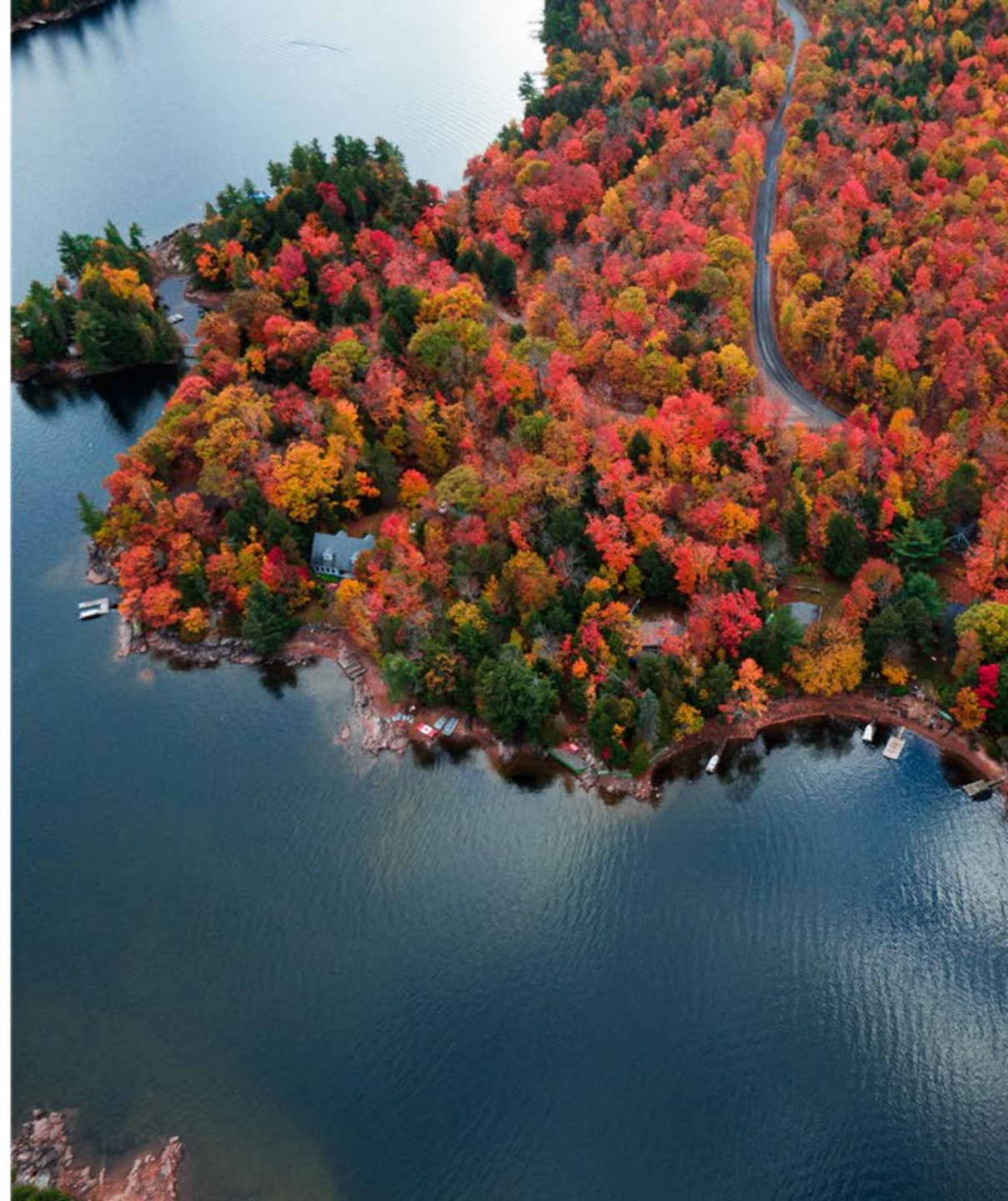




Healthy Democracy Project

Standing Up Together for Local Democracy

Agenda





We're in this together

Election trends

The good. More women running—more women elected.

