

Québec solidaire (2): No to an electoral pact with the PQ, Yes to a united front against austerity, for energy transition and for independence

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MONTREAL – As expected, the 500 delegates to the congress of Québec solidaire (QS), held here May 19-22, voted to work toward a fusion with Option nationale, debated and adopted the remaining part of the party's draft program with few major amendments, and elected a new leadership headed by "co-spokespeople" Manon Massé and Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois.

Most of these achievements, however, were overshadowed by the debate on a proposal by some of the outgoing leadership that the party attempt to negotiate an "electoral pact" with the Parti québécois (PQ) for the 2018 Quebec general election, as offered by PQ leader Jean-François Lisée, that would entail an agreement to abstain from standing candidates against each other in some counties (ridings) deemed "winnable" by the other party. After a passionate debate the congress voted by more than two-thirds to reject this proposal (Option B, as amended) and in favour of a resolution (Option A, as amended) proclaiming that "Québec solidaire aims for a genuine united front against austerity, for energy transition and for independence."

But no sooner was this debate over than Québec solidaire was confronted with the need to clarify its own scenario for achieving independence and the strategic forces it looks to for this purpose. More on that later, below.

In six points, the adopted resolution sets out these goals, which it presents as the QS response to a debate recently opened among the parties promoting independence, a debate usually referred to as one on "sovereignist convergence." That debate, conducted within a coalition of parties (including QS) in "OUI Québec (Organisations unies pour l'Indépendance)," is not addressed specifically to electoral strategy in 2018, however. Instead, it is focused on developing a common strategy for a long-term fight for independence, the PQ having postponed debate on its pro-sovereignty option to a

future election, probably in 2022.

Québec solidaire, the adopted QS resolution says, “takes the opportunity offered by the debate on sovereigntist convergence”

"1. "to reaffirm the principles underlying its existence as an alternative to the neoliberal policies implemented for the last 30 years in Quebec";

2. "to reaffirm that it rejects policies of cultural, ethnic or racial exclusion";

3. "to reaffirm that its political project aims not for the separation of a country but for the independence of a people through a political project that cannot be totally realized within the framework of Canadian federalism"; and

4."to reaffirm that it will link the national question with the issues of reform of our democratic institutions, the energy and climate transition, the protection of public services and social programs, and the fight against poverty and inequality on the basis of a feminist, inclusive and civic vision of the Quebec nation and in solidarity with the First Nations and their right to self-determination."

The resolution adds:

"5. "Québec solidaire announces forthwith its intention to make the independence of Quebec one of the issues in its struggle during the 2018 general election and invites Option nationale to ally with it around this perspective. Québec solidaire rejects the proposal of the PQ and its scheduled postponement of the fight for independence for many years";

6. "Failing a mutual agreement with Option nationale, Québec solidaire will run candidates in all 125 Quebec ridings promoting parity of women candidates, including in major ridings. It will not form an alliance with parties that subscribe to neoliberal practices or policies of exclusion."

No pact this time, or ever?

Much of the debate on the respective options centered on the record of the Parti québécois, both in and out of government, as a party that since its founding in 1968 had abandoned its promise of making Quebec an independent sovereign and inclusive country with a progressive social agenda. Many delegates, particularly young women from minority ethnic communities and activists in the party's anti-racism committee, denounced the PQ's sponsorship while in government recently of a "charter of Quebec values" [1] that was designed primarily to impose a dress code on Muslim women if they were to be eligible for social services that are otherwise available to all Quebec citizens.

As I reported in a recent article [2], the debate on these options in the party in recent months has revealed a deep and wholly understandable reluctance of QS members to any association with the PQ which, they say, would tend to mask Québec solidaire's identity as a progressive alternative to the neoliberal parties, including the PQ, and undermine the QS attempt to build alliances between the party and "some social and political movements that share the same inclusive vision."

This vision, as defined by the party's National Council in November 2016, included

"Quebec independence, an end to austerity, equality between men and women, recognition of the diversity of Quebec's population, support of First Nations and Inuit self-determination, an ecologist transition including an end to hydrocarbons development, and reform of the electoral system that would include representation of parties in the National Assembly in proportion to their respective

share of the popular vote.” [3]

For many members this list of criteria, consistent with the pursuit of broader links to the indigenous population and progressive social movements, simply excluded the Parti Québécois as a partner in an agreement like the one proposed by the PQ and the Option B supporters.

