

NOW WHAT? A POST-ELECTION ROUNDUP: THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

FEDERATION OF ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES | NOVEMBER 12, 2026

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LOCAL MATTERS



THERE WERE MORE THAN 1000 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACROSS CANADA IN 2026, INCLUDING 417 IN ONTARIO

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WHAT HAPPENED?

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WHAT HAPPENED?

AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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DR. KATE GRAHAM

- Leads & teaches in the Governance, Leadership & Ethics (GLE) Program at Huron University +
- Teaches in the Local Government Program at Western University
- 10-years experience as local public servant; 7 years advising local governents
- Co-Founder of Local Matters
- 4x book author; 2x podcast host

TELL US ABOUT YOU

- Who are you?
- In 5 words or less: how did the municipal election turn out in your community? 🙂

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PART I: NOW WHAT? A POST-ELECTION ROUNDUP

- Today

PART II: LET'S DIG IN TO YOUR CURIOSITIES

- February 9, 2027 @ 1-2pm
- What questions do library leaders have about local governance today and local decision making?

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TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- The post-election landscape
- The changing balance of power
- Building relationships with new councils
- Libraries as strategic community partners
- The future of local democracy



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2026 Municipal Elections

- New Brunswick (May 11)
- British Columbia (October 17)
- City of Yellowknife, NWT (October 19)
- **Ontario (October 26)**
- Manitoba (October 28)
- Prince Edward Island (November 2)
- Saskatchewan, rural (November 9)

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Ontario Municipal Elections

- 414 elections
- 2800 council seats directly elected
- 6670 candidates
- 36% turnout (33% in 2022)

Source: Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 2026 Municipal Elections Results

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2026 in Context

	2026	2022	2018
Candidates acclaimed	**400**	**548**	**477**
Female candidates acclaimed	123	163	147
HOCs acclaimed	**104**	**139**	**120**
Female HOCs acclaimed	30	37	27
Full councils acclaimed	**19**	**32**	**26**

Source: Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 2026 Municipal Elections Results



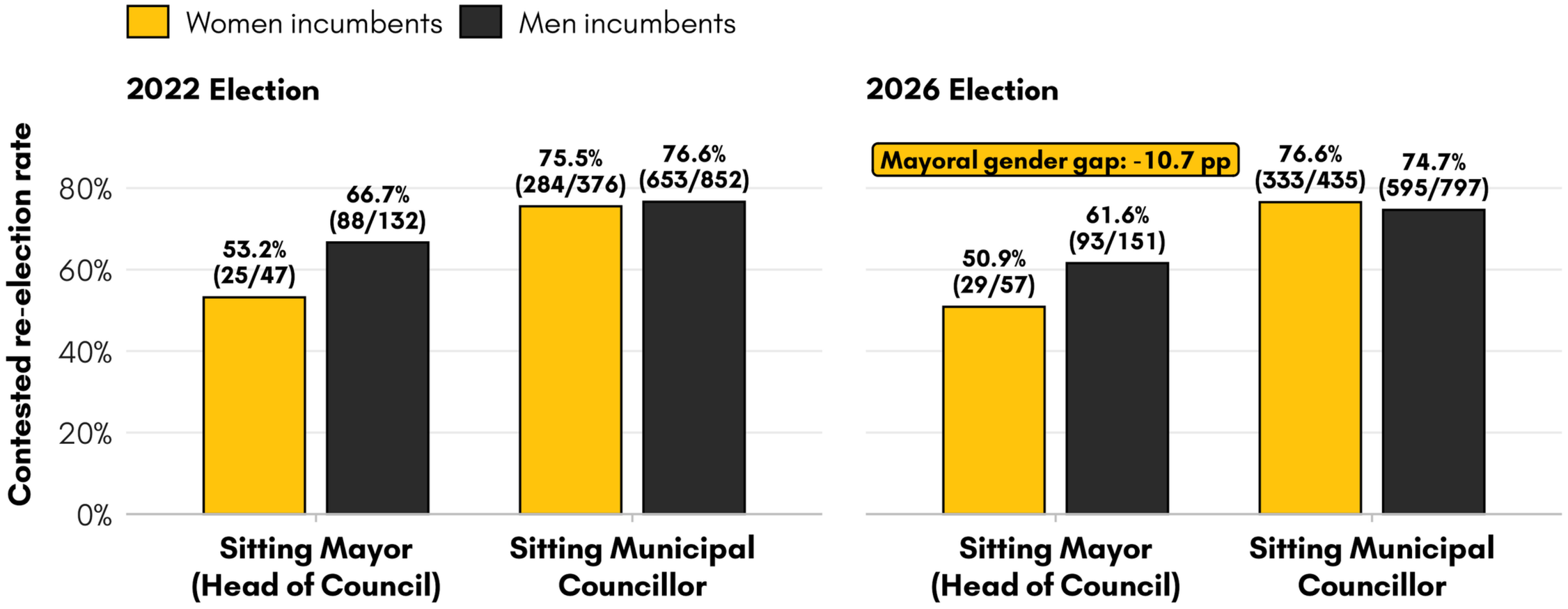
2026 in Context: Gender

	2026	2022	2018
Total number of candidates	6,663	6,308	6,658
Total female candidates	2,103	1,931	1,808
% female candidates	**32%**	**31%**	**27%**

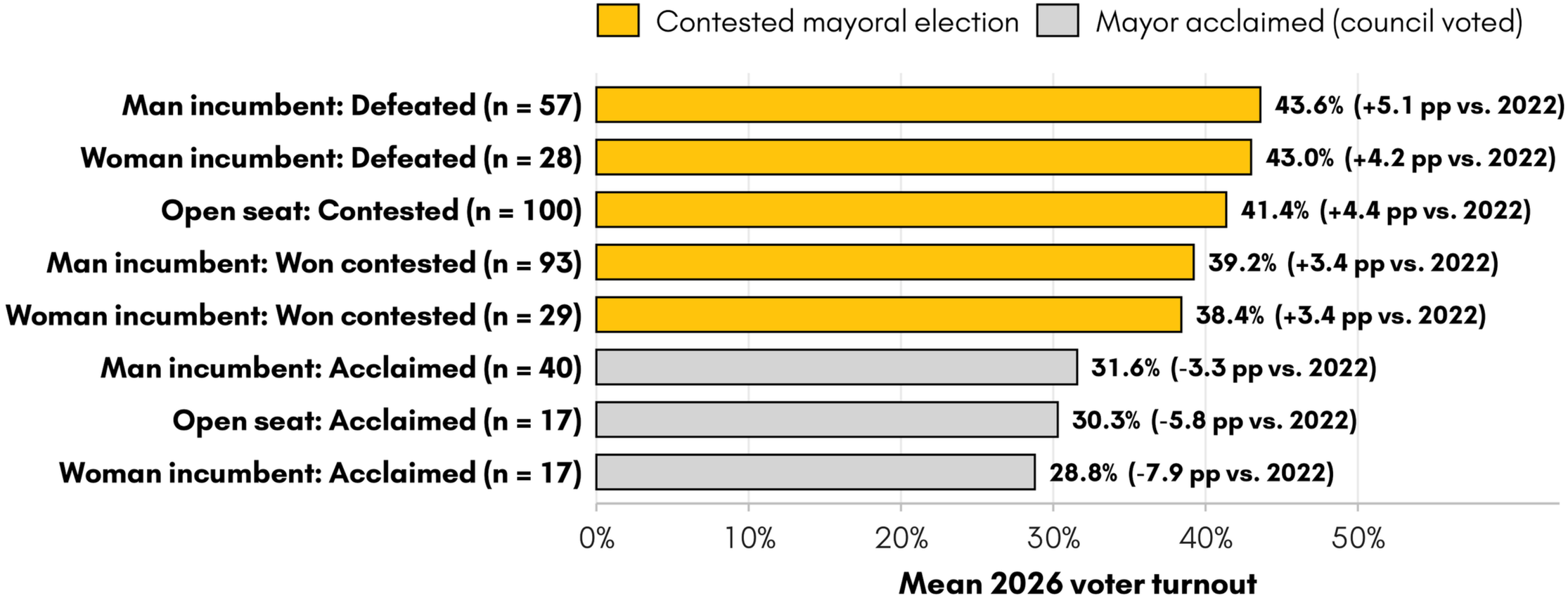
Source: Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 2026 Municipal Elections Results

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Contested incumbent re-election rates by office and gender across Ontario municipalities (excludes acclamations)

