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HEALTH**

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*Eight in Ten (88%) Agree Federal Government Should Set Up
Fund To Help Provinces Retain, Hire, and Educate More Nurses*



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BASED ON RECENT OUTBREAKS OF SARS, WEST NILE AND MAD COW DISEASE, SIX IN TEN (62%) CANADIANS THINK HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IS UNPREPARED FOR SUCH THREATS TO HUMAN HEALTH

Eight in Ten (83%) Say Shortage of Nurses Makes System More Vulnerable to Future Health Threats

Eight in Ten (88%) Agree Federal Government Should Set Up Fund To Help Provinces Retain, Hire, and Educate More Nurses

Toronto, ONTARIO (Wednesday, June 4th, 2003) – According to a new poll conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and released today, six in ten (62%) Canadians say that they think the healthcare system is unprepared to deal with future threats to human health based on the recent outbreaks of SARS, West Nile Virus and Mad Cow Disease. This poll is released on the eve of the opening of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions national convention, being held at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

In other findings, eight in ten (83%) believe that a shortage of nurses makes the healthcare system more vulnerable to future threats to human health such as SARS or West Nile Virus. As well, the recent outbreaks of SARS has made two in three (64%) Canadians say they personally realize the importance of nurses more now than before the outbreaks.

As for solutions to this issue, eight in ten (88% - 59% strongly) agree with the proposition that the Federal Government should set up a fund, similar to the one recently created that provides funds to purchase medical equipment, to help provinces to retain, hire and educate more nurses.



Retaining, recruiting and educating nurses as a priority comes out on top when respondents are asked which should be the top priority out of a list of possible priorities facing their provincial government. Four in ten (43%) rank retaining, recruiting and educating nurses as the top priority, while the approximately half (21%) that number rank cuts to personal provincial income taxes as a top priority. Slightly less believes the top priority should be balancing the provincial budget (16%), or paying down the provincial debt (15%). Just one in twenty (4%) Canadians identify tax cuts for business as the top priority.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions between May 27th and May 30th, 2003. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,001 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.

Based on Recent Outbreaks of SARS, West Nile and Mad Cow Disease, Six in ten (62%) Canadians Think Healthcare System is Unprepared for Such Threats to Human Health

Six in ten (62%) Canadians say that they think the healthcare system is unprepared to deal with future threats to human health, based on the recent outbreaks of SARS, West Nile Virus and Mad Cow Disease. This compares to four in ten (37%) who disagree with this position.

- This view is stronger among residents of Atlantic Canada (72%) than among those in Quebec (59%) or Alberta (58%).



- Older (68%) and middle aged (64%) Canadians are more likely to agree with this view than are young adult (55%) Canadians.
- Women (68%) are more likely than are men (56%) to believe that this is the situation.
- Canadians without a high school diploma (72%) are more likely than those with some university or other post-secondary education (61%) or with a university degree (59%) to agree with this viewpoint.

Eight in Ten (83%) Say Shortage of Nurses Makes System More Vulnerable to Future Health Threats, While Two-Thirds (64%) Say SARS Outbreak Has Made Them Realize the Importance of Nurses to System

Eight in ten (83%) believe that a shortage of nurses makes the healthcare system more vulnerable to future threats to human health such as SARS or West Nile Virus, while one in six (17%) disagree with this proposition.

- Regionally those most likely to hold this position are found in Atlantic Canada (89%) and Ontario (87%).
- Women (86%) are significantly more likely than men (80%) to believe that a shortage of nurses makes the healthcare system more vulnerable.
- University graduates (20%) are significantly more likely to disagree with this proposition than are those with just (13%) or without (12%) a high school diploma.

As well, the recent outbreaks of SARS, results in two-thirds (64%) of Canadians saying they personally realize the importance of nurses to the healthcare system more now than before the outbreaks. One in three (35%) disagree with this viewpoint.



- Residents of Atlantic Canada (74%), Ontario (69%) and Quebec (66%) top the list as to those who feel the SARS outbreak has made them realize the importance of nurses to the system, followed by Alberta (58%), British Columbia (56%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (46%).
- Older (72%) Canadians are significantly more likely to agree with this position than are their middle aged (63%) or younger (59%) counterparts.
- Canadians from lower (70%) and middle (68%) income households are significantly more likely to believe this to be the case than are Canadians from upper income households (59%).
- University graduates (45%) are significantly more likely to disagree with this position than those with some university or other post-secondary education (36%), a high school diploma (28%) or without a high school diploma (22%).

Six in ten (61%) Canadians say they are more aware of the shortage of full-time nursing positions in the healthcare system due to the SARS outbreak. Thirty-eight percent disagree with this view.

- Residents of Ontario (70%) are significantly more likely than are those in Quebec (59%), Alberta (52%), British Columbia (49%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (45%) to agree with this viewpoint.
- This position is also more likely to be held by older (70%) than by middle aged (57%) or younger (57%) Canadians.
- More women (65%) than men (56%) agree with this position.



