

## Shovels in the ground: Majority say Liberals made right decision in approving TransMountain expansion

*But will it be built? Six-in-ten say yes, while four-in-ten say they're not convinced*

**June 21, 2019** – Indigenous rights, economic debates, provincial tension, climate change and environmental protection; all of these are at the core of not only the TransMountain pipeline expansion (TMX) saga, but also the nearly four years of Justin Trudeau's government.

The Liberals' fortunes in October will likely hinge on their ability to convince Canadians of their triumphs, or at the very least, positive momentum, on these important files, and in this respect, the decision to approve the TMX appears for now, to be a political win.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that a majority of Canadians (56%) side with the government in its decision to approve the pipeline twinning, indeed, by a ratio of more than two-to-one versus those who disagree (24%).

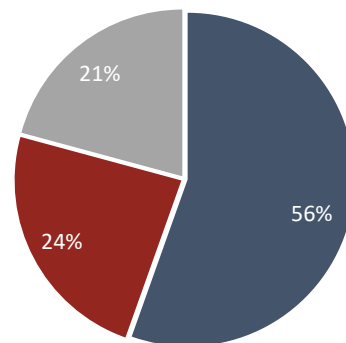
How much public favour the government will gain from this decision remains to be seen, however, as the highest levels of praise come from Alberta (85%) and Saskatchewan (71%). Both provinces are [projected to offer little electoral support](#) to the Liberals in the forthcoming election.

Meanwhile, one-quarter (24%) say the government made the wrong choice, rising to three-in-ten in British Columbia (30%) and two-in-five (40%) within Quebec. Both of those provinces are [considerably more competitive](#) heading into the campaign.

While oil patch workers likely breathed a sigh of relief after the approval announcement, uncertainty about the fate of TransMountain [still remains](#). British Columbia Premier John Horgan said immediately following the announcement that his government will continue to fight the project [all the way to the Supreme Court](#).

Ultimately, six-in-ten Canadians (59%) say the expansion will be built, though four-in-ten are either unsure (28%) or disagree (12%). Notably, the percentage saying the project will be completed rises to seven-in-ten in B.C. (69%), where [local protests](#) have already begun.

**In your view, did the federal government make the right decision or wrong decision in approving the TransMountain pipeline expansion project?**



■ Right Decision ■ Wrong Decision ■ Not sure/Can't say

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 18 – 20, 2019 among a representative randomized sample of 1,842 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 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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### More Key Findings:

- 58 per cent of Canadians say they support the TransMountain pipeline expansion, rising five points from 53 per cent at the beginning of this year. Support in British Columbia is statistically unchanged from January, at 54 per cent, while support in Alberta is highest in the country (87%)
- More than four-in-five Canadians who are considering the Conservative Party (85%) in the coming federal election say they support the TMX. This drops to 56 per cent among would-be Liberals, and one-in-three (33%) among those considering the NDP or the Green Party.
- The government's performance in handling Canada's pipeline capacity is a considerable source of division. One-quarter (27%) say the Liberals have struck the right balance in attempting to increase capacity, which includes approving TransMountain and the Line 3 replacement, while rejecting the Northern Gateway pipeline. The rest are divided evenly between saying the Liberals have done too little (37%) or have been pushing too hard on this file (35%).
- The primary concerns for Canadians, both those who support and oppose the TMX, are the possibility of a tanker spill due to increased traffic in the Burrard inlet (68% choose this) and the increased burning of fossil fuels from pipeline expansion (66%).

### About ARI

*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.*

### INDEX:

#### Part 1: Views of TransMountain pipeline expansion

- **Most say government made the right call in approving TMX**
  - A political win?
- **Majority support holds in B.C., but opposition rises**
  - Stronger opinions in Western Canada
- **Six-in-ten say the pipeline will be built**
- **How much weight should local opposition carry?**

#### Part 2: Federal government performance

- **Environment vs Economy**
- **Doing enough to increase pipeline capacity?**
- **Doing enough to protect the environment**
- **Concerns centre on tanker traffic and climate change**

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**Part 1: Views of TransMountain pipeline expansion**

