Madam Mayor:
Gender, Montréal and the Election of Valérie Plante

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In the 2017 municipal elections, Valérie Plante surprised many when she defeated incumbent Denis Coderre and became Montréal's first female mayor. Although conventional wisdom suggests that municipal governments will be most open to female candidates, research suggests that election rates are roughly the same at all three levels of government (Tolley 2011), with the most recent data showing that women hold just 18% of all mayoral positions in Canada (Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2015). Plante's election thus provides a backdrop for interrogating questions about gender, political leadership, and municipal politics. The City of Montréal is an important case study given a history of feminist organizing in Québec and the province's distinct trajectory of female inclusion in electoral politics (Tremblay 2010).

In the first part of this chapter, we situate Plante's election in a historical context, highlighting key moments in the city's politics, with a focus on women's political organizing and activism, but also on partisan realignment and shifts in electoral strategy. Next, we present data from a survey of Montréal electors in the lead-up and close of the 2017 campaign that allows us to examine the correlates of support for Plante. Was gender a deciding factor in Plante's victory, or was this a disenchanted electorate turning against a known commodity and choosing the next best option? We look at which voters were most likely to support Plante, how they evaluated her in comparison to her competitors, and what role feminist orientation played in their decisions. We argue that while there are distinctions between Coderre and Plante voters, these are related more to partisan preferences and a desire for change. We do not discern dramatic differences when it comes to gender or views about equality. We conclude by looking at the implications of Plante's election for municipal politics in Montréal and gender politics more broadly. Is Plante a standard-bearer for a new wave of women leaders, or should we be more sanguine about her victory? We argue that while Plante's victory is significant, we should not be too quick to proclaim this as a new frontier in gender equality.

The 2017 Municipal Election

The municipal campaign officially commenced on September 22, 2017. Eight candidates battled for the position of mayors; these included five independents and three associated with municipal political parties.[1] The three party candidates were also the main contenders for mayor: Denis Coderre (Équipe Denis Coderre pour Montréal), Jean Fortier (Coalition Montréal), and Valérie Plante (Projet Montréal). Coderre, the incumbent, had been elected in 2013, securing 32 per cent of the votes; his party won 27 of the council's 65 seats. Prior to serving as mayor, Coderre been a Liberal Member of Parliament, representing the Montreal-area riding of Bourassa for the previous 16 years; he was a well-known political figure. Plante had become leader of Projet Montréal in 2016. She had served as a district councillor since 2013 and was vice-president of City Council while also sitting on Ville-Marie's borough council, but prior the 2017 campaign, she remained relatively unknown outside of the party. Jean Fortier, who in the late 1990s and early 2000s had served as chair of the city's executive committee under the Bourque administration (CBC News 2017), withdrew from the race in October 2017 and endorsed Plante.

Despite early polls favouring the incumbent, Projet Montréal was victorious, with Plante winning more than 51 percent of eligible votes. Coderre finished second with 46 percent of the vote; he subsequently announced his departure from municipal politics. In addition to winning the Montréal mayoralty, Projet Montréal also elected 11 borough mayors (including Plante as the borough mayor of Ville-Marie), 33 city councillors, and 17 borough councillors.

A Two-party Race

Municipal political parties have existed in Quebec since the 1960s, and their influence has grown since municipal mergers in the 2000s (Chiasson and Mévellec 2014). That trend was evident in Montréal's 2017 campaign. Early predictions suggested that the sitting mayor would be returned to power, but in the end the election was a two-party race pitting Équipe Denis Coderre against Projet Montréal. These were the only two parties to run candidates in every riding, a contrast to the 2013 election when four relatively strong candidates—Melanie Joly, Richard Bergeron, Marcel Côté, and Coderre—aspired to the mayor's office. The 2017 campaign appears to have reinforced some of the trends that observed in the 2013 election, namely, increased electoral competitiveness and an enhanced role for political parties (Mévellec 2014). Prior to the 2017 campaign, partisan reorganization and consolidation were evident, and a contrast between Coderre and Plante's parties emerged.

During Coderre's tenure as mayor, elected council and borough representatives began to realign themselves, generally choosing to side with either Coderre or

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[1] The five independent candidates were Tyler Lemco, Philippe Tessier, Fabrice Ntompa Ilunga, Gilbert Thibodeau, and Bernard Gurberg.

