

The Canadian Council for  
Public-Private Partnerships



Le Conseil Canadien des  
Sociétés Publiques-Privées

# **THE PEOPLE SPEAK ON P3**

**A national survey on attitudes  
to public-private partnerships**

The Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships

Survey conducted by Environics Research Group

Released: November 22, 2004

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## Introduction

For years, politicians, union leaders and other interest groups have told us why the private sector should not be involved in the business of delivering public services.

### **But what do Canadians *really* think about public-private partnerships?**

We decided to try a new approach – we went out and asked them.

The national research company Environics Research Group was commissioned to ask 2,000 adult Canadians a series of questions probing their attitudes to the infrastructure deficit, the concept of public-private partnerships and specific areas where they believe the private sector could be an appropriate participant in the provision of infrastructure and the delivery of public services.

The results\* show that an overwhelming majority of Canadians (more than eight in 10) believe that federal, provincial and municipal governments are having trouble keeping pace with demand for new or improved public infrastructure and services.

And a solid majority – six in ten – agree that it is time to allow the private sector to deliver these services in partnership with government.

Detailed analysis of the data shows that majority support for P3 extends virtually across the spectrum of Canadian society, irrespective of age, gender, income, employment status, union or political affiliation, region or community size.

The Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships (CCPPP) is a national non-partisan, non-profit organization founded on the belief that the capacity of government to meet its current and future infrastructure and service obligations can be enhanced through public-private partnerships. Our membership is drawn from the public and private sectors in equal numbers. The Council conducts research on a wide variety of subjects, sponsors local events and promotes the development of public-private partnerships at all levels of government in Canada.

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\* Results are based on a nationwide survey of 2,027 adult Canadians conducted by Environics Research Group between September 17 and October 3, 2004. The results are estimated to be accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 percentage points in 19 out of 20 samples. The margin of error is greater for results pertaining to regional or socio-demographic subgroups of the total sample.

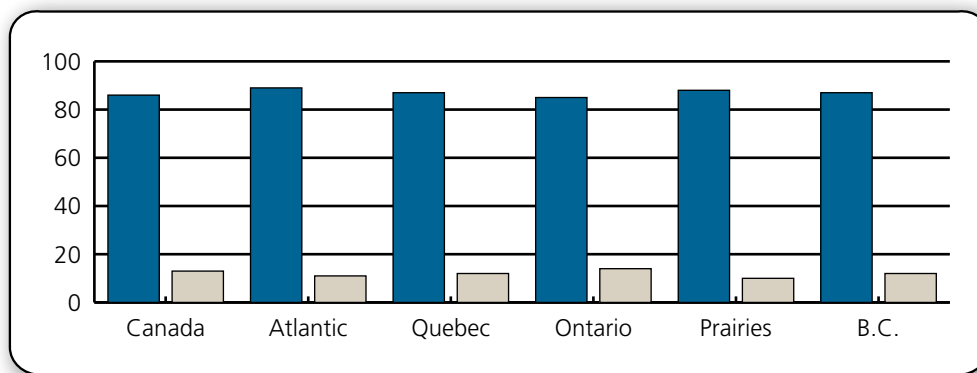
# 1. The Infrastructure Deficit

## The Proposition

**Governments are having trouble keeping pace with demands for new or improved public infrastructure and services. Do you agree or disagree?**

