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# CHARTÉ DES RÉGIONS .QUÉBEC

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER

I am proud to present you with the fruit of an extensive process stemming from vast consultations aimed at placing the regions at the heart of decision-making when it comes to their own development. At the Quebec Liberal Party, we want to build on each of our region's potential in a sustainable and inclusive manner, particularly in this context which is often referred to as post-pandemic recovery.

This document represents the culmination of meticulous work which began when I launched my leadership bid. It proffers two central principles: equity among regions and decentralization. In other words, less wall to wall, more made to measure.

Before going any further, I would like to thank the 1,400 participants who, over the course of 20 nonpartisan regional consultations, contributed to the development of this document which is intended as a roadmap. I would also like to thank the people I met during my regional tours who were a source of inspiration for this document. I'd also like to convey my particular thanks to the members who took part in developing its framework.

Our goal? Bringing together and uniting Quebecers around a common project: their own progress. Faced with the major challenges awaiting us in the coming years such as an aging







population or workforce shortages, we at the Quebec Liberal Party are proposing a bold vision and solutions that are adapted to the diverse realities of each region.

Quebec is a vast territory that has always greatly benefited from its diversity. Its people, under the leadership of the likes of Jean Lesage and Robert Bourassa, have had the courage to showcase those differences.

We must rely on the strengths of each of our regions, starting with their inhabitants. We need to connect Quebecers and bank on their sense of solidarity. With respect to education or health, the fight against climate change, culture, immigration, tourism, natural resources or economic development, we will give the regions a voice.

We need to focus on the pride among those who inhabit those regions and help them to grow. I invite you to be a part of this major undertaking.

Quebec is made rich by those who live here and when each of our regions is able to reach its full potential, it's Quebec as a whole that comes out ahead.

Dominique Anglade



# Introduction

Quebec has been made prosperous through the diversity of its territories and the people who live there. It is a free and competent nation where realizing each person's full potential is at the very heart of our sense of solidarity.



# Dynamic territorial occupation is everyone's responsibility!

Here, the future must be built together, in a way that benefits everyone throughout the entire territory. Our land is vast, Quebecers are sometimes physically far from one another, but bringing them together and uniting them is inherent to the Quebec Liberal Party's DNA.

Dynamic territorial occupation is everyone's responsibility! And yet Quebec's regions bear the brunt of this responsibility alone all too often. The rapidly aging population, the significant challenges of attracting and retaining its labour force, difficulties accessing essential services, the low frequency of interregional transportation connections and centralizing powers hindering local initiatives are all obstacles to developing the full potential of Quebecers living in the regions. We must find solutions that are adapted to the realities of the territory. Why? Because every region should have the right to accessible child care services, local health-care services, quality cellular network coverage, stimulating higher education centres, affordable housing, strong SMEs and a flourishing economy.

For the Quebec Liberal Party, it goes without saying that municipalities are local governments. We officially recognized them as such in 2017. Today that principle is too often forgotten by the government's interventionist policies. We must advance our vision. It is also primordial that each region has the tools it requires to realize its full potential. That is why it was clear to us that we had to present a project to showcase them; we call it the Charter for Regions.



# Two fundamental principles guided the elaboration of this document



## 1. Equity between regions

Our territory offers a diversity of realities that enrich Quebec. From this diversity stems a variety of needs. The government of Quebec tends to take uniform action throughout the entire territory, but that isn't equitable for all. Uniformity is not fairness. We need to aspire to a genuine equality of opportunity. Equity means modulating government interventions to respond to the specificities of our regions. Equity means fewer wall-to-wall approaches.

## 2. Decentralization

The government that is the closest to the people is the one that best positioned to decide what is best for them. Unfortunately, the trend of centralizing decision-making in Quebec City under the pretext of economies of scale is still too common. Faced with handling interventions that are poorly adapted to their realities, our regions are paying the price of centralization. We need more policies made for and by the regions. Not everything can or should be decided upon in Quebec City. We need to have faith in our regions as well as in our regional authorities and local governments. Quebec City does not have a monopoly on democracy and it is by trusting our local governments that we will achieve the best results for all Quebecers.

