

**LE QUÉBEC**  
NATION FRANCOPHONE  
DES AMÉRIQUES  
**QUÉBEC QUÉBEC**  
FRANCOPHONE NATION NACIÓN FRANCÓFONA  
OF THE AMERICAS DE LAS AMÉRICAS



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# LE QUÉBEC

NATION FRANCOPHONE  
DES AMÉRIQUES

## QUÉBEC QUÉBEC

FRANCOPHONE NATION NACIÓN FRANCÓFONA  
OF THE AMERICAS DE LAS AMÉRICAS

The Bloc Québécois is proud to represent Québeckers outside Québec's borders on the many parliamentary missions in which its Members of Parliament take part.

In addition to promoting the values and interests of the Québec nation, participating in national debates and opening a dialogue with the parliamentarians of other countries, these missions afford us the opportunity to promote the values and interests of the Québec nation.

These missions afford us the opportunity to explain to those we meet what Québec is today and the role the Bloc Québécois plays in its political history.

The main driving force behind our political actions is the Québec nation's aspiration to become a full-fledged partner in the international community, a sovereign state, like more than 190 nations around the world.

Once it has achieved that status, Québec will be able to contribute fully to the prosperity, peace and cultural, social and scientific advances of the world.

Gilles Duceppe  
Leader of the Bloc Québécois



The main driving force behind our political actions is the Québec nation's aspiration to become a full-fledged partner in the international community, a sovereign state, like more than 190 nations around the world.



After two referendums on sovereignty, the Québec question has not ceased to be a matter of international current interest.



After two referendums on sovereignty, the last lost by only 0.6%, the Québec question has not ceased to be a matter of international current interest.

Quebeckers form a people and a nation in North America. Different by its language and its culture, its understanding of the world and its progressive social organization, the Québec nation is ready to take its place among the sovereign nations of the world.

It is my hope that this document will enable you to better understand Québec and its sovereigntist movement, including the Bloc Québécois, which is an active participant in building this country.



Francine Lalonde  
Bloc Québécois Foreign Affairs Critic

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A1

# THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS



[1990- ]

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The Bloc Québécois' mission is thus to promote this "projet de société" and to work toward its achievement, because the Québec nation must have control over all political, economic, social and cultural levers necessary to its development.

## ONE MISSION, ONE VISION: THE SOVEREIGNTY OF QUÉBEC

The Bloc Québécois,<sup>1</sup> which is exclusively rooted in Québec, operates at the Canadian federal level, where it advocates sovereignty for the Québec nation. We believe the Québec nation must have control over all the political, economic, social and cultural levers necessary to its development.

This is an opportunity for the Québec people to decide together on the use of their taxes, the laws governing their lives and relations with the other nations of the world, and to sign international treaties on its own behalf.

The sovereigntist initiative will succeed if it is carried out in a democratic fashion, if it is inclusive and respectful of the rights of the Anglophone minority and the Aboriginal nations here in Québec, and if it is open to the world.

The Bloc Québécois' mission is thus to promote this "projet de société" and to work toward its achievement. Once sovereignty has been achieved, the Bloc Québécois will have no further purpose in the Parliament of Canada. Until then, the

1. The Bloc Québécois was born in particular circumstances, when, in the spring of 1990, Newfoundland and Manitoba refused to ratify the Meech Lake constitutional accord. In response to that defeat for Quebec, Lucien Bouchard, then federal Minister of the Environment, resigned from his position and left the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. In the following weeks, he and five other Members sitting in the House of Commons formed a separate parliamentary party advocating Quebec sovereignty: the Bloc Québécois (see page 115).

Bloc Québécois alone can defend the interests of Québec and its people in Ottawa. To that end, the party maintains solid and constant ties with all social and economic players in Québec, the unions, women's groups, community groups and so on.

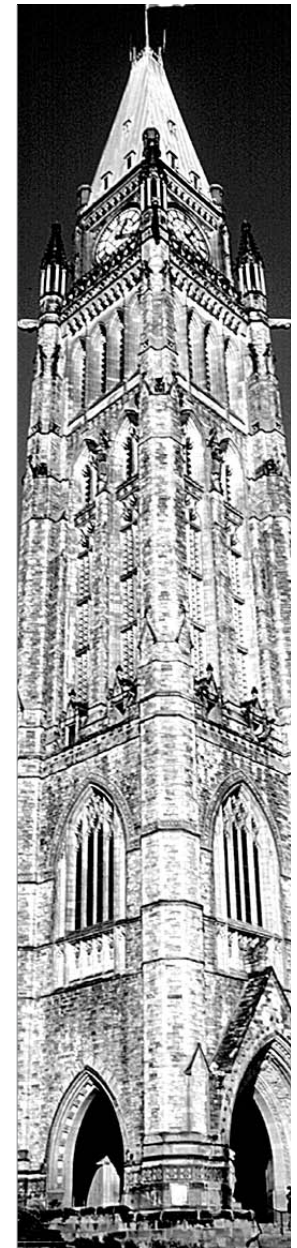
## THE PARLIAMENT OF CANADA: THE BLOC'S FIELD OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

The Bloc Québécois' parliamentary field of action is the Parliament of Canada in Ottawa. The party's presence in the House of Commons enables it to help ensure that the sovereigntist initiative remains in the international eye.

In this way, the Bloc is able to support Québec's institutional presence outside its borders, promote its representation in international fora and denounce any agreement that undermines its interests. Since they take part in all international parliamentary debates, Bloc Québécois Members of Parliament are both Québec's antenna and its mouthpiece.

By its actions, the Bloc Québécois is paving the way to the necessary international recognition that will enable Québec to accede to the status of a sovereign state.

The Bloc Québécois can play an important role in the Parliament of Canada, where its expertise will enable Québec to



The Bloc Québécois thus acts as Québec's voice in federal politics, where it explains the essential nature of the sovereigntist initiative.

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reach a partnership agreement with Canada. The Bloc Québécois thus acts as Québec's voice in federal politics, where it explains the essential nature of the sovereigntist initiative.

### AN OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The actions of the Bloc Québécois, which is deeply attached to democratic values and institutions, are always carried out in a manner respectful of parliamentary institutions. The Bloc's stance on certain issues such as the environment, foreign affairs, social and international solidarity and worker protection make it one of the major forces for progress in the Americas.

In addition, the Bloc Québécois regularly consults Québeckers and sovereignty supporters. In this way, it encourages greater participation by all citizens and contributes to the emergence of new democratic practices.

Being the only true mouthpiece of the aspirations of Québec civil society in the House of Commons, the Bloc pays the greatest attention to that society's concerns and provides it with the best possible representation.

The Bloc Québécois encourages and promotes the participation of all its members in the life of the party. To that end, it works hard to inform, train and mobilize sovereigntist supporters.

