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been abolished and instead the regions will have major impact in governance. He has made it a major plank that "lean" government does not imply "mean" government. There are to be no more "blind cutbacks in government services." Last, but not least, Parizeau is committed to restructuring Quebec's battered economy.

So, what then is Parizeau's *beau risque*?

It is that in every collision course with Ottawa running up to the referendum, on balance, the PQ will come

out ahead. The more the Chrétien government follows Paul Martin's lead in slashing government spending, the more Parizeau is reckoning that it will push another thirty thousand Quebecers into the sovereigntist fold. Each time Ottawa talks about debt and deficit, the PQ government will offer Quebecers something more important: a vision that in a world of trading blocs and interdependence, good economic management matters more than ever.

If he can demonstrate that a PQ government will tame markets, promote growth, and keep social in-

equality within strict limits in an independent Quebec, he stands a fighting chance of finding those 200,000 new supporters on referendum day. In his rendezvous with history, Parizeau is counting on Chrétien's tough-minded fiscal conservatism to point Quebecers toward their destiny.

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## ELECTORAL STRATEGY AND TRENDS IN PUBLIC OPINION

*by Guy Lachapelle*

Since the Quebec election was announced on July 24, 12 public polls have been published by Quebec polling firms. A comparison of these polls indicates that support for the Quebec Liberal party remained relatively stable throughout the campaign, but that the Parti québécois lost a few points during the last two weeks of the campaign. Overall, public opinion polls underestimated the Liberal party's support, a phenomenon that we have observed since the '70s in Quebec elections, and overestimated the PQ support. The election of the Parti québécois was not a surprise because the level of satisfaction toward the Johnson-Bourassa government was very low. However, the outcome of the election in popular vote, the PQ getting 44.7 percent of the popular vote and the Liberal party 44.3 percent, indicates that Quebec society is highly divided along partisan lines and that the 1995 referendum is going to be highly contested.

The performance of the Parti de l'action démocratique du Québec (ADQ), which received 6.5 percent,

demonstrates that an important group of Quebec voters are dissatisfied with the two main parties. The fact that both leaders of the Parti québécois and the Liberal party did extend a hand to Dumont, Jacques Parizeau being the first one in his speech during the eve of the election, demonstrates the importance of this group of voters for the 1995 referendum.

This short analysis examines the evolution of the Quebec electorate before and during the election. A number of phases can be identified: first, the long campaign that started with the election of Daniel Johnson as leader of the Liberal party; second, the pre-campaign period, or the short campaign, when rumour about the date of the election was the only issue on the public agenda; and finally, the electoral campaign itself in which political parties had six weeks to convince voters about the benefits of their electoral platform.

### THE LONG CAMPAIGN

The election of Daniel Johnson as leader of the Liberal party was the beginning of the campaign. John

Parisella, who was responsible for the campaign, went to see party organizers both in Britain and the United States to see how he could revamp the strategy of the Liberal party, which had been in power for more than nine years. The task was not an easy one because the economic situation and, more importantly, the neo-conservative ideology of its leader and several ministers and its vision of the state led to great displeasure among citizens. On the constitutional issue, the Liberal party wanted to offer the status quo — an evolutive status quo as Johnson liked to say — until 1997. The heart of its vision of intergovernmental relations was to sign more administrative arrangements with Ottawa.

On the other side, the Parti québécois wanted to offer Quebecers another way of governing, closer to its citizens' needs and more accountable. The Parti québécois and its leader, Jacques Parizeau, argued that the status quo was not acceptable and, as well, since the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords

failed, that Quebeckers would have to decide their future by 1995. Therefore, they wanted to make the sovereignty issue the central theme of the upcoming election.

On March 12, before the beginning of the electoral campaign, the Liberal party held an orientation congress in Montreal. Its key objective was to prepare the new electoral platform of the Liberal party. The central themes were employment, social issues, and the constitutional position of the party. Concerning the language issue, the more militant anglophone members were not pleased that the Liberal party was in favour of maintaining the status quo reached with Bill 86. But because the electoral campaign was approaching, it was important for Liberal party members to demonstrate their unity.

The week after, as the National Assembly met again, the Liberal party put more emphasis on job creation, economic development, family support, and environmental pro-

tection. More important, the finance minister, Mr. Bourbeau, presented a new budget without tax increases.

#### THE PRE-CAMPAIGN

The Liberal party strategists were looking for an election in June, but the Parti québécois was still high in the polls and, in mid-June, they decided to launch an important pre-campaign publicity blitz. For the first time in Quebec electoral history, a political party spent money to stress the importance of the election and the future constitutional status of Quebec; this blitz claimed that the election of the Parti québécois would bring more instability. The Parti québécois also launched a publicity campaign that focussed on the economic record of the Liberal government. Each party was, therefore, ready for the election.

During the pre-campaign, as Quebeckers waited for Premier Johnson to call the election, the pollsters evaluated the mood of citizens. Four public opinion polls were

conducted by four leading Quebec firms: Léger et Léger, CROP, SONDAGEM, and SOM. These four polls indicated that the Parti québécois was up front by a margin of between 4 and 12.6 percent; SOM found the smallest gap and Léger et Léger the largest.

