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Rural Health Survey Results: A Resounding “YES” to 6 Mayors’ Approach.

The results from an online survey called “6 Questions from 6 Rural Mayors” (survey was distributed to every candidate we could reach in the 2020 provincial election) indicates a willingness for elected officials to work with the 6 Rural Communities to find effective solutions to health reforms, solutions that work for everyone.

“Every elected candidate, including the Premier, is on record (through the party response or individually) to answering ‘yes’ to our survey questions” said signator Mayor John Higham.

The 6 survey questions were:

1. Would you guarantee that the proposed reforms are completely revoked and that any future reforms will start from a new plan?
2. Would you consider changes to the leadership of the health authorities?
3. Would you ensure healthcare professionals are able to provide their perspectives without fear of repercussions?
4. Would you commit to wider consultation including rural residents and indigenous communities?
5. Would you ensure that any public process has access to the data used in creating a new health care plan and to the data used to monitor its progress?
6. Would you ensure that any proposed health care reforms examine the impacts at local and provincial levels, among rural, urban, and Indigenous communities, and that any potential issues identified will be addressed in advance to ensure healthcare delivery is not compromised?

In an interview conducted by CBC’s Harry Forestell on election night, Premier Blaine Higgs said that getting a majority would permit him to move on the health reforms. “For me, it was a mistake to go down and talk about the actual ERs and changing the hours, that was never the issue.” he said. “The issue is the challenge of meeting the service requirements that we must for citizens”.

Higgs directly addressed the questionnaire that was sent by the Mayors of the 6 municipalities most impacted by the initial cuts.

“The questionnaire was very, very clear, but very reasonable that they want to be part of the solution. They know we have challenges in our province and they want to be part of the solution, you know you can’t ask for anything more than that.” The Premier then went on to apologizing for not laying out all the facts and agreed to share the data in upcoming meetings with the communities and to work together to look for solutions. Back in July Elaine Smith, Chair of the Sackville Hospital Foundation asked for a statement of the facts and analysis used in the decision under the Right to Information Act, and was denied.

The Rural Mayors’ expectations are that the favourable response to the survey questions indicates a significant change in tone from the government and that the survey results could offer a viable route to change health policy in the province

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