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THE CRIC PAPERS

# Portraits of Canada 2003



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# Preface

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The 2003 edition of *Portraits of Canada* captures a national mood of concern and expectation.

Canadians want the new government in Ottawa and the provinces and territories to bury the hatchet. Improved intergovernmental relations is one of the three highest priorities the public have for the new Prime Minister. But, when the data is carefully considered, it is clear that message is for leaders at all levels of government — federal, provincial and territorial. It is to the point: focus on Canadians' concerns, work cooperatively, and deliver the goods. Jurisdictional squabbles are of no interest.

Canadians tend to blame all governments equally for the failure to cooperate. In Quebec, where a clear majority backs the provincial government's commitment to make the federation work better — even most sovereignists support this goal.

Canadians also show an appetite for reforms to the country's political institutions. But while they want change, they are not getting their hopes up. Most think that the Council of the Federation, established by the Premiers, and the National Health Council, proposed in the Romanow report, will simply bring more conflict or add another layer of bureaucracy while delivering few results.

Irritation is also visible in the numbers who think that their province is not treated with the respect it deserves, or has less than its fair share of influence on national issues. This dissatisfaction surfaces where it is expected traditionally, but it is most pronounced in Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

No less troubling is the fact that, while three of every four Canadians want distinctive Aboriginal cultures to be strong, the public is divided on land claims and Aboriginal rights. In the Prairie provinces, where Aboriginal peoples represent a significant percentage of the population, the number taking the view that most Aboriginal land claims are valid is declining, and support for constitutionally entrenched Aboriginal rights is alarmingly modest. (Readers should note that,

because of their particular importance, comprehensive survey results relating both to relations with Aboriginal peoples and to attitudes in the three northern Territories, surveyed for the first time this year, are being analyzed separately and are not covered in the remainder of this paper. The results of this analysis will be published by CRIC later in 2004. A presentation of the results on Aboriginal issues is available on the CRIC website at [www.cric.ca](http://www.cric.ca)).

However, there are positive aspects to the new survey results. If better intergovernmental cooperation is one of three priorities for the new Prime Minister, the other two are health care and education and training. This suggests that maintaining quality of life and building for the future rank high among Canadians' concerns. The preoccupation with improving intergovernmental cooperation and the political process reflects a sophisticated public understanding of how to deal with the mechanics of creating better public policy.

In the following pages, readers will read summaries and analyses of the findings of *Portraits of Canada 2003* interspersed with expert commentary. From it will emerge the picture of a population that is concerned about the state of the federation, but that has a very clear sense of its priorities and no shortage of ideas about how the country can move forward.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As in previous years, the *Portraits of Canada* survey was developed and directed by a group of researchers that included, in addition to CRIC personnel, Donna Dasko (Enviro-nics Research Group), Claude Gauthier (CROP), Matthew Mendelsohn (Queen's University), and Maurice Pinard (Professor Emeritus, McGill University). CRIC thanks each of these individuals for their invaluable contributions to the survey and to the analysis and presentation of its results. *Portraits of Canada* has also benefitted from comments from public opinion specialists in the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Privy Council Office, from suggestions from researchers in other organizations who have worked with the data from previous editions of the survey, and from feedback from many citizens who have attended presentations of survey results in past years.

*Andrew Parkin*  
*Co-Director*  
*The Centre for Research and Information on Canada*

## METHODOLOGY

*Portraits of Canada* is an annual survey of public opinion in Canada conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC). It tracks how the attitudes of Canadians have evolved on a range of issues relating to the nature and well-being of the country and its citizens. This is the seventh *Portraits* survey.

The 2003 edition is based on a sample of 3,204. Canada's three northern territories have been included for the first time. The sample size is large enough to ensure that opinions in all regions of the country are accurately reflected.

As in past years, two separate surveys were conducted, one in Quebec and one in the rest of Canada. Enviro-nics Research Group surveyed 2,201 persons in the provinces and territories outside of Quebec between September 16 and October 3, 2003. CROP surveyed 1,003 persons in Quebec between September 15 and October 2, 2003.

The data from the CROP and the Enviro-nics Research Group surveys were combined in order to establish results for the whole of Canada and weighted to reflect the actual proportions of the provinces and territories in the population. The results of surveys of this size have a margin of error of approximately plus or minus 1.7%, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error for smaller sub-samples within each survey are larger.

# Part 1: Priorities

- **Canadians in every part of the country have three top priorities for the next Prime Minister: more spending on health care (73%); improved federal-provincial cooperation (70%); and increased funding on education and training (69%).**
- **Forty-eight percent want the new Prime Minister to put reform of the country's political institutions at the top of the political agenda, making them more open and democratic.**
- **Among the top five items identified by Westerners as high priorities, three have to do with improving the mechanisms of political decision making.**
- **The number of Canadians who support spending the surplus on social programs has increased steadily over the last four years.**
- **There is a growing difference of opinion between Quebecers and other Canadians on the issue of health care reform. In 2003, 53% of Quebecers support allowing private companies to provide some health care services to those who can afford them, whereas in Canada outside Quebec, support for this option stands at 31%.**

## PRIORITIES: SOCIAL POLICY AND DEMOCRATIC REFORM

By now, no one is surprised to see more research indicating that Canadians want to see more spending on health care and education. According to *Portraits of Canada 2003*, increased spending on healthcare, and on education and training are among the top three priorities for the majority of Canadians in every province and territory, far ahead of other issues including tax cuts, senate reform, or spending more money on the military (see Table 1).

Tax cuts remain a concern for Quebecers — 56% in that province say cutting taxes should be a high priority, compared with 37% in the rest of the country. Yet across the country, the trend toward placing greater emphasis on social program spending is clear. Overall, the number of Canadians who support spending the surplus on social programs has increased steadily over the last four years, while the number favouring tax cuts or debt reduction has been falling (see Figure 1). An even more striking result emerges when respondents were asked a question that specified that the increased spending would be devoted to health care and education. In this case, fully 63% favour using budget surpluses to put more money into social programs like health care and education, making it even more clear that these two items have no rivals in the minds of Canadians (see Table 2).

**TABLE 1** MAKING THE COUNTRY WORK BETTER  
ITEMS IDENTIFIED AS HIGH PRIORITIES ONLY

As you may know, Canada will soon have a new Prime Minister. When it comes to helping the country work better, please tell me if you think each of the following should be a high priority, a medium priority or a low priority for the new Prime Minister...

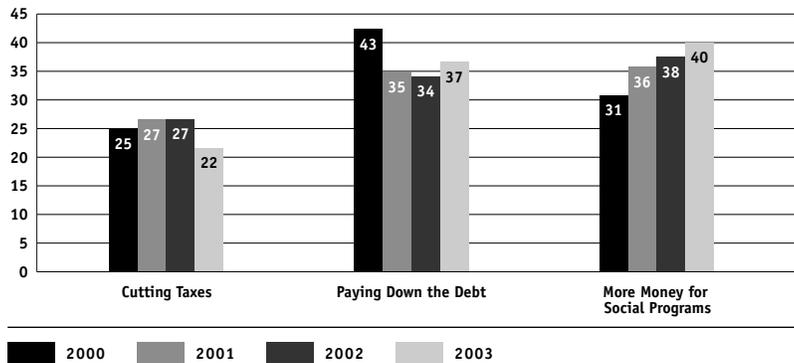
	Canada	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	West	North
Spending more money on <b>health care</b>	73	82	76	76	66	83
<b>Increasing cooperation</b> between federal and provincial governments	70	69	70	68	72	65
Spending more money on <b>education and training</b>	69	81	65	70	67	70
Significant changes to our <b>political institutions</b> to make them much more open and democratic	48	45	51	47	50	44
Closer relations between <b>Canada and the US</b>	42	40	31	47	46	31
Improving relations between <b>Canada and the US</b>	41	46	38	39	44	35
Cutting <b>taxes</b>	41	46	56	33	39	42
Reducing <b>regional economic inequalities</b>	40	50	46	37	36	40
<b>Reforming the Senate</b> so that the regions outside Central Canada can have more say in federal government decisions	36	32	29	30	52	43
<b>Transferring more powers</b> from the federal to the provincial governments	32	26	46	23	34	38
Spending more money on <b>the military</b>	30	43	12	37	33	27
Giving more money to the country's <b>big cities</b>	16	8	21	20	10	15

Note: each of the twelve items was asked to 50% of the survey sample, which means that each respondent were asked about six items in total. The two items about Canada-US respondents were each asked to a different group of respondents.

## Part 1: Priorities

**FIGURE 1 THE SURPLUS**

If governments have budgetary surpluses, which of the following three things should be the highest priority: cutting taxes, paying down the debt or putting more money into social programs?



**TABLE 2 THE SURPLUS — TWO QUESTIONS**

NOTE: EACH QUESTION WAS ASKED TO ONE-HALF OF THE SURVEY'S SAMPLE OF RESPONDENTS.

**Question A:** If governments have budgetary surpluses, which of the following should be the highest priority? Is it cutting taxes, paying down the debt or putting money into social programs?

Cutting taxes	22%
Paying down debt	37%
Putting money into social programs	40%

**Question B:** If governments have budgetary surpluses, which of the following should be the highest priority? Is it cutting taxes, paying down the debt or putting money into social programs like education and healthcare?

Cutting taxes	12%
Paying down debt	24%
Putting money into social programs like education and healthcare	63%

between Quebecers and other Canadians on this issue that has been growing in recent years. In 2003, 53% of Quebecers support allowing private companies to provide some services to those who can afford them, whereas in Canada outside Quebec, support for private sector involvement is 31% (see Figure 2).

While the survey results do show a continued commitment to health and education among Canadians, two other high priority issues within the top four convey Canadians' frustrations with their political institutions and the political process. Seventy percent of Canadians said that improved federal-provincial cooperation should be a high priority for the next Prime Minister, while 48% said making significant changes to our political institutions to make them much more open and democratic is a high priority, placing these issues in second and fourth place respectively among a list of twelve potential priority items.

The relatively high support for making democratic reform a top priority is symptomatic of the extent of the public's dissatisfaction with the decision-making process in our governments. Westerners in particular are prepared to go even further, since they not only identify democratic reform in general, but also Senate reform more specifically, as a high priority for the new Prime Minister. What is striking is that among the top five items identified by Westerners as high priorities, three have to do with improving the mechanism of political decision making.

But while this desire to inject funding into healthcare is strong, it does not completely override other options. A majority of Canadians agree that governments should increase health care spending, rather than allow private companies to deliver some services to those who can afford them or limiting the availability of some treatments and medications. However, over one-third of Canadians say that government should allow the private sector to provide some healthcare services. Moreover, there is a difference of opinion

Governments are beginning to respond to these concerns, with growing interest in electoral or legislative reform in a number of provinces. The Quebec government is examining electoral reform, and a unique citizens assembly mandated to review the merits of the traditional first-past-the-post voting system has been convened in British Columbia. Democratic reform was an issue during the 2003 New Brunswick provincial election, and the re-elected Progressive Conservative government has established a Commission on Legislative

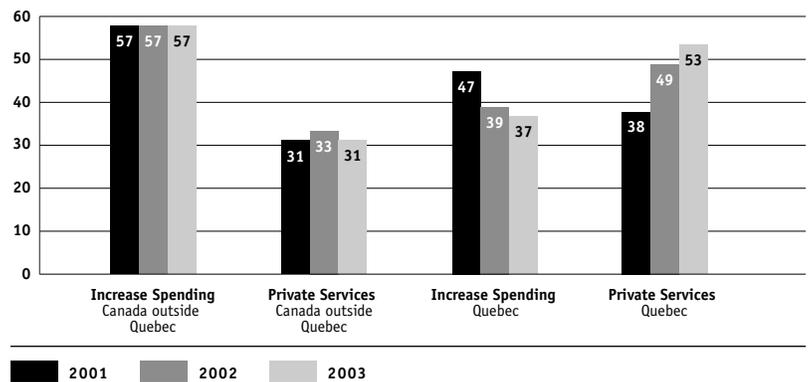
Democracy to examine issues such as the concept of proportional representation and fixed election dates, and a New Brunswick Referendum Act to allow the public to decide important public policy issues through binding referendums. The new government in Ontario has also appointed a minister responsible for democratic renewal. Finally, in Prince Edward Island, a Commission on Electoral Reform was created in January 2003, after three of the last five provincial elections produced official oppositions of only two members or less, and recently tabled its report.

