

New Frontier: As Trudeau government mulls approval, Canadians divided on political, regional lines over Teck mine

Uncertainty over whether approval means the project will ultimately be built

February 12, 2020 – As political and regional lines are drawn in the battle for hearts and minds over the proposed Teck Frontier oil sands mine, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney warned Prime Minister Justin Trudeau this week that rejecting the project may represent “[a boiling point](#)” for western alienation.

Trudeau's Liberal caucus, meanwhile, has reportedly been pressuring him to do just that, reject the project. As an end of February deadline to decide on the project approaches, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians divided over of the whether the project should indeed be approved. Overall, support narrowly outpaces opposition, 49 per cent to 40 per cent.

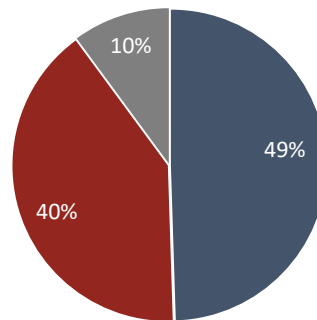
Many take a firm stance. One-quarter (24%) say they strongly support the construction of the \$20 billion mine, primarily comprised of prairie residents and past Conservative voters. Meanwhile, the same number (25%) say they strongly oppose the project, led by left-leaning Quebecers and British Columbians, both groups that the Trudeau Liberals relied on heavily in the last federal election.

Opponents are also unlikely to be swayed by promises made by those in charge of the mining operations. Asked whether Teck's intention to be carbon-neutral by 2050 would sway their support at all, one-in-five opponents (21%) say they may be a little more likely to consider the project, while 77 per cent say it makes no difference.

More Key Findings:

- Awareness of the Teck Frontier mine is regionally disparate. In British Columbia and Alberta, news of the project has been followed closely, while fewer have been following elsewhere
- Few Canadians are confident the project will ultimately be completed due to market conditions. Just 16 per cent say they feel it will 'absolutely' be finished if approved.

Support vs Oppose
Teck Frontier Mine



■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Not sure/Can't say

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from February 10 – 11, 2019, among a representative randomized sample of 1,300 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 +/- 3.0 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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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.*

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Project flying under the radar outside BC, Alberta

Whether for [economic reasons](#) or [political ones](#), the Teck Frontier mine decision has emerged as a critical moment for many Canadians wondering what approach the federal government will take towards new energy projects after winning a second term, albeit a minority, this past October. Premier Jason Kenney has stated that a rejection would be "[devastating](#)" for relations between Ottawa and Alberta. Prime Minister Trudeau has faced pressure from his own caucus to [reject the project](#).

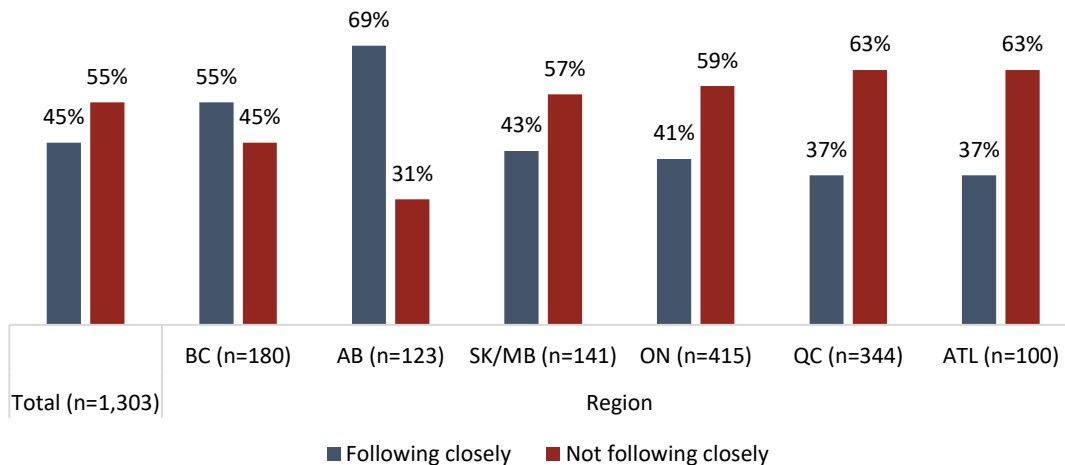
The proposed mine has been deemed to be [in the public interest](#) by a federal-provincial panel convened to study it, noting the thousands of jobs it would create and billions it would add to federal, provincial and municipal revenue streams. That same panel, however, also noted that construction could result in considerable environmental effects and disruption to Indigenous communities, which has led many to [protest the decision](#).