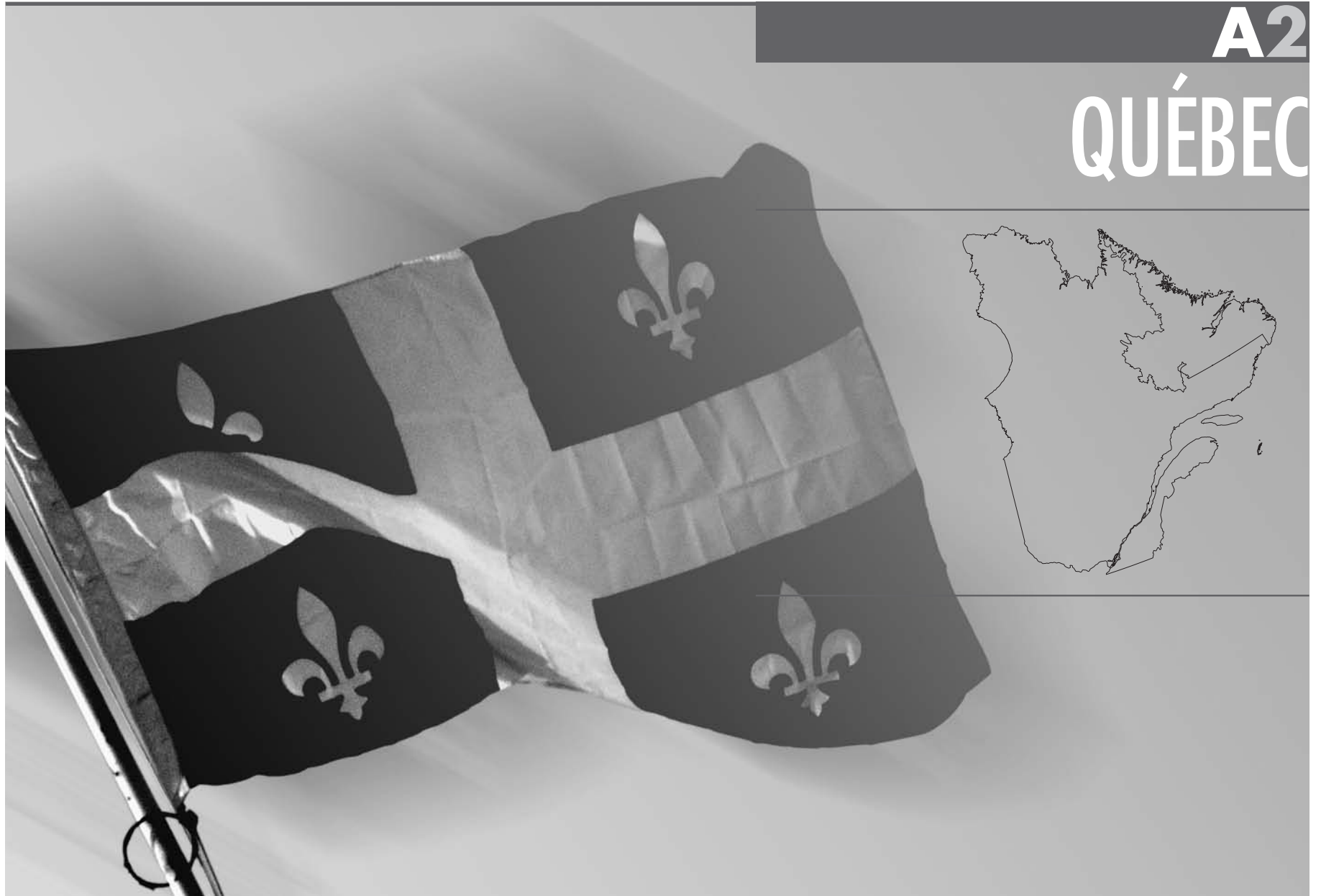
The Bloc Québécois respects parliamentary institutions and promotes the participation of all citizens.

As a major progressive force in the Americas, the Bloc Québécois contributes to the emergence of new democratic practices.

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# QUÉBEC



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Québeckers' standard of living, one of the highest in the world, compares favourably with those of the most industrialized countries.

The Québec people has built one of the most socially conscious, secure and educated societies in the world.

## QUÉBEC, A MODERN AND SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS SOCIETY

Over the past century, Québec has changed from a relatively poor and uneducated province into a modern society. Today, its standard of living is among the highest in the world, comparing favourably with those of most industrialized countries.

Before the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, Québec's economy was based almost exclusively on the exploitation of natural resources. The Government of Québec at the time was not very involved in social and economic life. Rapid and extensive change altered the situation, resulting in the creation of major government institutions and the pooling of efforts from all sectors in Québec, government, unions, management and the cooperative and community organizations.

The concerted efforts of all these major players enabled Québec to modernize quickly, teaching future generations that cooperation makes it possible to meet major challenges and to bring about major change. This is what we call the "Québec model".

The Québec people has built a society that is one of the most socially conscious, secure and educated in the world. The Québec nation is also one of the most open in terms of trade, culture and immigration. This is how Québec has developed over the past 40 years: as a country within a country.

Today, Québec occupies its constitutional jurisdictions as fully as possible. However, the federal government enters Québec's exclusive jurisdictions from time to time, thus interfering with the democratic choices<sup>2</sup> of Québeckers.

This is why Québec's future development now requires a higher degree of autonomy. However, the Québec nation will not be able to develop as it would like or take its rightful place on the international stage if it is still part of the Canadian federation.

Future development of the Québec state will require greater autonomy, which the Canadian federation cannot offer it.

2. See the "Québec Democracy Undermined" section in "Imagine a Sovereign Québec", page 98.





## QUÉBEC AND ITS POPULATION

Québec has an area of **1,667,926 SQ. km**, three times that of France, five times that of Japan.

Nearly 70% of its territory lies in the north and is virtually uninhabited. With **MORE THAN ONE MILLION LAKES AND WATERWAYS**, including the St. Lawrence, Québec has some of the largest freshwater reserves in the world.

Québec has a population of **7.6 MILLION INHABITANTS**, comparable to those of Switzerland and Sweden.

**FRENCH IS ITS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE**, spoken at home by 80% of the population.

**ANGLOPHONES ARE THE MAIN LINGUISTIC MINORITY**, 600,000 persons representing 11% of the population.

Ten percent of the population has immigrated to Québec, which had **706,965 IMMIGRANTS IN 2001**.

**MORE THAN 78,000 ABORIGINAL PERSONS** belong to 10 Indian nations and the Inuit nation.



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The Aboriginal nations must have the necessary tools to direct the development of their own identity.

## ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, FULL-FLEDGED NATIONS

Québec is a leader in the recognition of Aboriginal rights. On March 20, 1985, the Government of Québec, led by René Lévesque's Parti Québécois, became the first government in Canada to acknowledge the legal existence of its 11 Aboriginal nations.

