

Provincial Issues Poll Report September 28, 2011

KEY FINDINGS

CARP members agree strongly that basic CARP advocacy issues should be priority concerns in their provinces. Members prefer substantive policy issues over hot button or wedge issues and in a comparison of just the substantive issues, there is no significant difference. They insist they base their vote on the best policy, not on an unconsidered urge for change or blind need to stay the course.

The vast majority of members agree their provinces should focus on, in order of urgency:

- **A comprehensive home care strategy**
- **Enforcement of realistic wait time benchmarks for surgery**
- **An increase in provincial income supplements to combat poverty**
- **Home energy rate relief for low income seniors**
- **Bulk purchase/cost controls on prescription drugs**

CARP members are relatively equally likely to choose one set of substantive promises as the other since the major parties have all tried to address issues of concern to older Canadians. However, members clearly prefer substantive promises over “hot button” issues and wedge politics like GPS bracelets on sex offenders and prisoner work details in parks.

In order to pay for platform promises, CARP members are most willing to give up investment in renewable energy sources. They are especially loath to give up infrastructure maintenance, health care spending or education funding.

The most popular “doorstep question” on the health care file is whether the candidate will support provinces being required to account transparently for the federal health transfers they are sent. The most popular non-health care “doorstep question” is whether the candidate will act as constituents wish or follow his or her own conscience.

Members are slightly more likely to say they will vote for the best party platform in the upcoming election than to say they will vote for change or think they should stay the course.

Two thirds of members agree the most import financial priority for their province is investment rather than spending cuts, and more than half

expect their government, once elected, to maintain services by increasing revenue rather than maintaining tax levels by cutting services.

The plurality of members think solar energy is the energy source most deserving of investment by their province, followed by nuclear, hydro, natural gas and wind. Almost none thinks investments should be made in coal or oil. Members are slightly more likely to say they are unwilling to pay higher energy costs to fund renewable energy and emissions controls than they are to say they are willing to do so.

When asked their attitude to paying taxes, the majority of members take a positive view, citing “the price of civilization” and services received. The minority who take a negative viewpoint mostly do so because of government waste.

While the majority of members say their financial situation hasn’t changed in the past year, those who say it has gotten worse outnumber those saying it is better by a factor of six. By the same token, the majority of members feel the economy is either stagnant or sliding back into recession.

Members feel the best answers to elderly patients stuck in acute care beds are more public nursing homes and more funding for home care workers.

The Conservative Party is preferred nationwide by one half of members, while one quarter opt for the Liberals. One fifth will vote for the NDP and few will vote for the Green Party. In Ontario, just fewer than half our members will vote Conservative, while 4-in-10 will vote Liberal, leaving about one tenth for the NDP.

Detailed Findings

There is virtually unanimous agreement (95%) that the member's province should develop a comprehensive home care strategy, and two thirds express this in the strongest terms ("strongly agree" - 64%).

How much do you agree that your province needs to develop a comprehensive home care strategy and provide adequate funding to allow residents to age at home?

AGREE	95%
Strongly agree	64%
Agree	31%
DISAGREE	3%
Disagree	2%
Strongly disagree	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

The same situation occurs with respect to realistic wait time benchmarks (92%), with more than one half expressing the strongest view ("strongly agree" - 59%).

How much do you agree your province needs to set realistic wait time benchmarks for surgery and treatment, and enforce them with sanctions if they are not met?

AGREE	92%
Strongly agree	59%
Agree	36%
DISAGREE	4%
Disagree	4%
Strongly disagree	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

Agreement is, if anything, even stronger with respect to bulk purchasing and other cost-saving strategies for prescription drugs (96%, 70% “strongly agree”).

How much do you agree your province needs to work with other provinces to use bulk purchasing and other strategies to bring down prescription drug prices?

AGREE	96%
Strongly agree	70%
Agree	26%
DISAGREE	2%
Disagree	2%
Strongly disagree	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

The vast majority agree their province should increase income supplements to end poverty (86%), and one half express the firmest view (“strongly agree” - 51%).

How much do you agree your province needs to augment provincial income supplements to ensure no senior lives in poverty?

AGREE	86%
Strongly agree	51%
Agree	35%
DISAGREE	9%
Disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	1%
DON'T KNOW	5%

A similar proportion agree with home energy rate relief (86%, 48% “strongly agree”).

How much do agree your province needs to provide home energy rate relief to lower and fixed income seniors?

AGREE	86%
Strongly agree	48%
Agree	38%
DISAGREE	11%
Disagree	9%
Strongly disagree	2%
DON'T KNOW	4%

When members are asked to rank each of the five issues discussed above, the most urgent is seen to be a home care strategy (35%) cited by one third, followed by one fifth who think wait time enforcement is most urgent (19%).

Which ONE of these areas needs attention most urgently?

Comprehensive home care strategy	35%
Wait time benchmark enforcement	19%
Increase provincial income supplements	14%
Home energy rate relief for low income seniors	12%
Bulk purchase/cost controls on prescription drugs	11%
NONE OF THESE	5%
DON'T KNOW	3%

When members are asked which programs should have funding stripped to pay for election promises, the plurality choose renewable energy research and development (27%), followed by deficit reduction (13%). Programs members are loath to cut include infrastructure (3%), health care spending (4%), education (4%) and affordable housing (6%).

