

# Only Four in Ten (39%) Canadians Support Seal Hunt

## *But Full Majority (75%) Backs Government in Seizing Anti-Sealing Boat*

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**Ipsos Reid**

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# **Only Four in Ten (39%) Canadians Support Seal Hunt**

## ***But Full Majority (75%) Backs Government in Seizing Anti-Sealing Boat***

**Toronto, ON** – Following last week's news coverage of the seal hunt in Atlantic Canada, coupled with public relations nightmares for the Canadian Government and pressure from the international community to put an end to the hunt, a new Ipsos Reid poll finds that only four in ten (39%) Canadians support (17% strongly/22% somewhat) the commercial hunting of seals off Canada's Atlantic Coast.

In fact, the majority (52%) of Canadians 'oppose' (33% strongly/19% somewhat) the seal hunt, while one in ten (9%) Canadians don't know what to think about the issue.

- In Atlantic Canada, the data reveal a different story. Two thirds (64%) of Canadians in this region are in support (41% strongly/23% somewhat) of the seal hunt, while just three in ten (29%) are opposed (14% strongly/15% somewhat), and 6% don't know how they would respond.

Tracking this data back to 1997 reveals that support for the hunt has dropped 6 points in the last decade, with opposition rising by 2 points, and the proportion of Canadians who don't know what stance to take rising by 3 points.

Recently, the RCMP boarded and seized the anti-sealing ship 'the Farley Mowat' and arrested its senior officers, claiming that the ship broke numerous laws including entering Canadian waters and being within a half nautical-mile of a seal hunt. Reflecting on the

actions of the RCMP and the Government, three quarters (75%) of Canadians indicate that they 'support' (50% strongly/25% somewhat) these actions, while just two in ten (17%) 'oppose' (9% strongly/8% somewhat) these actions. One in ten (8%) do not know if they are in support or opposition.

Thinking about which statement most closely resembles their point of view, a majority (52%) believes that 'the government has been turning a blind eye to the actions of the protesters for many years and it's about time that the government took a stand against protesters of the seal hunt'. On the other hand, four in ten (39%) are closer of the opinion that 'the protesters are right to be disturbing the seal hunt because the government is not doing enough to stop the killing of the seals for commercial trade'.

Turning to the future of the seal hunt, most Canadians want an end to the commercial seal hunt, with two in ten (19%, up 8 points) indicating that they 'support closing the seal hunt completely', while four in ten (39%, down 5 points) 'support closing the commercial seal hunt, and only allowing hunting by aboriginals and others for personal and subsistence use'. Still, one third (33%, down 2 points) supports 'leaving the seal hunt to operate pretty much as it does today', while less than one in ten (6%, increase of 1 point) say they 'support expanding the seal hunt to allow for more seals to be taken'. Four percent (4%) don't know what the future of the seal hunt should be.

- Most Atlantic Canadians either want to see the seal hunt operate as it currently is (44%), or support an expansion of the hunt (17%). Two in ten (18%) support closing the hunt completely, while 16% support closing the commercial hunt but allowing aboriginals and subsistence hunters to continue their practice.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of CanWest News Service and Global Television from April 15 to April 17, 2008. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1002 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Canada 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.*

## ***Atlantic Canadians Support the Hunt, While the Rest of Canada Opposes...***

While a majority of Canadians oppose the commercial hunting of seals, Atlantic Canadians are in support. The following are some regional data highlights:

- In Atlantic Canada, two thirds (64%) support the hunt (41% strongly/23% somewhat), while three in ten (29%) are opposed (14% strongly/15% somewhat).
- Saskatchewan and Manitoba are the only other provinces where there are more individuals (50%) supporting (24% strongly/25% somewhat) the hunt than are opposing (42%) the hunt (30% strongly/11% somewhat).
- A majority (54%) of Quebecers oppose (27% strongly/26% somewhat) the hunt, while four in ten (41%) are in support (12% strongly/30% somewhat).
- A majority (55%) of Ontarians oppose (39% strongly/16% somewhat), but one third (35%) are in support (15% strongly/20% somewhat).

- One half (50%) of Albertans oppose (32% strongly/18% somewhat) the hunt, while four in ten (39%) are in support (16% strongly/23% somewhat).
- British Columbians are the most likely to be opposed, with six in ten (61%) opposing (39% strongly/22% somewhat) the commercial hunt of seals. Just three in ten (28%) are throwing their support (12% strongly/16% somewhat) behind the hunt.

### ***While Canadians Support Actions of Government and RCMP, There's No Consensus on Role of Protesters in Seal Hunt...***

Canadians across the country supported the actions of the RCMP and the Government in arresting the crew of the Farley Mowat and seizing the vessel, but many are split on whether protesters should be allowed to intervene with the hunt:

- Atlantic Canadians (86%) were the most likely to support the actions of the RCMP and the Government, followed by those living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (79%), Alberta (77%) Quebec (77%), British Columbia (74%), and Ontario (71%).
- A majority (75%) of Atlantic Canadians more closely associated with the sentiment that it was 'about time the government did something to stop the protesters of the seal hunt'. Majorities of residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (65%), Quebec (59%) and Alberta (52%) also more closely identified with this point of view.
- A higher proportion of those in British Columbia (48%) believe that the protesters are right to be protesting the hunt because of inaction of the government than the proportion (41%) who believes that it was time for the government to step in and take action.



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- Residents of Ontario are split evenly as to whether the protesters are right (44%) or whether the government was right to step in (44%).

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