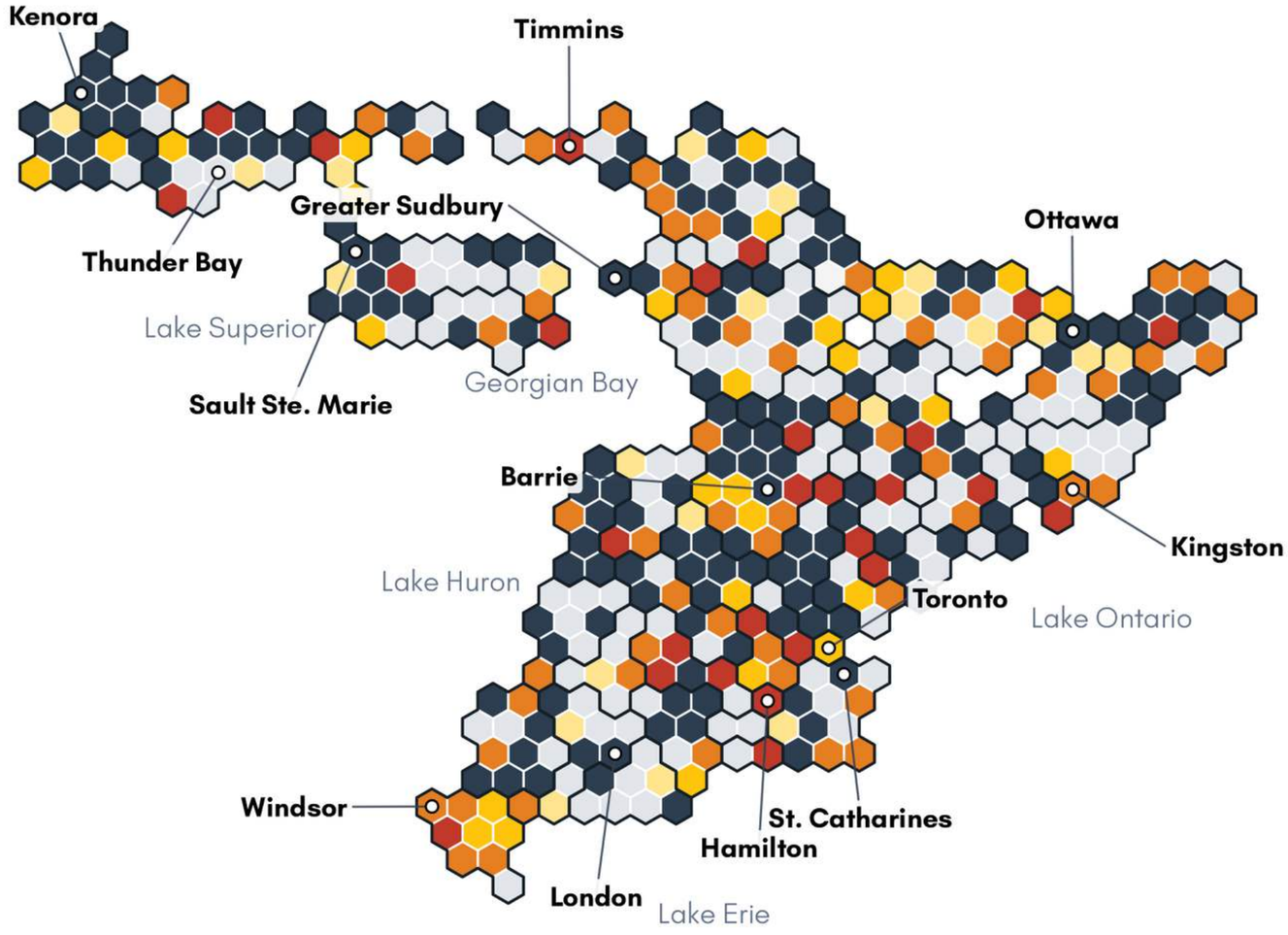


Mean 2026 municipal voter turnout and percentage-point change vs. 2022 across reporting Ontario municipalities



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Each hexagon = 1 Ontario municipality (413 of 414 single-, lower-, and separated-tier heads of council decided)

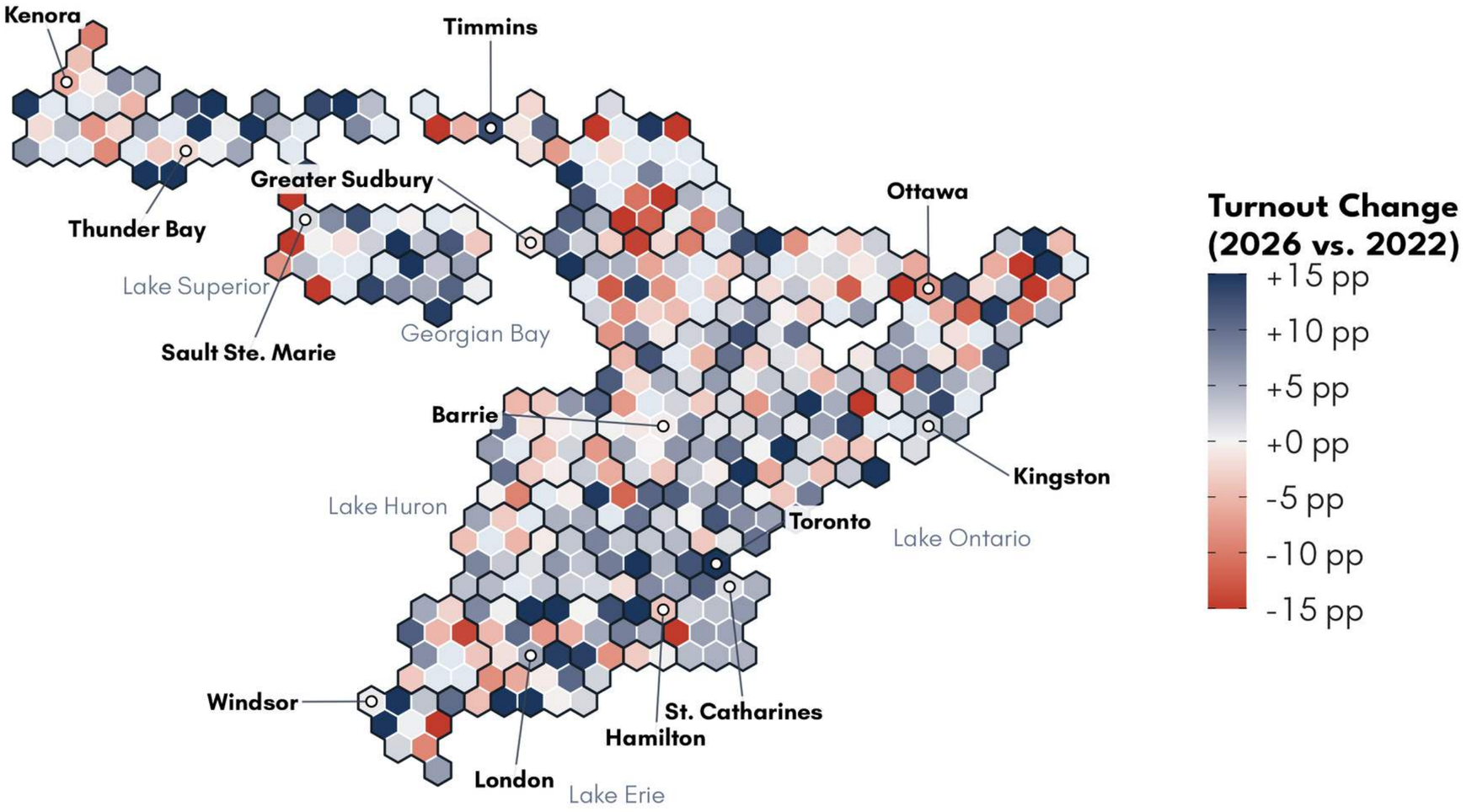


2026 Mayoral Outcome

- Woman mayor: Won contested (n = 29)
- Woman mayor: Acclaimed (n = 22)
- Woman mayor: Defeated (n = 28)
- Man mayor: Re-elected / acclaimed (n = 155)
- Man mayor: Defeated (n = 58)
- Open seat (no sitting mayor) (n = 121)
- Pending official return (n = 1)

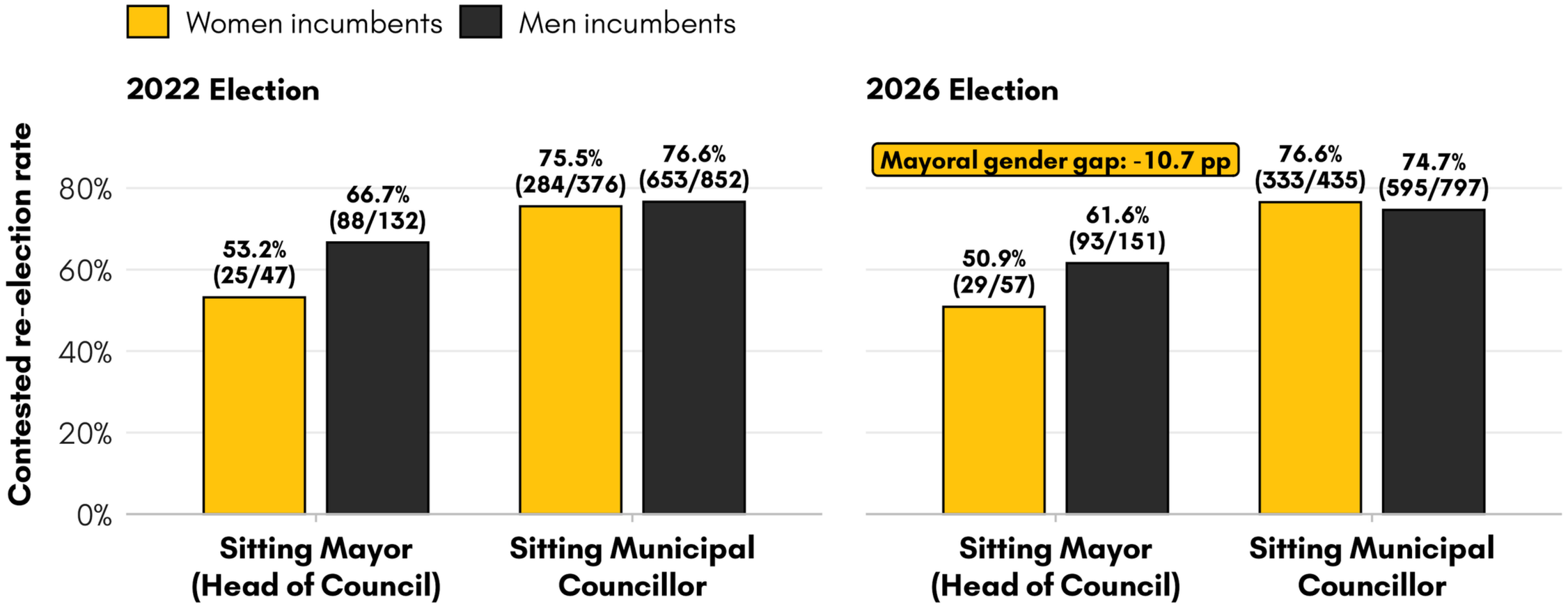
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Turnout rose in 62.4% of paired municipalities (n = 362; +2.5 pp unweighted, +4.9 pp weighted)



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Contested incumbent re-election rates by office and gender across Ontario municipalities (excludes acclamations)





