



Building Faster?

Public expectations for collaboration
in the Canadian federation

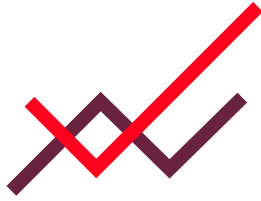


**Environics
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*Confederation
of Tomorrow*

2026 SERIES



**Environics
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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. They have been conducted annually since 2019 by an association of the country's leading public policy and socio-economic research organizations.

The 2026 study consists of a survey of 5,696 adults, conducted between February 14 and March 28, 2026 (92% of the responses were collected between February 19 and March 7); 91 percent of the responses were collected online. The remaining responses were collected by telephone (both landline and cell phone) from respondents living in the North or on First Nations reserves, or from francophone respondents in New Brunswick.

The survey is conducted on behalf of all the survey partners by the Environics Institute for Survey Research. The fieldwork is managed by Elemental DCI. The online portion of the survey drew respondents from the Leger LEO panel; the telephone interviews were conducted by Elemental DCI.

The survey data are weighted in three separate ways, depending on the population of interest. First, the complete survey data are weighted by region, gender, age, education, home language (separately for Quebec, New Brunswick and the rest of Canada) and Indigenous identity, so as to be representative of the Canadian population. Second, the territorial sample (when reported separately) is weighted by gender, age and education. Third, the Indigenous sample (when reported separately) is weighted by gender, age, region and education.

[**View the Confederation of Tomorrow series on our website**](#)



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Introduction

In the spring of 2026, the Liberal Party of Canada secured a majority of seats in Parliament. The formation of this Liberal majority government came in two stages: first, the party won a plurality of seats in the spring 2025 election; subsequently, it enticed members of other parties to join its caucus, and won several by-elections, pushing the total number of Liberal seats past the majority threshold.

Having secured its parliamentary majority, the government can now focus on its intention to, among other things, speed up the building of “new nation-building infrastructure: ports, mines, trade corridors, and other major projects that will unlock our vast natural resources and enable us to sell them to new markets across the country and around the world.”

In doing so, the Liberal government now faces fewer obstacles in passing legislation than it would have in a minority Parliament. Nonetheless, the government’s majority status does not diminish the need to negotiate with its partners in the federation – provincial and territorial governments, and Indigenous governments and communities. The latest Confederation of Tomorrow survey shows that, notwithstanding the urgency attached to the need to build new transportation and energy infrastructure to help increase energy exports, most Canadians continue to prefer that the government take the time it needs to reach agreements, whether with the provinces and territories or Indigenous communities.

There are two notable aspects of this finding. The first is that the current federal government’s apparent popularity as measured in the polls does not translate into a blank cheque from Canadians for it to proceed in the absence of agreements with its provincial or Indigenous partners. The second is the absence, broadly speaking, of a double-standard: on the whole, Canadians are just as likely to insist on the need for the agreement of Indigenous communities as they are the agreement of provinces.

The current federal government's apparent popularity does not translate into a blank cheque from Canadians for it to proceed in the absence of agreements with its provincial or Indigenous partners.

This second finding is consistent with the fact that, since the question was first asked in 2020, roughly two in three Canadians have agreed that the development of natural resources on Indigenous land should only proceed when the Indigenous community that lives there agrees. While this is true at the national level, agreement has fallen recently in the Prairies and in B.C., particularly among supporters of the main conservative provincial parties.

The survey also shows that, while the federal government holds a broad level of support in managing the country's international trade relationships, public trust is more evenly distributed between the federal and provincial governments when it comes to managing energy resources – again underlining the need for federal-provincial collaboration in order for the new prime minister to successfully implement his government's agenda. Despite an improvement in opinions on the state of federal-provincial relations since 2024, only about one in two Canadians currently say that the federal and provincial governments are working well together.



Key findings

- As was the case last year, Canadians in 2026 are much more likely to look to the federal government, rather than their provincial government, to manage trade relations with other countries. Almost one in two (46%) say they trust the federal government more to manage trade, compared to only 10 percent who trust their provincial government more. Trust is more evenly distributed when it comes to managing energy resources. In this case, only 21 percent say they trust the federal government more, and 23 percent trust their provincial government more.
- Canadians are more likely to favour the option of the federal government expanding the country's transportation and energy infrastructure only after ensuring the agreement of the provinces and territories or the Indigenous communities affected, than they are to prefer the option of the government acting quickly even in the absence of such agreement.
- At the national level, and in several provinces or regions, Canadians give similar answers to the two versions of the question – one asking about the need for provincial or territorial agreement and the other asking about the need for the agreement of Indigenous communities. In Manitoba, B.C. and the North, however, residents are more likely to insist on the need for provincial or territorial agreement than on the need for the agreement of Indigenous communities (though, in the North, majorities favour waiting for agreement in both cases).

At the national level, Canadians give similar answers to the two versions of the question – one asking about the need for provincial or territorial agreement and the other asking about the need for the agreement of Indigenous communities.

- A majority of Canadians continue to agree that “no one should be allowed to develop natural resources on Indigenous land unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees.” However, between 2024 and 2026, the level of agreement declined in the Prairies and in B.C.
- Just under one in two Canadians say that the federal and provincial governments are working well together, but almost as many say that they are not. Opinions are largely unchanged from last year, but remain more positive than in 2024.
- While a majority of Albertans and Saskatchewanians continue to say that the federal and provincial governments are not working well together, opinions are much less negative than in 2024. This improvement is seen among supporters of both the provincial government and official opposition parties, but the change among supporters of the opposition (the NDP, in both cases) is much more significant.

Canadians are now slightly less likely to say that the federal government is usually to blame when there is conflict.