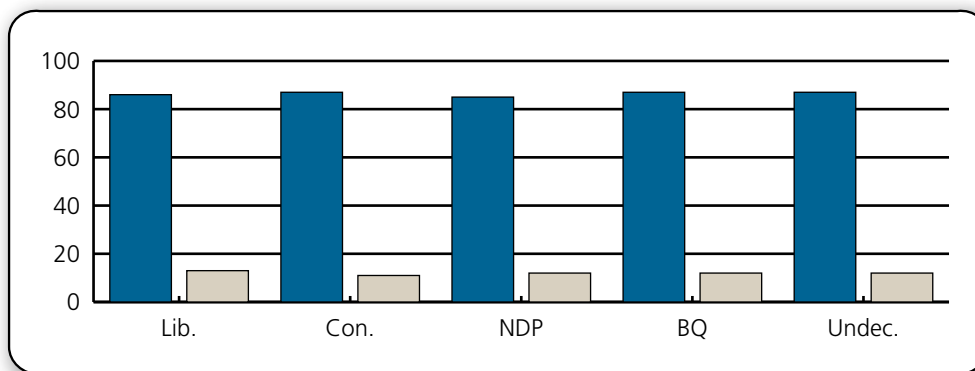
## The Results

More than eight out of ten Canadians believe that their national, provincial and municipal governments are having trouble keeping pace with the demand for new or improved public infrastructure – roads, hospitals, schools, public transit systems, power stations, water and wastewater treatment facilities and so on.



<b>Agree</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>

The concept of the "infrastructure deficit" resonates across the board, from British Columbia to the Maritimes, regardless of whether people live in a city, town or rural area and irrespective of the political party they support – Liberal, Conservative, NDP or Bloc Quebecois (see below).



<b>Agree</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>

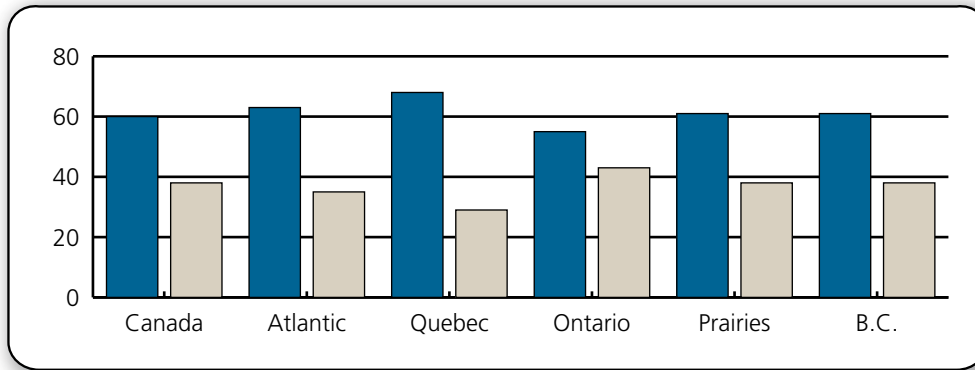
## 2. Public-Private Partnerships

### The Proposition

**It is time to allow the private sector to deliver these types of services in partnership with government. Agree or disagree?**

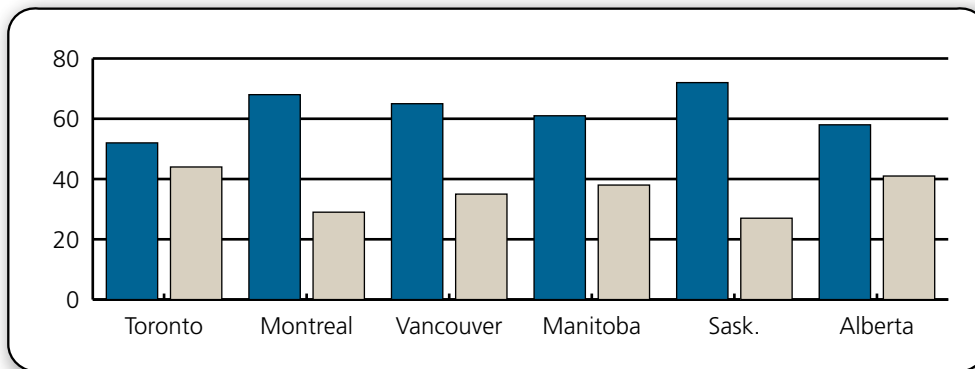
### The Results

Six in ten Canadians believe that the time has come to put private sector finance and expertise to work on closing the infrastructure gap. Support for the idea of governments forming partnerships with private companies in public works projects varies from province to province – strongest in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, tapering off slightly in Ontario.

