Big city elections in Canada

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At first glance, the 2018 Toronto municipal election may appear quite ordinary. Voter turnout was just over 40% (a figure typical of local elections in Canada), the sitting mayor was comfortably re-elected, and 80% of those elected to City Council were incumbents. Upon closer examination, however, the election was anything but ordinary. Indeed, the 2018 Toronto municipal election had a number of rather extraordinary features: a heated battle between former rivals John Tory and Doug Ford, now the Mayor of Toronto and the Premier of Ontario respectively; unilateral provincial intervention into the municipal election just hours before the campaign was to officially begin; a media firestorm surrounding Bill 5 (*The Better Local Government Act*); judicial rulings of unconstitutionality; and even threats to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause (Section 33 of the Charter). How did we get here? To understand the extraordinary nature of this election, some background is necessary.

In 1997 the *City of Toronto Act* amalgamated East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, York, and "Old Toronto" into a single municipality (doing so against the wishes of many politicians and residents in the affected areas). In 2005, the province revised that act, granting the city additional authority, including the ability to establish its own electoral boundaries. The city's last five elections (2000 to 2014), were all conducted with the same 44-ward system. In light of the fact that Toronto's population had changed considerably (and in a geographically uneven manner) over the previous decade and a half, in 2014, the city established the Toronto Ward Boundary Review Commission, which had a mandate to recommend the redrawing of ward boundaries. After a two-year process involving a number of consultations, surveys, and meetings with stakeholders, the commission recommended increasing the council's size to 47 to reflect population growth, with modest boundary changes to even out ward populations. Among the options considered and eventually rejected

by the commission was a 25-ward system whereby ward boundaries would match those of federal and provincial ridings. The commission's report noted of the 25-ward system: "There was little support for this option at the public meetings and from Members of Council" (Toronto Ward Boundary Review, 2016, p. 5). In 2016, Toronto City Council voted 28 to 13 to accept the commission's recommendation that the 2018 election be conducted under a 47-ward system (Pagliaro, 2016).[1]

In a controversial move that sparked a widespread outcry, Premier Doug Ford (brother of former mayor Rob Ford, and himself a former mayoral candidate and Toronto city councillor), unveiled the *Better Local Government Act* (Bill 5), announcing that the size of Toronto City Council would be reduced from 47 to 25 seats (the system explicitly rejected by the Ward Boundary Review Commission) for the 2018 election. The move reportedly stunned Toronto's politicians, who largely opposed the change, and did so in a vocal manner (Rieti, 2018).[2] The decision itself was unprecedented, and so too was its timing. Ford made the announcement on 26 June 2018, *the day before* the official candidate nomination deadline and only four months before the election. The change was largely opposed on the grounds that changing the boundaries so close to the election, after candidates had already been campaigning for quite some time, was needlessly disruptive – opponents describe the change as having caused "widespread disruption and confusion" (Pagliaro, 2019). A series of legal challenges to the act emerged. On 10 September 2018, a Superior Court judge in one of those cases ruled that Bill 5 was unconstitutional, dictating that the election move forward with 47 wards:

> The enactment of provincial legislation radically changing the number and size of a city's electoral districts in the middle of the city's election is without parallel in Canadian history … I find that the Province's enactment of Bill 5 in the middle of the City's election substantially interfered with the municipal candidate's freedom of expression that is guaranteed under s. 2(b) of the Charter of Rights … I find that the reduction from 47 to 25 in the number of City wards and the corresponding increase in ward-size population from an average of about 61,000 to 111,000 substantially interfered with the municipal voter's freedom of expression under s. 2(b) of the Charter of Rights, and in particular her right to cast a vote that can result in effective representation … The October 22 election shall proceed as scheduled but on the basis of 47 wards, not 25. (*City of Toronto et al v. Ontario (Attorney General)*, 2018)

This ruling, however, was not the end to the saga. In response to the court's decision, the Ford government made yet another shocking

declaration, threatening to make use of the Notwithstanding Clause (Section 33 of the Charter) in order to bypass the judge's decision and move forward with the reduction of Toronto City Council to 25 wards: "Our first order of business will be to reintroduce the *Better Local Government Act*, and with it invoke Section 33 of the Constitution" (Russell, 2018). In the end, however, this unprecedented threat proved to be unnecessary. While Ford appeared ready to utilize s. 33 for what would have been the first time in the province's history, on 19 September, an Ontario Court of Appeal stayed the original judicial ruling. Ford had won, and the election went forward under the 25-ward system.[3]

Despite the excitement provided by these dramatic events, the campaign itself was relatively uneventful and unmemorable at both the council and mayoral levels. As with most municipal elections, incumbency proved paramount. John Tory, first elected in 2014, sailed to an easy victory in a crowded mayoral campaign that only had one credible challenger (Jennifer Keesmaat). He captured nearly two thirds of the vote and won in every ward. At the council level, the story was much the same: 20 of the 25 seats were filled by incumbents (though many sitting councillors lost their bids for re-election, as they were forced to run against other incumbents in the new 25-ward system).

After providing a more detailed overview of the important features of the 2018 Toronto mayoral and council elections, this chapter digs into the apparent dominance of the incumbent mayor. As in the other chapters in this volume, we consider the bases of the mayor's support. Building on this, we then consider *changes* in Tory's support over time (drawing upon data on vote choice from 2014). We find that the mayor's dominance at the aggregate level masked substantial changes at the individual level. A comparison with data on federal voting behaviour reveals that the mayor's supporters were considerably less loyal to the incumbent than tends to be the case in federal elections. Incumbents are famously successful in Canadian local elections, yet even a popular incumbent like Mayor Tory had to work to build a new coalition of voters in 2018.

Election Overview

The Mayoral Campaign

While John Tory won in both 2014 and 2018, the two elections were sharply different. The 2014 mayoral contest lacked an incumbent, for controversial mayor Rob Ford had dropped out of the race for medical reasons (though it has been argued that Doug Ford amounted to a pseudo-incumbent; see Stephenson et al., 2018). In the 2014 election

there had been three credible candidates (in a field of 65 registered contenders), which resulted in a relatively competitive race. John Tory (40.3%), Doug Ford (33.7%), and Olivia Chow (23.2%) provided voters with an ideologically diverse slate of candidates (Chow being on the left, Tory the centre-right, and Ford on the right; see McGregor et al., 2016), and each won a substantial share of the popular vote. Combined, these three accounted for 97% of the vote. Tory ultimately won, but not by a particularly large margin (less than 7%).

