



Special ELECTIONS 2007

REPORT



- Health
- Women and poverty
- Family
- State and taxation
- Democratic life

**FIQ
Position**

**Party
Platforms**

**FIQ
Comments**

Special REPORT ELECTIONS 2007

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Responsible executive officer: Michèle Boisclair, 1st V-P | **Written by:** Lucie Mercier, Marc Thibault-Bellerose and Florence Thomas, consultant, Health-Care Sector | **Editing and coordination:** Sara Lapointe and Marie Eve Lepage, consultant, Communication-Information | **Translation :** Martine Eloy, Translation Service |

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In view of providing members with information on current issues, the Federation has decided to produce a new publication: **FIQ Special Report.**



4

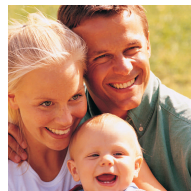
Health

FIQ Position
Party Platforms
FIQ Comments

7

Women and poverty

FIQ Position
Party Platforms
FIQ Comment



9

Family

FIQ Position
Party Platforms
FIQ Comment



11

State and taxation

FIQ Position
Party Platforms
FIQ Comment

13

Democratic life

FIQ Position
Party Platforms
FIQ Comment

The election platforms of the political parties available on the web were used to draw up this publication.

A Word from the President



Regardless of the party in power, the FIQ will continue to vociferously promote its members' demands and their aspirations as women, workers and care professionals.

In 2003, during the last Quebec election campaign, Jean Charest's Liberal Party defeated Bernard Landry's Parti Québécois and came to power. Four years later, another vote has been called and five parties are in contention for the March 26 provincial election. Which political party will prevail?

The 2007 election involves the *Action Démocratique du Québec* (ADQ), the *Quebec Liberal Party* (PLQ), the *Parti Québécois* (PQ), the *Parti Vert du Québec* (PVQ) and *Québec Solidaire* (QS). The PVQ and QS are two significant new players. The PVQ, due to the Kyoto Protocol and global warming, is rising in the polls. QS, combining the membership of the *Union des Forces Progressistes* and *Option Citoyenne*, also has a high profile in the media.

These two parties account for about 10% of voting intentions. Even though they have little chance of governing Quebec for the next few years, they nonetheless are likely to influence the debate and push the "traditional" parties to take a stand on major issues such as poverty and "ecologically responsible" economic development. They could also force a minority government to deal with the official opposition.

Beyond this electoral speculation, the FIQ has studied the parties' election platforms and presents a comparative analysis of certain themes debated in the public forum: health-care, women and poverty, the family, the State and taxation, and democratic life. The environment is undoubtedly an important issue in this campaign since it is now at the top of the list of priorities for the Quebec government and since there is a clear relation between health and environmental issues. How-

ever, the FIQ has chosen not to analyze this question since it has not yet taken a formal position on the matter. Be assured that a position will soon be taken on this issue.

Since the FIQ is not associated to any political party, the analysis presented has been produced without partisanship and, of course, based on the values, the principles and the main demands which have guided and still guide its actions. This analysis is preceded by a summary of the FIQ's positions, based on the positions adopted by delegates, and made public, followed by brief comments.

The FIQ represents 57,000 nursing and cardiorespiratory care professionals faced with problems which are currently election issues. It thus cannot remain silent or be a mere observer of such important debates. It is in the best position to defend its members' interests, represent them and present their points of view.

This *FIQ 2007 Election Special Report* will give you a better understanding of what Quebec could look like in the next few years, without forgetting that, regardless of the party in power, the FIQ will continue to vociferously promote its members' demands and their aspirations as women, workers and care professionals.

Don't forget to exercise your right to vote! ■

Lina Bonamie

HEALTH

Representing most of Quebec's nursing and cardiorespiratory care professionals, the FIQ keeps abreast of every subject of political, social and economic interest regarding the field of health and social services. As a privileged witness, but one also involved in the various reforms, it evaluates the consequences of the decisions made in the health-care system and intervenes in the debates to make its position known and denounce all kinds of abuses. The FIQ is convinced that quality health-care delivery depends on recognition of the work accomplished by its members. In this regard, better salaries and working conditions are necessary.

