

# Vive le Québec Libre?: The October Crisis of 1970



**Crisis Director: Nicholas Pizzo**

**TUMUN X**

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## Letter from the Crisis Director

Dear Delegates,

Bonjour-Hi and bienvenue au Québec! My name is Nicholas Pizzo, and I'm incredibly excited to welcome you all to "Vive le Québec Libre?: The October Crisis of 1970" at TUMUN X. I'm a first-year at Tufts, originally from the area around Chicago, IL, double majoring in Philosophy and International Relations with a minor in French. This is my fifth year participating in Model United Nations, and I'm super excited to be on the other side of committee for the first time here at TUMUN. Outside of MUN, I play guitar and sing in a screamo band on campus and participate in Tufts Effective Altruism. If you have questions about any of those things or Tufts in general, please feel free to email me and I will be happy to respond!

Though here at Tufts we are only a four-hour drive from crossing the border into Canada, the fascinating history of our northern neighbor is often ignored. However, the internal politics of Canada, our largest trading partner and longest-time ally, are quite important to the United States. In this committee, we will examine one of the fundamental problems in Canadian politics – the union between the "Anglo-Canadians" of the country's nine English speaking provinces, and the French-speaking Québécois.

The October Crisis of 1970 was the last time an elected political figure in Canada was assassinated, and an event that still affects Québec's increasingly nationalistic government today. In this committee, I hope to see you all grapple with the fundamental questions of Canada's democracy, and I am excited to see your solutions take shape!

Best,

Nicholas Pizzo

[nicholas.pizzo@tufts.edu](mailto:nicholas.pizzo@tufts.edu)

## **Technology Policy**

As this is a historical committee and an advanced crisis, there will be no use of technology allowed in the committee. Please refrain from utilizing computers, phones, or other electronic devices during the committee.

## **Out-of-Committee Writing Policy**

Pre-writing directives and working on directives outside of committee time is strictly prohibited and will lead to the removal of any offending delegates from awards consideration.

## **Position Paper Policy**

As this committee is historical and focuses on a relatively unknown topic, delegates are asked to submit one single-page position paper to the Crisis Director by email to [nicholas.pizzo@tufts.edu](mailto:nicholas.pizzo@tufts.edu). Delegates who do not submit a position paper before the beginning of the first committee session will not be considered for awards.

If you are unsure of how to write a strong position paper, a three-paragraph model is recommended. In the first paragraph, focus on the general history and assessment of events. In the second paragraph, focus on how your character has responded to this or similar crises before (remember that this committee starts on October 7th, 1970!). In the third paragraph, give your character's assessment of the best course of action to take during this crisis. Write all papers as if they were for general publication – don't tell us your secret backroom plans just yet!

## Fact Sheet: The Québec of 1970<sup>1,2</sup>

**Total Population:** 6,027,764 (27.9% of Canada)

**Capital City:** Québec City

**Largest City:** Montréal

**First Language:**

French: 80.7%

English: 13.1%

Other First Languages: 6.2% (mostly Indigenous languages, Spanish, and Arabic)



**Religion:**

Roman Catholic: 86.7%



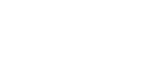
Protestant Christian: 7.2%



No Religion: ~2%



Jewish: 1.8%



Others: ~4%

**Unemployment Rate:** 7.9%

**Key Industries:** Hydroelectricity, Mining & Manufacturing, Aerospace

**Premier:** Robert Bourassa, Liberal Party (since May)

**Leader of the Opposition:** Jean-Jacques Bertrand, National Union (since May)

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, *1971 Canadian Census* (Ottawa, 1989), [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2017/statcan/CS92-703-1971.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/statcan/CS92-703-1971.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> K.G. Basavarajappa and Bali Ram, Statistics Canada, *Historical statistics of Canada, section A: Population and migration*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/pdf/5500092-eng.pdf>.