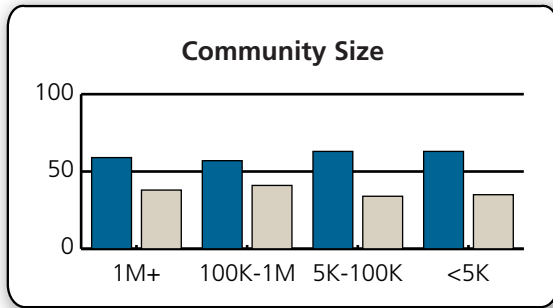


<b>Agree</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>

There are some significant regional variations when it comes to support of the P3 concept. Residents of Saskatchewan come out almost three-to-one in favour of P3s; in Toronto, support falls to just over 50%.

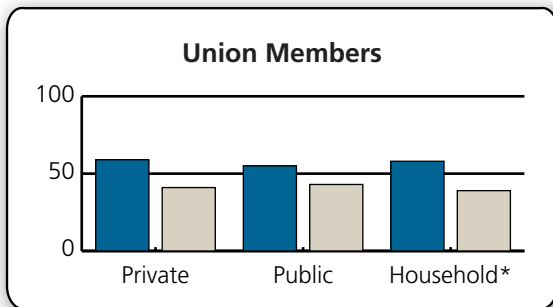


<b>Agree</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>41</b>



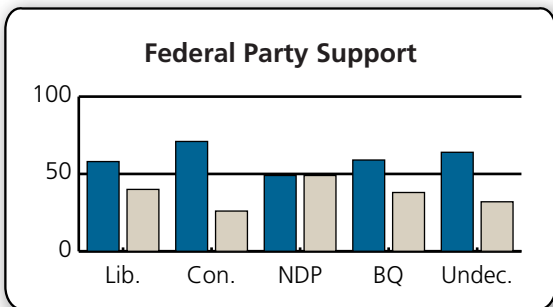
Support for the P3 concept remains strong regardless of community size.

Agree	59	57	63	63
Disagree	38	41	34	35



A majority of union members, whether they work in the public or private sectors, agree that it is time to move ahead with public-private partnerships.

Agree	59	55	58
Disagree	41	43	39



The same result emerges from the major voting groups, with the exception of NDP voters who are evenly split on the question.

Agree	58	71	49	59	64
Disagree	40	26	49	38	32

\* Respondent's household contained at least one union member.

### 3. Delivering Services with P3

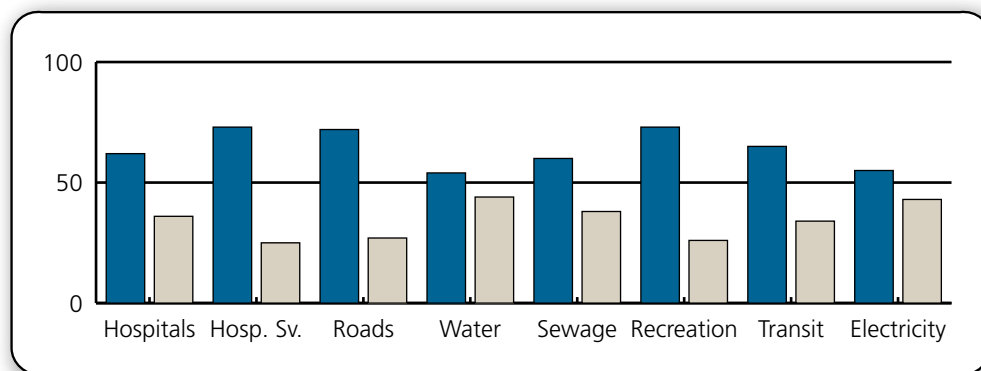
#### The Question

If your access to services remained the same, if the quality of services was the same or better and if the cost to you was no more than if the government was providing the services would you support or oppose private sector involvement in:

- The financing and construction of public hospitals.
- The operation of non-health related services in public hospitals, such as cleaning and cafeterias.
- The construction and maintenance of roads.
- The operation of public water treatment facilities
- The operation of public sewage treatment facilities
- The construction and operation of public recreation facilities, such as public pools and ice rinks.
- The operation of public transit systems.
- The generation of electricity and delivery to your home or business.

#### The Results

Some interesting trends emerge when comparing the national response to a series of questions about specific areas where private companies would be considered an appropriate partner in delivering public services.



