

Latest PQ defector tires of focus on sovereignty

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QUEBEC – The Parti Québécois took another hit Tuesday as Benoit Charette became the fifth MNA to resign in two weeks.

The young MNA for Deux-Montagnes said his decision is not related to the raucous resignation of four other PQ MNAs – Louise Beaudoin, Pierre Curzi, Lisette Lapointe and Jean-Martin Aussant.

The four, who will sit as independents, slammed the door following disagreements with PQ leader Pauline Marois over the Quebec City arena file and the sovereignty agenda.

Charette said he is, contrary to the others who resigned, tired of seeing the PQ focus solely on sovereignty.

“I think they made the wrong analysis,” the 34-year old on Tuesday told reporters at a news conference in Quebec City. “We need a truce.”

Charette has had several conversations with former PQ member François Legault, whose Coalition pour l’avenir du Québec could morph into a new provincial party. Charette said he shares Legault’s vision that sovereignty is not a priority for Quebecers and didn’t close the door to joining forces with the former PQ minister.

Legault said last week his plan is to solve Quebec’s education and health-care problems, pay down the provincial debt, encourage a more dynamic entrepreneurial economy and ensure the French language flourishes in Quebec.

Charette was first elected in December 2008.

His decision comes as the party lurches from crisis to crisis in the dying days of the political season before summer holidays. In saying he sees himself more in Legault’s approach to politics, Charette is charging off in a different direction than others

who quit saying the party was not sovereigntist enough.

Charette said he proposed to Marois that she renounce the plan to hold the referendum in the first mandate and govern Quebec as a province but his plea fell on deaf ears.

But he said the PQ refuses to face the reality that since 1994 the number of people voting PQ has been in steady decline. Even polls showing 40 per cent of Quebecers favour sovereignty are soft because, for many Quebecers,

the idea is no longer a priority. A more accurate number would be 20 per cent, he said.

If Charette makes the leap to Legault’s coalition, it would be a major coup for Legault who would be able to say he has a first elected member in the National Assembly.

Charette’s move might also encourage others said to be thinking of jumping ship.

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