Since its founding in 1987, the FIQ has defended the right to health-care for the entire population, a right that can only be respected within a completely public system. When it is funded adequately, the public health and social services system fulfills its obligations regarding performance and equity. In this sense, the FIQ calls for the five main principles of the Canada Health Act (public management, comprehensiveness, universality, transferability and accessibility) to be entrenched in the Quebec *Act respecting health services and social services*.

In keeping with its values and principles, the FIQ opposes solutions that give preference to reliance on the private sector in the delivery of health services. Inefficient, costly and, above all, inequitable, resorting to the private sector serves the affluent and in no way guarantees better access to services for those who cannot afford to pay. The FIQ sounded the alarm in June 2005 when the Supreme Court of Canada allowed private funding of care in Quebec through private insur-

ance. This decision dangerously undermines the public health-care system and paves the way for treating health care as a commodity.

Finally, the FIQ opts for a preventive and comprehensive approach to public health, and increased funding of all health and social services. The deci-



sion-makers must understand that social determinants, such as education or the environment, are vitally important for public health. Consequently, the improvement of health also depends on a better distribution of wealth and a harmonization of the policies that have an impact on health. ■



The PLQ makes health care its top priority and undertakes to continue the “reconstruction” of the health and social services network. It wants to preserve the universal public system, but the private sector's contribution should be increased to improve access to health services and control total health-care spending.

In addition to this major orientation, the PLQ undertakes to:

- Increase the staff levels of health professionals. The PLQ would add 1,500 general practitioners and medical specialists to the network for the 2007-2012 period. It would continue the measures to attract and retain the nursing workforce. Increased reliance on foreign recruiting and continuation of the specialty nurse practitioner program are also among their commitments.
- Guarantee access to services. The PLQ undertakes to guarantee access to all surgical services within six months. It also intends to prioritize the decongestion of emergency rooms and better access to ambulance services. Info-Médicaments and Info-Social will be added to the services offered by Info-Santé.
- Support the most vulnerable members of society. The PLQ will establish an “Physical and intellectual rehabilitation access plan” to improve takeover of these individuals. Improvements will be made to home care, respite services for parents and childcare services. A 24/7 intervention service for youth in crisis will be established, as well as a mental health action plan “closer to the people”. Finally, the PLQ will fund an action plan to support seniors who are losing their autonomy.
- Increase prevention efforts. Among other measures, the PLQ plans to eliminate junk food in educational institutions and promote physical activity.

Party Platforms



**PARTI
QUÉBÉCOIS**

For the PQ, the reduction of waiting times for access to care is the most pressing challenge to be met. It does not believe that increased reliance on the private sector is the solution, but instead considers that better management of waiting lists and the establishment of service corridors between the regions are measures likely to improve the situation. In addition, the PQ will guarantee access to surgery within medically acceptable times.

Moreover, to adapt to population aging, the PQ believes that it is urgent to allocate more resources to home care. In this sense, it undertakes to:

- Invest \$450 million to establish a home care policy.
- Increase financial and technical support substantially to natural caregivers.
- Invest more in home adaptation for people suffering from physical impairments.
- Improve the quality of life in the residential and long-term care centres (CHSLD).

Improvement of front-line services is also a priority. In this sense, the PQ plans to:

- Increase the number of family medicine groups (FMG) to 300.
- Increase the number of specialist nurse practitioners.
- Agree with the physicians to increase takeover of chronic patients and vulnerable individuals.

The PQ also intends to make a shift in policy and orient resources more to prevention. To accomplish this, it undertakes to:

- Increase substantially the budgets allocated to accident and disease prevention.
- Update the national public health program.
- Develop concrete measures in each government department regarding accident and disease prevention for their employees and the clientele they serve.

Finally, the PQ hopes to improve access to social services significantly. In this regard, it plans to:

- Establish acceptable waiting times for social services.
- Increase the resources allocated to youth centres.
- Offer support and coaching to young people leaving the youth centres.
- Increase the resources allocated to palliative care.
- Establish a policy against homelessness.



The PVQ wants to favour the creation of health-care cooperatives to counter the current “over-medication” and empower citizens regarding their health. It intends to increase regulation of the pharmaceutical industry’s research, marketing and advertising activities. The PVQ also wishes to abolish the law restricting ownership of pharmacies to pharmacists.

In addition, the PVQ wants to:

- Include alternative medicines in the *Régie de l’assurance maladie du Québec* health insurance plan.
- Obligate health professionals to take courses in homeopathy.
- Prohibit junk food in public places.
- Orient resources more to prevention and health education.