At the same time, the new Prime Minister is taking steps to bring about his own brand of democratic reform. Paul Martin has promised more power for Members of Parliament, made a commitment to a more transparent and accountable government through changes such as allowing more free votes in the House of Commons, and laid the groundwork for a more collaborative relationship and increased dialogue between the federal government and the provinces.

Clearly, the message is getting through to policymakers that Canadians want to see changes in the political process, and that these changes are not just desirable, but necessary. The effort required to correct this “democratic deficit” will be considerable, but for most Canadians, the end goal of a more inclusive, participatory government is one that is worthwhile.

**FIGURE 2** HEALTH CARE  
OPTIONS FOR REFORM

**Question** (abbreviated): To deal with rising costs, government should... (a) significantly **increase their spending** on health care; (b) **limit the availability** of some treatments or medications\*; or (c) allow **the private sector** to provide some services to people who can afford to pay.



\*Results for (b) not shown

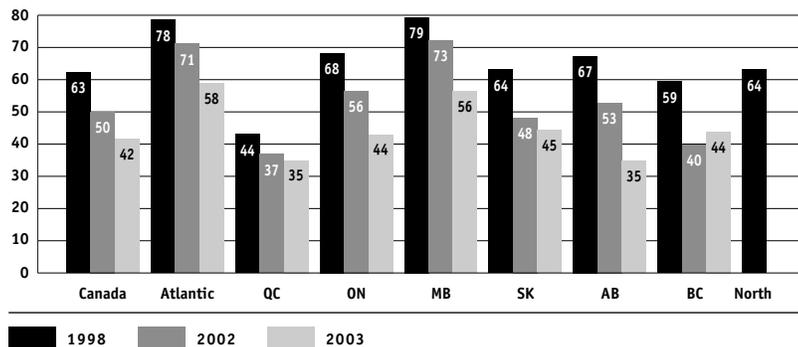
# Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Seventy percent of Canadians say that improved federal-provincial cooperation should be a high priority for the new Prime Minister, making this the public's second highest priority, after increasing spending on health care.
- The number of Canadians who think both levels of government work well together is declining sharply. Only 42% of Canadians believe that governments are working well together, down from 63% in 1998.
- Alberta has experienced the steepest drop in satisfaction with intergovernmental cooperation. In 1998, 67% of Albertans believed both levels of government were working well together, while in 2003, only 35% agreed.
- Seven out of ten Canadians believe that both levels of government are usually to blame for federal-provincial conflicts.
- Nationally, a majority (53%) believe that the Council of the Federation, recently formed by the provinces, will actually create more conflict while only 35% believe that it will lead to more cooperation.
- Canadians in every region are also divided over the proposed National Health Council. Overall, 50% predict it will be a bad thing, adding another layer of bureaucracy without improving health care. Forty-four percent say it will mean better cooperation among governments and will improve health care.
- A majority of Canadians (54%) believe that local and municipal governments need more money to meet their responsibilities, while 43% are of the view that their provincial government needs more revenue. Only 24% think the same is true for the federal government.
- The sense that provincial governments have too little revenue to fulfill their responsibilities is dramatically more pronounced in smaller provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan than it is in bigger provinces such as BC, Quebec, Ontario or Alberta.
- Support for more money to local governments is high in Canada's big cities. In the Greater Toronto Area, 62% think that more revenue is needed for their municipal government to fulfill its responsibilities, while 52% in Calgary-Edmonton, 51% in Montreal, and 40% in Vancouver take the same view.

**FIGURE 3 COOPERATION AMONG GOVERNMENTS**  
RESPONDENTS ANSWERING THAT GOVERNMENTS ARE WORKING TOGETHER "VERY WELL" OR "SOMEWHAT WELL"

2003: Do you think the federal and provincial/territorial governments are working very well together, somewhat well, not very well or are they not working at all well together?

1998, 2002: In recent years, do you think the federal and provincial governments have worked very well together, somewhat well, not very well or have they not worked at all well together?



## COOPERATION AND CONFLICT IN THE WORKINGS OF THE FEDERATION

BY HARVEY LAZAR

In the 2003 edition of *Portraits of Canada*, CRIC asked respondents to react to questions about "cooperation among governments" and about allocation of "blame for intergovernmental conflict" (see Figures 3 and 4). The juxtaposition of the questions implied that intergovernmental "cooperation" and "conflict" are opposites—governments either cooperate with one another, or they engage in disputes.

In my view, cooperation and conflict are not opposites in intergovernmental relations. Rather, they are inevitable corollaries of a relationship of interdependence.

## Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

By way of analogy, consider whether Canada has more conflicts in its international trading relationship with the United States than it does with any of the Central American states. The answer is obvious: Canada has many more trade disputes with the Government of the United States for the simple reason that it does infinitely more business with the United States than with Central America. For the same reason, Canada also collaborates more with the United States. Canada and the United States are in a highly interdependent economic relationship and with it there is bound to be much cooperation and some conflict. Needless to say, the conflict attracts the headlines.

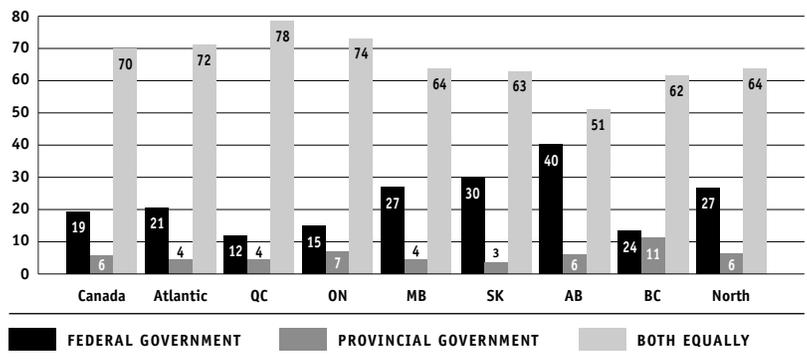
Canada's federal and provincial governments are also highly interdependent. This was not the case prior to World War II. Before the Great Depression of the 1930s, both federal and provincial governments played relatively modest roles in the economy and society. During the 1930s, to varying degrees, federal, provincial, and local governments all attempted to offset the horrendous economic and social ills of that decade. In so doing, they were poorly coordinated and they enjoyed relatively little success.

In the almost six decades since the end of World War II, the role of the state has become much larger. Today, it is impractical to think that either the federal or provincial governments could carry out their full range of responsibilities without one affecting the other, given the massive growth in intergovernmental interdependence.

Thus, the true opposites in intergovernmental relations are independence and interdependence. On issues where federal or provincial governments act largely *independently* of one another, and where the actions in question have limited effects on the other order of government, there is, by definition, little cooperation and generally little conflict. For example, provinces are responsible for primary and secondary education in Canada with Ottawa, by and large, uninvolved. Consequently, there is little intergovernmental cooperation or conflict in this area. Similarly, the federal

**FIGURE 4** WHO IS TO BLAME FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFLICT?

When there is a conflict between the federal government and your government, which one do you think is usually to blame: the federal government, your government or that both are usually to blame?



government is responsible for national defence in Canada with provinces largely uninvolved. The result is similar.

The opposite is true where there is *interdependence*. Where both orders of government are involved, say, in responding to child poverty or to protecting the environment, the actions of one have the potential to offset or complicate the efforts of the other. In such situations, there is a functional need for dialogue and coordination. However, the federal government and the one or more provincial governments at the table may have different interests (the interests of all of Canada versus the interests of a specific province), distinctive ideologies, different political stripes, strong personalities, and separate electoral cycles. They are unlikely, therefore, to see the issue identically when they begin the conversation. Instead, they can be expected to start with some differences of position (large or small) and then attempt to work their way toward a solution. While this process is unfolding, it may be difficult to describe what is happening as either cooperative or conflictual as elements of both will often be present. In fact, deciding on whether the conversation is more cooperative or more conflictual may have more to do with its tone than the magnitude of the *substantive* commonalities or differences among the governments.

## Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

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On some issues, governments may be unable to agree, in which case they have to learn to live with their differences. But even when governments reach an agreement that leads to ongoing collaboration, there can and often will be differences of interpretation about what is intended by the agreement or disputes about aspects of implementation. In short, both cooperation and conflict are integral to a relationship of interdependence.

This does not mean that Canadians should be unconcerned about the balance between cooperation and conflict in intergovernmental relations. Continuous public squabbling among governments may be a symptom of a dysfunctional intergovernmental relationship, while widespread federal-provincial harmony may signal a healthy situation. But this generality may not be the case for any one issue. Some intergovernmental disagreements may reflect a healthy competition of ideas. And some intergovernmental agreements may constitute lowest-common-denominator solutions to serious intergovernmental challenges. Compromise arrangements may reflect ineffectual responses to the situations they purport to deal with. In short, not all conflict is bad, nor are all agreements good.

If cooperation and conflict are corollaries of an interdependent relationship, then those who would minimize conflict essentially are calling for a return to a federation of watertight compartments. This is not the trend in international relations, however, where interdependence is increasingly the reality, and it seems an improbable course for domestic affairs.

A related issue is the way in which governments manage their conflicts. Too frequently, they resort to unnecessarily emotive language, turning legitimate differences of views or interests into the rhetoric of political symbolism and high politics. For the most part, however, these differences are about functional issues such as how best to achieve widely accepted goals. More often than not, therefore, governments ought to be able to agree to disagree without turning their diversity

of views into a game of high stakes political poker about the political integrity of the country. Learning to live comfortably with differences would be a big step forward in the workings of the federation. Indeed, it is a form of cooperation!

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### PROSPECTS FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN THE MARTIN ERA

BY IAN PEACH

As the 2003 *Portraits of Canada* survey indicates, Canada's First Ministers have a significant challenge to overcome if they are to demonstrate to Canadians that intergovernmental relations can actually secure good government. In theory, the Council of the Federation and the National Health Council are good ideas, but those familiar with the conduct of intergovernmental relations in Canada are also familiar with how often good ideas have succumbed to intergovernmental conflicts. This time, though, the stakes are higher: Canadians have a renewed interest in seeing governments cooperate for the common good, and Canadians, in both the East and the West, feel a strong sense of alienation from the national government. It is time for all governments to put an end to intergovernmental gamesmanship and respond to citizens' demands for a stronger social and economic union; failure is too likely to cause the public to put "a pox on both your houses." That 70% of Canadians currently blame both levels of government for intergovernmental conflict foreshadows this response.

## Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

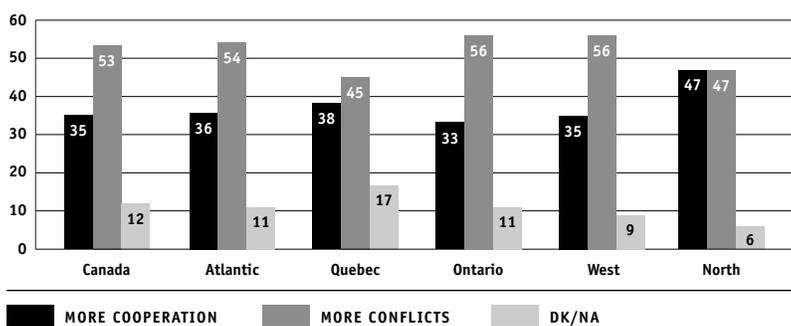
It is, indeed, possible that the Council of the Federation could become an effective vehicle for simultaneously securing the social and economic union and renewing citizens' faith in federalism as a vehicle for good government. To do so, however, all of the country's governments will have to commit themselves to making the Council effective, even when an effective Council is inconvenient. The fact that the *Portraits* survey shows that Canadians have even less confidence in the Council as a means of improving public policy than they do in the more arms-length National Health Council suggests a deep skepticism about the willingness of governments to make this courageous choice (see Figures 5 and 6).