TODAY'S DISCUSSION

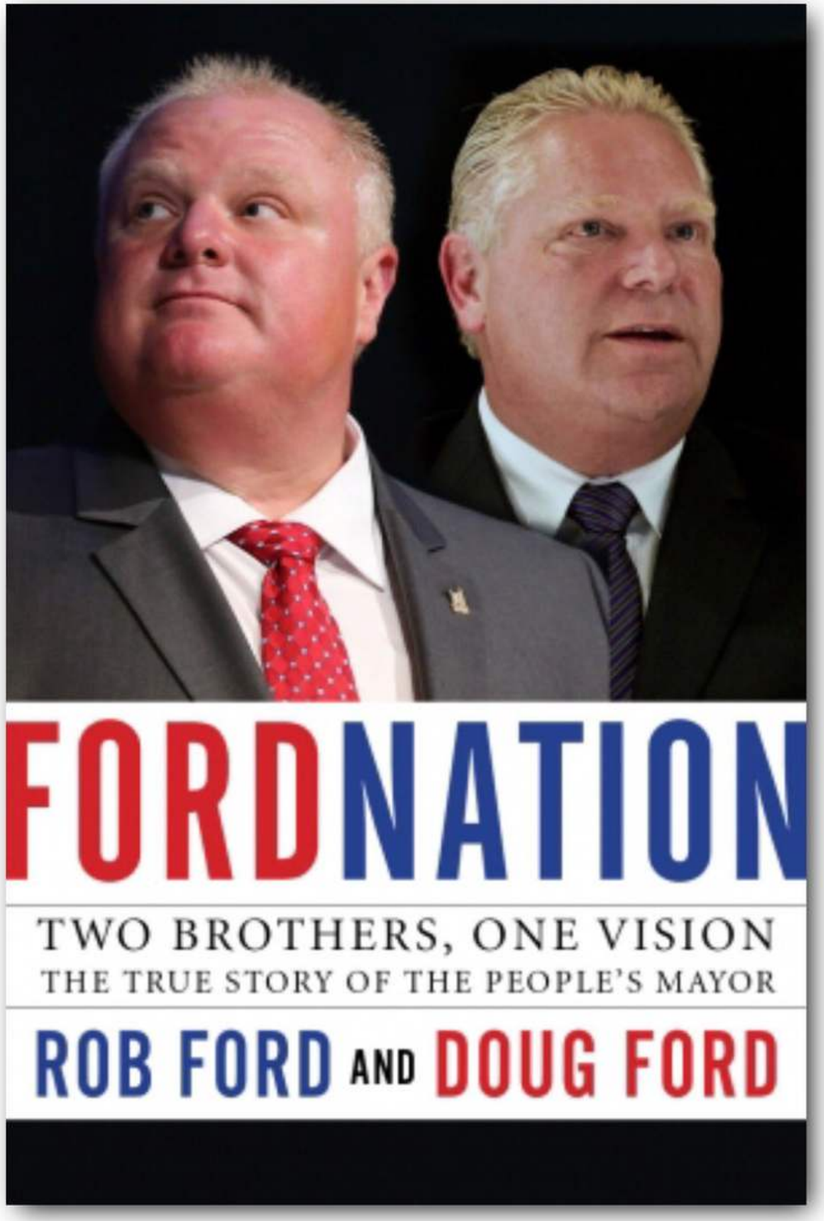
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WHEN WE THINK ABOUT MAYORS, WE THINK ...

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2012 GOLDEN GLOBE WINNER
KELSEY GRAMMER
BEST PERFORMANCE BY
AN ACTOR IN A TELEVISION SERIES - DRAMA
BOSS

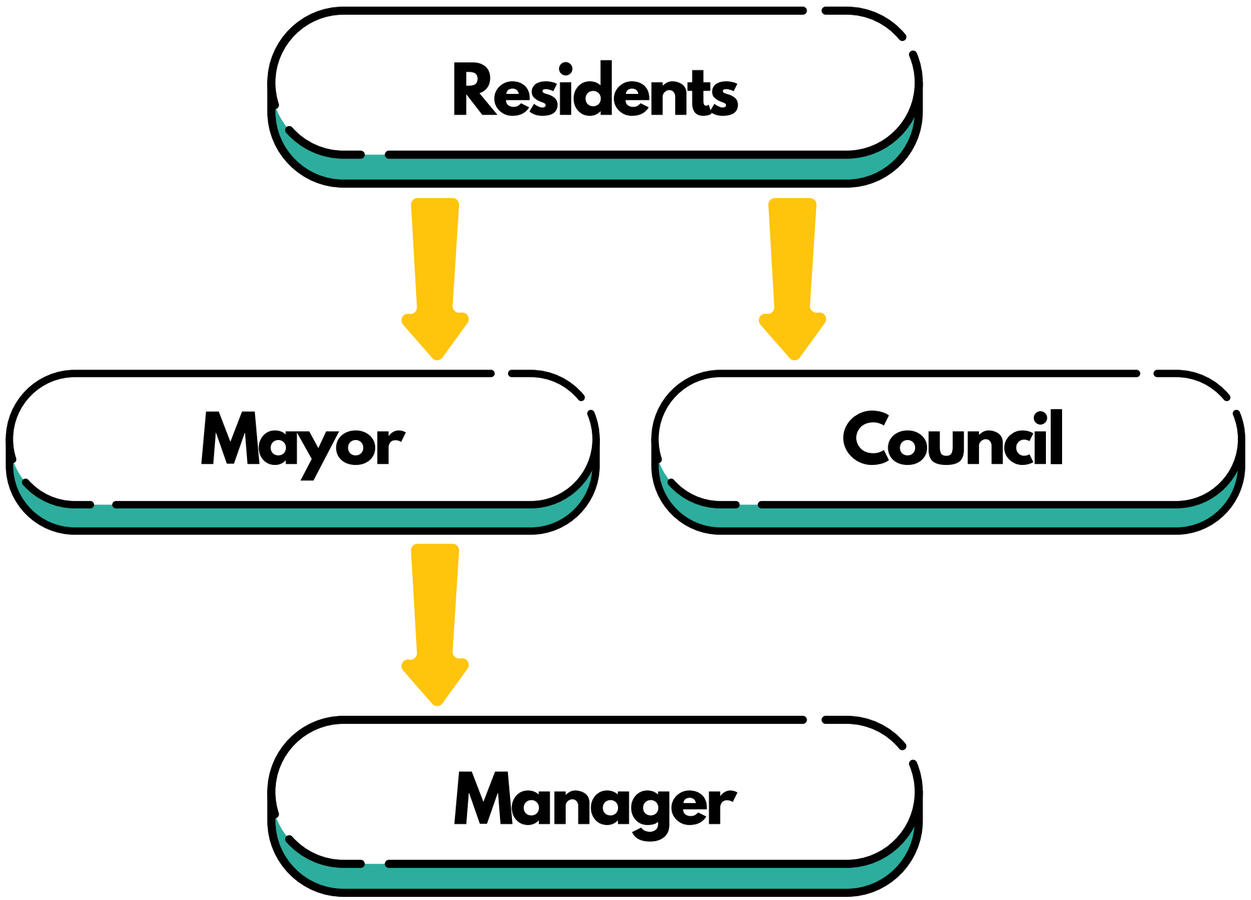


"If I ever get to the provincial level of politics, municipal affairs is the first thing I would want to change. I think mayors across this province deserve stronger powers. One person in charge, with veto power, similar to the strong mayoral systems in New York and Chicago and LA.

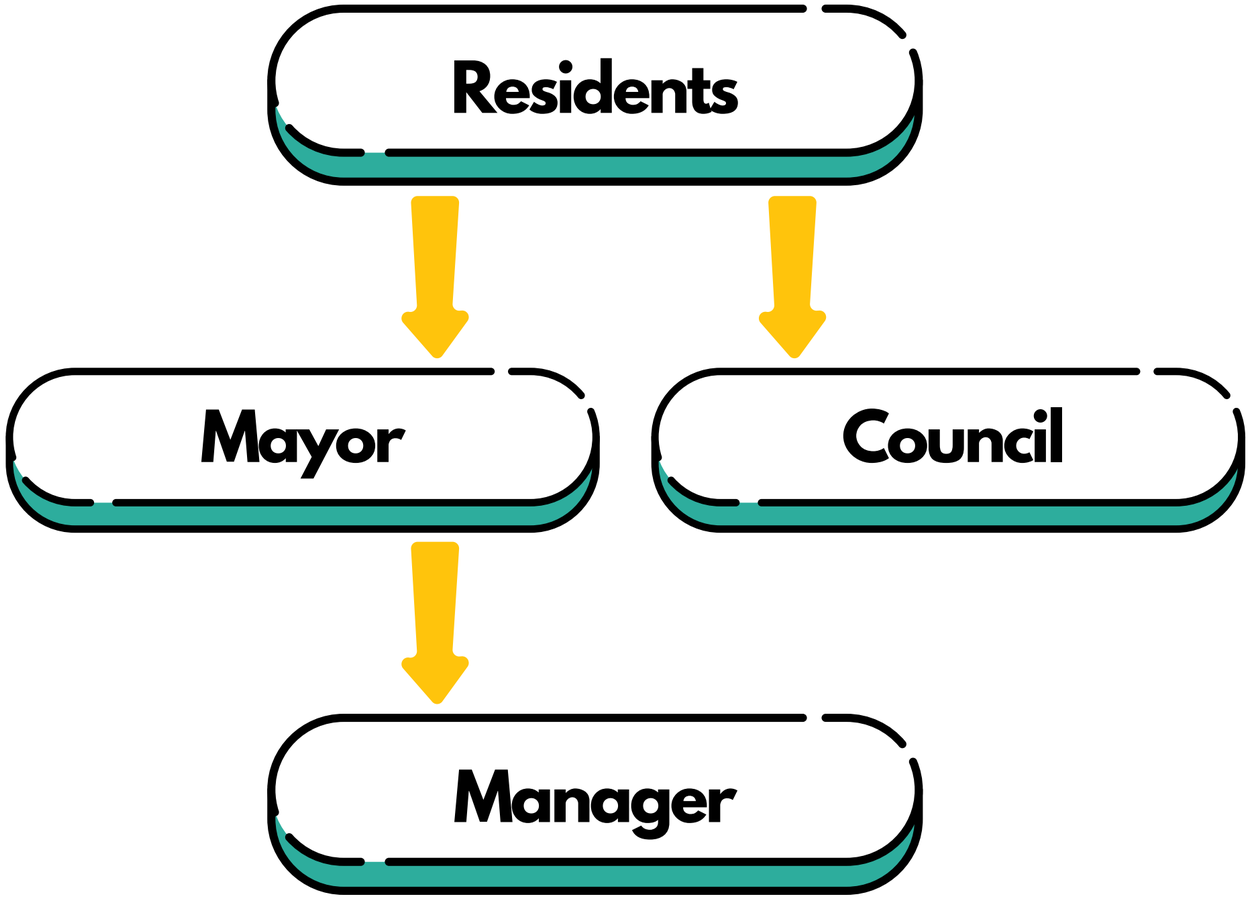
I would want our mayors to have strong powers but to be held accountable; if the voters don't like the job he or she is doing, they can fire that mayor in four years. That's how it should work."

