

# **Beyond Elections: Promoting health and well-being through civic engagement**

Panel Presentations & Discussion

November 27, 2024



**Alliance for Healthier Communities**  
Alliance pour des communautés en santé

# Panel Presentations & Discussion

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## Fostering a Culture of Civic Engagement: Beyond Voting Day

*By the Ottawa Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres - Community Developers' Network*

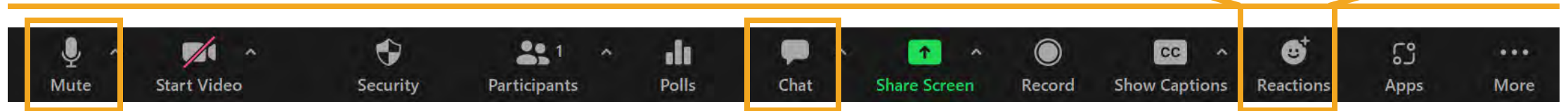
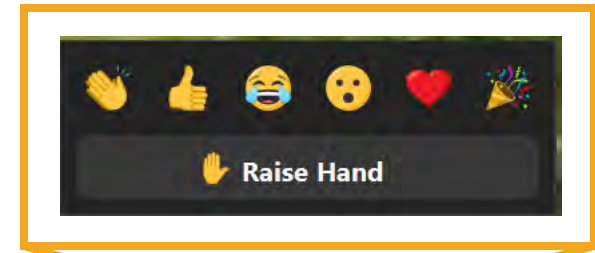
- Robynn Collins, Pinecrest-Queensway CHC
- Sado Ibrahim, Pinecrest-Queensway CHC
- Mohamed Aden, South-East Ottawa CHC

## Strengthening Communities: Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

*By The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO) and Flemingdon Health Centre (FHC)*

- Eshrat Meshkat, Flemingdon Health Centre
- Abdul Rashid Athar, Flemingdon Health Centre
- Karma Lhamo, The Neighbourhood Organization / Flemingdon Thorncliffe Inter-Agency Network Civic Engagement Cochair

# Housekeeping



- Microphones are muted by default.
- You may enter questions through the “chat” at any time.
- You may also use the “chat” function for technical assistance.
- During Q&A period, you may use “raise hand” function (under “reactions”), and we’ll unmute you when we call on you.
- Please don’t forget to mute your microphone again when you’re done speaking.

# Acknowledgement of Traditional Indigenous Territories

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We recognize that the work of the Alliance for Healthier Communities and Alliance members takes place across what is now called Ontario on traditional territories of the Indigenous people who have lived here since time immemorial and have deep connections to these lands. We further acknowledge that Ontario is covered by 46 treaties, agreements and land purchases, as well as unceded territories. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, meet and work on this territory.

Ontario continues to be home to vibrant, diverse Indigenous communities who have distinct and specific histories and needs, as well as constitutionally protected and treaty rights. We honour this diversity and respect the knowledge, leadership and governance frameworks within Indigenous communities. In recognition of this, we commit to building allyship relationships with First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples in order to enhance our knowledge and appreciation of the many histories and voices within Ontario. We also commit to sharing and upholding responsibilities to all who now live on these lands, the land itself and the resources that make our lives possible.

# Fostering a Culture of Civic Engagement: *Beyond Voting Day*

OTTAWA COALITION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND RESOURCE CENTRES - COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS' NETWORK

NOVEMBER 27, 2024



CENTRE DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE  
**PINECREST-QUEENSWAY**  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

South-East Ottawa  
Community Health Centre



Centre de santé communautaire  
du sud-est d'Ottawa



Coalition of Community Health  
and Resource Centres of Ottawa

Coalition des centres de ressources  
et de santé communautaires d'Ottawa

# Engagement Strategies

- ▶ Community-based Lunch & Learn/ Coffee Chats about the levels of government and what each level is responsible for. We do these where people are naturally gathering or through existing programs
- ▶ Meet & Greet with candidates/elected officials in different communities
- ▶ Mock Polling Stations (showing people how to vote) providing facts, handouts, choice of candidates and main issues
- ▶ Helping people register to vote (using postal codes) and find polling station
- ▶ Organize *All Candidate Debates* at a CHC/ CHRC

# Engagement Strategies...cont'd

- ▶ Set up information tables in apartment buildings or in Community Houses for several weeks leading up to an election
- ▶ Provide information at events (partner agencies, Food Trucks, and community BBQs)
- ▶ Door-to-Door Outreach (including resident leaders)
- ▶ Public education around who does what, how to write to representatives
- ▶ Community Conversations in natural/ ongoing ways where people gather
- ▶ Deputation training, how to present at budget consultations
- ▶ Engage local community leaders from various faith, language groups



