

For immediate release

NEWS RELEASE

Reducing wait times, improving seniors' health care and investing in new hospitals are top health-care priorities in Durham area, 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

OSHAWA, Ont., Aug. 17, 2021 – Reducing wait times for medical procedures, improving seniors' health and investing in new hospitals, clinics and health-care facilities to improve access are the most important ways to improve health care in Durham Region and surrounding communities, 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. Almost one-quarter (23 per cent) of the 367 area residents who responded identified reducing wait times.

The same number (23 per cent) identified improving seniors' health care including long-term care and home care. Fifteen per cent said mental health and addiction 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?" More than one-third (38 per cent) per cent chose "invest in new hospitals, clinics and medical facilities to improve access" and 28 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. Natalie Leahy, chair of the local OMA district. "This is a huge province. Even in communities in the Greater Toronto Area, health-care priorities can be very different from those in places like downtown Toronto. By completing this public survey, you help make the voice of the communities in Ajax, Pickering and other communities in and around Durham heard."

Among other public survey results specific to this area:

- 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, 23 per cent of those who responded gave it a B, 50 per cent gave it a C and 24 per cent gave it a failing grade. Three per cent gave it an A.
- Forty-six 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 one-third (34 per cent) said it should be given the highest priority, above all other issues.

- Almost half (46 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 one-third (37 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, 34 per cent selected “we need to do more to keep people healthy and out of doctors’ offices,” 26 per cent selected “we don’t have enough doctors and 20 per cent selected “health-care dollars should be better spent.”

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

-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