- When conflicts arise, Canadians are most likely to say that both the federal and provincial (or territorial) governments are equally to blame. Compared to 2024, however, Canadians are now slightly less likely to say that the federal government is usually to blame when there is conflict between the federal and provincial governments. The proportion blaming the federal government is usually to blame for conflict fell in every region of the country.

Trade and energy: which government is more trusted?

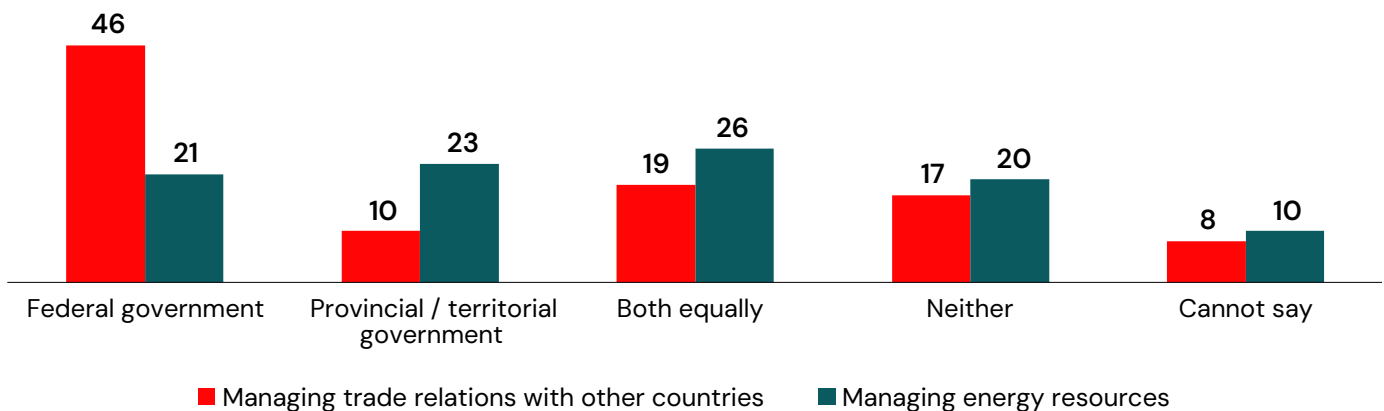
As was the case last year, Canadians in 2026 are much more likely to look to the federal government, rather than their provincial government, to manage trade relations with other countries.¹ Almost one in two (46%) say they trust the federal government more to manage trade, compared to only 10 percent who trust their provincial government more. An additional 19 percent trust both governments equally, while 17 percent trust neither and eight percent decline to express an opinion.

Trust is more evenly distributed, however, when it comes to managing energy resources. In this case, only 21 percent say they trust the federal government more, and 23 percent trust their provincial government more. A small plurality (26%) trust both equally and 20 percent trust neither (10% decline to express an opinion).

Figure 1

Level of government trusted more on trade and energy

2026



*Which government **do you trust more** to make the right decisions in the following areas?*

The proportion trusting their provincial government more to manage energy resources is higher than average in Saskatchewan (37%), Alberta (35%), Manitoba (29%) and Quebec (28%).

¹ This question was not asked in the territories.



Building infrastructure and partnerships

The survey asked Canadians to say whether they prefer that the federal government proceed with its plans to expand the country's transportation and energy infrastructure as quickly as possible to help increase energy exports, even if some of the provinces and territories or Indigenous communities affected don't agree, or whether instead they prefer that it take the time needed to ensure agreement. Canadians are more likely to say that the federal government should take the time needed to obtain agreement.

This question began as follows:

"Recently, the federal government has said it would like to speed up the construction of new transportation and energy infrastructure in Canada, in order to help increase our energy exports to other countries. Thinking about this policy, which of the following two options do you prefer?"

One version of the question then asked about the need to obtain provincial (or territorial) agreement. Just over one in two Canadians (53%) prefer that the federal government take the time needed to ensure that the provinces or territories affected agree. This compares to 32 percent who prefer that the federal government act as quickly as possible to expand Canada's transportation and energy infrastructure, even if the provinces or territories affected don't agree. An additional 15 percent do not express a preference either way.

A second version asked about Indigenous communities rather than provinces and territories (each of the two versions was asked to 50% of the survey sample, selected at random).² The response is strikingly similar.

² Because each version of the question is asked to only half of survey participants, sample sizes for specific groups (e.g., provinces) are smaller than for other questions in the survey. Sample sizes for all groups are available in the detailed [survey data tables](#) posted alongside this report on the Environics Institute website.

The full text of the survey question

Recently, the federal government has said it would like to speed up the construction of new transportation and energy infrastructure in Canada, in order to help increase our energy exports to other countries. **Thinking about this policy, which of the following two options do you prefer?:**

- The federal government should act as quickly as possible to expand Canada's transportation and energy infrastructure, even if [Version A: some of the provinces/territories affected / Version B: some of the Indigenous communities affected] don't agree.
- The federal government should work to expand Canada's transportation and energy infrastructure, but it should take the time needed to ensure that [Version A: the provinces/territories affected / Version B: the Indigenous communities affected] agree.
- Cannot say

Each of the two versions was asked to 50% of the survey sample, selected at random.

