

Québec Solidaire chooses right-wing nationalist Sol Zanetti as co-spokesperson

Hugo Maltais

11 December 2025

At its congress last month, Québec Solidaire (QS) chose Sol Zanetti, a Quebec City MNA (Member of the National Assembly) and fervent *indépendantiste*, as its “male spokesperson” and “updated” its election platform to further emphasize its pro-capitalist character.

These actions are part of Québec Solidaire’s ongoing efforts to project a more “responsible,” pro-establishment orientation and place the promotion of Quebec independence at the centre of its activity.

QS is thereby signalling to the nationalist sections of the ruling class that it is prepared to play an even larger role in realizing their reactionary project of creating a third imperialist state in North America through Quebec’s secession.

Zanetti is the former leader of Option Nationale, a small right-wing nationalist party founded in 2011 following a split from the Parti Québécois (PQ) led by the former PQ MNA and investment banker Jean-Martin Aussant. Aussant accused the PQ of “soft-peddling” the fight for independence and becoming a mere “provincial” party. QS officially integrated Option Nationale (ON) into the party in 2018, with the leadership changing the party constitution to give ON a special status as a recognized “collective,” allowing its members to more effectively agitate for their nationalist views within QS.

In securing the position of QS co-spokesperson, Zanetti defeated by a wide margin the candidate favoured by the party establishment, his fellow Quebec City MNA Étienne Grandmont. Grandmont sought to camouflage QS’s increasingly blatant shift right, arguing that the pseudo-left party should emphasize mounting economic distress and social inequality, and be more vocal in supporting “worker struggles.”

Grandmont referenced and drew inspiration from the successful New York City mayoral campaign of Zohran Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The DSA functions as a faction within the Democratic Party, one of the twin parties of American imperialism. Mamdani generated widespread popular support for his electoral platform based on lowering the cost of living (especially rents and transit fares) and opposing the genocide in Gaza. But as soon as he was elected, he rushed to the White House to strike a partnership with the fascist US President Donald Trump.

Unlike Grandmont, Zanetti ran a campaign entirely focused on Quebec independence. He declared it Québec Solidaire’s “historic mission” to contribute to a “Yes” victory in a future referendum on independence. Zanetti touted his personal “credibility” as a staunch *indépendantiste* as “key” to the party’s campaign in the next provincial election, slated for October 2026.

This nationalist, pro-sovereignist message clearly resonated with QS members, who gave Zanetti more than 50 percent of their votes, propelling him to a first-ballot victory over Grandmont and Dr. Yv Bonnier Viger.

The scrapping of QS’s “left-wing” pretensions signalled by the victory of the right-wing nationalist Zanetti over the “progressive” Grandmont was also reflected in changes to the party’s platform. Although the new

document has not yet been published, reports from congress participants indicate that it makes no connection between capitalism, the climate crisis and socio-economic problems, and depicts small and medium-sized businesses—not working class struggle—as the engine of major societal change.

Since its formation in 2006 by feminists, environmental and anti-poverty activists, and other “left-wing” nationalists, QS has operated entirely within Quebec sovereignist circles. It has repeatedly sought to negotiate an electoral pact with the PQ, including at the height of the 2012 student strike.

Speaking for privileged layers of the middle class, QS serves the faction of the Quebec ruling class that sees the creation of a third imperialist state in North America as a means of intensifying worker exploitation and more effectively advancing its economic and geostrategic interests.

Within the “sovereignist family,” Québec Solidaire’s special function is to use what remains of its fraudulent image as a “left-wing,” “anti-establishment” party to give a “progressive” and “democratic” veneer to Quebec nationalism and the program of Quebec independence.

Québec Solidaire and the PQ’s chauvinist, pro-imperialist program for Quebec independence

Once presented as a “social project”—the fraudulent idea that an independent Quebec would be a vehicle for social progress—Quebec independence is now openly promoted by the Parti Québécois, the main sovereignist party, as a chauvinist, exclusivist and openly pro-big business project.

