

INTRODUCTION

On October 19, 2026 Alberta will be going to the polls, not for a general election, but for a referendum to answer ten questions laid out by the UCP government. The questions, as presented, are not clear yes or no questions and leave a lot of room for interpretation by firstly, the people trying to answer and secondly by the government analyzing the answers and building policy from those answers.

I went to AI to for an analysis of the questions:

- *as to their clarity and how they may be interpreted by the voters*
- *about voter answers and how those answers may be interpreted by the government*
- *about the consequences of those interpretations.*

As seniors and polio survivors government actions and policies are very relevant to our wellbeing so I feel it is extremely important that we educate ourselves, that we understand what the questions are asking and that we carefully consider the consequences of our choices when voting in this referendum.

*Therefore I took this one step further and asked AI to do something I think would be **very useful before voting** - for each of the 10 questions I asked it to lay out:*

- ***what a “Yes” actually means***
- ***what a “No” means***
- ***what the Alberta government could legally do afterward***
- ***how Ottawa and/or other provinces are constitutionally involved***
- ***the strongest argument for and against each question. This would give us a stronger basis for deciding how to vote than just the ballot wording alone.***

Bernd Schwanke, Editor

REFERENDUM

MY QUESTION to AI

Alberta is having a referendum in October. Please list the 10 questions and give your neutral opinion on each as to whether the question is clear enough to give a simple yes/no answer.

Also give your opinion as to what the government's interpretation of the yes/no answer might likely be.

I (Chat GPT) checked the **official Elections Alberta wording**, rather than relying on summaries or commentary. The referendum is scheduled for **October 19, 2026**. Questions 1–9 are Yes/No questions; Question 10 is a choice between two alternatives.

One important point before getting into the questions: **Questions 1–9 are explicitly non-binding**. A Yes vote therefore does not itself enact the proposed policy or constitutional change. Question 10 is also non-binding, but the government says that if a majority chooses the second option, it would begin the legal process toward a later binding separation referendum.

Here is my (ChatGPT) assessment of each question, concentrating specifically on **whether an ordinary voter can give a meaningful Yes/No answer from the wording alone**, and then on **what I (ChatGPT) think the Alberta government would interpret that vote to mean**.

Individual Assessments:

1. Increased provincial control over immigration

“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?”

My clarity assessment: ⚠️ **Moderately clear — but not a clean Yes/No question.**

The general proposition is understandable: *Do you want Alberta to have more control over immigration?*

But there are actually **three separate objectives** embedded in it:

1. decrease immigration;
2. prioritize economic migrants; and
3. give Albertans first priority for new jobs.

A voter could strongly support #1 but oppose #3, for example. There is no way to express that distinction.

There is also no definition of “**more sustainable levels**” or what “first priority” would legally mean.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

I think the government would regard Yes as a mandate to pursue **substantially greater provincial control over immigration**, including measures to reduce immigration and give preference to economic immigrants and Albertans in employment.

My rating: 6/10 for clarity.

2. Eligibility for provincially funded programs

“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?”

My clarity assessment:  **Moderately clear, but with important ambiguities.**

The basic question is reasonably straightforward: should access to provincial programs be restricted according to immigration status?

However, “**Alberta-approved immigration status**” is not defined in the question, nor is the meaning of “**such as health care, education and other social services.**”

That matters enormously because the range of programs potentially affected is very large.

There is also a significant distinction between saying *someone is not eligible for a publicly funded program* and saying *they must pay for it themselves*. The question doesn't explain what happens to people excluded.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate to create legislation restricting provincially funded services to the three categories specified.

My rating: 6/10.

3. Twelve-month waiting period for social support

“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?”

My clarity assessment:  Fairly clear — with one important qualification.

This is one of the easier questions to understand.

It essentially asks:

Should people with non-permanent legal immigration status have to live in Alberta for 12 months before becoming eligible for provincial social-support programs?

The question deliberately assures voters that Canadian citizens and permanent residents wouldn't be affected.

The remaining ambiguity is **what constitutes “social support programs.”**

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate to establish a 12-month residency/waiting period for the specified group.

