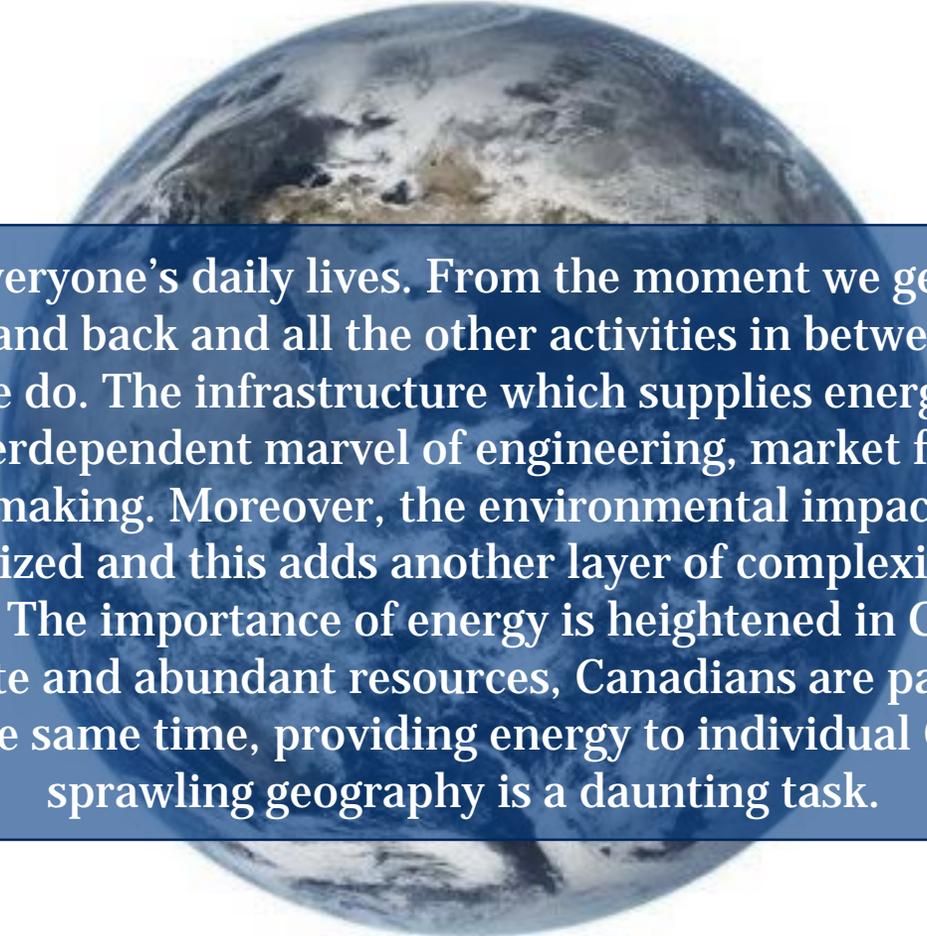


THE EFFECT OF ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE ON POLITICAL POLARIZATION



**Jade McLean – The School of Public
Policy at U of C**

Andre Turcotte – Carleton University



Energy permeates everyone's daily lives. From the moment we get up to how we go to work, school or play and back and all the other activities in between, we rely on energy to accomplish what we do. The infrastructure which supplies energy in its many forms is a complex and interdependent marvel of engineering, market forces, government regulation and policy making. Moreover, the environmental impact of energy production is increasingly scrutinized and this adds another layer of complexity to the management of the energy system. The importance of energy is heightened in Canada. With our vast lands, difficult climate and abundant resources, Canadians are particularly dependent on energy while at the same time, providing energy to individual Canadians across our sprawling geography is a daunting task.