**Most say government made the right call in approving TMX**

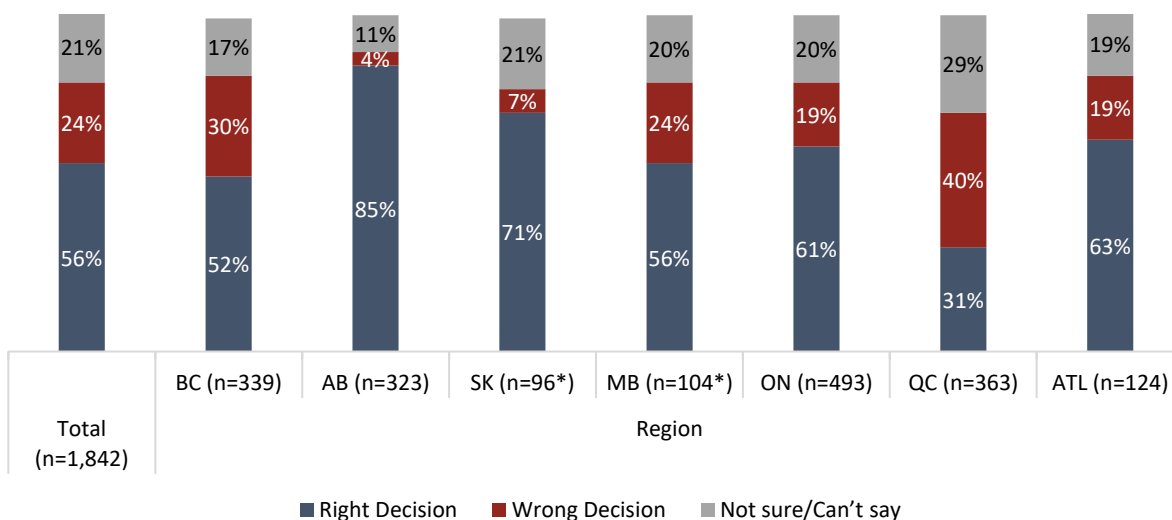
The announcement made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on June 18 was unsurprising to many. After extending the deadline to approve or reject the twinning of the TransMountain pipeline between Edmonton, Alberta and Burnaby, British Columbia, in order to further consult with Indigenous communities that may be affected by the project, Trudeau announced that the project would indeed go forward. This marks the second time the federal Liberal government has approved the project, which it purchased last year for \$4.5 billion.

The announcement was praised by the provincial government in Alberta and immediately condemned by B.C. Premier John Horgan. While Horgan has been committed to opposing the pipeline since taking office in 2017, he faces the risk of being at odds with the majority in his province.

Nationwide, 56 per cent of Canadians say that Trudeau and his cabinet made the right decision in approving the expansion, while 52 per cent say this in B.C. One-in-three B.C. residents (30%) disagree, though they are outpaced by Quebec in this sentiment, where it rises to 40 per cent.

Albertans are overwhelmingly enthusiastic, with more than four-in-five (85%) saying the federal government made the right call.

**In your view, did the federal government make the right decision or wrong decision in approving the TransMountain pipeline expansion project?**



**\*Note, small sample size, interpret with caution**

**A political win?**

In an election year, this decision undoubtedly carries political considerations. The Trudeau government has attempted to balance economic priorities and environmental protection, as the Prime Minister looks to persuade Canadians of all political stripes to support his party's pursuit of a second term in October.

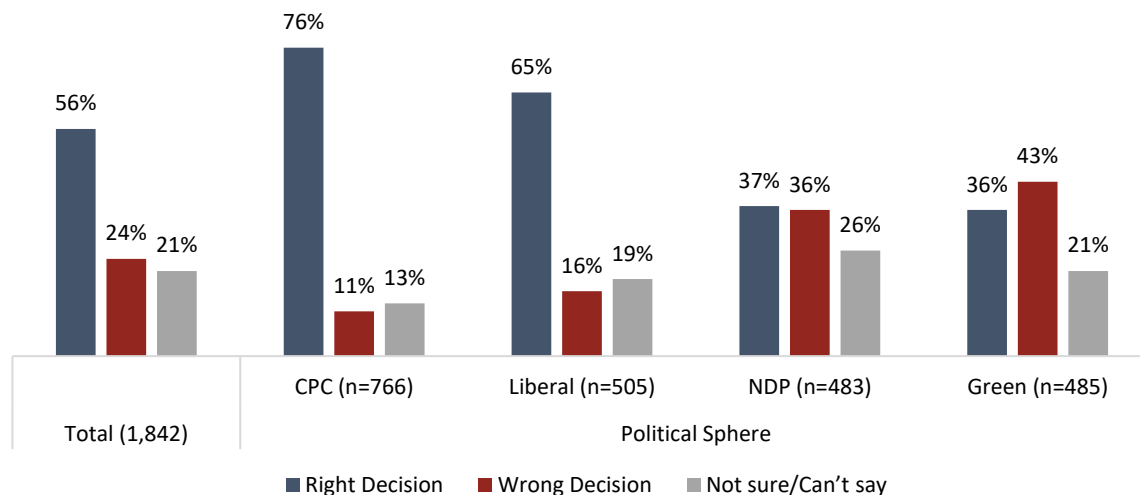
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So how does the TransMountain announcement fit into this narrative? A considerable number of Canadians from all political backgrounds believe that Trudeau made the right decision.

The decision is received favourably by three-quarters (76%) of those considering the Conservatives in the coming election (see end of report for political sphere definition), and nearly two-thirds of those considering the Liberals (65%). Further, more than one-in-three would-be NDP or Green supporters agree, though these groups are far more divided, as shown in the following graph:

**In your view, did the federal government make the right decision or wrong decision in approving the TransMountain pipeline expansion project?**

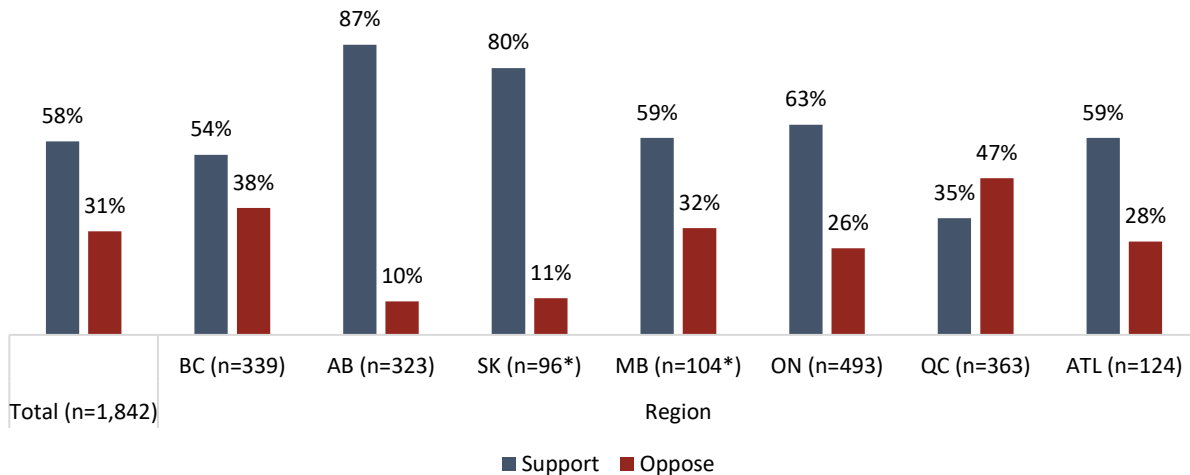


**Majority support holds in B.C., but opposition rises**

As one might expect, the number of Canadians who support the TransMountain pipeline expansion (58%) closely mirrors the proportion who say the government made the right decision in approving it (56%).

Outside of Quebec, a majority of residents in every region canvassed say they support the project. Within that province, only one-in-three (35%) would like to see it built.

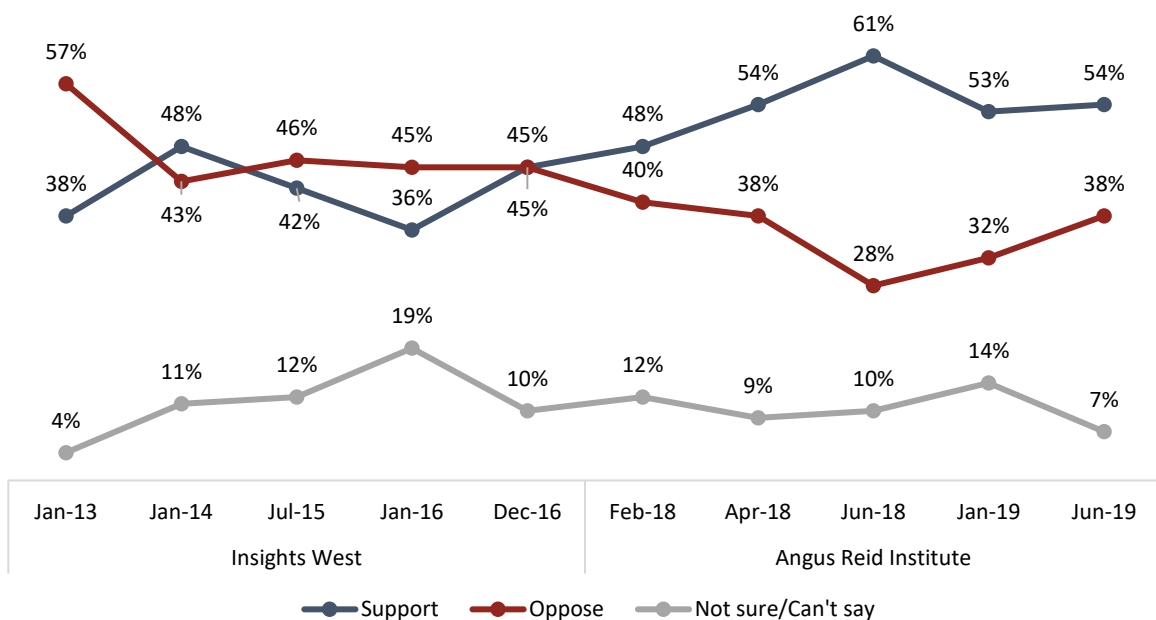
**Would you say you support or oppose the TransMountain pipeline expansion project?**



**\*Note, small sample size, interpret with caution**

In British Columbia, support for the pipeline twinning has outpaced opposition over the past 18 months, and that trend continues. Notably, however, while support is unchanged from the beginning of 2019, opposition has risen six percentage points, and ten points since last June. Four-in-ten B.C. residents now oppose the TMX (38%).

