

**Green Party of Canada**  
**GREEN PAPER ON HEALTH PROMOTION**

*“Health is a basic human need. It is fundamental to the successful functioning of individuals and of societies. Health promotion aims to empower people to control their own health by gaining control over the underlying factors that influence their health” (International Union for Health Promotion and Education, 2007)*

*“.... The main factors---the main “determinants” as the experts call them---that will likely shape our health and life space are the ones that affect society as a whole. And if we want Canadians to be the healthiest people in the world, we have to deal with them at that level” (Roy Romanow, 2004 in Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives).*

**Introduction**

Health care remains an important component of any national health policy platform, and universal access to timely, appropriate, and effective healthcare remains a defining characteristic of Canadian identity and a top priority for most Canadians and every political party. Nevertheless, there is no hiding the fact that a significant proportion of illnesses and deaths in this country are preventable. Much needless suffering, premature loss of life, and considerable healthcare costs can be avoided through improved health research, screening programs, more timely diagnosis, earlier treatment, improved lifestyles (diet, exercise and smoking cessation), and healthier public policies and environments. For example, it is estimated that as many as 50 percent of (lung) cancers may be preventable through improved education, early treatment, smoking cessation, and environmental regulation (Canadian Lung Association, 2007). Yet traditionally, funding allocated for health promotion has fluctuated in the vicinity of 1 percent of overall health system funding, despite the demonstrated cost-effectiveness of many disease prevention and health promotion programs.

**Health Promotion** is the process of enabling people to take control of, and to improve, their health

(Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986)

Since the release of *A New Perspective on the Health of Canadians* in 1974 by then federal Minister of Health Marc Lalonde, it has been recognized that health care is but one (and not even the primary) determinant of the health status of Canadians. In addition to human biology (genetic factors), the (physical and social) environment, and healthy lifestyles were also identified as key influences on population health.

Following the release of the Lalonde Report, considerable efforts were made to educate Canadians about the benefits of a healthy diet, exercise and not smoking, as well as other health-enhancing practices (condom use, periodic health exams, breast and colorectal cancer screening, etc). Despite some remarkable successes (such a reductions in smoking amongst non-aboriginal groups), many health education programs showed disappointing results. Thirty years experience suggests that lifestyle education works best when combined with comprehensive inter-sectoral efforts to create supportive policies, removing barriers to change, and creating healthy environments.

Health promotion is about more than health care or health education. It is about recognizing the profound health impacts of determinants of health outside the formal healthcare system and working with many stakeholders (policy-makers, NGOs, health agencies, multiple levels of government, the private sector, and most importantly affected communities themselves) to reduce, eliminate, or overcome those factors that harm health or act as barriers to health enhancement, and to promote those factors that enhance the health, well-being and quality of life of all Canadians.

The most significant development in the field of health promotion since 1974 has been the recognition of the importance of the broader social determinants of health. Widely promulgated by NGOs, health promotion advocates, academic researchers, independent think tanks such as the Canadian Institutes for Advanced Research (CIAR), Health Canada, the National Forum on Health, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), and leading Canadian and international authors in the field, the social determinants of health perspective holds that freedom from violence and discrimination, access to safe, accessible and affordable housing, meaningful social relationships and healthy working and living conditions, are fundamental pre-requisites to human health and well being. Furthermore, such determinants do not 'respect' national, local or administrative boundaries but arise and take shape in the context of interpersonal relationships, local community economic and social processes, institutional practices, and international forces of economic globalization (Poland, 2007; CPHA, 2006). In this context, health promotion has come to be defined as the process of enabling individuals and communities to increase their control of the determinants of health and thereby to improve their health (Nutbeam, 1986; Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986).

Social Determinants of Health:

- Income inequality
- Social inclusion and exclusion
- Employment and working conditions
- Social and physical environments
- Healthy child development
- Education and literacy
- Food security
- Housing
- Gender

(Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2003)

Core health promotion values include equity and social justice, holistic definitions of health (as physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being), the enhancement of health (not just prevention of disease), recognition of the role of environments (settings) in shaping human behaviour and health, empowerment, meaningful social participation in the creation and maintenance of health, building individual and community capacity, and inter-sectoral collaboration. Many, if not all, of these values are also evident in the Earth Charter and are foundational to the Green Party of Canada.

The Green Party of Canada recognizes that addressing health through a social determinants perspective and working for social justice and environmental sustainability are one and the same. Optimal health is not only a fundamental human right, but also the key to the most vibrant, inclusive and sustainable Canadian society possible.

This Green Paper outlines the Green Party of Canada's vision for what a health-promoting Canada can and should look like. Strong Green leadership combined with passionate participation from Canadians coast to coast will make this vision a reality.

