three?

M Myer Siemiatycki 17:59

Yeah, that's a really good question. It is a combination of all the correct answer to that multiple choice question is all of the above all of the above is the correct answer. And pretty much everyone is dropping the ball pretty much everyone whose job it should be is flunking that test. So we're in a pretty sorry, state, but I would say that, that the starting point is the municipality itself. These are municipal elections. And I would say that it is their primary responsibility to promote engagement. And I know it's been a rough few years with the pandemic at at city halls across the country across Ontario across the GTA. But even with that said, I think they have dropped the ball this time around for the 2022 election. I don't see many signs of election education, election promotion, and certainly not towards traditionally under participating segments of the population like young people, so get out there and find out who's running what's going on in this election, cast a ballot.

A

Andrew Yang 19:40

The TMU Bold soccer programs have been on the receiving end of some special recognition amongst the provinces top athletic programs, earning two player of the week titles with the men's and women's team, each taking home one player of the week distinction in the last three weeks. One of the recipients, midfielder Ivymae Perez, is one of TMU's brightest stars on the field, having scored five goals in TMU's, last seven women's soccer matchups. Ivymae joins us today to speak on her successes during her soccer career and her life as a student athlete. Ivymae thank you for coming onto the show.

I

Ivymae Perez 20:12

No problem.

A

Andrew Yang 20:13

So take us through a day in the life of a student athlete on game day.

I

Ivymae Perez 20:17

So there's two types, usually we'll play on the Thursday or on the weekend. So usually on Thursdays, I'll have class, like the morning from like eight to one, I have class two to four. But I usually just don't go to those because I can't focus anyway. And then we usually get there two hours before kickoff. So let's say game, the games, five, then we'll get there for three. And then usually a couple of us girls will get there like an hour to 45 minutes early to just hang out and chill and talk with ATs and talk amongst each other. And then we'll have like this little we have we created this like little ritual before game, where we'll start singing and you know, getting hyped in the change room will usually bump. Right Now by Akon, everyone gets, you know, everyone gets in the change room and starts dancing like it's some type of club and we have this other song. I don't know if I'm allowed to like swear in this but it's called the song's called I Don't Fuck With You by Big Sean. And whoever we're playing, let's say we're playing Carlton that day will like pull up the Carlton roster. And we'll be like singing in like flipping them off. Like, I don't even know if supposed to say that. But it's just like our thing that we created. And then and then we have you know, the warmup and then we'll go into the game. And then after

the game, we get catered food, usually Swiss Chalet during home games, and then we'll stay for the first half of the men's game, and then we'll all just all just chill there. And then on the weekends, it's literally the same exact thing, but I don't have classes. So I'll just wake up like an hour before I have to go.

A

Andrew Yang 22:03

Yeah, so speaking of pregame rituals, do you have any of your own like, are you superstitious about that stuff at all?

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Ivymae Perez 22:08

I'm not superstitious at all. But I usually just take my wrist, I take one of my wrists, but recently I've been taping to my wrist. So that's something I personally do. But as a team, we do that whole like huddle thing when we sing and cost at the other team. That's that's pretty much it.

A

Andrew Yang 22:28

Lots of students have aspirations of becoming student athletes, but they aren't sure as to how they can balance a schedule revolving around school and athletics. How do you manage your time to ensure that you excel in both?

I

Ivymae Perez 22:38

Honestly, it's all about to me personally, organization is like, you gotta be on top of that I, I keep up a paper journal, like not even on the computer, I'll keep like a, like a book or like an agenda with me. And literally, the week prior, I will write down what I need to do every single day. So I can, like, see my time, like on the piece of paper, and I can execute it. Instead of like rambling or not rambling, instead of just, you know, going about my day and planning right there. And then I like to be organized in a sense where I can see I can see my whole week planned out. And that's how I can, you know, I think I feel like I've gotten a lot better managing my time. Because my first year I was I was all over the place. And you know, I didn't have that journal with me. And so I think that's been really, it's been really what's been, you know, getting me through being able to manage my time.

A

Andrew Yang 23:38

Yeah, so you're currently in your third year of studying arts and contemporary studies. What inspired you to choose this major?

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Ivymae Perez 23:45

Honestly, it was by accident. So my first choice was criminology. When I transferred from Florida, I applied to different programs and arts and contemporary was actually the first

program to accept me, and I kind of applied late and so my coach just told me to accept it, and then transfer into the program I want to like later in the semester. So I was like, okay, and then my first year comes in here, and honestly, I didn't mind it, like it wasn't anything terrible. Like, you know, also, it wasn't something I thoroughly enjoyed, enjoyed. But then I didn't really get around to talking to my academic advisor about switching it. So I was just like, you know, I'm just gonna stay in this program. I'm still getting the same Bachelor of Arts degree. And I'm already like, I realized this literally, just this year, I'm like, it's already too late for me to, you know, fully switch my program. So I'm just going to continue on with it. And then I'm also minoring in crim. So it like all works out anyway.

