MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION QUEBEC STYLE: A COMPARATIVE NORTH AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the United States, interest in consolidation of urban governments is cyclical. Many of the existing city-county consolidations occurred in the 1950's and 1960's. Recently, the successful city- government consolidations in Kansas City-Wyandotte County, Kansas in 1997 and Louisville-Jefferson County, Kentucky in 2000 renewed interest among urban reformers and academics. In most major U. S. metropolitan areas, a combination of suburban activism and central city minority political control makes metropolitan government a non-starter. The literature in recent years (e.g., Rusk 1999 and Stephens and Wikstrom 2000) emphasizes "governance" rather than "government." Nelson Wikstrom, a leading academic expert writes that "given the rise, recognition and institutionalization of regional governance, the concept of one comprehensive metropolitan government has become a somewhat archaic intellectual relic, identified with the past century"

(Wikstrom, 2002). It is fair to say that no existing city-county consolidation, on either side of the border, can really be called a comprehensive metropolitan government.

Despite these recent differences, we think that a U. S.-Canadian contrast is very important, feasible and useful, for at lease two reasons. First, these are strong local government similarities. City governments in both countries exist in the context of federal systems. Local governments are legal creatures of the state (or province) in both countries. Municipal governments share a common heritage based upon the English system (even in Quebec). Many of the reforms associated with the Progressive Era in the early 20th century United States crossed the border. These include the city-manager system, and the practice of nonpartisan local elections. Both countries lack strong socialist parties, especially at the local level. In recent years, both countries have devolved and downloaded governmental functions to the local level. Both countries have shown evidence of an active neighborhood movement. Some experiments in U. S. local democracy, such as Chicago's Local School Councils and Alternative Policing Strategy (Fung, 2004) can be viewed as parallels to developments in Canadian cities, such as the Montreal borough system.

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Second, many of our academic colleagues have made such comparisons previously. The most explicit comparison appears in Rothblatt and Sancton's (1998) edited volume on metropolitan governance. In this rich, detailed work, a Canadian metropolitan area (i.e., Montreal) is implicitly paired with a single U. S. metropolitan area (i.e., Boston). Laura Reese's (1997) study of local economic development policy compares cities in Michigan and Ontario. A recent volume on city-county consolidation (Carr and Feiock, 2004) includes a chapter on the Ottawa amalgamation. Donald Phares's recently edited volume (2004) on metropolitan governance presents an overview chapter on the U. S. and Canada, as well as a case study of the Vancouver region. Interestingly, this book also includes a case study of Mexico City, and a survey chapter on Europe.

Overall, this literature concludes that Canadian cities have more highly developed metropolitan planning and government systems than their U. S. counterparts. Rothblatt and Sancton (1998) consider the differences and similarities in terms of political culture influences, policymaking influences, and the global social and economic situation. The political culture argument, in brief, is that the U. S. is more individualistic and privatistic than Canada. Thus, Canadian metropolitan areas have a political and social climate more sympathetic to metropolitan government. The lengthy, tragic history of U. S. racism also comes into play. Policymaking influences include the interplay of these levels of government; we will have more to say about this below. The global forces argument is that jobs and people have decentralized, and that a common competitiveness is important to any metropolitan area today. Newman and Thornley summarize many of these global changes in a world cities planning context (2005).

Most of the researchers in these fields attribute the more highly developed metropolitan institutions in Canada to the major proactive role played by provincial governments. Still, there are many U. S. states which are activist in nature - - California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, and Wisconsin come to mind. A crucial difference is the form of provincial government. Provincial governments have adopted Canada's parliamentary system. Thus, a caucus majority in a provincial governing party can impose a controversial government change. The result is "local government amalgamation from the top down" (Rosenfeld and Reese, 2004).

The federal role differs somewhat. Despite the Canadian constitution's assignment of responsibility for municipalities to the provinces, the Canadian government is pursuing urban policy much more vigorously than is the U. S. government. Canada has financial equalization policies that result in transfer of federal monies to "have-not" provinces. While both federal governments are large landholders, the presence of the Canadian federal government in its cities, and the consciousness of this as a policy concern are greater. On the other hand, Canada lacks ongoing programs of direct assistance to localities, such as the long-standing Community Development Block Grant program in the U. S. Similarly, Canadian urban governments are less encumbered with federal mandates than U. S. cities.

In the U. S., consolidations of cities and counties have been cyclical. However, U. S. cities have proceeded through a series of less comprehensive measures; annexation, interlocal agreements, and special district governments. Many U. S. observers feel that these lesser solutions provide a more fruitful and more feasible approach to metropolitan problem solving.

To reiterate a point made briefly above: existing city-country consolidations are not comprehensive in their metropolitan regions. They have not really contained growth or sprawl in their areas. As constituted, they cannot deal with true regional policy issues, like economic development or environmental policy.

The Quebec situation has many interesting aspects. In Quebec, the presence of local political parties in the larger cities provides a different environment for local elections. In Montreal, the linguistic duality creates a context that is politically different from almost all the rest of North America. The fact that Montreal is located on an island in the St. Lawrence River is a constraint for comprehensive governance. It should be noted that New York City reached its present form which includes two islands, part of a third island, and part of the U. S. mainland in 1898.

Whatever the governmental form, whatever the governmental function, there is much to be learned on both sides of the border, from an awareness of the other country. U. S. cities can learn much from Canadian city-county consolidations; many have cited the Greater Vancouver Regional District as a less comprehensive, but more useful model for the U. S. Similarly, Canadian metropolitan areas might find the Twin Cities regional tax base sharing program, or the myriad efforts of U. S. cities' economic development offices useful.

The story of municipal mergers and de-mergers in the Montreal area in the last five years is one of the most notable episodes in the history of North American local government. There are two main reasons why we think it is important. First, the Montreal case provides an outstanding example of conflicting values in metropolitan governance. The tensions between centralization and decentralization and between efficiency and responsiveness are fundamental to the Montreal situation. The issue of equity in the distribution of services and the assessment of costs is also critical.

Metropolitan government reform has been an academic and practical issue for more than a century in North America and Europe. In American public administration, the traditional view among both academics and practitioners was that governmental consolidation was highly desirable. By making possible economies of scale, consolidation increased efficiency – or so the theory ran. Enlarging the tax base improved fiscal equity, while the broader problems of regional planning, transportation, environment and the like could be entrusted more appropriately to a new "higher" (i.e., metropolitan) level of government. By the 1920s and 1930s, political scientists and others favoring regional planning were regularly looking to metropolitan solutions (Munro, 1923; Institute for Government Research, 1932). This viewpoint was prevalent until the 1960s, and was evidenced in annexations, city-county consolidations, and other attempts to create metropolitan governments (for restatements of the traditional view, see Gulick, 1962; Bollens and Schmandt, 1965).

Not all informed observers have favored consolidation, however. The public choice school agrees that the existence of a plethora of local government units maximizes consumer choice. Citizens can choose their location within a metropolitan area on the basis of the service package available, and the rate of taxes and fees levied. This view, based on economic theory, is given some support by survey research indicating that suburban residents are generally satisfied with the level of public service they receive (Ostrom et.al, 1988 provides an excellent accessible statement of local public choice). The view that American citizens "vote with their feet" in moving to the suburbs has been accepted by many American politicians, including, most notably, former President Ronald Reagan.

Other groups skeptical of metropolitan governance include community activists of the left, and minority politicians. Minorities often oppose metropolitan governance proposals because they would

eliminate hard-won political gains. In the 1960s, "grass-roots" advocates became involved with the many government programs that had citizen participation provisions. Many called for decentralization of government services, and, even, "community control" of key services, such as public schools at the neighborhood level (see Jacobs, 1961; Kotler, 2005). The question then became: How can we reconcile centralization with decentralization? The Committee for Economic Development (CED), a leading U.S. business group, provided one answer. In 1966, the CED recommended the adoption of metropolitan government by urban regions, with substantial decentralization at the neighborhood level. In fact, this system approximated the then-existing system in London, in which the Greater London Council set citywide policies, and the thirty-three boroughs delivered local services, and represented constituents directly.

The Montreal merger, as implemented by the Parti Quebecois (PQ) Government in 2000, and the subsequent de-merger referenda and creation of agglomeration councils orchestrated by the Liberal (PLQ) Government beginning in 2003, provide an excellent example of this struggle between centralization and decentralization. Twenty-seven municipalities located on Montreal Island were merged into one Montreal megacity. After the first mayoral election in the new jurisdiction in 2001, Mayor Gerald Tremblay instituted a system of borough ("arrondissement") government and service delivery. Recent Montreal governance exemplifies the struggle between centralization and decentralization that we have often seen in urban governmental history. In the case of Montreal, we are witnessing what we have labeled the "Humpty Dumpty effect." First the PQ put the pieces together in the mega city. Then they were allowed (by the successor Liberal Government) to fall apart with de-merger referenda and finally the Provincial (PLQ) government is trying to put them back together again. Whether they can effectively do so, remains an open question.

Five critical issues guided the municipal amalgamation effort, although the emphasis changed over time. Firstly, the issue of fiscal equity was among the top priorities of the PQ Government in implementing the merger program. They sought to reallocate costs and taxes in a progressive tax format that was "fairer" to those who benefited from the services of the central city. Secondly, there was a perceived need to adapt the governmental structures of Quebec's cities to the demands of increasing globalization. Organizational

structures were designed for urban regions to maximize the ability of the "mega-city" leaders to respond to global demands with one voice by minimizing the seemingly dysfunctional municipal competition and by centralizing decision making authority and eliminating regional "veto-players." Thirdly, there were hypothesized increases in efficiency. Would it be possible to create economies of scale by providing additional area wide services and eliminating the existing overlap between multiple fragmented governments? Fourthly is the question of effectiveness. Consolidation was conceived as a mechanism to improve the quality and consistency of services throughout the metropolitan areas. Fifthly, there was concern in a number of reports expressed for democratic governance. Could municipal mergers help develop a closer link between citizens and their local government? Although consolidation is generally regarded as a form of centralization, there was a sense that the clarity of having a single local authority would make it easier for citizens to understand what was going on and to hold their elected officials accountable. The democratic governance arguments were subsequently turned into demands for decentralization, the creation of boroughs (arrondissements) and for demergers. A sixth motivation behind the initial actions of the PQ led efforts appeared to some as a sub-text. There was a sense that by uniting the linguistically diverse cities, particularly in Montreal, under a clear Francophone majority in a single government, there would be no basis for breaking up Montreal in response to some future successful Quebec secessionist referendum.