Support	62	73	72	54	60	73	65	55
Oppose	36	25	27	44	38	26	34	43

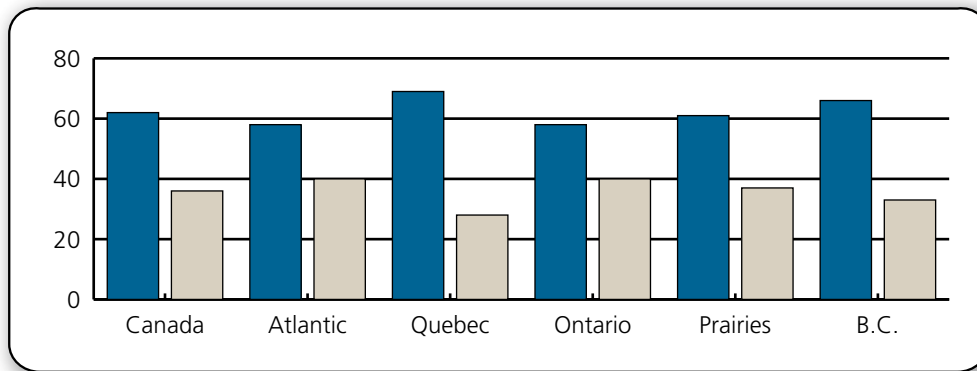
Firstly, while the numbers vary according to the service under consideration, a clear majority support private sector involvement across the board.

Secondly, the fact that support for public-private partnerships varies from a high of 73% (for non-health hospital services and recreation facilities) down to 54% (water treatment) would suggest a public willingness to shift the debate away from the old political rhetoric and to consider public-private partnerships as a practical solution to specific service needs.

### 3.1 Financing and Building Public Hospitals

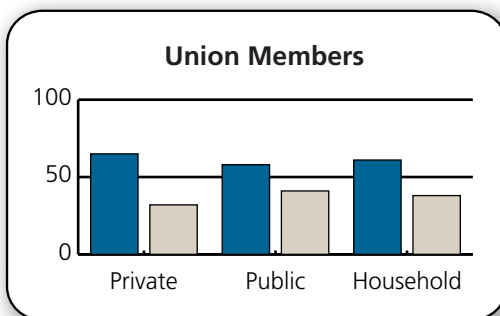
A solid nationwide majority support was demonstrated for private sector involvement in financing and constructing hospitals.

A highlight of the provincial breakdown is that support is still strong in the three provinces where debate on public-private partnerships in the healthcare sector is most advanced: British Columbia, which has two active P3 hospital projects and one on the drawing board; Ontario, with two P3 hospitals under way; and Quebec, where the government has announced plans to seriously consider the P3 model for future major hospital projects.

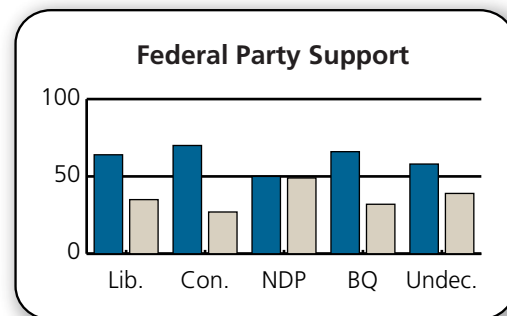


<b>Support</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>

Also interesting, and perhaps more unexpected, is the strong support for P3 hospitals among union members, even those in the public sector whose approval rate (58%) is only a few points below the national average (62%).