	2010	2014	2018	2022
Women running	1,495	1,647	1,808	1,939
Women elected	26%	21.6%	698	750
Women heads of council	100	78	92	110

The not good. Voter turnout decline and acclamations rise

	2010	2014	2018	2022
Position acclamations		390	477	553
Trustees acclaimed			236	229
Full council acclamations	30	18	26	32
Voter turnout	44.35%	43.12%	38.30%	36.30%
Candidates	8,039	7,290	6,658	6,325
Trustee candidates			1,513	1,462

Democracy today

Politics

Why Is Politics Getting Nastier?

With threats and harassment rising, running for office has become a dangerous job

BY STEPHEN MAHER

Updated 21:32, May, 30, 2022 | Published 14:00, May, 12, 2022

Local News

Trolling is a major barrier for women considering politics, conference hears

"I want to put my time into developing good policy, not fighting trolls on the internet. It is frustrating and it is draining."

Elizabeth Payne

Published Aug 15, 2022 • 3 minute read

Politics

MPs describe threats, safety fears as they're issued panic buttons



One MP said he's forwarded 20 death threats to the police

OPINION

Women and racialized political candidates are being set up to fail

ERIN TOLLEY

CONTRIBUTED TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL
PUBLISHED JUNE 13, 2022

OPINION

As apathy spreads, municipal democracies are in danger



MARCUS GEE >
TORONTO

PUBLISHED OCTOBER 15, 2022
UPDATED OCTOBER 20, 2022

CANADA

Wasaga Beach, Ont., disables comments on its social media to prevent spread of hate, misinformation

By Staff • The Canadian Press
Posted October 27, 2021 9:13 pm

Politics

Governor General's office closes social media comments after a wave of hateful remarks



Rideau Hall says comments have been 'abusive, misogynistic and racist' in nature

Democracy today

WINDSOR STAR

News / Local News

Essex County meeting cancelled after unruly protest

Brian MacLeod
Published Apr 07, 2023 • 2 minute read

43 Comments



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43 Comments



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Montreal

Quebec launches helpline for politicians following wave of resignations at municipal level

Hundreds have left public life since 2021

The Canadian Press · Posted: Feb 28, 2024 1:26 PM EST | Last Updated: February 28



Quebec Municipal Affairs Minister Andrée Laforest says a growing number of elected officials are quitting because of intimidation and harassment. (Jacques Boissinot/The Canadian Press)



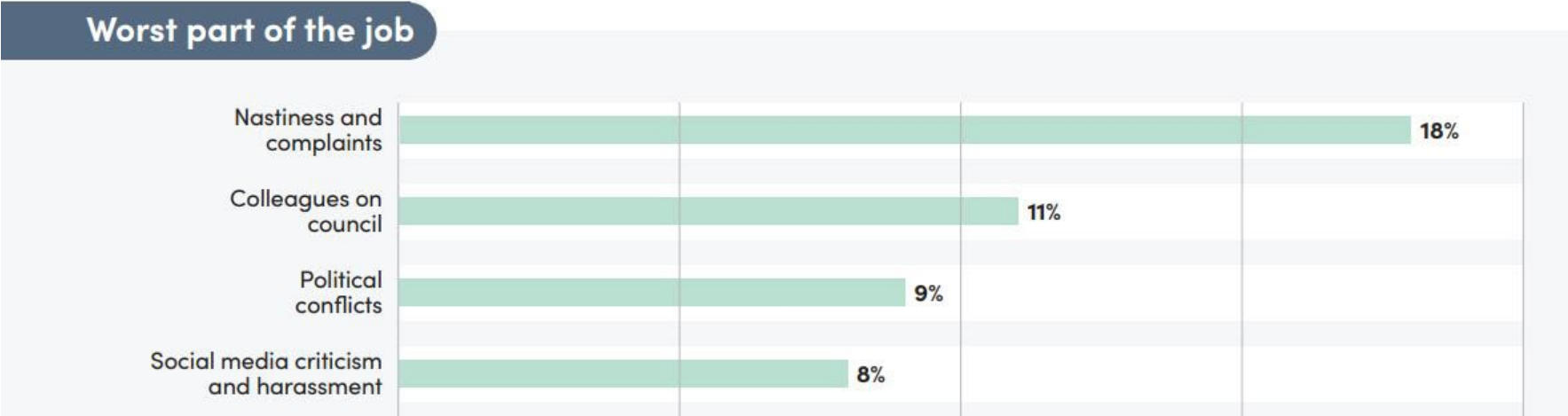
Quebec is committing \$2 million to connect politicians and their families with psychological aid after a wave of resignations and leaves of absence among elected municipal officials.



