

**OAS/Health Care Quality Poll Report
February 10, 2012**

KEY FINDINGS

Not only do the majority of CARP members disagree with any attempt to increase the age for OAS or to try to make such a move without campaigning on it, they make their political views clear, and preference for the Conservative Party has dropped 11 points since we last polled two weeks previously

	Agree With Plan	Without Election
AGREE	33%	37%
DISAGREE	63%	62%
DON'T KNOW	4%	2%

	January 14 2012	January 28 2012	CHANGE
Conservative	54%	43%	-11
Liberal	26%	32%	+6
NDP	15%	21%	+6
Green	4%	3%	-1

Members are evenly split on whether it is a good idea to base provincial health care funds on a per capita basis, with those in favour saying it guarantees fair distribution and those against saying provinces with many seniors will suffer.

Opinion is also split on whether it is a good idea to provide the provinces with health care funding with no strings attached. Those in favour say provinces have unique needs and health care is a provincial jurisdiction. Those opposed say the federal government has a role in guaranteeing national standards.

Opinion is also split on whether a two year, 6% escalator, followed by increases tied to GDP growth is a good idea. Those in favour say this will foster innovation and end unsustainable increases. Those opposed say health care needs stable funding.

Two thirds of members agree it was not a good idea for Minister Flaherty to decide health care funding without consulting the provinces, and this is because they feel the provinces and the federal government must cooperate on health care reform, for which provincial input is necessary.

Members believe the aspects of the health care system most in need of reform include primary care, wait times, long term care and home care. Innovations seen to be especially effective include a national home care program, a blended (public/private) health care system and a national pharmacare program.

One half of members believe the best thing that could happen now is that the provinces can cooperate to build a true national health care system, or the provinces can convince the federal government back to the bargaining table.

One half of members suffer lower back pain and a third suffer weakness or numbness in their legs. Most have seen a doctor about these conditions. Very few were diagnosed with a pinched nerve as the cause.

Noted above, while the Conservative Party still leads in member preference, they have lost more than 10 points since the last wave of polling, which have been picked up by the Liberals and the NDP, and this is entirely due to the commotion over OAS.

OAS

Two thirds of CARP members disagree with both the plan to increase the eligibility for OAS from 65 to 67 years (63%) *and* the fact that this decision was made without being put to the voters in an election (62%). In each case, more than 4-in-10 members use the strongest terms to express their disagreement (“disagree strongly” - 43% and 48%).

Prime Minister Harper announced at the Davos Economic Forum yesterday that Canada would fundamentally reform its pension system. Experts believe this includes raising the eligibility for OAS from 65 to 67. How much do you agree with this plan?/How much do you agree the government should be allowed to make such a fundamental change WITHOUT putting it the voters in an election?

	Agree With Plan	Without Election
AGREE	33%	37%
Agree strongly	10%	21%
Agree	24%	14%
DISAGREE	63%	62%
Disagree	20%	14%
Disagree strongly	43%	48%
DON'T KNOW	4%	2%

HEALTH CARE FUNDING PLAN

Members are evenly split on whether per capita funding is a good idea (45%) or not (46%) for health care. Those in favour say it will guarantee fair distribution (25%) while those opposed says it ignores provinces with lots of seniors (22%).

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty announced before Christmas that all provinces would continue to receive their health funding based on the number of residents, not the economic status of the province. Which of the following statements would best describe your reaction to this plan?

GOOD IDEA	45%
Guarantees fair distribution	25%
Larger provinces get larger share	11%
Less complex	8%
OTHER	2%
Neither good nor not such a good idea	4%
NOT SUCH A GOOD IDEA	46%
Ignores provinces with many seniors	22%
Poorer provinces will suffer	11%
Smaller provinces will have greater challenges	8%
OTHER	4%
DON'T KNOW	5%

Once again, opinion is split on whether it's a good thing (44%) or a bad thing (50%) to place no restrictions on health care funding. Those in favour say provinces have unique needs (18%) and that health care falls under provincial jurisdiction (15%). Those opposed to this say it is because the federal government has a role to play in guaranteeing national standards (28%).

In addition, Minister Flaherty announced the federal government would impose no restrictions on how the money was spent, as long as the Canada Health Act was observed. Which of the following statements best describes your reaction to this plan?

GOOD IDEA	44%
Each province has it's own needs	18%
Falls under provincial jurisdiction	15%
Allows provinces to experiment/innovate	11%
OTHER	1%
Neither a good nor not such a good idea	3%
NOT SUCH A GOOD IDEA	50%
Federal govt. has role to play in national standards	28%
Provinces haven't shown they can self-monitor	11%
Will lead two tier health care	10%
OTHER	1%
DON'T KNOW	3%

Opinion is split on the escalator clause for health care funding, with half in favour (45%) and half opposed (44%). Those in favour say funding tied to GDP will stop unsustainable increases (20%) or that this will promote innovation (19%). Those opposed agree health care needs stable funding (30%).

In addition Minister Flaherty told the provinces that health care funding would continue to increase at 6% annually for two years, and then be tied to the rate of GDP growth. Which of the following statements best describes your reaction to this plan?

GOOD IDEA	45%
Will stop unsustainable increases	20%
Will promote innovation	19%
6% is too much	4%
OTHER	3%
Neither good nor not such a good thing	5%
NOT SUCH A GOOD THING	44%
Health care needs stable funding	30%
This amounts to a funding cut	11%
Will stifle innovation	1%
OTHER	2%
DON'T KNOW	6%

Two thirds of members agree that it wasn't a good idea to offer health care funding without consulting the premiers (64%), and this is mostly because members believe the provinces and the federal government should cooperate on health care (30%) or that provincial input is necessary to reform (23%).

Minister Flaherty made these decisions about health care funding without consulting the premiers. Which of the following statements best describes your reaction to this move?

GOOD IDEA	33%
Forces provinces to act	15%
Demonstrates government is serious about reform	10%
Avoids protracted negotiations	8%
Neither good nor not such a good idea	2%
NOT SUCH A GOOD IDEA	64%
Provinces/feds should cooperate on health care	30%
Provincial input necessary to reform	23%
Not cooperative federalism	11%
DON'T KNOW	1%

One half of respondents believe they live in a “have” province (51%) as opposed to a third who think they live in a “have-not” province (38%).

Do you believe you live in a "have" province, or a "have-not" province?

Have province	51%
Have-not province	38%
DON'T KNOW	11%

HEALTH CARE INNOVATION

Opinion is split among members as to which areas of health care could benefit the most from innovation, with most picking primary care and family doctors (21%), followed by wait times (19%) and long term care (15%) and home care (12%).

Minister Flaherty has said the government’s funding plan will prompt provincial innovation. What ONE area of health care reform do you think is in the most need of innovation?

Primary care/family doctors	21%
Wait times	19%
Long term care	15%
Home care	12%
Cost of prescription drugs	10%
Hospital care	7%
Electronic health records	7%
Emergency care	4%
Clinics/labs	2%
OTHER	3%

Once again, there is a split in opinion on which health care innovations are the best, with about a quarter choosing a national home care program (24%) or a blended (private/public) health care system (24%). A national pharmacare program is also popular (20%).

And what specific type of health care innovation do you think offers the most promise for bringing down costs and improving care?

National home care program	24%
Blended health care system (public/private)	24%
National pharmacare program	20%
Virtual ward	7%
National family caregiver support program	7%
National/regional waiting list	4%
More private clinics	3%
Better palliative/end of life care	3%
House calls	2%
OTHER	7%

The largest group of members believe the provinces should band together to create a true national health care program (47%), followed by a minority who think the provinces should (or can) negotiate the federal government back to the bargaining table (15%).

Now that the federal government has presented the provinces with a final decision on health care funding without consulting the provinces, what should the provinces do to have a positive effect on health care reform?

Province coordinate true National health care reform	47%
Provinces convince government back to table	15%
Each province to it's best on it's own	9%
Provinces coordinate national pharmacare program	7%
Provinces agree on national fee schedule/formulary	7%
Provinces coordinate national home care program	6%
Provinces stop competing for doctors/nurses	2%
Provinces coordinate on group practices	2%
Provinces coordinate national	
OTHER	3%

The vast majority of members agree with CARP’s position on re-inventing health care (88%), and one half take the strongest view (“strongly agree” - 52%).

CARP has advocated for a wholesale reinvention of the health care system in Canada, rather than the multiple studies and commissions which take place. How much do you agree Canada needs to focus health reform on a national pharmacare plan, an integrated national home and continuing care strategy and better palliative and end-of-life care?

AGREE	88%
Agree strongly	52%
Agree	37%
DISAGREE	6%
Disagree	5%
Disagree strongly	2%
DON'T KNOW	5%

LOWER BACK PAIN

One half of members say they suffer lower back pain (51%), but most say it only affects their quality of life “somewhat” (17%) or hardly at all (21%)

Do you have lower back pain?

