

CANADIANS WEIGH IN ON THE FUTURE OF THE SENATE

Two Thirds (64%) Say Yes to Referendum on Senate, but Majority Wants Reform (52%) not Abolishment (24%)



Ipsos Reid

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THE FUTURE OF THE SENATE

Two Thirds (64%) Say Yes to Referendum on Senate, but Majority Wants Reform (52%) not Abolishment (24%)

Ottawa, ON – In a week where the Senate was the focus of debate, and amid calls for a national referendum on the topic, a new Ipsos Reid Poll conducted exclusively on behalf of CanWest News Service and Global Television reveals that two thirds (64%) of Canadians either ‘strongly’ (35%) or ‘somewhat’ (30%) support the undertaking of a referendum to determine the future of the Senate as a parliamentary institution in Canada. Just one quarter (26%) of Canadians ‘strongly’ (13%) or ‘somewhat oppose’ (13%) the idea of having a referendum on the future of the Senate.

Earlier in the week, NDP Leader Jack Layton called the Senate ‘outdated and obsolete’, calling for its unqualified abolishment, and for the question to be put forward to Canadians in a national referendum.

With Canadians apparently supporting Mr. Layton’s idea of a national referendum on the topic, supposing there was a referendum where Canadians were given two options – to keep the senate or to abolish the senate – more Canadians would opt to abolish it (45%) than to keep it (41%). One in seven (14%), though, do not know which option they would choose.

Prime Minister Harper, though, has adopted the position that the Senate must first agree to be reformed, or face abolition. But regardless of whether or not there is a referendum on the future of the Senate, the majority (52%) of Canadians agree with Prime Minister Harper’s position and believe that the Senate should ‘be reformed to make it, for instance, an elected body’. One quarter (24%) of Canadians are of the opinion that the Senate ‘be done away with completely’, while just 16% of Canadians believe that it should just ‘be kept as it is’.



These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted for CanWest News Service/Global News and fielded from Nov 6 – Nov 8, 2007. For this survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the aggregate 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 Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within each sub-grouping of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

Prairie-Dwellers, Middle-Aged Canadians Most in Favour of Holding Referendum...

Canadians across the country are not uniform in their endorsement of a referendum to deal with the future of the Senate. The following is a more specific analysis of support for the referendum:

- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (76%) as well as Alberta (72%) are most likely to support the idea of undertaking a referendum, followed by those in British Columbia (68%), Quebec (64%), Ontario (61%) and Atlantic Canada (56%).
- Middle-aged Canadians are more likely (69%) than older (66%) or younger Canadians (59%) to support the notion of a referendum on this matter.
- Men (66%) are slightly more likely than women (63%) to want a referendum to deal with the Senate Question.

Choosing Between Status quo and Abolishment, Majority (60%) of Quebecers Choose Abolishment...

If a referendum question were to be posed which asked Canadians to choose between keeping the Senate and the abolition of the Senate, this is how Canadians would vote:

- A majority of Quebecers (60%) would choose to abolish the Senate, followed distantly by residents of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (47%), Atlantic Canada (42%), British Columbia (41%), and Ontario (36%).
- Atlantic Canadians (48%) would be the most likely to vote in favour of keeping the Senate, followed by residents living in Ontario (46%), Alberta (43%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (42%), British Columbia (41%), and Quebec (31%).
- Interestingly, older Canadians are much more likely (57%) than middle-aged (48%) and younger Canadians (28%) to say that they would vote to abolish the Senate.
- Men (52%) are much more likely than women (38%) to say that they would vote to abolish the Senate.

Canadians Prefer Reform to Abolishment...

If given the option to choose among three different options – status quo, reform, or abolishment --- a majority (52%) of Canadians would choose to reform the Senate, not abolish it (24%). Just 16% prefer the status quo.

- Forty-Two (42%) percent of Quebecers believe that the Senate should be abolished, which is compared to just 24% of Albertans and Atlantic Canadians, 19% of British Columbians, 17% of those living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and 15% of those living in Ontario.
- Ontarians (22%) are the most likely to believe that the status quo should be preserved, followed by Atlantic Canadians (19%), Quebecers (14%), British Columbians (10%), and Canadians living in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (8%).



- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba are the biggest proponents of reform (67%), followed by Albertans (63%), British Columbians (62%), Ontarians (53%), Atlantic Canadians (50%), and Quebecers (37%).
- Older Canadians are more likely (31%) than middle-aged (25%) and young Canadians (14%) to believe that the Senate should be abolished if given the option of reforming or keeping the Senate the same. Men are also more likely (28%) than women (20%) to believe that this should be the case.

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