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Municipal politics, GTA election, city budget, mayor's power, local politics, city councilors, Toronto City Hall, municipal issues, youth involvement, local elections, community concerns, municipal government, city priorities, election cycle, municipal impact.

SPEAKERS

Moyo Lawuyi, Coun. Matlow, Streeter 3, Coun. Moise, Olivia Chow, Aisha Shabeese, Streeter 1, John Tory, Streeter 2, Streeter 4

 Aisha Shabeese 00:00

Hi. Welcome back to the OTR Podcast. I'm Aisha Shabeese.

 Moyo Lawuyi 00:13

And I'm Moyo Lawuyi. This semester, we're doing things a bit differently for our podcast.

 Aisha Shabeese 00:19

We're focusing on municipal politics in the GTA because the next election is coming up on October 26

 Moyo Lawuyi 00:26

from who controls the city budgets to how the mayor's power is different from that of Councilors

 Aisha Shabeese 00:32

to any questions you want us to answer about local politics, email us at on the record news@torontomu.ca You can subscribe to this podcast on Apple, iTunes or Spotify, or listen right on our website, at on the record news.ca

 Moyo Lawuyi 00:48

Today's big question is: how does power work at the municipal level? To answer this, we are going to be talking to TMU students as well as Toronto St Paul councilor, Josh Matlow and Toronto centers councilor, Chris Moise,

 Aisha Shabeese 01:05

but before we do that, Moyo, what's your experience with local elections?

 Moyo Lawuyi 01:11

I haven't really voted or participated in local politics because I'm not Canadian, and I left my home country, Nigeria, before I was 18, but I know Toronto's mayor is Olivia Chow I was in Toronto when she was elected, but nothing much else about power on a local level. What about you?

 Aisha Shabeese 01:27

Aisha, well, growing up in Toronto, I witnessed my parents go to polling stations to vote, and like most Canadian citizens, it wasn't until I turned 18 in 2022 when I got my chance to vote in an election and to educate myself on local politics. That is when I begin to understand what certain political impacts mean to me and to my community. In addition to all this, in high school, I actually worked for Elections Canada, so I got to see elections firsthand and watch people come in and cast their vote for a leader that best represents them.

 Moyo Lawuyi 02:01

That's really cool. Aisha, since this is the municipal election we're talking about, what exactly does the mayor do?

A Aisha Shabeese 02:09

It's funny, when our instructors, Angela and Walid, asked us about our own knowledge of municipal elections, we all kind of blanked out. And to be honest, when we tried to learn on our own, we had a hard time, but we still found some information. So to answer your question, the mayor oversees local politics in the respective city. These include setting priorities in transit, like the TTC, housing and public safety, just to name a few. And mayors are actually elected every four years. Yeah.

M Moyo Lawuyi 02:42

Olivia Chow was elected back in 2023 after Toronto Mayor John Tory stepped down. But we see Olivia Chow a lot. She's basically like the face of the city.

O Olivia Chow 02:54

Thank you Toronto. Thank you, everyone. Wow. What a night.

O Olivia Chow 03:12

If you ever doubted what's possible, together, if you if you ever questioned your faith in a better future and what we can do with each other, for each other, tonight is your answer.

M Moyo Lawuyi 03:36

But this, election wasn't the usual election cycle. It was a by election for context, John Tory resigned after admitting to having an affair with a staff member, which led to much controversy surrounding him.

J John Tory 03:49

I've decided that I will step down as mayor so that I can take the time to reflect on my mistakes and to do the work of rebuilding the trust of my family. I'll be working with the city manager, city clerk and the deputy mayor, Jennifer McKelvey, to ensure an orderly transition in the coming days.

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Moyo Lawuyi 04:05

For more information on Tory's resignation, you can actually visit on the record news.ca and search mayor in our search bar for more on that. But the mayor is not the only person who runs the city.

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Aisha Shabeese 04:15

Right. That's right. Another group of people you should know that you'll be voting for in the municipal election is your city councilor? There are 25 city councilors in total, each with their own Ward, which is basically a section of the city of Toronto. For instance, Tmu is in the Toronto center Ward, and alongside the mayor, city councilors meet at Toronto City Hall and they talk to and listen to concerns from residents, businesses and community groups in their ward about city programs and services.

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Moyo Lawuyi 04:46

City councilors get elected at the same time as the mayor every four years, and they don't belong to political parties like the provincial or federal levels. For instance, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney leads the Party, whereas Pierre Poilievre leads the Conservative Party. The reason city council candidates run independently is election law, which allows donors to give money directly to candidates, not to parties in municipal elections. Therefore they focus mainly on local issues in Toronto, rather than on how the federal government addresses Canada as a whole

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Aisha Shabeese 05:24

and regarding the multiple Toronto wards in 2018 Ontario premier Doug Ford changed the number of wards from 47 to 25 despite opposition to it, and the final decision was then ruled by the Supreme Court of Canada. This upcoming election in October, will stick to the 25 word model, as established by the premier, with Torontonians having to elect a new mayor and 25 council members.