During the debate, a young delegate wearing the Muslim hijab said this was her first party congress but now, for the first time with the adoption of Option A, “I can see myself as an independentist.” A young woman of East Asian origin said she was a former PQ supporter but Option B was just “a bet.” Urging other delegates to vote for Option A, she said to tumultuous cheers that if it prevailed “I’m sure [PQ leader] Jean-François Lisée will blame it on the ethnics.”

The QS congress was preceded by a very public campaign by the PQ and its supporters — not least the daily newspaper *Le Devoir* [4] — to influence the QS debate in support of Option B.

What the PQ proposed

Early in May, PQ leader Jean-François Lisée issued an open letter to Québec solidaire [5] signed by the PQ’s executive council promoting his proposal of an electoral pact between the parties that would help to elect the PQ to government with the promise that if elected the PQ would introduce a proportional representation regime for subsequent elections similar to the one proposed by Québec solidaire, although without providing any details. However, since the 2018 election would be held under the existing first-past-the-post electoral regime, he said, the parties should sign his proposed pact.

“This pact,” he said, “would be made around some common well-identified proposals, in particular the rejection of lower taxes, a reinvestment in health, social services, education for families, and justice; rejection of the proposed Energy East pipeline, and the establishment of robust measures to accelerate the ecological transition away from oil; ratification of the UN convention on aboriginal rights, strengthening of French as the language of work, and, as mentioned previously, reform of the electoral system.”

Noting that an Option C in the QS debate proposed postponing a decision on an electoral pact to the QS convention next November, Lisée urged Québec solidaire members to adopt his proposal at its May congress. Any delay, he said, would pose “almost insurmountable obstacles” since the PQ hoped to endorse the promised agreement at its congress in September when it would be adopting a revised program [6] for the party that had already been adopted by its leadership.[3]

Amir Khadir’s position

Shortly before the QS congress Amir Khadir, a QS member of the National Assembly and a supporter of Option B, published his own conception of the possible division of seats under an agreement with the PQ [7]. It would have QS refrain from running in 21 ridings that the PQ considered “winnable,” while the PQ would not run candidates in nine ridings that QS deemed “winnable”— five in Montreal and four in regions outside the Metropole. This, Khadir said, was a one-off tactical proposal for 2018 aimed at possibly winning a proportional representation regime for subsequent elections. Québec solidaire would be free at any moment to break this agreement if the political context and the decisions of the PQ, which he admitted could be problematic, necessitated it. However, he argued that the electoral mathematics had forced the PQ toward “a less toxic progressivism on the identitarian plane and sometimes seems to make important concessions.” (As to the claim of the

PQ's "less toxic" appeal to identity politics, see my note 3 below.)

Khadir acknowledged the fear by many QS members that an alliance with the PQ such as the one he supported would be perceived by many QS allies as an opportunist compromise, but he compared this maneuver to two recent experiences. One was French presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon's probe of a possible agreement between his party *France insoumise* with the Socialist party candidate Benoît Hamon prior to the first round in the 2017 election. Although unsuccessful, France insoumise had demonstrated that the Socialist party, with its disastrous record in office, could not represent an alternative to France's "catastrophic political situation."

Khadir's other example of electoral maneuvers was Bernie Sanders' campaign within the Democratic party's presidential primaries which he said, had brought many issues and progressive demands into public debate. And Sanders had never refrained from criticizing the record of the Democrats and the Clintons while they were in office. Similarly, he thought, Québec solidaire could maintain an uncompromising critique of the PQ before, during and after the election.

All to no avail. Speaking midway through the congress debate, Khadir repeated these arguments but without the passion and determination for which he is known, admitting that he had been "strongly affected" by the members' critique of the PQ during the debate and the confidence they displayed as to Québec solidaire's potential to project a real alternative to the neoliberal parties.

A will for real change

That was also the spirit conveyed by the party's new leaders after the vote on alliances. "Our congress," said Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois,

"opted for change. Our members decided to create a vast movement to transform Quebec. They decided to work with people who want a real change, working to achieve a government that is really progressive and independentist. The members don't want Québec solidaire to serve as a stepladder to the Parti québécois to help it attain power."

