

## One year later: British Columbians mixed on NDP's performance, but support its affordability policies

*Although two-in-five say B.C. is on the 'wrong track', Horgan remains most approved-of party leader*

**May 9, 2018** – It's been exactly one year since the historic 2017 British Columbia election threw the province into months of political uncertainty that eventually resulted in a rare minority government.

Today, a new poll from the Angus Reid Institute finds British Columbians themselves feeling uncertain and anxious about the direction in which the province is headed.

On one hand, British Columbians support some key policy changes introduced by Premier John Horgan on the affordability file. On the other, they are expressing palpable unease over his party's handling of an ongoing dispute with the Alberta and federal governments over the Kinder Morgan pipeline project.

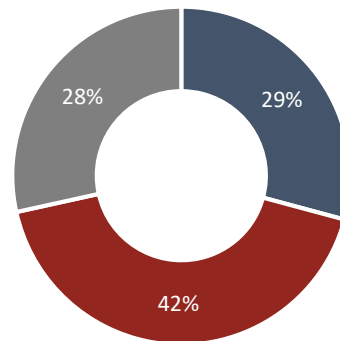
These findings reflect a British Columbia as divided as it was 12 months ago. Roughly equal numbers say this government - supported by the B.C. Green Party – has helped or hurt them personally.

But overall, more British Columbians say the province is on the "wrong track" (42%) than say it's on the right one (29%).

### More Key Findings:

- Horgan has the approval of 47 per cent of B.C. residents, more than approve of either opposition Liberal leader Andrew Wilkinson (26%) or Green leader Andrew Weaver (34%)
- A majority (57%) continue to support changing the voting system to ensure more proportional representation, and a similar number (56%) do not express concern that details of a planned referendum on the topic have yet to be released
- Age, political partisanship and regional differences are key drivers of opinion on government performance, with younger British Columbians holding more favourable views, and older respondents holding more unfavourable ones

Overall, do you think British Columbia is on the right track, or the wrong track?



■ Right track ■ Wrong track ■ Not sure

### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 4 – 7, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 809 adult B.C. residents who are members of [Maru Voice Canada](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.4 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.

### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)  
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 [ian.holliday@angusreid.org](mailto:ian.holliday@angusreid.org)

- The BC NDP holds a vote intention advantage in the City of Vancouver, Metro Vancouver, and on Vancouver Island, while the BC Liberals hold a significant advantage in the rest of B.C.

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**Part 1 – Mood of the Province:**

**Is B.C. on the right track or the wrong track?**

To say British Columbians found themselves staring into an uncharted political chasm on the night of May 9, 2017 might be an understatement. In one of the closest electoral results in B.C. history – indeed, just [1,566 votes](#), separated the B.C. Liberal Party from the B.C. New Democrats – political watchers bore witness to a two month period where the possibility of another snap election or a coalition government loomed large.

Tens months later, an NDP minority government supported by the B.C. Green Party on matters of supply and confidence remains in power, enacting policy that the party campaigned on, to the delight of supporters and the displeasure of opponents.

Today, more people are inclined to say the province is on the wrong track (42% do) than the right one (29%), while a significant number (28%) aren't sure.

Past partisanship plays a significant role in shaping this overall view. Nearly seven-in-ten (69%) who voted for the BC Liberals last year say the province is on the wrong track, while NDP and Green

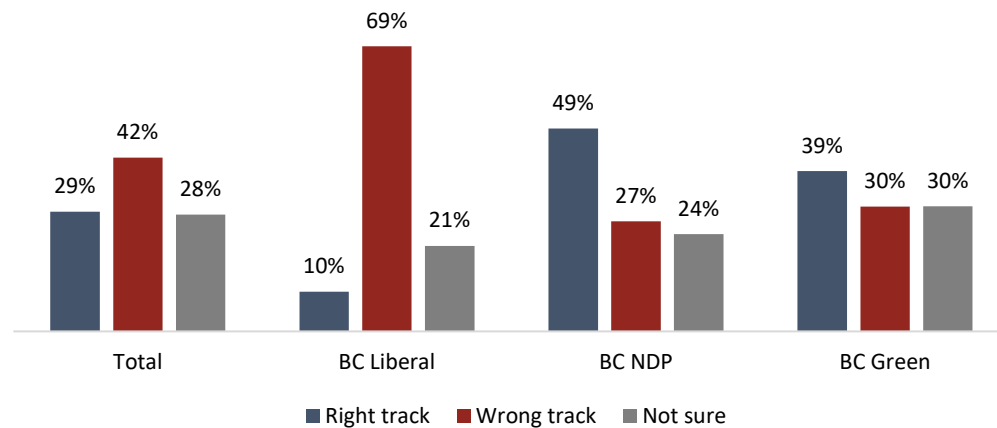
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**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)  
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 [ian.holliday@angusreid.org](mailto:ian.holliday@angusreid.org)

supporters lean toward the opposite view – though it’s notable that they’re not as united in perceiving the province on the right track as past Liberals are in saying things have gone awry:

