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Albertans agree health care system needs change

Province-wide survey also finds majority want more healthcare options

Edmonton... A recent public opinion survey has found nearly two-thirds of Albertans believe the health care system requires major changes if it's going to be sustainable for future generations.

The Leger Marketing survey of 900 people, conducted during the months of January and February, found that Albertans generally perceive the state of the current health care system is not sufficient for future generations. The survey also found that among those who believe changes are needed; 41 per cent suggested that wait times be improved and 28 per cent suggested more staff was needed.

"The survey results are not surprising. It shows Albertans understand that we need to start getting serious about health care reform," said Iris Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness. "There's a deep sense of pride and connection to our public health care system, but there's also the acknowledgement that if we don't do anything to make it sustainable, our children and grandchildren are not going to have access to the same responsive, innovative system we've come to expect."

A majority of Albertans surveyed also agree that the health care system should provide more options for care and shouldn't rule out privately-delivered health services:

- 92 per cent agree it is critical we are provided with a full range of options for our health care;
- 77 per cent agree private facilities should be able to provide certain health care services covered by the Canada Health Act, as long as Alberta Health and Wellness pays for the service, and not the person receiving the service;
- 71 per cent agree those who are willing to pay for private facilities for health care services normally paid for by Alberta Health and Wellness should be able to do so if they want;
- 66 per cent agree that if Albertans were allowed to pay for some health care services, then waiting lists would be shorter for those who choose not to pay for these services.

Additionally, 94 per cent agree that individuals are responsible for the health and wellness of their communities, and 80 per cent agree that individuals need to make their own choices and manage their own health care.

The research also found that many Albertans were not aware of the government's plan for health care reform. Only 51 per cent of those surveyed had heard about the "Third Way" initiative.

"Albertans are asking for more information. They know there needs to be change and they're keen to learn more about what our direction is," said Evans. "We're following up the release of our Health Policy Framework with information in the media so that Albertans can have informed discussions with each other and with government. We invite their ideas and comments."

A complete copy of the survey and more information on the government's Health Policy Framework are available on the website www.yourhealth.gov.ab.ca. Albertans can also provide comments by calling 310-4455 toll-free. Groups wishing to request a meeting with Minister Evans are invited to phone 780-644-3333 (toll-free by first dialing 310-0000) to make arrangements.

Complete survey results.

Survey results are accurate to within 3.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Media enquiries may be directed to:

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