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Québec

Historic change in the political landscape

- IV Online magazine - 2009 - IV409 - February 2009 -

Publication date: Sunday 22 February 2009

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Amir Khadir of the new leftist party Québec solidaire (Qs) was elected to the Québec National Assembly in Montréal's Mercier riding late last year. With this historic victory, Qs established itself as a credible option for an 'alternative Québec'. Although it has only 3.8% of the overall vote, Québec solidaire made significant advances in 8 other ridings. For example, Françoise David came in second in Gouin riding with 32% of the vote.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Qs_Amir-IVP.jpg]

Based on a feminist, ecological, anti-neoliberal and sovereigntist platform, Qs was founded in 2005 with the fusion of two left-wing organisations, Option citoyenne and Union des Forces progressistes, itself a regroupment of several left groups including Gauche socialiste, the Québec section of the Fourth International. Québec solidaire's first electoral outing was in the March 2007 elections where Amir Khadir and Françoise David both came in second in their ridings and garnered 3.65% of the vote. Completely ignored by English-Canadian media and excluded from the Québec leaders' debate, Qs based itself on being a party of the streets as well as the ballot box, engaging with social movements as central to building the party. This paid off in these elections.

The Québec elections were called on the heels of the October 2008 Canadian federal elections for similar reasons: a minority government seeking a chance to become a majority because the main opposition party had dropped in the polls. While the last 30 years have seen the Québec Liberal Party (Parti libéral du Québec - PLQ) and the Parti québécois (PQ) swapping roles as government or opposition, the March 2007 elections resulted in the right-wing Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) becoming the official opposition, with the PQ coming in third. This was mainly a rejection of the two main parties – PLQ and PQ – for a new alternative. But ADQ is a party centred on a single right-wing figure, Mario Dumont, with no credibility as the official opposition. The ADQ score in 2007 did raise hopes among Canada's governing Conservative party of Stephen Harper about prospects for increased support in Québec. Those hopes, along with the ADQ itself, were smashed in this election, as ADQ fell from 41 seats to only 7! In a generally lacklustre campaign, with the lowest voter turnout since 1927 of 56.5%, Jean Charest's Québec Liberal Party did get their majority – electing 66 members, with 63 needed for a majority, but the Parti Québécois, led by Pauline Marois rose from 36 to 51 seats, regained official opposition status. The real news was the election of Amir Khadir; a candidate from the new left 'upstart' party – Québec solidaire.

Further reading

<http://www.lagauche.com/lagauche/index.php>

<http://www.pressegauche.org/>

<http://www.quebecsolidaire.net/accueil>