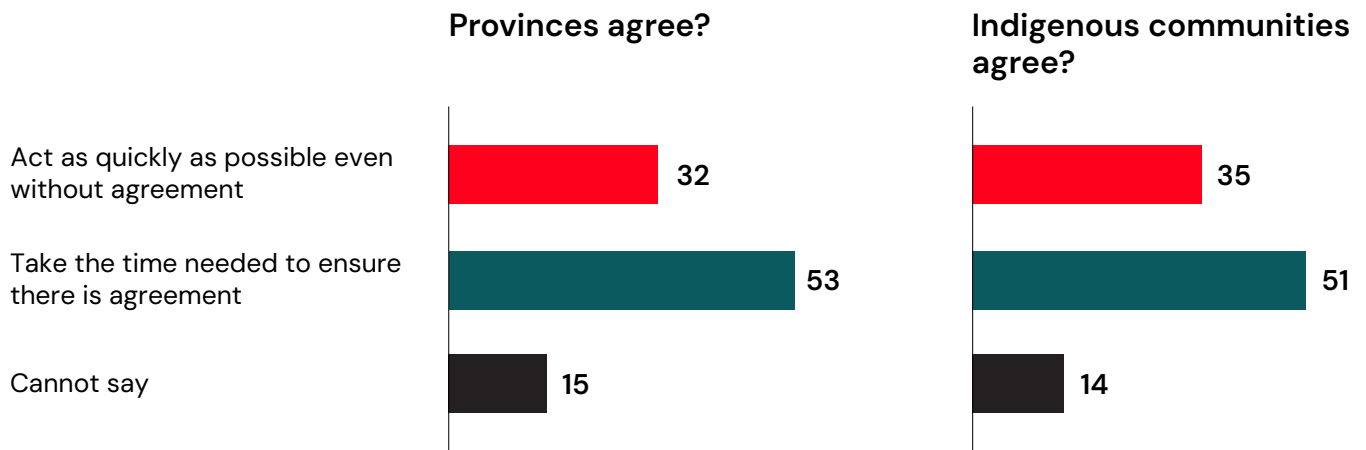
One in two Canadians (51%) say that the federal government should take the time needed so that the Indigenous communities affected agree to the proposed expansions of transportation and energy infrastructure, compared to 35 percent who prefer that this expansion occur as quickly as possible, even in the absence of agreement. An additional 14 percent do not express a preference either way.

Figure 2

Building new transportation and energy infrastructure in Canada

2026

Should the federal government take the time needed to ensure affected:



*Should the federal government take the time needed to ensure affected **provinces / territories** agree? Should the federal government take the time needed to ensure affected **Indigenous communities** agree?*



Gender

Women are more likely than men to prefer that the federal government take the time needed to ensure that either the provinces or the Indigenous communities affected agree to the expansion of Canada's transportation and energy infrastructure.

- When asked about provinces, a majority of women favour waiting for agreement (57%), compared to only 25 percent who would prefer that the federal government act as quickly as possible even in the absence of agreement. Men are more evenly divided, though a slight plurality favours waiting for agreement (47%, compared to 41%).
- The results are very similar in the case of the question asking about Indigenous communities. Again, a majority of women favour waiting for agreement (58%, compared to 23% who prefer the government move ahead regardless). Men remain more evenly divided; though, in this case, a slight plurality favours *not* waiting for agreement (44% say the federal government should wait for agreements to be reached with Indigenous communities, compared to 48% who prefer that it act even in the absence of agreement).

Region

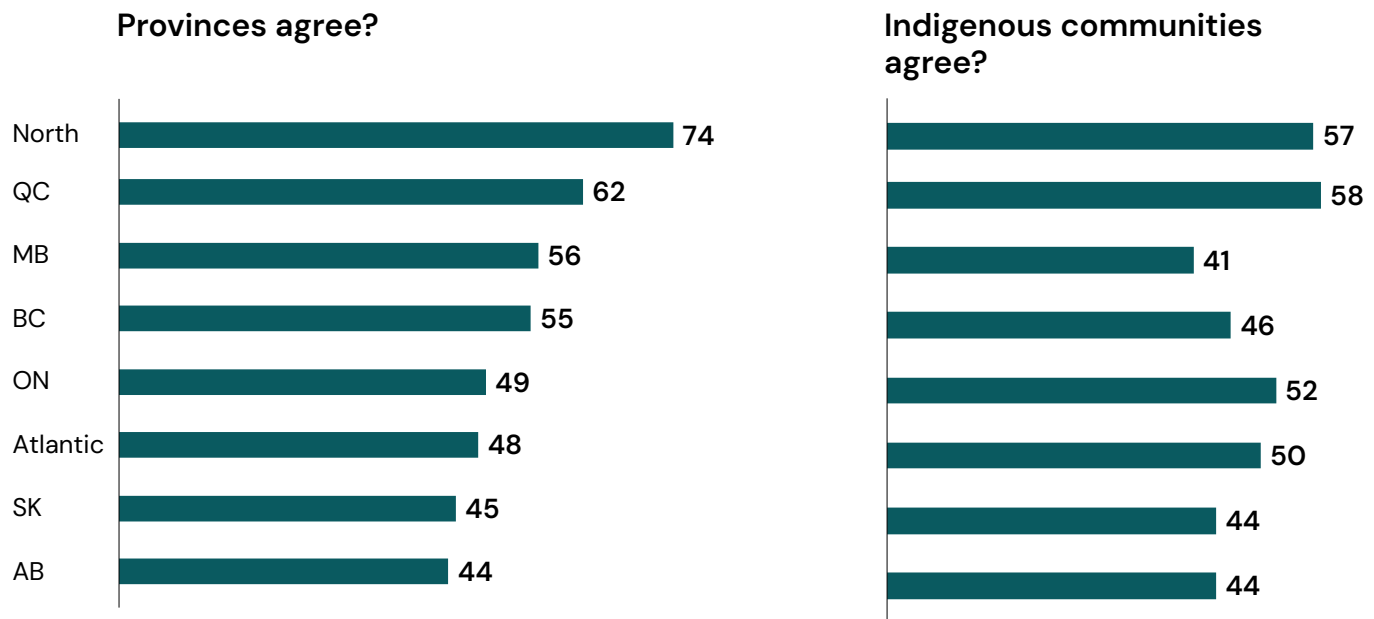
Among provinces and regions, preference for taking the time needed to obtain provincial agreement is highest in Quebec (62%), Manitoba (56%) and British Columbia (55%). Residents of the North (74%) are even more likely to favour waiting for the agreement of the territories affected. Preference for the alternative approach – building as fast as possible without waiting for provinces to agree – is highest in Saskatchewan (39%) and Alberta (37%); though, even in these two provinces, larger proportions prefer that the federal take the time to obtain agreement (45% and 44%, respectively).



