



CALLED TO ENGAGE

A FAITH-BASED GUIDE FOR
THE ALBERTA REFERENDUM

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Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chinook Winds Regional Council of The United Church of Canada is located on Treaty 4, Treaty 6 and Treaty 7 Territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta - ancestral, traditional and stewarded lands of the Niitsitapi ᓃᑦᑭᓴᓴᓴ - including the Siksika, Piikani and Kainai, the Îyârhe Nakoda Nation - including the Goodstoney, Chiniki and Bearspaw, and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. Our region is also located on the traditional meeting grounds and traveling route to the Cree, Saulteux, Dene, Ktunaxa and Nakoda Sioux peoples.

We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit whose footsteps and guardianship have marked these lands since time beyond the reach of memory.

We acknowledge the injustices committed by Church against Indigenous Peoples and we affirm our commitment to the principles and actions needed for Truth and Reconciliation.

We acknowledge that we are treaty people, with shared responsibilities and shared destinies.



Forward from the Contributors

This is an unprecedented moment in the history of Alberta as our province moves towards a 10-question referendum on October 19, 2026. It requires a faithful response that is nonpartisan and pastoral, and also prophetic. We believe that as a reconciling church with deep roots in immigrant communities, we are called to be in solidarity with vulnerable communities and champion the plight of our neighbours. We certainly hope that the following researched commentary and questions, as well as worship and prayer resources and referendum minutes (linked in the Resources page), can inform a robust, civil and faithful response for communities of faith.

As contributors, we have not tried to conceal our own viewpoints. The toolkit is not intended as a conclusion to a conversation, but the foundations for future ones. It is intended to support individuals and communities of faith in their discernment as we all prepare to vote. Please share the toolkit with your communities of faith, friends, families and neighbours.

Acknowledgements

This guide is informed by community conversations that are happening across our region and province. Thank you for sharing questions and concerns, listening to one another, and considering what our faith asks of us at this point in history. May these faithful conversations continue.

We would like to thank and credit the faithful contributions of our guide team:

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Preparing for Faithful Discernment

The Alberta Referendum concerns Canada’s constitution, immigration and immigrants, and Alberta’s place in Canada. Some possible questions to consider as we approach the Referendum are:

- What is your own family’s immigration story?
- Do you know a recent immigrant to Alberta? Why are they here, and how are they contributing? What challenges do they face?
- How have you, personally, benefited from immigrants and immigration in Alberta?
- What does it mean to you to be Canadian?
- What are the real issues you and your family are facing right now? Are any of these issues reflected in the referendum questions? What do you think might bring improvement?

Categories of Referendum Questions	
Immigration (Questions 1-5) • Provincial control over immigration. • Restricting access to social services, health care and education. • 12-month residency requirements for services • Fees/Premiums to access services. • Voter ID Requirements	Constitutional (Questions 6-10) • Provincial control over the appointment of judges • Abolishing the senate • Opting out of federal programs while keeping all federal funding. • Prioritizing provincial law over federal law. • Referendum to have a referendum on independence.

The 10 Referendum Questions

The next two pages lists the 10 questions that are part of the Alberta October 19, 2026, Referendum. As you read these questions, consider:

- Do the referendum questions address issues you and your family face?
- Do the questions suggest solutions, or do they shift blame to others?
- What do our gospel and faith tradition say about immigrants and national responsibilities? What do our own church's mission and values say?
- For each referendum question, how does our faith inform our vote?
- How might we, as a church, contribute to a healthy conversation on the referendum's content?

1. *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?*
2. *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?*
3. *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?*
4. *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 health care and education systems?*
5. *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?*

The 10 Referendum Questions (cont.)

6. *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?*
7. *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?*
8. *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?*
9. *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?*
10. *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?*



Reflecting on the Referendum Questions

Over the next several pages, the referendum questions are listed along with researched commentary for your reflection and discussions.

Immigration Questions: *Reflecting on our Christian call to welcome the stranger & build communities where everyone flourishes*

1. *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?*

- See [How many immigrants are coming to Alberta?](#)
- Immigration to Alberta spiked in 2022-2024, partly in response to the provincial government's *Alberta is calling* campaign to attract immigrants from other parts of Canada. Currently, immigration both from within Canada and beyond has dropped to or below what has been normal for the past decade.
- Canada already has a "point system" for immigration which prioritizes skilled and educated people.
- How, exactly, does one give first priority to Albertans for employment opportunities? Will employers need to somehow prove that no Albertan will take a job before they hire someone from outside the province?

2. *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?*

- Temporary foreign workers are taxpayers in Alberta, and refugee claimants have services provided by the federal government.
- Voting in favor of this question will mean that working, tax-paying residents of Alberta would not be able access health care and education for their children.

Reflecting on the Referendum Questions

Immigration Questions (Cont.)

