A Special Status for Montréal?

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In the near future, a proposal will be put forward by the Québec provincial government to grant a "special status" for Montréal and Québec City. This could be a moment for real renewal, a "tiger project" or just a list of proposals that may look good but have no real impact, a "mouse project". How will Montrealers evaluate such a proposal? Does it provide a vision for the future and believable steps to get from here to there? Herewith is our view.

Montréal at its full potential would enjoy the prosperity and the culture to be one of the top 10 cities in the world. The city still has assets and strengths to pursue such a vision and to become Canada's link to Europe and Africa as well as the country's entrepreneurial hub.

The problem is that Montréal has been under-performing for a number of decades. The performance gap with its Canadian comparable cities, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver increases continuously in terms of wealth, culture, reputation; the hallmarks of a true global city. If the current system of governance is maintained, we can, of course, only expect the same results in the future.

In order to turn this situation around, Montréal must become master of its destiny. Instead of the current stagnation, it must have the means to become a leading global city. As an example, the levers required to create such a model involve: education, health and social services, policies and taxation supportive to entrepreneurship, a high degree of liberty, the development and retention of talent including the attraction of highly educated immigrants.

This can happen in an open culture. For Montréal, this means bilingualism and nurturing its multiethnic make up. Success would provide Montrealers with the City they deserve, it would give Québec the economic engine it requires and Canada would gain a unique, world class city.