
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

By email

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Richard Elliott, Executive Director
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
info@aidslaw.ca

[This document, including the quotations, is an unofficial English translation.]

Dear Sir:

It is our pleasure to provide the response of the Bloc Québécois to the questions your organization has asked in connection with the 2015 federal election.

Question 1: Fully funding a renewed strategy on HIV and AIDS

The Bloc Québécois will continue to be vigilant and uncompromising on the issue of the \$84.4 million in funding promised for the Federal Initiative to Address AIDS in Canada. It will call the government to order until it gives the fight against HIV/AIDS the importance it deserves. Specifically, the funds in question are for the federal HIV/AIDS strategy, which was approved unanimously in 2003. By 2007, the Bloc was already pressuring the Minister of Finance to give effect to the intent of the House of Commons in that regard.

Furthermore, the Bloc Québécois believes that only a complete correction of Canada's fiscal imbalance, an imbalance that continues to deprive Quebec and the provinces of the revenues needed to fulfil their responsibilities in the realm of health and social services, will enable Quebec and the provinces to further develop services to the public in their areas of exclusive jurisdiction, and to ensure that their residents receive adequate and timely care.

Question 2: Saving lives through supervised consumption services

On August 19, 2015, Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe, expressed his support for Dopamine, one of the supervised injection sites planned for Montréal. The press release on the subject states:

Supervised injection sites: Gilles Duceppe asks Ottawa to get out of the way

Montréal, Wednesday, August 19, 2015 – Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe today called on Health Canada to stop stalling the implementation of supervised injection sites on the island of Montréal.

There is an extraordinary consensus among stakeholders, including policymakers, community groups, Montréal’s municipal government, the health sector, police and users. Everyone understands the need for tools to help women and men coping with drug addiction. Everyone except the federal government, which continues to undermine Quebec’s solidarity-based model,” declared Duceppe.

The Bloc Québécois leader met with people from Dopamine, the organization spearheading of one of the planned injection sites. He was joined by Hochelaga Bloc candidate Simon Marchand, and Carole Poirier, the MNA for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve.

Poirier’s statement on the matter was emphatic and heartfelt: “We would have expected a government to be part of the solution — for it to help the community. But the Government of Canada has been a systematic part of the problem in this area of social policy. We have all had enough! For four years, Quebec’s voice, and Hochelaga’s voice, have no longer been heard in Ottawa. We gave the NDP a try, but it didn’t work. It’s time for us to regain our strength by sending Bloc MPs to Ottawa.”

“Carole is right. Last year in Montréal, more than 80 people suffered overdoses, and 25 of them died. This cannot be allowed to continue. The Conservative ideology is endangering the lives of vulnerable, struggling people. The injection sites can support some 4,000 users in Montréal. There is no more time to waste: Health Canada must grant an exemption to the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and get out of the way,” concluded Gilles Duceppe.

Question 3: Protecting prisoners’ health to protect public health

The Bloc Québécois supports the idea of needle exchanges in Canada’s federal prisons.

Question 4: Protecting the health and human rights of sex workers

The Bloc Québécois has been against the status quo on prostitution for quite some time. Our position was that the *Criminal Code* provisions on prostitution endangered the health and safety of women sex workers.

In the *Bedford* decision, the Supreme Court validated our stance.

The government was given one year to redefine the legal framework for prostitution. Instead of using that time to conduct genuine consultations with experts, sex workers and their allies, and police, the government produced a bill in isolation. The bill misses the whole point and core of the Supreme Court's decision, which are about the safety of women who work as prostitutes.

The Bloc Québécois acknowledges that the "Nordic" approach, aimed at reducing demand for sexual services by criminalizing clients rather than prostitutes themselves, has some merit. The Bloc Québécois is no more in favour of prostitution than any other party, and does not seek to encourage it.

However, the "Nordic" approach leaves issues unresolved. And if it is applied categorically, and without a transition period, it is likely to have perverse effects on the health and safety of women.

By prohibiting communication about sexual services, and criminalizing clients who try to obtain such services, it seems to us that the approach forces prostitutes into the shadows, making it impossible for them to screen their clients by excluding ones who pose a danger to their health and safety.

In our view, Bill C-36 clearly does not meet the criteria articulated by the Supreme Court, whose focus was on the health and safety of sex workers.

If the federal government cared about the health and safety of women who work as prostitutes, it would refer its bill to the Supreme Court before its adoption, rather than placing the burden of challenging it on women sex workers, in the form of interminable delays and high costs.

Question 5: Protecting and promoting the human rights of LGBTI people

As you know, the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of Bill C-279. Unfortunately, the Senate did not debate the bill because elections were called, dissolving Parliament and causing the bill to die on the order paper. The Bloc Québécois will continue the fight against discrimination and hate crimes based on gender identity or expression.

Question 6: Ensuring equitable access to affordable medicines

The Bloc Québécois supports, and intends to continue to support, the bill concerning Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR).

In closing, if you would like any additional information, we encourage you to visit our website at www.blocquebécois.org [*Available only in French.*]

Please accept our cordial regards.

The 2015 Bloc Québécois team
3750 Crémazie Street East, 5th Floor
Montréal, Quebec H2A 1B4