

## TransMountain troubles: Alberta-B.C. pipeline battle splits Canadians down the middle

*Albertans are generally united on pipeline positions, the rest of Canada, including BC, is divided*

**February 22, 2018** – While a war of words, political will, and even wine continues to rage between the governments of British Columbia and Alberta over Kinder Morgan's TransMountain pipeline, Canadians from coast to coast are split evenly when it comes to picking sides.

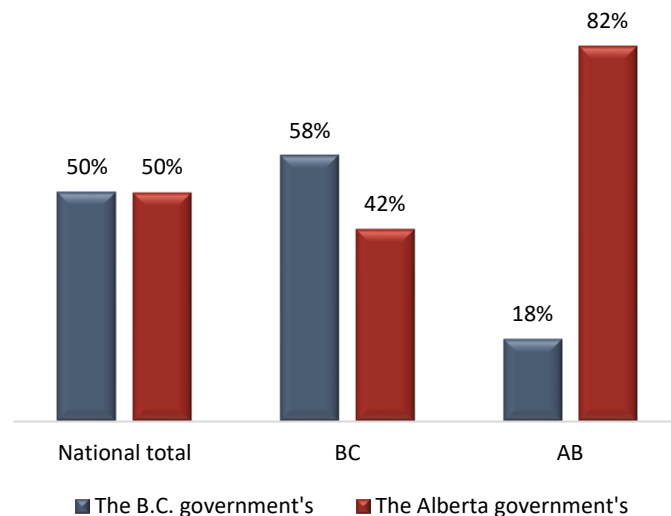
The latest public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute finds Albertans themselves are, unsurprisingly, near unanimous in their backing of the project. British Columbians, on the other hand – are split. Indeed, the strongest opposition to the pipeline's expansion is found not in B.C., but Quebec.

And as the Trudeau government weighs in on one side of a regional dispute with national implications, its public avowal that the twinning of the pipeline that runs from northern Alberta to B.C.'s south coast will be completed stands to risk alienating voters who were instrumental in delivering a majority mandate to the Liberal Party in 2015.

### More Key Findings:

- Asked which province – B.C., which wants to delay the project for environmental reasons, or Alberta, which wants to avoid delays for economic reasons – is making the more compelling argument, Canadians are evenly split, with 50 per cent saying each province's government is more persuasive
- As has been the case [previous ARI studies](#), Canadians are more likely to support the TransMountain pipeline expansion project (49% do) than to oppose it (33%). Almost one-in-five (18%) are unsure, suggesting that those who take British Columbia's side in the ongoing debate are less solid in their position than those who side with Alberta
- Political affiliation emerges as another key driver of opinion, with past Conservative Party of Canada voters overwhelmingly taking Alberta's side. Past Liberal and New Democratic Party supporters are more divided

**Which side are Canadians taking on this issue?**



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from February 15 – 19, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 2,501 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). The sample plan included large oversamples in specific regions, which were then weighted down to provide a national snapshot. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size with this sample plan would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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**Canadians deeply split on pipelines**

The idea that pipelines are a divisive issue is almost a cliché in Canada today, but the results of this study drive home just how divided the country really is.

