

- 2 **Protecting minorities** How did the leaders on both sides of the borders address the needs of minority groups: Select two Canadian and two US leaders, and fill out the following chart in point form.

What conclusions can you reach based on the evidence gathered?

Leaders	Civil rights	Women's rights	First Nations
Canada			
United States			
Canada			
United States			

- 3 Compare the following:
- Trudeau's treatment of Quebec and Kennedy's treatment of the southern states of the USA.
 - Diefenbaker's Bill of Rights and Johnson's civil rights legislation?
 - Responsible government in Canada and the United States.
- 4 Speculate on the importance of the St. Lawrence Seaway project and the Auto Pact in developing closer economic ties between Canada and the United States that led to the North American Free Trade Agreement of the mid 1980s.
- 5 Select the US president and Canadian prime minister that, in your opinion, had the most effective and successful domestic policies? To what extent was their approach similar?

The Quiet Revolution

In the 1960s, Quebec entered a dynamic period of social, economic and political change and transformation, known as "*La Révolution tranquille*" (the Quiet Revolution). Québécois nationalist views were promoted by Union Nationale (Union National Party) under Premier Maurice Duplessis (arguably Canada's most corrupt politician) in the 1940s and 1950s. During the 1960s, young Québécois, irritated by the slow pace of change, demanded fundamental change and reform. These Québécois rejected the conservative Catholic, rural values that had long defined Quebec and instead they sought modernization and secularization that resulted in interventionist government policies that emphasized social policies and an increased bureaucracy to administer new programs. These did not come without a cost, however, Quebec went from being the least taxed province with the least debt to the most taxed and the most indebted in six short years. The Quiet Revolution is said to coincide with the leadership of Premier Jean Lesage, from 1960 to 1966, but the changes continued well into the 1970s, and their effects are still felt.

During the 1950s, a new urban, well-educated, secular and reform-minded middle class had emerged and was gaining influence over traditional, rural, Catholic Quebec. Between 1941 and 1971, the urban population swelled from 55 % to 78% of Quebec's population. At the same time, the number of farms decreased by over 50% and the rural farm population fell from 19.5% to 5.6%. The service sector experienced the greatest economic growth during the period and rose from 37.2% to 59.7%, reflecting the youth movement from farm to city. This new urban class wanted Quebec's institutions modernized and secularized and were tired of Duplessis's brand of nationalism, his corruption, influence-peddling and patronage-ridden style of politics.

Discussion point

Terminology

In Quebec the leader of the provincial government is called the **prime minister**. In the other nine provinces the provincial leader is called the **premier**. The **Legislative Assembly** or **Provincial legislatures** are the names commonly used to describe the legislative bodies of the Canadian provinces, with the exception of Quebec, which has a **National Assembly**.



Why does Quebec believe it is necessary to use different terms to describe the government leader and the legislative body?

They wanted a new Quebec that took economic control of the province from the wealthy English-speaking minority whose mansions in Montreal's fashionable Westmount district remained a symbol of conquest and subjugation. Influenced by the civil rights movement in the United States and decolonization movements elsewhere, they believed it was time for Quebec to do the same and assert its sovereignty. Finally, they wanted to protect Quebec's distinctive language and culture and expand the province's power and influence in Canada and abroad. "*Maître chez nous*" (Masters in our own house) became the slogan. The stage was set for the Quiet Revolution which according to Canadian Historian J. M. Bumstead transpired faster and with less resistance than anyone imagined or anticipated.

The Quiet Revolution was less a political movement orchestrated by politicians than an affirmation of an awakening by an entire society and the sudden integration of that society into the middle-class secular world of the twentieth century.

In 1960 the Liberals, led by Jean Lesage, won the provincial elections in Quebec but the results were not so much of an endorsement of the Liberals, as a turn away from the Union Nationale. Nonetheless, Lesage was determined to take advantage of the grass-roots demand for modernization of Quebec's government and institutions. The Liberal campaign had promised two things: an end to government corruption and the adoption of progressive policies. The Liberals had not outlined specific policies, but moved quickly and decisively in two areas that symbolized the Quiet Revolution—electric power and education.

