

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

ALBERTA IS ANGRY

The most imminent threat to Canada’s federation is a growing disenchantment in the oil-rich provinces

OPINION

Nik Nanos is the chief data scientist at Nanos Research, research adjunct professor at the Norman Paterson School for International Affairs at Carleton University, and the official pollster for The Globe and Mail and CTV News.

The spectre of Alberta separation is on the horizon. The path to independence is clear. The separatist offramp back to Canada’s federation is trickier.

Western alienation and disenchantment with Ottawa are longstanding and part of Alberta’s political DNA. Right now, the mood in the West is quite ugly. Ask people that live in the Prairie provinces the emotions they feel when they think of the federal government – anger tops the list at 35 per cent followed by pessimism at 26 per cent. Feelings of anger and pessimism towards Ottawa are the most intense in the Prairies, outstripping every other region of the country.

We should not be surprised that Reform Party founder and former Opposition leader Preston Manning sounded the clarion call of what he believes to be a backlash against Canada. Mr. Manning’s Globe and Mail opinion piece during the recent federal election, where he asserted that a vote for the Liberals was a vote to fan the flames of Western separation, was grounded in the view that the negative impact of Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government on the West was egregious enough to trigger a possible break-up of the federation.

The most imminent threat to Canada’s federation is a growing disenchantment in the oil-rich West, with Alberta being ground zero. A survey for The Globe and Mail by Nanos in April suggested that more than six in ten Canadians felt talk of separation should be taken seriously to one extent or another (32 per cent seriously, another 30 per cent somewhat seriously). We are at moment in time where Western disaffection today is different than in the past.

First, research by Nanos for The Globe and Mail conducted in Alberta shows that a very noticeable proportion of Albertans believe they would have a stronger economy in the long run if they were an independent country (20 per cent) or part of the United States (10 per cent). Views on

the economic benefits of leaving Canada are stronger outside of the big cities of Calgary and Edmonton.

Albertans are more likely to agree with Preston Manning that a Conservative majority government led by Pierre Poilievre would make Canada more united as a country (35 per cent), compared to a Liberal majority government led by Mark Carney (21 per cent). Of note, almost one in five Albertans (18 per cent) asserted that no outcome would make Canada more united.

Even with the appetite for a

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Conservative majority government, the positive news for the Carney Liberal government is that Albertans do believe there are actions that can help improve the relationship. At the top is listen more to the Government of Alberta (22 per cent) followed by treat the Alberta government with respect (19 per cent) or as an equal (14 per cent). Of note is that one in five Albertans (22 per cent) believe there is nothing the federal government can do to improve relations with Alberta.

At the top of the list of recom-

mended priorities for Ottawa when it comes to Alberta is approving pipelines and energy projects (43 per cent). Clearly, the first and biggest hurdle for the Carney government is to move forward on energy. Pipeline politics are complicated. But today’s environment gives leaders political license to create a national energy corridor, which includes moving oil and liquified natural gas from Alberta to the East. If the energy file goes sideways, however, it will play into the forces of separatism within Alberta.

