



Interview with the Consul General of the capital ▶ Balance of the half of the legislature and fu

COMÚ D'ANDORRA LA VELLA/TONY LARA

The Consul General of Andorra la Vella, Conxita Marsol.



Conxita Marsol

Consul General of Andorra la Vella

«We will re-raise the cable car at the peak of Carroi and, if it doesn't work, this will be the last attempt»

EL PERIÒDIC ANDORRA LA VELLA @PeriodicAND

The Consul General of Andorra la Vella, Conxita Marsol, takes stock of the first half of the legislature marked by the covid-19 and presents the main initiatives for the next two years in the capital. For the time being, however, she rules out running for head of government and shows her unconditional support for the current one, Xavier Espot.

–What is your assessment of this first half of the legislature?

–We can't take stock without talking about covid. Unfortunately, the balance of these first two years of office is to have worked, to have fought, to have adapted to a global pandemic, but without giving up doing things that were necessary for the parish and that, in spite of everything, we have been able to throw forward, such as the remodeling of Enclar Avenue, Callaueta Street or La Rotonda square. In short, areas that despite the coronavirus we considered could not be left behind and we have succeeded. We have done much less than we probably would have done if there had not been a pandemic, which has worn us down and forced us to be vigilant and delay all kinds of pro-

jects and activities, such as the festival or the fair. 2020 was a very atypical year that we would like not to live again.

–What could have been done better?

–You can always do things better and depending on the eyes you look at you may have made some decisions or others. But I think we did what we had to do at all times and we were very committed to helping businesses and families and, above all, to keeping the parish clean and tidy, especially to prevent contagion. At the urban level, projects such as the communal stadium have been delayed, but I don't think it was the most important or the most urgent. Luckily, for the past four years we had done a lot of things and we didn't come across anything that was essential. As for the exclusive management of the pandemic, I think the government has done very well, because to deal with an unknown situation like this you have to be brave and determined. And not only the government has managed well; also the citizens, because everyone has collaborated and has become aware of the gravity of the situation.

–How about the next two years?

–With great enthusiasm and with

great desire for the pandemic to pass and for us to be able to dedicate ourselves exclusively to work in the parish. I think we all want to regain our health and get back to a normal life in a pre-pandemic normalcy. My goal is to make Andorra la Vella the economic and administrative center, to turn it into a sustainable capital with a quality of life, for the people, but also with a lot of activity.

–At the last Joint Council, a budget of 50 million euros was approved, 13 of which will be allocated to new investments.

–One of the most important investments will be the area of the Rotunda, which consists of several phases and the next one will go from the river promenade to the Paris bridge, with light and sound sources, which we understand will bring a plus to the part commercial of the parish and that we must give it the maximum appeal. Each of these two projects, we estimate, will cost one and a half million euros. Then we will continue working on the beautification and accessibility of all the streets, starting with La Llacuna, which needs considerable remodeling, as well as the passages of Aigüeta and Europa. We will also finish the Santa Coloma separation, which has already



«My goal is to make Andorra la Vella the administrative economic center, a green capital with a quality of life»

begun a spectacular transformation. And finally, we have many miles of sidewalks pending, to which we have set aside one million euros. Then there are other items for smaller, long-term infrastructure, but these would be the most important.

–Why do you think that in times of crisis like the current one, big works need to be started? There are those who do not understand and say that this is not the time.

–I think it's time. We are a tourist country, and I am convinced of that and I am well aware of it, and we live from tourism and as such we must be at-

tractive, and Andorra la Vella must be an attractive parish. And not just for tourism, but for its citizens who have to live in good conditions, in open spaces, without cars and where children can play freely. I often imagine what the pandemic with Meritxell Avenue would have been like without being a pedestrian zone and I think it would have been a drama. Instead, now people can walk around without worries. It has been shown that tourists are still coming and looking for new experiences. And here we are facing our policy.

–Indeed, there are many tourists and this sometimes causes collapses. Is there a solution?