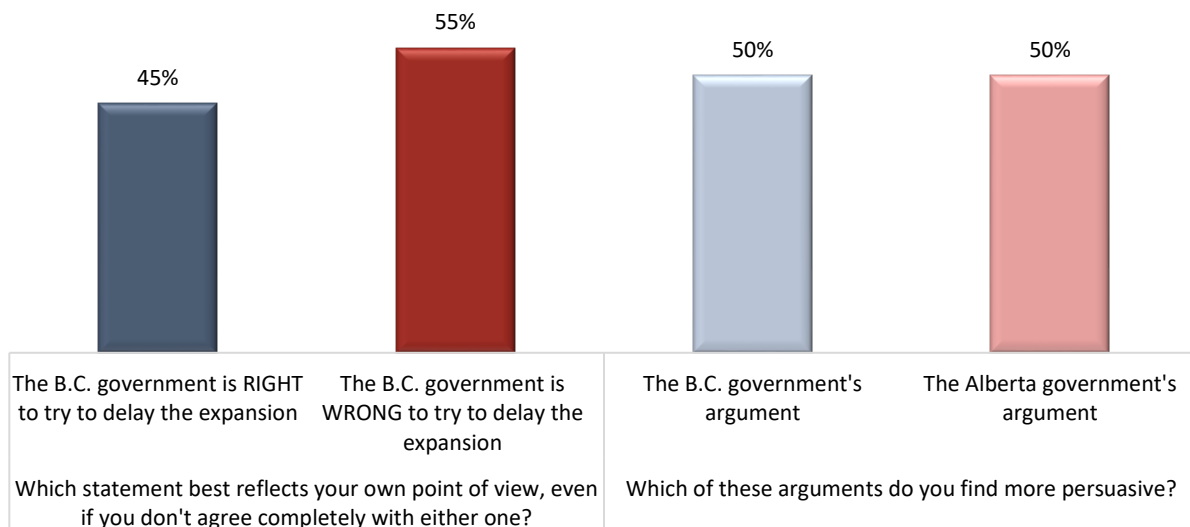
When it comes to the current row between B.C. and Alberta, for instance, the split is 50-50 as to which province's argument is more persuasive.

British Columbia argues that the pipeline would increase tanker traffic in Vancouver seven-fold – seriously increasing the risk of an oil spill along the B.C. coast – and that it therefore should be delayed, to further study the potential impact of a spill, or scrapped entirely.

Alberta argues that the pipeline will create jobs and allow the province's oil to get to foreign markets, which will be good for the Albertan and Canadian economy. Some 50 per cent of Canadians see each of these arguments as more compelling than the other.

Similarly, respondents are nearly as divided on whether the B.C. government's tactic of calling for more time to study the potential effects of a spill on its coast is appropriate, although the majority tilt slightly the other way:

**Canadians are divided on the recent disagreement between B.C. and Alberta on pipelines:**

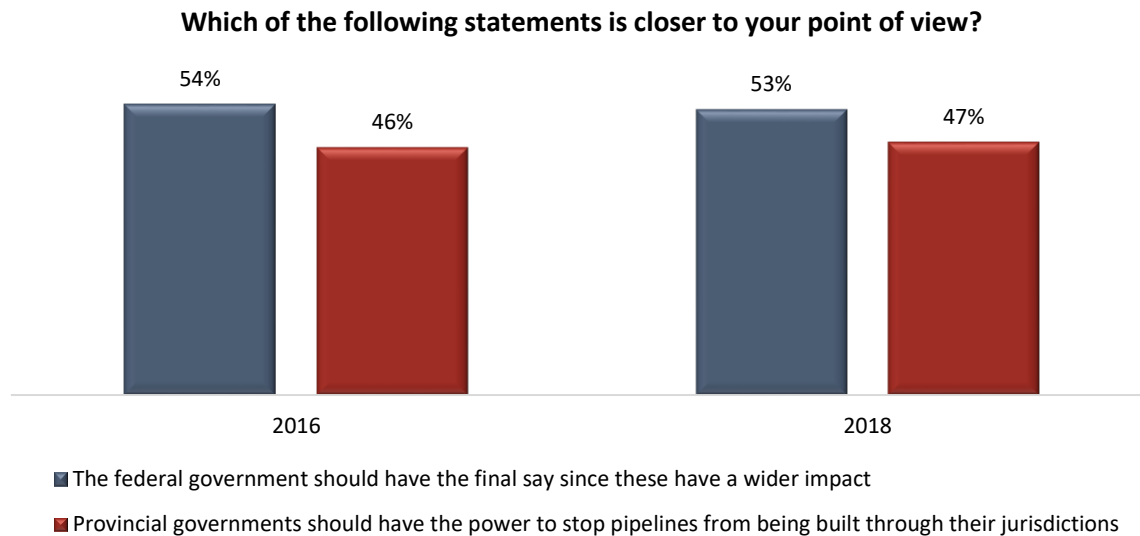


Then there is the near-even division on the question of which level of government should have the final say on energy projects such as these. Just over half (53%) are of the view that the ultimate authority rests

