

2007 Quebec Provincial Election

Answers by candidates in the Outaouais to questions asked by CRAPO



Edith Gendron, Parti Québécois, Chapleau

1- If your party is in favor of Quebec independence what guarantees can it give to workers in the federal public sector (the government and agencies) about their employment? Will you guarantee similar employment (salary and working conditions) in a Quebec public service or negotiate an arrangement with Ottawa whereby they could be kept on in the federal public-sector?

During the entire public consultation process that will lead us to a sovereign Quebec, (see *Forum de pays* in the platform at www.pq.org), MPs of the Parti Québécois in the Outaouais will work on developing a policy to integrate public servants to ensure that our region becomes a major administrative hub of the Quebec State.

The idea here is to put to use the skills and professionalism of public servants in the region. A sovereign Quebec will not only recover \$42 billion in income tax that Quebecers sent to the federal government each year, but would it will also have to provide services and manage the attendant authorities. It is up to the of elected officials in our region to convince the rest of Quebec that it is to the advantage of the Quebec State to integrate into its public service the some 16,670 workers employed by Canada who have to cross the river to Ottawa every morning. (This is based on Treasury Board of Canada data, which includes public servants at Headquarters and separate agencies).

As far as the integration policy is concerned, we are going by previous experiences (professional training agreement) to repeat and build on the positive aspects of that agreement and avoid errors. In other words, we can answer yes to both sub-questions (employment in similar conditions or continuation within the federal public service). There is some leeway to offer of alternatives, and a sovereign Quebec will negotiate in good faith with Canada so that we can treat public servants working in the Outaouais with respect and dignity.

We will especially avoid the past mistake of not consulting with the 17 unions representing all of these workers. This integration policy and the ensuing negotiations with the federal government will be conducted in cooperation with the unions. This is only way of guaranteeing that this policy will be successful, and that is the only guarantee that we can offer to workers in the federal public sector today.

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<p>2- What does your party intend to do to eliminate poverty in Quebec? Give us some concrete examples.</p>	<p>The Parti Québécois is essentially proposing two measures costing \$10 million as a new investment to combat poverty. With the new money that the PQ wants to take out of the manoeuvrability (the financial framework based on a growth rate of 2.5% of the GDP), the first action the Quebec government will be to index social assistance benefits for poorer recipients able to work and also to encourage social assistance recipients, particularly young mothers, to return to school.</p> <p>Of course, the PQ was behind the legislation to combat poverty and social exclusion along with the national fund to combat poverty, and will build on existing policies and programs already in place.</p> <p>One must acknowledge, however, that the requirements are huge, and the PQ's vision is that Quebec must be wealthier if it is to be fairer and more united. By creating wealth and developing better jobs, the Quebec State will be in a better position to respond to and intervene to help more fragile citizens. And if our Quebec is to be wealthier and fairer, a higher level of education is required. Our party has the audacity and the courage to make education our main priority to lay the groundwork for and implement more social-democratic measures.</p>
<p>3- What does your party intend to do to counter the harmful consequences of climate change?</p>	<p>For the Parti Québécois, urgent action is required and that is why the party is proposing the following measures to spur a truly green revolution in the area of transportation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass a <i>Climate Change Act</i> with specific targets; • Favour the creation of carbon credit (market) in Montreal; • Establish an Independence Commission on Oil to be given a mandate to make recommendations to reduce our dependency on oil; • Set objectives to reduce our overall consumption of oil products by 10% over five years and 20% over 10 years; • Abolish the Quebec Sales tax (QST) on the purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles and those with an equivalent or superior energy efficiency rating, in addition to encouraging the purchase and use of such vehicles by the public and municipal governments; • Adopt more stringent measures to encourage public transit, including a tax credit for passes; • Adopt a comprehensive investment plan for transport infrastructures and the use of green technology. To that extent, the Rapibus is a concrete example of a project that is perfectly compatible with this plan.

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<p>4- Are you in favor of using subcontracting and privatization to reduce the size of the Quebec public service? What role would you give to the public service to deliver quality services to citizens?</p>	<p>Our position is that the State must deliver quality public services at the best possible cost in a transparent manner. Although the aim is to achieve responsible and effective management of public funds, we believe that the State must change its approach in its relations with employees in the public sector and with citizens in general.</p> <p>The goal is not so much to reduce the size of the public service and turn to privatization with no consideration given to the quality of services delivered to the public. Our vision is to create a partnership State that will bring together the public, private, community and social economic sectors to work together for the common good.</p> <p>We believe that it is most important for the public service to deliver quality services to the public, an inescapable reality that must be recognized in a working agreement negotiated in good faith and with dignity. That is why we will eliminate aspects in Chapter 4 of Bill 142 which curtail the freedom of association of employees in the public sector.</p>
<p>5- What will you do to help the region improve traffic between Gatineau and Ottawa? If your party forms the government, would it contribute to the funding of a corridor reserved for STQ (Rapibus) buses? If so, how much would your government contribute?</p>	<p>In keeping with its willingness to act quickly in environmental matters, our approach to resolve traffic problems between Gatineau in Ottawa certainly includes public transit. It is imperative that the number of cars on the roads at rush hour be reduced in favour of public transit. This requires major infrastructure investments, and for our region, the Rapibus is the project that we must bring on stream as quickly as possible, because it will take at least 3000 vehicles off the road.</p> <p>As for the exact amount that the Parti Québécois government will have to invest, this will depend on certain unknown or uncertain factors (federal budget). However, it is clear that our party will ensure that the Rapibus project will be adequately funded and that the federal contribution will be negotiated.</p>