The government acknowledged that Aboriginal persons had a right to autonomy within Québec, a right to their cultures, languages and traditions, the right to control lands, the right to hunt, fish, harvest and take part in the management of wildlife resources and the right to take part in and benefit from the economic development of Québec.

More recently, on February 7, 2002, the Government of Québec, led by the Parti Québécois under Bernard Landry, signed the Peace of the Braves, a historic agreement with the Cree nation. This agreement concerns the establishment of a new relationship between the two nations and provides for greater Cree control of their economic and community development. The Peace of the Braves is an excellent example of innovation and cooperation for a number of countries.

Today, the First Nations of Québec, Canada and around the world, are striving to have the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People adopted. Canada and Russia have refused to support this declaration before the UN Human Rights Council in June 2006.

## POLITICS AND QUÉBEC DEMOCRACY

The parliamentary systems of model. The Canadian federation comprises 10 provinces, including Québec, and three territories, each of which has its own government.

Two orders of government thus pass laws in areas defined by the Constitution, which initially conferred on Québec and the provinces exclusive responsibility for areas concerning citizens, such as the administration of health and education, leaving the federal government responsibility for other areas such as foreign affairs and defence.<sup>3</sup>

3. This division of powers has considerably evolved over the years, as a result of which the federal government's numerous intrusions into Québec's areas of jurisdiction have reduced the Québec government's ability to implement the democratic choices of its population.

Like the Québec people, the First Nations of Québec have a right to self determination and self government.

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Québec's democracy is exemplary. Its voter turnout rate is appreciably higher than the average among industrialized countries.

#### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF QUÉBEC

Québec is a society subject to the rule of law in which there is a separation between the legislative, executive and judicial powers. While the 125 Members of Québec's National Assembly pass legislation, the Premier and his Cabinet are responsible for administering those laws and passing regulations for their implementation. Under its electoral system, the plurality system, the leader of the party that has elected the largest number of Members becomes the head of government.

Québec's democracy is exemplary in many respects. Its voter turnout rate is appreciably higher than the average among industrialized countries, and the integrity of the political process is guaranteed by strict statutes which, since 1977, have reserved for voters alone the right to contribute to the financing of political parties.



#### PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

The Parliament of Canada is divided into two separate chambers: the House of Commons, where 308 Members elected by universal suffrage sit, 75 of whom are from Québec, and the Senate, home to Senators appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada. There are 105 seats in the Senate, 24 for Québec.

#### QUÉBEC'S ECONOMY

Québec's economy would rank twentieth largest among the countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), making it an economic power in the Americas, indeed in the world.

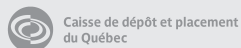
In 2005, its exports totalled \$70.96 billion and its gross domestic product (GDP) \$220.24 billion. Québec's per capita GDP of \$28,987 compares favourably with that of France, Sweden and Great Britain.

Québeckers enjoy an enviable standard of living in a society very much committed to globalization and the redistribution of wealth to combat inequalities.

The integrity of Québec's political process is guaranteed by strict statutes, which reserve for voters alone the right to contribute to the financing of political parties.

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The diversification of the Québec economy is enhanced by a growing number of private and public businesses that have established operations in the Americas and Europe.



#### AN ECONOMY ENGAGED IN GLOBALIZATION

A growing number of private and public Québec corporations have established operations in the Americas and Europe, including the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Quebecor, Hydro-Québec, Power Corporation, Bombardier and Alcan, which have now become major global players. The Québec economy is more diversified as a result.

In addition, a number of aerospace, biotechnology, pharmaceutical and multimedia companies are well established in Montreal and have helped to make it one of the leading cities in North America in its concentration of high tech jobs.

#### QUÉBEC GOES HIGH TECH

Since 1996, Québec has taken a resolutely high tech direction. In 2005, no less than 20% of the Québec manufacturing sector was concentrated in aeronautics, pharmaceuticals, information technology and electronics, spheres that attract research and development investment.

In gross domestic expenditures on research and development (GERD) relative to GDP, Québec ranks fifth in the world,<sup>4</sup> ahead of the United States and behind Sweden.

Many Québec cities, such as Québec, Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières, Rimouski, Saguenay, Rivière-du-Loup and Gatineau are taking part in this technological

4. In 2003, Québec's GERD/GDP ratio was 2.74%, compared to those of the United States (2.68%) and Sweden (3.98%). In that same year, the GERD/GDP ratio of the European Union was 1.82%.

conversion and are now home to a large number of prosperous businesses.

In addition to its abundant hydroelectric power, Québec is also a leader in logging production, the mining sector and the agri-food industry.

#### A VIBRANT AND FLOURISHING CULTURE

For Québeckers, culture is a common ground on which they have forged their identity as a people and which brings them together. Québec is the largest Francophone society in North America, a fact that lends it its unique character. As a result, Québec is in a way a crossroads of American and European cultures.

Every year, a number of major international events are held in Québec, including Les Francolies, the Montreal International Jazz Festival, the Theatre Festival of the Americas, the Québec City International Summer Festival, the Mondial des cultures de Drummondville and the Festival Nuits d'Afrique, to name only a few.

The high tech wave is well under way in Québec, which ranks ahead of the United States in gross domestic expenditures on research and development relative to GDP (GERD/GDP).

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Québeckers form the largest Francophone society in North America, hence their unique character.

Québec has become a crossroads of American and European cultures, where a number of international events are held every year.

Québec's cultural offerings also include:

- two opera companies and symphony orchestras, including the world renowned Montreal Symphony Orchestra;
- an excellent system of museums;
- 250 professional theatre companies;
- 2,000 to 3,000 book titles published each year by Québec commercial publishing companies.

Every year, the Government of Québec invests in support of Québec artists in other countries. This assistance enables some 200 cultural organizations to launch tours, prepare coproductions and do prospecting work.

As a result, there is an impressive presence of Québec artists in the international cultural world, including the Cirque du Soleil, the La La La Human Steps dance company and personalities like Céline Dion, Luc Plamondon, Robert Lepage and Leonard Cohen.

## A DIFFERENT FOREIGN POLICY

Québeckers' traditional positions on foreign policy show a strong inclination toward the peaceful resolution of conflict, multilateralism and international development.

The Québec people have a different, clear and well-defined understanding of the world. Faced with the problems it encounters, the Québec people offers its own solutions, thus showing that it is ready to take its place in the concert of nations.

In offering its own solutions to the problems it encounters, the Québec people shows that it is ready to take its place in the concert of nations.

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**A3**

# THE AMERICAS AND THE WORLD

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The era of closed doors is over. Civil society and parliamentarians of all countries must take part in the discussions to protect democratic, social, environmental and labour rights.

## TRANSPARENT GLOBALIZATION WITH A HUMAN FACE

Globalization is a process that has brought nations together and transformed the face of the planet. For a number of years now, the Bloc Québécois has taken a very close interest in this phenomenon. In 1999, the party started a broad public debate on the subject to clarify established notions, expand popular opinion and develop a Québec perspective.

