

## *Report*

### **The 2021 Municipal Elections in Québec and its aftermath: a turning point?**

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#### **Abstract**

Long overshadowed by other levels of government, Québec municipal politics has undergone a major revival in recent years. This short article focuses on the 2021 municipal elections were presented in the media as the scene of a “new wave”, as a new class of younger, more politicized politicians emerged, several of them have won in major cities. The results suggest a renewal in various aspects of Québec's municipal landscape. However, the post-election period has proven challenging, both in terms of relations with the provincial government and the difficulties faced by newly elected officials. These developments raise the following question: does this election cycle represent a real “turning point” in Québec municipal politics?

#### **Résumé**

Longtemps éclipsée par les autres paliers de gouvernement, la politique municipale québécoise connaît depuis quelques années un regain d'intérêt marqué. Ce court article s'intéresse aux élections municipales de 2021, présentées dans les médias comme le théâtre d'une « nouvelle vague » avec l'émergence d'une classe politicienne plus jeune et plus politisée, particulièrement dans les grandes villes. Les résultats suggèrent un renouveau à plusieurs égards. Cependant, la période postélectorale s'est avérée difficile, tant sur le plan des relations avec le gouvernement provincial que sur celui des difficultés rencontrées par les nouveaux élus. Ces développements soulèvent la question suivante : ce cycle électoral représente-t-il un véritable « tournant » dans la politique municipale québécoise?

**Keywords:** Québec; municipal elections; local governance; mayor; Québec City; Montréal

**Mots-clés :** Québec; élections municipales; gouvernance locale; maire; Ville de Québec, Montréal

#### **Introduction**

Long overshadowed by other levels of government and relatively little studied in Canadian political science, municipal politics in Québec has undergone a major revival in recent years (Bélanger et al., 2022, Mévellec, 2021). The 2021 municipal elections in Québec were presented in the media as the scene of a “new wave”, as a new class of younger, more politicized politicians emerged (Nakonechny, 2023). Several of them have won in major cities such as Québec City, Laval, Longueuil and Sherbrooke (Gatineau joins this list following a mayoral by-election in 2024).

This short article focuses on the campaigns that took place in Québec's ten largest cities, which represent almost 50% of the province's population. The mayoral results in these cities suggest a renewal in various aspects of Québec's municipal political landscape leading to the rise of a 'new generation' of municipal politicians. However, the post-election period has proven challenging, both in terms of relations with the provincial government and the difficulties faced by newly elected officials. These developments raise the following question: does this election cycle represent a real “turning point” in Québec municipal politics?

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We first present some of the distinctive features of Québec municipal politics to provide context. Next, we highlight the key developments in the campaigns in the 10 largest cities. We then discuss the emergence of this new local political class before looking at the aftermath of the 2021 elections. We conclude by stating that the 2021 election does indeed show signs of a turning point, but that the difficult aftermath could slow this momentum. We emphasize the importance of continuing to valorize Québec's municipal scene and better support local politicians.

