Establish - Taking the Scaries out of Politics - Transcription

0:00:00 **Allie Rougeot**

This is why your individual vote matters. Even though it won't perhaps change the full outcome, every time you're nudging us in the right way, you're getting us a little closer to the change we need.

00:00:11 **Acacia Markov**

You're listening to establish a podcast presented By Shake Up The Establishment, shake up the Establishment is a youth lead, registered national non-partisan, non-profit organization that operates within the geographical confines of what is currently known as Canada, but what is referred to by its First Peoples as Turtle Island.

00:00:52 **Acacia Markov**

Welcome to our special mini episode of Establish: "Taking the Scaries out of Politics". As I'm sure many of you know, a federal election has been called for September 20th, which is fast approaching. We know that it can often be overwhelming trying to navigate all of the different information and resources that come out at election time. And let's face it in general, political discussions and voting can be stressful. We at SUTE want to empower our listeners to become informed voters that can advocate for climate justice through our elected representatives. What you will in this episode is snippets of interviews we've had with other youth in the activism spaces, hearing their take on youth voter turnout, elections and the importance of voting. You will hear from Allie Rougeot, organizer with Friday's for Future Toronto, Payton Mitchell, co-founder of la CEVES and Climate Strike Canada, and Chúk Odenigbo, Founding Director of Future Ancestor Services. It's a great discussion and reminder of the importance of using your voice and your right to vote in the upcoming election. Without further ado, I'll pass it over to the interviews.

00:02:04 **Manvi Bhalla**

So Payton, really amazing to have you again, talking on the topic of the election. Given all the experiences that you have in political activism, I'd love to know a couple of your thoughts about the upcoming federal election. I guess my first question for you is, how influential do you think voting is for enacting positive change in climate justice?

00:02:23 **Payton Mitchell**

That's a really good question. So when it comes to voting, it's a bit of a catch-22, because voting can only be as powerful as the people who are willing to put themselves forward as candidates to take that power and to do something with it. Right? So if we're voting, and none of the candidates have any sort of climate platform, or any sort of, you know, ambition to make any positive change in regards to climate and to justice, then it doesn't matter how many youth vote, or how many people in Canada vote, because the outcome will be the same, and nothing will happen. And I think that's sort of a dilemma that a lot of youth come to, that they don't see the candidates pushing the values that they want to see. And so they don't see the point in voting. And that becomes really, really challenging to communicate to young people, as to like, we all know that the candidates aren't doing enough, and that their platforms aren't enough, and that all of these things become really frustrating for us. Especially, you know, like university-aged youth, who feel very, very like in touch with these issues.

00:03:27 **Manvi Bhalla**

Yeah, that's really beautifully put. So my next question for you is kind of a two-parter. The first one is just kind of to further elaborate on reasons Why you think voter turnout might be low, and I guess going from there, ways that some of the work you're doing, or have done, has motivated young people to vote and some strategies to increase turnout.

00:03:48 **Payton Mitchell**

So I think the main reason that young people don't vote is disillusion with candidates. So, not seeing that candidates are doing the things that they want to see candidates do. And a lack of understanding as to what Canada's political systems are, and just really not getting it and not wanting to pay attention because they don't get it, it's confusing. And, and you don't want to put in a lot of homework to pay attention to issues that, you know if you're resenting the government, you're not going to want to spend a lot of time paying attention to its internal drama while you could be doing other things. So I think that that becomes really challenging for young people, and as somebody who's on their Student Association, ways that I'm trying to work on improving that, at least for the people coming to our university, is by putting information about the election in our frosh packages. So that first year students who come in get a bit of a brief on: What does first-past-the-post mean? Why is it important for you to vote? What's the difference between voting in your school riding, for example, compared to your riding in your hometown? For example, having a lot of students vote in their school riding can actually sometimes swing that riding to be more progressive. Whereas if we're

all voting at home, we don't have that power like that concentration of young people, so that's something that we can consider when we're kind of like thinking strategically about voting.

