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SPEAKER:

...Proportional representation or something else, parties are still going to play a very important role in that. In fact, if you change, they have a stronger role to play because they will they would be the gatekeepers in terms of who forms government. All that being said, when it comes to regulations, contests and leadership spending is under the elections Act and is regulated. I don't disagree with my colleague.

I think this is something we should be looking at more because the moment of democracy in Canada I always believe is at the nation level. That's when people get to choose who is going to represent them in their political party, and that is a really, really important moment because a lot of people don't think about how I became the Liberal or Conservative candidate, but that's when you have groups of people locally organize organizing to say this is the person that I want to run representing me under this party banner. Then the people in the riding decide which person they want to be their member of Parliament ultimately. But I think that's an important moment we should be looking at more closely. But I do want to give a shout-out to political parties because for many people it's a signpost. It's a marker. It's a way to say: Hey, here are the ten things or five things I care about. Is that reflected in this political party?

If I elect candidate X from party Y, I'm going to have a good sense of where they're going to stand. Maybe not on all of the issues but on the issues that I care about. That makes it easier for me as a citizen to make my choice about who I want to be represented.

I also think that sometimes we tend to think of parties as nefarious organizations, and when you join a political party you often realize they're just made up of people, right? They're just made up of citizens who are passionate about politics and passionate about their country, and want to achieve certain objectives. Jane mentioned the statistic of 3 to 8 per cent. I think it's actually 2 per cent of Canadians are members of political parties. Often what I tell people is if you want to impact policy and you want to impact the future, join a political party, because all of a sudden you're going to be part of that policy process. I can't speak for the other political parties because I'm not a member of theirs, so I don't know exactly how they work internally. But I can say that the legal legalization of cannabis, for example, was a policy item that was put forward by the Liberals, right, and it made its way through the process into our platform and then into actual legislation and public policy. So I think there is a real -- political parties can be a useful vehicle. Of course, we should make them more accountable. Of course they should be more transparent transparent. But I do think that they're important organizing entities for Canadians to be able to make decisions about who they want to be governed by and how they want to be governed. Thank you. There are different points of view on the floor.

SPEAKER:

Bringing this home, can you speak about your perspective, having led an organization, recruiting amazing people, supporting leadership development in the city? Where do parties figure? Are people keen to work outside sort of these traditional structures, and why?

SPEAKER:

Thank you, Jane. It is such a treat to be here this morning. I am very thankful to be invited to share some thoughts. Here's where high-tech will come from: I am a proud Canadian. I studied in Canada and moved to Washington, D.C. where I worked for a few years, close to politics, right up to the line. I came back to Canada and served as a civil servant in the Canadian government. Close to politics right up to the line. And now I'm CEO of CivicAction, that has a hands hands-on deck approach to address and works closely with elected officials, right up to the line. But at no point in my career have I stepped over the line to

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become a partisan player. I'm not one of the 2 per cent, a political party member. That's been rather intentional in my experience. I share that so that as I share with you three observations I've had through the culmination of those experiences. I want to give you a bit of a vantage point from where I sit.

One is the challenge of the echo chamber that is increasingly getting louder and borderline inbred. Let me give you an example. Recent changes here in the city of Toronto, the premier cut our council down to 25 members. One quarter of all those city council members who remain are either the brother or the son, the father or the sister of other politicians. Politics is increasingly becoming a family business. Not in every case, but when we look at it as an assembly, there's a discernible trend, the club. A lot of folks don't see themselves reflected in the club, and a lot of folks, it takes more interest in party membership to join an association with the big C club.

The second thing, observation I have is around the culture of what we put these people through, the terrainian of public life. We throw rocks the at you, inside and outside. As a woman, what you deal with is three times worse on social media. Twitter has become the Roman colonel seeum of our era. Why? People put themselves through that is stagger to me, because it's no longer about facts and arguments. You need the artillery and the cavalry to beat them in many cases, not all -- in many cases. So the culture is hurting. The environment is vitriolic. And here's the good news that I'll end on: While government has continued to work hard, and there are many brilliant leaders who have served, some of them in this room, from previous governments as well. The rest of society is busy working too. Do you know that Canada has the second largest NGO sector in the world, and most of it is here here? We are outperforming the world in civil society bench strength. I see it every day.my life. The #MeToo is a great example. For hundreds of years, the advancement of women and girls have been moving at a glacial pace. It will take another 217 more years for that to get here. Here's what happened, through Twitter, this is now 81 countries, the #MeToo movement. We have revolutionized in 24 months what it took 60 years to see through. Did you know that the business community is driving the next generation of gender equality? I've sat in my office in the last two weeks with two in-house legal counsel, big Canadian companies companies. They were working in big firms where they were tired of the glass ceiling and tired of what it took to be successful there. So they went into the client side. And guess what they do from the client side? They say the firm that they are retained to work with, I want to see diversity on the team that's attached to me. They're driving change because they're powerful clients. That's awesome.

In California, the pension boards, biggest one is run by women. You can no longer have a gag rule that protects sexual harassment or claims. In other words, if you have a #MeToo in your ranks, you can't pay them off and clamp it down and have that not be a news story anymore. So pension boards are now saying: I want to see your reports on all those claims. Because before I choose to invest in you, character and the audit thereof is going to be part of what I look like.

I use that as an example of just one of many aspects of change that has continuously been driven by government but is not being driven as aggressively as it sometimes can be from the inside.

SPEAKER:

OK, great. [APPLAUSE]

I'm going to try to moderate the conversation with four different perspectives. Let's go back to -- so there's a point of view, sort of a defence of parties from the minister, and a position from at least two folks that I think -- sympathy to change parties, I think held by a few. And then a strong voice around a really important change can happen outside of parties. We can't forget about that.

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I do want to come back to parties, because I think there is something compelling about the reality of if you want to hold power in Canada in our Westminster system, parties are something you can't entirely ignore ignore.

So Michael and talked about some change to need to happen. Is there appetite within the parties or does that have to come from without? I'd be curious especially about your experience with the reform act.

SPEAKER:

I think there's appetite within parties for reform, but I also think there has to be pressure from out. A lot of ideas I have about reform of political parties actually comes out of my own party. I remember in 2004 when the platform was shaped. One of the things we ran on was for public productions Canada to hold party memberships, to get away from the clandestine business of paying a \$10 fee and then not having the right to join a political party. Political parties can deny you membership. They can kick you out out. And you have to pay a \$10 fee and you have to renew that fee each and every year. That's not true. The Liberal you still have to pay a fee if you want to be a voting member and go to a national convention.

So my view is we need to go down the path of what we proposed in four, which is to have party membership registered with elections Canada, permanent role of party membership. You do not have to renew every year. That's the list we rely on.

In the United States, they decided to get away from the private club way of operating political parties. They decided that when you register to vote with the United States once in your life, you then also at the same time register your membership in a political party. You can register as a democrat, Republican, independent, member of the green Party, a plethora of other parties in the United States. But once you register you never have to register again. Whenever there is a party nomination contest like there was in New York City, where they took out an incumbent, an election, party nomination contest regulated by local election authorities. That revolution down there there, where she took out a long-standing member of the US house of representatives would never be allowed to happen in Canada because party leaders have kiboshed it and kill it.

SPEAKER:

Hot pursuit. [APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER:

I appreciate that and I think there's some merit there. But what I would counter is that that doesn't allow for change in parties either, right? I'm going on your example here, in the US you see a two-party system, very entrenched. It's really hard for new actors to break into that and to break out. I think the other part is that Canadians change their minds a lot, right? This notion of being partisan, Karim talked about that he's been part of three different parties. Cool, right? This idea that it could one day wake up and say: Actually, I have changed my mind or I think this or the party has changed. I think there is an important agency that citizens need to be able to say: This is what I support right now, or I'm changing my mind. A system that's more entrenched makes that more difficult.

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I just want to turn to some examples around the country because I think it's really interesting. Obviously the Liberals, the Conservatives, the NDP are the three traditional parties in Canada. Last election a whole new party landscape. They still have political parties to help organize and inform voters of the different values and ideas and ideals, but new players were able to come in there. In New Brunswick, the Greens, the other party that just came up, people's alliance. The Greens are making headway in P.E.I. We have a really dynamic landscape, actually. Even though we have two more traditional parties we have a lot of dynamism. I think actually enabling them to morph and change over time as Canadians morph and change over time is really important. I think that that's actually something that is something that we should be taking into consideration as we think about political parties and how Canadians engage with them.

SPEAKER:

Great. I'm going to -- hold your thought, Michael. Karim, adding to that point around -- especially Michael's idea is if you register, does that take away the partisan factor?

SPEAKER: We need to expand that 2 per cent. That is a key role where civil society and political parties can do things together. Political parties need to work to change their culture to make joining a political party more acceptable, and that involves outreach and also a greater appetite from civil society, in my opinion.

The party I'm affiliated with has gone through hashed times of late. We need to go to places where people are congregating or speaking to people rather than listening. If we do that, if we start to go where people are already gathering in in a non-partisan, hip hipster way, and say: Actually, there's this political party that we are in that we think espouses your values values. Come join us and shape that party.

That, in concert with political circumstances, that in concert with the explicit statement that we want to gain power to do these things is what can grow the audience of a political party. You mentioned New Brunswick. I'm from New Brunswick. They used to have lifetime memberships. At the end of the Richard Patfield era because there was such an appetite from a lot of places to have change, one in seven New Brunswickers was a member of the New Brunswick political association association. So circumstances and a political party that is making outreach attempts can really drive civil society engagement. my policy solution around other players that could be well funded would be examples of organizations that if they got a super tax credit could then really drive political engagement in a non-partisan, cross-partisan way and could help create a culture for political parties to meet its marks.

SPEAKER:

Michael, do you want a quick in? We'll talk about partisanship versus non-partisanship.

SPEAKER: I think it's quite simple. People cannot find their voice in the old mainline parties. So what they end up doing is starting a new party. That's why we have all these new parties starting up because top-down structure prevents grassroots people from having their voice heard. Whereas in the United States there is no top-down control. It's all bottom-up. As a result most Americans find their voice in the democratic or Republican parties, they can shape those parties and there's not a need to start a third party. Sometimes it happens, but more often than not people can make change happen within parties themselves. That can't happen in Canada.