# Where we have found support:

- ▶ *Democratic Knowledge Exchange* (engagement and readiness tools, workshops for residents, mock polling stations, fantastic literature and handouts)
- ▶ *Elections Ontario*
- ▶ *Elections Canada* (Inspire Democracy program, Train-the-Trainer, outreach materials)
- ▶ *City for All Women Initiative* (CAWI- based in Ottawa)
- ▶ *Alliance for Healthier Communities* (pre-budget recommendations, advocacy material, templates)
- ▶ *Our sister CHCs and CHRCs*
- ▶ *Community Associations and All Candidates Debate*
- ▶ *Community Partners such as Aging in Place, Community legal services Ottawa participate in various organizations*
- ▶ *Social Media Campaigns*



Coalition of Community Health  
and Resource Centres of Ottawa

Coalition des centres de ressources  
et de santé communautaires d'Ottawa



# Key Challenges for Community Developers

- ▶ Often off side of our desks, not integrated into workplans year-round, only at election time
- ▶ Low resource allocation in terms of human resources, budgets to do this work in an ongoing way
- ▶ Lack of knowledge or training for staff about levels of government and electoral processes
- ▶ As our crisis work increases, our capacity for *proactively* engaging in civic engagement work becomes less of a priority

# Barriers to Civic Engagement and/ or voting

- ▶ Accessibility(transportation)
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Lack of interest in resident-led leadership/advocacy due to lack of incentives that we can offer
- ▶ Minimum awareness around voting, election processes
- ▶ Apathy. Why bother? What difference will my vote make?
- ▶ Distrust in the electoral system, sometimes cultural/ historical
- ▶ Time constraints and long wait times

# Examples/ Best Practices: Safe People & Creating the Change We Want

- ▶ Safe People Resident Leadership Training- Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre [www.pqchc.com/services/safe-people](http://www.pqchc.com/services/safe-people)
- ▶ Creating the Change we Want- South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre & Community Development Framework [www.cdfcdc.ca/creating-the-change-we-want-ccww](http://www.cdfcdc.ca/creating-the-change-we-want-ccww)
- ▶ City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) [www.cawi-ivtf.org](http://www.cawi-ivtf.org)

# Recommendations/Way Forward

- ▶ Go to where People Are! Regularly.
- ▶ Engagement via Social Media and Digital Platforms: Encourage local governments and organizations to share regular updates on platforms people are already using, like Instagram, Facebook, and even TikTok, to make civic content engaging and accessible.
- ▶ Youth Engagement and Inclusion Initiatives: Engage young people through internships, mentorships, or school programs to cultivate a habit of civic engagement early on.
- ▶ Accessible Voting Resources and Registration Drives: Develop ongoing voter registration and education drives, especially in under-represented communities.
- ▶ Ongoing Feedback Loops with Elected Officials: Encourage elected officials to create regular feedback loops with constituents through surveys, newsletters, or quarterly reports that outline the progress on key issues.
- ▶ Provision of transportation for each riding

# Thank you!

Coalition of Community Health and Resource  
Centres of Ottawa for more information

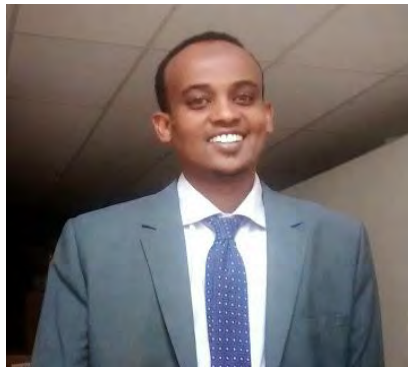
[www.coalitionottawa.ca](http://www.coalitionottawa.ca)

## Mohamed Aden

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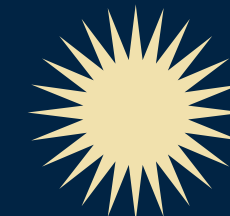


**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**



# **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES: VOLUNTEERISM AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**