QS proposes the creation of a public entity called Pharma-Québec, an institution which would become a public centre for purchasing and price negotiation, research and pharmaceutical production. QS also undertakes to amend the *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* to include the right to health care.



Comments

The PQ identifies waiting lists as a health-care priority but proposes to solve these problems within the public system, preferring better management. It does not seem to want to put the emphasis on increased reliance on the private sector even though, if it is elected, the PQ can easily use the guaranteed access mechanism and structure introduced by the PLQ during its mandate: reliance on the private sector to reduce the waiting



The ADQ calls for an increased role for the private sector in health-care and the abolition of rules that limit the choices of patients and of the different health-care system stakeholders. The ADQ thus undertakes to establish a true mixed health-care system to which the public and private sectors will contribute.

To accomplish this, the ADQ intends to:

- Legalize private insurance contracts for medical services already covered by the public system.
- Allow physicians to practice both in the public system and in the private system.
- Break down the barriers between the public and private sectors. Thus, services funded by the State can be delivered by the private sector and the private sector may offer its services in public institutions.
- Introduce guaranteed access to health services.
- Favour the establishment of health-care cooperatives.

lists. Indeed, nothing indicates that the PQ will reverse course and further consolidate the principles of public management and universality to maintain the public character of the health-care system.

The question of population aging is discussed from the perspective of home care, the new mantra of rich countries that rely both on takeover of dependent individuals by the community and on the fact that the baby-boom generation is a rich and healthy population. Here again, only the future will tell the extent to which these home care programs will remain universal.

Front-line services are not a new concept because the PQ proposal to develop FMGs and take over chronic patients were already in the previous program. It remains to be seen whether, once elected, it will succeed in convincing physicians to collaborate on this program.

The PQ relies on prevention but we would have expected it to come forward and propose policies based on the health determinants advocated by public health researchers. It settles for targeting healthy lifestyles, once again, without raising, for example, the questions of poverty and environment. The PQ platform remains very discreet regarding the solutions to the labour shortage. Is this an omission or a missed opportunity?

The PLQ has chosen to rely on continuity in health-care. It will continue to allow the private sector to be a full partner of the public sector. After seizing the opportunity of the Chaoulli decision and authorizing private insurance for cataract, hip and knee surgery while allowing private clinics to enter into contracts with the public sector, the PLQ will consoli-

date this path. It is thus very likely that this opening to the private sector will be generalized to other care and surgery, since the Liberal government has adopted legislation (Bills 25, 30 and 33) allowing it to do so without public consultation.

In fact, the Liberal platform repeats the main lines of a series of measures already proposed during the PLQ's mandate. It remains to be seen whether the party has surprises in store for Quebecers regarding funding of home-care programs. Indeed, the avenues explored during its mandate did not favour continuity and an overall takeover through public funding. The PLQ instead proposed "empowerment" and a fees-for-service approach, thus leaving it up to the families and the community to take charge of dependent persons.

Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that the staff shortage is recognized in the PLQ's program. However, this is more a matter of pious hopes than of effective solutions, because there will be barely enough professionals who graduate to make up for the retirements foreseen within the next 10 years. This is apart from the predictable exodus of professionals if more contracts are offered to the private sector. Moreover, the PLQ's promise to add doctors and nurses is, in fact, a promise universal to all parties because these individuals are already enrolled in academic institutions. Finally, the PLQ does not make concrete proposals to improve the conditions of employment of care professionals.

The ADQ platform associates the vast majority of the current health-care system's problems with its public character and the rigidity of the State. The ADQ thus advances the

WOMEN AND POVERTY



Position

principles of individual freedom and responsibility to justify its measures, rather than the principles of social solidarity and equity. It wants to remove the barriers, whether regulatory or financial, that restrict liberalization of health care. Authorizing physicians to work both in the public sector and the private sector, without restrictions, and allowing the private sector to penetrate the public sector are two disturbing measures because they would undoubtedly lead to an American-style system and a greater crisis of the public system.

QS attacks inflationary prescription drug costs, which eat away at the health and social services budget. The creation of Pharma-Québec would initially make it possible to reduce this budget's expenditures by nearly \$1 billion by consolidating drug purchasing. It is unfortunate that the QS platform does not raise any other questions, except for the symbolic recognition of the right to health care.

