

CANADIANS ON HEALTHCARE



Ipsos Reid

Public Release Date: - January XX, 2006 – XX:00 a.m. (EST)

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CANADIANS ON HEALTHCARE

Toronto, ON – It's clear that since the Quebec Supreme Court decision as a result of frustrations with wait times and the concerns about the delivery of the healthcare system, Canadians will consider a number of different approaches to a remedy. Their first choice is for a public system. A new Ipsos Reid survey conducted on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions finds that seven in ten (67%) Canadians would prefer "a not-for-profit" model where services are paid for by governments and individuals and delivered by the public sector" over "a for-profit model where services are paid for by governments and individuals and delivered by the private sector" (27%).

And, given the choice between Prime Minister Paul Martin and Conservative leader Stephen Harper more Canadians say they trust Mr. Martin to protect Canadian publicly funded healthcare (40% vs. 33%).

Canadians believe in equal access to healthcare: 90% of Canadians agree that access to healthcare should be exactly the same for everyone, regardless of their income.

Most (67%) Canadians say more private healthcare will result in healthcare professionals leaving the public system. Moreover, 62% think allowing people the option of paying for enhanced healthcare services would create a two-tier healthcare system - a better system for the rich, and a worse system for the poor and 61% think it would be the first step toward a for-profit Americanized Canadian healthcare system.



Ipsos Reid asked Canadians whether or not they would be able to afford to pay the price for a few medical services that are currently paid for through Canada's healthcare system; few indicate that they could. Three in four (76%) say they could *not* afford to pay \$3,000-\$6,000 for knee surgery; 67% say they couldn't pay approximately \$1500 for an MRI; and 64% indicate that they could not afford to pay \$1000-\$1500 per eye for Cataracts surgery if they had to.

Seven in ten (70%) Canadians rate the quality of the current healthcare system in Canada as "good" (36%), "very good" (28%), or "excellent" (6%). However, a full 30% say it's only "fair" (20%) or "poor" (9%).

The survey also finds that most Canadians think more private involvement in Canada's healthcare system would lead to improvements in the availability (61%) and the quality (58%) of healthcare services offered in Canada. However, a majority (83%) feels that if our government just got their act together there would be enough money available to fund an excellent healthcare system without allowing people to pay for enhanced services. There may be conditions that are forcing Canadians to ponder these options, such as the lack of improvements in wait times for surgeries, the quality of publicly funded healthcare, and the level of media reports on private options.



What possible solutions to healthcare issues such as waiting times, physician and nursing shortages, Pharmacare, and infrastructure upgrades for patient care are Canadians in favour of in order to prevent the creation of a second tier of healthcare?

- 94% of Canadians think that wait times for surgical procedures should be shortened by opening unused and under-used operating rooms in public hospitals and keeping them open longer;
- 94% think more nurses should be hired to reduce waiting times to receive medical or surgical attention;
- 91% think coverage of publicly insured services should be extended to include access to home care, long-term care, mental health care and drug benefits;
- 85% think conditions and guidelines should be set for all federal transfer of funds to provinces for healthcare;
- 84% think prescription drug purchasing should be centralized nationally if it can be shown that it would save taxpayers' money (80% in May 2005);
- 79% think Canada should develop a national government financed Pharmacare program that would provide to Canadians most doctor-prescribed drugs without charge (up from 71% in May); and,
- 70% agree with increasing personal taxes by about fifty dollars a year to eliminate for everyone up-front costs for prescription drugs such as co-pays and deductibles and to provide prescription drug coverage to everyone not now covered (up from 62% in May).



