

Oct 11, 2012

The Empire Club Presents

What does the PQ Government Mean for Quebec? For Canada?

Head Table:

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André Pratte, Chief Editorial Writer, *La Presse*

Reverend Canon Kim Beard, Incumbent at St. Paul's on the Hill Anglican Church in Pickering

John Honderich, Chair, Torstar Corporation

Lisa Balfour Bowen, Founding President, French for the Future

Introduction by Robin Sears

It's now my delight and honor to introduce André Pratt. And let me just say by way of preliminary comment that editorial writers are an unrecognized and in some cases, a disrespected breed of journalism. They're often accused of being obvious, irrelevant, or naïve by jealous, quote, 'working reporters.' Their job in the cliché of people in the profession is to, quote, 'come down from the hills after the battle to shoot the wounded.'

They're also usually anonymous, so you're not entirely clear which one of the August editorial board members is responsible for today's foolishness, except in Québec, and in some European centers where they actually get a byline so you know who to be mad at. They get blamed for the editorial positions of the publisher's insistence, even if it wasn't theirs, and I can say this with some confidence because I'm the son of one grumpy such former editorial page editor.

My friend André Pratt though, is not one of those. In a 30-year career as one of Québec's leading political writers, he spent the last decade building the editorial reputation of *La Presse*. Its editorial page is now famous, and a must-read for its courage, its determination on the issues that André cares about, about which we're going to hear in a moment, and its occasional humor.

His colleagues have endorsed that view from journalism centers across the country by naming him the Best Editorial Writer in Canada on three separate years. I don't think I know of somebody else who's achieved that kind of trifecta.

An author in his spare time, he recently wrote a marvelous life of Laurier published last year, it's a great addition to the thin shelf of good Canadian political biography, I recommend it entirely, and he is the author of five previous books, as well. It is, however, his championship of Canadian federalism for which he is most infamous at home, and perhaps more famous in places like this.

It's hard to describe adequately to a Toronto audience, the resolve and the courage and the determination that André's eloquent defense of federalism means for someone in his position in a place such as he sits. I guess the closest I could come in contemporary terms might be to suggest it would be like the editor of the editorial page of the Toronto Star endorsing Rob Ford consistently and bashing his enemies.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of Canada's premier journalists, a visionary about our country, a good talker, André Pratte.

André Pratte, Chief Editorial Writer, *La Presse*

Thank you, Robin, for a much too generous introduction. The one word I like is naïve, because I believe in the power of ideas. I'm not a businessman, I'm not a lawyer, I don't do anything, I just look at people doing things, and I comment on it. But I believe that ideas are important, and that you can contribute to how our society is evolving by thinking and spreading ideas and discussing with others, sharing those ideas.

It's really a privilege for me to address such a distinguished audience. When I speak in Toronto, I usually have a good Maple Leafs joke, but unfortunately, the NHL is in a lockout and therefore I don't have a joke to start with. I must say we also joke a lot about the Canadians these days, but they're not playing either, which means they're not losing.

I'll make a few remarks that I'll try to keep as short as possible because I do really think that it's a great opportunity for me to hear your ideas, your views and discuss the future of our country, especially after the results of September 4 in the Québec election. Let me first remind you briefly of the results of that election, the *Partie Québécois* got 54 seats out of 125 in the National Assembly, so only 9 shy of a majority. The outgoing Liberals got 50 seats, which really surprised many who thought that after nine years in power and a very high rate of dissatisfaction the Liberals would be routed which did not happen. A new political party called Coalition Avenir Québec, or CAQ, and their members are known as the CAQuist, a very strange name, they got 19 seats, which for a new party is not bad, and a leftist party Québec Solidaire got two seats.

It's interesting to note that the *Partie Québécois* got 32% of the vote; that's their lowest score, actually, since 1973, which was their second election. In '73, they got six seats with about 31% of the vote, and now they're in power with 32% of the vote. And as a result, of course, of having not only a two- or three-party election, but actually four or five parties that are strong enough. The Liberals got 31%, which is very close again.

Even though Mrs. Marois is now Premier, she has a minority government and a weak one at that, and there is no indication that there is some kind of resurgence of the separatist movement in Québec. However, the movement is still there and still quite strong in most polls. If you ask people would you vote for separation or usually the word used is sovereignty, they get about 40% of the vote. So that's quite significant still today.