Plante. These decisions were largely driven by the perceived popularity of the two leading parties, by the disaggregation of existing parties, such as Vrai changement pour Montréal, and by the hope that realignment might result in a more prestigious position on Coderre's executive team. As a result, twelve elected officials defected to Équipe Coderre. Defectors included the founder of Projet Montréal, Richard Bergeron, who had split from the party as an independent in 2014 and joined the city's executive committee. In 2016, he joined Équipe Coderre. As an opposition party, Projet Montréal had considerably less leverage, but five representatives nonetheless switched to join the cause prior to the election; of these, one was an independent, one was from Coalition Montréal, and three were from Vrai changement pour Montréal. This realignment reinforced a reorganization of partisan identification towards two main parties. This transformation had begun following the 2013 election, which marked the end of Union Montréal and Vision Montréal.

The 2017 campaign also marked the culmination of a period of transition for Projet Montréal. Established in 2001 by Richard Bergeron, a former public servant at the Agence Metropolitaine des Transport, Projet Montréal defined itself as a party that supported public transportation, ecology and sustainable development, local urban development and favouring measures to help families remain in the city (Latendresse and Frohm 2011, 93). The party also worked to distinguish itself from traditional parties by proposing stringent transparency and accountability processes for related to campaign finance (Latendresse and Frohm 2011, 110). First elected as a city councillor in 2005, Bergeron was re-elected in 2009, and the party extended its reach: two Projet Montréal candidates became borough mayors, and 15 other representatives gained council seats. Following the 2013 election, the party became the official opposition and a central actor in Montréal's political life, with 20 representatives on city council, including 2 borough mayors.

In 2014, Bergeron left Projet Montréal. He had foreshadowed this intention after the 2013 election, which was his third mayoral campaign. Bergeron's departure marked a shift from a highly personalized party in which a single leader dominated to a more diffuse policy-focused approach, which was reinforced by the increased number of Projet Montréal representatives at city hall. Projet Montréal morphed from "Bergeron's party" with a fairly tight focus on introducing a streetcar line to a more collective with a wider range of policy proposals. The selection of Plante as leader in 2016 was emblematic of the party's shift. Known inside the party, Plante was nonetheless the underdog. Because she was much less recognizable to voters than her predecessor, Plante's victory reinforced the need to establish an aggressive communication strategy while also allowing the party to present her as an anti-establishment candidate.

Meanwhile, Équipe Coderre fit the more classic mold of a Quebec municipal political party. Traditional municipal political parties tend to be dominated by the leader and its executive, have very few local associations, behave generally like brokerage parties, and see campaign organization as their main function (Breux and Bherer

2012; Mévellec and Tremblay 2013). Although campaign organization and financing remain central to Projet Montréal, this party in at least two ways. First, it is guided by a vision statement on urban governance, which informs its policies both during and between elections.[2] Second, and perhaps more importantly, is its internal organization, which replicates the franchise model adopted by many provincial and federal parties (Carty 2002; Mévellec and Tremblay 2013). Projet Montréal maintains local associations through which party members elect district and borough candidates. The platform is developed through a bi-annual Congress where party members are able to vote on priorities and positions (Projet Montreal 2018). In addition, Projet Montréal has maintained formal and informal alliances with the provincial party, Québec Solidaire, and has connections with several New Democratic Party staffers. Many Projet Montréal members are also deeply in involved in Quebec's rich network of community groups and political action communities. In other words, Projet Montréal is more than a campaign machine. The party is embedded in the city's civic and political life during and between elections, with networks that are both vertical and horizontal.

Although purely speculative, it is likely that Projet Montréal's organization—which provided opportunities for individuals to participate in the party's democratic life—appealed to voters seeking a change. Moreover, the party's networks with other organizations and with the NDP might have helped steer undecided voters towards Projet Montréal. As we detail below, these dynamics may have been more central to the result than any gender-related explanation.

