

SENATE REFORM

Two Thirds of Canadians Continue to Call for an Elected Senate

Three-in-five respondents criticize Stephen Harper for appointing senators despite his opposition to the upper house in its current form.

[TORONTO – Nov. 23, 2010] – For the past two years, most Canadians have consistently called for the opportunity to choose the members of the country's upper house, a new *Toronto Star* / Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

The online survey of a representative national sample of 1,009 Canadians also shows that a third of Canadians believe the country will never have an elected Senate.

The Status Quo

Slightly less than half of respondents (44%) believe Canada needs a Senate, but Canadians should be allowed to take part in the process to choose senators. This position is particularly popular in British Columbia (54%), Atlantic Canada (53%) and Ontario (49%).

About three-in-ten respondents (28%) believe Canada does not need a Senate, but would prefer to have all legislation reviewed and authorized by the House of Commons. Quebecers (42%) are particularly fond of this notion.

Only one-in-twenty Canadians (5%) endorse the status quo, and think that Canada needs a Senate, and that the current guidelines that call for appointed senators should not be modified.

KEY FINDINGS

- **69% would allow Canadians to directly elect their senators**
- **61% think PM Harper is being hypocritical for appointing new senators**
- **35% think Canadians will “never” be able to directly elect their senators**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From November 19 to November 20, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,009 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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Reforming the Senate

Across the country, three-in-five respondents (63%) support holding a nationwide referendum to decide the future of the Senate of Canada, including three-in-four Albertans (74%).

A sizeable majority of Canadians (63%) believe Canadian senators should be limited to eight-year terms. About a third of respondents (35%) endorse the idea of creating a panel distinguished Canadians to choose senators, instead of the Prime Minister. Three-in-ten Canadians (30%) are ready to abolish the Senate of Canada altogether, including 43 per cent of Quebecers.

However, the most popular idea continues to be allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators. Two thirds of respondents (69%) would like to see this happen, including 78 per cent of British Columbians.

The Prime Minister

Since July, when Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed Salma Atallahjan to the Senate, the Conservatives control 52 seats in the upper house, followed by the Liberals with 49 members and four independent senators—two of whom sit as Progressive Conservatives.

As was the case earlier this year, three-in-five Canadians (61%) claim Harper is being hypocritical because he has appointed senators despite his long-standing opposition to the Senate in its current form. Conversely, 39 per cent of respondents believe that the Prime Minister is not being hypocritical because he has appointed senators who agree with his views on Senate reform.

The Future

In another finding that has remained consistent throughout 2010, 35 per cent of respondents believe that Canadians will never be able to directly elect their senators, while 31 per cent expect this to happen in the next five years.

Analysis

Earlier this month, the Senate voted 43-32 to defeat the Climate Accountability Act, which had been passed in May by the House of Commons in a 149-136 vote. The outcome of the vote in the unelected upper house was criticized by opposition parties, and has reignited debate over the future of the Senate.

A sizeable majority of Canadians have consistently demanded a chance to elect their Senators for the past two years. Only one-in-twenty is satisfied with the status quo, but the idea of abolishing the upper house altogether remains at or near the 30 per cent mark.

Senate elections are attractive for a large proportion of respondents in Western Canada, Atlantic Canada and Ontario, but Quebecers are more likely to choose doing away with the upper house. Albertans are

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more likely to voice support for a nationwide referendum to settle the issue, and are vehemently opposed to the notion of a panel choosing senators instead of the Prime Minister—more so than respondents in any other region.

In the end, a third of Canadians continue to predict that they will never have a chance to vote for their senators, despite the fact that, for two straight years, two thirds of respondents have called for the opportunity to do so.

Our previous surveys on the Senate can be accessed here: [February 2010](#) / [July 2010](#)

For all our polls, go to our [website](#) / Follow us on [Twitter](#)

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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	28%	23%	19%	33%	23%	42%	19%
Canada needs a Senate, but Canadians should be allowed to take part in the process to choose senators	44%	54%	48%	30%	49%	29%	53%
Canada needs a Senate, and the current guidelines that call for appointed senators should not be modified	5%	5%	7%	5%	6%	3%	8%
Not sure	24%	19%	26%	32%	22%	26%	20%

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	63%	55%	74%	65%	63%	61%	64%
Oppose	10%	6%	5%	6%	9%	17%	8%
Not sure	27%	39%	21%	30%	28%	22%	28%

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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	63%	64%	77%	68%	64%	55%	56%
Oppose	14%	16%	8%	13%	11%	18%	17%
Not sure	24%	20%	15%	19%	25%	27%	26%

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	69%	78%	68%	75%	70%	63%	58%
Oppose	11%	12%	7%	9%	10%	16%	14%
Not sure	20%	11%	25%	16%	20%	21%	28%

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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	30%	26%	18%	38%	25%	43%	23%
Oppose	36%	44%	29%	42%	41%	24%	47%
Not sure	34%	30%	53%	20%	35%	32%	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? –

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

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Support	35%	40%	15%	33%	42%	34%	25%
Oppose	38%	41%	56%	41%	32%	38%	40%
Not sure	27%	19%	30%	26%	26%	28%	35%

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Senate Reform

Some people think that Prime Minister Stephen Harper is being hypocritical because he has appointed 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 has appointed 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	61%	54%	45%	60%	62%	71%	60%
Stephen Harper is not being hypocritical	39%	46%	55%	40%	38%	29%	40%

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	9%	16%	6%	4%	11%	8%	4%
Three to five years from now	22%	26%	21%	29%	24%	16%	16%
Six to ten years from now	18%	15%	15%	13%	23%	14%	17%
More than ten years from now	16%	9%	25%	27%	12%	19%	23%
Never	35%	34%	34%	27%	30%	43%	40%

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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

	Nov. 2010	Jul. 2010	Feb. 2010	Aug. 2009
Allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators	69%	70%	67%	68%
Limiting appointed Canadian senators to eight-year terms	63%	70%	65%	66%
Creating a panel of distinguished Canadians to choose senators, instead of the prime minister	35%	36%	34%	36%
Abolishing the Senate of Canada altogether	30%	31%	29%	33%

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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 Public Opinion 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.

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.

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. More information on our electoral record in Canada and the United States can be found at:

<http://www.angus-reid.com/services/record-of-accuracy/>

More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angus-reid.com/about/>

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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.angus-reid.com>**

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