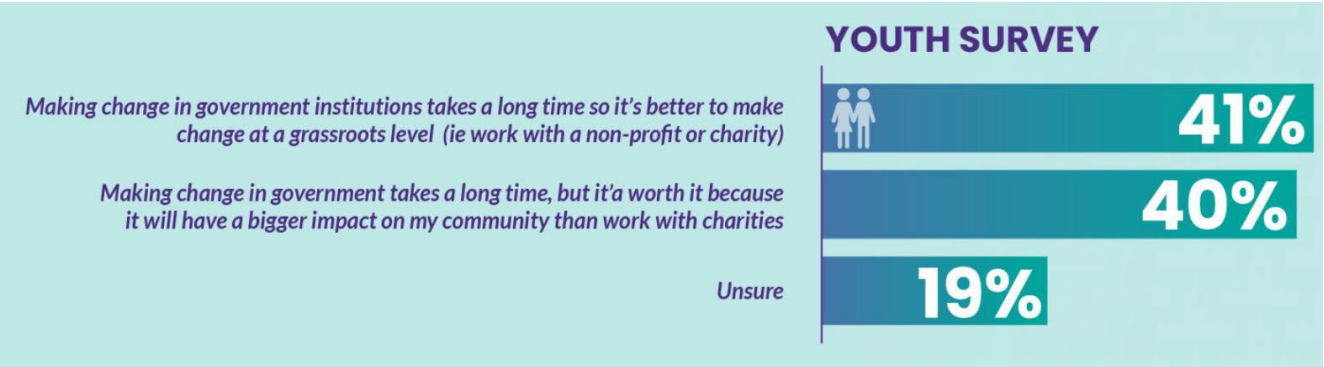
**closes social media
hateful remarks**

ive, misogynistic and racist' in nature

Democracy today



■ Source: "Locally Grown" Samara Centre for Democracy/Canadian Municipal Barometer



■ 63% of youth don't feel welcome to participate in civic engagement

■ Source: "Understanding Youth and Child Civic Engagement in Canada" Abacus Data

Where we started

Healthy Democracies are everyone's responsibility

2021

AMO's Board strategic objectives included advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in municipal governance, including the *We All Win* campaign to attract more diverse candidates to municipal office.



2022

Following the success and interest in the We All Win campaign, in November 2022, the AMO Board approved a 4-year strategy with a \$1 million investment to promote and build healthy democracy in Ontario.





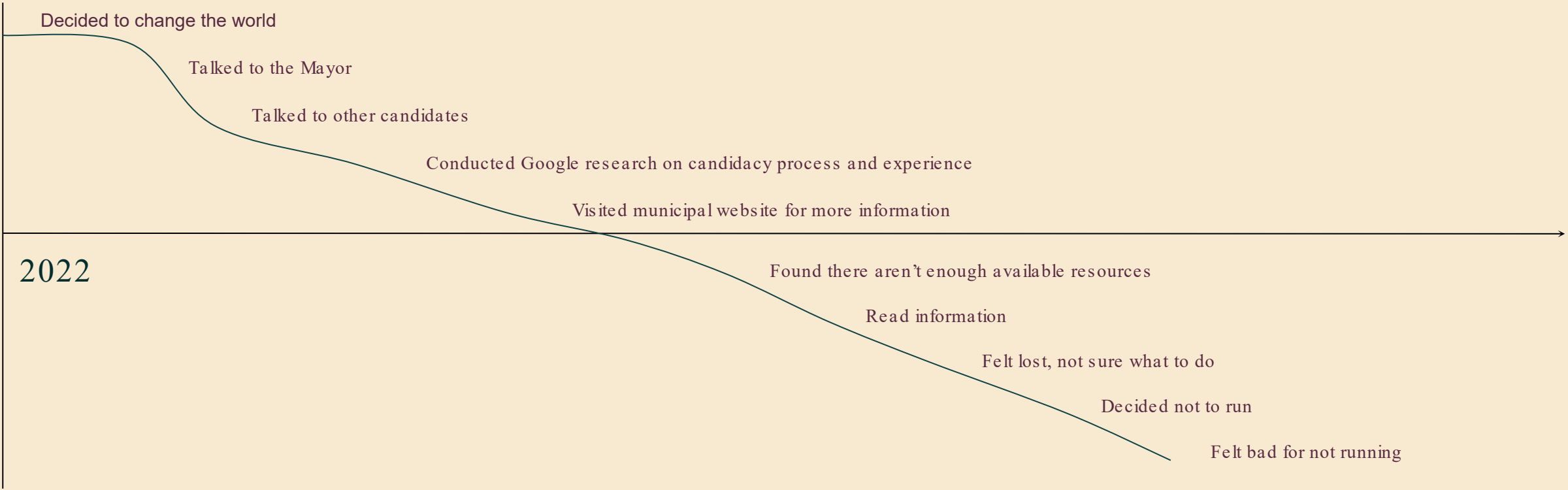
Mapping the Experiences of Diverse Candidates Running for Municipal Office in Ontario

