



Special **REPORT** ELECTIONS QUEBEC 2008

**FIQ position
and issues**

**Commitments of
the major parties**

**FIQ
comments**

HEALTH CARE

ECONOMY

**WOMEN, FAMILY
AND POVERTY**

Special ELECTIONS REPORT

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Editor's note

The FIQ has analyzed the electoral promises of the main political parties in the Quebec elections and presents its positions, comments and a comparative analysis of the themes and various issues which will certainly be debated throughout this entire electoral campaign : healthcare, women, families and poverty. The promises of the Green Party of Quebec are not included in this issue as they have not released their positions at the time this went to press.

The Federation is asking its members to visit its web site for additional information on the issues in this election and for the comments on the electoral current events. Updates will also be made as soon as new information on the party platforms is available.

www.fiqsante.qc.ca

Word from the president



One of the main characteristics of our political system is the possibility for the political party in power to call an election at their convenience. The Canadian and Quebec governments, regardless of political affiliation, have always used this power to meet their own needs.

Nevertheless, this power is being contested more and more, because it leads the government to orient its actions based on its election strategy, and not on the needs of the general public. It is in this spirit and with the intention of perfecting our democratic system that the Conservative Party of Canada led by Stephen Harper will pass legislation to install a fixed date for elections, which will not prevent him from ignoring his own law at the first opportunity. Is there any wonder that the general public is cynical about the political scene?

Leave it to Jean Charest's Liberal Party to decide to add cynical fuel to the fire by declaring elections only a few weeks after the federal elections and the day after the historic elections held by our neighbours to the South. Totally saturated with electoral promises and hollow speeches, visibly disturbed by the financial and economic crisis, three out of four Quebecers did not want an election before Christmas.

A government should not always take decisions based on surveys and it is normal that it will sometimes act against popular opinion. However, if the calling of the current provincial elections has stirred up such controversy, it is because the Charest government has not convinced anyone of the rightness of such a decision. Even the Charest team now admits that the only reason behind the decision to dissolve the National Assembly was the government wanting to take advantage of the opposition parties' precarious situations to try and get a majority government. The Liberals can boast that they are the best team to manage the economic crisis, they are the ones who have committed 83 million dollars of public funds in a purely partisan performance during this period of great uncertainty.

This investment is all the more appalling as by reading this document you will realize the similarities of the different political parties promises with the exception of the populist radicalism of the ADQ. This reinforces the premise that the government could have presided over the crisis without being worried.

Faced with this lack of striking issues, a sad political spectacle is presently taking place, where the image of the leaders and the speeches of the accountants monopolize the media scene while the

big debates and challenges to the established order are carried out in the whole world. Also, although a recent survey showed that healthcare is the primary preoccupation of electors, the campaigning parties appear to want to skirt around this thorny issue.

This having been said, this campaign remains important for several reasons. If the Quebec political class has not already understood that now is the time to find an alternative to the neoliberal model, the world political and economic situation should force their hand within a short time frame. One must ask, which party is most likely to adopt the required change in a progressive outlook, in the interests of the majority of the public.?

Also, must we remind them that the next government will be across the table from the Federation during the negotiations of a work contract that was imposed on labour organizations in 2005, in complete disregard for the basic rules of democracy? Who is most likely to respect us at the Quebec negotiation table?

Throughout the campaign, the FIQ will speak out on the subjects that have a big impact on its members and the general public, among others, healthcare, the economy, status of women, poverty and democracy. Even if this campaign may have little importance for many, it still remains very important to exercise the dearly won right to vote. In this age where governments no longer hesitate to resort to gags and special laws to muzzle the debate, the right to vote remains a democratic right and citizens must respect it.

Lina Bonamie

Lina Bonamie



HEALTH CARE



fiq position and the issues

A recognized advocate in the field of healthcare and representative of the nursing and cardio-respiratory professionals in Quebec, the FIQ has defended, since its inception in 1987, the right to health care for all people within a public health-care system. The FIQ specifically demands the introduction of the five principles from the Canada Health Act into Quebec legislation; public management, integrality, accessibility, universality and transferability.

The FIQ has always been involved in the different commissions and reforms that have marked the evolution of the Quebec health-care system. The FIQ denounced the fiscal imbalance and budgetary cuts which have contributed to making waiting lists longer. It believes in financing health-care expenses from the income tax of private individuals and companies. Private insurances are not a solution to consider because they pave the way for making healthcare a commodity.

Public solutions must be encouraged. The private sector in health care is notoriously ineffective, costly and inequitable and does not guarantee more access to the general public. It can certainly improve access for the section of the public that is more rich, but does nothing to improve access to public health-care services for the majority of the public. The FIQ demands the complete withdrawal of Bill 33, which authorizes the creation of specialized medical centres (SMC) and private hospitals and the performance of more than 50 surgeries outside a hospital setting.

The FIQ also demands an improvement in the living and working conditions of care professionals by, among others, the stopping of mandatory overtime, better organization of work, an end to recourse to private nursing agencies and the implementation of effective means to counteract the current and future nursing shortage. Demands which, without a doubt, will improve the health-care services offered to the Quebec public.

The Federation also demands better public financing of home care for the elderly who are experiencing loss of autonomy. For those people for whom the loss of autonomy is very important, the creation of places in public CHSLD's needs to be encouraged instead of creating intermediate resources where the care is often inadequate, manpower is often poorly trained and the search for profit compromises the well-being and the safety of those who live there.

The cost of medications is the most rapidly increasing element in health-care expenses. Quebec needs to make efforts to limit the increase in the costs of medications by abandoning its policy of support of multinational companies which produce brand name drugs. In this respect, the FIQ demands a universal public system of medication insurance and denounces the mixed system in which most of the high risks are assumed by the public part of the system. Lastly, an approach to health care centered on the decisive factors in health care must be a priority. In this way, a preventive and global approach focused on a better distribution of the wealth and standardization of policies with an impact on health care must be encouraged. ■



Health care is one of 6 priorities for the **Parti québécois** (PQ). Recognizing that Quebec has a good health-care system, the PQ nevertheless thinks that it must be adapted to the public's needs and access to it improved. Two-tiered medicine is not an answer for them. They are against the public-private partnership formula in this sector. More concretely, the PQ proposes :

- To make sure that every person has access to a family doctor.

Complete the FMG network; encourage longer operating hours of private clinics; train teams in prevention and chronic illnesses; facilitate the integration of those with foreign education; complete the computerization of the health-care network by developing a computerized patient chart.

- Reinforce the public health-care system.

Repeal the regulations of Bill 33 which encourages the development of private clinics; stop the development of duplicate private insurance; refuse mixed medical practice; guarantee access to specialized services within medically approved delays through more effective use of operating rooms; support local reorganization of work projects; increase the value of health-care professions and social services to encourage recruitment, attraction and retention of personnel.

- Make prevention and promotion of health care a priority

Create a Quebec Prevention Fund; stress programmes against tobacco use, unhealthy eating, drugs, alcohol and lottery games; implement a real policy on mental health prevention; stress pre-

vention and the fight against cancer; pursue the prevention of hospital-borne infections.

- Develop social services and social solidarity

Fight against illiteracy; support the development of a social economy for some clients such as domestic helper; implement a real plan for access to services for mental deficiencies, intrusive developmental troubles and physical rehabilitation.

- Allow the elderly to live as long as possible in their homes by investing more in homecare and support; implement a Quebec policy for the elderly; adopt a dietary policy for the elderly and fiscal regulations to support helping family members.

- Adequately support couples who resort to assisted reproduction or adoption and reimburse infertility treatments by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ).



For the moment, the **Quebec Liberal Party** (PLQ) is sticking to an economic action plan. They have promised to issue an electoral platform before the end of the campaign. This lack of a platform has not prevented the liberals from announcing various measures.

- Insure access to a family doctor by increasing the number of FMG from 178 to 300;

- Avoid ruptures in services : ask physicians to work harder to maintain continuity of care in institutions;

- Get the elderly waiting for residential centres out of the hospitals and invest in home-care;

- Oversee and avoid work overloads : reorganize the organization of work ; eliminate the obligation to work overtime and review management styles;

- Encourage new nurses and nursing assistants with three years and less of service as well as nurses with more than 35 years of service to work in the public sector by offering premiums;

- Insure reimbursement by the RAMQ for the first two attempts at IVF (in vitro fertilization).



Québec solidaire (QS) favours eight main line interventions, including universal and free public services. It's a question of choosing equality and solidarity to the exclusion of making a profit, particularly in health care.

