

# Durham and Peel School Trustee Candidates Co-host Zoom on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Community Hub and Back Office

*Durham and Peel School Trustee Candidates Co-host Zoom call with students and subject matter experts*

PEEL, ONTARIO, CANADA, October 19, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As part of the GenZ listening tour, [Future Is Broken](#) hosted the third of five Zoom town halls to discuss equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives, additional community services, and school board back-office management.

[John Ingold](#) (Durham) and [Paul Skippen](#) (Peel Wards 1&7) facilitated the discussion with volunteer panellists Iona Sky (Senior Social Worker, EDI Leadership and Organizational Transformation Consultant) and Alden Cuddihey (former Senior Public Services Management Consulting Lead Partner).

Key quotes from the town hall:

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

Schools should accommodate all beliefs without harming students' physical, mental, and emotional well-being. This is easier said than done in today's political climate. With suicide risk in the student population rising over the past five years, enhanced equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives are critical to building unity, safety, and security.

Paul noted that, "Peel is 70% visible minority." When it comes to EDI, "This whole area had been underfunded and basic awareness just isn't there. 16% of our teachers don't feel safe to identify their sexual orientation in anonymous surveys. I cannot find of another North American workplace example with such horrible numbers. If the adults are afraid to come out at work, how can it be safe for youth?" Iona added that, "Inclusion is about a sense of belonging and contribution, but who is defining what inclusion looks like? A lot of social systems are trying to apply the lens of equality where we treat everybody the same, but that assumes we are starting from the same place." The question the school system should be asking is "How do we support children and families with different identities?"

Many people talk about critical race theory without understanding it. Iona offered that there should be "Conversations in school about what critical race theory is and why it's important and

what other perspectives should be shared and discussed when we think about education.” When it comes to equity for all, she continued “the content and calibre of EDI support in school is dependent on the school leadership. Where you live or where you grow determines your experience.” This was echoed by one of the student participants, “You have to fight the system to survive, not thrive. When we are talking about what's missing, it's missing right from the top. I don't know how students will get it if the teachers and the leaders aren't doing it.”

#### Additional Communities Services

Ontario spends \$250 million+ on after-school programs yearly. Unfortunately, not all communities get an equal share and some are unable to provide additional after-school services to advance students' knowledge and capabilities.

Paul noted some staggering statistics, “On average, 280 children and youth commit suicide in Canada each year. Of that, approximately 1/3rd identified as queer. It is shocking to me that the only reason attributed to that is being queer. Being queer doesn't mean you kill yourself. From a risk perspective, who is working to understand these numbers and root causes? “We don't think the concept of stand alone schools works anymore. We need community hubs that deliver the full range of services the community needs.”

Iona presented an example of where community hubs have been successful, “I know that there are hubs happening in Branford. There are a few that bring together different community partners and offer a variety of different supports.” One participant added, “When services are integrated, the richness is seeing, experiencing, and hearing the stories.”

#### School Board Bank Office Management

There are 72 separate school boards serving students in Ontario. They each have their own unique set of back office operations and supporting technologies which adds to the overall cost of education in this province.

Alden launched the conversation with, “When you have a governance structure the way you have with school boards, essentially 72 autonomous entities each doing their own HR, their own finances, there is significant room to achieve efficiencies. There have been some attempts to look at how these back-office functions could be shared to achieve savings that could be re-invested back into the classroom.” He added that, “...the opportunity for savings are large and could easily exceed \$1 Billion were a full shared services model to be implemented across the province.

Paul concluded, “We are leaving billions on the table. Let's shift the back office systems to the Cloud. Let's start in a remote place up north and a complex like Peel, because they're really broken. And let's redirect the savings to the classroom – where the money belongs. Let's have more teachers and teachers' assistants who are better enabled with the latest and greatest technology”

The Zoom town hall series continues:

October 18, 2022 - Digital education opportunities for children and youth

October 20, 2022 - Digital security for children and youth

GenZ youths are encouraged to join future Zoom calls and share their opinions and join our Discord to discuss their thoughts and perspectives. Please use the contact information below to be invited to the Zoom calls.

About Future Is Broken Zoom Town Halls:

Future Is Broken is series of educational Zooms jointly sponsored by the Paul Skippen and John Ingold Trustee campaigns. People have varying opinions on how the Public School system is working today - but almost everyone agrees that we are not on the right path to deliver what our children will need in the future. This series explores the perspectives of various stakeholders and challenges everyone to help reimagine education as something that works for all.

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Future Is Broken ([futureisbroken.org](http://futureisbroken.org)) website and co-hosted Zoom series of discussions are jointly sponsored by the John Ingold and Paul Skippen Trustee campaigns.

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