The globalization priority for Quebec's effort at municipal reform is aimed at making cities more competitive and their government more efficient and more effective. These goals may conflict with preferences for decentralization, and the opportunity for democratic input, equity and accountability. What is the relationship between the governed and the government? How is this evidenced by continuity in office? We look at elected and administrative leadership to see if there is continuity between the old and new governments. What people and groups were represented in the old and in the new cities? We analyze the representation of women to see how governmental mergers have affected gender politics. Finally, the Quebec government provided an interesting and unusual opportunity to examine support for and opposition to municipal mergers by providing opportunities for local referenda to "de-merge" and re-

establish their former municipalities. What are the political bases for de-merger ("démembrement") support and the reconstituted cities, and decentralized boroughs of the central cities?

The Montreal case affords an excellent opportunity for the United States and Canada to learn from each other. This is not only true for the academic community of urbanists. It may also be the case for policy-makers on both sides of the border. Let us explain. Throughout Canada, mergers, consolidations, and amalgamations have proceeded at a rapid pace throughout the last decade. The best known is the 1997 creation of the Toronto "Megacity," an amalgamation of six local governments, and an existing metropolitan level. The Toronto megacity was imposed from the top-down, by a Progressive Conservative (PC) provincial government that viewed itself as Canadian Reaganites (or Thatcherites) (Boudreau, 2000). This paper begins to tell the tale of creation of the Montreal "megacity" by the Quebec government in 2000. As in Toronto, a provincial government, despite substantial local opposition, imposed the Montreal megacity. Unlike Ontario, the Parti Quebecois (PQ) government in Quebec was social democratic in orientation rather than neo-liberal. PQ ministers were ostensibly committed to fiscal equity and social justice, in proposing and implementing these reforms. The subsequent election of a Liberal Party (PLQ) government in 2003 afforded the opportunity for municipalities to demerge.

The plan of this paper is as follows. We begin with a specific introduction to the Quebec context for municipal consolidation. The major part of the paper considers the implications of the mergers. Two sections relate to efficiency questions: one on collective action problems and veto players, a second on administrative leadership. We then turn to local democracy issues: gender representation, and decentralization in the eight megacities. The decentralization discussion includes a more in-depth view of both the role of the Montreal boroughs, and the de- merger movement. Our concluding section focuses on the implications for U.S.-Canadian urban policy.

II. THE QUEBEC CONTEXT FOR MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION

In 2001 the Parti Quebecois Government in Quebec City officially merged the 27 municipalities on the Island of Montreal into a new single mega-city. Referenda held in 2003 under the aegis of the Province's newly elected Liberal Government resulted in the de-

merger of 15 of these cities. The transition committee worked out the details of the new arrangement specified in the law. The new configuration on the Island included the remaining city of Montreal, the 15 reestablished cities and a new island wide Agglomeration Council. In commenting on the new Agglomeration Council and the new municipal organizations one leading transition official wryly smiled as he noted "it could work in theory", clearly not a ringing endorsement of the prospects. The effort to put the city back together after it was put together in 2001 and partly broken apart again in 2004 seems somewhat futile, hence the reference here to the fairy tale like nature of this process as the "humpty dumpty effect."

Before its set of municipal mergers in the late 90's Québec had an extremely high ratio of municipal units to population. The Province had a greater number of municipalities (over 1,300, the vast majority, 85%, with populations of under 5,000) than any other province and surpassing in total most other Provinces in Canada combined. More than a third (35%) of the budgets (covering local roads, water and sewage, infrastructures, libraries and cultural facilities, etc.) of the smaller municipalities were provided by transfers from the Provincial Government. The comparable figure for the larger municipalities was a highly inequitable eleven per cent (MAM, 2000). Yet, even today there are still 1087 municipalities in Quebec (MAM, 2005).

In order to bring order out of the chaos which is Québec's system of municipal administration then Municipal Affairs Minister, Louise Harel proposed municipal consolidations, a changing role for the MRCs (Rural County Municipalities), a major reorganization of the three Urban Communities, Québec, Gatineau-Hull and Montreal, and consolidation of the five remaining major municipal agglomerations (Saguenay, Longueuil, Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières and Lévis (Laval, the remaining Québec mega-city had its 14 municipalities consolidated since 1965). A major government white paper on municipal reform was issued and a timetable established for cutting the number of municipalities in half. The Parti Québecois (PQ) government put in effect a massive, phased program of municipal consolidation designed to reduce 624 small municipalities to 206 in its first phase alone. It should be noted that this is a generally cumbersome process and even after considerable time and effort there are still nearly 1,100 municipalities in Québec, two thirds of which have populations of under 2,000. The nine mega-cities,

however alone include more than half of the total provincial population of 7.2 million.

The so-called "New Municipal Pact", an agreement between the Union of Québec Municipalities (UMQ, which represents the larger cities) and the Provincial Government resulted in municipal governments and the school boards absorbing significant budget cuts, and major changes in functional responsibilities. In addition some functions were transferred to regional units (the Regional County Municipalities, MRCs and Urban Communities, CUs) and the Provincial Government.

With considerable opposition being expressed by the public to municipal consolidation (Sondagem, 2000) and greater confidence in municipal than provincial politicians by the public, the Minister, Louise Harel, went out on a limb to advance her reform and reorganization program. These proposals were modeled after the French reforms instituted by Lionel Jospin which created fifty new "agglomerations intercommunales." (Cloutier, 2000)

Bill 170 passed in the National Assembly over significant opposition (including several local non-binding referenda) in many of the municipalities affected. The legislation formally laid out the framework for municipal mergers leading to the creation of new megacities of Montreal, Québec City, Gatineau, Longueuil, Lévis, and the other three census metropolitan areas (CMA's) Chicoutimi-Jonquieré (Saguenay), Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières, as well as mergers of many smaller rural towns and villages. In the case of Montreal, all 28 municipalities on the island were merged into a new city of 1.8 million residents, while 8 suburban municipalities on the South Shore were molded into an enlarged City of Longueuil. In Québec City, thirteen municipalities were merged into the new city and across the St. Lawrence ten were merged into an expanded Lévis. Gatineau is the result of the merger of nine Outouais municipalities, Sherbrooke nine in the Estrie region, Saguenay seven and Trois-Rivières six.

The PQ Government, emotionally committed to the reform, failed to take account of public opinion and political realities at the local level. According to Louise Quesnel (2000):

> Municipal reorganisation processes share common characteristics. They challenge the incumbent politicians. They appear as threats to what locally has long been taken for granted or established as vested interests. Although they

> are structural and institutional in nature, they are seen as calling upon important values related to democracy and quality of urban life. Municipal reorganisation, then, represents a provocative change and is seen as such in all places.

It is widely recognized that the proposed consolidations cost the separatist Bloc Québécois several seats in the 2000 Canadian parliamentary elections (Dutrisac, 2000), ate into PQ support in Provincial by-elections, and contributed in no small way to the defeat of the PQ in the 2003 Provincial elections (Allan and Vengroff, 2003). In spite of some initial threats, it is highly

The findings of one of the most comprehensive studies of municipal problems and reform in Québec, Pacte 2000 (Bédard et al., 1999) outlined both the key problems and potential solutions that were to provide the raison d'être for the reform program. Among the main obstacles to the effectiveness of municipal governance noted are: 1) "inefficiencies in the organization of municipal governance and their cost to the public" including the "multiplicity of players" and the associated restraints on inter-municipal cooperation; 2) the structure of finance, especially given fiscal disparities between communities; and 3) local democracy and the increasing difficulty for citizens to understand and participate in complex decisions made by multiple local authorities and special purpose agencies (Bedard 1999). These contrast somewhat with the goals of municipal reform and amalgamations in neighboring Ontario where "the overall purpose was to reduce the size of government" (Kushner and Siegel 2003; 2005). Few analysts take seriously the arguments for greater efficiency in service delivery due to economies of scale resulting from mergers (Sancton, 2000; Parizeau, 1986; Vogel, 2003). According to Kushner and Siegel (2003), only very small savings were achieved in Ontario consolidations from the decrease in the number of elected officials.

In Québec, it was felt that the status quo could no longer prevail. In Montreal, for example, on the island alone there existed 27 different municipalities, each with its own council, set of constituents, interests and priorities. The patchwork of cities included some which were either entirely surrounded by the city of Montreal and/or which depended heavily on the central city for jobs, culture, transportation and many other areas of concern. In addition, there are multiple related municipalities, linked in various ways to the central

city in the wider metropolitan area on both the south and north shores of Montreal Island.

The Montreal Urban Community (MUC) was charged with the delivery of key area wide urban services, including police and transportation. Assessments by scholars who have studied the MUC vary from the very positive (Colcord, 1987: 116) to those that are rather critical of its achievements (Trépanier, 1998: 81; Sancton, 1985: 125). The supra-municipal Montreal Urban community (MUC or CUM) council had a complex indirect system of representation. All 55 Montreal councilors were members of the MUC council. Only the mayor represented other municipalities. Montreal outnumbered the suburban jurisdictions by 2-1. However, every decision had to be approved by concurrent majorities of Montreal and suburban representatives. This gave the suburbs a veto power, which they enhanced organizationally by forming the Conference of Montreal Suburban Mayors in 1975 (Trépanier, 1998: 77).

The Communauté Urbaine de Québec (CUQ) was not dominated by the central city in the way that the MUC was. Québec City had 11 of the 32 members. Charlesbourg, Sainte-Foy and Beauport had four members each. The other municipalities had a total of nine. Like Montreal's MUC, the CUQ provided indirect representation. All of its members had been elected mayors or councilors in their own jurisdictions (Hulbert, 1989: 190-191). Hulbert was highly critical of the CUQ, and quotes a provincial cabinet minister who described the body as a "bridge club" (Hulbert, 1989: 197).

The Outaouais Regional Community (CRO) was in a somewhat different situation. While it had the regional service and development planning functions, it was also intended as the Québec counterpart to the City of Ottawa. The CRO moved more quickly than the Montreal and Québec City bodies in developing and adopting a regional plan. Andrew (1997a: 469) notes the ongoing tension in the CRO "between urban and rural municipalities over the differing perceptions of the need for services, and over the question of distributing the costs of these services." In 1990, the Outaouais Urban Community (CUO) was established to take the place of the CRO. Urban and rural jurisdictions were separated. The CUO included Hull, Gatineau, Aylmer, Masson and Buckingham. A 1991 merger proposal, to create one city in Hull, Gatineau and Aylmer was defeated by the residents of the latter two cities. The presence of a substantial Anglophone minority in Aylmer was a contributing factor (Andrew, 1997b: 731-735).