Concerning voters' intentions, the Parti québécois led in average by 10.1 percent (see the adjoining table). Both SONDAGEM and Léger et Léger gave 44.7 percent for the Parti québécois; CROP and SOM indicated the support the PQ had at around 37 percent. For the Quebec Liberal party, the voting intentions were closer. SONDAGEM gave the highest score with 36 percent and CROP the lowest at 31 percent. Overall, the average voting intention for the Parti québécois was 40.9 percent and for the Liberal party, 33 percent, a gap of 7.9 percent. In the case of the support for Action démocratique, public opinion polls established that

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**The Evolution of Public Opinion During the Electoral Campaign**

Period	Pre-Campaign	I July 25 to Aug. 9	II Aug. 22 to 23	III Aug. 30 to Sept. 4	IV Sept. 1 to 8	Election Results
No. of Surveys	4	3	4	2	3	
Parti libéral du Québec	33.0 (42.1)	35.0 (43.4)	36.5 (44.3)	32.7 (39.7)	34.6 (42.7)	44.3
Parti québécois	40.9 (52.2)	40.4 (50.1)	40.0 (48.6)	40.8 (49.5)	37.7	44.7
Action démocratique du Québec	2.5 (3.2)	2.7 (3.4)	4.0 (4.8)	6.4 (7.8)	6.4 (7.9)	6.5
Others	1.9 (2.5)	2.5 (3.1)	1.9 (2.3)	2.5 (3.0)	2.4 (2.9)	2.8
Abstention/ Spoiled	3.9	3.6	4.5	4.6	1.9	1.7
DK/LA	21.7	15.8	13.1	13.0	17.0	—

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continued from page 7.*

between 2 and 3 percent of the electorate was ready to give their vote to this party. Finally, in the case of the Equality party, polls were clearly indicating, with only 1 percent support, that this single-issue party was going to disappear from the National Assembly. However, at 17.8 percent, the number of undecided voters remained relatively high. CROP and SOM have the highest proportion of undecided voters, 23 and 22 percent, where SONDA GEM had 14.9 percent and Léger et Léger only 11.2 percent.

Several factors can explain these variations between the estimates of the various polling firms. With the exception of the SONDA GEM, all surveys were typical omnibus polls — that is, studies in which respondents answer questions related to different themes, the election being one of them. In the case of the Léger et Léger polls, a shorter questionnaire might explain the fact that it had the lowest number of undecided respondents.

### THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

During the electoral campaign, 12 surveys were published by four Quebec polling firms: six by Léger et Léger, three by CROP, two by SONDA GEM, and only one by SOM, the last one of the campaign. Four periods can be identified during the campaign. Each period covers roughly two weeks of the campaign, except for the third period, which measured the state of the mind of Quebec voters just after the televised debate.

The first period covers the first two weeks of the campaign. Leading by 6.7 points, the Parti québécois had a relatively large majority. However, if we compare before and after the election call, the gap between the PQ and the Liberal party, which

was at 10.1 percent before the campaign, was then reduced by 3.4 percent. During the second period, its lead was again reduced to 4.3 percent. The short-term impact of the debate gave an obvious advantage of 9.8 percent to the Parti québécois, but this lead shrunk to 3.8 points during the last week of the campaign. As the leader of the Parti québécois mentioned in the days after the debate, this campaign lasted one week too long. It helped the Liberal party to regain some momentum at the end of the campaign.

If we compare the survey's results during each period, we observe important discrepancies

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among polling firms. CROP came in always with the smallest differences between the Parti québécois and the Liberal party. In their first poll of the campaign, CROP established the gap between the PQ and the PLQ at only 1 percent before redistribution of the undecided voters; in the second poll it was 2 percent in favour of the PQ; in their last poll, the gap was 2 percent, but in favour of the Liberal party. This last public opinion poll was the only one to put the Liberals ahead among all published polls. The key factor explaining why the gap between the two major parties was so close is that CROP always gave the highest scores to the Liberal party. After redistribution of the undecided respondents, CROP overestimated the Liberal vote by 1.6 percent and un-

derestimated the PQ support by 1.2 percent.

Léger et Léger, SONDA GEM, and SOM had lower scores for the Liberal party. In the last poll of the campaign, SOM gave the lowest score to the PLQ with 31.0 percent before redistribution of the undecided. But the vote for the Parti québécois was clearly overestimated by Léger et Léger and SONDA GEM, both polling firms giving more than 49 percent of the vote to the Parti québécois after redistribution of the undecided voters.

### CONCLUSION

Public opinion evolved during the electoral campaign. The popular support for the Parti québécois was lower than the polls indicated. Several hypotheses have been suggested. First, the Parti québécois organization was not very successful in demonstrating to its supporters the importance of voting during this election. The difference between francophone and non-francophone voter turnout indicates that the Liberal party succeeded in its publicity campaign to polarize the debate and raise some fear among its supporters. Second, the vote for the Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) contributed to a reduction of the popular support of both parties. Finally, as public opinion polls indicate, there is no doubt that the electoral campaign was an important stimuli. The coming Quebec referendum campaign will spark the same debate again.

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