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I go back to the example of Ms. Cortez. She took out a long-standing member of the US house of representatives and a shocking party nomination. Never Never, ever happened in Canada. Why? Because parties, they get difficult to join. Parties keep the rules of nomination contests secretive. Parties can deny you even from running for party nomination. They can change the dates of nomination. They regulate the nomination contest and a whole bunch of stuff. Here's the proof of the pudding and I'm being non-partisan. In Toronto we have a nomination contest and another criminal investigation going on by another police force of a nomination contest in hamton.

This happens all the time because these contests are private privately regulated by private parties, they need to be brought into the open and regulated. It's high time we take parties out of the 19th century as private clubs with clandestine rules and secretive ways of working, bring them into elections Canada. We can do that in 12 months. I remember the 2004 platform. We promised that a team 1 tax, when you file your T 1 income and benefit return, we enlarge the box on page 1. It says do you want to register your address and name and be on the voters' list. Do you want to register as a member of the one of the following political parties. Check off the box, you're a member, the next time there's a party leadership contest, elections Canada will notify you and you get to vote. That's party participation, you take participation from 2 per cent to 20 per cent overnight [APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER: This has gone up to the line and not crossed the line. Do you find in Canada there's enough -- is the gap now too big between non-partisan and partisan or can we work closely together, as Karim suggested, to try to have sort of that greater participatory ethic between civil society and parties?

SPEAKER:

My first job was at a video store. It was awe awesome. You came in with your card and you went to the shelves and picked the movie you wanted. It was empty. You would bring it to us at the front. We fill it with the movie, the VHS, I'd scan your card, I'd scan the movie, I'd remind you about the rewind, and then you would leave the store and go home and watch the movie. You needed a membership to have an experience. You do not need a membership to have a civic experience. The opportunities to get stuff done outside of a party I believe are bigger than being inside.

You don't need to drink any Kool-Aid if you don't join, and there are varying degrees of Kool-Aid, intensity, flavour, and expectation, in many of our parties, yeah? But it's a party for a reason. There is a cohesive expectation for a reason. It doesn't work if you all don't get in line at some point. And I believe most of us prize autonomy of independent views on a range of topics, and an autonomy of how we did you believe click certain issues for certain degrees of focus. I think most people are comfortable not having that membership and still finding ways to get stuff done than getting the video card to have the movie experience. [APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER:

Minister, do you want to add?

SPEAKER:

I just wanted to say that I think this is alright, right? I think that a healthy democracy has a robust and diverse ecosystem. Part of that is -- will be within the party. A lot of that is without the party. There needs to be flexibility to move in and out, to make decisions. I have an issue with checking it off on your taxes because -- for other people to know they're a member of that party as well. I obviously am partisan and I don't think there's anything wrong with partisanship, but I understand some people say: I want to make a small donation to this party because I support that idea. But I don't necessarily want my in addition to know that because of whatever reason.

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I think that's OK and that's actually part of your democratic right to be able to participate and to share without having the experience role. One of the challenges in the United States, I don't always take as the best example of the best democracy experience out there, but is that once you're registered, everybody knows. That can be a real limit limiting factor for some people or it can have a different experience than what we have here in Canada.

I'm a very proud Canadian and I'm really proud of what we have here. There's a reason why we're a really good country. Of course, we always need to be striving to be improving and getting better. I don't think we should throw the bathwater out just because. There's a lot of good stuff going on here. One of the things that's important that Karim touched on is that we are not singular people, right? I am not just a partisan, right? I am also, was before, but -- sorry, members of other things. I can't be, because I'm a minister. I used to be sit on the board of some community organization.

I am a multi-faceted person that tends to align with the Liberal party because of the causes I support and the things they support as well. I think there has to be some cohesion in political parties because otherwise it doesn't serve that gold postmarker for people as they're making decisions when they're voting of what kind of country they want and what they expect the party that's seeking to govern them will do once they're in government. I think that's really important. But the point is there has to be dialogue and there has to be communication and of course there's going to be engagement with different parts of civil society. I think that's the important part, that we want to make sure that those conferences have been and that engagement happens. But we don't view, because it's not true, that political parties are siloed from civil society. In fact they're dynamic and engaged.

I would agree with Karim that organizations like Civil Society or Political Parties and Samara should be supported and encouraged to do what they're doing because they're encouraging people to participate and to be engaged and to look at politics in a different way that speaks to themselves as citizens and their contribution to the community. So I don't want to sound naive, but I'm really positive and optimistic and I think we need to also remember the good that we have and work to improve what we already have here.

SPEAKER:

Just a quick follow up from me. How do you think parties can best attract for participation? You mentioned the Liberal Party's position to get rid of membership, this lowering one barrier, but are there others you see within parties that you would like to have a more imaginative structure.

SPEAKER:

I think one thing that's really important is that there is an engagement, right, and that it's not just seen as, yes, everyone has to stand in line at one point because you want to know your party stands for something. You know that people not everyone is going to agree on every issue. That's impossible. We're never going to get there. But to make sure there is room for engagement and room to be part of the process. I found that in my own experience as a politician, a member of Parliament and previously as the candidate, I would often go to the door and ask people what the issue they cared about was. They would say: I don't know. Well, do you have kids? Yeah, I've got kids. OK, so is child care important or maybe playing hockey or the environment maybe? And really making it tangible for people. These issues are issues that we care about as well, and we're trying to work to make better. Actually, your voice and your support and your ideas can be part of our policy development and what we eventually put into the pipeline, in government government.

One of the things that I think -- I'm monopolizing time right now, but I have lots to say -- I have a keynote later. We live in a world where we're used to getting things quickly. You can order food, your dry cleaning, you can get everything done with a click of a button. Politics takes times and democracy takes times

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times, because it's about us engaging and debating and discussing and me trying to encourage you to say that we shouldn't put our partisan label on our tax returns, Michael is saying we should, and having this conversation and you make up your mind in terms of what we should be doing. That's part of the process. I think sometimes, especially today, we want quick returns.

Actually, democracy is a process, and it's my job and Michael's jobs and Karim's job and Sevaun's job to try to convince you that we're right, but that takes time. That's OK, but that's the brilliance of democracy, because otherwise it would be a dictatorship dictatorship.

SPEAKER:

That's why we don't have jobs like video store clerks anymore either.

SPEAKER:

I think this might be a research agenda item, so I'm going to put it on the table and check it with the others. My intuition is that political parties are more representative than many civil society organizations. So what do I mean by that? Who here is part of -- in a religious community? And how do you come to that community? Generally through family. So who here is part of a professional association? How did you come to that? Through the organization of the professional association. So those are civil society organizations. How do people come to political senators generally by being asked or by being motivated around an issue.

You take the aggregation of people who are involved in political parties and you actually have a fairly representative group. The problem is we don't have enough participation in those parties. So we don't actually have a representation challenge as much as we have an inclusion challenge, is my impression. The inclusion challenge I think is caused once they're put on the table here.

SPEAKER:

On that note, speaking about inclusion, I want to have some questions from the audience. We have a mic probing. I see someone at the back, in the corner.

SPEAKER: On the inclusion challenge, I think that Indigenous Canadians still are greatly under-represented in political parties. That may be one of the inclusion differences [APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER:

Generally I see fairly representative populations included.

SPEAKER:

What we do know about surveys of members is that they're not representative of Canadians Canadians. They tend to be older, more male, more White. That always needs to be updated. I'll take that challenge.

Question.

SPEAKER:

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Hi, there. Two of the more local dimensions that were mentioned.

And are not just not rewinding but recording over what they took out.

SPEAKER:

Is your question what's the role of civil society in that example where the council cuts were made?

SPEAKER:

In a majority context it can be isolating. You can feel powerless as well, which can turn you off political aspects because you don't see a role for yourself necessarily.

So this is a great example. Has everyone followed this file? This is a very well-informed group. This was a decision made by the government with essentially no consultation, that city council would go in the middle of a race from 47 down to 25 overnight, no consultation. It was not in the mandate as something this party was going to do, so everyone has caught off-guard. There were many groups and individuals saying: You can't just do this. Ultimately the province was playing musical chairs and appointed itself DJ.

SPEAKER:

Got it. So the question I think is a great one. Was there a loud enough response? Was there enough civic activism? And I think this hits an interesting rub because there was a very vocal minority of people that had great offence to this and took to different channels to voice that. Shockingly, or maybe not to groups like this, the vast majority didn't care one bit, not even 1 per cent of one bit. So this is concerning for a bunch of reasons, not because if you have a view one way or another. From my position, certainly what was the intended outcome? Is it efficiencies? Like, what are we doing that for and then what's the fair process to land at that? None of that was done. So process, fail, OK? Process fail.

But the fact that there was this giant schism between a progressive group who was very upset and then the vast majority of 3 million Ontarians that didn't seem to care at all, that's interesting. Back to this point on democracy being representative, if the systems and the voices are only aware, by topsoil, the topsoil -- sorry -- by the bedrock folks that study it, that understand the nuance of changing the rules midway through, the topsoil people don't care. They are no less citizens, by the way, than anyone else. Sometimes I worry that we have views that diminish the validity of people that don't share the same passion over the same issues. They aren't ignorant. They aren't malinformed. These are moms and dads and aunts and uncles that have strong opinions on many topics but the conversation is sometimes eliteist. Don't assume people are in that lane because they haven't heard you talk yet.

SPEAKER:

A quick reminder. I want to get at least two more questions on the floor before we wrap. Go ahead.

SPEAKER:

I used to be a former political staffer. One of the major issues that I found while working on Parliament Hill

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is the echo chambers within each party. I find that each party has obviously different perspectives, but when you have things like whipped votes and everyone is aligned to one specific ideology, even though there is variance within the group on that issue, how do you ensure that you are encouraging diversity and not shunning people within the party to voice their opinions that are different from the masses within the party?

SPEAKER:

I'm going to turn -- let's get two questions on the floor so we can divide and conquer on the panel.

SPEAKER:

Thank you. On the same line. Having em empowered party members, as Michael mentioned, having become a party member you can't do much except knocking on the door during election time. Empower party members who can run the agenda. The example the minister mentioned about the policy proposal for business, yes, it was accepted by the party at the time because you had that policy resonated with that leader. Otherwise it would be very difficult. In fact it is extremely difficult for party members to have their voice heard. That hierarchy actually replicates within Parliament Hill, within the backbenchers. They have much less power than the others. They cannot relay the voice of their constituents.

