

Québec solidaire

Declaration of Principles

A new party has arrived on Québec's political scene offering a progressive alternative to other existing political parties. A large and united alternative which is rooted in all regions of Québec. An alternative capable of carrying and realizing the hopes for change of so many women and men in Québec! An alternative enabling us to build a world which fits our dreams.

Our party completely devotes itself to defending and promoting the public interest (le bien commun). In other words, it puts the interests of the whole population before those of a greedy minority. It focuses its energy in searching for equality and social justice, in respecting individual and collective rights. It recognizes the interdependence of human beings and of nature.

This demands a profound transformation of Québec. For our party, this means opposing neoliberalism, a modern version of capitalism, which dominates our societies and bankrupts our future as well as the future of our planet.

To demonstrate that another Québec is possible, our party will elaborate a program and platform offering concrete, and, if needed, detailed and balanced propositions. They will be notably inspired by the values of the World Charter for Women and Humanity: equality, liberty, solidarity, justice and peace.

For the time being, we will promote the values and the principles which guide our actions. These values and principles speak to Québec we dream of for our children and for ourselves.

We are ecological

We estimate that our planet must be able to sustain not only the people who currently live there but the generations to come. The planet's natural resources are not inexhaustible. Different ecosystems cannot be disturbed without consequence.

Humanity can and must still develop but enormous needs fail to be met: housing, drinking water, education, health, culture, etc. Development must meet the needs of people but also the capacities of our planet. Therefore, we must rethink not only in economic terms but also in terms of viability. To get there, we need a green economy. Thus, we put into question short-term production system that seeks solely maximal profit. We suggest, for example, an agricultural system that respects the environment, collective management and the management of essential resources such as our water and our forests.

Of course, Québec will not save the planet on its own but it has a part to play in it. With the means in its possession (laws, regulations, taxes, sensitivity campaigns, etc.) the State must encourage responsible behavior and punish corporate polluters or consumer behavior. For, certain businesses, often big businesses, are by far the main culprits in destroying the environment. The never ending accumulation of wealth will only lead to the exhaustion of our

resources and the suffocation of life in our planet.

Each person can also play his or her part. To do so, we need to modify our manners of production, of consumption and our lifestyles. The green Québec which we envision demands that we rethink the workplace, notably the time which we spend working and how this time is divided. This would allow us to reclaim a product which is becoming rarer every minute: time. Time to love, time to think, time to play, time to grow, time to help, time to engage in political and social activities.

We are from the left

We promote social justice, equality and solidarity. We think that the State must intervene to ensure the respect of human rights, the redistribution of wealth, and to shape our economy. The State must act to ensure the universality of public services- both public and parapublic and the accessibility of education and social programs everywhere in Québec. These are responsibilities which would be eliminated to the most minimal expression by those who advocate for neoliberalism .

One of our main interests is to eliminate poverty, a situation not ordained by fate or individual action. Rather, it is the consequence of societal choices : for example, accepting the widening gap between the rich and the poor. We propose a global and preventive approach to fight poverty which allows us to intervene in all pertinent parts of the public sphere such as income, employment, education and training, housing and access to public services. This approach will be based on the respect of human rights and the inclusion of people living in poverty. It will be accompanied by measures ensuring a better redistribution of wealth, which implies, among others, a deep revision of our taxation system and influencing local and regional development.

Because we come from the left, we would like to rethink our ideas about the economy so that they serve people and the population. All economic sectors will be and must be put in the service of the public interest and social and environmental rules which exist in Québec. Whichever sector it may be, our goal is to reinforce the collective management and the will of the population. This applies to corporations and the economic polities which apply to them.

We are democrats

Our democracy is in poor shape. The dropout rate in Québec elections continues to increase. And with it, disillusionment and cynism against politicians and all things political is at an all time high.

The way we do democracy must be rethought. We have to encourage more citizen participation-- especially from those who are excluded and marginalized-- in decision-making. That is what we call participatory democracy. Participatory democracy has to exist at the Québec level and continue to flow to different regions, cities, villages and neighborhoods. And this preoccupation must also be reflected in how our party functions.

Representative democracy must also be revamped to give more importance to transparency, accountability and integrity. Shouldn't we, for example, insist that elected MNAs hold at least one public assembly per year outside of elections to account to their voters? Also, the electoral system, itself, should be reformed in its political institutions and its voting system. This voting system should include more elements of proportional representation so that each vote really counts and that women and people from diverse backgrounds are better

represented.

Another indicator of the health of a democracy is this space which civil society occupies. We recognize the importance of social movements, community organizations, the union movement and other citizen's based organizations.

The complexity of economic, social and environmental problems in our modern societies require us to further rethink the way that we vote. No longer can we wait for politician-saviors or miracle solutions. In essence, the solutions to our problems can only emerge amongst citizens in spaces where citizens have the full power to participate, get involved and ponder our modern problems.

