

POINT OF VIEW

On eve of likely Quebec election uneasiness sets in over race card

It has been just more than a year since the Parti Québécois won the last provincial election with a narrow minority government and within weeks Premier Pauline Marois is expected to send everyone back to the polls for a Dec. 9 vote.

Marois desperately wants to achieve majority status, something which has the province's cultural minorities ill at ease. The PQ does not have the support of any of the opposition parties to pass its divisive Charter of Quebec Values, which would impose a ban on religious symbols. Plans to adopt a beefed up language law were stalled as well. Marois is frustrated and she appears ready to roll the dice.

The proposed charter would ban public servants from wearing kippas, hijabs, or larger-than-average crosses. While there have been massive protests against the proposal and opposition from hard line separatists such as former Premier Jacques Parizeau, polls measuring reaction across the province still give the PQ a measure of support. The whole controversy has completely placed the province's precarious financial position in the background, something which suits the PQ just fine.



Mike Cohen
QUEBEC
CONFIDENTIAL



Côte Saint-Luc city councillor Allan J. Levine (right) wishes MNA Lawrence Bergman well during the next provincial election. (Photo: Mike Cohen).

So why call an early election? For one thing, the opposition Liberals and their new leader Philippe Couillard may not be quite ready. There is no question they would prefer to wait until at least the spring, when the PQ has to adopt a new budget. The other opposition party, François Legault's Coalition Avenir Québec, is doing poorly in the polls and many of its votes could go to the PQ. Two other separatist par-

ties, which did well in the popular vote in the last election, Québec solidaire and Option nationale, also appear to be losing ground. In the Nov. 3 Montreal election, high-profile federalist and former Liberal cabinet minister Denis Coderre is poised to become the city's next mayor. He has already spoken out repeatedly about the charter. Marois might want to pounce before Coderre's influence spreads.

Lawrence Bergman, the long-time Liberal Member of the National Assembly for D'Arcy McGee, has no doubt an election is imminent. Last week he gathered a few hundred of his supporters to a local synagogue where he was formally nominated as his riding's candidate once again. On the eve of his 73rd birthday, Bergman showed that he still has plenty of fire in his belly. The de facto 'Minister of Jewish Affairs' stated to much applause, "for the sake of all of Quebec we need a change in government." He went on to accuse the PQ of wanting to institute state-sponsored discrimination.

Bergman added, "How many times have I said that all Quebecers, those born here and those who decided to come to our shores, are equal no matter what the colour of our skin, their origin and the society that they come from? We are all equals as Quebecers and Canadians. Unfortunately the present government wants to break with that premise."

It is sad that the race card could be in play as a major component in the next Quebec election. If the PQ is returned to office with a majority, there will be a lot of people questioning their place in the province. Will there be another anglo exodus like the one after the PQ was first elected in 1976? Premier Marois would like nothing more.

Mike Cohen is the Jewish Tribune's Quebec bureau chief. He can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca. Follow him on Twitter @mikecohencl.

2008 BMW X5 3.0si

7 Passenger seating

Huge sunroof

Navigation

Bluetooth

Back up Camera

Smart key Tech

Alloys

Xneon lights

Leather seats

101,000 kms



\$28,888 plus tax and licensing
In-house leasing and financing available

We offer Leasing, Financing, Sales- All Makes, All Models

David Berkovitz • (416) 817-AUTO (2886) • dberkovitz@autoonegroup.ca

www.autoonegroup.ca