For the Premiers, making the Council of the Federation effective will mean giving it the capacity to move a national policy agenda forward through intergovernmental agreements, even in the face of resistance from some governments, and giving it the capacity to enforce those agreements. For the Prime Minister, it means turning over the federal government's ability to use the federal spending power in areas of provincial jurisdiction, as a way of both creating national programs and enforcing their conditions, to the Council. Canada's experience with previous attempts to replace unilateral federal enforcement of national standards with intergovernmental decision-making unfortunately leads one to share citizens' skepticism.

The most recent of these efforts, the negotiation of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA), must be judged a failure; within months of being signed, it was effectively ignored by both the federal and several provincial governments and has never entered the public consciousness. As well, Annual Premiers' Conferences (APCs) are notorious for being merely an annual demand that the federal government transfer more money to the provinces, and do so without attaching conditions; a Council of the Federation that institutionalizes this demand will do nothing to gain public confidence in intergovernmental decision-making.

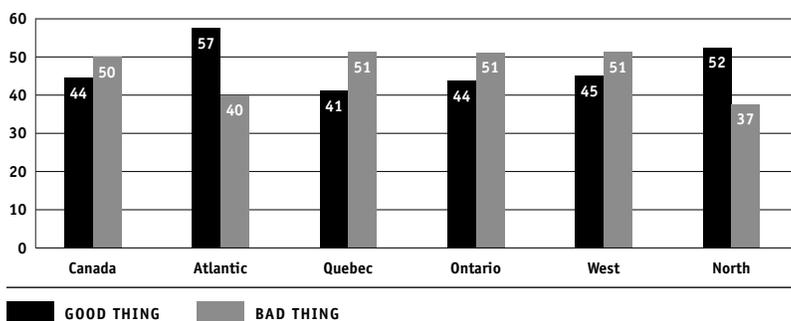
**FIGURE 5 VIEWS ON THE PROPOSED COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION**

As you may know, the provincial [and territorial] governments want to establish a Council of the Federation in order to develop shared positions and influence the federal government. Do you think the Council will lead to more cooperation between the provinces [territories] and the federal government, or do you think it will lead to more conflicts between the provinces [territories] and the federal government?



**FIGURE 6 VIEWS ON THE PROPOSED NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL**

As you may know, the federal government and most of the provincial governments have agreed to form a National Health Council that will provide advice and report on the state of the health care system. Do you think the Council will be a good thing because better cooperation among governments will improve the health care system, or do you think it will be a bad thing because it will just add another layer of bureaucracy without improving the health care system?



The prospects for intergovernmental cooperation are not hopeless, however. Before negotiating the SUFA, the First Ministers established the federal-provincial-territorial Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal. This body, in turn, was able to negotiate a federal-provincial-territorial National Child Benefit scheme in 1996, the first new national social program in over two decades.

## Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

As well, the incoming Prime Minister's openness to regular First Ministers' Meetings and his expressed desire to respond to Western alienation already seems to be easing the intergovernmental tensions of the Chrétien era. This may make future federal-provincial conflicts easier to manage, by laying a foundation of mutual respect between governments.

### THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

What lessons can we draw from both the successes and the failures of the past that would help the Council of the Federation to win public confidence? The first lesson is that the Council needs to be a federal-provincial-territorial body if it is to promote federal-provincial-territorial cooperation. That the Premiers invited Mr. Martin to meet with the Council and that he accepted is an improvement over what we have grown used to in the last decade, but it is still definitely second best. Having Mr. Martin meet with a Council that has already developed its position risks a confrontation between an immovable provincial-territorial consensus and an equally entrenched federal position, rather than joint problem-solving. In contrast, the Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal was a federal-provincial-territorial body and, as such, it had an incentive to find a consensus acceptable to both orders of government.

The second lesson, also derived from the Ministerial Council's experience in negotiating the National Child Benefit and managing the SUFA, is that the Council of the Federation needs to be responsible for negotiating matters of substance that will actually make a difference in people's lives, rather than just intergovernmental mechanics. Because the National Child Benefit was characterized as an intergovernmental response to child poverty, it was meaningful to the public, and any government that jeopardized the negotiations risked being characterized as opposed to addressing child poverty. This would encourage any government to seek an agreement. On the other hand, the SUFA is part of the arcane world of intergovernmental mechanisms, which the public neither really understands nor cares about.

It had no impact on the public consciousness and, as a consequence, governments, both federal and provincial, have been able to ignore it with impunity.

The third lesson is that, for intergovernmental agreements to exercise a meaningful discipline on governments and effectively protect the social and economic union, they have to operate on the basis of some sort of qualified majority rule, rather than consensus, and operate against governments that are not part of the agreement. This would most likely take the form of a "2/3 of the jurisdictions with 50% of the population" decision rule, with a provision that a government that is not part of the agreement would receive the benefit of the agreement if it acts in a manner consistent with the agreement (e.g. by operating an equivalent social program). Such a provision would ensure that any agreements coming out of the Council of the Federation would be truly national in scope, but would better reflect Canadians' desire for a strong social and economic union than would an agreement that required the assent of all jurisdictions. Such a rule may, however, be hard to achieve, as it is a break from the consensus tradition of APCs.

The fourth lesson is that these agreements, once made, need to be enforced either by an intergovernmental body or an independent, neutral agency, rather than by the federal government. The federal government has traditionally been very reluctant to give up its power to enforce the conditions of national shared-cost programs, yet the provinces' perception that the federal government does, or at least can, use this power capriciously has caused significant tension in federal-provincial relations. On the other hand, if there were no enforcement mechanisms, rational provincial and territorial governments would eventually be tempted to shirk their obligations. Without some incentive for all partners in the federation to abide by their obligations, it is unlikely that any province or territory would agree to limit its policy flexibility in the name of the "national interest." As well, without some assurance that the conditions of national

programs will actually be enforced, the public will continue to be skeptical about governments' commitment to protect national programs. Thus, if the First Ministers are not prepared to vest in the Council some enforcement powers for agreements negotiated by the Council, the agreements, and the Council itself, risk becoming irrelevant.

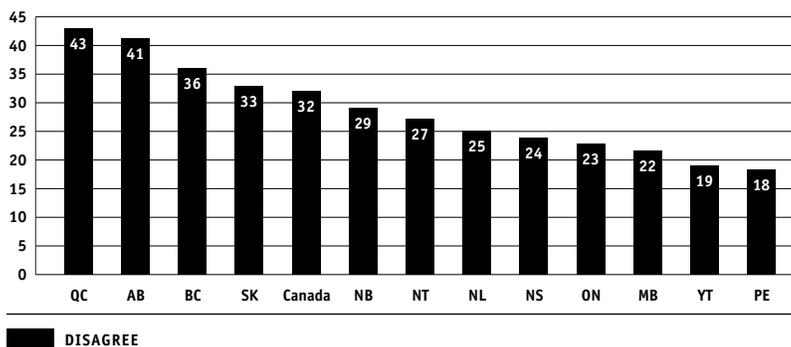
### THE PRICE OF FAILURE

If there is one factor that may make the Council of the Federation work where past efforts have failed, it is the price of failure. One statistic is likely enough to make this point: a very similar percentage of both Quebecers and Albertans surveyed (43% and 41%, respectively) do not believe that federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for their provinces (see Figure 7). An "alliance of the alienated" between Quebec and Alberta, in the aftermath of yet another failed attempt to manage the national social and economic union through intergovernmental mechanisms, would be a force to be reckoned with. One should also be concerned about the depth of alienation in my own province, Saskatchewan, which has a long history of playing the role of "honest broker" in federal-provincial relations. The Government of Saskatchewan may well wonder why it expends its energy and credibility in this brokerage role, if the province's citizens feel strongly that they do not get proper respect, or suitable influence on national decisions.

To date, the incoming Prime Minister has made statements that should give Canadians some hope that increased intergovernmental cooperation will be part of the Martin legacy; his challenge will be to demonstrate that his rhetoric will be backed up by substantive actions. The Premiers, too, must remember that they will also suffer the wrath of the electorate if they are seen to be unwilling to respond to good faith attempts by Mr. Martin to improve the intergovernmental environment. One can only hope that they are all listening to what Canadians have said, loudly and clearly, through *Portraits of Canada*.

**FIGURE 7** CANADIAN FEDERALISM MORE ADVANTAGES THAN DISADVANTAGES?  
BY PROVINCE — THOSE WHO DISAGREE

Under the Canadian federal system, the federal government has responsibility for some areas and the provincial [and territorial] governments have responsibility for others. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements... *Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for my province/territory.*



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### FISCAL IMBALANCE, OR "THE FOUR MUSKETEERS"

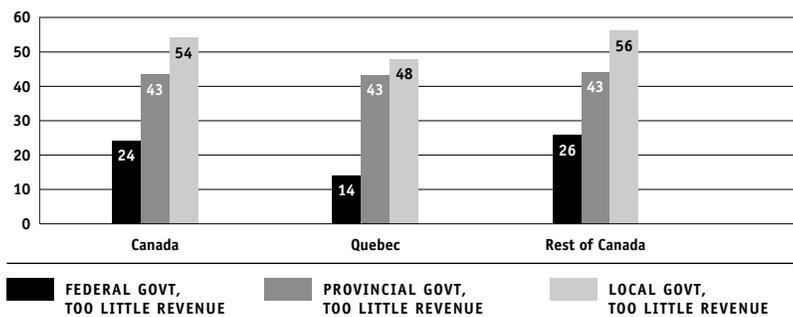
BY GILLES PAQUET

Governments are instruments fashioned by citizens to provide access to public "services" that can only be obtained through concerted collective action backed by the State. From this standpoint, the different orders of government are like the "Three Musketeers," each serving the needs of the sovereign citizen, with varying degrees of success.

## Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

**FIGURE 8 FISCAL IMBALANCE?\***

- A. Do you feel that the federal government has enough, too much or too little revenue to fulfill its responsibilities?  
 B. Do you feel that your provincial [territorial] government has enough, too much or too little revenue to fulfill its responsibilities?  
 C. Do you feel that local or municipal governments have enough, too much or too little revenue to fulfill their responsibilities?



\* Note: These questions were adapted from questions developed by the Canada West Foundation for use in its Looking West 2003 Survey.

Like the musketeers in Dumas's novel, each order of government has different character traits and, therefore, different roles. There is Aramis, the architect of overarching strategies (the federal level); Athos, the mysterious provincial, given to gambling and excess; and Porthos, the man of many garments, the urbane and convivial one (the municipal level). There may be debate about who does what best or worst, but there is general agreement on overall areas of responsibility.

But what the Canadian citizen of 2003 saw is two things: (1) insufficient cooperation among the orders of government and (2) a mismatch between their resources and their responsibilities. Simply put, the three musketeers are not equal partners.

Survey data confirm this impression, with 70% of Canadians asking that the new Prime Minister establish better intergovernmental relations. This is their second highest priority, after health care funding (73%) but ahead of funding for education and training (69%). It is quite extraordinary that a subject as arcane as federal-provincial relations could arouse such concern. What is more, a significant majority of citizens believe that provincial and local governments need more fiscal resources (see Figure 8).

But despite such strong feelings, Canadians are hesitant about demanding a transfer of power to the provinces and municipalities. Only 32% would place a high priority on transferring more power to the provinces, and only 16% say that giving more money to big cities is a high priority issue (see Table 1).

The reason for this reluctance is not hard to understand. During the past seven decades, Canadians have developed a rosy view of the federal government — despite some memorable failures — through such watershed moments as the Great Depression, the Second World War and the advent of the Welfare State. It has come to be considered the great producer of public assets, the protector of the public interest, the stabilizer and redistributor of income and wealth. Neither provincial governments (except in Quebec), nor municipal governments, have gained such public trust.

Another explanation for this reluctance arises, in part, from the fact that the three musketeers — in both the novel and in our structures of governance — are actually four in number. The dashing D'Artagnan, who spurs others to action, should not be forgotten. He personifies the big cities.

