
Referendum Questions Information Session

— Leah Mulligan, MST —

What to Expect in this Session

- Neutral breakdown of each of the 10 questions
- Information about topics in the questions
- Implications of the questions on future legislation and government action if majority “YES” vote
- Answering of people’s questions throughout
- Basic information on voting date, location, and what to expect

Please understand that this session is not a place for debate regarding personal opinions on the questions. This is an information only session.

Important Terms - Immigration

Permanent Residents: person is not a citizen, but they have the right to reside in the country on a permanent basis (have to apply for PR, can later apply for citizenship) (formerly called **landed immigrants**)

Federal government plans to keep permanent resident arrivals at less than 1% of the population beyond 2027

- **Economic immigrants:** immigrants who have been approved to live in Canada for their ability to contribute to Canada's economy (63% of PR total admissions for 2026 - Canada prioritizes economic immigrants)
- **Family:** Canadian citizens and permanent residents are able to sponsor family members to immigrate (22% of PR total admissions for 2026)
- **Refugees:** once claim is approved, asylum seekers become PRs (15% of PR total admissions for 2026 - this category is harder to predict amounts, as it depends on situations/crises throughout the world)

Non-Permanent Residents: person from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who has a work or study (international students) permit or who has claimed refugee status (asylum claimant)

Federal government plans to reduce temporary population to less than 5% by the end of 2027

- **Temporary foreign workers:** people from other countries fill temporary jobs when qualified Canadians are not available (limits on these positions based on local unemployment rates and amount per employer) (every year the federal government lists [prioritized jobs](#)) (59% fewer new worker arrivals between January and July 2026, compared to the same period in 2024)
- **International students** (80% fewer new student arrivals between January and July 2026, compared to the same period in 2024)
- **Asylum claimants:** persons who had a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or for political opinion, as well as persons who had been seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict, or had suffered a massive violation of human rights (non-permanent residents until refugee claim is approved, then become PRs)

Questions 1-9

- All are yes or no questions
- Questions 1-5
 - Non-constitutional questions about immigration and voting ID
 - These questions are **non-binding** (the provincial government **is not obligated** to act on the results)
- Questions 6-9
 - Constitutional questions (working to change the Canadian Constitution)
 - These questions are **binding** (the provincial government **is obligated** to act on the results)

Question 1 - Immigration Cap

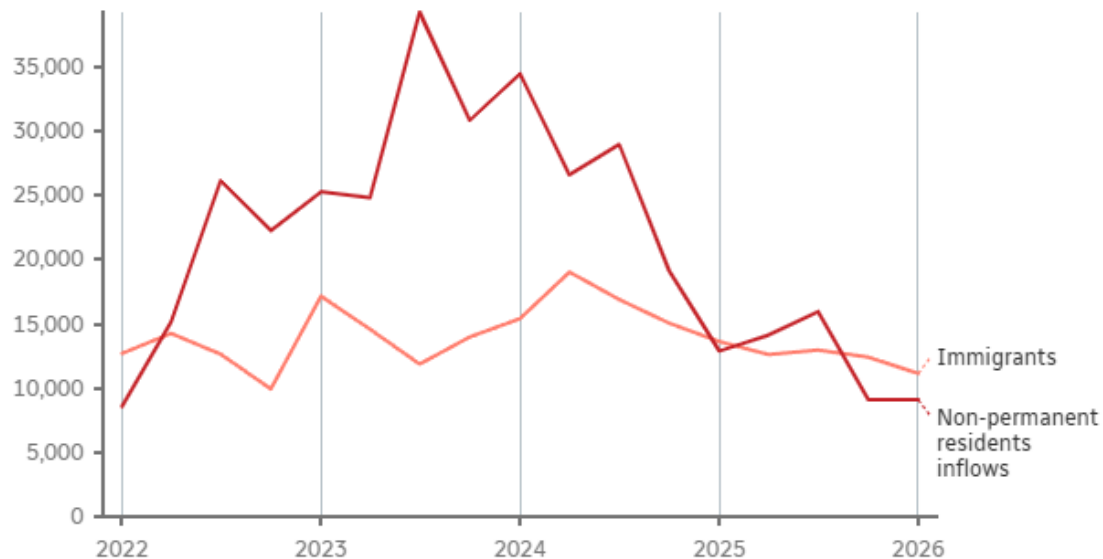
Do you support the Government of Alberta taking increased control over immigration for the purposes of decreasing immigration to more sustainable levels, prioritizing economic migration and giving Albertans first priority on new employment opportunities?