Research Conducted by Monumental Projects

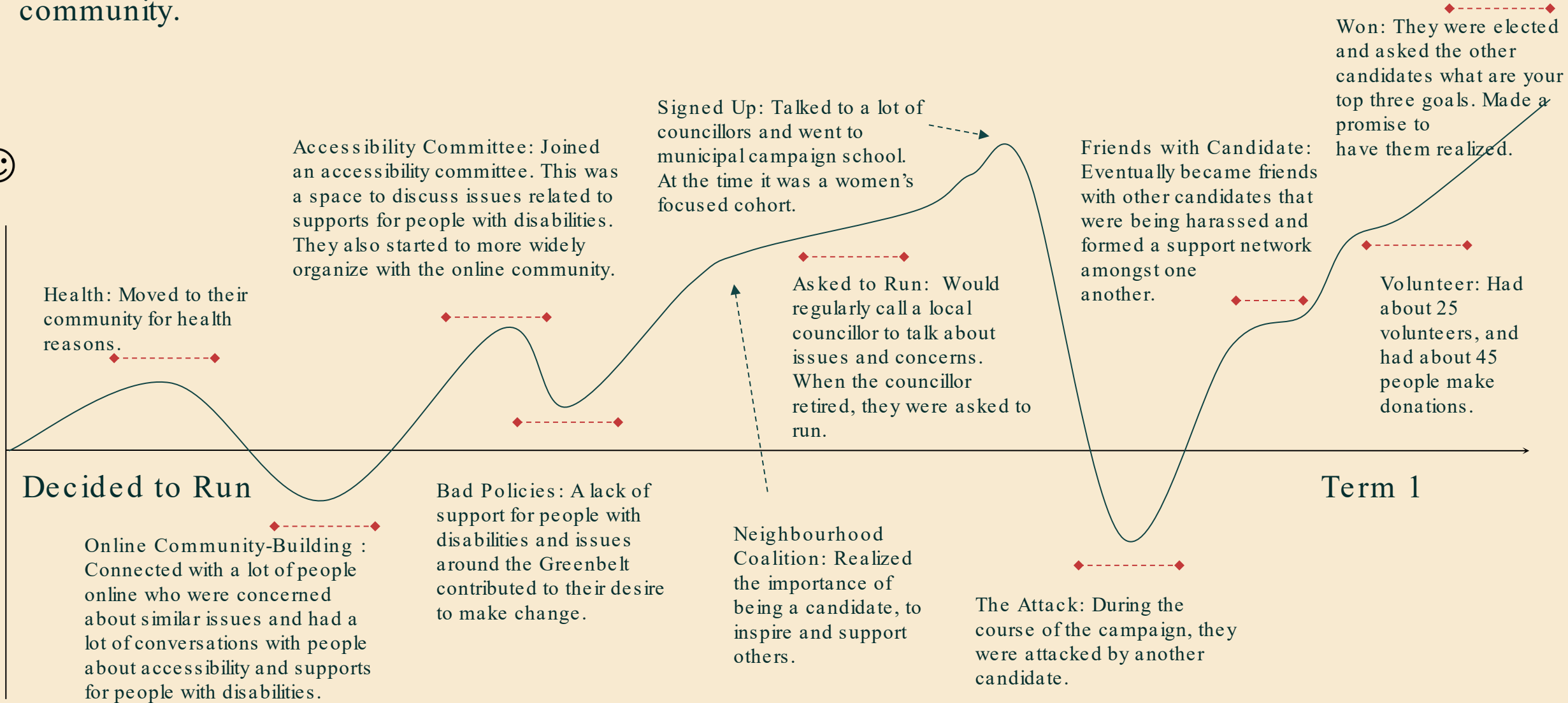
The Risk-Reward Paradox

- For many **the risks (negative realities) of running outweigh the potential benefits**
- **It's not certain that over time it will be easier for diverse candidates.**
While socially, Canada is getting more open in people's views generally (e.g., polling data), at the same time politics is getting more toxic
- The **job itself takes a major toll on families, mental health, your career,** and it is financially precarious
- Our focus group with potential possible candidates made it clear that **many people see change as easier to make, with less personal cost, outside of government**

Not having enough information was a common reason for deciding not to run. This potential candidate - a mid-career professional identifying as male and Black in a mid-size jurisdiction - found that his lack of knowledge about (a) the requirements of a campaign, and (b) the role of councillor itself, was a significant barrier. He shared that not only was it frustrating not to easily find that information online, but that he wasn't sure who (or how) to ask the seemingly basic questions.



This research participant was the first non-binary councillor to be elected in their ward, motivated to resolve the lack of accessibility and supports available to people living with disabilities in their community.



What motivates people to run

Identity-based motivations

- i.e., wanting to increase representation

Policy-based motivations

- i.e., wanting to move forward specific policy wins

Place-based motivations

- i.e., commitment to their local community

Common enablers and assets

Personal skills and capabilities

- e.g., sense of resilience to help navigate negativity, bullying and harassment

Advocates, mentors, and cheerleaders within the system

- Relationships with experienced individuals was a key enabler for many diverse candidates