**Overall, do you think British Columbia is on the right track or the wrong track?**



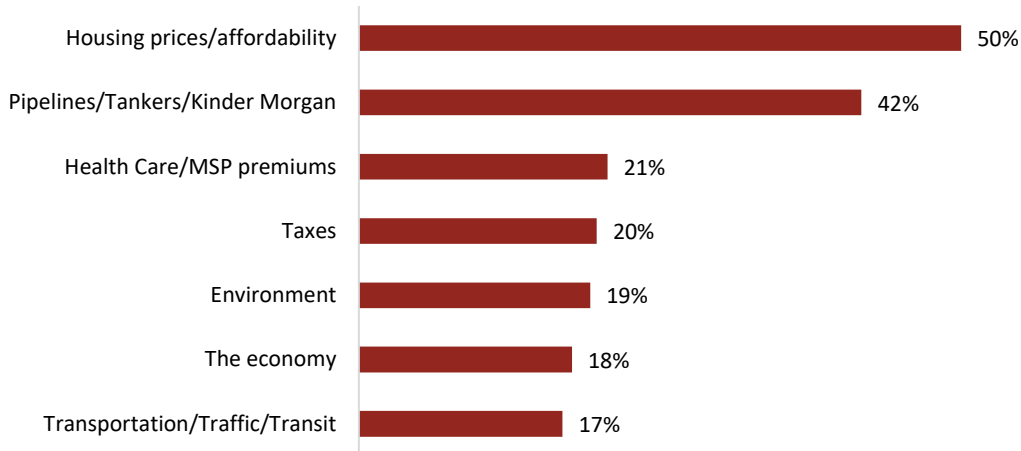
But what are the undercurrents driving these views? This Angus Reid Institute analysis focuses on three key ballot issues that dominated last year’s election, and how British Columbians view them today: affordability, the ongoing pipeline debate, and electoral reform.

**Part 2 – Affordability issues**

Housing prices and affordability are foremost on the minds of British Columbians. Fully half of those surveyed (50%) name this a top issue facing the province.

The only other issue that comes close is the debate over Kinder Morgan’s TransMountain pipeline expansion project and the additional oil tanker traffic it would bring to B.C.’s coast (discussed in part 3 of this report).

**As far as you are concerned, what would you say are the most important issues in the province today? (Choose up to 3; issues mentioned by at least one-in-six respondents shown)**

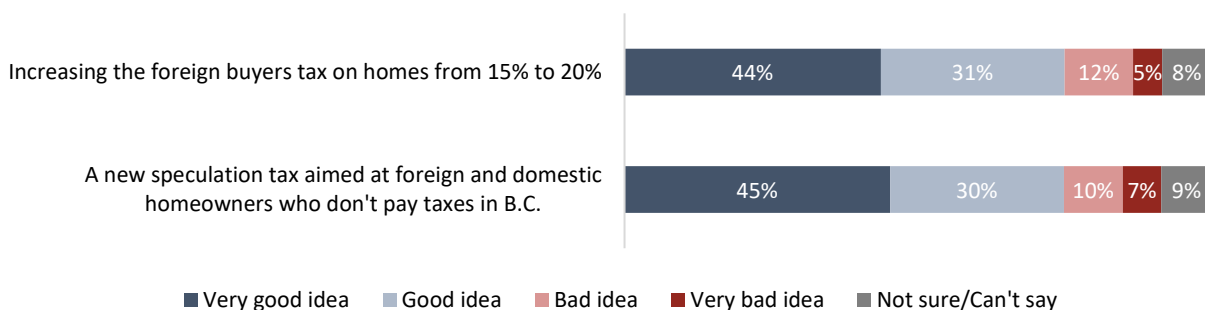


**Support for new house taxes**

Since forming government in July, Premier John Horgan’s NDP has announced changes aimed at cooling the housing market and improving affordability. ARI polling finds these proposals to be supported by the public.

Fully three-quarters of British Columbians (75%) say increasing the tax on foreign buyers of real estate implemented during former premier Christy Clark’s government from 15 per cent to 20 per cent is a good idea. Likewise, the same number (75%) hold this view of the NDP’s speculation tax, which is aimed at owners of residential property – whether foreign or domestic – who don’t pay income taxes in the province.

**Here are some specific measures the NDP has proposed or introduced since it formed government. For each, we’d like to know whether you think it’s a good or bad idea.**

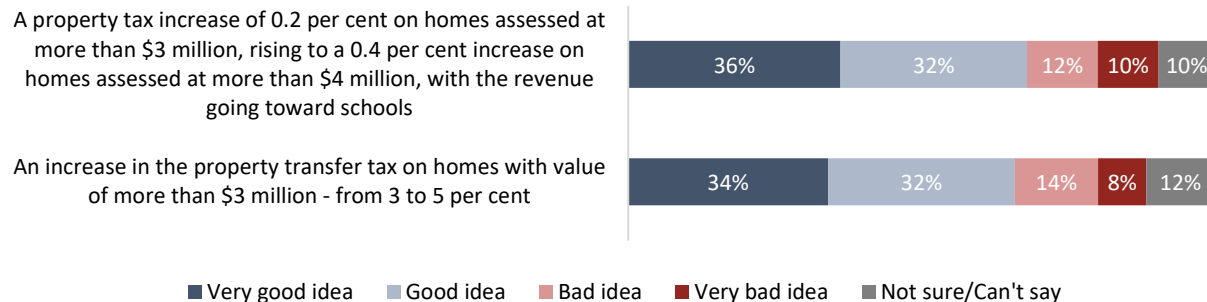


**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
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 Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 [ian.holliday@angusreid.org](mailto:ian.holliday@angusreid.org)

Two other housing-related measures also generate widespread support. Two-thirds (66%) say an increase in the property transfer tax on homes with values higher than \$3 million is a good idea, and a similar number (68%) say this of a proposed increase in the school tax on homes assessed at more than \$3 million.