–No. Well, there is a solution: let's all start walking a little more and use public transport more. In this sense, from the municipality we have made an important commitment to public transport, offering the communal bus at 10 cents a ticket –free if you have the national monthly pass –and increasing the budget to make it wider the current service. The solution is also for companies to promote sustainable mobility plans and even change the way we take our children to school, because it is clear that when there is a school holiday, traffic is better. We need to change our mindset

and attitude, but I know this can't be done in a year or two, but we're going to have to try. And from there, of course, big infrastructure needs to be improved.

-If public transport is encouraged, won't more car parks be needed?

-In Andorra la Vella there is no need for more car parks. At the entrance to the city, yes, but in the center we provide a well-sized service. That is why we are renting land in Santa Coloma, to try to get people, especially those who work in the capital, to leave their private vehicle on the outskirts and from there travel by communal bus or shuttle bus, which would also generate more road safety and less pollution. It is true that almost all the car parks in the city center are blocked three days a year, but considering that in a couple of years we will have a private investment of 900 spaces, I believe that Andorra la Vella will cover all the needs.

-We have to believe in sustainability, but maybe there are still green spaces inside the parish, right?

-One of the 13 million planned for investments is precisely for a park that we will build between the end of Andorra la Vella and the beginning of Santa Coloma to complement the green connectivity between Central Park and La Serradora Park. We have to start looking for a name, but we already have the project on the table and we will open the contest soon. We hope that this new park invites you to walk and, although we are surrounded by mountains, we have the feeling of being in a real green area.

-Isn't it difficult to want to combine a parish for citizens and tourists?

-I think not, because everything that is pleasant and improves the quality of life is liked by citizens and tourists.

-And is the current tourism of the parish of quality or is it still a pending subject?

-Not only Andorra la Vella, if not all of us always say that we want less tourism and more quality, but right now the important thing is that we have tourism. It is true that it is gradually improving, but we must not forget that if we want quality tourism, we must have a quality offer and that is why in Andorra la Vella we are committed to a good image for everyone.

-What do you think of the launch of

Andorra-La Seu Airport?

-We are very happy and I think we can finally say that it was time. I, who am already old, can assure you that we have been hearing about it for many years. Having weekly flights with Madrid seems to me to put Andorra on the map and, if we really want to have quality tourism, having an airport is fundamental, it is basic. It is a first step and now it will be necessary to gradually expand the lines.

-Do you think that the arrival of a tram in the central valley is viable?

-Everything is viable, but this is a very long-term project. We need to be aware of the size of the roads we have and that segregated spaces are needed, but I don't know. Hopefully we get it and today anything is possible, but I think it will still take time to get there. The important thing is to bet on it and start thinking about it and maybe start in stages.

-Has the stoppage of the cable car project at Carroi peak been a failure?

-It was a disappointment, not a failure. We believed in it and we were convinced of it. It is true that the pandemic has not helped us and that betting to get to Pal changed the initial project that we had talked to some operators a bit. Wanting to go further also made the project more expensive, and perhaps in the midst of a health crisis, not everyone was willing to make such a large investment. But we will consider it again and, I am very clear, that I will make one last attempt, even to get to Carroi, without closing any door. We would love to become a trailhead. We'll make the decision in a few days, and if it doesn't work, this will be the last attempt, but this corporation will do it. We wanted to make it clear in December, but we didn't expect the omicron to arrive.

-At what point is the multifunctional building located?

-Although it depends on the Government, the Municipality of Andorra la Vella is very focused on it. I am very happy that the Executive wants to allocate a significant budget and it seems that everyone, as the Head of Government has stated, is clear that it must be done and it must be done in the capital. We need to find the best location and I think that if it hadn't been for the covid and the Christmas holidays we would have already had this meeting.

may be too forced in a city center of our size, because we are not Madrid, or Barcelona, or even Lleida. We have to decide.

-In the 2021 edition of the fair, you stated that you would like it to be the last time it was held in Central Park, already thinking about the multifunctional, but it doesn't seem possible, right?