Rooted in community, identity, and/or professional groups

- i.e., personal, cultural, faith-based, professional communities

Common barriers

Mental health toll: bullying, harassment, discrimination

Timing: family and career conflicts, incumbents

Financial barriers

Access to social capital: mentors and volunteers

Accessibility challenges

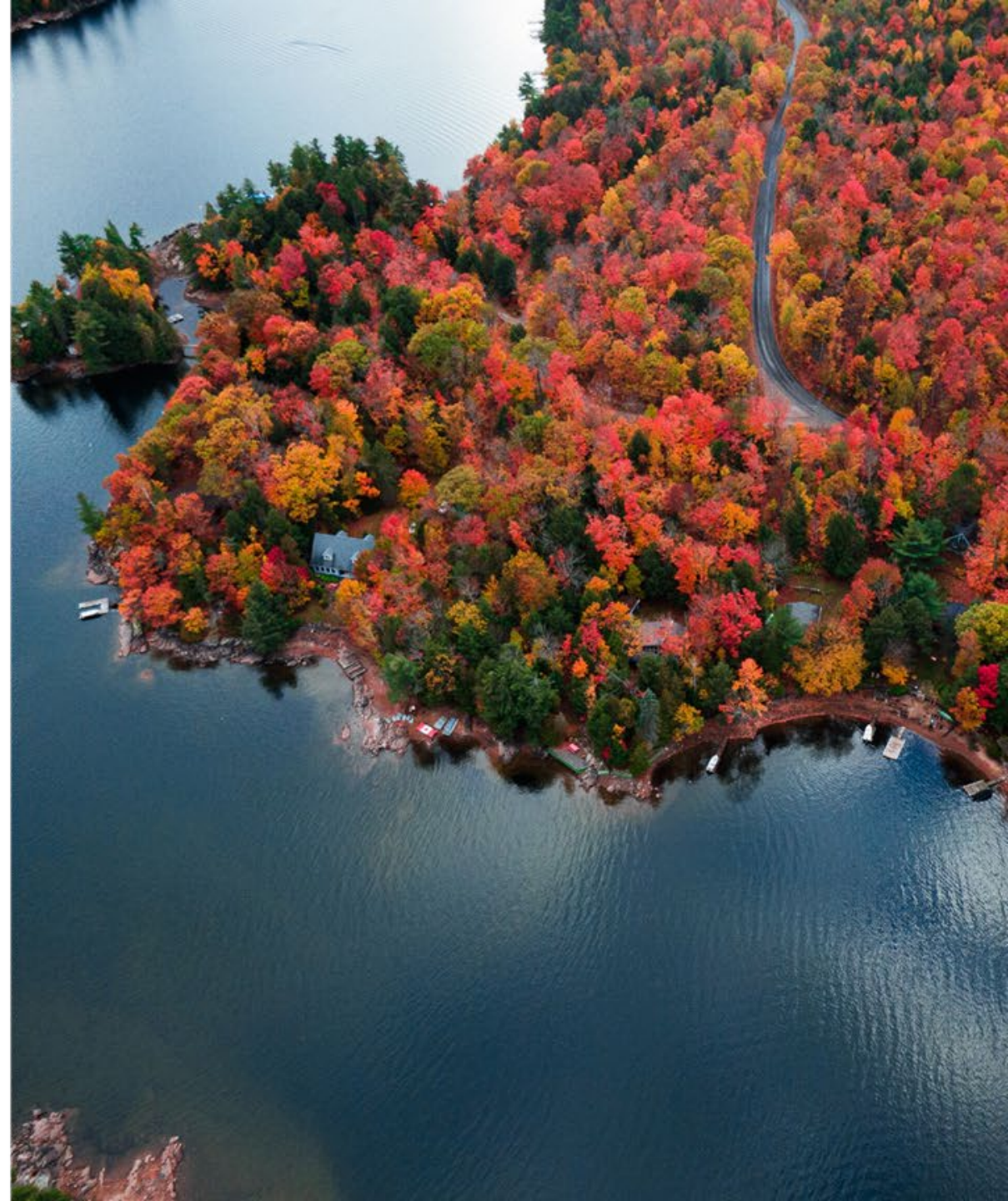


Healthy Democracy Roadmap

Understand, test, foster, mobilize

The Healthy Democracy Project

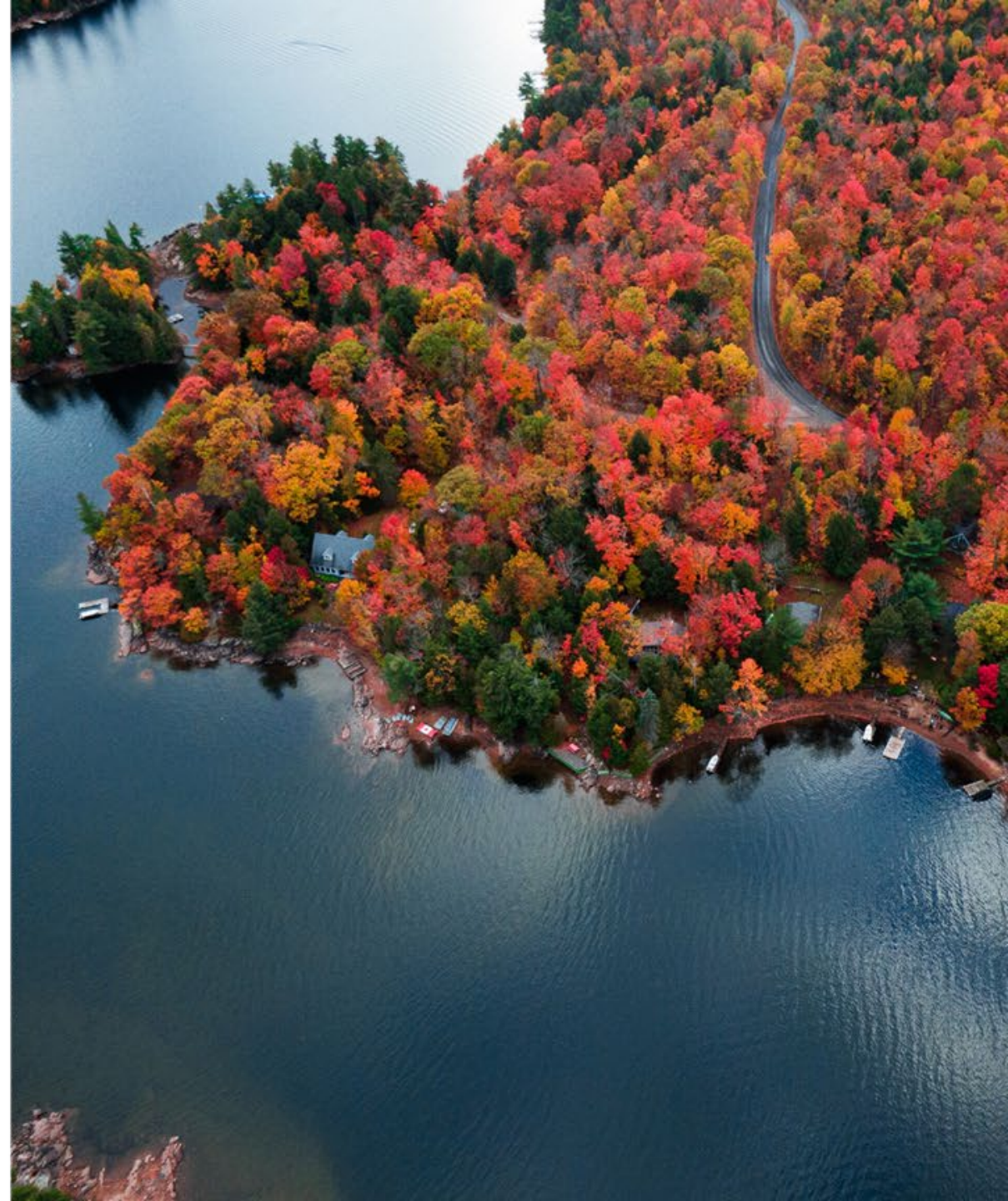
- Builds on the momentum of AMO's *We All Win* campaign to encourage and support greater diversity of municipal candidates in the 2026 municipal elections
- Builds partnerships to promote greater respect for democracy and political participation
- Promotes greater awareness of the important role of municipal government and municipal councils in building strong communities
- Develops new training and resources to support AMO members to engage effectively with their communities
- Promotes the value and importance of municipal governments in Ontario and Canada's political system, while focusing on the importance of diversity of leadership and perspectives.