Simplified: Should Alberta try to take over more of the immigration decisions that the federal government currently makes, with a goal of fewer newcomers/immigrants?

- Alberta and the federal government share jurisdiction over immigration
- However, the provincial law cannot contradict federal law
- The federal government decides immigration levels, which it has been lowering since 2024
- Alberta's new PR immigrant landings are down 18.2% compared to last year (Canada's down 20.2%)
- January and September 2025, Alberta welcomed 19,093 international immigrants, down from 107,721 from the same time span in 2024 (this includes asylum seekers, temporary workers, and permanent residents)
- Same time frames, 18,532 migrants came from other Canadian provinces, mostly Ontario. Down from 32,769 interprovincial migrants in 2024
- Alberta government has said immigration goal would be less than 1% of population (around 50,000 newcomers), similar to federal government goal
- Alberta cannot limit interprovincial migration (movement of people between provinces), as it is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Interprovincial migration from BC and Ontario make up a large portion of the population growth in Alberta

Immigrant admissions and non-permanent resident inflows to Alberta from 2022-2026

Non-permanent residents coming to Alberta have significantly dropped from nearly 40,000 in the third quarter of 2023 to about 9,000 in the first quarter of this year, according to Statistics Canada.



Estimates of international migration flow to Alberta from the first quarter of 2022 to the first quarter of 2026. Statistics Canada defines non-permanent resident inflow as the number of people entering Canada to work, study or claim asylum status along with their family members who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Stats Can refers to "immigrant" as a person who is a permanent resident (landed immigrant). This graph may represent some people who were non-permanent residents and then later became landed immigrants.

Question 2 - Program Eligibility

Do you support the Government of Alberta introducing a law mandating that only Canadian citizens, permanent residents and individuals with an Alberta approved immigration status will be eligible for provincially-funded programs, such as health care, education and other social services?

Simplified: Should the province cut off health care, schooling, and social services for people living in Alberta on temporary permits (like students, temporary foreign workers, asylum seekers), unless the province separately approves their status?

- Provinces control their own programs and social services
 - However, the Charter requires provinces to educate children whatever their parents' status
 - Government implementation of a "YES" result would likely result in equality challenges (court under the Charter)
- The Canada Health Act (federal legislation) ties federal transfers (money) to providing care for anyone normally resident in the province
 - However, Ontario and Manitoba already exclude international students from public health care coverage entirely (mostly young people without high health care needs)
- The Alberta Government has not explained what "Alberta approved immigration status" means or how people would qualify
- Temporary residents are already not eligible for social programs like Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) and income support
- Asylum seekers already have health care covered by federal money, not provincial

Question 3 - One Year Waiting Period

Assuming that all Canadian citizens and permanent residents continue to qualify for social support programs as they do now, do you support the Government of Alberta introducing a law requiring all individuals with a non-permanent legal immigration status to reside in Alberta for at least 12 months before qualifying for any provincially-funded social support programs?

Simplified: Should the province make people on temporary permits wait a full year in Alberta before they can access any provincial social support program (not including health care and education)?

- Temporary residents also pay taxes (also relevant to the previous question)
- A “YES” result becoming law means temporary residents continue paying taxes, but need to wait a year before they can benefit from provincially-funded social support programs (like student aid, the Alberta Child and Family Benefit, or the Alberta Child Care Subsidy)
- Similar to Question 2, laws around this could result in Charter challenges regarding equality

Question 4 - Fees and Premiums

Assuming that all Canadian citizens and permanent residents continue to qualify for public health care and education as they do now, do you support the Government of Alberta charging a reasonable fee or premium to individuals with a non-permanent immigration status living in Alberta for their and their family's use of the healthcare and education systems?

Simplified: Should the province charge fees or premiums for health care and schooling to non-permanent residents?

- The Alberta Government has not said what the fees or premiums would be
- Similar to other questions, there is a potential for Charter challenges regarding equality
- Also, concerns around non-permanent residents paying taxes without having access to tax-funded systems
- A “YES” result becoming law would apply to all non-permanent residents, including those already living in Alberta
 - Children would be pulled from publicly funded schools, unless payment is made
 - People currently receiving health care would have to start paying

Question 5 - Citizenship Voter ID

Do you support the Government of Alberta introducing a law requiring individuals to provide proof of citizenship, such as a passport, birth certificate or citizenship card, to vote in an Alberta provincial election?

