

**The Cost of Waiting: Eight in Ten (78%) Canadians
Believe Healthcare Wait Times ‘Cost Canada Money’
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(35%) Who Have Paid out of Pocket Costs and Three in Ten (29%)
Who Have Lost Income as a Result of Wait Times.***

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The Cost of Waiting: Eight in Ten (78%) Canadians Believe Healthcare Wait Times ‘Cost Canada Money’

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Ottawa, ON – The results of a new Ipsos Reid poll finds that eight in ten (78%) Canadians believe that hospital and other health care wait times cost Canada money because people who are waiting for treatment are less productive and miss work. This is compared to just two in ten (19%) who think that wait times save Canada money because governments don’t have to put as many resources into healthcare.

Canadians have experienced this first hand with 35% saying they have paid out-of-pocket costs and three in ten (29%) who have lost income as a result of wait times. Furthermore, some Canadians have personally, or through another member of their household, experienced ‘restriction in activities around the household or recreational activities’ (34%), or ‘taking time to assist the person who was waiting for treatment’ (29%) as a result of having to wait for health care services within their own provinces.

In the last year, Canadians have had to wait longer than they thought was reasonable to get access to various healthcare services. In fact, just over a third (35%) of Canadians say that they, or a member of their household, have had to wait for longer than they thought was reasonable to get access to a family physician. Many report having the same delay in gaining access to a specialist (41%), or waiting for a surgical procedure or other medical treatment (30%), or an advanced diagnostic procedure such as an MRI or CT Scan (28%).

Among those individuals who had to wait for at least one of the above-mentioned services, the leading consequences of the perceived unreasonable wait were frustration (17%), a worsening of their condition (16%) and the inability to work or loss of income (16%).

However, the issue of wait times is less an economic issue than it is a personal health issue. While only 31% say wait times impact on the economy to a great extent, more than half (55%) say that wait times are a major problem. When asked, Canadians say that wait times result from a lack of human resources (55%), a lack of infrastructure (20%) and an inefficient health care system (14%). Other reasons include too many people requesting medical services (6%) and people abusing the system (6%).

Focusing on the 2007 federal budget, which included more than \$600 million to help provinces in developing wait time guarantees, a majority (53%) of Canadians agree (14% strongly/38% somewhat) that 'the Patient Wait Time Guarantee trust will significantly contribute to provincial efforts to reduce wait times.' However, two in ten (18%) disagree (13% somewhat/5% strongly) that this is the case, while a quarter (24%) do not have an opinion either way.

Finally, when asked to reflect on the number of health care professionals in Canada, seven in ten Canadians (70%) suggest that 'there is a significant shortage of health care professionals,' while one quarter (25%) thinks that there is a 'slight shortage' of health care professionals in Canada. Just 4% of the population believes that 'there are enough health care professionals' in this country.

In terms of what Canadians believe would be effective in helping to reduce wait times in Canada, nine in ten (89%) believe that hiring more doctors, nurses and other healthcare



professionals would be either 'highly' (63%) or 'somewhat effective' (26%) in reducing wait times.

Similarly, three quarters (74%) believe that making improvements to infrastructure such as hospitals and clinics would be 'highly' (33%) or 'somewhat effective' (42%) in reducing wait times. Furthermore, eight in ten (77%) are of the opinion that more effectively managed wait lists would be 'highly' (36%) or 'somewhat effective' (40%) in reducing wait times.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Canadian Medical Association poll conducted between January 8th and 10th, 2008 among 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 populations 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 Census data.

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