TNO-The Neighbourhood Organization  
Flemingdon Health Centre



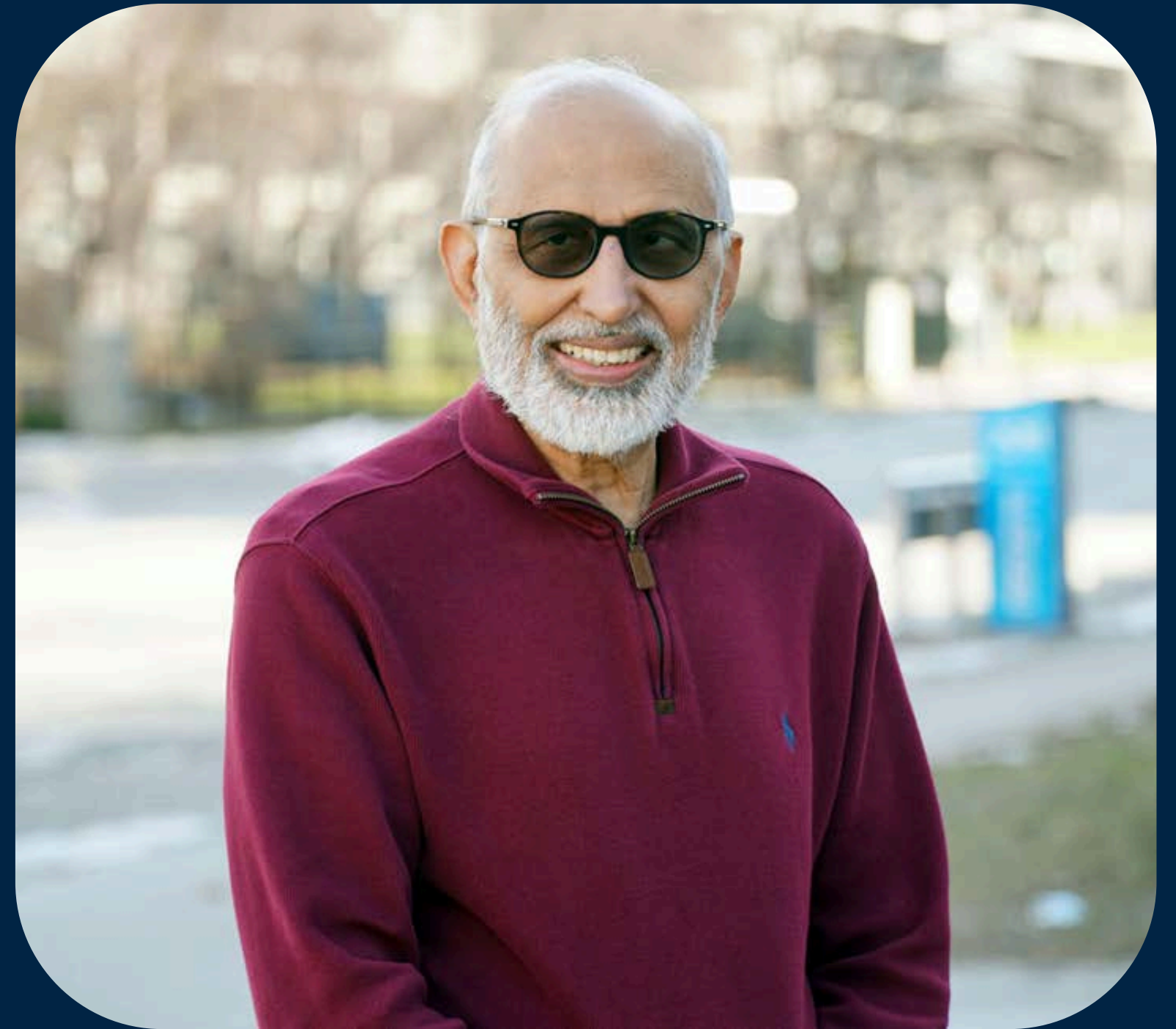
Alliance for Healthier Communities  
Alliance pour des communautés en santé



A retired corporate banker and a community leader Abdul is very passionate about community development through capacity building, enhancing inclusion and equity, reducing isolation and supporting initiatives aimed at improving physical and mental health.

From 2021 to 2023 he was lead community health ambassador with Flemingdon health Centre and was instrumental in the phenomenal success of vaccine engagement drive in the equity deserving and underserved Flemingdon Park community. He is a member of Community Advisory Council of East Toronto Health Partners as well as Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Park Residents Council.

He is an avid walker and started Steps Challenge initiative during the peak time of Covid-19 in mid 2020 to encourage the community members to go out for a walk which was so successful in reducing isolation and keeping the community members physically active that it was featured in the daily Globe and Mail in Stepping up series introducing Canadians to their country's new sources of inspiration and leadership.



Abdul Rashid Athar  
Community Ambassador (FHC)  
Grassroots Leader (FCSS)



Eshrat Meshkoti is a dedicated community leader and health ambassador who has tirelessly served Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park neighbourhoods in Toronto with passion and love for people. She was born and raised in a rural community of Northern Iran where she learned the importance of collective efforts in facing common challenges. Eshrat's journey for community development and her passion for helping others grew while living in Iran, New Zealand and Canada. She has always been a strong advocate of human rights, food and health equity, public participation, democracy, and civic engagement.