My rating: 8/10.

4. Fees or premiums for health care and education

“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?”

My clarity assessment:  Fairly clear in principle, but “reasonable” is a major ambiguity.

The basic idea is clear:

Should non-permanent immigrants pay something toward their family's use of public health care and education?

But “reasonable fee or premium” could mean almost anything—from a modest contribution to an amount approaching the actual cost.

It also doesn't specify whether the fee would apply to **every individual**, only certain temporary residents, or particular services.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate to establish some form of fee or premium on non-permanent residents for health-care and education costs.

Importantly, I would **not** interpret a Yes vote as approval of any particular dollar amount, because the question doesn't specify one.

My rating: 7/10.

5. Proof of citizenship to vote

“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?”

My clarity assessment:  **Very clear.**

This is probably the clearest of the ten.

It asks whether proof of Canadian citizenship should be required when voting in Alberta provincial elections.

There is some minor uncertainty about **exactly what documents would be acceptable**, but that is an implementation question rather than ambiguity about the policy itself.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate to introduce voter-identification requirements specifically establishing **proof of Canadian citizenship** as a condition of voting.

My rating: 9/10.

6. Provinces selecting provincial court 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?”

My clarity assessment:  **Conceptually clear, legally complicated.**

The basic proposition is understandable:

Should provincial governments, rather than the federal government, select judges for provincial superior and appeal courts?

But this is a constitutional question. A voter is being asked to approve a **constitutional amendment**, without being told what the amendment would actually look like or precisely how judicial appointments would subsequently work.

The phrase “**working with the governments of other willing provinces**” also means Alberta cannot accomplish this by itself.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate to negotiate with other provinces and pursue a constitutional amendment transferring the appointment power.

A Yes vote would **not itself change the Constitution**.

My rating: 7/10.

7. Abolishing 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?”

My clarity assessment:  **Very clear as a proposition.**

There is little ambiguity about what “abolish the Senate” means.

The important qualification is that the question asks Alberta to **work with other provinces to amend the Constitution**. Alberta alone cannot abolish the Senate.

It therefore asks voters to approve a **political/constitutional objective**, rather than something Alberta could simply implement.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate for Alberta to pursue abolition of the Senate through constitutional negotiations.

My rating: 9/10.

8. Opting out of federal programs while keeping federal 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?”

My clarity assessment:  Only moderately clear.

This is a **very consequential question**, but the wording makes it sound considerably simpler than it is.

The key phrase is:

“programs that intrude on provincial jurisdiction”

Who determines whether a federal program “intrudes”?

And what exactly does **“without a province losing any of the associated federal funding”** mean?

For example, would Alberta be able to reject federal conditions attached to a program while still receiving exactly the same money?

That is arguably the central issue—but the question doesn't explain it.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate to pursue a constitutional arrangement whereby Alberta could reject federal involvement in areas of provincial jurisdiction **while retaining the corresponding federal funding**.

My rating: 5/10.

This is one of the questions where I think voters should be especially careful about distinguishing the **simple wording** from the **complex constitutional consequences**.

9. Provincial laws taking priority over conflicting federal laws

“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?”

My clarity assessment:  Understandable concept, but legally quite ambiguous.

The basic message is:

When provincial and federal laws conflict in an area of provincial or shared jurisdiction, should provincial law prevail?

That's understandable.

But the words “**provincial or shared areas of constitutional jurisdiction**” and “**priority**” involve complex constitutional law.

This could have enormous consequences for the balance of federal and provincial power.

A voter who simply reads it as “*give Alberta more power*” may not fully appreciate what a constitutional change of this nature could mean.

Government's likely interpretation of YES:

A mandate to pursue constitutional changes giving provincial legislation precedence over conflicting federal legislation in specified areas.

Again, **the Yes vote itself would not accomplish that constitutional change.**

My rating: 5/10.

10. Remain in Canada or begin the separation process

This one is substantially different because it is **not a Yes/No question.**

“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?”

The two choices are:

1. Alberta should remain a province of Canada.

2. The Alberta government should commence the legal process required to hold a future binding referendum on whether Alberta should separate.