The country's dozen largest cities — with Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver respectively the biggest — are powerful engines of economic development and social progress in an economy increasingly affected by globalization, and a society that is ever more pluralistic. They are powerhouses of economic growth and crucibles in which the country's vital elements are melded. They account for the major portion of Canada's GDP. Any attempt to overshadow or underemphasize these realities jeopardizes the very sources of the nation's wealth, stifling its potential for creativity and innovation.

## Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

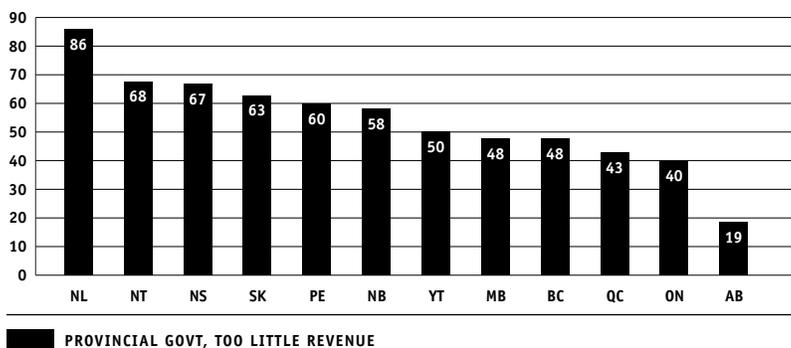
The challenge, then, is to distinguish clearly between Porthos, who embodies the country's small cities, towns and villages, and D'Artagnan, who personifies the big cities with all their spirit and might. In the novel, of course, it is D'Artagnan's arrival that unites the musketeers and forges them into a formidable fighting unit.

The leadership in major cities must make them stand apart. Some mayors, such as Winnipeg's Glen Murray, have understood this for a long time. Within the near future, these cities need considerable additional financial resources to consolidate their strength. Yet, it is precisely this strength that is feared by provincial governments, jealous guardians of their constitutional authority over the cities. This provincial trusteeship of major cities — some of them much larger than several provinces — smothers their dynamism.

It might have been thought that the Council of the Federation could be a likely forum in which the big cities could sit down at the same table with the provincial and federal governments to discuss the best ways to correct fiscal imbalances, either through redistribution of responsibilities or fiscal resources. But such a fiscal Meech Lake Agreement, which would bring together the federal government, the provinces and the municipalities (at very least the major cities), is not on. It is not on because the provinces' defensive reflexes are ingrained. They oppose treating the major cities as partners. The provinces view them as emanations of provincial authority, thereby creating this paradox: they want to deal with them as subordinate administrative entities, although the major cities drive their economies.

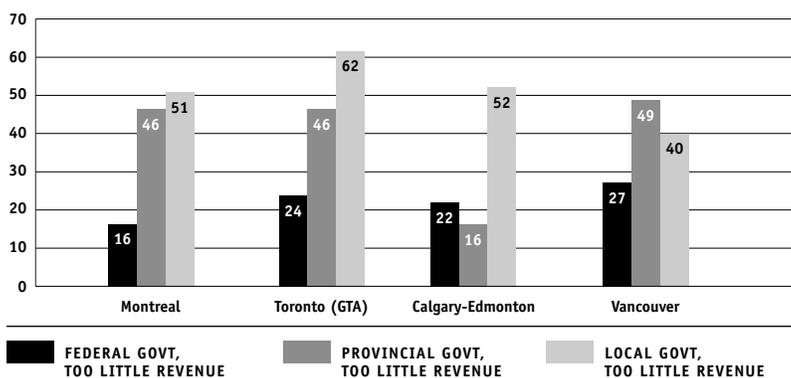
**FIGURE 9 DOES YOUR PROVINCE HAVE TOO LITTLE REVENUE**

Do you feel that your provincial [territorial] government has enough, too much or too little revenue to fulfill its responsibilities?



**FIGURE 10 FISCAL IMBALANCE? THE CITIES**

- Do you feel that the federal government has enough, too much or too little revenue to fulfill its responsibilities?
- Do you feel that your provincial [territorial] government has enough, too much or too little revenue to fulfill its responsibilities?
- Do you feel that local or municipal governments have enough, too much or too little revenue to fulfill their responsibilities?

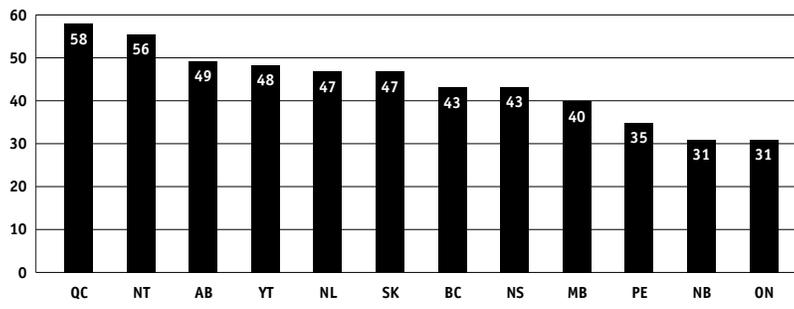


But public discontent over fiscal imbalance is on the rise in our cities. In Toronto, nearly two of every three residents think their city needs additional fiscal resources. This figure is around 50% in Montreal, Calgary, and Edmonton. And in the smaller provinces and the territories, residents are just as vehement in demanding federal fiscal transfers towards the provinces.

## Part 2: Federalism and Intergovernmental Cooperation

**FIGURE 11** SHOULD PROVINCES HAVE MORE POWER?  
% WHO SAY PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD HAVE MORE POWER

In your opinion, in the future, should the provincial [territorial] governments have more power, the federal government have more power, or should things stay as they are?



The new federal government, having fully recognized the severity of problems at the local level and provincial stubbornness in preventing a true fiscal reform à la Meech, will seek ways to circumvent the problem. It is unfortunate, but necessary. It can only be hoped that whatever it does will be more intelligently thought out than what was attempted in the early 1970s, and which led to an exacerbation of federal-provincial frictions, without yielding any significant results.

But this will certainly be a great opportunity to provide true recognition of the “Four Musketeers” different character traits and the need for joint action among them — something Canadians are demanding. This is the key to resolving fiscal imbalance.

In this rebalancing process, the central role of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities should not be underestimated. It can marshal the forces of intergovernmental cooperation in such a way as to make the cities full-fledged players in the pan-Canadian decision-making process. But like *Milady* in Dumas’ novel, the FCM is complex and somewhat schizophrenic, torn as it is between Porthos and D’Artagnan. Formally, it represents all the cities, not just the big ones. Can it separate the wheat from the chaff by making the smaller municipalities see that their progress depends on the health of the big cities?

Let’s hope so. And if that should come to pass, the day may not be far off when the rallying cry of the four musketeers will be heard through the land: “All for one and one for all!”

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# Part 3: Regional Perspectives

Canadians view their federation through the prism of regional differences.

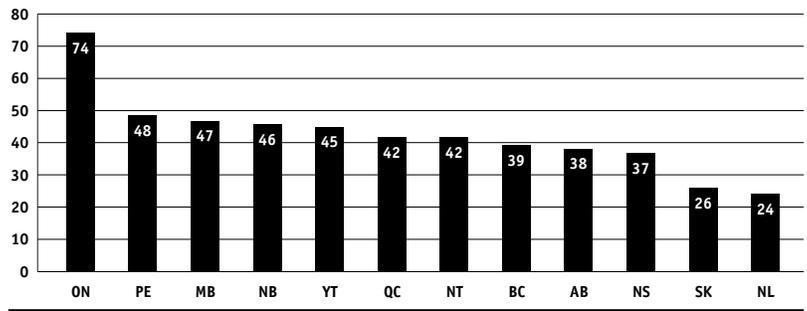
Outside Ontario, a majority are concerned about their region's place within Canada. "Western alienation" has attracted considerable attention in recent years. How deep it runs is illustrated by *Portraits* findings in each province of the region: the number of Albertans who say their province is treated with the respect it deserves has fallen by 19% since 1998; Saskatchewan residents are the most likely to say that their province doesn't have its fair share of influence on important national decisions, and the second most likely to say that it doesn't get the respect it deserves; sixty-five percent of British Columbians believe their province has less than its fair share of influence, and 42% trust neither the provincial nor the federal level of government to protect the programs they care about (see Table 3).

Discontent also runs high in Atlantic Canada where reducing regional inequalities is the fourth highest priority out of twelve possible priorities, compared to an eighth-place ranking for Canada as a whole.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Nova Scotians, with their emerging offshore oil and gas industries, are especially frustrated by their inability to improve what they view as their disadvantaged status in the federation.<sup>1</sup> Seventy percent of Nova Scotians say their province has less than its fair share of influence on important national decisions, second only to Saskatchewan where 72% feel that way. In Newfoundland and Labrador, 76% say that their province does not get the respect it deserves in Canada — the highest percentage of any province. In 2002, the provincial government, responding to this discontent, established the "Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada," to assess Newfoundland and Labrador's strengths and weaknesses and recommend ways to renew and strengthen its place in the federation.<sup>2</sup>

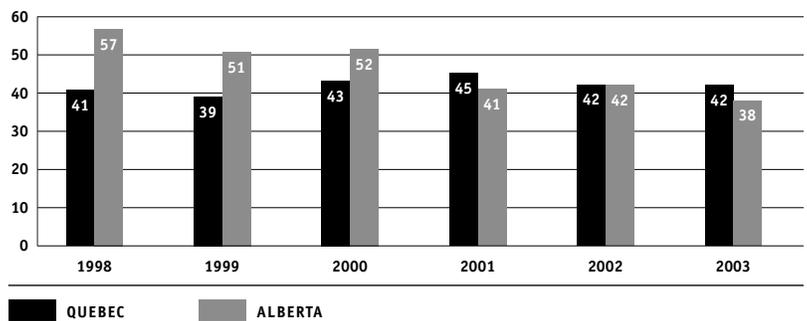
**FIGURE 12** IS YOUR PROVINCE TREATED WITH THE RESPECT IT DESERVES?  
% WHO ANSWERED "YES"

In your opinion, is (name of province) treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?



**FIGURE 13** IS YOUR PROVINCE TREATED WITH RESPECT?  
RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED "YES"

In your opinion, is your province treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?



When the question of why their province did not get the respect it deserved in the federation was probed further, the views of those in the different Atlantic Provinces varied.<sup>3</sup> Two out of five Newfoundlanders and Labradorians cited such economic reasons as high unemployment or a weak economy (see Table 4). In Prince Edward Island, a plurality of those who said that their province did not receive the respect it deserved put the blame, not on their economy, but on the province's small size and population. However, in all four Atlantic Provinces, at least one out of four respondents

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of the equalization program in *Sharing the Wealth: Choices for the Federation*, CRIC Paper #7 (Montreal: CRIC, September 2002), available online at [www.cric.ca](http://www.cric.ca).

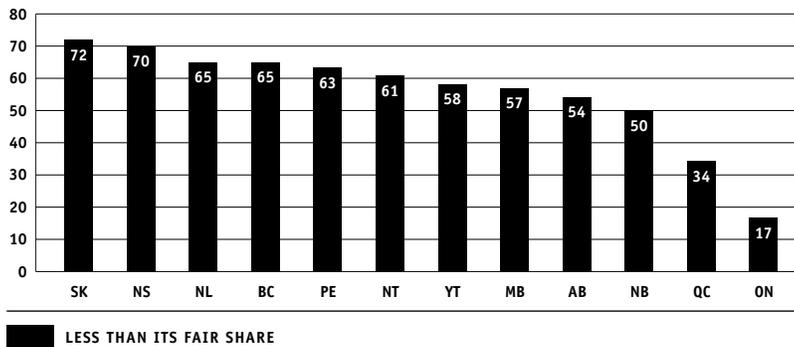
<sup>2</sup> Information on the Newfoundland and Labrador Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, including the final report, is available online at <http://www.gov.nf.ca/royalcomm>.

<sup>3</sup> This question was asked of those Atlantic Canadians who said their province is not treated with the respect it deserves. The same question was asked in 2002 in Alberta and Saskatchewan. See *Portraits of Canada 2002*, CRIC Paper #8 (Montreal: CRIC, December 2002); available online at [www.cric.ca](http://www.cric.ca)

## Part 3: Regional Perspectives

**FIGURE 14** INFLUENCE ON IMPORTANT NATIONAL DECISIONS  
LESS THAN ITS FAIR SHARE (%)

In your opinion, how much influence does your province/territory have on important national decisions in Canada... More than its fair share, less than its fair share, or about its fair share?