In the last 40 years, unease over oil and gas development, greenhouse gases, and climate change in Canada have evolved from local concerns, such as toxicity risks, to global concerns about national environmental policy

As a result, pipelines, fossil fuel development, energy and environmental policy, as well as environmental advocacy, in Canada has received enormous public and media attention in recent years



In 2018, 80% of Canadians believe that climate change is a very big or moderately big problem (Anderson & Coletto, 2018)



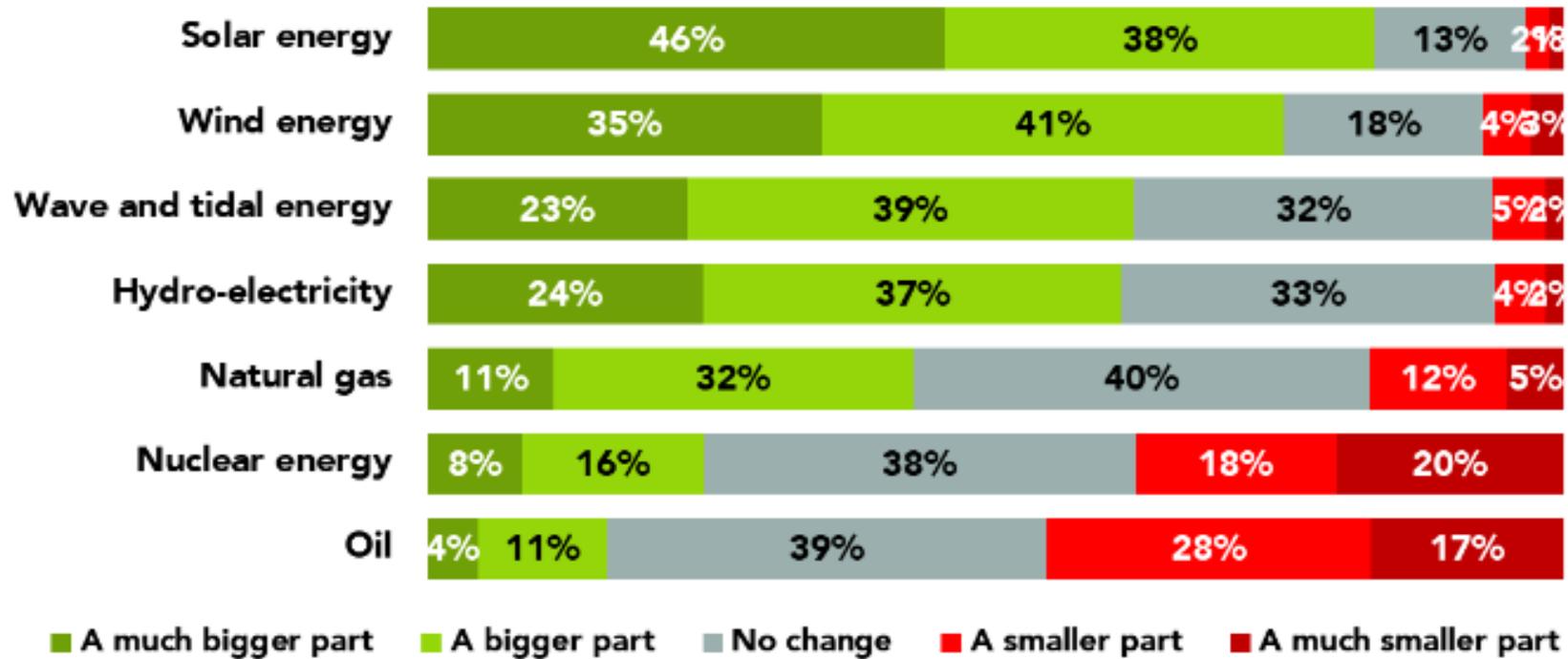
In 2017, 78% of Canadians identified themselves as “moderate” environmentalists (as opposed to ‘ardent environmentalist’ and ‘not really concerned’) (Anderson & Coletto, 2017)

According to Abacus Data, public support for pipeline development has **dropped** 14-percentage points from 2014 to 2017

67% of Canadians believe that Canada should prioritize other ways of growing the economy, aside from oil and gas development (Anderson & Coletto, 2017)



What do Canadian's want for the future of Canada's energy mix?



Anderson & Coletto, 2017

The controversy over Canada's energy infrastructure has imposed a number of costly limitations to the country's energy sector:



- Overreliance on the U.S. market for oil exports
- Use of riskier and less efficient modes of oil transportation (rail and truck)
- Deepening discount for Western Canadian Select crude oil prices

Despite this situation, issues related to energy, energy production and conservation, regulation, or transportation rarely make a prominent appearance in the electoral discourse of the main federal political parties in Canada



This research aims to answer two questions:

1. To what extent has political rhetoric, public views and statements of political leaders have been used to shape and frame the energy infrastructure issue along partisan lines?
2. How can we measure the impact of those attempts at framing discourse around energy infrastructure?