3. *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?*

- Temporary residents pay provincial taxes from day one. They currently have less access to the social safety net than permanent immigrants and current Alberta residents. This change would make temporary workers vulnerable to issues such as work-place injuries. Temporary residents – foreign workers, students, etc – are contributors to our economy, not drains on our system.

4. *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?*

- Since temporary residents are already taxpayers, this would be an additional tax on those who come to Alberta to fill jobs that are difficult to fill (hospitality, farm work, for instance). Why should temporary workers pay double?

5. *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?*

- One must be a citizen to vote, and there is no evidence of significant voter fraud. Requiring proof of citizenship to vote is a voter suppression measure. The poor and marginalized don't often have the money or the cause to get a passport or other official citizenship ID.

Reflecting on the Referendum Questions

More Background on Immigration Questions

Source: Calgary Alliance for the Common Good)

Canada's immigration system already oriented to accept immigrants who bring skills and talent that build our economy.

Immigrants have been a critical part of what has built our economy. Canada's immigration system uses a point system to prioritize immigrants who bring critical skills and talents. Among those aged 25-44, about 65% hold University degrees. Many fill labour shortages in health care, senior care and the agricultural sector.

All immigrants, including temporary workers, pay taxes like everyone else.

The provincial government says that recent immigrants cost it \$1 billion in social services and \$600 million in education. However, 90% file taxes in their first year and contribute between \$5 billion and \$7.8 billion annually in provincial taxes. Extra fees amount to an added tax. For people establishing a new life, this extra tax could result in families getting sick because they avoid going to the doctor and ending up in already crowded emergency rooms. This could also result in kids getting kicked out of school and falling behind.

Immigration is only 11% of the reason housing has become so expensive.

A 2025 study by Statistics Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, found that only 11% of the increase in housing and rental costs is due to new immigrants. What is driving the rise of housing? A lack of funding for affordable housing since the 1990s; restrictive zoning limiting housing construction and low interest rates leading to the financialization of housing (where housing is viewed as an investment for profit rather than a basic human right or a place to live).

Reflecting on the Referendum Questions

More Background on Immigration Questions

What about our Deficit?

The \$1.6 billion figure that the province says is the cost of recent immigrants is only 2% of Alberta's total \$83.9 billion budget. Recent immigrants are about 5% of Alberta's population. In other words, these tax-paying families are already using less than their fair share of what they are paying for. Health Care for refugees is paid for by the federal government.

Immigrants, including temporary immigrants, are a significant contributor to our economy.

Immigrants (citizens and residents born outside of Canada) make up 23 percent of Alberta's population and nearly 30 percent in Calgary. Most are of working age and highly educated. (Canada Census 2021).

They were admitted to address labour shortages and bring needed skills to build our economy. A full 90% file taxes in their first year and contribute between \$5 billion and \$7.8 billion annually in provincial tax revenues. Many sectors of our economy, such as health and senior care, rely on immigrants to function.



Reflecting on the Referendum Questions

Constitutional questions: *How would these proposals shape or deter democracy and the well-being of our families and neighbours?*

6. *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?*

- An independent judiciary is critical in all democracies as a means of protecting basic human rights, especially the rights of minority populations. It also ensures that no one, including political leaders, are above the law. The federal appointment process selects judges through independent advisory committees based on legal merit, professional excellence, and ethical standards. Alberta already has representation on these committees. A provincial government that has overridden fundamental human rights by invoking the notwithstanding clause four times in one session should not be given the power to politicize or control the judiciary. ([From the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good](#)).

7. *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?*

- The Senate is the body that is designed in our system to help balance regional interests, and so that the politics of the immediate don't override the long-term interests of all Canadians. Without it, Alberta is even more vulnerable to be ignored in favor of the more populous parts of Canada. There may be a need to reform the Senate, but abolition may not serve us well.

Reflecting on the Referendum Questions

Constitutional questions (cont)

8. 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?

- The federal government is charged with the responsibility for maintaining national standards for national programs, even those that fall into provincial jurisdiction.

9. 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?

- In areas of shared constitutional jurisdiction, having provincial legislation take priority over federal legislation is a direct challenge to the constitutional order that has held this country together throughout its lifetime. It would be, effectively, a form of separation, placing provincial interests ahead of national interests.

Reflecting on the Referendum Questions

Separation Question: *What serves the common good for Alberta, Canada and future generations?*

10. *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?*

Voters will choose one of the two options:

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.*

- Important Note: This question on whether Alberta should have a binding separation referendum in the future was added to the referendum after an Alberta Court of King's Bench judge ruled that the Alberta Government, as representatives of the Crown, failed in its duty to consult with First Nations. The ruling quashed the approval of the separatist petition.
- Treaty Chiefs are clear that Alberta separating from Canada would not be in Indigenous peoples' interest, would violate treaty rights, and do significant harm to Indigenous rights to self-government and sovereignty that are recognized within treaty, legal precedent, court rulings and Crown-Indigenous relations.
- A province does not have a unilateral right to secede from Canada: a vote by a province to secede initiates a complex negotiation process between the separating province, Canada, other provinces, and First Nations.
- What might be the consequences of a long-term, uncertain negotiating process be for business investment?
- If companies and/or families have significant ties to the rest of Canada, would there be good reasons to leave Alberta, faced with such uncertainty?
- How much of Alberta's prosperity and quality of life come from being a part of Canada?