The PQ constantly attacks immigrants and Muslims, accusing them of being responsible for myriad social ills, from the housing crisis and dilapidated public services to increased crime and violence. It insists that Quebec independence is the only way to “drastically” reduce immigration and thereby protect the Quebec “nation,” which it claims is threatened with extinction by “uncontrolled immigration.”

During the presentation of the first chapter of the PQ’s new “blue book” on independence, PQ leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon trumpeted that a future République du Québec would accept its “responsibilities” and serve as a member of leading imperialist military alliances such as NATO and NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command).

The PQ leader forthrightly declared that an independent Quebec would have to align its economic and military policies with the United States as part of a “common strategy.” This amounted to a declaration of loyalty to the Trump administration, even as the would-be American dictator intensifies his witch-hunt against immigrants and preparations to wage imperialist war on China, Iran, and Venezuela.

St-Pierre Plamondon followed this up by boasting before the PQ’s

recent National Council meeting that independence is an “entrepreneurial project” aimed at making Quebec “a rich country” and “our businesses” prosperous. The PQ leader, who constantly rails against the federal government’s supposed “excessive spending,” emphasized the opportunities that independence would provide to implement a pro-big business agenda of reduced “bureaucracy,” deregulation and corporate tax breaks.

The ruling class is well aware that a push for independence based on such reactionary policies and appeals is likely to provoke opposition within the working class. Polls currently indicate that the sovereignist option has the support of less than 35 percent of the electorate.

A significant faction of the sovereignist movement, represented by former PQ premier Lucien Bouchard and former Quebec City mayor Régis Labeaume, has called on St-Pierre Plamondon to tone down his Quebec chauvinist rhetoric. These figures fear that the PQ’s “Quebec First” chauvinism and anti-immigrant incitement could compromise the Yes camp’s chances in a future referendum—particularly in the context of a surge in Canadian nationalism following President Trump’s tariffs and threats to use economic force to annex Canada.

These sections of the ruling class are urging the PQ to temper its attacks on QS and follow the example of Jacques Parizeau, the PQ premier at the time of the 1995 referendum, in working for a pro-independence “rainbow coalition.” They calculate that because of its public identification as “left,” and occasional criticisms of the PQ’s most extreme chauvinist positions, QS can be used to promote the illusion of an “inclusive,” “open” and “democratic” nationalism, thereby preventing workers from breaking definitively with the *indépendantiste* program.

Writing in *Le Devoir*, nationalist columnist Michel David argued that even if QS’s representation in the National Assembly were reduced to just two or three in the next election (a real possibility given the collapse in its support), the party could play a crucial role in the success of an independence referendum by rallying immigrants and other sections of the allophone population to the Yes camp. With this in mind, sections of the corporate media are heavily promoting the QS’s female spokesperson, Ruba Ghazal—who was born in Lebanon to a family of Palestinian refugees before immigrating to Quebec as a child—as an emblematic figure of “inclusive” sovereignty, i.e., Quebec separatism.

QS also serves to legitimize the shift of the entire Quebec ruling class toward unvarnished chauvinism by labeling agitation against immigrants and religious minorities as “legitimate debates.” QS constantly defends Premier François Legault, his “national-autonomist” Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), and the PQ by fraudulently claiming that their attitude towards immigrants and immigration are not racist or “intolerant,” even as they engage in increasingly vicious attacks on immigrants and religious minorities.

In this vein, Ghazal recently told the *Journal de Montréal* (JdM), an ultranationalist tabloid owned by billionaire and former PQ leader Pierre-Karl Péladeau, that she is willing to discuss immigration thresholds and that she understands Quebecers’ “fear of disappearing.” This lends credibility to the Quebec version of the fascist “Great Replacement” theory put forward by the PQ.