Methodology:

- Data was collected for the period 2007 to 2017 from transcripts from the House of Commons debates, political party electoral platforms, and a variety of public political speeches
- Word frequency queries were performed using the keywords 'pipeline(s),' 'climate change,' 'greenhouse gas(es),' and 'oil'
- Each occurrence of the keywords were examined for context and placed into one of three categories (Economic frame, environmental frame, or social frame)
- Public opinion polls were analyzed from 2007-2017

Politicians and special interest groups use persuasive language and framing techniques when communicating policy to the public to influence their belief systems and alter their perceived realities

Framing:

“Selectively *emphasizing* and *simplifying* particular aspects or interpretations of an issue in order to influence [ones] understanding of complex and unfamiliar phenomena in light of their own predispositions and experiences” – (Dusyk, Axen, & Dullemond 2018)

Typically, three dominant frames are used when speaking to energy infrastructure:

Economic

- Jobs
- Economic prosperity

Environmental

- Climate change
- Impact of greenhouse gases on the environment

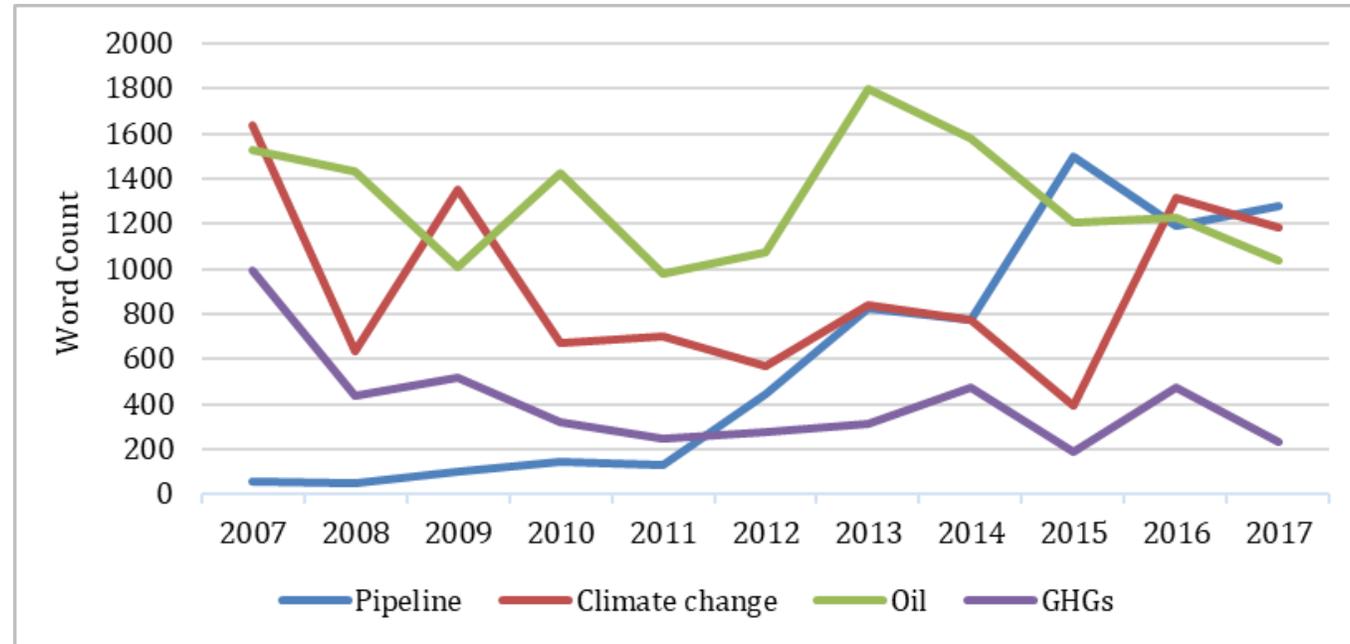
Social

- Impact on Indigenous peoples and local communities

By way of strategic framing, political actors have a powerful ability to control and limit the information available to their audiences in efforts to shape public opinion of policy issues

- Policy information that reaches the public is never the full picture - rather, a selective and stereotypical view of reality
- Complex information is captured by the public in short, digestible, persuasive statements made by politicians
- These cues often expand into larger, ideology-based concerns because people tend to align their positions with their trusted political elites (Lakoff, 2010)