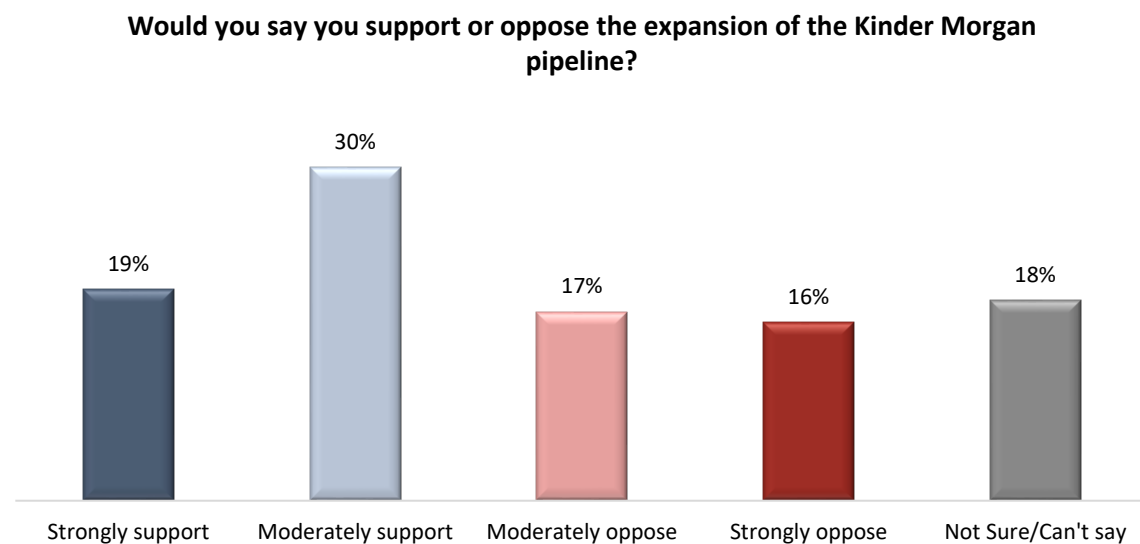
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with the federal government, while just under half (47%) say provincial governments should have the power to “veto” projects in their jurisdictions. These findings are essentially unchanged since the Angus Reid Institute [last asked](#) in 2016:



As for views on the Kinder Morgan project itself, roughly half of Canadians (49%) say they support its construction, while one-in-three (33%) are opposed. The rest (18%) are unsure.



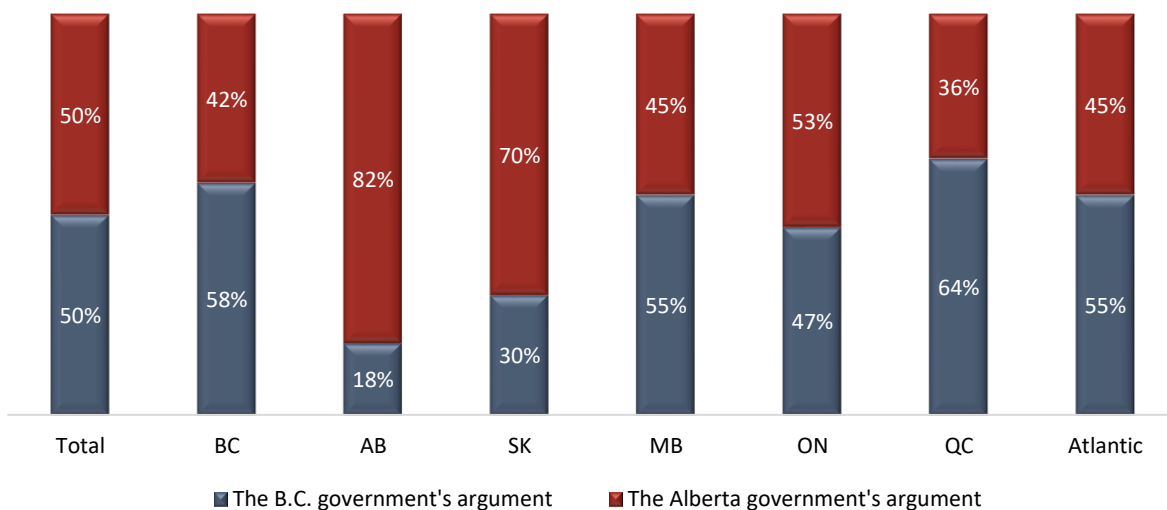
**Both Alberta and B.C. find allies across the country**

While the country is split in two over the arguments made by B.C. and Alberta's leadership, there are significant regional variations in opinion, and each province finds both sympathy and antipathy for its position in pockets across the country.