**Support/Oppose TransMountain pipeline project in B.C.**

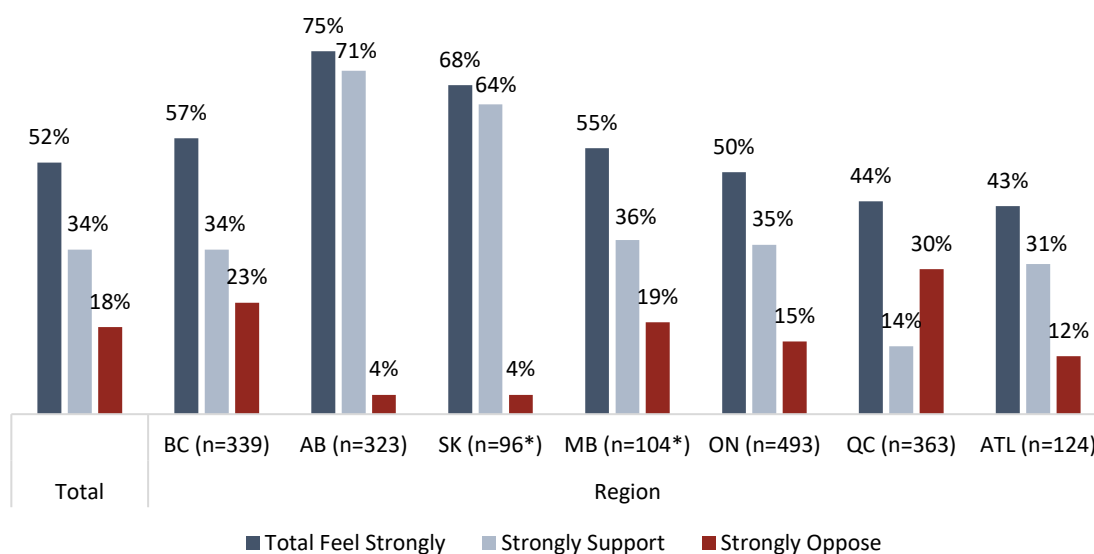


## Stronger opinions in Western Canada

One notable aspect of this issue is the intensity of opinion it generates in different parts of the country. Western Canadians, those west of Ontario, are more likely to hold strong views regarding the pipeline expansion than their eastern counterparts. In Alberta, nearly twice as many residents (75%) have a strong opinion as in Quebec (44%) and Atlantic Canada (43%).

Three-quarters of Albertans (75%) and seven-in-ten Saskatchewan residents (68%) strongly support the TMX, while Quebec residents are the most likely in the country to strongly oppose it (30%). The difficult political situation for Premier John Horgan in British Columbia is made clearer through this lens as well. One-in-three British Columbians (34%) strongly support the TMX while one-quarter strongly oppose it (23%), suggesting his government will face backlash from a significant group of constituents, regardless of the fate of the project.

Opinion of TransMountain Pipeline Extension



\*Note, small sample size, interpret with caution

## Six-in-ten say the pipeline will be built

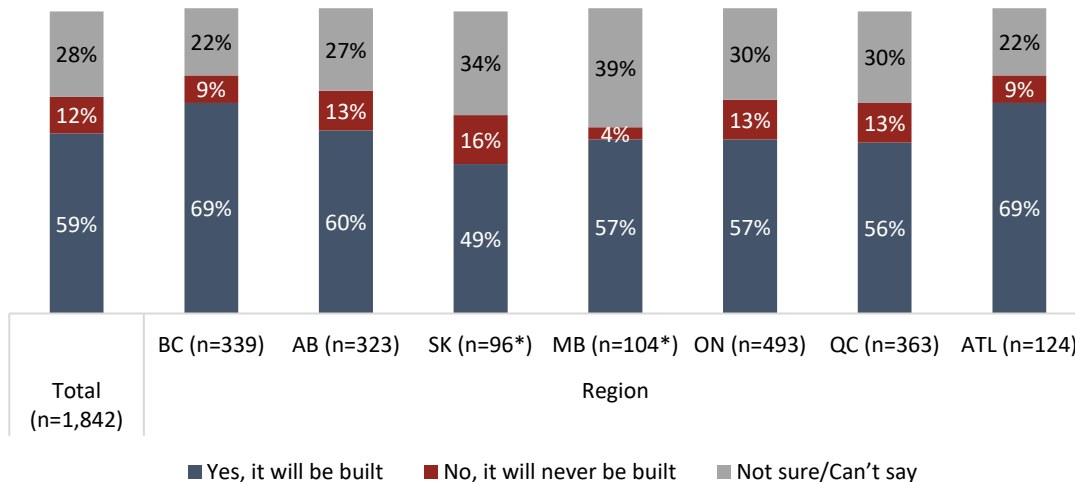
During his announcement to approve the TMX, Prime Minister Trudeau said he hoped to have “[shovels in the ground](#)” soon. Trans Mountain Corporation, the government-owned company tasked with building the project, has reportedly already received [30 per cent](#) of the pipe necessary to complete the project, but there are still [regulatory hurdles](#), as well as expected [protests and further legal battles](#) to contend with.