My clarity assessment: ⚠️ **Clear about the immediate choice, but potentially misleading about the ultimate consequence.**

The question **does not ask whether Alberta should separate from Canada.**

It asks whether Alberta should **start the legal process necessary to eventually hold a binding referendum on separation.**

That distinction is extremely important.

A voter who chooses Option 2 is **not voting for separation.**

The government's own website explicitly says that this question does **not directly trigger separation.** If Option 2 wins, the government says it would begin the legal process necessary to hold a later binding referendum.

Government's likely interpretation of Option 1:

Albertans have instructed the government **not to proceed toward a separation referendum.**

Government's likely interpretation of Option 2:

Albertans have given the government a **political mandate to begin the process leading toward a future binding separation referendum.**

That's considerably different from saying:

“Albertans voted to separate from Canada.”

They would **not** have done so.

My rating: 7/10 for the immediate question, but only 5/10 for communicating the ultimate implications.

My overall assessment

#	Subject	Clarity	What a YES would most likely mean to government
1	More Alberta control over immigration	6/10	Pursue greater control, lower immigration and prioritize economic migrants/Albertans
2	Restrict eligibility for provincial programs	6/10	Legislate eligibility restrictions based on immigration status
3	12-month wait for social support	8/10	Establish a 12-month waiting period

#	Subject	Clarity	What a YES would most likely mean to government
4	Fees for health care/education	7/10	Establish fees/premiums for non-permanent residents
5	Citizenship proof to vote	9/10	Require citizenship documentation to vote
6	Provinces appoint provincial judges	7/10	Pursue constitutional amendment
7	Abolish Senate	9/10	Pursue constitutional amendment to abolish Senate
8	Opt out of federal programs but retain funding	5/10	Pursue constitutional right to opt out while retaining funding
9	Provincial law takes priority over federal law	5/10	Pursue constitutional change giving provinces greater legal precedence
10	Remain or begin separation process	7/10	Option 2 = begin process toward a future separation referendum

The most important distinction

I think there are **three different kinds of “Yes” hidden in this referendum:**

Questions 1–5:

A Yes is essentially **policy direction** to the Alberta government. The government could then attempt to implement legislation, although the referendum results are expressly non-binding.

Questions 6–9:

A Yes is **authorization/direction to pursue constitutional change**. Alberta cannot implement these changes by itself; negotiations and the applicable constitutional-amendment procedures would still be required.

Question 10:

Option 2 is **not a vote for separation**. It is a vote to start the legal process for a subsequent binding referendum. The Alberta government's own explanation makes that distinction explicit.

There is another point worth emphasizing: **Elections Alberta itself says it is not permitted to interpret these questions.** It directs voters who want to know what a question means to the Alberta government or their MLA. That makes the distinction between the *literal wording* and the *government's intended interpretation* particularly important.

[Official Elections Alberta referendum page](#)

I will take this one step further and do something I think would be **very useful before voting**: for each of the 10 questions, lay out **(1) what a Yes actually changes, (2) what a No means, (3) what the Alberta government could legally do afterward, (4) what Ottawa could prevent, and (5) the strongest argument for and against each question.** That would give you a much better basis for deciding how to vote than the ballot wording alone.

I have looked at the **legal implications**, not just the wording of these questions. I would also correct one important impression from my previous statement: **a Yes vote on Questions 6–9 would be politically significant, but it would not by itself give Alberta the constitutional powers described in those questions.** Constitutional amendments would still have to follow the applicable federal/provincial procedures.

Where I say “**government would likely interpret**”, that is my neutral assessment of the mandate the Alberta government would claim—not a prediction that a court would agree with that interpretation.

1. Greater Alberta control over immigration

What a YES would mean

The government would be able to say:

Albertans have directed us to seek substantially greater provincial control over immigration, with lower and more sustainable immigration levels, priority for economic migrants and priority for Albertans for employment.

The important limitation is that **immigration is currently a shared federal-provincial area.** The Constitution gives Parliament and the provinces concurrent jurisdiction over immigration, subject to the constitutional framework.