YES	51%
Affects quality of life a great deal	5%
Affects quality of life quite a bit	8%
Affects my quality of life somewhat	17%
Hardly affects my quality of life	21%
NO	49%

About one third of members have numbness or weakness in their legs (37%), but once again, it affects quality of life only somewhat (13%) or hardly at all (11%).

Do you have pain, numbness or weakness in one or both legs when you walk or stand?

YES	37%
Affects my quality of life a great deal	6%
Affects my quality of life quite a bit	7%
Affects my quality of life somewhat	13%
Hardly affects my quality of life at all	11%
NO	63%

Four-in-ten members have consulted a doctor about these conditions (43%), mostly about lower back pain (18%) or both (16%).

Have you seen a doctor about either of these conditions?

YES	43%
Lower back pain	18%
Both	16%
Numbness/weakness in legs	9%
NO	22%
HAVE NO BACK PAIN/NUMBNESS IN LEGS	35%

Just one tenth of members have been diagnosed with a pinched nerve (10%).

Were you diagnosed with a pinched nerve?

Yes	10%
No	56%
HAVE NO BACK PAIN/NUMBNESS IN LEGS	34%

One tenth were told nothing could be done (11%), while somewhat fewer were told surgery was an option (7%).

Which of the following best describes the outcome of your diagnosis:

Was told nothing could be done	11%
Was told surgery was an option	7%
Was told I was too old for spine surgery	1%
WASN'T DIAGNOSED WITH PINCHED NERVE	81%

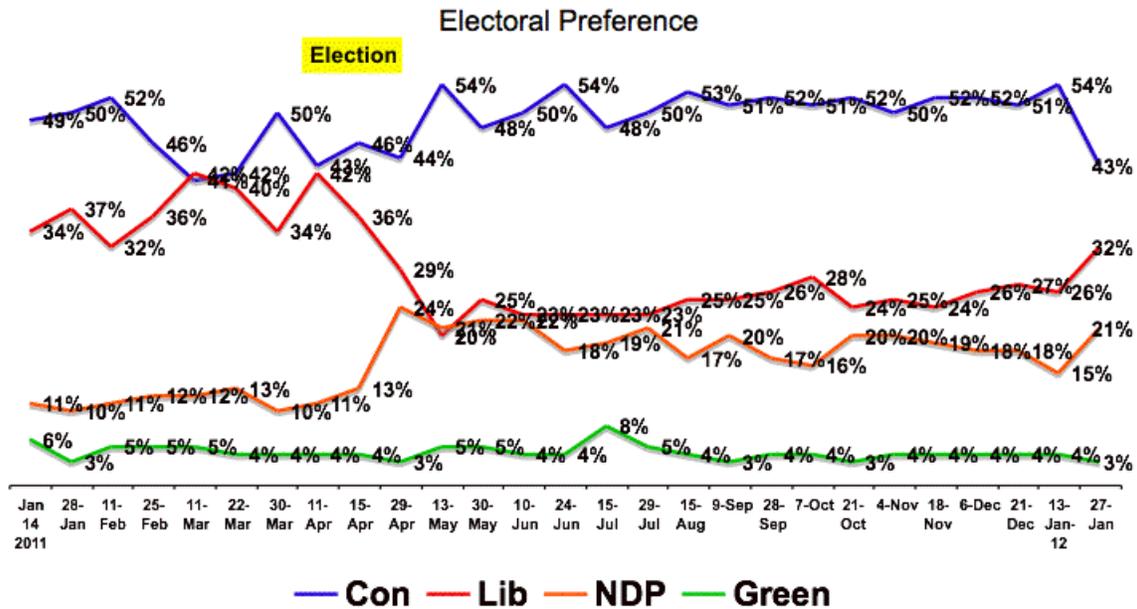
The largest group of members say they will not consider surgery for their condition (13%).

Which of the following best describes your consideration regarding the surgical management of your diagnosis:

I will not consider surgery	13%
I have had spinal surgery completed	2%
I have consulted a spinal surgeon	2%
I am on a wait list to see a spinal surgeon	1%
I am on a wait list for spinal surgery	*
WASN'T DIAGNOSED WITH PINCHED NERVE	82%

ELECTORAL PREFERENCE

While the Conservative Party continues to lead, they have lost 11 points in the past two weeks (due entirely to the fracas over OAS) and now lead the resurgent Liberals by just 11 points (43% to 32%). While the NDP has seen some growth during this crisis (from 15% to 21%), they are still the third place party among CARP members.



More than 3700 CARP Poll™ panel members responded to this poll between January 27 and 31. The margin of error for a sample this size is plus or minus 1.7%, 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