

## **Most want limits on accommodating immigrants: poll**

53% believe newcomers should adapt to Canadian way of life

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OTTAWA - Most Canadians want limits on accommodating the cultural demands of new immigrants and religious minorities, suggests a poll to be released today.

According to the poll, conducted last week by Ottawa-based SES research, only 18% of Canadians say cultural and religious minorities should be totally accommodated in Canada, with 53% saying immigrants should fully adapt to the Canadian way of life.

The remaining respondents fell somewhere in between.

Two out of three Canadians said they have heard of the term "reasonable accommodation," which is at the centre of a debate that has raged in Quebec since the town of Herouville adopted a set of societal rules for immigrants who might want to settle there.

More than 90% of Quebecers are aware of the term, suggests the poll, and are overwhelmingly opposed to accommodating minority cultures and religions.

Only 5.4% of respondents said "reasonable accommodation" reflected their views and 77% said immigrants should adapt to Quebec and Canadian society.

Older Canadians tend to be less tolerant of "reasonable accommodation" of minorities but while they want limits, a significant numbers of Canadians of all ages hold more moderate views.

"A sizeable portion of Canadians have a relatively fixed view of Canada and what it is," said SES president Nik Nanos yesterday.

"Part of that fixed view is a willingness to accommodate new Canadians but not at the price of compromising what Canada really is. In Quebec, the message is loud and clear.

"They see Canada through the lens of two founding peoples, two founding language communities and anyone who comes to Canada should fit into that framework.

"They see this vision of two founding peoples being eroded."

Reasonable accommodation was a major issue in the Quebec election earlier this year and the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, created by Premier Jean Charest to examine the issue, is receiving extensive media coverage in the province.

Ontario's current election wrangling over public funding of faith-based schools is a variation of the debate in Quebec, said Mr. Nanos.

The majority of Quebecers, he added, have reached their limit of tolerance but the poll results, and the faith-based school debate in Ontario, suggest the issue is going to spread to other provinces.

"[The poll] should be a bit of notice to Canadians that we're going to deal again with the vision of Canada as two founding peoples or whether we have become a multi-cultural country where the two founding peoples are subsumed within that," Mr. Nanos added

The online poll was conducted among 1,083 Canadians (295 in Quebec) for the Quebec-based public policy magazine Policy Options. SES says the poll result is accurate to within three percentage points 19 times out of 20.

While most Canadians favour some limits, roughly half say religious and cultural minorities should be accommodated "some of the time".

About 14% said they shouldn't be accommodated at all and 5.6% said they should be accommodated all the time.

The remainder, roughly 22%, said they should be accommodated "most of the time."

When respondents were asked whether prayer spaces should be provided free of charge in public places to accommodate religious minorities, 58.6% of Canadians were -- to greater or lesser degrees -- opposed with around 31% favour.

In Quebec more than 80% were opposed to some degree.

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