III. THE IMPLICATIONS OF MERGERS

A. Fiscal Equity

While the existing supra-municipal organizations did reduce disparities between municipalities, their impact was limited. In a very well documented and insightful analysis of the key financial issues regarding municipal taxes, Marie-Claude Prémont (2001), argues that this competition among cities meant that the taxes on businesses were kept artificially low, thereby increasing the burden on ordinary citizens and further increasing inequality between cities. "Le cumul des distorsions et des inéquités tolérées et encouranées par la structure fiscale locale est assez inquiétant pour que l'on cesse de traiter chaque situation à la pièce en lui appliquant un baume qui ne fait que masquer ses pires effets"[2] (Prémont, 2001:777). At the individual level she argues that reliance by municipalities on a regressive property tax unfairly placed a higher burden for municipal services on the poor. The data she presents on a sample of ten municipalities in the Montreal CUM (urban community) before the merger clearly reinforce this point.

We have taken Prémont's data and calculated correlations (both Spearman and Pearson) for the tax rate in these ten municipalities and the average family income and the value of an average single-family dwelling. The correlations are very strong and negative. For the tax rate and family income the results are -.815 (rho) and -.891 (r). The same relationships for home values are -.819 (rho) and -.842 (r). Hence, the poorer the community the higher the pre-merger tax rate paid by the average citizen. On the other side of the coin, however, residents of the richer communities make the case that whatever the rate, the actual amounts of taxes they pay are considerably higher. Andrew Sancton (2004) responds that "the real issue here is whether residents of rich areas should be able to use their resources collectively to buy books (for libraries) and municipal recreational facilities."

In fact even though the tax rate in Westmount was considerably lower than that in the old city of Montreal, the average Westmount homeowner was paying more than double ($C6084) what a Montreal resident paid ($C2736) in municipal taxes. Once again, however, this amounts to only 3.5% of income in Westmount but 5.7% in Montreal. Hence, one important goal of the mergers was to equalize the tax rates and distribute the real costs of services in the municipal regions in a more equitable and progressive fashion. Since the mergers this

is in fact underway, although the actual process will take between five and ten years to implement fully. However, with the demergers the tax format has again changed and there have been significant immediate increases in the local property taxes. These were estimated to run on average 9.8% increases from 2005 to 2006 or about $336 per household in the 15 demerged cities on Montreal Island. There have been many complaints from citizens who are only now realizing the fiscal consequences of de-mergers.

Table One
Costs of De-Merger for the Average Household for 2006*

	Estimated tax increase increase for 2006 in $ as a reconstituted city	Estimated tax increase for 2006 as a reconstituted city
Baie d'Urfe	$438.00	14.80%
Beaconsfield	$471.00	13.40%
Cote St. Luc	$588.00	17.00%
Dollard des Ormeaux	$421.00	17.00%
Dorval	$230.00	9.60%
Hampstead	$36.00	0.50%
Kirkland	$230.00	7.30%
Montreal Est	$116.00	7.80%
Montreal west	$334.00	7.00%
Mt Royal	$441.00	7.90%
Pointe Claire	$68.00	2.70%
St. Anne de Bellevue	$204.00	8.70%
Senneville	$665.00	14.10%
Westmount	$364.00	4.70%
L'Ile Dorval	$430.00	14.50%
Average	$335.73	9.80%

*These figures only include current municipality and agglomeration expenses. They exclude additional reconstituted city service additions and the considerable increase associated with the original merger.

B. Collective Action Problems and Veto Players

In these "urban communities" the ability to collectively reach decisions, especially those regarding the sharing and / or redistribution of resources was tied to an un-manageable number of actors or potential actors. In fact, the tendency was to pose the interests of the many suburban communities against those of the central city and among cities to pit the richer against the poorer. In addition, how were citizens to make sense of the issues that affected them, much less to participate actively in their own governance in these multi-unit, multi-level institutions?

In the Province of Québec (outside of Montreal), prior to amalgamation there were still on average more than eight municipalities, each with its own separate jurisdiction, involved in area wide problems. As noted by Hooghe and Marks (2003:239) in order to "deal with the coordination dilemma...one strategy is to limit the number of autonomous actors who have to be coordinated by limiting the number of autonomous jurisdictions." They cite Scharpf's law: "As the number of affected parties increases...negotiated solutions incur exponentially rising and eventually prohibitive transaction costs" (Hooghe and Marks, 2003: 239).

In effect in Québec, the number of potential "veto players" (Tsebelis, 2002) at the municipal region level had to be dramatically cut if new more effective and efficient policies were to be implemented (Bedard 1999: 157; Trépanier, 2004). Tsebelis (2002: 19) defines veto players as "individuals or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status quo." It follows that a change in the status quo requires a unanimous decision of all veto players. There are essentially two types, institutional veto players, those formally established by laws such as the municipal councils, and "partisan veto players," those such as party coalitions "generated by the political game" (Tsebelis 2002: 19). Québec's pre-merger metropolitan areas were composed of a combination of multiple institutional veto players (represented by the individual councils and their mayors) and partisan veto players both within each council and in the larger urban context. Thus if we take the case of Longueuil, decisions affecting these south shore cities were subject to eight institutional veto players (the independent municipalities), multiple partisan veto players within each municipal council, and on certain policy issues (e.g., mass transit), the larger urban community of Montreal and its various institutional and partisan players. Further-

more, many of the cities in the same metropolitan area were in direct competition with each other, with the property tax serving as "a cause and an instrument of this competition" (Bedard, 1999: 159; Prémont, 2001). Externalities generated by local policies were rarely considered although their impact on neighboring cities could be quite profound. Even though these municipalities could be subjected to Provincial authority, the Province was generally reluctant to get involved in day to day decision making at the municipal and inter-municipal levels, thus leaving each municipality in the position of a veto player on municipal region issues.

In sum, the "win-set" of the status quo, "the set of outcomes that can defeat the status quo...the set of policies that can replace the existing one" (Tsebelis 2002: 21) was in Québec's municipal agglomerations very small or maybe nonexistent. From the perspective of the Québec Government the situation was managerially untenable. Change in the status quo was at best painfully slow and in practice nearly impossible to achieve. Given the demands of global competition and trade, employment, service delivery, equity, and unity the Provincial government stepped in to cut back the number of veto players and make new initiatives possible.

C. Democratic Governance

How do municipal mergers affect the policy outcomes related to initiation of change in municipal regions? As can be seen in Tables Two and Two A the functional distribution of authority between the province, the municipalities the new "boroughs/arrondissements" and the agglomerations creates a new combination of institutional and partisan actors in terms of intergovernmental relations. How does this affect the issue of democratic governance?

An examination of the data on both administrative and political representation on the new mega-city councils may provide some insights. First, as expected, the number of elected officials has been dramatically reduced. In the eight new mega-cities considered here the 791 elected officials before the mergers were significantly reduced to 246, a decrease of 69% (for similar findings in Ontario see Kushner and Siegel 2003; 2005). Most municipal council members are also members of the local "arrondissement" councils in the six mega-cities where these units exist. However, in Montreal there were an additional 31 "arrondissement" councilors (Collin and Robertson 2005) a number that is now 41 since the demergers.

Table Two: Division of Municipal Responsibilities in Québec Mega-cities

Division of Responsibilities between Québec, the Municipalities, the Boroughs, Agglomerations' and Reconstituted Cities* (* after de-merger in Montreal, Quebec City and Longueuil)

Function/Service	**Québec**	Merged **Municipalities**	Merged **Boroughs**	*After de-Merger Agglomeration	*After de-merger Reconstitute Municipalitie
Health & Social Services	XXXXX				
Social solidarity	XXXXX				
Housing	XXXXX	XXXXX		XXXXX	
Education	XXXXX				
Roads	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Public Transportation	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Police	XXXXX	XXXXX		XXXXX	
Fire Services		XXXXX		XXXXX	
Drinking Water		XXXXX		XXXXX	
Water Purification		XXXXX		XXXXX	
Leisure and Culture	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Parks and Natural Environment	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Urban Planning and Development	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Permits		XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Garbage Collection			XXXXX		XXXXX
Economic Development	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Libraries		XXXXX			XXXXX
Taxing Authority	XXXXX	XXXXX		XXXXX	XXXXX (Limited)

Sherbrooke has three additional councilors. In other cities having "arrondissements" their representatives are limited to the municipal councilors from that area. If we add these to the mix of elected officials we still see a reduction of over 500 representatives. There was a modest increase again after several de- merged cities were officially reconstituted and their new councils and mayors elected in November 2005 (officially taking office in January 2006).

Table Two A

Urban Agglomeration Powers
Services under the jurisdiction of the urban agglomeration council
as foreseen by Acts 9 and 75

- Property assessment
- Municipal waterways
- Emergency preparedness
- Fire safety services
- Police services
- 9-1-1 emergency centre
- Implementation of fire coverage and public safety plans
- Municipal court
- Social housing
- Assistance for the homeless
- Waste disposal and conversion
- Implementation of waste management plans
- Water supply, except local water mains
- Water purification, except local water mains
- Public transit
- Streets and arterial roads
- Economic promotion, including tourism, outside the limits of a municipality part of the agglomeration
- Tourist reception
- Industrial parks
- Any location or depot for snow removed from partner municipalities
- Arts councils
- Any other responsibilities formerly under the jurisdiction of the urban community in the event that the city took the place of the latter, including the land use and development plan, emergency plan, fire coverage plan, and the local development centre
- Equipment, infrastructures and activities defined to be in the collective interest in the appendix of Act 9
- The following economic development elements:
  - local centres of development
  - convention centres
  - all ports or airports
  - railroad sidings
  - all help intended specifically for a business

A critical question is the degree to which the various component municipalities of the new mega-cities are represented politically and administratively on the mega-city organs of decision-making. Of the 86 pre-merger municipalities in the eight new mega-cities, 61 (71%) are represented by a councilor from their previous city government

Table Three – New Qué Mega-cities-Old and New Councils*

Merged Québec Mega-cities - Councils 2004	Size of Council Plus mayor	Arrond. Boroughs	Arrond Reps.	% Incumbents	Total # Cities	# of cities represented	#elected officials before mergers	change in # elected main council
Montreal	73	27	104	79	28	19	278	-205
Gatineau	18	0	0	83	5	5	48	-30
Québec City	40	8	39	59	13	9	124	-84
Trois Rivieres	17	0	0	89	6	4	52	-35
Sherbrooke	20	6	23	55	9	6	69	-49
Longueuil	43	7	42	86	8	7	85	-42
Lévis	15	3	15	64	10	7	74	-59
Saguenay	20	3	19	70	7	4	61	-41
Total	246	54	242		86	61	791	-545

on the mega-city council. This includes virtually all of the larger cities and representatives of an overwhelming proportion of each mega-city's population. Thus, those elected to the mega-city councils demonstrate a great deal of continuity with the past and bring with them a considerable repository of experience and knowledge of their respective communities. On average about three quarters of the city councilors in the mega-cities were previously serving members of the city councils or were mayors of one of the constituent cities. Since the electoral system for mega-city councils is plurality in single member districts (SMP) this is not very surprising. Furthermore, it is clear that for most executive committees of the larger councils the leadership seeks some balance. In Longueuil for example, each of the seven "arrondissements" had one councilor on the executive committee. For Montreal and Longueuil demergers have brought some change. By and large, however, familiar faces in the mayor's office and on the city councils represent most of the reconstituted cities.