Clearly, when we speak of territorial occupation and vitality, our relationship with indigenous people must also be taken into account. The nation of Quebec shares its territory with 10 First Nations and the Inuit nation. We must espouse nation to nation relations in our partnership for the protection and development of the resources that make our lives and coexistence possible.





It is imperative that these nations are an integral part of discussions pertaining to the future of the regions they inhabit. We reached out to the chiefs of the various nations to elaborate the Charter for Regions.

The Charter for Regions is about enhanced equality of opportunity for all Quebecers in all of Quebec's regions. The Charter for Regions is about greater justice for the development of all of our regions. The Charter for Regions is the next Quebec Liberal Party government's vision for our regions. The Charter for Regions is a project for Quebec's future **and that is why our leader will be responsible for its application once she is elected Premier.**

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# Section 1 Regionalized governance



A hand holding a stalk of wheat against a sunset background. The text is overlaid on the image.

# These regional ministers must be held accountable to their fellow citizens.

The reality of a region whether it be an island, on a border, a maritime or Nordic region, replete with forestry, mining, agriculture, industry, tourism, whether it's urban, suburban, central, rural, remote or isolated, should be taken into account in each of our decisions. The cultural and community-based dimensions of each of them need to be considered, as does the presence of English-speaking communities as well as indigenous and Inuit nations. Unfortunately, the Quebec government has a tendency of being rigid rather than modulating and decentralizing its measures.

The Quebec Liberal Party will undertake a major cultural transformation within the State by adopting "regional reflexes." In this way, each time the government has to make a decision, it will need to consider the decision's impact on regional diversity. It will have to constantly ask itself whether modulation or delegating power would serve the objectives better than the traditional approach.

It was a Liberal government that passed the Act to grant the Ville de Québec national capital status and increase its autonomy and powers. It was also a Liberal government that established "Réflexe Montréal", in particular through the signing a framework agreement with the city to recognize the metropolis' special status. We also adopted a decree which recognized the insular status of the Magdalen Islands; a historic gesture which underscored the need to adapt government programs to the specificity of the Islands. It is





following these precedents that a “Regional Chapter” will be included in each of the Government of Quebec’s policies.

We must also ensure that government decisions aren’t solely made in Quebec City or Montreal. For several years now, each region has been able to rely on the support of a regional minister and yet this role has not been clearly defined. Without the support of specific teams, their role is all too often reduced to that of communicator. The National Capital region and the Metropolis are the exceptions, their ministers are supported by secretariats and dedicated budgets to carry out their activities.

These **regional ministers must be held accountable** to their fellow citizens, as well **as be entrusted with the means to fulfill their mission**. Thus, to endow each region with clear power to act, we will **establish a secretariat in each region, which will be able to rely on a team of civil servants under the leadership of a deputy minister who is responsible for the region**. The secretariat, whose employees will be based in the region itself, will support the regional minister’s work and will be responsible for working alongside partners to identify priorities to advance, for example agriculture, forestry, fishing, mines, tourism, heritage conservation, the deployment of sports infrastructures or health and educational services.

They must ensure that they are listening to regional stakeholders, including those from civil society, so that priorities remain up to date. They will become a sort watchdog for the regional interests with other levels of government. Regional ministers will have to provide the National Assembly with an annual account of the status of their activities. Sending 5,000 civil servants to the regions is insufficient to be called a “government of the regions”. In order to be a real government of the regions, we have







to be bold enough to provide them with a real voice at the decision-making table.

So that public administration is accountable to regional stakeholders, it is also important to **officially recognize and support the government's key contacts**, those who will interact on a day-to-day basis with the regional secretariats. The rapid abolition of the *Conférences Régionales des Élus* unfortunately hurt several regions and ecosystems which were built around these organizations. We cannot, however, return to the past or repeat its errors. We are not interested in reshuffling regional structures.

The regions have since developed their own regional consultation tools. Without recreating a new standardized institutions or duplicating our local governments, the time has come to better recognize the region's representative consultation bodies..

It should be noted that representation of a regional territory includes the indigenous and Inuit peoples who live there. The terms of their participation within the consultation process must be established with them, in full respect of their customs and their will.

