



The revival of the Quebec Liberal Party

OPINION

« A leader, no matter how talented or eloquent in espousing an engaging vision, will not win an election...»



A political commentator has recently called the work of the Committee for the Renewal of the Quebec Liberal Party an exercise in navel gazing, adding that everyone knows what the Quebec Liberal Party (QLP) stands for and that the revival of the QLP and its electoral fortunes are wholly dependent on choosing the “right” leader.

I respectfully disagree.

On August 23, when most would have stayed in their backyards to enjoy a beautiful Montreal summer evening, I attended a packed hall meeting of the Committee for the Renewal of the QLP that brought together West End and West Island ridings at a Lachine venue that offered a magnificent view of Lac St-Louis.

With respect, reviving the QLP and its chances of attaining power at the next provincial election requires more than holding a leadership convention and hoping that it produces a messiah who will lead Liberals to the promised land. Choosing a credible leader for the QLP is important but it is not enough. Any leader must be a passionate advocate of a vision that must resonate with the electorate. But that vision alone will not secure political victory. Choosing a credible leader for the QLP is important but it is not enough.

Any leader must be a passionate advocate of a vision that must resonate with the electorate. But that vision alone will not secure political victory.

A leader, no matter how talented or eloquent in espousing an engaging vision, will not win an election working with a small inner circle of back-room advisors. The path to victory of a political party and its leader requires both a vision and a motivated team- the broad-based support of men and woman who believe in a shared vision for our society and the leader chosen to convey that vision to voters. A party’s vision for our future and faith in the leader of that party are what motivates volunteers to go door to door with candidates- even in the rain.

Meetings such as the one held on August 23 offer an important forum for those who believe in liberal values to come together, to fine tune the vision, and to take the initial steps at building the team that will carry the party and its leader to victory. Politics is certainly a contact sport, but it was clear from the people in attendance at the meeting of August 23 that the electoral victory being sought is not about “winning” for winning’s sake, i.e., to cause the defeat of a political adversary.



The revival of the Quebec Liberal Party... Continued

OPINION

People were genuinely concerned about the kind of Quebec the present government is attempting to create.

A Quebec that is becoming unrecognizable to many, be they English or French speaking, foreign or native born, whose families have lived in Quebec for generations or who are relatively recent arrivals to our society.

Concerns about the kind of Quebec we want for ourselves, our children and grandchildren are what motivate people to go to a meeting on a beautiful summer night instead of staying home with their families.

These concerns are what motivate people to become politically active and volunteer their time and efforts to supporting a political party and a leader whose vision aligns with the vision of the life they want for themselves and their families. Hardly an exercise in navel-gazing.

The meeting was a forum for discussion and formulation of the liberal vision that is a condition precedent to building the team that will work in the trenches, do the heavy lifting, for the leader that will eventually be chosen to lead a party that solidly supports and advocates the shared liberal vision.

What is that vision?

To paraphrase what I stated when it was my turn at the microphone:

The liberal tradition in western democracies is focused on securing individual freedom for the governed- the right of the individual to pursue a happy life unfettered by intrusive government interference with individual rights.

Rights that need only be restricted or sanctioned if the exercise of those rights cause harm to others. The liberal tradition is therefore inherently tolerant of others, their way of life, their differences.

The liberal tradition embraces diversity. Societies that embrace these liberal values are not only more inclusive, but they are also more prosperous.

The prosperity that is generated by welcoming the contributions of peoples from all over the world, regardless of their race, ethnic origin or religious faith creates a wealthier society that generates tax revenues that fund the social entitlements that liberals believe everyone is entitled to health services, primary, secondary, and higher education and social services for the vulnerable and less fortunate members of our society.

Liberals believe in a more tolerant and open Quebec that will create more opportunity, wealth and prosperity for everyone. And that's why Liberals attended this meeting and why they are ready to build that team.

Ralph Mastromonaco
practices criminal law in Montreal.
www.mastromonaco.ca