## Early History of Québec

The area now known as the Province of Québec has been inhabited since 10,000 BCE but remained very small in population until the development of agriculture in the region around 1300 CE.<sup>3</sup> The first European settler to establish a permanent settlement in Québec was Jacques Cartier, sailing for the King of France in 1534. Interest in the colonization of Canada was highly limited due to harsh winters, and thus Québec was not developed much farther until the resurgence of the fur trade in the late 16th century. Even so, very few French settlers (less than ten thousand in the first hundred years) established permanent settlements, many instead seasonally working in the beaver trade.<sup>4</sup>

Québec was made part of the formal colony of “New France” in 1608 and stayed as such until New France was ceded to the British in 1763. During this 155-year period, Québec, though still a small, largely resource-driven colony, gained much of its distinct character. Québec became intimately connected to the Catholic church, especially through nuns who provided almost all of the social services in the colony. As the 17th century continued, the French Empire was drawn increasingly into conflict with the British Empire, often through the two sides’ indigenous allies, the Algonquin and the Iroquois, respectively. By 1754, the **French and Indian War** (the North American theatre of the Seven Years’ War) began in earnest between the French and British directly, and in 1763, France ceded all North American territory to Britain.



*St Marie de l'Incarnation, a major figure in the early Quebec church.*

<sup>3</sup> Thomas F. McIlwraith and Edward K. Muller, *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 66, <https://archive.org/details/northamericahist00mcil/page/66/mode/2up>.

<sup>4</sup> Marie-Emmanuel Chabot, o.s.u., “GUYART, MARIE, named de l’Incarnation (Martin),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/guyart\\_marie\\_1E.html](https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/guyart_marie_1E.html).

Britain initially intended to transform Québec completely into a British colony, but in 1774, fearing that the “Canadiens” (Franco-Canadians) would join the American Revolution, the British passed the **Quebec Act**,<sup>5</sup> which allowed the Canadiens to maintain French civil law and the Catholic faith. During the period of crown administration and throughout the history of Québec, the province remained largely French, especially in rural areas. This largely was due to the significantly higher birth rate of the French-speaking Catholic population.<sup>6</sup>

In 1791, Québec was made one of the two provinces of Canada, known as Lower Canada, and given its own legislative assembly. However, this assembly immediately came into conflict with the British-appointed governors, and the leading French-Canadian political party, the **Parti Patriote**,

claimed that the British administrators were giving key contracts in growing industries, especially timber, to exclusively Anglo-Canadians. In 1837, the Patriotes, as they were known, rose in an unsuccessful rebellion that led to the execution or imprisonment of almost all of their key leaders. In 1840, the provinces of Lower and Upper Canada were united into one in order to weaken the power of the Francophone majority in Lower Canada. Political unrest continued, and in 1849,



*The Lower Canada Rebellion*

<sup>5</sup> Maxime Dagenais, "Quebec Act, 1774." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/quebec-act>.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Malcolmson and Richard Myers, *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada*, 6th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 203, <https://books.google.com/books?id=VNCX6UsdZYkC&pg=PA203>.

English-speaking rioters in Montreal burned the House of Parliament (causing the capital to permanently move from Montreal to Ottawa).<sup>7</sup>

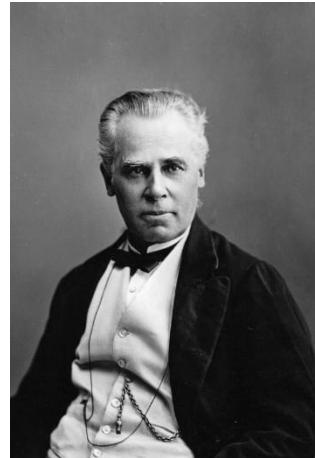
## The Formation of Modern Québec

Canada gained independence in 1867 (though technically a commonwealth dependency until 1992), and from the beginning of the confederation, Canada was envisioned as a union between the Anglo- and Franco-Canadian Nations.

