

From Political Refugee to Mayor: Soraya Martínez Ferrada's Historic Victory in Montreal

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Soraya Martínez Ferrada arrived in Canada at the age of eight as a political refugee fleeing the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and was recently elected with 43% of the votes as the new mayor of Montreal, becoming the first Latin American-born person and the second woman to hold this position.



Original article: [De refugiada de la dictadura a alcaldesa en Canadá: las claves del triunfo de la chilena Soraya Martínez en Montreal](#)

Soraya Martínez Ferrada arrived in Canada in 1980 as a young refugee fleeing the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile. Forty-five years later, on November 2, 2025, she made history by becoming the new mayor of Montreal, the country's second-largest city, achieving 43% of the votes in a pivotal municipal election.

Martínez Ferrada is the first Latin American-born individual and the second woman to lead the city, following outgoing mayor Valérie Plante.

The Ensemble Montréal candidate surpassed incumbent Luc Rabouin of Projet Montréal, who garnered 35% of the votes and announced he would resign as party leader in the coming days.

Arrival in Canada as a Political Refugee from the Dictatorship

Martínez Ferrada was born in the Providencia commune of Santiago on August 28, 1972, and arrived in Canada in 1980 at the age of eight as a political refugee from the civic-military dictatorship.

In her early days in the North American country, she attended a welcome class while her mother learned French at an immigrant center.

She studied at HEC Montréal, earned a master's degree in management, and worked with community organizations.

According to Spotlight, the new mayor's political career began in 2005 when she was elected a municipal councilor for Saint-Michel.

During this time, she advocated for impactful urban transformation and sustainable development projects and helped organize the Sommet de la culture, which led to the

creation of the Quartier des spectacles, a significant contribution to Montreal's cultural landscape.

«As chief of staff for Louise Harel, she was part of the team that highlighted inequalities in services across districts and alleged irregularities in public works contracts,» noted the [cited media](#).

She then distanced herself from party politics to focus on community and environmental management, particularly through TOHU, a cultural and environmental center founded in 2004 in the Saint-Michel district.

In 2015, she ventured into federal politics as a senior advisor and chief of staff in the Canadian Heritage Ministry, and in 2019, she reached Parliament as a representative for Hochelaga, a district that hadn't elected a Liberal representative in 30 years. As a legislator, she concentrated on food security, housing, and urban revitalization issues.

Prior to her election as mayor, Martínez Ferrada served as a federal MP and took on the role of Minister of Tourism in Justin Trudeau's government in 2024.

She resigned from her ministerial position in February and announced her candidacy for the leadership of the municipal party Ensemble Montréal.

In her resignation letter, she expressed her dedication to the city that welcomed her. «The desire to serve the city that welcomed the young refugee from Chile is too significant to ignore,» she stated in her letter.

Program Focused on the Needs of Montreal Residents

As a candidate for mayor of Montreal, she presented a campaign centered on rebuilding citizens' trust, prioritizing concrete results and transparent governance.

To address the housing crisis and the lack of shelter for the homeless, Soraya Martínez Ferrada proposed a series of measures including the establishment of a “Tactical Intervention Group on Homelessness” with an investment of \$120 million and the creation of an inventory of vacant city lands to tackle this sensitive issue.

Simultaneously, she proposed accelerating the construction of “off-market” housing on city-owned lands, reducing red tape and costs to achieve 20% affordable housing. Additionally, she called for a rental registry, a review of mobility and public transportation, and the optimization of urban cleaning and management activities, plus the implementation of a 100-day plan with visible measures.

Victory of Soraya Martínez Ferrada: A Message of Integration and Diversity

The victory of the Ensemble Montréal candidate signified not just a change in governance, but a clear message from a city demanding a new direction.

In her victory speech, Soraya Martínez Ferrada expressed her deep humility and emotion in accepting the mandate of mayor that had been entrusted to her, sending a message about integration and diversity.

«Montreal has sent a clear message: we need change (...) Montrealers not only elected a mayor for the second consecutive time, but also voted for a candidate of diverse background. This election is a powerful message, it reflects a city that recognizes the richness of its diversity,» she affirmed.

Through her social media, she shared a message thanking all the volunteers and supporters who passionately carried the campaign forward and stated that with the election results, «Montreal now has a city that is more humane, attentive, and united.»

«Starting tomorrow, we will work to live up to your trust and build together the Montreal we deserve,» she emphasized.

Merci, Montréal. 💜

Aujourd'hui, vous avez choisi le changement, et vous m'avez fait un immense honneur.

Je ressens une profonde gratitude envers tous les Montréalais qui ont cru en moi, envers nos candidats, bénévoles et supporters qui ont porté cette campagne avec coeur.

Ce... pic.twitter.com/wQv8ZLwoHA

— Soraya Martinez Ferrada (@SorayaMartinezF) [November 3, 2025](#)

Fuente: [El Ciudadano](#)