



PAULINE MAROIS

Prime Minister of Quebec

Thank you very much Mr de Montbrial. And I would like to commend you for organising this conference which brings together people from all over the world. I think we need such forums in order to be able to communicate with one another, to share our experiences and, thus, I hope, to be able to make our world a better place. I would first of all like to pay my respects, most particularly, to the ministers and ambassadors as well as the general director and founder of IFRI, Mr de Montbrial, and to the distinguished guests.

I would like to say that I find it both an honour and a distinction to have the benefit of such a prestigious platform from which to speak about Quebec. As Mr de Montbrial has requested me to do, I will be approaching the issue of governance in economic terms as well as socially and politically, and all within the context of globalisation. I will attempt, today, to give voice to a point of view that is strong and original, a way of life that is different from the American one.

Quebec has a population of over eight million inhabitants, of whom 80% have French as their first language of use. We live in an enormous land, exceeded in area only by Alaska among the Canadian provinces and American states. It is a land rich in mineral resources, through which runs a network of powerful rivers. This has enabled Quebec to become the fourth largest producer of hydroelectricity in the world. In addition, half of our population lives around an immense river – the Saint Lawrence River, one of the busiest navigation routes in the world because it leads into the heart of the North American continent. Conscious of their largely minority status, the people of Quebec have chosen, and continue to choose, collective action. During the 1960s, the ‘quiet revolution’, as we like to call it, took place. The people of Quebec chose to adopt a strong state. A number of cultural, social and economic institutions were created at this time, which went on to differentiate us from what was happening in the rest of Canada. We tried to occupy all the fields of power and responsibility that ensued from the application of the Canadian Constitution. And we even went further by claiming more powers for Quebec. We also voted for a law to protect the French language.

What were all these actions aiming to achieve? To ensure that our singular experience on the North American continent survives. Furthermore, Quebec had the audacity to become involved in the area of international relations, moreover with the complicity of the French Republic, which still constitutes our greatest ally today. In addition, I will have the opportunity to come back to this point a little later in my presentation.

In its political expression of Francophone expression in America, the State of Quebec is attempting to come to terms with the challenges as well as the advantages that arise from its status as a nation. Our small number, in conjunction with the immensity of our land and the harshness of our climate, has in a certain way condemned us to be innovative. I shall give you an example which some of you certainly know – Bombardier, the jewel of Quebec's economy and a world leader in the sector of land transport and aeronautics. This company was founded by a man who at first wanted to invent a vehicle capable of moving through snow in emergency situations. That was how Bombardier started. This necessity for innovation in order to survive led to doors opening for us. We must and we know how to demonstrate agility in order to be able to distinguish ourselves. We are convinced that small, strong states are in a good position to succeed in an open and democratic international environment, that what makes us different as a people can not only help us to assert ourselves but can also act as a mark of our identity and allow us to distinguish ourselves. Our small number, in conjunction with the immensity of our land and the harshness of our climate, which I mentioned previously, has in a certain way condemned us to be innovative, which is fundamentally important for Quebec's economy – one of the most diversified in North America, with a GDP of approximately 307 billion dollars, which compels us systematically to take various kinds of initiatives. Our per capita GDP, our collective wealth per person, enables Quebec to rank 19th in the world according to the OECD. If we were to become a free and independent state tomorrow, we would be 19th in the OECD's ranking of countries.

The economy of Quebec is also founded on the exploitation of natural resources. We have a large number of significant natural mining resources, wood and hydraulic energy. This wealth is equally rooted in these natural



resources as in exceptionally performing sectors with high added value. For example, the bio-medical sector in Quebec benefits from an attractive environment. In our country, a company can go through all the development stages for a medication, from the fundamental research up to release on the market. In the aeronautics sector, we can build an airplane, we can make it fly and we can export it all around the world. In the wider area of Montreal, we are one of the world's three great centres in the areas of aeronautics and astronautics together with Toulouse and Seattle.

Quebec is also one of the world's centres for interactive games, and is in this regard a participant in the reinvention of entertainment. In this case, we participate with two other important hotbeds in the world of video games – California and Japan. Quebec is effectively constructing part of its future on the basis of an intangible but nevertheless important asset – creativity. Basically, more than ever, in our country, innovation is making a determining contribution. And this creativity is nowhere better nourished than in the rich environment of a city like Montreal, a city of culture, teaching, research and business. Because there is a continuity in creativity, whether for the purposes of art, research or entrepreneurship. Thus, we are not constructing dynamic industries in a cultural desert. We have in Quebec the opportunity to be able to rely on innovative entrepreneurs. However, it is up to the state to give clear signals, coherent rules, a political and regulatory framework conducive to innovation, imagination and boldness, these small, opportune impulses that constitute the beginnings of our major lines of development.

My government, for example, launched an economic policy consisting of four components just a few weeks ago. It is a policy for research and innovation. We want the amount of GDP allotted to research and innovation to be 3%, while it is currently 2.4%. This thus involves a research and innovation policy, an industrial policy, a development plan for external trade and a transport electrification strategy. Since I attach particular importance to this last component, and since this dossier constitutes a strategic element of my economic policy, allow me to say a few words about it.

