

Majority (56%) of Canadians Believe Foreign Ownership a 'Problem'

Only 40% Think Foreign Ownership Benefits the Canadian Economy

Half (48%) Say 'Government not Strict Enough' in its Regulation of Foreign Investment and Ownership in Canada

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Toronto, ON – In light of a recent flurry of Canadian corporations being sold or up for sale, a new national poll conducted by Ipsos Reid exclusively for CanWest Global finds that a majority (56%) of Canadians believe that ‘foreign ownership is definitely a problem in Canada’. Further, these Canadians maintain that we should monitor the situation carefully and try to increase Canadian ownership of companies which operate in Canada. Conversely, just one in six (16%) say that ‘ownership is not a problem’ and that ‘we should be trying to attract more foreign investment’. Nearly three in ten (27%) say that the levels of foreign ownership are ‘just about right’.

When weighing the merits and demerits of foreign ownership, four in ten (40%) Canadians believe that the current level of foreign ownership in Canada ‘benefits the economy’. However, a similar proportion (37%) believes that the current levels ‘hurt the Canadian economy’. Two in ten (18%) regard the levels of foreign ownership as having no impact one way or the other.

Thinking about practices which regulate foreign investment and ownership in Canada, half (48%) believe that 'the government is not strict enough in its regulation of foreign investment and ownership in Canada'. One third (34%) agree that 'there is about the right amount of federal government regulation in this area', while very few (7%) say that 'the federal government is too strict in its regulation of foreign investment and ownership'.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for CanWest Global from May 22 to May 24, 2007. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1000 adults was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

Majority (56%) Believe Foreign Ownership a 'Problem'...

Saying that Canadians should be watching the levels of foreign ownership carefully, a majority of Canadians (56%) believe that foreign ownership in Canada is a 'problem'. Speaking about the extent to which companies in Canada are owned by foreigners, nearly three in ten (27%) maintain that the 'current level of foreign ownership in Canada is just about right'. Further, these advocates of the status quo say that Canada need not reverse any move towards foreign ownership that have occurred in the past, but that Canada should not be trying to attract more foreign ownership either.

- Ontarians are more likely than residents of other provinces to agree that foreign ownership is a problem in Canada, with six in ten (60%) agreeing that a problem exists. Just over half (51%) of the residents of Quebec and Alberta say the same.

- Education appears to play a role in an individual's propensity to agree that foreign ownership is a problem. Seven in ten (70%) individuals without a high school diploma believe that there is a problem, with just over half (52%) of university graduates agreeing that a problem exists.

Canadians Split on Whether Current Levels of Foreign Ownership Help Economy...

Canadians appear to be fairly evenly split on the issue of whether or not the current level of foreign ownership in Canada is good for the economy. Four in ten (40%) think that the present level of foreign ownership in Canada 'benefits the Canadian economy', while a similar amount (37%) believe that the present level of foreign ownership 'hurts the Canadian economy'. Two in ten (18%) think that it does not have an impact one way or another.

- Almost half (43%) of Ontarians believe foreign ownership 'hurts the Canadian economy', compared one third (31%) of Albertans.
- Older Canadians, aged 55 and over, are more likely than Canadians of other age groups to believe that foreign ownership 'hurts the economy', with 43% believing that it does so, compared to one third (33%) of younger Canadians, aged 18 to 34.
- Once again, education appears to be a factor in one's opinions on foreign ownership, with 43% of Canadians without a high school diploma believing that it hurts the economy, and only one third (33%) of those with a university degree saying that it 'hurts the economy'.

Nearly Half of Canadians (48%) Believe Government 'Not Strict Enough' in its Regulation of Foreign Investment and Ownership...

Nearly half of Canadians (48%) believe that the government is 'not strict enough' in its regulation of foreign investment and ownership in Canada. Conversely, just 7% say that the government is 'too strict' in this regard. One third (34%) say that it's 'about the right amount' of regulation.

- A majority (55%) of rural Canadians think that the government is 'not strict enough', compared to 46% of urban Canadians.
- A similar proportion (55%) of older Canadians, aged 55 and up, believe the government is 'not strict enough', compared with four in ten (40%) younger Canadians, aged 18 to 34.
- One in ten (11%) Canadians did not know whether the regulations were too strict, too lenient, or appropriate.

Canadians Steady in their Views...

When compared to data collected almost twenty years ago on the topic of foreign ownership in Canada, it appears that Canadians have not changed much when it comes to how they feel about the foreign ownership of companies operating within Canada.

- In 1989, fully half (50%) of Canadians believed foreign ownership to be a problem in Canada, compared to 56% who think the same in 2007. Conversely, in 1989, 18% of Canadians thought that foreign ownership was not a problem, compared to 16% who currently say that foreign ownership is not a problem in Canada.



- In 1989, 42% of Canadians felt that foreign ownership benefited the Canadian economy, while slightly less (40%) have the same feeling today. Similarly, while in 1989 one third (34%) of Canadians thought that their current levels of foreign ownership hurt the economy, 37% think the same thing today.
- Despite the apparent fear of some Canadians regarding foreign ownership, Canadians are generally happier with government regulations regarding the ownership of companies by foreigners than they were before. In 1989, 53% of Canadians thought that the government was not strict enough in their regulations, while, in 2007, 48% of Canadians believe that the government is not strict enough in its regulation of foreign ownership. Similarly, one third (34%) of Canadians currently think that there is 'about the right amount of federal government regulation in this area', compared to one quarter (25%) who felt the same nearly twenty years ago.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

John Wright
Senior Vice President
Ipsos Reid
Public Affairs
(416) 324-2002

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