A working vision for Ontario's local democracies

Where people feel they can participate safely and fully in local government and do so enthusiastically. Where people can be well informed and feel their votes matter. Where people believe their voices will be respected and included in the decisions that affect their lives.

This vision fosters an environment of mutual respect, informed participation, and equitable representation.



Strategic Objectives

OBJECTIVES

We All Win

- Increase diversity on municipal councils to be more reflective of Ontario's diversity.
- Support AMO members through their diversity, equity, and inclusion journey.
- Elected officials are equity-informed leaders.
- People running for office don't feel alone and have recourse.

Respect for Democracy

- Increase trust in local government as an institution where people can safely/actively/regularly contribute to the decisions that impact their community.
- Municipal leaders are aligned and committed to improving the tone of discourse between elected officials and community members, municipal staff and other elected officials.
- Establish AMO as a thought leader on democratic engagement.

Engagement & Education

- Youth see local government as a means (from within or without) to make a positive difference in their community.
- AMO members can productively and authentically engage with their communities—in particular with underrepresented communities and youth.
- AMO members are aware and engaged in the We All Win and Respect for Democracy streams of work.

ACTIONS

Understand

- #1 Candidate Experience Journey
- #2 Candidate/elected official demographic data
- #3 Democratic Engagement Solutions Bank
- #4 Voter Turnout Model
- #5 Healthy Democracy Indicators

Test

- #6 Local Democracy Accelerator
- #7 Candidates Attraction & Support Network
- #8 Improving civic education pilot

Foster

- #9 Healthy Democracy Forum
- #10 Local Democracy Accelerator community of practice
- #11 Civility Commitment

Mobilize

- #12 Local Democracy Accelerator solutions mobilization
- #13 Comprehensive anti-harassment strategy
- #14 Youth engagement better practices
- #15 Increased member education

Healthy Democracy Forum

October 19 & 20

Day 1

- Diverse representation matters—a focus on candidate attraction and support efforts
- Engaging youth in local democracy and elections—for youth and youth-focused groups only

Day 2

- Accelerating local democratic engagement: convene, prototype, energize





OPSBA & AMO

Partnership & Perspective

Discussion & Questions

A shared commitment and strong working relationship

- Democratic and political engagement
- Healthy Democracy Project Advisory Group
- Local Government Week
- Learning from each other—Student Trustees
- Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award
- Healthy Democracy Forum

OPSBA and Healthy Democracies

First topic

- Do School Board Trustee candidates take part in candidate attraction and support organizations?

