

Quebec not foolish enough to vote Yes . . .

Commentary: On the Quebec Referendum

by Brian Scott
for The Brunswickan

"Thank God!"

That is one exclamation that most, if not all, Canadians from Vancouver to St. John's will be saying on the last day of this month.

It's not necessarily because it's the day we get to dress up in scary costumes and ask complete strangers for candy (although some are eagerly awaiting this day). It's because it will be one day after October 30; the day Quebec votes in a referendum on whether or not to separate from Canada.

Unless you've been living in some far off corner of the country for the past few years without media coverage of anything but an ex-football player found not guilty of killing his ex-wife and a crazed wife who avenged her abusive marriage by cutting off her husband's Quebec from the rest of his Canada, you know that some people in Quebec, a

province with a majority French-speaking population in an English-speaking country, have been trying to convince the rest of the province (and the country for that matter) that they should declare Quebec's sovereignty from the rest of Canada.

You also know that they will hold a vote on the matter on October 30.

Some of us are not concerned with this referendum because we know that a "yes" vote will never happen. Others couldn't care less what happens.

But still others may be losing sleep realizing that a win for the separatists which would lead to the inevitable break-up of the country is possible.

So, for those of you who fit into the latter category, you can rest assured that this will never happen. Here are a few points to ponder to remedy those sleepless nights.

The first thing to consider is the statistics. Up until the last week or so, every poll (or at least every valid poll) conducted on support for Quebec sovereignty showed that the separatists are losing and that the majority of No voters say they are not likely to change their opinion.

It's true that a recent poll put the separatists ahead by the slightest of margins but do not let this bother you. Polls have been known to err.

There are still many undecided voters. These are people who may still be undecided come voting day. However, many times statisticians do

not take this into account and divide the undecided evenly between the two sides.

It may appear that the Yes side is still slightly ahead of the No side when you do take this into account, but it is not.

On Monday, those who decide to vote will undoubtedly have to take a stand on the issue. At this time, those who are only making a last minute decision will not likely be voting for such a big risk as separation.

It is also wise to keep in mind that the only way the separatists can win is to convince the undecided voters to cast a "yes" ballot on voting day, but this late in the game that may be difficult too. The undecided may stay undecided. Also, they've surely heard enough from Bouchard, Parizeau, and their colleagues by now to know if they are going to vote for sovereignty.

Last week, Bouchard gave a little ammunition to the No side. Bouchard's comment that women should stay at home and make babies to increase the French population in Quebec did not go over well with the women of the province.

This may have an affect on the voting next Monday.

Prime Minister Chretien has recently stepped into the batter's box. In a speech presented earlier this month, Chretien stressed unification. "Together we can make our mark in the world," he repeated.

Chretien and the rest of his team

have informed Quebec of all the impossibilities that Parizeau has promised regarding dual citizenship and Canadian currency.

The choice is a separate Quebec "where Quebecers will no longer be Canadian citizens, [and] where Quebecers will no longer be entitled to the Canadian passport," Chretien said.

Political partnership, Chretien said, "is unrealistic."

Which leads to another point why the federalists will win come October 30: social security. All the statistics show that the standard of living will decrease tremendously with a separatist victory. All social services currently supplied by Ottawa will become a fond memory. The Quebec government will not be able to afford these services because they will be paying off their share of the national debt, which will necessitate a raise in taxes.

Finance Minister Paul Martin has also reminded the people of Quebec of the threat against their jobs in the wake of a Yes vote.

Martin claims that one million jobs, about thirty percent, will be jeopardized.

The Official leader of the No side, Daniel Johnson, has gone even further. Johnson has stated that 3500 jobs will be lost and 92,200 at risk as the result of a Yes side victory.

Surely, these are facts that no one, separatist or federalist, can ignore.

The final point to keep in mind is a very simple one and that is that Quebecers are not stupid. By Monday when they will have to make a decision, or else not vote, common sense will lead the majority of Quebecers to vote against separation.

The majority of them will not vote for something that will undoubtedly produce that many hardships. Voting for sovereignty with the risk of that many jobs being lost and even more threatened is ludicrous.

Surely the people of Quebec will not vote against facts like these.

In short, too many studies show that they would be foolish to vote "yes," and the people of Quebec are smart enough not to take such a risk. So those of you who have been losing sleep can rest assured the separatists will lose come voting time.

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