The 2018 election was far less competitive: 30 fewer candidates registered than in 2014; there were only two main candidates (a number of high-profile potential candidates, including Mel Lastman's son Blayne, and former mayoral candidate Olivia Chow, declined to enter the race); and Tory's margin of victory grew by nearly 25 percentage points. In fact, for much of the lead-up to the election, it looked like incumbent "scare-off" effects would result in Tory running (virtually) unopposed as no strong challengers were willing to step forward. On the last day of registration, however, Jennifer Keesmaat entered the race. Keesmaat, a former chief planner for the City of Toronto, proved to be Tory's only credible challenger, and she credited her decision to enter the race to Doug Ford's *Better Local Government Act* (Gray, 2018).

In terms of the campaign, Tory began the election period with considerable support (70%) and maintained a commanding lead in the polls through to Election Day. The campaign proved to be of little help to Keesmaat – a series of polls conducted by Forum Research Inc. reveal remarkably little movement in support for the mayor's chief rival (see Figure 8.1). She began the campaign with around 30% support, and the final polls put her at 29%. These numbers turned out to be fairly accurate: Tory won with 63% to Keesmaat's distant 23.6%. There were 33 other candidates, but none were particularly popular. The third-place finisher, Faith Goldy, received just 3.4% of the vote.

We suggest one possible reason for this lack of movement in mayoral vote intentions during the campaign: the fact that the ward-redistricting scandal, and the subsequent court cases and threats of invoking the Notwithstanding Clause, dominated news coverage of the election for most of the campaign period (recall that the issue first arose in July and that the final court case was not until 19 September, just a month before Election Day). Torontonians are fairly attentive to municipal politics compared to people in other cities, and this was particularly true with respect to the 2018 campaign for City Council. CMES respondents in all eight cities included in the study were asked after the election how much attention they had paid to (a) the mayoral campaign and (b) the council campaign (both on a scale from 0 to 10).[4] The average level of attention

Figure 8.1. Mayoral polls – Toronto
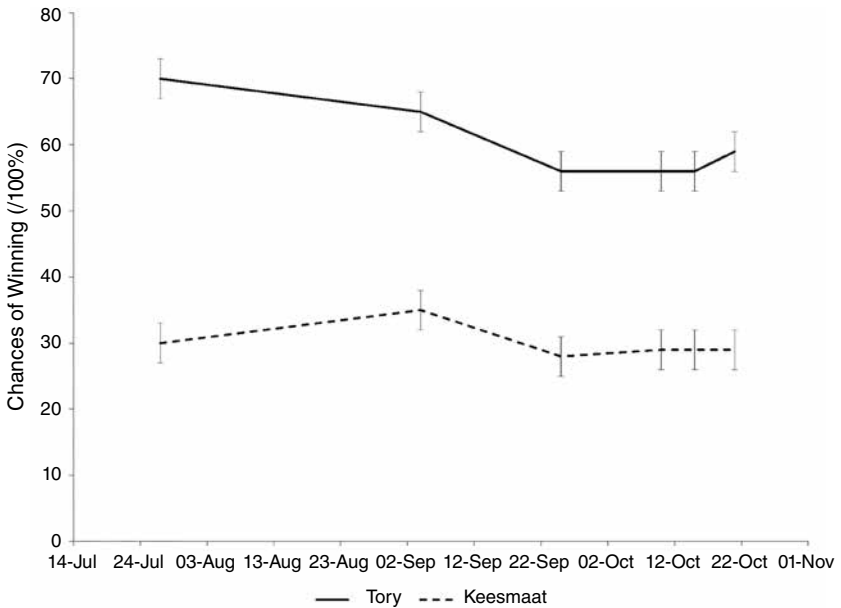
paid by Torontonians to the mayoral race (7.65) was higher than in other cities (7.32) – a difference of 0.33 points, which is significant at $p < 0.05$. When it came to the council elections, however, this gap was significantly larger: Torontonians had an average score of 6.5, compared to a mere 5.2 for the other cities (this difference of 1.33 points is significant at $p < 0.01$). Though Torontonians did assign a higher score to the mayoral race than to the council elections, this gap (1.1 points) was half of that observed for the seven other cities (2.2 points). When voters focus a comparatively large share of their attention on the council elections rather than on the mayoral race, it stands to reason that mayoral vote intentions will be fairly constant. Furthermore, both Keesmaat and Tory were publicly opposed to ward redistricting, so the public's focus on the issue could do little to change the minds of voters.[5] At least at the aggregate level, the 2018 campaign seemed to have little effect on voters.

Council Races

Council races are often overshadowed by the parallel campaign for mayor. However, the Ontario government's last-minute change to the

city's ward boundaries and the subsequent court challenges meant there was considerably more attention, especially in the news media, on the council campaign than might have otherwise been the case (as CMES data confirm; see above). The redistricting had two identifiable consequences on the pool of candidates contesting the election. First, by the time registration closed under the new 25-ward system, a total of 242 candidates had officially signed up (an average of 10 candidates per ward). Under the 47-ward system, however, more than 100 additional candidates had been registered (Pagliaro, 2018). The first consequence was therefore that many candidates withdrew from the 25-ward race, no doubt largely because they perceived that their chances of winning had declined. Second, of the 44 sitting Toronto councillors, 33 opted to seek re-election for one of the 25 redistricted council seats. This, of course, meant that a number of incumbents would be competing against other incumbents – a tremendously rare occurrence in single-member districts. In total, there were 11 wards in which two incumbent councillors contested the same seat[6] and only three wards in which no incumbent was seeking re-election.[7] The second consequence was therefore that there were more incumbents running than there were seats for them to win, which greatly limited the ability for newcomers to mount competitive campaigns – something that is difficult to do in local elections even under normal circumstances.

