

CANADA PULSE INSIGHTS

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Treason in the Air: Most Canadians Back Premier Eby's Comment Over Alberta Separatists, Split on Premier Smith's Retorts

February 10, 2026, Toronto, Ontario, Canada — A new Canada Pulse Insights survey finds Canadians broadly aligned with B.C. Premier David Eby's sharp criticism of Alberta separatist leaders who have held repeated meetings with officials at the U.S. State Department. Just prior to a First Ministers' meeting in Ottawa on Thursday, January 29, 2026, Eby said such overtures were "completely inappropriate" and amounted to "an old-fashioned word for that, and that word is treason."

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith attempted to counter that criticism, arguing that the use of the term "treason" was a "desperate attempt to chill free speech," and adding that she would not "demonize or marginalize a million of my fellow citizens when they've got legitimate grievances."

Regardless of the premiers' contrasting statements, the poll also finds Prime Minister Mark Carney, who hosted the First Ministers' meeting, receives good marks from a majority (72%) of Canadians who agree he "is doing a good job of unifying Canada, not dividing it."

It should also be noted that Canada has experienced two referendums to alter the country—both in Quebec: the first on May 20, 1980, to give the provincial government a mandate to negotiate "sovereignty-association", (defeated No 59.56% to Yes 40.44%), and again on October 30, 1995, as to whether Quebec should become sovereign (defeated No 50.58% to Yes 49.42%). This means that virtually an entire adult generation aged 18-34 has had no exposure to such an occurrence in Canada except through folklore and high-school history lessons.

The survey tested reactions to these remarks by first providing respondents with contextual information and then asking them to agree or disagree with the verbatim statements (which were randomized), without identifying which leader had made them. This approach was used to minimize partisan or personality-driven bias in respondents' answers. *

Topline findings on sentiments about separatist U.S. meetings

The poll found a majority of Canadians broadly in agreement with Premier Eby's statements, while the findings on the comments made by Premier Smith send a more mixed signal: a majority supported her views in one statement while a slim majority rejected her assertion in another. As noted previously, both sets of statements were made by each premier just prior to a First Ministers' meeting on Thursday, January 29, 2026.

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Premier Eby's views garner majority agreement

This is what B.C. Premier David Eby said:

“It is completely inappropriate to seek to weaken Canada, to go and ask for assistance to break up this country from a foreign power.”

Eight in 10 (81%) Canadians agree with this statement. This majority is led by those living in British Columbia (86%), followed by those living in Ontario (83%) and Atlantic Canada (83%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (82%), Québec (78%), and Alberta (69%). Those most likely to agree with this sentiment are the oldest Canadians (aged 55+ 86%), those who are lower income (<\$50K 83%), and women (82%), while all others approximate the national norm.

Those most likely to disagree with this sentiment (19%) are found most in Alberta (31%), followed by Québec (22%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (18%), Ontario (17%), and British Columbia (14%). Those who are middle-aged or younger (<54 23%) and men (21%) are most likely to disagree with this view, while all others approximate the national norm.

“To go to a foreign country and to ask for assistance in breaking up Canada, there's an old-fashioned word for that, and that word is treason.”

On his sharper remark, seven in 10 (71%) Canadians agree and are led by those living in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (82%), followed by Atlantic Canada (78%), Ontario (77%), British Columbia (75%), Québec (63%), and Alberta (56%). Across the country, the oldest Canadians (aged 65+ 79%) and those who are middle to lower income (<\$99K 74%) are most likely to agree with this statement, while all others approximate the national norm.

Those most likely to disagree with this statement (29%) can be found in Alberta (44%), followed by Québec (37%), British Columbia (25%), Ontario (23%), Atlantic Canada (22%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (18%). Those who are middle-aged (35–54 36%), and those with the highest income (\$100K+ 35%) are most likely to disagree with the statement, while all others approximate the national norm.

Alberta Premier Smith's perspective gets mixed reviews

This is what Alberta Premier Danielle Smith said:

“The idea that we are somehow committing treason because we are discussing what an independent Alberta would look like is a desperate attempt to chill free speech.”

