

Translation of the Declaration by the UMQ (Extract from the Resolution)

"Our democracy is rooted in our history. We ourselves choose the men and women who will govern us. In a democracy we can all be candidates for public office. When elections take place, citizens delegate the administration of their common welfare to people who offer their services, as we do. This way of managing our communities and regions has helped us attain one of the highest standards of living in the world – living in safety, living our lives as we wish, and freely expressing ourselves.

"Debate and a spirited exchange of ideas are the lifeblood of democracy. This is possible as long as people respect one another. But these days, our democracy is too often abused in unfortunate ways – offensive behaviour, disrespect, threats, intimidation, and identity theft. In recent years, especially since the rise of social media, vigorous but respectful debate has too often been replaced with insults, threats, and intimidation.

"This was already true before the pandemic. But the pandemic has only made things worse. That this crisis should cause concern and anxiety is perfectly normal. That we may sometimes disagree with decisions made by the authorities is also normal. What is not normal or acceptable is that the women and men who exercise public responsibility by serving their fellow citizens should be intimidated, driven to resign, sometimes even facing death threats, or forced to move about with police protection.

"In less than a year, local elections will be held in all Quebec municipalities. Between now and then, we must learn to take better care of our democracy. We must return to debate that respects people and institutions so we can make the best possible decisions together. Let us remember that councillors and public officeholders are committed to the well-being of the people they represent. Let us encourage political commitment, not discourage it.

"As elected municipal officeholders, we are proud to serve our fellow citizens. That is why we are calling for respectful, democratic debate. Because "Respect in Democracy Is Respecting Democracy." And we urge officeholders in every Quebec municipality to join us in this movement."