Issues and Events

When the campaign began, it seemed as though the question of ward boundaries, or at very least municipal autonomy from provincial interference, could be a central issue. After all, there had been a lot of drama around that issue: the province had cut the size of council nearly in half, there had been a series of court battles, and the premier had even threatened to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause. The intense news coverage devoted to the redistricting saga did not, however, accurately reflect voters' issue priorities. Figure 8.2 shows the mean importance of seven issues included in our CMES data (ranging from 0 to 10, where 10 is extremely important).

Immediately clear is that the least relevant issue among those presented to voters was ward boundaries. This is likely because there was very little debate or disagreement during the campaign among the leading candidates. A majority of councillors had voted in favour of the 47-ward system and of challenging Bill 5 in court, and both Tory and Keesmaat agreed on the issue during the campaign. In other words, there was a strong consensus among the candidates – almost all of them

Figure 8.2. Issue importance in the 2018 Toronto election
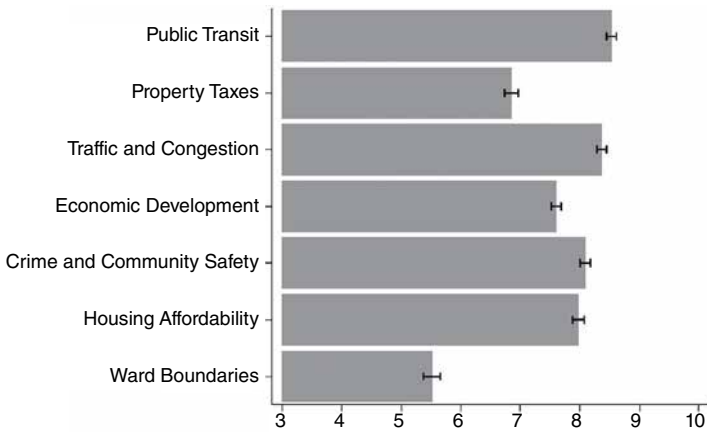
opposed redistricting – so the question did not differentiate them. This, of course, is not to say that Torontonians themselves were completely united. Though a majority of them (52.6%) did oppose the redistricting, a noteworthy minority (39.0%) supported it (8.5% had no opinion).[8] Had the candidates decided to take different positions, the issue might have played a more significant role in the campaign.

Transit and traffic/congestion were far more salient concerns for voters; these ranked as the top issues for Torontonians. This is not surprising, for these have long been central issues in Toronto (McGregor et al., 2016; McGregor et al., forthcoming). In contrast to the ward boundaries debate, there was meaningful debate on these matters. Keesmaat unveiled her transit platform, "A Real Plan for Transit," a month into the campaign. Among other things, that platform promised to build the downtown relief line three years ahead of schedule, add five new GO stations, and integrate service to the airport into the transit network; it also made a commitment to proceed with the Scarborough subway extension. Tory's plan was more modest, relying on existing infrastructure and emphasizing "SmartTrack," which had been part of Tory's 2014 election platform and continued to be front and centre in 2018. That plan called for six new transit stations and eight refurbished stations to be added to the existing regional GO transit network. There was, of course, more to Tory's transit plan, but SmartTrack was its centrepiece. Keesmaat was particularly critical of Tory's plan: "John Tory got elected by promising 'SmartTrack' as the solution to all our transit problems. As mayor, he focused on trying to get this plan approved. Almost nothing has come

of it. It will never be built" (Keesmaat, 2018). Tory and Keesmaat had not seen eye to eye on transit issues for some time. Long before the election, when Keesmaat was employed as the city's chief planner, she had publicly disagreed with the mayor and his support for maintaining the eastern part of the Gardiner Expressway (Elliott, 2018).

The Election Result

Table 8.1 shows the election results for the mayoral and council campaigns. In the council results, the primacy of incumbency is immediately clear. By the time the dust settled, twenty incumbent councillors had been re-elected. In only two wards did a challenger defeat an incumbent (Wards 8 and 25). Moreover, in Ward 25 (Scarborough–Rouge Park), the race was remarkably competitive and the sitting incumbent lost by less than 1% of the vote. While some races, like Ward 25, were highly competitive, others were anything but. Ana Bailão, the incumbent in Ward 4, won her seat by 75 points. The average margin of victory across the 25 wards was 21 points. Clearly, then, the winning candidates enjoyed comfortable levels of support.

Table 8.1 also shows that the mayoral race was anything but competitive. City-wide, Tory won 63% of the vote, nearly 40 points more than Keesmaat (24%). He also received the most votes in all of the city's 25 wards. His margin of victory was slim in some places (less than 1 point in Ward 9, for instance) but was considerably higher in others (just over 58 points in Wards 2, 6, and 15). There was therefore noteworthy geographic variation in voter preferences. Figure 8.3 shows the geographic distribution of Tory's support, with darker areas indicating a higher vote share.

The implications of Figure 8.3 are clear: Tory performed much better on the periphery of the city than in Toronto's downtown core. This pattern matches what has previously been observed in Toronto: left-leaning candidates tend to perform well downtown, while their right-leaning opponents are stronger in the inner suburbs (Walks 2004, 2005, 2013). As has been observed elsewhere, this pattern corresponds largely with voting results from other orders of government, which show that the NDP is strongest downtown (McGregor et al., forthcoming). Tory's dominance in 2018 stood in stark contrast to 2014, which saw a more competitive, three-way race between Tory, Doug Ford, and Olivia Chow, in which the mayor won only 40.3% of the vote. Voters themselves were well aware of the uncompetitive nature of the mayoral campaign. On average, CMES respondents gave Tory a 76.2% chance of winning; the anticipated likelihood of a Keesmaat victory was 38.3% (N = 2,085, $p < 0.01$).