In 1962, the Minister of Natural Resources, René Levesque (eventually leader of the separatist Parti Québécois) decided to nationalize hydro-electricity under a government-run corporation, Hydro-Québec. Levesque acted alone—without the prior knowledge or approval of cabinet. It was a bold move, Lesage and the takeover passed without much opposition in the National Assembly. The majority of power companies in Quebec were privately owned, mainly by English-speaking Canadians and the takeover symbolized that henceforth Quebec would be run by Québécois. It was very popular and costly at Can \$600 million. To implement the takeover, the Liberals tripled the provincial budget and demonstrated that they would use this money to pursue their true intentions—to be interventionist, nationalist and statist (this is pro-government solutions to economic and social problems). The Liberals would also assume control of other utility services (water and heating) and would try to promote greater industrialization.

The second area and symbolically more important focus was education, representing a break from Quebec's traditional rural and parochial past. Education had been run by the Roman Catholic Church since the founding of New France. Nuns and priests were the teachers, and teacher training and curriculum development (most notably in math and science) lagged behind the other Canadian provinces. The issue was more than just teaching methods and curriculum but the survival of Quebec in English-dominated Canada. The French press claimed that church-run schools had failed to protect the distinctive and unique language and culture of Quebec from assimilation into North-American (English-speaking) culture.

These issues were brought to the fore in the best-selling novel by Brother Jean-Paul Desbiens, *Les insolences du Frère Untel* (The Impertinences of Brother So and So), published in 1960. The central character was the fictional Frère Untel, a nationalist demanding that education in Quebec should first and foremost protect, defend and ensure the survival of French Canadian language and culture in its purest form. These fears were not without validity. Since the early 1950s, the birthrate in Quebec had fallen by half and consequently the French Canadian portion of the total Canadian population was in sharp decline. Frère Untel had a name for the erosion of language that was taking place: he called it *joual*, a hybrid dialect spoken by Québécois youth that was a style of French liberally laced with English words and phrases. The Frère blamed this on church-run schools that had failed in their duty to teach and protect the French language and culture. The church struck back by condemning Desbiens's novel and recalling him to Rome.

Lesage responded by setting up a provincial education commission called the Parent Commission named after its respected chair, Catholic cleric Monseigneur Alphonse-Marie Parent. Parent's 1963 report formed the blueprint for massive changes to education. In 1964, Bill 60 was passed that gave the provincial government control over education. In rapid order, education standards and teaching qualifications were brought up to national standards. The power of the Catholic Church to exert its influence on the people of Quebec had suffered a setback from which it could never recover.

The Liberals also moved to advance culture through a newly created Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The goal: to encourage, develop and showcase Québécois artists, writers and musicians. It led to a cultural renaissance that reacquainted the province with its proud and distinct cultural history and heritage and reenergized a distinctive arts community dedicated to promoting French Canadian language and culture. Despite instituting a series of popular changes, Lesage was defeated in 1966 by a reinvigorated Union Nationale led by the popular leader Daniel Johnson (who died suddenly in 1968). Johnson had no intention of overturning Liberal reforms, and continued their policies in many instances.

He appointed a commission to investigate French language rights and purity that set the stage for language legislation in the 1970s that made Quebec a unilingual French speaking province, with the passing of the controversial Official Language Act (*Loi sur la langue officielle*) in 1974 that made French the official and dominant language of the province. In 1977, the separatist Parti Québécois government enacted the Charter of French Language (*La charte de la langue française*), known as Bill 101. It declared that French was the fundamental and only language of Quebec. It made French the normal and daily language of the workplace. Schools were required to teach in French only and it was made compulsory for immigrants to learn French. All public signs and advertisements were to be in French. The Quebec government replaced Bill 101 in 1988 with Bill 178 that reflected the court decisions particularly regarding unilingual commercial sign, advertising and company names.