Apart from a form of organization based on the cooperative mode in which citizens would become managers, the PVQ does not deal with any of the problems experienced in the health and social services system. Also, seeking to oblige health professionals to learn alternative approaches seems somewhat out of synch in the current context. On the other hand, the PVQ is the only party that proposes action on the environment as a health determinant. ■



The PVQ election platform contains no proposal on this theme.

With a membership 90% composed of women, the FIQ has always been sensitive to the plight of women. It has the firm conviction that a society cannot progress without the recognition and full exercise of women's rights. It has long been active in the women's movement, whether through its involvement in the *Intersyndicale des femmes* or in the *World March of Women*.

More specifically, the FIQ continues its struggle against poverty and violence, a struggle that is part of a more comprehensive action against neoliberalism and a form of globalization that disregards human rights and women's rights. The FIQ also participates in the discussions of the *Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté* whose actions it supports.

In the current world context, the economic principles of competition and profit and maintenance of armed conflicts are increasing the disparities

between rich and poor, between North and South, and leading to the rise of fundamentalisms. The FIQ is thus maintaining its vigilance, because it is often women who pay the price of this internationalization of trade, are victimized in conflicts and are the object of reprisals.

In Canada and Quebec, although the situation has improved substantially, women still have a way to go to obtain equality and a standard of living similar to men. In this regard, the FIQ will have waged the struggle for pay equity for public sector employees to the very end.

Despite many interventions, the FIQ still finds too many situations of violence against its members in their work environment. It demands a true policy to put a stop to violence in health-care institutions. Finally, the FIQ wants measures implemented that truly favour the reconciliation of work and family life. ■

Party Platforms



The ADQ offers no specific policy to improve the plight of women. On the issue of poverty, the ADQ mainly calls for individual responsibility and autonomy. Consequently, this party believes that "individuals are fulfilled by achieving greater autonomy."

The ADQ wants to:

- Establish a commission of inquiry on the living conditions of seniors to preserve their right to dignity.
- Undertake a vast reform of social assistance to make a return to work compulsory for social assistance recipients who are fit to work. The ADQ also wants to improve support for social assistance recipients who cannot return to the job market.



**Parti
Libéral
du Québec**

In conjunction with family community organizations (FCO) and community organizations in the health and education sectors, the Liberal government will intensify the fight against poverty by targeting three specific groups:

- Children living in poverty
- Disadvantaged young adults
- Parents in difficulty

Special attention will also be given to single individuals over age 45.

In the light of the different platforms, it is important to mention that, except for the PQ and QS, the parties make no specific commitment to women. Must we conclude that they consider that gender equality has been achieved? Yet, there is still a long way to go.

The PQ and QS propose a vast awareness campaign on violence against women. QS goes farther and undertakes to establish a national policy to put an end to this plague and provide more support to women's groups.



**PARTI
QUÉBÉCOIS**

For the PQ, it is important to continue the efforts to arrive at greater equality between men and women. The PQ intends to pursue the implementation of the Status of Women Policy. It also plans to establish 10-year awareness-raising campaign regarding violence against women.

On the issue of poverty, the PQ intends to:

- Index social assistance benefits for recipients who are fit to work.
- Encourage social assistance recipients to go back to school.



**Québec
solidaire**

A QS government would immediately enforce and strengthen the Act to combat poverty and social exclusion. Since this is one of its priorities, QS plans several concrete poverty reduction measures:

- Gradually increase the minimum wage to \$10, indexed to the cost of living, on an annual basis. Support measures for small and medium-sized businesses are also planned to limit the negative consequences that this increase could have for them.
- Increase social assistance benefits, which will cover all essential needs. Support payments will no longer be deducted from the amount of social assistance.
- Abolish the legal prohibition against bankruptcy for citizens who have contracted a student debt.
- Build 8,000 social housing units per year.

QS also intends to develop a policy to counter violence against women. In addition to legislative tools, QS will establish a major awareness campaign on violence against women. Finally, adequate financial support will be offered to women's groups.