Regarding Alberta, for which there is much less debate at home about who holds the high ground, their neighbours to the east in Saskatchewan and further, in Ontario, are most attuned to the argument that economic harm is being done by delaying the project. Seven-in-ten Saskatchewan residents (70%) and a slim majority of those in Ontario (53%) say that Alberta's claims are more persuasive than those put forth by B.C.

For British Columbia, kindred mindsets are most likely to be found in Quebec. In fact, more Quebecers (64%) say the B.C. government's argument holds the most weight than British Columbians themselves (58%). Slim majorities in Manitoba and Atlantic Canada also say that delaying the Kinder Morgan project is justified.

### Which of these arguments do you find more persuasive?



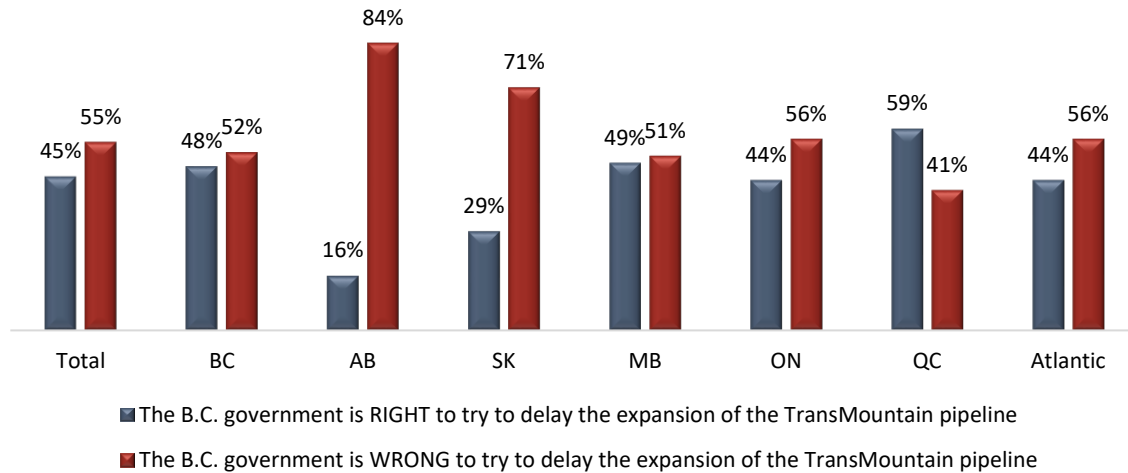
While the claim that John Horgan and the NDP have made does appear to resonate with a substantial number of Canadians, in action, they're less inclined to think that the decision to delay the project was the right one. In British Columbia, the 58 per cent who said the government has a better argument translates into just 48 per cent who say that same government made the right choice in acting to delay the project.

Majority sympathy all but disappears across the country on the decision. Six-in-ten in Quebec (59%) say the BC NDP is right to take this action, but a majority in all other regions disagree. It's worth noting that in Manitoba, this majority is by the slimmest of margins, and within the margin of error.