GND did not speak for or against either option during the congress debate, although he had earlier indicated his support for Option B, adding that he was prepared to await the next congress to settle the matter.

Manon Massé added that "by voting for Option A [as she did at the last minute] the members told us today that it is not through electoral calculations that we will beat the Liberals in 2018. In some ways it is a vote of mistrust toward the Parti québécois and its leader Jean-François Lisée. But it is also a vote of confidence toward Québec solidaire as a party of the future...."

"During our weekend debates, the delegates who rejected pacts with the PQ did so mainly on the basis of principled arguments. Those present noted this. Now we are aware of the responsibility that falls to us to explain this decision and to propose a new way to dislodge the neoliberals from power. That is why we hope to build a vast political movement that brings together the progressives well beyond Québec solidaire. It is time to turn the page on the idea of electoral pacts."

Reactions to the vote

Predictably, the congress decision was met with a storm of criticism, even derision, by PQ leaders and their supporters in the media. *Le Devoir* editorials and columnists speculated that now the PQ

would be inclined to turn in its search for allies to the right-wing Coalition Avenir Québec, a party with a large clientele among former PQ and Liberal supporters — an indirect acknowledgement of the opportunist nature of Lisée's failed proposal to Québec solidaire.

The critics also included some liberals of a progressive disposition who have worked with QS on election reform, such as the Mouvement Démocratie nouvelle (MDN), which maintained a booth at the congress. Among others were two members of the panel headed by Nadeau-Dubois (Karel Mayrand and Alain Vadeboncoeur) that had toured Quebec months earlier to hear ideas from ordinary Québécois on how Quebec could advance in the coming months and years.[4] Mayrand, who is Quebec head of the David Suzuki Foundation, told *Le Devoir* that he was "enormously disappointed with a party that wants to do things differently but reacts exactly like all the others."

In a *Le Devoir* op ed piece Jean-Pierre Charbonneau, a former PQ minister and speaker of the National Assembly, expressed his feeling of "betrayal" by Québec solidaire. He had worked for a year with the MDN to get the PQ and CAQ leaders to agree to put proportional representation in their platforms for the next election, and now QS was renouncing a pact with them on the grounds that beating the Liberals was not a radical social agenda (*projet de société*). Well, "scrapping the old election procedure and creating a new political culture that would induce more collaboration through governmental coalition was for me a change of paradigm, indeed a *projet de société*."

Some critics were more measured in their response to the QS congress decision.

Feminist blogger and columnist Francine Pelletier [8] saw the debate on alliances as one between Idealists and Pragmatists, awarding them respectively a score of 1-0. Although she seemed more sympathetic to the QS "realists" who favoured an alliance with the PQ — a "recurring debate like the cuckoo in the clock" — she noted that "more women than men held to the hard line against the PQ."

"If ever you were still looking for proof that the PQ made the error of its life by playing the identity card, it was fully on display here. How can we ally with a party that arrays a part of the population against the others?, they said. More than mere wariness, among these women — notably racialized, and among the Anglophones — there was a palpable feeling of anger, fully shared by the meeting.

"And that was certainly the best argument for rejecting an alliance. Eleven years after its founding, the 'little left party' has some solid bases where the Parti québécois is lacking: among the minorities, among more and more Anglophones and among young people. It casts a wide net although not a deep one. Forming an alliance with the PQ risked endangering this diversity in addition to demotivating members who have laboured in the shadows for many moons. And agreeing to do 'the big mambo with the PQ,' wasn't that precisely making the error charged against it? To turn one's back to one's principles out of pure electoral calculation."

On the other hand, Pelletier said, the men tended more to advance strategic arguments: the proposed alliance would bring electoral reform that in the long run would get Québec solidaire into "the temple of power." Between Options A and B it was, she thought, a Hobson's choice (*un dilemme parfaitement cornélien*).

QS activist Pierre Mouterde, writing in the pro-QS online journal *Presse-toi à gauche* immediately after the congress [9], expressed concern over the emotional attacks on the PQ. Mouterde was a supporter of Option B although he had urged the vote be postponed until the next QS congress.

