

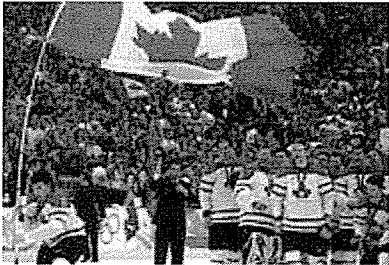
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Nationalism on rise, poll finds

Games afterglow

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The fervent flag-waving, raucous singing of O Canada and thrilling success of the country's athletes during the Vancouver 2010 Games appear to have influenced more Canadians -- especially Quebecers -- to view themselves as "Canadian nationalists," according to a survey conducted in the days following last week's closing ceremonies.

Andrew Cohen, president of the Historica-Dominion Institute, says the numbers show that Quebecers are feeling much closer to Canada, something he says is because the country is in a "sweet spot of security, unity and prosperity." More than 80% of Canadians in general, and nearly two-thirds of Quebecers, are willing to call themselves "Canadian nationalists," suggests the Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Historica-Dominion Institute.

That's a sharp rise from an identical poll conducted last March in which only 48% of Quebecers surveyed, and 72% of Canadians surveyed overall, said they would use the term.

"There is a larger sense that the country is at peace," Mr. Cohen says. "The unity crisis, which has bedevilled us for so long, no longer seems prominent."

More than 80% of respondents in Quebec agreed that "Canada plays a positive role in international affairs," up 16 points from last year, and 76% agreed they're "patriotic," an increase of 11 points. Mr. Cohen pointed out that two of the most compelling stories from the Olympics were that of Canada's first gold medallist, moguls skier Alexandre Bilodeau, and the inspirational performance of figure skater Joannie Rochette, who competed days after the sudden death of her mother.

"I think Quebecers saw how their athletes were embraced by the rest of the country," Mr. Cohen said. The national survey of 1,013 Canadians was completed on March 1 and 2, in the days after the Vancouver Olympics ended. The margin of error was 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The brash patriotism on display during the Games, even if short-lived, appears to have boosted Canadians' pride and confidence in the country's abilities in other ways as well. Two in three poll respondents said they "agree" that "when Canada speaks the world takes notice," a result that's up 13 points from last year's poll.

And nearly 90% of Canadians also think that "people in other countries look to Canada as an example" (up five points), and that they are "patriotic" (up four points).

Also showing a significant change, was the belief that Canada can dominate the Olympic medal standings.

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