For their part, most Canadians say they believe the project will be built, but a significant amount of uncertainty remains. Overall, six-in-ten (59%) have faith that the pipeline will be twinned eventually, while one-in-ten (12%) say that it will not, and three-in-ten (28%) remain unsure:

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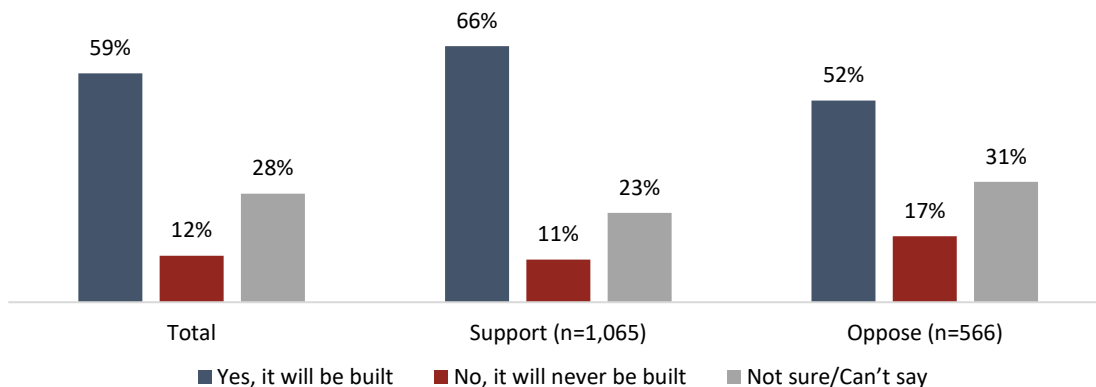
**And regardless of your personal views of the TransMountain pipeline expansion, do you feel it will ultimately be built?**



**\*Note, small sample size, interpret with caution**

Two-thirds of those who support the project have confidence that construction will be completed, while a majority of those who oppose it agree. A significant number within both groups are unconvinced:

**And regardless of your personal views of the TransMountain pipeline expansion, do you feel it will ultimately be built?**

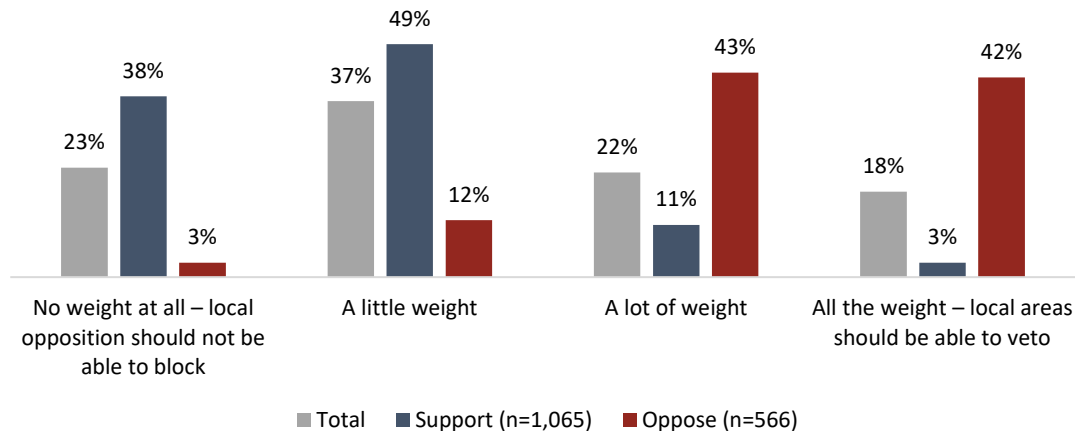


**How much weight should local opposition carry?**

The TransMountain expansion has faced significant opposition from residents in British Columbia. This has come from both Indigenous groups, including the [Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs](#), and environmental groups, who are concerned about emissions and increased tanker traffic in the Burrard Inlet. Federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh said on the day of the announcement that the concerns of Indigenous communities and environmental groups [still remain](#).

