



Separatist sentiment was running high in the lead up to the recent provincial election in Quebec thanks to the divisive platform that Parti Quebecois leader Pauline Marois was operating on. These concerns were severely compounded by sensationalist reporting of pre-election polls surrounding the issue.

Recent polls regarding Quebec's place within Canada have caused quite a stir throughout the country. Earlier this year, to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1982 patriation of Canada's Constitution, a nation-wide survey was conducted to examine attitudes towards Quebec sovereignty. A series of questions were posed to Canadians across the country by Léger Marketing which seemed to play right into the hands of the protagonists of the Quebec separatist movement.

The numerous questions surrounding the issue of sovereignty within the province of Quebec is by no means a new development within Canada.

Long before the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, the question of Quebec sovereignty has been threatened by various degrees of interests over the collective heads of the nation. Indeed during 1968 while in the Royal Canadian Air Force I was sent to Lac Ste. Denis to be in charge of a fully armed security patrol to guard against the Front de liberation du Quebec (FLQ) who were using a violent means to fuel the cause. This separatist posturing de-radicalization culminated with the 1995 referendum, which put a de-

ceptively worded question to Canadian voters intended to garner a majority such that then the separatists would produce support should Quebec secede from Canada. With a very narrow 1 per cent margin of defeat, the referendum was struck down by Canadians.

It was in my concern for the issue of National Unity from past experiences living in

Quebec and working for a Quebec based company, and more specifically the 1995 referendum where I found my start in the



Mr. Goldring shown addressing thousands assembled on Parliament Hill in support of Canadian unity and causes for all of Canada to be treated equally.



world of politics. My interest in this cause took me to Quebec City for the 1995 referendum vote. Upon my arrival it was much to my dismay that I witnessed first-hand the disturbing apathy towards Canadian unity coupled with the simplistic belief that a day after a 'yes' vote a new national flag would be raised and all good would continue as their newly minted nation then would prosper, wrongly believing that they could simply lean on Canadian largesse economically as an "associate".

We spent the days and evenings promoting Canadian unity with flags and pins while conducting a lot of conversations throughout the hotels, shops, and businesses of old Quebec City. That evening, the television coverage of the polling station returns of the votes was cause for consternation as the earliest eastern polls demonstrated a positive vote for sovereignty association. It was with this that I re-evaluated my priorities and goals. What could I do to help stop the growing threat of Quebec separation and the break-up of Canada by those propagating misinformation, taking full advantage of the apathetic and those politicians riveted with fear of further offending and exacerbating the issue.

This led me to found the Edmonton Chapter of Montreal based Special Committee for Ca-

nadian Unity in 1996. One thing led to another and in 1997 I prepared myself to successfully run for Federal government on a platform to support Canadian unity and a strong, united Canada of equal citizens respectful of all Acts of the Constitution of Canada.

It is this vested interest in Canadian unity that has prompted me to speak with specific regard to recent polling survey done on the issue of Quebec sovereignty just before the Provincial election in Quebec this September.

The poll reports a 44.5% plurality of Quebecers would still support separating from Canada if the Constitution could not be changed enough to satisfy the majority of the province.

Not surprisingly, when simple mindedly questioned, 71% of Quebec respondents also believe that the Quebec government should take the first step to propose changes be made to the Constitution, which would grant Quebec special status and recognition as it being distinct and unique from the rest of the country!

After all, what provinces and territories of Canada – Newfoundland, Nunavut, Yukon, Alberta, Nova Scotia, etc. – do not believe



Mr. Goldring addresses the hundreds assembled in Edmonton on Canada Day at a wonderful event put on by the Vietnamese community to celebrate the day.



that they are unique? However this goes to show that a simplistically conducted survey can succeed in provoking a sleeping separatist beast.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the survey's author's predetermined results from elsewhere in Canada suggest there is almost no desire outside of Quebec to change the Constitution in a way that would grant really anyone let alone the province of Quebec more powers or a special status.

It must be noted that the findings of this survey are not an issue unless pollsters or politicians choose to make it one. In recent years, residents of Quebec have showed overwhelming support to federalist parties at both the federal and provincial level. Voter turnout and election results should speak volumes more to Canadians than a poll with questionable motives.

There is certainly no question that a fracture remains in Canadian society that continues to divide Quebec from the rest of this country. In my personal opinion, an issue on the edge of spiralling into a very serious concern facing the citizens of Canada should be treated with more care and tact than what it was given through the sensational creation and

administration of this survey. First off, the survey is careless in the fact that it simply serves to reopen old wounds, cast a light on an issue that has not been front and centre of media attention for quite some time, and unnecessarily push it into the forefront of Canadian's minds simply to sell more ink. It is without a doubt naiveté in the extreme to think that a simple question framed in a survey

format would result in any sort of serious explanation or rationalization for how and what Canadian citizens are thinking and feeling.

This highly questionable journalism completely ignores the fact of history, both ancient and recent, of all Canadians in all parts of Canada deciding time after time

that they overwhelmingly want unity and equality of being. Historically, Canadians have come together through numerous situations ranging from the Wars of 1812, WW1, WW2, and the Fenian Raids, to things such as hockey, the Olympics, and sports in general. This is why scribes who jump the gun and meddle provocatively in Canadian unity issues do not add to the situation positively. They simply fan the flames of the disgrun-



Mr. Goldring is shown on Canada Day at the grounds of the Alberta Legislature with volunteers supporting Canadian unity.

tled simplistic idealists. The outcome of the Quebec election speaks strongly at this fact, as the Parti Quebecois received just 32% of the popular vote.

This goes to show that the people of Quebec voted for change, not for separation. The Canadian Constitution is – and should be – a point of pride for Canadians from coast-to-coast. It is what gives Canadians our freedoms and equality as a people, regardless of where in the country you hail from. Similarly, it should be a symbol of national unity, not a symbol of fracture and divide. As such, it be-

comes apparent to me that through the carelessness that is this survey, it not only unnecessarily feeds Canadians’ fears of a divided Canada, it runs counter to the beliefs of the founding tenets of our great country by the Fathers who laid the vision of a country hopefully to be of equalized entities from sea to sea. As such, it is with great enthusiasm that I voice my dismay and disappointment regarding this survey, which serves as a prime example of cheap journalism indeed.

With the Parti Quebecois receiving less than 32% of the popular vote and a very weak minority government, it indicates the fact that the citizens voted for change in Quebec, and not for sovereignty from Canada.

9111 - 118th Ave.
Edmonton, AB T5B 0T9
(780) 495-3261
Fax: 495-5142

Web Site:
www.petergoldring.ca
Email:
peter.goldring.c1@parl.gc.ca

411 Justice Bldg.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
(613) 992-3821
Fax: 992-6898

This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.

Your Opinion Matters...

Question #1 Do you trust in the validity of polling results?

Yes No

Question #2 Are you happy with the outcome of the Quebec provincial election?

Yes No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Postal Code: _____
Telephone: _____



Peter Goldring
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6