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By Theophilos Argitis | Nov 27, 2014 10:15 AM ET | 2 Comments Email Print

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Canadians are almost evenly divided over the merits of developing Alberta's oil sands, with impressions worsening, according to Nanos Research polling.

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The share of Canadians who say they view development of oil sands reserves favorably was 45.1 percent, versus 48 percent who see it as unfavorable, according to a survey of 1,000 Canadians by Ottawa-based Nanos. Thirty-five percent of respondents reported having a worse impression of the oil sands than five years previously, with 19 percent reporting having impressions that improved.

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Canada's energy industry has struggled to win broad public support for infrastructure projects it says are required to move oil to new markets. The public resistance is partly due to mounting criticism that environmental costs are too high, concerns which have stalled pipeline projects such as TransCanada Corp.'s Keystone XL.

Production of bitumen is forecast to more than double by 2030, according to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. The federal environment department has identified bitumen production as Canada's fastest-growing source of carbon emissions.

The Nanos survey found those opposed to oil-sands development are mostly concerned about the environment impact, while those in favor are attracted to the economic benefits. Men and residents of the prairie provinces tend to have the more favorable views, the poll found.

The telephone poll, taken between Nov. 15 and Nov. 18, has a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points.

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Ralph Monzo · 2 days ago

The United States of America has the highest environmental standards on the planet as it is... Isn't it time we gave the workers of America a break along with the entrepreneurs? Let the manufacturing and mining industries flourish... and GOOD jobs for all. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

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elidyl · 2 days ago

Probably has much to do for why infrastructure is such a challenge in Canada, and they are looking south for refinery operators, transportation options, shipping ports, and more. Canadians seem in a hurry to export the stuff, and all of the environmental costs that come along with it to their nearest neighbor. At least, that's their ambition. So far, it's been a pretty tough sell (and Americans aren't as gullible as some would hope or think). We understand any benefits come with larger and more permanent costs (leadership on carbon mitigation, local environmental impacts, higher gas prices for consumers at home, competitive disadvantage to domestic resources, zero net benefits on permanent jobs, exposure to market uncertainty and price volatility risks, and more). And PR departments are

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