For those who oppose the project, local opposition carries a significant amount of weight. In fact, more than four-in-ten opponents (42%) say that local communities should be allowed to veto the project entirely if they find it unacceptable. Those who support the project are unlikely to give local opposition much weight, if any:

**As far as you're concerned, should this kind of local opposition carry:**



Regionally, British Columbians are evenly divided on this question of whether or not local opposition should be a factor in the decision-making surrounding pipeline projects. In Quebec, a majority say it should be, whereas the rest of the country is inclined to disagree:

As far as you're concerned, should this kind of local opposition carry:								
	Total (1,842)	Region						
		BC (339)	AB (323)	SK (96*)	MB (104*)	ON (493)	QC (363)	ATL (124)
No weight at all – local opposition should not be able to block	23%	22%	50%	43%	21%	23%	11%	17%
A little weight	37%	30%	37%	35%	35%	42%	30%	50%
A lot of weight	22%	32%	10%	13%	33%	23%	21%	20%
All the weight – local areas should be able to veto	18%	15%	3%	9%	10%	12%	38%	13%

\*Note, small sample size, interpret with caution



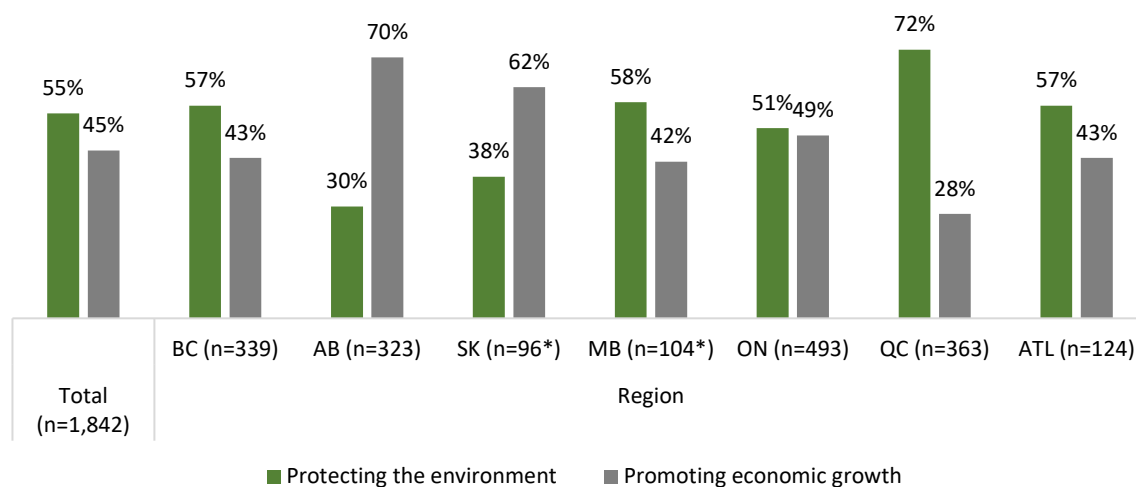
**Part 2: Federal government performance**

**Environment vs Economy**

The Trudeau government has dealt with its fair share of criticism from both sides of the political aisle on the natural resource file. The government position has been that the economy and environment work hand in hand. The latest example of this sentiment comes with the announcement that every dollar earned from the government owned TransMountain expansion will be used to fund Canada’s [clean energy transition](#) away from fossil fuels. The importance of representing both sides of the economy versus environment debate is rarely more apparent than when asking Canadians which of the two is the biggest priority for them.

Just over half (55%) say the environment is paramount when considering how to utilize Canada’s natural resources, while just under half (45%) say the economy should carry more weight when evaluating this issue. These proportions are both significant, and vary considerably by region:

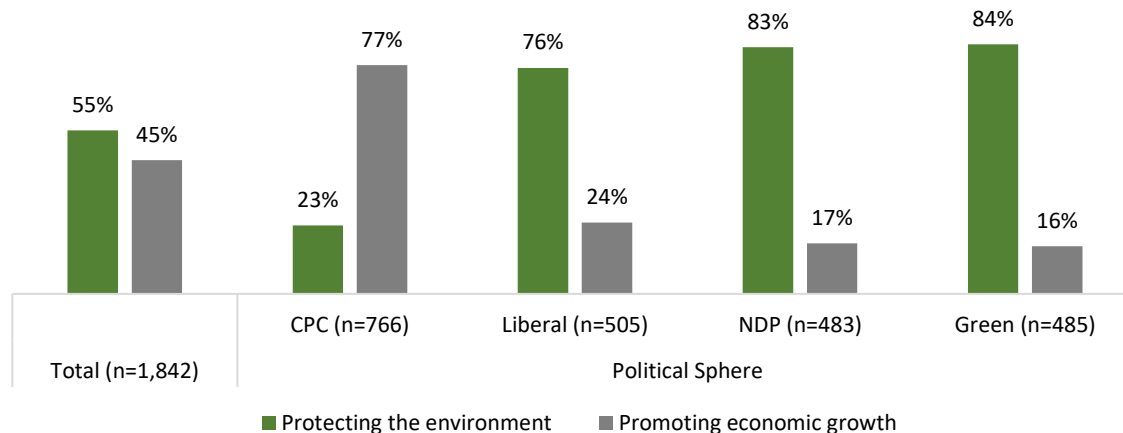
**In shaping Canada’s energy policy, what do you see as the biggest priority?**



**\*Note, small sample size, interpret with caution**

Those considering the Conservatives in the coming election lean heavily in favour of an economic growth emphasis, while at least three-quarters of Canadians considering the Liberals, NDP and Green Party say the environment should take precedence.