The Liberal defeat has brought about the resignation of Mr. Charest, and the Liberals are now in a leadership race with two quite good candidates. The CAQ, the new party, is led by François Legault, former businessman, former *Partie Québécois* minister; it has some potential, but it's not very clear whether they'll be become a coherent party enough to become eventually an alternative for government.

Quite surprisingly, the first month of the *Partie Québécois* government has been very controversial and has shown signs of incompetence. I say surprisingly, because whatever you think of the *Partie Québécois* and their ideas, they're usually formed very competent government full of brilliant people, especially in finance, you think of Mr. Parizeau, for instance, or Bernard Landry, and many others, and in particular there was a lot of controversial controversy, which you may have read about or heard about, about some fiscal proposals that they made.

During the campaign, one of the main promises of Mrs. Marois was to scrap a healthcare premium of \$200 a year that had to be paid by practically everyone except the poorest of the poor, that was introduced by the previous government. Obviously, like any new tax, it was very unpopular in the PQ had promised very solemnly, that they would scrap the tax.

And they also explained that they would compensate the billion dollars, because scrapping the tax means the government would have would miss a billion dollars, they would replace that money by introducing two new brackets in the income tax regime, taxing everyone at provincial rate who had taxable gains of over \$250,000 31%, which would bring the marginal tax rate in Québec, combined Federal and Provincial at over 55%, which is, you know, is quite high compared to certainly compared to what is the case in Ontario. But that was not enough to reach the billion dollars, so they also propose to increase taxes on capital gains and on revenues from dividends.

So obviously, that was very unpopular, and not only unpopular in the business circles, but also for a lot of people for whom capital gains is part of really their retirement or planned retirement income. And also, a lot of people who invest even small amounts or through their pension funds in in shares that that produce dividend revenues. And besides Mrs. Marois announced during the campaign that the tax, the health premium would disappear, right from year fiscal year 2012. So that means they needed a billion dollars for the current fiscal year, and therefore the new tax measures would be retroactive, which is surprising, especially in the case of capital gains, because of course, people had made transactions during the year not knowing that they will now be taxed higher amount on these transactions. So the controversy was so huge, really that the government finally had to back down, which they did yesterday, even though they said that what they now propose respects the spirit of their initial proposal.

The fact is, they've now announced that the health premium will not be scrapped but become progressive. I just recalled it was \$200 for practically everyone, it will now move between 0 to \$1,000 for the high incomes. Taxation for dividends and capital gains will remain the same, they will not be retroactive measures; therefore the health premium will remain for 2012 and the new regime will come in force for 2013.

So, what really they did is not only the initial proposals are gone but the spirit is gone, everything is gone. They've come back really to something much more sensible. But this impression of improvisation and competence in in the field that is extremely important, as lead many does think that this government will have a very short life and will probably be defeated in the National Assembly if not this fall, then next spring when the first budget is presented.

It is true that a lot of people especially in the business community are worried not only because the perceived sense of incompetence, especially in the economic field where Mrs. Marois's cabinet is very weak. But also, because their program is really to the left it's like the NDP before Jack Layton, which I guess tells you a lot.

However, we should not underestimate the *Partie Québécois* even though their Minister of Finance is pretty weak, they do have a lot of brilliant people around Mrs. Marois' table. They have very good communicators, there's a lot of sympathy for the *Partie Québécois* in the media, as you know, in the many lobby groups like the environmentalists, the all the artists and so on. So I'm pretty sure that the

mess of the first week will not be repeated and they will have a government that is competent enough, and will have a lot of sympathy for many groups who made Mr. Charest's life miserable.

There is also the question of who will be the next Liberal leader. As I mentioned, there are three good candidates, but as we all know, someone who's a good candidate who's been a good minister is not necessarily a good leader. And besides, you certainly have heard about this inquiry on corruption and collusion in public works contract. The first star witness, who's now been on the witness stand for five or six days have started making allegations or revelations that imply a very strong link between corruption and collusion in the construction industry and fund collecting for the Liberal Party. And if this goes on for weeks and weeks and other witnesses confirm these things, obviously, the Liberal Party, whoever the leader is, will suffer something like what happened to the Liberal Party of Canada under Paul Martin; and I don't need to tell you that in Québec especially, the Liberal brand, the Federal Liberal brand, is very damaged.

