

Bloc Québécois

1. Support for Family Caregivers

Family caregivers are the backbone of the healthcare system, providing an estimated \$26 billion dollars of unpaid care in 2009 alone. Providing this care often places great financial, physical and emotional burdens on the caregiver.

Will your party help address the financial burden of cancer and create a Family Caregiver Tax Benefit by introducing specific changes to the Compassionate Care Benefit administered by the federal Employment Insurance Program, including:

- **Increasing the number of weeks: Increase the benefit period to 26 weeks, accessible during a 52 week period.**
- **Building more flexibility into the program: Allow partial weeks over a longer period, rather than blocks of weeks at a time.**
- **Softening the eligibility criteria by changing the terminology from “significant risk of death” to “significant need of caregiving due to a life threatening illness”.**
- **Amending Labour policies: i.e. amend the Canada Labour Code to protect the jobs of caregivers.**

The Bloc Québécois is particularly sensitive to the issue of cancer. Given that it is the Government of Quebec that has the expertise and that can take action with all the institutions in the Quebec health network, along with all the partners, it is the view of the Bloc Québécois that the Government of Quebec should be the one to decide what priorities need to be established and develop the action plans for its territory. The Bloc Québécois is recommending a simple approach for avoiding costly duplications: any additional funding allocated by Ottawa should be paid directly to Quebec and to the provinces so they can consolidate their own health networks. Despite everything, the Bloc Québécois is taking action at the federal level while respecting its own jurisdictions and it has also proposed solutions in order help both family caregivers and people struck with cancer in the area of Employment Insurance:

- *More and more women contribute to the Employment Insurance system, but their professional situation, linked to work stoppages for family reasons and part-time work, limits their access to Employment Insurance benefits. Given that most family caregivers are women, the Bloc Québécois is proposing improvements to the Employment Insurance system regarding accessibility, including the elimination of the waiting period, the twelve best weeks and a minimum threshold of 360 hours for accessing the system.*
- *Although the Bloc Québécois is not opposed to an increase in the benefits period for compassionate leave, it feels that at the end of the day, Quebec should be given the right to opt out with full financial compensation for this measure that interferes in one of Quebec's exclusive jurisdictions.*

The Bloc Québécois also recognizes that an increase in tax credits for family caregivers is urgently needed and is proposing an additional 250 million dollars over five years, while making tax credits for family caregivers available to spouses.

In addition to all that, it is the view of the Bloc Québécois that resolving the fiscal imbalance would better allow Quebec to improve and implement its own initiative for helping its people.

2. National Catastrophic Drug Coverage

Currently, there is no national standard on how much patients should pay out-of-pocket for prescription drugs. This leads to situations where a patient in one province may have to pay out of pocket for a cancer drug while a patient in another province does not. This is not universal health care. The CCS believes that all Canadians deserve equal access to appropriate, high-quality and timely services, regardless of where they live or how much money they have.

How will you party progress the establishment of national catastrophic drug coverage and work with Provincial governments to implement it as soon as possible?

In terms of medicare, Quebec adopted a public health and social services system over 30 years ago to ensure the health and well-being of its citizens. Over the years, while maintaining its public character, this system has been augmented by many additional benefits, the purpose of which are to provide Quebeckers with access to the care and services they need for their health with the best possible quality. For example, Quebec has long had its own prescription drug insurance plan.

The Bloc Québécois, as a party acting within the House of Commons, does not place pressure on the Government of Quebec regarding access to prescription drugs since this is an exclusive jurisdiction of the Government of Quebec. Instead, our party encourages the federal government to act within its own jurisdiction and to enhance its financial efforts by correcting the fiscal imbalance. This would allow Quebec and the provinces to fund existing effective programs more adequately. If the Government of Quebec wishes to participate in a given strategy, it will do so of its own accord and in accordance with its jurisdictions.

3. Tobacco Control

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in Canada, causing 30% of cancer deaths, and killing 37,000 Canadians each year. While progress has been made at reducing smoking, the smoking rate among Canadians remains unacceptably high.

Recent success includes important national measures brought forward with the support of all political parties in Parliament, specifically the ban on flavoured cigarillos and cigarettes, the ban on tobacco advertising in print media, and the introduction of new, larger package health warnings.

The Federal Tobacco Control Strategy is the means by which Health Canada implements cessation programs, youth prevention programs, research, enforcement, and other initiatives. After eleven years, this Strategy is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2012.

Does your party support:

- (a) Renewing the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy for a further five years beyond March 31, 2012 and ensuring that Health Canada's funding for the Strategy is maintained or increased?**
- (b) Examining potential new initiatives to enhance the impact of the Strategy?**

Since 2003, the Bloc Québécois has continued to sound the alarm regarding the upsurge in the smuggling of tobacco products and its negative impact on smoking rates. We are pushing the federal government to take strong measures to make sure that all the efforts that have gone into prevention are not lost, especially with young people. This is what we are proposing:

- *Prohibiting the supply of raw materials and equipment used to produce cigarettes to unlicensed manufacturers;*
- *Revoking permits from tobacco manufacturers who violate the law;*
- *Implementing an effective marking system on cigarette packages (marking and tracing system), making it possible to closely monitor tobacco deliveries;*
- *Persuading the US federal government to close down the illegal manufacturers located on the US side of the border;*
- *Setting the price for a federal tobacco manufacturing licence at a minimum of five million dollars instead of the ridiculous price of five thousand dollars that exists currently.*

We are also proposing other measures for eliminating tobacco smuggling, including:

- *The seizure of smugglers' vehicles;*
- *Concerted and efficient police action;*
- *Amendments to regulations to discourage smugglers, notably through the elimination of supply sources.*

The Bloc Québécois is also asking the federal government to coordinate the efforts of its various agencies and departments since only a concerted effort will be able to take into account the various aspects of smoking and smuggling (prevention, application of manufacturing standards, suppression of smugglers, etc.).

Lastly, the Bloc Québécois feels that any measure aimed at fighting smuggling on reserves must be done in collaboration with the Aboriginal authorities. Cooperation in this sector is essential for identifying and targeting criminal organizations.

4. Chrysotile Asbestos

Occupational exposure to asbestos accounts for roughly 90,000 deaths per year worldwide. The chrysotile asbestos mined in Canada is a major contributor to this death toll. It is shipped to developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America where safety practices are lax or non-existent. All forms of asbestos represent a ticking, public health time bomb contained in public and private buildings. Across Canada, this asbestos must be identified and removed safely, as soon as possible.

Does your party support the establishment of comprehensive strategy to address all aspects of the public health impact of asbestos, including:

- **Immediately eliminating all federal Government funding for the Chrysotile Institute;**
- **Setting a clear timetable for phasing out Canadian mining and export of asbestos;**
- **Providing transition support for affected communities;**
- **Including chrysotile asbestos on the Rotterdam Convention's Prior Informed Consent list;**
- **Implementing a national surveillance system to track the health outcomes of people who have been exposed to asbestos;**
- **Creating a public registry of all the buildings in Canada that contain asbestos.**

The Bloc Québécois is aware that the National Assembly will be examining the issue of safe chrysotile use. The industry and the workers are telling us they can prove that chrysotile is safe. They will be given an opportunity to present their arguments as part of a parliamentary commission. The National Assembly will debate the issue and make a decision. We will act accordingly.