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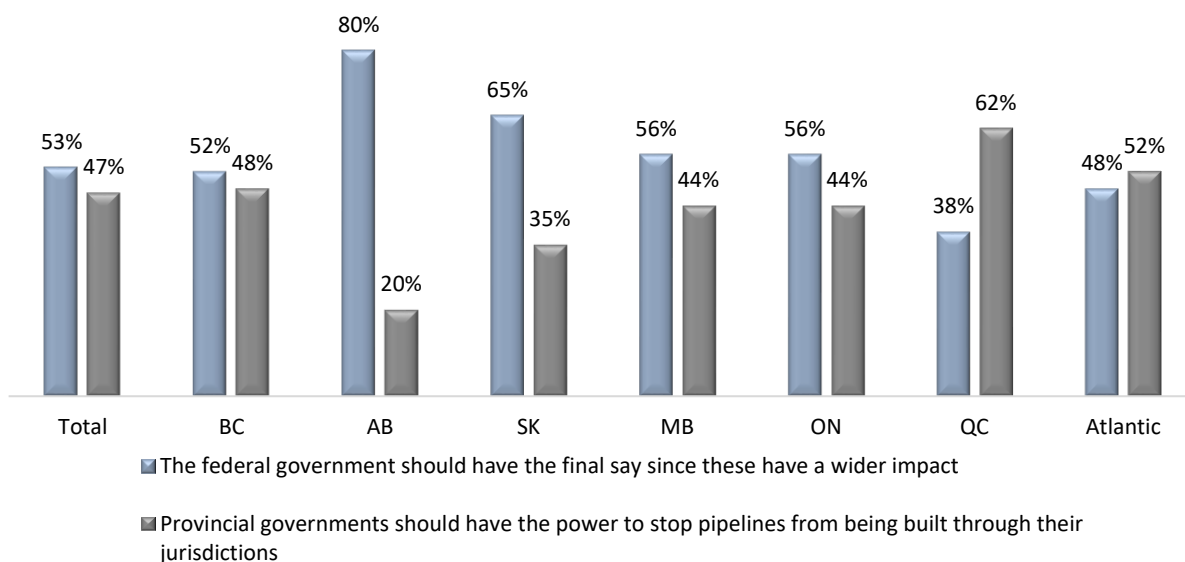
**Based on what you've seen, heard or read, including this survey – which statement best reflects your own point of view, even if you don't agree completely with either one?**



Part of this discontinuity between debate and practice appears to owe to the eminence of the federal government on this issue. While Quebec, historically more likely to claim provincial independence on issues involving the federal government, leans toward the right of provincial governments to stop pipelines from being built through their jurisdiction, the rest of the country is more federally inclined.

B.C. and Atlantic Canada are evenly divided over whose say should be final, while a majority in Manitoba, Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan say the federal government should have final say, given the wider impact of these decisions outside of the focus provinces.

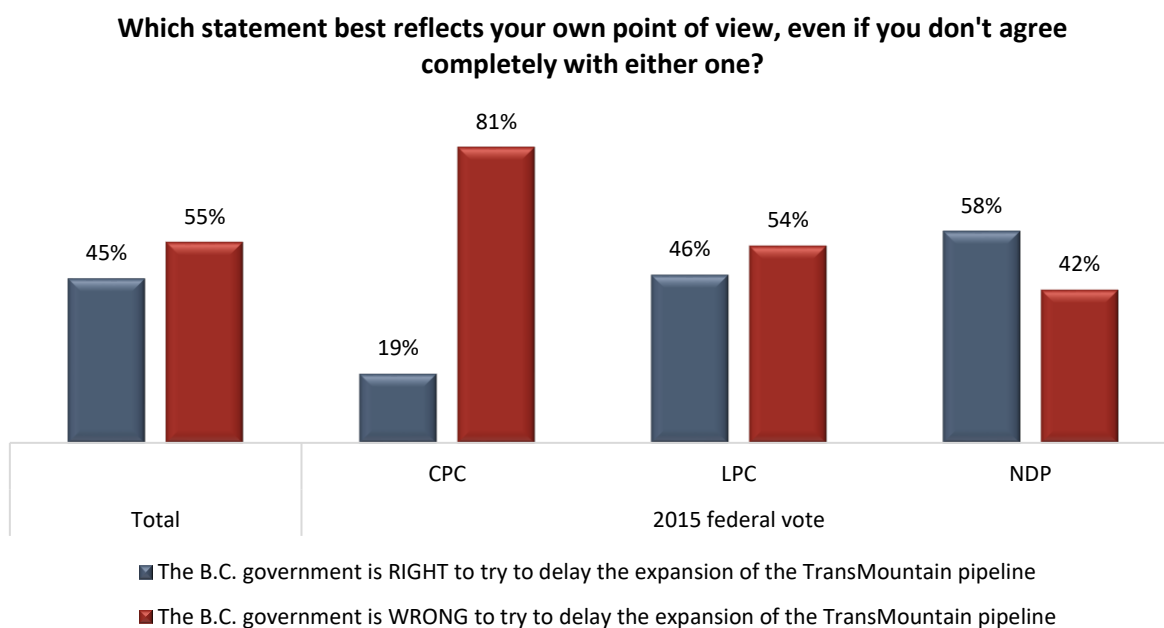
**Which of the following statements is closer to your point of view?**