And there's also, even though the parties at the provincial level in Québec are very different, still, there's a connection, there seems to be an impact of what happens to the federal Liberal party to the provincial party and the reverse; and if another scandal hurts the Liberal brand in Québec, it will be very difficult not only for the future federal leader to make inroads in the province, but also for any leader of the provincial party, and therefore, whatever has happened over the first month of the Marois. Government, there's certainly a possibility that they will survive more than a few months, and even eventually be reelected as a majority government.

Now, should we care? As Québécois I think we certainly should. As Canadians from outside Québec, should you care? I certainly think so. And actually, we should care about politics in Québec, whatever happens to the *Partie Québécois*, even if they're beaten three months from now; but more so if they remain in power, because they will continue and intensify a very constant process that has been going on probably since the *Bloq Québécois* has elected a majority of MPs in Ottawa for about 20 years. And that is a distancing of Québec from the rest of Canada and vice versa. A process that obviously, the *Partie Québécois* has every intention of continuing and pushing.

There are many reasons for that rift that is widening between Québec and the other regions of the country, and certainly many Québécois now feel, I wouldn't say hostile, more indifferent to whatever happens in the rest of the country. Besides the 35 or 40%, who would like to separate, many, many others don't care either about separation or federalism or Canada or Toronto or anything else.

Young people from Québec are like many other young people in the world; they want to learn languages, they have friends from every culture, they want to travel in the world they want, they're ready to work practically everywhere, but probably not in Toronto. So, very strong feeling that always has existed in Québec for many Québécois, this emotional attachment to Canada as a country that they help to build, that admiration for Canada's contribution role in the world, that pride of achieving such a marvelous country that existed has really diminished a lot. And I don't need to tell you that, when crisis erupts between the rest of the country and Québec like is bound to happen in a country as diverse as ours, that emotional link is crucial, it's very important, because whatever the arguments from one side to the other, when people come out and vote, for instance, in a referendum on separation, many hesitate, even though for some would be sensitive to the PQ argument, they don't want to lose Canada.

Well, that feeling that certainly existed a lot in the generations in the 1940s and 1950s, and 60s, a little less than in 1980, and still, I would say a little less in 1995 is weaker now, and a lot of polls show this than it has ever been. Now, it seems also and maybe we can discuss that in a few moments, that some kind of a parallel process is going on at this in the same while in the rest of the country. Many people I think, are tired of listening to Québec politicians and others whining and complaining and never be satisfied of whatever deal is offered to them. And many are simply indifferent. That, you know, whatever happens if Québécois decide to go and let them go, if they decide to stay, let them stay, I don't care.

And of course, Canada is changing a lot during that period. Economic power is changing our population, is now is now more diversified from a religious standpoint and demographic standpoint than ever. And this idea of Canada, founded by two peoples is still there, but much less important for all Canadians than then it was before.

So anyway, some people are starting to think in and outside the province that we're moving in the direction of separation, de facto. No one has voted for that, but if, for instance, Canada is led by a government that whose policies are not only unpopular in Québec, but also that has a very weak Québec representation, it again encourages many Québécois to think that, you know, this is not our government, and we don't really care what they're doing as long as they let us do what we want to do. And the fact that Québécois do not participate, or participate much less than they used to into the building and this evolution of the country, and don't really have or even want the word to say about how will we deal with this difficult balance between our natural resources and the wealth it brings, and the protection of our environment?

Well, if Québécois are not part of the game, we lose as a country, I think, certainly, Québécois lose, but also we sort of encouraged this mutual feeling that you were together, but we don't really care about each other. Now, I think that process makes us weaker and poorer, because every time people from different cultures, try to build things together, it makes them stronger. But besides, from a political standpoint, when a future crisis arises, as it will inevitably, at one point, it makes the Alliance much weaker.

Now imagine a third referendum, and as I said, I don't think there's one in the cards but you know, who knows? So imagine this referendum tomorrow who would speak for Canada in Québec? Jean Charest is gone, and not very popular besides, so you'd have Mrs. Marois on the yes side with a long list of intellectuals and artists and very popular and brilliant people who have thought and written and made movies about Québec as the future great country and participant in the world. And the other side, you'd have Stephen Harper, and you can be an admirer or not, but obviously Stephen Harper will not be the one who can convince Québécois to stay in Canada. You would have Christian Paradis, a very nice guy, but he's no Jean Crétien, and he's no Pierre Elliot Trudeau either. Maybe Justin Trudeau, but I hope if there is a referendum, it won't be tomorrow so we can give him a bit more time so he can mature a bit. So what I'm saying really is, certainly the Federalist and Canadian voice in Québec has never been weaker than it is today.

