

Left-leaning Quebec solidaire party wins first-ever seat in legislature

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MONTREAL — The left-leaning Quebec solidaire got a foot in the door of the national assembly by electing co-leader Amir Khadir as its first-ever member on Monday.

“It has to be said, this victory was not given to us,” Khadir told jubilant supporters after he narrowly defeated Parti Quebecois incumbent Daniel Turp in the Montreal riding of Mercier with about 38 per cent of the vote.

The party, which describes itself as leftist, pacifist, pluralist, feminist, democratic and sovereigntist, presented a platform totalling \$10 billion in spending, including a \$1.7-billion economic stimulus package.

Proposals included the nationalization of the wind energy industry, the construction of 50,000 social housing units and an increase in welfare benefits.

Shortly after the polls closed Monday, hundreds of supporters gathered in a downtown theatre erupted into cheers when Khadir jumped into the lead by about 200 votes.

By the end of the night, the margin had grown to 872.

“From Gatineau to Gaspé, everywhere, people with sincerity, energy, consistency, and patience have made this possible,” Khadir said.

“Giving to Quebec - to hundreds of thousands of Quebecers - a reason to dream a different Quebec is possible.”

For the Iranian-born Khadir, 47, that means the stewardship of the environment, accessible health care, and a more egalitarian society.

A microbiologist by training, Khadir has been a longtime opponent of privatized health care and has previously run federally for the Bloc Quebecois.

Quebec solidaire, which will now be one of four parties represented in the provincial legislature, also finished fourth among the parties in popular vote.

In some ridings, Quebec solidaire candidates received more than 10 per cent of the popular vote.

“There’s more solidarity in Quebec tonight,” Khadir said, promising to fight for “an economy that works for the people, where the wealth is shared. Where the population can finally hope for better and stop accepting so little.”

Just 20 months ago, Turp won the riding for the PQ with 33 per cent of the popular vote while Khadir finished a strong second at 29 per cent.

But it was third time lucky for Khadir against Turp - the PQ member had also defeated Khadir in 2003.

The party’s other co-leader, Francoise David, came in second behind the PQ candidate in her

Montreal riding of Gouin.

“It’s much better to have a MNA (member of the national assembly), isn’t it?” she said.

“We have a reason to love the Quebec that just elected the first (Quebec) solidaire (member).”

P.S.

* From La Presse canadienne:

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