Data results



In 2007, the term ‘pipeline(s)’ was mentioned a total of **58** times by political actors during the debates in the House of Commons

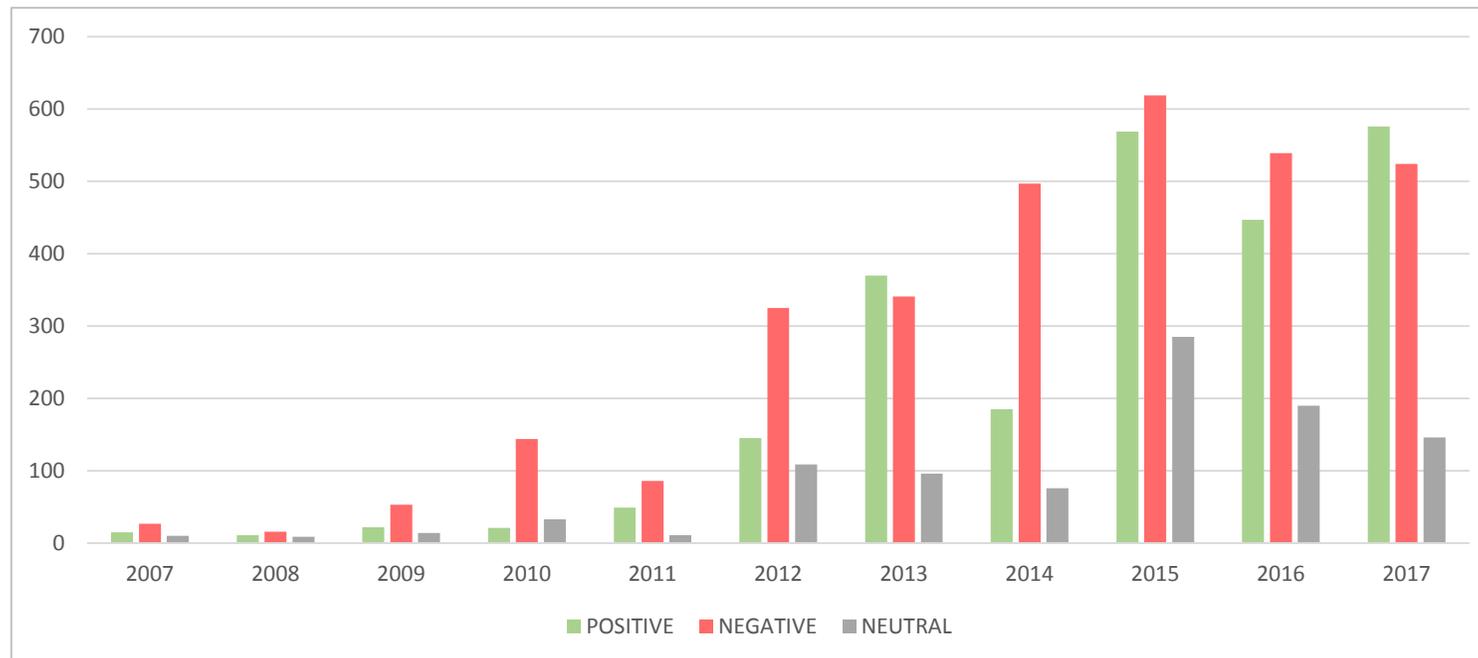
In 2017, this count jumped to **1,278** instances

Sentiment analysis of the term 'pipeline(s)'

48% Negative

36% Positive

15% Neutral



Framing Energy Infrastructure

The Justin Trudeau government vs
the Stephen Harper government



The Harper Government

Key frame: Economic frame

- promotion of jobs, employment, investment, and economic prosperity

<u>Word</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Count</u>
1. Jobs	171	11. Trade	74
1. Development	119	12. Security	70
1. Children	116	13. Victims	69
1. Businesses	103	14. Industry	67
1. Economic	103	15. Foreign	61
1. Taxes	87	16. Investment	58
1. Seniors	84	17. Workers	57
1. Infrastructure	81	18. Build	56
1. Research	81	19. Stronger	56
1. Budget	74	20. Protecting	55

Twenty most frequent words from the Conservative Party election platforms (2008, 2011, and 2015).