Johnson also made advances in women's rights establishing a Royal Commission on the Status of Women. During the Quiet Revolution, the women of Quebec, like women throughout North America and the developed world, rejected the traditional roles of childbearing and childrearing and joined the workforce in ever-growing numbers. This struck at the very heart of Quebec society with its emphasis on traditional family values and was further evidence of the declining influence of the Catholic Church. Large families had been the norm in Quebec, 10 or more children was not unusual. Procreation had a religious and political imperative. The Catholic Church forbade the use of modern contraception, ensuring a birth rate at least twice that of the rest of Canada. But by the 1950s, the use of modern birth control methods had brought about a rapid decline in the province's birth rates and the fear of assimilation prompted the search for new ways of protecting Quebec's unique status in Canada.

The centerpiece to Quebec's new self-image was the 1967 Montreal World Expo that coincided with Canada's centenary celebrations. Over 50 million visitors and foreign dignitaries came to the "Man and His World" exhibition and were impressed by what they saw. In just five years the city of Montreal had been transformed into a modern city through major public works projects that included an underground metro system, a new international airport, major freeways and sports facilities. An artificial island, Notre Dame, was built in the St. Lawrence River as part of the new metro construction and was the location of many pavilions and exhibitions.

The changes drew notice from the recently restored French president Charles De Gaulle who began treating Quebec as if it were a sovereign nation after his first visit in 1960. He claimed that the spirit of change and revolution in Quebec was an example to France in addressing its own problems. His actions drew the immediate attention of the federal government. During his visit to Expo 67, de Gaulle infamously ended a speech with "Vive le Québec, Vive le Québec Libres!" (Long live a free Quebec!), causing an uproar among the political leadership in Ottawa. This invocation drew attention to Quebec's growing desire and endless demands to be given special status—a determination that would not abate and would dominate the national scene for the next three decades.

In any revolution there are casualties. In Quebec, it was the English minority. Many could trace their ancestry in Quebec back over two centuries, arriving just after the conquest during the glory days of the Montreal fur trade when the city was Canada's economic centre. The province was their home but they were no longer welcome. As a consequence, thousands moved to English-speaking provinces and took with them their business, expertise and wealth, leaving behind a void that would take time to fill. But their exodus did not stop the revolution. Some of the more radical proponents considered it to be an essential part of the purification process.

By the end of the decade, Quebec had broken out of its traditional stranglehold and modernization had created a new sense of destiny. It was a revolution that dramatically changed Quebec's perception of

itself, its identity and its place in confederation. No longer rural, Catholic and parochial, the new Quebec was modern, well-educated, dynamic and autonomous. Relations with the rest of Canada would become increasingly strained during the decade and into the next as the province demanded and received special status and treatment. Yet, for an ever-growing number of young Québécois, this was not enough and a new force would emerge that seemed the logical outcome of this desire for autonomy and cultural purity in separatism.



Why was it called “The Quiet Revolution”? What else would you call it?

Discussion point

Revolutions

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a social revolution as “a great change in conditions, ways of working beliefs, etc. that affects large numbers of peoples.”



Based on this definition do you agree that what took place in Quebec during the 1960s should be called a “revolution”?

Activity

Cooperative federalism

In the following political cartoon, Prime Minister Pearson is dressed as the referee, Premier Lesage of Quebec is in hockey gear and “The Other Nine” premiers are dressed as baseball players.

What message is the cartoonist trying to convey about the nature of federal–provincial relations in the 1960s in Canada during the time of the Quiet Revolution and, in particular, relations between the federal government and Quebec? What is Quebec’s perception of its special status? Who does the waterboy represent and what message is being conveyed? What is meant by the title “Cooperative federalism”?



“Cooperative federalism” by John Collins, first published in the *Montreal Gazette*, c. 1964.