**George-Étienne Cartier**, the founder of modern Québec, intended to establish a Franco-Canadian province in which the language would retain majority status, and the French Catholic Church could be protected.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the early confederation, Québec, especially in rural areas, maintained the culture of the New France era. The province's continued reliance on the Catholic Church for social services, including education, was notable for the Church's willingness to use political control to resist the rise of liberalism in Québec. One area where this was less effective was in the rapidly booming city of Montreal, which became the financial and technological center of Canada, and which was also increasingly willing to adopt bilingualism.

One of the most important Premiers (roughly equivalent to a governor of an American state) of Québec was **Maurice “Le Chef” (“The Boss”) Duplessis**, who served as Premier from 1936-1939 and then from 1944-1959. Duplessis's tenure would be later called the “Grande



*Cartier was a Patriote rebel who turned federalist due to fears of American expansion.*

<sup>7</sup> Philip A. Buckner, "Rebellion in Lower Canada (The Patriots' War)." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rebellion-in-lower-canada>.

<sup>8</sup> Jared Milne, "Couillard and Cartier: What's Old is New Again," *Active History*, December 9, 2014, <https://activehistory.ca/blog/2014/12/09/couillard-and-cartier-whats-old-is-new-again/>.

Noirceur", or "Great Darkness" by separatist leaders.<sup>9</sup> Duplessis was a fervent Catholic and anti-communist, and was notable for his crackdown on labor unions and support of anglophone-owned big business, which led to a months-long violent labor dispute in 1949 known as the **Asbestos Strike**.<sup>10</sup>

## The 1960s in Québec

In the 1960s, however, the conservative bent of the province would change significantly with the rise of the **Quiet Revolution**, and extension of the global counterculture movement of the 1960s. In 1960, the **Liberal Party of Québec**, a federalist liberal party, came to power with the intent of rebuilding the Québécois system. They established a welfare state, secularized the province, and generally established social liberal policies, such as legalizing divorce.<sup>11</sup> The Liberals also began to explicitly take the side of Francophone workers over their Anglo-Canadian bosses, significantly increasing tensions between the two groups. In 1967, the French President Charles de Gaulle, visiting the 1967 Montreal World's Fair, de Gaulle exclaimed "Vive le Québec Libre", seemingly signaling his support for Québécois



Charles de Gaulle famously declared "Long Live Free Quebec!" at the Montreal 1967 Expo.



The Montreal Expo of 1967

<sup>9</sup> Conrad M. Black, "Maurice Le Noblet Duplessis," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/maurice-le-noblet-duplessis>.

<sup>10</sup> Danny Kucharsky and Hélène David, "Asbestos Strike," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/asbestos-strike>.

<sup>11</sup> CBC Learning, "The October Crisis," <https://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP16CH1PA1LE.html>.

independence.<sup>12</sup> De Gaulle's declaration became the flashpoint for independence becoming a generally acceptable political position, rather than a fringe extremist one, and the same year, Québec Liberal star **Réne Levesque** left the party to form the separatist **Parti Québécois**.

## Québec Separatism

By 1970, the three dominant ideologies of Québec in 1970 were **Federalism, Traditional Nationalism, and Separatism**. Federalism refers to the political position of supporting the status of Québec in Canada at large and is led by the Liberal Party. Traditional Nationalism is a pro-Canadian ideology that emphasizes the differences between Anglophone and Francophone Canada and generally supports special privileges for Québec. Traditional Nationalism is most popular in rural areas and is represented by both the **National Union Party** and the **Social Credit Union**. Separatism is a diverse ideology that supports independence from Canada, with varied views on the association (or non-association) with the rest of Canada after independence. Its primary political wing is the **Parti Québécois**.

The separatists that caused the crisis of 1970, however, were not members of the Parti Québécois, or any political party. Instead, they were members of the radical militant group the **Front de Libération de Québec (FLQ)**, a Marxist-Leninist group that sought absolute independence from Canada. The FLQ operated in clandestine terrorist cells, and before 1970 had already carried out several bombings, including the **1969 Montreal Stock Exchange Bombing**.