**Here are some specific measures the NDP has proposed or introduced since it formed government. For each, we'd like to know whether you think it's a good or bad idea.**



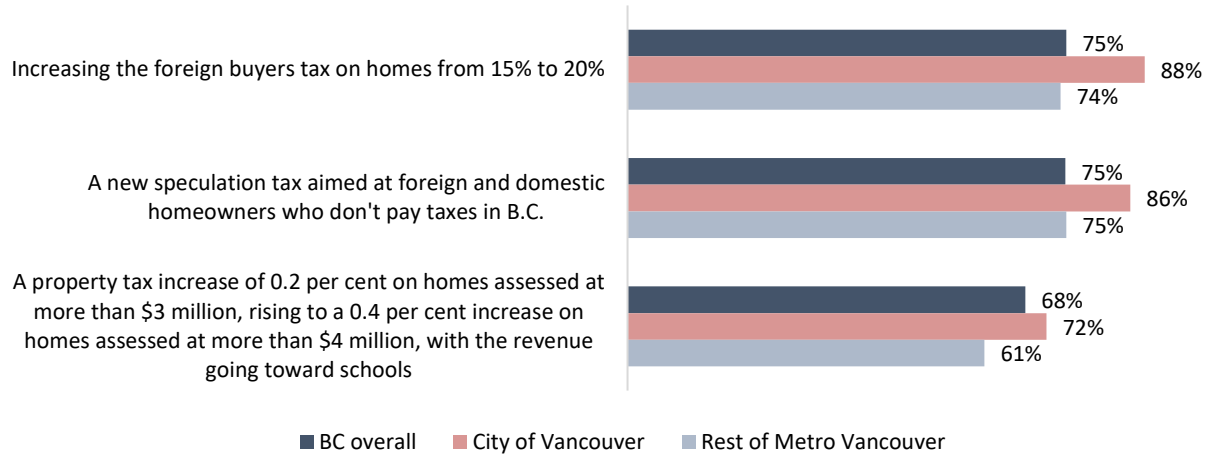
The school tax proposal has generated controversy, particularly in Attorney General David Eby’s West Point Grey riding, where there are hundreds of high-value properties affected by the change. Many homeowners in the City of Vancouver – especially seniors who bought into the market decades ago when prices were lower – argue that the value of their home does not reflect their income, and that they can’t afford the proposed increase.

In an open letter to constituents in March, Eby argued that the increase in the school tax would provide a necessary revenue source for increased investment in education, and that seniors and families with children can defer the taxes until they sell their properties and realize the increase in value that has accumulated over the years.

Notably, while residents of the City of Vancouver are overwhelmingly supportive of the speculation and foreign buyers taxes in comparison to the rest of the province, they are more muted in their support for the school tax proposal, as seen in the graph that follows.

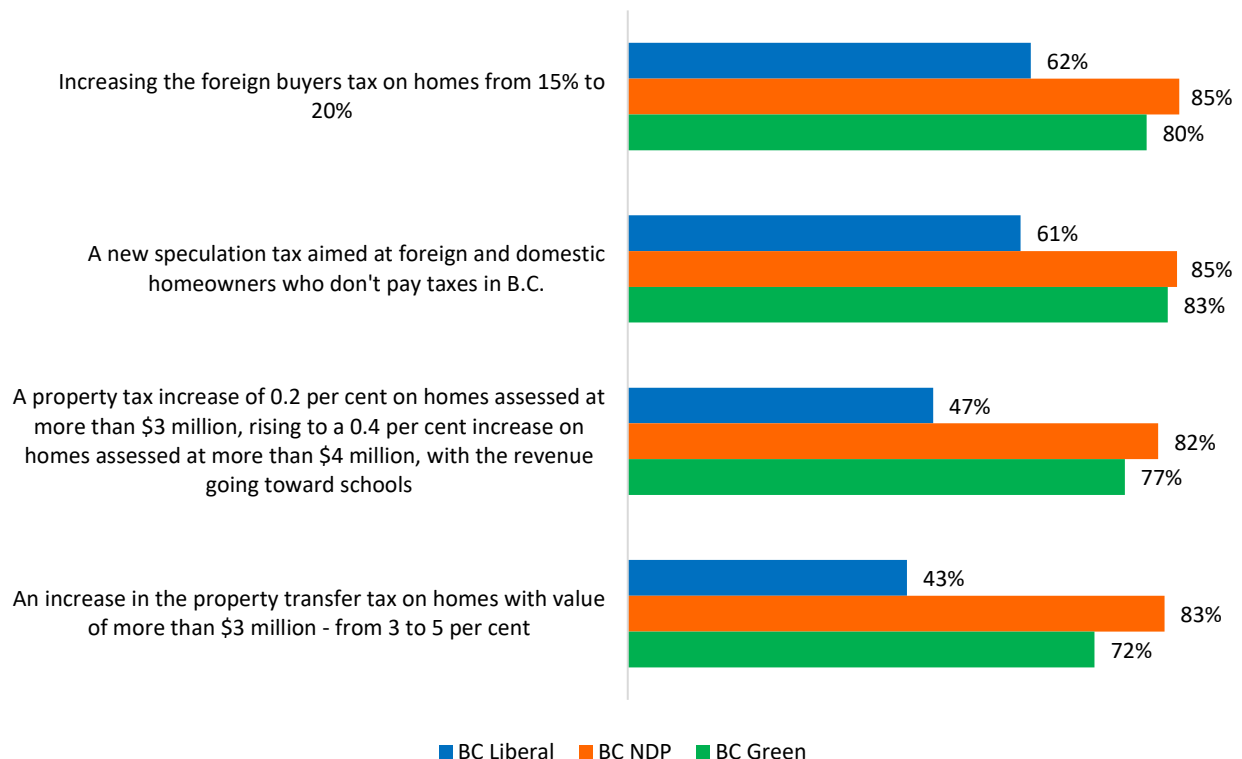
That said, support for this change among Vancouver residents is still more than seven-in-ten (72%):

