

After the election – a candidate reflects



Scott Healey reflects on the democratic process after running in the June provincial election as a Progressive Conservative candidate.

By Scott Healey

The 2022 Ontario provincial election is over; the people have spoken. Candidates respect the people's choice and move on. Some may even hold the winner accountable to the people.

I was honoured to be a candidate for the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario in Ottawa Centre for the June 2 election. Though the outcome was not totally unexpected, it was not what I had hoped. No one likes to lose, and I am certainly no exception. I am proud of our campaign and the way it represented the platform of the PC party. My team conducted a respectful campaign in a professional manner; that I am happy with.

After some post-election reflection, my campaign experience has brought both feelings of disappointment and humility.

My disappointment is threefold. Firstly, the voter turnout was terrible. I know incumbents benefit from a low voter turnout – my party was returned to power with an even larger majority, and for that I am glad. I am happy for our party's victory, but I am not happy about the state of our democracy. Disengagement and complacency are not healthy for democratic politics.

Secondly, I was disappointed by a few comments directed towards my campaign team. I somewhat expected it for myself and was on the receiving end of some nasty language on a few occasions. However, having your volunteers called racists and fascists as they put up blue signs in our neighbourhoods is hardly supportive of the progressive image that our community wants to portray. Intolerance is not just reserved for the right end of the so-called political spectrum, but for the left as well. If my fellow candidates received similar comments, which I would regret if they did, I am sure they would feel the same.

On a slightly partisan note, I am disappointed that five Ottawa ridings representing over 600,000 people have no representation around the government table.

Ottawa is the second largest city in Ontario and should have a strong voice at the government table, but there is none. As a colleague of mine once stated, "equal but not fair." You may not be disadvantaged, but you are sure not going to be advantaged.

As I reflect on my campaign experiences, I am humbled in two ways. I am humbled that 8,686 people voted for me. I take this vote of confidence very seriously and feel a deep sense of gratitude, commitment and obligation. If I had received just one vote, I would take that obligation no less seriously than if I had received 100,000.

Secondly, while campaigning I saw, heard and felt the challenges that exist in our community. When I spoke on election night, I said "Ottawa Centre is just a pin prick on a geographical map and a grain of sand on a beach in the world's population, but there are so many challenges in our midst." When you depart from the usual path travelled, the world you encounter is not always what you had imagined.

I often said to my small campaign team "you can't eat the whole elephant at once, just one bite at a time." That's how we can improve the world, one bite at a time.

All said and done, the overall experience was very rewarding, and I am glad I had an opportunity to participate in the political process as a candidate. To my campaign team, thank you. To the voters of Ottawa Centre, thank you for listening and doing your civic duty. To all those new friends and acquaintances I met on this journey, it was a pleasure, and we'll keep in touch.

I wish Joel Harden all the best as our MPP at Queen's Park. I know that he will represent the riding and our interests with the intensity and dedication we expect from our elected officials. I'll be watching.

Scott Healey was the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario candidate of record for Ottawa Centre in the June 2022 election.

Four ways for parents to support teen mental health

By Jenny Demark

It is an enormous understatement to say that our teens have been through a lot in the past two years. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 64 per cent of youth aged 15 to 24 have reported poor mental health, a higher rate than all other age groups (Statistics Canada). Teenagers have endured decreased social interactions, school closures and disruptions and reduced access to clubs, sports and arts activities. They have missed important milestones, such as graduations, proms and class trips. They have witnessed increased stress within their families. They have lost loved ones.

Add the fact that it is harder than ever to access mental health supports, especially for marginalized youth, and it is no wonder that they have had a difficult time.

Yet despite these many obstacles, Canadian youth have also been remarkably resilient. In a survey completed by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 50 per cent of youth reported positive impacts of the pandemic. Benefits included spending more time with family, feeling less rushed and having more time for hobbies and self-reflection.

Although the pandemic is not over, opportunities are opening up, and it is time to make plans to move forward. So how can we best support our youth and their mental well-being?

1. Be a role model

Be sure to get enough sleep, engage

in regular exercise and eat good food. Put the phone down, and let your kids see you engage in healthy activities such as reading, journaling, playing an instrument or practising yoga. Go to therapy. Spend time outdoors, no matter the weather. Use drugs and alcohol sparingly. Not only will we be better able to cope with the stress of parenting adolescents, we will also be teaching our kids healthy habits through our own behaviour.

2. Find quality time

Many teens act as though they do not want to spend a single second with their parents but in reality, they still want us involved in their lives. It is very important to find time, even just a few minutes a day, to check in. Quality time (remember, it is not *quantity* time) is meant to be relaxed, enjoyable and directed by your teen. It is *not* a time for reprimanding, nagging or interrogating them about homework, chores, social media or dating. Follow their lead, talk about what they want, share a fun activity, and you will maintain a strong relationship.

3. Validate, validate, validate!

Know that teens are doing their best during these uncertain and turbulent times. Acknowledge their feelings in a non-judgmental and compassionate manner. This means making eye contact, staying focused on what they are saying and being mindful of your body language (nothing can be more invalidating than an eye roll or a sigh). Be tolerant of their behaviour and emotions,

even if you do not agree with them.

Don't pretend to "get it," and don't suggest that their stress is trivial compared to the concerns of adults. Remember that our own adolescence was quite different from what youth are currently going through. We do not know what it is like to come of age in this era.

We don't have to fix all their problems – in fact, we want our kids to be able to find solutions on their own – but they will need our guidance at times. Offer support and suggestions, and listen with an open mind. Encourage, but don't force them to take your advice.

4. Don't wait for a crisis

Even if your teen has done well and appears to have healthy coping strategies, they can still benefit from working with a mental health professional. An appointment once every month or two allows teens to check-in, build skills and foster a relationship with a psychologist, psychotherapist or social worker. Should problems surface, they already have a trusted person to work with.

Unfortunately, when crises arise, our youth often end up waiting too long for services. That said, if your teen is in trouble, there are some places to turn:

- Parents' Lifeline of Eastern



- Ontario, www.pleo.on.ca
- Kids Help Phone, www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Youth Services Bureau, www.yusb.ca

Don't hesitate to go to CHEO's emergency room if there is any indication that your teen is going to seriously harm themselves.

We are not fully out of the pandemic woods, but the future is starting to look brighter. Continued support of our youth and their mental well-being will foster the next generation of happy, productive and resilient adults.

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