The Québec solidaire programme focuses on five main themes:

■ Strengthen an entirely public health-care system

To do this includes: stop all forms of privatization; insure adequate financing of the public system and increase human resources; reduce the field of duplicate private insurances; implement a pharmacological policy focused on a universal and public medication insurance system; a public information system; and the creation of Pharma-Québec, a public centre for the acquisition, research and production of pharmaceutical products and, lastly, an awareness campaign on the phenomenon of over-medication.

■ Put the accent on promotion and prevention and allocate 5% of the healthcare budget to this:

Reduce the negative impacts of determining factors in health care; improve physical exercise; improve access to food (proximity, cost, quality); increase financing in mental health; systematically evaluate the impacts of major projects on health (Rabaska, Autoroute 25, etc.).

■ Reorganize our public health-care system by :

Managing the waiting lists; reducing waiting times for surgery; developing public ambulatory clinics; strengthening home-care services and nearby services within the CLSC network;

encouraging the retention and recruitment of personnel; regulating recourse to private agencies in order to reduce the use of these agencies; reinforce home-care services for those with loss of autonomy or suffering from physical or mental deficiency; creating a sufficient number of places in public residential centres.

■ Expand free access, universality and accessibility

Cover basic dental care and eye exams for all within the public system; include within the public system services for: audiology, occupational therapy, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, prohibit direct billing of extra costs (bandages, work stoppage forms and medically required devices, etc.); access to a family doctor.

■ Support the elderly

Recognize the economic and social value of the work of family caregivers; increase financing for volunteer groups in homecare; increase access to public residential centres; create nonprofit rental properties; carry out an awareness and education campaign on the mistreatment of the elderly.



In a general way the **Action démocratique du Québec** (ADQ) defends independence and re-engineering of the State. In health care, the ADQ takes the position that, on the one hand, the right to life and on the other hand, the economic freedom to make choices in matters of health. Therefore, the ADQ favours the implementation of a mixed health-care system, public/private, and the introduction of public/private competition in health-care and in the whole government system.

■ The ADQ proposes the introduction of the private sector in four fields : operating rooms, medical practice, private clinics and outsourcing of auxiliary services. It has already tabled a proposed law, Bill 392, in the National Assembly in April 2008, which would allow, if adopted, mixed medical practice, which is the possibility of working in the private and public sector at the same time. Mixed medical practice would apply to general practitioners as well as specialists. The ADQ believes it would also be possible to increase care in Quebec without increasing the financial burden on the public system because the money would come from the private sector.

■ The ADQ adheres to the Castonguay report and therefore introduces several steps taken from this report, such as the decrease in the number of regional health and social services agencies from



18 to 6 or 8. The role of the agencies and the Minister of Health and Social Services would be reviewed. These health agencies would become buyers of services for the institutions, for example from France and Great Britain. The ADQ also defends economic freedom of choice regarding family caregivers. They would like to introduce an allowance for family caregivers financed by the savings in the public healthcare system due to their contributions. An allowance would be paid to family caregivers who care for a family member in their home.

- The ADQ also proposes that the current responsibilities of the Quebec government be transferred to the regional level, including some health-care services, without specifying which ones. These responsibilities would be covered by a Regional Independence Fund financed by the royalties on natural resources and administered by local elected officials on the Conférences régionales des élus (CRÉ). These funds would be subject to equalization.
- For the financial plan, the ADQ agrees with the abolishment of federal transfers for health care and their replacement with a reduction in income tax which would mean a distribution of the cash payments between the two levels of government.

L'Action démocratique du Québec is certainly the party who goes the farthest in wanting to privatize the health and social services network by promoting the mixed system. To do this, they rely on the right to life and the economic freedom to make choices. However, it is completely false to pretend that bringing in the private sector can protect the right to life. The public network has never refused care and services to someone whose life is threatened. In reality, it is more of a question of a false pretense in order to justify bringing the trade sector into a field that is being seen more and more as a potential source of profit.

Contrary to what is being said in the media, the Parti québécois is not proposing that Bill 33, that creates specialized medical clinics (SMC) and private hospitals and authorizes duplicate private insurance in three domains, be withdrawn. They only promised to remove the regulation allowing the SMC to perform almost any surgery. Furthermore, the PQ believes in having guaranteed access, which is the basis of privatization, particularly in Great Britain. The PQ position is the same as the PLQ on this subject.