Table 8.1. Toronto election results, by ward

| Ward	Number of candidates	Number of incumbents	Council winner	Margin (council)	Mayoral winner	Margin (mayoral)
1	9	2	Michael Ford*	7.9	John Tory*	50.6
2	5	2	Stephen Holyday*	3.1	John Tory*	59.0
3	10	1	Mark Grimes*	13.7	John Tory*	47.1
4	10	1	Gord Perks*	23.0	John Tory*	9.7
5	10	2	Frances Nunziata*	10.5	John Tory*	47.6
6	4	2	James Pasternak*	9.6	John Tory*	58.8
7	8	2	Anthony Perruzza*	12.0	John Tory*	49.0
8	10	1	Mike Colle	19.7	John Tory*	54.8
9	4	1	Ana Bailão*	74.7	John Tory*	0.5
10	14	1	Joe Cressy*	43.5	John Tory*	15.4
11	7	1	Mike Layton*	56.4	John Tory*	10.3
12	6	2	Josh Matlow*	9.5	John Tory*	32.8
13	19	2	Kristyn Wong-Tam*	35.1	John Tory*	14.7
14	10	2	Paula Fletcher*	16.1	John Tory*	16.6
15	5	2	Jaye Robinson*	5.4	John Tory*	58.5
16	8	1	Denzil Minnan-Wong*	16.0	John Tory*	55.9
17	9	0	Shelley Carroll	11.5	John Tory*	54.0
18	18	1	John Filion*	11.3	John Tory*	52.2
19	16	0	Brad Bradford	0.8	John Tory*	31.8
20	10	2	Gary Crawford*	1.4	John Tory*	48.7
21	11	1	Michael Thompson*	62.2	John Tory*	53.7
22	7	2	Jim Karygiannis*	9.8	John Tory*	54.5
23	11	0	Cynthia Lai	7.0	John Tory*	52.8
24	10	1	Paul Ainslie*	58.3	John Tory*	55.6
25	11	1	Jennifer McKelvie	0.5	John Tory*	57.3

Source: compiled by authors.

* = incumbent.

A final noteworthy feature of the election outcome is that the turnout rate of 40.9% represented a significant drop from 2014 (54.7%). This decline may be partly attributable to the aforementioned uncompetitiveness of the 2018 election. Note, however, that 2018's turnout figure represents a regression to the mean; 2014 was, in fact, a high-water mark for turnout in Toronto. Excluding 2014, average turnout in Toronto's post-amalgamation history has been 41.8%. By this comparison, 2018 is more norm than outlier.

Vote Choice

We turn discuss the correlates of vote choice in the mayoral election. Figure 8.4 shows the marginal effects plots, with the vote for the winner

Figure 8.3. Vote share for Tory, by ward
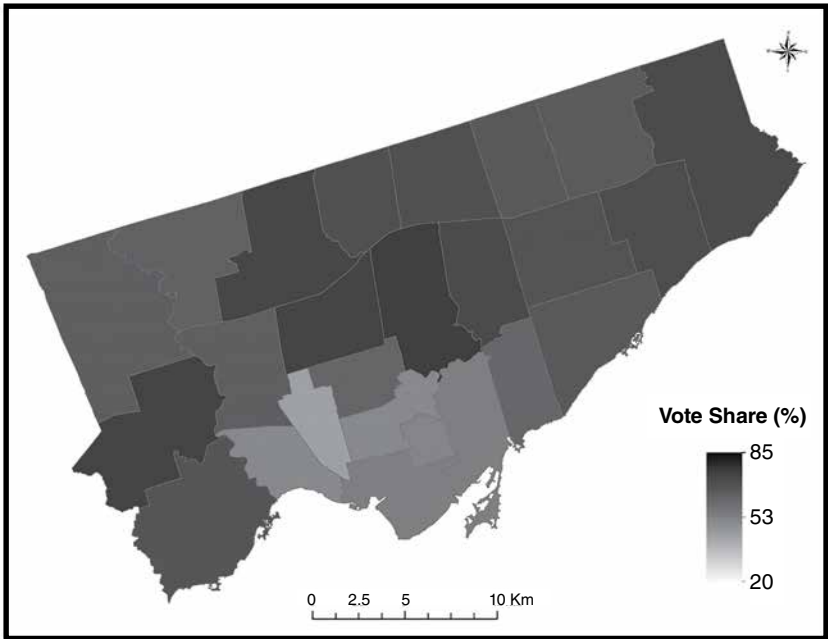
(Tory) serving as the outcome variable. The four models introduce a series of explanatory variables in step-wise fashion, according to the funnel of causality and the proximity to vote choice (Campbell et al., 1960).[9]

Both socio-demographically and attitudinally, Tory's supporters differed from those of his opponents in many ways. As one would expect for a right-wing incumbent, the mayor performed well among older, less educated, more ideologically conservative voters, as well as those who were pleased with the city's economy. A closer look at Figure 8.4 points to two themes in particular that were central to vote choice: housing and economic indicators.

In terms of housing, Tory performed well among those for whom property taxes were an important issue but extremely poorly among those who cared about housing affordability (the latter variable had the largest effect of any in Model D). Tory's position has always been to freeze property taxes at the rate of inflation, which no doubt appealed to many constituents. As a result, the city has come to rely heavily on its real-estate transfer tax, which effectively increases the cost of purchasing housing in the city by 5%. Tory has made no moves to reduce or eliminate this tax. At the same time, the issue of housing affordability was a

Figure 8.4. Vote choice for Tory – marginal effects
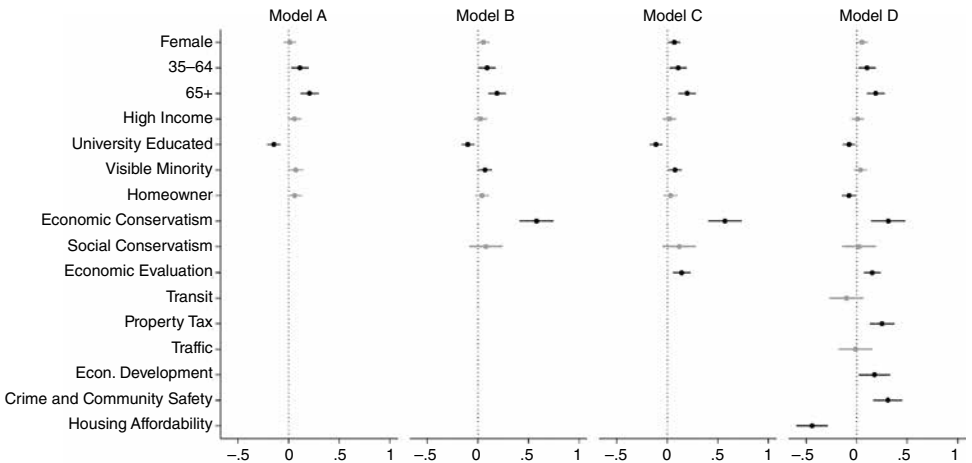
Notes: Entries report marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals. Coefficients in black are statistically significant at p < 0.1.

major theme of Jennifer Keesmaat's campaign, which no doubt drew to her many individuals who sought a remedy for the city's increasingly expensive housing market.