**Percentage saying each policy proposal is a "good idea":**



Politically, these housing measures are immensely popular with past NDP and Green voters, but they're also deemed "good ideas" by significant numbers of past BC Liberal voters, as seen in the graph that follows:

**Percentage who say each proposal is a "good idea":**



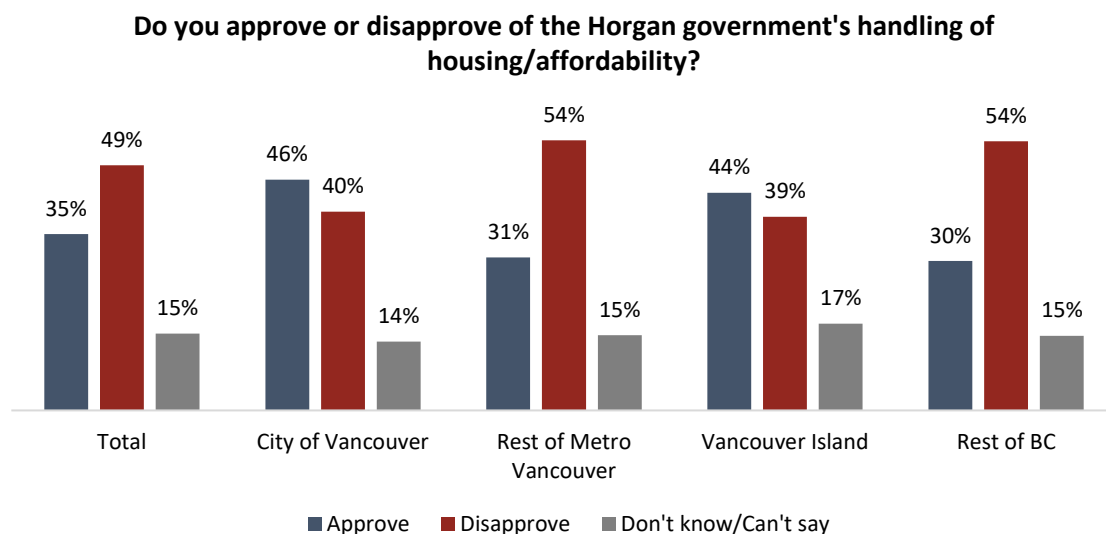
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## New policies do not result in approval on affordability

However, British Columbians' broadly favourable views of housing policy proposals belie their less-rosy assessment of the government's performance on this file.

Nearly half of all provincial residents (49%) say they disapprove of the Horgan government's handling of housing affordability, while slightly more than one-in-three (35%) approve. Even in Vancouver, where support for the government's policies is especially strong, views on its performance on the file are middling.



## Part 3 – Performance on pipelines

### Most disapprove of government's performance

Kinder Morgan's early-April announcement that it was considering walking away from the TransMountain pipeline expansion project amid opposition from the B.C. government set off a firestorm of media coverage and a flurry of activity from the federal and Alberta governments seeking to reassure the company of their commitment to getting the pipeline built.

For its part, the Horgan government proceeded with a reference to the court system, asking whether it has the authority to limit the flow of diluted bitumen through the province.

As recent Angus Reid Institute polling has shown, most Canadians – and, indeed, most British Columbians – support the construction of the pipeline. Last month, seven-in-ten B.C. residents (69%) said the province should “give in and allow the pipeline to be built” if the courts rule against it.