### **The particularities of municipal politics in Québec**

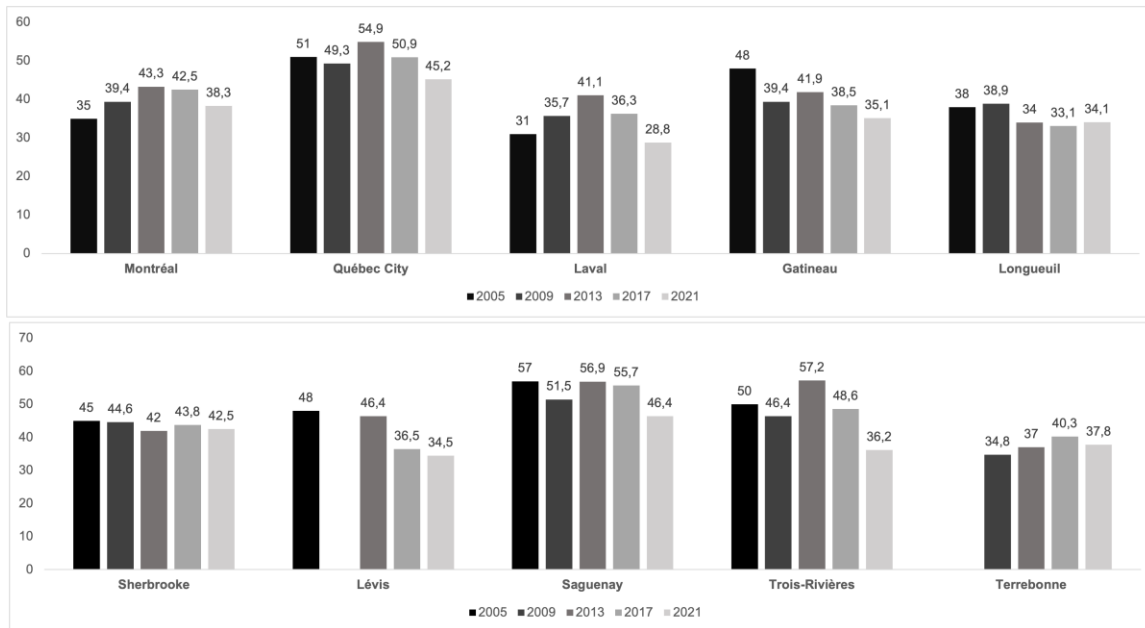
The Québec municipal scene has several distinctive features. Since 2005, elections are held simultaneously every four years, with the 2021 vote occurring on November 7 after an extended 51-day campaign due to COVID-19. Most municipalities elect a mayor and six councillors, though cities with over 20,000 residents can be divided into electoral districts, with councillors elected locally and the mayor elected at large. As a result, council sizes vary, and in 2021, over 8,000 officials were elected across approximately 1,100 municipalities.

As is the case elsewhere in Canada (see Anderson et al., 2020), incumbents have often remained in office for long periods, partly because their personal notoriety, which plays an important role in municipal elections. (Mévellec, 2024). Also, it's not uncommon to see former members of the National Assembly (MNAs) or Federal Parliament (MPs) running in municipal elections, taking advantage of their standing to promote their candidacy. Therefore, it seems difficult for newcomers to win an election against an incumbent mayor.

Another peculiarity of Québec municipal politics is the presence of political parties, which are permitted in cities of 5,000 inhabitants or more<sup>1</sup>. These parties vary from city to city and have no official affiliation with provincial or federal parties. The parties also vary in their level of professionalism, which is lower than that of their Québec or Canadian counterparts (Dubois, 2025). They are generally not ideological but rather used as a vehicle for conquering power. While municipal parties have been present in Québec City and Montréal since the 1960s, they are much more recent elsewhere. Although municipal parties seem to be gaining in popularity, they are up against a traditional “apolitical” vision of municipal politics that rejects partisan labels and ideological debates to focus primarily on traditional municipal responsibilities and the efficient management of public funds (see Breux, 2024a; Breux and Mévellec, 2024; Prévost, 2024).

Voter turnout in Québec mayoral elections (Figure 1) has generally been lower than in other levels of government, averaging below 50% in the ten largest cities since 2005 and varying significantly across municipalities (Dubois and Gélneau, 2021; Breux, 2024b). Combining a first-past-the-post system with municipal political parties, Québec's municipal elections offer a compelling case for analyzing local democracy in Canada (Mévellec, 2012).

**Figure 1.** Voter turnout in mayoral elections in Québec's 10 largest cities, 2005-2021



**Note:** Compiled by the authors. The absence of data for Lévis in 2009 and Terrebonne in 2005 is explained by uncontested mayoral elections. Voter turnout (46%) of the 2007 mayoral by-election in Québec City is not shown.

