

Enbridge pipeline slightly favoured, poll finds

By Cassidy Olivier, The Province January 6, 2012

Days before the start of federal hearings into Enbridge Inc.'s Northern Gateway pipeline project, a poll commissioned by the oil-and-gas giant finds that British Columbians are in slight favour of the \$5.5.-billion proposal.

Released Thursday, the online Ipsos Reid poll, however, also found that the majority of respondents were limited in their knowledge about the project, which will link Alberta's oilsands to Kitimat for shipment to Asia.

Only 42 per cent of those surveyed said they were familiar with the project, compared to the 30 per cent who said they were "not very familiar" with it, and the 25 per cent who said they were "not at all familiar" with it.

Describing it as bogus, critics also highlighted the poll's "innocuous" wording. On completion, the twin pipeline would be capable of moving 525,000 barrels of crude oil a day, most of which would be shipped to China via supertanker.

Nikki Skuce, a senior energy campaigner with Forest Ethics, said the link between oilsands expansion and the anticipated explosion in supertanker traffic off B.C.'s West Coast wasn't made clear in the poll question.

"Asking the public whether they support a disembodied "under-ground pipeline" without mentioning what it will be carrying or what its impacts will be, shows that they are afraid of public opinion," Skuce said. She also highlighted the results of an independent Forum Research poll released in December that found that 51 per cent of respondents were against the project, compared to the 35 per cent who expressed support for it.

The Ipsos poll, meantime, found that 48 per cent of respondents are in favour of the project, compared to the 32 per cent who are in opposition. Of the 48 per cent in favour, 14 per cent said they "strongly support" it while 34 per cent said they "somewhat support" it. Twenty per cent said they are still undecided.

The Ipsos poll was conducted between Dec. 12 and Dec. 15 and had a sample size of 1,000 adult British Columbians. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 percent-age points, 19 times out of 20.

A series of public and government regulatory hearings about the project, to be held before a joint panel run by the National Energy Board and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, begins next week. The entire poll can be read online at www.ipsos.ca.

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