"Whatever the option each may have finally privileged... it must be recognized that the debate, in the little time available (100 minutes), took a strange turn, swept and then engulfed by the identitarian questions raised by the militants of the anti-racist committee, who... exacerbated a visceral anti-PQ

sentiment that cut short any political, cool and deep thinking about the type of relationships it would be possible to have with it in the circumstances of 2018.

"This emotional drift over identity issues, moreover, could in the medium term — if it is not skilfully handled — be rather problematic for QS. For after all, this appeal by the anti-racist committee members to take into account the aspirations of the so-called "racialized" cultural minorities also has its necessary obverse: how to achieve this concretely when at the same time we are an independentist party that is fighting for a common language, secular values shared collectively... in favour of the same positive vision of life in common and the sharing of economic resources? And on that, apart from the blackmail about tearing up one's membership card if Option B passed [a reference to a threat by one participant in the debate], it was radio silence!"

Mouterde thought the congress, in adopting Option A, had missed an opportunity. By voting to go it alone, "we also shut ourselves off from the hopes for unity and social change that exist outside the QS ranks...."

And the social movements?...

What, then, of the other side of the November QS national council resolution, which had proposed not only an opening of discussions with other pro-sovereignty parties about electoral alliances but also an attempt to consult progressive social movement activists outside Québec solidaire on their ideas about how to overcome the obstacles they encounter in the present political context?

QS member and social housing activist François Saillant reported to the congress on the work of the party's committee on "Political Renewal." It had held two regional meetings in late March in Sherbrooke and Saguenay. Although they attracted only 25 persons, the majority were not QS members. They came from trade unions, community, feminist and ecologist organizations, municipal politics, and cultural and farming communities. Overall, the participants' response was very positive to Québec solidaire's initiative, Saillant reported.

"They identified the principles and issues that could be contained in common platforms... In terms of principles, a green and interdependent [solidaire] economy, redistribution of wealth, participative democracy, inclusion, recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples. Among the concrete issues identified were reform of the electoral system and a Constituent Assembly. In Saguenay there was a consensus on strong advocacy of Quebec independence... but not in Sherbrooke where the pertinence of advancing this issue in the next election campaign was openly questioned."

In both locations, Saillant reported, possible agreements with other parties were discussed. Some participants were keen on this, others more critical.

A committee member had also led a workshop on "The Spring of Alternatives" at a Quebec City regional social forum.

Attendance at these events has been modest, but participants were positive to the QS approach, and the committee intends to continue its consultations with social and political movements, the next stage being a national (Quebec) meeting on June 13, Saillant said.

A disconcerting moment

That the debate over relations with other pro-sovereignty parties is not finished was brought home

in the closing minutes of the congress, on May 22, when outgoing co-spokesman Andrés Fontecilla reported on the party's participation in OUI Québec, the coalition of pro-sovereignty parties (PQ, ON, QS and the Bloc québécois) working to develop a "convergence" on a common strategy in the fight for independence beyond 2018. For reasons that were unclear to most delegates, they were asked to vote that the session be held behind closed doors, and media observers were excluded. A written report was handed out, and then recollectd following the report, which was read aloud by Fontecilla.

The gist of the report was that Québec solidaire had been successful in convincing the other parties that a popular referendum on sovereignty should be accompanied by the appointment of a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution, a proposal championed by QS for years. Fontecilla alluded to some outstanding differences over the nature of this Constituent Assembly, but gave few details. "We were isolated," he said.

That evening, after the congress had closed, Radio Canada revealed that all four parties in OUI Québec had reached an agreement several weeks previously on a "road map" (*feuille de route*) for accession to independence. It had been signed by the representatives of all the parties, including Andrés Fontecilla and Monique Moisan for Québec solidaire. According to the chair of OUI Québec, Claudette Carbonneau, Québec solidaire had requested that the agreement be kept secret until after the QS congress vote on electoral pacts for the 2018 election, which was not the subject of the "road map." However, Québec solidaire had not yet disclosed the existence of that agreement.

The Parti québécois leaders now turned their anger at Québec solidaire against the party leadership's alleged concealment of the "road map" toward sovereignty. "Sabotage," chimed in *Le Devoir* [10]. Some QS members too were disconcerted. The party's proceedings in OUI Québec had not been discussed during the pre-congress debates, and the party leadership had issued no report on them prior to the congress. And why the secrecy about the report?