Recognizing key contacts must be part of an approach that promotes greater transparency and dialogue. To that effect, it is a pity to note that the current government has not used the Table Québec-Régions which was established by the Act to advise the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on issues that affect Quebec's regions. This refusal to recognize the importance of the consultation mechanism created to take the pulse of the municipalities is unfortunate. That is why the Quebec Liberal Party would **mobilize the Table Québec-Régions**.





We need to go even further so that the Quebec government's paternalism vis-à-vis the municipalities truly becomes a thing of the past.

Recognition of the status of local governments by the last Quebec Liberal Party government was an important step on the path to additional decentralization and municipal autonomy. In order for our local governments to seize their full potential, we need to provide them with more bite, additional powers. That is why we will undertake a **major review of the municipal and land-use planning legislative framework**.

The complexity and obsolete nature of the current framework make a major overhaul necessary. Quebec's Municipal Code- whose adoption dates to the 19th century— continues to govern 875 municipalities. There are over 60 laws that municipalities must currently consider as part of their administration. We will seek to **simplify measures**, as well as to **include previously agreed upon delegations of power with the municipalities**.

We have too often seen recent initiatives- for example, residential construction or municipal development projects- constrained by the rigidity of development planning. A review of the legislative framework should include the **possibility of asymmetry in the development of particular norms or regulations**. The realities of the Greater Montreal Areas are not those of the Bas-St-Laurent region, for example. We therefore cannot consider the development of the regions in a monolithic manner and must offer local stakeholders more of a say in the process.

The process will culminate in the consecration of our local governments as stronger institutions with more flexible, more efficient governance.



Pour être  
un vrai  
gouvernement  
des régions,  
il faut oser  
donner une voix  
à la table des  
décisions.



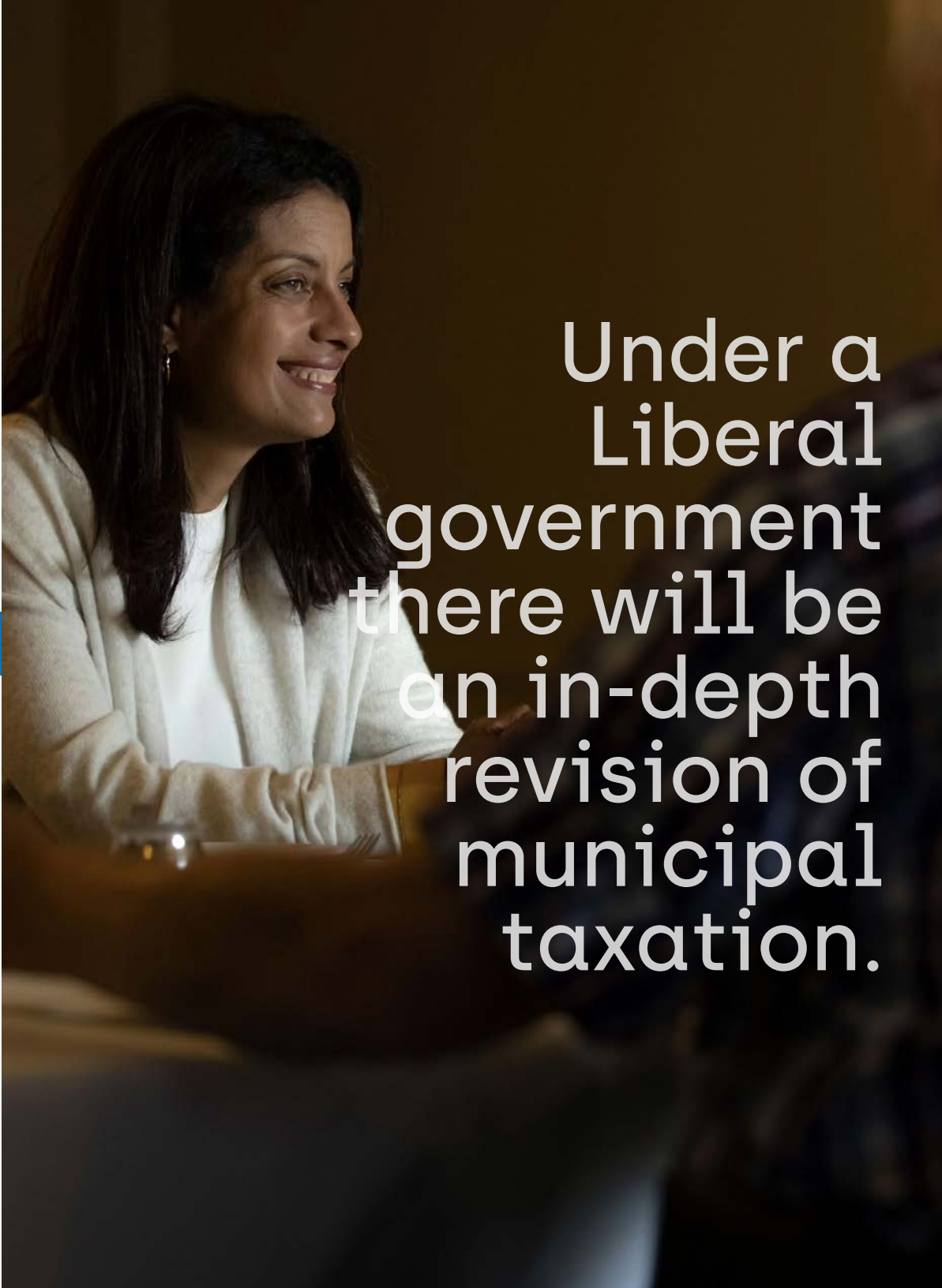
Finally, **reducing municipalities administrative burden** needs to become a concern again. Our local governments need to send less paperwork to Quebec City and offer more services to their citizens. Under the impetus of the Perrault Report in 2015, the previous QLP government developed an action plan, adopted a policy and established an advisory committee aimed at reducing municipalities' administrative burden. Those tools yielded results, but the CAQ halted the momentum by allowing the action plan to expire without a new vision for the future. During the first year of a Liberal mandate, stakeholders from the municipal sector will be mobilized again to continue to ease municipalities' administrative burdens. This undertaking will be a testament to the fact that we do not consider municipalities as offshoots of the government, but truly local governments in and of themselves.