Administrative Leadership

At the administrative level, like the political, the number of leaders, service directors in this case, has been dramatically reduced

Table 4

Merged Québec Mega-cities - Administrative Department Heads

Merged Québec Mega-cities-Administrative Department Heads

Municipality	# of Offices	Arrond	Arrond. Direct	% incumbents	Total # Cities	# cities represented Among service dir.
Montreal	10	27	27		28	
Gatineau	9	0	0	67	5	3
Québec City	11	8	8	73	13	4
Trois-Rivieres	10	0	0	90	6	3
Sherbrooke	9	6	6	78	9	2
Longueuil	9	7	7	78	8	4
Lévis	9	3	3	67	10	4
Saguenay	9	3	3	78	7	3

even though the overall number of managerial personnel has not necessarily been significantly cut. Some municipal administrators have been reassigned to other service functions or to mid level positions in the larger new mega-city bureaucracies. Overall in the eight new mega-cities 667 municipal service directors have been reduced by 89% to only 76 or 130 if "arrondissement" directors are counted. Again, as a result of the de-mergers this number will rise slightly as the bureaucratic organs of the re-constituted cites re-emerge, albeit in a more limited form consistent with their more circumscribed functions.

On average better than three quarters (76%) of the new city service heads are drawn from among department heads in the component cities of these agglomerations. When we consider the newly merged cities other than Montreal, about two in five of the component cities (39.7%) have one of their former city service directors on the new top management team. Thus, the top administrators in the new mega-cities are very experienced, familiar with the areas in which they are working, and necessarily tied to the goal of mega-city success. The downside is that some of the smaller towns have

been shut out in this regard. Furthermore, the competition for these limited top director positions produced some internal ill will and service disruptions, further compounded in Montreal and Longueuil by the reassignment of some of these same people to the reconstituted city administrations.

Gender Representation

In Canada, as in many other western democracies, women have had more success in attaining elective office at the local as opposed to the national levels.[3] The representation of women or changes in that representation at both the elected and managerial levels is yet another indicator of the impact of municipal consolidations on democratic governance and representation. Women held 170 (21%) of the elected council seats on the pre-merger municipalities in the eight new mega-cities. On the mega-city councils, women hold only 67 seats or on average 22.8% of the elected positions per council. Hence, in overall percentage terms women are as well or better represented on councils as they were before the mergers. In five of the mega-cities the percent of women actually increased after the mergers. On one council, Sherbrooke, there was no change and on two, Québec City and Trois-Riviéres there was a decline. At the level of the second tier, the "arrondissements" and "arrondissement" councils, women are well represented. In the 27 "arrondissements" in Montreal (prior to the de-merger) nine of the 31 (29%) "arrondissement" councilors were women and of the 27 "arrondissement" mayors a third (9) were women. All indications are that it will remain about the same or even increase in the future. In fact the results of the November 6, 2005 elections in the reconstituted cities on Montreal Island put four (37.5%) mayoral positions and 23 council seats (25%) in the hands of women. In Longueuil and the demerged municipalities of Longueuil 38% and 21% of the council seats respectively went to women. In the seven remaining megacities thirty-nine (27.3%) of the council seats went to women. Furthermore, women candidates captured the mayor's seat in both Quebec City and Levis. Although these figures for women's representation in the mega-cities may seem somewhat modest, they are quite impressive both in comparison with other smaller municipalities in Quebec and in other provinces. Province wide there are 1,117 women serving on Quebec municipal councils. This still means that women hold less than one in six (16.1%) of the council seats.

The same "representative" tendency is not seen in women's role as administrative department heads in the new mega-cities. Under the older cities women held 110 positions as heads of municipal service departments. Under the merged cities they hold only seven such positions. On average the 15.6% of service heads in the pre-merger cities has been reduced to 9.7%, a reduction of more than a third (in percentage terms) in the new city administrations. This represents both real and percentage declines in seven out of eight cities, Québec City being the lone exception. However, even there when we examine the current organization chart, women hold only three of the thirty-nine (7.7%) top and mid-level management posts. In Montreal the comparable figure is 11 out of 50 (22% -this excludes 3 vacant positions) of top and mid level director posts. If we add in the "arrondissement" directors, this figure drops to 16.9%. The comparable figure is one of thirteen in Gatineau (7.7%) one of fifteen (6.7% in Lévis) and none of the eighteen in Longueuil. This will change slightly in the Montreal area in the reconstituted cities where some women likely will be reassigned from greater Montreal to administrative posts in the new city bureaucracies.

Although many of the former department heads who are women are still employed by municipal governments, their top management/leadership positions have largely disappeared. On the Island of Montreal alone this represents a decline of 52 women department heads. Although it is possible that future promotions may serve to rectify this situation, there is no guarantee of this. One confounding factor is the persistence of agency stereotyping, a factor which limits women managerial personnel to certain agencies (e.g. directors of the secretarial staff, communications) and keeps them out of others (e.g. Public Safety and Public Works –see for example Gidengil and Vengroff, 1997). Hence when the mergers took place experienced women were concentrated in a few key areas and basically competed with each other for a limited number of positions. There may be opportunities for a few women to serve as department heads in the reconstituted municipalities, although with more limited powers and functions than before merger.

What perhaps is more significant is the fact that there were 103 fewer elected women officeholders and over 100 fewer women department heads immediately after the mergers than before. In essence, the pool of experienced elected women available to run for higher office may have declined significantly even though the per-

centage among actual officeholders has increased slightly. The painfully slow growth in equity in municipal administration has clearly suffered a setback as a result of mergers. In addition, on the three transition committees planning the return of the reconstituted cities in Montreal, Longueuil and Quebec City each has only one female member out of ten, seven and six respectively. Furthermore, on the all-important executive committees of the new councils women are again underrepresented, generally holding only one or two seats on these committees. For example, in Longueuil, Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières only one member of the executive council in each is a woman. Montreal had three women on the Executive Council, out of eleven regular members (plus the mayor) and nine associate members. Since demerger and with the 2005 elections completed there are now only two women on the Montreal executive committee and six of the eight associate members are women. Clearly men hold the most important positions, with the two women assigned to the environment and recreation and sports portfolios. On the plus side there are several newly elected women mayors in megacities such as

Table Five

Merged Québec Mega-cities - Gender Representation on Councils

Merged Québec Mega-cities-Gender Representation on Councils

Municipality	% women on old councils	#women on old councils	#women on new councils	%women on new council	change in % women (new-old%)
Montreal	21.2	59	28	26.9	5.7
Gatineau	16.7	8	4	22.2	5.7
Québec City	26.6	33	7	17.5	-9.1
Trois-Rivieres	21.2	11	3	17.6	-3.6
Sherbrooke	21.7	15	5	21.7	0.0
Longueuil	24.7	21	12	27.9	3.2
Lévis	20.3	15	5	33.3	13.0
Saguenay	13.1	8	3	15.0	1.90
Total		170	67		
average	20.69			22.76	

Table 5A

Gender Representation on Montreal City and
Demerged Councils in the Montreal Agglomeration

	Montreal City	Demerged Cities (Montreal Island)	Longueuil	Demerged Longueuil Cities	Remaining 7 Megacities	All Quebec Municipal
Female Mayors* (arrondissements)	6 (31.6%)	4 (26.7%)	---	1 (12.5%)	2 (28.6%)	73 (6.6%)
Female City Councilors	11 (24.4%)	23 (25%)	10 (38%)	7 (20.6%)	39 (27.3%)	1,117 (16.1%)
Women Arrondissement Councilors	16 (9%)	---	---		0!	----
Total Women elected officials	33 (31.4%)	27 (25.2%)	10 (38%)	8 (21.0%)	41 (27.3%)	1,190 (14.8%)

* not including the mayors of Montreal or Longueuil who are male

**in Montreal does not include Arrondissement mayors who also serve on the council.

Gatineau, Laval, Levis, Quebec City, Saguenay, Sherbrooke, Trois Rivieres

! There are 4 arrondissement councilors in Sherbrooke who do not serve on the municipal council. All four are male.

Quebec and Levis. It is too early to tell whether these changes will have an effect on the number of gender related issues which make it on to the municipal agenda, but that will likely be the case.

D. Decentralization in the Mega-cities

Structurally, to what degree can democratic representation and participation grow, flourish and be maintained in light of municipal mergers? Does the effort to minimize the number of elected officials at the municipal level mean that representation, accountability and popular input must be compromised (Kushner and Siegel 2003)? What mechanisms are there for geographic areas to be represented on the new councils? To what extent have the new sub- municipal units, the "arrondissements/boroughs" and other mechanisms such as local municipal service centers been maintained and expanded?