***This is our Green Vision: Let's become a health promoting country. Let's make improved and sustainable health for all a national priority.***

## **RECLAIMING CANADIAN LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH PROMOTION**

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) is widely regarded as *the* definitive statement on the nature and scope of the field. Following, as it did, the Lalonde Report (1974) and the Epp Framework (1986), it exemplifies early Canadian leadership in health promotion in the international arena that still defines how we are seen in many parts of the world. However, under successive Conservative and Liberal governments this leadership has been eroded with the dismantling of the Health Promotion Directorate within Health Canada, the removal of funding for groundbreaking federal leadership in the healthy communities movement (an approach that has been taken up and widely promulgated around the world by the World Health Organization, and which remains active in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and BC), and by the recently announced decision to withdraw funding from the world-class Canadian Health Network.

Green MPs will push for renewed Canadian leadership in health promotion both nationally and in on the international stage. We have some of the best minds, training programs, experienced practitioners, and progressive health promotion coalitions in the world. These could be key building blocks in a renewed federal leadership in health promotion.

Specifically, we call for:

- reinstatement of funding for the *Canadian Health Network*
- the creation of a *Federal Healthy Community Initiatives Fund* to which community organizations could apply for innovative local projects utilize community development principles and practices to address both human and ecosystem health at the local level
- additional funding to support the vital work of the *Public Health Agency of Canada*, including additional resources for their health promotion work

The Ottawa Charter stipulates that promoting the health of individuals and populations is accomplished by enabling and coordinating action in 5 critical areas:

- building personal skills (including healthy lifestyles),
- creating supportive environments;
- strengthening community action; and
- building healthy public policy;
- reorienting health services towards a greater emphasis on primary care and prevention.

Other key international health promotion charters, including the Adelaide Recommendations (1988), the Sundsvall Statement (1991), the Jakarta Declaration (1997) and the Bangkok Charter (2005), all argue that health promotion is critically important to enhancing the health of individuals and communities. Determinants of health are interconnected, as evidenced by the close relationship between human and ecosystem health. The Green Party of Canada believes that a strong green economy, communities built around principles of social justice and equity, and sustainable environments are all central to a strong health promotion platform that strives to make Canadians the healthiest people in the world.

## **A) BUILDING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND DEVELOPING PERSONAL SKILLS**

Health promotion seeks to increase the options available to people to exercise more control over their own health and their environments. This can be achieved in part by providing information, enhancing life skills and enabling people to learn throughout life. The Green Party of Canada knows that health risks are not purely the result of individual choice, but that social environments and structural factors also play a role (Frohlich, Corin & Potvin, 2001; Poland, 2007). The development of healthy lifestyles should therefore be facilitated through schools, home, work and community settings, as well as through the enactment of healthier public policies that remove barriers to (and provide appropriate incentives for) healthy practices.

### **Addressing a need:**

Two thirds of deaths in Canada are due to cancer, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and chronic obstructive lung disorders – diseases that are all largely preventable (Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada, 2007). Many Canadians have been empowered to quit smoking, start exercising and improve their diets. However, many people face multiple barriers to change at the interpersonal, organizational and policy levels. Conditions of social isolation, racism, stress, overwork and lack of control over one's working and living environments can be powerful reinforcers of the belief that change is not possible or likely. These conditions also contribute to the unhealthy use of alcohol, tobacco, junk food, and psychoactive substances as coping mechanisms amongst socio-economically disadvantaged groups, further compounding their disproportionate exposure to hazardous working and living conditions.

Health promotion must be driven by a focus on enhancing physical and mental well being as well as preventing illness.

**Green Party MPs will work to:**

**1) Address determinants of physical activity, healthy eating and obesity**

International comparisons show that Canada as a country has among the highest prevalence of overweight children (Janssen et al, 2005), and almost 60% of Canadians are overweight or obese (CDPAC, 2007). Research has increasingly shown that social and environmental factors, such as the way our communities are designed, and regulatory environments have an impact on healthy eating behaviours and physical activity.

Green MPs will work to:

- protect children from inappropriate exposure to marketing (especially of junk foods and soft drinks - see development of a National Food Policy below)
- reducing poverty to address income-related food insecurity (see other aspects of the Green Party platform)
- integrating primary prevention goals within agriculture/agri-food policies (including attention to food production, labeling, marketing - see development of a National Food Policy below)
- creating a *Coordinated System of Excellence for Physical Activity*, as advocated by the Canadian Coalition for Active Living

**2) Improving health literacy for all**

Individuals have the right to high quality health information needed to make appropriate health decisions (Frankish, Kwan & Flores, 2002). Green MPs will work to

- restore funding for the *Canadian Health Network*, a key national resource for individuals and health professionals across the country
- fund and coordinate the production of an evidence-based *Canadian Healthy Living Guide*, similar to the recently revised Canada's Food Guide but more comprehensive in scope. Recognizing the variety of ethnic backgrounds and abilities in Canadian society, we will strive to ensure that information is provided in culturally sensitive and diverse languages with meaningful adaptations, thereby increasing available options to exercise more control over one's own health.
- work with provincial stakeholders to better compensate family physicians and other health professionals for health education and health promotion services

Participatory democracy also means that people have access to timely, relevant and digestible information on the social determinants of health, health impacts of economic and social policy options, and forums at the community and extra-local levels to debate these issues and to press for more progressive, inclusive and sustainability policy and practice alternatives.

