

HEALTHCARE FUNDING: ASSESSING THE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL POSITIONS

*Two-Thirds (67%) Agree with Provincial Position, Almost as
Many (62%) Agree with Federal Position*

*But When Push Comes to Shove, The Nod Goes to the Premiers
(51%)*



Public Release Date: Friday January 31st, 2003 - 11:00 p.m. (EST)

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But When Push Comes to Shove, The Nod Goes to the Premiers (51%)

Toronto, ONTARIO (Friday January 31st, 2003) – As the Prime Minister and the Premiers sit down to carve up the healthcare funding options next week, Canadians appear to say yes to both opposing positions. But in the end, when push comes to shove on healthcare funding, it's the Premiers and the provinces that get the nod, according to a new Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll released today.

While the findings of this poll appear to be contradictory – support going to both federal and provincial leaders who have differing positions – it would appear that the public there may be another message that has emerged: participants at the upcoming meeting have arguments that have considerable merit on both sides, but at the end of the day trust wins out with the premiers in terms of what decisions can be made. Further, with the debate on healthcare being the most important issue in the country for a such an extended period of time it would appear that Canadians are also hopeful that the apparent federal and provincial solitudes come to some agreement that is in the interests of citizens and patients.

When asked separately if they agree or disagree with each side's position, two-thirds (67%) of Canadians say they agree with the provincial view that there should be no strings attached to new healthcare money, so they have the flexibility to spend the money on the health issues each province deems as most urgent; however, almost as many (62%) agree with the federal position that the federal government needs more control over the use of the new healthcare



funds to ensure that the money goes to pay for national priority health services, such as home care, drugs, and diagnostic equipment.

While this may seem contradictory, it appears that Canadians are saying that they like both the items on the menu, but when asked which one of the two they most want, Canadians lean towards the view of the Premiers and the provinces (51%) over that of the Prime Minister and the Federal Government (42%).

This point is further illustrated by the majority (56%) of Canadians who disagree that they “trust the Prime Minister and the Federal Government more than the Premiers and their governments to make the right decisions about where healthcare dollars should be spent”. Just four in ten (41%) express agreement with this viewpoint.

However, trust in the provincial governments’ position on healthcare funding is not without some skepticism. Six in ten (62%) agree with the view that “the Premiers are asking for more money they actually need to solve their healthcare problems. They should be dealing with waste and inefficiency in their own provincial healthcare systems since that is causing the most problems.”

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll conducted between January 28th and January 30th, 2003. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Canadians. 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 statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.



When asked separately if they agree or disagree with each side's position, two-thirds (67%) say they agree with the provincial view that there should be no strings attached to new healthcare money, so the provinces' have the flexibility to spend the money on the health issues each province deems as most urgent, while one-third (32%) disagrees.

- Canadians in lower income households (73%) are more likely to express agreement with the provincial government view than are those from upper income households (62%).
- Younger (70%) Canadians are more likely to express agreement than are older (63%) Canadians.

Almost as many (62%) agree with the federal position that the federal government needs more control over the use of the new healthcare funds to ensure that the money goes to pay for national priority health services, such as home care, drugs, and diagnostic equipment. One in three (36%) disagrees.

- Regionally, Atlantic Canadians (71%) and those in Ontario (67%) are more likely than their counterparts in Alberta (52%) to agree with the Federal Government's viewpoint.

However, when pushed to say which one of the two positions they most agree with, half (51%) opt for the position of the provincial premiers, while four in ten (42%) say they most agree with the Federal Government position. One in twenty (5%) say they support neither position over the other.

- Albertans (64%) lead the list of those who most trust the provincial position, while Ontarians (44%) are the least likely to hold this position. Meanwhile, Ontarians (48%) are the most likely to most agree with the federal position, while those in Alberta (33%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (32%) are the least likely.



- Middle aged (55%) and younger (53%) Canadians are more likely than their older (45%) counterparts to most agree with the provincial government position. Older (9%) are more likely than middle aged (4%) or younger (3%) Canadians to say they most trust neither of the positions.
- Canadians from upper (46%) and middle (44%) income households are more likely to most agree with the federal position than are those in lower income households (35%).

This point is further illustrated by the majority (56%) of Canadians who disagree that they “trust the Prime Minister and the Federal Government more than the Premiers and their governments to make the right decisions about where healthcare dollars should be spent”. Just four in ten (41%) express agreement.

- Regionally, residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (74%) and Alberta (67%) are the most likely to disagree with this position, followed by British Columbia (58%), Atlantic Canada (55%), Quebec (54%) and Ontario (50%).
- Middle aged (60%) Canadians are more likely to disagree than are older (52%) Canadians.

However, trust in the provincial governments’ position on healthcare funding is not without some skepticism. Six in ten (62%) agree with the view that “the Premiers are asking for more money they actually need to solve their healthcare problems. They should be dealing with waste and inefficiency in their own provincial healthcare systems since that is causing the most problems.” Thirty-five percent disagree that this is the case.

- Younger (68%) Canadians are more likely to agree with this position than are older (58%) Canadians.



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