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NEWS RELEASE

More doctors and investing in new hospitals and health care facilities are the top priorities in northern 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

SUDBURY, 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 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 878 area residents who responded identified more doctors.

Twenty-four per cent identified reducing wait times and 15 per cent identified mental health and addiction as their top priorities 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?” One third (34 per cent) chose “invest in new hospitals, clinics and other health care facilities to improve access,” one third (33 per cent) chose “make it easier to get an appointment with my doctor” and 21 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 Ontarian,” said Dr. Stephen Cooper 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 northern Ontario heard.”

Among other public survey results specific to the communities including North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Kapuskasing and Sudbury:

- More than half of those who responded (55 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 37 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, 19 per cent of those who responded gave it a B, 51 per cent gave it a C and 27 per cent gave it a failing grade. Three 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 more than a third (38 per cent) said it should be given the highest priority, above all other issues.

- Forty-two 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 41 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 40 per cent selected “we don’t have enough doctors” and 22 per cent selected “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

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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