**3) Integrative solutions**

Green MPs will work with key stakeholders such as the Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada (CDPAC), the Canadian Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and others to promote integrated, innovative, evidence-based, inter-sectoral and comprehensive approaches to disease prevention and health promotion.

Integrated disease prevention and health promotion frameworks such as the National Tobacco Reduction Strategy, the National Lung Health Framework, the Canadian Heart Health Initiative, and the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control draw together multiple sectors, intersecting disciplinary sources of expertise, and reduce the duplication of effort, unintended negative external consequences, and build consensus for action. Comprehensive, multicomponent, inter-sectoral approaches have been shown to be more effective than more narrowly cast single-

strategy programs (such as public awareness campaigns unsupported by parallel legislative, community, and organizational changes) (Jackson et al, 2007).

#### 4) **Health tax shifting**

The Green Party of Canada believes that taxation policies should send a strong message about what we value as Canadians. Currently, many tax policies work at cross-purposes to stated policy goals. We claim to want to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions but we place very little monetary value on keeping the air we breathe and water we drink clean. Instead we tax things we say we want, such as employment and income, creating disincentives to maximizing social goods.

Green MPs will shift the burden of taxes to better reflect the priorities of Canadians:

- **carbon taxes** will encourage Canadians to leave their cars at home and use public transit, walk or bicycle; upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes; and adjust their consumption in favour of greener products. Carbon tax revenues will be used to provide incentives for home energy retrofits, subsidies for public transit infrastructure, and reductions in taxes on employment and other socially desirable goods
- a **GST Health Benefit Reduction** will be applied to those items deemed to have significant health benefit such as sports equipment, fitness centre fees, and some health promoting health services.
- **Corporate Health Tax Reduction** for workplaces that institute a qualified workplace health model or comprehensive healthy workplace settings approach such as that offered by the National Quality Institute

#### 5) **Develop a new Canadian National Food Policy**

Recognizing the importance of food in the lives of all Canadians, Green MPs will work with key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Canadian Food Policy that will:

- work to protect fertile farmland under threat of suburban development
- work to reduce the use of pesticides, growth hormones, antibiotics and other chemical and pharmaceutical agents in agriculture
- reduce the carbon footprint of agribusiness and its dependence on fossil-fuel intensive practices
- work to reduce the needless over-packaging of foodstuffs, and promote the use of biodegradable and more environmentally friendly packaging alternatives
- phase out the use of genetically modified 'terminator' seeds
- promote environmentally sustainable farming practices that protect the health of the land, farmers, and consumers
- support small-scale farming operations
- promote the development of (and demand for) local organic produce
- educate Canadians about the value of fair-trade products
- restore funding for critical food safety testing and new produce approvals processes
- restrict the advertising and promotion of junk foods, particularly to young children (just as were developed to limit tobacco advertising)
- strengthen legislation limiting the health claims that the 'nutriceutical' industry can make without appropriate evidentiary basis
- where jurisdiction allows (or in collaboration with relevant levels of government), set minimum nutritional standards for all publicly funded food programs, including community-based feeding programs for the poor and homeless
- regulate (and eventually phase out) the commercial use of trans fats in consumer food products
- phase in regulations mandating that a (steadily increasing) proportion of disposable cutlery and dishes used in fast food establishments be sourced from recycled and/or biodegradable sources

- explore the merits of a possible junk food tax to be applied to non-essential empty calorie soft drinks and unhealthy snack foods, including ways to address the impact on the poor and northern/remote communities to ensure net health benefit

**6) Protecting Canadians from tobacco exposure**

In an effort to protect and promote the health of children and youth by preventing and reducing smoking in this age group, 3 priority actions are recommended, as advocated by the Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada (CDPAC) in *Improving the Health of Canadians, 2007*:

- **banning all tobacco advertising and promotion**, consistent with the standards in the new international tobacco treaty
- requiring **plain packaging** for tobacco products, as recommended in 1994 by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health
- **curbing tobacco contraband**

The ready availability of contraband cigarettes directly contravenes public health efforts to reduce smoking through pricing mechanisms and restrictions on sales to minors. Contraband cigarettes cost a fraction of legal ones and are regularly ‘marketed’ on school grounds to youth. Green MPs will work with indigenous leaders, regulatory bodies and other key stakeholders to stem the flow of contraband cigarettes off-reserve and to bring tobacco companies guilty of illegal sales to justice.