And it's true that separatists are not at the same level of popularity and brilliance, I would say, then when Lucien Bouchard was there, or René Lévesque, but their adversary is much, much weaker than it was at the time. I remember, as a young journalist Québécois, covering one night a speech by Pierre Trudeau

and the other night by René Lévesque, and whatever the idea is, you could not be anything else but struck by how brilliant and charismatic these men were. And it made for a very difficult choice for many Québécois who thought maybe it was a chance to increase Québec's power of negotiation and so on, because you have not only a quality intellectual debate, but you also had a lot of emotion on both sides.

I'm not sure the scene could be repeated today if we had this. But again, I don't want to talk about necessarily about the risk of separation, because I think whatever happens to the PQ and eventual referendum, even if the Liberals are reelected tomorrow morning in Québec, this issue of a rift that is increasingly widening between Québec and the rest of the country makes us weaker; and I think we as Canadians, even though we're tired about these debates about Québec and the Constitution, whatever, I think we have a duty to try to bridge that gap between Québec and the rest of the country.

Now, what can we do? As I said at the start, I'm not a politician, I am not a business person, so all I can do is write and write articles and books and hope that you know, one or two people read them and find them interesting. I believe in the power of ideas, so I and many others in Québec decided a few years ago to do more than what we did, and tried to change this thing, increase the level of federal discourse in Québec and Canadian discourse in Québec, and we created a very small Think Tank called The Federal Idea and you have the documentation on your table. What we're trying to do is create a space where Québécois who believe in Canada can rejoin, discuss things because it's very surprising to meet people who believe in Canada and Québec, but don't even want to be identified as a federalist because it's become such a taboo, unpopular word. So we decided to create that space where people would be comfortable in discussing and exchanging ideas, and also to rehabilitate the word federalist. And I think that's not only in Québec. I think in the rest of the country, we tend to think that federalism is sort of a very cumbersome system of government complicated, and wouldn't it be much simpler if we had one national government and maybe provincial governments, but not very strong and we'd be more united country. I think we have to rehabilitate federalism as such. Because Federalism is not dull, of course, it becomes a system of government. That's very complicated, but it's like any other system of government. It starts with ideas and principles and values. And when you look at the principles and values that are that underpin federalism, you realize that these values, these principles of tolerance and diversity are also working together to reach common goals and yet, respecting every group's autonomy and diversity. This is more pertinent today even than in Pierre Trudeau's time, and if you look at the crisis in Europe, you realize that what they lack is federalism; and that every kind of solution that they're looking at, even though they don't want to say the word too loud, is a federal solution.

So, we're trying in our small way to work. For instance, we publish different studies on federalism in Canada in the world. I want to give you an example of how that can be useful. Every provincial political party in Québec now believes, even the Liberal Party of Canada believes, that Ottawa should give to the provincial government of Québec all powers in the field of Support for the Arts. That means the National Film Board would be split and you would have a Québec Film Board, with money coming from the federal government; and the Council of the Arts would be separated and you'd have the Québec part with some funding transferred from Ottawa.

And instinctively if you ask Québécois, "Do you think that culture should be an exclusive provincial jurisdiction?" Well, of course people say, "Ah, our culture, language, French, of course, only Québec should." Well, you have to think about it twice; if you ask Québec artists, even separatists, they will tell you that they enjoy very much having another door they can knock on if the Québec government says,

“We're not going to subsidize your play or your exhibition,” they like to have other doors, even though they're called Canada doors, hey like to have other doors, and that it's the same in all Federations. And also if you look at the budget, you realize that the federal government gives Québec artists and cultural institutions 33% of the national budget in Support for the Arts. And obviously, if the Québec government eventually convinces Ottawa to abandon all jurisdiction for culture, it would transfer back 23% of their money, not 33%. Of course, in Québec, provincial parties say, “No, no, no, no, we also want 33% of the money.” I don't think that will work.

So the federal idea had very respected university professors, experts in the field of Support for the Arts, publish a study that had a lot of media impact explaining how it worked in Canada from a budget standpoint, from a cultural diversity standpoint, how even Québec artists thought that it was a good thing to have many doors to knock on, and how other federations in the world dealt with these issues of what is the best national strategy to support the arts when you're in a federation, whether it's Germany, or the United States.