Christian Values to Consider

- **Love and respect for our neighbours.** We believe in honouring the contribution of immigrants in Alberta as well as long-term residents, and that we are called to care for the people around us regardless of their background or the length of their tenure.
- **The common good.** We believe that our efforts should be towards the good of all, rather than protecting the privilege of some at the expense of others.
- **Integrity and responsibility.** We believe in solving problems and meeting challenges together, taking collective responsibility for the building of our society, rather than blaming others for issues we all share.
- **Universal healthcare and education.** We are all better off when everyone has access to quality health care and education.
- **Compassion.** None of us makes it on our own – we all need help sometimes. We believe that society as a collective whole should help those who need it, and that compassion characterizes our society's relationship with the vulnerable.

Best Practices for Registered Charities



The Region and your Community of Faith CAN:

- Take a public position on the referendum questions, as long as they connect to your charitable purpose.
- Advocate for and against specific policies (not parties or candidates).
- Use exempted (non-paid) communication channels such as websites, social media, editorials, speeches (sermons), letters, forums, etc.

The Region and your Community of Faith CANNOT

- Register with Elections Alberta as a Third Party Advertiser (TPA).
- Contribute to a TPA or join a group that forms a TPA.
- Pay for advertising
- Endorse a party or candidate.
- Oppose a party or candidate.

What You Can Do

Organize a “house” meeting:

House meetings are intentionally led discussion groups, focused on education, experiences and storytelling on community issues, followed by collective discernment on how to lead together in our communities.

Organize a get-out-the vote plan for your congregation

This can be as simple as encouraging members to vote, to providing information on ordering special ballots (mail-in-voting), to providing regular updates on voting days and locations, to organizing congregational get-out-the vote plans; such as contacting members to see if they have a vote plan, assisting those with mobility issues, providing childcare, etc.

Sharing toolkits and educational resources

See our resources section and share this guide with communities, friends and family.

Amplify Indigenous and Immigrant perspectives

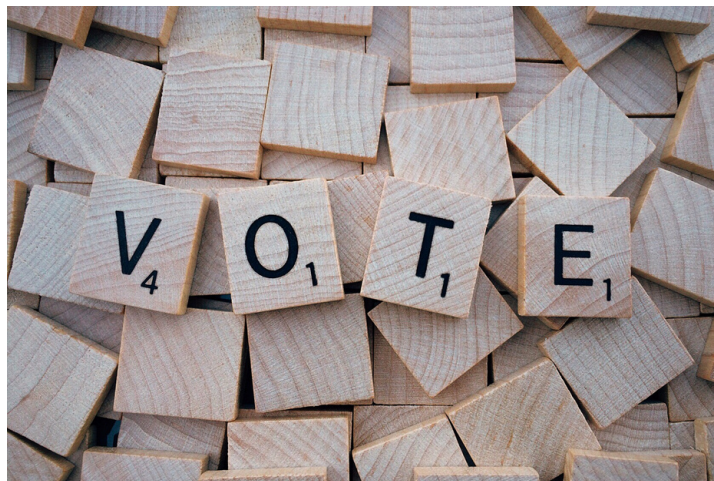
Find ways to amplify the experiences, concerns and stories of Indigenous peoples and Immigrant communities during the referendum.

Voice your opinions, concerns and questions

Write your MLA, MP, City Council, Chamber of Commerce.

Write an op-ed or social media post about your opinions, concerns, and questions as a community member.

VOTE!



Additional Resources

Worship Resources Prepared by Rev. Rob Shearer. These include two worship services on referendum themes, including prayers, scriptures, music suggestions and more. [Download Worship Liturgies](#)

Referendum Minutes Prepared by Rev. Erin Klassen, based on each of the 10 Referendum questions. [Download Referendum Minutes](#).

Prepared to Drown: Deep Dives Into An Expansive Faith

This podcast ministry of McDougall, Ogden and Red Deer Lake United Churches is having faithful conversations on the Alberta Referendum in a four-part series. Check out the [Referendum episodes](#).

The Calgary Alliance for the Common Good (CACG)

The Calgary Alliance for the Common Good (CACG) is a non-partisan and non-profit alliance of faith communities, unions, ethnocultural associations, community groups and everyday Calgarians, working together to organize the power of community to shape a more just and compassionate city. CACG has also put out a helpful [Referendum Toolkit](#).



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