

**Healthy Democracy Forum**  
**Supporting Ontario's municipal candidates panel notes**  
**Saturday, October 19, 2024**  
**Westin Harbour Castle Toronto – Room to be provided**  
**Approximately 10:00 am**

Thank you for that presentation Kofi.

Working with you, Zahra, Arielle, Benji, and Eli has been a highlight for me in this work.

This research was our first significant Healthy Democracy Project initiative and has laid the groundwork for a lot of what's next to come.

The research is the first of its kind as is the work we are doing today. Our friends at the Apolitical Foundation have told us that taking a regional approach to municipal candidate attraction and support hasn't been done before.

At AMO, we can't support individual candidates. But we can act as a platform and convenor for this conversation about the importance of the work being done to attract and support candidates, especially from underrepresented communities.

The Healthy Democracy Project has grown from AMO's We All Win campaign that sought to encourage greater diversity on Ontario municipal councils.

The research, which validates and confirms what we hear from our members, outlines the harsh realities of what it's like to run for political office, whether for the first time or as an incumbent.

So how can we encourage people from diverse communities to run for office knowing full well how difficult the experience can be?

The answer come, at least in part, in the form of the groups and organizations who attract and support candidates to run in hopes of sitting around municipal council tables.

There are, from our exploration, several different types of candidate attraction and support organizations:

- Local, on the ground, campaign schools—a number of whom are represented here today
- National, identity-based groups like Operation Black Vote Canada, Proud Politics, Equal Voice, The Canadian Muslim Vote and others
- Municipally-driven efforts or partnerships like the one we'll hear about tomorrow from Hamilton.
- And sitting a little on its own is Nominee, that we'll hear about shortly

This conversation we're about to have is an exploration of the different types of supports that exist for candidates, their strengths and limitations.

So now I'm very happy to introduce our tremendous panelists to you. They'll each have a few minutes to talk more about their background and experience, and then we'll get into a discussion.

Please welcome:

## DRAFT

- Amanda Kingsley Malo who is the founder of PoliticsNOW, and with her team have created tremendous resources and gotten a lot of women elected in Northern Ontario
- Jordan Simmons is the co-founder of Nominee—a very interesting digital candidate support platform working in Canada, the U.S, and the U.K.
- And we're also happy to welcome Region of Waterloo Councillor Colleen James who is also the founder and principal consultant for Divonify where she helps organizations address systemic racism, oppression, anti-Black racism and inclusive leadership.

We'll go now from one to the next to hear a little about your background and experiences supporting candidates or running for office. We'll start with Amanda, then Jordan and Colleen.

AFTER ALL THREE ARE DONE THEIR INTRODUCTIONS, HERE ARE QUESTIONS YOU CAN CHOOSE FROM:

Question 1. Let's start with why are you doing this? What inspires you to do this work?

Question 2. From your experience, what do candidates need most first to make that decision to run. And then what do they need most to feel supported through the process?

Question 3. As we heard through the research, the risks associated with running for office are increasing while the rewards of being in office aren't keeping pace. What are you or your group doing that's have the best success in mitigating those risks?

Question 4. The other side of the risk/reward challenge is important too. What can we be doing to help people see that running for office can have a positive impact on their communities—that the rewards are still real and worth running for?

Question 5. Candidates, especially those who have intersectional backgrounds, can benefit from different types of support. Can you talk about what that means and how those different needs can be met for candidates?

Question 6. What are the biggest challenges faced by candidate attraction and support organizations? What do they need to be successful and sustainable?

WRAP-UP: Thank you very much for this thoughtful conversation and for the important work and perspectives you each bring to this conversation. You, quite literally, are changing the landscape of municipal leadership through your efforts.

And now our Healthy Democracy Project lead, Stewart McDonough will lead us in our first workshop.