

## Most want limits on demands of immigrants

Only 18 per cent say minorities should be fully 'accommodated,' new poll shows

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

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

The remaining respondents fell somewhere in between.

Two out of three Canadians said that 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 Hérouxville adopted a set of societal rules for immigrants who might want to settle there.

More than 90 per cent of Quebecers are aware of the term and are overwhelmingly opposed to accommodating minority cultures and religions. Only 5.4 per cent of respondents said reasonable accommodation reflected their views and 77 per cent said immigrants should adapt to Quebec and Canadian society.

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

"A sizable 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 election wrangling over public funding of faith-based schools is a variation of the debate in Quebec, Mr. Nanos said.

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.

"In Quebec," he said, "people are saying, 'We want to accommodate new Canadians and minorities, but hold on a minute.' What we are seeing in the province is a build up of accommodation after accommodation after accommodation. It's reached a tipping point in Quebec and our leaders outside Quebec should be watching because it is coming to their neighbourhood."

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

Roughly half of respondents say religious and cultural minorities should be accommodated "some of the time." About 22 per cent said they should be accommodated "most of the time." About 14 per cent said they shouldn't be accommodated at all, and 5.6 per cent said they should be accommodated all the time. The rest are unsure.

When respondents were asked whether prayer spaces should be provided free of charge in public places to accommodate religious minorities, 58.6 per cent of Canadians were "to greater or lesser degrees" opposed, with around 31 per cent in favour. In Quebec, more than 80 per cent were opposed to some degree.

SES asked respondents three separate questions to determine in what public venues Canadians might find accommodation of religious and cultural minorities acceptable.

In Canada as a whole, just 36.7 per cent said there should be no accommodation in places "like schools, hospitals and public buildings." Around six per cent said there should be full accommodation, and the rest were between those extremes. Nearly two out of three Quebec respondents said there should be zero accommodation, with just 1.7 per cent in favour of full accommodation.

About 45 per cent of Canadians were opposed to religious accommodation in the workplace (65 per cent of Quebecers were opposed), and the opposition was more intense when respondents were asked whether similar accommodation should be part of amateur sport and leisure activities.

Among Canadians as a whole, 48 per cent opposed that option; among

Quebecers, 72 per cent were opposed. Only 1.7 per cent of Quebecers and 3.3 per cent of Canadians overall were totally in favour.

The issue first hit the headlines in late February when Nepean's Asmahan "Azy" Mansour, 11 at the time, was ordered to remove her hijab or leave the field during a soccer tournament in Laval, Que.

Canadians in regions with fewer cultural and religious minorities were more inclined to favour accommodation than those in larger urban centres.

"It's because they're not dealing with the issue on a personal basis," Mr. Nanos said.

"(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 multicultural country where the two founding peoples are subsumed within that."

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