We've published many such documents, we've organized conferences, we've built links with other organizations. Instead of trying to build a new Canadian Council for unity that existed before, we've decided to work with other organizations and universities across the country, the Mowat Center here in Toronto, the Canada West Foundation, and we organize events together. Now, we're still very small, and that's why that flyer is on your table, because we need any kind of support you can give us, but more so I think we have to try to learn to rebuild, or to reestablish a dialogue between Québécois and other Canadians.

And when I say this, people say, “Okay, you want to talk constitution again?” No, no, no, no, that's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying I know it's difficult to do that. But let's forget the last 40 years. Obviously, if we, if we start from what we tried the last for the last 40 years, we'll end up the same place, which is an impasse. But I mean, we have a country that is a great country, that obviously has a lot of challenges. And we're certainly better off if we work on these issues together, then each on our own our own side.

So the PQ victory certainly reminds us that separatism is not dead, that this issue will not go away. We may find that very frustrating, but it's not surprising, really. We all wish that the country would work without quarrels between provinces and regions, and so on, but that's not the standard for the success of a federation. A federation is not somewhere where you have no conflicts or no quarrels. A federation is an organization that permits diverse groups to work together and manage those differences in a peaceful and productive way. The standard for a well working federation is not the disappearance of quarrels, but how you manage them peacefully and productively. And by that standard, Canada's an extraordinary success.

But we have to work at it. That's also part of what a federation is, we have to work at it every day, even though we're tired. That's the answer I get from many people when I talk about what we're trying to do and what I personally and many others in Québec are trying to do: they're tired. Well, once you get tired, eventually you lose your country, because separatists are not tired, or if they're so they're certainly not showing it at all, they're working. And if they're in power today, it's not because they're mean or whatever, it's because they work at it. They believe in their idea, and even though they've had very difficult times, and two very difficult losses, they still they still believe that their idea is the best one for Québec, and they will work at it, and they will do all they think legally, democratically is necessary to

win. And that means that on the other side, we can't just say, "Well, okay, we'll see if one day there's a referendum, we'll start working on it." That's what we tried in 95; and we know what happened, right?

A couple of months ago, when I talked about our project to people in the rest of the country, many said, "Wah, this is all finished, PQ is finished." Okay, now, the PQ is not finished. A referendum? Maybe not, but who knows. So, I think we should work at it, and we all have a duty as Canadians to do that. And I think we certainly have a better chance of succeeding, as a country, whatever happens to the separatists and so on, if Québécois and the Canadians from other regions. reestablish some kind of dialogue on the common problems that were that we're facing.

I don't have to talk too much about those problems, but I think for instance of energy, and when you look at the question of pipelines in the West, now this issue is probably that oil companies are now looking at maybe reversing some of those pipelines. So, if oil cannot be exported to Asia, it will be exported through Québec and the Maritimes, that's a national importance issue. And if we don't establish some kind of dialogue on a national energy policy, for instance, I'm not talking about a program here but a National Energy Policy, and if Québécois are not part of that dialogue with other Canadians, we lose as a country.

So I just want to thank you for your patience. And well, let's begin the dialogue. I hope there's time and interest for questions and comments. Thank you very much.

Robin Sears

So, as Mr. Pratte mentioned, we have a few moments and he's agreed to take some questions from the audience. So I believe there are some roving microphones around. So if you have a question, please just raise your hand and they'll get to you. Gentleman over here.

Questions & Answers

Q. Mr. Pratte, you mentioned that to bridge the solitude required a sort of a battle of ideas. So I'd like to comment on a couple of ideas. The first one is that for many years, the Parti Québécois defended the idea of separation by saying, "Well look at the European Union. They're independent countries, that currency union is working extremely well."

Well, that idea is looking a bit shop worn when you look at places like Greece and Spain, which actually have a lot in common with Québec. And, you know, the second idea is the fiscal idea. You said there's a problem of communication, and you gave the example of arts funding, which seems to me that in the Canadian Federation, there's actually been a disproportional amount of federal funding that's gone to specifically the province of Québec, so they're benefiting hugely from being in the Federation. And yet, that doesn't seem to be a good way of communicating that to the people of Québec. So, again, I'd be interested in your comments on those.