On May 24 Radio-Canada disclosed the existence of an email by Andrés Fontecilla on behalf of Québec solidaire informing OUI Québec that the QS national coordinating committee was opposed to the agreement he had signed in good faith. And on May 25 the chair of OUI Québec, expressing her exasperation, released the text of the agreement as duly signed by Fontecilla and Moisan on behalf of Québec solidaire [11]. I have translated the full text into English; it is appended to this article.

Manon Massé offers a clarification

Also on May 25, QS spokeswoman Manon Massé released a statement [<http://quebecsolidaire.net/nouvelle/proposition-de-travail-sur-une-modalite-commune-daccession-a-lindependance-quebec-solidaire-invite-a-ne-pas-mettre-la-charrue-avant-les-boeufs>] explaining that in the national leadership's opinion the party's co-signatories of the agreement had "misjudged the situation" in signing it in good faith. The question of an electoral pact was one thing, the question of convergence on the process of accession to independence was another. The congress had addressed the first issue and left the second for later debate. Even the PQ, by relegating the question of a referendum on sovereignty to a second mandate, had removed that issue from the proposed 2018 pact. Option A, she implied, had confused the issue by presenting its response to the proposed electoral pact as a general response to the debate on sovereigntist convergence.

As to the party leadership's objection to the all-party agreement, Massé explained, "it does not require a sovereigntist government to hold the constituent assembly during its first term in office and it does not propose a *projet de société*, for example." Massé urged supporters of Quebec independence to "follow the example of Catalonia, to conduct a real campaign to promote a *projet de*

société for a sovereigntist Quebec....

“We should stop putting the cart before the horse. We must all do better, QS included, on this front. We must first convince the Québécois of the benefits of independence, that’s the real urgency and that is why in our opinion the question of a *projet de société* is essential if we are to win those who are not convinced.”

Once again, the mandate of the Constituent Assembly

But are these the only reasons why the QS leadership rejected the text their representatives had signed? With one exception, there is really nothing in the text to which QS could object. That one exception, however, directly contradicts the QS position on the Constituent Assembly, which Manon Massé aptly describes as “one of the pillars in our project.” And that is the text’s assertion that the Assembly’s mandate is to develop “*the constitution of an independent Quebec*.” That phrase appears four times in the text. QS has consistently refused to impose such a mandate on the Assembly, preferring to leave the question open as to whether the “constitution” to be drafted is that of an independent state... or merely of a province within the federal system, however reconceived. On this it differs with all the other independentist parties.

This issue is now clearly on the agenda for debate within Québec solidaire. The QS representatives who signed the proposed “road map” are experienced politicians who must have known what they were doing. As I explained in an earlier article, the issue will come up again if Option nationale accepts the QS invitation to engage in a rapprochement pointing toward fusion in one party. And the party’s new spokesman Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois has indicated he favours assigning the Constituent Assembly with a clear mandate to design the constitutional framework of an independent state.

In fact, the adopted resolution on the proposal of fusion between QS and Option nationale states (point 4) that “in this process of discussion leading to fusion, QS undertakes to discuss in its authoritative bodies the development of political campaigns on the independence of Quebec *and the means by which to accede to it*.” The move toward closer relations with ON is a clear indication that QS is prepared to collaborate with other political forces genuinely committed to building an independent Quebec with a professed interest in doing so around a progressive social agenda.

Manon Massé reiterated Québec solidaire’s commitment to continue working within OUI Québec. But she said she agreed with Claudette Charbonneau, who had proposed putting these discussions on hold for now. “We hope that in the near future we will be in a position to agree with the partners in OUI Québec and that we will be able to table a work proposal which, I hope, will be adopted by our members.”

After 11 years, QS now has a program, or almost

As to the debate on the final *tranche* of the party’s program, which occupied most of the congress’s time, the draft programs covering justice issues, agriculture, regional development and international policy and solidarity were largely adopted with few major amendments.[5] In the haste to process many proposed amendments, however, it was hard to avoid some confusion on what exactly was being proposed.