## The campaigns in brief

### Québec City

The election campaign in Québec City was the most exciting of all. It was marked by a high level of competition between the candidates, a first in many election cycles. After 14 years at the head of the Québec's *Capitale Nationale*, Mayor Régis Labeaume<sup>2</sup> announced his departure from political life. For the first time since 2007, he was not part of the electoral race. His party, renamed Équipe Marie-Josée Savard, was put at the service of his designated successor, a two-term city councillor. A total of six parties campaigned, plus two independent mayoral candidates. The two opposition parties at City Hall, Québec 21 and Démocratie Québec were on the starting line. The former made some progress, electing four councillors in the city's suburbs, two more than in the previous election. The second failed to get its leader re-elected as a councillor and was wiped off the electoral map. Transition Québec, a small left-wing environmentalist party, achieved some success in the city centre with the election of its leader as a city councillor for Limoilou, a progressive urban neighbourhood.

The surprise of the election was undeniably the narrow victory of Bruno Marchand, leader of a new party named Québec forte et fière, over Marie-Josée Savard, by a mere 0.4%. Despite his political inexperience, he succeeded in embodying renewal, his personal brand as a sportsman and go-getter being a hallmark of his campaign (Dubois, 2021). The 2021 election in Québec City resulted in the most diverse city council in its history (at least since the creation of the new city in 2002, following municipal mergers), with four parties represented. It was also

the first time in 20 years that a mayor who was also a party leader did not win a majority on the council.<sup>3</sup>

### **Montréal**

The election for mayor of Montréal looked like a rematch between outgoing mayor Valérie Plante (Projet Montréal – Équipe Valérie Plante) and her 2017 opponent Denis Coderre (Ensemble Montréal – Équipe Denis Coderre).<sup>4</sup> Projet Montréal is an ideological party, camped more on the left and structured in a democratic way with local associations and committed activists (Sanger, 2021). This is an exception on the Québec municipal political scene, where most parties are *ad hoc* structures created around the mayor's candidacy, rather than programmatic organizations as at other levels of government (Breux and Mévellec, 2024). Ensemble Montréal more closely fits this definition of an electoral machine serving a candidate rather than promoting ideas or public policies.

According to polling firms, the 2021 Montréal mayoral race appeared relatively close during the official campaign, but Valérie Plante ultimately secured a decisive victory over Denis Coderre, winning 52% of the vote compared to Coderre's 37%. Plante also retained a majority on the city council. Coderre's campaign was overshadowed by two scandals that drew negative media attention: he was photographed texting while driving—an accusation he denied—and he refused to disclose his list of consulting clients. Two other parties were officially in the mayoral race—Balarama Holness's Mouvement Montréal, and Gilbert Thibodeau's Action Montréal—but their impact was minimal, with each receiving 7% and 1% of the vote.

### **Laval**

In Laval, the election was shaped by the legacy of Marc Demers, who had led the city through years of institutional stabilization following the corruption scandals of the previous administration<sup>5</sup>. His departure left a leadership vacuum, with eight candidates claiming the mantle of continuity or change. Stéphane Boyer, representing the incumbent party Mouvement Lavallois, positioned himself as the natural successor to Demers. He won the mayoral election with a comfortable lead (41.5%) ahead of four other parties and three independent candidates. His party also retained its majority on the city council. The 33-year-old mayor, the youngest in Laval's history, has become one of the leading figures of the municipal “new wave” (Teisceira-Lessard, 2021).

### **Gatineau**

The two opposing visions of Québec municipal politics are evident in Gatineau. With the arrival of Action Gatineau in power in 2013, a politicized vision has taken hold in a city traditionally led by independent mayors. In 2021, the election was marked by the departure of outgoing mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin, the party founder. His exit left the race wide open, with several candidates vying to replace him. France Bélisle, a political newcomer, emerged as a strong contender against former councillor Maude Marquis-Bissonnette, Pedneaud-Jobin's successor. Despite her lead in the polls, Marquis-Bissonnette lost to Bélisle who focused her campaign on change and economic development, becoming Gatineau's first female mayor. However, with

a fragmented council and eight of the nineteen councillors grouped under the Action Gatineau banner forming the opposition, she immediately faced the challenge of forming a functional coalition to govern. She ultimately resigned from her position in February 2022. Maude Marquis-Bissonnette was elected with a ten-point lead in June 2024 in a by-election. Like the mayor of Laval, she is also part of the new guard in municipal politics (Teisceira-Lessard, 2021).