Different Campaigns

At the start of the campaign, a Leger survey commissioned by Projet Montréal showed that 43% of voters supported Coderre, and 29% supported Plante (Le Devoir 2017). Yet, the same survey suggested that about 40% of Montréalers did not know of Projet Montréal or of Valerie Plante. These results demonstrate the two parties' starting points and provide some insights into the strategies they eventually adopted. Projet Montréal and Équipe Denis Coderre pour Montréal both presented extensive platforms that included pledges related to social, economic, environmental, and cultural affairs. The two parties also aligned in their expansive vision of the role of municipal government, something that was reinforced by the recognition of Montréal's metropolitan status, which was a central achievement of the Coderre administration. Enacted in September 2017, bill 121 provided the city with new institutional economic, political, and social powers while simultaneously

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[2] "Projet Montréal propose à la population montréalaise une façon de vivre en ville à échelle humaine, respectueuse de sa diversité ainsi que de l'identité et de la richesse propre à chacun de ses quartiers. Pour ce faire, il met de l'avant une vision urbanistique, sociale et économique innovante, à l'affût des bonnes pratiques, centrée sur le développement durable, la démocratie, la saine gestion et la transparence. Le parti vise une meilleure qualité de vie pour toutes et tous" (Projet Montréal 2018).

requiring the provincial government to adopt a Montréal-specific approach when designing policies (Québec 2017b).

Of course, the parties differed in several ways as well. Équipe Coderre's platform was characteristic of an incumbent. It reported on the administration's achievements and urged continuity. Coderre took credit for addressing several of Montréal's longstanding ailments, including corruption and crumbling infrastructure, and for improving the city's profile, but nonetheless suggested that the work was not complete. His platform included several promises related to taxation, sustainable development, youth engagement, and municipal governance (Labbé 2017; Normandin 2017). Meanwhile, Projet Montréal worked to present Plante as a non-traditional politician and the party as an alternative to Coderre's style of governance. Its platform focused on public transportation, construction management, equitable taxation, affordable housing and city planning (Projet Montréal 2017).

Both parties also presented gender-specific proposals, but these proposals did not attract much attention during the campaign. Coderre pledged to have a gender-balanced executive committee and to create more opportunities for female leadership as well as entrepreneurship. Plante promised gender balance on the executive committee as well within the municipal civil service while also pledging to fight street harassment and increase the number of female firefighters (Santerre and Normandin 2017). Projet Montréal's proposal for an extension of the Montréal subway—the "pink line"—seemed at first blush to be a gendered appeal, but it was mostly framed as an illustration of the core values of the party and especially its commitment to public transit.

From the start of the campaign, strategic differences were amplified by the fact that Projet Montréal worked to control the media agenda and to reinforce its key themes. The first official publicity materials included a poster of Plante with the slogan "L'homme de la situation" (Champagne 2017). In an interview, Plante argued that this was an attempt to highlight her bold and irreverent character, but also a way to get ahead of the gender issue at the very beginning of the campaign (Grégoire and Bourque 2017). The party had a very active communication strategy, including daily announcements and press releases, and it worked to demonstrate Coderre's diminishing support as the election unfolded (Schué 2017).

In contrast, Coderre led a much more muted campaign and had trouble keeping up with Projet Montréal's communication strategy. The incumbent also had to deal with growing discontent toward some of his policies, including the costs and congestion associated with the organization of an electric car race in the summer of 2017, the city's near constant construction, and a proposed ban on pitbull dogs. Post-mortem analyses point to weaknesses in the campaign organization both in terms of centralization and lack of prior preparation (Ducas 2017), as well as the mayor's perceived lack of dynamism (Groguhé 2018).

Beyond the initial "L'homme de la situation" slogan and the allusion to gender in the proposal for a pink metro station, Plante and Projet Montréal did not explicitly make her gender a campaign theme. Even so, several initiatives in the lead-up to the 2017 election had put gender on the agenda. These include the 2016 mobilization of the group "Femmes, politique, démocratie (FPD)" for gender balance in Quebec politics (Groupe femmes 2014), the Quebec government's new gender equality strategy (Québec 2017a), several debates and a parliamentary commission on women in provincial politics, and the successful mobilization in favour of parental leaves for municipal elected officials between 2012 and 2017. These were reinforced by the work done by several organizations, including FPD and l'Union des municipalités du Québec, to inform, mobilize and train women interested in running for office, which Mévellec and Tremblay (2016) report, contributed positively to women's decision to run for municipal office. Although Plante was on the board of FPD (Grégoire and Bourque 2017), it is unclear how directly related these women-centred initiatives were to her eventual electoral success.