**In shaping Canada’s energy policy, what do you see as the biggest priority?**



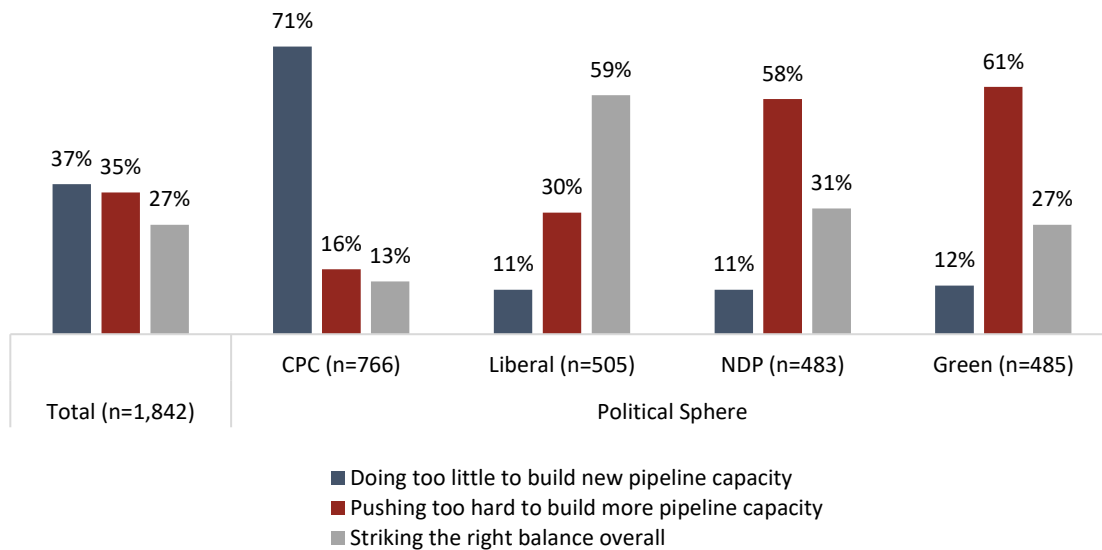
Whether or not Trudeau is seen as effectively walking the tightrope when October comes around remains to be seen, though Canadians do offer some insights into his government’s performance thus far.

**Doing enough to increase pipeline capacity?**

Much of the criticism aimed at the government from Conservatives, both federally and provincially, has been centred on the idea that the Liberals have not been doing enough to increase pipeline capacity for Canada’s natural resource sector. The federal government rejected the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline in 2016, on the same day that it approved the TransMountain expansion for the first time and also gave the green light to the replacement of the Enbridge-operated Line 3 pipeline running from Alberta to Wisconsin. The political and regulatory skirmishes of TransMountain have largely overshadowed the 1,070 kilometers of pipe already completed along the Line 3 route to the United States border, though delays in Minnesota are now hampering the American portion of the pipeline.

Canadians are divided largely along political lines over whether or not the federal government has been striking the right balance on creating more pipeline capacity. Seven-in-ten potential Conservatives say that the government has done too little (71%), while only one-in-ten of those considering other parties agree. Six-in-ten of those considering the Liberals (59%) in the coming election say that the Trudeau government has struck the right balance, while would-be New Democrats and Greens are inclined to say they’ve been pushing too hard:

**Thinking about the actions and approach to the pipeline issue taken by the federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, would you say it has been:**



**Doing enough to protect the environment?**

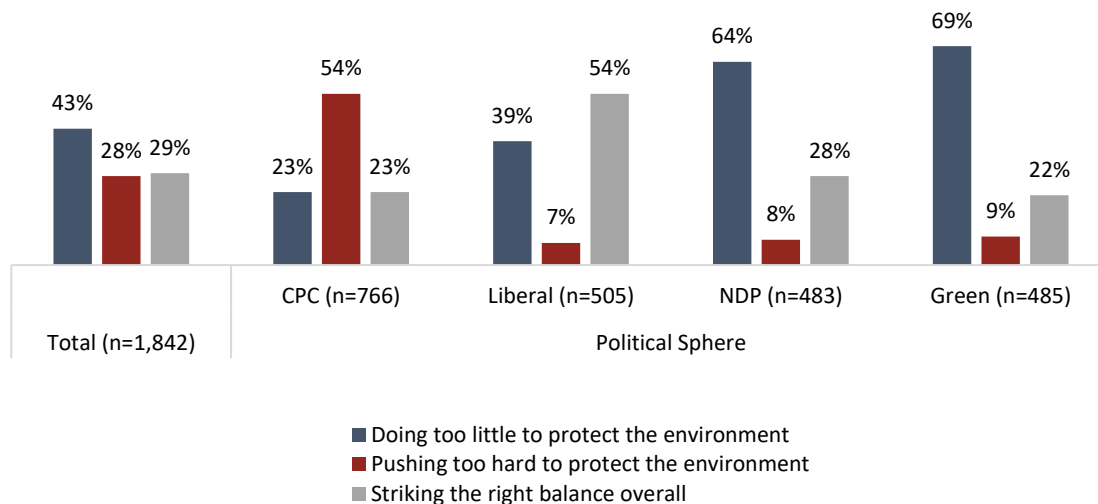
On the other side of the debate, environmental activists have argued that pushing forward pipeline projects is counterproductive if the [government legitimately wants](#) to combat climate change. The government has noted that it will continue to fund certain energy projects to grow the economy while investing in green energy projects and implementing its carbon pricing mechanism across the country.

