

CETA polls indicate more confusion than conviction on pharma IP

By [BJ Siekierski](#) | Sep 17, 2012 5:07 pm

That typical Canadians know the difference between a patent, a copyright, and a trademark is dubious. But take it a step further and ask them about patent-term restoration and data exclusivity — and how that relates to the Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement (CETA) — and the odds are slim that most will have much of a grasp on the issues.

On Sunday, though, Ipsos Reid and Nanos Research released the contradictory results of two polls that were immediately spun by both the **pro-** and the **anti-CETA** sides of the debate as representing the will of Canadians on one of the deal's most esoteric and soon to be decided negotiating positions: the Europeans demands for increased intellectual property protection for pharmaceuticals.

Nanos Research

A poll Nanos Research conducted for Canada's Research Based Pharmaceutical Companies found that 76 per cent agreed IP protection should be as strong in Canada as it is in the U.S. and European Union, ergo the CETA is a great opportunity to do that more specifically for the pharmaceutical industry.

Strangely, though, when the respondents were asked whether they thought this strengthened IP regime would have an impact on private sector research and development – the main justification for the changes – they weren't so sure.

Only 43.7 per cent thought it would encourage investment in R&D, while a combined 56.3 per cent weren't sure, thought it would have no impact, or might even discourage investment, which suggests they didn't *really* know why they were initially supportive.

Ipsos Reid

In February, an Angus Reid poll found **69 per cent** of Canadians in favour of the CETA.

The Council of Canadians, a civil society group, were surely hoping that their long campaign against the deal would have turned the tide, but the results of a poll Ipsos Reid conducted on their behalf showed that percentage rising to 81 per cent.

More to the point, however, was the poll's long follow-up question.

The proposed Canada-Europe trade agreement may include a provision that extends patents on brand-name pharmaceutical drugs and that is intended to encourage investment in new product development. This provision would also increase the cost of prescription drugs for Canadians. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose a free trade agreement with Europe that extended patent protection for brand-name drugs?

Faced with option of paying more for drugs versus the far less tangible possibility of encouraging investment in new product development, respondents were suddenly less supportive (31 per cent) – as you'd expect – and that's the problem.

If they'd been asked what they value more — access to the latest medications or affordable generic drugs — the result might have been different.

As it stands, however, neither of these polls will make the Harper government's final decision on the contentious negotiating position any easier.