Nonetheless, in the news coverage that followed Plante's victory, one frame centred on Plante as the first female mayor of the Montreal. Plante mentioned this—and several other things—in her victory speech, and but the key point trumpeted in most headlines was that a female mayor had been elected. The focus on Plante's gender is consistent with research on gendered mediation, which suggests that often focus on the novelty of a "political first" when reporting on atypical politicians (Goodyear-Grant 2013; Tolley 2016; Trimble 2017). It is also perhaps not surprising in a municipal context where the bulk of mayors remain male (Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2015). How central was gender to Plante's victory? Did Plante's voters differ significantly from Coderre's and, if so, in what ways? In the next section, we present a portrait of Plante's supporters and argue that while there were important differences between those who voted for her and those who did not, gender does not emerge as a central distinguishing feature.

Voting for Valérie

These data are drawn from the Canadian Municipal Election Study's (CMES) post-election survey of Montreal municipal electors. We concentrate on those respondents who report they voted in the election (n=807). Plante was the preferred mayoral candidate among 59 percent of respondents (about 8 points higher than her share of the actual vote), while 35 percent say they preferred Coderre. These survey responses suggest a stronger preference for Plante, and a more negative take on Coderre, a result that is not unexpected in post-electoral surveys. Six percent were not sure who they voted for, or favoured a candidate other than one of the two frontrunners. Plante was the favourite of both male and female respondents, and male voters actually formed a very slim majority of her overall base of supporters. On the surface then, it does not appear that Plante was hoisted to victory on the shoulders of women.

Table 1. Preferred Mayoral Candidate, by respondent sex

	Male		Female		Total	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Coderre	136	34.7	131	34.8	269	34.8
Plante	234	59.7	220	58.5	455	58.9
Other	22	5.6	25	6.6	48	6.2

Source: CMES post-election survey

Most respondents (84.9%) have lived in Montreal for 10 years or more, and there is almost no difference between Plante and Coderre supporters in this regard, although there is a clear division between those who supported one of the main contenders versus those who supported an alternate mayoral candidate. For example, while more than 85% of supporters for both Coderre and Plante have lived in the city for more than 10 years, just 59.3% of supporters for other mayoral candidates said the same. Coderre voters are slightly more likely than Plante voters to own their primary residence (63.0% compared to 60.2%), a secondary rental property (19.8% compared to 17.6%), a vacation property (9.0% compared to 10.0%) and additional land or business properties (7.9% compared to 4.8%). This is consistent with responses to the income question, shown in Table 2, which indicate that Coderre drew somewhat more support from those in the higher income categories than was the case for Plante.

Table 2. Support for Each Candidate, by income

	Coderre (%)	Plante (%)	Other (%)	Total
Less than $25,000	9.7	9.0	14.6	9.6
$25,000 - $49,999	21.2	22.9	12.5	21.6
$50,000 - $74,999	16.0	25.3	14.6	21.4
$75,000 - $99,999	19.3	15.2	4.6	16.6
$100,000 - $124,999	8.9	7.0	10.4	7.9
$125,000 - $149,000	3.7	4.2	6.3	4.2
$150,000 - $174,999	3.7	3.5	2.1	3.5
$175,000 - $199,999	4.8	2.9	4.2	3.6
$200,00 or more	4.5	2.9	0	3.2
Did not respond	8.2	7.3	20.8	8.4

Source: CMES post-election survey

As is shown in Table 3, Plante supporters skewed somewhat younger, with Projet Montréal drawing nearly 70% of its support from voters between the ages of 35 and

64, compared to 56% of Coderre's supporters. Coderre, meanwhile, had stronger support among senior citizens with 32% of his supporters falling into this age bracket, compared to 18.9% of Plante's. Respondents without children overwhelmingly supported Plante. Of those without children, 62.8% said they preferred Plante. Put another way, 41.5% of Plante supporters have no children, compared to 34.2% of Coderre supporters.

Table 3. Support for Each Candidate, by age

	Coderre (%)	Plante (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
18-24 years	2.0	1.6	0	1.6
25-34 years	10.5	9.8	15.9	10.4
35-44 years	14.0	20.7	18.2	18.2
45-54 years	17.5	20.7	34.1	20.4
55-64 years	24.1	28.3	15.9	26.1
65-74 years	21.8	16.2	13.6	18.0
75 years and older	10.1	2.7	2.3	5.3

Source: CMES post-election survey

There was almost no difference in support for Coderre or Plante based on respondents' level of education (54.3% of Plante supporters have bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 56.9% of Coderre supporters). Plante voters are more likely to be born in Canada (84.2% of her supporters compared to 75.8% of Coderre's. Consistent with this, Plante had stronger support among respondents who listed French as a mother tongue (79.3% of her supporters, compared to 74.0% of Coderre's), while Coderre had stronger support among allophones (16.0% of his supporters, compared to 11.0%) of Plante's.