Figure 3

Building new transportation and energy infrastructure in Canada 2026, by region

Should the federal government take the time needed to ensure affected:



Take the time needed to ensure that the **provinces / territories** affected agree.
Take the time needed to ensure that the **Indigenous communities** affected agree.

Residents of several provinces or regions give similar answers to the second version of the question, which focuses on the agreement of Indigenous communities (recall that each survey participant only received one of the two versions, chosen at random). Quebecers, who were among those most likely to emphasize the need for provincial agreement, are also among the most likely to take the same view in the case of Indigenous communities. At the opposite end, in both cases, Saskatchewanians and Albertans are the least likely to prefer than the federal government wait until agreements are reached. Ontarians and Atlantic Canadians also respond similarly to both versions of the questions.

In Manitoba, B.C. and the North, however, residents are more likely to insist on the need for provincial or territorial agreement than on the need for the agreement of Indigenous communities (though, in the North, majorities favour waiting for agreement in both cases).

Indigenous identity³

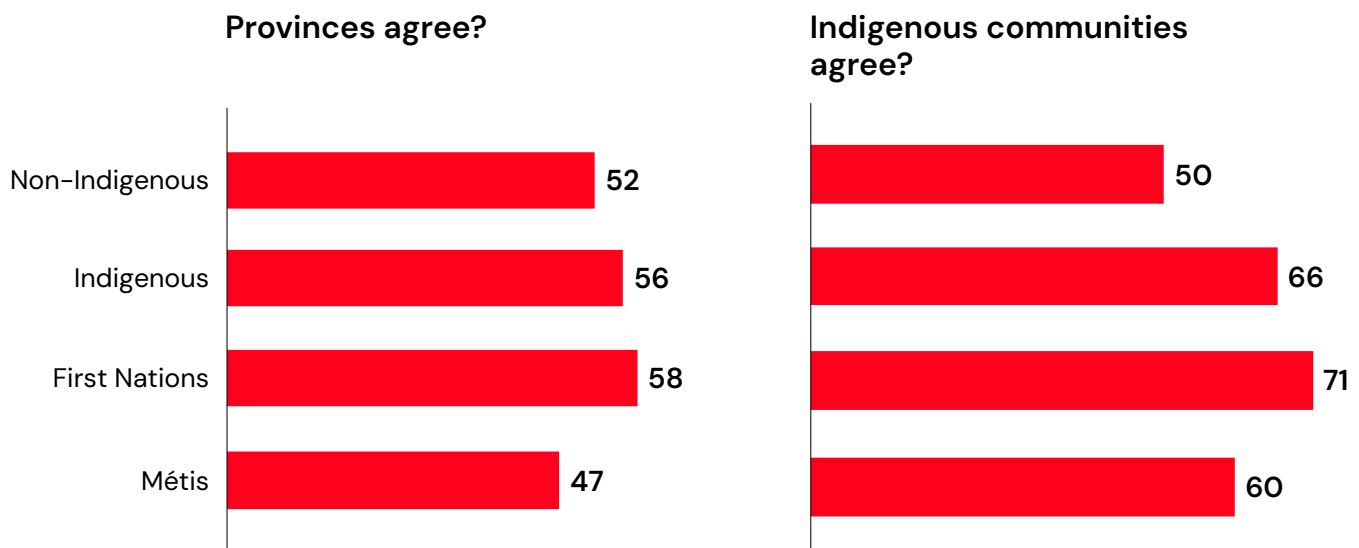
It is also notable that non-Indigenous Canadians, on average, give similar answers to both versions of the question:

- 52 percent prefer the option of waiting to obtain the agreement of provinces or territories rather than building faster without agreement (preferred by 33%);
- 50 percent prefer the option of waiting to obtain the agreement of Indigenous communities rather than building faster without agreement (preferred by 36%).⁴

Figure 4

Building new transportation and energy infrastructure in Canada 2026, by Indigenous identity

Should the federal government take the time needed to ensure affected:



Take the time needed to ensure that the **provinces / territories** affected agree.

Take the time needed to ensure that the **Indigenous communities** affected agree.

3 The survey sample includes 919 persons who self-identify as Indigenous; this represents five percent of the weighted sample.

4 These figures refer to the averages for non-Indigenous respondents in all parts of Canada taken together. There are differences in responses given by non-Indigenous respondents to the two versions of the question in Manitoba, B.C. and the North, which match the differences in opinion by region discussed earlier.



A majority of those who identify as Indigenous also prefer that the federal government take the time needed to reach agreements, both with provinces (56%) and with Indigenous communities (66%) – although the preference for agreement is slightly higher (by 10 percentage points) in the case of Indigenous communities. In the case of those who identify specifically as First Nations, preference for waiting for agreements stands at 58 percent in the case of provinces, but 71 percent in the case of Indigenous communities.

Non-Indigenous Canadians, on average, give similar answers to both versions of the question.

