**NEWS RELEASE**
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Local officeholders facing increased threats as**

**political climate worsens in many municipalities**

**UMQ Launches “Respect in Democracy Is Respecting Democracy” Campaign**

**Montreal, January 18, 2021** – The Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ) is launching a province-wide “Respect in Democracy Is Respecting Democracy” campaign today. The is an opportune time to do this since 2021 an important year for municipal democracy with municipal elections on November 7.

As an early runup to November’s municipal elections, the UMQ campaign is designed to encourage people to enter politics and to get involved in the public sphere by promoting enhanced municipal democracy and a more trusting relationship between the people and their democratic institutions.

“We’re seeing more aggressive statements and acts of intimidation against municipal officeholders than ever before, especially on social media. This has negatively impacted the political climate in many municipalities. It’s a phenomenon that began accelerating in 2020 with the public health crisis. The presence of differing opinions is essential for a healthy democratic society. However, sharing ideas and a diversity of viewpoints must be expressed in a respectful, tolerant, and civil manner,” said UMQ president Mayor Suzanne Roy of Sainte-Julie.

In the coming weeks, Quebec municipalities will be invited to adopt a [Declaration of Commitment](https://umq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/declaration-generale-version-web.pdf) through a municipal council resolution of their own. “This is an important gesture. We want to safeguard our democracy collectively, together. We must never forget that our elected officials and public officeholders are committed to serving the well-being of their constituents on a daily basis. Our goal is to encourage social engagement, not discourage it,” Mayor Roy said.

The UMQ campaign will be complemented by an action plan that includes more than a dozen awareness-raising and support measures for municipalities and the general public to be implemented in the weeks and months ahead. For example, the UMQ will propose activities in its continuing education program for elected municipal officials as well as standards to be met for using social media.

**The voice of local government**

For over 100 years, the UMQ has represented local governments from every region of Quebec. The UMQ mission is to provide strong leadership for effective, autonomous local governments by mobilizing municipal expertise, supporting members in carrying out their functions and in promoting enhanced municipal democracy. UMQ members, representing over 85% of the population and land area of Quebec, are grouped into affinity caucuses: local municipalities, central municipalities, regional county municipalities, major cities, and municipalities in the Montreal metropolis.

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Source: Communications and Marketing Services

 Union of Quebec Municipalities

Information: Patrick Lemieux

Communications and Media Relations Advisor
 514-282-7700, extension 279

Mobile 438-827-4560
 plemieux@umq.qc.ca