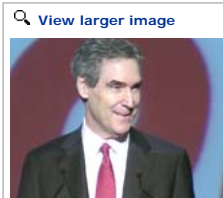


CTV MONTREAL



Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff delivers a speech to Quebec supporters in Laval on March 22, 2009.

**Ignatieff makes pitch for Grit support in Quebec**

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CTV.ca News Staff

Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff made a pitch to Quebecers Sunday, saying his party could provide them with a new road into Ottawa that does not force them to make a choice between their Quebecois and Canadian identities.

"Give us the chance to prove what we can do for Quebec, for your families, for your

neighbours, for you," Ignatieff said in a speech to supporters in Laval, Que., on Sunday morning.

"Let us prove that there is no contradiction between your Quebec pride and the grand and beautiful experience that is Canada."

Ignatieff made his remarks while addressing delegates at the general council meeting for the Liberal party's Quebec wing.

More than 400 Liberal delegates gathered in Laval over the weekend, to discuss strategy in Quebec at a time when the Liberals appear to be gaining in the polls.

Ignatieff picked up on this theme during his speech, telling delegates that the Liberals were the best choice for Quebecers who wish to see their province gain more power at the federal level.

"Quebecers do not deserve to be in a permanent opposition in Ottawa. Their place is in power," Ignatieff said, pausing for applause.

"The red has returned. I am so proud to be a Liberal; I am so proud to be Canadian. The time has come for Quebecers to get their place back in Ottawa," he added later.

Ignatieff also spoke about his personal experiences in Quebec and the story of how his Russian grandparents settled in *la belle province* in the 1920s.

While Ignatieff said he would elaborate on a party platform when the time was right, some critics said Sunday's speech lacked specifics and didn't provide enough details.

Political analyst L. Ian MacDonald said it was a speech perfect for its time, if short on substance.

"It's what we call *une belle parole de circonstances* -- he said all the right things and touched all the right buttons about unity and Quebec's place in Canada," said MacDonald.

"It was a speech that was long on unity on rhetoric, but short on specifics."

If the Liberals are to gain a foothold in Quebec, it will be an uphill battle: The party currently holds only 14 of 75 federal seats, barely ahead of the Conservatives' own 10 seats. The Bloc Quebecois hold the vast majority, with 49 seats.

But pollster Nik Nanos said the Liberals are gaining points in Quebec from rival parties and appear to be particularly strong in Montreal.

"The interesting thing is that a lot of that support is concentrated on the island of Montreal," Nanos told CTV's Question Period on Sunday.

"What it means is that Montreal is probably going to be a real wasteland for the Conservatives. The Liberals have been picking up from the Conservatives, the New Democrats and, to a lesser extent, the Bloc in the province of Quebec."

With files from The Canadian Press

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CTV Newsnet: Craig Oliver on the balancing act

CTV Newsnet: L. Ian MacDonald, editor-in-chief of Policy Options Magazine, on where Ignatieff succeeded and failed in his appeal to Quebec voters

CTV Newsnet: Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff addresses supporters, part one

CTV Newsnet: Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff addresses supporters, part two

CTV Newsnet: Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff answers media questions, part one

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