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### Health Care Continues to Be Top Issue for Canadians (37%); Climate Change Climbs to Second (30%, +4), Ahead of Affordability (26%, -2)

9 in 10 (89%) Agree Action is Needed to Protect Quality of Health System, Half (47%) Won't Pay A Single Dollar More to Access Better Care

**Toronto, ON, October 2, 2019** — With the federal election three weeks away, the campaign is in full swing as leaders present their ideas on a host of issues. But are these the issues that Canadians care about? The latest Ipsos poll for Global News finds that health care remains Canadians' top concern (37%). However, the recent Global Climate Strike movement has helped climate change (30%, +4) unseat affordability and cost of living (26%, -2) as the second-most important issue that Canadians say will determine their vote later this month. While taxes (22%, -2), the economy (22%, -2), and education (12%, -2) are all directionally lower than last week's polling, other issues have gained in importance, such as immigration (14%, +3), housing, (16%, +1), poverty and social inequality (12%, +1), and energy (11%, +1). Corruption and ethics in government has also taken a hit as an issue of importance (10%, -2), perhaps an indicator that already-low interest in the SNC-Lavalin affair has further abated.

Most Important Issues in Determining Vote		
	Among Top 3 Most Important	Change from Last Week (% points)
Health care	37%	0
Climate change	30%	+4
Affordability and cost of living	26%	-2
Taxes	22%	-2
The economy	22%	-2
Housing (e.g., affordability, availability)	16%	+1
Immigration	14%	+3
Seniors' issues/aging population	12%	-1
Education	12%	-2
Poverty and social inequality	12%	+1
Government deficits/debt	12%	-1
Energy, including pipeline, gas prices	11%	+1
Unemployment/jobs	11%	0
Corruption and ethics in government	10%	-2

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### Current State of Health Care in Canada

Health care is a perennial issue topping the list of what influences Canadians to vote the way that they do. In fact, many social issues such as climate change, affordability, housing, seniors' issues, and poverty all have health implications, thereby making health care all that much greater of a concern for Canadians when they go to the ballot box. This latest Ipsos poll digs a little deeper into what everyday Canadians believe about their health care system. While 8 in 10 (79%) Canadians say they are in good general health, the poll sheds some light on the current state of health care in Canada:

- 3 in 10 (31%) say they have a chronic condition that requires routine treatment
- 2 in 10 (18%) Canadians are caregivers for an ageing parent or other loved one
- 16% are receiving care from a loved one
- 16% have no access to a family doctor/GP, climbing to 24% in Quebec

This certainly colours what Canadians think to be important when talking about health care. When asked what specific issues related to health care are most important to them, 4 in 10 Canadians (42%) named wait times in emergency rooms and hospitals, a proportion that climbs to 49% in Quebec. Being able to afford prescription medications now and in the future also ranks highly (39%), with over half (55%) of Albertans naming this issue.

Also in the top-five ranking of most important health care issues are access to a family doctor/GP (31%) – a particularly salient point in Atlantic Canada (42%), Quebec (39%), and British Columbia (39%) – and wait times to see doctors (29%). The latter concern is also a hot-button issue in Quebec (36%) and Atlantic Canada (35%).

Different age groups have different priorities when it comes to health care. Having access to mental health services or treatment when needed ranks highest for those aged 18-34 (33%), whereas at-home care is something that those aged 55 and over care more about (16%) than younger generations.

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Most Important Health Care Issues	
	Among Top 3 Most Important
Wait times in emergency rooms and hospitals	42%
Being able to afford the prescription medications I need, now and in the future	39%
Receiving high-quality care	31%
Access to a family doctor/GP	31%
Wait times to see doctors	29%
Access to specialists	25%
Access to mental health services/treatment when I need it	22%
Access to the latest developments in medical technology and treatment	16%
Finding long-term care solutions for an ageing parent or loved one	14%
At-home care services	11%
Advancements in medical technology	10%
Tackling the opioid crisis	10%
Tougher regulations on the sale of e-cigarettes and vaping products	8%
Dementia care	5%
Something else	2%

Whatever their top concerns may be when it comes to health care, Canadians nonetheless agree that the current arrangement is unsustainable and must change, with older Canadians the most bothered. Almost three-quarters (72%) disagree (33% strongly/38% somewhat) that the public health care system is fully able to cope with the demands of Canada's ageing population, rising to 81% among those aged 55 and over. A large majority of Canadians (89%) also agree (50% strongly/39% somewhat) that action is needed to ensure the quality of the health care system does not suffer as Canada ages, a proportion that reaches 95% in the 55+ age group.