(1) The Boroughs ("Arrondissements")

This emphasis on the democratic participatory aspect of mega-city governance is reinforced when we examine the "arrondissement" level. Of the eight new mega-cities, six of them have created local "arrondissements" together with "arrondissement" councils. There

Table Six

Merged Québec Mega-cities - Gender Representation in top Admin. Director Positions

Municipality	% women old admin directors	# women old admin directors	#women new admin directors	%women new admin directors	change in % women (new-old%)
Montreal	20.6	53	1	14.3	-6.3
Gatineau	20.5	8	1	11.1	-9.4
Québec City	10.4	11	2	18.8	8.4
Trois-Rivieres	11.6	5	0	0	-11.6
Sherbrooke	18.8	9	1	11.1	-7.7
Longueuil	10.6	7	0	0	-10.6
Lévis	13.6	8	1	11.1	-2.6
Saguenay	18.8	9	1	11.1	-7.7
Total		110	7		
average	15.61	13.75	0.88	9.69	-5.92

Table Six A

The Largest Merged Quebec Mega-cities - Gender Representation in Mid-Level Admin. Director Positions

Municipality	#mid-upper level Admin Directors	# women New Mid level Admin. Directors	%women mid level
Montreal	43	10	23.26*
Montreal Arrondissement directors	27	2	7.41*
Quebec City	28	1	3.57

- *When central admin and "arrondissement" directors are combined the figure is 17.14% for Montreal. The 8 "arrondissement" directors are included in the calculation for Quebec City.
- Sources: Ville de Montreal Organigramme Mars, 2003; Ville de Québec Organigramme, 2003.

is a great deal of variation in size and the ratio of population to councilor between "arrondissements", even in the same city (Trépanier, 2004; Collin and Robertson, 2005). In many cases they serve to establish a direct link between the elected councilors and their respective constituencies. These local councils review policy implementation, identify specific problems in their home areas, and act as sounding boards for the local population before the larger

council. Some typical examples include Notre Dame de Grace (NDG) and Mont Royal. The "arrondissement" council for NDG in Montreal complained about the snow removal in their area, catching the attention of the Mayor. In the borough of Plateau Mont Royal, citizens voiced their concerns about noise levels, bicycles on the sidewalks, and the city's planning process. These complaints tend to be very local in nature but directly related to concerns of the average citizen.

The "arrondissement" councils also oversee implementation of a variety of service functions assigned to them, although there is some variation in how this is done. In Québec City "arrondissement" functions, ranging from local libraries to traffic problems to building permits are handled at this level. Regular public meetings are held and the councilors play an important role in providing constituent services, especially in terms of interventions with municipal administrators and service providers. At the lowest level Quebec City has established 36 "quartiers," each represented by its elected municipal councilor who holds local meetings and attends to local constituent interests and needs almost as would be expected of a legislator at the provincial or national level. In Lévis the arrondisement offices are in the old city halls of three of the merged cities. These offices provide for most of the day-to-day municipal services that require direct citizen contact. To further bring municipal services down to the local level, Lévis has established nine "centres de services de proximité" (local municipal service centers). In Saguenay the council has emphasized that "peu importe l'arrondissement où vous demeurez, nous continuons à vous offrir des services de proximité" (no matter which "arrondissement" you live in, we will continue to provide you with local neighborhood services).

Two mega-cities, Gatineau and Trois-Rivières, have opted not to have "arrondissements" In these cities numerous local municipal service centers have been established to provide for citizen needs. Gatineau's leaders decided against establishing "arrondissements" because they felt that they would detract from municipal unity. "Arrondissements ont parfois créé des divisions et des divergences, principalement entre les 'arrondissements' d'une ex-ville et les autres municipalities fussionées" (Ville de Gatineau, 2002). They argued that "arrondissements" only introduce another unnecessary layer of government between the citizen and her/his municipal council, detracting from direct contact between them. Gatineau now has

opened a special 3-1-1 telephone service for citizen complaints, comments and suggestions. Although we do not have direct evidence of citizen opinion, similar service centers created in Chatham-Kent in Ontario have been very popular and "universally praised" (Kushner and Siegel 2003:1049). The loss of local identity, however, did produce some resentment and opposition to the mayor that manifested itself in the 2005 elections.

The boroughs have carved out a niche for themselves in the planning process, and there seem to be mechanisms for broader viewpoints. One example of this would be the meetings in the borough of Beaconsfield-Baie d'Urfe in the spring of 2005. The subject of these meetings was a major development project, which is said to intrude on the island's decreasing green space. The residents of the area voiced typical residential concerns, such as the amount and regulation of traffic. At the same time, they offered to purchase a significant amount of property to preserve as wildlife habitat. Environmental groups from the wider Montreal area (such as the Green Coalition) testified in support of local concerns at the meeting. At the same time, officials of Montreal City Planning and the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs were present, seemingly to provide a broader viewpoint. Still there was, rightly or wrongly, a sense of loss of autonomy by the locale since the merger into greater Montreal.

The boroughs have carved out a political role for themselves as well. This is most clearly evidenced by the lengthy monthly meeting in Cote St. Luc, Hampstead, Montreal West in 2005. These three cities all voted to demerge, and this meeting was filled with prospective office- seekers from the three cities. All seemed eager to prove that if elected, they would improve traffic congestion, public safety, and the like. It was also clear that many of these problems require coordination with other boroughs, and that the current councilors were informally working with other boroughs to alleviate common problems.

(2) Citizens and the "Arrondissement" Councils

The "arrondissement" councils hold regular public meetings each month, usually on set days such as the evening of the first Monday of the month in Montreal. In addition to the council members the council secretary and chief administrator also attend. The councils vary in size depending on the population but average about five councilors. In the smaller "arrondissements" these

councilors are elected area wide while in the larger "arrondissements" they are chosen in specific single member districts (wards). The "arrondissement" councilors in the Montreal area include both those specifically elected to the "arrondissement" council (31) and the city councilors elected from that area (Collin and Robertson, 2005). In other mega-cities only city coucillors serve as the arrondissment council. The exception is Sherbrooke which also has four specific "arrondissement" councilors, two each for the small towns of Brompton and Lennoxville, to insure that there are three elected representatives on each "arrondissement" council, even for those areas with only one city councilor. The "arrondissement" council meetings include a regular printed agenda that in most cases also is available to the public on- line. In addition to the councilors and their staffs, representatives of the various service units of the city attend the meetings, especially when issues related to their areas of competence appear on the agenda.

The meetings are quite collegial in those "arrondissements" in which all of the councilors represent the same municipal political party or are independents but can become quite contentious, partisan and polemical in those in which the councilors represent contending parties or party factions. This takes the form of heated discussion and criticisms of municipal policies and administration as well as oversight and demands for full transparency. This may carry over in the form of a question period at the end of the meeting when councilors may pose questions to each other and to the administrative representatives.

There is generally a reserved period of 30 minutes for questions from citizens during each meeting. Citizens can sign up to ask questions before the start of the meeting. They are usually allowed 2-3 minutes in which to pose their questions. The councilors then respond and/or request clarification from administrative staff in attendance. Often there is some flexibility built into the process so that all of the questions can be responded to, even if it runs over the thirty minutes formally allocated (up to 45 minutes is not uncommon). However, there is some variation and some of the meetings observed cut off questions precisely in the time allocated. Usually the number of questions and attendance is fairly light unless there is an especially controversial issue on the agenda. In the meetings we monitored citizen attendance varied from around 15 all the way up to about 100. The number of questions posed in these meetings

ranged from none to 19 (averaging 8.6). In the 17 "arrondissements" in which we collected data at meetings, the questions and issues were generally concerned with local infrastructure, especially leisure activities such as parks and facilities for children. In general, the citizens ask questions related to the development of their district. The most commonly posed questions of general interest included:

- improvement of the infrastructure
- better service for street cleaning and garbage collection
- social housing
- transport
- regulation of traffic circulation (speed limit, reduction of the noise);
- public and personal safety
- parks
- regulations related to pets, particularly dogs
- the opening of new businesses

Although most of the questions involve local community issues, more purely personal issues are also frequently raised. In both cases the typical response is to refer the issue to the responsible administrator or service for consideration directly or to ask the affected citizen to contact these individuals on their own.

Even in the most culturally diverse "arrondissements" attendance and direct participation by visible minorities is relatively low. Women, as an underrepresented group in politics were well represented among attendees posing questions with 41 questioners (39%). In our observed "arrondissement" council meetings in Montreal, only four of the 106 citizens who asked questions were visible minorities (Latinos, those of African descent, none from East Asian or middle Eastern backgrounds). Minority and immigrant groups tend to work through their ethnic or other NGO associations and are represented at the meetings by spokespersons for those organizations. Typical of the participating organizations observed are the Resident's Association of CDN-NDG ; Coalition Romero (CDN), an association of Salvadorian immigrants ; a dog owners Association (Westmount) ; the Quebec Chilean Association (Mount- Royal Plateau). The Union representing municipal blue-collar workers is also a regular participant in "arrondissement" meetings.

There are few elected councilors of color or representatives of specific ethnically distinct recent immigrant groups. For example in the Cotes des Neiges-Nôtre Dame de Grace "arrondissement" nearly

half (45%) of the residents are immigrants. Yet among the six "arrondissement" councilors none are themselves immigrants or members of visible minorities and only one is a woman. This may discourage participation by citizens of color.

Even though popular participation in council meetings is relatively low, community groups may still have an influence over important local policies. For example, in the "arrondissement" of Ville Marie, a large downtown area, residents were able to put pressure on the borough council to stop Concordia University from proceeding with construction of a new faculty of management building which would exceed the regular city height limits of 80 meters. This was especially significant because the ward council had already approved the necessary easement. As a result the urban planning officials and the University have gone back to the drawing board to modify the plans consistent with the existing limits. The fact that this is an election year may have had an impact on the change of heart among the Ville Marie council members.

On the down side, although the "arrondissements" were finally granted budgets, they depend entirely on the megacity council for them and have no taxing authority. Montreal Mayor Tremblay, a strong advocate for decentralization stated definitively that the "arrondissements" would not be given any legal authority to raise their own revenue through local taxes or fees (Tremblay 2004). Furthermore their official "legal personality" rests in the hands of the megacity and would always remain so even though the city might use its authority in that regard on their behalf. There are a growing number of small battles between city and "arrondissement" councils over who should pay for day-to-day services like the repair of potholes in Montreal roads (CBC, 2004). Recently in the Côte-de-Neiges-NDG the borough mayor argued that the budget allocated by the city is $5 million ($C) short of the basic service needs. In Plateau-Mont- Royal borough local councilors are requesting an additional $4.9 million from the city for a local environmental project and raising local fees to help compensate. In Rivière-des-Prairies-Pointe- aux–Trembles the borough council could not pass its budget because the newly elected councilors argued that they had not been adequately consulted in the process. According to Andrew Sancton (2004: 30) "whether such decentralization within the framework of a single large municipal corporation will actually work – or be given the opportunity to work – is still far from clear." Recent allegations of

corruption at the "arrondissement" level may serve to further limit discussion of their future financial independence.

