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## **No indication of Alberta/BC split before political rhetoric over TMX** Survey data prior to feud indicates support for nuanced approach

Data from a survey of residents of Alberta and BC taken just as the conflict over the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion (TMX) was set to erupt suggest that the polarization of opinion between the two provinces over the past year is more the result of overheated political rhetoric than a significant difference in beliefs.

In *Provinces Apart? Comparing Citizen Views in Alberta and British Columbia*, sociologists Trevor Harrison and Harvey Krahn revisited data from a survey conducted between February 9 and March 9, 2017 to gauge perceptions in the two provinces prior to the feud over the TMX began in earnest last summer. Results include:

- Almost half of respondents in both provinces agreed that "ordinary people have no control over oil and gas development" and almost three-quarters in both provinces agreed that "what is good for markets isn't always good for communities."
- 52% of Alberta residents and 62% of BC residents agreed that "protest groups are an important part of democracy" and only 33% of Alberta residents and 23% of BC residents agreed that "people who protest pipeline development are against progress."
- A majority of respondents in both provinces (53% in Alberta, 69% in BC) agreed that "we need to move away from using fossil fuels."
- 76% of Alberta residents and 68% of those in BC thought the petroleum industry has too much influence over the government, while less than a third of respondents in both provinces believed that either environmentalists or Indigenous groups had too much influence.

"The results of this survey indicate that the difference in opinion between the two provinces reflected in recent polls is more a case of manufactured discontent from a year-long war of words between the two provincial governments than a reflection of deep-seated differences between the two provinces," says Trevor Harrison. "Our survey suggests that many residents in both provinces supported a nuanced approach that involved having more voices heard, were wary of the claims the oil industry, and recognized the need to substantially reduce the use of carbon-based energy. Similarly, there was not widespread disapproval of protesters, even in Alberta."

Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. *Provinces Apart? Comparing Citizen Views in Alberta and British Columbia* is available for download on Parkland's website at [www.parklandinstitute.ca](http://www.parklandinstitute.ca).

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