## Section 2 Supporting local governments





# Under a Liberal government there will be an in-depth revision of municipal taxation.

It's well and good to recognize our local governments, but we also need to provide them with the financial means to do more in accordance with their priorities.

For years, municipalities have been looking to diversify the sources of revenue to better acknowledge the growing weight of their responsibilities. Municipal taxation only generates one consensus- there is no consensus!

Property tax represents approximately 70% of a municipalities' tax capacity. It is a particularly high rate when compared with other OECD countries. This dependence on property tax leads to various adverse effects such as increased urban sprawl and territorial inequities. It is important to diversify municipalities' sources of revenue and that is what we will accomplish in a next mandate. It is also important to acknowledge that cities' responsibilities are increasing, but that the means to face these new responsibilities do not automatically follow. From 2012 to 2018, inflation increased by 6.8% whereas the expenses among municipalities with 100,000 residents and under have increased by 20.1%.

The previous QLP's government's decision to open new tax fields to municipalities has increased their fiscal autonomy. We do, however, believe that we need





to go further. We need to implement mechanisms that ensure that any increased responsibilities stemming from Quebec City are accompanied by the financial or taxation means to face them. Therefore, under a Liberal government there will be an **in-depth revision of municipal taxation**. This taxation update will be undertaken alongside local stakeholders. It should not, however, lead to additional taxation for citizens.

In spite of the significant work that needs to be done to modernize this framework, we are now committing to including the entire value of public and para-public buildings within municipalities' tax perimeter. Currently, the government of Quebec does not pay all of the municipal taxes on buildings in the health care, social services, day care, education and high education sectors. As people are tightening their belts to pay their municipal taxes, it seems absurd that the government is not paying for the entirety of its own. Therefore, with the Quebec Liberal Party, **the government of Quebec will pay 100% of its municipal taxes**. This measure will allow municipalities to rapidly acquire the additional revenues to which they are entitled.