A majority (53%) of Canadians disagree with Smith's view — especially among those living in Ontario (58%) and British Columbia (57%), followed by those living in Atlantic Canada (50%), Québec (49%), and Alberta (45%). Women (57%), those with postsecondary education (56%), and those who are middle-aged and older (35+ 56%) are most likely to disagree with this sentiment.

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By contrast, just under half (47%) of Canadians agree with this sentiment — led by those living in Alberta (55%), followed by residents of Québec (51%), Atlantic Canada (50%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (45%), British Columbia (43%), and Ontario (42%).

But while most disagreed with Smith’s view on that count, a clear majority (59%) of Canadians were more inclined to side with her perspective that:

“I’m not going to demonize or marginalize a million of my fellow citizens when they’ve got legitimate grievances.” as she put it.

Among this majority (59%), most residing in Alberta (64%) embrace that view, followed by those living in Saskatchewan/Manitoba/Québec/Atlantic Canada (62%) and British Columbia/Ontario (55%). Younger Canadians (aged 18–34 65%) and men (60%) are most likely to support this view.

Those most likely to disagree with this sentiment (41%) may be found in British Columbia/Ontario (45%), followed by those living in Saskatchewan/Manitoba/Québec/Atlantic Canada (38%) and Alberta (36%). The oldest Canadians (55+ 46%) have the strongest pushback on this sentiment.

Prime Minister Carney gets good marks as a unifier

While the two premiers were the most prominent voices in characterizing the cross-border discussions, Prime Minister Mark Carney, who hosted the First Ministers’ meeting, is given good marks by a majority (72%) of Canadians who believe that he “is doing a good job of unifying Canada, not dividing it.”

Those who agree with this perspective (72%) are most likely to hail from Québec (75%), followed by those living in British Columbia (73%), Ontario/Atlantic Canada (72%), and Alberta/Saskatchewan/Manitoba (67%). Older (aged 55+ 78%) and younger (aged 18–34 74%) Canadians appear most eager to take this position.

Those who disagree with the view that the prime minister is doing a good job of unifying Canada, not dividing it (28%) can be found in Alberta/Saskatchewan/Manitoba (33%), followed by Ontario/Atlantic Canada (28%), British Columbia (27%), and Québec (25%). Middle-aged Canadians (35–54 37%) are most likely to take this view.

About the survey

This survey was conducted with 1,510 Canadian adults as part of a Canada Pulse Insights national omnibus survey, fielded from January 29 to February 2, 2026. A random sample of respondents was invited to complete the survey through an online panel platform managed by SAGO, one of the world’s largest sample and panel suppliers. The data were weighted according to census benchmarks, so the sample aligns with Canada’s population by age, gender, educational attainment, and region. The margin of error for a comparable

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probability-based random sample of the same size is ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Any discrepancies between the detailed tables and published results are due to rounding. The detailed tables and questions used for this are posted to the Canada Pulse insights website as a companion part of this release of findings.

This survey — from questionnaire through to publication — was conceived, conducted, and released without any client direction or compensation. Both Canada Pulse Insights and Sago are accredited members of the Canadian Research Insights Council

(CRIC) and adhere to its Canadian Code of Market, Opinion, and Social Research and Data Analytics.

***Assessing the statements**

The survey tested reactions to these remarks by first providing respondents with contextual information and then asking them to agree or disagree with the verbatim statements, without identifying which leader had made them. This approach was used to minimize partisan or personality-driven bias in respondents' answers.

Contextual setting

“It’s been reported that leaders of the Alberta Prosperity Project — a separatist group advocating for Alberta’s independence — have met with U.S. State Department officials three times in Washington since April 2025 as part of a ‘diplomatic outreach’ to secure a \$500-billion (USD) line of credit to stabilize a new Alberta currency, discuss energy security and the creation of energy corridors through states like Montana and Idaho, and seek international recognition of Alberta’s sovereignty, following the success of a potential future referendum.

None of these activities meet the threshold definition of ‘treason’ or ‘sedition’ under the Canadian Criminal Code.”

Having been informed of this, respondents were then provided with non-attributed quotes which were randomized) and asked if they agreed (strongly/somewhat) or disagreed (somewhat/strongly) with those statements.

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