Awareness is highest among Canadians in British Columbia and Alberta. For the rest of the country, however, awareness is relatively low, with less than half in each region paying close attention.

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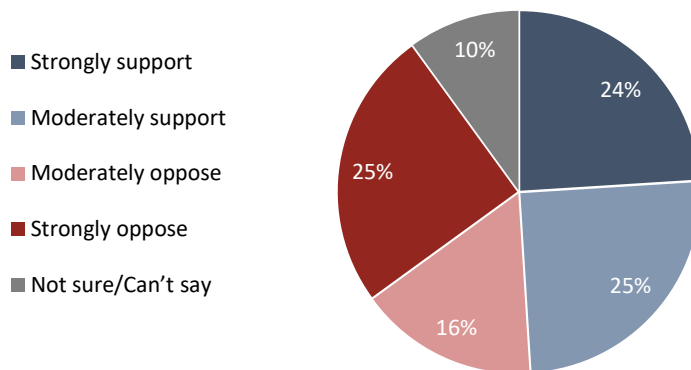
**How closely would you say you've been following this issue?
(Teck Frontier Mine)**



Disparate support levels across regions

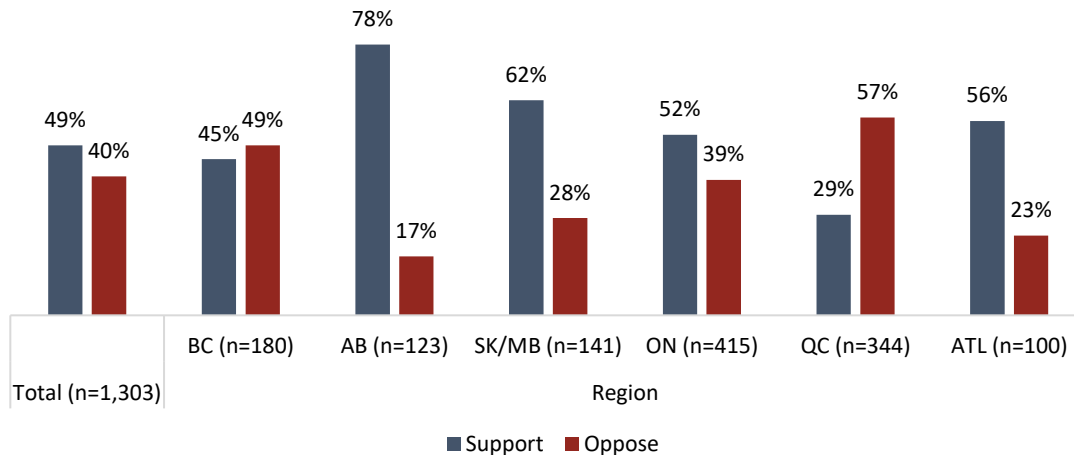
Public opinion of the Teck Mine is divided. One-quarter of Canadians each strongly support (24%) and moderately support (25%) the project, while the same number strongly oppose it (25%). The rest are either moderately opposed (16%) or unsure (10%):

Based on whatever you've seen or heard, including in this survey, would you say you support or oppose the construction of the Teck Mine?