(3) The De-merger Game

The Liberal party took the position in the 2003 campaign that while it supported the newly created merged cities, municipal consolidations should be subject to the popular will of the people concerned and that "defusion" (de-merger or the term "démembrement" used in the anti- de-merger campaign) should be an option which could be presented in local referenda. While 58% of the population of Québec expressed opposition to such referenda (Léger, 2003), significant portions of the electorate in recently merged cities were strongly favorable to an expression of the popular will on what was, for them, a very salient issue. As noted above, these pockets of resistance to municipal mergers decreased confidence in the PQ, cost them support among local leaders, and in 2003 contributed to Liberal wins in some closely contested constituencies and produced dramatic changes in others (Allan and Vengroff, 2005).

The level of support for de-mergers is a good indicator of the status of the new megacities in the eyes of the public. As we have seen, the PQ was severely punished by voters in some of the merged cities for having taken action without benefit of consultation with the affected public. However, it should be kept in mind that these reactions were largely based on emotional ties, dire predictions and misperceptions current before the mergers had much chance to take effect. These fears were fueled by local, particularly small town and suburban elected officials who saw themselves as losers in the merger process.

The strong personal ties Quebeckers maintain with their local governments were mirrored in pockets of on-going opposition to the municipal consolidations. A post election poll of Montrealers (Léger, 2003) showed that they were evenly split on whether there should be de- merger referenda (45% in favor, 47% opposed). While overall a slim majority of Montreal Island residents said they would vote against de-merger, residents of the former suburban towns were in favor by a slim majority (47%-43%). When broken down by former suburban city, majorities in half of them favored de-merger and slim pluralities were in favor in several others. Even in the Outaouais, where support for mergers was seen as relatively secure, a survey conducted in April 2004 in the mega-city of Gatineau, a full two and

a half years after its creation, showed that only 45% of the citizens identified with the new city. Outside of the old city of Gatineau large majorities of citizens, ranging from 58% in Hull to 68% in Aylmer, still identified with their former cities (Duquette, 2004). The recent electoral defeat of the Gatineau mayor reflects this latent dissatisfaction.

A CRIC study (2004) found that by a wide margin Québec residents felt they get more for their money from municipal governments than from either Provincial or Federal governments. Yet, only 12 percent of those surveyed said that they trust the local government to deliver important programs that affect them and only 28 percent of Québeckers feel that municipal government needs more power, the latter opinion group at least partially reflecting the reaction to the recent mergers. Ontarians on the other hand are twice as likely as Québeckers to see the need for more power for local government (56% to 28% respectively). The same relationship holds when we compare Toronto and Montreal (60% to 29% respectively). According to Andrew Parkin, "the different view taken by Montrealers may reflect two factors: the traditional tendency of Québeckers to seek greater powers for their province; and the still contentious status of the 'mega-city' of Montreal to which a number of suburbs were amalgamated through provincial legislation" (CRIC, 2004). Hence we see additional evidence that the new cities have not been fully accepted by all of their residents.

The National Assembly passed the de-merger legislation, Bill 9, in final form on December 17, 2003 after much rancorous debate and amendment. Bill 9 provides the opportunity for the old municipalities that have disappeared in "forced" mergers to launch a process that would reverse much of the process and restore them to some of their former status as separate, independent municipalities. The bill laid out several stages for the process: 1) first is the contracting out of "independent" assessments of the costs, impact on services, advantages and disadvantages of de-merger in the eight new mega-cities (and 34 other recently created smaller agglomerations). These contracts were let and reports were submitted in March 2004; 2) Once these studies were completed they were made available to the public; 3) Those seeking to bring about a de-merger had to obtain signatures of 10% of the registered voters in their former city on a de-merger referendum petition during an extremely brief period running between May 2 and June 15, 2004; 4) Campaigns for and against de-

mergers were financed by the Québec government; 5) The actual referenda, in those former cities in which sufficient valid signatures were obtained took place on June 20, 2004.

For a de-merger referendum to succeed the results had to be "clear and just." To some extent these referenda criteria were designed by the Liberal Government in Québec City so as not to set a precedent for possible future Québec independence referenda. The rule underlying this required that a simple majority (50% +1) of those voting vote in favor of de-merger. However, an additional criterion requiring a supra majority was applied. Those voting in favor had to constitute a minimum of 35% of the registered voters in the old city. Given a typical turnout of about 50% in municipal elections, for victory the de-merger forces had to obtain 70% of the votes cast and or mobilize voters and dramatically increase normal turnout rates. This margin declines as turnout increases, so that with a turnout of 60% a 59% vote in favor would be required for passage. At 70% turnout or higher, a 50% + 1 vote is all that is required since that would satisfy the 35% rule automatically. While this voting formula raised a relatively high barrier, it was not a totally insurmountable one in those municipalities where anti-merger sentiment remained high and de-merger organizational efforts began early.

Not surprisingly the reaction of officials in many of the mega-cities to the de-merger legislation was strongly negative. In Gatineau, organized opposition to the original merger tended to be relatively weak. The mayor pointed out that in 2001 across the river in Ontario eleven cities were merged to form the new mega-city of Óttawa without any referendum. He argued that not only are services better now but 94% of the citizens of the new Gatineau pay lower taxes than before the merger. The Gatineau Council went ahead and unanimously endorsed the position taken by the Québec Municipal Union (UMQ) in support of maintaining the territorial integrity of the new cities (Ducharme 2003) and of opposition to de-merger referenda. In Québec City the argument was made that the need for region wide services makes the merger of the 13 cities that constituted the CUQ (Québec Urban Community) a very effective solution. In Montreal, where the mayor and his council majority were elected largely from suburban constituencies (including many anti-merger politicians in the coalition), some merger – de-merger conflict persisted. The mayor attempted to weaken the rationale for a return to the past by

emphasizing the role of the "arrondissements" and proposing an even greater level of decentralization.

Some of the punch may have been taken out of the de-merger movement by Law 9 which provided for many common services to be maintained centrally even after a de-merger takes place. The fact is that de-merged cities would be put in a very weak position regarding the many services that will remain with the so-called agglomeration even after de-merger (see Table 2A). The costs of the de-mergers, the subject of the mandated commissioned studies, were also expected to have some impact when hypothesized tax implications became clearer to voters. The extension of the tax equalization processes from five to ten years was designed to dampen the fervor of mega-city opposition. None of these had much impact on citizens who were very skeptical of Government claims.

The key question was whether citizens perceived that they had experienced negative changes in the quality of services, or in their location and accessibility to those services. Henry Aubin, an opponent of mergers, charged that services provided by mega-city Montreal were slowly declining in quality (Aubin, 2004C). However, a recent survey found that on at least one important indicator, the amount of money spent on snow removal, most of the merged cities in Montreal still budgeted about the same amounts for this highly visible service as before the merger. It is unclear whether there is a change in service delivery or even in perceptions more broadly defined (Gyulai, 2004A). Survey data indicated that even in the suburbs of Montreal only 36% of the citizens felt that the situation deteriorated since the merger (Léger, 2003). In only two of the towns, Pointe-Claire and Westmount, did a majority of those polled say that conditions had deteriorated since the merger. In one special case the citizens of Westmount were especially upset about the "invasion" of their public library by people who in the past were "non-residents" and hence unable to compete for books and space. It is these types of seemingly minor irritants that aroused support for demerger.

The creation of "arrondissement" councils and local service centers provided the opportunities for local input that some citizens claimed to desire and feared would be lost after the merger. However, David Siegel, a student of mergers in Ontario, indicated that although interest in borough councils was initially high in some Ontario cities, when it became clear over time that they had little budgetary authority, public participation dropped off dramatically

(Siegel, 2004). The formation of de-merger committees in many merged cities in Quebec was consistent with this interpretation.

Of the 86 cities merged to form the eight new mega-cities, "de-merger" forces managed to obtain sufficient signatures of voters on the referenda registries (10% of registered voters) in six of the eight, affecting a total of 51 merged cities. In the referenda that followed, among this group of cities 37 (73%) received majority votes in favor of de-merger but only 21 (41%) succeeded in meeting the more stringent conditions required by Bill 9 (a simple majority of votes cast which also had to be the equivalent of 35% + 1 of the registered voters) to reemerge as separate entities once again.

In the City of Montreal 22 former cities participated in the de-merger referenda, and 15 succeeded. In six of the remaining seven, although a majority of voters cast their ballots in favor of "defusion," the yes vote did not rise to the level of 35% of the registered voters and thus failed. In Longueuil on Montreal's south shore five cities qualified for referenda, four succeeded, and the remaining one, although obtaining majority support for de-merger, did not reach the required threshold. Hence, both of the two newly created mega-cities in the Montreal region were seriously challenged. Of the 27 cities holding referenda, the demerger forces obtained a majority vote in 25. Montreal suffered an important defeat with towns representing 13% of the population voting to reconstitute their municipalities and nearly 40% of Longueuil's citizens and four of the eight municipalities leaving the merged city.

Although most of the departing cities in Montreal are well-to do west island Anglophone strongholds primarily seeking to preserve their historic identities, the overwhelmingly working class Francophone city of East Montreal also opted to leave. Montreal Est, although predominantly working class, is home to oil refineries and some heavy industry that gives it a very strong local tax base. Hence, local revenues make it possible for Montreal Est to maintain a very high level and quality of services with relatively low local taxation. De-merging was clearly in the local economic self interest of its residents and the companies based there.

In the suburban but heavily Francophone south shore the Longueil mega-city suffered a devastating defeat with cities representing nearly half its population voting to de-merge, a clear measure of the dissatisfaction of the populace. The Longueuil mayor's own town and the site of the current city administration voted to leave the

agglomeration. Subsequently Mayor Olivier, faced with a revolt in his own party, was pushed into resigning.