Vote intention

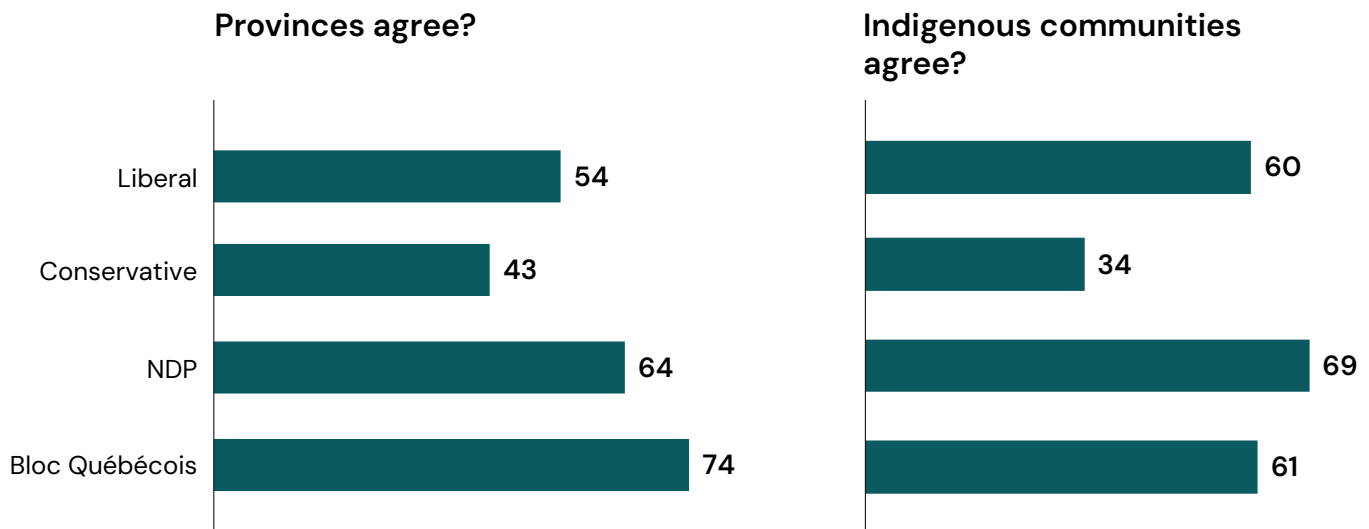
Finally, supporters of the different federal political parties express broadly consistent preferences regardless of whether they are asked about the need for provincial (or territorial) agreement, or for the agreement of Indigenous communities. Majorities of those who support the Liberal Party, the NDP or the Bloc Québécois prefer that the federal government take the time needed to reach agreements.

By contrast, the weight of opinion among supporters of the Conservative Party leans toward the federal government acting as quickly as possible to expand the country's transportation and energy infrastructure to help increase energy exports, even in the absence of agreement.

Figure 5

Building new transportation and energy infrastructure in Canada 2026, by federal vote intention

Should the federal government take the time needed to ensure affected:



Take the time needed to ensure that the **provinces / territories** affected agree.
Take the time needed to ensure that the **Indigenous communities** affected agree.

It is notable that, even though the Liberal Party currently forms the government, its own supporters do not necessarily believe it should have *carte blanche* to implement its agenda; rather, a majority of its supporters agree that it should take the time needed to reach agreements with provincial or Indigenous partners. It is supporters of the Conservative Party, which forms the official opposition, who favour quicker action even in the absence of agreement, by a plurality in the case of provinces (47% favouring quicker action, compared to 43% favouring waiting for agreement), and by a majority in the case of Indigenous communities (55% favouring quicker action, compared to 34% favouring waiting for agreement).



Natural resource development and Indigenous communities

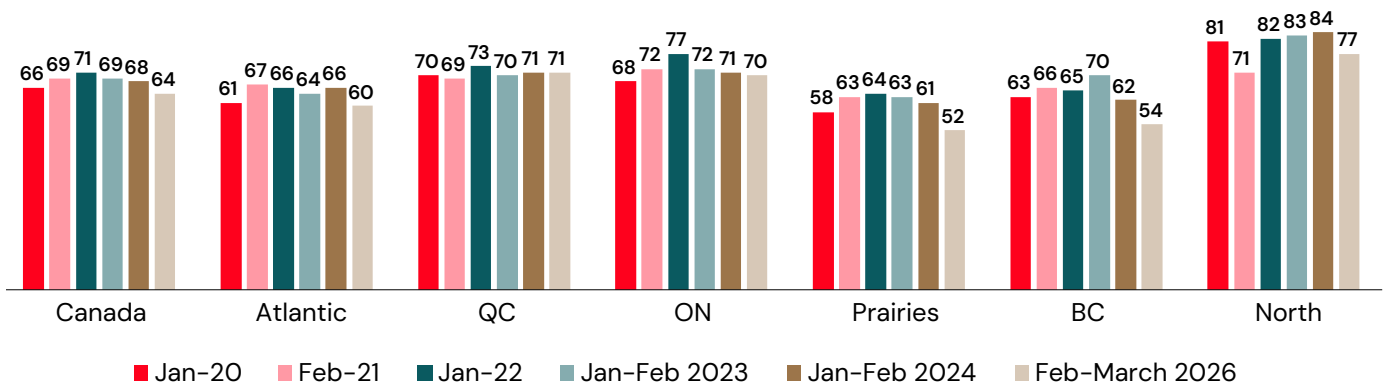
As noted, Canadians are more likely to favour the option of the federal government expanding the country’s transportation and energy infrastructure to help increase energy exports only after ensuring the agreement of the Indigenous communities affected, than they are to prefer the option of it acting quickly even in the absence of such agreement.

This finding is consistent with those from another survey question regarding the development of natural resources on Indigenous land. In 2026, a majority of Canadians (64%) agree that “no one should be allowed to develop natural resources on Indigenous land unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees.” Only 26 percent disagree, while 10 percent do not take a position.

Figure 6

Development of natural resources on Indigenous land

2020 – 2026, by region



How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? No one should be allowed to develop natural resources on Indigenous land unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees.



Since 2019, the overall level of agreement with this statement in Canada has varied very little. It edged up slightly from 2020 to 2022 (from 66% to 71%), before declining to the current level – but agreement in 2026 is only two percentage points lower than in 2020 (which is not a significant change).