00:05:23 **Manvi Bhalla**

Allie, It is so amazing to have you back on the podcast, back at it again with your amazing insightful thoughts. Given your variety of experiences within like the both the climate sector, and so much so to do with policy, policy-oriented work in this space - we're asking people, you know, how influential do you think voting is for enacting positive change for climate justice?

00:05:48 **Allie Rougeot**

Thank you Manvi for the question. I think as someone that constantly screams at elected officials, It's hard for me to justify, you know, a lot of things around elections. But the reality is that for me, elections are the bare minimum. And so what I can tell you is, if we collectively just don't vote and let whatever happens happen, and let the folks that do have time or money, or the privilege to go vote do it., we're going to deal with an impossible situation to address. And I would much rather speak to folks that aren't perfect but are willing to listen, compared to folks that have been elected by people that absolutely have nothing to do with me. And so I really think about it as a bare minimum. Do I think the next election will all of a sudden solve all our problems? Absolutely not. However, I think we can either be in big trouble or very big trouble. And so I guess I'd rather, you know, pick the former. So that's my slightly pessimistic take on the election. But I do, I actually think about that. And the second one is that I think even in the Canadian system, where, no matter you know, you can have a large amount of people that are going to vote for someone, it's still, you know, it won't be shown on the general map of who ended up getting elected, because of our stupid system. Either way, you are signaling an interest, and you signaling that interest in a party that's, you know, better for workers, or a party that's more climate oriented, that says something to the folks in power, to your peers around you that are like, "wait, I'm not alone", to you know, big businesses feeling threatened. I mean, it's very important that you're signaling that. And more than that, from having worked in areas that actually look at elections and want to perhaps influence them and get the most progressive vote out there, if you vote, and you end up getting your local most progressive candidate much closer to a victory, even if they lose I can tell you someone that next election is going to try to get your riding to switch towards the progressive one. And so even If you nudge a little bit closer, someone out there, some policy nerd, is going to see that and think this is now a riding that's becoming more progressive every time. And so this is why your individual vote matters, even though

it won't perhaps change the full outcome Every time you're nudging us in the right way, you're getting us a little closer to the change we need.

00:08:08 **Manvi Bhalla**

I personally really empathize with a lot of what you said. And I have a similar viewpoint about the the use of the vote, as it is your say. And in a true democracy maybe there would be more accountability structures in place that could make that, that vote have a greater weight. But right now it has the weight that it does, but it still has some weight, you know, in terms of being able to say what you think no matter who you vote for. So at least you get the right to exercise that and say what you think.

00:08:39 **Allie Rougeot**

And you know what? I also realized that before elections, election periods are also good times for you to just socialize certain ideas to your peers and to your family. I've never had such rich conversations as dinner conversations before elections, because it's like, who is- Who are you gonna vote for? Well? And then you get into debates. And so even if it's just that, I'll take it.

00:09:00 **Manvi Bhalla**

Yeah. I mean, that's what SUTE was founded over. We literally were having conversations about who to vote for, did not know the answer, because we were like, who has the most progressive platform for the environment? Not necessarily like our focus at the time was just objectively, who would it be? You know? Because, of course, people have their, how the parties are viewed, but we were like, let's look at the actual promises. And that led to this whole inquiry that literally led to the founding of SUTE. So I totally agree with you. They are like inflection points for change, and they can really be critical, critical times for those critical discussions. So that's a great view point.

00:09:51 **Mei-Ling Patterson**

C'est quoi ton message pour les voteurs jeunes?

00:09:58 **Chúk Odenigbo**

Oo, j'aime cette question. So, moi je dirais, on a l'habitude en tant que jeune personne au Canada, de ce dire ça ferait pas une différence si je vote ou pas. Et dans un côté oui on habite dans un pays ayant comme une système un peu bizarre ou on ne peut pas même choisir notre propre premier ministre mais on choisit quelqu’un qui représente notre circonscription mais c’est pas n’importe des

