

THE PRELUDE TO THE NATIONAL HEALTHCARE SUMMIT

*Canadians Split On Who Has Best Idea For Reforming
Healthcare System*

*Half (52%) Disapprove Of Federal Government's Conditional
Policy Towards Healthcare Funding*

*More Than Half (56%) Agree That If Healthcare Needs Not Met In
A Timely Fashion They Should Be Allowed To Buy Private Care*



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Canadians Split On Who Has Best Idea For Reforming Healthcare System

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Toronto, ON – As the Premiers and the Prime Minister get ready to gather this coming Monday for the televised healthcare summit meeting, a new Ipsos-Reid/CTV/The Globe and Mail national survey shows that while Canadians appear, at the outset, to equally embrace either the Provincial Premiers' argument that the best way to reduce waiting lists is to create a national pharmacare program (74%) or the Federal Government's response that any new healthcare funding should go directly into reducing waiting lists instead of a new national pharmacare program (74%). When they are pushed hard to choose between the two options the country essentially splits into two camps: 47% for the Federal position, mainly driven by Ontario (53%) and BC residents (52%), and 45% for the provincial Premier's position with solid pluralities of support in the other provinces.

The research demonstrates that while Canadians appear to have a common desire to embrace any position that gets at reducing waiting lists they are not united in terms of the mechanism to do so. It also indicates that neither the Federal government nor the Premiers have convinced a fulsome majority of Canadians that theirs is the right way to meet the healthcare challenge.

This is also underscored by the fact that half (52%) of Canadians disapprove of the Federal Government's proposition that if a province refuses to agree to the Federal rules on how it



will spend any new healthcare money it won't receive funding at all, compared to 46% who approve of the "strings-attached" formula. A deeper reflection on these numbers finds that without Ontario residents more onside with the Federal proposition (57%) than any other part of the country, the verdict would be much more heavily tilted towards the "no-strings-attached" camp.

Finally, slightly more than half of Canadians (56%) agree with the idea that if the publicly funded healthcare system cannot meet their needs they should be allowed to pay out of their own pocket to get faster diagnosis or treatment from a private health care facility – but 43% disagree with this notion.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/ CTV/The Globe And Mail/CFRB poll conducted from September 3rd to September 5th, 2004. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1000 adult Canadians were 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 the 2001 Census data.

At the Outset, Three-Quarters (74%) Approve Of Premiers' Position That Federal Government Should Put New Funding Toward National Pharmacare Program...

Three-quarters of Canadians (74%) approve of the Premiers' position that "if the federal government wants to put more money into the healthcare system, they should start by bringing in a new national pharmacare program to help Canadians pay for their prescription drugs" (43% "somewhat approve", 31% "strongly approve"). But, one-quarter of Canadians (24%) disapprove of the Premiers' position (13% "somewhat disapprove", 12% "strongly disapprove").

- Residents of Atlantic Canada (84%) are the most likely to approve of the Premiers' position, followed by residents of Alberta (78%), Quebec (77%), British Columbia (73%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (71%), and Ontario (70%).
- Women are more likely than men to approve of the Premiers' position (78% vs. 69%).

And Two-Thirds Of Canadians (64%) Agree With The Premiers' Position That The Best Way To Reduce Waiting Lists Is To Create A National Pharmacare Program...

Further, two-thirds of Canadians (64%) agree with the Premiers' position that "the best way to reduce waiting lists is to create a national pharmacare program, because it will reduce provincial spending on drugs, and allow them to spend this money on reducing waiting lists in a way that is appropriate for each province" (43% "somewhat agree", 20% "strongly agree"). One-third of Canadians (34%) disagree with the Premier's position (22% "somewhat disagree", 13% "strongly disagree"). The remaining 2% of Canadians "don't know" if they agree or disagree with the Premiers' position.



- Residents of Quebec (68%) are the most likely to agree with the Premiers' position, followed by residents of Atlantic Canada (66%), Alberta (65%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (62%), British Columbia (61%), and Ontario (60%).