In the Quebec City area both mega-cities survived largely intact. There the referenda received majority votes in only five of the twelve referenda cities and succeeded in only two relatively small towns (both of which, given the results in their neighboring cities, are now having second thoughts). Seven of the cities voted in the majority no. In Levis all the referenda failed although majorities voted in favor in two of the four referenda cities. The tremendous success of the mayors in these mega-cities can be attributed to strong organization and the effective "no" campaigns they waged. Rather than staying at home, as was the case in some cities, "no" voters were strongly encouraged to participate en masse. Even so turnout in the Quebec region was about the same as the provincial average. This is indica-

Table Seven De-merger Referenda in the Mega-cities

Municipality	Total # Cities	Cities Qualifying for Referenda	Successful Referenda	majority Vote for Defusion
Montreal	*28*	22	15	21
Gatineau	5	4	0	2
Québec City	13	12	2	5
Trois Rivieres	6	0	0	0
Sherbrooke	9	4	0	2
Longueuil	8	5	4	5
Lévis	10	4	0	2
Saguenay	7	0	0	0
Total	86	51	21	37

Table Eight

Total Municipalities Holding De-merger Referenda in Quebec

Total cities holding* Referenda	de-merger succeeded (majority vote = 35% of registered voters)	Majority vote for de-merger but de-merger failed	Majority vote against de-merger	*Total de-merger* failed
89	31	27	31	58
100%	34.8%	30.3%	34.8%	65.2%

tive of the failure on the part of the de-merger forces to mobilize supporters as well as the general satisfaction with the new city. The final result may have actually strengthened Quebec City Mayor L'Allier and weakened the opposition remaining on the council even though the mayor acknowledged the need to bring the people of the western boroughs, particularly Saint-Foy, back in. All four referenda in neighboring Levis, Quebec City's counterpart to Longueuil, went down to defeat. However, the leader of the demerger forces in St. Foy was elected mayor in 2005, following the retirement of Mayor L'Allier.

In the federal capital region's referenda in all four former cities qualifying for the vote, including the all important core cities of Hull and Aylmer, the referenda failed. They did produce majorities, but not equivalent to 35% of the registered voters in two. Sherbrooke in the "Estrie" remained completely intact in spite of the fact that the de-merger side won a majority of votes in two of the four elections. In two mega-cities, Trôis-Rivières and Saguenay none of the municipalities even qualified for referenda by obtaining the signatures of 10% of the registered voters needed.

Two key proximate factors contributed to the victories of the de-merger forces in 31 municipalities, namely organization and turnout. The correlation between voter turnout and the percent voting yes is very strong and positive ($r=.66$, $p< .001$, $n=89$). Among the cities holding de-merger referenda those in which the de-merger was successful averaged just over 60% turnout while those in which the de-merger vote failed had a significantly lower turnout, averaging only 49.8% ($F= 12.3$, $p<.001$). This held equally for the mega-cities and the other smaller merged cities in the Province holding referenda.

An excellent indicator of the degree of organization and mobilization of the de-merger forces is the percent of the registered voters who signed the registry in favor of having a referendum. This figure is highly correlated with referendum turnout ($r= .67$, $p< .001$, $n=89$) and almost perfectly correlated with the total percent of the registered voters voting yes, a critical threshold for passage ($r = .90$, $p<.001$, $n=89$). In municipalities that had a successful de-merger vote ($n=31$) on average a third of the voters signed the registers to hold a referendum while in the unsuccessful referendum cities an average of only 16.2% ($n=58$) signed ($F=84.4$, $p<.001$). It is quite clear that salience of the issue, successful organization and mobilization of the de-merger forces and getting voters to the polls were critical.

4. *The Transition: Agglomerations and the Reconstituted Cities*

The de-merger elections created the need for a transition in terms of functions, personnel, policies, equipment, finance, debt and many other core issues. This applies mainly in the Montreal area where the cities of Montreal and Longueuil are now again divided, but this time into Montreal and 15 reconstituted cities and Longueuil in which four of eight cities demerged. The Government named transition committees for Montreal, Longueuil and Quebec City which only lost two small towns, as well as some of the smaller de-merged cities in the Province. These committees were charged with sorting out in a non-partisan fashion the resources, organizing the new electoral format for the new cities, appointing the initial transitional managers and negotiating between units.

The new structures in place in Montreal are the 16 individual municipalities (the city of Montreal and the 15 reconstituted cities) and their mayors and councils and the area wide agglomeration council. Within Montreal, the 27 boroughs, reduced to 19 (the 15 departing cities comprised the other eight of the 27 that were created after the merger) will continue to perform many strictly "local" functions (see Table Two). The third level, the Agglomeration Council and agglomeration functions are to be performed by the old central city along with its strictly local functions. The weighted voting procedures put into effect under the law in fact eliminate the suburban municipalities as potential veto players over area wide issues and policies. Overseeing these functions is an agglomeration council to consist of the mayors of each of the fifteen reconstituted cities and an equal number of representatives of the central city, to be named by the Mayor of Montreal. The Agglomeration Council will have voting for each city's representative weighted in relation to population. Hence, a united central city will thoroughly dominate policy making with its 87% of the voting power while the suburban cities will collectively have only 13%.

In sum, Montreal, with the authority it maintains over the most important functions and two thirds of the taxes of the de-merged cities at its disposal is in some ways strengthened. Anglophone influence on the executive committee is diminished and the west island has for all intents and purposes been eliminated as a potential veto player in island affairs. Mayor Tremblay and the legitimacy of his remaining coalition were briefly questioned. His opponents in

the Vision Montreal (VM) Party, led by ex-mayor Bourque are even stronger supporters of the one island one city concept than Tremblay. This position did not help their election effort in November 2005. However, Mayor Tremblay and his very much reconstituted coalition under the Union of Citizens of the Island of Montreal (UCIM) have built a strong team of supporters in spite of their loss of support in their former strongholds in the reconstituted cities in the suburbs. Tremblay and his team dominated the mayoral elections in almost all areas of the city, retaining the Mayor's seat and an overwhelming majority (48 of 63) on the council. The reconstituted cities by and large re-elected their former leaders, with four mayors and 36 of 98 councilors elected without opposition.

The overall result may have redefined the ethnic/language divide on Montreal Island in terms less favorable to the de-merged Anglophone enclaves in the suburbs. Under the new Agglomeration Council arrangements the mayors on the area wide council will represent their cities. These mayors are expected to consult their respective councils on agglomeration issues and proposals. However they will collectively hold only 13 percent of the votes. There was some controversy in interpretation of Bill 75 regarding representation on the Agglomeration Council. The suburban leaders and the opposition in Montreal interpret the law to mean that its entire council will represent the central municipality, with their votes divided among them. This would provide an opportunity for alliances between the leaders of the de-merged cities and central city factions. The alternative interpretation, based on some ambiguity in the law argues that the central city representatives could be the executive committee of the central city council or a group named by the mayor alone. In essence this means the mayor will appoint them all to the agglomeration council.

Mayor Tremblay wanted to appoint all central city council members on the Agglomeration Council (he proposed limiting the number to 15) to serve and cast the 87% of the vote held by the central city (based on population) together. This would make the Agglomeration Council largely irrelevant as the Mayor's appointees would make the real decision with or without the accord of the suburbs. The Ministry supported the mayor's viewpoint with the Urban Agglomeration Order specifying how those seats for the central city will be filled and how many there will be. There were delays on the part of the administration in issuing the Order and gaining approval by the

Quebec National Assembly, before the municipal elections. The law does provide an opportunity for those in the de-merged cities to appeal decisions they oppose or feel are unjust to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions but it also gives a veto to the central city over any agglomeration acts.

The breakup of Longueuil pits the urban and more suburban parts of the metropolitan region against each other and potentially the central and regional city needs (of greater Montreal). The balance in terms of population between the central city and the reconstituted cities is much closer (approximately 60-40 in favor of the central city) than is the case in Montreal. Therefore the Urban Agglomeration Order issued by the Provincial Government for Longueuil is even more significant than the one for Montreal. If the Agglomeration Council is composed of each of the five mayors, the four reconstituted city mayors plus the mayor of Longueuil, then the central city mayor will easily dominate the decision making process. If on the other hand, the votes of the central city are divided among the council members, some coalition building for the suburban mayors may be possible.

What have the de-merged cities gained? The de-mergers have left the Montreal region in a situation that has strengthened the role of the de-merged cities. The de-mergers enhance local control of modifications these cities may want to make to service quality and delivery, and they restore authority over about a third of tax revenue. In fact, the de-merged cities have taken over a limited number of powers that leave them in a position similar to that of the boroughs. Had these additional powers been ceded to the boroughs in Mayor Tremblay's decentralization plan in Montreal, the de-merger referendum results in some, although probably not all of these communities might have been different. The key functions including property assessment, the source of most municipal revenue, remain with the central city alone. Tax bills are rising quite significantly in some although not all reconstituted cities. These cities do not really have a place at the table in this regard. Furthermore, even on agglomeration decisions the central city has a veto over any actions proposed and passed.

Decentralization in the form of delegation of some central city or agglomeration functions to the reconstituted cities is allowed for in Bill 75. Through the mechanism of inter- municipal accords the central city or agglomeration could agree to delegate one or more of

the functions it can perform to one or more of the reconstituted cities. Some observers believe that due to the complexity of the issues, the diversity of the areas included and even the distances involved that there will likely be many areas in which functions are in fact delegated by mutual consent. It is not yet clear how the financial aspects of this arrangement will be handled, but there are mechanisms in place for working this out.

How many of the agglomeration functions will the central city find it convenient to delegate on the basis of inter-municipal agreements is also of critical importance, though the expectation is that there will be many such functions. However, it does open the possibility of a new configuration that will tie these cities even more closely to the larger city of Montreal through the CMM or some new organizational mechanism. As noted above, given the relative balance in population between the remaining central city and the reconstituted cities the final decision on agglomeration council representation for that area is likely to be highly controversial.

The overall impact of the de-mergers outside the Montreal region (Montreal and Longueuil) has been much less dramatic and significant. De-mergers succeeded only in Quebec City and in only two small cities there. Even in these two cities, the remaining mega-city central municipality will still have access to much of the tax base of the region, hence easing somewhat local income and revenue disparities. In the other five mega-cities combined, no former cities have been de-merged, leaving these new cities in a generally stable condition.

E. The Democratic Deficit?

On November 6, 2005 for the first time in recent Quebec history all municipal councils and mayors were elected on the same day. Given that the elections were held on a single day and there was considerable press coverage and information about the elections, it was anticipated that voter interest and turnout would be quite high. In that respect the general reaction of Quebec voters was quite disappointing. Competition or the lack thereof seems to have been the critical factor. In more than a quarter (27.3%) of the 1,106 municipalities there was no opposition for either the mayoral or a single council post. More than half of all mayors (55%) and councilors (62%) were elected without opposition. In those municipalities in which there was competition 95.3% (477 of 495) of those elected as

mayor and 90.2% (2,402 of 2,662) of those elected as council members were incumbents. Hence, calculating turnout in a meaningful way Province- wide is quite difficult.