Over the years, international bodies for discussion and joint action such as the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre have been established to debate the issues that will influence the economic and social future. In the negotiations for the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Bloc Québécois has defended three guiding principles.

### 1. TRANSPARENCY IN NEGOTIATIONS

The era of closed doors is over. The civil society and parliamentarians of all countries must take part in the discussions. Their presence will guarantee that the agreement negotiation process is legitimate and democratic.

### 2. GLOBALIZATION WITH A HUMAN FACE

A country that wants to enjoy the benefits of market globalization must abide by certain rules. International treaties must include clauses protecting the democratic, social, environmental and labour rights of every nation in order to prevent any levelling downwards.

### 3. A PLACE FOR QUÉBEC AT THE BARGAINING TABLES

Québec must have its own place at the bargaining tables. Québec government representatives must have access to the international fora in which Québec's areas of jurisdiction, such as culture, are discussed.

If a country wants to enjoy the benefits of market globalization, it must abide by certain rules.

EN

American continental integration must be achieved in a manner respectful of nations and must promote solidarity among American peoples.

Funded by the countries based on their ability to pay, the Social Fund of the Americas would make it possible to provide financial support to low income nations.

## CONTINENTAL INTEGRATION RESPECTFUL OF NATIONS

American continental integration must be achieved in a manner respectful of the nations concerned and encourage the solidarity of the peoples who compose it. In this area, the Bloc Québécois also promotes a number of international issues, including the Social Fund of the Americas and the Monetary Institute of the Americas.

### SOCIAL FUND OF THE AMERICAS

This fund, which is based on the European model, would enable the economies of the countries concerned to adjust to the impact of economic integration in the areas of employment, infrastructure development, health, education, the social safety net and the environment.

### MONETARY INSTITUTE OF THE AMERICAS

Since the Canada U.S. Free Trade Agreement entered into effect in 1989, the Québec economy has become more integrated with the American economy than with the Canadian economy. Furthermore, the Canadian dollar has become largely dependent on oil prices, the volatility of which undermines the competitiveness of certain Québec industry sectors. The benefits of adopting a common currency in the Americas, like the euro for the European Economic Community, must be considered.

The Monetary Institute of the Americas would make it possible to conduct the necessary studies on the important common currency issue.

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A4

# IMAGINE A SOVEREIGN QUÉBEC

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In the Canadian federal context, the Québec people does not have the real means to promote its values or defend its interests.

By intervening in issues that are not under its authority, the Government of Canada prevents the Québec government from implementing the democratic choices of Québeckers.

## QUÉBEC DEMOCRACY UNDERMINED

The Québec people currently does not have the real means to promote and defend its values and interests within the Canadian federation. Many decisions and actions by the Canadian government interfere with the democratic choices of Québeckers.

The Parliament of Canada thus undermines the expression of Québec's democracy when it rejects the National Assembly's consensus on various issues. That consensus is reached on important questions for Québec and is the subject of motions passed unanimously by parliamentarians in the National Assembly.

Some motions criticize the unilateral repatriation of the Constitution of 1982 or Bill C-20 on clarity of the referendum question. Others call for a correction of the fiscal imbalance or compliance with the Kyoto Protocol. But none find an echo in the House of Commons.

The Canadian government's policy of intruding into Québec's jurisdictions is another attack on democracy. By intervening in issues that are not under its authority, such as the administration of health and social programs, the Government of Canada reduces the Québec government's ability to implement the democratic choices of Québeckers.

This federal interference causes needless duplication that limits the quality of services provided to Québeckers. It also undermines Québec's social fabric.

Lastly, in the signing of international agreements, the Québec government has no influence on the decisions made by the Government of Canada, even where those discussions concern Québec's exclusive jurisdictions.

This last problem raises a legitimate question: why should the Québec people agree to be subject to rules that run counter to its vision of the world and that were negotiated in its absence from the various international negotiating tables? Why should it agree to be represented by a government that denies its distinct character or rejects those characteristics that make it different?

Federal interference results in needless duplication that undermines the quality of services provided to Québeckers.

By undermining Québec democracy, the Canadian government denies the distinct character of Québec.

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Québec's difference is expressed in Québec's public language: French. It stems from a separate history and institutions specific to Québec, but also from its values, culture and different ways of doing things.

## DEFENDING THE QUÉBEC DIFFERENCE

Québeckers' principal strength is their difference. That difference is expressed first of all in Québec's common public language: French. It also stems from a separate history and institutions specific to Québec, but also from the values, culture and different ways of doing things that form the foundation of the Québec nation.

That difference is an affirmation of universal concepts such as democracy, fundamental human rights and international law, as well as a firm will to resolve conflicts peacefully.

To protect and ensure the development of the Québec nation and its difference, the Bloc Québécois believes that Québec sovereignty is necessary. After all, the best country for Québeckers in all regions and of all origins is undeniably Québec.

## LEGITIMACY OF REFERENDUMS

Historically, in Québec and in Canada, referendums held on fundamentally important issues<sup>5</sup> have been decided by an absolute majority of ballots cast (50% + 1).

This is true of most referendums organized elsewhere in the world, including those on the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and on adoption of the European Constitution (2006), which confirms the validity of that principle. Similarly, UN referendums on self-determination, as in the case of East Timor, comply with the principle of the absolute majority of ballots cast.

It goes without saying that, by taking an active part in the referendum debates in 1980 and 1995, the federal government clearly accepted the rules set out in Québec's *Referendum Act*.

5. Two referendums on Quebec sovereignty, in 1980 and 1995; the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord, in 1992; two referendums in Newfoundland, in 1996 and 1997.

Québec's Referendum Act sets out an irreproachable process that meets a number of democratic imperatives. It puts a limit on spending by all parties and guarantees a voter turnout rate that reflects the expression of the popular will of Québeckers.

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By taking an active part in the referendum debates in 1980 and 1995, the federal government clearly accepted the rules laid down by Québec's Referendum Act.

That act passed by Québec's National Assembly sets out an irreproachable process that meets a number of democratic imperatives. Its legislative framework allows for informed debate, sets limits on spending by all parties and guarantees an honest process. The result is a high voter turnout rate,<sup>6</sup> which reflects the expression of the popular will of Québeckers.

What is more, the virtues of this framework are recognized by all political parties in Québec's National Assembly. When the Québec people votes in favour of sovereignty, the international community will recognize the highly democratic value of a decision that reflects an undeniable state of affairs.

6. The voter turnout rate was greater than 90% in the 1980 and 1995 referendums.

## A SOVEREIGN QUÉBEC

Over the years, the Bloc Québécois has acquired expertise in areas that are the prerogative of sovereign countries, such as international trade, security, foreign affairs, international cooperation, globalization and the environment.

Through its actions in the Parliament of Canada, the Bloc Québécois has developed a set of principles and policies that would enable the government of a sovereign Québec to act in a manner entirely consistent with the values and interests shared by the citizens of that country.