Comments

Regarding poverty, there are also major disparities between what the parties propose. The PVQ and the ADQ stand out for their absence of commitments on this issue. Thus, the word “poverty” only appears once and practically anecdotally in the PVQ platform, illustrating the fact that poverty and better distribution of collective wealth are not part of their concerns. The ADQ remains faithful to its classical neoliberal vision and relies on market forces and charity to solve the problem of poverty. While the ADQ claims in this campaign that it wants to move forward, what it is really proposing is a return to the 19th century.

The two major parties are somewhat timid on the issue of poverty. The PQ, which has already been more proactive on this issue, settles for a commitment to index social assistance benefits for recipients who are fit to work. The PLQ intends to fight poverty by targeting three specific groups. However, the PLQ is very evasive about the means it intends to take and its proposals are more similar to pious hopes than to a real policy designed to eradicate the problem. Moreover, a great many policies advanced by the last Liberal government have had the effect of increasing inequality and poverty. The PLQ expresses the desire to help children living in poverty; however, it seems to forget that, if they are in this situation, so are their parents.

Finally, QS stands out strongly on this issue. The FIQ considers the increase in the minimum wage and social assistance benefits, and the startup of 8,000 social housing units, are not “cosmetic” measures and thus are likely to improve the plight of the most disadvantaged. ■

FAMILY



The FIQ calls for the implementation of a genuine family policy, which takes into account the needs of families and working women. In the context of an aging population, it considers that the government should establish effective birth and family policies. Thus, the FIQ, most of whose members are women of childbearing age or already mothers, considers that the current working conditions in the health and social services network do not allow decent reconciliation of work and family life. Indeed, chronic overwork, systematic reliance on compulsory overtime and casualization are still too

present in the everyday lives of working women for them to lay claim to quality family life.

Consequently, the FIQ requires the implementation of true work-family reconciliation measures, which takes into account the special situation of women and the reality of care professionals who guarantee services all day, evening and night. Better access to childcare services and arrangements are necessary, especially in the context of a chronic shortage. In this perspective, the FIQ has been an active participant in the *Coalition*

pour le maintien de l'universalité des services de garde, the coalition for maintenance of universal childcare services, and demands that these services be offered in the work environment.

The FIQ also participated in the workforce planning efforts and the events organized by the *Conseil de la famille*, and was involved in the process leading to the creation of the *Quebec Parental Insurance Plan*. These concerns were part of the negotiations for the renewal of the collective agreements. ■



Parti Libéral du Québec

The PLQ has as objective for 2007-2012 to make Quebec the world's most open society for families, from the cradle to the grave. To achieve this, the PLQ hopes to increase the birth rate significantly and ensure that this upward trend is sustainable.

Thus, a Liberal government promises to:

- Create 20,000 new places in childcare services from 2007 to 2012.
- Establish predictable and stable funding for community drop-in daycare centres.



The ADQ maintains that the family is at the core of its concerns and actions. Here are the measures advocated by the ADQ to improve the lot of Quebec families:

- Establish an allowance of \$100 per child for families who do not have access to subsidized childcare services. According to the ADQ, the current subsidized childcare system is discriminatory due to the difficulties of access. The ADQ estimates the total cost of the program to be \$912 million per year. This amount would be saved by budget cuts in public finances, particularly in social assistance. The party also counts on economic growth to finance this measure.
- Introduce a \$5,000 allowance upon the birth or adoption of a third child and for subsequent children.
- Add treatment of infertility and alternative procreation methods to the services covered by the RAMQ.
- Introduce free tuition for parents of children under 18 months of age.
- Streamline adoption procedures.

Party Platforms



The PVQ's election platform contains no proposal on this theme.



The PQ wants young families to “be at home” and to have time to enjoy it.

To this end, the PQ undertakes to:

- Establish an access-to-home-ownership program for young families.
- Establish a work-family-education reconciliation incentive program, in partnership with employers and unions.
- Offer parental leave measures to parents who adopt a child.

The family is an electoral theme prized by the different parties because it generates political capital, the proposed measures are generally popular and they result in few conflicts. For some time, the parties have proposed measures to influence Quebec’s exceptionally low birth rate. In addition, the major increase in atypical jobs and casualized jobs on variable schedules, often held by women, complicates life for young families.

During this campaign, the ADQ has made a lot of noise with its promise of an allowance of \$100 per child for families who do not have access to subsidized childcare. While this proposal seems attractive at first glance, its funding is astounding. Thus, the ADQ plans to fund this measure (\$912 million a year) from the social assistance budget and the general public services budget. In other

words, it proposes to reduce the amount of assistance to society’s most disadvantaged members to give it to others, regardless of their income.