An unfortunate example was the fate of a section of the international policy draft resolution that called for an independent Quebec to withdraw from the imperialist military alliances NATO and NORAD. A proposed amendment by QS Gouin riding would replace this demand with the words “will

exclude participation in international bodies contributing to militarism and to interventionism without a UN mandate.” NATO does in fact act sometimes under UN mandate, as it did recently in its bombing of Libya, to cite only one example. The delegates adopted this amendment by majority vote. But then they adopted, also by a majority, an amendment proposed by QS Capitale-Nationale (Quebec City) that denounced the growth in Canadian military budgets and called for “Canada’s immediate withdrawal from NATO and NORAD.”

After some debate a much-anticipated proposal that an independent Quebec be “a country without an army,” with differing options as to whether a proposed national civil defense force should include a military component, it was agreed to postpone further debate on this until after the 2018 Quebec election.

By adopting (finally) an international component to its program the party adds an important dimension to its perspective, one that reinforces its identity as a pro-sovereignty party.

The party hopes to publish its complete program by September of this year. A QS congress in November will select which demands it wishes to highlight in the platform it will present in the 2018 election.

A final thought...

This was an important congress for Québec solidaire. But it left hanging many issues that the party will have to confront in the near future, and not only the ongoing issue of sovereigntist convergence. There is still a naive illusion in the party that majority support for independence can be won largely through advancing compelling arguments, and there is a dangerous tendency to discuss the independence project without reference to the inevitable opposition by the federal state and the need for a strategy to confront it. Bernard Rioux, an editor of *Presse-toi à gauche*, alluded to this toward the close of his report on the congress [12]. I quote:

“We need a party that understands the need to confront the domination of the economic and political oligarchy and that conceives its construction and alliances starting from that imperative. A party that understands that victory against the oligarchy depends on the unity and mobilization of the social movements and their capacities to put an end to the neoliberal offensive....”

“Building a political alternative to neoliberalism and the Canadian state means participating in a reconfiguration of civil society and the strengthening of all the anti-systemic forces so they can oppose the demands of the ruling class. For real power is not confined to government services or the parliament. It is concentrated as well in the economic apparatus, the banks and the major corporations, in the state bureaucracy, the apparatuses of repression and the state ideological apparatuses. A true resistance front posing an end to austerity... can only be achieved through strengthening capacities for struggle of the various social movements and expressing this readiness to struggle in a party that is capable of resisting the pressures ... of the ruling class.”

The congress vote on alliances was a step in that direction, said Rioux.

Richard Fidler

Appendix

Draft Proposal on a Common Procedure for Accession to Independence

Revised, amended and adopted on April 10, 2017

Introduction

The delegations of the Parti québécois, Québec solidaire, Option nationale and the Bloc québécois, parties that are committed to promoting the independence of Quebec, met between January and April 2017 under the aegis of the Organisations unies pour l'indépendance (OUI Québec) to draw up together a common procedure for accession to independence, the content of which appears below.

Constituent elements

1. Common approach for accession to independence

The procedure for accession to the independence of Quebec is based on the principle of popular sovereignty and includes:

- the adoption of a transitional fundamental law that will serve as a legal framework in Quebec and will chart the steps toward independence;
- the establishment of a Constituent Assembly with responsibility to develop a draft constitution of an independent Quebec pursuant to broad public consultation;
- a referendum that will enable the Québécois to state their position both on Quebec's political status and on the draft constitution of an independent Quebec developed by the Constituent Assembly.

These elements are now an integral part of any procedure leading to the independence of Quebec.

2. Creation of the Constituent Assembly

The Constituent Assembly is established by a law of the National Assembly that determines its duration, mandate, methods of appointment, terms of functioning, and powers.

This project, which must be carried out within a single term of governmental office, will first be subject to a strong electoral commitment by the independentist parties which, in this scenario, constitute a parliamentary majority.

3. Mandate of the Constituent Assembly

The Constituent Assembly has the following mandate:

To organize an extensive public consultation, to hear from specialists it considers appropriate, and to draft [1] a proposed constitution of an independent Quebec which addresses the following themes:

- Values, principles, rights and responsibilities to be provided for in a Quebec constitution;
- Division of powers between the Quebec state and the regions, to ensure the development and fulfilment of the Québécois;

- Institutions and political system of the Quebec state;
- Relations with the First Nations and Inuit; and
- At the conclusion of its proceedings, to convey the draft constitution, its report and its recommendations to the National Assembly.