All these policies will require funding that must be taken from other programs. Which programs do you think should receive LESS funding so that these policies can be put in place?

Developing renewable energy sources	27%
Deficit reduction	13%
Transit	8%
Social services	8%
Affordable housing	6%
Education	4%
Other health care spending	4%
Infrastructure maintenance	3%
OTHER	14%
NONE	14%

The most popular “doorstep question” regarding health care is whether the candidate will demand accountability for provincial health transfers (27%), followed by support for national health care standards everyone must meet (14%) and support for a national pharmacare program (13%).

Which ONE question about health care would you most like to ask a provincial candidate on your doorstep?

Demand provincial accountability for health transfers?	27%
Support national health care standards?	14%
Support national pharmacare?	13%
Support single national/regional waiting list?	9%
Support more spending on home care workers?	9%
Support more funding for long term care?	9%
Support medical service delivery at home?	6%
Support income support for family caregivers?	5%
Support sanctions for providers not performing?	4%
OTHER	4%

The most popular non-health related “doorstep question” is whether the candidate will act as his constituents wish or according to his conscience (22%), followed by equal proportions who want significant spending cuts and those who want significant stimulus spending (14%). In other words, representatives are expected to do as their constituents wish even when their wishes are contradictory.

Which ONE question about other subjects would you most like to ask a provincial candidate on your doorstep?

Follow constituents’ wishes, not own conscience?	22%
Support significant spending cuts?	14%
Support stimulus spending?	14%
Work to defeat HST?	9%
Support “Right To Die” legislation?	9%
Support “Get Tough On Crime” agenda?	8%
Support investment in alternate energy sources?	8%
Uphold civility in the legislature?	8%
Support a single National Securities Regulator	3%
OTHER	4%

Members were asked to describe their voting mood in the upcoming provincial election. One third claim their vote is for the best party platform (33%), while one quarter want change (25%), exactly the proportion that don’t want change (“stay the course” - 24%). Only a minority say they will vote for the party they always support (6%).

Which one phrase best describes your attitude towards voting in upcoming provincial elections?

BEST PARTY PLATFORM	33%
Vote for best party platform	21%
Vote for 'adult' platform, not 'hot buttons'	12%
TIME FOR A CHANGE	25%
Time for a change	21%
I'm grumpy and want to shake things up	4%
STAY THE COURSE	24%
Not happy with incumbent, not enough to change	13%
Happy with incumbent party	11%
Vote for party I always support	6%
Vote for lower taxes	5%
Vote for tougher crime laws	4%
OTHER	3%

Two thirds of members believe provincial governments must invest (64%), either in job creation (35%) or health care (29%), rather than cutting expenditures (31%).

Which of the following choices is the most important financial priority for your province now?

INVEST	64%
Invest in job creation	35%
Invest in health care	29%
Cut spending to reduce deficit	31%
OTHER	5%

One half our members expect provincial governments, once elected, to maintain services through increased revenues (51%) rather than cut services to maintain current tax levels (28%).

Once elected, which course would you expect the provincial government to take?

Maintain services by increasing revenue	51%
Maintain tax levels by cutting services	28%
DON'T KNOW	21%

The plurality of members, about one quarter, agree solar power is the most deserving of provincial investment and development (26%), followed by nuclear

power (17%), hydro, natural gas (15% each) and wind (13%). Almost none believes in investing in coal or oil.

Which ONE energy source do you believe offers the most promise for the future and should be invested in by your province?

Solar	26%
Nuclear	17%
Hydro	15%
Natural Gas	15%
Wind	13%
Geothermal	10%
Coal	1%
Oil	1%
NONE	3%

Members are slightly more likely to say they are not willing to pay extra in order to fund renewable energy and emissions controls (51% to 45%), but the proportion who are “willing” (37%) is greater than the proportion which is “not very willing” (31%).

Are you willing to pay a higher price for energy if it supports conservation, renewable energy and emissions control?

WILLING	45%
Very willing	8%
Willing	37%
NOT WILLING	51%
Not very willing	31%
Not at all willing	21%
DON'T KNOW	4%

More than one half of members express positive feelings about paying taxes (57%), mostly because they buy civilization (29%). One third of members have negative feelings about paying taxes (37%), mostly because of perceived government waste (29%).

Which of the following statements best describes your attitude to paying taxes?

POSITIVE	57%
Don't mind, they are the price of civilization	29%
Pay taxes for good services	26%
Pay taxes to help the most needy	2%

NEGATIVE	37%
Dislike taxes because of government waste	29%
Dislike taxes because some get a free ride	6%
Resent taxes, cut them across the board	2%
Pay taxes, don't think about it much	3%
NONE OF THESE	1%

When asked how they support a party at election time, the majority of members say they will support the best platform (71%), specifically the one that does the 'right' thing for the province (34%), followed by the one which will benefit the largest number (21%). Fewer will support the platform that benefits them personally the most (16%). One tenth say it's time for a change (11%), while half this proportion say it's time to stay the course (5%).

