

# Media Release

## Coalition of Family Physicians Presentation

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Prepared by:

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## Canadians Open to Private Health Care

“Private health care is no longer the third rail of Canadian politics” says Greg Lyle, Managing Director of Innovative Research Group, Inc, speaking of polling results released for a Coalition of Family Physicians conference to be held on Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

INNOVATIVE released a number of questions from surveys conducted on its Canada 20/20 panel from January to May. Canada 20/20 was one of the most accurate polls in the last federal election, topping most major telephone polls in predicting the final outcome.

The INNOVATIVE results included the following:

- **Health care is not the wedge it used to be:**
  - All three national parties are within 3 points of each other as the best party on the issue of health care.
  - His view on health care was not a key element of why some called Stephen Harper “scary” over the course of the campaign.
  - As many Canadians expected the new government to make health care better as they did worse.
  - Most Canadians thought the budget would have no impact on the health care system.
  - The federal and the provincial governments are in a similar situation in terms of managing reaction to their respective budgets: more Canadians thought that each budget would have a negative impact on health care, rather than a positive one.
  
- **Chaoulli has raised the profile of a key value that divides Canadians on most issues related to public health – an individual’s right to spend their own money if the government health system fails them.**
  - When forced to choose between giving people the right to buy their own health care when the public system fails them, and preventing private payment to keep people equal, Canadians are split right down the middle.
  - Canadians are also split on private delivery of health care. They very narrowly oppose it when individuals have to pay, and narrowly support it if the government pays.

- **Our values divide us into four tribes when it comes to private health care:**
  - **Private True Believers** are at one pole. The three out of ten Canadians (29%) who fall under this category not only believe we have the right to spend our own money if the system fails us, they also have no problem with two-tier health care or people making a profit from public health dollars.
  - In the middle are **Ambivalent Egalitarians** and **Pragmatic Public Supporters**. **Ambivalent Egalitarians** (22% of Canadians) are suspicious of the profit motive, but think that allowing a parallel system may relieve the stress on the public system. Further, they strongly believe people should be able to spend their own money as they choose. **Pragmatic Public Supporters** (26%) are less convinced private payment will relieve pressure and are more concerned about two-tier health care. In fact, they completely oppose allowing patients to pay for their own care, but this group doesn't really care about private delivery so long as the government pays.
  - At the other pole are **Public True Believers**. While they are the smallest group of Canadians at 22%, the middle groups tend to share most of their suspicion of the profit-off-of-healthcare motive and their accessibility concern; as such they are supported by both Ambivalent Egalitarians and Pragmatic Public Supporters in backing the public health system.
  
- **Using private insurance a valid option for about half the public:**
  - Just over one in five Canadians (22%) report having some form of private insurance which allows access private health care here or abroad.
    - 43% of those who don't have such insurance are interested in buying it.
  
- **Private clinics enjoy more support than opposition:**
  - 44% support private medical clinics while 39% are opposed
  - 85% say if government wants private clinics to go away, they should focus on making the public system work better.

- **While the debate on private clinics is not changing minds on the issue, it is creating some pressure on government:**
  - About half our panellists say they heard something about private medical clinics in March.
    - The debate left almost the same number feeling more favourable (31%) towards private clinics as less favourable (30%).
  - The impact on both federal and provincial governments is more negative.
    - While 47% have no view on the job the federal government is doing on the issue, 35% disapprove while only 17% approve.
    - Similarly, while 41% have no view on the job their provincial government is doing on the issue, 38% disapprove while only 19% approve.
  
- **68% agree they are worried that if we allow a parallel private system, the best doctors will work in the private system.**

## About This Study

Canada 20/20 is our ongoing program to understand who we are as Canadians and where we are going as a country. The heart of Canada 20/20 is an online panel of roughly 7,000 Canadians who completed weekly surveys during the recent federal election and monthly surveys since Election Day.

Anyone interested in participating in these surveys can join the Canada 20/20 panel by going to [Canada2020.com](http://Canada2020.com) and completing the enrolment survey. While our core analysis is based on those who respond to email invitations, we will also be tracking the views of those who 'walk in' and, once we have confirmed they represent a typical cross-section of Canadians, they will be integrated into our analysis.

This release is based on results from Waves 7 and 8 of the election series of surveys as well as results from May, April and especially March, 2006.

In terms of margin of error, the last 20/20 wave in May had 3,600 responses eligible for inclusion in our analysis, which were weighted according to the 2001 Census. With a sample of this size the aggregated results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 1.63$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had a representative cross-section of Canadians eligible to vote been polled. The margin of error will be larger within each sub-grouping of the survey population.

Detailed sample sizes, field dates and margins of error for each survey wave can be seen below.

Survey Wave	Start Date	End Date	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/- %, 19 times out of 20)
1 <sup>st</sup> Wave	December 2, 2005	December 12, 2005	N = 4808	+/- 1.41%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Wave	December 13, 2005	December 19, 2005	N = 4725	+/- 1.43%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Wave	December 20, 2005	December 26, 2005	N = 5156	+/- 1.36%
4 <sup>th</sup> Wave	December 27, 2005	January 2, 2006	N = 4838	+/- 1.41%
5 <sup>th</sup> Wave	January 3, 2006	January 9, 2006	N = 4990	+/- 1.39%
6 <sup>th</sup> Wave	January 10, 2006	January 16, 2006	N = 4936	+/- 1.39%
7 <sup>th</sup> Wave	January 18, 2006	January 22, 2006	N = 4701	+/- 1.43%
8 <sup>th</sup> Wave	January 26, 2006	January 31, 2006	N = 5019	+/- 1.38%
February Canada This Month (CTM),	February 17, 2006	February 25, 2006	N = 4189	+/- 1.51%
March CTM	March 22, 2006	March 29, 2006	N = 3063	+/- 1.77%
April CTM	April 20, 2006	April 27, 2006	N = 2916	+/- 1.81%
May CTM	May 17, 2006	May 25, 2006	N = 3600	+/- 1.63%

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