The Harper Government

Second frame: pipelines as an issue of national security

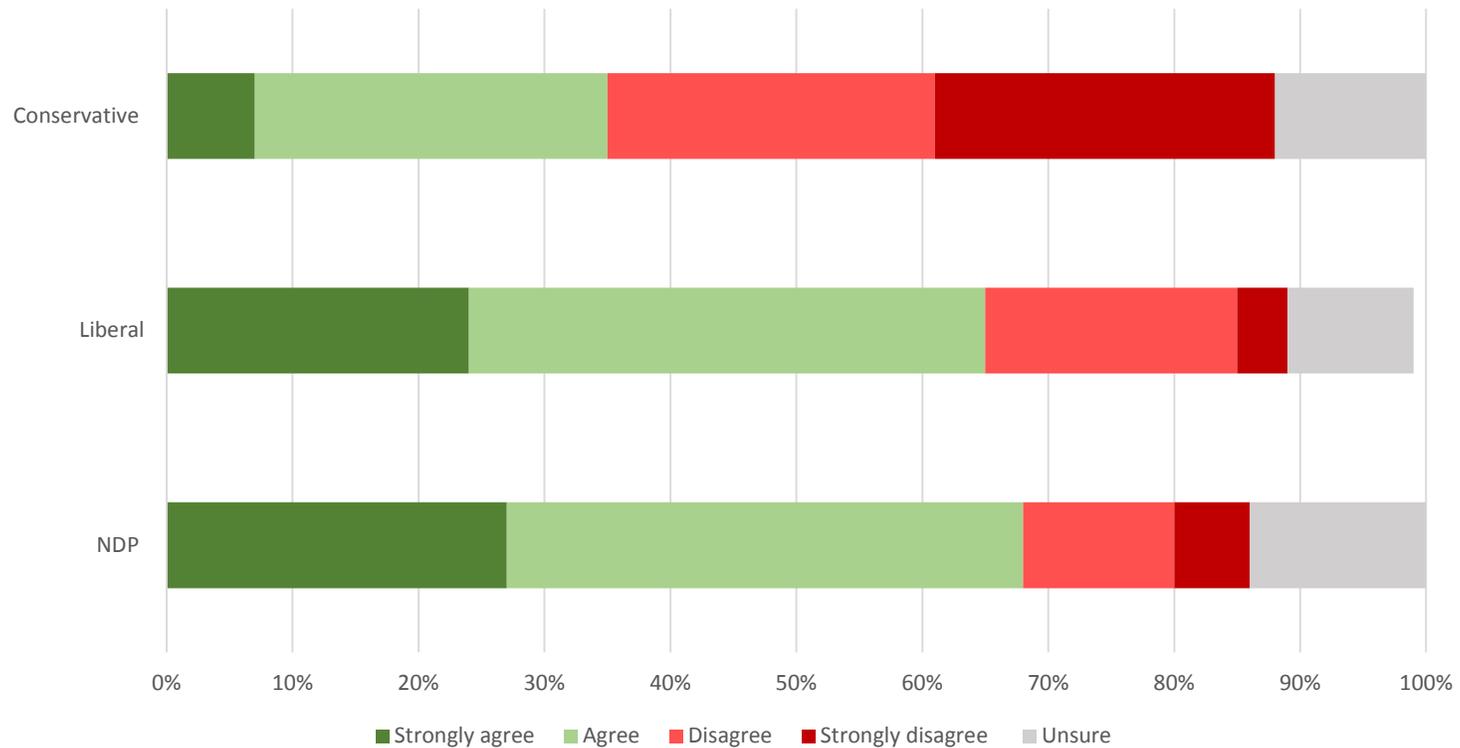
- The interference of foreign actors into the decision-making processes and policy decisions regarding Canada's economic interests, namely oil sands development
- Former Minister of Natural Resources accused environmentalists as “radical groups” threatening to “hijack our regulatory system”
- Critics such as the Liberal, NDP, and Green Parties insisted that the Harper government was sacrificing the environment for economic gain and argued that Stephen Harper denied climate change

The Harper Government

Analysis of the Conservative Party's recent election platforms do not suggest a strong emphasis on climate change or the environment by the Harper government