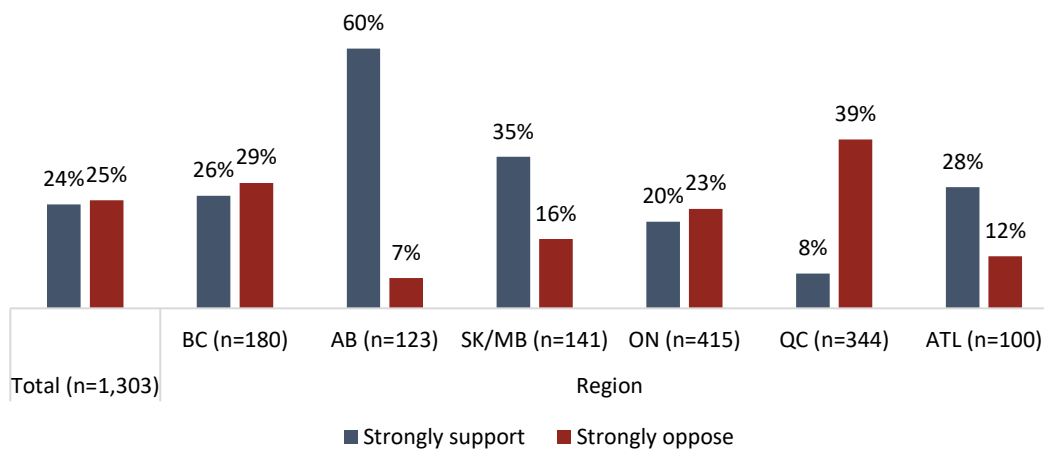
Albertans are overwhelmingly in favour of approving the Frontier mine. They are joined in majority support by fellow prairie provinces Saskatchewan and Manitoba, as well as among Atlantic Canadians, who have long relied on a booming Albertan economy for employment opportunities. Opposition on this project comes especially from Quebec:

Based on whatever you've seen or heard, including in this survey, would you say you support or oppose the construction of the Teck Mine?



This is an issue that evokes strong opinions. Vehement support is highest in Alberta, though still significant in B.C. the prairies and Atlantic Canada, while strong opposition is particularly high in B.C. and Quebec:

**Strong support vs Strong opposition
Teck Frontier Mine**

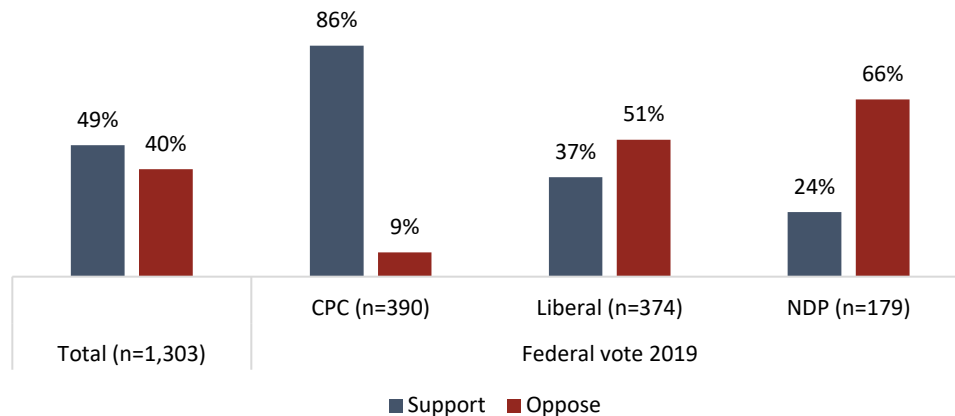


Political opinions differ widely

The conspicuous political element of this decision is more apparent when looking at opinions by party support. The Trudeau government likely has little to gain politically from approving the project, as support levels in Alberta and Saskatchewan are already the party's lowest in the country. Those most supportive of the Teck Frontier mine are past Conservative voters, for whom support is near-unanimous (86%). Liberal voters, meanwhile, who have begun to reconsolidate their support behind the Prime Minister since

the election, are more opposed to the project than for it (37% support vs 51% oppose). Meanwhile, two-thirds of NDP supporters (66%) oppose the mine.

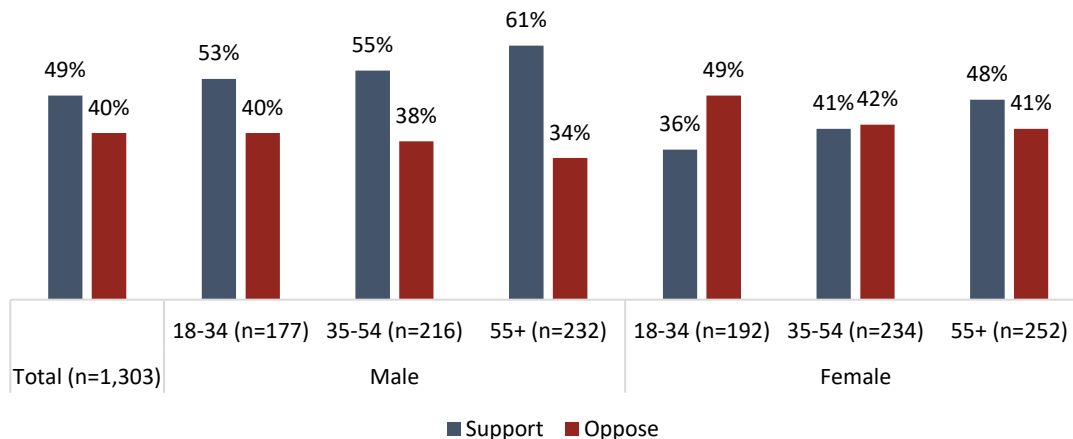
Based on whatever you've seen or heard, including in this survey, would you say you support or oppose the construction of the Teck Mine?