Related to both these factors is homeownership. This variable is not associated with vote choice in Models A, B, or C, but in Model D, it shows a negative relationship with support for Tory. This is no doubt a result of the addition of the "property tax" and "housing affordability" variables. Homeowners are more likely than renters to place high importance on the issue of property taxes (p < 0.001) and a low value on housing affordability (p < 0.001). Accordingly, we suggest that the observed relationship between homeownership and vote choice (which is itself only significant at the p < 0.10 level) is an artefact of the inclusion of these other variables. The key takeaway here is that Tory did well among those for whom property taxes were an important issue, but very poorly among those who cared most about housing affordability.

The second important theme revealed in Figure 8.4 is that the economy matters. Setting aside housing issues (which themselves have obvious financial implications), a variety of factors suggest a clear divide between Tory supporters and other voters on this dimension. The mayor performed well among economically conservative voters, those who believed that the economy had performed well in the previous year, and those who placed a high priority on economic development. Municipal

governments arguably have much less capacity to shape the economy than their federal or provincial counterparts, yet it has been established that Toronto voters view their local government as having a strong economic impact, and that they hold incumbents accountable for economic conditions (Anderson et al., 2017).

Several of these findings are consistent with those from the 2014 mayoral race. McGregor et al. (2016) found that Tory performed well that year among older voters, economic conservatives, and those who cared the most about property taxes. This, even though the constellation of opponents faced by Tory differed significantly between the two elections. In particular, Tory faced a strong candidate on the right (Doug Ford) in 2014, but not in 2018. It seems that the mayor enjoyed the support of a particular "type" of voter – older, conservative individuals who place great importance on the issue of property taxes.

Vote Consistency across Time

Incumbency is known to be a significant advantage in municipal elections (Kushner et al., 1997; Krebs, 1998; Moore et al., 2017). This is particularly true at the council level, but it also applies in mayoral elections. Incumbents have name recognition, an established track record, and existing fundraising apparatuses, and their mere presence may be enough to "scare off" high-quality challengers, who may well be wary of taking on a candidate with such formidable advantages (King, 1991; Levitt and Wolfram, 1997; Moore et al., 2017). Of the six mayors discussed in this volume who sought re-election, only one (Montreal's Denis Coderre) was unsuccessful. Since the creation of the "Mega-City" in Toronto in 1997, no incumbent mayor who has sought re-election has lost. John Tory's landslide victory in 2018 fits this trend; in fact, the mayor saw his vote share increase from 40.3% in 2014 to 63.5% in 2018 (an increase in raw votes from 394,775 to 479,659).

It seems that such results point to consistency, at least on the surface. Municipal voters are generally deciding whether to reward the incumbent mayor with another term in office, and they generally do. In contrast, at the time of writing, in seven of the ten most recent provincial elections in each of Canada's provinces, the incumbent party won fewer seats than a challenger.[10] The country also saw a change in government after the most recent federal election prior to the Toronto election (2015). On the basis of these results, municipal electorates would appear to be relatively stable.

We end this chapter by considering two questions. First, while mayoral elections where an incumbent is present would seem to be relatively

stable in the aggregate, can the same be said at the individual level? Tory won in both 2014 and 2018, but did he attract or lose many supporters between elections? In answering this question, we compare individual-level consistency of vote choice in Toronto to the five most recent federal elections. Second, what are the correlates of individual-level volatility? Using the same battery of factors considered in the vote choice model above, we identify the voter-level factors associated with changes in support for the mayor between 2014 and 2018. We find that, in the case of Toronto, there was a great deal of individual-level volatility between elections. Despite surface-level consistency, Tory lost many of his 2014 supporters, even attracting many who had not previously supported him.

Consistency of Vote Choice

We begin by examining the consistency of John Tory's support between 2014 and 2018. The fact that Tory won both elections (and by an increased margin in 2018) might suggest that those who backed him when first elected remained loyal in 2018. At the individual level, how-ever, there are reasons to expect there was inter-election stability *and* change.

Why might we expect that many voters chose to support Tory in 2014 but not 2018 (or vice versa)? As in most municipal elections, the con-stellation of candidates was quite different between the two contests. In 2014, Tory faced off against noteworthy challengers from both the right (Doug Ford) and the left (Olivia Chow) (McGregor et al., 2016). In 2018, Jennifer Keesmaat was viewed by Torontonians as being on the left of the ideological spectrum, and there was no serious challenger from the right.[11] Add to this that there were fewer viable candidates in 2018 – the "effective number of candidates" (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979) had dropped from 3.03 in 2014 to 2.17 in 2018. The decrease in the number of competitive options, coupled with the fact that there was no serious candidate on the right in 2018, suggests there was a great deal of poten-tial for Tory to attract new voters.

The election's non-partisan nature is another good reason to expect inter-election instability. Partisanship (commonly conceptualized as a long-standing psychological attachment to a party – Campbell et al., 1960) is a major determinant of vote choice in Canadian politics (Blais et al., 2002; Anderson and Stephenson, 2011). Over the course of mul-tiple elections, voters gather information about a party's ideology and issue positions, and that information can be factored into future vote decisions. If a party system remains stable over time, voters can develop long-term partisan orientations (positive or negative), which can

dampen the likelihood of changing one's vote between elections (LeDuc et al., 1984). No such long-term effects exist in non-partisan elections, and thus changing one's vote between elections (particularly if the slate of candidates is different) may be comparatively likely.