### ***Longueuil***

The elections in Longueuil were marked by the landslide victory of Catherine Fournier, a former provincial MP running as the head of the new Coalition Longueuil party. With no incumbent running, the 29-year-old politician won 61% of the vote and her party took 13 of the 15 seats on the city council. However, there were other notable candidates in the race. Josée Latendresse, who lost by 110 votes in the 2017 election, Jean-Marc Léveillé, chairman of the board and CEO of the Longueuil Symphony Orchestra, and Jacques Létourneau, former president of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), Québec's largest union. They received 18.58%, 13.95% and 6.16% of the vote, respectively. Since entering politics, first as a candidate for the Bloc Québécois in 2015, Fournier has always been recognized as a promising young politician (Teisceira-Lessard, 2021).

### ***Sherbrooke***

Sherbrooke's 2021 municipal election featured a competitive three-way race following the decision of incumbent mayor Steve Lussier to seek a second term. Évelyn Beaudin, leader of the left-wing Sherbrooke Citoyen party, benefited from an original positioning in the election race against the outgoing mayor, who came third with 18.66% of the vote, and former Québec minister Luc Fortin, who came second with 39.26%. Beaudin's campaign, emphasizing civic engagement, transparency, and environmental sustainability. At 33-years-old, with 41.08% of the votes, she became the first woman to take the head of the city. Her close victory marked a shift toward a more participatory and activist-oriented governance style, though she faced challenges in implementing her ambitious agenda within a politically diverse council.

### ***Lévis***

In Lévis, Gilles Lehouillier, the incumbent mayor and former MNA, easily secured another term in office, reflecting the city's political stability and support for his administration. His party, Lévis Force 10, dominated the council elections, leaving little room for opposition voices with only one elected councillor of the new party Repensons Lévis. The election results reaffirmed Lehouillier's strong hold over municipal politics in Lévis, where his focus on a tunnel project between Québec City and Lévis and urban infrastructure development resonated with the electorate. For many voters, the outcome signalled a preference for business as usual, favouring continuity over change.

### ***Saguenay***

In the 2021 municipal elections in Saguenay, Julie Dufour, an independent candidate and city councillor, challenged incumbent mayor Josée Néron of the Équipe du

renouveau démocratique as well as former Québec minister Serge Simard. One of six candidates, Dufour insisted on a call for unity and notably promised a tax freeze. Despite Neron's experience, Dufour's message of change and renewal captured the electorate's attention. She secured a decisive victory with 47.4% of the vote, marking a return to a more apolitical vision of municipal governance, distancing the city from municipal political parties.

### ***Trois-Rivières***

In Trois-Rivières, the 2021 municipal elections featured a contest between incumbent mayor Jean Lamarche and Valérie Renaud-Martin, a city councillor seeking the mayoralty. Lamarche, running as an independent, emphasized continuity, economic development and environmental actions in his campaign which led him to his re-election with 61.49% of the vote. With a council comprising both new and returning members, Lamarche faced the task of uniting diverse perspectives to implement his vision for Trois-Rivières.

### ***Terrebonne***

Terrebonne's municipal election was another closely watched affair following years of political turbulence and allegations of corruption under previous administrations. The election saw Mathieu Traversy, a 37-year-old former provincial MNA, emerge as the frontrunner against outgoing mayor Marc-André Plante. Running under the banner of Mouvement Terrebonne, Traversy's campaign put emphasis on a unifying leadership, integrity and the city's reputation. His decisive victory, winning all 16 seats, signalled a desire for both renewal and stability in Terrebonne's governance.