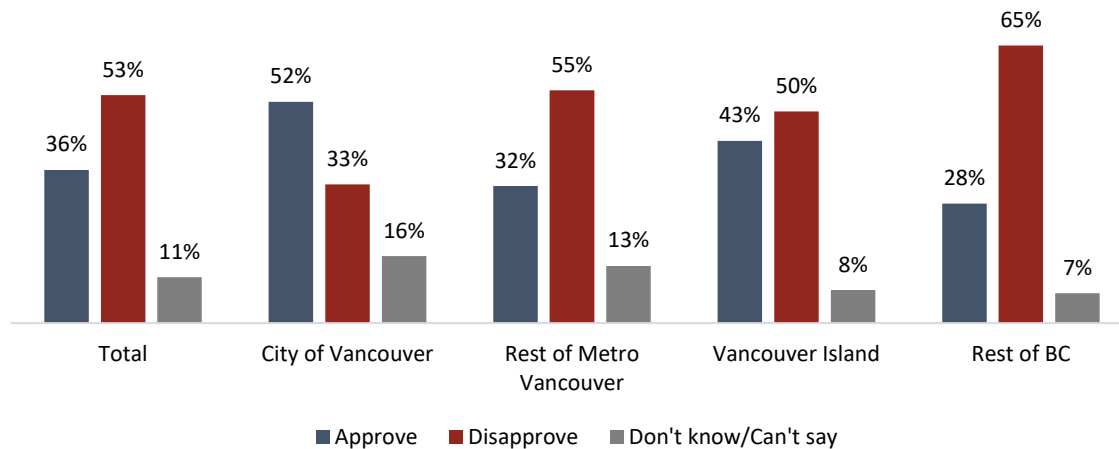
**[Related: Pipeline Problems? Try Tanker Troubles: BC Kinder Morgan opponents want spill response assurances](#)**

#### CONTACT:

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Against this backdrop, it's perhaps not surprising that a majority of British Columbians (53%) disapprove of the Horgan government's handling of the Kinder Morgan project, while slightly more than one-third approve of it.

**Do you approve or disapprove of the Horgan government's handling of Kinder Morgan's TransMountain expansion project?**



**Divisions among NDP base on Kinder Morgan**

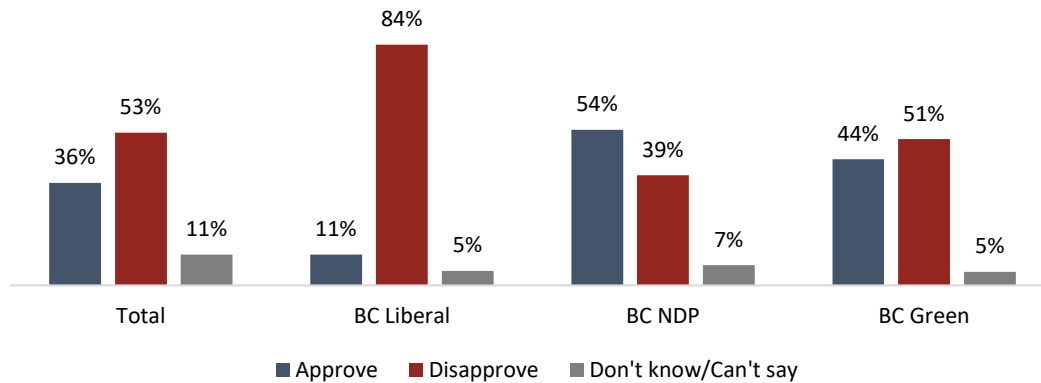
The Horgan government's low approval on its handling of the TransMountain project reflects, in part, divisions among those who voted for the NDP and the Greens last year.

While most 2017 NDP voters (54%) approve of the government's handling of this issue, a sizeable minority disapprove. Among those who supported the Green Party, whose three-member caucus holds the balance of power in the minority government, those who disapprove (51%) outnumber those who approve (44%).

Each governing party's base is much more divided than that of the opposition BC Liberals, whose 2017 supporters overwhelmingly disapprove of the government's handling of pipelines – likely for different reasons than some past Green voters do.



**Do you approve or disapprove of the Horgan government's handling of Kinder Morgan's TransMountain expansion project?**



Age is also a factor in this negative assessment of the government's handling of the pipeline file, though this is likely correlated somewhat with political partisanship as well.

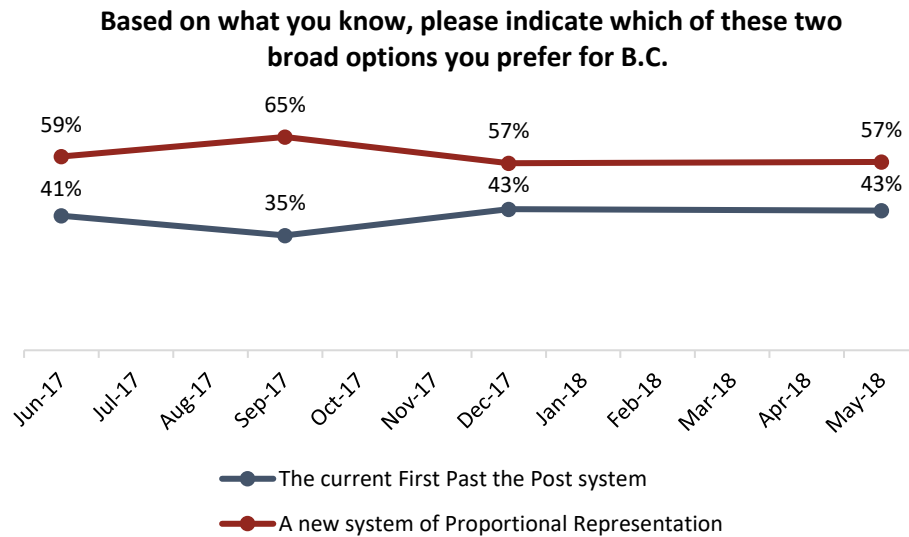
Among 18-34-year-olds – who tended to vote for NDP and Green candidates in 2017 – more approve (44%) than disapprove (37%) of the government's handling of this file. Older age groups – who provided more support to the Liberals in the last election – disapprove by wide margins (55% of those ages 35-54 disapprove, as do 65% of those ages 55+, [see comprehensive tables](#))