Our regions also need to be able to take full advantage of the economic activity they generate. Royalty revenues from mining, forestry and water resources raised almost \$1.5 billion for the government last year. Yet, the government has only redistributed a meager part of that. For the regions that develop our natural resources to be able to transform this wealth, we need to do more. **We will therefore double the level of revenue sharing from natural resource royalties with the regions and municipalities directly impacted by their development.**

We also need to support the development of local initiatives. **We will dedicate \$500M to that effect each year.** The Strategy





to Ensure the Occupancy and Vitality of Territories includes three funds to support regional economic development, namely the *Fonds Régions et Ruralité (FRR)*, which seeks to support municipal entities in the execution of their competencies, the *Fonds de la Région de Capitale-Nationale* and the *Fonds de Développement Économique de Montréal*. These are the funds that will be enhanced so that we are able to achieve our goal and increase the regions' influence. We will also **increase the budget for local roads by \$50M** so that we are able to fund a greater number of community-based initiatives.

We also need to look more broadly at the issue of financing local infrastructures in the context of rising inflation. The cost of project materials is rapidly increasing. Yet several municipalities have received funding from the Quebec government for projects that they sought to undertake but which are no longer suitable, for example, for aqueduct system rebuilding or for sports infrastructures. The rules of the existing programs are also currently formulated in such a manner that all projects are required to be released on the same schedule, thereby creating overwhelming

demand within the construction sector. The result is that some municipalities are having to forgo projects that their citizens needed because the portion of the funding that falls to them has become too great. **Therefore, the Quebec Liberal Party is committed to working with local authorities to revise the funding for the infrastructure projects so that all of the announced projects actually come to fruition.**







## Section 3 Driving regional economies





The very essence of the Charter for Regions is to support the regions so that they are able to thrive according to their local priorities whether that be the development of natural resources, agriculture, public services, the environment, tourism, etc.

But supporting our regions also means ensuring that the government adequately responds to people's shared needs within the territory. Following consultations, we have identified the following fields of activity:

**1. Taking part in the fight against climate change and economic development within the framework of the ÉCO project**

The ÉCO project is our major economic and ecological development project. It aims to create wealth while allowing us to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. It allies our water and hydroelectricity to develop green hydrogen while developing an energy-saving enterprise. It is a societal project that will drive Quebec as a global leader.

We estimate that it will represent **\$100B in public and private investments in the coming years. All of our regions will reap the benefits.**





## 2. Attracting More Workforce to the Regions

The regions have a lot to offer, particularly in terms of quality of life and community spirit. But for several years, the exodus of young people toward urban centres has negatively impacted for the promotion of these assets.

While the pandemic-related migration has benefited some regions, workforce and territorial vitality challenges remain. Our SMEs, our manufacturing industries, the tourism sector and public services among others, need arms. Regions want the influx of new families. As population ages, this trend will continue.

A tax credit currently exists for individuals who have graduated within the last two years and are working in a resource region. We can do more.

A Liberal government will replace and **establish a new tax credit for the revitalization of resource regions**. This non-refundable tax credit will be aimed at people who graduated within the past 5 years as well as newcomers who hold employment in their field of study or in an in-demand sector and who reside in the resource area where their place of employment is located. These people will receive an amount of up to \$3,000 per year for a period of 4 years, representing a total of \$12,000.

## 3. Ensuring Immigration That Better Aligns with Needs

To face the generalized labour shortages that are affecting Quebec, all the regions need the support of immigration's driving force. Yet, over the 2019 to 2022 period, there was a decrease in the annual number of immigrants that Quebec welcomes. While the number of vacant positions increased, Quebec deprived itself of over 14,000 immigrants within the "qualified worker" category. For 2022, the thresholds were revisited, reaching a range of between 67,500 and 70,000






immigrants. That being said, only 27% of immigrants settle in regions outside of the Greater Montreal area.

Given these circumstances, we need to quickly review our methods.