Many are also concerned by a potential spill of diluted bitumen and the [impact](#) that may cause. The government is investing \$1.5 billion over five years into a number of areas including marine safety, restoring marine ecosystems and researching oil spill cleanup methods.

The largest group of Canadians, about two-in-five (43%), say that the government needs to do more to protect the environment, while smaller groups say Trudeau has found the right balance (29%), or has in fact, been paying too much attention to the environmental side of the equation (28%).

Men are divided nearly evenly between the three options, while half of women say the government needs to focus more on protecting the environment (see [comprehensive tables](#) at end of report). Similar to the previous question about pipeline capacity, Conservatives feel that the government is doing too much for environmental protection, while potential supporters for the three other major parties disagree:

**And thinking about the approach the federal government has taken to environmental protection when it comes to pipelines and tankers, would you say it has been:**



**Concerns centre on tanker traffic, climate change**

Though the project has now been approved by both the National Energy Board and the federal government, many Canadians' concerns remain. Chief among these are the potential impact on the climate from burning more fossil fuels (66%), and the potential for an oil spill (68%) that may result from a seven-fold increase in tanker traffic through the Burrard Inlet. Currently only four or five tankers per month run through the inlet, but the expectation is that this would increase to approximately one per day:

**When you think about this project, to what extent are you yourself concerned about the potential risk or danger posed by each of the following:**



What is particularly notable about both of these potential risks is the concern that each draw from regions that overwhelmingly support the expansion. Four-in-ten residents from Alberta and Saskatchewan say they are concerned about climate impacts and tanker spills. Further, nearly half of those considering the CPC in the coming election also say they share this worry, making it the highest priority for that group as well.

<b>When you think about this project, to what extent are you yourself concerned about the potential risk or danger posed by each of the following:</b>								
	Total (1,842)	Region						
		BC (339)	AB (323)	SK (96*)	MB (104*)	ON (493)	QC (363)	ATL (124)
<b>The overall environmental impact of extracting and burning more fossil fuels</b>								
Concerned	66%	69%	39%	45%	67%	64%	82%	69%
Not concerned	34%	31%	61%	55%	33%	36%	18%	31%
<b>The pipeline itself and the risks of major leaks or breaches on its 1,150 km path from AB to the BC coast in Burnaby/Vancouver</b>								
Concerned	60%	63%	31%	39%	59%	59%	78%	60%
Not concerned	40%	37%	69%	61%	41%	41%	22%	40%
<b>The environmental impact of constructing the second pipeline beside the existing one</b>								
Concerned	54%	54%	24%	31%	51%	50%	75%	58%
Not concerned	46%	46%	76%	69%	49%	50%	25%	42%
<b>The increased oil tanker traffic in the Burrard Inlet in Metro Vancouver visually detracting from the natural beauty</b>								
Concerned	53%	56%	22%	31%	52%	50%	73%	54%
Not concerned	47%	44%	78%	69%	48%	50%	27%	46%
<b>The risk of an oil spill or accident from a tanker carrying oil through the water of Metro Vancouver</b>								
Concerned	68%	74%	40%	48%	71%	67%	82%	65%
Not concerned	32%	26%	60%	52%	29%	33%	18%	35%

\*Note, small sample size, interpret with caution

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## **Political Sphere Methodology**

Rather than rely on respondents' potentially faded memories regarding their vote in the 2015 federal election, ARI researchers constructed a measure of political partisanship based on willingness to vote for the main federal parties in a future election under their current leaders.

The question specifically asked respondents how likely they would be to vote for "The Liberal Party led by Justin Trudeau," "The Conservative Party led by Andrew Scheer," and "The New Democratic Party led by Jagmeet Singh" in a future election. The response options were "definitely support" the party and leader in question, "certainly consider" them, "maybe consider" them, and "definitely not even consider" them. Respondents choosing either of the first two options (definitely support or certainly consider) are considered to be a party's "sphere." They represent potential supporters of that party, not necessarily decided voters.

It should be noted that the categories are not mutually exclusive. Respondents were asked to give an opinion on each of the main parties and had the option to say they would "certainly consider" each one. Thus, many respondents may appear in the spheres of multiple parties.

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

*For detailed results by support/opposition to the TransMountain Pipeline expansion and political spheres, click [here](#).*

*[Click here for the questionnaire used in this survey](#)*