SPEAKER:

Thank you. Great question.

SPEAKER:

I can answer both. I think the heart challenge that you're identifying here is party leaders in Canada, particularly the Prime Minister, have too much power. They not only control their elected members of Parliament, they control the party. Riding associations don't exist within the party leader's signature. Just before the last general election, Mr. Mr. Trudeau registered and reregistered some 150 Liberal riding associations overnight with one signature on each of those documents. Riding associations exist at the pleasure of the leader. They can take them out overnight.

Let me shock you into this reality: What if I were to say to you this coming October you could only vote in the next general election if you paid a \$10 membership fee to a political party, if you -- that party had the right to reject your membership. That's what we do in Canada. Political parties in Canada are far more important than the United States. In Canada, because we have the Westminster parliamentary system, political parties in effect can directly elect Prime Ministers and premiers without going to the people. The most recent example, my late colleague the Honourable Jim Prentice premier of the province of as will. He did not become premier of the province of as will through election. He was elected through the private process of as will PC Party. When that party decided he would become party leader, even though he didn't have a seat in the as will legislature, he was appointed full premier, full head of the government of the province of as will with all the attendant powers that entails. The same thing can happen federally. The point I'm making is political parties have to be brought out of the shadows of 19th century private clubs where you don't have the right to join into the public realm of this century where your membership is a right, is appreciation and where it's easy for you to join and participate in these party leadership ands because they are the gatekeepers of our democracy [APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER:

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Karim and minister, be as succinct as possible.

SPEAKER:

When knocking on doors, people often say: I'd love to vote for you but I can't vote for Justin. I say don't worry, you're only voting for me. In no system in Canada do we directly elect the leader. Our tradition has always been that the party informs the majority. Michael is advocating for a switch to a US presidential systems which is different. However, what is also important to note -- we changed the riding back back, right? So you had to do that. I think it's really important to make sure that we have the facts on the table here.

One of the other things I wanted to mention in response to the first question is that's kind of an us problem, not a them problem. What I mean by them is it's an us problem as people who care about these issues that we need to do a better job making these issues important and relevant to Canadians. Part of that is education, and the role that Samara and CivicAction can play in helping Canadians really to think about what their citizenship means in its full fullness. I think the US government has a role to play in that. The other thing, it's also important -- I feel like I'm beating the same drum here, but government is relevant for people. Government makes decisions in their day-to-day lives that has impacts on how they live their lives. We need to make sure that people understand that and recognize that, because sometimes it seems too far away. That's not an easy thing to do, but it's incumbent upon us as leaders in this room because we care about these issues, to try to make that relevant.

SPEAKER:

I still don't think we've talked about how to protect the diversity within parties, exchange of views, rather than shutting down of discipline.

SPEAKER:

I used to write talking points, the gospel of what the party was going to say. This is the official view, we said. One day, -- there's been a problem there. I would say some of the parties need to build up that culture of informed consent, which starts with the culture of learning with the political parties parties. Political parties have these long traditions. Michael represents a very important strand of the tradition of one party. The tradition of the Ontario Liberal Party was southwest protest party to the right of the Conservatives. Not many people here know that. I haven't read the biography yet. We need to understand where we need to go.

Having a culture of being informed about what the party is about and having a learning culture within a party, as unions do or used to do, through universities, organizations like yours, is really key to having partisanship be about engagement around ideas, not just engagement other things. Inevitably, no matter what the party is, is going to clamp down on dissent.

SPEAKER:

We're coming to the end of our time together. I know not everyone had a chance to say ask their question. Maybe you can hang around on the break to take those. Would you consider joining a party today? I'll ask you the question. Who is open to joining a party today, the right leader and culture came along? Who is on the other side of the fence: I'm done with parties, thank you. There's no redeeming now?

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I think this crowd is a little more optimistic. We have not chilled the spirit of getting engaged. I want to give all the panellists a minute to close off with some thoughts. I would encourage them to think about a message that -- what gives you hope right now that this picture will improve and turn around? I know if you're in the democracy business, it's depressing these days. Can you give us something that's going to be uplifting? Reverse order.

SPEAKER:

If you would like to have a day of optimism, come and job shadow me. At CivicAction, we get to spend all day, every day, getting done on big urban issues where leaders from all sectors just dive in and do it. And we have a network of 2,000 -- 2,000 -- rising leaders. Some of them are in the room this morning -- who have decided to put up their hand for civic engagement and don't want to do it in a partisan way. So we are shaping parts of this city, where whether it's youth unemployment, public spaces. Dave is one of the rock stars that gets stuff done by not colouring inside the lines. So I am extraordinarily hopeful for our future because I get to spend every day with people who have decided to dive in and just get stuff done. We're not an advocacy shop. We don't write reports. We're civic action, not civic chit-chat chit-chat. And in this world of attention deficit disorder reality, right, we all have the attention span spans of a squirrel on a park field. There are ways and there is increasingly a movement of people that want to be involved in their community, that want to affect their country, that want to focus on the actions that are real, that feel palpable in their lives, but they don't need to be resigned to the words and ideas of politics alone. Business is booming on my side of the ledger and I invite all of you to join us [APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER:

I wish to point out the exhibitors and sponsors, and I'm happy to do so. I notice there's not a political party among them. Last year we did have a couple of political parties represented. This year we don't. We do have political party representation from most of the persuasions, I believe, but it wasn't easy to get people who are more explicitly identified as partisan to come to this. So there's clearly work to be done and I would indicate that there's some poll factor from the civil society organizations that have booths, some of which are explicitly in political engagement.

SPEAKER:

As I said, I'm incredibly optimistic and hopeful person. One of the things that gives me hope is I make a concerted efforts to participate in women programs where women shadow me for a day. I am so inspired by them every single time I meet them because they're people from every walk of life, every corner of Canada, and they're young women who see themselves as future members of Parliament and future leaders.

I think that we have an incredibly rich, talented cohort of young people who are going to do amazing things for this country. I think the other thing that gives me in incredible hope is just Canadians. As I've said, come shadow me for a day. Come to my riding and meet the people who are doing such good things and good work and who issues they care about and are passionate about. There's a lot of stuff on the horizon, but ultimately I really believe in Canadians. I believe in what they believe for our country. And I'm really optimistic and hopeful for the future. I think the very fact that there's this many of you in the room right now talking about democracy is awesome, and I think that speaks to the fact that we have a really strong fabric here in Canada.

SPEAKER:

Thank you, Jane. Thank you all for coming out. Thanks to my panellists here for coming out and sharing

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their ideas. I'm optimistic about the chance for reform, and here's why. Increasingly I'm seeing groups like this assemble across the country who are interested in changing our political system.

I'm not optimistic because we have achieved significant political reforms in Canada. Political finance, Mr. Chretien and Happier introduced influential laws, union donations are banned, donations are capped, roughly \$1,600 per year, it's transparent, we do that right. They do not get that right south of the border. It's a mess. But I also believe in being humble, and humility is the mark of a society that can learn from others.

There are things that other democracies do much better than we do when it comes to the way they regulate political parties, the way they regulate political nomination and leadership contests. In the United States the UK and Australia do it much better than we do. We need to take parties from being top-down, centrally controlled organizations, where the party leader controls the party, controls riding associations, approves party candidates, controls members of Parliament and flip it upside down to the way it should be in Westminster democracy.

Where you as a citizen have the right without paying a fee to join a party, you have the right to vote in a party nomination, when an MP is elected, he can vote freely, and if we do that, we'll create much more participatory democracy where ordinary Canadians' voices are heard and we get a much better diversity of views in the House of Commons instead of three large voting blocks where every member is whipped into alliance. Then we won't have the need for new parties popping up because people will find change within the party system. That's the change I believe we ought to fight for [APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER: As the minister said, a great example of democracy in action. I think we can all leave the room knowing we've been invited to take part in parties, in civil society, and to make sure we extend that invitation to others, because this is a group of I think highly engaged Canadians. So thank you very much. I hope you enjoy the rest of the Democracy XChange. Just as a little note, tomorrow we'll be doing research on political parties, so stay tuned if you're interested in this issue.

How is everybody doing so far? Good. My name is stand. I'm with the Ryerson Leadership Lab. I have the pleasure of kicking this off. We're going to be talking about how and why we fight, citizens in the space of protest. I want to make a small plug before we get into it tomorrow at 3:30 there's an organizing session for people who want to protest the tuition fee changes. If you feel inspired, and you want to stay and protest, come on by tomorrow.

First I would like to introduce our moderator, Martin Regg Cohn. He writes for the Toronto Star, foreign correspondent for 11 years. He was chief in the Asia bureau and foreign editor. He has reported for more than 40 countries from Afghanistan to Yemen, nominated five times for the national newspaper award. He previously covered national politics from Ottawa. He was a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ryerson and professor at Munk school and we are pleased to have him kick this off. Thank you. [APPLAUSE]

MARTIN REGG COHN:

Thank you, stand. Thanks to all of you for coming. We had an empty room a few minutes ago. Bless you. If you are a democracy activist and you think about engagement all the time, this is your job. We're all in this together. Thanks to the organizers for letting me come here. Every year I beg, I actually do beg, harass them to let me participate because in my job as a columnist, I'm always upon if I have upon if I have indicate indicating. It's a key into the inner sanctum. I am your moderator today, but I won't try to moderate these people. We're looking for passion, and these three activists are high-act kind of thing activists, leaders in their own right. We will hear their stories in a moment.

One of the reasons I love hearing these kinds of stories and have read about them and I know about

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some of them is that I'm personally passionate about democracy because of what I did before, covering democracy, activists, people who literally died for democracy in some cases. So when you come home to Canada, and you find people who aren't that engaged. We have three lightning talks, so I'll give lightning introductions. I thought I would not introduce everyone at once. Instead I'll do it one by one so they are top of mind when they come to the microphone, rather than giving you three off the top and losing it.

I am here to listen and learn because these three have in their own way reinvented democratic engagement. I want to hear how we can integrate some of those lessons. Our first speaker is Jeremie Bedard-Wien. Jeremie is the main speechwriter for Quebec Solidaire, which is probably known as the political party unlike any other. He will describe it to you, but it's pro-independence, pro-progressive, and it is much more popular than ever before. It went from three seats to ten seats. Jeremie organized, before he went into organized party politics, he was organizer of students and the Quebec maple spring in 2012, I guess it was, yes. As you know, students were marching the streets, large numbers of students, a question we'll get into later as to why it's not happening in Ontario. I think it was hundreds of thousands of students in the streets of Quebec.

