

**End Of Life/Elder Abuse Poll Report
December 20, 2011**

KEY FINDINGS

Seven-in-ten CARP members agree with legalized physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill, both now and last year, and regardless of whether or not Canada has an effective, comprehensive and compassionate system of palliative and end of life care.

Members agree both patient and doctor should make the decision about physician-assisted suicide, but they expect it to be, on average, almost a decade before the procedure is legal in Canada. Despite the level at which they support legalized physician-assisted suicide, one half agree there might be less interest in it if palliative and end of life care in Canada were better.

Two thirds of members have an advanced directive of some kind, and it is most likely to be entrusted to a spouse or a child, not a doctor or a lawyer. There is wide agreement that next of kin should be charged with the responsibility of seeing the advanced directive is carried out. Members are most likely to say they would ensure their advanced directives are followed by encoding them in their electronic health record (one half have these) or having a designated decision-maker among next of kin.

There is wide agreement doctors should be proactive about discussing end of life issues with their older patients and there is strong interest in learning more about what “no heroic measures” actually entails. While virtually all members think it is important for the government to have a comprehensive palliative and end of life care strategy, almost none believes governments have the political will to address these issues.

While a small percentage of members have experienced elder abuse themselves, as many as one third know someone who has been abused, which, coupled with reported rates of about 10%, could indicate a severe underreporting problem. In most cases, abuse is financial, followed by verbal elder abuse. One third have, or know someone who has been financially disadvantaged because of their age.

In most cases, someone close to the victim perpetrated the financial abuse (a demand for an early bequest or abuse of power of attorney) and this was most likely to be a family member.

Solutions to elder financial abuse include stiffer penalties for fraud, adding age as an exacerbating factor in sentencing and a national hot line to report suspicious pitches. There is agreement including age as an exacerbating sentencing factor will help limit elder abuse, and among the specific suggestions for solutions are more awareness building, a national hot line connected to the police, a national home care strategy or special investigator/prosecutor teams.

Fully one third of members watched Sidney Crosby's return to the NHL against the New York Islanders, and virtually all of them were happy to see him playing hockey again.

While the Conservative Party commands half our members' votes, the Liberals are firmly in second place and trending upwards, while the NDP are in third and trending downward.

END OF LIFE ISSUES

Support for physician-assisted suicide is high and constant, and is characteristic of 7-in-10 members, last year (71%) and this year (68%), and remains high when members are presented with a Canada where effective and compassionate palliative and end-of-life care is available (70%).

Do you support the idea of physician-assisted suicide for those who are terminally ill or at the end of their lives?/Do you believe physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill should be legal in Canada?/If Canada had a comprehensive, government-paid system of effective palliative care and compassionate end-of-life care, would you support legalized physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill?

	August 2010 Unprompted	December 2011 Unprompted	December 2011 Prompted
Support/Yes	71%	68%	70%
Don't support/No	19%	20%	17%
DON'T KNOW	10%	12%	13%

About one half of members, both this year (46%) and last year (52%), agree the final decision in physician-assisted suicide should be made by the patient and doctor, while the remainder are relatively evenly split between those who think the decision is the patient's alone (18% this year and last) and those who think the authorities and the doctor should also be involved (15% last year, 17% this year). Very few think the decision should occur between the authorities and the patient only or between the doctor and the authorities only. One tenth in both years will not countenance physician-assisted suicide (10%).

If physician-assisted suicide were legal, who do you think should have the responsibility for deciding whether it was allowed?

	August 2010	December 2011
Patient and doctor	52%	46%
Patient	18%	18%
Patient, doctor and authorities	15%	17%
Patient and authorities	1%	1%
Doctor and authorities	*	1%
DON'T KNOW	4%	5%
WOULD NEVER SUPPORT THIS	10%	10%

On average, members expect it will be more than 8 years (2020) before there is legislation allowing physician-assisted suicide in Canada, and a significant proportion say it will never happen (14%).

When polled, a majority of Canadians agree physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill should be legal in Canada, but politicians will not deal with it. How long do you think it will be before Canada has legislation permitting the terminally ill to seek assistance to end their lives on their own terms?

Within a year	1%
! to 3 years	8%
3 to 5 years	14%
5 to 10 years	23%
More than 10 years	20%
NEVER	14%
DON'T KNOW	21%
AVG. NUMBER OF YEARS	8.2 Years

About one half of members agree there might be less demand for and interest in physician-assisted suicide if there were a better system of palliative and end of life care in this country (50%), but this doesn't dim their interest in seeing it legalized.

Critics of physician-assisted suicide say Canadians would not be so apt to support it if palliative and end of life care were better in this country. How much do you agree better, more comprehensive palliative and end of life care would lead to less demand for and interest in physician-assisted suicide?

AGREE	50%
Agree strongly	18%
Agree	32%
DISAGREE	39%
Disagree	28%
Disagree strongly	11%
DON'T KNOW	12%

Two thirds of members (64%) have either a living will (35%) or DNR (7%) or both (22%), and the overall finding has remained constant since last year (63%). Interestingly, members are more likely this year than last to have a living will (35% vs 28%) and are less likely to have a DNR (7% vs 19%).

Do you have a living will or a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order?

	August 2010	December 2011
YES	63%	64%
Living will	28%	35%
DNR	19%	7%
BOTH	16%	22%
NO	37%	36%

About one half of those with living wills or DNRs have entrusted them to their spouse (46%) and a third to a child (31%). One tenth have given it to another family member (12%). Few entrust it to a doctor or a lawyer.

A DNR or a Living Will is known as an Advanced Directive. To whom have you entrusted this Advanced Directive with the responsibility for carrying out your final wishes?

Spouse	46%
Child	31%
Other family member	12%
Close friend	4%
Doctor	3%
Lawyer	3%
OTHER	1%

There is wide agreement the next of kin should be responsible for carrying out an advanced directive (60%), followed (distantly) by the will executor (13%), who may be the same person. Various doctors are considered, but there is no interest in having the decision made by a hospital board or judge.

In the end, someone has to make the decision to follow the instructions in an Advanced Directive. Who should make this final decision?

Next of kin	60%
Will executor	13%
Attending physician	7%
Family doctor	5%
Palliative care specialist	4%
Hospital board	*
Judge	*
OTHER	2%
DON'T KNOW	8%

Close to one third of members think the best way to get their advanced directives followed, even if they cannot communicate them, is to have directive encoded on their electronic health record (31%). Approximately one half of members have these electronic records. After this, members opt for a designated decision-maker among their next-of-kin (21%) or a mandatory requirement that hospital staff consult with next of kin at every treatment stage (14%). Interestingly, the choice of an advisory tattoo, more common among doctors, is not common among members.

Which of the following do you think is the best way for older Canadians to ensure their Advanced Directives are followed by hospital staff, even if they are not able to communicate them?

Advanced directive on electronic health record	30%
Designated decision-maker among next-of-kin	21%
Hospital staff enquire next-of-kin at every stage	14%
Advanced directive notarized part of will	9%
Mandatory doctor/hospital communication	8%
Advanced directive on medic alert bracelet	4%
Searchable online database like www.beadonor.ca	2%
Medical tattoo with advanced directive	1%
OTHER	2%
DON'T KNOW	12%

Two thirds of members agree doctors should be proactive about discussing end of life issues with their older and terminally ill patients (69%) and one quarter adopt the strongest position (25 - “agree strongly”).

It has been proposed that family doctors be encouraged to discuss Advanced Directives with older or terminally ill patients and bill the health care system for this service, even if the patient doesn’t initiate it. How much do you agree with this idea?

AGREE	69%
Agree strongly	25%
Agree	44%
DISAGREE	24%
Disagree	16%
Disagree strongly	7%
DON’T KNOW	7%

When asked to consider in detail what “no heroic measures” means, the plurality adopt a generous view (“water, food, oxygen, IV drip” - 19%) while a similar proportion adopt a much more minimalist view (“no measures at all” - 16%). Reflecting this indecision, the largest group, one third, do not know and/or would like to learn more (34%).

Many Advanced Directives specify “use no heroic measures to revive or prolong life”. What level of care or treatment would you assume this would permit?

Water, food, IV drip, oxygen	19%
No measures at all	16%
Water, IV drip	9%
Water	8%
Water, food, IV drip	5%
Water, food, IV drip, oxygen, heart pump	4%
Oxygen	1%
OTHER	3%
DON’T KNOW/WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE	34%

Virtually all members (95%) say it is important for the government to develop a comprehensive end of life and palliative care strategy, and close to half use the strongest possible terms (“extremely important” - 44%).

How important is it to you that the provincial and federal governments develop a comprehensive strategy for palliative and end of life care in Canada?

IMPORTANT	95%
Extremely important	44%
Very important	31%
Important	19%
NOT IMPORTANT	4%
Not important	3%
Not at all important	1%
DON'T KNOW	2%

Despite the high levels of engagement and interest shown, members have no expectation that governments have the political will to face the difficult issues discussed in this survey (84%)

Do you think the federal and provincial governments have the political will to deal with the important end-of-life issues we are discussing here?

Yes	5%
No	84%
DON'T KNOW	12%

ELDER ABUSE

Members are equally likely to be surprised by how large and how small the proportion of seniors who have been abused is (24% in each case), whereas one third think the stated range (5% to 10%) is “about what I expect” (38%).

Studies show that between 5% and 10% of older Canadians are victims of elder abuse. Is this more, fewer or about the same proportion of older Canadians you expected to be in this position?

MORE	24%
A lot more	8%
Somewhat more	16%
About what I expected	38%
LESS	24%
Somewhat less	18%
A lot less	6%
DON'T KNOW	14%

A very small percentage of members (2%) report personally suffering elder abuse, and this compares with a figure of 7% found in a previous survey in which different wording was used. A further one third know someone who has been the victim of abuse (32%) and this is identical to figures recorded earlier, and may indicate substantial underreporting.

Elder abuse can be physical abuse, verbal and psychological abuse, financial abuse or neglect. Have you, or has anyone you know ever been a victim of elder abuse?

YES	34%
Me	2%
Someone I know	32%
NO	66%

Financial abuse is the most common form of elder abuse, and this is mirrored among members exposed to abuse (50%), followed by verbal abuse (23%).

What form did this abuse take?

Financial abuse	50%
Verbal abuse	23%
Neglect	18%
Physical abuse	5%
OTHER	4%

In a more direct question, just less than one third of members say they or someone they know has been taken advantage of financially because of their age (30%).

Financial abuse is the most common form of elder abuse. Have you or has anyone you know been taken advantage of financially primarily because of age?

Yes	30%
No	70%

The most common forms of financial abuse are perpetrated by the most trusted, either a child seeking an early bequest or inheritance, or someone abusing power of attorney (17%). Other abuses include unauthorized bank charges, services paid for and not received and aggressive door-to-door salesmen.

What form did this financial abuse take?

Family member demanding money	28%
Abuse of power of attorney	17%
Unauthorized bank charges/fees/withdrawals	8%
Services paid for/not received	7%
Aggressive door-to-door salesman	7%
Account mismanagement/fee padding	5%
Charities demanding auto-withdrawal	5%
Stock pitch over the phone/by friend/family	1%
OTHER	22%

Financial abuse is primarily carried out by family (61%), followed distantly by strangers (15%) and acquaintances (8%).

Who perpetrated this financial abuse?

Family member	61%
Stranger	15%
Acquaintance	8%
Financial professional	4%
Close friend	3%
Lawyer	1%
OTHER	8%

Members are equally likely to see the solution to financial elder abuse as being stiffer penalties for fraud (16%), using age as an exacerbating factor in sentencing (15%) and a national hot line to report suspicious pitches, etc (14%). Few believe more research and study is required, or a national financial literacy course (2% each).

What do you think would be the best solution to curtailing financial abuse of older Canadians?

Stiffer penalties for fraud	16%
Vulnerability due to age as exacerbating factor	15%
National hotline to report suspicious activity	14%
Special investigative/prosecutor police squads	9%
More rigorous licensing of financial advisors	7%
Single national securities regulator with enforcement	7%
More research and study	2%
National financial literacy courses	2%
OTHER	4%
DON'T KNOW	25%

Three quarters of members expect that the government's proposed changes to sentencing for elder abuse will limit the problem (72%), but just one fifth strongly agree (20%).

The federal government promised stiffened sentencing provisions for acts of elder abuse, allowing judges to use the vulnerability of an older person as an exacerbating factor in sentencing. How much do you agree this will help limit elder abuse?

AGREE	72%
Agree strongly	20%
Agree	53%
DISAGREE	16%
Disagree	13%
Disagree strongly	2%
DON'T KNOW	12%

Members are asked overall the best way to end elder abuse, and the plurality say the answer is more education and awareness building (23%). This is followed by relatively equal proportions calling for a national hot line connected to police (17%), a national home care strategy (16%) or special investigator/prosecutor police teams (13%). More education and training of caregivers is also seen as a solution (10%).

Which one of the following do you think is the best way to combat elder abuse overall?

More education and awareness-building	25%
Nationwide hot-line connected to police	17%
National home care strategy	16%
Special investigator/prosecutor teams	13%
More education and training of caregivers	10%
National financial literacy strategy	1%
More research and study	1%
OTHER	4%
DON'T KNOW	15%

SID THE KID

As many as one third of our members watched Sidney Crosby's return to the NHL versus the New York Islanders (36%), and of those, the vast majority were happy to see him playing hockey again (90%), with as many as one fifth using the most positive descriptor ("extremely happy" - 20%). Curiously, name awareness of Sidney Crosby is almost universal among our members, and almost none claim to be unfamiliar with him (2%).

Did you watch the return of Sidney Crosby to the National Hockey League two weeks ago?

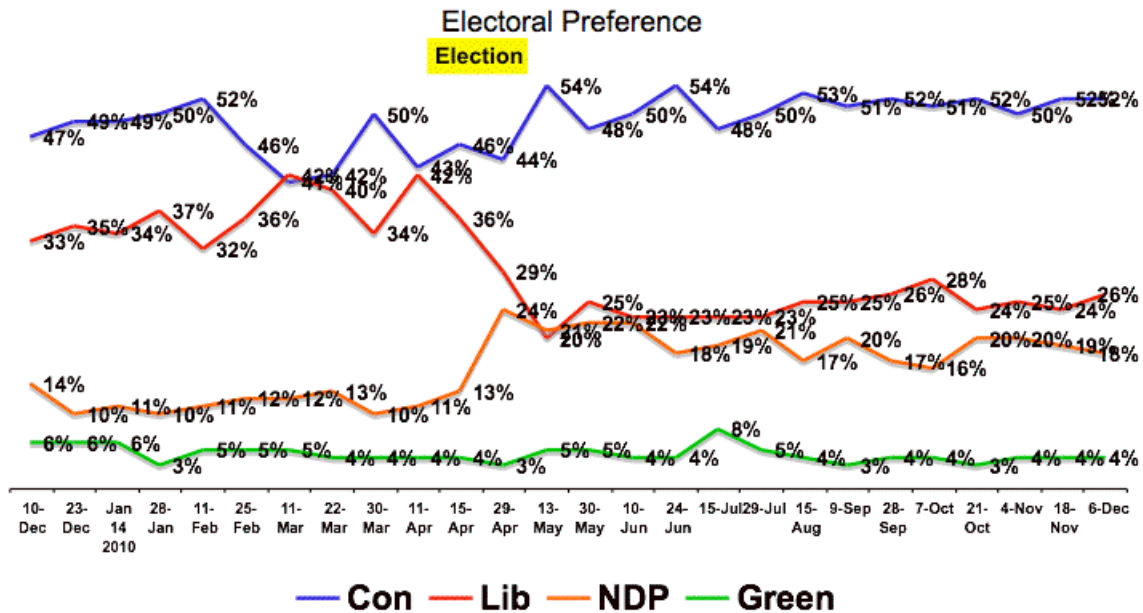
Yes	36%
No	57%
Who is Sidney Crosby?	2%
DON'T KNOW/DON'T CARE	5%

How happy did it make you to see Sidney Crosby playing hockey again?

HAPPY	90%
Extremely happy	20%
Very happy	28%
Happy	42%
NOT HAPPY	10%
Not very happy	7%
Not at all happy	3%

ELECTORAL PREFERENCE

While the Conservative Party remains dominant among our members (52%), the Liberals are still in second place (26%) ahead of the NDP (18%), and this is a situation the national polls are only finding now. In addition, we are seeing a slight downward trend for the NDP and a slight upward trend for the Liberals.



More than 2600 CARP Poll™ panel members responded to this poll between December 6 and 12. The margin of error for a sample this size is plus or minus 2.0%, 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