<b>Support</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>38</b>

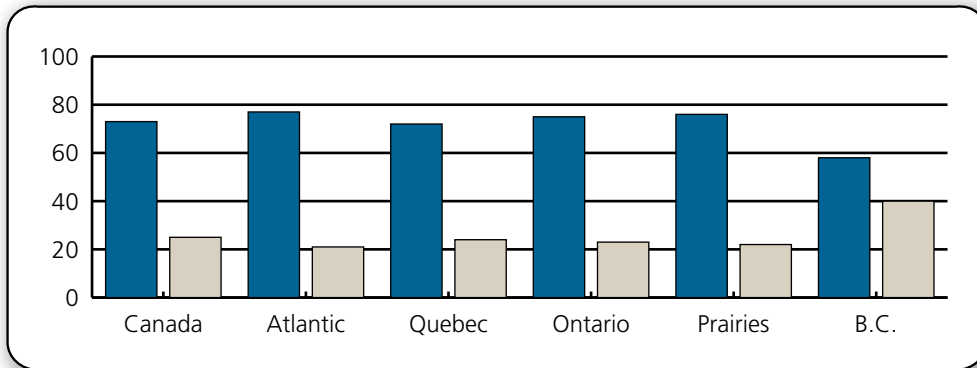


<b>Support</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>39</b>

### 3.2 Non-Health Related Services in Public Hospitals

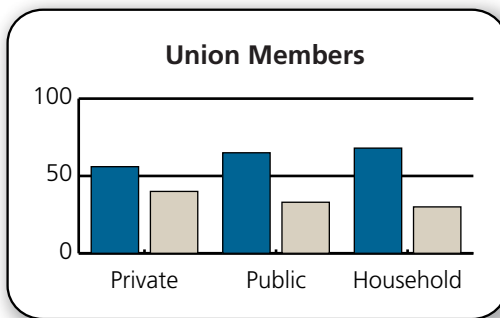
Here, the strong support numbers nationally and in almost every province indicate that people are thinking about private involvement in hospitals as two distinct issues: construction of new hospitals and delivery of non-health services.

For new hospitals, national support stands at 62% with the provinces in a range from 58-69%. This compares with a national support figure of 73% for hospital services and the provinces in the 72-77% range.

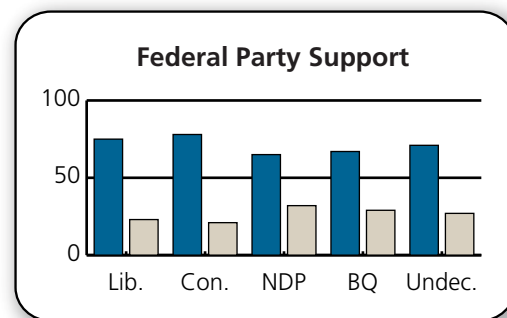


Support	73	77	72	75	76	58
Oppose	25	21	24	23	22	40

Private delivery of non-health related hospital services is also favoured by both public service union members (65% for/33% against) and their private sector counterparts (56/40).



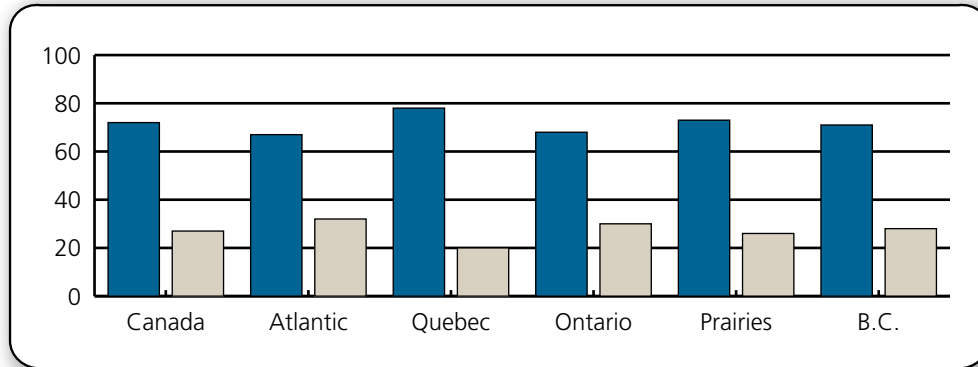
Support	56	65	68
Oppose	40	33	30



Support	75	78	65	67	71
Oppose	23	21	32	29	27

### 3.3 Construction and Maintenance of Roads

This is one of the three service categories (along with non-health hospital services and recreation facilities) where national support for private sector involvement peaked at more than 70%. Quebec is a standout with supporters outnumbering opponents by almost four to one.