Teck's carbon neutral pledge does little to assuage opponents

Support levels are higher among men, and older men in particular, while opposition is highest among young women, as seen in the graph below:

Based on whatever you've seen or heard, including in this survey, would you say you support or oppose the construction of the Teck Mine?



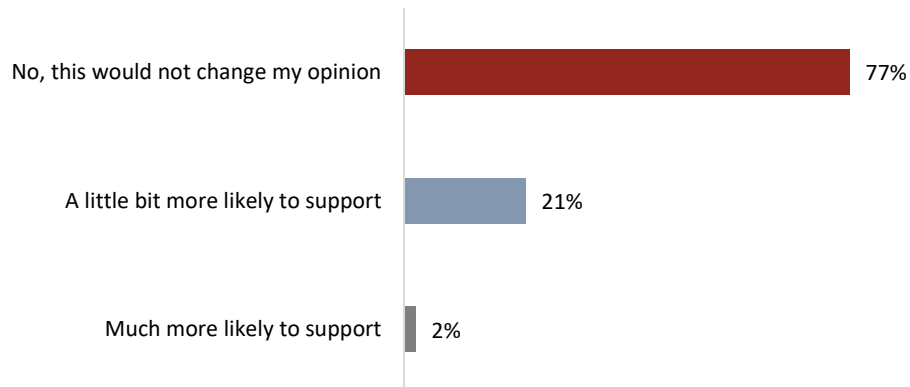
The company in charge, Teck, says it intends to become "carbon-neutral" across all operations – including the proposed mine – by 2050. Canadians who oppose the project were asked if this declaration makes any difference in their own likelihood to support the project. Few are movable.

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Among those who oppose it, only a handful say that they would support it if Teck were to become carbon-neutral, while just under one-in-five say they would be open to reconsidering their position. Most, approximately four-in-five, say this pledge changes nothing for them, personally:

Does this pledge from Teck to be carbon neutral by 2050 make you any more likely to support the project? (Among those opposed, n=527)

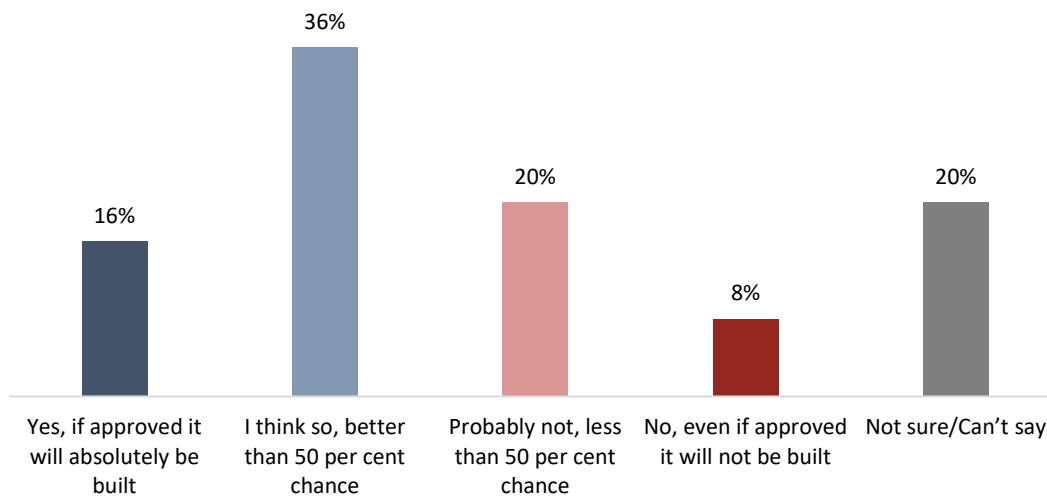


Fewer than one-in-five think Frontier mine will ‘absolutely’ be built if approved