	<u>'Climate change'</u>	<u>'Environment(al)'</u>	<u>'Greenhouse gas(es)'</u>	<u>Total</u>
2008				
Green	72	54	24	150
Liberal	67	23	23	113
NDP	14	24	6	44
Conservative	0	18	5	23
2011				
Green	2	3	0	5
Liberal	22	26	8	56
NDP	9	6	3	18
Conservative	6	4	4	14
2015				
Green	32	8	1	41
Liberal	13	14	2	29
NDP	19	12	7	38
Conservative	8	9	3	20

In 2014, 37% of Canadians said that their growing concern about climate change has contributed to their increasing reluctance to support oil and gas development



Angus Reid, 2014

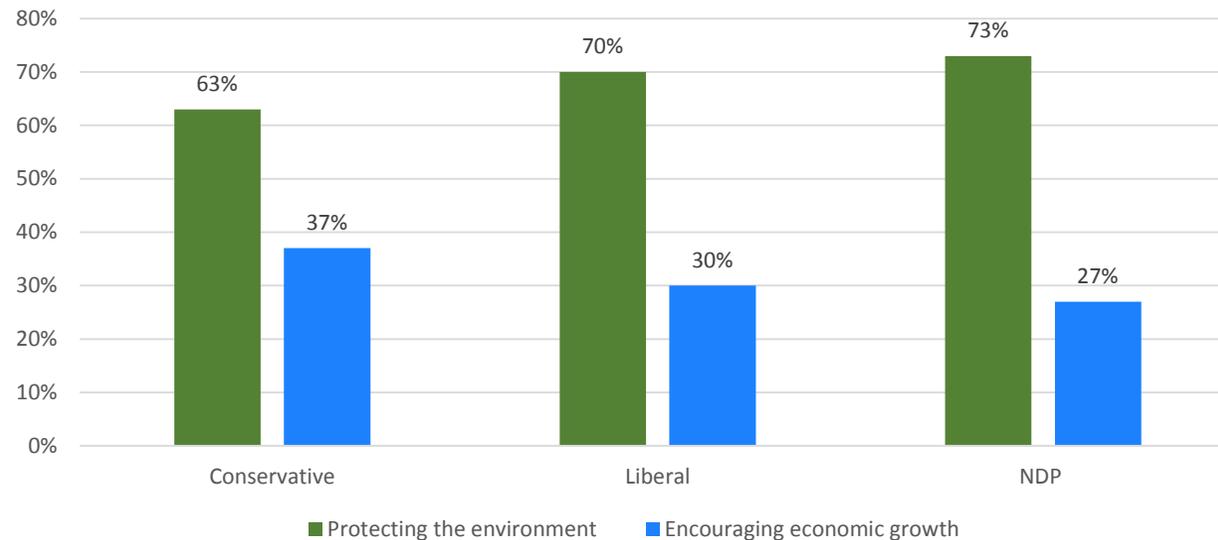
Policy Implications and Public Perceptions

The Harper government's aggressive pursuit of oil and gas development ultimately failed to reflect the political will of the population in terms of the environment

- In 2010, 66% believed that the government was paying too little attention to the environment (Angus Reid, 2010)
- In 2012, 63% believed that Harper had not struck the proper balance between the environment and the economy (Ipsos, 2012)
- In 2014, 63% of Canadians perceived that the government's official response to climate change was 'too weak' (Angus Reid, 2014)
- In 2015, Harper received a 62% disapproval rate (iPolitics, 2015)

2014: What do you consider to be the top priority in shaping energy policy in Canada?

	June 2014	November 2014
Protecting the environment	58%	61%
Encouraging economic growth	42%	39%



Angus Reid, 2014

The Trudeau Government

Key frame: Environmental frame

➤ 'Balance' between oil and gas development and the environment

<u>Word</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Count</u>
1. Energy	131	11. Children	76
2. Infrastructure	130	12. Growth	73
3. Investment	116	13. Benefits	71
4. Economic	112	14. Environment	69
5. Jobs	108	15. Innovation	68
6. Clean	107	16. Quality	68
7. Development	106	17. Students	67
8. Climate	102	18. Housing	66
9. Security	84	19. Research	65
10. Aboriginal	83	20. Women	65

Twenty most frequent words from the Liberal Party election platforms (2008, 2011, and 2015).