Those principles and policies are set out in a paper entitled "Imaginer le Québec souverain"<sup>7</sup> [Imagine a Sovereign Québec – Tr.]. The Bloc asks Québeckers to imagine a sovereign Québec, without the restrictions placed on it by Canadian federalism.

7. This was the subject of the main motion passed by the members and authorities of the Bloc Québécois at the 2005 National Conference. The document may be viewed on line in the "Publications" section of the Bloc Québécois' Web site: [www.bloc.org/archivage/propositionprinc05\\_adoptee.pdf](http://www.bloc.org/archivage/propositionprinc05_adoptee.pdf)

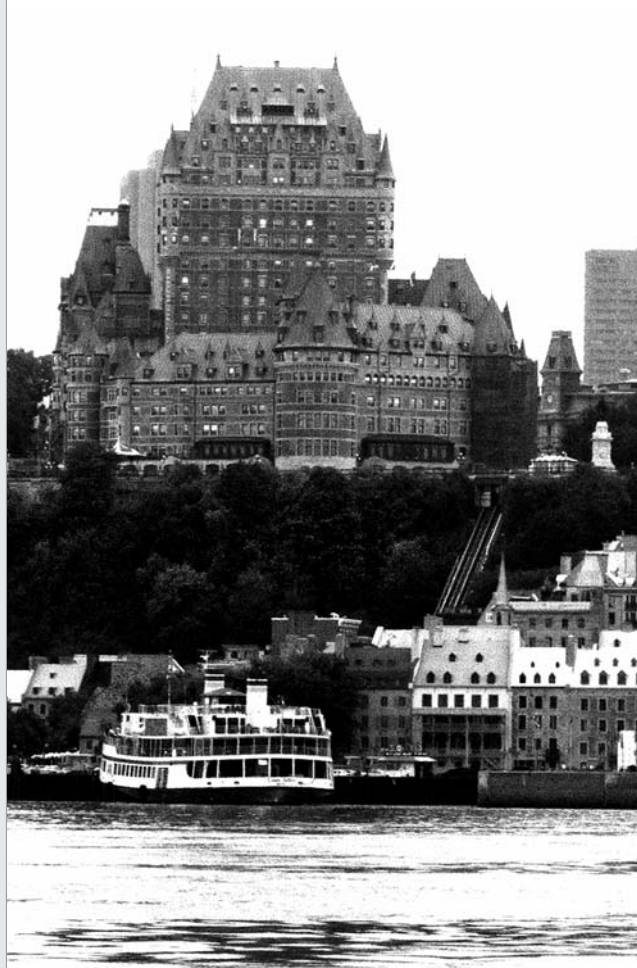
With its experience in areas that are the prerogative of sovereign countries, the Bloc Québécois has invited Québeckers to imagine a sovereign Québec, without the restrictions placed on it by Canadian federalism.

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**IMAGINER**  
le Québec souverain

We have developed a set of principles and policies that would enable the government of a sovereign Québec to act in a manner consistent with the values and interests shared by the citizens of that country.

In “Imagine a Sovereign Québec”, the Bloc puts all these possibilities into perspective. They cannot be achieved in the present Québec, and yet they are real opportunities for a sovereign country. In “Imaginer le Québec souverain”, the Bloc describes a country that aims for undeniable success in all areas of human activity.



## CONCLUSION

### IMAGINE...

A sovereign Québec that collects its own direct and indirect taxes, passes and implements its laws and meets the needs of its population, that stands out on the North American continent as a result of its culture and is a unique model for development.

### IMAGINE...

A sovereign Québec open to agreements that guarantee it access to the world; that has a particular concern for the capacity of states to intervene for the common good and to preserve cultural diversity.

### IMAGINE...

A sovereign Québec with a foreign policy that respects human rights and freedoms, as well as the treaties to which Canada is a party, and the international agreements into which Québec itself has entered.

### IMAGINE...

A sovereign Québec that does its share to keep peace and that advocates international military intervention overseen by the UN Security Council.



**IMAGINER**  
le Québec souverain

EN



**B1**

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE

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René Lévesque, the new Premier of Québec, on the night of the Parti Québécois' victory,  
November 15, 1976.

## ORIGINS

**1534.** Jacques Cartier first walked the shores of Québec, which at the time had been inhabited by Amerindians for generations.

**1608.** However, it was not until Samuel de Champlain arrived that the first permanent settlements were established in New France. Thus began a history that, from 1534 to 1760, saw the territorial boundaries of this new world change with attempts to explore it, and efforts to colonize and conquer it, extending from north to south, from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. At that time, the British colonies were limited to the east coast of the continent.

**1763.** The *Treaty of Paris* put an end to the Seven Years' War between France and England. The treaty also resulted in the transfer of New France and its settlers to England. Québec, as we know it today, thus became a British colony. The *Royal Proclamation* at the time named it the "Province of Quebec" and abolished France's political institutions. The Common Law thus replaced French law and the oath administered under the Test Act required Catholics to renounce their faith in order to take up administrative duties. The majority of inhabitants of New France at the time were Catholic.

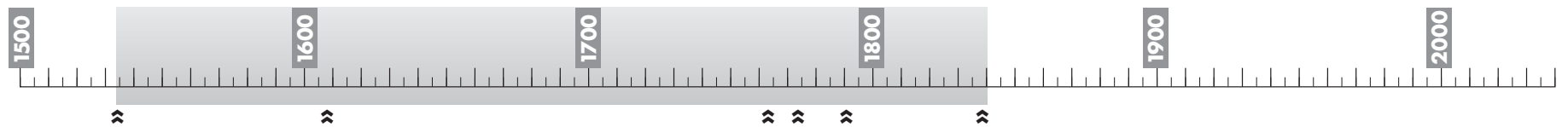
**1774.** England, fearing that the American War of Independence would spread to other British colonies, softened the rules imposed on its French-speaking colony. The *Québec Act* restored a number of rights of the French-speaking majority of the "Province of Quebec", including French civil statutes, and repealed the Test Act.

Similarly, the massive influx of Loyalists – subjects faithful to the British Crown who rejected American independence – required England to alter its relations with the colony. Anglophone inhabitants, whose numbers were constantly increasing, did not accept the idea of being subject to a constitution that acknowledged the French character of the land.

**1791.** The *Constitutional Act of 1791* thus separated the colony into two entities, giving rise to Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Québec). While Upper Canada subjected Anglophones to a British system, Lower Canada was home to French-speaking descendants who enjoyed their own structures. These two entities were granted separate legislative assemblies, which had little power but were the seat of democratically elected representatives.

**1837-1838.** The rebellions of the Patriots of Lower Canada pitted part of the civilian population against the British occupiers. Armed struggle resulted from the refusal by the British colonial government to take into consideration the decisions of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada. The result was a number of convictions and the publication of the Durham Report, in February 1839, advocating Francophone assimilation.