Before that, in between those years, he co-founded Ricochet Media in Montreal. He has asked me to -- because he's a speechwriter he's putting words in my mouth -- to remind you he's speaking in a personal capacity here lest he run afoul of party discipline.

On that note, his talk today is about building solidarity economy. Welcome to Toronto.

JEREMIE BEDARD-WIEN:

Can you hear me? Great. Thank you for the kind introduction, Martin. Thank you for having me hear. It's great to be in such great company this morning. It's a great opportunity for a speechwriter, once in a while, to deliver his own speeches.

[LAUGHTER]

My English is a little rusty. It's nice to have the opportunity to speak to audiences outside of Quebec. Back then I was there because we had a huge student movement going on, the maple spring. I don't know if you remember what happened back then. It involved hundreds of thousands of college and university students going on strikes for months on end to protest planned tuition increase. Do you? I'm looking for confirmation here.

Back then, for myself and so many others, this was a first experience of, as the slogan goes, what democracy looks like. What turned us at the time to movement politics was the lack of any other recourse amid the cronyism and corruption scandals of the government we are fighting at the time. Students instead built power in the streets. And while it cost me the remainder of my hair, and I'm proud to say that after six months of striking we actually won that fight against tuition increase. [APPLAUSE]

Quebec tuition remains the lowest in Canada, although Newfoundland isn't far behind us.

The question on everyone's lips when I made the round of these conferences back then was simple: Where will all of you guys go once this is over? And for a while it seemed like this maple spring would be a flash in the pan. Indeed, business as usual resumed almost as soon as the last demonstrations ended.

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Eventually the strikers graduated and it looked as if they had all gotten, as the government was saying back then, real jobs and had settled down.

All this while, though, something simmered just below the surface and it came to a boil just a few months ago, the general elections in the Quebec legislature, and our political landscape was turned on its head by a striking victory of a new party, which put at rest 40 years of rotation between the Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois. These elections crowned another victor, another party called Quebec Solidaire. It had until then been a minor presence in our national assembly.

Three out of 125 does not grant you a lot of time in question period. But slowly and surely it had built a significance, how shall I put it? Presence, I guess. And most importantly, it had enabled, mobilized thousands upon thousands of Quebecers ready to build this new party, this new way of doing politics. In political terms, that would be as close to equivalent of Bernie Sanders in. This party had few allies in the media and was mocked daily by opinion makers in Quebec, the daily newspaper. It took policy lists and espoused ideas which are taken for granted elsewhere but are truly a tough sale back home, shaped by a decade of awe at thity politics. It could only rely on small donations and a small fraction of the public funding awarded to public parties. This campaign could only rely on two things: it's penal its ideas.

I'll start with a few ideas, but I'll make it short because the program is 160 pages long and we would be here all afternoon.

Basically, the core tenets of the campaign we ran, first of all, was putting forward the Quebec movement of the new deal, building new investments for public transit, engagement between municipalities, a commitment to switch to a fully electric car fleet, legislation putting an end to all oil and gas products. We also put together universal social policies, stuff like public transit, free education from, which had been one of the student movements, minimum wage in Ontario, and an idea of a democratic role for Quebec, starting with the much-needed electoral reform, something the current premier has signed on before his election. We'll see how that goes.

Unfortunately, something that won't make me popular with this particular crowd, Quebec's politics, constituent assembly enabling ordinary people including minorities and first nations people to shape the country they want to build before any question is fought a referendum. The campaign made no apologies for putting people and clients first, and even shorter terms it was a long shot. So we have to turn to the grassroots.

By then conventional political parties, the ones that had dominated Quebec politics for decades, had kind of moved away from their respective grassroots. Their line of thinking, and I say this with all due respect, is often that party activists are kind of a painful fact of life. They have policy ideas that are awkward, that don't necessarily poll well. It holds politicians accountable at party congresses instead of accepting their role in well-rehearsed chauviunity. But they're good at fundraising. I guess we've all been there. Sadly, so many examples, that's about the extent of at which the parties involve their members in decisions.

That's all well and good if you don't seek to actually change things once you get elected. The kind of reforms Quebec needs or that we believe Quebec needs rely already on broad public supports, yet we know they will face strong oppositions from courses that have little concern for democracy. I believe the only way to actually achieve real change is to build the kind of power that is built from the ground up.

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From the get-go, Quebec Solidaire was a different kind of party, founded by activists that sought to build on their experience of the women's movement, of the anti-globalization movement, all examples of a proud Quebecois position of horizon grassroots organization. Coming into politics, my experience has been shaped by our experience of the maple spring, of the climate justice movement. These movements share a lot of common DNA. To give you an example, we both nominate spokes people instead of party leaders, one woman, one man. Party members get to have a direct hand in the policy decision making of their organization, which does imply that you sort of the wisdom of the crowd, which occasionally will miss the mark for sure, will create headaches for those who have to explain those policies.

But more often than not, it turns out to generate the kind of engagement that conventional parties can only dream of. It remains a party that we knew that we needed to go further, so we sought to turn Quebec Solidaire into a movement of illustrates own. We built a cutting edge platform and we gave it no strings attached to any activist who shared our values, or whatever initiatives they might come up with, even if they don't serve strategic purposes.

We even had people from Catalonia attack us to ask if they could use the platform, which would be fine in the borders had been not part of the development process. We organized mass gatherings and even a proper demonstration, which is not something parties usually do. People showed up because they were empowered. It happened during the maple spring. I'm just finishing up. As it turns out, this method was quite successful at the polls.

People showed up for these demonstrations and then when we needed them to show up at the polls, they did. This party went from 3 to 10. They elected people outside of Montreal. We doubled our share of the votes and we'll see over the next four years whether we are able to continue building on this tradition of horizontal grassroots party politics that we have now pioneered for 12 years. I guess that's about it.

RAYNE RISHER-QUANN:

There will be plenty of time to talk after. We will come back to you.

[APPLAUSE]

RAYNE RISHER-QUANN:

I'm sorry tor-Quann. Rayne is a 17-year-old student act activist, but she knows how to you play power politics because she told me ahead of time when we met moments ago that she was going to speak for 13 minutes. So we negotiated down below that. She is already, despite her 17 years, a veteran activist. She led the biggest high school walkout in Canadian history.

[APPLAUSE]

She led 40,000 students out of class last year, and my two 15-year-olds were among her followers. As you may know, everyone knows it was because the updated sex education curriculum physical sciences and health curriculum in Ontario, the updated version was down downgraded by the progressive Conservative government and reverted to the curriculum that was written in 19 1998, before sexing and texting were part of our world.

So Rayne is going to talk about -- I have her title here. By the way she's also the director of women's march Toronto. I've read about her in the newspapers and I've listened to her in person. Her title is why we protested against the repeal of Ontario Ontario's sexed curriculum.

RAYNE RISHER-QUANN:

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You're making me sound like a bad person. I'm not going to talk for 13 minutes. OK. Hi. I'm Rayne. That was a good introduction. I led the largest high school student walkout in Canada's history, which is really cool. I'm going to talk about why we did that and how we did that and I'll talk afterwards. Let's jump into it.

In about the beginning of July, I would say, that's when Doug Ford made all of his dramatic changes to the sex Ed curriculum. He took a curriculum that was heavily consulted on in 2015, so there were 4,000 parents, teachers, educators educators and researchers who went into the creation of this curriculum. That included the LGBT community, teaching about consent, healthy relationships, all that good stuff pep decided to take that and shove it back to 1999 or 1998, which was before Facebook.

Once that happened, it made a big splash in the news. I followed politics for a long time. I had never really been active. I saw all of this happening and I saw the news talking to doctors and nurses and teachers, but nobody was really talking to students. That's one of the things I really saw as being an issue issue, because the sex Ed issue and the issue of educating my generation in general isn't something that adults can really understand. Because in the last 20 years there has been a fundamental paradigm shift in the way we learn and interact and even just exist in this world. My generation learned about sex from upon Hub and a generation of people who didn't have the Internet, it's not really fair for them to decide what we learn and how we learn it.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. So I put together this protest. This was the original March for Our Education and it was just supposed to be a small protest in queen's Park. It developed into thousands of people which was great and cemented this voice as an important thing, which again super cool. The news started talking to me. I started kind of going on on Doug Ford and all the important stuff people needed to care about. The issue is after a few months the new cycle did what it does moved on. That's something I find politicians politicians often count on. We'll let the activists tire themselves out and everyone will move on and we won't have to worry about this anymore. That kind of started to happen.

So in September I wanted to show that this isn't an issue that students were going to stop caring about, so I put together a walkout. It ended up being a big success. This walkout was run entirely over Instagram. So we started Instagram accounts for the walkout itself and then we had every school created Instagram account for their walkout. It created its own natural reality which worked really well for the movement. We got in the end 120 schools across Ontario and 40,000 students, which was crazy, which was just really, really crazy.

[APPLAUSE]

And that's something that we don't often see here in Ontario, as I'm sure we're going to talk about. It was the biggest show of student solidarity and student action in Ontario that I've certainly ever seen in my lifetime. And I think the issue that happens, here and even globally, is that we tell young people -- first of all, we shame young people for being lazy and for not caring, for being experienceed. But then when we try to make a change, make our voice heard, we're told you can't even vote yet or you're so inexperienced, you shouldn't have a voice on this.

That's what I got for months. We've created a system where we is you press the voice of young people. This is my future. This is our future. We want to create an Ontario that we're happy to live in. Throughout this process, there were essentially a few tenets that we built the movement on that I think really contributed to its success. The first one is that we said no adults, 100 per cent we wanted this to be run and motivated and conceptionalized by students. So again it was run completely over social media. I

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spent one night basically just heavily researching all of the laws around this, and I created a package that was about five pages long. It was thousand make your student walkout.

It was about all your rights as a student, what your principal can say to you, what the law says, what will protect and and all of this stuff. It was a full guide, start to finish, on how to completely create your own school walkout. I releaseed it on to the Internet and made sure everybody who is running a walkout shared that as much as they could. That was it. That kind of leads to the second thing, was that I said from the beginning that if you're going to run a school walkout, you have to do it right. I wanted to make sure that we were demanding to be treated with respect and that we were treating each other with respect and that we were a unified front.