What, then, are the reasons to expect individual-level consistency in Toronto from 2014 to 2018? First, as noted earlier, incumbents perform exceptionally well in Canadian local elections, and this was certainly the case here. This aggregate-level consistency provides perhaps the best reason to expect the same at the individual level. Though ecological observations of this nature are admittedly dubious, if the same candidate is easily winning multiple elections, it seems plausible that this is due to consistent support from individual voters. The aforementioned decrease in number of viable candidates provides a second reason to expect voter consistency. The absence of a major candidate to the right of Tory in 2018 (the role filled by Doug Ford in 2014) means that the most ideologically conservative of Tory's supporters had no viable alternative, even if they were dissatisfied with the mayor's performance. Finally, Tory's former partisan ties may have led to cross-level partisan "contamination" effects (see Stephenson et al., 2018, as well as chapter 2 of this volume). Torontonians largely associated Tory with the Progressive Conservative Party (which is not surprising, given that he led the provincial party from 2004 to 2009) (McGregor et al., 2016). These perceptions had the potential to dampen vote switching in the manner described above as applying to partisan elections. The circumstances of the 2018 Toronto election provide several reasons to expect that inter-election vote consistency would have been high.[12]

Theorizing aside, how consistent were Torontonians between 2014 and 2018? We answer this question by way of a cross-tabulation of vote choice in 2014 and 2018 (both measured in 2018). The results of this analysis are provided in Table 8.2. The table allows us to consider the consistency of Tory's support at an individual level and to map out how voters shifted among other candidates over time. Recall that in 2014, Tory won 40.3% of the vote, Doug Ford 33.7%, and Olivia Chow 23.2%. In 2018, Tory won 63.5% of the popular vote, followed by Jennifer Keesmaat (23.6%). Entries in the table report column percentages.

Table 8.2 shows several findings of note. It suggests, perhaps unsurprisingly, that most voters who supported Tory in 2014 also supported him in 2018; more than two-thirds (69.2%) of those who backed the mayor when he was first elected also voted for him in the most recent election. Interestingly, this value is not the largest in the table: 72.1% of Chow's voters from 2014 backed Tory's rival in 2018, Keesmaat. Such a finding suggests that voters clearly saw the two candidates as ideologically similar.

Table 8.2. Consistency of mayoral vote choice (%)

Vote in 2018	Vote in 2014			
	Tory	Ford	Chow	Other
Tory	69.2	41.7	19.4	37.4
Keesmaat	28.8	26.9	72.1	37.8
Goldy	0.9	25.8	0.8	11.1
Other	1.2	4.9	7.1	13.7
N	378	83	305	14

Doug Ford's former 2014 support was divided much less consistently in 2018. Though Tory was the recipient in 2018 of a plurality of this support, Keesmaat received a noteworthy share.[13]

The fact that Tory increased his vote share between elections, coupled with the finding that nearly one third of his 2014 supporters abandoned him for another candidate in 2018, suggests that he must have secured many new voters in the most recent election. This is, in fact, the case: nearly one quarter (24.7%) of individuals who voted for another candidate in 2014 backed the mayor in 2018. Thus while Tory lost many old voters, he also gained many (more) new ones. Though the same candidate won both elections, there was a great deal of change at the individual level.[14]

To put these findings in context, it is useful to compare them with results from other elections. To that end, we employ data from the Canadian Election Study (CES) to consider the consistency of support for incumbent parties in federal elections from 2004 to 2015.[15] For each election, we calculate the share of those who voted for the incumbent party in the previous election (T1) who also did so in the present election (T2) – recall that the analogous value was 69.2% for Tory. We also consider the share of voters who supported another party in the previous election, but the incumbent currently (again, this value is 24.7% for Toronto 2018). For instance, for the 2015 federal election, we calculate the share of Conservative voters from 2011 who voted for that party again in 2015, as well as the share of non-Conservative 2011 voters who voted for the party in 2015. We performed these calculations for the five most recent national elections, including those in which both the Liberals (2004 and 2006) and the Conservatives (2008, 2011, and 2015) were incumbents, and those in which there was a change of government (2006 and 2015) and where there was not (2004, 2008, and 2011).[16] We show the results of this analysis for federal results, along with the results for Toronto, in Figure 8.5.[17]

Figure 8.5. Consistency of vote choice across time

<figcaption>Voted for Incumbent at T1 ■   Voted for Other at T1 ■</figcaption>
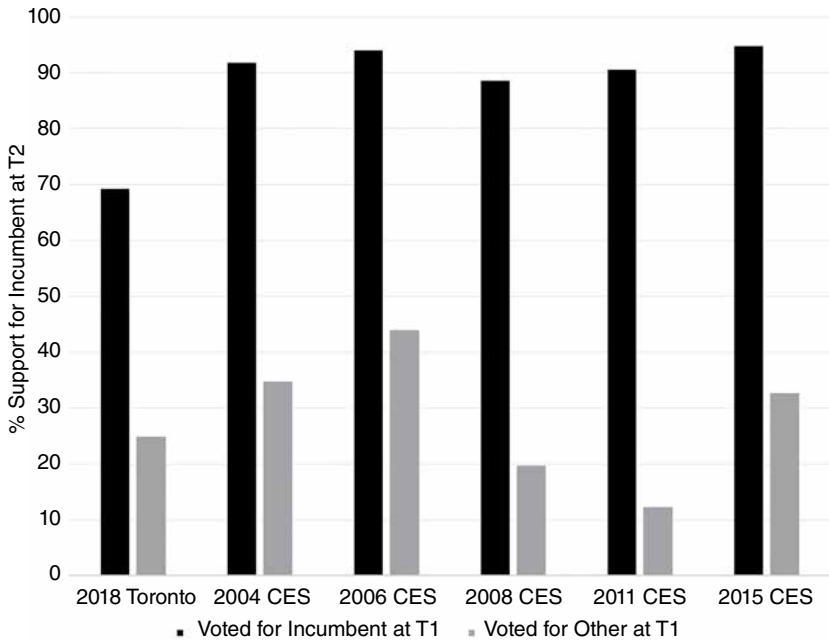
Figure 8.5 shows unequivocally that, compared what happens at the federal level, John Tory was unsuccessful at retaining his supporters. On average, federal incumbent parties were able to retain the support of 91.9% of their voters from the previous election – John Tory lost more than *three times* as much of his support between 2014 and 2018. In terms of attracting new supporters, the 2018 Toronto election result sits near the middle of the federal results. In 2006, the Conservatives were able to steal away 43.9% of voters who previously supported their opponents, but in 2011, they were much less successful at doing so (the figure was 12.2% that year). Thus while Tory did fairly well at attracting new supporters, he did a poor job at retaining old ones.