So a Yes would be a **political mandate to negotiate/change the system**, rather than an immediate transfer of federal immigration powers to Alberta.

What a NO would mean

The government could still change provincial immigration-related policies within Alberta's existing authority.

But it would have much less political justification for saying:

“Albertans voted for us to demand greater control over immigration.”

What Alberta could legally do afterward

Quite a lot within existing provincial jurisdiction—for example, influence provincial nominee programs and employment-related policies.

But Alberta **could not simply take over Canada's immigration system** by passing an Alberta law.

What Ottawa could prevent

Ottawa retains major constitutional and practical control over immigration, including admission to Canada, visas, citizenship and many classes of immigration. Canada's federal immigration system continues to administer immigration and citizenship.

Strongest argument FOR

Alberta should have greater ability to match immigration levels and selection to its **housing, infrastructure, labour-market and social-service capacity**.

Strongest argument AGAINST

Canada is a single country with a national immigration system. Giving individual provinces substantially greater control could create **different immigration rules and competing national/provincial priorities**.

My assessment

Clarity: 6/10

This is a legitimate policy question, but it combines several different objectives. Someone could agree with lower immigration but disagree with giving Albertans employment priority.

2. Restricting provincially funded programs

This question asks whether only Canadian citizens, permanent residents and people with an Alberta-approved immigration status should qualify for provincial programs.

What a YES would mean

The government would have a political mandate to **change eligibility rules** for provincial programs according to immigration status.

What a NO would mean

The government would not have the same referendum mandate for such restrictions, although it could still make changes permitted under existing law.

What Alberta could legally do

Potentially change eligibility for programs that genuinely fall within provincial jurisdiction.

But there are important legal constraints.

For example, health care is administered provincially, but Canada also has federal legislation and federal funding arrangements affecting health care.

What Ottawa could prevent

Ottawa could challenge provincial legislation that conflicts with federal constitutional authority, federal statutes or Charter rights.

Strongest argument FOR

People who are not permanent members of the Canadian community should not necessarily have identical access to every provincially funded benefit immediately upon arrival.

Strongest argument AGAINST

It could create a **two-tier system** in access to essential public services and potentially affect vulnerable people who are legally living and working in Alberta.

My assessment

Clarity: 6/10

The problem is the enormous breadth of the phrase “**provincially-funded programs.**” The voter isn't told exactly which programs would be affected.

3. Twelve-month waiting period for social support

This is considerably more specific.

What a YES would mean

Non-permanent legal immigrants would have to live in Alberta for **at least 12 months** before qualifying for provincial social-support programs, while the question explicitly assumes that Canadian citizens and permanent residents retain their current eligibility.

What a NO would mean

No referendum mandate for imposing that particular 12-month waiting period.

What Alberta could legally do

The province could attempt to establish such eligibility rules for programs within its jurisdiction.

But individual programs could be governed by different statutes, agreements or constitutional requirements, so the referendum does not automatically establish one universal 12-month rule.

What Ottawa could prevent

Federal law, constitutional rights and federal-provincial agreements could limit what Alberta could actually implement.

Strongest argument FOR

It could discourage people from moving to Alberta primarily to obtain immediate access to social assistance and reduce pressure on provincial social programs.

Strongest argument AGAINST

A blanket waiting period could cause hardship for people who are legally resident, working and paying taxes but temporarily unable to support themselves.

My assessment

Clarity: 8/10

This is one of the clearest questions. The major unresolved issue is precisely **which programs count as “social support programs.”**

4. Fees or premiums for health care and education

This is an interesting question because it doesn't simply ask about eligibility.

It asks whether non-permanent residents should pay a “**reasonable fee or premium**” for their family's use of health care and education.

What a YES would mean

The government could claim:

Albertans want non-permanent residents to make a direct financial contribution toward provincial health-care and education costs.

What a NO would mean

There would be no referendum mandate for such a fee or premium.

What Alberta could legally do

The government could examine fees or premiums for particular categories of residents, subject to constitutional, statutory and federal constraints.