That's another I think that set our movement apart and I think that's what empowered students so much about it it, was we were being treated like adults and we were acting like adults and people deserving of respect and attention. That's something that young people don't often feel. I think when you see these crowds, when I saw the pictures, I was crying on the day of, because there were thousands and thousands of students who were walking out of school and taking their protest signs and walking to town halls and M.P.s' offices. That's something I had never seen before it's something that students are so willing to do. Because I really and truly believe -- if you don't give 16-year-old girls enough credit.

[APPLAUSE]

If I'm going to get a little personal, as soon as this was over, on the day of, when I was all over the news cycle and stuff like that, my Twitter DMs were filled with people, first of all, I was being called a Slut a Whore death threats. It was terrifying. But also it was people saying that I didn't deserve to have a voice because I was just a 16-year-old girl. Sixteen-year-old girls are told constantly that we're not smart and we're not strong. But 16-year-old girls are I think the smartest, strongest demographic that exists right now.

And we did this. This was a movement that was built on 16-year-old girls. And that's pretty cool. If I'm going to summarize, the things we did differently is we demanded to be treated with respect. We ran it entirely over social media. We took the thing they mock us for, the thing that 16-year-old girls know beans built a movement off it. We made a movement on our own charts.

Finally, the fact that it was all students created a feeling that young people don't get to feel enough. We felt empowered. We felt educated and we felt like we mattered. We live in a system that constantly tries to tell us that we don't. That's what made this movement so powerful. I think that kind of summarizes everything that we've stood for. Of course, afterwards we got some really cool responses, like this one. I thought it was amazing that people were looking at the stuff we did and kind of taking that as an excuse to give young people more credit, because we deserve it. I really hope we see more of it. I think what happens in the protest represents a big shift in Ontario politics. Thank you for listening.

[APPLAUSE]

MARTIN REGG COHN:

Thank you, Rayne, for an amazing presentationp and perfectly on time. Bless you. I was terrified that she would steal the show. Such a great speaker.

A hard act to follow for our final speaker who nevertheless is going to plunge ahead. Aaron Bains is an activist and adviser. I'll plunge through this one. I'll switch later. He is an activist and adviser with the World Sikh Organization of Canada. His day job is a lawyer, but his passion has always been other things, fighting discrimination against Sikh Canadians and trying to educate and communicate. Flipping that switch would be too much for me. Thank you very much.

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His passion is always trying to fight discrimination but also educating all Canadians. His focus,, as he tells me, is not just identifying the things we're doing wrong, the time to figure out and do the right thing. His talk today is on grassroots organizing and advocacy online and off-line.

AARON BAINS:

Thanks so much. Definitely a hard act to follow. I'm extremely impressed. I was not that active when I was 17 or 16, for that matter.

What I'm going to talk about briefly is about what I think is important for the crowd who is doing advocacy and protest movements and what I think can help you. The World Sikh Organization has been around for a long time in Canada and has recently been the spotlight I think more often than in the past because we're really at the forefront, we're engaging the media media. We're no longer afraid to call people out when they've done things wrong, where in the past I think the organization thought there would be retribution if you called up the PMO's office or told the premier that they were doing something really wrong and bad policy.

That organization has primarily run at the grassroots on educating people on Sikh issues but also legally advocacy. Most of our successes have been in the courtroom, not myself, but our counsel. He has been to the Supreme Court numerous times. People don't usually know that he has actually been an intervenor on many cases. He is the intervene himself on a case right now at the Supreme Court for the prohibition on wearing the ceremonial dagger in the Quebec legislature. We've had lots of fundamental successes there. I had no idea in school that the WSO intervened in that case, which is law in all of Canada, in numerous case law.

A lot of our successes have been behind the scenes, but more often than not, now you see us at the booth outside, sharing with others, the Canadian Sikh campaign, trying to get that information out.

What I think has helped us be consensual what I think is important for all of you going on to advocacy movements is identifying what you are trying to do, what is the question you are asking, why are you here? I know that sounds very easy, but it's extraordinarily difficult. I bring it always back to admin law, the type of law where you study constitutional law and the differences between levels of government. It's one of the most difficult areas of law, and people usually do badly in those classes, speaking for myself.

The key question that was hammered into me was: Are you asking the right question? What is the right question? This is quite difficult. Sometimes you think the question is easy. You identify the solution. You see poverty provides for illness. Figureing out exactly the right question to ask will inform everything else. I think that's the first step, followed by answering the question, and third, providing a narrative that can be translated into legislation and policy activism. But identifying what you're there to do is quite difficult. You might think think: OK, for example, I'm going to talk about the Wall Street protests briefly in a second, but there was income disparity. You might ask the question: Why is Sarah poor and John rich? Is that a good enough question? Probably not. Let's go a little further. What barriers keep Sarah partner allow John to be rich? What systemic policies exist that keep Sarah from becoming rich? You might not see the subtleties between those items, but they will help you plan your response to these issues. If you don't do that right at the forefront, you'll have a lot of difficulty preparing a response that can be adopted by the public.

At the WSO, our questions, you can probably guess, the ones you're asking are usually: Why is it that there's a prohibition somewhere that, when it translates into English, seems to prohibit only some from being excluded? Why is it that students aren't allowed to participate in Karate classes because they're

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wearing a particular bandana? Why are Sikhs labelled extremist? Those are the kinds of questions we're asking. Once we've identified the question, we're not shy in throwing that out there. When the Prime Minister says or does something or fails to say something, there's no need for us to hold back anymore because we need to immediately identify a wrong right when it happens. We need to say: That's not right policy. That's poor legislation.

I think we were the only religious advocacy group that called out the notwithstanding clause in Ontario. We knew right away that's bad. It might not be bad to a Sikh today, but it will be bad to people in the future.

What sets us apart and what I think is important for people to take away from here, is once you upturned this, you've left a void in the public space. You've set something. Many movements fail to fill that space with a positive, believable narrative that can be translated into change. Wall Street protest happened, they identified a wrong, immediately told us what was going on there. But what policy? They failed to use grassroots efforts to repair a narrative that the public could adopt and. The Sikh organization, we're doing this on a few levels.

We like to fill a narrative by talking to people. We prepare policy for legislation. We put up narratives on what we believe to be a better answer to something. You have the motorcycle issue we'll talk about in a second where helmets were bad. We put out a report that identified how it won't cost Ontario more money. There's an identifiable risk from that in terms of insurance cost. But filling that next step, putting the narrative out there, it's not the fun part. But it's extremely important. It's all about taking your protest to the next step, using it as a mission for change. It's the tool that will make what you want to happen in every day life.

MARTIN REGG COHN:

I'm going to take the next step and take back the microphone. Let's give a round of applause.

[APPLAUSE]

You would think that being moderator would be the easiest job in the world, but imagine my position with these three articulate activists. Thank you for indulging me, but we are way behind because we had a very late start and lunch is looming.

Let me try get the conversation going. With any luck we can get audience questions, but we are squeezed squeezed. I couldn't help but thinking that in French we say militant, but you don't translate it literally into English as militant but activist. But it does speak to the difference in sometimes not just a language but in culture. I was fascinated by the fact that you called it the maple spring, which was an echo or the Arab spring and revolutionary movements around the world that were fighting for democracy.

So you have hundreds of thousands of students protesting a threatened tuition increase in 2012. But in Ontario, you have the lowest tuition in Canada, most of the people would know in Ontario we have the highest tuition in Canada. But trying get a crowd is not easy. There was a protest yesterday. I understand there will be a rally of some kind tomorrow as well. But I wanted to ask the other two panellists here: Why is there seeming reticence in Ontario students compared to Quebec students? Rayne, why don't you start, because you organized.

RAYNE RISHER-QUANN:

That's a tough question, I think. I don't think I'm knowledgeable enough on the history of Quebec politics and stuff like that definitely to have a much more illustrious history of protest and resistance.

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MARTIN REGG COHN:

Why Ontario?

RAYNE RISHER-QUANN:

I would say it's a matter of precedent. That's why I think that all the stuff that's been happening recently is a really good sign. I think that it's very hard for young people to rise up when there are so many people who are telling them that they can't and that their voices don't matter and this is that they don't know anything. I really think it is a matter of precedent. You've been seeing, and we've all been seeing in the past seven months, it's been a happy year for protests. Yesterday we had -- it was around 10,000 students walking across Dundas to protest the OSAP cuts. I don't think that's something that would happen last year.

So I think there are a lot of factors that are pushing young people down and a lot of people in power are scared of the voice of young people in power right now. That's a tough thing to overcome that kind of systemic oppression, but I think it's something we're overcoming.

MARTIN REGG COHN:

Jeremie?

JEREMIE BEDARD-WIEN:

Of course there's a lot of history of protests in Quebec in the student movement and in other movements. Successive movements draw from these common points of reference to build these new movements. In 2012, students had won, going back to the 1960s, but also it's important to compare the kind of methods that in employed to mobilize students and also to make these movements successful. Because, of course, the fact they were successful in the past will not mean they will be successful in the future. What happened in 2012, a series of protests, a strike. And a strike in the student movement in Quebec will mean exactly the same thing as a strike in the union. So students walking out, holding votes in huge general assemblies, votes that will be binding because the next morning if the vote is successful, there will be a big line in the university. So the mere fact that to get these strikes will actually bind all students to a decision means that you need to mobilize much more. You need to go out of your traditional element and try to reach people who otherwise would not be sympathetic to this new movement. Because to win a strike vote you need a majority, and that makes a huge difference. Of course, the strike itself, once it's voted, applies economic pressure on the governments, which is also a factor of success with these movements.

MARTIN REGG COHN:

I'm going to shift to Aaron in a moment on a different topic. You can't come tomorrow to a democracy or engagement conference like this without social media and the media being raised in some way. So let's talk about that, about social media. It's a bit of a trick question, by the way: Who here reads the newspapers all the time? I'm not going to ask you if you vote in every election, because I think I know the answer. But I wanted to -- these meetings, we always think about the positive, but social media has the advantage, and we've seen that in responses, perhaps not as vicious, but we've seen in other countries,

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we had the Arab spring, which didn't end up as well as it did for Quebec Solidaire. But messaging apps and other forms of communication, social media.

