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## Backgrounder

### Highlights from April Polling April 20, 2006

#### Summary

Albertans support many of the elements of the Third Way, although understanding of the Government of Alberta's healthcare policy framework is generally low. Albertans most closely associate the Third Way with a) allowing more private sector delivery of healthcare services, and b) allowing doctors to do limited surgeries in a private healthcare setting after working predetermined hours in the public system. However, awareness for other elements of the framework is low, and support for most of these elements is generally high.

#### Research Findings

Seventy-three percent (73%) of Albertans feel that healthcare is the most important issue for the Alberta Government to deal with in the next 3 to 6 months. The next most important issue is education (30%). Albertans are generally divided on if the Provincial Government is on the wrong track (45%) or the right track (46%) in terms of how it is addressing healthcare.

While 60% of Albertans are aware of the Third Way healthcare policy framework, 41% feel that this policy framework will be a bad thing for healthcare, while 37% feel that it will be good thing, 7% think it will be neutral, and 15% don't know.

The two elements most closely associated with the Third Way are a) allowing more private sector delivery of healthcare services (72% aware), and b) allowing doctors to do limited surgeries in a private healthcare setting after working predetermined hours in the public system (62% aware). Whereas 50% of Albertans approve of allowing more private sector delivery of healthcare services, 45% approve of allowing doctors to do limited surgeries in a private healthcare setting.

Other elements of the Third Way have lower levels of awareness, but high levels of approval. For example, although 57% of Albertans were aware that the framework

involves *putting greater emphasis on community health clinics to relieve the stress on hospital emergency ward*, 86% approve of this, and although only 40% were aware that the framework involves *removing restrictions that prevent pharmacists, nurses and other professionals from making clinical care decisions appropriate to their training and knowledge*, 75% approve of this.

Other findings from the research include:

- 50% of Albertans agree that *physicians should be allowed to practice in both the public and private sectors*;
- 77% would *like more choice in the type of healthcare services available and the manner in which they are delivered*;
- 60% agree that they *should have the option of paying for quicker, more convenient access to routine procedures like hip and knee replacements and cataract surgery*;
- 57% agree that *having medical procedures available privately will reduce wait times in the public system*; and,
- 53% agree that *“if some Albertans want to pay extra for the convenience of quicker access to health professionals, I’m okay with that”*.

### **Methodology**

This telephone survey was conducted by NRG Research Group from April 11 to 18, 2006. The survey was administered with adults from 1,000 randomly selected households across Alberta. Using Statistics Canada data, the results were weighted by age, gender and region to ensure that the sample was representative of Alberta . The maximum margin of error on the reported findings is +/-3.1%, 19 times out of 20.

### **About NRG Research Group**

NRG Research Group is one of Canada’s leading market research and opinion polling companies. NRG provides both quantitative and qualitative research services through Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto and Halifax offices to clients throughout North America and worldwide.

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