The electrification of transport is both an urgent need and an opportunity. It is, firstly, urgent because of the substantial challenges involved in the fight against climate change. Next, it is an opportunity to develop a new industrial sector for the future. We currently have a very substantial surplus of electricity, an energy which is clean and renewable, produced by hydroelectricity. We want to make the State of Quebec a model of transport electrification. We will thus set an example in this regard, as much on the level of individual transport as on the level of commercial transport and collective transport. Thus, we think we can be capable of achieving a certain degree of energy independence in this way because what is beginning to compromise our trade with the rest of the world is the fact that our oil is supplied from abroad. So, by relying on our expertise, we want to go further in this matter. We want to create more high-quality jobs for the whole of our territory. In order to achieve these goals, we are using all the tools of the state.

Our singular vision as a people, a nation and a State is not limited to the economy. The people of Quebec are essentially gifted with a social model without parallel in America. In our view, solidarity is a collective wealth. This is why, for example, in the area of education, Quebec is the place where university fees are the lowest in North America. Why? Because we want to promote access to as many higher-education programmes as possible. We have caught up at an incredible speed since the 1960s. But there is still some way to go.

We also have one of the most generous family policies in the world, the first stages of which I, moreover, as one-time Family Minister, initiated in order to offer our children the best start in life. Child-care services, namely, kindergartens and nurseries, cost parents less than five euros a day. All workers contribute equally to a Quebec Parental Insurance Plan, which enables new parents to share up to 55 weeks of leave from work after the birth of their child. The effect of these policies is that the degree of women's participation in the workplace in Quebec is maintained at a level higher than that of all Canadians put together since 2006. This policy concerning our children, concerning our families, has considerably reduced poverty among families in Quebec and has enabled women who used to live on social aid, on social assistance, to be able to return to the employment market, thus creating wealth. As such, solidarity is also collective wealth, and this is a good illustration of how this policy is our vision of solidarity as men and women of Quebec.

I have another example to present to you. It is the social economy enterprises that generate 8% of our GDP. Mouvement Desjardins is a credit union that manages 200 billion dollars' worth of assets and is ranked, according to Bloomberg, thirteenth among the most sound financial institutions in the world. Through collective entrepreneurship, the social economy shows that solidarity is not only a force for redistribution but also a force for production. By



reconciling the market economy and democracy, the cooperative model is a model for the future. Moreover, this is what Jacques Attali asserted during a recent visit to Quebec. The social economy, or the solidarity economy as it is called in Europe, makes it easier to include future generations in our equations. And if you allow me the paradox, we have an urgent need to think in the long-term. For me, it is bold policies that will make our society more just and which will thus enrich us.

With regard to trade, traditionally, the sovereigntist movement that I lead was always in favour of free exchange because we are driven by the conviction that small countries can succeed within large entities. We have thus been ardent promoters of the North American Free Trade Agreement and, very recently, of the economic and trade agreement that has been reached between Canada and the European Union, in relation to which an agreement in principle has recently been concluded. Quebec believes in fact that the areas of competence reserved to it by the Canadian Constitution can be extended to the realm of international action. In its public policies the government of Quebec must take into account an international environment in which any change affects its activities and responsibilities. This is why for 50 years now Quebec have been highly active internationally. We rely on a modest but very dynamic network of 28 representative offices in 17 countries. I must point out that within the area of its competence Quebec is just as autonomous as the Federal State is within its own. Culture, health, education, the economy, agriculture, immigration and the environment, to name only a few, are thus either exclusive responsibilities or shared by the two orders of government. From now on these areas of competence are inscribed in an international normative order in such a way that in order to exercise its internal responsibilities a State must from now on take on the international dimension of these, and this may result in disagreements.

In our country, one of the issues where this seems the most obvious to us is the fight against climate change. In this dossier, as you know, Canada is challenging the global scientific consensus and isolating itself from the rest of the world. For Quebec, which fully engaged in the recommendations of Rio and Rio+20, this position caused our economy to be threatened by the prospect of possible sanctions. We have a strong desire to contribute in a multilateral way to the emergence of solutions that have a great potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Quebec is relying on its expertise in order to contribute, within a number of large networks, to advancements in environmental issues that have moved from the edge to the centre of international relations. Thus, on 1 January 2014, together with California, we will implement the first system of limits and carbon emission rights trading in North America.

I most humbly believe that the world would benefit if the unique path taken by Quebec in these key issues is understood. This afternoon I have given you a rapid overview of Quebec's situation and of the formidable capacity for adaptation that it enjoys. This creativity that enables it to meet the particular challenges of a Francophone nation within a largely Anglo-Saxon continent is what has enabled us to distinguish ourselves in economic matters by trusting in innovation. This is also why we have our own model in matters of solidarity, which is what in particular gives us an original voice that deserves to be heard everywhere in the world. In addition, our different fields of expertise are often called upon by our international partners and I am convinced that one day Quebec will contribute, in its own way, to good global governance.

To conclude, I would like to thank the IFRI and Mr de Montbrial, who organised this conference. I would like to thank him for allowing me to present my vision of Quebec. I hope that my presentation will compel you to go and learn more about the specific situation of Quebec. I thank you and I invite you to follow the exchanges together with me. Thank you.