Which of the following statements best describes how you make the decision on which party to vote for in an election?

BEST PLATFORM	71%
Vote for party that does the 'right' thing for province	34%
Vote for best platform for largest number	21%
Vote for best platform for me personally	16%
TIME FOR A CHANGE	11%
Time for a change	11%
STAY THE COURSE	5%
Should stay the course	4%
Don't change horses in midstream	1%
Vote for the party I always support	8%
OTHER	3%
DON'T KNOW	1%

More than two thirds of members feel they are worse off financially now than a year ago (38%), whereas fewer than one tenth say they are better off (6%).

Are you financially better off, the same or worse off than you were one year ago?

Better off	6%
Same	55%
Worse off	38%
MARGIN IN FAVOUR OF "BETTER"	-32
DON'T KNOW	1%

Close to three quarters of members think the economy is either stagnant (51%) or sliding back into recession (20% - 71% in total). Just one quarter believe the economy is recovering (24%).

As far as you know, is the Canadian economy recovering, remaining stagnant or sliding back into recession?

Recovering	24%
Stagnant	51%
Sliding back into recession	20%
DON'T KNOW	5%

Close to one half of decided Ontario members say they will support the Conservatives in the coming provincial election (47%), compared to about 4-in-10 who say this of the Liberals (39%). The NDP has one third this level of support (13%). However, the proportion which is undecided (23%) is high, and indicates possible upside for the Liberals, when seen in the context of other findings in this poll.

Which party will you support in the [Ontario] provincial election?

Conservative	47%
Liberal	39%
NDP	13%
Green Party	2%

Members suggest the best solutions for elderly patients stuck in acute care beds is more public nursing homes (29%), followed by more funding for home care workers (22%). Other solutions offered include the “virtual ward” concept (15%) and more financial support for family caregivers (10%).

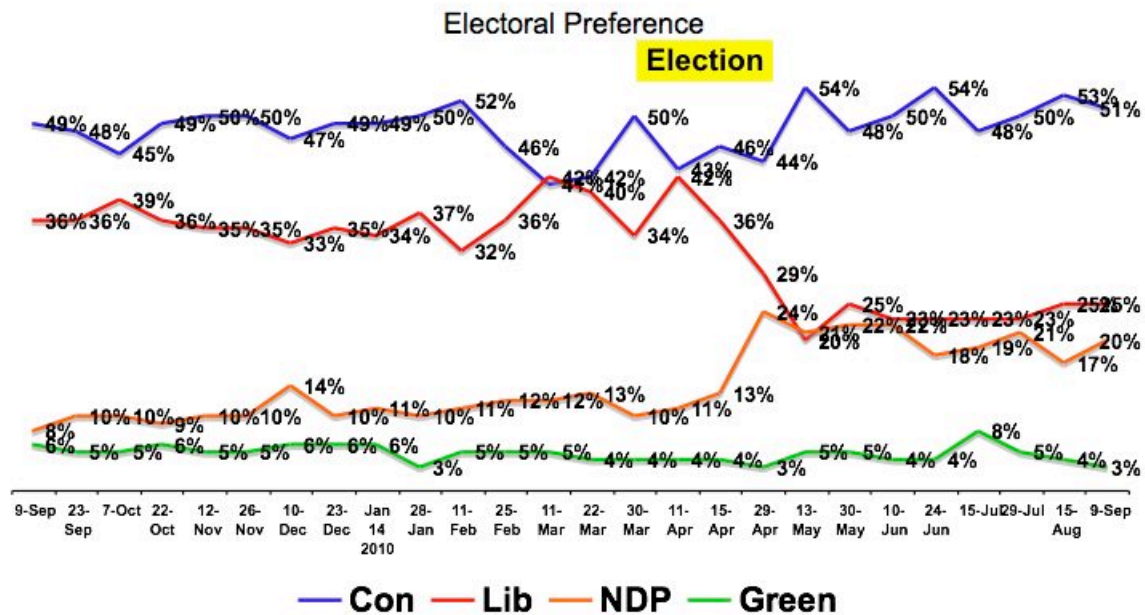
Long term care patients occupy hospital beds which are needed for acute care patients because alternatives are unavailable. Which ONE of the following solutions is the most deserving of investment by your province to address this problem?

More public nursing homes	29%
More funding for home care workers	22%
“Virtual Ward” (hospital services delivered at home)	15%
More financial support for family caregivers	10%
More private nursing homes	5%
Health system “navigator”	5%
More training for home care workers	4%
Better queue management	4%

More hospice care	3%
More funding for house calls	3%

ELECTORAL PREFERENCE

While the Conservative Party remains dominate (51%), the Liberals (25%) have drawn ahead of the NDP (20%) and now occupy second place on their own. This poll was conducted after the death of Jack Layton, so that event has a 3% effect on NDP support (from 17% to 20%).



Over 2800 CARP Poll™ panel members responded to this poll between August 15 and 18. The margin of error for a sample this size is plus or minus 1.8%, 19 times out of 20. That is, if you asked all members of the CARP Poll™ panel the identical questions, their responses would be within 2%, either up or down, of the results shown here, 95% of the time