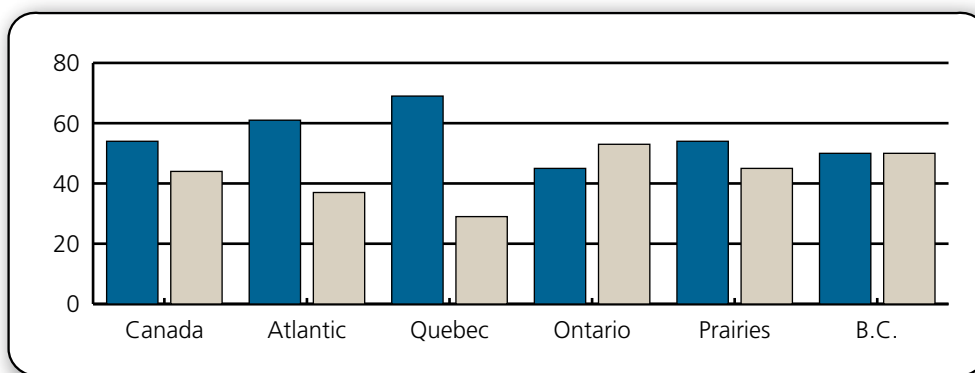


<b>Support</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>

Although Ontario is at the lower end of the regional breakdown, it still turns in a solid 68% support figure indicating that controversy over the province's Highway 407 toll road is having minimal impact on attitudes to P3 road projects in general.

### 3.4 Water Treatment

Only 54% of people nationwide support private-sector involvement in public water treatment facilities, making this the lowest of the eight categories covered in the survey.

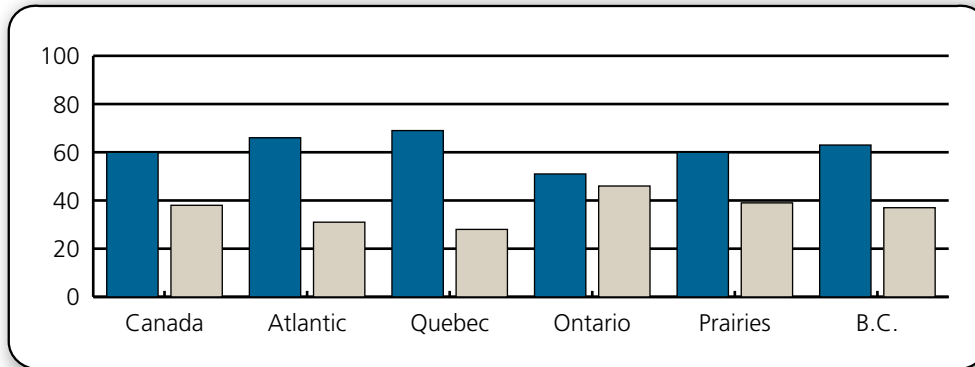


<b>Support</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>50</b>

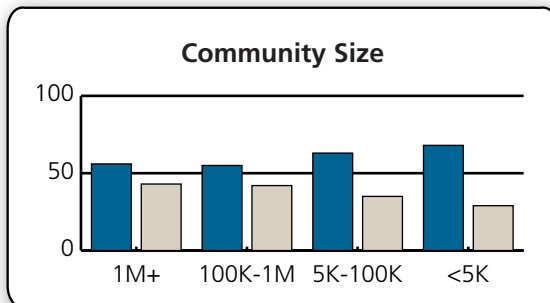
Support is strongest in Quebec (69%) followed by the Atlantic provinces (61%). The proposition is also favoured by a solid majority in smaller communities: 64% in towns with fewer than 5,000 residents; 60% in communities with 5,000 to 100,000 people.

### 3.5 Sewage Treatment

Quebec (69%) and the Atlantic region (66%) again led the way in supporting private sector participation in the operation of public sewage treatment facilities. A virtual split vote in Toronto (50% supporting/49% opposing) and Ontario (51/46) helped to bring down the national majority to 60%.

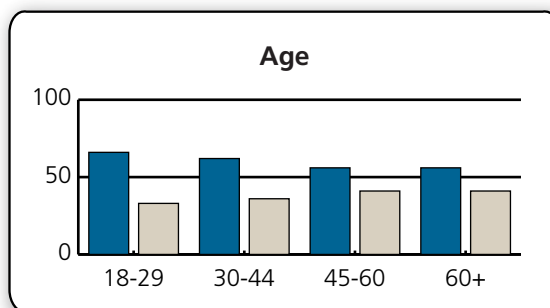


<b>Support</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>



Once again, the majority in favour is significantly larger in small communities.