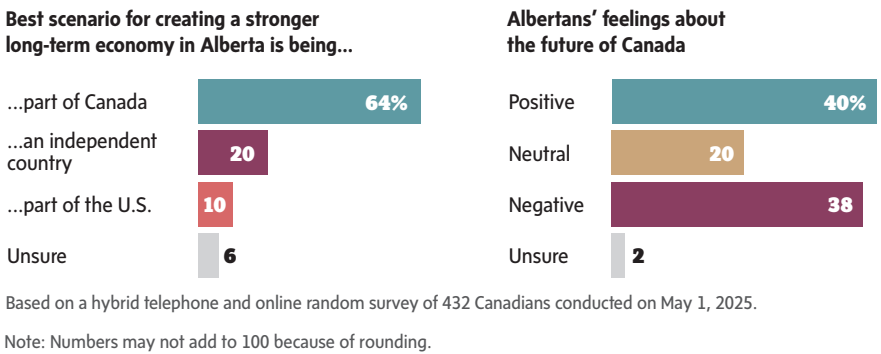
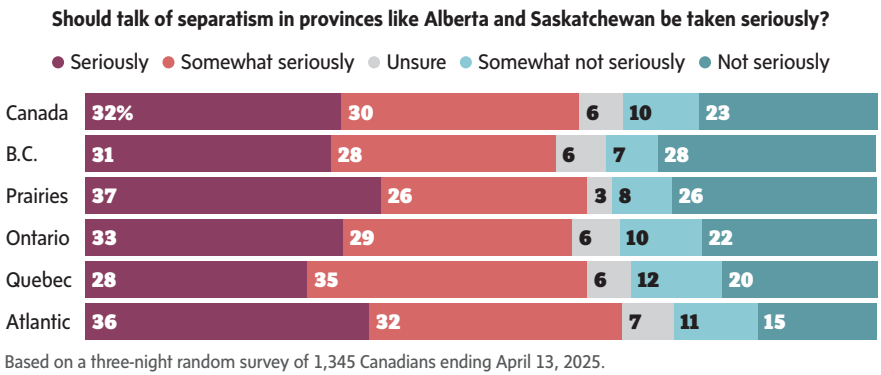
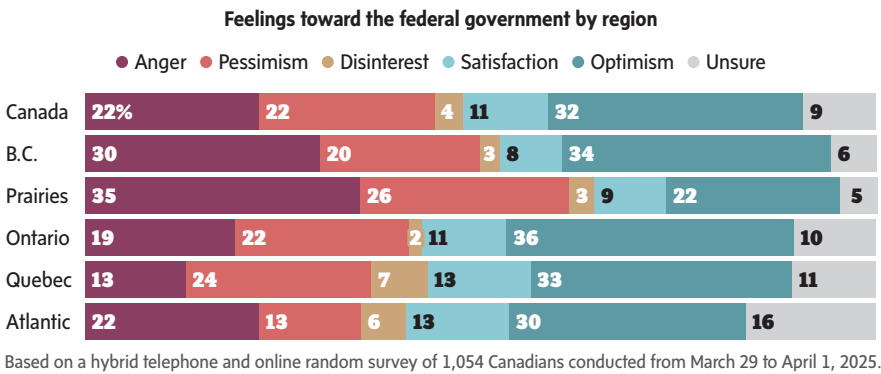
Managing the politics of a budding separatism movement may take more than stick-handling energy projects. A look at the party standings in the Alberta legislature provides insight into additional factors that Premier Danielle Smith is navigating. In the last provincial election, Ms. Smith’s United Conservative Party (UCP) won 49 of 87 seats to form a majority government followed by the NDP who won 38 seats. Currently, the UCP stands at 46 seats, the NDP at 36 with two independents and three vacant seats.

With three in 10 Albertans believing it would be beneficial to leave Canada, the likelihood of UCP caucus members open to independence should not be dismissed. This casts a different light of the Premier Smith balancing act – advancing the interests of Alberta, engaging the federal government while looking over her shoulder at a separatist movement in her province and likely even in her caucus.

To complicate things is the fledgling independence-minded Republican Party in Alberta which will be looking to field candidates in the three by-elections to be held on June 23. The by-elections will be a litmus test on the real political traction of the independence movement in Alberta.

Alberta’s political landscape is shifting, and the forces of separatism are no longer just murmurs on the fringes. Whether this leads to a referendum or remains a pressure tactic against Ottawa, one thing is certain – Canada’s federation is at a crossroads. The question now is whether political leaders will heed the warning signs and act decisively, or whether Alberta’s simmering discontent will boil over into a seismic reckoning for the country. Time, as always, will be the ultimate judge.