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<p>6- According to a citizens' coalition on health matters, the Outaouais is said to be currently underfunded by the Quebec public system if you consider the funding allocated in terms of population. Do you share their findings and you believe that the region is underfunded? If so, how do you intend to resolve the problem? In addition, what measures does your party intend to take to improve to provide better access to family doctors access in the region and to public sector health care resources?</p>	<p>We share the concerns of the <i>Outaouais à l'urgence-phase</i> coalition. There is no getting around the fact that the budget for health care and social services has not kept pace with the demographic growth of the region.</p> <p>The MLAs of the Parti Québécois en Outaouais will work to obtain interregional equity in the allocation of health care budgets by stressing the urgent needs of our region.</p> <p>We are also proposing that an Estates General on Health in the Outaouais be held because we feel it is important to reestablish citizen dialogue between professionals in the health care and social services sector, the people and administrators of our health care system. Our border region must contend with special challenges and we in the Parti Québécois believe that we must listen to stakeholders in the area because they are in the best position, they are more attuned to what they need and, more often than not, they have already identified some possible avenues to a solution. Doctors, nurses and the public have taken the <i>Outaouais à l'urgence</i> citizens coalition out of mothballs because the administrators of the Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux en Outaouais have turned a deaf ear to their concerns in the past two years.</p>
<p>7- What is your party's platform on daycare services? In particular, we would like to know whether you intend to increase the current \$7 cost per day. In addition, what is your position on the presence of the private sector in the daycare services sector? Are you also planning on increasing the number of subsidized spaces in the Outaouais?</p>	<p>The Parti Québécois, with the leadership and determination of Pauline Marois, implemented the Centres de la petite enfance (CPE) system, a public day care system that is accessible to all which we are very proud of. We intend to add another 20,000 new places, of which 5% (1000 places) shall be allocated to the Outaouais. We are also committed to maintaining the \$7 a day charge.</p> <p>The current Liberal Government has encouraged the private sector to become involved in the day care sector. Although this is not an option that our party prefers for day care services, we refuse to disrupt once more the available daycare services offered by overhauling the structures once again if a PQ government were elected. However, our vision is to expand and develop our public day care by improving the quality of child raising.</p>

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8- What measures which are party propose to improve primary and secondary school education? Provide some concrete examples. Moreover, are you in favor of maintaining the freeze on tuition fees in universities?

At a cost of \$450 million, the new measures our party is proposing for primary and secondary school students are as follows:

- Access to schools between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to provide more assistance with homework, sports and extracurricular activities;
- Decrease class size by at least 10% near the end of primary school and at the beginning of secondary school in underprivileged areas;
- Hire 1500 specialists to work with children with learning difficulties;
- Ensure that all students and their parents can rely on the advice and support of a tutor right from the first year of secondary school forward;
- A national fund that will contribute \$5 million per year to discourage students from dropping out of school;
- Strengthen the fight against taxing, intimidation, harassment and violence at school;
- Encourage students to get diplomas and professional training in keeping with the realities of various regions.

Moreover, a Parti Québécois government intends to invest an additional \$750 million to maintain and improve primary and secondary schools.

Increased support must be provided for teachers. We are proposing that 250 guidance counselors be hired to assist teachers and, to resolve the retention problem, we are in favour of mentoring younger teachers and devoting more time to the training and development of all teachers.

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<p>9- What is your party's position on the laïcité of Quebec society? In particular, do you believe that the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides sufficient protection to guarantee the denomination-free nature of society and its public institutions? If not, what do you plan to do to rectify this problem?</p>	<p>Our position is that all public institutions in Quebec which are funded by taxpayer dollars must remain denomination-free. That is why we are firmly committed to putting an end to illegal denomination-based schools.</p> <p>The Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the denomination-free nature of our society and, by so doing, enshrines this as a legal right. The challenge is to bring legal rights and de facto rights into line.</p> <p>We believe that the State is responsible for issuing the directives and policies that are respectful of the Charter so that the denomination-free nature of our society in public sector institutions is a known fact and is recognized as a way of life, an overriding value that permeates citizens' relations in Quebec.</p>
<p>10- What is your party's current position with respect to the current debate on a reasonable accommodation? Specify, in particular, which fundamental values you believe that Quebec society must not negotiate (equality of men and women, laïcité, etc.) when it reviews requests for accommodation in the public sector.</p>	<p>Back in November 2006, the leader of our party, André Boisclair, publicly explained the PQ position on reasonable accommodation in an open letter published in all major daily newspapers in Quebec.</p> <p>He explained that there are fundamental and rock solid values in Quebec society for which no reasonable accommodation can be made. This includes equality of men and women and the laïcité (denomination-free nature) of our public sector institutions. Our party believes that any attempt to make any accommodation on these two values has to be termed "unreasonable".</p> <p>Negligence and sloth have given way to improvisation and ignorance which, in turn, has resulted in unreasonable directives and practices of accommodation on these fundamental and common values of our society, i.e., equality of men and women and the laïcité of our public sector institutions. That is why a Parti Québécois government will provide the necessary leadership to address the lack of clear directives and policies. This will bring about a respectful match between legal rights and the de facto rights of our common and fundamental values as provided for under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.</p>