Further highlighting Tory's comparatively weak performance in this respect is the fact that his vote share increased so significantly (from 40.3% to 63.5%). In many of the national elections considered in Figure 8.5, the incumbent party *lost* vote share – the Conservatives dropped 7.7 percentage points from 2011 to 2015, and the Liberals saw a decrease of 6.5 points in 2006. In both these elections, the incumbent parties

nevertheless maintained the support of more than 90% of their voters from the previous election.

Despite his re-election, and apparent consistency at the aggregate, an individual-level analysis reveals that John Tory's bases of support shifted significantly between 2014 and 2018. He retained a much smaller share of his support than do incumbent parties in federal elections, all the while winning many new voters. We expect that such a result is largely due to the non-partisan nature of local elections. Torontonians were offered an almost entirely new slate of options in 2018, while federal elections are generally contested by exactly the same constellation of parties. In such an environment, individuals may form (long-term) partisan ties to parties, leading to consistent support for their party of choice. When voters are presented with new options in each election, the incumbent cannot rely so heavily on past supporters, for partisan ties are lacking. Municipal elections have a reputation for being dominated by incumbents; even so, as the 2018 Toronto election suggests, mayors can hardly rest on their laurels.

The Correlates of Vote-Switching

We have thus far shown that there was a great deal of volatility in vote choice in Toronto between 2014 and 2018. Though John Tory won both elections, he did so with the backing of very different voters. He was able to attract a great deal of new support in 2018 from individuals who formerly backed his opponents. Yet at the same time, he lost a large share of his 2014 voters, particularly when compared to the losses experienced by incumbent parties at the federal level. High levels of incumbent success in local elections seemingly occur despite a relatively high level of individual-level volatility.

We conclude with an exploratory analysis of the sources of this volatility. That is, we consider the correlates of either abandoning or beginning to support Tory between 2014 to 2018. The explanatory variables considered are the same as those in Figure 8.6 (socio-demographic factors, ideology, economic evaluations, and issue importance variables). We run models for two binary outcome variables. The subsample used for the first model includes only those voters who supported Tory in 2014, and the model is meant to identify the correlates of defecting from Tory between elections – the outcome variable compares those individuals who supported Tory in both elections to those who did so in only 2014 (values for this variable are 1 if voters were loyal to Tory in 2018, and 0 if they abandoned him). The subsample for the second variable includes only those respondents who did not vote for Tory in

Figure 8.6. The dynamics of support for Tory, 2014–2018
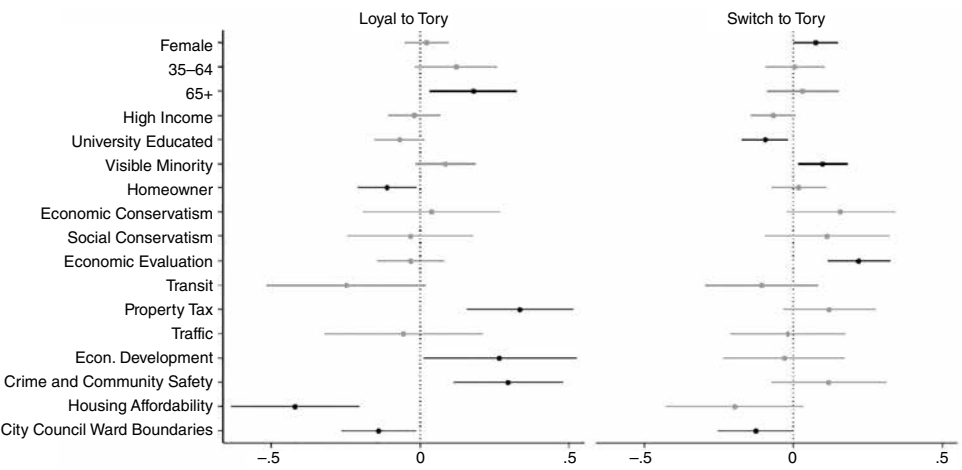
Notes: Entries report marginal effects and standard errors. Coefficients in black are statistically significant at p < 0.1.

2014, and this model is meant to provide insight into the correlates of switching *to* the mayor between elections. The outcome variable here is coded as 1 if they voted for Tory in 2018, and 0 if they once again decided not to back the mayor. High values for both variables therefore indicate support for Tory.

The results of these models are found in Figure 8.6, which shows the marginal effect of each explanatory factor on either abandoning or beginning to support Tory between 2014 and 2018.[18] Effects to the right of the vertical axis indicate that a factor is positively associated with support for Tory (either continuing to support him across elections, or beginning to support him). Identifying the correlates of these "loyal to Tory" and "come to Tory" variables provides insight into the sources of the significant inter-election volatility observed earlier and the reasons why voters changed their position (or not) toward the incumbent mayor.

Figure 8.6 reveals that a very different set of factors are associated with the two outcome variables; those factors that caused Tory 2014 voters to stay with him in 2018 differ from those that led new voters to back him. The issue variables are largely driving the retention/defection of Tory's 2014 voters – five of the seven issue importance indicators are significant. Those individuals who placed a great deal of emphasis on housing affordability or ward redistricting were likely to abandon the mayor. On

the other hand, those voters who placed emphasis on property taxes, economic development, and crime and community safety tended to vote for the mayor again. Two other factors were associated with abandoning the mayor: age and homeownership – younger voters and owners were comparatively likely to defect.