*The Aftermath of the 1969 Stock Exchange Bombing*

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<sup>12</sup> CBC News, "'Charles de Gaulle's infamous 'Vive le Québec libre' speech feted, 50 years on," July 24, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/charles-de-gaulle-speech-50th-anniversary-1.4218130>.

## The Current Situation

The current date is October 7, 1970. Two days

ago, members of the FLQ kidnapped James Cross, a British Trade Representative at his home and held him hostage in an unknown location. The FLQ intends to use Cross as a bargaining chip in a hostage negotiation, demanding the release of “political prisoners” (FLQ terrorists apprehended for previous bombings), safe passage to Cuba, and the reading of the FLQ Manifesto on CBC, the Canadian national broadcast service. They have promised to execute Cross tonight if their demands are not met.

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1970, it is not clear the size, organization, or capacity of the FLQ. This body has been assembled from the most prominent members of Québécois society to respond to the crisis.

Please remember the date in committee! We will update you as time moves on in our simulation. Any actions or speeches based on information from after October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1970, will be voided.



*The Funeral of Pierre Laporte*



*Armed Soldiers in Montreal, Oct. 1970*

## Questions to Consider

1. To what extent should the provincial government concede to the demands of the FLQ? Is the protection of James Cross worth the demands made by the FLQ?
2. To what extent should the provincial government rely on federal intervention to protect the province?
3. To what extent can civil liberties be curtailed in a crisis?
4. In general, what should the relationship between Anglo- and Franco-Canadians be?

## **List of Positions<sup>13</sup>**

This committee has been assembled from members of the federal and provincial cabinets, law enforcement officials, opposition leaders, and civil society figures. Though this group may have been unlikely to assemble during the actual crisis, Premier Robert Bourassa was known for meeting with a wide variety of figures as the crisis unfolded, and thus this committee includes a diverse set of individuals.

### **Hugues Lapointe, Lieutenant Governor of Quebec**

Hughes Lapointe is the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, tasked with carrying out the constitutional and ceremonial duties of the British Monarch (the ceremonial head of state of Canada). He is a member of the federal and provincial Liberal party, and while loyal to the existing federal and provincial government, he is also required by his role to be mostly politically neutral.

### **Jean Marchand, Federal Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion**

Jean Marchand is the Federal Minister for Regional Industrial Expansion, and a Québécois Liberal. Marchand is a strict federalist and considered a member of the “Three Wise Men” of the Liberal Party along with his strong allies, the current Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier. He believes the FLQ is an eminent threat to the state and sought to react aggressively.

### **Gérard Pelletier, Federal Secretary of State for Canada**

Gérard Pelletier is the Federal Secretary of State for Canada, a position which makes him the primary representative to the United Kingdom from Canada. He is a strict federalist and considered a member of the “Three Wise Men” of the Liberal Party along with his strong allies,

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<sup>13</sup> Canada’s History of Rights, “The October Crisis: Appendix Y, The Roles of the Participants in Retrospect”, [https://historyofrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/FLQ\\_appendix.pdf](https://historyofrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/FLQ_appendix.pdf).

the current Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Jean Marchand. Pelletier's response to the crisis was more cautious than Marchand's.

### **Jérôme Choquette, Provincial Minister of Justice**

Jérôme Choquette is a Québec Liberal and the current provincial Minister of Justice, making him responsible for the prosecution and legal response to the crisis. A strong believer in the democratic virtues, Choquette is uncomfortable with, but not necessarily conclusively against, efforts to limit social liberties to respond to the crisis.

### **Claude Castonguay, Provincial Minister of Social Affairs**

Claude Castonguay is a conservative member of the Québec Liberals and currently the provincial minister of Social Affairs. During his term, he was responsible for the implementation of single-payer healthcare in Québec.