**TABLE 3** TRUST IN GOVERNMENTS

Which government do you trust more to protect the programs you care about? Is it a) The federal government b) The government of your province/territory c) Both equally d) Neither.

	Federal	Provincial/Territorial	Both Equally	Neither
NL	14	23	30	33
PEI	8	33	44	15
NB	21	17	22	39
NS	23	23	33	18
QUE	11	24	34	28
ONT	15	22	29	32
MA	12	26	23	37
SA	9	25	27	37
AB	14	40	16	29
BC	20	16	20	42
North	17	31	27	24

who felt their province did not get the respect it deserved attributed this to neglect by the federal government and to the belief that the rest of Canada receives better treatment or more money from Ottawa.

In reviewing regional perspectives, Canadians should not overlook the three northern territories. After Quebec, this region is the most likely to say that their provincial or territorial government needs both more power and more money to fulfill its responsibilities (see Figures 9 and 11).

The search for “regional fairness” within Canada also must go beyond the demands of the provinces. Mega-cities with growing populations, such as Toronto and Vancouver, want their distinct interests reflected in the nation’s public policy agenda. In the Greater Toronto Area, for instance, 45% seek more powers for their local government, up from 36% in 2001, and 62% say their local government has too little revenue to meet its responsibilities.

These different results suggest an appetite for change. Yet, no one looks forward to another “Meech Lake” type round of constitutional talks. When asked if this is the right time to return to the constitutional issue, or leave it alone, only 28% would re-open it.

Consequently, attention has shifted to seeking reforms that do not require constitutional change. Suggestions include correcting a lack of regional representation in the upper echelons of the federal public service, better cooperation with provincial governments on major federal policy decisions, and improvements to the operations of the Senate and the House of Commons. Last April, during the Canadian Unity Council’s annual general meeting, there was a luncheon debate on the theme “Us Vs. Them: Myth or Reality, A Solution-Oriented Dialogue on Canadian Regional Discontent.” Participants repeatedly called for reforms that would give Canadians opportunities to learn more about other regions of the country, celebrate

regional diversity, establish more forums for open discussion on issues and exchange of ideas, as well as electoral reform to better reflect the popular vote in the distribution of seats following elections.

All of this leads to an obvious conclusion: reforms are needed as a prelude to improving the perception Canadians in very part of the country have of their federal system in Eastern and Western Canada.

**The following suggestions were among those proposed by participants in the April, 2003 luncheon debate on the theme “Us Vs. Them: Myth or Reality, A Solution-Oriented Dialogue on Canadian Regional Discontent”:**

- **Encourage young Canadians to explore the country through travel, employment or educational opportunities (including more bursaries to allow students to attend university in provinces other than their own).**
- **Require schools to do more to encourage civic engagement among young Canadians.**
- **Inform Canadians about the country’s different regions and the issues they face.**
- **Find ways to attract excellent leaders to politics and public service.**
- **Increase opportunities for citizens at the constituency level to contribute meaningfully to consultations about government policy.**
- **Give more power to municipalities and to provinces.**

*“[...] the provincial government must work hand in hand with the federal government not only to ensure that the province does not fall further behind, but that it progresses at a reasonable pace. The unacceptable alternative is the status quo, entrenched by a federal system unable or unwilling to respond seriously and respectfully to the unique circumstances facing Newfoundland and Labrador. The cost of doing nothing is high, not just for Newfoundland and Labrador, but for Canada as well.”*

**Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada,  
(Newfoundland and Labrador)**

**TABLE 4 WHY NO RESPECT? THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES**  
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS/PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

	A	B	C	D	E
<b>NL</b>	31/42%	8/11%	2/3%	18/24%	15/20%
<b>PE</b>	6/11%	20/36%	0/0%	17/30%	13/23%
<b>NS</b>	13/19%	19/28%	0/0%	20/30%	15/22%
<b>NB</b>	15/28%	7/13%	4/8%	13/25%	14/26%

**Question:** “In your opinion, is your province treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?”  
**Follow-up question** (open-ended), to those who answered “no”: **“why not?”**

**A** POOR REGION/WEAKER ECONOMY/HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT/TOO DEPENDENT ON ONE INDUSTRY  
**B** TOO SMALL/LOW POPULATION BASE  
**C** NEGATIVELY STEREOTYPED BY OTHER CANADIANS  
**D** NEGLECTED BY FEDERAL GOV'T/REST OF CANADA GETS BETTER TREATMENT OR MORE MONEY  
**E** OTHER/DON'T KNOW

## Part 4: Quebec

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- The new Quebec government has broad support within the province for its goal of actively seeking to improve the workings of Canadian federalism, and this support extends to a majority of both federalists and sovereignists.
  - Sixty-one percent of Quebecers think that federalism can satisfy both Quebec and the rest of Canada, and about one in two Quebecers agrees that “Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for Quebec,” both of which represent no change since 1998.
  - A majority (53%) say that their province is not treated with the respect it deserves in Canada, a figure that is similar to that found in previous CRIC polling on the issue.
  - A plurality of French-speaking Quebecers say that when two equally competent candidates — one Francophone and one Anglophone — seek the same job or a promotion, the English-speaking candidate has the advantage. Among English-speaking Quebecers, 66% say the Francophone has the edge.
  - About six out of ten French-speaking Quebecers say the French language in Quebec is threatened — a figure that is unchanged since 2000.
  - If a referendum on sovereignty-partnership had been held in September, support for the “yes” side would have been about 47% (after the redistribution of the undecided respondents). This level of support has been attained only a few times since 1998, and two of those times were this year. The results show that the “no” side would have won with about 53%.
- 

### NEW CHAPTER OR THE SAME OLD STORY? PUBLIC OPINION IN QUEBEC<sup>4</sup>

BY MATTHEW MENDELSON, ANDREW  
PARKIN, AND MAURICE PINARD

The Liberal Party of Quebec’s victory in the 2003 provincial general election, which replaced a sovereignist government with a federalist government, has far reaching consequences for Canadian politics. However, those who assume that it signals a major shift in public opinion are well advised to be cautious. Often, governing parties are defeated and opposition parties elected for a variety of reasons that have little to do with fundamental shifts in public attitudes towards key issues.

The defining feature of Quebec public opinion since the 1970s has been polarization on what is referred to in Quebec as the national question (federalism versus sovereignty). During this period (except for an interlude from 1981 to around 1987), “normal” politics took a backseat to the more existential questions of national identity and the province’s constitutional status. This is no longer the case.

We are now witnessing a move to more mundane political debate involving the size of the state, levels of taxation, and social values. The media have reported widely that Quebecers are tired of debating the merits of sovereignty, and have little appetite for a new referendum or re-opening constitutional negotiations. In fact, the current *Portraits of Canada* shows that only 36% of Quebecers say that now is the right time to re-open the constitutional issue. It would be difficult to underestimate the depth of this sentiment. The debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s hold little appeal, especially for younger Quebecers.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is not surprising to find that Quebecers respond favourably to the idea of their provincial government participating constructively in the life of the Canadian federation. Three of every four Quebecers want their new government to play a very active role to help the Canadian federation work better, while 19% are opposed. Even among those who would vote “yes” in a sovereignty referendum, 64% back making the federation work better, while 30% are opposed (see Figure 16).

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<sup>4</sup> This article is informed by a longer paper entitled “A New Chapter or the Same Old Story? The Depoliticization of the National Question: Public Opinion in Quebec from 1996-2003,” by Matthew Mendelsohn, Andrew Parkin, and Maurice Pinard. The paper was presented by Matthew Mendelsohn at the conference on “Quebec and Canada in the New Century: New Dynamics, New Opportunities” hosted by the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queen’s University, October 31-November 1, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> See the results from *Portraits of Canada 2002*, especially as discussed in: Maurice Pinard, *A Great Realignment of Political Parties in Quebec*, special edition of the CRIC Papers (Montreal: CRIC, March 2003), available online at [www.cric.ca](http://www.cric.ca).

Some other significant findings:

- Increased federal-provincial cooperation is a high priority for no less than 70% of Quebecers.
- Seventy-eight percent of Quebecers blame both levels of government for intergovernmental conflicts, while only 12% hold the federal government solely responsible.
- Today, Quebecers are far more likely to believe that a provincial Liberal government strengthens Quebec in terms of its relations with the rest of Canada, than the number in 1999 who believed that a PQ government strengthened Quebec's hand. Apparently, the public does not share the PQ's view that a federalist government in Quebec City places the province at a disadvantage when dealing with its partners in Confederation (see Figure 17).

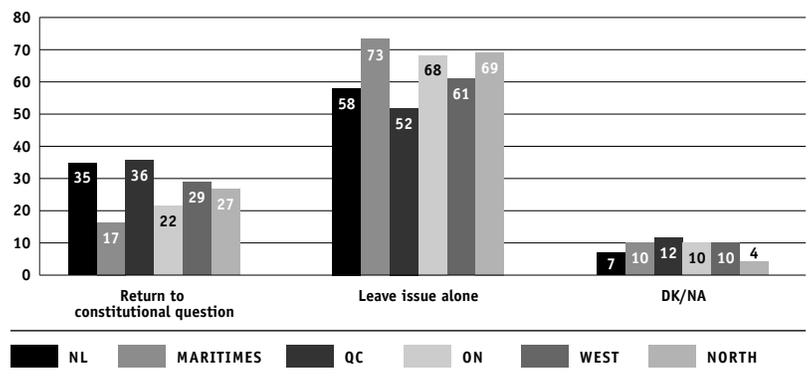
Taken together, these results reflect a widespread desire for cooperation, rather than confrontation, in federal-provincial relations.

None of this is to suggest, however, that many Quebecers do not continue to support Quebec sovereignty on some level. Despite a decline in support during the late 1990s, the number of Quebecers who would vote "yes" in a referendum on sovereignty-partnership never dropped below 40%. Following the provincial Liberals' election victory in April 2003, support for this option has been in the mid-40s, confirming, at least in part, a well-established pattern whereby rhetorical support for sovereignty often increases when a federalist government rules in Quebec City, and a sovereignty referendum seems unlikely.

The 2003 *Portraits* also shows that 46% of Quebecers favour Quebec becoming a sovereign country (this question does not ask about how respondents would vote in a referendum). Another question, asking Quebecers to choose among four constitutional options, shows that support for sovereignty has declined little in recent years.

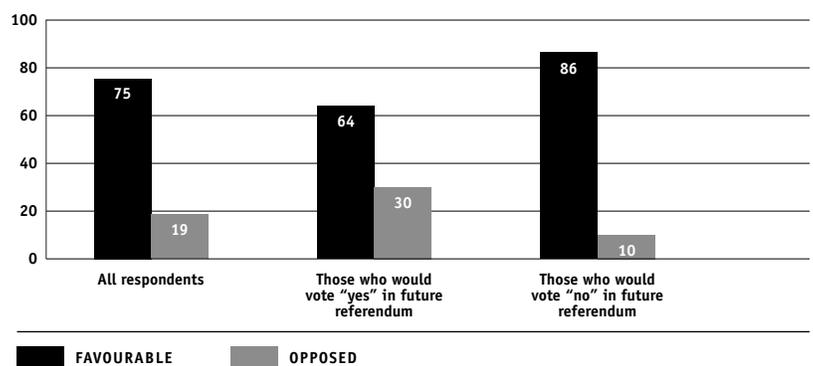
**FIGURE 15** CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES  
QUEBEC RESPONDENTS ONLY

In order to improve the way the federation works, some people say we should make changes to Canada's constitution. Others disagree. In your opinion, *is this the right time to return to the constitutional question, or should governments leave the issue alone?*



**FIGURE 16** THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT AND THE CANADIAN FEDERATION  
QUEBEC RESPONDENTS ONLY

The current Quebec government wants to play a very active role to help the Canadian federation work better. Are you very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat opposed or very opposed to this policy direction?