As for attracting new voters, quite a different story emerges. Of note, only one issue (ward redistricting) is a factor; those who prioritized this were relatively unlikely to switch to Tory. Instead, socio-demographic characteristics and retrospective economic evaluations determined whether those individuals who did not support Tory in 2014 decided to do so in 2018. Tory was comparatively likely to win new support from women and visible minorities, while university-educated voters did not embrace him. He was able to attract new support from respondents who had positive retrospective evaluations of the city's economy – such a finding is not at all surprising for an incumbent. It is these groups of individuals who helped Tory win in 2018, even though he lost so many of his voters from 2014.

There is very little overlap between the two models. Issues were a significant factor in Tory's ability to retain support, but not in attracting it. Women, visible minorities, voters without a university education, and those who had a positive assessment of the economy were relatively likely to vote for Tory for the first time in 2018, while homeowners and young voters were comparatively likely to abandon him. These data suggest that there were clear patterns to individual-level changes in vote choice between elections. Though Tory won both elections in a convincing fashion, his bases of support in 2018 were, in fact, quite different from those that existed in 2018.

Conclusion

In some ways, the 2018 Toronto municipal election was typical of Canadian local contests. Despite the tumult caused by the stunning provincially imposed reduction in the size of City Council, 80% of council seats were won by incumbents. Voter turnout was just over 40%, and the sitting mayor won by a comfortable margin. The mayoral election appears particularly ordinary when contrasted to the exceptionally high-profile 2014 contest.

CMES data provide novel insights into Tory's seemingly conventional victory, in terms of both the sources of his support and how the bases of his support shifted between elections. In 2018, the mayor received the backing of segments of the population that were largely to be expected to support him, given his status as a right-of-centre incumbent. He

performed well among older and less educated voters, as well as those with economically conservative attitudes and those who had positive retrospective economic evaluations. Voters who placed a high priority on property taxes, economic development, and crime and community safety, and a low priority on housing affordability and the ward redistricting scandal, tended to back him.

Though Tory's success in multiple elections is fairly conventional, we find that his repeated success at the aggregate level masks a great deal of volatility at the individual level – a striking result given that municipal incumbents are famously dominant. Tory lost a much greater share of his support from the previous election than incumbent parties tend to do at the federal level. He only increased his vote share because he was able to attract the support of a sizable share of voters who backed his opponents in 2014. Importantly, there are clear patterns in the correlates of abandoning, or newly supporting, the mayor; of particular note, given Tory's comparatively weak ability to retain support, is the finding that issues seemed to drive patterns of defection. All of this points to a very clear conclusion: the high levels of success that municipal incumbents enjoy cannot be attributed to a consistent set of supporters. When a new set of opponents emerges, bases of elector support shift and new coalitions of support must be created.

NOTES

1 There was some opposition to changing the number of wards from 44 to 47, and this led to a hearing by the Ontario Municipal Board. Supporters of the shift to 47 seats claimed that the change was needed to ensure proper representation in the downtown core, where population growth had been particularly high in recent years (Beattie, 2018). Coincidentally, downtown happens to be a particularly progressive part of the city. Recent research on Ford's decision to adopt the 25-ward scheme has shown that attitudes toward redistricting in Toronto are strongly shaped by partisan and ideological considerations (McGregor et al., forthcoming).

2 A small group of seven incumbent councillors did publicly support the move. Among them, three did not run in 2018 (David Shiner, Justin Di Ciano, and Cesar Palacio), two lost against another incumbent (Giorgio Mammolitti and Vince Cristani), and two were re-elected (Michael Ford and Stephen Holyday)

3 The matter remains unresolved, however, as in early 2020 the Supreme Court agreed to hear the city's appeal to the change (Pagliaro, 2020).

4 N = 9.251 for all values reported in this paragraph.

5 Keesmaat did arguably oppose the redistricting more strongly than Tory. She attributed her last-minute entry into the mayoral race as a result of Tory's "tepid" response to Premier Ford (Gray, 2018). Though she later backtracked, she even hinted at Toronto secession as a potential solution to provincial interference (Elliott, 2018).

6 Wards 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, and 22.

7 Wards 17, 19, and 23.

8 N = 2,281.

9 N = 974 for all models. Pseudo R-squared for Model D is 0.1657.

10 As of July 2019, of the most recent elections in each province, only in Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland did the incumbent party win.

11 On a scale of 0 (left) to 10 (right), CMES respondents placed Tory at an average of 6.4 and Keesmaat at 3.7 (N = 877, difference significant at $p < 0.001$). In 2014, McGregor et al. found that Tory was placed at 6.5, Chow at 3.0, and Ford at 7.4.

12 Toronto is the only city in the CMES where changes in vote choice across elections can be considered (the questions necessary to do so were not asked in any other city).

13 The share of Ford voters is lower in the sample than should be expected given the 2014 election outcome. Among other things, this may be due to self-selection into (or out of) the survey by these voters, or a reluctance of such individuals to "admit" to having voted for Ford – i.e., a municipal "shy-Tory" effect (we suspect the latter option to be particularly likely, given Ford's intrusion into the election regarding the council ward boundaries). Both of these factors might conceivably have some biasing effect upon values in the "Ford" column of the table. However, the most important value in the table is that of the top-left corner, which indicates consistency among Tory supporters. This value is unaffected by any potential issues with sampling former Ford voters.

14 If participation is related to vote choice, turnout can be an important factor in shaping election outcomes. CMES data show no difference, however, in the 2018 turnout rates of individuals who supported Tory versus other candidates in 2014 (though non-voters are underrepresented in the sample, as is the case in most election surveys). We therefore limit our analysis to those individuals who voted in both elections.

15 See https://ces-eec.arts.ubc.ca.

16 All results are weighted to the population.

17 For both the CES and CMES, vote choice for T1 was asked in the pre-election survey, while T2 vote choice was asked in the post-election questionnaire.

18 N = 455 and Pseudo R2 = 0.2004 for the "leave Tory" model. N = 402 and
     Pseudo R2 = 0.1639 for the "come to Tory" model.

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