But **the referendum doesn't establish the amount.**

“Reasonable” could mean \$100, \$1,000 or something substantially different.

What Ottawa could prevent

Federal law, constitutional rights and existing federal-provincial arrangements could constrain some forms of charging.

Strongest argument FOR

People temporarily living in Alberta should contribute toward the very substantial public costs associated with health care and education.

Strongest argument AGAINST

Many temporary residents already pay Canadian taxes and other charges. Additional premiums could make Alberta less attractive to workers, students and businesses that depend on temporary residents.

My assessment

Clarity: 7/10

The principle is clear.

The **financial consequence isn't.**

5. Proof of citizenship to vote

What a YES would mean

Alberta would be directed to establish a requirement that voters provide proof of Canadian citizenship before voting in provincial elections.

What a NO would mean

No referendum mandate for adding that particular citizenship-proof requirement.

What Alberta could legally do

Alberta already controls many aspects of provincial election administration, and eligibility to vote in Alberta requires Canadian citizenship, being at least 18 and ordinarily residing in Alberta.

The proposed change is therefore primarily about **proving citizenship**, rather than changing the basic legal eligibility requirement.

What Ottawa could prevent

The federal government isn't the principal decision-maker here; this is primarily a provincial electoral matter.

However, the Charter and constitutional law still apply.

Strongest argument FOR

Citizenship is already a legal requirement. Requiring proof would provide an additional safeguard against voting by people who aren't eligible.

Strongest argument AGAINST

Opponents would argue that it could create an unnecessary barrier to voting for eligible citizens who have difficulty producing the required documents.

My assessment

Clarity: 9/10

Probably the clearest policy question on the ballot.

6. Provincial appointment of superior-court judges

This is where the referendum moves into **serious constitutional territory**.

What a YES would mean

Alberta would seek to work with other provinces to change the Constitution so provincial governments—not the federal government—select judges for provincial King's Bench and Appeal courts.

Today, section 96 of the Constitution Act, 1867 says that the **Governor General appoints judges of the superior courts of each province.**

So this question directly proposes changing an existing constitutional arrangement.

What a NO would mean

Alberta would lack a referendum mandate to pursue this particular constitutional change.

What Alberta could legally do afterward

It could negotiate with other governments and propose a constitutional amendment.

It could **not simply pass an Alberta statute transferring the appointment power to the provincial government.**

What Ottawa could prevent

Ottawa and other provinces would be participants in the constitutional amendment process.

The federal government therefore has an important role.

Strongest argument FOR

Provincial governments are responsible for administering provincial justice and may reasonably argue that they should have greater control over the selection of judges who preside over provincial courts.

Strongest argument AGAINST

Judicial independence is a fundamental principle of Canadian constitutional government. Giving politicians greater direct control over judicial appointments could increase concerns about **political influence over judges.**

My assessment

Clarity: 7/10

The political objective is clear.

But the question does not tell voters what the **new appointment system** would actually look like.

7. Abolishing the Senate

What a YES would mean

Alberta would have a mandate to work with other provinces to pursue **abolition of Canada's Senate**.

What a NO would mean

No referendum mandate for Alberta to pursue Senate abolition.

What Alberta could legally do

It could advocate for and negotiate a constitutional amendment.

It cannot abolish the Senate unilaterally.

What Ottawa could prevent

This is an especially important distinction.

The Senate is part of Canada's constitutional structure. Constitutional amendment rules apply, and some constitutional changes require extremely broad agreement.

The Constitution Act, 1982 contains several different amendment procedures, including special procedures for matters involving the Senate.

So a Yes vote in Alberta **does not abolish the Senate**.

Strongest argument FOR

The Senate is unelected. Its democratic legitimacy can therefore be questioned, particularly when senators can delay or amend legislation passed by elected representatives.

Strongest argument AGAINST

The Senate provides regional representation and a second chamber capable of reviewing legislation independently of the House of Commons.

My assessment

Clarity: 9/10

Very clear as a policy objective.

The uncertainty is **whether it could actually be achieved**, not what the question means.