-No, it's impossible. I think the last edition will be the last year of my term, we still have two good years of fair in Central Park. The multifunctional will be a major one, which, no matter how fast its construction goes, will require at least a couple of years.



«I want to be remembered for bringing a plus to the parish. On Meritxell Avenue and the Santa Coloma refurbishmen»

«I do not think I will present me to the head of government. It's up to Espot and, if he needs me, I'll be by his side»

-There aren't many options for location either.

-No; we are talking about the land of the Braus square or other property owned by the municipality in La Margineda.

-And what is your preference?

-I would very much like it to be in the center of the city, because it would allow to reduce, precisely, the mobility and to give work to the hotels and businesses of the zone. But it is true that it is a very large infrastructure, very cumbersome, and that it

-What can the parish of Andorra la Vella contribute to the housing problem?

-We are, I have already said it and I will say it again, the only municipality that has made a significant effort and has ceded to the Government a land valued in a lot of money, and central, so that houses can be built at a reduced price. It is something we have believed in and committed to from the very beginning, which was the day before the pandemic broke out. The government is working on it and we, being aware of the problem and within our means, will do what we can.

-How is the pilot test of door-to-door or waste collection in the Cedre neighborhood?

-Really well. In fact, it should have ended in December, but we decided to keep it because we understand that it should stay. We have extended the contract for six months, because during this time we determine in which other neighborhoods we want to implement it permanently. The ideal would be to reach the whole parish, but we know that for now there are areas where it is difficult.

-The pandemic has stopped the reform of the communal stadium. When will the project resume?

-The communal stadium of Andorra la Vella is a benchmark in the country; it was the first and that is precisely why it needs a complete remodeling, and the municipality will do it. It's true that we've been around a lot, and even though I don't want to make an excuse for the pandemic anymore, it's true that there has been a pandemic and it still is, and the contest of ideas has stopped. We then awarded the preliminary project to the winner and it was presented to us on December 22nd. We now have a month to analyze it, commission the works and schedule them. The project has been readjusted to our reality, reducing the number of seats and lowering the stands, but maintaining the athletics track and the approved green field, although it is not our vocation that this is a football stadium, and it creates a very important space that is a public square and the union with Andorra la Vella. The communal stadium is now separated from the capital by the river and one of the most important roads in the country; with this project, the ri-

ver becomes a large square and from the other side, above the road, access to the stadium. I believe that, beyond sports, it is a quality urban project, which must be completed in 2025 to host the Small States Games.

-This is your last term as consul general. Why would you like to be remembered?

-I want to be remembered for working for the parish of Andorra la Vella and for trying to transform it. I have a great vocation for service and I would like to have added a plus, devoting many hours to it. Things don't come out by chance, but because someone is working on them and they are on top of it ... I would be left with having made Meritxell Avenue a pedestrian area and with the transformation of Santa Coloma, which was essential to end its floods. And I've done it with all the teams I've had that, together, we've «regained pride», which was the motto of the first election campaign.

-Have you thought of a possible replacement?

-This is very difficult. There is the junior consul, who is my main collaborator and is a young, trained and prepared person and is a good choice. But it will not only depend on me, but also on him and the party. It's still early days.

-Will you run for head of government?

-No, I don't think so. It is up to Xavier Espot to reappear; He still has a long way to go before his first term, which has been hit by the pandemic, and I don't think he's been able to do much of what he wanted to do. If he needs me, I'll be by his side and give him all the support, but it's not up to me. You never know in life, but at the moment my priority is to finish the next two years, which will be very intense, in Andorra la Vella. We have a lot of work to do.

-What is clear is that Democrats must stand alone.

-Yes. A party like ours, with a vocation for government and which in recent years has been forged with convincing victories both in the communal and in the Executive, cannot but present itself alone, we have no need. I have this very clear. Other formulas for territorial lists may exist; It's not my favorite thing to do, but they've been successful and, well, they learn everything. ≡

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad