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NEWS RELEASE

Reducing wait times and investing in new hospitals are the top priorities for improving health care in Niagara Region, 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

ST. CATHARINES, Ont., August 17, 2021 – Reducing wait times for medical procedures and investing in new hospitals, clinics and health-care facilities to improve access are the most important ways to improve health care in the Niagara Region, interim results of one of the most comprehensive consultations in the 140-year history of the Ontario Medical Association show.

In the public 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. Thirty-nine per cent of the 803 Niagara Region residents who responded identified reducing wait times.

Twenty per cent said improving home care and long-term care for seniors was their top priority for improving local health care and 17 per cent said more doctors was their top priority.

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?” Forty-six per cent chose “invest in new hospitals, clinics and medical facilities to improve access,” 21 per cent chose “make it easier to get an appointment with my doctor” and 20 per cent chose “improve the delivery of long-term care.”

“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. Richard Tytus, 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 the communities in this area heard.”

Among other public survey results specific to the Niagara Region:

- Almost two-thirds of those who responded (63 per cent) said their views of the way local health care is delivered have become worse due to the pandemic, seven per cent said their views have improved and 30 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, 18 per cent of those who responded gave it a B, 52 per cent gave it a C and 28 per cent gave it a failing grade. Two per cent gave it an A.
- Half (51 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 more than one-third (39 per cent) said it should be given the highest priority, above all other issues.
- More than one-third (38 per cent) of those who responded said the health-care issues that were important to them and their community were not being discussed at all and 42 per cent said that they were somewhat being discussed.

- When asked to choose the statement that best reflected their views on the way health care is delivered in their community, 29 per cent of those who responded selected “wait times at our hospitals are too long and need to be reduced,” 27 per cent selected “we need to do more to keep people healthy and out of doctors’ offices” and 22 per cent selected “we don’t have enough doctors.”

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. 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

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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