

Province's funding of health care leaves much to be desired—survey

MELANIE HENNESSEY
Special to The IFP

The majority of residents in Halton and the Greater Toronto Area say local hospitals don't receive a fair share of provincial funding and that the quality of health care has declined because of underfunding, according to a recent poll.

The public opinion survey of 500 adults, conducted between March 5 and 14 by Léger Marketing and Redfern Research, also found that more than half of the residents in Halton, Durham, Peel and York say the issue of improving local access to health care will be very important in how they vote in the next provincial election. A further 37 per cent say it will be at least somewhat important.

"GTA/905 residents believe that it is time for the government to address the underfunding issue," said Kirk Corkery, chair of the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance. "I think many people will be disappointed if the government doesn't respond to what is obviously a key concern for more than one quarter of the population of the province."

Other key findings of the survey reveal that among GTA/905 residents:

- 46 per cent believe their hospitals get less than their fair share of provincial funding
- Less than one-third believe their hospitals are treated fairly compared to other regions of the province
- 83 per cent strongly agree their community hospitals should receive a fair share of provincial funding
- More than half agree the quality of hospital care in the GTA/905 has declined because of underfunding, while less than one-quarter disagree
- Most say hospital access hasn't improved in

the last five years, with 27 per cent saying access has actually gotten worse

- 81 per cent strongly agree it's important to have access to hospital care close to home
- 52 per cent of those who needed hospital care last year had to leave their community to obtain some of that care.

"This survey confirms that many of the three million people living in the GTA/905 know that the provincial government's funding of their local hospitals is not keeping pace with their booming communities," said Tariq Asmi, executive director of the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance.

In terms of wait times, the poll found 48 per cent of people in the GTA/905 say the provincial government has done a poor or very poor job of reducing wait times for health care in their community, while 24 per cent gave the Province a fair grade.

Only 14 per cent of those surveyed say the Province has done a good or very good job in reducing wait times.

Similarly, 34 per cent of residents believe the Province has done a poor or very poor job in improving the quality of hospital care in the GTA/905 over the last five years, and a further 31 per cent rate government performance as only fair. In contrast, 25 per cent credit the Province with a good or very good performance in this area.

A recent PricewaterhouseCoopers study showed that GTA/905 residents are receiving \$214 less per resident for hospital care annually compared to the provincial average. This translates into \$900 million less per year in provincial funding compared to the Ontario average, and the gap is growing by millions of dollars each year.

For background information and poll analysis visit the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance website at www.gta905health.com



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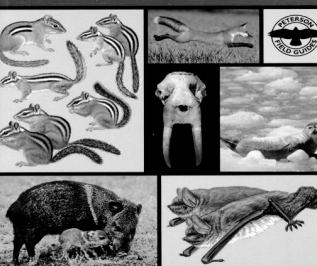
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