The absence of a health electoral platform has not prevented the Quebec Liberal Party from proposing some on the spot measures to deal with the most urgent issues. No overall view on the future of the health-care system nor intentions regarding privatization have been presented. However, considering its track record over the last five years, the PLQ, if re-elected, will continue its pursuit of health-care privatization through guaranteed access. In an interview on *Tout le monde en parle*, the departing premier, Jean Charest, confirmed that almost 60% of the Castonguay report has already been carried out. Remember that several recommendations in this report, that was denounced by the FIQ, advocates the development of private services and financing. What does the Liberal Party intend to do with the remaining 40% of the Castonguay report, when Jean Charest insists on the role that the private sector must play in healthcare?

Concerning the financial incentives promised in mid November, the FIQ laments the simplistic approach of the PLQ which believes that a premium for nurses and nursing assistants will solve the challenges of the manpower shortage in the health-care network. Concrete improvements in working and performance conditions must be made and it is through negotiations that solutions can be found. The Charest government has instead chosen, repeatedly, to ignore the will of the members represented by their unions and the FIQ. Bills 7, 8, 25, 30, and 31 in December 2003 and Bill 142 in December 2005 are indications of this liberal arrogance.

Moreover, QS is the party which best expressed its willingness to unambiguously preserve and develop the public health-care system. Upon analysis, it appears more and more difficult to separate the orientations of the PLQ and the PQ. At the most, it can be claimed that the PQ is not ready to move as quickly as the PLQ, but both are certainly moving in the same direction: the privatization of the Quebec Health and Social Services Sector is on their respective menus. ■



ECONOMY



fiq position and the issues

In the current context, the economy is certainly a source of concern for the majority of the population. While the stock markets collapse and, day after day, the threat of an economic crisis similar to the Great Depression takes shape, Quebec political parties are trying to take advantage of the uncertainty.

For the FIQ, the current crisis confirms its often repeated concerns that the increased concentration of wealth, from a purely economic point of view, can only be a source of instability, in addition to jeopardizing our society's social cohesion. In this sense, the FIQ has always taken a stand in favour of progressive taxation and against tax reductions for the wealthiest individuals and major corporations, to allow a better redistribution of wealth.

For the FIQ, the commitment to greater social justice must not only be achieved through progressive taxation, but through accessible, free, quality public services. For example, the rights to education and health care for everyone are rights that cannot be honoured by the private sector, whose primary motivation is and always will remain profit. The State must guarantee this right so that everyone can have access to services regardless of their ability to pay. It must also have sufficient resources to perform its missions.

In short, the Federation affirms with conviction that the State must intervene in the economy to correct the market's imperfections. The current crisis also shows that, when left on its own, the economy's "invisible hand" is very selective and always favours a tiny minority of the population, to the detriment of the vast majority. To meet the challenges of the 21st century, the State must have the will and the means to implement a strategy allowing the entire Quebec population to live in dignity and respect, values that the private sector cannot assume. ■



The ADQ clearly stands out on economic matters. Thus, while the PQ and the PLQ propose investments, modest as they may be, and some State intervention in the economy to curb the crisis, the ADQ intends to reduce public investments and shrink the size of the State. The budget cuts would total \$2 billion. Faithful to neoliberal precepts, the ADQ justifies these measures based on its belief in “work, effort, risk-taking and ‘entrepreneurship’”. Consequently, the ADQ proposes to:

- Reduce government spending by \$1 billion;
- Abolish one third of government subsidies to businesses, for a total of \$1 billion;
- Sell 7.5% of Hydro-Québec’s equity to generate a surplus allowing the government to fund its family policy;
- Improve access to venture capital;
- Promote youth entrepreneurship.



This young political party proposes many measures to increase the role of the State in the economy. It also favours a more equitable redistribution of wealth. For example, QS proposes to:

- Change the mandate of Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec to favour green and socially responsible investments;
- Encourage the use of public and collective savings for retirement by allowing a voluntary increase of the QPP contribution up to 13% of income, while discouraging savings in private plans by reducing the RRSP ceiling to \$10,000;
- Establish a local, ecological and socially responsible government purchasing policy;
- Require companies that relocate their activities to repay the loans and tax assistance obtained from the government;
- Inject \$1.2 billion for the development of public transit;
- Nationalize wind energy;
- Increase the minimum wage to \$10.20 an hour and index it according to the low-income threshold;
- Increase the list of goods exempted from the QST;
- Freeze utility rates;
- Abolish the Agence des partenariats public-privé du Québec and stop using this development mode;
- Introduce new tax brackets for more progressive taxation;
- Increase the income tax and the capital tax on financial corporations;
- Increase or reduce the income tax on businesses with 100 employees or more, depending on the ownership model and the degree of employee participation in decisions and the organization of work;
- Reevaluate tax assistance with the goal of reducing it gradually;
- Remove the prohibition on bankruptcy for former students;
- Establish a plan to eliminate poverty by evaluating the feasibility of a citizenship income;



The Parti Québécois presents very prudent and sober economic measures, which it justifies due to the prospect of an economic crisis. Thus, the goal is to mitigate “the consequences of the world economic slowdown without creating pressure on Quebec’s public finances”. In this sense, a PQ government undertakes to:

For Quebecers:

- Improve workforce training programs;
- Institute a non-refundable tax credit equivalent to 20% of the first \$5,000 of annual interest payable on a residential mortgage of households with aggregate income not exceeding \$150,000;
- Pay \$200 a year for a two-year period to beneficiaries of the QST tax credit;
- Defer from age 71 to age 73 the age when taxpayers must convert their RRSP or RPP into a taxable annuity.

For businesses:

- Guarantee loans for businesses;
- Eliminate the capital tax by 2010;
- Adopt tax measures favouring private investment;
- Simplify regulation and administrative procedures affecting businesses;
- Create a strategic investment fund, administered by the Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec;

- Increase the investment ceiling in fiscalized funds, such as the Fonds de solidarité des travailleurs du Québec (FTQ) and the Fonds d'action (CSN), by \$1 billion.

For the regions and their industries:

- Constitute regional funds that will be financed by royalties on natural resources, in particular;
- Decentralize powers according to the capacity and will of various territories;
- Support the transfer of farms to younger generations;
- Support producers who adopt sustainable agricultural practices;
- Adopt a policy on labeling of any product containing GMOs;
- Compensate the cheese industry adequately for the losses suffered in the listeriosis crisis;
- Support the development of secondary and tertiary wood processing.

QUEBEC 2008





The economy is the cornerstone of the Liberal platform and campaign strategy. The prospect of a major economic crisis also served as an alibi for the party in power to call this selection. The PLQ's commitments regarding the economy break down into three components – protection of jobs, purchasing power and businesses.

Regarding jobs, the Liberal Party intends, among other measures, to:

- Improve infrastructure investments by \$4 billion (from \$37 billion to \$41 billion);
- Increase financial assistance to businesses for vocational training by 25% (from 50% to 75%).

Regarding protection of purchasing power, the PLQ intends to:

- Increase the minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour in 2010;
- Increase social assistance benefits by 2.36%;
- Increase the pension income deduction to \$2,000.

Finally, concerning protection of businesses, the Liberals intend to:

- Guarantee loans to businesses through an additional envelope of \$1 billion;
- Add \$1 billion to the capital invested in businesses by Société générale de financement (SGF).

fiq Comments

The FIQ is convinced that the financial and economic crisis looming on the horizon is rooted in the bankrupt ideas associated with neoliberal ideology. To disregard this would be a serious error and the consequences could be felt for a long time. The State's intervention in the economy and a better redistribution of wealth seem unavoidable.

In this regard, Québec Solidaire stands out clearly from its political opponents. It proposes many measures that positively reflect the FIQ's values and historical positions. For example, indexing the minimum wage to the low-income level is a much more effective measure to eliminate poverty than the increase proposed by the PLQ. However, a caveat must be made regarding the feasibility of these measures, because they are not presented in a financial framework. However, it must be emphasized that Québec Solidaire is not alone in this situation, because no party has seen fit to present a financial framework.

The ADQ is a party that is diametrically opposed to the FIQ's values and convictions. In plain language, the ADQ proposes to go even farther in the pursuit of the neoliberal utopia, completely discredited around the world and blamed as the chief culprit of the current crisis. Moreover, the financial and economic crisis does not seem to appear on the ADQ's radar screen, as it obsesses about its crusade in favour of Christmas trees... In the current context, slashing \$2 billion from the government's budget translates at best into a great ignorance of basic economic rules and, at worst, the expression of a dangerous and irresponsible ideological blindness.