AP: Very interesting. Well, I guess, separatist leaders and intellectuals are like most political people; they tend to find arguments in scenarios, whatever happens. So at one point, Europe was a very good example for them, and then they're not talking about Europe anymore.

What is interesting in the European case, is that it shows, obviously, that some kind of federal system is the only way to share a common currency. It also shows the difficulty of building a federal system. Obviously, Europe is tremendously complex, but in these days where you have to consult a population

for every move you're making, it's not easy for national leaders to convince people that they will have to abandon some kind of part of their national sovereignty to reach common goals.

So, I guess that separatists will tell you that the difficulties in Europe right now, in part, are due to the fact that people want their national sovereignty protected, and they're not willing to give it to some kind of common institution.

For the fiscal issue, it is quite astonishing that even though the numbers are extremely clear as to the fact that Québec gets a couple, if not more, billion dollars a year more from the federal government than they give to the federal government in taxes.

We've done some polls, and people are still convinced the majority of Québécois are still really convinced that they're sending more money to Ottawa than they're receiving. And therefore, when separatists say that, you know, "We'll separate and we'll have more money," it really strikes a chord; people really believe that and I think one of the reasons is that that message has been repeated much more often and for a longer period.

Then the other side of the message. When Stéphane Dion was the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and Pierre was also a member of cabinet, these kinds of arguments were put very forcefully, and you could see that for a couple of years, Québec has started to have a different view.

But it doesn't take much. Once the voices on one side disappear or quiet down, it's much easier for Québécois, like for Scottish; if you read a bit about the debate about the future of Scotland, or Catalonia, the similarities are incredible. It's the same kinds of arguments, exactly the same kinds. And so, it comes back to my point. And of course I'm a communications guy, so I believe as I said very much in the power of communication, but I think simply in these cases where even the facts are clear, but people do not seem to understand or see the facts, it's because the arguments have not been put forcefully enough and constantly enough for people to realize that the facts are this way, not that way.

Q. Mr. Pratte, by some estimates, there are three and a half million English Canadians who speak French of some form or other; 350,000 students a year in French immersion. Does that register with French Québec and the separatist factors that have forced for unity? Or is it just ignored?

AP: I would say unfortunately, I think again, there's quite a bit of indifference. I think Francophone Québécois, French Québécois is I wouldn't say they don't care, that would be exaggerating it, but they feel very different. You know, their universe is now more and more centered on the borders of Québec, and what happens outside the province. They certainly have sympathy, but they tend to believe I think that most Francophone communities are disappearing, or will eventually disappear. And there's, there's not much you can do about it.

As far as French immersion, that's interesting, I tend to agree with what Graham Fraser wrote just before he became Official Languages Commissioner. He was struck by the fact that so many people in English Canada learned French when they were young, and then for many reasons, sort of lost it. And when those people came and tried to get a job at the federal government, for instance, the taxpayers had to pay for these people to relearn the language that they had learned when they were kids. And he thought that was a tremendous waste, and I tend to agree. I think French immersion is nice, but we have to find a way as a country. For the people, at least we're interested that French after high school is not lost, it has to become something more. Graham, for instance, was struck by the fact that in many university departments, French was taught as a foreign language. But obviously it's difficult, because, as a Francophone, even if I were not part of Canada, I need to speak English. So, even young separatists today, they want to learn English, because they know that English is essential in the world.

As an English Canadian, you may learn French as a youngster because your parents think it's good for you, but after that, besides cultural enrichment or patriotism, if you don't have the occasion to talk French a lot, it's easy to lose a language.

I certainly think that we're winners when there are more people in Ottawa, for instance, who speak French, I think we're losers when the federal government sends to Québec, the image of a government that is led by some people who don't speak French, I think that one of the major difficulties of the present government in Ottawa is, besides its policies, is its difficulty in communicating, explaining to Québécois what they're doing.

And I won't go too long on this, but there are many examples where if the government that's sold its policy correctly, not only in French, but correctly, they would have been much more accepted in Québec than they were.

But of course, if you always get the same guy, Christian Paradis; he's very nice guy, but he himself acknowledges that it's not correct for about 75% of the policies of the government to be sold by an English speaking minister, and then Christian comes and translates what the real powerful guy has said, So, obviously, the absence of French, it's not absent, but the diminished presence of French right now at the federal level, increases that perception for many Québécois that the Canadian government, which is not the government, the government of Québec. Sorry, good question. long answer.