### **Guy Saint-Pierre, Provincial Minister of Education**

Guy Saint-Pierre is a technocratic member of the Québec Liberals and the current provincial minister of Education. He is primarily concerned with the FLQ's impact on economic and educational modernization.

### **Robert Demers, Negotiator for the Provincial Government**

Robert Demers is a prominent Montreal lawyer and the legal counsel for the Québec Liberal Party. He is a close friend of Premier Barassa and was selected to negotiate with the FLQ during the crisis.

### **Lt. General Gilles-Antoine Turcot, Commander of the Canadian Armed Forces**

Gilles-Antoine Turcot is the highest-ranking commander of the Canadian Army and is responsible for the command of any conventional federal armed forces that may be invoked during the crisis.

**Marcel Saint-Aubin, Director of the Montreal Police Services**

Marcel Saint-Aubin is the Director of the Montreal Police Service (French acronym SPVM). He has already dealt with the FLQ during their earlier bombings and is responsible for the initial investigation and civilian police response to the crisis. He is generally supportive of the invocation of emergency powers.

**René Lévesque, Leader of the Parti Québécois**

René Lévesque is the leader of the separatist party, the Parti Québécois. While he shares the FLQ's goal of Quebec independence, he vehemently denounces their violent methods as "undemocratic and suicidal" for the movement. However, he remains strictly opposed to the invocation of emergency powers.

**Claude Charron, Member of the National Assembly for Saint-Jacques**

Claude Charron is the youngest ever member elected to the Québec National Assembly, and a radical voice for separatism and the Parti Québécois. He is closely linked to student movements and labor organizations, but like most separatists, still opposes the FLQ's methods. He is on the left-wing of the Parti Québécois.

**Robert Burns, Member of the National Assembly for Maisonneuve**

Robert Burns is a MNA for the Parti Québécois, and a labor attorney for Québec's increasingly radical "Confédération des syndicats nationaux" trade union. Burns is the informal leader of the left-wing of the Parti Québécois (often in opposition to the more moderate wing led by René Lévesque).

**Jean-Jacques Bertrand, Leader of the Union Nationale**

Jean-Jacques Bertrand is the former Premier of Québec and the leader of the Union Nationale, the second-largest party in the National Assembly. A traditional Québec nationalist,

he is tasked with maintaining a position for his party against the widely popular federalist Liberals and the growing star of the separatist Parti Québécois.

### **Camil Samson, Leader of the Québec Social Credit Rally**

Camil Samson is the leader of the Québec Social Credit Rally, a party once based on an obscure economic ideology known as Social Credit Theory that has now become a populist conservative party strongest in rural Québec. He is a strong supporter of a “Law and Order” reaction to the crisis.

### **Jean Drapeau, Mayor of Montreal**

Jean Drapeau is the long-serving and powerful mayor of Montreal. Under his patronage, Montreal has massively expanded its prestige, and he views the FLQ as a direct threat to his work in the city. He is fearful of a coup by the FLQ, and hopes for federal intervention.

### **Claude Ryan, Editor of *Le Devoir***

Claude Ryan is an influential member of Québec civil society and the editor of the newspaper *Le Devoir*. He seeks to form a “group of eminent citizens” to mediate the crisis and find a peaceful resolution.

### **Michel Chartrand, Montreal President of the Confederation of National Trade Unions**

Michel Chartrand is a fiery labor leader and socialist-nationalist that leads the increasingly radical Montreal chapter of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (Confederation of National Trade Unions). His remarks, some of which border on support of the FLQ, have significantly incensed the provincial government.

## Resources for Delegates

Canada's History of Rights. "The October Crisis: Appendix Y, The Roles of the Participants in Retrospect." [https://historyofrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/FLQ\\_appendixy.pdf](https://historyofrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/FLQ_appendixy.pdf).

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<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/charles-de-gaulle-speech-50th-annivesary-1.4218130>.