– *Ford Nation: Two Brothers, One Vision* (2016)

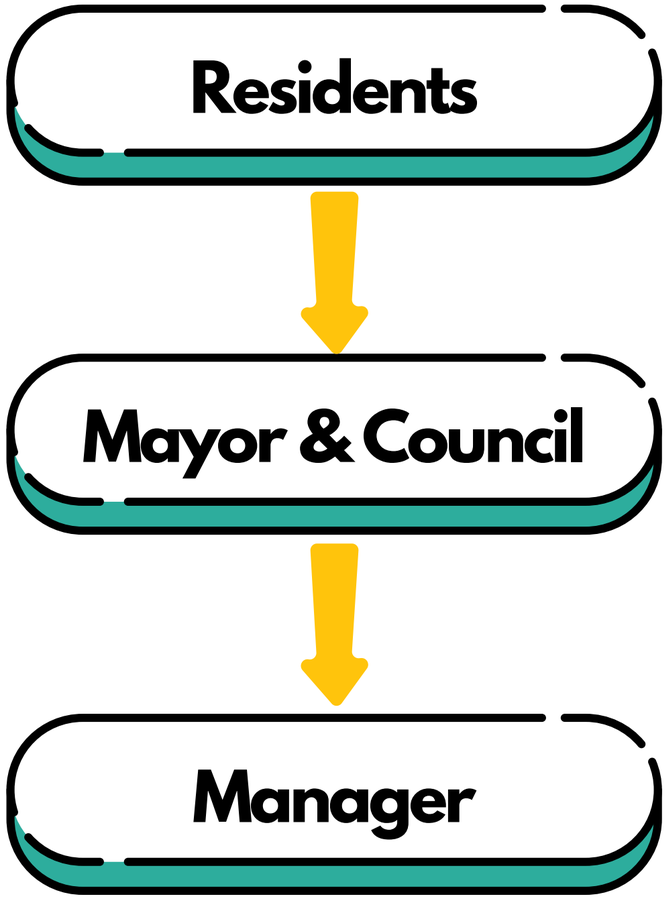
Mayor-Council



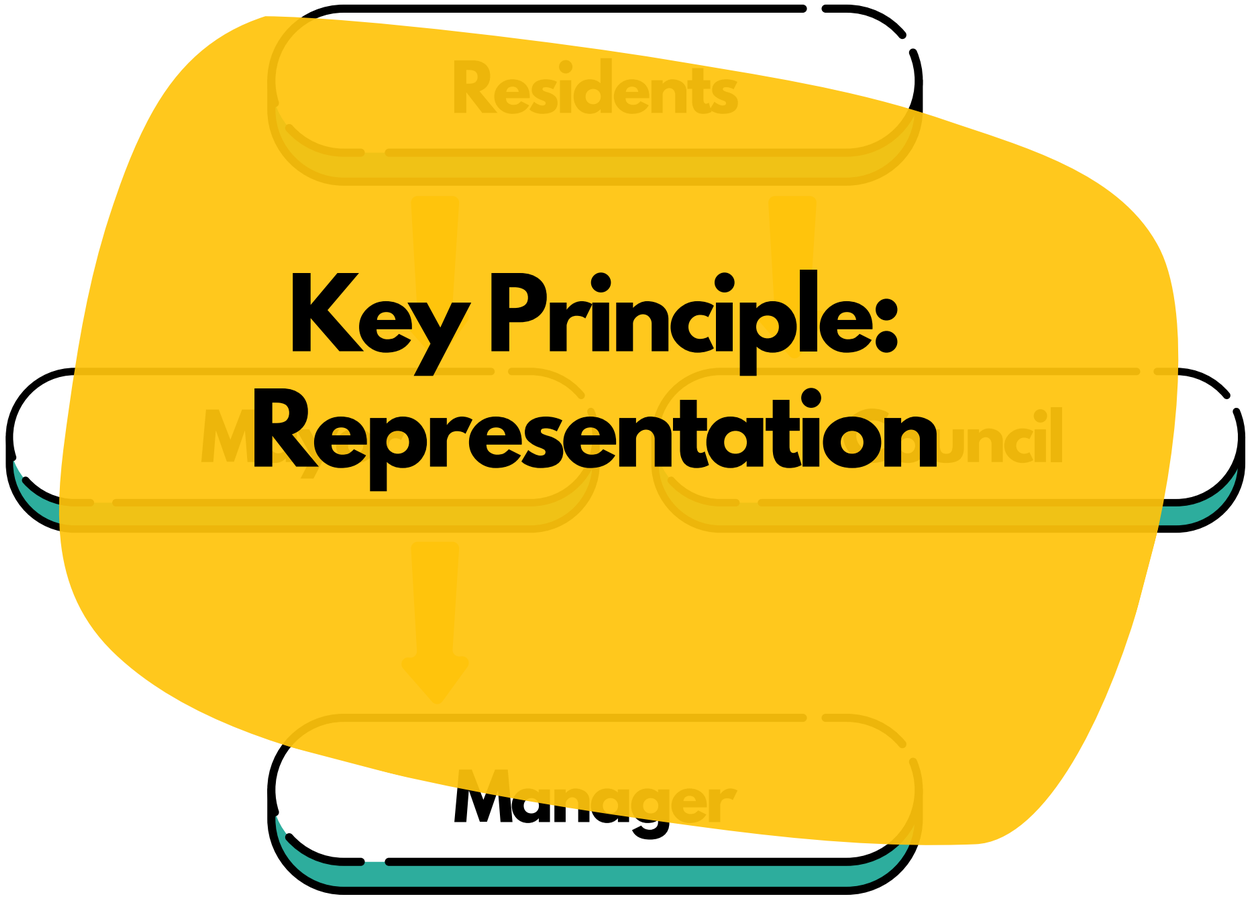
Mayor-Council



Council-Manager

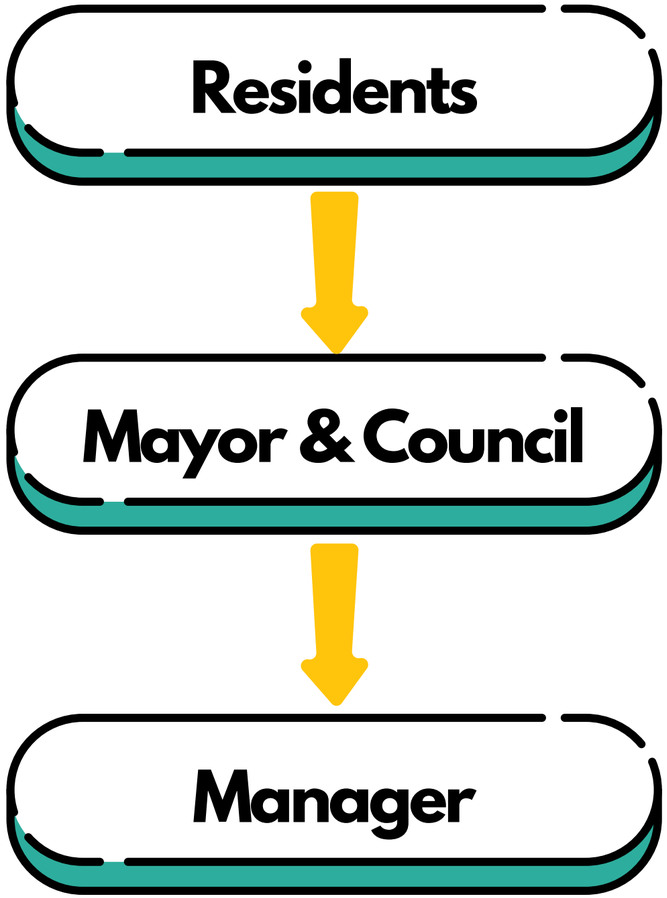


Mayor-Council

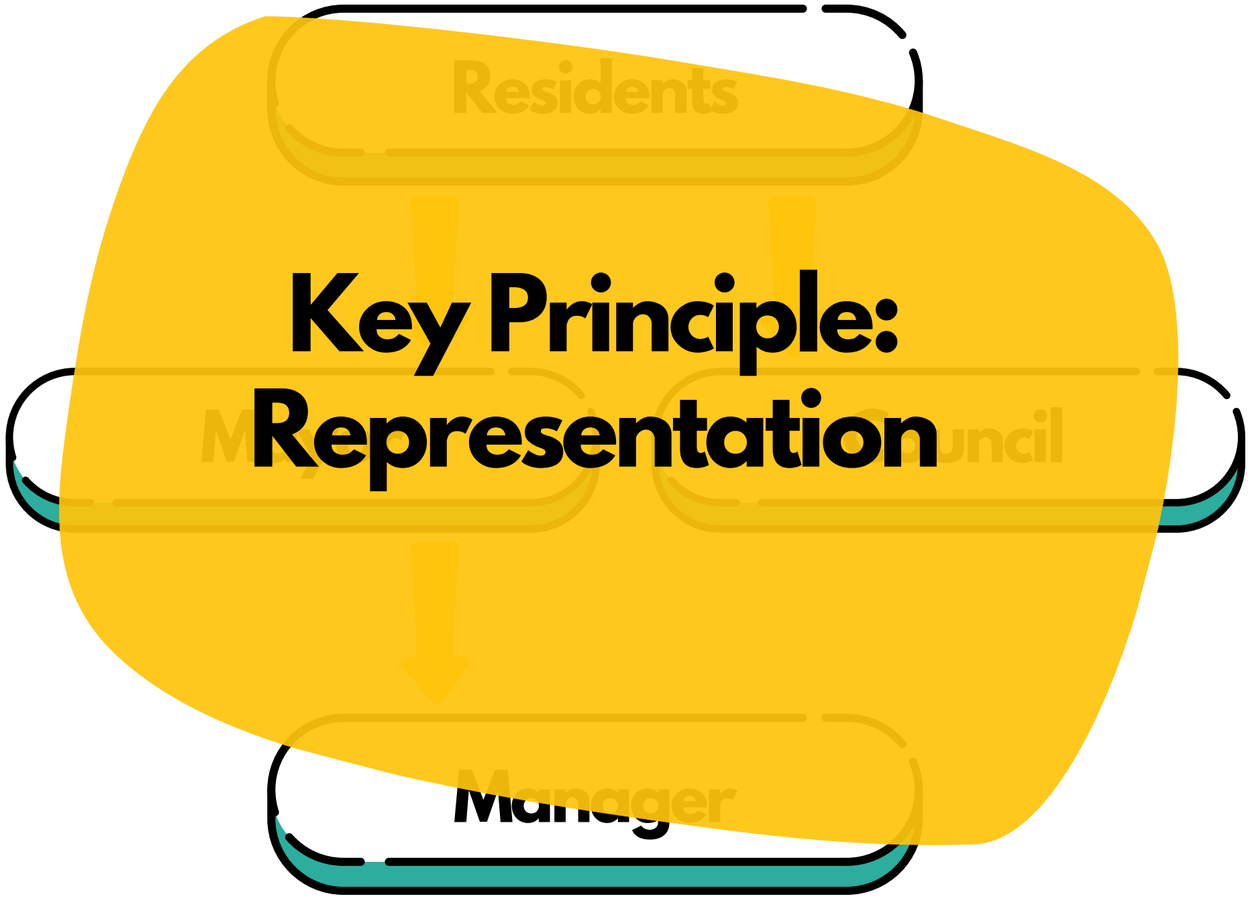


Key Principle: Representation

Council-Manager



Mayor-Council



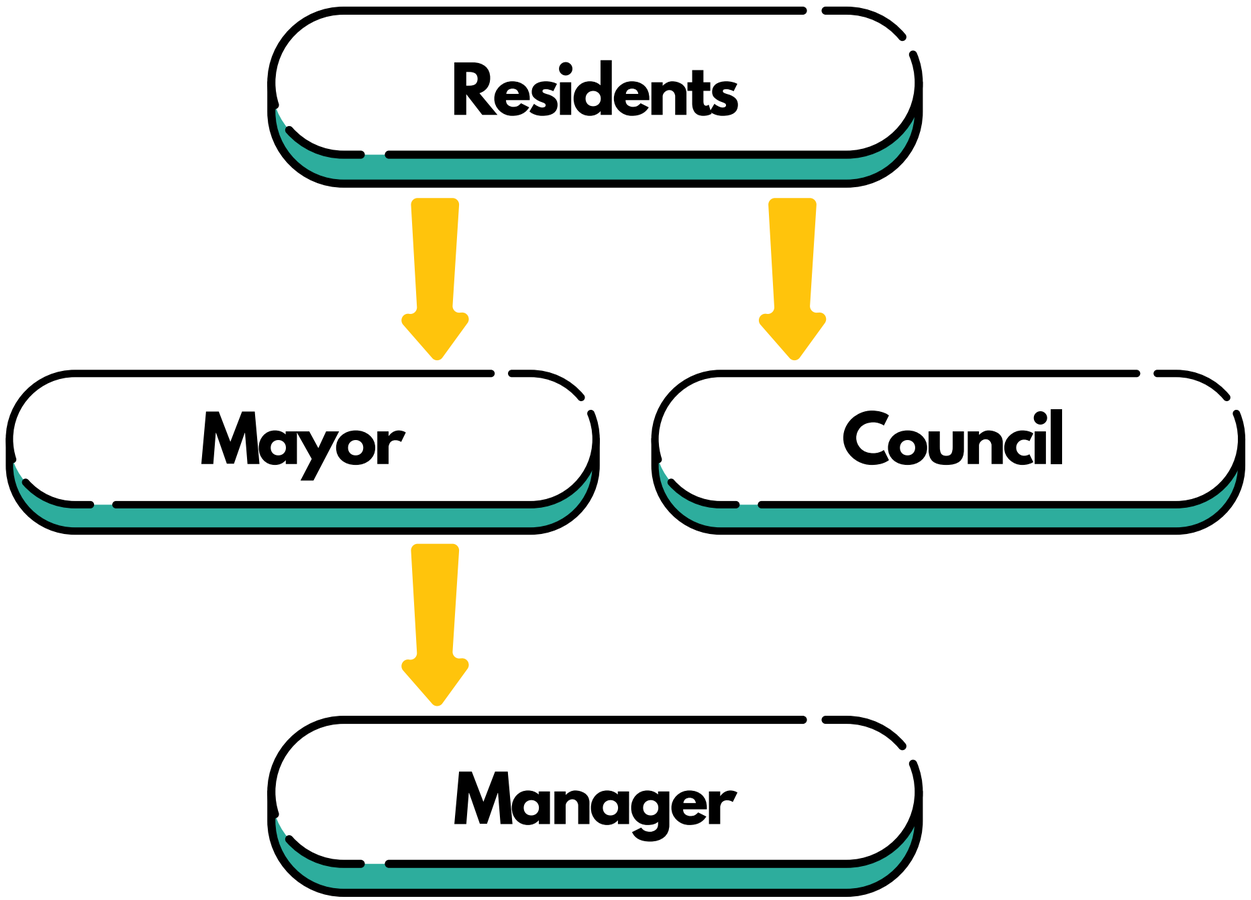
Key Principle: Representation

Council-Manager



Key Principle: Professionalism

Mayor-Council



In the US, ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ mayor refer to variants of the mayor-council model.



Source: Post Media (August 2023)

Powers for head of council

- Choosing the Chief Administrative Officer
- Hiring division heads (with exclusions: Clerk, Treasurer, IC/AG, Chief of Police, Building Official)
- Changing organizational structure of the municipality

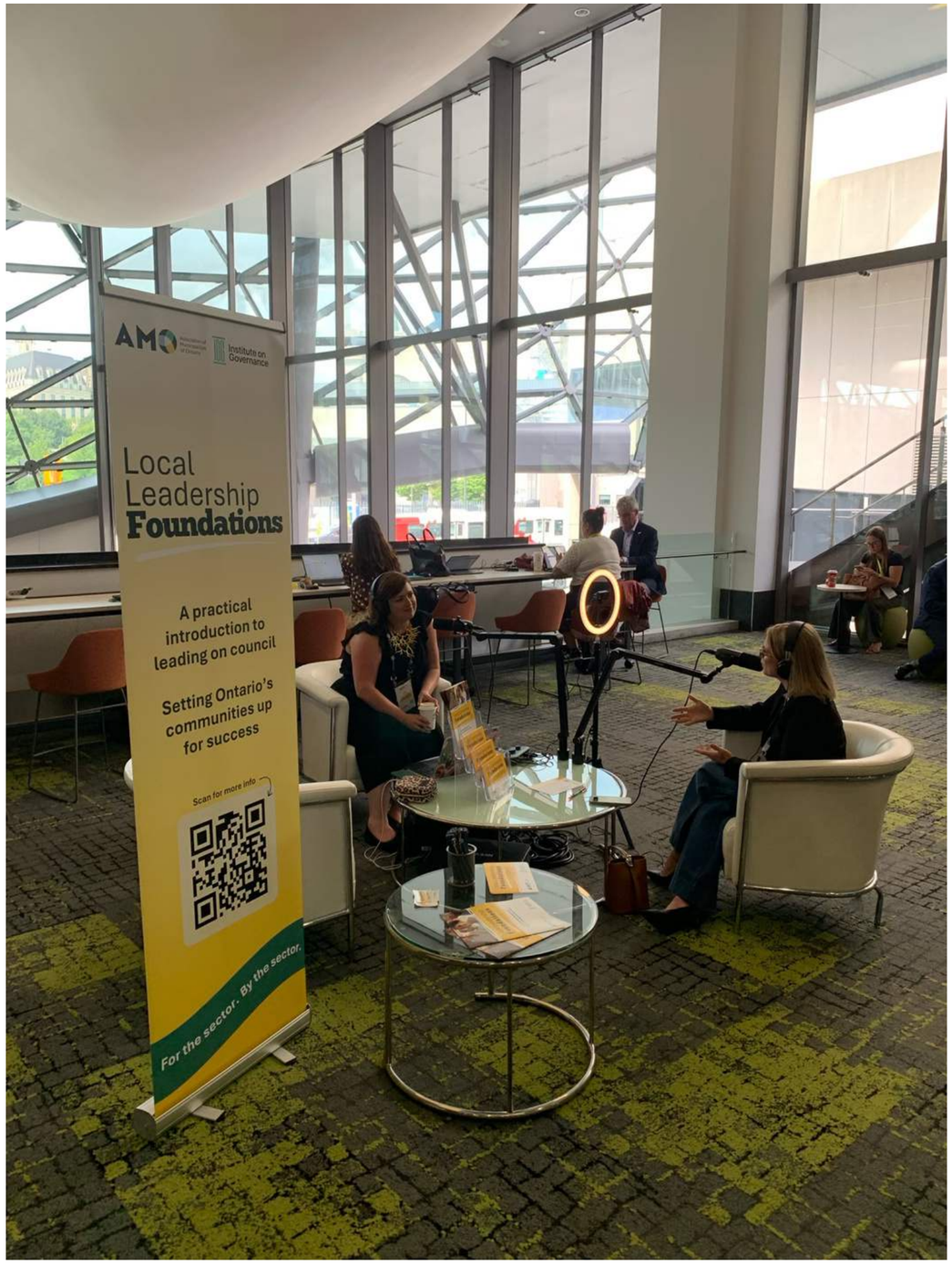
Powers for head of council

- Appointing chairs of committees
- Bringing forward items and proposing bylaws that advance provincial priorities (including building 1.5M homes by 2031)
- Veto a council decision (noting that council can override the veto by a 2/3 vote including mayor)

Powers for head of council

- Propose the budget for the municipality
  - Must be tabled by February 1 each year
  - Council can amend budget through resolution within 30 day review period
  - Head of council has 10 days to veto amendment (with written documentation and rationale)
  - Council then has 15 days to override council's veto (2/3 vote)
  - Otherwise, budget is "deemed to be adopted"

- Initiate in-year budget amendments


AMO
Institute on Governance