Finally, our party promotes a completely secular State with secular social services, a secular judicial system and a secular educational system.

We are feminist

We are inspired by the quest for equality between men and women in our actions and in our internal functioning. During the last decades, women in Québec have advanced somewhat ; for example, in the judicial system. However, there still remains much work to be done so that this equality is real, above all in a context where women face more obstacles in a neoliberal system. As well, a lot of women face additional forms of discrimination because they are poor, native, lesbian, immigrant or disabled. Their path towards equality is more difficult.

The inequalities which women face are rooted in a system of oppression which we call patriarchy. These inequalities come from social and cultural roles given to women which result in women being considered inferior to men.

In our party, women and men are partners in the goal of achieving equality. We support feminist struggles, here and abroad, in order that this goal is achieved in all parts of society. Policies and government actions will be analysed by how they differently impact men and women.

Our commitment to equality also applies to our party's functioning. To achieve this goal, we will create incentives and if necessary, create obligations. We will also adopt, from day to day, rules and practices which permit parity between women and men and the complete participation of women in our structures and in elections.

We are alterglobalist

(*Alterglobalists are people in left-wing movements who oppose current global trends such as big business economics, unilateral military intervention, and unfair practices in north-south trade.)

We want to work to establish more solidarity, more equality, and more harmony in the links between people the world over. We know that many environmental, social, and political problems require solutions at a global scale. They will not, however, be solved under capitalist globalization that favours a concentration of owners to the detriment of fundamental human rights. Equitable solutions are required to end the exploitation of developing countries.

Therefore, we ally ourselves with the efforts of those who are working for an alternative

globalization and a another world, one that respects the rights of peoples and individuals, and which gives itself the tools to fight off scourges such as poverty and pollution.

To be alterglobalist also means assisting movements in solidarity with people struggling against situations of oppression. We are in solidarity with the billions of people living in a state of abject poverty, with women who are oppressed and exploited around the world, and with child slaves and soldiers.

We are also pacifists. We believe that no tradition, no religion, no ideology, no economic or political system justify discrimination or violence against persons and peoples. We reject wars that aim to subject peoples and nations in order to control their territory, to pillage their resources, or to reduce their populations to servitude. Justice is an indispensable prerequisite for peace, just as openness and dialogue are.

We are from a Québec with plurality of origins

These alterglobalist and pacifist principles apply to the relations we wish to establish with the multiple peoples within the territory of Québec. We recognize Native and peoples as peoples in the full sense of the term, and we want their ancestral and territorial rights to be recognized, including by formal agreements. We advocate relations on an equal, nation-to-nation basis with the ten First Nations peoples and the Inuit people to arrive at shared management of territory and resources.

We are committed to fighting here and now against all forms of intolerance, racism, and attacks on human dignity. As Gilles Vigneault sang, "tous les humaines sont de ma race" ("all humans are of my race.") This is our vision of a modern, diverse, pluralist, and inclusive Québec. This Québec stems from a large Francophone majority but also from an Anglophone community with recognized historical rights. It is also enriched, as it has been well into the past, by the contribution of people from different cultural communities, the product of immigration, whose full and complete participation in the working, social, and political world must be promoted. To do this, it is essential to reinforce the struggle against racism and all forms of discrimination practised in multiple areas such as access to housing, employment, and justice.

Here and now, we commit ourselves, to fight against all forms of intolerance, racism, homophobia and other attacks on human dignity,

We are for a sovereign Québec based on solidarity

The people of Québec form a nation with numerous specific characteristics, including French as a common language, a specific culture, history, and political, economic, and social institutions. It includes people of all origins who are entitled henceforth to define, together, equally, its political present and future. This nation has the absolute right to decide its future for itself, without outside interference.

The national question does not belong to a single political party or even to the National Assembly. It belongs to the entire population of Québec. This is why our party proposes that the future of Québec be debated through a vast process of participatory democracy. The entire population will thus be able to have its say on political and constitutional changes and the values associated therewith. This process must take the time necessary to permit the broadest and most inclusive reflection possible and will conclude with a referendum.

Québec must have all the powers necessary to its full development on the social, economic, cultural, and political levels, which it is denied under the federal system. Our party is therefore in favour of sovereignty. Although it is not a guarantee, sovereignty is one possible way to furnish Québec with the tools necessary to bring its social project to fruition and to fully develop as a people.

Our party places its essential energies on building a social and political project based on seeking the public interest and on all the principles listed in this declaration. It is on this basis that it invites citizens with all perspectives on this subject to become members.

An alternative party for another Québec

To defend these principles on the Québec political scene, our party will present candidates in the next election. It will also become involved in social struggles to support progressive movements, with full respect for their autonomy.

Québec solidaire is the fruit of the merger between the Union des forces progressistes and Option citoyenne. It now belongs to all people - men and women, old and young, from all regions and all walks of life - who seek justice, equality, and solidarity in Québec.