When it comes to possible ways of addressing the current nursing and doctor shortage in Canada, a majority of Canadians favour most of the seven possible solutions measured:

- 91% of Canadians think grants and loans should be made more available to all nursing and medical students who demonstrate the financial need;
- 90% think there should be incentives for staying on the job to the most experienced nurses to help reduce the nursing shortage
- 84% think any available surplus revenues should be used to pay for nursing programs (up from 73% in May);
- 64% think taxes should be raised on the top 10% of income earners (67% in May); and
- 56% think tax cuts for major corporations should be eliminated (52% in May).
- Canadians are split (49% support vs. 49% oppose) as to whether or not government revenue from programs such as higher education, defense, and child care should be diverted (up from 34% in May); and,
- One-third (34%) of Canadians think taxes on all income earners should be raised (up from 22% in May).

Finally, when it comes to which groups Canadians trust to comment about healthcare policy and reform, organizations representing nurses (77%) and doctors (73%) are trusted by most while many *distrust* politicians (63%), government (53%), and the media (48%).



These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid/Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions poll conducted from January 2 to January 5, 2006. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1005 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

Canadians on Public Healthcare

When asked to choose which of two systems of funding they would primarily support for Canada's healthcare system, more Canadians indicate that they would prefer "a not-for-profit" model where services are paid for by governments and individuals and delivered by the public sector" (67%) than "a for-profit model where services are paid for by governments and individuals and delivered by the private sector" (27%). The remaining 6% of Canadians are unsure.

- Albertans are particularly likely to support the "not-for-profit" model (82%).



Who do Canadians trust to protect our public healthcare system? Given the choice between Mr. Martin, the leader of the Liberal Party, and Mr. Harper, the leader of the Conservative Party, more Canadians say they trust Mr. Martin protect Canadian publicly funded healthcare (40% vs. 33%). Two percent trust both equally, 20% trust neither, and 5% don't know.

- As might be expected, there are more Canadians in Alberta that trust Mr. Harper (45%).
- Men are more likely to trust Mr. Harper (36% vs. 29% of women).

Canadians believe in equal access to healthcare: 90% of Canadians agree that access to healthcare should be exactly the same for everyone, regardless of their income (with 74% that "strongly agree").

Most (67%) think more private healthcare will result in healthcare professionals leaving the public system to work in the new private one (28% "strongly agree"). Moreover, (62%) think allowing people the option of paying for enhanced healthcare services would create a two-tier healthcare system - a better system for the rich, and a worse system for the poor (with 38% that "strongly agree"); and similarly, 61% of Canadians think allowing people the option of paying for enhanced healthcare services would be the first step toward a for-profit Americanized Canadian healthcare system (30% "strongly agree").

Few Canadians indicate that they could afford to pay the price for some medical services that are currently paid for through Canada's healthcare system. Three in four (76%) say they could *not* afford to pay \$3,000-\$6,000 for knee surgery; 67% say they couldn't pay



approximately \$1500 for an MRI; and 64% indicate that they could not afford to pay \$1000-\$1500 per eye for Cataracts surgery if they had to.

- Unsurprisingly, those with upper income levels are more likely to be able to afford to pay for these services if they had to. Even so, only half, at most, think they would be able to pay for the services.

The state of Healthcare in Canada: Seven in ten (70%) Canadians rate the quality of the current healthcare system in Canada as "good" (36%), "very good" (28%), or "excellent" (6%). However, a full 30% say it's only "fair" (20%) or "poor" (9%).

- Residents of Ontario are especially likely to describe the quality of healthcare in Canada as "excellent", "very good", or "good" (74%).

Most Canadians think more private involvement in Canada's healthcare system would lead to improvements in the availability of the healthcare services in Canada (61% "definitely/probably" vs. 37% "definitely not/probably not") and the quality of healthcare services offered in Canada (58% "definitely/probably" vs. 40% "definitely not/probably not").

- Residents of Quebec are most likely to think more private involvement in Canada's healthcare system would lead to improvements in the availability (73%) and the quality (71%) of the healthcare services in Canada.

However, 83% feel that if our government just got their act together there would be enough money available to fund an excellent healthcare system without allowing people to pay for enhanced services (with 51% that "strongly agree").