Local Leadership Foundations
A practical introduction to leading on council
Setting Ontario's communities up for success
Scan for more info
For the sector. By the sector.


Local Leadership Foundations
A new training program for Ontario's municipal elected officials
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For the sector, by the sector



Local Leadership Foundations is built on the experiences of those who have done the job. Throughout the program you learn from councillors, mayors, and experts from across Ontario and beyond. It's hundreds of years of collective municipal experience, distilled into practical guidance you won't find in a textbook.

Engagement with the sector also helped us design a modular, flexible program that complements the full range of municipal onboarding plans and flexes to accommodate busy leaders' calendars.

The Program

Local Leadership Foundations is a flexible learning journey, built as six focused modules you can fit around a busy schedule. Take the full series or just the ones you need, in any order.

MODULE 1
Governing in Practice
An orientation to the councillor's role in Ontario today, and the habits that set up a strong term.

MODULE 2
Making Decisions
How council decisions get made, and how to prepare for meetings and shape good outcomes.

MODULE 3
Finance & Budgeting
A plain-language grounding in municipal finance and the trade-offs behind the big decisions.

MODULE 4
Civility & Integrity

MODULE 5
Engaging Community

FOR HEADS OF COUNCIL
Leading Council



These changes matter for communities.

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These changes matter for libraries.