In Saudi Arabia, we now know, after the Khashoggi incidence, we've seen how Twitter dominates discourse in the U.S. Aaron, why don't you go first and we'll go to Rayne and Jeremie. Tell us about how social media can be your friend and also your enemy.

AARON BAINS:

It had made the WSO what it is today and it can be -- that app, WhatsApp, has fundamentally empowered multiple groups around the world in a good.bad way. Sometimes you hear stories where there is mock justice, all the way from Mexico to India, China, where people are spreading false narratives on WhatsApp. I come across this all the time. It's extremely exhausting to try to counter all the time. We've used this tool for our benefit, creating -- accessing it and tapping into active people across Canada and keeping in touch with them.

For example, there was a Conservative motion that you never heard about. In 24 hours we shut down this motion coming into the federal -- it was a motion that I said something along the lines of -- right after Justin Trudeau got back from India: We love India and we denounce extreme lism and extremist movements. Nothing wrong with that, but why are you talking about that when there's no substantive evidence for those things. That gets picked up in the traditional media, read by lots of Canadians, which form a perception. I was directly involved with advocacy. I said we need to shut this down. It will come at 10 a.m. the next morning. This is 4:30. Through what is app, we gave them -- six MPings who couldn't get to their phones because of the number of voice mails we left. I got a call at 9:30 that night from an assistant. This is a perfect example.

MARTIN REGG COHN:

I remember that. I love that you are relentlessly focusing on the positive. The truth is that social media also hoped to galvanize opposition to an updated sex education curriculum, as I think Rayne probably knows. Tell us about your own good and bad.

RAYNE RISHER-QUANN:

Social media, I have a complicated relationship with, as I'm sure a lot of us do. I directly credit social media for the success of our movement. But the unfortunate thing is that we are living in a post-truth society, some would say, where especially on social media, on Facebook and on Twitter, the people whose motivations are completely driven by how many clicks they get know that lies will often get more clicks than the truth will. I saw it unfold on social media, with all the anti-sex Ed stuff.

The amount of fake news that was spreading was astounding. I would have conferences with people in real life. I would talk to people kind of on the other side of the fence, I suppose, protesters, would talk to them, and they would be like: On Facebook, it said that teachers are teaching grade 1s thousand masturbate, and that's something they truly believed, that they were told on Facebook. And it's difficult, because it's the nature of the beast, right? You can't have this truly free, open method of communication and expect and the that only the good is going to come out of it.

I don't think Twitter is doing a very good job right now. I can't condemn social media, because it's done so much.

MARTIN REGG COHN:

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We can't wish it away. You have the pedestrian pedestrianophilia card that's played.

JEREMIE BEDARD-WIEN:

Social media is great with one exception, Twitter.  
[LAUGHTER]

Quickly, one of the things that happened in the last election for us was the rise of the Meme pages, actively getting involved in the political process, which allowed the party, Quebec Solidaire, to reach a demographic that otherwise would not be engaged by traditional party politics. That was interesting.

MARTIN REGG COHN:

Thank you for reading my body language as well. When a microphone comes close to my lips. I apologize to my speakers for having to rush the clock. I think the audience is hungry. They're already shifting in their seats. Despite being activists, they need nourishment. Thank you very much for all panellists.  
[APPLAUSE] Slow Down and Fix Things: Re-making the media that may break our democracy.

Slow Down and Fix Things: Re-making the media that may break our democracy.

SPEAKER:

Hi, everybody. We'll get started. Take your seats. How is everybody doing so far?. This is Slow Down and Fix Things: Re-making the media that may break our democracy. My name is Sam, from Ryerson, and I have the pleasure of introducing our moderator, Shawn Micallef, freelance columnist. She writes about the streets of Toronto in a fascinating way. You've heard enough from me already. Here is Shawn.

SHAWN MICALLEF:

Thank you. I mostly work alone, not with microphones. Thank you for coming today to have a discussion about the media. There's always somebody yelling every day, especially on Twitter. We'll have a nuanced discussion. Our time is jammed, so we'll go to the presentation of Vanessa Loewen, producer of First Contact.  
[APPLAUSE]

VANESSA LOEWEN:

Hi. As Shawn said, I'm Vanessa Loewen, executive producer of the series First Contact. I'm Metis from Manitoba. I'm You can play the trailer.  
(Video played).

SPEAKER:

Worst off when they're getting so much. Where is the money going? They don't fix windows. They're angry at white people. Get off your ass if you're not happy. A lost cause at this point. See with your own

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eyes, experience with your own bodies, what this community is doing. I have not been to a reservation ever. (inaudible) there are lots of things happening. I'm having a hard time understanding. That's no excuse excuse. You're a prime example of society. For me, it's like hell on earth. We've always been here. How can we stand together? Change is coming to my community. It's not the Canada that I thought I knew. You know what? I was wrong. A lot of our stories are similar.

[APPLAUSE]

VANESSA LOEWEN:

So the Australian version of the trail in 2014 when it originally aired in Australia, I was moved and I felt that because of the similarities that we have with our brothers and sisters in Australia, I just knew that we could do something like this in Canada. If it had done successfully in Australia, I felt confident that we could bring it here. There had been a lot of talk about trying to do some of this. In the interest of kind of international relationships and stuff, I approached the Australians and asked if they could help me to bring it to Canada, because obviously it was a highly sensitive thing. As a Metis person and a storyteller, I knew there was some purpose in honouring the work they had done. None of us took creating the series lightly. I was keenly aware of the trauma on multiple levels that it would cause in our community, and I felt a huge responsibility to handle the subject matter with careful consideration. So we brought it to Canada. I would say that approach is uniquely Indigenous. A lot of companies woos make a Canadian version and as someone who travels the world, talking to other communities and broadcasters, I knew we worked so hard already to have our voices heard that we can't tear each other down, so I really wanted to work with them.

When you exist in this world of self- self-determination, which ideal in the Indigenous community, you can't take lightly how much harder it is for us to have our voices heard in popular media and the constant exposure is exhausting and the need to continue to be the authors of our own stories drives us to work together to break down barriers. That's what I mean about working with the audience and trying make it more of a partnership and being less competitive with one another.

That is also to say that the show needed to remain uniquely Indigenous. Without a doubt, we needed to be the strongest voices on the team in order for the series to remain successful, because it was just too dangerous otherwise.

Just in the interest of definition, Indigenous -- the right to participate in the democratic process of governance and to influence one's future socially, politically and culturally. Self-determination embodies the right of all people to determine their own economic, social and cultural development. It has thus been defined by the international court of justice as the need to pay regard to the freely expressed wills of all the peoples. That's an important sensibility that obviously drives a lot of the work we do. I'll say that our existence is a critical extension of self- self-determination for Indigenous peoples of Canada. Not one single mainstream Canadian broadcaster was willing to take on the show. We were told a number of different things about why the show is not right for Canadian television, and we knew inherently that they were wrong, at least on reception the show eventually got. Thank God for APTN and its important role in helping us to continue to be self-determinant.

Had it not been for APTN we simply would not have been able to start this conversation.

Sorry, I just -- yeah, I mean, I'm just sort of saying that as an extension of self-determination and sort of

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the democratic process and stuff, we really just need to continue to be able to tell our stories from our perspective and that's not historically what has happened. Not just anyone can take people with such strong racially charged opinions into these communities and start these conversations. The risk is simply too great, for both sides. The possibility of facilitating these encounters to have -- only to have no education and therefore no empathy develop would have made the whole thing for not. It would have been a disaster.

On the flip side, to expose community members to conversation that were triggering and traumatic for them in our communities. Neither of those are things that we're willing to do. The weight of it needing to be done correctly still weighs on me, the discussions, as it continues to air. It will be in Ontario in his a month or two. So that will be another thing to come through.

As a documentary filmmaker by trade, I've always felt the documentary format is a bit of a sweet spot. I'm not stuck to the unbiased requirements of regular television news and I'm also not driven by the sense sayingsal reality TV. We did not set out to make a reality series. As a Metis person I can tell you there's no way I would do that. The ideas encountered throughout the series are simply commonplace in our communities. While tacking the subject in this way, it might have come off as reality TV-esque, it was the way to put the conversation forward into an actual conversation about what reconciliation can look like.

An extension of that, of course, is all of the backlash or conversation, positive and negative, that we have online that continues to be generated online. We know it's a privilege to be able to take the position of -- this is the approach we decided to take, and you can have your own approach. But we have the freedom to take these approaches differently or together, and I guess that is democracy in action. That's all I have to say

[APPLAUSE]

SHAWN MICALLEF:

Thank you, Vanessa. You're standing at the back, and if you feel like sitting, there are seats.

This is a Canadian from Winnipeg and Erin came from Vancouver. She is a journalist and CEO and co-founder the The Discourse.

ERIN MILLAR:

Thank you so much, Vanessa. Such powerful work. I just really appreciate your taking on that burden of telling those stories. My name is Erin Millar and I'm a journalist with The Discourse and also the founder and CEO of The Discourse, a digital news media dedicated to a healthier and more inclusive democracy. We're working on reimagineing the community newspaper and developing a new model to sustainably deliver in-depth news in communities are underserved by media. Currently we roll this out in three communities, the urban Indigenous community on the lower mainland and scar brokers not far from here. Our model is completely based on community listening, so the idea that through a deep listening process you can understand what the community need for information is and then respond directly to that with journalism.

Before I explain to you how we do that, I need to start by telling you from my perspective as a journalist who came out of the so-called mainstream media how stories get told in the first place.

I started my career at Macleans magazine in 2006, and how we usually chose -- how I got assigned the

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stories to report that I did, I came up with ideas on the weekend. I workshopped them a little bit with my friends at a dinner party. I go into a meeting on Mondays, usually, and pitch those stories in a room with maybe a dozen people in them. Those people looked a lot like me. We had similar education, all lived in downtown Toronto. I would compete relative to our editor, who was a white man in his early 40s, 50s, and he would decide what Canadians needed to know  
[LAUGHTER]

He did a good job. He did a damn good job. So of course the decisions were aligned with news values that we were all trained through the student press or journalism school that generally awarded political drama and conflict. Things that don't necessarily empower communities to have agency in any kind of social change. Once those stories were assigned, and this is where this diagram that I ripped off from The Guardian, I would record those completely in isolation of my audience and decide who to interview and what to tell. When I got to the line here and my story was done, I would press publish. I was off to the next thing and the story was handed over to the community to react to without me being involved in it at all.