Eshrat is an experienced leader in mobilizing community resources, creating synergy and providing social support to those in need, people with family crisis, particularly newcomers facing resettlement challenges. She has played major role in local consultations, projects and programs related to community health such as managing Covid-19 challenges and vaccination campaign during the pandemic, emergency food distribution, health equity and food security research, cancer screening, improving community's physical and mental health challenges, and Seniors' Support program.

In addition, Eshrat has facilitated many training workshops since 2019 for educating community and promoting healthy and cost-effective food preparation through collaboration with Flemingdon Health Center, Oriole Community Centre, Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities, and Access Alliance in Toronto.

She has been recognized for her community activities and achievements throughout the years for her leadership in the community. Eshrat is also a member of Local Champions' Network in Toronto.



**Eshrat Meshkoti**  
**Community Ambassador (FHC)**  
**Local Champions Network**



Karma is the Manager of Community Development at TNO- The Neighbourhood Organization. Her current portfolio includes, community outreach and engagement, health access, sustainable initiatives, food security, community ambassadors, community capacity building and special projects. Her previous roles included leading the Pandemic Response team, a Settlement Counsellor supporting newcomers to Canada as well as running her own business.

Given her strong belief in the power of individuals to create stronger, more connected communities, Karma works to support and empower communities in overcoming challenges and addressing their own needs. As a community development practitioner, Karma focuses on promoting social justice, inclusion, and sustainability, ensuring that all members of the community have the opportunity to thrive.

Having personally navigated the journey from a refugee claimant to permanent residency and eventually a citizen in Canada, Karma holds a profound appreciation for the value of citizenship driven by a deep commitment to fostering positive social change. This personal experience informs her approach to community development, where they advocate for the importance of active civic engagement in shaping society and a strong belief that citizens play a crucial role in shaping their communities, Karma is dedicated to creating environments where everyone has a voice and can contribute to lasting, positive change.



**Karma Lhamo**  
Manager, Community Development &  
Special Projects (TNO)  
Civic Engagement Co-Chair (FTIAN)

# What is Civic engagement ?

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.\*\*



## What does it look like for us?

Activism & Advocacy

Community Service & Volunteering

Community Education &  
Awareness

Electoral Participation



# Activism & Advocacy



Save the Science Centre



Tenants Network - No Demovictions advocacy



Climate Action toolkit - w/grassroots leaders

## Community Organizing

- Coming together to address local issues around neighbourhood safety, environmental sustainability, grassroots mobilizing communities
- writing advocacy letters to elected officials, signing petitions
- e.g. Save the Science Centre, Tenants Rights, Climate Action initiatives, Deputations at city hall

**STOP**  
& READ THIS

to learn why the  
Community  
Ambassador model  
in Ontario is so  
important, and how  
you can help grow  
and expand it!

HEALTH  
COMMONS  
SOLUTIONS  
LAB



# Community Service & Volunteering

Community Clean Up - Flemington Park



Eco-Fair - Grassroots Groups



Community Clean Up - Thorncliffe Park

Prep meals - Flemington Park Food Ministry



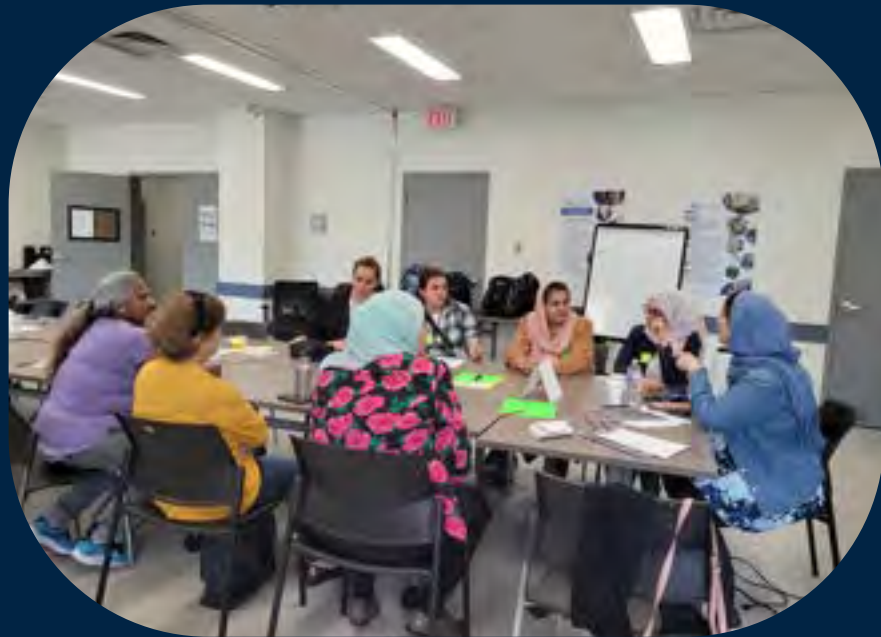
Volunteering could include:

- Organizing or participating in community clean ups
- Volunteering at local food banks
- Supporting grassroots initiatives that are almost always centered around causes for the community



# Community Education & Awareness

Voter Pop Up Booth at Fall Festival



Consultation on Cancer Screening



- Increase social engagement and cooperation
- Support local social initiatives
- Trusted individuals such as Community Ambassadors and Grassroots leaders play an important role in building the awareness and education



Community Ambassadors gathering

## Thorncliffe & Flemingdon Civic Engagement Forum

Join us for a fun and exciting evening to chat about what is important to our community and voting for our next Mayor

Tuesday, June 6, 2023 | 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm

Thorncliffe Park Community Hub, 45 Overlea Blvd  
2nd floor (Entrance 6)

For exterior elevator (entrance close to A&W), East York Town Centre

Free food & fun activities!

First 50 people in attendance will receive a free gift card!

Get engaged and learn about:

- How and where to vote
- How we can increase voter turnout
- Who are the candidates
- What questions to ask candidates



Register in advance online here:  
[bit.ly/cwlforum](https://bit.ly/cwlforum)



You can also visit [www.toronto.ca/elections](https://www.toronto.ca/elections) for more information on voting.

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Coalition of Women in Leadership

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2023 Mayoral Election- Toronto



# Electoral Participation

Voter Pop Up Booth - Flemington Park



EYDV-By-election Forum 2024



Don Valley East - City Elections 2022



Electoral participation could be:

- Voter Pop Up Booths encouraging discussions and share information
- Collaborative engagement with community leaders to plan election forums
- plan and organize election forums e.g. FTIAN Election Forums have become a constant in every election
- Town halls and public consultations







# Civic Engagement - beyond elections

Barriers to engagement include

Social, cultural and language barriers

Past experience and Trauma/Mistrust in govt

Lack of information or civic education

Barriers faced by people with disabilities

Youth - disengaged, facing barriers to voting

Time and resource constrains





# Civic Engagement - beyond elections

Ways to engage could include

Improving Civic Education

Participating by either Running or working at Elections

Reducing barriers to access

Volunteering, civic engagement

Participatory budgeting eg.

Fostering Discourse, hosting public meetings and forums



City of Toronto Budget Consultations



Voting Pop Ups



Local Grassroot leader- Shakhlo Sharipova who ran for the recent By-elections for DVW



# What role do we play a role?

## Non Profits & Health Care providers

Educating and mobilizing voters

Amplify marginalized voices

Collaborate with government and other stakeholders

Support advocacy work

Provide resources, services & sponsorship of community events

Improving Civic Education

Civic Engagement is a social determinant of health



## Thorncliffe Park Election Forum

Meet your Ward 15 City Councillor  
By-Election candidates!

Date: Monday, October 21, 2024

Time: 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Location: Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre,  
Gym, 48 Thorncliffe Park Drive

Meet your candidates and hear about their priorities. We will be asking the candidates questions from the community in a moderated Q&A style forum. Meet and greet from 6:00 pm to 6:30 pm

Submit your question online here:  
[bit.ly/ward15forum](https://bit.ly/ward15forum)



For information on voting, please visit [www.toronto.ca/elections](http://www.toronto.ca/elections)  
Advance Vote is October 26-27 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Election Day is November 4 with voting places open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.





# Outcome of Civic Engagement

- Community Empowerment
- Healthy Democracy / Political Equality
- Social Capital / Stronger Bonds
- Civic Engagement is a Social Determinant of Health and improves Physical and Mental Health of individuals
- Better Interpersonal Skills
- Advance Health Equity and can inform policy and systemic changes
- Promote Social Justice
- Better Outcomes for Youth





**THANK YOU**



The background features a repeating pattern of wavy lines. The colors of the waves are orange, green, teal, and red. Some waves are solid, while others are filled with a pattern of small, colorful triangles in shades of orange, green, teal, red, and dark grey. The overall effect is a vibrant, rhythmic border.

**Questions?**





**Thank You**

**Merci**

**Miigwetch**