

Canadians to their Governments: Get on with Romanow!

Ottawa-November 25, 2003: Canadians continue to endorse the broad policy directions contained in Roy Romanow's landmark *Report on the Future of Health Care in Canada* almost 12 months after its tabling, according to a new poll released today. The poll also indicates that health care remains the number one priority for Canadians despite a sharp drop in the number of Canadians who say the quality of the health system has deteriorated over the past 2 years.

The poll, conducted by EKOS Research Associates, was commissioned by a consortium comprising the Atkinson Foundation, the Canadian Autoworkers, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Union, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Ontario Nurses Association and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario to mark the 1 year anniversary of the tabling of the Romanow Report on November 28, 2003. The poll of 1,208 Canadians was completed between November 18 and November 20, 2003 and has a margin of error of 2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Other poll highlights include:

- Among Canadians familiar with the broad recommendations of the Romanow Report, 84% support its overall directions, while 12% oppose it.
- While awareness of the Health Council debate is low (22%), those supporting the principles of a Health Council outnumber those who oppose it by a 4-1 margin; among those aware of the debate, 83% support the principle of a Health Council.
- Canadians are expressing widening support for social investment, particularly for Health Care (93%) vis-à-vis other priorities such as Debt and Deficit Reduction (62%), Public Security (62%) and Level of Taxation (52%).
- Nearly 2 in 3 Canadians would prefer the government use budgetary surpluses for social investment (health and education) over debt reduction (1 in 5) and lower taxes (1 in 6)
- Despite the sharp decline over the past year in the number of Canadians who believe the health system is deteriorating (from 63% in December 2002 to 44% today) public support for further investment in health care is growing.

- Increasing the number of health professionals is the preferred choice of Canadians (64%) for improving the health care system, while support for privatised health care where Canadians could pay extra for better or quicker service is the least favoured (18%).
- Support for a public, universal health care system has strengthened in recent months, while support for 2-tier medicine and privatization has dwindled on virtually all indicators.

“These poll results underscore what any objective observer already knows: the Romanow Report accurately reflected the consensus views of Canadians vis-à-vis their health care system, and these views remain unchanged”, said consortium spokesperson Charles Pascal. “It is time for government to start listening to Canadians and commit to building the high quality, efficient and affordable public health care system Canadians want and deserve”, Pascal concluded.

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The poll results can be viewed on www.atkinsonfoundaton.ca or www.ekos.ca