At the end of the process, the National Assembly undertakes to publish the draft constitution, report and recommendations of the Constituent Assembly within a period provided by law, and will ask the Chief Electoral Officer of Quebec to organize a referendum that will enable the Québécois to state their position both on the political status of Quebec and on the draft constitution of an independent Quebec developed by the Constituent Assembly.

4. Composition of the Constituent Assembly and appointment of its members

The composition of the Constituent Assembly must ensure an equitable representation of society that reflects the following criteria:

- Parity of men and women (threshold 50% women)
- Representativity of administrative regions
- Representativity of social groups
- Representativity of diversity
- Representativity of the historic Anglophone minority

Pursuant to the resolutions of the National Assembly of March 20, 1985 and May 30, 1989 recognizing the rights of the First Nations and the Inuit, they are respectively invited to participate in the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly with a status and a role to be determined with them.

The members of the Constituent Assembly will be designated according to the following methods:

To guarantee the equitable representation of society provided for above, the National Assembly will widely solicit nominations for appointment of members of the Constituent Assembly [3].

The parties will continue their proceedings in order to determine consensually another mode of appointment of members of the Constituent Assembly, which might include, for example, election by universal suffrage or any other mode of designation*.

* * *

The delegations of the following political parties have agreed on this proposal, which they have agreed to submit for adoption to their respective party congresses:

For the Parti québécois: Véronique Hivon and Alain Lupien

For Québec solidaire: Andrés Fontecilla and Monique Moisan

For Option nationale: Sol Zanetti and Viviane Martinova-Croteau

For the Bloc québécois: Kédina Fleury-Samson

These proceedings were conducted under the aegis of OUI Québec represented by Claudette Carbonneau and Jason Brochu-Valcourt, respectively president and vice-president of the organization.

Signed at Montréal, April 10, 2017 [2]

[1] The draft constitution will be written in accordance with the gender-sensitive spelling rules defined by the Office québécois de la langue française.

[2] The original version signed by the representatives of the delegations cited above shall serve as proof thereof.

[3] The number and proportions of the members of the Constituent Assembly designated by one or another of the methods provided above remain to be determined. Furthermore, members of the National Assembly are excluded from the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly.

Translator's note: I have followed the numbering and location of the notes as they appear in the original French text. The asterisk () in the text is not accompanied by any corresponding note.*

P.S.

* <http://lifeonleft.blogspot.fr/2017/05/quebec-solidaire-no-to-electoral-pact.html>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-60-40-1.html>

[2] ESSF (article 41193), [Québec solidaire \(1\): Major decisions face QS at its forthcoming congress](#).

[3] Idem

[4] On the eve of the QS congress, *Le Devoir* and *Le Journal de Montréal* (the latter a part of the media empire owned by former PQ leader Pierre-Karl Péladeau) published a poll they had sponsored which purported to find that 87% of voters identifying with either the PQ or QS favoured an alliance of the two parties to defeat the governing Liberals.

[5] <http://jflisee.org/lettre-aux-militantes-et-aux-militants-de-quebec-solidaire/>

[6] http://congres.pq.org/Brochure_PQ_Prop_Principale.pdf

[7] It is worth noting that this program promises that a PQ government would “amend the burden of proof in matters of religious accommodation in order to put an end to unreasonable religious accommodation,... require that all officials, employees and agents of the state have their faces uncovered in the performance of their duties,... require all citizens to receive state services with their faces uncovered,... prohibit employees in the public and parapublic sectors, during their working hours, from wearing clothing covering their entire body other than the face... in

particular the chador,... prohibit persons in authority, educators in childcare facilities, teachers in the preschool, elementary and secondary schools to display their beliefs, including religious convictions." These are precisely some of the divisive provisions of the PQ charter of values that were denounced by feminist and human rights proponents.

[8] <http://www.francinepelletierleblog.com/2017/05/idealistes1-pragmatiques0.html>

[9] <http://www.pressegauche.org/Impressions-premieres-autour-du-congres-de-Quebec-solidaire-de-mai-2017>

[10] <http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/499577/un-acte-de-sabotage>

[11] <https://www.ouiquebec.org/single-post/2017/05/25/modalite-commune>

[12] <http://www.pressegauche.org/Un-congres-democratique-et-militant-trace-une-perspective-a-la-lutte-pour-une>