

REACTIONS TO THE QUEBEC ELECTION



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Political Leaders

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien: "This is the third time that Quebecers have chosen the Parti Québécois to form a provincial government. In electing the Parti Québécois in the past, the people of Quebec never rejected Canada....I am convinced that in the coming months Quebecers will once again demonstrate their profound attachment to being a full part of Canada."

Finance Minister Paul Martin (on the positive response of financial markets to the election): "There is a great deal of momentum in the Canadian economy right now and Quebecers want that momentum to continue."

Parti Québécois Leader Jacques Parizeau: "We are fully aware of our responsibility, as a government proposing sovereignty to its people, of keeping this debate in the confines of a civilized, democratic, if heated, debate."

Quebec Liberal Party Leader Daniel Johnson: "We will be there to remind Quebecers that they are already part of a great country."

Bloc Québécois Leader and Leader of the Opposition Lucien Bouchard: "It was a little less than I expected but still it is a majority government."

Reform Party Leader Preston Manning: "I think there are two things that federalists like ourselves can contribute: ...to insist that the question asked in any Quebec referendum be clear and explicit and that it be asked fairly quickly."

Conservative Party Leader Jean Charest: "Quite clearly this is a mandate to change governments and nothing more. It is now on the shoulders of Péquistes [PQ supporters] to demonstrate to Quebecers what their option is, what it means and what the consequences are."

Assembly of First Nations Leader Ovide Mercredi: "We have to make sure the Canadian public...hears the message that Quebec has no right to break up the country."

Provincial Premiers

Frank McKenna (New Brunswick): "I think we should take a Valium and stay calm."

Bob Rae (Ontario): "While we respect (Quebeckers') right to choose a new government, it's our view that that government has no mandate to break up the country."

Roy Romanow (Saskatchewan): "...we now have a very strong federalist voice on the provincial scene, coupled by the Prime Minister and the support that he will give in this upcoming referendum battle—this makes it a little easier for the rest of us."

Mike Harcourt (British Columbia): "British Columbians want to see Canada stay whole. Change, yes, but stay whole."

Editorials

The Globe and Mail (Toronto): "Confident that they can decide on sovereignty later on, Quebecers have exercised their right to choose a government to address the same issues as voters in any other province....In giving the PQ a limited majority, Quebecers are expressing their reluctance to give the PQ a free hand to detach Quebec from Canada."

Vancouver Sun: "(PQ Leader Jacques) Parizeau made two promises: to provide a provincial government that would be preferable to its Liberal predecessor; and to lead Quebec out of Confederation. In the first promise, we must wish him all the best. In the second, we must do nothing that gives him support."

La Presse (Montreal): "Mr. Parizeau was certainly clear about his party's option throughout the campaign. He will be able to use his majority to begin talks with Ottawa or in our name declare Quebec's wish to accede to sovereignty without contravening the parliamentary rules of our democracy in the slightest. But that would be illusory and would confuse the will of his party with the will of the people. Our democracy is not based on rules alone. It is based on rules and common sense. The new government has the moral obligation to reflect the wishes of the people who brought it to power. And that before all is what should determine the next government's mandate. (Alain Dubuc) (translation)."

Halifax (Nova Scotia) Chronicle-Herald: "...the survival of a reasonably strong Liberal opposition...ensures the federal government will not fight alone in the coming referendum."

Moncton (New Brunswick) Times-Transcript: "It is time for common sense and reason to prevail. Canada is too great a country to allow it to slip away in a fit of pique and frustration."

Quebec Election Results		
Party	Seats	Popular Vote
Parti Québécois <i>(led by Jacques Parizeau)</i>	77	44.7%
Liberal Party of Quebec <i>(led by Daniel Johnson)</i>	47	44.3%
Parti Action Démocratique <i>(led by Mario Dumont)</i>	1	6.5%
Other Parties	0	4.5%
Total Votes Cast: 3.9 million (80 per cent of eligible voters).		