The Trudeau Government

Second frame: a *social license* for energy development

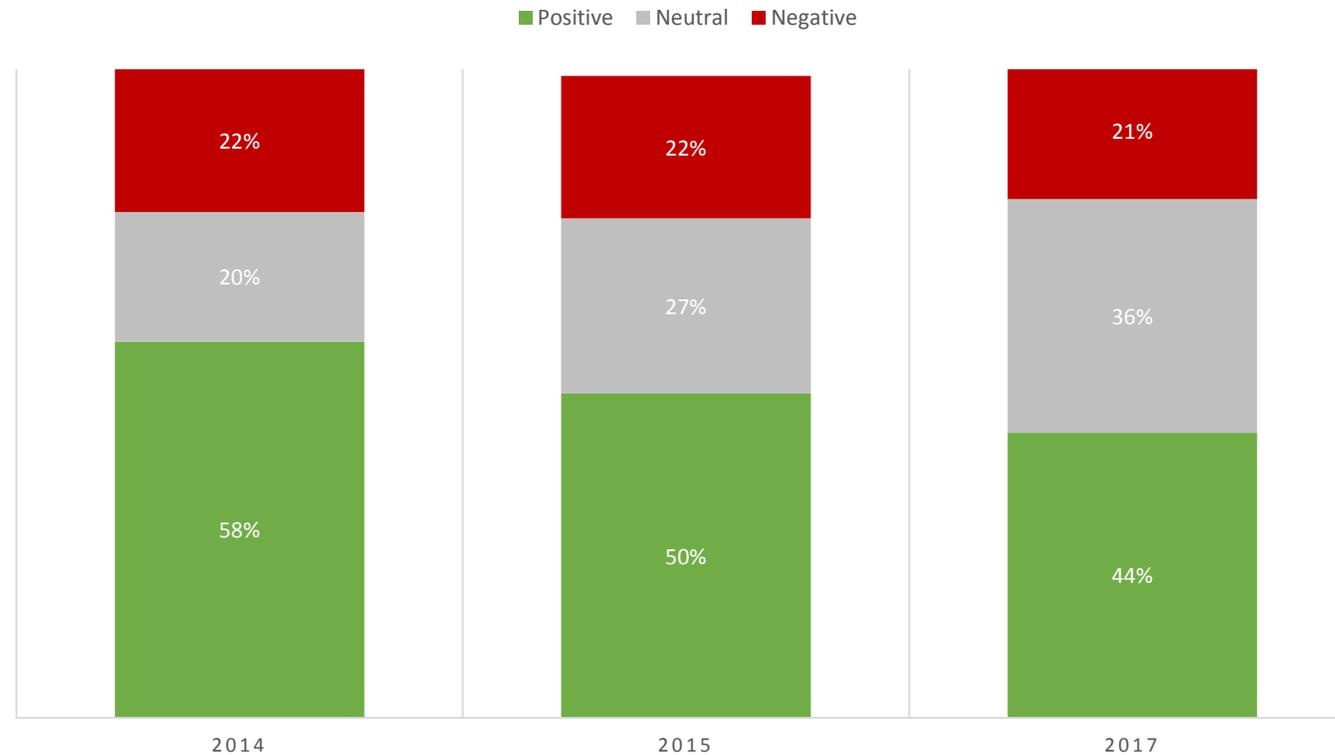
- Stressed the importance of acquiring public confidence and integrity in order to have pipelines built (greater public consultations and a national carbon pricing strategy)
- Argued that the Harper government destroyed Canada's international reputation and made it harder to businesses to compete by failing to take meaningful action on climate change
- Conservative critics insisted that increased public oversight, carbon pricing, and a moratorium on crude oil tankers were simply a Liberal strategy to road-block pipelines and oil sands development to appease special interest groups

Policy Implications and Public Perceptions

Though the Liberal's balanced approach to energy infrastructure initially fared well with the public, Canadians have experienced declining optimism regarding the Trudeau government's ability to effectively manage the economy