This overall pattern holds for several regions of the country, including Atlantic Canada, Central Canada and the North. However, the recent change in opinion has been more noticeable in the Prairies and in B.C. Between 2024 and 2026, agreement fell by nine percentage points in the Prairies and by eight points in B.C. This drop is larger than average among supporters of the main right-of-centre provincial parties, and smaller than average among supporters of the provincial NDP. Nonetheless, even in these two regions, agreement still outweighs disagreement (in the Prairies, 52% agree and 36% disagree; in B.C., the respective figures are 54% and 35%).

Federal-provincial cooperation

Working well together

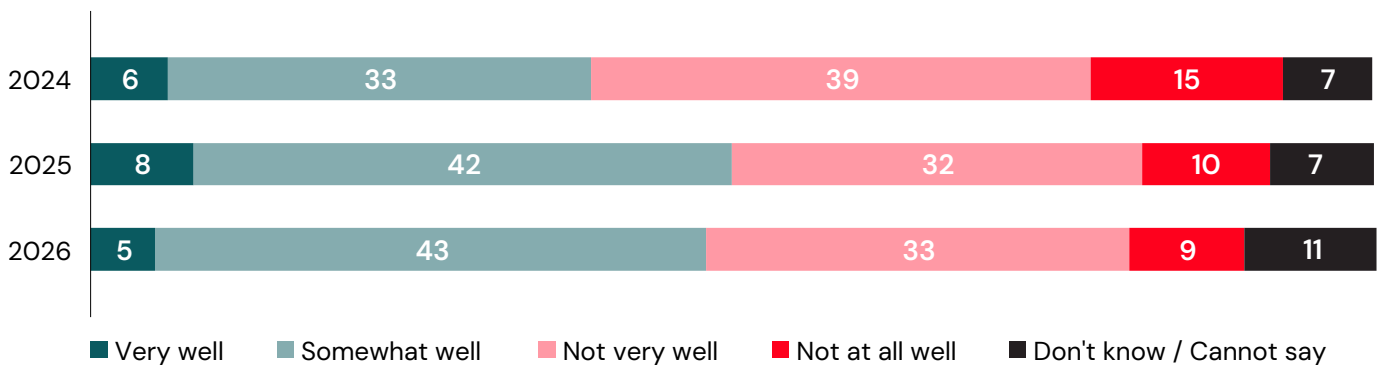
While opinions in Canada lean toward the preference for federal-provincial agreement as a condition of the expansion of critical infrastructure, a significant portion of the public continues to express concerns about the ability of the two orders of government to work together.

Currently, just under one in two Canadians (48%) say that the federal and provincial governments are working very or somewhat well together. Almost as many (42%), however, say that they are not working very well or not working at all well together. An additional 11 percent do not express an opinion either way.

Opinions are largely unchanged from last year, but remain more positive than in 2024. The proportion of Canadians who say that the two orders of governments are not working very well together fell from 54 percent in 2024 to 42 percent in 2025 (the latter survey was conducted soon after the spring 2025 federal election). It remains at 42 percent in 2026.

Figure 7

Are governments working well together?



2024 – 2026

Do you think the federal and provincial governments are working very well together, somewhat well, not very well or are they not working at all well together?

In 2026, perceptions of the state of intergovernmental relations are most positive in the North. Two in three residents of the North (66%) say that the federal and territorial governments are working well together (with little difference across the three territories) compared to 25 percent who take the opposite view.

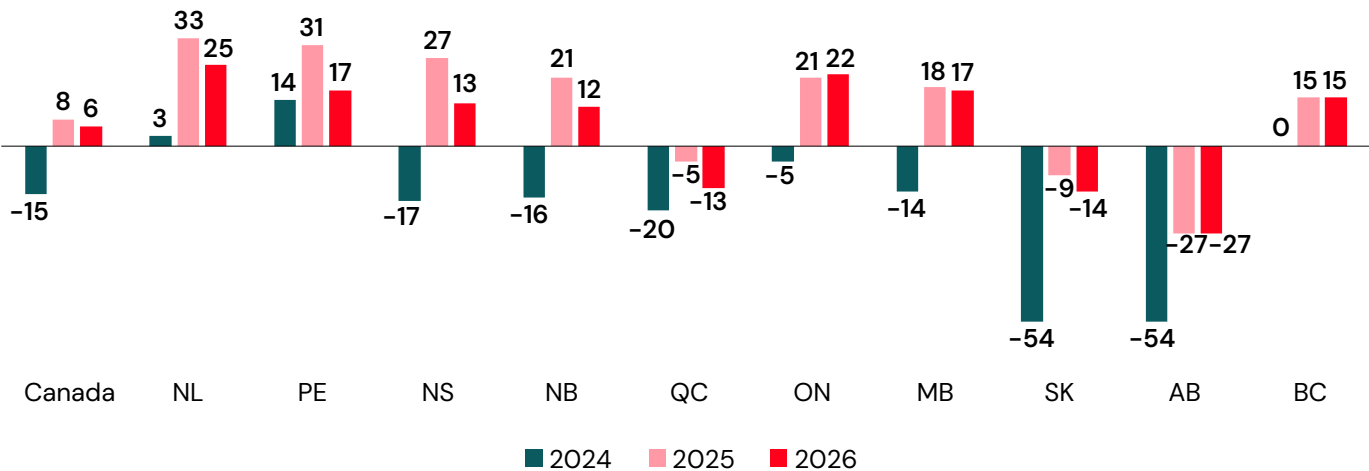
Among provinces, opinions are most positive in Ontario (where 57% say that the federal and provincial governments are working well together), Newfoundland and Labrador (56%), Prince Edward Island (54%) and Manitoba (52%). Conversely, the perception that the two governments are not working well together is most widely shared in Alberta (59%), Saskatchewan (53%) and Quebec (51%).