### **The Outcome: the rise of a new municipal political class**

The elections marked a historic advance in gender representation and generational renewal. A record number of women were elected mayor, including in half of the province's largest cities. Throughout all elected mayors under the age of 30, 44.4% were women, the proportion shrinking to 23.4% among those aged 30 and over (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2024). Across Québec, Table 2 shows an increase in the proportion of women elected, particularly among mayors, as well as in the number of people under the age of 30 compared to previous elections.

**Table 2.** Variation in gender and age diversity indicators between the 2017 and 2021 elections

|                                                     | <b>2017<br/>municipal<br/>elections</b> | <b>2021<br/>municipal<br/>elections</b> | <b>Variation</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------|
| Proportion of women elected as municipal councillor | 34,5%                                   | 38,5%                                   | + 4,0%           |
| Proportion of women elected as mayor                | 18,9%                                   | 26,6%                                   | + 7,7%           |
| Proportion of people elected for the first time     | 37,3%                                   | 42,1%                                   | + 4,8%           |

Source: Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation (2022)

Interestingly, while the elections were characterized by renewal, they also attracted seasoned political figures, particularly former members of the *Assemblée nationale du Québec* (MNAs), who saw an opportunity to extend or reinvent their political careers at the municipal level. Of the ten largest cities in Québec, seven saw former provincial or federal politicians run for mayor. While some of these former members of parliament were able to capitalize on their fame and political networks, most of them failed to win the mayoral race. Table 2 presents the previous political experience of major mayoral candidates of the ten largest cities. The renewal of the municipal political scene therefore does not only concern the municipal political class, but also seems to be reflected in voters' preference for new political figures over experienced candidates from other levels of government. At least, this is what we observe in the 10 largest cities.

The municipal level in Québec is traditionally characterized by political stability, particularly due to the longevity of mayors' careers. However, in 2021, three of the six incumbent mayors were defeated in the ten largest cities. In addition, three of the four designated successors/people running under the banner of the outgoing mayor's party (Savard, Boyer, Marquis-Bissonnette, Létourneau) were also defeated. Thus, in the ten largest cities, only four elected candidates (Plante, Boyer, Lehouiller, and Lamarche) represent continuity.

The 2021 municipal elections in Québec marked the emergence of a new political generation, signalling both continuity and rupture with previous trends in local governance. This election cycle saw a remarkable influx of newcomers, many of them younger and politically engaged. They are now shaping the discourse and direction of local politics across the province, especially in the largest cities. This shift not only diversified the profile of municipal leadership but also infused city halls with new policy priorities—particularly around issues like housing, environmental sustainability, active transportation and social inclusion.

### **The aftermath: hard times for local politicians**

While the 2021 municipal elections in Québec ushered in a wave of optimism and political renewal, the months that followed revealed the depth of the structural and political challenges facing local officials, especially those newly elected on platforms of change.

One of the most significant obstacles has been the complex and often strained relationship between municipalities and the provincial government under the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ). Québec has been the scene of an ongoing political realignment which led to the election, in October 2018, of the first government not led by one of the two traditional parties, the Québec Liberal Party (PLQ) or the Parti québécois (PQ), since 1966 (Bélanger and Chassé, 2021; Dubois et al., 2022). This shift was confirmed by the re-election of the CAQ in 2022.