**Part 4 – Electoral reform**

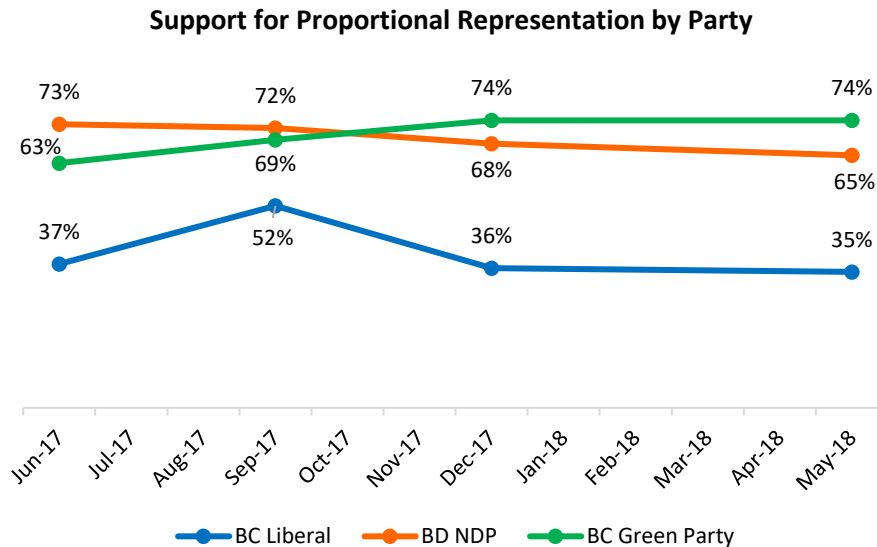
**Most still prefer to change the voting system**

One of the key elements of the arrangement between the BC NDP and the Green Party is electoral reform. The written agreement on which the alliance between the parties rests mentions specifically the task of working together to generate a form of proportional representation and campaigning “[actively in support](#)” of its passage.

It would appear that most British Columbians remain more supportive of such a measure than opposed. After a post-election bump in support for the idea of proportional representation, that support dropped to 57 per cent. Now, one year after the election, support holds at that level:



This backing is primarily drawn from B.C. NDP and B.C. Green Party supporters. In each case, more than two-thirds support the initiative, and have since September of last year. While past B.C. Liberal voters flirted with the idea of support after the election, a hard line from new party leader Andrew Wilkinson appears to have diminished support among this group. It is now at one-in-three (35%).



### Divisions on referendum timing, trust

The government set a deadline of November 30, 2018 to carry out a referendum. But details have yet to be released regarding key elements of the process. As director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions'

**CONTACT:**

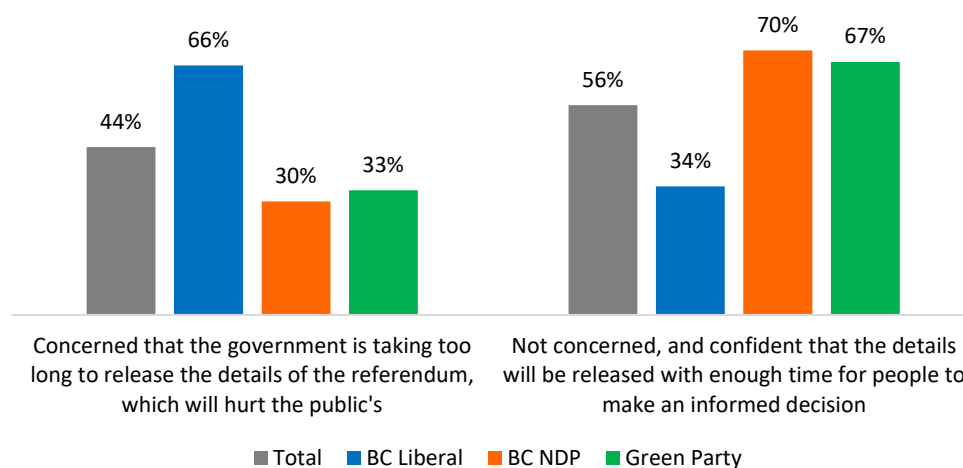
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
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Max Cameron stated recently, residents still don't know "whether the ballot question will be about picking a system or whether it will be about a mandate to design a process to pick a system".

This lack of clarity has opponents of electoral reform claiming residents may not have enough time to be fully informed about the process.

