

CTV Poll: 69 per cent believe pipelines are best way to ship crude oil

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A new poll has found that 69 per cent of people surveyed believe pipelines are the best way to transport crude oil from one place to another.

In the wake of last year's Lac-Mégantic disaster and other recent rail tanker explosions, a new poll conducted by Ipsos Reid for CTV News also found that 54 per cent of people surveyed said they have no faith in the safety of transporting flammable materials by rail.

"This specific product or any other products that could be seen as hazardous, the public feel that right now it isn't as safe as it should be," said Darrell Bricker of Ipsos Reid.

According to the poll, an overwhelming majority of 90 per cent agree the federal government should conduct a formal review of Canada's rail policies around transporting crude oil by rail.

There are an estimated 50,000 tankers rolling down the tracks in Canada that need to be replaced or at least retrofitted.

This week, the Transportation Safety Board called for sturdier rail cars to be built. The government says it's considering those recommendations along with some of its own to improve the design of the tankers, but the opposition is demanding a more immediate response.

"We need a specific timeline on what this government is going to do to stop using those highly dangerous unsafe old tankers," said NDP transportation critic Olivia Chow.

But industry insiders say replacing those tankers won't happen quickly

"There's just the physical ability to build them and also there is an economic issue and it will likely involve a lot of players in the whole process," said Bob Ballantyne, president of the Canadian Industrial Transportation Association.

Residents in Quebec were most likely (63 per cent) to "disagree" that they have confidence in rail safety, followed by those living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (61 per cent), Alberta (57 per cent), British Columbia (55 per cent), Atlantic Canada (50 per cent) and Ontario with 47 per cent.

The poll showed the majority of Canadians (69 per cent) believe that pipelines are the best way to ship crude oil from one place to another, compared to 18 per cent who prefer rail and 13 per cent who prefer transferring crude oil by way of trucks.

When it comes to pointing fingers for the recent derailments, the poll reveals that no one group is singled out.

Thirty per cent of respondents say the problem has to do with a lack of oversight, regulation and inspection by the government, while 24 per cent say the companies that own the railway

tracks are to blame. Another 19 per cent say the companies that own the tankers are responsible and 14 per cent say the blame should be placed on the engineers, crew, and human error.

But recent rail accidents haven't necessarily soured Canadians against all rail use; the majority of Canadians (70 per cent) say businesses should strive to increase the amount of goods that are shipped on trains.

The majority of respondents (78 per cent) also agreed that they're confident in the safety of passenger rail travel in Canada.

Ipsos Reid surveyed 1,000 Canadians online between Jan. 20 and 22, 2014. The poll is considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

With a report from CTV's Deputy Ottawa Bureau Chief Laurie Graham