<b>Support</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>

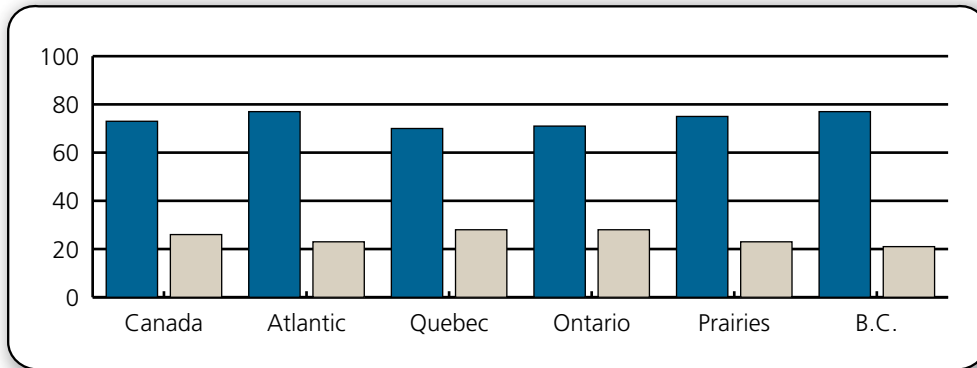


This is also one of the few service categories where the age of respondents is significant, with a stronger vote in favour of P3 in the younger categories.

<b>Support</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>

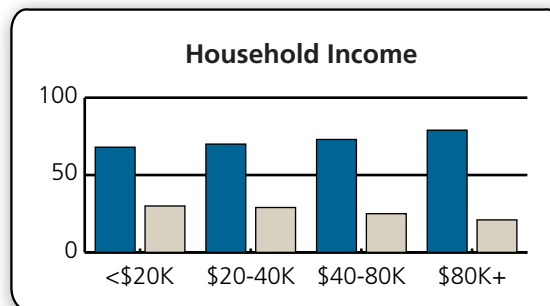
### 3.6 Public Recreation Facilities

Building and operating public recreation facilities using public-private partnerships is a winning idea across the country and in all demographic groups with supporters outnumbering opponents by almost three to one. British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces head the regional breakdown with 77% in favour. Support was slightly softer in the major cities, Toronto (69%) and Montreal (68%).



<b>Support</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>

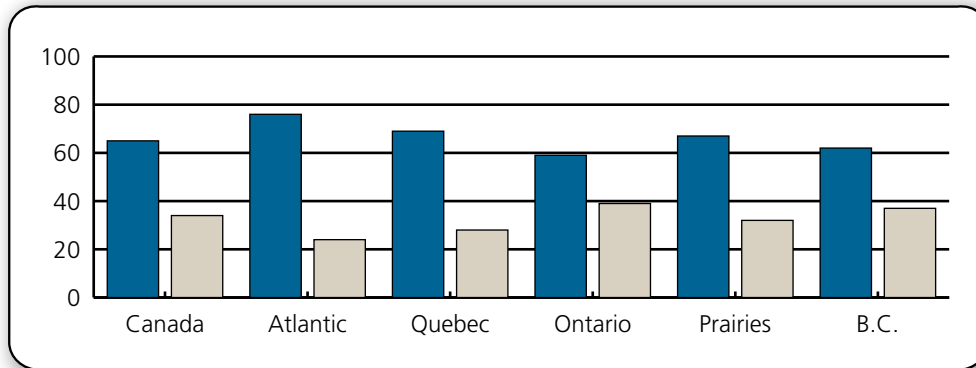
Although community size is not a significant factor in the recreation facilities category, an interesting trend is apparent in the household income breakdown with support rising with household income.



