

## British Columbians view natural environment and climate as key to quality of life in BC, support strong penalties including jail time for polluters

Poll commissioned by the Real Estate Foundation of BC gauges British Columbians' attitudes on land use, sustainability, and rural planning.

**Vancouver, B.C. January 22, 2019** - Today, the [Real Estate Foundation of BC](#) (REFBC) shared the results from a public opinion poll it commissioned on British Columbians' views on land use, sustainability and regional planning throughout the province. Conducted by McAllister Opinion Research, the poll drew on a cross-section of British Columbian residents. Questions focused on quality of life, sustainable economy, local needs, land protection, penalties for polluters, First Nations as partners, and regionally specific concerns.

REFBC, a philanthropic organization that helps advance sustainable land use in B.C., commissioned the poll to better understand B.C. residents' values, opinions, and knowledge on land use issues. By sharing the findings from [Sustainable Land Use: A Public Opinion Survey of British Columbians](#), REFBC hopes to help policy makers, governments, First Nations, non-profits, and others make decisions that align with public values.

"Poll findings help to quantify the needs and opinions of the people of British Columbia," said Jack Wong, CEO of the REFBC. "Climate change is a large concern for people across the province and we hope that decision makers will use this data to make choices that are in the best interests for everyone."

Highlights from the poll include:

- **Quality of life.** One in two British Columbians (54%) rate quality of life in their region of BC as "excellent" or "good". Natural beauty and the environment (41%) and climate (22%) are most often named as the top factors contributing to quality of life in the province. Cost of living (18%), cost of housing (11%), and population increase (11%) are most frequently named as top threats to quality of life.
- **Penalties for polluters.** 81% of residents support strong penalties (including jail time) for companies and people who pollute or degrade the land and water.
- **A sustainable economy.** Asked to identify which types of future economy most appealed to them, British Columbians are most likely to pick environmental themes like, "sustainable economy" (53%), "clean energy economy" (34%), and "green economy" (25%). The least popular types of future economy are "service" (9%), "industrial" (9%), and "extraction" (3%) economies.

- **Local needs first.** Nearly half (48%) of British Columbians want to see local needs prioritized over provincial interests.
- **Land protection.** British Columbians name “habitat for bird, fish, and animals” (66%), “local food security” (62%), and “large-scale wind, solar, and geothermal power” (61%) as their top three land use priorities for the province.
- **First Nations as important partners.** When it comes to ensuring First Nations are included in land use decisions, 86% of respondents agree that “we are neighbours and friends and we need to live together”.

“These findings show that British Columbians value our shared land and water and want to see more local input into land use decisions,” said Ramona Faust, Chair of REFBC’s Board of Governors. “In our grantmaking, we’ve seen how investments in watershed governance, community engagement, and public outreach can contribute to more sustainable land use outcomes.”

Overall, residents support investments in local decision-making as 80% of respondents agree with “establishing local decision-making bodies to ensure that all local citizens have meaningful input into land use decisions”.

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SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

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**The Real Estate Foundation of BC** (REFBC) is a philanthropic organization that helps advance sustainable land use in British Columbia. They give grants to non-profit organizations working to improve BC communities and natural environments through responsible land use, conservation, and real estate practices. Their grants can support research, education, and policy analysis. Since 1988, REFBC has approved more than \$85 million in grants. Learn more at [www.refbc.com](http://www.refbc.com).

**McAllister Opinion Research** uses leading edge qualitative and quantitative research techniques to help clients understand constituencies that matter. Since 2001, McAllister has worked with a wide range of clients in Canada and the United States, including universities and colleges, government agencies, environmental organizations, and private companies. McAllister is a qualified member of ESOMAR, the international professional body for opinion research.

### **About the Poll**

In the summer of 2018, McAllister Public Opinion Research conducted an online survey of 1,658 British Columbia residents. Participants were recruited from a panel designed to replicate a cross-section of the BC population. Survey data has been weighted according to Statistics Canada figures on province, region, age, and gender. The margin of error is +/- 2.41%, 19 times out of 20.

## **Interviews**

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