- Canadians without a high school diploma (73%) or with just a high school diploma (71%) are significantly more likely than those with some university or other post-secondary education (58%) or a university degree (51%) to agree with this proposition.
- Canadians from lower income households (71%) are more likely than their counterparts in middle (60%) or upper (56%) income households.

Eight in ten (83%) Canadians agree with the position that there is a shortage of public health nurses, that is nurses who provide immunization, public education on disease prevention and investigate disease carriers. One in eight (13%) express disagreement with this view.

- Albertans (25%) are more likely to disagree with this view than are their counterparts in British Columbia (13%), Ontario (12%), Quebec (10%), or Atlantic Canada (9%).
- Nine in ten (90%) Canadians who did not or have not graduated from high school agree that there is a shortage of public health nurses. This compares to 82% of university graduates and 80% of those with some university or other post-secondary education.

Four in ten (43%) say that they feel more vulnerable to disease such as SARS and West Nile Virus because of a shortage of public health nurses in their province, while just over half (56%) disagree with this position.

- Residents of Atlantic Canada (54%) and Quebec (47%) lead the pack in agreement with view, followed by those in Ontario (44%), British Columbia (40%), Alberta (34%) and those in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (30%).
- Older (51%) and middle aged (44%) Canadians are more likely than are younger adult (34%) Canadians to agree with this position.



- Canadians who did not or have not graduated high school (58%) are significantly more likely than their counterparts who have some university or other post-secondary education (41%) or are university graduates (36%) to agree with this position.
- Canadians in lower income households (54%) are significantly more likely to agree with this view than are their counterparts from middle (44%) or upper (41%) income households.

Eight in Ten (88%) Believe Federal Government Should Set Up Fund to Assist Provinces in Retaining, Hiring and Educating More Nurses

Eight in ten (88% - 59% strongly) agree with the proposition that the Federal Government should set up a fund, similar to the one recently created that provides funds to purchase medical equipment, to help provinces to retain, hire and educate more nurses. Just one in ten (11%) say they disagree with this proposition.

- Residents of Atlantic Canada (94%) are significantly more likely to agree with this proposal than are their counterparts in Quebec (88%), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (86%), Alberta (86%) or British Columbia (86%).
- Younger adult (91%) Canadians are more likely than are their middle aged (86%) counterparts to agree with this idea.
- More women (91%) than men (85%) express agreement with this position.
- University graduates (15%) and those with some university or other post-secondary education (13%) are statistically more likely to disagree with this proposal than are Canadians without (6%) or with (5%) just a high school diploma.



- Canadians in lower (93%) and middle income households (91%) are more likely to agree with this proposal than are their counterparts in upper income households (85%).

Retaining, Recruiting and Educating Nurses (43%) Tops Reducing Personal Taxes (21%), Balancing Budget (16%), Paying Down Provincial Debt (15%) and Cutting Business Taxes (4%) As Top Priority for Provinces

Retaining, recruiting and educating nurses as a priority comes out on top when respondents are asked which should be the top priority out of a list of possible priorities facing their provincial government. Four in ten (43%) rank retaining, recruiting and educating nurses as the top priority, while the approximately half (21%) that number rank cuts to personal provincial income taxes as a top priority. Slightly less, believe the top priority should be balancing the provincial budget (16%), or paying down the provincial debt (15%). Just one in twenty (4%) Canadians identify tax cuts for business as the top priority.

- Half of Ontarians (48%) hold the view that retaining, recruiting and educating nurses is the top priority. This compares to just one-third of Albertans (35%) or Atlantic Canadians (33%).

In fact, nine in ten (94%) Canadians indicate that their provincial government must retain more full time nurses positions as well as hire more nurses to meet future healthcare emergencies.

- Agreement with this position is highest among Quebecers (99%), those in Atlantic Canada (96%) and Ontario (95%). This compares to the views of those in British Columbia (91%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (87%) and Alberta (85%).



- Older (97%) Canadians are significantly more likely to express agreement with this view than are young adult (91%) Canadians.

Just slightly less (87%) say they would be more likely to vote for a member of their provincial legislature if they proposed a program to retain, recruit and train enough nurses to deal with future healthcare crisis. One in ten (12%) say they would not be more likely to vote for a such a politician.

- Quebecers (93%) are significantly more likely than are those in Ontario (87%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (82%), British Columbia (81%) and Alberta (75%) to agree they would be more likely to vote for a provincial politician who proposed such a program.
- Older (91% versus 83% of younger) Canadians, women (89% versus 84% of men) and those in lower (91% versus 84% in upper) income households are significantly more likely to agree they would vote for a politician who proposed a program to retain, recruit and train enough nurses to deal with future healthcare crisis.

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