

Health Care Reform Poll Report March 9, 2012

KEY FINDINGS

When presented with health care savings recommendations from the Drummond Report on Provincial Spending, members favour those dealing with drug pricing, home care and palliative care and capping hospital CEO salaries.

Members are less enthusiastic about capping health care funding increases at 2.5% per year or with making family doctors go on partial fee-for-service payment rather than salaries.

Members agree that, if drug benefits were means tested, a household income limit between \$67,000 and \$100,000 a year would be appropriate.

While two thirds of members agree with the conclusions of the Drummond Report, as many as 8-in-10 say it is applicable to their own province.

When members are asked to specifically consider the proposed 2.5% annual funding increase cap, half approve, because costs need to be reined in. About a third are not comfortable, mostly because they see this as a de facto funding cut.

The health care delivery outcomes members would least like to see as a result of Drummond-style reforms are the regionalization of local services, PSWs taking on medical duties and fewer treatments and drugs being covered.

More than one half of members say the health care in their province is “excellent” or “very good”, and very few say it is “poor”.

The Conservatives have recovered some of the ground lost to the Liberals over the OAS fray since the last wave of polling two weeks ago, but the Liberals are now firmly in second place among our members, just behind the Conservatives.

DRUMMOND REPORT

When presented with health care savings recommendations from the Drummond Report, most members agree with most measures, led by the provinces cooperating on common drug pricing (98% “strongly agree/agree”), reviewing and capping hospital CEO salaries (93%), using more home care services, and using nurse practitioners and pharmacists to take on more duties (92% each) and better end-of-life palliative care (91%). These items are all approved by 9-in-10 or more members.

Recommendations which are accepted (more than one half of members agree) are led by PSWs taking on more front-line medical duties (81%), adopting electronic discharge and lab records (80%) and expanding the health system to cover drugs, long term care and mental health (76%).

Recommendations which are rejected (less than one half of members agree) include capping health care funding increases at 2.5% a year (46%) and putting doctors on partial fee-for-service (39%).

The Drummond Report on provincial spending was released in Ontario last week. It contains recommendations, especially on health care, that will be examined by provincial governments across the country. How much do you agree:

- ***with the recommendation to increase the use of home based care where appropriate to reduce costs without compromising quality of care?***
- ***increases in health care spending should be capped at 2.5% per year, as opposed to the current 6% federal increase, which is a target that has never been achieved anywhere?***
- ***shifting some health care responsibilities from doctors to less costly providers such as nurse practitioners and pharmacists***
- ***increasing the use of personal services workers and other non-medical personnel and integrating them into health care teams along with nurses and doctors?***
- ***allowing pharmacists to take over such medical roles as routine injections and vaccinations?***
- ***the province should build fewer long term care facilities to invest in more home-based care?***

- *pay rates for hospital CEOs should be reviewed and capped?*
- *province should switch immediately to electronic hospital discharge records and lab test results?*
- *primary care physicians and family doctors should be paid at least 30% on a fee-per-service basis instead of 100% salary?*
- *province must invest in more and better palliative and end-of-life care?*
- *provinces should cooperate on common pricing for prescription drug purchases to bring prices down?*
- *provincial health system should be expanded to cover prescription drugs, long term care and mental health care?*
- *Provincial Drug Benefit program should be means-tested, so that those who do not need it do not qualify?*

APPROVED	Strongly Agree/Agree
Provinces cooperate on common drug pricing	98%
Review and cap hospital CEO salaries	93%
More home care where possible	92%
Nurse practitioners and pharmacists to take on duties	92%
Better palliative/end of life care	91%

ACCEPTED	
PSWs to take on more duties	81%
Electronic discharge and lab records	80%
Expand health system coverage	76%
Pharmacists to do routine injections	74%
Means testing drug benefits	62%
Fewer LTC beds, more home care	55%

REJECTED	
Capping health care increases at 2.5% per year	46%
Doctors paid fee, not salary	39%

OTHER FINDINGS

The largest groups of members think an appropriate income level for means-testing drug benefits would be either the OAS claw back limit of \$67,000 per household per year (28%) or the more arbitrary limit of \$100,000 in household income a year (29%).

If prescription drug benefits WERE means tested, at what income level should they be cut off?

HH income \$20K or less (LICO)	1%
HH income of \$48K or more (CPP contribution limit)	11%
HH income \$67K (OAS claw back limit)	28%
HH income of \$100K or more	29%
HH income of \$250K or more	10%
HH income of \$500K or more	1%
DON'T SUPPORT MEANS TESTING	17%
DON'T KNOW	4%

Two thirds of members agree with the conclusions of the Drummond Report (66%), although more than half use the less emphatic descriptor ("agree" - 55%).

All of the preceding questions come from recommendations contained in the Drummond Report. Overall, how much do you agree with the conclusions of this report?

AGREE	66%
Agree strongly	11%
Agree	55%
DISAGREE	12%
Disagree	10%
Disagree strongly	2%
DON'T KNOW	22%

The vast majority of members, whether that agree with it or not, say the Drummond Report is applicable to their province (82%).

How applicable do you think these conclusions are to your province?

APPLICABLE	82%
Very applicable	46%
Somewhat applicable	36%
NOT APPLICABLE	6%
Not very applicable	5%
Not at all applicable	1%
DON'T KNOW	12%

The majority of members think it's a good idea to cap health care spending increases at 2.5% a year (53%), because it will force innovation (19%), it will force the province to live within its means (17%) and because health care costs are seen to be unsustainable now (16%). Those who don't think it's such a good idea (35%), do so because it equals a cut in funding or because it is unrealistic and arbitrary (15% each).

What is your reaction to the Drummond Report's target of capping annual increases to health care spending at 2.5%?

GOOD IDEA	53%
Province forced to innovate	19%
Province has to live within its means	17%
Health care costs unsustainable now	16%
OTHER	1%
Neither a good idea nor not such a good idea	6%
NOT SUCH A GOOD IDEA	35%
Amounts to a funding cut	15%
Unrealistic, arbitrary target	15%
Unexpected crises might arise (SARS, etc)	5%
OTHER	1%
DON'T KNOW	5%

When members are presented with some of the real life implications of the Drummond recommendations, the ones they like least include regionalization of health care services (2%), PSWs taking over medical duties (3%), less effective drugs and treatments not being covered (3%) and pharmacists administering injections and vaccines (6%).

If Ontario or any other province implemented the recommendations of the Drummond Report, there would be changes to the way health care is delivered. Which of the following do you think would be the most appropriate change to health care delivery?

Health teams replace family doctor	29%
Less time with doctor, more with nurse, pharmacist	18%
Means testing for drug benefits	12%
Fewer LTC beds, more home care	12%
Pharmacist for routine injections/vaccinations	6%
Less effective treatments/drugs not covered	3%
Non-medical service workers taking on duties	3%
Regional services, not as local	2%
DON'T KNOW	15%

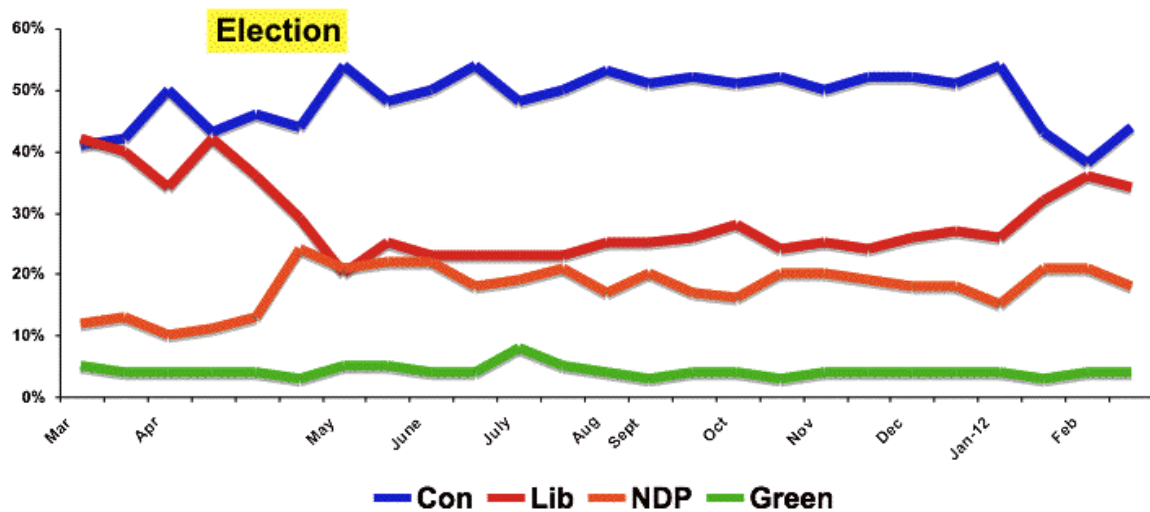
More than half of members rate the health care in their province as “excellent” or “very good” (53% in total). Very few rate it as poor (5%).

How do you rate the quality of health care in your province overall?

Excellent	6%
Very good	47%
Good	21%
Fair	20%
Poor	5%
DON'T KNOW	*

ELECTORAL PREFERENCE

After being tied with the resurgent Liberals (38% to 36%) in the last wave of polling, the Conservatives have improved their position (44%) at the expense of the Liberals (34%) and the NDP (18%). The NDP is now firmly seen as the third party among our members.



More than 2100 CARP Poll™ panel members responded to this poll between February 24 and 29. The margin of error for a probability sample this size is plus or minus 2.2%, 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