**Table 2.** Political experience of major mayoral candidates, 10 largest cities, 2021

| City                  | Candidate                               | Past Political Experience          | In office               |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Montréal</b>       | Denis Coderre                           | Mayor of Montréal                  | 2013-2017               |
|                       |                                         | MP, Liberal Party of Canada        | 1997-2013               |
|                       | <b>Valérie Plante*</b> <sup>√</sup>     | Mayor of Montréal                  | Since 2017              |
|                       |                                         | City councillor                    | 2013-2017               |
|                       | Balarama Holness                        | None                               | -                       |
| <b>Québec City</b>    | Jean-François Gosselin                  | City councillor                    | Since 2017              |
|                       |                                         | MNA, Action démocratique du Québec | 2007-2008               |
|                       | <b>Bruno Marchand</b> <sup>√</sup>      | None                               | -                       |
|                       | Jean Rousseau                           | City councillor                    | 2017-2021               |
|                       | Marie-Josée Savard                      | City councillor                    | 2017-2021;<br>2009-2013 |
|                       | Jackie Smith                            | None                               | -                       |
| <b>Laval</b>          | <b>Stéphane Boyer</b> <sup>√</sup>      | City councillor                    | 2013-2021               |
|                       | Michel Trottier                         | City councillor                    | 2013-2021               |
|                       | Sophie Trottier                         | None                               | -                       |
| <b>Gatineau</b>       | <b>France Bélisle</b> <sup>√</sup>      | None                               | -                       |
|                       | Jean-François LeBlanc                   | City councillor                    | 2016-2021               |
|                       | Maude M.-Bissonnette                    | City councillor                    | 2017-2021               |
| <b>Longueuil</b>      | <b>Catherine Fournier</b> <sup>√</sup>  | MNA, Parti québécois then Ind.     | 2016-2021               |
|                       | Josée Latendresse                       | City councillor                    | 2016-2017               |
|                       | Jacques Létourneau                      | None                               | -                       |
|                       | Jean-Marc Léveillé                      | None                               | -                       |
| <b>Sherbrooke</b>     | <b>Evelyne Beaudin</b> <sup>√</sup>     | City councillor                    | 2017-2021               |
|                       | Luc Fortin                              | MNA, Parti libéral du Québec       | 2014-2018               |
|                       | Steve Lussier*                          | Mayor of Sherbrooke                | 2017-2021               |
| <b>Lévis</b>          | <b>Gilles Lehouillier*</b> <sup>√</sup> | Mayor of Lévis                     | Since 2013              |
|                       |                                         | MNA, Parti libéral du Québec       | 2008-2012               |
|                       | Elhadji M. Diarra                       | None                               | -                       |
| <b>Saguenay</b>       | <b>Julie Dufour</b> <sup>√</sup>        | City councillor                    | 2013-2021               |
|                       | Josée Neron*                            | Mayor of Saguenay                  | 2017-2021               |
|                       |                                         | City councillor                    | 2013-2017               |
|                       | Serge Simard                            | MNA, Parti libéral du Québec       | 2014-2018;<br>2008-2012 |
|                       |                                         | City councillor                    | 2002-2008               |
| <b>Trois-Rivières</b> | <b>Jean Lamarche*</b> <sup>√</sup>      | Mayor of Trois-Rivières            | Since 2019              |
|                       | Valérie Renaud-Martin                   | City councillor                    | 2017-2021               |
| <b>Terrebonne</b>     | Marc-André Plante*                      | Mayor of Terrebonne                | 2017-2021               |
|                       | <b>Mathieu Traversy</b> <sup>√</sup>    | MNA, Parti québécois               | 2008-2018               |

\* outgoing <sup>√</sup> elected



**Note:** some, however, have political experience outside of elective institutions such as Jacques Létourneau, former president of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), or Balarama Holness as a political activist in Montréal.

Despite rhetorical gestures acknowledging the importance of local governance, the CAQ era has been characterized by a centralized approach to public policy. Many mayors and city councillors, particularly those from the new generation, have expressed frustration with the lack of meaningful dialogue, consultation and financial empowerment. This lack of means and support has been compounded by an increase in expectations for municipal leadership and mounting responsibilities while the resources have not followed.

The social and psychological costs of local political life have also come into sharp relief. Intimidation, harassment, and threats, often amplified through social media, have become disturbingly common, particularly for women and younger municipal politicians. According to a survey conducted by Léger among 1,380 municipal politicians in Québec, 58% said they had experienced verbal abuse (62% among women) and 46% said they had been victims of intimidation or threats (53% among women). Forty-three percent said they had considered resigning (Corriveau, 2024). A toxic political climate and lack of psychological support were cited by politicians who resigned, whose numbers reached an unprecedented level during this mandate. In January 2024, it was estimated that one in ten municipal politicians had left office since 2021 (Rondeau and Léonard, 2024).