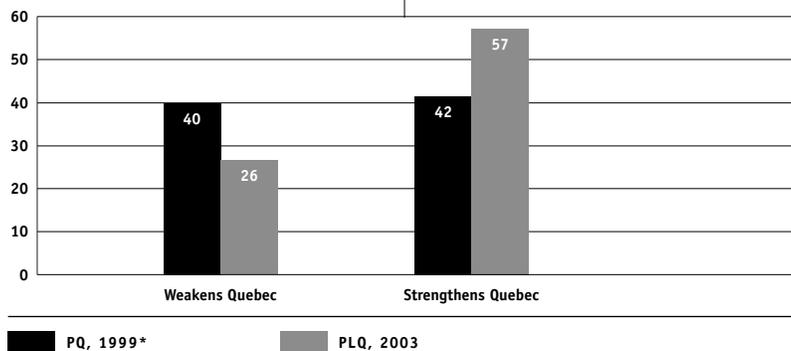
## Part 4: Quebec

**FIGURE 17** PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS IN QUEBEC: RELATIONS WITH THE REST OF CANADA  
QUEBEC RESPONDENTS ONLY

Which of the following statements more closely reflects your own opinion?

1999: The fact that the **Parti Québécois** is in power **weakens Quebec** in its relations with the rest of Canada...OR the fact that the Parti Québécois is in power **strengthens Quebec** in its relations with the rest of Canada?

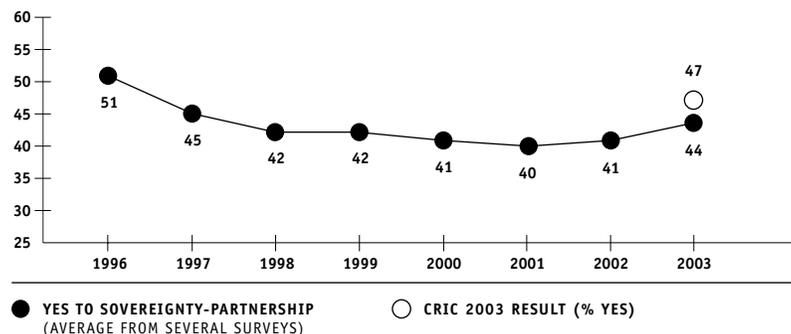
2003: The fact that the **Quebec Liberal Party** is in power **weakens Quebec** in its relations with the rest of Canada...OR the fact that the Quebec Liberal Party is in power **strengthens Quebec** in its relations with the rest of Canada?



\*Source: 1999: CROP

**FIGURE 18** SUPPORT FOR “SOVEREIGNTY-PARTNERSHIP”  
(QUEBEC RESPONDENTS ONLY, WITH UNDECIDED REDISTRIBUTED ON A PRO RATA BASIS)

If a referendum were held today on the same question as that asked in 1995, that is, sovereignty with an offer of partnership with the rest of Canada, would you vote YES or would you vote NO?



\* Surveys from CROP and CRIC. Number of surveys for each year:  
1996 = 9; 1997 = 5; 1998 = 13; 1999 = 8; 2000 = 10; 2001 = 13; 2002 = 13; 2003 = 12.

Moreover, despite the change of government, opinion on traditional concerns about language and the federal system has been remarkably stable. For example:

- Fifty-nine percent of francophone Quebecers believe that the French language is threatened in Quebec. This has not changed significantly in recent years.
- Despite all the major economic progress in the past 40 years, there has been only a small drop in the perception among many French-speaking Quebecers that they are at an economic disadvantage. A significant number (44%) remain convinced that if two equally competent candidates — one Francophone and one Anglophone — seek the same job or a promotion, the English-speaking candidate has the advantage (see Figure 20).
- A significant number of Quebecers (37%) believe that they contribute more to confederation than they take out. Only Albertans are more likely than Quebecers to believe that their own province contributes more than it takes out of confederation.
- Only 42% of Quebecers say that their province is treated with the respect it deserves in Canada. This figure has remained stable over the past six years, again demonstrating that the change in government has not been accompanied by wholesale changes in the way the federal system is perceived.
- Only about one in two Quebecers (49%) agrees that “Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for Quebec,” which again represents no change since 1998. Forty-three percent disagree with this statement, the highest level of disagreement of any province.

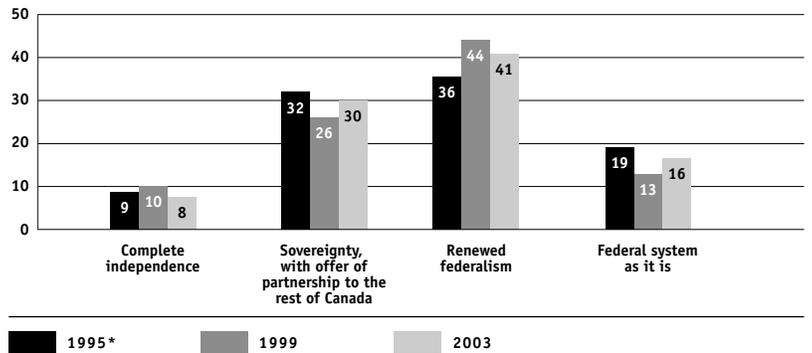
By simply looking at public opinion on issues, such as threats to the French language and the fairness of the federation, it would be easy to conclude — mistakenly — that the public opinion environment in Quebec has changed little since 1996. Although Quebecers do have many of the same concerns they had during the 1995 referendum, there has been a significant decline — for the time being at least —

in their desire to pursue a debate about sovereignty or constitutional change. Like other Canadians, Quebecers want more inter-governmental cooperation and are more interested in discussions about social and economic policy than the province's place in the Canadian federation. However, this should not be construed as increased attachment to Canada, or support for the constitutional status quo. Quebecers remained as sceptical about the merits of federalism in 2003, when they elected the Liberals, as they did in 1998, the year in which they re-elected the PQ. The data shows that support for sovereignty has not declined lately and may be on the rise.

A final, tentative conclusion might also be offered. As we know, the state and government are not viewed as pathways to political change as much as they once were. We may have failed to fully appreciate the importance this has for the Quebec nationalist movement. To political scientists, it is natural that the state will be uppermost in our consciousness when we think about the development of a national community. To citizens of advanced democracies, this is not nearly as apparent. The protection and development of the Quebec national community can take place at an interpersonal, social, and economic level on a daily basis. To most citizens, that which takes place in the formal political world is only one small part of the effort to strengthen Quebec. Which level of government has formal jurisdiction over what is of course an important political issue, but it is not at the core of most citizens' preoccupations when they ponder the future of their own communities. Although "the national question" has clearly not been resolved for party leaders and political scientists, many Quebec citizens may have resolved it for themselves. Quebecers will continue to create and recreate their national community regardless of what governments do.

**FIGURE 19** QUEBEC: CONSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS  
QUEBEC RESPONDENTS ONLY

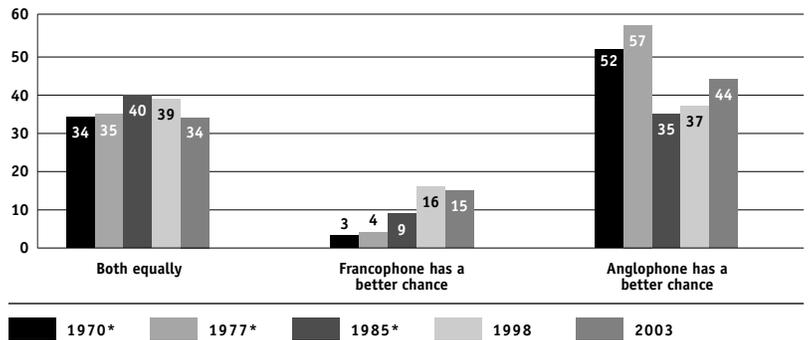
Which of the following constitutional options would you prefer for Quebec? Is it ...



\*1995: average of 3 surveys;  
Source: Maurice Pinard, from Pinard et al., *Un Combat Inachevé* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1997).

**FIGURE 20** LANGUAGE AND EMPLOYMENT  
QUEBEC FRANCOPHONE RESPONDENTS ONLY

When it comes to job offers and promotions in Quebec, do you think a francophone and anglophone stand an equal chance if they are equally competent, do you think the francophone has a better chance, or do you think the anglophone has a better chance?



\* Source (1970-85): Maurice Pinard, from Pinard et al., *Un Combat Inachevé* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'université du Québec, 1997).

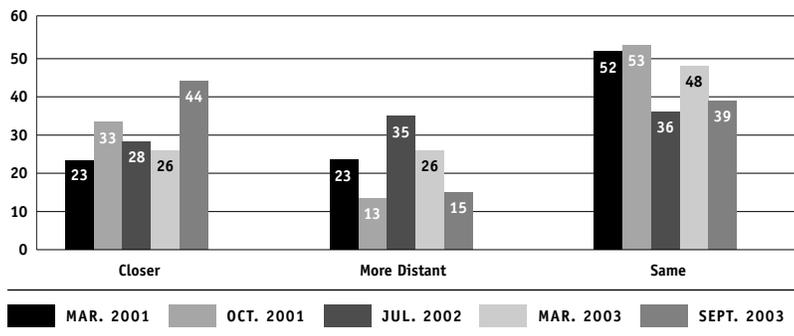
*Matthew Mendelsohn is an Associate Professor of Political Studies at Queen's University, the Director of the Canadian Opinion Research Archive, and an associate researcher at the Center for Research and Information on Canada. Andrew Parkin is Co-Director of the Centre for Research and Information on Canada. Maurice Pinard, Emeritus Professor, McGill University, and an associate researcher at the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC).*

# Part 5: Canada-US Relations

- **Forty-four percent of Canadians believe Canada should have closer ties to the US, an increase of 18 points since March 2003 — at the start of the war in Iraq — and is a higher percentage than for earlier surveys conducted over the past three years.**
- **When asked a separate question about priorities, about four out of ten Canadians say that having closer or improved relations between Canada and the US should be a high priority for the next Prime Minister.**
- **Overall, the results suggest that the increased support for closer relations is due mainly to a belief among some Canadians that Canada-US relations were strained in the lead-up to the US invasion of Iraq, and should now return to normal.**
- **Support for adopting a common North American currency has fallen; when asked specifically about Canada adopting the US dollar as its currency, support drops even lower.**
- **Fewer Canadians than in 2002 think that a common border security policy with the US is in their best interests, though a majority remains in favour.**
- **Eighty-one percent of Canadians would support agreeing to a request from the United Nations to send soldiers to Iraq as part of a United Nations military force, while only 41% would do so if a request came from the US to send troops to help the American military stabilize the situation in that country. Quebec stands out as the least likely to support sending Canadian troops, regardless of whether the request came from the US or the United Nations.**

**FIGURE 21 | CANADA'S TIES WITH THE US**

Do you think Canada should have much closer ties to the U.S., somewhat closer, about the same as now, somewhat more distant or much more distant ties to the US than it has now?



## VIVA LA DIFFERENCE! RELATIONS BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES AT THE START OF A NEW CENTURY

BY CHRIS BAKER

As pundits and advocacy groups debated the changing of the guard in the Liberal Party, there was a common view that Prime Minister Paul Martin would revitalize Canada-US relations. Not only was Martin seen as more pro-American than Jean Chrétien, he also didn't carry the baggage of the government's decision to abstain from the "coalition of the willing" that invaded Iraq, or of anti-American comments from caucus and even ministers. However, at the leadership convention, Liberal delegates gave strong and sustained applause to both Martin and Chrétien when they affirmed Canada's need for an independent foreign policy. In the eyes of delegates, the differences in style between the two men may have been very visible, but there was little apparent difference between them on their approach to the need for a made-in-Canada foreign policy. Like Canadians in general, those delegates understood that our relationship with the United States is not a matter of choice. We rely on access to American markets for much of our economic output. We also

cooperate on defence and security matters through our mutual membership in NATO and NORAD. We are each others' largest trading partner (although many Americans are more likely to believe that Japan or Europe are more important in terms of trade). There may be difficulties in our relationship, but we believe that our mutual future depends on cooperation rather than confrontation.

