



December 9, 2006

EKOS ANALYSIS

Is “Quebécois” the new “Quebecker”: Implications for the Quebec as a Nation Debate

Among their many other differences, Quebeckers and other Canadians are divided about the meaning of the word “Quebécois”, which was used in both the French *and* English versions of the recent House of Commons resolution affirming that the Québécois are a nation. Quebeckers decisively say the word “Quebécois” is civic and territorial in character – that is, it includes everyone living in Quebec. In the rest of Canada, the clear majority of the public see the definition as either linguistic or ethnic-linguistic in nature.

The result, quite literally, is that the House of Commons resolution means one thing in one part of the country, and something else elsewhere.

Maurice Pinard has documented how the term “French Canadian” has morphed over many years into “Quebécois”, at least in political discourse. Now, in Quebec, the term “Quebécois” is principally defined by residence and territory and hence is more civic than linguistic or racial in character. One can presume then, that Jean Charest was correct in his recent comments on this issue, at least from the perspective of Quebeckers.

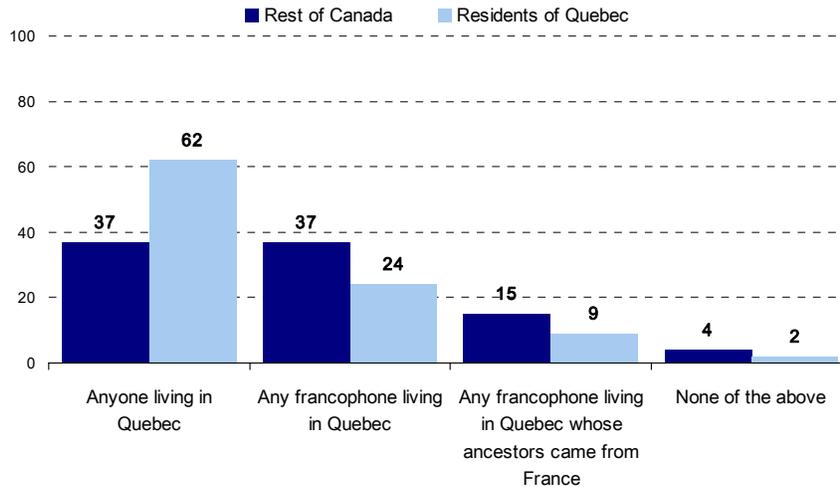
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Definition of “Quebecois”

Q: Which of the following definitions of the word “Quebecois” would you say comes closest to your own.



Base: All Canadians; Dec. 5-6/06 n=1022

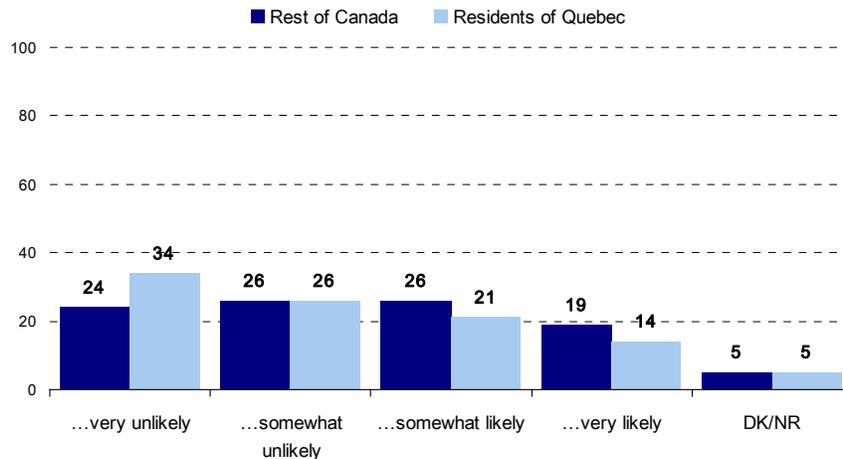
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There is, however, real potential confusion, if not mischief, in the fact that these views are decidedly different outside of Quebec. Many English Canadians have retained the traditional English dictionary definition of “Quebecois” as meaning a French-speaking Quebecker. (Confer the Oxford Canadian Dictionary). This reserves this term for natives of Quebec who are French speaking or French ancestry. Interestingly, the Heritage dictionary goes so far as to include supporters of the Parti Québécois in its various definitions of Québécois. In English, then, it seems, many Canadians make a distinction between “Quebeckers” who irrespective of linguistic background are residents of the province, and “Quebecois” who are seen as Francophones.

So, are these alternative understandings just a point of anthropological curiosity? We think not. The probing on whether or not recognition of a “Quebecois nation” means more powers or is just a symbolic gesture becomes more charged when we consider that Canadians do not share a semantically consistent understanding of the term. The term is neither conceptually nor phenomenally equivalent across the Quebec / ROC divide.

Likelihood of “nation” recognition resulting in more power for Quebec

Q: Do you think that the recognition of the Quebecois as a nation is likely to lead to greater powers for the Government of Quebec? Would you say this is...



Base: All Canadians; Dec. 5-6/06 n=1022

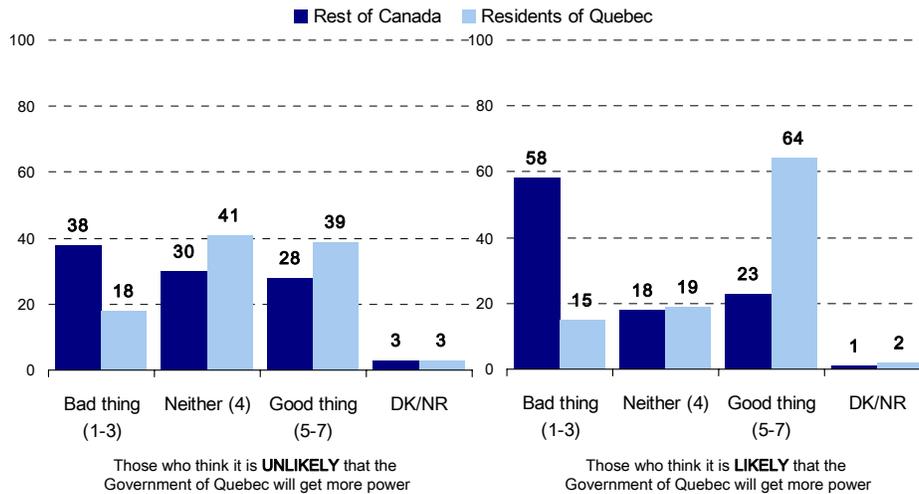
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Although both Quebeckers and English Canadians are split as to whether the affirmation of the Quebecois as a nation will actually mean more powers (and while Quebeckers are more skeptical), there is a profound division as to whether more powers is a good or bad thing. In simple terms more powers is a decidedly good thing if one lives in Québec and an equally decisively bad thing if one doesn't. If this debate evolves further, there is a potential for a powerful collision of views on this issue – one which likely has little middle ground.

If recognition acknowledges a symbolic gesture to the French culture in Quebec on the part of English Canada this is simply not what would be either understood or desired in Québec. In Québec the recognition is more civic and territorial in nature and ultimately would be linked to the preference for more power. Recognizing that the support for even the weaker symbolic gesture is tepid at best in English Canada, one can see the danger underlying further pursuit of the issue framed in this language at this time.

More power seen as a bad thing by ROC, while welcomed in Quebec

Q: Is this a good or a bad thing?



Base: All Canadians; Dec. 5-6/06 n=967

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METHODOLOGY

The EKOS survey sampled 1,022 Canadians between December 5 and December 6, 2006. A sample of this size produces a statistical margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as regions).

All the data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, gender and age composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.