Children and Youth Planning Table
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# Oh Snap! Candidates Chat

On September 14, 2021, the Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT) hosted a group of local youth in conversation with federal candidates running for election in Waterloo Region. An invitation was sent to all the candidates in Waterloo Region running in this federal election and they were invited to send a representative from their party to attend. Oh Snap! Candidates Chat brought together:

**Michele Braniff**, Green Party of Canada Candidate from Cambridge
**Bardish Chagger**, Liberal Party Candidate from Waterloo
**C.A. Morrison**, Independent Candidate from Kitchener South Hespeler
**Ellen Papenburg**, Animal Protection Party Candidate from Kitchener Centre
*a last-minute scheduling conflict prevented the attendance of Beisan Zubi, NDP Candidate from Kitchener Centre*

Ahead of the event, youth from across Waterloo Region submitted the questions they wanted asked to the candidates and they voted for their favourites. The following top three questions were posed.

1. What are you doing to combat Islamophobia in Canada (including bill 21) and what will you do to address international human rights violations?
2. Why are we having this election?
3. Children and youth mental health is a huge issue. What are you going to do to add resources and support for mental health services, financial support and prevention programs like recreation and leisure?

This conversation was moderated by local young person Dauood Ali and Debbie Engel, Director of Community Services at Carizon and member of the CYPT and wrapped up with a final question to all candidates. "Having had the opportunity to learn more about what questions are top of mind for young people in Waterloo Region, how are you going to bring this back to your party and the work you will do if elected?"

Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region

It was generally agreed on by all candidates that they could engage more with young people. They acknowledged that some of the candidates in attendance haven't been as active with youth as they could be but there was a desire and interest to maintain the connections that had been made at the event.

Young people in Waterloo Region are passionate about issues affecting them and their communities and youth have said that they feel their voices matter less to elected officials as they don't have the political power to vote. Events like this help the voices of young people to be heard by future decision-makers in our communities and help foster belonging for children and youth. In particular, it supports young people feeling valued, heard, and included.

The recording from the event can be viewed HERE

A couple of highlights:

- Issues around equity was a consistent theme throughout the questions and the answers provided by the candidates.
- "Even though I did not have a vote, I did have a say" – said by one of the candidates at Oh Snap! Candidates Chat.
- The CYPT is currently running our own version of the Federal Election specifically for local youth, aged 14 – 18. We hope this will be an opportunity to better understand how youth would vote in our communities and we know it is important for decision-makers in Waterloo Region to know what local youth think.

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The Children and Youth Planning Table is a community-wide partnership that includes over 800 members across the Region of Waterloo. As a collective, we care deeply about the well-being of children and youth in our community.

Our Vision: Happy, healthy children and youth – today and tomorrow.

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