8. Opting out of federal programs while keeping federal funding

This is, in my opinion, one of the **most important questions to understand carefully**.

What a YES would mean

Alberta would seek a constitutional arrangement allowing a province to:

- 1. refuse participation in a federal program that intrudes into provincial jurisdiction; while**
- 2. retaining the federal money associated with that program.**

That is a very substantial proposal.

What a NO would mean

No referendum mandate to pursue that constitutional change.

What Alberta could legally do

It could negotiate for such an arrangement.

But Alberta cannot simply declare:

“This is provincial jurisdiction, therefore we are taking the federal money but refusing the federal program.”

The legal basis for doing that would have to exist.

What Ottawa could prevent

This is the crucial issue.

The federal government could refuse to agree to the proposed constitutional change or refuse to provide funding under whatever existing federal program is involved.

A constitutional amendment would therefore be necessary if Alberta wanted to establish this as a **general constitutional right**.

Strongest argument FOR

The province should be able to design its own programs in areas of provincial jurisdiction while receiving its fair share of federal tax revenues.

The argument is essentially:

If the federal government is going to spend money in an area that constitutionally belongs to the provinces, Alberta should be able to take the money and administer the program itself.

Strongest argument AGAINST

Federal transfers often come with national standards or conditions. Allowing provinces to retain the money while rejecting the conditions could substantially weaken national programs.

My assessment

Clarity: 5/10

This is one of the questions where I would be particularly cautious.

The average voter can understand the sentence, but **the legal and financial consequences are much more complicated than the wording suggests.**

9. Provincial law taking priority over conflicting federal law

This may be the **most constitutionally consequential question other than separation.**

What a YES would mean

Alberta would seek a constitutional amendment under which, in specified provincial or shared areas of jurisdiction:

Alberta law would prevail when it conflicts with federal law.

That would represent a significant change in Canada's current constitutional structure.

The Constitution currently divides legislative powers between Parliament and provincial legislatures.

What a NO would mean

No referendum mandate for Alberta to pursue this particular constitutional change.

What Alberta could legally do

It could propose and negotiate a constitutional amendment.

But an Alberta law cannot simply declare itself superior to a valid federal law where the Constitution gives Parliament jurisdiction.

What Ottawa could prevent

Ottawa could challenge Alberta legislation in court.

The courts would continue applying the Constitution as it currently exists unless and until it is amended.

Strongest argument FOR

It would provide Alberta with a much stronger defence against what the Alberta government considers **federal intrusion into provincial jurisdiction**.

Strongest argument AGAINST

It could fundamentally disrupt the principle that federal and provincial governments operate within their respective constitutional jurisdictions, with courts resolving conflicts.

It could also produce situations where **different provinces have incompatible rules despite being part of the same country**.

My assessment

Clarity: 5/10

I think the ordinary voter can understand the general intention but **cannot easily understand the full constitutional consequences from the question itself**.

10. Remain in Canada OR begin the process toward a separation referendum

This deserves special treatment.

The actual question asks:

Should Alberta remain a province of Canada, **or** should the Alberta government commence the legal process required to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether Alberta should separate from Canada?

Elections Alberta confirms this is the first question counted on the ballot, although all ten are provided to voters.

What a vote for “remain” means

Very straightforward:

Do not begin this process.

The government would have a strong political mandate to leave the question of separation alone.

What a vote for “commence the legal process” means

This is where the wording matters enormously.

It **does not mean**:

“Alberta should separate from Canada.”

It means:

“Start the process necessary to hold another referendum asking Albertans whether Alberta should separate.”

The Alberta government's own referendum site makes this distinction.

But there is an important problem

The federal **Clarity Act** says that a referendum question relating to secession must produce a clear expression of the population's will on whether the province should **cease to be part of Canada and become an independent state**.

It specifically says a question that merely asks for a **mandate to negotiate** does not produce the required clear expression of the will to secede.

That is very important here.

So what would Ottawa likely say?

My assessment is:

Ottawa would almost certainly distinguish Question 10 from an actual separation referendum.

A Yes to Question 10 would not automatically trigger negotiations over Alberta leaving Canada.

