



Canadians want more women in elected office

Ottawa, November 4, 2004 - Nine out of ten Canadians support increasing the number of women in elected office in order to achieve a well-functioning political system.

Out of a list of seven choices for achieving a well-functioning political system that were tested in this year's edition of Portraits of Canada, this received the highest support.

There was majority support for each of the other choices:

- Allowing smaller parties to win representation in legislatures (74%).
- Distributing legislative seats proportionally according to the share of votes received in an election (71%).
- Forming coalition governments when no party has a majority of seats (71%).
- Ensuring strong majority governments (68%).
- Increasing the number of minority representatives holding elected office (66%).
- Holding referendums on moral issues such as abortion and gay rights (56%).

Portraits is the annual tracking survey conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC).

Effecting significant changes to Canadian political institutions to make them much more open and democratic rallied new support, making it the fourth highest priority of Canadians for the new federal government (55% - up seven points from 2003-- see Priorities release).

"We all know that political institutions are slow to change," said the Honourable Bob Rae, Chairman of the Canadian Unity Council. "But these results show that if and when political institutions do move towards change, Canadians will certainly be ready."

Regional views

Although strong majorities in every region support increasing the number of women in elected office in order to achieve a well-functioning political system, Atlantic Canadians (92%) and Quebecers (92%) show the most support. Residents of Saskatchewan (83%) are least supportive.

Not surprisingly, women (92%) are extremely supportive of increasing the number of women in elected office. Younger men 18 to 35 years of age (90%) are more supportive than are older men, 35 years and older (84%).

Increasing the number of persons from minorities in elected office is most strongly supported by residents of Quebec (73%). Lowest support levels are found in Alberta (60%) and in Saskatchewan (60%).

Albertans (63%) and Atlantic Canadians (62%) are most supportive of holding referendums on moral issues such as abortion and gay marriage to achieve a well-functioning political system. Residents of Saskatchewan are divided on this issue, and demonstrate the lowest levels of support (48% for and 48% against).

Quebecers (81%) are the most supportive and residents of Saskatchewan (67%) are least supportive of allowing smaller political parties to win representation in legislatures. Furthermore, Quebecers (76%) show greater support levels than Canadians in the rest of Canada (69%) when it comes to distributing legislative seats according to the overall proportion of votes received by each party in an election. Albertans (65%) are least supportive of this potential option for change.



Senate reform

Canadians still prefer reform of the Senate (39%, up three points since 2003) to abolition (29%, unchanged from 2003 levels). One-quarter of Canadians (24%, down two points from 2003) would leave the Senate as it is.

Across Canada, Ontarians (44%) and Westerners (42%) would most like to see the Senate reformed. Quebecers (42%) would most like to see this institution abolished. Atlantic Canadians are divided between preferences for reform (36%) or the status quo (33%).

The full poll, including graphics, methodology and additional breakdowns, is available on the CRIC website, www.cric.ca.

Further Information

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