A majority of Canadians agree with each of the seven possible solutions measured to address public healthcare issues such as waiting times for surgery and other services, physician and nursing shortages, Pharmacare, and infrastructure upgrades for patient care, and to prevent the creation of a second tier of healthcare:

- 94% of Canadians agree (70% "strongly", 25% "somewhat") that wait times for surgical procedures should be shortened by opening unused and under-used operating rooms in public hospitals and keeping them open longer;
- 94% agree (67% "strongly", 27% "somewhat") that more nurses should be hired to reduce waiting times to receive medical or surgical attention;
- 91% agree (51% "strongly", 40% "somewhat") that coverage of publicly insured services should be extended to include access to home care, long-term care, mental health care and drug benefits;
- 85% agree (43% "strongly", 42% "somewhat") that conditions and guidelines should be set for all federal transfer of funds to provinces for healthcare;
- 84% agree (46% "strongly", 37% "somewhat") that prescription drug purchasing should be centralized nationally if it can be shown that it would save taxpayers' money (80% in May 2005);
- 79% agree (42% "strongly", 37% "somewhat") that a Canada-wide government financed Pharmacare program that would provide to Canadians most doctor-prescribed drugs without charge should be developed (up from 71% in May); and,



- Young adults 18-34 years of age are most likely to be in favour of developing a Canada-wide government financed Pharmacare program (86% vs. 76% of adults 35 years of age or older).
- 70% agree (36% "strongly", 33% "somewhat") with increasing personal taxes by about fifty dollars a year to eliminate for everyone up-front costs for prescription drugs such as co-pays and deductibles and to provide prescription drug coverage to everyone not now covered (up from 62% in May).
- Residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (82%) and British Columbia (80%) are especially likely to agree with increasing personal taxes for this reason.

The Current Nursing and Doctor Shortage

When it comes to possible ways of addressing the current nursing and doctor shortage in Canada, a majority of Canadians are in favour of most of the seven possible solutions measured:

- 91% of Canadians would support (57% "strongly", 35% "somewhat") making grants and loans more available to all nursing and medical students who demonstrate the financial need in order to get more nurses in the system;
- 90% would support (47% "strongly", 43% "somewhat") providing incentives for staying on the job to the most experienced nurses to help reduce the nursing shortage;



- 84% would support (40% "strongly", 44% "somewhat") using any available surplus revenues to pay for nursing programs (up from 73% in May);
 - Women are more likely than men to support using any available surplus revenues to pay for nursing programs (87% vs. 80%).
- 64% would support (32% "strongly", 32% "somewhat") raising taxes on the top 10% of income earners (67% in May); and,
 - As one might expect, those Canadians from upper income households are less likely to support raising taxes on the top 10% of income earners, but still a majority (59%) supports this proposition.
- 56% would support (31% "strongly", 25% "somewhat") eliminating tax cuts for major corporations (52% in May).
- Support for diverting government revenue from programs such as higher education, defense, child care, and so on is split (49% support, 49% oppose). Support is up from 34% in May.
 - Quebecers are most in favour of diverting government revenue from programs such as higher education, defense, and child care (61%).
 - Canadians from low-income households are more likely than those whose annual household income is \$30,000 or greater to support diverting government revenue (58% vs. 47%).



- One-third (34%) of Canadians would support raising taxes on all income earners; 65% are opposed to this proposition. Support for raising taxes is up from 22% in May.

Trust Around Healthcare Policy

When it comes to which groups Canadians trust to comment about healthcare policy and reform, organizations representing nurses (77%, 21% "trust completely") and doctors (73%, 15% "trust completely") are trusted by most. In comparison, many *distrust* politicians (63%, 24% "distrust completely"), government (53%, 21% "distrust completely"), and the media (48%, 15% "distrust completely").

- Residents of Quebec are particularly likely to distrust the government's comments about healthcare policy and reform (67%).

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