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Andrew Yang 24:46

So yeah, so speaking of Florida, you played Division One soccer with the University of South Florida for the 2019 season. How does that program differ in terms of demand and in terms of training behind the scenes stuff and expectations on the field?

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Ivymae Perez 25:00

Um, in Florida, it was definitely a lot more, it was definitely more physically and mentally demanding. You know, obviously, playing a varsity sport is gonna be physically mentally demanding. But in Florida compared to here, it was just a lot on my body and on my mind a home, we would like preseason was a crazy time for me over there, we would literally have to practice a day. And then we'd have lift sessions, literally every day for like the next two weeks. And here, it was just like we still had preseason, but it wasn't as intense as that and it wasn't as loaded as that. And then during season, it's still the same thing, like we're training every single day that there's no single rest day type thing, like we would train and then lift. And then we would do film here, it's just like, we would train and then that would be it. You know, so the training load is different. Also mentally, like all the girls, they're not that the girls here, don't take it as seriously. But over there, it's literally like, it's their life as to here. It's like we're focused on school, and other stuff and like jobs and stuff. But over there, it's like strictly about soccer. And so it's just different for me that all of those girls like take it so seriously, I get like they literally play like it's a professional sport over there. And it's just a lot, you know, mentally trying to keep up and like being able to perform under pressure while your coaches like yelling at you and stuff. So it's it's a lot over there.

A

Andrew Yang 26:34

Yeah. So on the week of September 19, you took home the OUA Player of the Week award, when you're beginning a new season, do you have your eyes set on winning these awards? And take us through what you felt when you got that recognition from OUA.

I

Ivymae Perez 26:47

Honestly, I like I was not. I was not even thinking about that. I knew like, OUA did those player the Player of the Week awards type thing, because last year, one of our goalies got it. And I was like, oh, that's kind of cool. But going through the season this year, none of like it was not

in my head at all. And so when I saw that I was actually on. I was with Kaylee and Alanna from my team, we were just walking in a park in line moose got Alanna, got a notification on her phone because she has like the woman soccer account on her Instagram. And she was like, oh, like, OUA just tagged us in a post. And it was literally me like Player of the Week. And I was like, oh, like that's kind of cool. Like, I didn't really like think anything of it. I'm just like, you know, that's cool. You know, none of that would have been possible without obviously my team. So I'm just grateful for them being there, being able to provide me the ball and, and, you know, supporting me all throughout.

A

Andrew Yang 27:43

So you could say that you have a pretty tight knit relationship with your teammate. If you could use one word to describe your locker room dynamic. What would it be?

I

Ivymae Perez 27:52

Oh, there's a lot. I mean, one word to describe the dynamic over of my locker room, I would say I would say hype. Like we get pretty rowdy in there. Are rowdy, actually. rowdy, rowdy. Yeah.

A

Andrew Yang 28:09

What's your motivation behind what you do on the field is there like anything or anyone that motivates you to play at the level that you play at?

I

Ivymae Perez 28:16

Honestly, Johnny our coach, he, he gets into these like motivational speeches like before games and even like during the week, he will help motivate us he'll talk to us. Talk us through the game plan and you know, not even about soccer, but just in life in general. He would talk about adversity and how if we don't go through them, then we're not going to learn and you know, progress and to the next big thing. Um, so he always gets into these these motivational speeches. Honestly, you guys shouldn't make them up one day. He he says some some good stuff. And usually after those speeches, it's like, damn, like, I'm so ready to go play. Like I feel like I could play right now and deke everyone out. And so I think everyone is on the same page about that. So to me, Johnny would be probably one of my biggest motivations.

A

Andrew Yang 29:14

Awesome. Circling back to that tale of two cities. Being a student athlete, where do you see yourself after graduation? Do you see yourself pursuing a new career in soccer or continuing that I should say, or do you want to focus on something outside of it?

I

Ivymae Perez 29:29

Honestly, I was thinking about taking a year off of school after I graduate to go play pro maybe overseas or something like that, but I'm not I'm not there yet. So I have to like get there and see how I feel at the moment. Because I can say I want to go play pro right now and then next year, I don't know an injury can happen and then all my my plans change. So I don't want to like have a set plan right now. I'm just gonna decide like long as life goes on, but I do want to take a year off and go play somewhere, you know, just take a break from school, because I do want to get into law school and go through that. So I just want a little, you know, year or two break and then proceed into going into law school and do more school.

A

Andrew Yang 30:18

All right with that, that marks the end of our conversation. Ivymae, thanks so much for coming on the show.

I

Ivymae Perez 30:23

Thanks for having me.

A

Andrew Yang 30:24

You can catch Ivymae on the field against the Nipissing Lakers Saturday, the 15th on OUA TV.

M

Maya Abramson 30:30

And that's all for this week. We'll be back in two weeks with a new episode. For On The Record. I'm Maya Abramson.

G

Georgina Parker 30:36

I'm Georgina Parker.

A

Andrew Yang 30:37

And I'm Andrew Yang.

G

Georgina Parker 30:39

This has been TMU's Week in Review. Thank you for listening and have a great reading week.