A review of recent public opinion research on Canada-US relations supports this view. Perhaps a change in style is what is needed in our relationship with the United States. The substance of our relationship will remain much as it has since the end of the Second World War with the focus on maintaining safe borders, ensuring the free flow of goods and services, settling trade disputes, presenting a common front against terrorism and assuring continental defence. Moreover, despite some high-profile differences of opinion, Canadians still retain positive views of the United States and vice-versa.

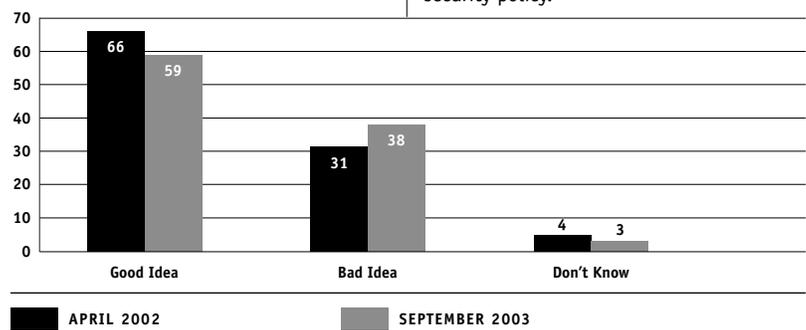
The annual *Portraits of Canada* survey, conducted by CRIC, highlights some of the attitudinal changes that have taken place. For the first time since tracking began in March 2001, a plurality of Canadians (44%) believe that Canada should have closer ties to the United States (see Figure 21). This view is up significantly from March 2003 (26%) and even from the previous highpoint immediately after September 11, 2001 (33%). The percentage of those who want a more distant relationship has dropped from 35% in July 2002 to 15% in September 2003. The numbers of those who feel that the status quo in Canada-US relations is preferable declined from a slight majority in March 2001 (52%) to 39% in September 2003. It should be noted that Quebecers express a stronger desire for the status quo (44%) than do other Canadians and are the least likely to desire closer ties with the United States (34%).

**FIGURE 22 | COMMON BORDER SECURITY POLICY**

April 2002: Some people say that Canada and the United States should adopt a common border security policy and follow the same set of rules when deciding who can or cannot enter either country. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

(a) A common border-security policy is a **good idea** because it will **increase the security** of both countries; or

(b) A common border-security policy is a **bad idea** because Canada will have to give the United States **some say** in our border-security policy.



Two-fifths of Canadians also believe that improving relations (41%) or closer ties (42%) with the United States should be a high priority for Canada's new Prime Minister.

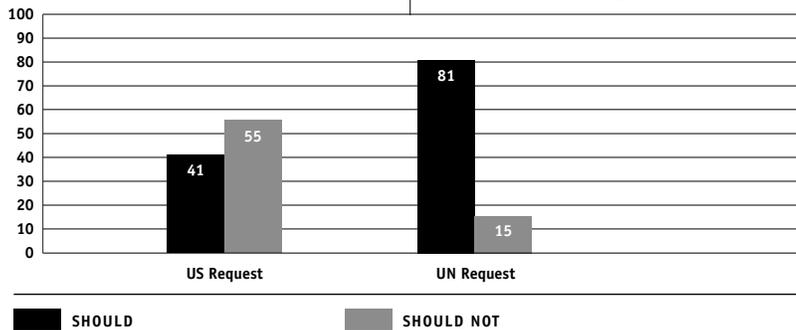
Despite all this, *Portraits* finds that the idea of pursuing a common currency with the United States, by either sharing a new North American currency or accepting the US dollar, appears to be fading as a policy option (possibly as a result of a strengthening Canadian dollar). Furthermore, there has been a seven-point decline between April 2002 (66%) and September 2003 (59%) in the percentage of Canadians who support a common border security policy.

## Part 5: Canada-US Relations

**FIGURE 23** SHOULD CANADA SEND SOLDIERS TO IRAQ?

1) If the **United States** were to ask Canada to send soldiers to Iraq in order to **assist the American military** in its efforts to stabilize the situation in that country, do you think Canada should or should not agree to the request?

2) If the **United Nations** were to take over responsibility for Iraq from the United States, and asked Canada to send soldiers to Iraq as part of a **United Nations military force**, do you think Canada should or should not agree to the United Nations request?

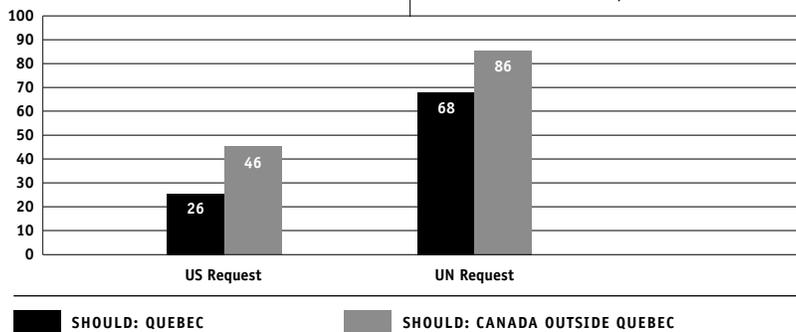


The results also confirm earlier research findings that a majority of Canadians (55%) oppose participating in the American-led intervention in Iraq (see Figure 23). This opposition would be converted to strong majority support (81%), if the United Nations were to request Canadian military participation in Iraq. While Americans distrust multilateral bodies such as the United Nations, Canadians are more confident acting in concert with multilateral institutions. In fact, the involvement of a multilateral decision-making process, whether it was NATO in the case of Kosovo or the UN with regard to Iraq, has become a necessary precursor for Canadian military involvement. In contrast, a multilateral process would be viewed with distrust and misgivings from an American standpoint.

**FIGURE 24** SHOULD CANADA SEND SOLDIERS TO IRAQ?

1) If the **United States** were to ask Canada to send soldiers to Iraq in order to **assist the American military** in its efforts to stabilize the situation in that country, do you think Canada should or should not agree to the request?

2) If the **United Nations** were to take over responsibility for Iraq from the United States, and asked Canada to send soldiers to Iraq as part of a **United Nations military force**, do you think Canada should or should not agree to the United Nations request?



Given these apparently conflicting results, what do Canadians mean when they say that they want closer ties with the US, but show greater reluctance about the elements of a closer relationship?

First of all, closer ties do not necessarily mean higher levels of economic integration or the harmonization of Canadian regulations to an American norm. For many Canadians, cooperation with the United States on issues such as border control or continental security does not mean co-optation; it means the recognition of a mutual responsibility. As such, it is seen as a relationship of partners (and not senior and junior partners, for that matter).

As hard as it may be for a Canadian nationalist to admit, Canadians labour under a naive (even nativistic) mindset that our society is superior to that of the Americans in every way. This attitude makes it difficult for Canadians to accept that American regulations in certain areas, food labelling for example, is equal or superior to our own. If we believe that American standards are less rigorous than Canadian standards, how can we reasonably expect our two countries to agree to common standards on drug testing, environmental regulations and food processing?

Perhaps Canadians are waiting for a sign of mutual respect as sufficient demonstration of close ties. Unfortunately, it seems that the only kind of attention that Canada receives these days in US political circles is negative. Our reluctance to go to Iraq persists more in their memory than does our immediate support for American travellers stranded in Canada immediately following the attacks on the World Trade Center or Canadian deaths in Khandahar.

Interestingly, the greatest change in our relationship has come as a result of our parallel evolution as nations over the past 50 years. Although these emerging differences are too subtle for some, it is clear that our attitudes toward government and society are quite different than those of Americans. The average American citizen remains focussed on local and domestic issues. Even the war in Iraq and the perceived exportation of American jobs to China or Mexico are seen through a domestic, rather than international, lens. Americans continue to believe in a unique destiny for their nation.

In contrast, Canadians have become more conscious of the world stage and Canada's status within the global community. It should be said that while some Canadians confidently embrace this new globalism, many others are either resigned to, or anxious about, the impact of a more open global economy on Canadian society. Nevertheless, they are committed to participating in the world community.

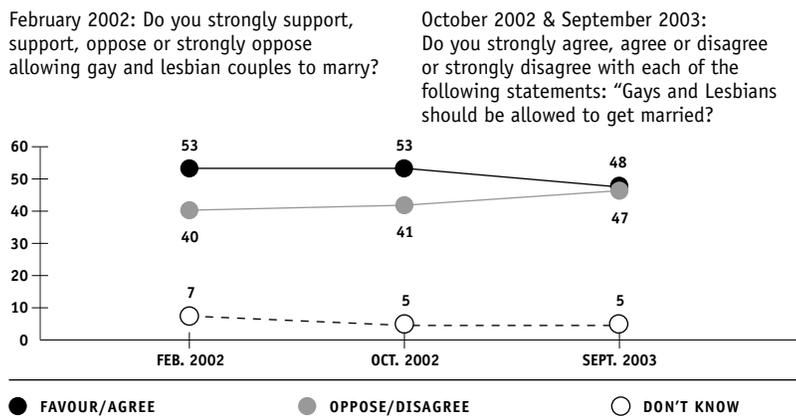
Given these differences, perhaps the important question for decision-makers in both countries is this: why has the relationship between our two countries been so good, and will it continue? We no longer have the threat of the Cold War to bind us. Will our mutual interest in a more open, competitive and democratic world be sufficient incentive to maintain the most successful international partnership between two sovereign countries?

*Chris Baker is the President of Continuum Research, an Ottawa-based public opinion consultancy specializing in public policy and public affairs.*

# Part 6: Courts, Parliament and Gay Marriage

- Nationally, 48% of Canadians agree that gays and lesbians should have the right to marry, as opposed to 47% who disagree. When CRIC last asked the question in October 2002, 53% of Canadians supported same-sex marriage and 41% opposed it.
- Younger Canadians are much more supportive of legalizing same-sex marriage than older Canadians.
- A majority of respondents say that the Supreme Court of Canada, and not Parliament, should have the final say when it comes to legislation that the Court says conflicts with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Forty-three percent of Canadians believe that legislatures should have the power to override the courts, as is the case under Section 33 of the Charter, as opposed to 50% who oppose the override.
- In February 2002, 28% of Canadians said that the government should use its power to overrule a court decision legalizing same-sex marriage while 67% disagreed. The 2003 *Portraits* survey shows that the number favouring government overruling the courts has now risen to 40%, while the percentage of those who disagree has fallen 16 points, to 51%. Again, age is a significant factor in that younger Canadians are much less likely than older Canadians to say that governments should overturn the decision on same-sex marriage.

**FIGURE 25** SAME-SEX MARRIAGE



same-sex marriage, but a clear majority supports the stand taken by the courts in support of gay and lesbian marriage.

Looking carefully at the data shows that the reason for this is that while attitudes toward same-sex marriage are for the most part very closely associated with whether one thinks the court rulings should be implemented or overruled (using the notwithstanding clause), the relationship is not consistent across all categories of respondents. Those who strongly agree with same-sex marriage are very nearly unanimous (97%) in saying that we should follow the courts. Moreover, among those who agree, but not strongly, with gay and lesbian marriage, the percentage favouring following the courts drops only slightly to 90%. On the other side of the issue those who disagree with same-sex marriage are less nearly uniform in their opinions. The distinction between those who disagree and those who disagree strongly is particularly striking. Over 90% percent of those who disagree strongly with allowing gays and lesbians to marry say the government should use its power to overrule the courts. By comparison, among those who disagree but not strongly with gay and lesbian marriage, the percentage favouring a government override of the courts' decision drops to 75%. Hence fully one quarter of those who somewhat disagree with same-sex marriage favour following the courts.

