

SENATE REFORM

Canadians Support Holding Referendum on Senate Reform

Two thirds of respondents want citizens to be allowed to directly elect their senators.

[TORONTO – Feb. 4, 2010] – Canadians continue to express a high level of support for reforming the Senate, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,001 Canadian adults, three-in-ten respondents (29%) believe that Parliament could function without a Senate. Almost half of Canadians (44%) say the Senate is necessary, but Canadians should take an active role in the process of choosing who gets to seat on it. Only six per cent of respondents are pleased with the status-quo that calls for appointed senators.

Reforming the Senate

A solid majority of respondents (69%) are in favour of holding a nationwide referendum on the future of the Senate.

Out of several proposals that have been tabled regarding Senate reform, most Canadians endorse allowing citizens to choose senators in direct elections (67%), and limiting the terms of appointed senators to eight years (65%).

Only a third of respondents (34%) would agree with the creation of a panel of distinguished

KEY FINDINGS

- **73% of Canadians want a new approach to the Senate**
- **69% support holding a national referendum on the future of the upper house of Parliament**
- **67% want to be able to directly elect senators**
- **65% say Harper is being hypocritical about reform by appointing new senators**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From February 1 to February 2, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,001 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Canadians that would appoint senators instead of the prime minister. Three-in-ten Canadians (29%) would abolish the upper house of Parliament altogether.

The Prime Minister

Last month, Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed five people to the Senate. Two thirds of Canadians (65%) think Harper is being hypocritical by appointing new senators while at the same time calling for Senate reform. A third of respondents (35%) disagree.

The Future

Canadians hold differing views on the possibility of an elected upper house. While 33 per cent of respondents foresee senators being directly elected within the next five years, 32 per cent believe this will not happen in another six years or more, and 31 per cent think Canadians will never be allowed to elect senators in directly.

Regional Differences

Albertans (81%) and Atlantic Canadians (79%) are particularly supportive of holding a nationwide referendum on Senate reform. About two thirds of respondents in every other province agree.

Support for an outright abolition of the Senate is noticeably high in Quebec (48%) and Atlantic Canada (44%). A quarter of people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (24%) are also on board with this idea, while less than a fifth of respondents elsewhere agree.

In Alberta (61%) and Atlantic Canada (58%), a majority of respondents oppose setting up a panel of distinguished Canadians to choose new senators.

Except for Alberta, a majority of respondents in all provinces say Prime Minister Harper is being hypocritical for appointing new senators.

Since January 2008, at least three-in-five respondents have consistently voiced support for allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators and limiting appointed Canadian senators to eight-year terms.

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Senate Reform							
Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?							
	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Canada does not need a Senate, all legislation should be reviewed and authorized by the House of Commons	29%	16%	17%	26%	22%	46%	39%
Canada needs a Senate, but Canadians should be allowed to take part in the process to choose senators	44%	55%	63%	45%	49%	27%	39%
Canada needs a Senate, and the current guidelines that call for appointed senators should not be modified	6%	8%	4%	15%	7%	4%	1%
Not sure	21%	22%	15%	14%	22%	22%	22%

Senate Reform							
Would you support or oppose holding a nationwide referendum to decide the future of the Senate of Canada?							
	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Support	69%	68%	81%	62%	66%	68%	79%
Oppose	11%	17%	2%	13%	12%	11%	4%
Not sure	21%	15%	18%	25%	22%	21%	17%

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Senate Reform

As you may know, several proposals have been made over the past few years to reform the Senate of Canada. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas? –

Limiting appointed Canadian senators to eight-year terms

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Support	65%	68%	66%	73%	67%	64%	55%
Oppose	13%	12%	10%	9%	13%	13%	16%
Not sure	22%	20%	24%	17%	20%	23%	29%

Senate Reform

As you may know, several proposals have been made over the past few years to reform the Senate of Canada. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas? –

Allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Support	67%	69%	82%	78%	66%	60%	63%
Oppose	15%	14%	7%	13%	13%	22%	17%
Not sure	18%	18%	10%	9%	21%	18%	19%

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Senate Reform

As you may know, several proposals have been made over the past few years to reform the Senate of Canada. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas? –

Abolishing the Senate of Canada altogether

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Support	29%	13%	18%	24%	21%	48%	44%
Oppose	41%	61%	53%	46%	47%	21%	32%
Not sure	30%	26%	28%	30%	32%	31%	24%

Senate Reform

As you may know, several proposals have been made over the past few years to reform the Senate of Canada. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas? –

Creating a panel of distinguished Canadians to choose senators, instead of the Prime Minister

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Support	34%	39%	18%	40%	36%	37%	16%
Oppose	41%	37%	61%	40%	39%	35%	58%
Not sure	25%	24%	21%	19%	26%	28%	26%

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Senate Reform

Some people think that Prime Minister Stephen Harper is being hypocritical because he is appointing senators despite his long-standing opposition to the Senate in its current form. Other people think Prime Minister Stephen Harper is not being hypocritical because he is appointing senators who agree with his views on Senate reform. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Stephen Harper is being hypocritical	65%	63%	41%	62%	64%	71%	75%
Stephen Harper is not being hypocritical	35%	37%	59%	38%	36%	29%	25%

Senate Reform

When do you expect Canadians to directly elect their senators?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
In the next two years	11%	15%	19%	4%	12%	6%	18%
Three to five years from now	25%	36%	37%	34%	24%	19%	18%
Six to ten years from now	17%	14%	14%	20%	17%	20%	16%
More than ten years from now	15%	11%	9%	22%	16%	13%	23%
Never	31%	24%	21%	20%	31%	42%	26%

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Senate Reform - TREND

As you may know, several proposals have been made over the past few years to reform the Senate of Canada. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas? – “Support” listed

	Feb. 2010	Aug. 2009	May 2008	Jan. 2008
Allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators	67%	68%	60%	63%
Limiting appointed Canadian senators to eight-year terms	65%	66%	64%	62%
Creating a panel of distinguished Canadians to choose senators, instead of the prime minister	34%	36%	32%	29%
Abolishing the Senate of Canada altogether	29%	33%	30%	37%

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Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995

Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum (www.angusreidforum.com), Springboard America (www.springboardamerica.com) and Springboard UK (www.springboarduk.com) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.

Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.

<http://bit.ly/4zxf1S>

Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://bit.ly/3z0u1l>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>**

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