**Pipeline politics: Divided Liberals could spell trouble for Trudeau**

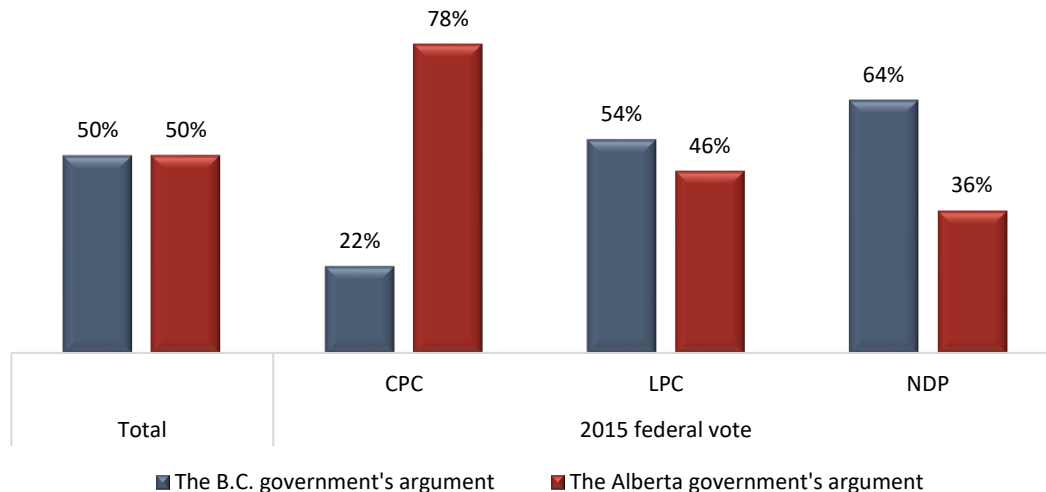
Politics is another key driver of division on this issue. Fully eight-in-ten (81%) of those who voted for Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada in the 2015 election say the B.C. government is wrong to try to delay the expansion of the pipeline, while supporters of the other two main federal parties are more divided.

A small majority (54%) of those who voted for the governing federal Liberals also take the position that B.C.'s government is in the wrong, while most – but far from all – past federal New Democrats support the party's provincial wing in B.C.:



A similar pattern can be seen in responses to the question about which province's argument is more persuasive. Past CPC voters again overwhelmingly side with Alberta and against B.C., while past Liberals are divided and past New Democrats find British Columbia's argument more persuasive.

**Which of these arguments do you find more persuasive?**



The division among Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's own partisans suggests a potential price to pay for a party that beat expectations in British Columbia in the 2015 election. The Liberals claimed 17 B.C. seats in 2015 – nearly all of them in the Metro Vancouver region, which has been the seat of some of the most vociferous opposition to the TransMountain project.

Trudeau's position on this issue puts him in conflict with the nearly two-thirds of Metro Vancouver residents (63%) who find their provincial government's argument more persuasive than Alberta's and the 42 per cent who oppose the pipeline. If these groups – which overlap significantly – were to abandon the PM's party in 2019, the Liberals would be hard-pressed to maintain their foothold in the province.

