

# SURGICAL CARE CHALLENGES

## WHAT WE HEARD

### What was the goal of this member engagement?

We know that specialists in BC are facing significant challenges. Growing waitlists; surgical wait times; and additional burdens on surgeons, anaesthesiologists, and other health care providers are pressing concerns. The pandemic has exacerbated existing issues in surgical care, and the worsening shortage of health care staff has led to cancellations and disruptions to surgery.

We sought your input to ensure that Doctors of BC is positioned to advocate for policy solutions that reflect your experience and meet your needs.

### How did we seek member input?

#### Surgery and Anesthesiology Sections Town Hall

Section members provided feedback on the Ministry of Health's surgical renewal and ramp-up program and the status of surgery in BC at a town hall meeting.

Draft policy recommendations and commitments were created based on that feedback.

#### Online engagement

Targeted interactive online engagement was then used to assess support for and feedback on the draft policy recommendations and commitments. Feedback was gathered from surgeons, anaesthesiologists, consultant specialists, physician surgical assistants, and BC Family Doctors.

### What did we ask?

We used two tools to gather member input:



**A survey seeking input on draft policy recommendations and commitments**



**An interactive ideas board seeking additional thoughts and other policy approaches for consideration**

### Who participated in the online engagement?

**149** registered members

#### Type of practice

Specialist: 81%  
Family physician: 14%  
Other: 5%

#### Practice setting

Facility-based: 59%  
Community-based: 8%  
Both: 33%

#### Geographic setting

Urban: 71%  
Semi-urban: 18%  
Rural: 11%

# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

There was a high level of support for the draft recommendations and commitments, and respondents provided feedback on and ideas for solutions to the current challenges they face. They also stressed the need for physician input to be included in provincial, regional, and local surgical planning and emphasized the need to address staffing shortages.

Key themes are outlined below.

## Physician input

- 90% of respondents agreed that government should seek physician input on surgical planning.
- 87% supported working collaboratively with government on local and regional issues.
- Respondents stressed that input should be sought before policies are publicly announced (e.g., increasing surgical cases or operating room (OR) hours of operation) and the significant value in working directly with OR teams to identify issues.

## Staffing shortages and resources

- Respondents supported strategies targeted at retaining health care staff and providing physicians with necessary resources, including critical care space, surgical equipment, and beds.
- They identified nursing shortages as the number one bottleneck in providing surgical care and highlighted the need to focus on retention and improve treatment of health care staff.

## Wait times

- 83% of respondents supported making accurate and transparent wait-time data publicly available.
- Respondents emphasized that wait times do not show the whole picture and identified the need to decrease wait-time discrepancies between hospitals; ensure data is available to patients; and trace data on bed shortages, quality of care, diversity, and location metrics.

## Additional feedback

### Common themes noted include:

- The need for a shared governance structure.
- The potential use of alternative spaces to increase capacity.
- Incentivizing off-hours to avoid short-staffing and cancelled cases.
- Including physician surgical assistants in the conversation.
- The impact of the lack of access to a family doctor on surgical patients.
- The need to reduce physician burnout and administrative time.

## WHAT'S NEXT

*Doctors of BC will use these findings to further inform actionable policy recommendations and commitments specific to surgical care in BC.*