

SENATE REFORM

Seven-in-Ten Canadians Want to Directly Elect Their Senators

Animosity towards the upper house is highest in Quebec, where 43 per cent of respondents think Canada does not need a Senate.

[TORONTO – Jul. 12, 2010] – The views of Canadians on the Senate have remained consistent over the past two years, with a clear majority of respondents calling for the chance to elect the members of the Red Chamber, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,000 Canadians, two-in-five respondents (40%, -4 since November 2010) believe Canada needs a Senate, but want Canadians to be allowed to take part in the process to choose senators. More than a third of Canadians (36%, +8) think the country does not need a Senate, and would prefer to have all legislation reviewed and authorized by the House of Commons.

As was the case last year, only one-in-twenty Canadians (5%) believe that Canada needs a Senate, and that the current guidelines that call for appointed senators should not be modified.

Reforming the Senate

Across the country, seven-in-ten respondents (71%, +8) are in favour of holding a nationwide referendum to decide the future of the Senate of Canada, including three-in-four Ontarians (76%) and Albertans (75%).

KEY FINDINGS

- **72% would allow Canadians to directly elect their senators**
- **70% support limiting appointed senators to eight-year terms**
- **71% are in favour of holding a referendum to decide the future of the Senate of Canada**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From July 8 to July 9, 2011, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,000 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.

CONTACT:

Jaideep Mukerji, Vice President, Angus Reid Public Opinion, 613-691-0948, jaideep.mukerji@angus-reid.com

The idea of allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators remains particularly popular, with 72 per cent of respondents (+3 since November 2010) endorsing this course of action. Public backing for limiting appointed Canadian senators to eight-year terms increased drastically to 70 per cent (+7).

The level of support for two other ideas is considerably lower: creating a panel distinguished Canadians to choose senators instead of the Prime Minister (39%, +4) and abolishing the Senate of Canada altogether (34%, +4).

Three-in-ten respondents (30%, -5) believe that Canadians will never be able to directly elect their senators, while 37 per cent (+6) expect this to occur in the next five years.

The Prime Minister

The governing Conservative Party controls 55 seats in the upper house, followed by the Liberal Party with 45 members and four independent senators—two of whom sit as Progressive Conservatives. A vacant seat from Newfoundland and Labrador has not been filled.

A majority of Canadians (57%, -4) continue to espouse the view that Prime Minister Stephen Harper is being hypocritical because he has appointed members to the Red Chamber despite his long-standing opposition to the Senate in its current form. Conversely, 43 per cent of respondents (+4) believe that Harper is not being hypocritical because he has appointed people who agree with his views on Senate reform.

Analysis

At first glance, the latest survey on the Senate shows that the appetite for an elected upper house has not subsided over the past year. There is also a marked increase in the proportion of respondents who are satisfied with the idea of limiting appointed senators to eight-year terms. However, most Canadians—although not as many as in November—continue to criticize the Prime Minister's appointments.

The other constant in the survey is the rejection of the status quo. Only five per cent of Canadians would be happy to keep the current Senate guidelines in place. There is a noticeable jump in the proportion of respondents who want all legislation to be handled by the House of Commons, with this sentiment being more prevalent in Quebec. However, in most other provinces, the idea of an elected Senate continues to be more palatable than abolition.

It is also important to note that the proportion of respondents who believe Canada will never have an elected Senate has dropped by five points, while the number of Canadians who think an elected Senate will be a reality by 2016 has increased by six points.

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

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[Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

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

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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	36%	32%	32%	29%	34%	43%	38%
Canada needs a Senate, but Canadians should be allowed to take part in the process to choose senators	40%	36%	43%	56%	41%	36%	38%
Canada needs a Senate, and the current guidelines that call for appointed senators should not be modified	5%	3%	4%	4%	6%	3%	7%
Not sure	19%	29%	21%	11%	19%	18%	18%

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	71%	61%	75%	80%	76%	67%	67%
Oppose	9%	11%	5%	7%	7%	16%	7%
Not sure	19%	29%	20%	13%	17%	18%	25%

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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	70%	68%	66%	81%	72%	68%	64%
Oppose	15%	12%	16%	13%	13%	19%	17%
Not sure	16%	20%	18%	6%	16%	14%	20%

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	72%	72%	77%	77%	72%	68%	75%
Oppose	14%	12%	14%	13%	14%	18%	11%
Not sure	14%	16%	9%	10%	14%	15%	14%

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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	34%	29%	31%	32%	32%	43%	27%
Oppose	35%	34%	36%	47%	38%	27%	34%
Not sure	31%	36%	33%	20%	30%	31%	39%

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	39%	38%	24%	29%	38%	49%	42%
Oppose	38%	31%	47%	49%	39%	32%	36%
Not sure	23%	30%	29%	21%	23%	20%	22%

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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	57%	46%	42%	56%	54%	70%	63%
Stephen Harper is not being hypocritical	43%	54%	58%	44%	46%	30%	37%

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	13%	15%	20%	17%	13%	7%	13%
Three to five years from now	24%	28%	28%	28%	25%	18%	20%
Six to ten years from now	19%	19%	13%	19%	19%	22%	21%
More than ten years from now	14%	10%	14%	10%	16%	14%	15%
Never	30%	28%	26%	27%	28%	39%	31%

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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

	Jul. 2011	Nov. 2010	Jul. 2010	Feb. 2010	Aug. 2009
Allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators	72%	69%	70%	67%	68%
Limiting appointed Canadian senators to eight-year terms	70%	63%	70%	65%	66%
Creating a panel of distinguished Canadians to choose senators, instead of the prime minister	39%	35%	36%	34%	36%
Abolishing the Senate of Canada altogether	34%	30%	31%	29%	33%

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