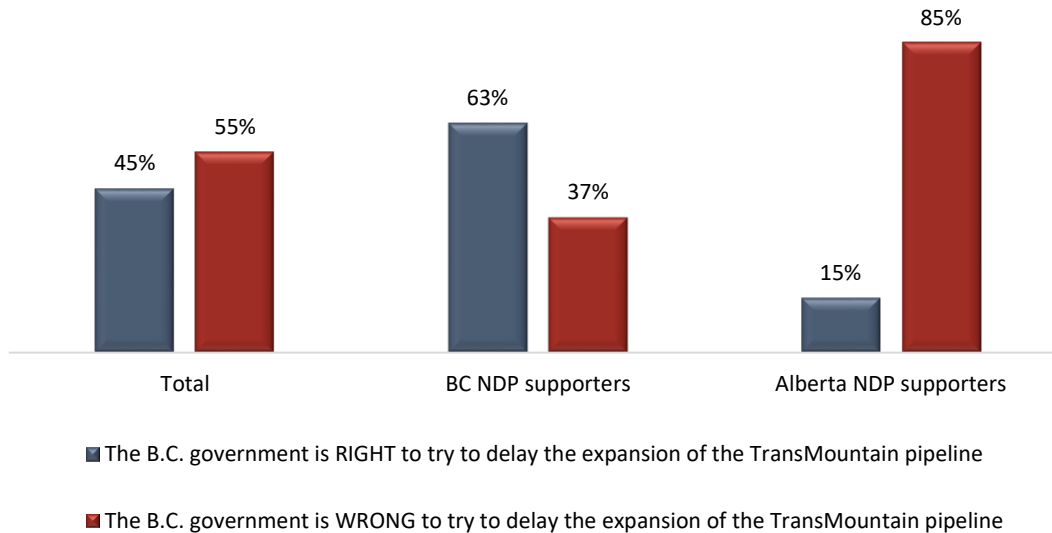
**B.C., Alberta and the battle over bitumen**

British Columbia and Alberta share a border, but when it comes to pipeline politics, that's often the extent of their commonalities. Consider this: both provinces are currently led by an NDP government. Each version of that provincial party shares a similar vision on carbon taxation, minimum wages and health care, to name a few examples. However, when it comes to pipelines, they're hardly on the same planet.

Some explanation of this divergence in view may have to do with the lens through which people in each province view the debate. In Alberta, the overwhelming consensus is that it centres on the pipelines themselves and the expansion of Canada's oil producing capacity (77% say this). In British Columbia, the public is more divided, with nearly half (48%) saying instead that this debate hinges on oil tankers and the potential risk of an oil spill off the west coast ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

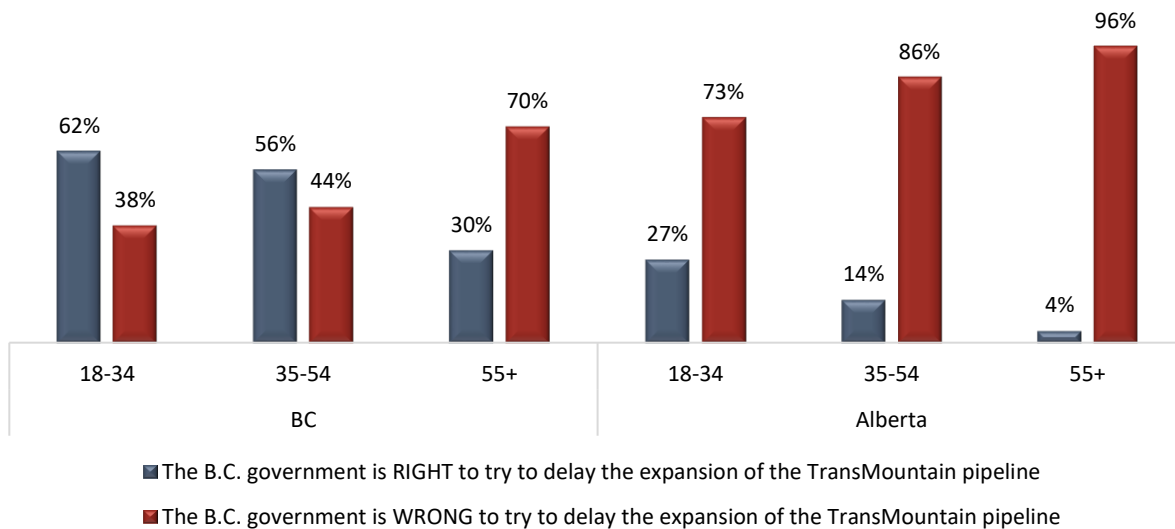
Asked whether the B.C. government is right or wrong in seeking to delay the TransMountain pipeline twinning, 63 per cent of NDP supporters in B.C. say they're right, while 85 per cent of NDP supporters in Alberta say they're wrong.