But, Three-Quarters Of Canadians (74%) Also Approve Of Federal Government's Position That New Funding Should Go To Reducing Waiting Lists Instead Of New Pharmacare Program...

Three-quarters of Canadians (74%) approve of the Federal Government's position that "it wants any increased healthcare funding to go to reducing waiting lists instead of a new national pharmacare program" (42% "somewhat approve", 32% "strongly approve"). One-quarter of Canadians (24%) disapprove of the Federal Government's position (15% "somewhat disapprove", 10% "strongly disapprove"). The remaining 2% of Canadians "don't know" if they approve or disapprove of the Federal Government's position.

- Approval of the Federal Government's position is highest in Atlantic Canada (77%), followed by Quebec (75%) and Ontario (75%), British Columbia (73%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (70%), and Alberta (68%).
- Women are more likely than men to approve of the Federal Government's position (78% vs. 70%).

So If They Embrace Both Sides, What Happens When Push Comes To Shove? Canadians Are Divided...

After hearing what both sides believe the funding solution is, Canadians are split in opinion when forced to choose between the Federal Government *or* the Provincial Premiers -- one half (47%) believe the Federal Government's idea of committing any new healthcare funding to reducing waiting lists is the best idea for reforming our healthcare system, while 45% believe

the Provincial Premiers' idea of a new national pharmacare program is the best idea. Meanwhile, the remaining 8% of Canadians "don't know" who has the better idea.

- Residents of Ontario (53%) are the most apt to think that the Federal Government has the best idea for reforming our healthcare system, followed by residents of British Columbia (52%). Diminishing numbers of support are then found in Alberta (43%), Quebec (42%), Atlantic Canada (41%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (32%).
- Residents of Quebec (52%) are the most apt to think that the Provincial Premiers have the best plan for reforming our healthcare system, followed by residents of Atlantic Canada (50%), Alberta (48%), British Columbia (42%), and Ontario (39%).

Further, Half (52%) Disapprove Of Federal Government's Conditional Policy Towards Healthcare Funding...

As part of the survey, respondents were informed that the Federal Government has said that any new funding that it gives to the provinces to reduce waiting lists will require them to spend it according to rules established by the Federal Government and if a province doesn't agree to the rules, it won't receive the funding. After being prompted with this information, Canadians were asked whether they approve or disapprove of the Federal Government's position.

Half (52%) say that they disapprove of the Federal Government's position (22% "somewhat disapprove", 30% "strongly disapprove"), while 46% say they approve (25% "somewhat approve", 21% "strongly approve").

What is more striking is the regional divides:

- Residents of Ontario (57%) are much more likely to approve of the Federal Government's "strings attached" funding proposition than are other Canadians, with

residents of Alberta (46%) being the next most likely to approve of the Federal Government's position, followed by British Columbia (45%), Atlantic Canada (44%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (39%), and Quebec (33%).

- Men are more likely than women to approve of the Federal Government's position (50% vs. 43%).

Finally, More Than Half (56%) Agree That If Healthcare Needs Not Met In A Timely Fashion They Should Be Allowed To Buy Private Care...

Slightly more than half of Canadians (56%) agree with the statement that "if the publicly paid for healthcare system cannot meet the healthcare needs of myself or my family in a timely fashion I should be allowed to pay out of my own pocket to get faster diagnosis or treatment from a private healthcare facility if available" (26% "somewhat agree", 30% "strongly agree"). Four in ten Canadians (43%) disagree with this statement (12% "somewhat disagree", 31% "strongly disagree"). The remaining 1% of Canadians "don't know" whether they agree or disagree with this statement.

- Residents of Quebec (62%), British Columbia (62%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (62%) are the most likely to agree with the statement, followed by Atlantic Canada (60%), Alberta (52%), and Ontario (50%).
- Residents of Ontario (50%) are the most likely to disagree with this statement, followed by residents of Alberta (46%), Atlantic Canada (40%), British Columbia (38%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (38%), and Quebec (37%).



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