<b>Support</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>

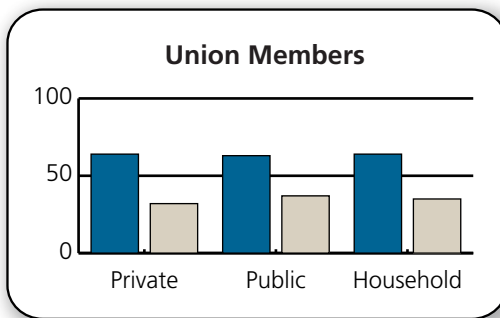
### 3.7 Public Transit

Although the national sample comes out strongly in favour of private involvement in the operation of public transit services, this category is marked by significant regional variations – from a high of 76% support in the Atlantic provinces down to 59% in Ontario.

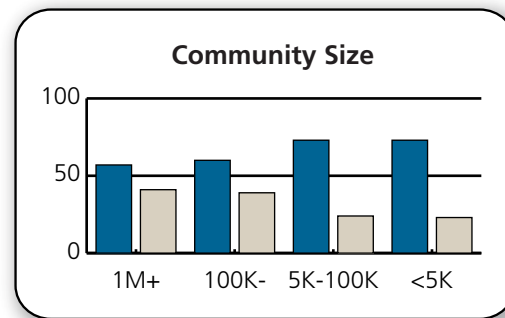


Support	65	76	69	59	67	62
Oppose	34	24	28	39	32	37

Support from members of both public and private sector unions is close to the national figure while support in small communities again is considerably stronger than in larger towns and cities.



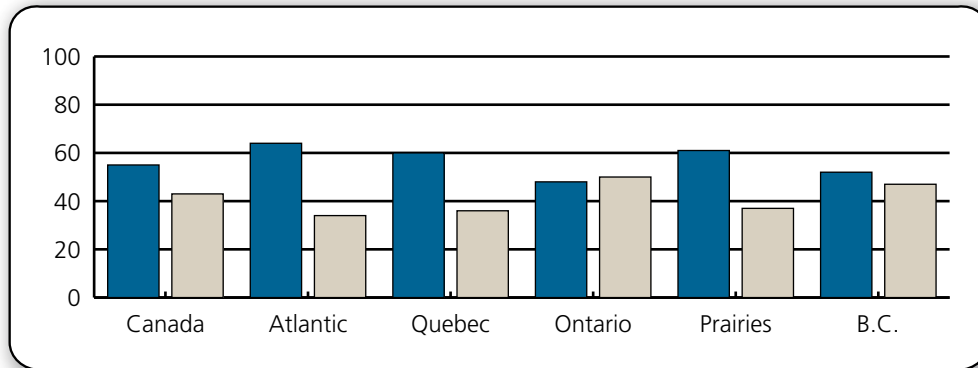
Support	64	63	64
Oppose	32	37	35



Support	57	60	73	73
Oppose	41	39	24	23

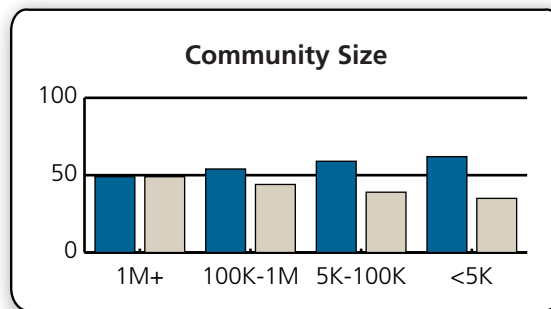
### 3.8 Electricity Generation and Transmission

The national 55% support figure for private participation in the generation and delivery of electricity was second lowest (water treatment scored 54%) of the eight sectors surveyed. Three regions – Quebec, the Prairies and the Atlantic provinces – scored 60% and above but the national average was dragged down by low numbers in Ontario and British Columbia.



Support	55	64	60	48	61	52
Oppose	43	34	36	50	37	47

The only significant trend emerging from the demographic breakdown comes, once again, in the community size section where support increased in inverse proportion to the size of the community.



Support	49	54	59	62
Oppose	49	44	39	35

#### CCPPP Comment:

There is no attempt to interpret these results. Readers are asked to reflect upon their own knowledge of public and private actions across the country that may produce regional variations which seem inconsistent with the rest of the country.

The purpose of this survey was to take a credible sounding of public reaction to public private partnerships.

Extra copies of this publication may be obtained by contacting:

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