# Translation of interview with Pierre-Léon Lafrance, candidate for the position of Vice-President, Francophone

Catherine Schellenberg: Today, I'm speaking with Pierre-Léon Lafrance, candidate for the position of Francophone Vice-President in the elections.

Mr. Lafrance, we have five questions for you today. **First, given that the Board of Directors is the governing body of the PNA, how will you lead the board through the priorities, changes and opportunities you have identified for the association?**

**Pierre-Léon Lafrance**: So right now, I'm not a member of the Board of Directors, so I'm far from leading it. That being said, I was looking at all of this a little bit, and there are things that seem obvious to me and what seems obvious to me in any case, is the priority that must be put on recruitment for quite obvious reasons. I know that there is a committee in the association that is looking into this issue, and if I am elected, I would like to participate if possible.

You know, I know retirees who are not members of the association, and they don't necessarily see why they would become members. We have to tell these people that the association, of course, is there to protect and promote their interests, but we also have to tell them that we are no different, we know their interests, we know their problems. Our members are concerned of course about financial issues, but also about their health, we are no longer young foals and fillies. So health is a concern. The health of their spouses is also a concern. The loneliness that older people can fall into at some point is a significant concern and worse than loneliness, isolation can become a concern.

Of course, the association cannot solve these problems, or all of them. But we have to listen to our membership and through recruitment, the more we are, the more we will hear from members and the more we will be able to help find solutions that could make their lives easier.

Catherine Schellenberg: Thank you. **Okay, now you've talked a little bit about recruitment, we're going to ask the question. Since recruitment has been identified as a priority, what would you change about our current structure or practices to support recruitment? And how can we leverage our recent successes to encourage recruitment?**

**Pierre-Léon Lafrance**: So, in order to change things in the way recruitment works, I first have to know how it work and I don't know how it works, at least not enough to be able to answer the first part of your question.

The second part, of course, is that a success, you have to take advantage of it. You have to hit the nail on the head, strike when the iron is hot, as they say, and we are of course talking about the recovery of sums from the pension fund surplus. It shows how successfully we can defend the interests of our members and all that, well, it's an important recruitment tool. If recruitment works well, the association grows. There are more people, the more we talk to each other and the more we are able to determine with certainty, more precisely, rather, the needs of the members, the better we will defend their interests. The better we defend their interests, the more successes there will be, as we had last year with the distribution of the surplus.

Catherine Schellenberg: Thank you, Mr. Lafrance. **So, the third question is, what efforts are needed to unify our association? We are talking about geographically, linguistically, culturally, regardless of the positions we held with CBC/Radio-Canada.**

**Pierre-Léon Lafrance**: I'm going to have fun with that question. I don't know if we're ever going to be able to unify. We can try and we must try. Basically, CBC and Radio-Canada are two beasts that are culturally very different and they look at each other and they see each other through their respective lenses, so there is already a problem. Basically, it is no different from Canada. This is true for Radio-Canada. And that's also true for those who worked there because they were imbued with the cultures of our respective bosses, so that's something that needs to be sorted out.

All I see is that I see it from outside the board and I know that in Quebec, to come back to the question of unification, the Quebec association is looking for an anglophone representative to sit on its board of directors. I also know, and I have observed this and discussed it at length with Micheline Provost, who currently holds the position I am seeking, that the francophone representation within the association is clearly insufficient in my opinion. Actually, I think it's pretty well recognized, it's obvious on this side of the border. In addition, French speakers represent 40% of the PNA's membership. The representation we have in the National Association, when we have 40%, is not strong for us right now.

I'm going to work hard to try to make things right. Finding solutions is not a question of revolution, it's simply recognizing one another’s realities. I would also like to point out that, and this is important, at the last meeting of the Quebec association, which was held in Quebec City, this aspect was discussed at length. And I'm sure, I know that we need to find a way out of this problem so that our members feel that we have a voice at the table.

Catherine Schellenberg: **And in the same vein, How will you develop/improve our relationship with the CBC/Radio-Canada?**

**Pierre-Léon Lafrance:** Well, you see, it's the same thing. I think it's more difficult on the English side than on the French side. What I do know is that relations between the *association québécoise des retraités de Radio-Canada* are rather harmonious, they were at the time of former vice-president Michel Bissonnette, who left and was replaced by a new vice-president with whom, it seems, relations continue to be harmonious. On the CBC side, I don't know, I've heard things, but I'll know when I talk to people from the CBC. But either way, CBC/Radio-Canada needs to keep an open mind. We are not adversaries, in the end we members of the association, only want what is rightfully due to pensioners.

Catherine Schellenberg: **Excellent and the last question for you tonight, why do you think you will make a difference if you are elected?**

**Pierre-Léon Lafrance**: I've been retired since 2011. I have extensive experience as a retiree. I think that knowing what it's like to be retired, it can help when you sit on a committee or on a board of retirees. I think I can make a difference because not having been, until now, in an organization like the PNA, at least not as a Board member, I can contribute, and everyone says this, but I really think that I can bring a new perspective, or at least elements, new perspectives in our presentation and in the direction we want to take.

I feel supported by the Quebecers of the association and I am certain, I have no doubt about it, that if I am elected, I will have met the members, the other members of the board, and it will go very well. In addition, I think I am a pretty good communicator and my experiences as a parliamentary correspondent, as a foreign correspondent and as editor-in-chief at Radio-Canada International, put me in situations where I learned quite quickly how to communicate effectively. Communicate simply, communicate in French. And in English.

Catherine Schellenberg: Thank you, Mr. Lafrance, for taking the time to speak with us today, and good luck.

**Pierre-Léon Lafrance:** Thank you!