While a majority of Albertans and Saskatchewanians continue to say that the federal and provincial governments are not working well together, opinions are nonetheless much less negative than in 2024. The proportions holding this view are now 15 percentage points lower in Alberta (declining from 74% to 59%) and 21 points lower in Saskatchewan (declining from 74% to 53%).

Figure 8

Are governments working well together?

2024 - 2026, by province (net positive assessment) –“Working well together” (%) minus “not working well together” (%) (difference in percentage points)



Do you think the federal and provincial governments are working very well together, somewhat well, not very well or are they not working at all well together?

In both of these provinces, opinions have become more positive among supporters of both the provincial governing and official opposition parties. But the improvement is much more significant among supporters of the opposition (the NDP, in both cases).

The proportion of NDP supporters in Alberta who say the federal and provincial government are working well together increased from 18 percent in 2024 to 49 percent in 2026, compared to a much smaller change among supporters of the governing UCP (from 10% to 18%).

In Saskatchewan, the proportions holding this opinion increased from 17 percent in 2024 to 64 percent in 2026 among supporters of the NDP, compared to a much smaller change among supporters of the governing Saskatchewan Party (from 18% to 28%).

Another way to describe this shift is that, prior to the change of federal prime minister from Justin Trudeau to Mark Carney, large majorities of supporters of both provincial governing and opposition parties in Alberta and Saskatchewan agreed that the federal and provincial governments were not working well together. Following the change in prime minister, large majorities of supporters of the governing parties continue to take this view (despite some improvement), while significant numbers of supporters of the provincial opposition parties have changed their minds.

While a majority of Albertans and Saskatchewanians continue to say that the federal and provincial governments are not working well together, opinions are nonetheless much less negative than in 2024.

Which government is to blame?

The increase between 2024 and 2026 in the perception that the federal and provincial governments are working well together is accompanied by a modest drop in the proportion of Canadians who point their finger at the federal government when conflicts arise.

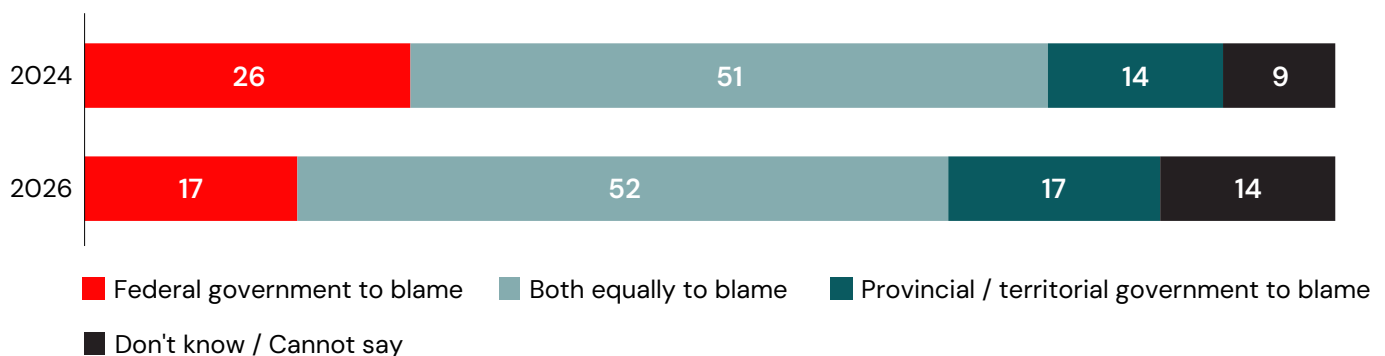
When there is a conflict between the federal government and provincial or territorial governments, Canadians are most likely to say that both governments are usually equally to blame: one in two (52%) take this view. This proportion is essentially unchanged from 2024.⁵

Compared to 2024, Canadians are now slightly less likely to say that the federal government is usually to blame for conflict (a 9-point drop from 26% to 17%). This is accompanied by small increases in the proportions who blame their provincial or territorial government (from 14% to 17%) or who do not take a position (from 9% to 14%).

Figure 9

Which government is to blame for conflict?

2024 and 2026



When there is a conflict between the federal government and your [provincial / territorial] government, which one do you think is usually to blame: the federal government, your provincial [territorial] government or that both are usually equally to blame?

5 This question was not asked in 2025.

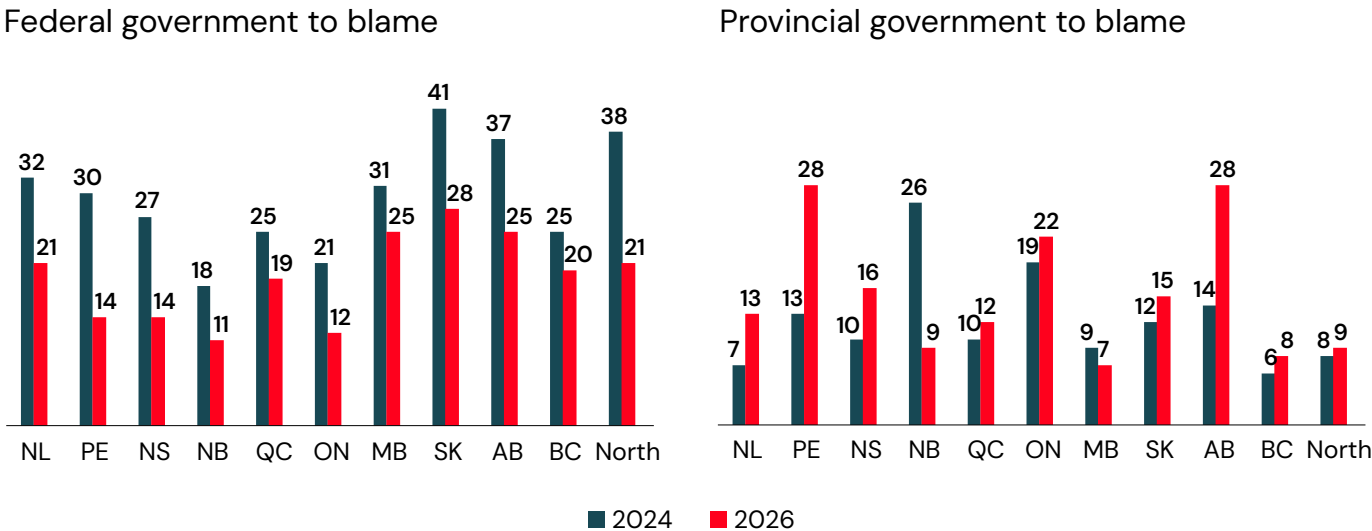
The proportion blaming the federal government for conflict fell in every region of the country. The proportion blaming their provincial government for conflict increased most sharply in Prince Edward Island (from 13% to 28%) and Alberta (from 14% to 28%).

