

Parti Québécois loses seats in provincial by-elections

Liberal candidates won all three Quebec by-elections held November 14, the eve of the third anniversary of the Parti Québécois' election as a government in the province.

The by-elections took place in the ridings of Maisonneuve in Montreal, Beauce-Sud, southeast of Quebec City, and Prevost outside Montreal.

The ridings contested represented three gains for the Liberals. Two had been held by the Parti Québécois and the third, Beauce-Sud, was won in the 1976 election by Fabien Roy, who resigned to become leader of the federal Social Credit Party.

"The results clearly come as a very severe verdict and a hard blow for our party and for our government," Quebec Premier René Lévesque told the National Assembly. "Even if the voice of the people is hard to accept it's obvious that we can't deny the message," he said. "There is a very clear message of dissatisfaction...and more than a mere warning or reprimand." Mr. Lévesque cited the "social climate" including inflation and a recent round of public service strikes for the party's defeat in the by-elections. He

repeated that the results would not reflect on the outcome of next spring's referendum on sovereignty-association.

Many observers considered the by-elections to be the last chance for the Parti Québécois to determine its support before next spring's planned referendum on Quebec's future.

"The people have categorically rejected the PQ's constitutional option and the white paper they had the impudence to release," said Liberal Leader Claude Ryan. "Quebecers want a more open attitude to the rest of Canada, to fundamental freedoms and to the economic climate," he added.

However, Prime Minister Joe Clark said that while he viewed the by-election results as a "triumph of federalist forces" he did not see them as a vote for the constitutional *status quo*.

An editorial in the *Montreal Gazette*, November 16, warned: "The plain fact is that we still face a tense and difficult winter and spring in which Quebecers will be carefully watching the attitudes and behaviour of English Canada. Mr. Ryan is on solid ground when he insists that the

renewal of federalism is still urgent national business."

In Maisonneuve, Liberal Georges Lalonde defeated PQ candidate Jacques Desmarais by 4,000 votes. The seat had been a Parti Québécois stronghold since they first contested it in 1970. The seat was left vacant this summer when former PQ Cabinet Minister Robert Burns retired for health reasons.

Liberal candidate Hermann Mathieu won by more than 2,000 votes over Raymond Boisvert of the Parti Québécois in the Beauce-Sud riding. In Prevost, Solange Chapat-Rolland defeated PQ candidate Pierre Harvey by 9,000 votes.

The results of the by-elections mean the Parti Québécois government has now lost all six by-elections held since it was elected to office in 1976. The Liberals have won more than 60 per cent of the vote in each riding. The by-election victories, however, do not affect the PQ's comfortable 68-seat majority in the National Assembly. The Liberals hold 29 seats, the Union Nationale, which did not officially field any candidates for the recent by-elections, have nine elected members, with three independents and one vacancy accounting for the remaining seats in the National Assembly.

Canada reaffirms pledge to participate in United Nations' goals

Canada will work to foster disarmament, to ease the plight of refugees and to solve the problem of poverty, Secretary of State Flora MacDonald pledged in a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Kurt Waldheim on United Nations' Day, October 24.

In her letter marking the thirty-fourth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, Miss MacDonald said "the Government and people of Canada would pay special attention to the efforts of the United Nations in its pursuit of the general goal of disarmament". Canada will continue "to participate actively in the negotiation of multilateral disarmament agreements within the framework of the United Nations," she added.

Miss MacDonald said that Canadians also shared the concern for the humanitarian problem in Indochina and "will support any initiative to seek a political solution through negotiation to the whole Indochina problem".

The major task confronting the UN for the rest of this century, the Minister said,



Paul-Emile Cardinal Léger (left) shows Pearson Peace medal to his brother, former Governor-General Jules Léger during ceremony at Government House.

was "to solve the problem of poverty; thereby providing enough material goods to ensure health and dignity to all. Canada will continue to give close attention to the efforts of the UN as it strives to reach this goal".

Medal to Cardinal Léger

In Ottawa, the United Nations Association in Canada marked United Nations' Day by awarding the Pearson Peace Medal to Paul-Emile Cardinal Léger in recognition of his outstanding services to Canada, the peace of the world and the United Nations. The award is presented annually by the association in honour of the late former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson. The medal, which was presented to Cardinal Léger by Governor-General Edward Schreyer at Rideau Hall, is awarded to a Canadian "who through voluntary effort, has personally most contributed to those causes for which Lester B. Pearson stood: aid to the developing world, mediation between those confronting one another with arms, succor to refugees and others in need and peaceful change through world law and world organization".