There is also some evidence that voters from the suburban areas tended to support Coderre, while those in the city's inner core preferred Plante. This is highlighted in Table 4. Plante drew significant support from Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie, Le Sud-Ouest, and Villeray—Saint Michel—Parc-Extension, while Coderre's strength was in Saint-Laurent, Verdun, and Pierrefounds-Roxboro.

The CMES's post-electoral survey provides additional insights into the type of voter who supported Plante compared to that who supported Coderre. The bulk of Coderre supporters identified as Liberals federally (56.5%) and provincially (49.8%). Plante's supporters were more evenly distributed among political parties, with 25.1% identifying federal as New Democrats and 24.6% identifying federally as Liberals. One-quarter of her supporters identified with Québec solidaire provincially, compared to 25.1% for the Parti québecois and 20.9% for the provincial Liberals. As Table 5 shows, most respondents pegged Coderre as a

Liberal, both federally and provincially, but there was much more uncertainty about Plante's partisan allegiances. Federally, just over one-quarter (28.1%) associated her with the NDP, but 15.8% did not think she had a strong association with any federal party. There were similar results provincially, with 28.8% saying she was most closely associated with Québec solidaire, but 13.7% saying they did not associate Plante with any provincial party.

Table 4. Preferred Mayoral Candidate, by borough

Respondents' Borough	Voted for Coderre (%)	Voted for Plante (%)	Voted for Another Mayoral Candidate (%)
Ahuntsic—Cartierville	32.7	63.6	3.6
Anjou	47.8	52.2	0
Côte-des-Neiges—Notre Dame-de-Grâce	38.5	61.5	0
Lachine	50.0	50.0	0
LaSalle	42.9	57.1	0
Le-Plateau-Mont-Royal	27.5	70.6	2.0
Le Sud-Ouest	30.3	69.7	0
L'Île-Bizard–Sainte-Geneviève	45.5	54.6	0
Mercier-Hochelaga—Maisonneuve	32.1	64.2	3.7
Montréal-Nord	40.6	50.0	9.4
Outremont	35.7	57.1	7.1
Pierrefounds-Roxboro	52.6	47.4	0
Rivière-des-Prairies—Pointe - aux-Trembles	41.0	51.3	7.7
Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie	24.1	74.7	1.3
Saint-Laurent	67.9	28.6	3.6
Saint-Léonard	45.0	50.0	5.0
Verdun	52.6	47.4	0
Ville-Marie	31.8	61.4	6.8
Villeray—Saint Michel—Parc-Extension	31.8	65.9	2.3
Don't know borough	5.1	47.5	47.5
Total	34.8	58.9	6.2

Source: CMES post-election survey

Respondents who said they did not know which provincial and federal parties with which each candidate was most associated also reveal the ambiguity surrounding

Plante's partisan allegiances. Although only about one-tenth of respondents said they did not know with which party Coderre was most associated, more than one-quarter could not hazard a guess for Plante. This uncertainty might be a function of respondents' more limited knowledge about non-incumbent candidates, but given that these results are drawn from a post-electoral survey—by which time Plante had been elected and was indeed the sitting mayor—they may also be indicative of her more fluid partisan identity. This fluidity potentially appealed to voters who were tired of Coderre's reign and of his more traditional style of politics.

Table 5. Perceptions of Candidates' Partisan Affiliations

	Coderre (% respondents)	Plante (% respondents)
Federally		
Liberal	75.2	5.0
Conservative	4.5	3.6
NDP	0.64	28.1
Bloc	2.0	9.5
Green	0.5	9.3
Other	0.9	2.0
None	7.0	15.8
Don't know	9.3	26.8
Provincially		
Liberal	70.0	5.0
PQ	2.9	14.0
CAQ	4.3	8.1
QS	0.5	28.8
None	8.8	13.7
Don't know	12.3	27.7

Source: CMES post-election survey

On municipal issues, there were in fact few differences between Coderre and Plante voters. Only on economic development did any significant difference emerge, with 94.8% of Coderre supporters saying this was very important, compared to 88.6% of Plante supporters. This suggests that the outcome of the election was driving by something other than value differences.