**1840.** Following the Patriot rebellion of 1837-1838 and the Durham Report, England once again altered the structure of its colonial administrative system. By uniting Upper and Lower Canada, the *Union Act* thus created a united Canada, with English as the only official language and a single Legislative Assembly, where Francophones sat in the minority, even though they formed the majority of the population.



## BIRTH OF CANADA AND QUÉBEC'S EMERGENCE

**1867.** The situation of the British colonies in North America evolved quickly. In 1867, the *British North America Act* was passed, following a series of meetings between the representatives of the colonies that were to become the first four provinces: Québec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In a number of respects, this constitution was a pact between the two founding peoples – English and French – and entrenched the division of powers between a federal Parliament and new provincial legislatures within the new Canadian federation. Francophones would remain in the minority in the new Parliament, but would enjoy a majority in the Québec legislature.

Since the Constitution of Canada entered into force on **July 1, 1867**, its interpretation, particularly as regards the powers and role of each order of government, has been the subject of constant discussion and dispute.

In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of significant events, in particular the two world wars and the depression in the 1930s, enabled the federal government to appropriate powers that did not belong to it under the Constitution and thus to increase its direct intervention in the daily lives of the population.<sup>8</sup>

For example, before World War II, only the governments of Québec and the provinces levied a personal income tax, with the federal government funding its own operations through indirect taxes, corporate taxes and customs duties. However, to finance the war effort, the Canadian government levied a personal income tax, which was initially intended to be temporary, but was never subsequently repealed. The same was true of

unemployment insurance, which the federal government took over by a constitutional amendment negotiated in 1942.

Most of these powers, which the Canadian government appropriated in time of crisis, were never restored to Québec and the provinces. What is more, many judgments by the Supreme Court of Canada expanding the federal government's powers were harmful to Québec and the provinces, hence the numerous instances of federal government interference in the jurisdictions of Québec and the provinces under the 1867 Constitution.

In Québec, successive governments never stopped defending their jurisdictions and developing greater autonomy. Among Québec citizens, the upheavals of the *Quiet Revolution* coincided with the emergence of a more organized and better structured sovereigntist movement.

**1968.** Québec's sovereigntist forces joined to form a new political party, the Parti Québécois, led at the time by René Lévesque, a well-known former minister in the Liberal government of Jean Lesage. The Parti Québécois elected its first Members in the 1970 Québec election and formed the Official Opposition in the Québec National Assembly following the 1973 election. Its rapid rise in Québec political life put the Parti Québécois in an undeniable position of strength.

**NOVEMBER 15, 1976.** In the Québec election, the Parti Québécois won a majority of seats in the Québec National Assembly and formed the new government. René Lévesque then became Premier of Québec. In its first mandate, the Parti Québécois government showed initiative and innovation in adopting unusual and avant-garde measures: the *Charter of the French Language*, the *Political Parties Financing Act*, the *Agricultural Land Preservation Act*, the *Referendum Act* and the *Québec Automobile Insurance Act*.

8. Note that the Constitution initially conferred on Québec and the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over areas directly concerning citizens such as the administration of health and education, leaving the federal government with responsibility for other fields such as foreign affairs and defence.





## FIRST REFERENDUM AND REPATRIATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

**MAY 20, 1980.** The Parti Québécois government held the first referendum on Québec sovereignty. The preamble to the referendum question read as follows:

*The Government of Québec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada, based on the equality of nations; this agreement would enable Québec to acquire the exclusive power to make its laws, levy its taxes and establish relations abroad – in other words, sovereignty – and at the same time to maintain with Canada an economic association including a common currency; any change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be effected with approval by the nation through another referendum.*

The question was worded as follows:

*On these terms, do you give the Government of Québec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Québec and Canada?*

The debate was high-spirited, and the NO side received sustained support from the federal government. The Prime Minister of Canada at the time, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, went so far as to promise renewed federalism that would meet Québec's demands. "Your NO will be a YES for change," he said.

On the day of the vote, 40.4% of electors voted YES, 59.6% NO. Despite the defeat, the sovereigntist movement had enjoyed sharp growth in popular support.

**1981.** One year later, despite the referendum defeat that many had considered a *coup de grâce* for the Parti Québécois, the party was returned to power with a large majority. The federal government prepared for change. Unfortunately, that change would have nothing to do with the referendum promises made to Québeckers.

**1982.** The federal government repatriated the Constitution from the British Parliament and added an amending formula. The Constitution was repatriated despite the opposition of Québec (which was nevertheless one of the founding peoples of Canada and a signatory to the 1867 Constitution) and with the approval of the Supreme Court of Canada, which refused to recognize Québec's veto. As the British courts dismissed its appeals, Québec found itself isolated and the powers of the National Assembly altered in areas such as culture, language and education, which jurisdictions had been granted to the provinces under the 1867 Constitution. The new constitutional amending formula now made it possible for the federal government, with the consent of certain provinces, but not necessarily Québec, to amend the Constitution without the say of one of its founding peoples.

Despite a resolution passed almost unanimously by Québec's National Assembly, dismissing this new constitutional order, the Constitution went into effect in 1982.

The forced repatriation of the Constitution broke the spirit of the 1867 agreement, which would no longer have the same meaning for Québec and the rest of Canada.

The federal government and the nine signatory provinces (except Québec) opted for a conception of Canada that suited them: a single bilingual and multicultural nation in which Québec would lose its status as a founding people and become a province like the others. The course of events in Canada would never be the same.



## FAILURE OF MEECH LAKE: A FURTHER BREAKDOWN IN RELATIONS

**1984.** The Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, Brian Mulroney, was elected Prime Minister of Canada. During his election campaign, he had promised to return Québec to the “Canadian constitutional fold with honour and enthusiasm”. In response to this expression of openness, Québec’s new premier, Robert Bourassa, Leader of the Québec Liberal Party, who was elected in 1985, presented Canada with **five minimum conditions**, which were considered essential for Québec’s recognition of Canada’s 1982 Constitution. They were:

1. Recognition of Québec as a distinct society;
2. A veto on all constitutional changes;
3. Guarantees respecting the appointment of Québec judges to the Supreme Court of Canada;
4. The ability to opt out, with full financial compensation, of any federal program concerning Québec’s areas of jurisdiction;
5. Increased powers for Québec in the area of immigration.

**1987.** Those five proposals were reflected in the *Meech Lake Accord*,<sup>9</sup> an agreement in principle signed by the Prime Minister of Canada and the prime ministers of the provinces and Québec. The premiers undertook to have the agreement ratified by their legislatures before June 23, 1990.

The agreement triggered strong opposition, particularly in the Anglophone provinces, where the concept of “distinct society” in reference to Québec was poorly received. In an effort to save the agreement and win the support of Manitoba and Newfoundland, which had refused to ratify the agreement, the federal government attempted to reduce the scope of the concept of distinct society, but to no avail. As a result of the

position of those two provinces, this first attempt to reconcile Québec’s demands with those of the provinces failed. In Québec, the unfortunate end was perceived as a refusal by the rest of Canada to recognize its specificity.