The idealism that carried the “new wave” of young politicians into office has, for some, collided with a reality that feels both hostile and exhausting. In reaction to this phenomenon, Andrée Laforest, Minister of Municipal Affairs, introduced the Bill 57 Act to protect elected municipal officers and to facilitate the unhindered exercise of their functions and to amend various legislative provisions concerning municipal affairs (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2024).

Despite these challenges, the new municipal political class has not remained passive. Many have mobilized outside formal institutions, forming informal coalitions, advocacy networks and peer support groups to share knowledge, build capacity and articulate shared demands such as Mères élues, advocating for better conditions for new parents, and the Caucus écologiste municipal, grouping mayors and city councillors around environmental and climate change issues. This grassroots mobilization echoes the origins of many of these officials and reflects a desire to reinvent politics not just through governance but also through collective action.

At the same time, traditional organizations such as the Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ) have also taken up the mantle, amplifying calls for reform and defending municipal autonomy. The 2023 UMQ conference was held with the tag line “The essential local government” (UMQ, 2022), a reminder of the role that municipalities claim for themselves. With one year to go before the 2025 elections, UMQ also held a “Summit on Municipal Democracy” in Québec City to “take note” of the context of “crisis” and “major changes” facing Québec's municipal world (UMQ, 2024).

The convergence of this new political energy with long-standing institutional advocacy could become a powerful force, if it can overcome fragmentation and sustain momentum in the face of mounting pressures.

## Conclusion

This report on the 2021 municipal elections in Québec suggests that the election of younger, more diverse and politically engaged officials disrupted long-standing patterns of incumbency and signalled a shift in the sociopolitical composition of municipal leadership – at least in the largest cities. This wave of renewal, however, must be interpreted with caution. While the electoral results suggested a break with past practices and actors, the post-election period revealed the persistence of structural constraints that continue to limit the autonomy and effectiveness of municipalities in Québec. The main one is the highly centralized nature of relations between the provincial government and municipalities, which remain fundamentally asymmetrical. The political realignment in the National Assembly that took place during the 2018 and 2022 elections does not appear to have altered this dynamic.

Moreover, the challenges encountered by newly elected officials, ranging from limited institutional support and fiscal resources to heightened levels of intimidation and harassment, have exposed the fragility of the municipal political space. These pressures have contributed to early resignations and growing disillusionment. Yet, the resilience and ongoing mobilization of these actors should not be underestimated. While institutional barriers remain challenging, new forms of collective action, both within and beyond formal political institutions, are emerging. These developments suggest that the 2021 elections may have initiated a longer-term process of transformation, the outcomes of which are still unfolding. As such, continued scholarly attention to Québec's municipal politics is not only warranted but essential to understanding the evolving nature of local governance in the province.

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<sup>1</sup> In municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants, candidates can form “teams”. This type of partisan organization is not subject to the same rules as political parties (see Breux and Mévellec, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> First elected in a by-election in 2007, he founded his party Équipe Labeaume for the 2009 election. His party won a majority of seats in 2009, 2013 and 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Mayor Marchand recruited former opponents from other parties to gradually build a majority in his favor at City Hall.

<sup>4</sup> Member of Parliament from 1997 to 2013, Denis Coderre held several positions as federal minister. He resigned as MP in 2013 to run for mayor of Montréal. At the head of his party Équipe Denis Coderre pour Montréal, he won the election with 32.15% of the vote, ahead of Mélanie Joly (26.47%). The latter became a federal Liberal MP and minister in the cabinets of Justin Trudeau and Mark Carney.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Vaillancourt, former mayor of Laval, was at the center of one of Québec's most significant municipal corruption scandals. In 2013, following an extensive investigation by the Commission Charbonneau, he was arrested and charged with gangsterism, fraud, breach of trust, and conspiracy. The inquiry revealed a widespread system of collusion in public contracts, where construction firms paid kickbacks to political figures in exchange for lucrative municipal contracts. In 2016, Vaillancourt pleaded guilty to fraud-related charges and was sentenced to six years in prison.

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