Second topic

- Experiences of incivility—how prevalent, what forms, are there differences across small, rural, urban?

Third topic

- Youth engagement better practices



Connect with us:

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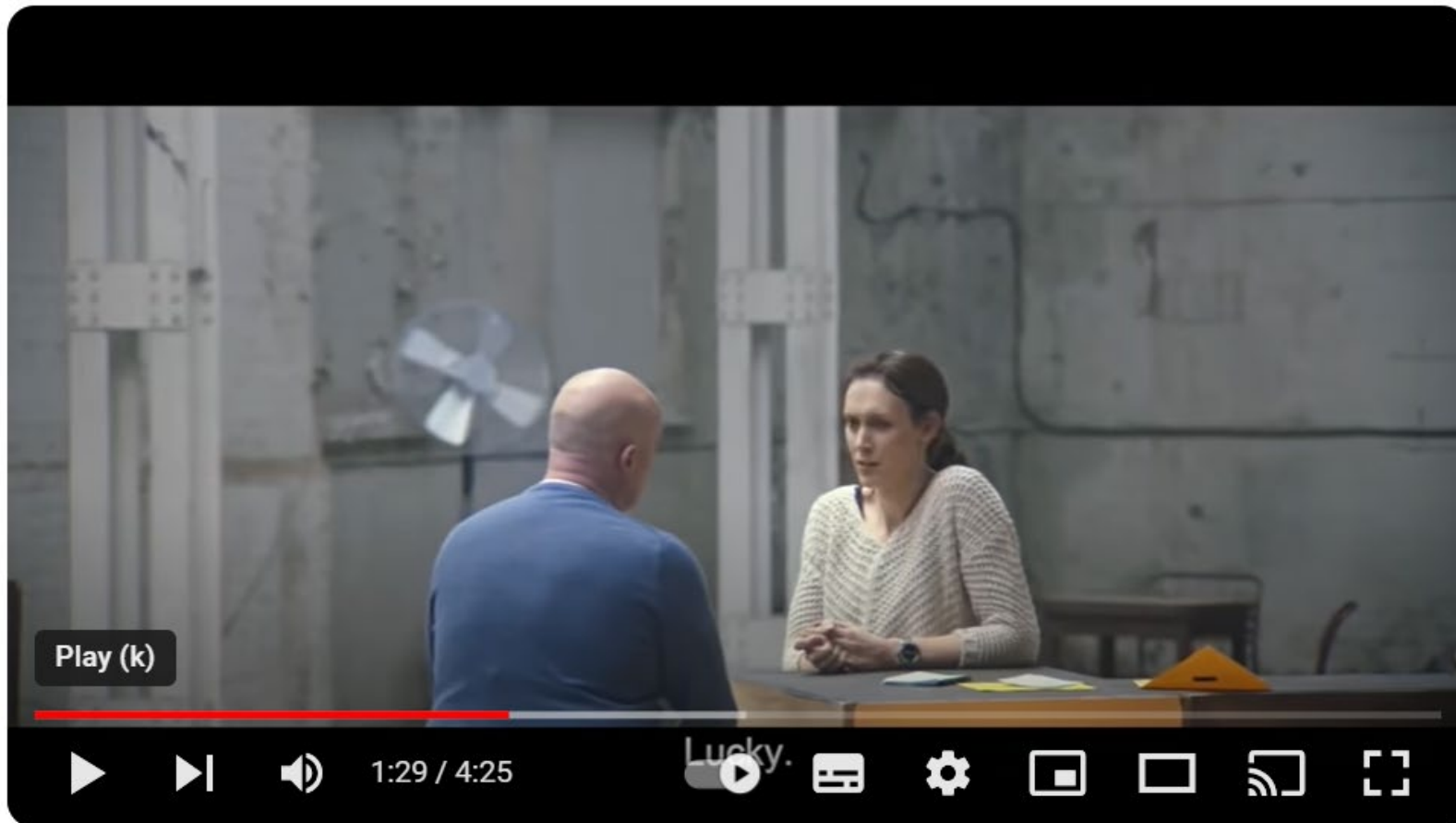


Thank you



If we have time

Outside your comfort zone



An everywhere everyone problem