fautes des fois c’est ça. Oui, notre système est bizarre, mais c'est tellement important, en tant que jeune personne de voter pour plusieurs raisons. La première raison est parce que ça va nous impacter beaucoup plus que tous les autres à démographique, par rapport à l'âge. Donc, chaque fois quand le gouvernement entrant pouvoir. Si ce gouvernement n'est pas soutenu par les jeunes et si ce gouvernement voit pas l'importance de même penser aux jeunes personnes, on va voir de politique qui vont nuire à nos communautés en gros. Si jamais ils en besoin de couper quelque chose, on va couper les financements pour les universités parce que c'est pas notre voter base les jeunes. Mais, notre voter base est dans les maisons de retraite, ou on va couper telle des services, on va couper telle choses et la raison pour ça est parce qu’ils savent que le voter base n’est pas les jeunes personnes et donc ils peuvent nous ignorer. Et donc, c’est important en tant que jeune personnes de vraiment montrer votre voit mais aussi jamais vous pensez que ça ne va pas vous impacter. Il faut voter pour celles et ceux et celles à qui ça va impacter. La dernier élection par exemple pour tous les écouteurs qui sont ici je suis noire c’est pas évident parce que je n’est pas présenté. Mais je suis noire et j’ai deux amies blanc et pendant la dernier élection ils ont mentionné mais c’est quoi l’objectif de meme voter ça va rien changer ça va pas m’impacter. Ils ont tous le même. Ça c'était leur manière de voir les choses. Et moi j'étais comme guys, je suis votre ami et je suis un homme noire, je suis francophone. Je fais partie de beaucoup de groupes marginalisés et racialisés. Et donc ça va m’impacter moi. Juste parce que ça va rien changer pour les gens.

Quand on voit par exemple ce qui s’est passé au Québec après la mort de George Floyd, le premier ministre du Québec disé mais non la racisme systémique, ça n’existe pas au Québec. Donc moi j’habite dans une province qui ne reconnaît pas que les personnes racialisées, les personnes noires, les personnes asiatiques, les personnes autochtones ne vivent pas juste le racisme individuel ou des gens qui leurs assaut mais un racisme qui est ancré dans notre système. Qu’on est désavantagé et défavorisé par notre système. Et donc quand vous dites que je ne vais pas voter parce que ça fait pas un différence. Si ça ne fait pas une différence pour vous ça c’est parce que vous êtes privilégié. Vous avez le pouvoir de vivre malgré les changements autour de vous. Donc vote pas pour vous-même mais votez pour quelqu’un qui est proche de vous qui à pas cette luxure. Moi je suis pas mal bien éduqué je suis bilingue donc dans un certains côté dans un certain sens il y a rien qui devrait impacter parce que peu importe ce qui est dans le pouvoir je suis en bon formation, j’ai assez de bon expérience que je peux trouver un boulot n'importe quoi. Je peux me débrouiller très bien en anglais en français même dans d'autres langues. Je reconnais que je suis privilégié et assez privilégié que peu importe qui est un pouvoir moi je peux me débrouiller. Mais qu’est-ce qui arrive si jamais je suis frappé par une voiture et je devien handicapper. Est-ce que tu as vu comment les noirs handicapés sont traités? Dans votre province ou même dans votre ville? Qu’est-ce qui se passerait si jamais j’ai

une crise comme Britney Spears et je rase tous mes cheveux et j'ai juste une moment de breakdown. Est-ce que tu as vu ce que les flics font aux noirs ayant des problèmes de santé mentale? Quand tu votes disant vote pas pour toi-même mais vote pour les gens qui en besoin le plus. Et juste soyez pas égoïste. Pensez à quelqu'un d'autre vous. Et c'est tout ce que j'ai à dire par rapport à ça.

00:14:57 **Manvi Bhalla**

Merci de partager vos expériences Chuk.

00:15:26 **Acacia Markov**

For more election resources, check out our Instagram @shakeuptheestab and our website at www.shakeuptheestab.org/vote, where you can find several informative blog posts with elections, related resources, and also a nonpartisan comparison chart of the five major parties' environmental and climate action commitments. This is a really, really valuable resource that our team has been working hard on, and I highly encourage everyone listening to go check it out. Also, remember to register to vote by September 14th. Thanks for listening!