Finally, how can we distinguish between the measures proposed by the PLQ and the PQ? Definitely, these two parties seem to agree on the actions to be taken in economic matters. This only reinforces the futility of the reasons evoked by Jean Charest to trigger the election. Moreover, either the PLQ's economic commitments were already announced before the election was called or they could have been adopted by regulation. Should we be surprised that the campaign is focused on the leaders' image? In short, both the Liberals and the PQ propose timid policies that risk having very little effect in the event of a real economic crisis. ■



WOMEN, FAMILY AND POVERTY

fiq position and the issues

Women make up a vast majority of the FIQ members. Since its creation, the FIQ has recognized that society cannot advance without defending and promoting the rights of women, workers and citizens.

The fight for salary equity for the public sector employees was one of the action priorities led by the Federation for equality and an improved economic situation for women. The FIQ is actively involved in the elimination of poverty, violence, any form of inequality and discrimination experienced by women.

The FIQ, which is against any involvement of the private sector in health care, recently denounced the case of abortion services which, by enlarging the scope of Bill 33, threatens accessibility, universality and free services for services related to the interruption of pregnancies.

The FIQ also has in its heart the needs of families and workers. The FIQ considers it imperative to implement an effective birth-rate and family policy. The FIQ demands a real policy on family/work/personal life which takes into consideration the current working conditions in the health and social services network, in order to have a healthy and quality family life. The workload, mandatory overtime and precarious job status which have been repeatedly denounced by the FIQ, are still too prevalent in health-care institutions for the care professionals to experience a balance between their work, family and personal life.

The Fédération endorses the objectives of the Coalition pour le maintien de l'universalité des services de garde (Coalition for maintaining universal access to daycare). On the same level as public services in health care and education, the FIQ believes that maintaining universal access to daycares is a right in order for the children to benefit from the best conditions for development from an early age. The FIQ demands the implementation of daycare services in the workplace in order to respond to the particular situation of women and the reality of care professionals who work days, evenings and nights. ■



The PQ presents several measures aimed at family support, assuring child safety, helping families get a roof over their heads and developing social solidarity. These proposals are directed at :

Family support

- Offer better support at birth;
- Introduce a support allowance for starting school;
- Insure that each child has a daycare place by creating 30 000 daycare places in one year;
- Encourage daycare services in various areas where the need is specifically felt (workplace, teaching institutions, community centres, underprivileged areas, etc.);
- Assure greater flexibility of daycare services : 12 hour days in some CPE, daycare services for atypical work schedules (evening, night, weekends), part-time daycare, development and support of stop-over daycares additional and better adapted services for handicapped children;
- Encourage all employers to install a family-work conciliation policy;
- Create an annual bank of leaves for family activities to take care of both children and parents;
- Assure adequate financing of family community organizations;
- Revise the maintenance allowance for children.

Child security

- Encourage direct financing of community organizations in under-privileged areas which carry out interventions in criminal, prostitution and illiteracy matters, particularly in children;
- Support the development and the rebuilding of the infrastructure such as parks, pools, sports arenas or libraries in neighbourhoods where these are insufficient or run down.

Help families put a roof over their heads

- Facilitate access to property for families;
- Increase the amount of social housing for families, the elderly and single people.

Develop social solidarity

- Improve the housing programme for single people;
- Increase budgets for youth services and their families;
- Support young people who leave youth centres as adults;
- Make Quebec among the number of industrialized nations having the least number of persons living in poverty;
- Full indexation of welfare benefits.



If they are returned to power, they agree to :

- Maintain the daily rate of 7\$ for daycare services for the duration of their next mandate;
- Create 15 000 new daycare places at a reduced cost for a total of 235 000 available places;
- Increase the eligible tax credit for daycare expenses, other than those at 7\$, by increasing the eligible family income from 80 000\$ to 125 000\$;
- Increase the number of days of leave without pay from 10 to 15 days for parents who must look after their child.



The proposals of the Québec solidaire party put forward several social measures which apply in particular to the fight against poverty, the revision of the Labour Standards Act, facilitating access to unionization, fighting all forms of exclusion and discrimination and support of families. A great part of the proposals are directed at :

Fight against poverty

- Develop a social security net for independent workers;
- Immediately increase welfare benefits and revise the Individual and Family Assistance Act;
- Propose that the National Assembly adopt a proposal demanding that the federal government dedicate more financial resources in the fight against poverty;
- Build 50 000 new housing projects.

