

For immediate release

NEWS RELEASE

**More doctors and investing in new hospitals and other health care facilities are the top priorities in northwestern Ontario communities, Ontario Medical Association interim public survey results show**

*Betterhealthcare.ca survey still open for area residents to make their voice heard on local health care issues*

THUNDER BAY, Ont., Aug. 24, 2021 – More doctors and investing in hospitals, clinics and other health-care facilities to improve access are the most important ways to improve health care in communities across northern Ontario, interim results of one of the most comprehensive consultations in the 140-year history of the Ontario Medical Association show.

In the survey that is central to the OMA consultation, one question asked people to identify their top priority for improving local health care other than dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. More than a quarter (26 per cent) of the 174 area residents who responded identified more doctors.

Reducing wait times was identified by 25 per cent and mental health and addiction was identified by 18 per cent of those who responded as their top priority for improving local health care.

In a second question, residents were asked what “what is the single most important thing that can be done to improve health-care services in your community today?” More than a third (38 per cent) chose “invest in new hospitals, clinics and other health care facilities to improve access” and 35 per cent chose “make it easier to get an appointment with my doctor.”

“These findings are incredibly important in helping us at the OMA develop a plan to improve health care and create a more integrated and sustainable system for all Ontarians,” said Dr. Stephen Viherjoki, chair of the local OMA district. “This is a huge province and health-care priorities here can be very different from those in other regions like Toronto. By completing this public survey, you help make the voice of northwestern Ontario heard.”

Among other public survey results specific to Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario:

- More than half of those who responded (57 per cent) said their views of the way local health care is delivered have become worse due to the pandemic, 10 per cent said their views have improved and 33 per cent said their views were unchanged.
- When asked to grade the local health care system on a scale of A, B, C or F, 20 per cent of those who responded gave it a B, 50 per cent gave it a C and 26 per cent gave it a failing grade. Four per cent gave it an A.
- Almost half (46 per cent) of those who responded said the government should give improving health care in this community the same priority as economic recovery from the pandemic and a third (33 per cent) said it should be given the highest priority, above all other issues.
- Forty-three per cent of those who responded said that the health care issues that were important to them and their community were not being discussed at all and 45 per cent said that they were being discussed somewhat.

- When asked to choose the statement that best reflected their views on the way health care is delivered in their community, and 33 per cent selected “we don’t have enough doctors” and 25 per cent chose “we need to do more to keep people healthy and out of doctors’ offices.”

More than 7,400 residents in more than 600 communities across Ontario have completed the survey to date. It is part of a broad consultation process that has involved doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals as well as community leaders across Ontario. The OMA will release its plan to improve health care based on the consultation process this fall.

**There is still time for area residents to make their voice heard. The survey will remain open through the Labour Day weekend at [betterhealthcare.ca](http://betterhealthcare.ca)**

-30-

### **About the OMA**

The Ontario Medical Association represents Ontario’s 43,000 plus physicians, medical students and retired physicians, advocating for and supporting doctors while strengthening the leadership role of doctors in caring for patients. Our vision is to be the trusted voice in transforming Ontario’s health-care system.

For further information: OMA Media Relations at [media@oma.org](mailto:media@oma.org)