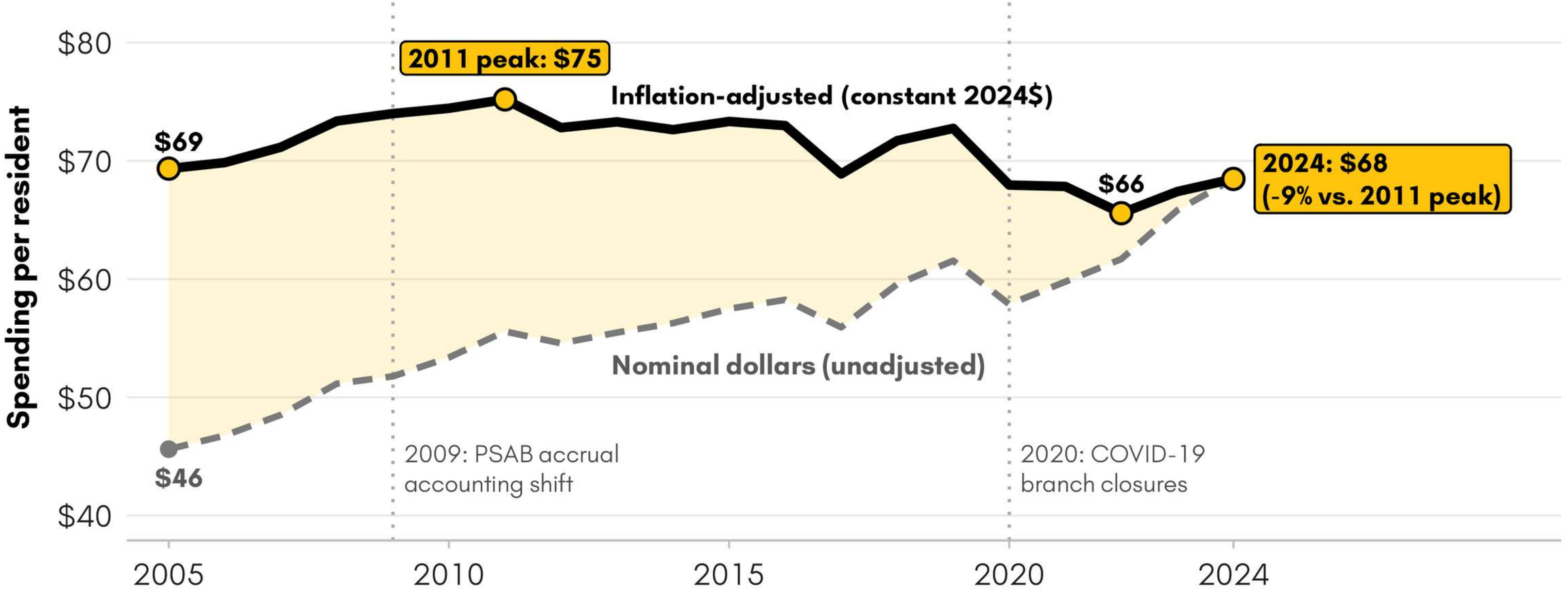
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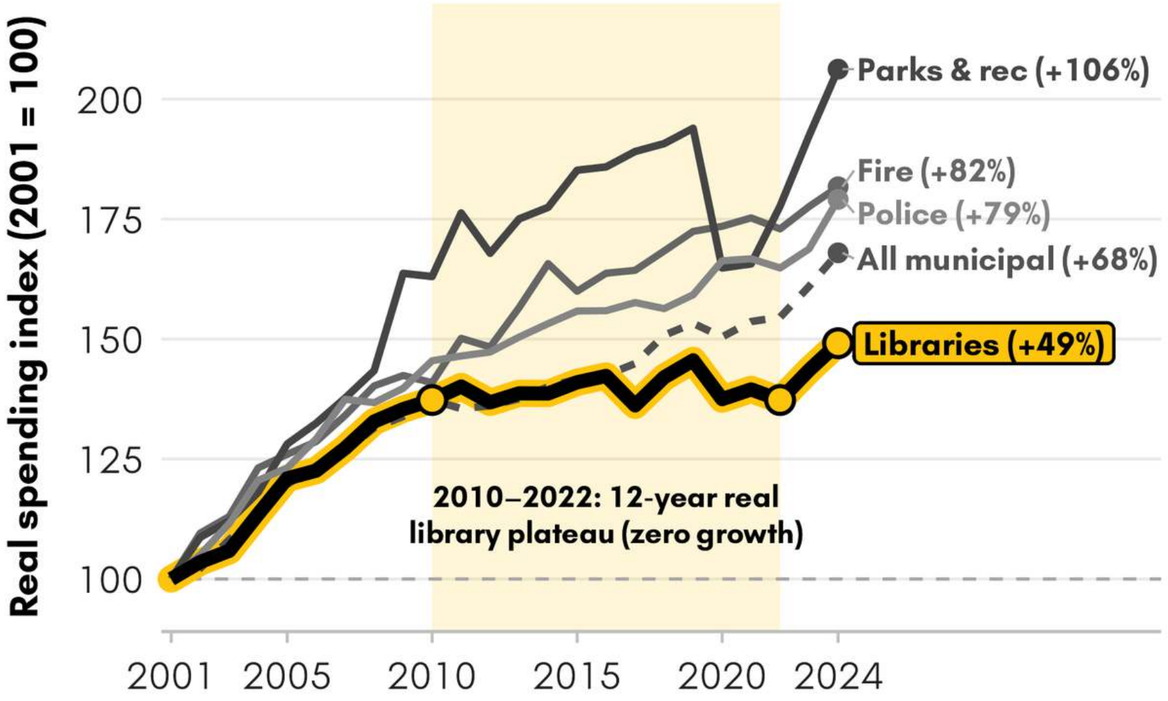
Consolidated library operating expenses per resident (400 consistent Ontario municipalities, 2005–2024)



Source: Municipal Financial Information (FIR) Returns, 2001-2024.

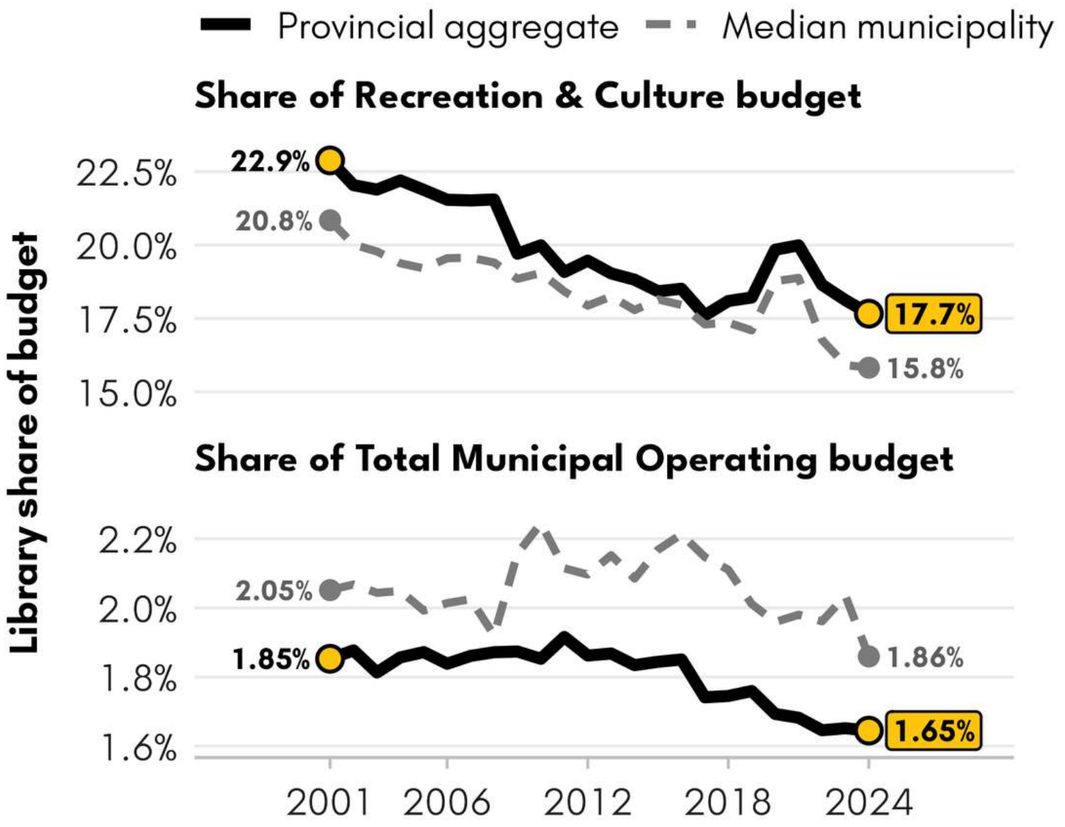
A. Real spending growth by service

CPI-adjusted expenses (2024$, 2001 = 100)



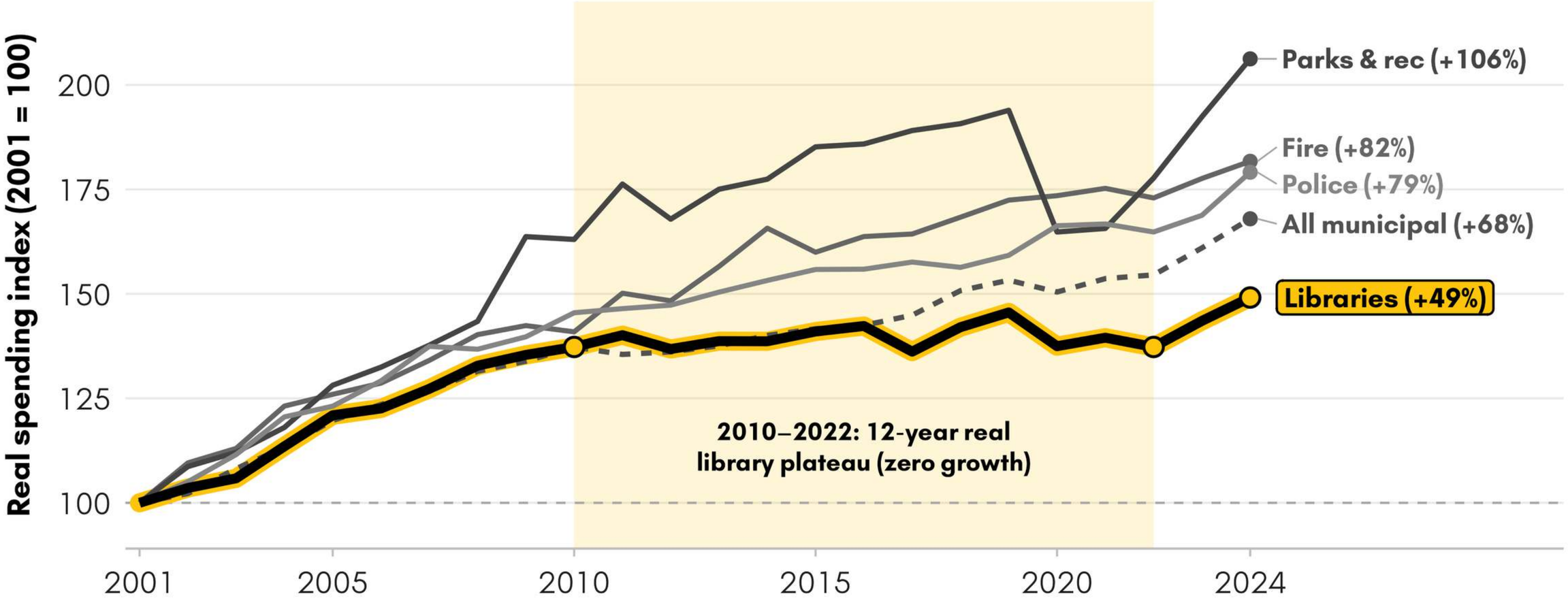
B. Libraries' shrinking budget share

Share of municipal budget envelope (2001–2024)