**Which statement best reflects your own point of view**



The one group of B.C. residents who find themselves more aligned with Alberta on this issue are those over the age of 55. While a majority of those from younger generations in Canada’s westernmost province tend to side with the B.C. government in this dispute, seven-in-ten (70%) residents over 55 say it is making the wrong call. This proportion would rank them lower than all age groups in Alberta, but significantly closer than other British Columbian cohorts.

**Which statement best reflects your own point of view?**

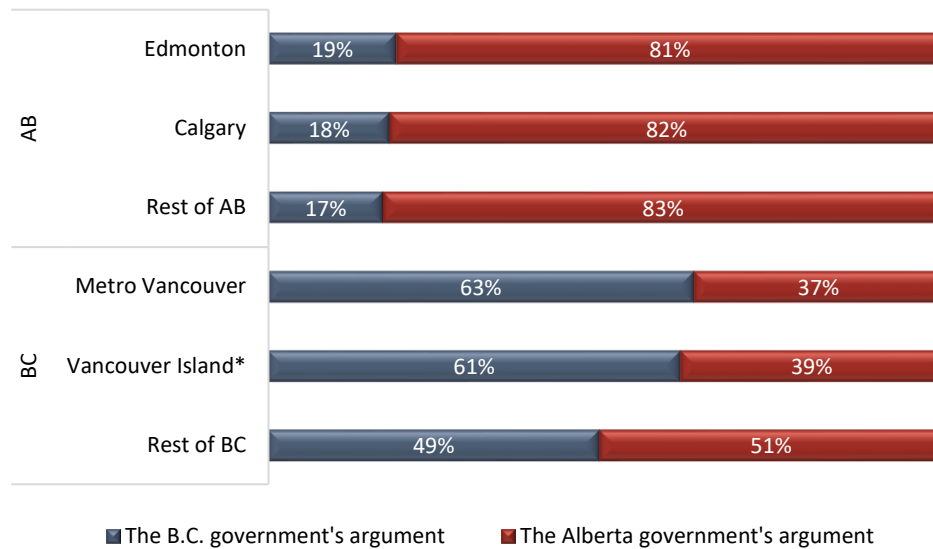


Another key difference between the provinces is the level of uniformity of opinion across regions in each. If one were to ask a resident of Alberta which province has the more persuasive claim in this debate, it



wouldn't much matter where they were. Whether in Calgary, Edmonton or outside of those two major urban centres, roughly four-in-five Albertans say their government is on the right side of the dispute. In British Columbia however, residents across the province are far more divided, and indeed split evenly outside of Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island.

**Which of these arguments do you find more persuasive?**



**\*Denotes small sample size**

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).*

Which of these arguments do you find more persuasive?							
(unweighted sample sizes)	Canada total (2501)	BC Subregion			AB Subregion		
		Metro Van. (235)	Van. Island (94*)	Rest of BC (177)	Edmonton (175)	Calgary (179)	Rest of AB (147)
The B.C. government's argument	50%	63%	61%	49%	19%	18%	17%
The Alberta government's argument	50%	37%	39%	51%	81%	82%	83%

Which statement best reflects your own point of view, even if you don't agree completely with either one?							
(unweighted sample sizes)	Canada total (2501)	BC age			AB age		
		18-34 (115)	35-54 (168)	55+ (223)	18-34 (125)	35-54 (196)	55+ (180)
The B.C. government is RIGHT to try to delay the expansion of the TransMountain pipeline	45%	62%	56%	30%	27%	14%	4%
The B.C. government is WRONG to try to delay the expansion of the TransMountain pipeline	55%	38%	44%	70%	73%	86%	96%

Which statement best reflects your own point of view, even if you don't agree completely with either one?					
(sample sizes withheld)	Canada total	BC provincial vote intention		AB provincial vote intention	
		BC Liberal	BC NDP	AB NDP	United Conservative
The B.C. government is RIGHT to try to delay the expansion of the TransMountain pipeline	45%	22%	63%	15%	7%
The B.C. government is WRONG to try to delay the expansion of the TransMountain pipeline	55%	78%	37%	85%	93%

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