Once again, the shift in opinions in Alberta – and also in Saskatchewan – differs significantly between those who support the provincial governing and opposition parties. The proportion of supporters of the UCP in Alberta who say their provincial government is usually to blame for federal-provincial conflict was or less unchanged between 2024 and 2026, increasing insignificantly from five to seven percent; among supporters of the opposition NDP, however, the proportion increased from 31 to 65 percent. In Saskatchewan, there has been no change in the proportion blaming their provincial government among supporters of the Saskatchewan Party (4% in both years). But the proportion among supporters of the opposition NDP increased from 29 to 45 percent.

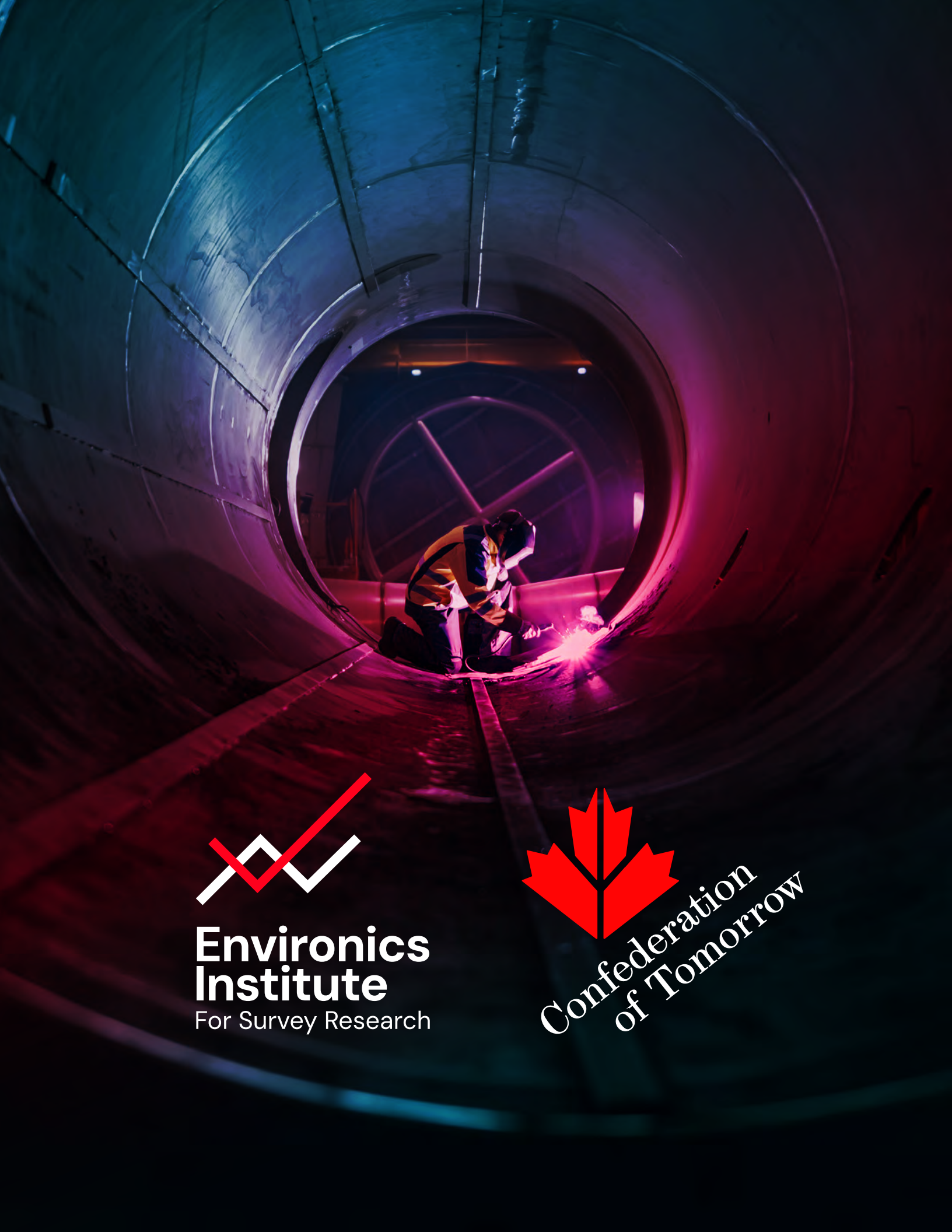
Figure 10

Which government is to blame for conflict?

2024 and 2026, by province



When there is a conflict between the federal government and your [provincial / territorial] government, which one do you think is usually to blame: the federal government, your provincial [territorial] government or that both are usually equally to blame?



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