The PQ’s proposals, all in all, are less generous than in 2003. At that time it proposed bold measures, such as the 4-day week for families with children under 12 and the 50% reduction in student debt for young parents. In 2007, the PQ limits itself to the creation of an access to homeownership program and a fairly vague promise concerning an eventual work-family reconciliation program.

The PLQ wants to make Quebec the ideal place in North America for families. However, it has very few proposals in this sense. It promises 20,000 new places in childcare services, but how much will these new places cost? If the PLQ was able to increase childcare fees from \$5 to \$7, what guarantees that they won’t rise to \$10 the day after the election? Despite the fact that family leave was initiated by the previous government, the PLQ is trying to claim all the credit for this measure.

Finally, QS proposes several interesting measures for families, totalling \$58 million, including the universal family allowance, home-helper and housekeeping services, recognition of the work of natural caregivers and support for childcare centres.

The PVQ does not seem to consider the situation of Quebec families to be a priority, since its platform does not mention it. ■



QS intends to initiate a “comprehensive, across-the-board and feminist family policy” which, among other points, favours the sharing of the parental educational role, which is mostly assumed by women, even today. Thus, QS plans to:

- Pay a universal parental allowance.
- Give a dependent tax deduction to parents looking after a child under 12 at home full time.
- Create family helper and housekeeping services with rates adjusted according to income.
- Favour integration into the job market of persons after a prolonged absence by offering support.
- Recognize the work of natural caregivers economically and socially.

STATE AND TAXATION

The FIQ has always been in favour of the redistribution of wealth by taxation and by asserting the role of the State as guarantor of citizens' rights and the proper functioning of society. The State is the expression of the collective public interest; it is a central player in an infinitely complex society in which different political, economic, social, ideological and religious forces operate side by side and confront each other.

Today, the FIQ's position is reaffirmed by the context of globalization, internationalization of trade and the new geopolitical order linked to the reactions provoked by the September 11, 2001 attacks, resulting in a new deal. Whether regarding rights, identity or

the economy, vigilance is essential in order that the common good be preserved and everyone's rights be respected.

The FIQ works actively for the protection of the State, particularly public and parapublic services and its workers, which guarantee social equity for the population by offering education, health and safety, among other services. The FIQ also supports actions for the protection of Quebec's natural and cultural heritage.

Concerning taxation, the FIQ continues to demand that taxation allow adequate funding of public services and the functions the State must assume to defend and protect the



common interest. It thus opposes a tax reduction in the immediate future and calls for tax reform to restore the balance between individuals and corporations, and to remedy the problem of tax evasion. The FIQ also supports any action designed to resolve the issue of fiscal imbalance.

The FIQ will be doubly vigilant regarding the use of public funds when they are given to private partners to provide services normally offered by the public sector. The multiplication of public-private partnerships and the rise of subcontracting by government managers leads the FIQ to question these practices. ■

Party Platforms



Regarding taxation, the PVQ plans to:

- Use taxation as a means to discourage non-ecological behaviour rather than an end in itself.
- Reduce the Quebec sales tax (QST) on services and increase it on non-sustainable goods.



Concerning public finances, the ADQ wants to:

- Evaluate the relevance of every public agency and eliminate those that cannot justify their existence.
- Engage Quebec in a real debt repayment process.
- Resort to public-private competition.
- Allocate any budget leeway to reducing taxes, repairing infrastructure or paying down the debt.
- Not increase taxes.
- Make electricity rates, SAQ premiums, tuition fees and subsidized child-care service fees public and foreseeable over a 5-year period.
- Correct the Quebec tax system by reducing the taxes most harmful to investment, such as the income tax and the tax on capital.



**Parti
Libéral
du Québec**

The PLQ intends to continue the exercise of modernizing the State begun over the past four years. However, it has adopted five management targets for a future mandate:

- Control spending. The growth of public spending will be limited to under 4% and the public investment share of the gross domestic product (GDP) will be reduced.
- Reduce the management costs of government programs from 15% to 10%.
- Reduce the number of State employees by 20% between 2004 and 2014.
- In 2025, the Generations Fund will have accumulated \$32 billion, allowing reduction of the debt burden to 25% of the GDP.
- Bring Quebecers' taxes down to the level of the Canadian average.