The West wants in



MURAT YÜKSELİR / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: NANOS RESEARCH

A crisis in men’s health

There is a growing, disconcerting trend in this country that chronic illness isn’t the only battle men are facing, **Mark Holland** writes

OPINION

Mark Holland is Canada’s former minister of health, the former leader of the government in the House of Commons, the former chief government whip and the former executive director of the Heart and Stroke Foundation’s Ontario Mission.

The trend in men’s health is moving in the wrong direction, and the cost is staggering. It’s not just the lives of the people we love that are at risk; it’s also draining our economy and overwhelming our health care system. The conditions and outcomes driving this crisis are largely preventable, yet we continue to treat the symptoms rather than confront the root causes.

We cannot build enough hospitals or hire enough doctors and nurses to keep pace with the rising tide of chronic illness and mental health issues. Our most powerful tool is prevention, and too often, it is our least considered one. Nowhere is this more evident – or alarming – than when it comes to the health of Canadian men.

A new report from the Movement Institute of Men’s Health reveals that more than two in five Canadian men will die prematurely – before the age of 75 – from largely preventable causes. While a portion of these deaths are attributable to conditions like cancer and heart dis-

ease, there is a growing, disconcerting trend in Canada that chronic illness isn’t the only battle men are facing with their health.

Between January and June of 2024 alone, men accounted for 72 per cent of deaths caused by accidental opioid toxicity, and 64 per cent of opioid-related hospitalizations in Canada. Suicide remains the fourth-leading cause of death among men and occurs at three times the rate seen in women.

This crisis isn’t only about biology; it’s deeply cultural. Sixty-one per cent of men report feeling pressure to “tough it out” or hide their pain. Harmful social norms continue to equate masculinity with stoicism – defining strength as the ability to silently endure, to shoulder hurt invisibly, or to numb pain altogether.

This resonates personally. In the lead-up to the 2011 federal election and the aftermath of losing my seat, I wanted to appear strong. I feared that speaking about the mental-health challenges I was experiencing would make me appear weak or frail. I wanted my family, friends and especially potential employers to see me as strong, so I suffered alone. I didn’t seek help, and it almost cost me my life.

Outdated ideas of strength are not making us more resilient – they’re fuelling a health crisis. If

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we want to stop unnecessarily losing the men we love, we need a cultural shift. That means re-framing how we talk about men’s health and how we design our health policies.

In 1999, Canada introduced a national women’s health strategy, which served as a catalyst for advancements in women’s health. While there is still more work to do, the strategy helped align health system stakeholders and signalled the importance of gender-responsive care.

Canada would similarly benefit from the development of a national men’s health strategy – one that prioritizes improving mental-health literacy, equips health care workers to better engage men, advances targeted research and scales gender-informed programs through a Canada-wide Men’s Health Centre. Together, these efforts would help the health care system listen more closely to men, support them without judgment and address the unique barriers they face. These are clear, actionable steps that would lead to measurable improvements.

Other countries have demonstrated what is possible. Ireland launched the world’s first National Men’s Health Strategy in 2008. Since then, Irish men’s life expectancy has increased by nearly three years – from 76.8 in 2008 to 79.6 in 2022 – and male suicide rates have declined. These outcomes weren’t driven

by breakthrough technologies, but by targeted strategies focused on prevention, outreach and cultural change.

At the core of a national strategy is the imperative to invest in prevention. Our health care system is under strain. If we continue to respond only to illness instead of preventing it, we will remain trapped in a cycle we cannot afford. In 2024, Canada spent an estimated \$12.4-billion treating avoidable cases of just five major health issues disproportionately affecting men: coronary heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, colorectal cancer and suicide. The only sustainable path is upstream – stopping illness before it begins.

The solutions to save countless lives and billions of dollars are within our grasp. There’s no ribbon to cut or monument to point to. It will take time, and it will initially be invisible. But we know what works. We can create a future with fewer preventable deaths, lower health care costs and vastly increased productivity.

Canada has the knowledge, tools and capacity to lead this transformation. What we need now is the public will to act. We must start a national conversation – one that places prevention at the foundation of our health care system and reimagines what it means to care for men’s health.