## DYNAMICS OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

BY JOSEPH F. FLETCHER

With Canadian opinion sharply divided on the issue of same-sex marriage, it is particularly worth our while to attend closely to what the CRIC data reveal about the dynamics of public attitudes on this issue. And what we learn may be useful in limiting (or exacerbating) the potentially divisive fallout from the much-anticipated Supreme Court decision now in the offing. The place to start is with CRIC's intriguing finding that Canadians split evenly on

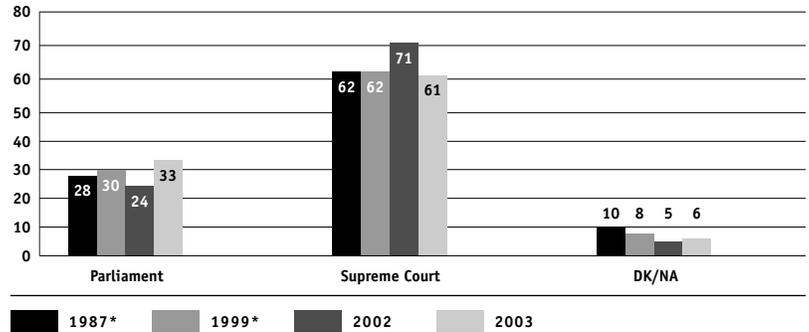
In other words, it is the relative inconsistency of those who only somewhat disagree with gay marriage that largely explains the complex state of public attitudes uncovered by CRIC. I say largely explains because a bit of the explanation also lies with those who decline to answer the same sex marriage question in the first place for they too are somewhat more likely to favour going with the courts.

The political upshot of this finding seems to be that despite opinion being evenly divided on same-sex marriage, we nonetheless have a majority in agreement on how we should decide the matter. The September 2003 survey shows most Canadians favour implementing the rulings of the courts. This finding, however, may have a limited shelf life. Looking at the development of the issue across time suggests that things have been changing quickly. There has been some movement in preference on same-sex marriage over time but more notable is the change in opinions on whether court rulings on the issue should be implemented or over-ridden through the use of the notwithstanding clause. This suggests greater polarization of opinion between those agreeing with same-sex marriage standing with the courts, and those disagreeing favouring the override. Examining the data from the perspective of consistency between these views, it is notable that the correlation has become stronger, moving from .44 in 2002 to .74 in 2003. Though there has been some tightening of opinion on both sides of the issue, the change has largely come among those who disagree with same-sex marriage, as they have become more likely to favour of the use of the override.

We can further examine the possible dynamics of public opinion on same-sex marriage using an experimental item carried in the 2002 CRIC survey on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms<sup>6</sup> featuring random wording variations to investigate the influence of framing the issue of gay rights in

**FIGURE 26 THE COURTS AND PARLIAMENT: WHO DECIDES?**

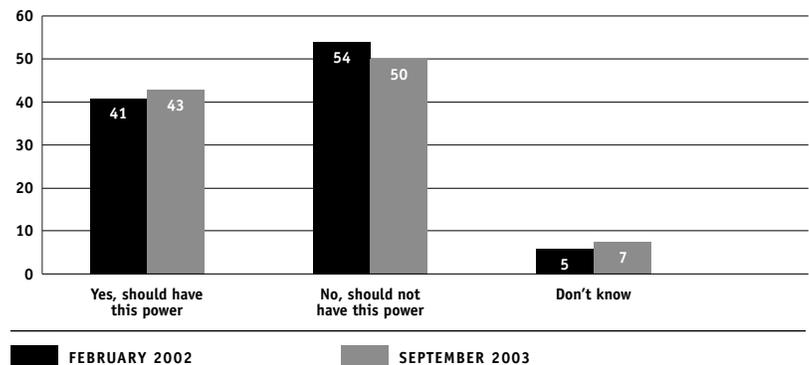
When Parliament passes a law but the Supreme Court of Canada says it is unconstitutional on the grounds that it conflicts with the Charter of Rights, who should have the final say, Parliament or the Supreme Court?



\* Data from 1987 (Charter Project) and 1999 (IRPP) reported in Joseph F. Fletcher and Paul Howe, "Canadian Attitudes Toward the Charter and the Courts in Comparative Perspective," *Choices* Vol. 6, No. 3 (May 2000). The question wording for these years was slightly different.

**FIGURE 27 THE CHARTER: SECTION 33 ("NOTWITHSTANDING CLAUSE")**

As you may know, in certain cases, the Canadian constitution gives governments the power to overrule the courts by passing a law, even though the courts have declared it to be unconstitutional because it violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Do you think that governments should or should not have this power?



three different ways.<sup>7</sup> Irrespective of framing variations, the common focus of the question concerned support for Charter of Rights guarantees for gays. Respondents were randomly selected to hear one of three question wordings. They were:

<sup>6</sup> See *The Charter: Dividing or Uniting Canadians?* CRIC Paper #5, (Montreal: CRIC, April 2002); available online at [www.cric.ca](http://www.cric.ca).

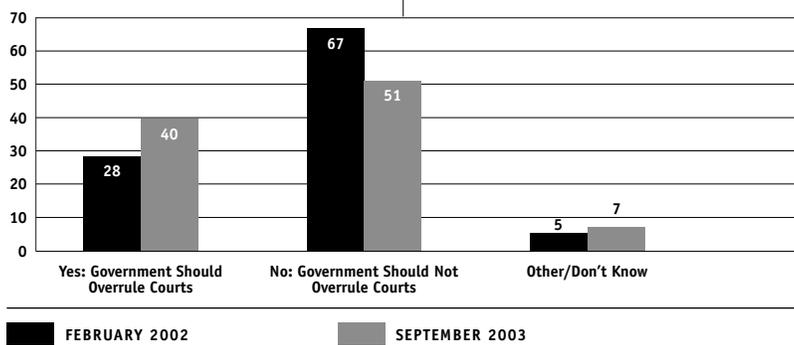
<sup>7</sup> The experimental question (q14) was placed in the middle of the survey ten items after the question about agreeing or disagreeing with gay marriage (q4) and well before the question about implementing or over-riding court decisions allowing gays and lesbians to marry (q33).

## Part 6: Courts, Parliament and Gay Marriage

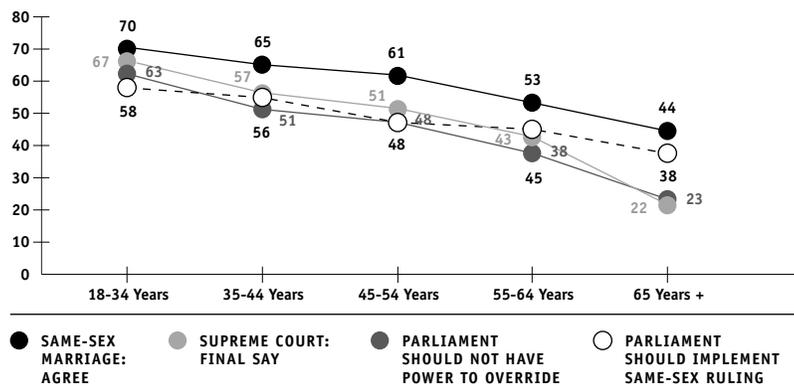
**FIGURE 28 SECTION 33 AND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**

Feb. 2002: If the Supreme Court said that the government had to give gays and lesbians the right to be married, do you think that the government should or should not use its power to overrule the court's decision?

Sept. 2003: The courts have now ruled that gays and lesbians must be given the right to get married. In your opinion, should the federal government implement the courts' ruling by passing a law to recognize same-sex marriage, or should it use its power to overrule the courts' decision?



**FIGURE 29 SAME-SEX MARRIAGE, THE COURTS AND PARLIAMENT BY AGE GROUP**



- [Discrimination Frame] The Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination against women, ethnic and religious minorities and other groups. In your opinion, should the Charter also prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians?
- [Discrimination + Courts Frame] The Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination against women, ethnic and religious minorities and other groups. Recently, the courts have ruled that the Charter must also prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians. Do you agree or disagree with this ruling?
- [Equality Frame] The Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equal rights for women, ethnic and religious minorities and other groups. In your opinion, should the Charter also guarantee equal rights for gays and lesbians?

The experiment produced only minor differences in how respondents felt about guarantees of gay rights. Bearing such apparently meagre fruit, the question was not repeated in the subsequent survey. Nevertheless, in a happy instance of teaching affecting research, Alison Burns, a student in my introductory research methods course, discovered that the experiment works differently for different respondents. In particular, the wording experiment makes a considerable difference in the answers given by those who oppose gay marriage in that they are substantially less likely to support equality for gays than they are to support non-discrimination for gays. The effect is especially pronounced among those strongly opposed to gay marriages (see Figure 30).

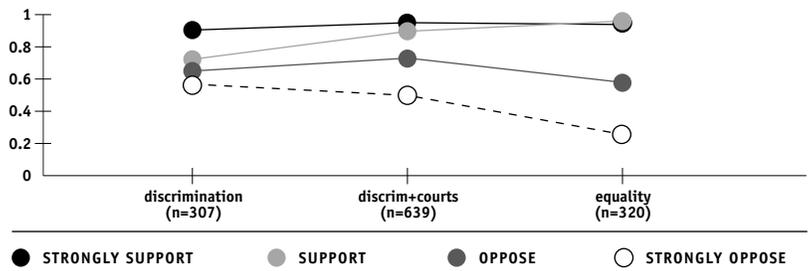
The framing of the Charter rights question also has an effect later in the interview when respondents are asked what should be done if the Supreme Court of Canada rules in favour of gay marriage. Those who had been previously asked about gay rights using the equality frame were substantially more divided over whether to support or override the Court's decision than those

who had been asked about gay rights using the non-discrimination framing. More specifically, as Figure 31 shows, when the issue of gay rights is framed as one of equality, the gap between those who favour and those who oppose gay rights is substantially wider than when the issue is framed as one of non-discrimination. In other words, framing the issue of gay rights as one of equality gains the Court more detractors than supporters. Mention of the courts has little effect.<sup>8</sup>

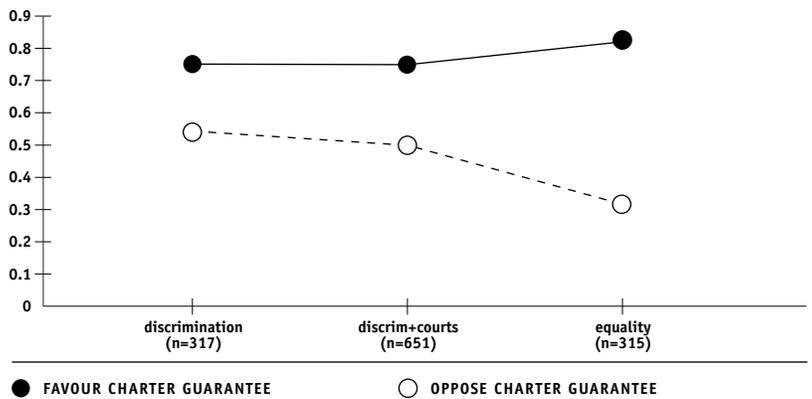
These findings suggest that the framing of gay rights issues can substantially sway public opinion regarding the Court. More specifically the language of equality is more divisive than the language of non-discrimination, particularly among those who are reticent to extend constitutional guarantees to gays and lesbians. Depending on how it is framed, therefore, the forthcoming Supreme Court ruling on the reference on gay marriage can be expected to be more or less divisive depending on whether the language of equality or non-discrimination is used. Similarly, in the run-up to the decision as well as in its aftermath the inevitable “spin” of pundits and activists can similarly be leveraged to advance their respective causes.

*Joseph Fletcher is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. He specializes in the analysis of public opinion data on the Charter, the courts and rights issues.*

**FIGURE 30** PROPORTION FAVOURING GAY RIGHTS, BY EXPERIMENTAL WORDING OF GAY RIGHTS QUESTION, BY ATTITUDE TOWARD GAY MARRIAGE (CRIC, FEB 2002)  
EXPERIMENTAL FRAMING OF GAY RIGHTS QUESTION



**FIGURE 31** PROPORTION ACCEPTING A SUPREME COURT DECISION FAVOURING GAY MARRIAGE (CRIC, FEBRUARY 2002)  
EXPERIMENTAL WORDING OF GAY RIGHTS QUESTION



<sup>8</sup> The framing difference survives the introduction of plausibly relevant statistical controls such as gender, age, education, religiosity, attitudes toward the Charter and attitudes toward the courts using multivariate logistic regression.



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