Table Nine

Elections and electoral Districts in Reconstituted Municipalities on Montreal Island 2005*					N women on council
	Population	Councilors**	districts or area wide	citizens/rep	
Baie d'Urfe	3895	6	area wide	649.17	4
Beaconsfield	20035	6	districts	3339.17	2
Cote St. Luc	31518	8	districts	3939.17	2
Dollard des Ormeaux	50360	8	districts	6295.00	2
Dorval	18374	6	districts	3062.33	2
Hampstead	7174	6	area wide	1195.67	2
Kirkland	21541	8	districts	2692.63	0
Montreal Est	3527	6	districts	587.83	0
Montreal west	5332	4	area wide	1333.00	2
Mt Royal	19478	6	area wide	3246.33	2
Pointe Claire	30405	8	districts	3800.63	0
St. Anne de Bellevue	5314	6	districts	885.67	3
Senneville	1039	6	districts	173.17	2
Westmount	20055	8	districts	2506.88	3
L'lle Dorval		6			1
					23
		98			(24.5%)

* All municipalities have a mayor elected area wide. Councillors are either elected area wide or in separate wards/districts.

**Four women mayors (37.5%) were elected in 2005

In the megacities all nine mayoral posts were contested as were almost all of the council seats. Hence we would have thought that turnout would be quite respectable and approach the general level of about 50%. Yet in the Montreal municipal region in particular a surprisingly small number of voters participated. Turnout was only 31% in Laval, 35% in Montreal proper and 38% in Longueuil. Perhaps the citizens of these cities felt that there were few issues to be decided and the polls gave a clear indicator of the winners in Laval and Montreal already. The demerged municipalities in Montreal and Longueuil did somewhat better at 45.3% and 41.8% respectively. In

Table Ten

Voter Turnout and Electoral Competition

	2005 election Turnout	Competition for Council Seats	Competition for Mayor
Demerged Cities in Montreal	45%		
Demerged cities in Longueuil	42%		
Megacities			
Montreal	39%	100%	y
Gatineau	48%	88%	y
Laval	31%	57%	y
Levis	48%	100%	y
Longueuil	39%	100%	y
Quebec City*	51%	100%	y
Saguenay	57%	79%	y
Sherbrooke	45%	84%	y
Trois Riviere	50%	75%	y
Average	45.3		

* does not include the two small demerged cities.

the rest of the provincial megacities turnout was fairly normal, averaging just under half (49.8%) ranging from 45% in Sherbrooke to 57% in Saguenay.

The satisfaction or lack thereof of the citizens, especially those whose municipalities lost their previous identities, with the new megacities can to a limited extent be inferred from the vote. In Gatineau, where the mayor ran on the record of improved services and lower taxes his administration provided since the merger, he was defeated handily. In Quebec City where the former mayor retired, a woman candidate running as an independent won a surprising victory. She is the former mayor of Saint Foy and a leading opponent of the mergers. In Levis a woman also took over the mayor's seat. In the de-merged cities on Montreal Island and on the south shore in Longueuil voters largely restored their pre-merger leadership. Hence it is clear that there are still some major sources of discontent with the loss of identity and control that the mergers brought on. Just as the PQ paid the price for the mergers in the loss of seats in the Provincial legislative elections of 2003, there are some indications that the Liberals may suffer in the next provincial election, as a result of their unsatisfactory handling of de-mergers and agglomeration legislation, although to a lesser extent.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Although the municipal consolidation process in Quebec is not yet over, there are some important lessons for North American urban regions. First, it is clear that the "forced" municipal mergers successfully cut back on the number of players in all eight of the new megacities. Theoretically, decision-making processes have therefore been streamlined. In an efficiency sense, if salaries are saved, and the same functions are performed, this is fine. As pointed out above, there are other perspectives, and people often believe that it is important to have government "close" to them.

Second, at both the administrative and political levels, the officials from old municipalities were, by and large, brought into the new megacities – by election to new positions, through the appointment process, or the new public service agreements. In making governmental changes of this type, there is a danger of bringing in a government with no experience, and no continuity. The Quebec experience, in this regard, might be valuably studied by anyone in North America considering a major governmental change.

Third, results in terms of gender representation are mixed. Women are as well represented on the new councils as on the old, but less so on the all-important executive committees. Representation of women in key administrative positions, however, has suffered a serious setback. Promotion and recruitment policies will need to be carefully monitored to insure equal opportunity for leadership in megacity bureaucracies. The reconstitution of de-merged cities and their councils has had a limited impact on improving gender representation. In this regard, Montreal is no better or worse than other cities in North America. In the U.S., we have been more willing to elect women to legislative positions than to executive positions. If we think of the largest U.S. cities, very few women have served as mayor, and some of those ascended to the office because an existing mayor died in office.[4]

The major consideration of this paper, participation and democratic governance, is still open to question. Six of the eight new cities have placed some emphasis on political decentralization through the creation of "arrondissement" councils and local service centers. Although the "arrondissements" do not deal with the full array of services and do not have independent budgetary authority, there is still some indication that they provide the opportunity for serious democratic input and participation. Even in the two cities without

"arrondissements," administrative deconcentration to local service centers appears to be flourishing and well appreciated. The threat of de-mergers placed pressure on all eight mayors and councils to be responsive, and to decentralize functions as much as possible. In a broader North American context, boroughs ("arrondissements") seem like a good idea. Most large cities have tried something in the area of neighborhood service decentralization and / or neighborhood governance (see, for example, Berry et.al, 1993; Fung 2004). The boroughs are a promising experiment. We must caution that they do not seem to be doing a good job in representing visible minorities and / or incorporating new immigrants.

Next, what of the de-merger game itself? The actual de-merger votes outside of the Montreal region have had very limited impact, failing in all but four of the 24 in which referenda were held. Within megacity Montreal itself, the departure of 15 municipalities, all but one from the Anglophone West Island, has greatly altered the landscape, and may, by strengthening the opposition to Mayor Tremblay, result in greater centralization of authority in several key policy areas. It also may give the departing cities less of a voice than they had before the de-mergers. On the South Shore, Longueuil has been emasculated, as four of the eight cities, including the home town of the mayor, have been de-merged. Clearly, the major failure of municipal consolidation remains the Montreal urban region.

In sum, there are five megacities that had no de-mergers – Gatineau, Levis, Saqueny, Sherbrooke, and Trois-Rivieres. In those cities, the structure and functions delineated in Table One remain in effect. The only difference is whether the city has "arrondissements." In the three other megacities directly affected by the de-merger, Montreal, Longueuil, and Quebec City, the new structure provides for a division of services between the Agglomeration (the central city) and the reconstituted cities as shown in the last two columns of Table One. The most important functions will remain with the Agglomeration, with some weighted voting (based on population) on area wide matters for the reconstituted cities. A limited array of local services will be provided by the reconstituted cities, as of January 2006. The powers of these de-merged cities are greatly reduced, and they will be dependent on the Agglomeration for the most important services. Area wide taxes will be collected by the Agglomeration, based on its assessment of property values.

We have two overriding conclusions. First, in a policy sense, is governmental consolidation of this type worth the political capital spent by decisionmakers? Our research suggests that metropolitan governance in Quebec is more efficient than in the past, in terms of numbers of governments and officeholders. We found that metropolitan taxation is more equitable. Effectiveness is difficult to demonstrate. We found a great deal of administrative continuity, but also, much dissatisfaction with urban service delivery. The local democracy picture, as noted above, is a mixed one. And, some of these changes - - in taxation or the creation of borough systems in large cities - - could have been effected without governmental merger.

For the other North American local governments, this experience screams: in the absence of compelling reasons, do not do anything of this sort. The original motivations of the PQ government may have been noble ones, but why did the party insist on the mergers, given substantial opposition within the caucus, in the other political parties, and in the general public? The Liberal party government grudgingly allowed de-merger elections, and, in so doing, made a difficult situation worse. The de-mergerites threw away a new city in which the suburbs had elected the mayor, and by and large, never really gave the new city a chance. They were willing to accept de- merger, with greatly reduced local powers. Meanwhile, as of January 2006, a citizen of Montreal will confront four levels of local government. On top, there will be the new Agglomeration Council. Next will be a metropolitan level, with powers in economic development and planning. This new Montreal Metropolitan Community has been almost invisible. Then there will be the Montreal City Council. What will its functions be relative to the Agglomeration? Will it have any important functions? Finally, there will be the boroughs. When all is said and done, is this really better than local government before 2000?

Cities are fragile places. Cities with major differences, and challenges like managing Anglophone-Francophone divisions and absorbing new immigrants, are especially fragile. Governments should be very careful in disrupting a local government fabric, which has handled conflict reasonably well for many years.

We began by noting the strong similarities in Canadian and U.S. local governments. The literature notes that Canada tends to have more highly developed planning and governance systems. These, in turn, are attributed to intervention by provincial governments. Clearly, the Quebec consolidations have been different, because of the long-

term political conflicts in the wake of the mergers. In Ontario, most consolidations were accepted, although not enthusiastically. While the metro Toronto merger was conflictual, the consolidation seems to finally be well accepted. In part, this is a result of David Miller's election as the second metro mayor. Miller is the type of progressive who would have been elected in the old Toronto. The protracted conflicts in the Montreal area are often attributed to the English-French language cleavage and differences on the Quebec independence question. However, the language and separateness questions explain neither the demerger in the Longueuil megacity nor the Montreal Est de-merger. Perhaps a more normal local politics of home ownership and class is at work in these situations. Language questions and Quebec independence do not explain the anti-merger undercurrents, which saw a leading merger opponent elected mayor of Quebec, and a leading merger proponent defeated as mayor of Gatineau in the November 2005 elections. Philip Resnick (2005) attempts to explain Canadian identity in terms of its European origins. Perhaps it is European roots such as the parliamentary system and the acceptance of broad-ranging metropolitan institutions (Van Denberg et al 2004) that best explain what has occurred in Quebec.

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NOTES

[1] The authors wish to thank the Governments of Canada and Quebec for support that made this research possible.

[2] The result of the distortions and inequities tolerated and institutionalized by the local fiscal structure is so disturbing that we have to stop treating it on a case by case basis, applying a palliative which only covers over the worst effects. (our translation).

[3] There is an extensive literature on this issue and the broader questions of women in politics in Canada. See for example the works of Evelyne Tardy, Manon Tremblay, Lisa Young, Heather MacIvor, Elisabeth Gidengil, and many others.

[4] Before the 1997 consolidation, both June Rowlands and Barbara Hall served as Mayor of Toronto.