On this, More than half (56%) of British Columbians say that there is plenty of time before the deadline to release these details, while a significant minority (44%) say the question(s) need to be released sooner rather than later. Past B.C. Liberals are significantly more concerned about the process, echoing Wilkinson.

### Would you say you are:



Another issue raised by the opposition in the B.C. legislature is the objectivity of the parties tasked with designing this referendum. There are myriad options: multiple forms of proportional representation, setting the level of support for passage of the referendum. The B.C. NDP, and its alliance partner, the B.C. Greens, wield significant control over the process.

For example, the government has chosen to set the bar for a vote to change at 50 per cent plus one, whereas the Liberal government set it at 60 per cent plus one in both 2005 and 2009 in referenda to switch to a single transferable vote system.

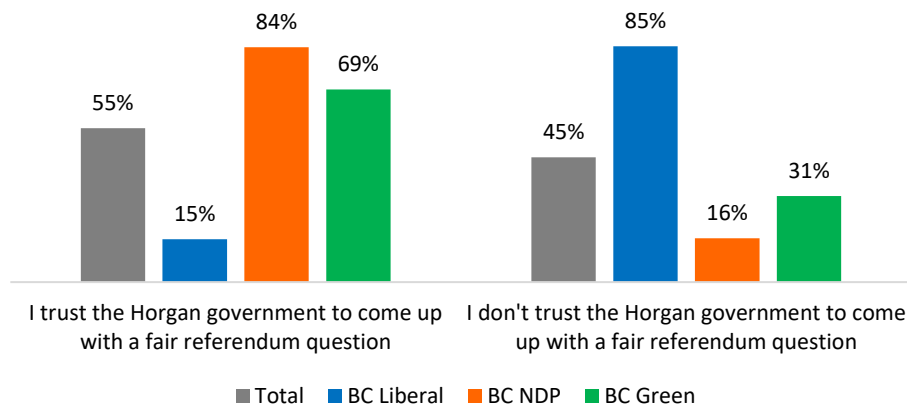
While John Horgan's NDP government holds the trust of a majority of residents on this issue, the majority is slight. Just over half (55%) say that they believe the government will come up with a fair question, while 45 per cent disagree, and are leery of what will be presented. This includes three-in-ten 2017 B.C. Green supporters (31%):

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**Which statement is closer to your own point of view, even if you don't entirely agree with either one?**



**Part 5 – Leadership and politics**

**Leader approval**

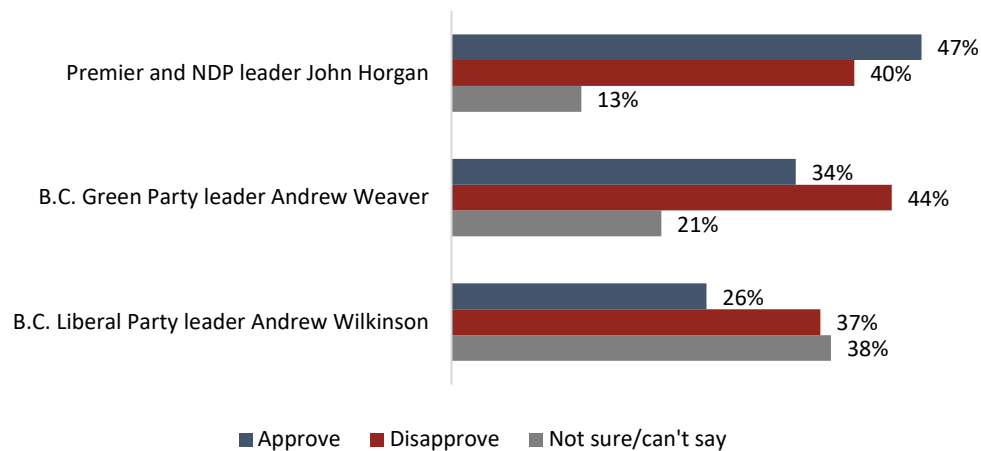
B.C. Premier John Horgan has spent most of his first year as premier in the good graces of approximately half of British Columbians. Since he took office, Horgan has been among the most approved-of premiers in the country, according to the Angus Reid Institute's [quarterly analysis premier](#) rankings, Horgan has been a fixture at the top of the list. That said, good will tends to fade as time in office accrues, and Horgan has had his share of difficult issues to deal with in the first half of this year.

As a result, Horgan's approval is down five points since March. Just under half of residents say they approve of the Premier (47%). On the other hand, neither of his fellow party leaders have more than 50 per cent approval, either. More residents disapprove of Green Party leader Andrew Weaver (44%) than approve of him (34%), and Andrew Wilkinson remains unknown by nearly two-in-five British Columbians, about the same number who say they disapprove of him.