Simplified: Should Alberta voters be required to show proof of citizenship (passport, birth certificate, citizenship card) to vote (cast a ballot)?

- Alberta can pass a law regarding this, without Charter or Constitution issues
- Alberta has already rolled out program adding citizenship marker to driver's licenses
- People without these documents would need to acquire them before being able to vote
 - People who do not drive
 - People without passports
 - People without birth certificates
- Non-citizens already cannot vote in provincial elections and Elections Alberta checks the voter list (registration)
- Voting-eligibility offences are a relatively non-issue in Alberta (only 3 cases since 2013)

Questions 6-9: Constitutional Amendments

Information

- Most cases of changing the Canadian Constitution require approval from both the federal government, resolutions from the House of Commons and the Senate, and two-thirds of the provincial governments (i.e. at least seven) representing at least 50% of the population (general amendment formula or “7/50 formula”)
- Some cases require the approval of the federal government and all ten provincial governments
- Any referendum question involving the Constitution that results in a “YES” majority would require the Alberta Government to start negotiations with and attempt to gain agreement from the federal government, House of Commons, Senate, and other provinces
- Due to Constitutional Amendment Law (attempts to change the Constitution), it is essentially impossible that a “YES” result to these questions would result in any changes to the Constitution and it would force the Alberta Government into conflict with the federal government

Question 6 - Provincial Judges

Do you support the Government of Alberta working with the governments of other willing provinces to amend the Canadian Constitution to have provincial governments, and not the federal government, select the justices appointed to provincial King's Bench and Appeal courts?

Simplified: Should the provinces, rather than the federal government, pick the judges who sit on the King's Bench and the Court of Appeal?

- "The Court of King's Bench is the Superior Trial Court for the Province, hearing trials in civil and criminal matters and appeals from decisions of the Court of Justice."
(<https://albertacourts.ca/kb/home>)
- "The Court of Appeal does not re-try cases and generally does not consider new evidence. Rather, the Court reviews the lower court or tribunal record to determine whether errors of law or fact were made in a decision."
(<https://albertacourts.ca/ca/about>)
- Section 96 of the Constitution Act, 1867; judges are appointed by the Governor General (on the advice of the federal cabinet and Judicial Advisory Committees - federal and provincial representatives)
- This is argued to keep provincial governments from being able to "stack the bench" with judges in their favour (judges are supposed to be non-partisan)
- Quebec has also pushed for changes here

Question 7 - Get Rid of the Senate

Do you support the Government of Alberta working with the governments of other willing provinces to amend the Canadian Constitution to abolish the unelected federal Senate?

Simplified: Should the provinces push to amend the Constitution to eliminate the federal Senate entirely?

- The Senate is the second body of the legislative branch (law-making), along with the House of Commons (MPs)
- Senators are appointed by the Governor General on advice by the Prime Minister when there is a vacancy
- There are 105 senators, representing the provinces and territories
- The Senate can reject bills proposed by the House, however it almost never does
- Bills get debated by both the House and the Senate before becoming law
- The Senate has been criticized before for being unbalanced (Ontario, Alberta, and BC are underrepresented)
- There have been calls to reform, but very few to abolish
- It would require unanimous consent of Parliament and all 10 provinces (confirmed by the Supreme Court in 2014)

Question 8 - Opt-Out, Keep Money

Do you support the Government of Alberta working with the governments of other willing provinces to amend the Canadian Constitution to allow provinces to opt out of federal programs that intrude on provincial jurisdiction such as health care, education, and social services, without a province losing any of the associated federal funding for use in its social programs?

Simplified: Should provinces be able to leave federal programs (like federal pharmacare, dental care, or child care transfers) while still collecting the full cash that would have come with them?

- The federal government provides money to the provinces and territories in order to run services
- That money comes with strings attached; provinces must spend the money according to federal conditions
- Ex. health care funding must be spent on health care as outlined in the Canada Health Act
- A provincial opt-out option would require the Constitution to be amended
- Provinces can leverage government funding to advance projects and initiatives, very unlikely that other provinces would support the Alberta Government
- Risk that provincial governments would spend money unequally on services/ programs (differences in quality and availability of programs across Canada)
- Questions about accountability (who would be tracking where the money gets spent?)