**PARTI
QUÉBÉCOIS**

The PQ hopes that the State will continue to offer quality public quality services, transparently and at the best possible cost. However, a PQ government would deploy all the necessary efforts to reduce the tax burden on families. To accomplish this the PQ intends to:

- Reduce the personal income tax by the equivalent of 50% of excess revenues, when economic growth is greater than 2.5%.
- Add 50% of the excess revenues to the Generations Fund when economic growth is greater than 2.5%.

In addition, a PQ government intends to:

- Abolish the tax on capital for all corporations, except for the financial sector.
- Increase tax incentives for new investments.
- Make Quebec one of the most attractive places in North America for investment, research, development and innovation.

Finally, regarding relations with State employees, the PQ undertakes to:

- Eliminate the aspects thwarting freedom of association included in Bill 142 (Bill 43).
- Change the legal framework for negotiations in the public sector, in cooperation with the unions. As soon as this is done, a PQ government will re-launch the negotiating process for a new collective agreement.



**Québec
solidaire**

QS plans to increase State revenues by various means. Thus it wants to:

- Restore a fiscal balance between individual and private corporations by increasing the corporate contribution to State financing.
- Institute a more progressive tax system by adding tax brackets, especially for high-income citizens.
- Tax capital gains and dividends more.
- Reduce the RRSP investment ceiling.
- Modulate the QST to support ecological use of goods and resources. Also, the QST will be reduced significantly for staple commodities and increased for luxury goods.

Regarding relations between the State and its employees, a QS government intends to repeal all of the antilabour legislation adopted by the PLQ. QS also wants to favour unionization of sectors with a majority of women workers, and to amend the Labour Code to allow multi-employer unionization.



Comments

The positions of the parties on issues related to the State and taxation range from all to nothing. The PV does not mention the State and its role. It may want to forget its existence or make it disappear in favour of a completely different mode of social and political organization, in which funding would be exclusively based on ecological taxes.

The ADQ platform proposes to clean house: a State withered down to its simplest expression. Performance would be the sole and only criterion in conducting this cleanup. Thus, public services that meet the public's needs but that are not competitive could disappear. The ADQ would also reduce personal income taxes and favour as much investment as possible by further reducing corporate taxes.

The PLQ pursues its reengineering project by reducing expenditures, either by cutting budgets or by reducing the number of government employees. Regarding taxation, the PLQ wants to bring taxes down to the Canadian average and will continue to use the Generations Fund to store money away.

The PQ, like the PLQ, takes up the fatalistic line of the bankruptcy of public finances to justify the rationalization of the State apparatus by the principles of transparency and accountability. The PQ insists symbolically on the role of the State, which should “bring people together.” According to the PQ formula, it is necessary to “free capital” and promote the economy – meaning corporations – through tax exemptions.

QS is the only party that proposes to increase the State's revenues for redistribution to social programs. Regarding taxation, QS restores the balance between individuals and corporation and would introduce truly progressive taxation. Instead of relying completely on the economy to increase private wealth, QS proposes to nationalize certain fields, such as pharmaceuticals and wind energy, to increase public revenues.

Finally, only the PQ and QS promise to review the relationship between the State and its employees. The PQ proposes a timid review of the effects of the last public sector negotiations. QS goes much farther and wants to restore the situation by abolishing the past legislation and encouraging the unionization of women. ■

DEMOCRATIC LIFE

The FIQ affirms its attachment to a democratic system whose political and legal institutions based their legitimacy on the rule of law, on respect for popular suffrage and on the principle of majority rule.

In this sense, the FIQ participates in the various public consultations to promote and defend its members' interests. It also encourages them to use the democratic participatory forums available to them.

The FIQ also participated in the various initiatives for a reform of democratic institutions and, more recently, took a position on the reform of the electoral system by participating in the public consultation organized by the government in 2005.

In its recommendations to the *Special Commission on Quebec Electoral Law*, the FIQ called for:



Position

- A public information and education campaign.
- The establishment of a two-vote proportional representation system to choose one candidate at the Quebec level and one candidate at the regional level.
- Measures ensuring egalitarian representation of men and women, and cultural diversity in political parties and in the National Assembly. ■

Party Platforms



A PQ government would adopt measures to prevent abusive lawsuits restricting freedom of expression (anti-SLAPP: *Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation*). The PQ also intends to:

- Limit the number of government departments to 18.
- Proceed with a parliamentary reform to restore value to the role of MNAs.
- Restrict the practice of closure in parliamentary rules.