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Moyo Lawuyi 05:50

The thing is, most people in Toronto know about Mayor Olivia Chow, but how many of you know what your city councilors do before we let the two city councilors we interviewed speak for themselves. On The Record Producer Yusuf Zaidi went on campus to find out about what you knew about your city councilor.

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Streeter 1 06:08

Does I imagine that they are in charge of decisions that will impact the people and certain rules that factor throughout the city?

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Streeter 2 06:18

Well, they're the elected official for a region of the city or municipality, and then they represent those that regions municipal interests at Council.

S

Streeter 3 06:33

They manage the city. I guess. I don't know. I think they like help make legislation for a city and help, like, oversee it. And, you know, they're not the only vote, obviously, but they just, like, are part of the decision making process for like, various things that happen within a city, like legislation and stuff.

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Streeter 4 06:56

I think city councilors probably try to meet the need other people in their own city and try to, you know, solve problems and, like, create solutions. Yeah, just for the people in the city that need help.

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Moyo Lawuyi 07:08

Thank you for stepping up on the mic. Tmu, we appreciate you going on the record, as most students don't know much about municipal politics or what city councilors do, I spoke to city council member Josh Matlow and Chris Moyes to find out what they actually do for the Toronto Community.

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Moyo Lawuyi 07:26

So what did they say about how the municipal government affects us young people?

A Aisha Shabeese 07:31

Councilor Moise expressed how young people don't truly understand the importance of local politics.

C Coun. Moise 07:38

I don't think young people truly understand what city politics entails and the importance of it. I know that in college and universities you have party politics, and people usually participate that way, and they're more aware of provincial federal issues because of the interactions they have with the Paris parties on campus, but when it comes to mutual politics and government, it's already talked about.

A Aisha Shabeese 08:11

Councillor Moise also explained that every aspect of daily life for Toronto residents is a major focus for councilors in local politics, like the city's water or garbage pickup. Here's what the councilor has to say,

C Coun. Moise 08:23

Everything that is closest to the people is useful governments that deals with that. So it's, I think it's more important. I mean, I'm a little biased than any other level of government, because we impact and touch your lives every second of the day. So I really think it's important that young people engage, you know, municipally, because it does impact them.

M Moyo Lawuyi 08:57

It's so interesting to learn that all the little things we take for granted and that many people complain about blaming the wrong level of government are actually controlled by the municipal politics. Yeah.

A Aisha Shabeese 09:09

And when speaking to Councillor Matlow, he shared that even if you aren't eligible to vote, you can still get involved in local politics. So Moyo, since you're not Canadian, you can still get involved in Toronto politics. Here's what councilor Matlow has to say,

C

Coun. Matlow 09:23

If you are a voting age not only do you have a voice at election time and you can remind your representatives of that. I mean, regardless of whether you're voting age or not, you can call them up and either speak with them about your priorities and remember they work for you. It's not the other way around. So don't feel intimidated and don't feel like you don't have the right to reach out to your representative, obviously, in a respectful way. But just say these are things that I believe is important, whether it be you know, better and affordable and safer and reliable transit or being able to afford to live in a. The expensive city, or like, we want to know what you're going to do about that and how we can work on that together.

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Moyo Lawuyi 10:06

Wow, that's so great to hear. I think as young people who aren't really in the adult world yet, we sometimes forget the power and the impact we have on politics because of this, I see many young people in our generation feel indifferent towards local politics, yet complain about issues that the local government can actually change.

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Aisha Shabeese 10:27

In fact, Councillor Matlow told me that those who care about their community should have the initiative to actively speak out on their decisions that affect their lives. And it's important to note that he stated that youth involvement in politics involve a two way relationship between young people and city councilors.

C

Coun. Matlow 10:45

Never fear and never feel intimidated to write or call a candidate or an elected representative and just say, What are you doing about whatever means something to you? Or how can I get involved in not just relying on you to make the change, but how can I be part of it? And that's a great way to kind of deepen your both your understanding, but also your involvement in the world around you. I think you know we as candidates can, and you're reminding me of this, which I appreciate in our literature and the things that we write about, we should actually speak to youth more. And I think that's really important, because if we're not if, if we're not telling you we care about you and we're doing work that matters to you, why would you why would you care about what I do? So I think the relationship needs to go both ways.

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Moyo Lawuyi 11:36

It's encouraging to know that counselors would like to speak to young people more about their concerns. Torontonians can talk all they want about politics, but it's the people in power who have to take action for things to start changing and improving in Toronto.

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Aisha Shabeese 11:51

Yeah, exactly. It's also important to know who the right people are in power, like city councilors, to address the concerns that affect our community.

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Moyo Lawuyi 11:59

With that being said, we have reached the end of our episode, which hopefully answers the question of how power works at the municipal level. Remember, if you have a big question for us about the upcoming municipal election, email us at ontherecord.news@torontomu.ca special, thanks to our producer, Yusuf Zaidi for helping us with this episode. I am Moyo Lawuyi.

A

Aisha Shabeese 12:24

And I'm Aisha Shabeese. Subscribe to our podcast on Apple, iTunes or Spotify. Before the next episode drops, we're going to dive deep on how the city of Toronto budget works. Take care!