Revise the Labour Standards Act

- Pay 5 of the 10 days of family leave provided in the law;
- Raise the length of paid annual vacation to 3 weeks after one year of continuous service.

Access to unionization

- Repeal the Charest government's anti-union laws (7, 8, 30, 31,142) and allow real negotiations between the public sector unions and the State;
- Enlarge the definition of employee;
- Make the payment of a dismissal compensation mandatory for every employee.

Equality of women-men

- Modify the law on salary equity in order that it fully apply to businesses with between 10 and 49 employees;
- Increase female representativity in the halls of power.

Violence against women

- Reinforce and further develop awareness and education campaigns on violence against women;

- Ensure better financial support to women's groups who intervene in the field of violence against women;
- Back native women in their initiatives for the respect of their fundamental rights.

Cultural communities and immigration

- Insure the recognition of foreign workers' education or inform them of the level of equivalence and the required educational needs before their immigration to Quebec;

- Facilitate access to unionization in sectors where job insecurity and low salaries are the rule;

- Repeal the waiting period for the Régie d'assurance maladie du Québec and employment assistance for new arrivals;

- Reinforce the role of the Human Rights and Youth Commission;

- Propose a plan of action to fight racism against native people.

Family support

- Enlarge the régime québécois d'assurance parentale (Quebec Parental Insurance Plan) to offer coverage to the 20 000 people not currently included;

- Re-establish the régime universel d'allocations familiales (Universal Family Allowance Plan) and the benefits targeted for low-income families;

- Create 38 000 new daycare places;

- Make the centres de la petite enfance (CPE) structures more flexible to support families whose parents work in atypical jobs;

- Gradually transfer the financing of private daycare services to the CPE.



The elements of the ADQ platform concerning the family are concentrated on the three following measures :

- Install a weekly family allowance of 100\$ for each child under school age who does not attend a daycare in the network. The ADQ does not foresee new daycare places;
- Install an allowance of 5 000 \$ for each family that has a third child and for each child thereafter;
- Facilitate the return to work for parents who benefited from the régime québécois d'assurance parentale (Quebec Parental Insurance Plan) in particular by a relaxation and extension of the parental leave by offering to distribute it over 65 weeks.

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fiq **Comments**

All the political parties are promoting policies to support families. Adding additional daycare places at a reduced cost for Quebec families is the main measure announced by the PLQ and the PQ. Their proposals are different only in the number of places and the implementation of this measure.

The Quebec Liberal Party intends to create 15 000 new places by 2012 while the Parti Québécois puts forth the notion of “one child, one place” by proposing 30 000 additional places during the first year of a péquiste mandate. The PQ also announced increased support at the time of birth and the creation of a support allowance at the start of school. Outside of these three measures, the proposals of the péquiste platform does not include a financial framework.

As for maintaining the 7\$ daily rate for daycare services, the PLQ commitment must be considered with some scepticism because in 2003, when the daily rate was 5\$, Jean Charest made the same promise which he reneged on a few months later. Will the PLQ do the same for the additional places in daycare?

The ADQ vision for family support is the same as the one proposed in the last provincial election in 2007. Rather than increase the number of available 7\$ daycare places, the ADQ wants to install a weekly family allowance of 100\$ per under school-age child who does not attend the daycare network. Last year, the Conseil du statut de la femme (Council on the Status of Women) criticized this measure. The payment of such an allowance, that the non-working parent would receive, would cause a certain number of women to be considered in what is traditionally referred to as traditional work, where only the man looks after the family's needs. Therefore the ADQ proposal threatens to increase a woman's financial dependence on her spouse, which can lead to the need for State assistance. The FIQ is of the opinion, like the Conseil du statut de la femme, that this type of family support is prejudicial to women's economic independence in general.

The proposals of the Québec solidaire are directed at putting families on the electoral agenda, particularly work-family conciliation. Accommodations of work time in favour of family life occupy a great part of the proposed measures. Also, QS wants to create an additional 38 000 places in the 7\$ daycares and build 50 000 housing units. Lastly, Québec solidaire separates itself by the importance that it gives to the rights of women, native people and immigrants. ■

QUEBEC 2008



**A strong voice,
actions that
count**

**On December 8,
exercise your
right to vote!**



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