

The Alliance Fleet in Quebec

The Saint-Lawrence River is majestic. It runs from West to East throughout the province of Quebec before pouring in the gulf and later in the ocean to finally reach the world. Its currents are very powerful in some places and navigation can in fact be extremely dangerous. Actually only specially trained captains have the right to steer major ships on certain parts of the river. However, in other parts, the river runs rather smoothly and peacefully. Sailing and kayaking are common there and children have a great time on rafts when the water is warm in July. At any rate, the river is a major commercial and touristic element and serves as an essential seaway link between Canada and the rest of the world. God trusted Quebec with it in order to bless the world. May we learn to use it to its maximal potential.

There is a Canadian boat company that does business on the St-Lawrence. It owns several boats, mostly small but some are larger. It services locally for the most part, but some larger vessels do international business. The company has been operating for about 30 years and its growth has been rather slow. Recently however the company has experienced serious difficulties as its CEO has been accused and found guilty, and had to be fired. Nevertheless the company keeps on developing and recently it has acquired a new boat that is very promising.

One of the strengths of the company is that it has been able to work effectively with commercial partners. One of them is a great school for crews and captains that offers training on the ground ... or rather on the river. Moreover a team of experts is well in place to evaluate each vessel in order to offer possible ways to improve crew effectiveness. These experts also have the training to identify future captains and the ability to accompany them in their progress. There is much hope for the company, but some changes are necessary and some are becoming urgent.

First, some efforts have to be deployed for a better coordination between crews on the boats. The problem resides in the fact that soon in the company's development each crew learned to operate independently from one another. So that, if a good and efficient idea is put in place on a specific boat and brings good results, the other crews are not made aware of it rapidly. And when they come to learn about it later, they are not trained to implement it effectively on their vessel. Therefore we find some boats operating efficiently, but others experience internal conflicts as they develop very slowly. This is due mainly to a lack of coordination, communication and work together. In short, the whole company suffers.

Another important and urgent problem comes from a certain type of mistrust expressed by some crews when asked to consider new ideas from the direction of the company. For example, when the CEO sends a team of experts to evaluate the efficiency of a crew, especially on those boats that make very small or no improvement, these are often received with suspicion or despise. Fear, ignorance and resistance to change keep these experts from bringing solutions that have yet been proven helpful on other vessels. This mentality must change.

Finally another challenge is the aging of the captains. One wonders who will replace them. Or will existing crews accept to work heartily with captains of the new generation? Our world is in

fast and constant change. New captains are painfully necessary, but at what cost? And will they be ready to face the high challenges presented by the river and use them for the greatest advantage of the company?

The St-Lawrence District is this company. The boats are the local Churches, the captains are the pastors and the crews are the elders, the deacons, and the members. The Training School is ETEQ and the experts are those who serve in the ministries of the District, like Children, Women, Youth, New Ventures, etc.

More than ever, the Churches of the St-Lawrence District need to catch the vision to better work together, courageously consider the proposed changes from the experts, and celebrate the Work of God that is taking place everywhere in the District.

In my vision for the District I explain the four areas where I see we need to learn to better work and collaborate together: evangelism and discipleship, mission, communications and finances.

Today God is calling us to form a better coordinated fleet on the St-Lawrence River. We must unite our strengths in order to rescue those who are drowning; and take care, encourage, and train those who are saved so that they in turn might join God's mission for the world.

Claude Noël, April 16 2017