Frictions in the “sovereignist family”

Assuming their assigned roles, the two QS spokespersons offered timid criticism of the PQ’s “insular” sovereignty at the November 8-9 congress at which Zanetti’s election was announced.

At the same time, QS removed from its platform the proposal to elect a constituent assembly by universal suffrage—intended to “democratically”

establish the constitution of a potential independent Quebec state—which had been sharply criticized by St-Pierre Plamondon and the PQ. The party also expunged any reference to the PQ’s “ethnic or identity nationalism” from its platform.

This did not prevent the PQ from reacting angrily to Zanetti and Ghazal’s comments. St-Pierre Plamondon accused the QS spokespersons of “creating divisions among the population” and “damaging the social climate” with their “deplorable and shameful attacks” on the PQ.

Right-wing forces gravitating around the PQ, including the ultranationalist columnists of *Le Journal de Montréal*, simultaneously launched a barrage of attacks against QS while appealing to Zanetti, the “true nationalist,” to prevail on QS to stop its attacks on the PQ, which “serve the interests of the federalists.”

Reflecting Québec Solidaire’s true orientation, just two weeks after its congress, Vincent Marissal, one of its Montreal MNAs, quit the party after it was revealed that he had spoken with St-Pierre Plamondon about defecting to the PQ. Whilst slamming the door on QS, Marissal accused his former colleagues of launching “personal” and “vicious” attacks against the PQ, for their meek criticisms of its chauvinist fulminations. He also condemned his former party for its refusal to publicly support the use of Bill 14 to outlaw a partial strike by STM (Société de transport de Montréal) transit workers.

Marissal was soon followed by none other than the manager of Zanetti’s campaign for QS co-leader and head of the Option National Collective in QS. Earlier this week, Jimmy Thibodeau published an opinion piece in *Le Devoir* in which he announced he was quitting QS for the PQ, because of the QS “attacks” on the PQ and the supposed opposition of many QS activists to a PQ-led bid for Quebec independence.

In reply Zanetti reaffirmed that QS will act as the PQ’s loyal junior partner. “I think,” said the QS co-spokesperson, “there are criticisms that need to be made, which are important in the name of unity within the Yes camp, and that’s the approach we’re taking. It’s rare that we make criticisms of the Parti Québécois, notwithstanding the visceral reactions they provoke.”

Meanwhile, the “left wing” of QS has been active on the *Presse-toi à gauche* website, drawing a false distinction between the “identitarian” and “non-genuine” independence proposed by the PQ and the “full and complete ... egalitarian, feminist, ecological, and de-colonial” independence advocated by QS.

These pseudo-left forces are attempting to camouflage Québec Solidaire’s turn to the right by covering its reactionary policies with a “socialist” veneer. They serve to foster illusions in the QS and supplement the efforts of QS to revive the myth of Quebec independence as a “progressive social project.”

As the class struggle intensifies across North America and internationally, it becomes ever clearer that the problems confronting Quebec workers are rooted in a global crisis of capitalism; and are essentially the same as those faced by their class brothers and sisters across Canada and internationally.

Quebec independence is a trap for the working class. It is advocated by sections of the ruling class, petty bourgeoisie and union bureaucracy as a means of advancing their own class interests—not least among them dividing and isolating Quebec workers from their class brothers and sisters in Canada and internationally in order to prevent a unified struggle of the working class against capitalism.

The working class must reject the nationalist agitation for Quebec independence, whether explicitly chauvinist and right-wing or “inclusive” and “left-wing.” It must no less forcefully repudiate Canadian nationalism—the ideological weapon of the federalist section of the Canadian financial elite in Quebec and across the country—and oppose the federal state, which for more than 150 years has served as the principal enforcer of capitalist exploitation in the northern tier of North America.

To prepare for the intense class struggles ahead, the working class must build an independent political movement, opposed to all the rival factions of the ruling class, to unite workers across national borders in the struggle for workers' power and international socialism.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact