



# Special **REPORT** ELECTIONS

**What are the issues  
for the healthcare  
professionals?**

**2015  
FEDERAL  
ELECTIONS**

**Distribution of  
the wealth**

**Democracy**

**Work and  
unionism**

**Health care**

**Women**

**Gender  
equality**

**Health care  
funding**

**Sharing  
of the  
wealth**

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# Special ELECTIONS

REPORT

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## What are the issues for the healthcare professionals?



- 4 Distribution of the wealth
- 6 Democracy
- 7 Work and unionism
- 9 Health care
- 10 Women

2015  
FEDERAL  
ELECTIONS



## Editor's Note

This FIQ Special Report on the 2015 federal elections is an information tool for the healthcare professionals. It was created using the programmes duly adopted by the democratic bodies of the four main federal political parties in Québec. The content of these programmes seems to us to be a weaker indicator than the electoral platforms and other promises often made in line with the context during an electoral campaign. In it the FIQ presents its positions, its comments and an analysis of the main issues for the healthcare professionals in relation to the following themes: distribution of the wealth, democracy, work and unionism, health care and women. The information contained in this brochure is linked to the positions of the FIQ debated and adopted in its democratic decision-making bodies. They will help you to go further in your reflection and to come up with your own opinion. ■

## President's message



***It must be pointed out that the evaluation of the last Conservative governments lies at odds with the values and the beliefs defended by the FIQ. As you will quickly realize, the programme and the proposals of the Conservative Party in the current federal elections are no exception. In this respect, the Federation is wholeheartedly expressing the wish that the next government will have proposals and orientations that are closer to those of the FIQ.***

The federal elections will take place on October 19. Certain groups, often hostile to the voice of workers being heard, make certain to energetically perpetuate a legend about the scope of union action: a labour organization having as a mandate the defense of its members should only concentrate on the negotiation and the faithful application of a collective agreement. Any intervention outside this scope would constitute a misappropriation of partisan funds. Because, they say, politics have nothing to do with the daily lives of the healthcare professionals that we represent.

To that I say without hesitation that what a healthcare professional can and cannot accomplish in her workday is directly linked to political decisions. Political decisions taken by people elected during democratic elections, based on the orientations of the party for which they were elected. The organization of the care and services, in your institution, is political and can be changed by political leverage. The scope of your field of professional practice is political. Your patients' health condition and the chance to offer safe health care are dependent on political decisions.

Need we also point out that we are currently in negotiations with an elected government, which makes us offers based on its orientations? That the working conditions that this government will give the healthcare professionals rest on its budget guidelines as well as the amounts allotted by the federal government based on its own budget guidelines?

Notwithstanding those who want us to stop talking about it, must we really justify that an adequate funding of health care by the federal government would facilitate the adoption of healthcare professional-to-patient ratios ensuring the safety of the care? That the reinforcement of the Canada Health Act would stop the privatiza-

tion of health care? That the increasing number of trade agreements negotiated by the Harper government threatens to compromise the giving of public health care and services?

No, the policy of burying one's head in the sand is not in keeping at all with what the FIQ has always done: energetically and passionately defend the healthcare professionals and the patients that they care for on all possible fronts and especially on the front which determines everything that makes up their daily lives, the political front. It is furthermore in this spirit that the culture of advocacy, dear to the FIQ, has its roots. The healthcare professionals must be aware of the power that they have and use it to change and improve their daily lives and, consequently, the daily lives of the hundreds of thousands of Quebecers that they care for every day.

Accordingly, because the FIQ wants to assume its leadership as the main conduit of well-being in health, and also because we are aware that your workdays and the days in your personal life are very busy, the Federation is proud to make this information brochure available to you as part of the current federal electoral campaign. Because you don't necessarily have the time (or the desire, maybe...) to go through the programmes of the different parties running and to do a comparative study, I am sure that this document will be very useful to you.

Keep your fingers crossed that when the orientations are decided that affect our daily lives, they are not irresponsible. The FIQ defends the healthcare professionals and the patients that they care for where it counts, when it counts. Good reading and reflection on the matter! ■

  
Régine Laurent

# DISTRIBUTION OF THE WEALTH

## Positions of the and issues

As written in its Statement of Principles, the FIQ has always taken a position in favour of a united society invested with social justice. What is social justice? It is the belief that the State must play an active role in the economy so that the collective wealth is distributed more equitably so that everyone can live in dignity. Moreover, beyond the values of the Federation and from a strictly economic point of view, it has been shown that a low range of socio-economic inequalities is an important factor for social cohesion and lays out the path for economic prosperity benefitting everyone.

In this regard, the leading international economic specialists and institutions now agree on the position that economic austerity doesn't work. For example, by decreasing income taxes, stifling employment in the public sector or by cutting the various social programmes, the most recent Conservative Governments have contributed to concentrating the wealth in the hands of a minority, leaving the middle class and the poorer people in growing insecurity.

There is a need then to ask what the parties are proposing for redistribution of the wealth. Do they intend to continue applying a model of distribution of the wealth which still benefits the same elite? What are they proposing as action to help the middle class and the less fortunate breathe a little easier?



The Conservative Party remains loyal to its beliefs in matters of distribution of the wealth. In this way, the Conservatives believe that to encourage economic growth, the State must withdraw from the economic sphere and that the distribution of the wealth must be done in the market, through the private sector. As a result, the Conservatives promote a reduction in the State's role in favour of private business and the wealthier. For example, in its programme, the Conservative Party proposes to:

- Lower business taxes;
- Introduce income splitting;
- Increase the maximum contribution for the TFSA, from \$5,500 to \$10,000;
- Recommend the public-private partnership (PPP) model of funding for building and renewing the country's infrastructures;
- Privatize certain crown corporations;
- Reform the tax system to make it less progressive by reducing the number of levels;
- Maintain the public pension plan (CPP) without any improvements.



For the Liberal Party, the State has a role to play in the economy and the distribution of the wealth. Therefore, it must be pointed out that this party wants to reduce income taxes for the middle class, to then increase those of the more privileged. In the same way, the desire of the federal Liberals, in collaboration with the provinces, to introduce a basic annual revenue is a strong symbolic measure. It attests to the acceptance of the fact that the State must see to it that every person can have access to a minimum of dignity without being left to themselves. Nevertheless, the Liberals intend, for example:

- To enhance the public pension plan for the workers whose annual earnings are from \$30,000 to \$80,000 when they retire at age 65;
- To eliminate the waiting lists for affordable housing, reduce the cost of housing for low and medium income people and stabilize the economy through investments which encourage the creation of jobs in the residential construction infrastructures sector;
- To provide sustainable and predictable tax measures to support the development of rental housing and see to it that the governments insure that the investments are permanent to encourage affordable housing.





The New Democrats intend to use the State as a tool to better distribute the wealth. For example, the NDP wants to increase the progressiveness of the tax system. In other words, that means that they will increase taxes for the more wealthy and reduce or maintain the level of taxation of the less fortunate, which will contribute to better distributing the wealth, at least in terms of State funding.

The New Democrats also want to preserve the role of the federal State as a major employer. Lastly, it must be pointed out that the NDP is the only party to commit to fighting the tax havens. Moreover, the NDP elected representatives agree, in particular, to:

- Protect the crown corporations against privatization;
- Put a stop to public-private partnerships (PPP);
- Increase federal transfers to the provinces and territories for social programmes to upgrade the welfare programmes;
- Cancel income splitting.



The *Bloc Québécois* remains true to its convictions in the redistribution of the wealth: it believes that it is up to Québec to decide in what way that it will advocate for the sharing of the wealth. Nonetheless, the *Bloc* elected representatives agree to support, at the federal level, any motion for maintaining age 65 as the age for eligibility for Old Age Security benefits.

The Bloc also wants to repatriate the management of employment insurance in order to ensure access for the workers and to adapt it to the reality of Québec.



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## Comments of the FIQ

Regarding the positions defended by the Federation on the redistribution of the wealth, in particular those encouraging an active role for the State to mitigate the socio-economic inequalities, it is the NDP proposals and, to a lesser extent, those of the CPC and the *Bloc* which are the most interesting. Although the first two parties are looking to make the tax system more progressive by taxing the wealthier and the large profitable corporations more, the NDP goes further with the measures that favour families, people living in poverty and workers by attacking problems such as homelessness and an improvement of the employment insurance programme, in particular.

As for the *Bloc Québécois*, its programme is more modest for the distribution of the wealth, even though its proposals on employment insurance and the retirement age merit mention here. Lastly, the Conservative Party is on the opposite of the spectrum to the values defended by the FIQ. After a decade in power since their first election, the measures adopted by the Harper Government have profoundly changed society. Its determination to align the increase of the provinces' transfer payments for social programmes with economic growth as of 2017 will further widen the already large gap between the wealthiest people and the less fortunate. And, the reduction in income taxes for businesses will result in depriving the government of significant income and therefore justify the considerable cuts in the different programmes. ■

# DEMOCRACY

## Positions of the and issues

Looking to improve the democratic character of public debates, the decision-making which affects all of us, and the transparency of the actions of those who have the privilege of representing us should not even be an issue. Regardless of the partisan colour or the ideological orientation, the search for a more democratic society which encourages its citizens to be interested and to participate in public affairs should be consistent.

It is clear that not everyone understands it like that. For too long, politics have not been popular, battered by too much corruption, lies or half-truths and a wealth of ploys to bypass instead of embracing the rules which we have collectively given ourselves.

As written in its Statement of Principles, the FIQ is a democratic organization which encourages the participation and involvement of the healthcare professionals. The same applies to the public realm. What are the parties proposing on this subject?



Despite what the Conservative Party may propose, it is its track record over the last few years on the subject which clings to it. Whether we like or not, the orientations defended by Mr. Harper's troops, the way they are applied clearly falls within a willingness to not be transparent and hiding basic information from the Canadian people. To name only these examples:

- The use of closure and huge draft bills to impose its government's priorities;
- The muzzling of the scientific community and the organizations which criticize the orientations of its government;
- Bill C-51: implements a system of collecting information, monitoring and pre-emptive arrests;
- Major changes in the rules for data collection for the census;
- Determination to retroactively apply the legislative provisions in order to forbid access to the information collected in the arms registry.



The federal Liberals essentially want to correct the undemocratic abuses of the Conservatives, in particular the reinstatement of the long census form and by renewing the voice of the scientific community. The LPC however does not intend to propose any concrete reforms to the electoral process, other than referring the question to a "multi-stakeholder process". Moreover, this party wants:

- To make transparency a basic principle of the Government of Canada;
- To revise the role of the Senate to end its partisan nature;
- To insure that all the higher level civil servants in Parliament receive appropriate funding and that they are independent of the government.





The New Democratic Party is proposing different measures to make public life democratic. This desire is broken down into several facets. For example, the NDP wants:

- To submit all proposed military interventions to a vote of Parliament;
- To improve access to information and see to it that the requests are dealt with within a reasonable time frame;
- To adopt laws to stop the “back - and - forth” between political life, the civil service and the lobbying of large corporations;
- To protect the independence of the CBC/SRC by increasing public funding with the goal of eventually eliminating private advertising.



At the time this Special Report on the federal elections was written, the *Bloc Québécois* programme did not contain any specific measure on this subject.

## Comments of the FIQ

It appears clear for the theme of democracy that the measures advocated by the Conservative Party are incompatible with the basic principles defended by the FIQ. A good number of the measures developed by the LPC are a response to the authoritarian abuses of the Conservatives.

In the same way, the NDP is putting forth additional tools to upgrade access to information, improve control between political power and the lobbyists, and protect the independence of public broadcasting (CBC/Radio-Canada). ■

# WORK AND UNIONISM

## Positions of the



## and issues

As a labour organization responsible for representing the workers and health professionals, the FIQ is obviously concerned with the issues linked to this topic. Although several of the laws determining the scope and extent of the union tools at its disposal are found in Québec, the federal level continues to have a significant influence on the labour world.

Therefore, it is appropriate to ask ourselves how the parties in contention consider the role of the government regarding employment and the organizations responsible for representing the interests of the workers.



Is it shocking that the Conservative Party is hostile towards labour organizations? For them, it is preferable that the market and the law of supply and demand determine the salaries and the working conditions. During the course of its last mandates, the CPC has endeavored to put up roadblocks for the labour organizations. For example, the Conservatives have:

- Passed Bill C-377, based on the false premise that the labour organizations divert money for partisan or personal purposes. With this legislation, the CPC force the unions to make their financial statements public and to declare all expenses more than \$5,000 as well as salaries higher than \$100,000. The fact that this exercise is imposed only on labour organizations, excluding, for example, the big businesses and employer associations, demonstrates the political profiling carried out by Stephen Harper's Conservatives;
- Modified the employment insurance plan in such a way as to limit access and to reduce benefits;
- Raised the eligibility age for Old Age Security benefits from 65 to 67;
- Abolished the tax credit for contributions to labour-sponsored investment funds.



The NDP are talking about a number of measures likely to improve the working conditions of the majority of Canadians, as well as re-establishing better bargaining power for the organizations defending workers' interests. For example, in addition to promising to repeal Bill C-377, a New Democrat Government agrees to:

- Improve the labour laws in order to make benefits more accessible to contract or part-time workers;
- Implement new measures to protect workers' pensions;
- Protect workers' rights, such as the right to unionize and collective bargaining, the right to work in complete safety and in a setting free of harassment, the right to earn a decent salary and fringe benefits, the right to be treated with dignity at work, and the right to take advantage of fair and equal training and promotion opportunities;
- Introduce a fair minimum wage for all employees under federal jurisdiction and to forbid strike breakers in all work conflicts under federal jurisdiction;
- Improve employment insurance in order to make the benefits and the necessary training available to workers.



Relatively silent on this subject, the federal Liberals have only promised to repeal Bill C-377 voted in by the Conservatives.



For its part, the *Bloc Québécois* intends to act in such a way as to protect the Rand Formula and the right of labour organizations to act in all fields that they consider to be linked with the protection of their members' interests. The *Bloc* also agrees to fight for the repatriation of the employment insurance programme in order that it respond to the realities of Québec.



## Comments of the FIQ

The FIQ can only welcome the apparent unanimity of the opposition parties regarding the need to repeal Bill C-377. Based only on unfounded biases, the goal of this legislation is none other than to pull a fast one on the labour movement by using a pious willingness for transparency. Moreover, the NDP and the *Bloc* stand out for their concern for workers and the organizations which represent them, while the Liberals' programme is more guarded on this. ■



# HEALTH CARE

## Positions of the and issues

Key observer of the healthcare system every day, the FIQ has stood out throughout its history as a key stakeholder in any question about the organization of the health care and services. Based on its humanistic values and invested with social justice, the FIQ clearly takes a position in favour of a public, universal and free of charge healthcare system. Even though health care comes under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government has always played an important role. On one hand, because it is responsible for the Canada Health Act which guarantees the respect of the principles of universality and accessibility that the FIQ defends and, on the other hand, because through its spending power it funds a part of the health care for the entire country. That contribution has however declined over time, going from 50% to less than 25% of the provincial health budgets. Therefore, the provinces' finances and their capacity to maintain the access and the quality of the care and services have been diminished.

Furthermore, the healthcare professional unions elsewhere in Canada, as well as the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, have the same concerns as the FIQ and want the federal government to increase the healthcare funding and to tighten the rules to better protect the public, free of charge and accessible nature of our healthcare systems. In short, the appropriate healthcare funding and the setting up of guidelines to prevent the privatization of the care and services are the main issues of the campaign for the Federation as far as health care is concerned. What do the parties think?



The Conservatives do not have a stellar record in regards to health care. In fact, their actions clash with the values and convictions of the FIQ. So, the Conservatives want to relax the Canada Health Act with the goal of making privatization of health care and services easier. Moreover, the CPC modified the Accord on Health Care Transfers, in such a way that, as of 2017, the reductions in the amounts allocated to the provinces can reach 36 billion dollars over the next ten years, including 8 billion for Québec alone.

According to the Québec Finance Minister, these reductions will change the federal funding of health care from 22.4% to 18.1%. Such a loss can be disastrous for the funding of health care and services in Québec. In addition, the Conservative troops have adjusted future transfers based on the economic growth; an unfair formula which penalizes the poorer provinces and which does not take into account such factors as the demographics, the cost of drugs, etc.



The Liberals want to renegotiate the Accord on Health Care Transfers so that the demographic factor is also included in the determination of the amounts allocated to the provinces, which in itself, is a good thing. Furthermore, the LPC wants, for example to:

- Develop a national drug insurance programme;
- Develop a national strategy for care of seniors;
- Set up a national framework for mental health;
- Develop a professional protocol to decriminalize medically assisted death in Canada.



The NDP is proposing a multitude of proposals worth considering in matters of health care. It is the only party to agree to set up further assurances to prevent the privatization of health care and services and to support the delivery of public services by workers in the public sector. Furthermore, the New Democrats agree to:

- Use the budget surpluses to reinstate the 36 billion of federal transfer money to the provinces cut by the previous Conservative government, and improve these same transfers;

- Support the cooperatives and the social economy initiatives, by closely collaborating with the regional development agencies in order to propose new tools and models;
- Invest in non-profit home care for the elderly and the people with a functional limitation;
- Facilitate the desire of Canadians to live in a place of their choice that provides integrated care and welfare services;
- Provide incentives for more recruiting and training of the health professionals, especially the physicians and nurses;
- Reduce the costs by financing the provincial and territorial drug insurance programmes, by coordinating the buying in bulk of pharmaceutical products and by encouraging the use of less expensive generic drugs.



As a sovereignist party, the *Bloc* believes that health care comes under provincial jurisdiction. Accordingly, the *Bloc* will demand that the federal government reinstate the full indexed transfer money for health care and social services. Moreover, the *Bloc* wants:

- To work on decriminalizing medically assisted death with dignity;
- To facilitate the setting up of supervised injection sites.

## Comments of the FIQ

In addition to coming to the defense of the public health care system, the NDP reflects the new models of care and services through the cooperatives and social economy initiatives. The New Democrat's intention to work at offering models to allow the elderly to choose their living environment corresponds to the wish expressed by the FIQ for several years now. The Liberals and the *bloquistes* have interesting proposals, even though they are a little less detailed. As for the Conservatives, they seem more preoccupied with the profits of private businesses than by the accessibility and free of charge nature of health care services. ■

## WOMEN

### Positions of the and issues

Unfortunately, there are still significant obstacles in Canada to attaining equality between men and women. The FIQ finds that the violence against women is too often trivialized, one only need think about that which aboriginal and military women face. The elimination of all forms of violence against women must be a constant battle. For the healthcare professionals that the FIQ represents, the care settings remain high risk settings. It is in this context that in 2014, the Federation published a "Policy for fighting against violence". In this respect, all women, victims of violence, must continue to break the silence.

The fight against the poverty of women as well as for their financial autonomy and a better work-family-personal life balance have also always been important issues for the Federation and they should be at the core of the next electoral campaign. Women are always more often in a situation of poverty, job insecurity and earn a salary which represents an average of 70% of the salary of men. What are the parties' proposals on this issue?



For the exiting government, attaining gender equality and the fight against violence against women have clearly not been priorities and a report published in July 2015 by the UN Human Rights Committee corroborates this statement by giving a depressing summary of the situation of women in Canada. The CPC adopts potentially regressive measures for the financial autonomy of women, as well as for their access to the labour market. For example, the splitting of income for families with children may also have the effect of encouraging certain women to leave the labour market. In addition, the CPC programme includes the following measures:

- Refusal to open a public enquiry on the murder and disappearance of aboriginal women;
- Abolition of the long gun registry;
- Cuts in the funding of organizations defending women's rights as well as for those who promote the health and education of women.

## Liberal

The Liberal Party believes that the right to equality is a priority and in this respect, it intends to set up measures for attaining this right. For example, they want to collaborate with the provinces and territories to find solutions to the democratic deficit of women. And, they want to offer more flexible and more accessible compassionate benefits to natural caregivers. In addition to these measures, the LPC wants to:

- Amend the Canada Labour Code to allow for better work-family balance for the employees working in settings under federal jurisdiction;
- Conduct a national public enquiry on the aboriginal women who have been murdered and disappeared;
- Set up significant measures for integrating a gender-based analysis in the development of public policies.

## BLOC Québécois

The recognition that the Government of Québec and its parliament are completely legitimate in its demand to repatriate the data from the gun registry is paramount in the eyes of the *Bloc québécois* in order to better prevent violence against women. And, equality between men and women should be protected and is, consequently, not negotiable. In addition, the *Bloc québécois* proposes to set up:

- An independent complaint centre for the Canadian armed forces to denounce all forms of violence;
- The tools necessary to stimulate the participation of women and men in society immune to stereotypes and biases.

## NDP

Like the Liberals and the *bloquistes*, the New Democrats also believe in the importance of the right to equality. Thus, the NDP intends to promote the economic equality of women, by implementing a proactive salary equity plan and by improving the parental leave benefits, among other things. The NDP believes that investments must be made again in the organizations that defend women's rights as well as those which promote the health and education of women. And, the NDP wants to develop a national action plan to fight the violence against women and to start a national enquiry on the aboriginal women who have been murdered or disappeared. The NDP programme also includes the following measures:

- Develop an exhaustive policy on reproductive health;
- Insure that abortion is fully financed as a universally accessible medical procedure;
- Eradicate the obstacles to women participating in politics by reforming the electoral system. By improving political civility and by consulting women's groups in the development of public policies;
- Apply a gender-based analysis to public policies;
- Develop and improve access for workers to flexible work schedules and to work sharing in the civil service and the private sector, for those employees who would want it.



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## Comments of the FIQ

The Liberal Party, the NDP and the *Bloc Québécois* are proposing measures which respond to the different issues and priorities of the FIQ in regard to the right to equality and the status of women. However, we cannot say as much for the Conservative Party. The various, often regressive proposals introduced by this party have the effect of jeopardizing the achievement of equality between men and women. ■

# To continue your reflection

Do not hesitate to follow the progress of the electoral campaign in order to make an enlightened choice this October 19. The FIQ suggests that you consult the vote compass, put online by CBC, which will allow you to better identify the political landscape!



[votecompass.cbc.ca](http://votecompass.cbc.ca)

**The FIQ,  
A strong voice,  
actions that count**



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