

feedback effects will not be short of work in the coming years. *Take a Number's* helpful first contributions to this research agenda set the stage for this exciting and essential new area of Canadian political science and public administration scholarship.

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Electing a Mega-Mayor: Toronto 2014

R. Michael McGregor, Aaron A. Moore and Laura B. Stephenson, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021, pp. 208.

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Eleven years ago in this journal, Zack Taylor and Gabriel Eidelman lamented that "scholarship on the institutions, processes, practices and impacts of Canadian urban politics is anaemic" (2010: 961), identifying four major approaches demanding further attention: institutions, regional governance, social-political governance and local-global studies. Today, their thoughtful critique has been rendered largely (and thankfully) outmoded, a development perhaps best represented by two pioneering book series: *Innovation, Creativity, and Governance in Canadian City-Regions*, published by University of Toronto Press; and *Fields of Governance*, published by McGill-Queen's University Press. Even these titles reflect the advances made in our study of city-regions, urban governance and Canadian cities' positions in a global economy. During this maturation, however, it seems that institutional studies—those concerned with municipalities, rather than the urban—have been left comparatively underdeveloped. To be sure, a raft of exploratory articles and books on the subject have pushed the subject along, including Jack Lucas's and R. Michael McGregor's (2021) recent edited collection *Big City Elections in Canada*, but the stuff and substance of municipal politics has proven consistently abstruse due to, among other complicating factors, the (general) absence of political parties (see Breux and Couture, 2018) and a paucity of both electoral and voter-level data (see Couture et al., 2014).

Electing a Mega-Mayor sets itself the task of correcting this lacuna. Somehow, it is the first book-length study of a Canadian municipal election in over 40 years. It is animated by a pressing sense of making up for lost time and thus establishes an impressive range of goals: not only to empirically explain why voters in 2014 embraced John Tory over one-time frontrunners Olivia Chow and the Ford brothers (chapters 2 and 3) but also to elucidate the disparate coalition of "Ford Nation" (chapter 5), to better understand how voters perceive local governments (chapter 4) and to locate the insights that a party-less electoral environment may yield for political behaviour studies. The authors' central resource is their Toronto Election Study (TES), an ambitious rolling panel survey from the 2014 campaign period (complemented by follow-up

surveys both immediately after the election and in 2016). The TES is itself unprecedented, and the authors should first be commended for such a substantive contribution to the data-starved world of municipal studies.

Given its ambitious scope, the book is unsurprisingly more successful in achieving some of its goals than others. An unimpeachable success is the Ford Nation chapter, which substantiates the common narrative that Rob Ford's 2010 mayoral campaign gave sudden voice and legitimacy to a loose constellation of Toronto's most disaffected and, at the same time, offers useful cautionary nuance in characterizing both the motivations and fidelity of this coalition. Likewise, the book confirms, with novel data-driven rigour, much of what we already suspected about municipal voters in Canada: they are ill-informed about the powers and responsibilities of municipalities; and in the absence of political parties, they overwhelmingly claim to prioritize policy over personality in candidates but often fail to live up to this claim. One of the book's most interesting findings is that despite being generally well informed of candidates' leanings and insistent that such things are important to them, voters nevertheless regularly prefer—and vote for—less ideologically amenable candidates, sometimes preferring those with radically opposed policy positions.

Where the book is less successful is in those areas where the contrast between a typical municipal election and the bizarre 2014 Toronto election cannot be escaped. This is not, it should be said, the fault of the authors: Who could have anticipated a crack video, a trip to rehab, a “pseudo-incumbent” (5) or for the remarkably popular Chow campaign to crater? Torontonians certainly paid attention: turnout was a record 54.67 per cent, more than 13 per cent higher than in 2018. This raises important questions of how generalizable TES data should be assumed to be. Did the forces bringing Torontonians to the polls in record numbers also distort their beliefs about municipal government or their knowledge of and preferences toward candidates? In at least some ways, the answer would seem to be yes (for instance, all movement in the polls occurred before the campaign period, suggesting an unusually attentive electorate).

These concerns are acknowledged by the authors but are too sanguinely dismissed. As one example, the partisan stripes of leading candidates—a New Democratic Party Opposition critic, a former Progressive Conservative leader and radio host, and the son of a Progressive Conservative MPP (and brother of Rob Ford)—were remarkably clear, but the authors nevertheless argue for these candidates being roughly nonpartisan in the eyes of voters (13) so as to make a broader case for generalizability. Elsewhere, they suggest that the 2014 election's outlier status makes it a sort of “most likely” case for theory testing, an interesting reconciliatory effort that readers may find either compelling, not entirely persuasive, or (as with this reader) both at once. In any case, by pursuing two orthogonal goals—better understanding the thousands of municipal electoral environments across the country, on the one hand, and the single most bizarre election of our lifetimes, on the other—the book occasionally struggles to maintain simultaneous traction on both fronts.

But this is a quibble common to any case study and one already being resolved as further studies come to fruition and allow for comparative development. *Electing a Mega-Mayor* is an ambitious and laudable contribution toward better understanding the politics of Canadian municipalities and the municipal voter. As a text, it is especially well suited for high-level undergraduate or graduate seminars: at a concise 145 pages of analysis, with a range of questions to be considered and an appropriate soupçon of unavoidable salaciousness, it offers a long-needed substantive basis for discussion of municipal elections within urban politics courses. Particularly when coupled with *Big City Elections in Canada*, it offers compelling proof that the same factors that have long rendered Canadian municipal politics a black box—relative public disinterest and an absence of parties—can, with the right dataset and conceptual approach, offer generative insights to electoral and political behaviour studies.

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Response to James Ankers' review of *Electing a Mega-Mayor: Toronto 2014*

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James Ankers has provided both some kind words and some thoughtful critique of our recent work, *Electing a Mega-Mayor: Toronto 2014*. This journal has graciously offered us the opportunity to engage with this review, and we are happy to take this chance to discuss both this particular work and the field of Canadian local political behaviour more generally.

After noting that the book makes positive contributions to topics specific to Toronto, as well as to the field more broadly, Ankers expresses some concern about the generalizability of some of the book's findings. Much of the book is devoted to the specifics of the Toronto election in 2014, but it does indeed attempt to generalize at points, including when making statements about elector orientations toward local politics. We understand Ankers' concern. The 2014 mayoral election was very atypical when compared either to other Toronto elections or to mayoral races elsewhere in the country. The exceptionally high-profile nature of the election makes it a challenging case with which to generalize to other places and times. However, although we agree that generalizing from any election has its challenges, regardless of the level of government, we do think that Toronto 2014 provides some important lessons for municipal political behaviour elsewhere in the country. Certainly, one can always go further to convince the reader of important points such as this, and Ankers' doubts in this respect may mirror those of some other readers as well. To those who share this concern about our claims of generalizability, then, we wish to offer two responses.

First, we agree that the unique nature of this particular contest means that the election is not at all representative of municipal elections. Cases need not be typical, however, to make generalizations. In this instance, the high-profile nature of the candidates and the race, which no doubt contributed to the record high level of turnout, actually make this a good case to draw directional conclusions about other cases, where races are lower in profile and turnout. If, for example, Torontonians in 2014 were not as interested in local politics as they were in politics at the provincial and/or federal level, or if residents of the largest city in the country (both in terms of population and budget) feel that municipalities have relatively little impact upon their lives, we expect that these findings will travel well to smaller cities. Though not all of the lessons from this election are applicable to elsewhere, due to the "extreme" nature of this case, we are nevertheless confident in making some generalizations.

Second, Toronto 2014 is hardly unique in its uniqueness. There is an astonishing amount of variation in Canadian local elections. This can be both a blessing (in that there are an immense