Youth-Led Civic Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic - Case study of the Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC)

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Introduction

Sophia DiNicolo (she/her)

Honours Bachelor of Arts Graduate, with High Distinctions from the University of Toronto

Pursuing a JD at the University of Ottawa

Former Urban Health Lead of the Toronto Youth Cabinet
The Toronto Youth Cabinet

Official youth (13-24 years old) advisory body to the City of Toronto

- Promote youth participation in municipal affairs
- Policy development through consultations and campaigns
- Hosts events and engage with youth across the city of Toronto

Advocate for youth that live, study, or work in the City of Toronto
YCE- Youth Civic Engagement

4 part mini series- Focused on the impact that the pandemic has had on youth civic engagement, along with organizing and advocacy efforts within the City of Toronto.

Featuring:

Michael Manu- Previous Executive Director of the TYC
Stephen Mensah- Current Executive Director of the TYC
Zenah Hussun- Director of Council Relations
Eli Aaron- Previous Transit and Budget Lead
How COVID-19 Changed Youth Organizing and Advocacy Efforts

**Shift to Online**
In person meetings, trainings, consultations, community gatherings moved online

**Enhanced Advocacy**
Before pandemic advocacy centered around city hall, virtual increased reach, engagement, and advocacy

**Social Media**
As a tool to connect with young people and advocate
Challenges and Ways to Overcome Them

**Burnout**
Difficult to get work done when everything online

**Providing support**
Open communication, leading with understanding and grace

**A lot of issues**
Pandemic exasperated many existing issues within the city, hard to address them all

**Partnerships and Collaborations**
Working groups collaborating as well as external partnerships

**Technology**
Pivoting to online and challenges with technology

**Strong Team**
Support both from Executive members as well as City staff
Ways to Get Youth Engaged with Civic Affairs

Reach Youth Where They Are
Virtually, various mediums, especially during COVID-19 and beyond! Bringing opportunities to youth

Continuous Communication
Keep youth informed about what is happening, and building meaningful relationships.

Meaningful Opportunities
Creating opportunities for youth to get involved in a meaningful way
Hopes for Youth Civic Engagement and Advocacy in Post-Pandemic Recovery

Mixed Mediums
Online and in person meetings moving forward

Mental Health
Recognizing importance of mental health, and prioritizing of wellbeing.

Youth are the Future
Recognition of youth voices and a seat at the table to address issues within the city

Elections
Getting more young people out to vote, especially next year with elections.
Advice for Youth

Don’t lose hope

Youth are the future, but they are also the present

Keep doing what you believe in

Don’t waver in what you’re fighting for

You bring experiences that are valid and important to the table
THANKS

Do you have any questions?
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