

## **ALBERTANS HAVE HOPE FOR HEALTHCARE**

*Majority of Albertans (57%) Say the Overall Quality of Healthcare They Receive Will be Better in Five Years – Only 30% Say it Will be Worse*

*Most Albertans Say Provinces (71%) as Opposed to Federal Government (28%) Should Decide How Increases in Transfer Payments are Spent*

*Hiring More Doctors and Nurses and Reducing Waitlists for Diagnostic Services are Albertans' Top Priorities for Increased Healthcare Spending*



**Ipsos Reid**

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**Calgary, AB** – In the wake of a number of policy and spending announcements by the Alberta government over the last few months, a new Ipsos Reid poll shows that Albertans are hopeful that these changes will create positive results. A majority (57%) says that the quality of healthcare they receive will be better in five years compared with only 30% who say it will be worse. When it comes to increased transfer payments from the Federal government, most (71%) Albertans feel that this money should be for the provinces to spend as they see fit as opposed to being designated by the Federal government (28%). In terms of spending any additional healthcare funds, Albertans want the provincial government to focus on hiring more doctors and nurses as well as reducing wait times for diagnostic equipment such as MRIs and CAT Scans.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between November 18<sup>th</sup> and November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 800 adult Albertans. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Alberta 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 Albertan population according to the 2001 Census data.*

## ***Majority of Albertans (57%) Say the Overall Quality of Healthcare They Receive Will be Better in Five Years – Only 30% Say it Will be Worse***

Over the last five years, healthcare has received a lot of attention in Alberta and across the country. Alberta has increased funding to the system and there have been numerous healthcare policies, from Bill 11 to Mazankowski and most recently, the Klein government's "Getting on With Healthcare" initiative. Albertans are hopeful that this will pay off. When "thinking about all the changes that have happened and are being proposed for healthcare in Alberta" 57% say that the overall quality of healthcare they receive will be better five years from now. This includes 11% who say it will be "much better" and 47% who say it will be "somewhat better". In contrast, 30% say it will be worse, with 21% saying it will be "somewhat worse" and 9% saying it will be "much worse". Meanwhile, 11% volunteer that it will be "about the same"

- Calgarians (62%) are more likely than Edmontonians (50%) to say the quality of healthcare they receive will be better five years from now.
- Albertans with a university education (51%) are less likely than those with some post secondary (59%) and those with high school or less (62%) to say that the quality of healthcare they receive will be better.
- Women (33%) are more likely than men (26%) to say that the quality of healthcare they receive will be worse.

## ***Most Albertans Say Provinces (71%) as Opposed to Federal Government (28%) Should Decide How Increases in Transfer Payments are Spent***

In the debate over the Federal government's role in healthcare, Albertans come down clearly in favour of the provinces deciding how any increases in transfer payments are spent. Seventy-one percent say that assuming transfer payments for healthcare are increased, "provincial governments should be allowed to allocate the additional funding to any part of the healthcare they see fit because they know the needs of their

province better than the Federal government” versus 28% who say “the Federal government should be allowed to designate what part of the healthcare system receives the additional funds so all Canadians benefit from the increased funding in the same manner.” Despite still being firmly on the side of provincial control, the percentage of Albertans saying the Federal government should be allowed to designate spending areas has increased 5 points since January 2003 (from 23% to 28%).

- Albertans aged 35-54 (76%) are more likely than those aged 18-34 (70%) and those aged 55+ (65%) to say the provinces should decide how increases in health transfer payments are spent.
- Albertans with a university education (35%) are more likely than those with some post secondary (26%) and those with high school or less (21%) to say that the Federal government should be allowed to designate where increases in transfer payments are spent.
- Calgarians (75%) are more likely than Edmontonians (64%) to say the provinces should decide how increases in transfer payments are spent.

## ***Hiring More Doctors and Nurses and Reducing Waitlists for Diagnostic Services are Albertans' Top Priorities for Increased Healthcare Spending***

When it comes to spending priorities, Albertans put at the top of their list the parts of the healthcare system with which they interact the most. In a paired tradeoff analysis (whereby Albertans are given a list of priorities two at a time and for each pair are asked to choose which one of the two is most important) “hiring more doctors and nurses” emerges as the top priority. It is chosen as the most important 67% of the times it is presented. Not far behind is “reducing waitlists for diagnostic services like MRIs and CAT Scans” (chosen 65% of the time). “Creating a homecare program to help seniors and others” (chosen 51% of the time) and “investing in prevention services to make Albertans healthier” (chosen 48% of the time) form a second tier of priorities. Finally, the third tier consists of “creating a pharmacare program to help people pay for prescription drugs” (chosen 39% of the time) and “investing in health system

information technology” (chosen 23% of the time). These priorities are relatively unchanged since January 2003.

- Healthcare priorities are consistent across key demographics.

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