If we really want to respond to our labour needs, we must encourage the regionalization of immigration. That is why we propose to **enter into agreements with all of Quebec's regions so that they are able to determine their own immigration needs, taking account of the actual needs in all sectors as well as their capacity for welcoming immigrants.**

We will maintain the threshold established for 2022 for the time it takes to establish agreements with the regions in accordance with their needs. We will then adjust our global thresholds accordingly in an effort to equitably regionalize immigration. In partnership with local stakeholders, we will ensure that regions have the resources and the flexibility required to welcome, integrate and offer French-language training to the workers in question.

A photograph of a young man with short dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and dark trousers. The background is a solid dark grey.

Si nous voulons  
vraiment répondre  
aux besoins de  
main-d'œuvre,  
il faut favoriser  
la régionalisation  
de l'immigration.

#### 4. Facilitate the Development of Houses and Housing

The housing crisis currently affects every region. In order for them to be able to welcome residents who want to settle there, they must have housing capacity that will allow them to grow. All of Quebec's regions are now contending with a serious housing shortage. While the inoccupancy rate in Montreal was 3% in 2021, the inoccupancy rate in Joliette, the Magdalen Islands, Mont-Laurier, Rivière-du-Loup, Rouyn-Noranda, Saint-Georges, Gaspé, Alma, Drummondville, Granby, Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières was 1% or below for that same period.

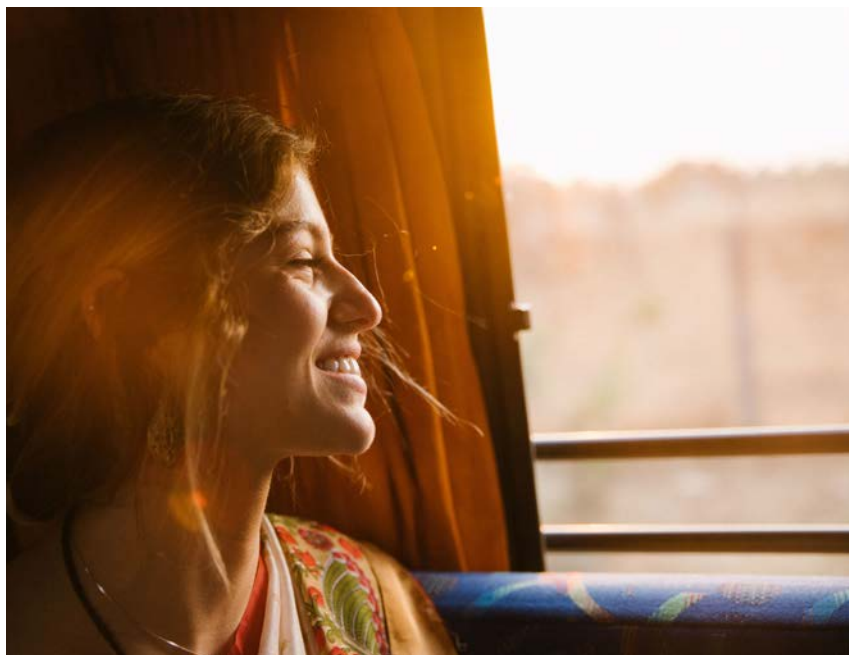
For the Quebec Liberal Party, it is clear that we need a real housing strategy, which would deal with access to property, access to affordable housing and access to social housing, all at the same time. This strategy would have to be based on support, but we will also need to encourage increases to supply.

To achieve this, we will **give a first right of refusal on available land and encourage the construction of housing units**. By doing this, municipalities will be able to purchase certain buildings or land in priority to any other buyer in order to carry out housing projects for the community's benefit. But to ensure that new projects really are undertaken, we will **modernize the Accès-Logis Program to include a regional facet for regional student housing, private residences for seniors and housing for the homeless**. This will help support the development of affordable community solutions to the housing crisis.

We also need to ensure the **upstream involvement of municipalities when regional public infrastructures, for example a new hospital, are developed**. This will help municipalities better plan around those projects, somewhat







like TODs, namely average to high density real-estate projects, structured around a high-capacity transit station.

Indeed, **some municipalities would like to have the latitude to offer incentives to facilitate the construction residential buildings or reasonably priced houses**, for example a property tax credit or a grant. However, this right should be regulated, especially for municipalities with a population of 100,000 and a low inoccupancy levels.