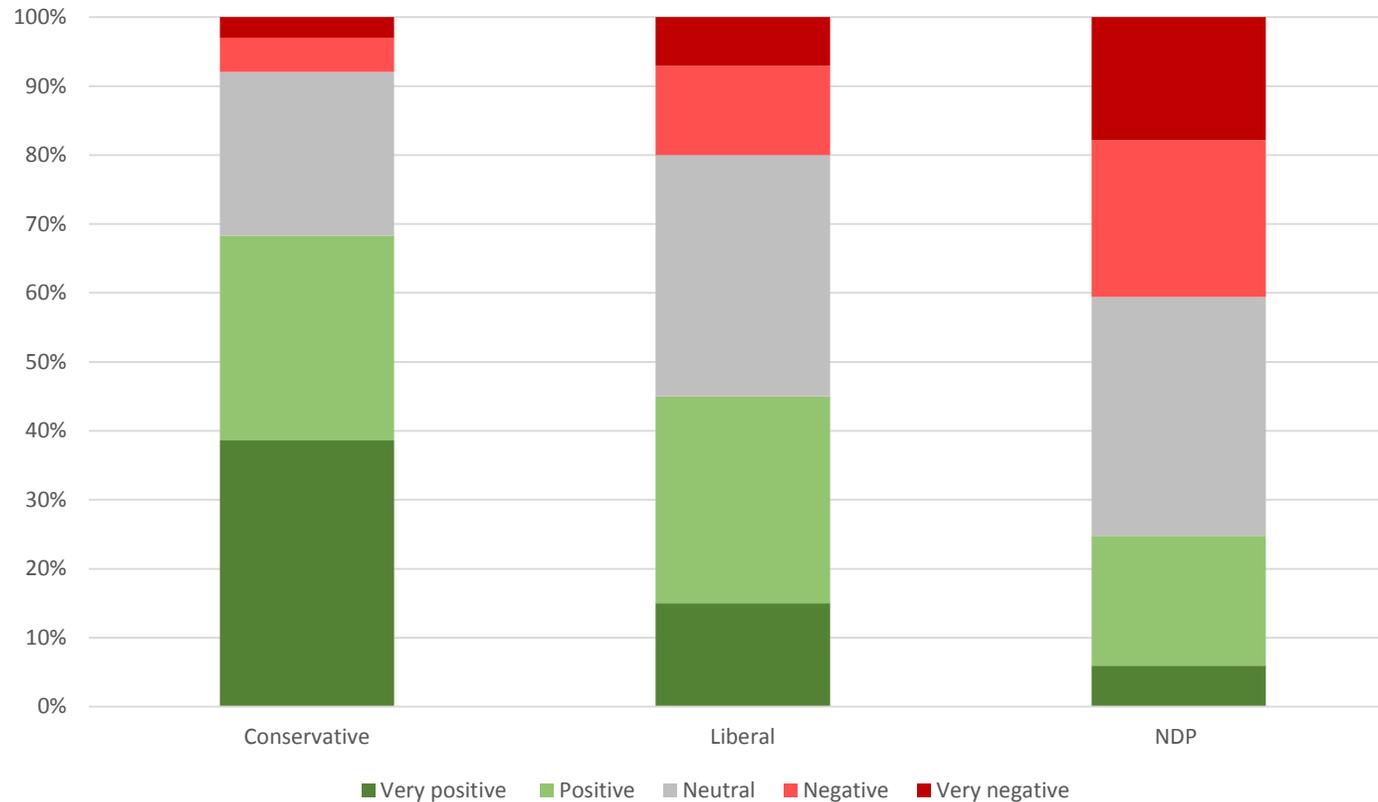
- In 2015, 63% of Canadians supported a national carbon pricing strategy. In 2017, only 44% supported it (Angus Reid, 2015)
- In 2017, half of Canadians believed that Canada was doing a poor or very poor job at building public confidence in energy decisions (Nanos, 2017)
- Still, the Liberals' framing strategy has appeared to be successful with Canadians – 79% of Canadians believe that combatting climate change will open up economic activities and 49% would not support a political candidate who does not promote climate change (Anderson & Coletto, 2018)

2017: How do you feel about building new pipeline capacity in Canada to help deliver Canada's energy to new markets?



Angus Reid, 2017

Building pipeline capacity (2017): Partisan differences



Angus Reid, 2017

Takeaways so far:

- A key theme in this analysis has been the political framing of the trade-off between the economy and the environment
 - The analysis does isolate systematic attempts to frame the discourse about energy infrastructure along different narratives.
- This study illustrates the ability for public opinion to alter energy policy development, and the importance of political rhetoric in shaping these opinions
 - Need further analysis to link results to partisan views.

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