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**Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following people?**

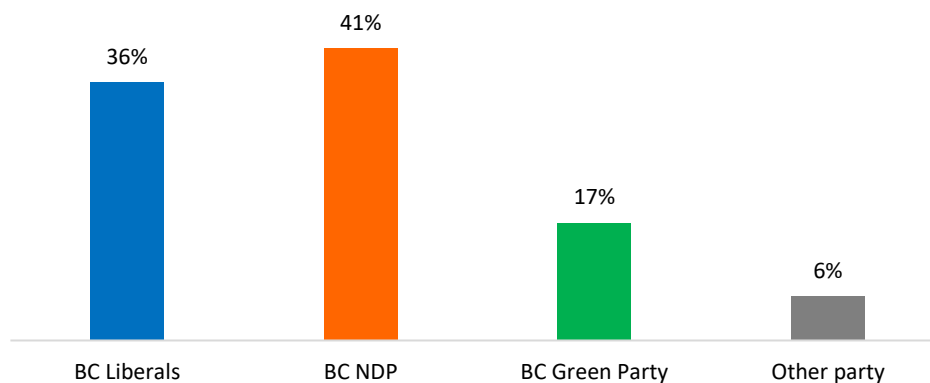


**Vote dynamics**

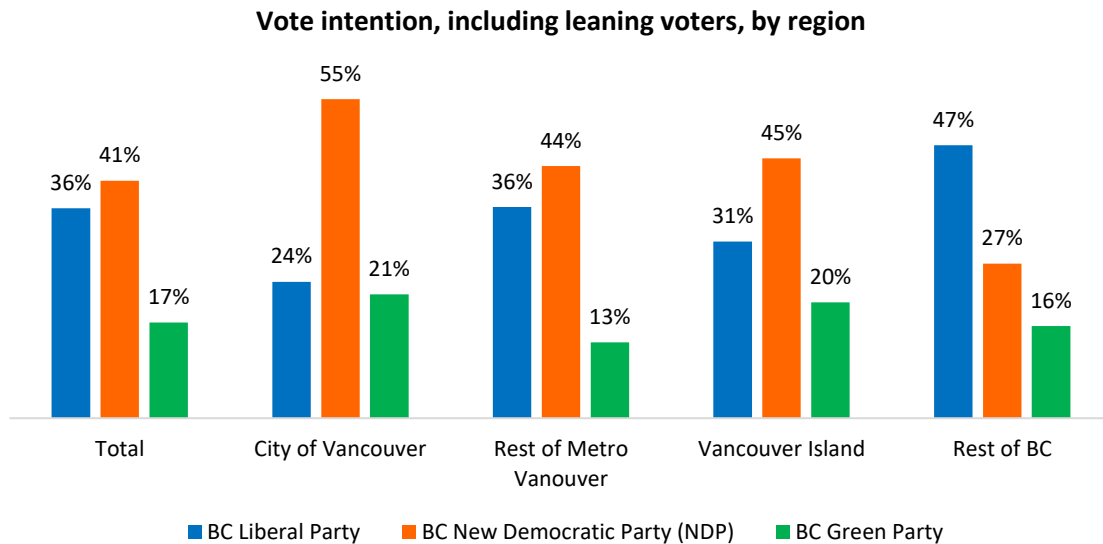
The political situation is inherently less stable than other provinces due to the coalition between the NDP and Green Party. Thus, the preference of voters at any given time is perhaps imbued with more consequence than at the usual one-year mark of a provincial term.

For the incumbent B.C. NDP, the situation remains tenuous, but has improved beyond the razor thin result from 2017. Asked who they would support in their constituency if an election were held immediately, 41 per cent of potential voters say they would support the NDP, lending them a five-point advantage over the B.C. Liberals:

**Vote intention, including leaning voters**



The NDP maintains high levels of support in Metro Vancouver, Vancouver proper and on Vancouver Island. In the City of Vancouver, 55 per cent say they would vote NDP, while just 24 per cent say they would support the Liberals. The B.C. Liberals hold a distinct advantage outside of those three regions:



*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.*

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

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<b>Do you approve or disapprove of the Horgan government's handling of each of the following? (Housing/Affordability)</b>					
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (809)	Region			
		City of Vancouver (110)	Rest of Metro Vancouver (289)	Vancouver Island (170)	Rest of BC (231)
Strongly approve	9%	13%	6%	14%	8%
Moderately approve	26%	33%	25%	30%	22%
Moderately disapprove	28%	25%	33%	21%	27%
Strongly disapprove	22%	15%	21%	18%	28%
Don't know/Can't say	15%	14%	15%	17%	15%

<b>Do you approve or disapprove of the Horgan government's handling of each of the following? (Kinder Morgan's TransMountain expansion project)</b>					
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (809)	Region			
		City of Vancouver (110)	Rest of Metro Vancouver (289)	Vancouver Island (170)	Rest of BC (231)
Strongly approve	19%	24%	19%	23%	13%
Moderately approve	17%	28%	13%	20%	15%
Moderately disapprove	15%	16%	18%	13%	13%
Strongly disapprove	38%	17%	37%	36%	52%
Don't know/Can't say	11%	16%	13%	8%	7%

**CONTACT:**

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**If a provincial B.C. election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?**

**(Including leaners, excluding undecideds)**

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (708)	Region			
		City of Vancouver (92*)	Rest of Metro Vancouver (245)	Vancouver Island (158)	Rest of BC (205)
BC Liberal Party	36%	24%	36%	31%	47%
BC New Democratic Party (NDP)	41%	55%	44%	45%	27%
BC Green Party	17%	21%	13%	20%	16%
Other party	6%	0%	7%	5%	10%

\*small sample size

**CONTACT:**

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