### 5. Reliable High-Speed Internet and Cellular Network Coverage

We wouldn't tolerate a region living without electricity. We can no longer tolerate a region existing without high-speed Internet access or without a cellular phone network. We must put an end to Quebec's two-tier reality for Internet connectivity in our regions. We need real connection!

**Having a reliable cellular network throughout the territory must be considered an essential service.**

We need to stop losing the signal! It is a basic security issue to ensure that everyone can reach emergency services, no matter where they are throughout the territory, but it's much more than that. It is an essential element of economic development. The government's last budget planned for investments to map needs and begin coverage by 2024. The first phase is necessary and we will continue our work so that in collaboration with the regions, everyone can have access to reliable cellular coverage as soon as possible.

When it comes to remote working, remote learning, telemedicine or online commerce, all Quebecers have the right to access a high-speed connection. Approximately 10% of households, or 110,000 connections still remain to be completed by 2022-2023. **We are doing everything we can so**





that high-speed Internet networks are **completed on time**. We cannot afford to make our fellow citizens wait any longer.

We must also ensure that we are stimulating innovation to support the deployment of new connection technologies and make free Wi-Fi available in additional public settings. Once we have caught up, we need to look to the future. We can no longer find ourselves at the tail end of the technology parade.

#### 6. More Efficient Transportation

Mobility within the territory is an integral part of its occupancy. To ensure this mobility, we need to take action on all fronts.

It is unacceptable for regions to be cut off from the rest of Quebec due to a lack of services or the inability to meet basic transportation needs. We need to facilitate transportation within a given region, from one region to another and toward the National Capital region or the metropolis. To achieve this while supporting local initiatives, we need to ensure that we have a **real vision and enhanced coordination of interregional transportation**. That is why we are committed to **ensuring reliable, accessible service via coach, plane and ferry for all of Quebec's regions**.



Mobility within  
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occupancy.



### To do so we will :

- Review the funding methods and regulation of bus transportation with the regions and companies involved to ensure better service, increased frequency and reliability;
- Continue efforts to reduce air transportation fees by imposing a maximum fee for users;
- Establish a call for tenders' system to maintain essential air services in case of service disruptions;
- Making access to all ferries free for Quebec residents.

**A support program to report the regional taxi industry** that serves the territories where sustainable mobility alternatives are limited will also be established to mitigate the negative impacts of the CAQ's reform of the taxi industry. In the context of an aging population, the issues of short-distance mobility are constantly growing. It is inconceivable that someone living in the regions feels compelled to call an ambulance to get to a medical appointment because of a lack of adequate taxi service.

Given that transportation is one of the most significant GHG emitters, we need to intensify our efforts to transform transportation throughout the territory.

To do so **we will accelerate the deployment of electric charging stations outside of metropolitan areas.**

We will **also work alongside the regions to intensify the development of public transportation.** However, that does not mean that we need to abandon our roads, which need to be well maintained. It's a question of safety. And yet, several of the projects announced by the



Ministry of Transport will never come to be. We are proposing that **each announced regional road rehabilitation project must be completed within a maximum of four years.** We must ensure that projects come to fruition once they are announced and have dedicated funding.

To support our regions' economic development, we will complete the *Route Verte*, we will continue our effort to make the shoulders safer on roads used by cyclists and we will intensify our efforts to make infrastructures safer for off-road vehicles. This will help us to support the recreational and tourism sectors while promoting user safety.



We will also work alongside the regions to intensify the development of public transportation.







# Conclusion



Quebec needs a government that governs for all Quebecers guided by strong principles of autonomy. When it comes to responding to regions' issues, sprinkling money here and there isn't enough; we need a government that recognizes the importance and contributions of local and regional governments.

The dynamic occupation of the territory something all Quebecers need to be involved in. By focusing on interregional equity and increased decentralization we will be able to meet our objectives. We now have to delegate and modulate as much as possible to adapt to diverse realities. We need to work toward economically and demographically dynamic regions which are attractive places to live and where mobility is both reliable and accessible. We want a Quebec where regional governance is decided upon by the regions.

**This is the project that the Quebec Liberal Party envisions for our regions.  
This is the Charter for Regions.  
This is Quebec's future!**

