

For immediate release

NEWS RELEASE

Reducing wait times and making it easier to get a doctor's appointment are top priorities to improve health care in Sarnia/Lambton County, 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

SARNIA, Ont., Aug. 17, 2021– Reducing wait times for medical procedures and making it easier to make an appointment with a doctor are the most important ways to improve health care in Sarnia and Lambton County, 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 third (31 per cent) of the 90 Sarnia and Lambton County residents who responded identified reducing wait times.

More than one in five residents (23 per cent) identified improving home care and long-term care for seniors as their top local health-care priority and 15 per cent identified improving mental health and addictions.

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 42 per cent chose “make it easier to get an appointment with my doctor.” More than one quarter of those who responded (26.5 per cent) selected “investing in hospitals, clinics and other health-care facilities to improve access.”

“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. Albert Ng, 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 the public survey, you help makes Sarnia and Lambton County’s voice heard.”

Among other survey results specific to Sarnia and Lambton County:

- Two-thirds (67 per cent) said their views of the way local health care is delivered have become worse due to the pandemic. Only two per cent of respondents said their views had improved.
- 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, 41 per cent gave it a C and 32 per cent gave it a failing grade. Four per cent gave it an A.
- More than half (54 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 a quarter (28 per cent) said it should be given an even higher priority.
- More than four of every 10 people (44 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 40 per cent said that they were being discussed somewhat.

- More than a quarter (26 per cent) of those who responded said we don't have enough doctors; one quarter (25 per cent) per cent said more should be done to keep people healthy and out of hospitals and doctors' offices, and almost a quarter (24 per cent) said hospital wait times need to be reduced.

More than 7,400 residents in more than 600 communities across Ontario have completed the survey. 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