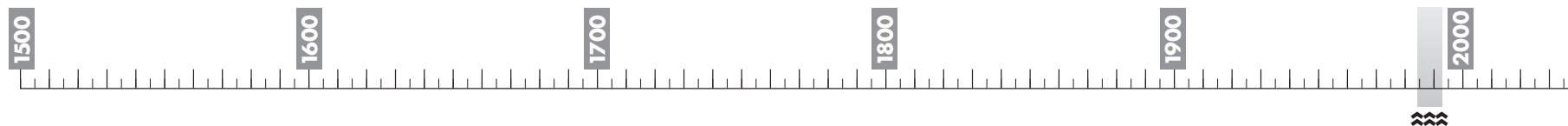
**MAY 22, 1990.** The Meech Lake episode had serious consequences for the federal government. One month before the death of the Meech Lake Accord, Lucien Bouchard, then federal Minister of the Environment and Member for Lac-Saint-Jean, left the Progressive Conservative Party in protest. He opposed the government’s intention to reduce the scope of the distinct society clause. Five other elected Members from Québec did the same, acknowledging that the only way open to Québec was sovereignty. Together, they founded the Bloc Québécois.

**AUGUST 13, 1990.** Gilles Duceppe was elected Member in a by-election held in the riding of Laurier–Sainte Marie. He was the first sovereigntist Member elected to the Parliament of Canada.

**JULY 1992.** Following months of discussion, the provinces and the federal government reached a new constitutional agreement in the *Charlottetown Accord*.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the draft agreement did not meet Québec’s demands, falling short of the five minimum conditions stated by Québec Premier Robert Bourassa which had been incorporated into the Meech Lake Accord. In the new agreement, the concept of distinct society was weakened. The accord was received with considerable scepticism in Québec. Once again, Québec’s specificity had been denied.

9. This agreement bears the name of a lake in Gatineau Park, on the edge of which the summer residence of the Prime Minister of Canada is built. It was there that the discussions leading up to the accord were held.

10. This accord bears the name of the capital of Prince Edward Island, where it was signed.



EN

**OCTOBER 26, 1992.** The *Charlottetown Accord* was submitted for the approval of Canadians and Québeckers by means of a referendum. The result was revealing: 57% of Québeckers rejected the agreement, finding in it nothing that met their constitutional demands, while 54% of the population of the rest of Canada rejected it for making too many concessions to Québec.

The rejection of Charlottetown was interpreted as a second breach with Québec, one that precluded any possible redress, as may be seen from the following passage from the preamble to Bill 1, An Act Respecting the Future of Québec, which was introduced by the Parti Québécois government in 1995:

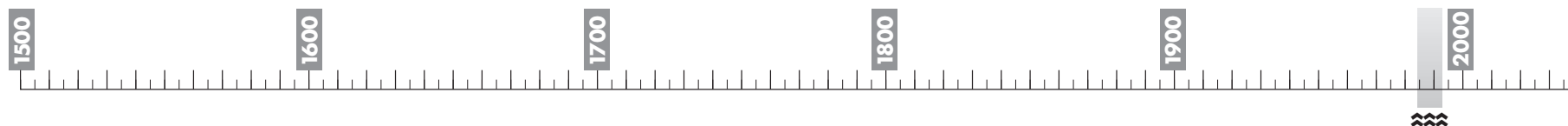
*We entered the federation on the faith of a promise of equality in a shared undertaking and of respect for our authority in certain matters that to us are vital.*

*But what was to follow did not live up to those early hopes. The Canadian State contravened the federative pact, by invading in a thousand ways areas in which we are autonomous, and by serving notice that our secular belief in the equality of the partners\* was an illusion.*

*We were hoodwinked in 1982 when the governments of Canada and the English-speaking provinces made changes to the Constitution, in depth and to our detriment, in defiance of the categorical opposition of our National Assembly.*

*Twice since then attempts were made to right that wrong. The failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990 confirmed a refusal to recognize even our distinct character. And in 1992 the rejection of the Charlottetown Accord by both Canadians and Québeckers confirmed the conclusion that no redress was possible.*

\* The reference here is to the two founding peoples.



## THE SECOND REFERENDUM: SOVEREIGNTY AND PARTNERSHIP

**OCTOBER 25, 1993.** Québeckers for the first time elected a sovereigntist majority to the Parliament of Canada. Lucien Bouchard's Bloc Québécois won 54 seats, 70% of all federal seats in Québec. As it had won the second largest number of seats, the Bloc Québécois formed the Official Opposition in the House of Commons. The Liberal government under Jean Chrétien held power. In a historic development, the sovereigntist option now held a strong voice in federal politics.

**SEPTEMBER 1994.** In the Québec election, the Parti Québécois led by Jacques Parizeau took power in the National Assembly. Its election platform provided for a referendum to be held on Québec sovereignty during its term.

To prepare the way for a referendum on Québec's future, the Parti Québécois, the Bloc Québécois and Action démocratique du Québec developed an agreement defining the terms of Québec's accession to sovereignty, as well as the rules governing the negotiations of the partnership to be proposed to the rest of Canada in the event of victory. The agreement was signed on **June 12, 1995**, consolidating the alliance among the three political parties in favour of the sovereigntist option.

**OCTOBER 30, 1995.** Québeckers voted for a second time in a referendum on sovereignty. The question asked was:

*Do you agree that Québec should become sovereign after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership within the scope of the bill respecting the future of Québec and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?*

With sovereigntist support reaching new heights, the YES side nearly won, with 49.4% of ballots cast, compared to 50.6% for the NO side. Voter turnout for the referendum hit a record 93%.

Following the referendum, positions hardened, mainly in the federal camp. On the one hand, Canadian public opinion pressed the federal government to react to the close result. Second, Jean Chrétien's Liberal government implemented a series of actions to make it harder for Québec to hold subsequent referenda. The choice was clear: if it could not convince Québeckers of the merits of Canada's federation, the federal government would try to prevent them from leaving.

**JANUARY 29, 1996.** Lucien Bouchard left the leadership of the Bloc Québécois to become Premier of Québec, succeeding Jacques Parizeau, who had announced his resignation following the referendum.

**MARCH 1997.** Gilles Duceppe won the Bloc Québécois leadership race, succeeding Michel Gauthier, who had taken over from Lucien Bouchard.

**JUNE 2, 1997.** A new federal election was held in an atmosphere of confrontation. Once again, the Bloc won a majority of 44 seats in Québec.



## A NEW ATTEMPT AT RECONCILIATION, SAME OLD LOG JAM

**SEPTEMBER 14, 1997.** The premiers of the nine Anglophone provinces (without Québec) began another attempt at reconciliation.

