# Quebec’s political landscape shifts as Canadian unity surges amid external pressures



In the midst of Canada’s current federal election campaign, the political landscape in Quebec is experiencing a significant shift, reshaping voter allegiances and challenging the separatist ambitions that once gained momentum in the province.

The Bloc Québécois, a separatist party long advocating for Quebec’s sovereignty, experienced a fleeting success last September when Louis-Philippe Sauvé narrowly won a Montreal electoral district from the Liberals by a margin of only 200 votes. This victory was viewed by Bloc supporters as a sign of renewed strength in the separatist movement. However, experts now predict the Bloc will struggle to retain that seat in the upcoming election on 28 April.

Philippe Fournier, a polling analyst at 338Canada, spoke to The Guardian about the rapid decline in the Bloc’s fortunes: “Sauvé will get to put on his resume that he was an MP for six months. And that’s great for him. But there’s no way the Bloc is holding that seat in the coming days.”

This political realignment is largely attributed to external pressure from the United States, where former president Donald Trump’s actions have galvanized Canadian unity, particularly in Quebec. Measures such as threats of annexation and tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminium have sparked concern about potential harm to Quebec’s vital timber, mining, and manufacturing industries. These actions have, consequently, led to a surge in Canadian patriotism, transcending regional divides. Remarkably, this includes a province that has held two referendums on independence over the past 50 years.

Historically, Quebec’s relationship with the rest of Canada has been marked by tension over cultural and linguistic recognition. The province's “Quiet Revolution” in the 1950s paved the way for the rise of a strong separatist movement, which by the 1970s included militant factions such as the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ). Following violent incidents related to separatist activism, the Bloc Québécois was established in 1991 to provide Quebec with a federal voice, culminating in the near-successful independence referendum of 1995.

However, the current election campaign suggests that Quebecers are prioritising unity with Canada in the face of external threats. Fournier described an emblematic moment in February when, during a hockey match between Canada and the United States, Montreal spectators enthusiastically sang the Canadian national anthem before booing the American anthem. He remarked to The Guardian, “I have never in my life heard people in Montreal sing the national anthem like they did, before booing the US anthem... I’m not an overly patriotic or partisan person, but I had shivers.”

Even Lucien Bouchard, the founder of the Bloc, has expressed temporary solidarity with the pan-Canadian cause, stating in La Presse, “we are together” in preserving Canadian sovereignty. Analysts interpret this as a strategic acknowledgement that an independent Quebec is contingent on stable Canadian independence.

This climate has favoured the Liberal Party and their leader, Mark Carney, an Anglophone economist and former central banker running in Quebec. Despite previous missteps regarding French language and cultural knowledge—which Carney himself admitted on the popular Radio-Canada program Tout le monde en parle—his effort to engage with Francophone voters has been well received. Fournier noted the exceptional nature of the election, saying, “Francophone voters see he’s making a sincere effort. That counts for something in a place where they’re used to seeing outside political leaders as uncaring about the French language. And second, he has probably the best resumé for prime minister in their lifetimes.”

The Bloc’s prospects have dimmed significantly, with hopes of winning 50 seats now replaced by a fight for survival. Kristina Michaud, a two-term Bloc MP who has decided not to seek re-election, reflected on the current situation in The Guardian: “It feels as though the Trump administration is calling the shots in this election. He owns the narrative. And with Canadian sovereignty and unity being defended and being talked about, people feel they’re better off with a party that can lead a country — and we know the Bloc cannot do that. But in times of crisis, there is a need for unity.”

Michaud also voiced concerns about the implications of this shift for opposition politics in Canada, noting, “an embrace of the Liberals and Carney comes at a cost, cutting out the opposition parties that serve as the ‘conscience’ of the House of Commons and hampering the Bloc’s ability to be a voice for Quebec.”

Preserving Quebec’s distinct culture remains a priority for many in the province, as evidenced by recent legislation mandating French-language communication in government and limiting the use of English in the legal system, alongside efforts to redefine Quebec’s status within Canada’s constitution.

Jacob Lamontagne, a business student from Sherbrooke, described a sense of cultural urgency, telling The Guardian, “There are times I feel like a stranger in my own country... We need these laws because if the English speakers have their way there’d be nothing. No culture. No language. We know because they’ve tried before.”

Despite this cultural vigilance, Lamontagne also acknowledged the prevailing mood of Canadian patriotism sparked by external threats: “The moment the threat subsides, so too will the patriotism... When Quebecers love and are embracing Canada, all you need to know is that things are really shit.”

At this pivotal moment in Canadian politics, Quebec’s complex interplay between regional identity, national unity, and international pressures continues to shape voter behaviour and the political fortunes of parties dedicated to the province’s future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)