

VOTING INTENTIONS



MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

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.

Canadian unity concerns thought to exist between the province of Quebec and the rest of Canada has thankfully been relatively quiet and dormant for the past few years. Having come into politics following the razor thin vote for separation in 1995, these issues settled to an acceptable level. Today even Lucien Bouchard has backed away from calling for separation. However, this status quo was vigorously shaken by the recent elections that faced the province of Quebec. The leader of the Parti Quebecois, Pauline Marois, for cheap political purpose whipped up the issue of Quebec sovereignty if the province's de-

mands are not to be met by Ottawa.

With Quebec separatist political leaders' sentiment running high, polls were being done fast and furious to attempt to gauge where the Quebec voters planned to lean with their vote. With an issue that is immensely important for the Nation, having the Canada-Quebec divide being propagated by separatist leaders it would be assumed that tact and sound-judgement would be used when conducting and reporting on polls regarding an issue that could threaten to literally divide our country.

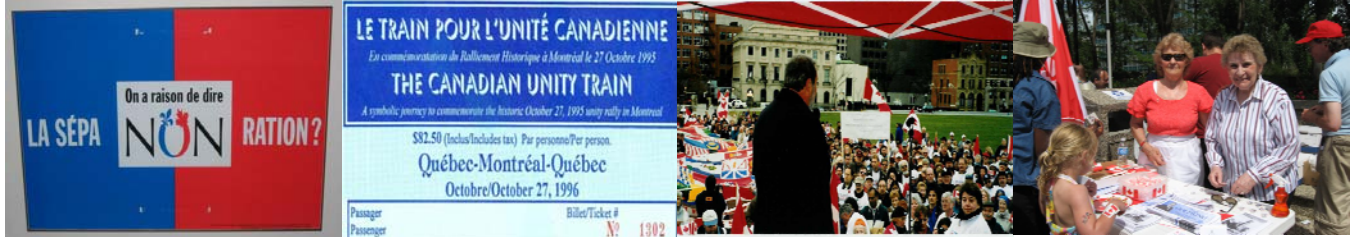
Apparently, to some journalists, this is not the case.

A recent poll put out by Abacus Data and reported on by David Akin has forgone the notion of encouraging national unity and instead opted to strike against the hearts of federalist Canadians from coast-to-coast.

The poll provocatively sampled Canadians from across the country and asked a host of questions deal-



Mr. Goldring, shown with veterans and Howard Galganov, at the gates of old Quebec City where a protest demonstration was conducted against separation.



ing with Quebec sovereignty and Quebec's status in the Confederation.

The questions in the poll, as well as the way in which the poll were reported on, were thoughtless and insensitive on the issue. The questions within the poll were inflammatory at best, asking questions of people such as, "Would you support or oppose giving Quebec more federal funding, powers, or special status if it would keep the province from separating from Canada?"

The question is ridiculous. There is no suggestion that the Conservative government will ever return to the gift giving appraisal of the Chretien government of the 1990's. It simply did not work then and would not work now. The majority of Quebecers simply want what all Canadians want – to be equal and to have the government in Ottawa fully respect their Constitutional Provincial rights.

The reporting on this poll is very disappointing from a Canadian unity standpoint. I feel it safe to say that all Canadians have a vested interest in keeping Canada intact as is. Renowned journalist David Akin, who reported on the findings of this poll, did the Nation a disservice with the way he presented the findings.

A prime example of Mr. Akin's carelessness is where he stated, "Albertans and supporters of the Conservative Party were far more likely to vote to kick Quebec out". This poorly conducted, biased, misleading poll, and the way it was reported to the Canadian people, can only be classified as sensationalist. This is why scribes who go seeking sensationalism and meddle misleadingly in Canadian unity issues do not add to the situation positively. It serves to simply feed into the separatist efforts by falsely creating a divide of opinion that supposedly exists in this country.



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

Parliamentarians have spoken out about the findings of this poll and most opted to dismiss the Abacus findings. One parliamentarian put it best when he said that the respondents to this poll gave in to 'superficial cynicism'. In other words, the respondents answered with an immediate reaction that is most likely far more cynical than what their response would be had they taken the time to seriously consider the question and its ramifications before giving their answer.

One thing this poll forgets to take into consideration is the 2000 *Clarity Act*. The *Clarity Act* gives the House of Commons the power to determine whether or not a clear



majority of the people concerned, not just the majority of those who voted, has expressed itself following any referendum vote. What this means is that a greater majority is required for success, as 50% + one or two only of those citizens who actually voted might only be for less than 100% of the population that is entitled to vote and would then not be an expression of over 50% of those who are concerned. They should never be accepted as a majority clearly expressing themselves or expressing the population's opinion, especially on an issue with this much extra popular importance to all citizens of the province who are also directly concerned.

Also to be highly questioned is the accuracy of the Abacus polling, suggested to be correct 19 times out of 20 plus or minus 2 percent. Are they?

The predictions of the Quebec polls' outcomes was very similar to the predicted poll results for the recent Alberta elections. The predictions that Ms. Marois' Parti Quebecois would win a majority was mirrored by the predictions for the Leader of Alberta's Wildrose Party. Pollers in Quebec took the voters' intentions of voting simply for 'change' and misconstrued it to try and show they were voting for actual separation. While obvi-

ous at the same time ignored the true thought of their questions. The PQ only receiving 32% of the popular vote revealed the vote was indeed simply for change.

At the end of the day, however, national unity should be at the forefront of all Canadians' minds. The economic, security, and cultural impacts of Quebec separating from Canada are massive. These are all things Canadians need to consider, and not just make a hasty decision out of frustration or annoyance with the constant bantering and rhetoric surrounding this issue and being egged on by sensationalist media hounds.

Polls like the one conducted by Abacus do nothing but focus on the negative. It is well past due to start kicking up support for national

unity and take pride in every aspect of our great Nation. I have been doing this every Canada day since 1996 on the grounds of Alberta's legislature with my unity table and several volunteers speaking out to thousands on the great benefits of a unified country. However, this past year I was barred from doing so because it was viewed rather myopically by the Provincial Legislative authorities as 'too political'. Imagine – a Federal government Member of Parliament



Mr. Goldring shown here with former Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan on Canada Day attending a wonderful function put on by the Vietnamese community to celebrate the day.

supporting Canadian Unity was found to be political!

From the lessons learned from the above, leading up to the near disastrous referendum caused by massively exhibited government and citizen indifference to the dangers of separation, we should know much better than to once again adopt the apathetic head in the sand approach to support the continued unification of our great country. I call out to Canadians from across the country to take pride in our great nation and to support national unity, and to stand against those that

seek to fracture our Canada. I call on the Alberta Legislature to rethink its Canada Day restrictions against Members of Parliament. The real threats to Canadian Unity are the dunder heads that oppose celebrating it. It's time to stop listening to those that purport to be right 19 times out of 20 plus or minus 2 percent and start listening to those that care about our country 100%.

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