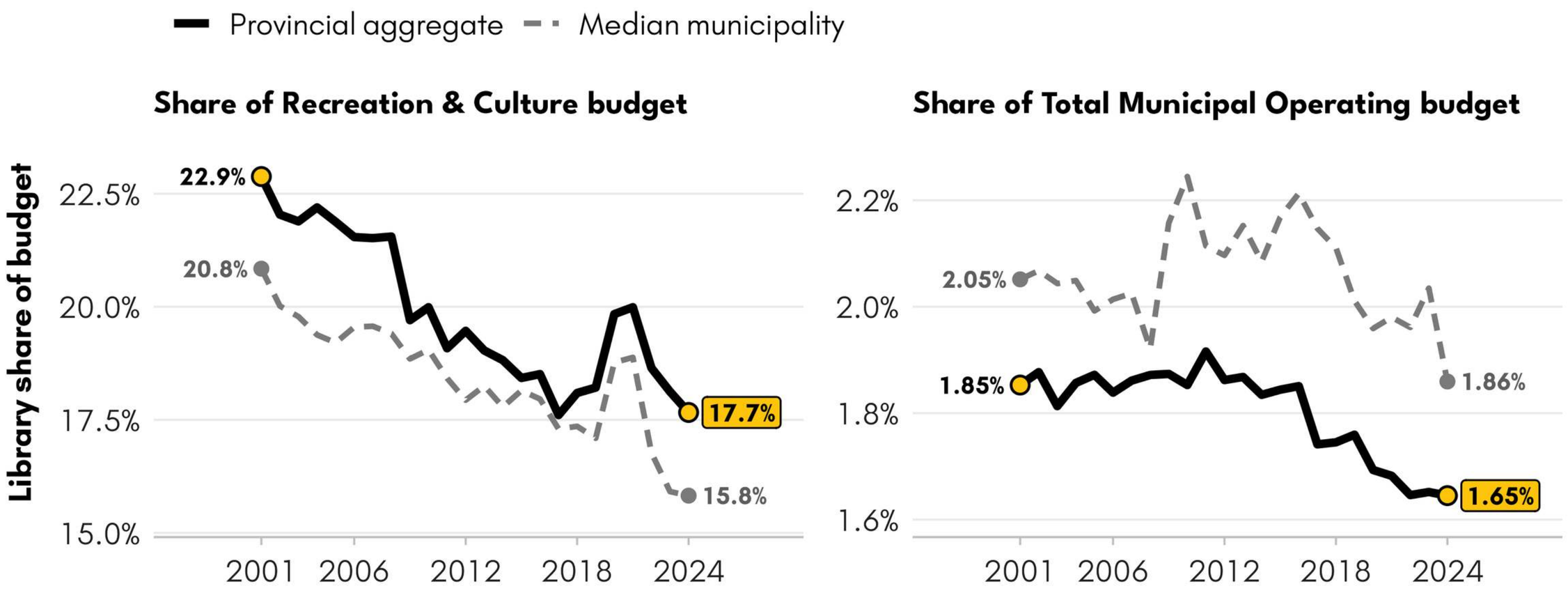
Source: Municipal Financial Information (FIR) Returns, 2001-2024.

CPI-adjusted municipal operating expenses (2024$, 2001 = 100; 398 consistent Ontario municipalities)



Source: Municipal Financial Information (FIR) Returns, 2001-2024.

Public library share of municipal operating envelopes (398 consistent Ontario municipalities, 2001–2024)





Local Government is Different

- No presence of the Crown; not Westminster parliamentary system
- (Usually) no political parties
- No Cabinet or concept of ministerial responsibility
- Higher requirements for openness and transparency
- Different relationships between elected officials and citizens
- “Closer to the people”



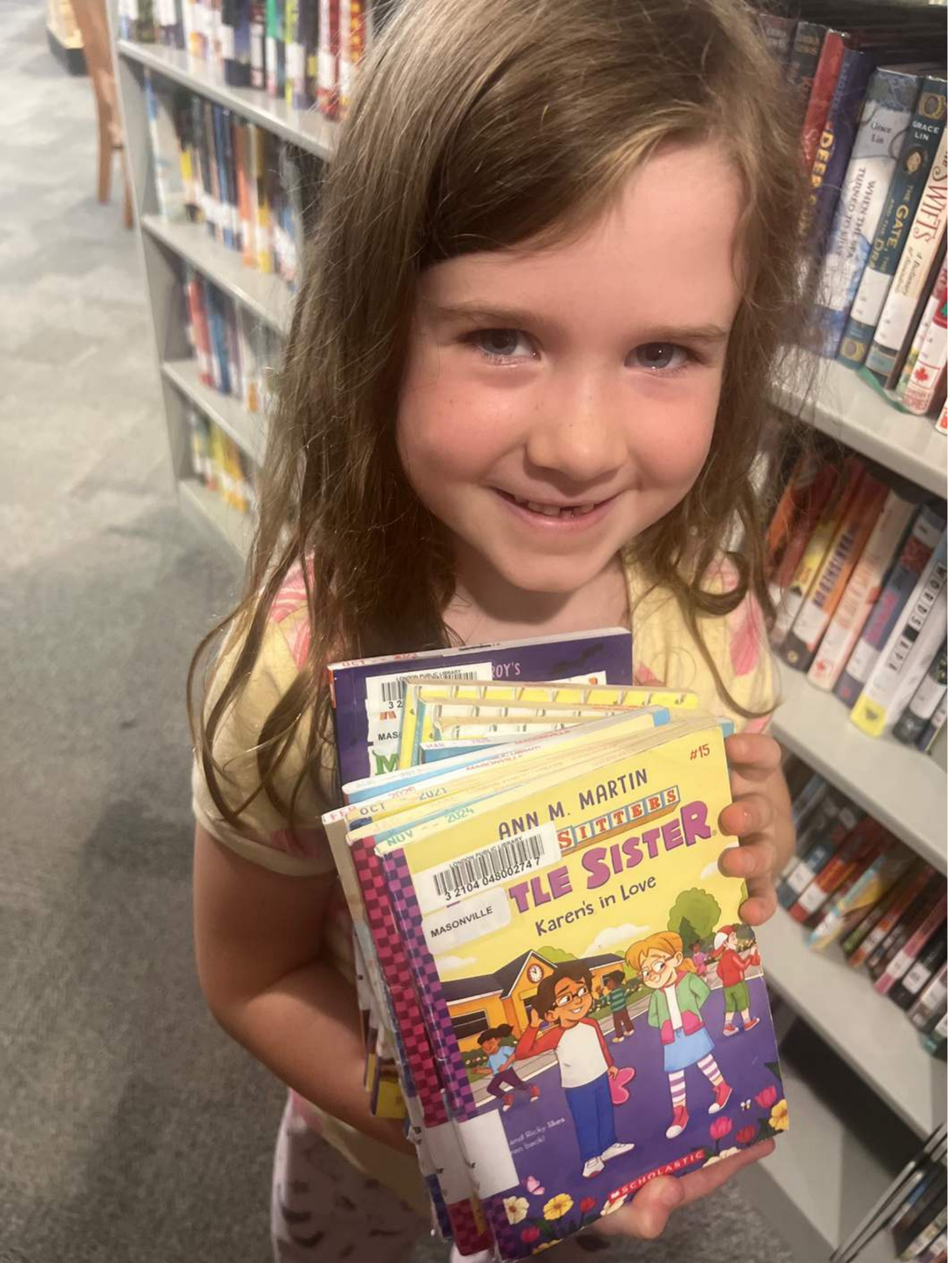
Building political support matters for public libraries.

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= library leadership + political will

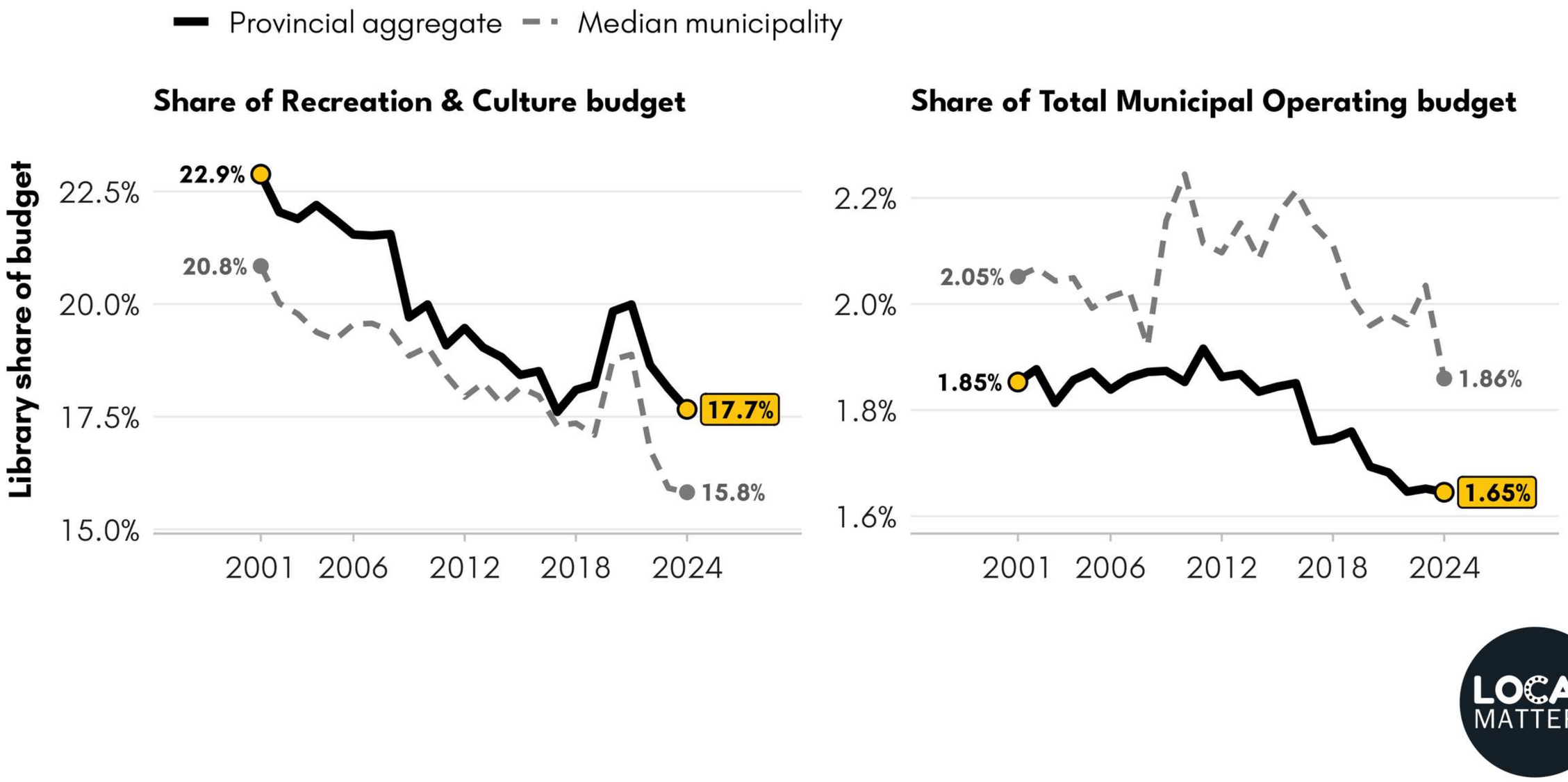
Political will:

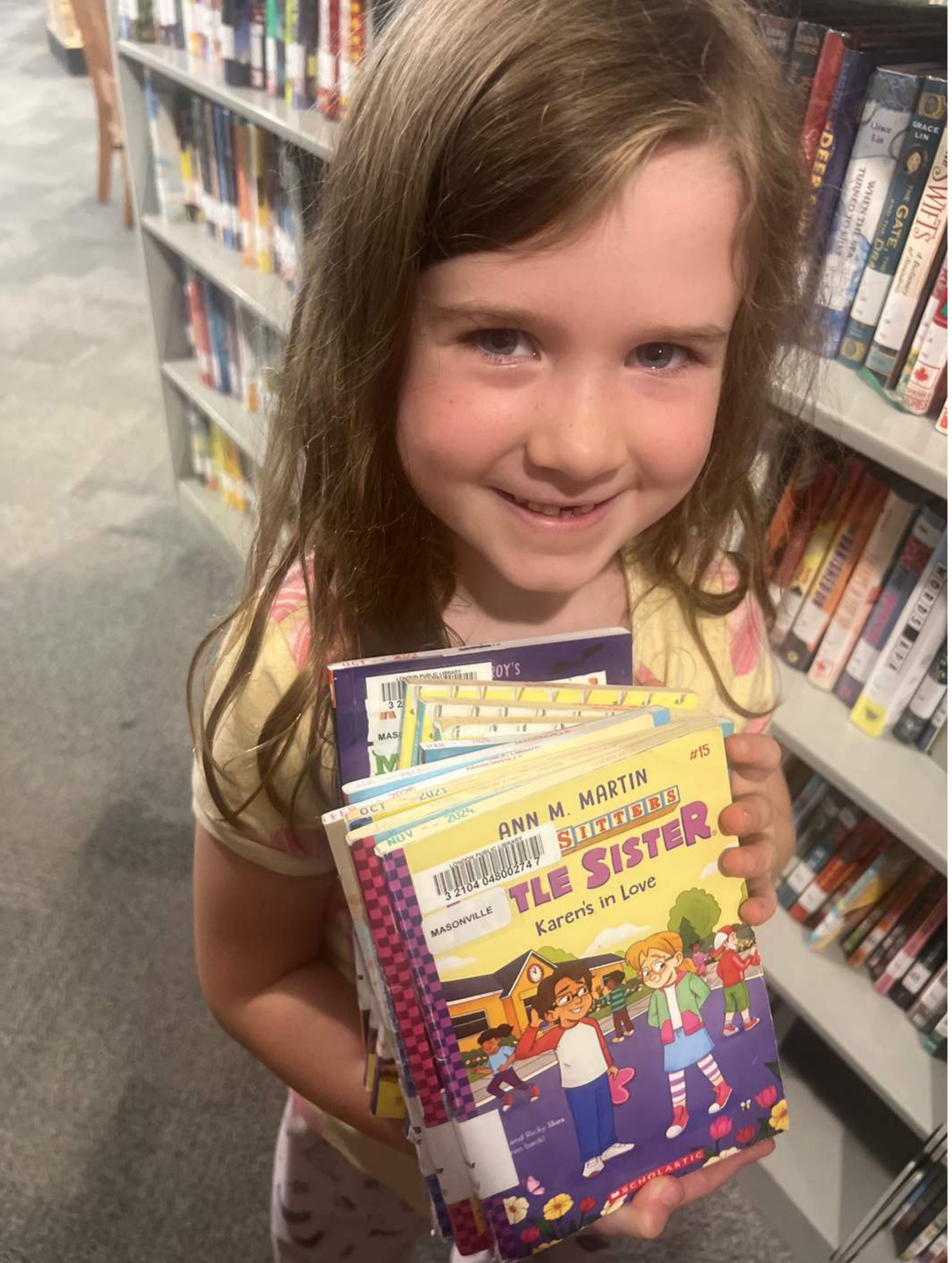
the extent of committed support among key decision makers for a particular solution to a particular problem

Effective advocacy

- More than just good relationships; more than just a good idea; both an art and a science
- **Active, deliberate, focused interception or intervention into the political process to accomplish specific goals**
- Starts before the budget or when a big decision is ahead; it begins with acts to **build political will**

Public library share of municipal operating envelopes (398 consistent Ontario municipalities, 2001–2024)



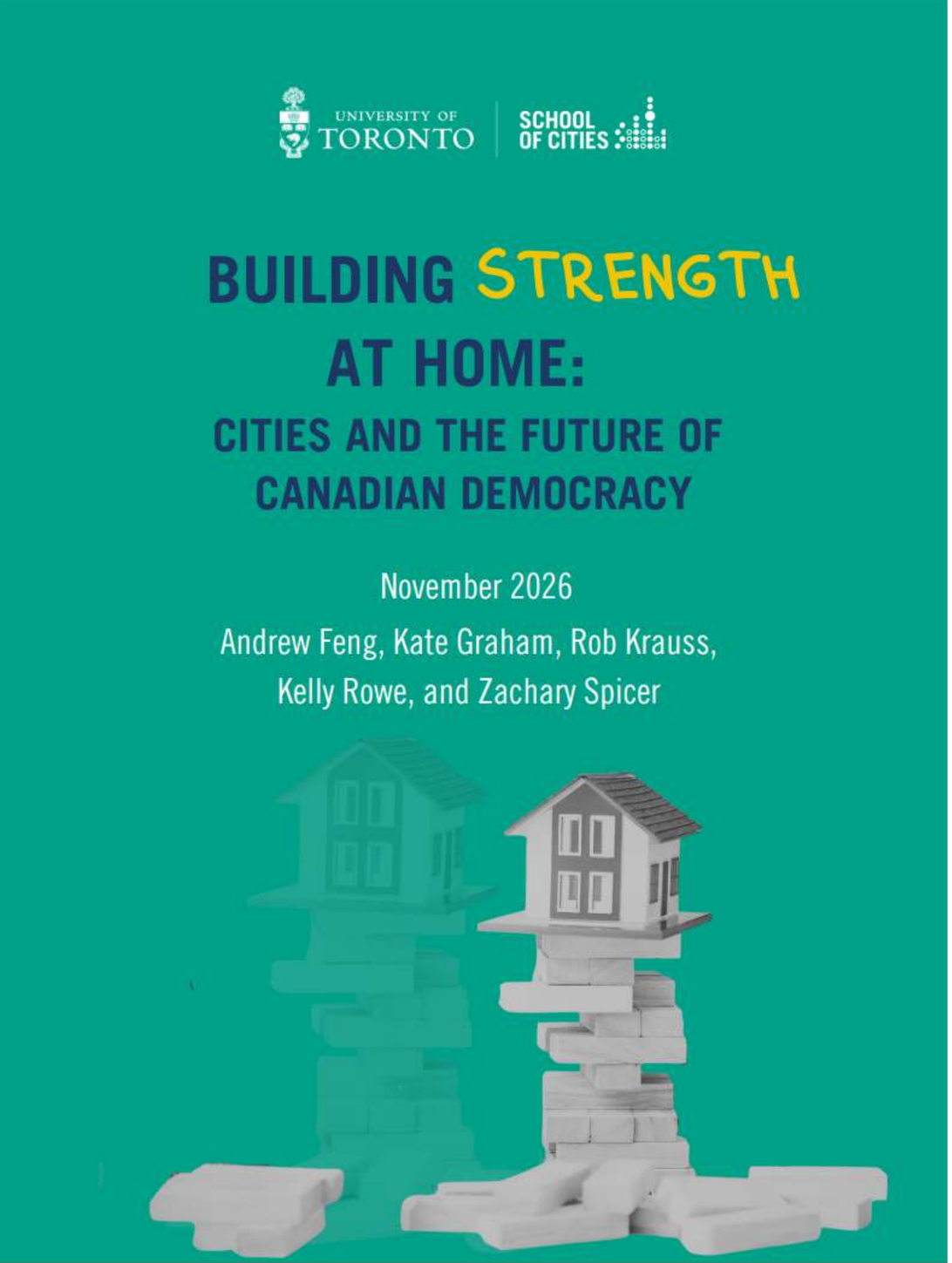


= library leadership + political will



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"'Canada's public square' is not a place so much as an ideal [...] often, it's a place just down the street.

Indeed, Canada's public square is loud – and it is **mostly local**."



Libraries matter for local democracy.

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THANK YOU

FEDERATION OF ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES | NOVEMBER 12, 2026

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