A government formed by QS would proceed as follows:

- Reform the electoral system to include proportional representation.
- Institute elections at fixed dates.
- Adopt measures assuring gender parity in the National Assembly and better representation of cultural minorities.
- Adopt anti-SLAPP measures to prevent abusive lawsuits restricting freedom of expression.



The PVQ boasts that it is “the only party to make democracy one of its main commitments”. It thus wants to favour reappropriation of power by citizens. To this end, the PVQ intends to:

- Reform the electoral system to include proportional representation.
- Institute elections at fixed dates.
- Institute the election of the Premier by direct universal suffrage.
- Establish guidelines to limit media concentration.
- Strengthen citizen initiatives as the basis of democratic life.
- Adopt anti-SLAPP measures to prevent abusive lawsuits restricting freedom of expression.



The PLQ election platform does not contain any proposal on this theme.



The ADQ undertakes to proceed with a reform of the democratic process, particularly by introducing proportional representation



Comments

Over the past several years, the parties have been confronted with debates on the reform of democratic institutions, but none has taken action to date. However, the low vote turnout (decreasing from one election to the next), the population's growing cynicism regarding politicians, and the loss of public confidence in political institutions illustrate the necessity for an in-depth reform.

Regarding democratic life, the PQ, QS and the PVQ propose to legislate to prevent the proliferation of SLAPPs. A SLAPP is a lawsuit filed by a private company seeking to silence a group of citizens denouncing its actions. The threat of a lawsuit is a powerful deterrent to citizen action, because the grassroots groups concerned rarely have enough financial

resources to be able to defend themselves. It is thus encouraging to note that three political parties undertake to put an end to these abusive and antidemocratic practices.

In addition, three parties have taken a stand in favour of proportional representation: the ADQ, QS and the PVQ. However, their position is not surprising since they are now prisoners of the existing two-party system. It remains to be seen if they will introduce true proportional representation once they are elected. The PLQ platform makes no allusion to this subject, even though it had repeatedly called for the introduction of elements of proportional representation when it was in the opposition. During its mandate, although the party tabled a draft bill and

conducted a public consultation on the issue, it shelved the conclusions of this process.

It should be noted that QS is the only party that responds favourably to the FIQ's demand for the introduction of two-vote proportional representation and measures aimed at gender parity in the National Assembly.

Finally, the measures suggested by the PVQ warrant our attention: for example, the election of the Premier by direct universal suffrage and stricter regulations to limit media concentration. ■

2007 Election Campaign A crucial moment for Quebec's future

Five parties, five different election platforms, but proposals at a crossroads, a time of crucial choices. Although sovereignty remains a backdrop to the campaign, the parties are emphasizing health care, families and issues related to the State and taxation. Issues concerning women and poverty, however, are not among the main parties' priorities.

On the other hand, it is clear that the *Action Démocratique du Québec*, the *Quebec Liberal Party* and the *Parti Québécois*, the three "leading" parties, are following the direction set since the late 80s for Quebec to remain internationally competitive. However, pressures are being felt from all sides: some are calling for more social justice, others for more competitiveness. Is it possible to achieve a balance?

One reality is certainly emerging – the Quebec political landscape is being transformed by the rise of the *Parti Vert du Québec* and the arrival of *Québec Solidaire*. These two parties are expressing their views strongly enough to renew the political debate and bring new concerns onto the public podium: a clear sign of the contestation of the traditional parties. ■

A crucial moment for Quebec's future



FÉDÉRATION
INTERPROFESSIONNELLE
DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC

FIQ Montréal | Head Office

2050, rue De Bleury, 4^e étage, Montréal (Québec) H3A 2J5 |
514-987-1141 | 1-800-363-6541 | Fax 514-987-7273 |

FIQ Québec ◀ Adresse de retour

1260, boul. Lebourgneuf, bur. 300, Québec (Québec) G2K 2G2 |
418-626-2226 | 1-800-463-6770 | Fax 418-626-2111

www.fiqsante.qc.ca | info@fiqsante.qc.ca

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