

**Québécois as Nation Resolution in Parliament:
Political Games That Won't Affect the Quebec Economy or
Future of Separatism but Reduces Respect for Politicians**

**BDO Dunwoody CEO/Business Leader Poll
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1.0 Introduction

The Québécois as Nation Resolution in Parliament is a matter of political gameship with no net impact on business but some diminished respect for national politicians. That is the general view of the CEOs and business leaders on the COMPAS panel.

On balance, the resolution will not increase or decrease support for separatism and will not affect the prospects for business in Quebec.

At best, the resolution is seen as a tactical manoeuvre in response to Liberal leadership candidate Michael Ignatieff's proposal to recognize Quebec as a nation. Ignatieff and fellow Liberal candidates Bob Rae and Gerard Kennedy earn failing grades for their performance on the issue. Along with Prime Minister Harper, Dion earns a bare passing grade.

Panelists say that they would almost certainly have advanced the resolution had they been in the position of the Bloc Québécois leader because it may conceivably help the separatist movement in some way. However, they would not have put such a resolution forward had they been in Harper's position and certainly not in Ignatieff's position. The latter elicits the most opprobrium while Intergovernmental Minister Michael Chong earns some respect for resigning on the matter.

These are the principal findings from the weekly business web-survey conducted by COMPAS for the *Financial Post* under sponsorship of BDO Dunwoody LLP. The survey was conducted immediately before the Liberal convention, which chose Stephane Dion as leader.



2.0 Impacts—No Net Impacts on Separatism, No Gain for Quebec Business

As shown in table 2, the resolution will not materially affect the separatist movement or party except insofar as it re-opens “a can of worms,” in the phrase of one panelists. Panelists are somewhat divided in their estimates of impact:

- Ignatieff’s raising the issue might strengthen the separatist movement by raising constitutional concerns in the view of the panel, while
- cross-party support for the ultimate Harper resolution may ultimately fail to deprive the separatist party and movement of a claim that the rest of Canada refuses to recognize Quebec adequately.

Table 2: (Q4) On a 7 point agreement scale where 1 means disagree strongly and 7, agree strongly, what is your view of the following opinions? RANDOMIZE

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
The resolution will strengthen separatist movement by raising constitutional questions again.	4.3	19	16	13	13	9	21	6	3
The resolution will weaken the separatist party by depriving it of the claim that the rest of Canada refuses to recognize Quebec’s uniqueness.	3.8	8	17	17	13	11	13	18	4
The resolution will strengthen business in Quebec motivating Quebec businesses to stay.	3.2	5	5	12	21	13	21	19	6
The resolution will help attract to Quebec businesses from outside the province.	2.6	2	2	7	19	10	25	30	6



Irrespective of the political consequences of the situation, panelists expect no real impact on the prospects for business in Quebec. By an overwhelming margin, panelists doubt that any feeling of national unity ostensibly generated by the resolution in Parliament will attract business to Quebec as a result.

3.0 Political Winners and Losers

Panelists were asked how they would have acted had they occupied the roles of the Bloc leader, Harper, or Ignatieff. Most would have advanced a type of Quebec as nation resolution had they led the Bloc, but not had they had occupied Harper's position and certainly not in Ignatieff's position, as shown in table 3A. The general view is that episode was wasteful and perhaps dangerous but some panelists volunteered an acknowledgement of what they felt to be Harper's dilemmas:

The whole thing is an utter waste of time and money. In the modern world all people call themselves whatever they like. People should be loyal and responsible to the area in which they live. Stephen Harper's move took some of the "puff" out of the PQ.

Harper did what he had to do. The result in my view just recognizes the reality that has existed since 1760, and was recognized in 1774, when Quebec was able to maintain their catholic religion and civil law. This does not undermine the strength of Canada, although we should also be more aggressive in promoting the Canadian nation.

I believe PM Harper was misguided in his decision to recognize Quebeckers (Québécois) as a Nation within Canada. Which other groups could now comprise a Nation? A can of worms is best left sealed.



This is the most slippery of slopes the Conservatives have embarked on to date. Who's next? Do we allow the Chinese-Canadians to proclaim nation status by heralding their differences too? What about Muslims? The idea of recognizing a "separate" nation within a nation is absurd. My confidence in the Conservatives to lead has diminished somewhat this week. This reminds me of being a "little bit" pregnant. Michael Chong gets the vote for strength of conviction award of the week.

Without the Liberal leadership race there would not have been any issue to raise the "nation" issue. Harper climbed on the bandwagon to deflate both the Liberals and the Bloc. Just another clear indication of politicians' efforts to garner votes, in this case, from Quebec. In fact, with all 3 parties now able to claim "success" in the Quebec issues, this is the province that will decide which party leads after the next election. There should however, be great concern that Pandora's box has been, again, opened at a time when it was not needed and when the support for the separation issue was not uppermost in Quebecker's minds.

We've been down this bullshit road before! This will suck up more time and hot air, and produce little...Enough already. The country has more significant issues to grapple with and resolve.



*Québécois Nation Resolution, BDO Dunwoody CEO/Business
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*Table 3A: (Q1-3) Please answer on a 7 point scale where
1 means definitely no and 7, definitely yes.*

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
If you had been leader of the Bloc Québécois, would you have intended to propose a Bloc resolution to recognize Quebec as a nation, which the Bloc leader was planning to do?	5.7	46	20	3	4	5	2	8	13
If you had been in Stephen Harper's position, would you have proposed his resolution that recognized the <i>Québécois</i> as a nation within a united Canada?	3.3	15	9	10	9	5	16	34	4
If you had been in Michael Ignatieff's position as a candidate for the leadership of the Liberal party, would you have recommended recognition of Quebec as a nation?	2.6	10	5	5	8	3	15	49	6



Table 3B: (Q5) On a 100 point school report card-type scale,
what performance score on this issue would you give...

	Mean
Michael Chong, the Intergovernmental Minister who resigned from cabinet rather than vote for the resolution	63
Liberal leadership candidate Stephane Dion	54
Prime Minister Stephen Harper	53
Liberal leadership candidate Gerard Kennedy	48
Liberal leadership candidate Bob Rae	45
Liberal leadership candidate Michael Ignatieff	38

3.0 Methodology

The COMPAS web-survey of CEOs and leaders of small, medium, and large corporations was conducted November 29 – December 1, 2006, just before the Liberal leadership convention. Respondents constitute an essentially hand-picked panel with a higher numerical representation of small and medium-sized firms.

Because of the small population of CEOs and business leaders from which the sample was drawn, the study can be considered more accurate than comparably sized general public studies. In studies of the general public, surveys n=134 is deemed accurate to within approximate 8.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal and co-investigator on this study are Conrad Winn, Ph.D. and Tamara Gottlieb.