Q. Great speech. I'm interested in hearing your thoughts; when you mentioned federalist voices, you didn't talk about Thomas Mulcair, and I'd be curious to hear where he and his party fits in to this landscape that you've described.

AP: I think it's unclear what impact the NDP can have in Québec, I think they're certainly doing much better now than many people expected. You remember during the campaign and after the orange wave how media like to laugh at unexperienced new MPs, and people who hadn't campaigned or we were in Las Vegas or whatever. And she's actually doing quite good job. And many, many other MPs have shown they're very disciplined, and this was a very spontaneous thing. And can it last? It will depend on how the NDP manages some of the difficult issues that will come forward.

I was talking about this idea of pipelines transporting oil from Alberta to Québec, and eventually through Québec to New Brunswick and maybe to be exported. I'm sure this will become as controversial an issue than it is presently in BC and Alberta. And so how will the NDP deal with that? It will be very easy if the PQ is in power to say, "No, we don't want that, and Canada imposes it's tar sands and we don't want it, we're green," and so on. It would be very difficult for Thomas Mulcair to deal with that if he doesn't have any support and Québec so that's why I admire Mr. Mulcair a lot, and I think they certainly have a change a chance to be a game changer, that is to form a major group of Québécois in Ottawa, helping to manage natural problems and eventually become a national government with a strong Québec presence. But I still think it's unknown whether that will happen or not.

Note of Appreciation by Gordon McIvor, Consultant, The World Bank & Director, Empire Club of Canada

Thank you very much, Mr. Pratte. I'm a newbie to the Empire Club, and actually you're my first assignment, so I said to Robin, it's all downhill from here. But it's always very special for us at The

Empire Club to welcome great Canadians from different regions of the country to our podium. And of course, it's also a core part of our mandate as one of the most historically significant venues in the country.

Given the recent victory of the of the separatist government in our neighboring province, this takes on an even greater importance for Canadians outside of Québec, whether as you mentioned from business, academic, or the political worlds, is everybody wonders about the bigger picture and how it may impact their own futures.

Mr. Pratte, I think you did a superb job today in addressing these and other questions, and not in a one sided manner as so many people would expect from other speakers, just as you always make a point of leaving space in your newspaper for ideas and viewpoints contrary to your own. You've given us today a better understanding of the often complex and very perilous world of Québec politics, while nevertheless staying true to your own deep federalist convictions.

Now, I have had the honor of working with your Vice-President of the Federal IDA for many years in another file, and I know that you and he and many other Québécois work tirelessly to bring the Québécois back to federalist tables so that they become a more meaningful part of our Federation. And sometimes we get tired of talking about this in English Canada, as you pointed out, but it's just so important that we can't.

So on behalf of my fellow board members at the Empire club, and those audience members in the room, and of course, the thousands of Canadians who have benefited from hearing you today on television, I want to thank you for accepting to address us on a topic that in many ways is one of the most determining factors in our national identity as Canadians.

So please know that you're welcome to come back and talk to us anytime. And in the interim, we wish you much continued success and running the most influential French language publication in North America. Merci. Thank you.

Concluding Remarks by Robin Sears

One of the truisms of political life is of course a timing is everything and I couldn't help but think as I was listening to and re review the history and talk about the future that we will all remember this speech, I suspect, about this time two years from now. No matter what has happened between now and then, I think André has laid out very sagely the challenges ahead.

So let's, again, say thank you very much for that and not ignore the important caution that you've shared with us about ignoring each other. I want to say thank you as well, with a form of appreciation in our book, *Who Said That?* the speeches to the Empire club over the last 100 years --you will appear there one day.

Finally, you've got a list of upcoming events at the table. Please join us on the 29th of October Monday for Anne Sado, the innovative president of George Brown College. On Wednesday, November 7, the impressive president of York University Dr. Mahmoud Shoukri, and they're both going to be here at the Ontario room.

I'd like to thank Deloitte for sponsoring our events and also Environics Communications for sponsoring the student table, the *National Post* as our print media sponsor.

This meeting is carried and aired on Rogers TV. We're grateful to them for their continued support.

We're on Twitter and Facebook and at Empire club.org. Thank you all for coming. We look forward to seeing you again.

The meeting is now adjourned. Thank you.