The Clarity Act says the federal House of Commons must assess whether a secession referendum question is clear. It also says that after an actual secession referendum, the

House of Commons must determine whether there has been a **clear expression of a will by a clear majority** before the federal government enters negotiations.

And the Act expressly recognizes that Alberta could not unilaterally secede: a constitutional amendment would be required, involving negotiations with at least the federal government and all provinces.

Therefore:

Question 10 YES → process toward a future referendum

Future referendum YES → possible demand for negotiations

Negotiations → constitutional negotiations

Negotiations do NOT guarantee separation.

There would be major unresolved questions involving assets, liabilities, borders, Indigenous rights and minority rights. The Clarity Act expressly identifies these issues as matters that would have to be addressed.

My overall ranking

If I were evaluating these questions purely from the perspective of **“Can an ordinary voter understand what their vote is really doing?”**, I'd rank them:

Rank	Question	My clarity rating	My concern
1	Citizenship proof to vote	9/10	Low
2	Senate abolition	9/10	Low on wording, high on feasibility
3	12-month social-support wait	8/10	Definition of social support
4	Health/education fees	7/10	“Reasonable” fee undefined
5	Judicial appointments	7/10	Constitutional implications
6	Separation process	7/10	Easy to confuse with actual separation

Rank	Question	My clarity rating	My concern
7	Immigration control	6/10	Three different policies bundled together
8	Program eligibility	6/10	Very broad definition of programs
9	Federal-program opt-out/funding	5/10	Major unanswered legal/financial questions
10	Provincial law over federal law	5/10	Very significant constitutional implications

One thing I think is particularly important for you as a voter

There is a **fundamental difference between Questions 1–5 and Questions 6–9.**

Questions 1–5 essentially ask:

“Do you want the Alberta government to pursue this policy?”

A Yes provides a political mandate, but the government still has to determine how to implement it and remain within the law.

Questions 6–9 essentially ask:

“Do you want Alberta to pursue a change to the Canadian Constitution?”

A Yes does **not** give Alberta the new constitutional power.

It gives the government a political mandate to **try to obtain it.**

That distinction is particularly important for Questions 8 and 9.

And Question 10 is different again

It effectively asks:

“Do you want Alberta to start down the road toward having a referendum on separation?”

It does **not** ask:

“Do you want Alberta to leave Canada?”

That distinction isn't merely semantic. Under Canada's Clarity Act, an actual secession referendum must produce a clear expression of the population's will on whether Alberta should cease to be part of Canada, and the federal government would have to determine whether there was a **clear majority** before negotiations could begin.

So I would be very cautious about anyone telling you that:

“A Yes on Question 10 means Alberta has voted to separate.”

It does not.

It would mean that Alberta has voted to **begin the process of asking that question in a future binding referendum.**

My biggest concern about the referendum as a whole

It isn't that the questions are inherently unreasonable. **Several are quite reasonable subjects for public debate.**

My concern is that **some questions ask voters to approve a broad political objective without telling them what the eventual legislation or constitutional amendment would actually say.**

Questions **8 and 9** are the clearest examples.

A voter can quite reasonably think:

“Yes, I want Alberta to have more control over its own affairs.”

But that is not necessarily the same thing as agreeing with **every constitutional consequence** that might follow from the proposed changes.

Conversely, someone might oppose the constitutional mechanism while agreeing with the underlying objective.

That is why I would **not treat a Yes vote as proof that Albertans have approved every specific implementation the government might subsequently propose.**

And there is another important safeguard: Alberta's government itself acknowledges that even a referendum result cannot require the government to implement something that would contravene Canada's Constitution.

Bottom line

If I were reducing the referendum to three questions for purposes of understanding what you're actually voting for:

Questions 1–5:

 *“Do I want the Alberta government to pursue these policies?”*

Questions 6–9:

 *“Do I want Alberta to pursue these constitutional changes?”*

Question 10:

 *“Do I want Alberta to begin the process toward a future referendum on whether to leave Canada?”*

Those are **three very different kinds of votes**, and I think that distinction is more important than the Yes/No boxes themselves.