Often our stories were just not that relevant to all Canadians. We were really missing an opportunity. When they were stories that might be relevant to the Canadians that weren't part of our inner circle, they often lacked nuance and were disempowering.

We're in downtown Toronto today and this room is filled with people who are engaged in a conference on democracy, so we are some of the best-served people in terms of media in Canada. But you don't need to go far to find people who are community leaders in Scarborough Scarborough. He is one of millions of Canadians telling us -- he's one that's telling us that they can't find trustworthy, in-depth reporting that contra contraaccurate accurately reflects their communities. Scarborough is not unique. There's been 260 newspapers that have closed in the last decades, created by Ryerson's local news projects, in 190 communities. That really matters because research shows there's a connection between civic engagement and local news. People who live in communities where local news has declined are less likely to vote and volunteer, they're less likely to trust their neighbours. Public health officials have warned that infectious disease is more likely to spread faster in those communities because we don't exchange information. Local government is less efficient.

So this is a critically important issue. It's clear that we need new models. I'll tell you a little bit about how The Discourse model works. We are very interested in in the untapped potential. Right from when we select our stories we're involving the communities we're serving in that process. We have a community engagement process where we interview a minimum of 20 people. We continue to interview over time in a structured way, so a structured data set that surfaces through analysis the top topics that are resonant for those communities. Those topics get handed to our journalists to do what they do best, to think about stories, how to tell it in a provocative way, do we do an investigation or data or whatever. They develop those stories and pitch them back to the community. The community votes on our priorities. Everybody in our community, including myself, has one vote as a member. I always vote. I always lose.  
[LAUGHTER]

Because the reality is that my idea of stories and these local news values is not actually what most of these communities need in terms of information to make important decisions. The stories that are coming out are not -- unsurprisingly, they perform significantly better than the stories that we were telling earlier in discourse's history when we weren't using this process, because we validated them ahead of time. So they performed well. They're not only stories interesting to that community. It's our hypothesis that neighbour neighbour procedures all over Canada national stories and there are things happening all

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over the country that we're not hearing about because national news is coming primarily from a handful of urban centres.

Just one example here is a project that we did in partnership with APTN. We have a lot of APTN love. And huffington Post. This project was really about going to communities that were involved in the pipeline pipeline. What actually happened in terms of consultation? There's nobody asking those guess many of those communities. There are a lot of relationships relationships. These stories in these communities are so important to the national dialogue. That's just one example of when that really -- how important that is.

The next question is: OK, that sounds really nice. How the hell do you pay for this great journalism? Isn't journalism dying?

The truth is journalism is not dying. Journalism advertising business model is dying and it's quite close to death. I won't get into the finer points of our business model, although I'd be happy to talk to anyone later in the Q and A, but I can tell you we've chosen to do this in a for-profit model and a start-up approach, and the reason is the scaleable -- we can really have an impact. Our plan is to expand the six communities, three communities in the next 12 months, and I am out there pitching investors and successfully raising investment capital. So I'm able to make that argument based on the market trends around audience pay and other things we're doing with our business model.

When we started this, it's almost five years we've been working on The Discourse in March. We felt very alone. We were the only people really innovating digitally and we were looking at what's happening in the States and wondering where are the other digital media start-ups. In In the last while something started to happen. We revisited our competitive analysis this summer and found that all of a sudden there was all these new outlets that is were digital and that seemed to be doing what we were doing, which is responding to communities, all different approaches, and these out outlets were all over the country. I thought: What the heck? I thought journalism was dying. That's depressing that data set there. I realized when we dug into the data that we were missing part of the story, which is part of the data set, the local news project. Ninety-three outlets, narrowly defined, have opened during the same period that 260 closed. We thought: Man, nobody is really talking about that or looking at it. So our team, led by Lindsay, who has done an awe awesome job, did a research project. The research is right here. We just published it in December. We have a booth in the exhibitor's area. We wanted to understand what was really going on with these outlets. I'll share a couple of quick points about who they are.

The majority of them are digital, not paper. They are innovating in terms of the cost structure of delivering news. They're independent, so they're not made open or owned by the large teams that really dominated and really have a problem with the consolidation of the ownership in Canada. That was exciting to learn. Audience pay models, that's what we're in. We're a membership-based model. Such as membership donations, subscription, those are seen as the biggest growth opportunity and where people were investing. We're also seeing that in the mainstream media. The Globe and Mail are getting more than half of their revenue there. The growth of the athletic, all of this suggests to us there's something happening in the market that has already happened in the States where there's growth in terms of willingness to pay for journalism that they value. That was really exciting to hear a story about something growing, where there's opportunity.

The other thing we learned when we looked at this was when you looked at who was founding these organizations, the leadership position and also the audience they're serveing, women and people of colour continue to be under-represented. That was a concern for us because we want to ensure that if this is going to be part of the ecosystem of the future, by no means think that independent digital as will

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take over main extreme, but if this is growing, we want to ensure it doesn't replicate the same problems in existing systems that have left a lot of people -- excluded a lot of people from journalism and therefore impacted the engagement.

I'll end by sharing that in November we gathered -- we had the first gathering of independent digital media here in Toronto. Just yesterday we actually launched this network called Canadian Journal Journalism Innovators. You can check out our website one day. We're getting there. If someone has something to contribute, we'd love to hear from you. It's a collaboration to accelerate the growth and work on some of the diversity problems to ensure that the communities that are served and the media of the future is as diverse as our country. Thank you so much for hearing me out. I hope that I've given you something to be hopeful about. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

SHAWN MICALLEF:

Thank you, Erin. Our next presenter is Kathy, Public Editor of the Toronto Star, Canada's greatest newspaper [LAUGHTER]

As a columnist for the Star, if you get an email from Kathy, it probably means you have made a mistake. Those mistakes are rigorously investigated. Email to Kathy.

KATHY ENGLISH:

Thank you, Shawn. Thank you, Vanessa and Erin. It's hard to come up after those great presentations. I think what we're all here for is because we believe that journalism can be better than what it is.

Today I want to talk a little bit about the trust crisis in journalism overall and what journalists and news organizations can do to try to earn your trust, to be worthy of your trust. I'll talk specifically about some of the steps we take at the Toronto Star to optimize your trust. I hope you take away some sense of what is the opposite of that awful F word, which I'll talk a little bit about, but what is real news, because that's increasingly what we're looking at.

So where am I coming from? I have served as a Public Editor for the Star for almost 12 years. There are only two newspapers in Canada that have this role, us and The Globe and Mail. The CBC has a similar role. It has existed since 1972, the intermediary between readers and the newsroom. I spend a lot of time explaining journalism to readers but, more important, explaining the concerns of readers to our journalists. I work outside the newsroom structure, so I don't make any decision about what goes in the paper, how anything is played. I do communicate with some 300 to 500 readers every month, so I feel like I have a really good front row seat on what people are thinking about. Last year I did more than 1200 corrections for all our platforms. It's not bad. We have very vigorous corrections policies. It's also my job to hold to account our ethics policies and adjudicate complaints when there is an issue between a source or a reader and a journalist, and try to determine what's the right thing to do.

Start from the premise that journalism matters, that it matters very much to democracy, and that's why we're all here today. All this is a 2001 definition from elements of journalism. Journalism provides something unique to a culture, independent, reliable, accurate and comprehensive information that citizens need to be free, to align with our democratic functions. It's not news to tell you there's a crisis of trust in journalism overall. We spend a lot of time about the media ecosystem overall. Journalism is a piece of an information ecosystem and a lot of problems of that ecosystem overall.

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have had an impact on how much people trust journalism. We have platforms that can amplify this information, spread lies that make little distinction between what is news, what's opinion opinion, what's verified, what's unverified. That's led to a lot of polarized audiences that everybody is coming from their own corner and deciding who they will listen to and who they won't.

Then there's this.  
[LAUGHTER]

(Video played)  
...You are fake news.

KATHY ENGLISH:

You are fake news. I watched that press conference in January 2017 and thought to myself: Everything changes for journalists from here on in. Mistrust is nothing new. I've been reading credibility studies for a long time. People have always distrusted the media. But a US president who is set to demonize the media and has the tools of amplification to do so I believe is something new. I spent ten years in the Public Editor's office before Mr. Trump. I had never heard that phrase. As I said, I hear from 300 to 500 readers every month, complaints, concerns, possible corrections. Never, ever heard that phrase. Within two or three days of that press conference, I started getting complaints coming into the Public Editor's office using the fake news term. Our journalists here all the time now, it's an epithet that's thrown at journalists everywhere they go.

I would like to just digress for a quick moment and say I believe it's a term we should kill. I'm a big believer in the work that's come out of the centre at Harvard University, an academic named Claire who did a report last year for the Council of Europe. It's called Information Disorder. It provides a lexicon to talk about this. It is much more complex than the F word. She talks about misinformation, which is false connection, misleading content. That's where media mistakes made honestly correct misinformation. Disinformation is the made-up stuff, manipulated, fabricated content. Now information they have determined as real information that's circulated to cause harm, which would be an example of what we're hearing about this weekend with the WikiLeaks information. This is the real dangerous part. This is what most of us would think of as fake news, but the problem is it's all getting lumped in together. I think it is incumbent on us to think about the terms we use.

Nevertheless, there is data that indicates Canadians have real fake news anxiety. This comes from the trust barometer. This one is a year old now. I think any day they're ready to come up with the 2018 media study. It found that 65 per cent of Canadians are worried about false information or fake news being used as a weapon. This is of particular concern in our election cycle here. There's never been a time when it's more important for us to figure out what is real news and what is news we can trust.

The study also found things that are very concerning to me as someone -- I have been a journalist for 30 years and work within an organization that is main extreme media. It found that a lot of skepticism about the media, surprise, surprise, 63 per cent of Canadians are more concerned, believe the media is more concerned with attracting a big audience than reporting reporting. Sixty-two per cent believe we sacrifice accuracy, and 54 per cent believe we support an ideology versus informing the public. This is aligned with everything I hear every single day in listening to readers' concerns about our journalism. This is very much the kind of stuff I hear.

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So what I think is that this current environment is both a challenge and an opportunity. All of us have to rethink what we believe is trusted news. Increasingly, news organizations have to prove to you that they're trustworthy, and so do individual journalists, to build and maintain trust we have to act trustworthy. This begins with individual journalists who operate in high ethical standards.