A survey question on political interest shows Plante voters to be more interested in municipal politics than Coderre supporters, and a battery of political knowledge items suggests that while Plante and Coderre supporters are all generally politically knowledgeable, Plante voters might have slightly more familiarity with municipal affairs. For example, most respondents could correctly name Quebec's premier (96.5%) and the city's previous mayor (90.6%), and while fewer knew the name of

the federal finance minister (67.7% answered correctly), but there was almost no difference between Coderre and Plante supporters in this regard. Only 12.1% of respondents could correctly identify the number of city councilors, and while Plante's supporters had a slight edge, it is but not by much, with 13.0% of her supporters responding correctly compared to 11.2% of Coderre's supporters. However, nearly half of all respondents (46.5%) did not even proffer a guess. It is in this "don't know" camp that a larger split emerges: 54.5% of Coderre's supporters said they do not know how many councilors there are in Montreal, compared to 39.6% of Plante's. This might be a reflection of a deeper level of municipal knowledge among Plante supporters, which has potentially been fostered by the party's local associations and the educative role that they play, or by their media preferences. Coderre voters were more likely to turn to television news for election information, with 52% preferring such sources, compared to 38.8% of Plante voters. Plante voters had a stronger preference for newspapers than Coderre supporters, but only by a slight margin (22.4% compared to 19.1%).

Although we might expect some differences between Coderre and Plante supporters when it comes to feelings toward certain social groups, the survey revealed no such distinctions. Asked about their feelings toward feminists, respondents gave a mean value of 68.8 on a scale ranging from 0-100, and there was no statistically significant difference between Coderre and Plante supporters. We see a similar lack of distinction with respect to feelings toward immigrants (68.7), racialized minorities (69.1) LGBTQ people (70.8), Indigenous peoples (72.3), and Caucasians (80.0); Coderre and Plante voters also uniformly revealed negative attitudes toward Muslims (54.9).

That said, there was a distinction between Coderre and Plante supporters when asked whether city council should reflect the gender composition of the population. Just about 85% of Plante supporters agreed with this, compared to 75% of Coderre supporters, and there was a nearly 7-point gap between Coderre and Plante supporters who disagreed. There was a slightly narrower gap when respondents were asked whether city council should reflect the racial composition of the population. The results are shown in Table 6. They are consistent with the earlier suggestion that while Plante's victory was perhaps not a result of gendered voting patterns, the context in which she emerged was one in which there was increased support for women in politics and a sense that elected bodies should include women's voices.

Table 6. City Council Should Reflect Demographic Composition of Population

	Should Reflect Gender Composition			Should Reflect Racial Composition		
	Coderre supporters (%)	Plante supporters (%)	Total (%)	Coderre supporters (%)	Plante supporters (%)	Total (%)
Strongly agree	27.7	43.0	35.9	21.9	28.0	24.5
Somewhat agree	47.5	41.5	43.6	45.7	45.2	45.0
Somewhat disagree	14.0	8.3	10.7	19.8	17.2	18.6
Strongly disagree	6.5	5.4	5.9	7.6	7.4	7.8
Don't know	4.3	1.7	3.9	5.0	2.2	4.2

Source: CMES post-election survey

Implications

The election of Montréal's first woman mayor was historic, but several contextual factors are important to consider when thinking about how to frame her victory. First, Coderre was a long-time politician whom the population had perhaps grown tired of. Second, Projet Montréal emerged as a different type of party that cultivated local engagement, internal democracy, and participation that extended beyond the election campaign. Projet Montréal supporters had an opportunity to participate in the party between campaigns, and this may have enabled its ascent to victory in 2017. Third, although we do not think Plante's won *because* she is a woman, she did come to prominence at a time when there was greater support for gender equality and a push to involve more women in politics. These institutional developments no doubt helped to pave the way for a female mayor to succeed.

Future research should look closely at the conditions under which women mayors emerge. Understanding these conditions is important in a context where only 20% of mayors are women. Certainly, there are prominent examples of strong women mayors—Barbara Hall in Toronto, Hazel McCallion in Mississauga, Charlotte Whitton and Marion Dewar in Ottawa, Elsie Wayne in Fredericton, Elisapee Sheutiapik in Iqaluit—but by and large, Canadian mayors are men. The election of Valérie Plante should not lull us into thinking that gender equality has been achieved in local politics.

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