If there are gaps in the way the system works now, then what is the best way forward? Asked to select the best way of building a more sustainable health care system of the future, 4 in 10 (43%) Canadians believe that health care professionals such as nurse practitioners and pharmacists should be allowed to offer more services, thereby helping lighten the load of the country's doctors and hospital waiting rooms. Canadians over 55 (54%), Atlantic Canadians (54%), and Quebecers (52%) tend to be more in favour of this solution than others. While focusing on prevention and healthy lifestyles is seen as the best way forward by two in ten (22%), other solutions such as increasing taxes to put toward healthcare (9%), virtual doctors or remote medicine (8%), or more privatization (6%) are less popular.

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<b>“What do you think is the best way to fund a sustainable healthcare system for the future?”</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
Increasing the services that nurse practitioners, pharmacists, and other health care practitioners can provide	43%
Focus on prevention and healthy lifestyles	22%
Increasing taxes to put towards health care	9%
Virtual (online) doctors/remote medicine	8%
More privatization	6%
Other	12%

### Putting Their Money Where Their Mouth Is

#### *Canadians Paying More*

While Canadians have a long wish-list of improvements to the health care system, when asked how much extra they would personally be willing to pay in taxes each year to make these improvements a reality, they come up short. On average, Canadians say they are willing to pay an extra \$238 annually in additional tax for access to better health care – this includes 47% of Canadians who aren't willing to spend any more than they currently do. Those who have decided they will vote Liberal on Election Day or are leaning in that direction are also more willing to pay more (\$323).

Intergenerational differences are clear on this matter, with younger Canadians aged 18-34 more willing to pay more in taxes (\$354), on average, than those aged 35-54 (\$209) or 55+ (\$182). This is particularly interesting, given that today's older Canadians are more likely to believe that the current state of the public health care system is unable to cope with the ageing population and that action is needed to ensure the quality of health care does not suffer as the population ages. Yet this age group is also the most likely to be against privatization to alleviate the burden on wait times at clinics and hospitals.

Only slightly more than half (53%) of Canadians said they were willing to pay anything extra for access to better health care, even if it were just a dollar. Of this proportion, 44% (or 23% of the entire sample) said they would only be willing to pay between \$1-\$100 more. Proportions drop drastically for any amount beyond \$100 a year, perhaps indicative of the financial strain that many households find themselves under. The remaining half (47%) say they are not willing to pay any more. This sentiment is more common among older Canadians (54%) and those in Quebec (53%), undecided voters (67%), as well as those who have decided or are leaning Bloc Québécois (60%) and Conservative (52%).

#### *Federal Government Paying More*

However, Canadians are quick to change their tune when it comes to spending the federal government's money. Eight in 10 (84%) agree (46% strongly/39% somewhat) that the federal government should play a bigger role in funding public health care costs across the country, a sentiment that is even stronger among Canadians over 55 (90%).

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When it comes to federal money going to fund health care, which is a provincial jurisdiction, there is little ambiguity in what Canadians want -- only 8% say they don't know if it should or not. The highest ambivalence can be seen in Quebec, where 14% don't know if the federal government should have a bigger role in funding health care in their province. Some Quebecers, unhappy with wait times and access to family doctors/GPs their own provincial health system, may be finding themselves caught between being independent-minded and letting the federal government involved. It may be no surprise those who are decided or leaning BQ voters are the least likely to want more federal involvement in the provincial health care system (68%, vs. 84% nationally).

Although wait times to see a doctor and access to affordable prescription drugs are the most pressing health-related issues, will Canadians remember this when casting a vote for their next MP? Media attention to matters related to health care remains low, especially when compared to coverage about the economy or the environment. In addition, the major political parties do not seem to differentiate themselves as clearly on health care as they do on other issues.

### About the Study

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between September 27 and 30, 2019, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of n = 1489 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources. Respondents earn a nominal incentive for their participation. Quotas and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe (weighting efficiency = 63.9%). The precision of Ipsos polls which include non-probability sampling is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within  $\pm 2.9$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. Ipsos abides by the disclosure standards established by the CRIC, found here: <https://canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/standards/>*



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***<https://ipsosintelligence.ca/canadiancontext/>***

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