By the admission of even Québec federalists, the *Calgary Declaration*, which resulted from these preliminary talks, fell short of Québec's minimum demands. The declaration, a simple statement of principle, permanently rejected the already weakened concept of distinct society and replaced it with the vague notion of "unique character", which also subordinated Québec to the Canadian dogma of equality of the provinces. As a result, this "uniqueness" would not confer any power on Québec without also granting it to the other provinces. In addition, recognition of this "unique character" carried with it no weight in interpreting the Canadian Constitution.

In **September 1996**, disregarding the Québec consensus that the Québec people alone can decide on its future, the federal government put three questions to the Supreme Court, the highest tribunal in Canada. In essence, it asked whether Québec had a right to decide on its own sovereignty. The Supreme Court hearings were held in February 1998.

Asserting that Québec's future was a purely political, not legal question, the Government of Québec refused to take part in the hearings of the Supreme Court, which should have done the same and refused to be manipulated by the federal government. The Supreme Court justices had no right to rule on a democratic right of Québeckers under a constitution that had been unilaterally imposed on Québec in 1982 (and which Québec had never recognized).

**AUGUST 20, 1998.** The Supreme Court rendered its judgment to general surprise. It held that Québec could not unilaterally declare independence, but that the rest of Canada had an "obligation" to negotiate in good faith if a clear majority of Québeckers said yes to a clear question in the next referendum.

*...a clear majority vote in Québec on a clear question in favour of secession would confer democratic legitimacy on the secession initiative which all of the other participants in Confederation would have to recognize.*

This would "impose a duty on the other provinces and the federal government to both consider and respect that expression of Québeckers' democratic will by entering into negotiations [...]"

The sovereigntist initiative was thus legitimate and the federal government could not disregard a desire for change clearly expressed by Québec.

Lastly, in the event Canada did not negotiate in good faith, Québec could turn to the rest of the world to recognize its sovereignty, before Ottawa had recognized it.

**NOVEMBER 30, 1998.** The Parti Québécois government led by Lucien Bouchard was returned to power in the National Assembly.



## THE CLARITY ACT: AN ATTACK ON DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

**DECEMBER 1999.** The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Stéphane Dion, introduced Bill C-20, the so called “Clarity Act”. Based on an incorrect interpretation of the Supreme Court judgment, Jean Chrétien’s Liberal government drafted an act that would enable it to decide whether a referendum question was clear, contending at the outset that sovereignty with an offer of partnership would not be a clear option.

This act does not address the clarity of the question, but rather its subject. It attacks the democratic principles of our society. What is more, as the Supreme Court’s opinion refers to a “clear majority”, Bill C-20 rejects the universally recognized principle of an absolute majority of ballots cast (50% + 1 vote). The debate on what constitutes a majority continues.

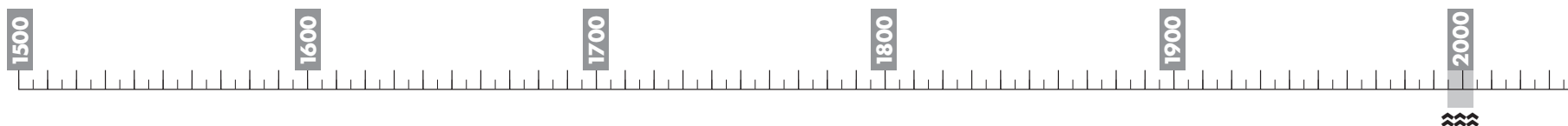
Fearing a democratic decision by Québeckers in favour of sovereignty, the federal government changed the ground rules. Bill C-20 even adds that, in the event of a yes vote, Canada reserves the right to partition Québec’s territory. And yet, if there is one rule that Canada has always supported internationally, it is the rule that existing borders should be maintained.

## FIGHTING SOVEREIGNTISTS WITH FEDERAL FUNDS

**In the 1995 referendum,** the federal government spent more than the limits it had imposed on the YES and NO sides together in order to influence citizens. These propaganda activities subsequently intensified.

**From 1996 to 2003,** in addition to the Supreme Court reference and the clarity bill (C-20), the federal government used public funds for propaganda purposes: distributing flags, large subsidies for July 1 celebrations in Québec, the Sponsorship Program, an obsession with visibility that was pervasive in all federal programs.

What is worse, the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) introduced a system whereby a portion of the amounts allocated under the Sponsorship Program, which was introduced in 1996, would be returned to the Québec wing of the party, enabling it to confront the sovereigntists more effectively.



## THE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPASSE CONTINUES

**NOVEMBER 27, 2000.** In the federal election, the Bloc Québécois maintained its majority in Québec, winning 38 seats. The constitutional issue remained at an impasse, while Jean Chrétien federal Liberals continued their program of visibility in Québec and became embroiled in what would become the sponsorship scandal.

**APRIL 14, 2003.** The Parti Québécois lost power in the National Assembly and Jean Charest's Liberals formed the government. In July, the new Premier announced the creation of the Council of the Federation. Within the Council, Québec had to be able to shape consensus with the provinces, establish a relationship of strength with Ottawa and thus bring about change in Canada.

It took two years for us to observe that the contrary had in fact occurred. Consensus is virtually impossible to reach: Québec's vision and interests and those of the provinces differ too widely. Any consensus that emerges from the Council of the Federation is broken as soon as the federal government puts money on the table. Furthermore, a number of premiers have expressed a wish to use the Council of the Federation to standardize certain provincial policies, which is not consistent with Québec's wishes.

**DECEMBER 2003.** Jean Chrétien left political life and handed the reins over to Paul Martin, who had been sworn in as Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada three weeks earlier.

**JUNE 28, 2004.** Against the backdrop of the sponsorship scandal, which hurt the Liberal Party of Canada, Paul Martin formed a minority government. The Bloc Québécois won 54 seats in Québec, a distinct majority that reaffirmed its legitimacy.

Paul Martin's brief term as Prime Minister was dominated by issues such as recognition of the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and the provinces and the under-funding of health, which even the Council of the Federation is unable to resolve. Canada's support for the U.S. anti-missile shield project was also an issue to which the Bloc Québécois was openly opposed.

**JANUARY 23, 2006.** In the federal election, the Bloc won 51 seats in Québec, its fifth consecutive majority since 1993. The Bloc then faced the minority Conservative government of Stephen Harper and fought bitterly on issues such as elimination of the fiscal imbalance, respect for Canada's commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and recognition of Québec's right to represent itself in international fora.

On this specific issue, and despite Prime Minister Harper's formal election promise to give Québec a place on the international stage, particularly within UNESCO, the federal government remains inflexible.

**MAY 2006.** The signing of an agreement between Prime Minister Harper and Premier Jean Charest gave the Québec government the right to name a representative to the Canadian delegation to UNESCO. The agreement provides, however, that Québec shall intervene "to complete the Canadian position", "in harmony with the general orientations of Canadian foreign policy".

In other words, even if the goal is to enter into an agreement concerning the exclusive powers of the Québec government, failing a consensus between Québec City and Ottawa, the Canadian government will have the final say.