Question 9 - Provincial Law

Do you support the Government of Alberta working with the governments of other willing provinces to amend the Canadian Constitution to better protect provincial rights from federal interference by giving a province's laws dealing with provincial or shared areas of constitutional jurisdiction priority over federal laws when the province's laws and federal laws conflict?

Simplified: When a provincial law conflicts with a federal law in a shared area (like immigration, health, or environment), should the provincial law win?

- Federal paramountcy has been settled Supreme Court doctrine since Confederation
- Most constitutional scholars consider this issue to be a non-starter
- It's too old, too entrenched in Canadian law, and has zero support from the federal government (that support is needed for any constitutional amendment)
- Federal paramountcy keeps laws consistent across Canada

Question 10 - Separation

Should Alberta remain a province of Canada, or should the Government of Alberta commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada?

Simplified: Should Alberta stay part of Canada, or should the Alberta government have a binding referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate?

Option 1: Alberta should remain a province of Canada.

Option 2: The Government of Alberta should commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada.

- Non-binding (the provincial government **is not obligated** to act on the results)
- This could mean a future referendum on separation, but there is no guarantee
- A future **binding** referendum on separation that results in a majority “YES” would obligate the Alberta Government to move forward with Alberta separating from Canada
- This still does not result in immediate separation
- Alberta would need a constitutional amendment for secession (separation), involving negotiation and agreement from the federal government and other provinces (no legal mechanism for secession currently exists in the Constitution)
- Already had court challenge (First Nations and Duty to Consult)
- *The Clarity Act* (2000)

The Clarity Act (2000)

The [key points](#) of the legislation included the following:

- Giving the House of Commons the power to decide whether a proposed referendum question was considered clear before the public vote;
- Specifically stating that any question not solely referring to secession was to be considered unclear;
- Giving the House of Commons the power to determine whether a clear majority had expressed itself following any referendum vote, implying that some sort of supermajority is required for success;
- Stating that all provinces and the Indigenous peoples were to be part of the negotiations;
- Allowing the House of Commons to override a referendum decision if it felt the referendum violated any of the tenets of the Clarity Act;
- The secession of a province of Canada would require an amendment to the Constitution of Canada.

Voting

- Register to vote (online or in person)
- Bring ID
- Mail in ballot or special ballot (must be received by Elections Alberta by Oct. 16), no reason required to use this
- Advance polls Oct. 13-17
- Voting day at assigned polling stations Oct. 19
- Mobile voting (facilities, such as hospitals and long-term care, must apply for this service)

Election Day Voting Location

80 – Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre / 067

(click table row below to show location on map or "Directions" for driving directions to get there)

Voting Location	Distance	Drive Time	Monday, Oct 19
ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 223, 135 6 ST SE, SUNDRE Directions	1.1 km	2 mins	9AM – 8PM
			

Advance Voting Locations

You can vote at any advance voting location, based on what is most convenient for you.
(Click table row below to show location on map or "Directions" for driving directions to get there.)

Voting Location	Distance	Drive Time	Tuesday, Oct 13	Wednesday, Oct 14	Thursday, Oct 15	Friday, Oct 16	Saturday, Oct 17
SUNDRE ELKS HALL, 113 1 AVE SW, SUNDRE Directions	 0.3 km	1 min	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM
ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH #8, 4911 49 STREET, ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE Directions	 81.6 km	55 mins	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM
BENALTO COMMUNITY HALL, 38520 RANGE ROAD 25A, BENALTO Directions	 87.1 km	55 mins	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM
BLINDMAN VALLEY AG CENTRE, 5202 53 ST CLOSE, BENTLEY Directions	 119 km	1 hour 17 mins	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM
KEYERA PLACE RIMBEY, 5109 54 ST, RIMBEY Directions	 124 km	1 hour 19 mins	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	Not Open
BUCK LAKE COMMUNITY HALL, 801 LAKESHORE DR W, BUCK LAKE Directions	 155 km	1 hour 38 mins	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM	9AM – 8PM
BIG HORN FIREHALL, ACCESS ROAD BIG HORN 144A, CLEARWATER COUNTY Directions	 192 km	2 hours 7 mins	Not Open	Not Open	9AM – 8PM	Not Open	Not Open

Ballots

- 10 separate ballots to complete
- You can leave a ballot blank if you don't want to answer a question



Final Questions?