Some observers have noted that while the decision to approve or reject the Frontier mine is a politically charged decision, it may have little overall relevance if market conditions do not improve. When first proposed, the price of the oil produced by the Frontier mine, West Texas Intermediate (WTI), was hovering around \$100 USD per barrel. That price has dropped closer to \$50 USD per barrel recently. Teck’s [own estimates](#) are that the price would need to rise to around \$75 USD per barrel for the mine to be profitable, a price that WTI has not carried [since 2014](#), and the company’s chief executive [also stated](#) that the TransMountain pipeline expansion is integral to ensuring the mine is built.

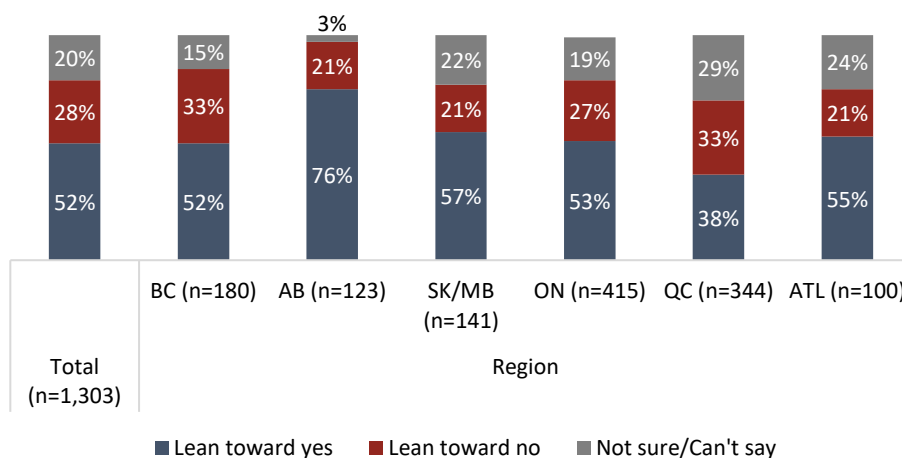
For their part, Canadians are deeply skeptical that the Frontier mine will be completed. Just 16 per cent say it will “absolutely” be built if approved, while a considerable number say probably (36%), probably not (20%), or that they are not sure (20%):

Ultimately, if the project is approved, do you think it will be completed?



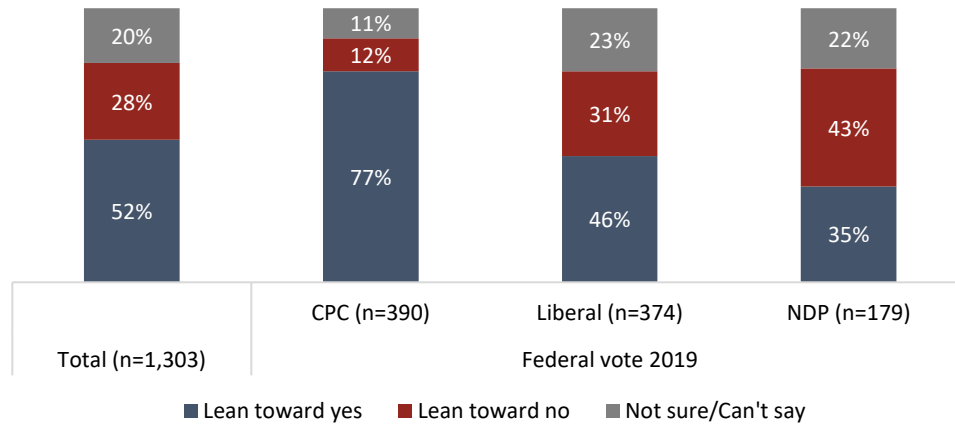
Confidence is high in Alberta that if indeed the project is allowed to go ahead, there's a better than 50 per cent chance it will be built. That province is most positive, while Quebecers are most unsure of what would happen if approval is granted:

Ultimately, if the project is approved, do you think it will be completed?



Past Conservative voters have the most faith that approval will be enough to get the project built. Three-quarters (77%) say that they believe it's more likely than not that the mine is built if given the green light. Meanwhile, 46 per cent of Liberals and 35 per cent of New Democrats agree:

Ultimately, if the project is approved, do you think it will be completed?



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