I've done this talk across our company a few times. How do we become a trusted news organization? How do we look at this challenge and build off what we've always done?

One of the definitions we've taken comes out of the trust project, which is an initiative to embed indicators of trust into content. Trusted news is accurate, ethically produced and accountable. Being accurate means we verify information before publishing it, we correct our mistakes when they're told it's wrong. Being accountable means that we are transparent about what we do and how we do it. Being ethical means we produce news according to a set of journalistic standards. We have a standards guide that I've just completed a project updated with editors across Canada.

This is a really high bar of accountability. We should be prepared to explain publicly what we do when gathering and presenting news and information, and the journalists involved. You come to me and tell me there's a mistake in the story or why was it done this way. This is a question I might ask the journalist, their editor, all the way up the line until we can determine: Was this journalism produced in alignment with the ethics code that we tell people we believe in? This is public, on our website. Everybody can see it.

We've taken a number of other steps to optimize for trust. In May of 2017, the Star's editor signed a transparency to write about the stories behind the stories, how things are reported. We have a speakers' bureau that sends journalists out into the community. We talk to groups of 25 or more, a lot of school groups, community groups. I've always found this opportunity to speak directly to people is one of the most effective things. All of our Torstar news organizations across the country are members of the national news media council, which means if a reader or complainant is not happy with the decisions I've made, I'm open to saying: You probably should take this to the council and get another view.

There are regular columns on journalism ethics and we try to share readers' views about what's going on.

Last year our CEO brought a number of people from the company together and challenged us to come up with Torstar trust principles, what are the things that a trusted organization do? I want to be clear this is not the ceiling. This is the floor. This is the very basic. There's much more. I'll quickly go through them and sum up. Easily viewable journalistic standards. You should know who is giving you your news and what they stand for. Correct errors in a transparent manner on all platforms. Accuracy is job one. Corrections follow. Makes a clear distinction between news and opinion on all platforms. You should know: Are you reading their fact which is news or someone's opinion? Provide a diversity of views and voices on issues of public interests. This is probably where most of the main extreme news organizations fall short, and we can discuss that. And of course, make the clear distinction between editorial and advertising content on all platforms.

My talk is really about rights and responsibilities of news creators and -- or news consumers and news creators. I want to put it back to you and say: What do news consumers do? Hold your news sources to a high ethical standard. You should expect that there is a floor, that there are some basic things that we'll promise we'll do. Expect transparency and accountability. Seek to understand the how and whys of journalism. We're talking a lot about news fluency, media literacy. I think it really matters. This is one I talk about a lot: Only share from trusted sources. If we all commit that we're going to read the

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link before we fascion and not share it if it's not a trusted source, that might do a lot.

I want to end with an echo of what Erin had to say say. I think we're long past the days of jumpism is greatP pay for a trusted source of jumpism that speaks to you. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

SHAWN MICALLEF:

Thank you, Kathy. We're going to jump into Q and A. Kathy, you touched on this a little bit, but I'd like to hear from all of you, how do you interpret the duty of journalism to democracy? From there, have you reached the people beyond kind of your core group? Whoever wants to answer.

SPEAKER:

I think that's been one of our central questions: How do we reach the people who don't trust us? You can speak to the converted, to the higher, people who have been long-time readers, but I'm not sure. That's why I have so much interest in what Erin is doing and reaching out. Trying to reach out to audiences beforehand, I think that's a big answer.

SPEAKER:

I think it's important to acknowledge when we think about this question, there's this term that's been thrown around in the debates about what the government should do, where we call media markets underunderserved. I find that's very euphemistic. I prefer to make clear there are many communities in Canada that have been excluded by media, and particularly during -- while media was really focused on advertising. Because the entire model is around serving people who advertise advertisers value. So that means a lot of publications are targeted to that.

I think we should just acknowledge that. We're all journalists working in the system trying to do good work, but let's acknowledge that. For us, it's really about thinking differently and looking for communities that where there really is genuine need for journalism, showing up there. We're trying to prove a lot of what people say. Indigenous, speaking to misconceptions about Indigenous people. One of our communities is in the lower mainland. One question I get is: That's great. I can see how that model would work, but Indigenous people aren't going to pay for news.

I've heard that many times. We're going to prove that wrong, because the reality is that there has to be a sustainable way to include everyone in our journalism and in our democracy if this country is going to work. We're working on that, and we're going to do it. So that's kind of our starting point. One thing we do know is we can't show up in these communities and be like: Journalists are here. Pay us. Their work is valuable.

They're like: Who the Fuck are you?

Anyway.

[LAUGHTER]

So we spend a long time listening before we print a story and I think that's critical in terms of our approach to building trust.

ERIN MILLAR:

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I'm a documentary.

SPEAKER:

I don't feel like I can speak specifically to these issues but as someone who has worked in the industry for many years, I feel like we have the opposite problem. How do we get white people to pay attention to what we're doing? We are our own -- I mean, APTN is interesting. We know that the majority of view certificates are obviously Indigenous Canadians. So I always was joking that we needed to find a way to trick white people into watching [LAUGHTER]. Everyone thinks what we're doing is for native folk: I can't believe we're having this discussion. We are all Canadians and we all have stories. When First Contact came, even though it was a big, I was like: This is how we're going to get them. [LAUGHTER]

Watch us now. And they did. The audience, APTN, I feel confident that we were able to contact an audience that had never paid attention because it was compelling. So I think it's to trick people. Pay attention to what we're doing in our community.

SHAWN MICALLEF:

You have to trick people into your honesty. We have some questions in the back.

SPEAKER:

Hi. I have two questions, but I'll pick one. So you just started to talk about this, but I wanted to talk about the fact that we can select which articles, in the case of The Discourse, voting on what things you want to read about. How do we get people -- a person goes to an environmental documentary, I'm wondering how we bring people to documentary and film?

SPEAKER:

It's really hard. What we're doing, we're trying in lots of different ways. One of them is it gets down to the principles that Kathy was laying out, that if you're truly transparent about the work and it actually is up to standards, at least it's a table you can start from with people who don't necessarily agree with you. We use Facebook like crazy. We're very actively engaging. We're putting out content starting from these conversations that I'm sure you've had the burden of weighing through, they're difficult misconceptions. We engage with them: OK, that's a good point. Tell us why you think that. Here's evidence that challenges that.

We've had some success in actually -- in building conversations between people who really disagree on top topics. How you scale that, we're not there yet, but we're trying.

SPEAKER:

In terms of engaging on Facebook, as soon as we put that trailer, the response was insane. Three days, 72 hours, and we hit a million people. We had 2 million within the first ten days. We never, ever had that kind of response. I'm positive that's it was because of social media, bridging people through that. It was

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just so effective. It was pretty unprecedented.

SPEAKER:

I've seen increasing amounts of polarization over the last three to five years through the last provincial election and now heading into the federal election, the uglyness and the instability of what I'm seeing and hearing is beyond what I have ever before. We had done a story several months ago out of Ottawa saying that the progressive Conservative -- the Conservative Party was considering making the media an election issue, and Scheer said: Don't do that. Let's not import that instability into this country. Let's be better than that.

I find it really frustrating. People who, whatever is written, are going to be critical. Everybody is coming at it from different windows. But it feels like civility and mutual respect is at risk.

SHAWN MICALLEF:

A bunch of hands and under five minutes. We'll a rapid fire answer and maybe we can get everyone's thoughts.

SPEAKER:

How do you address the coming divide of people who can pay for journalism and people who can't? They will be cut off from real news sources but they'll get plenty of free right wing idiocy.

SPEAKER:

We have the CBC in Canada. In the US it's increasingly a problem that they never developed a CBC manner. Our public broadcaster does great work.

SPEAKER:

They cut off funding during (inaudible).

SPEAKER:

It's a huge concern.

SPEAKER:

That's why we're not doing subscription but a membership model. We need people to support us so we can continue to allow anyone to be a member and be part of what we're doing.

SHAWN MICALLEF:

Way back there.

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SPEAKER:

Going with the idea that the CBC and the Star, --

SPEAKER:

Can we talk after? I don't have time, but I can tell you that we do operate by standards that aim to question everything we do and that reporting -- we have lots of opinionated columnists. They are labelled as such. But there are questions asked all the time: Is this fair? Is it accurate? How do you know what you know?

SHAWN MICALLEF:

Was there a question over here?

SPEAKER:

I wanted to ask this question for a long time, but first you're probably well aware of the fact that when there's an issue that's reported there are multiple stories in terms of how you can see it. It goes without saying that some marginalized groups and some issues, they don't have enough resources or power or people to change the narrative that defines it. So I think the media should play a role in helping to change that narrative. Because when you report a story, and I'm thinking towards solidifying negative stereotypes. For example, text messages. This is honestly why I had a distaste for newspapers. My question is: How can the media, in terms of reading a newspaper, how can they change this narrative for the better?

SPEAKER:

Well, we have to recognize, first of all, that journalism is not an exact science. There is some imperfection about it. Everybody needs to understand that there's no such thing as objectivity, because as soon as someone decides what they're going to cover, who they will talk to, what their first sentence will be, they're bringing themselves to it. We can aim to be fair and try to say: Have I provided the fairest account of this?

It's very hard. Anybody who followed what happened from the Washington manument last week will see all the perspectives on that story. It's very confusing trying to sort it out.

SPEAKER:

I won't say very much because I know we're right out of time, but I'd love to talk more about that. That's essential essentially what we're trying to get at at The Discourse. This is really about professional, highly trained journalists -- not highly paid.

[LAUGHTER]

Who have a valuable set of tools. Communities have species. So we're doing things like reporting on the child welfare system, creating opportunities for young people who are impacted by this system to come and work with us. In part, that's like let's train them to tell their own stories. The value to our organization

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to help us get the stories right is just as important as newsroom. We're constantly trying to think about that question. Can I just sum up one last comment? That is that because I know there are so many more questions in the room than we have time to respond to, I just wanted to plug our workshop for tomorrow. My colleagues Anita and Lindsay and I will be doing a workshop after the keynote and I would love to use that as an opportunity to dig in and hear your input on how we can change this.

SPEAKER:

What time is that?

SPEAKER:

Three:30 tomorrow.

SHAWN MICALLEF:

We're out of time now. Thank you, Kathy and Vanessa and Erin. [APPLAUSE]

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