**B) CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS**

The Green Party of Canada knows that an inextricable link exists between people’s health and their environment. A socio-ecological approach to health that encourages reciprocal maintenance – taking care of each other, our communities and our natural environment – is essential for optimal health and continued life on this planet. Safe working conditions, green space, effective public transportation, resource conservation and affordable and environmentally-sound housing will all create opportunities for improved health and well-being.

**Addressing a need:**

Contamination of the environment continues to harm human health and quality of life for individuals, families and communities. Mercury, pesticides and toxins have found their way into the food supply and have affected recreational and subsistence activities such as fishing, hunting and gathering traditions (Howze, Baldwin & Kegler, 2004). Social inequalities contribute to unequal impacts of environmental exposures, as communities experience differential access to resources that help mitigate the damaging effects of the environment (Schulz & Northridge, 2004). Many low-income Canadians, including indigenous peoples, new immigrants and lone parent families, do not have adequate access to safe, affordable housing, which puts them at increased risk of food insecurity, malnutrition and social isolation (Bryant & Chisholm, 2002). Homeless persons face numerous barriers to accessing health care and suffer from disproportionately high rates of illness and disability (Kushel, Vittinghoff & Hass, 2001). Community and urban design also plays a crucial role in the health of Canadians by affecting access to health promoting and environmentally sound choices for daily living.

**Green Party MPs will work to:**

**1) Improve community and urban design**

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that community infrastructure enables healthy living. Emphasis will be placed on developing active modes of transportation such as walking and

<p>IN FOCUS <b>One Percent Solution</b></p> <p>The One Percent Solution developed by the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (1998) calls on all orders of government to increase their spending on housing by one percent. The Green Party of Canada supports such efforts to end the affordable housing crisis.</p>
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cycling paths, organized walk-to-school programs and affordable public transportation, as well as improving current public space to be greener, safe and accessible for all. Planning communities with a primary focus on health will help ensure optimal living conditions for current and future generations of Canadians.

**2) Increase housing support for low-income and homeless Canadians**

The Green Party of Canada is committed to increasing available social housing units, building new units in areas of mixed-income housing, ensuring that housing provides meaningful social interaction and providing tax incentives to invest in affordable, energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable housing. We will work with leading experts and NGOs to develop a much-needed National Housing Policy (we are one of the few countries in the developed world that does not have such a policy)

**3) Decrease health impacts of environmental degradation**

The Green Party of Canada is calling for a carbon tax and a toxic chemical tax to limit both the exposure to and unequal distribution of toxins in Canada’s atmosphere (Green Party of Canada, 2007). Agencies and licensing boards that operate to protect the health of Canadians from negative environmental exposures must be strengthened. Immediate and resolute action is necessary to halt the damaging effects of climate change for the sake of the earth and its inhabitants. We will press for an enhanced role for the Public Health Agency of Canada in responding to the anticipated health effects of climate change, and we will press for the creation of a *Canadian Climate Change Adaptation Fund* to assist communities in increasing their adaptive capacity and resilience to face the anticipated effects of global warming

**C) STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ACTION**

Strengthening community actions involves empowering communities to increase ownership over their own lives and health. Drawing on existing resources in the community can enhance social support and allow for the development of flexible systems to strengthen public participation. The Green Party of Canada believes strongly in participatory democracy, equity, community empowerment and the resulting social inclusion and capacity building that these processes foster.

**Addressing a need:**

There is evidence of growing social exclusion in Canadian society, particularly for indigenous peoples, racialized groups and immigrants (Bottero, 2005). These groups are more than twice as likely to live in poverty and three times as likely than the average Canadian to be unemployed (Bottero, 2005). The incarceration rate of Black males has increased over 200% in the last 10 to 15 years (Bottero, 2005). These findings are mirrored in reports that describe the indigenous experience within Canada’s justice system (Galabuzi, 2002). The Green Party of Canada knows that a strong link exists between social exclusion and crime (O’Hara, 2006). Improving social support will result in a safer Canadian society for all. Food security is also a critical issue for Canadians. The 1998/1999 National Population Health Survey revealed food insecurity among 10.1% of Canadian households, representing 3 million people and 678,000 children specifically (PHAC, 2002).

“We strive for a democracy in which all citizens have the right to express their views, and are able to directly participate in the environmental, economic, social and political decisions affecting their lives”  
- Global Greens Charter

**Green Party MPs will work to:**

**1. Improve local autonomy in health decision-making**

Community members know what works best and should be central players in assessing and addressing their own health needs. By increasing local autonomy in health funding and planning

decisions and improving communication between federal-municipal governments, the Green Party of Canada seeks to enable individuals to address needs within their own communities.

**2. Ensure food security and food safety for all Canadians**

Making healthy food affordable and accessible is integral for eliminating the need for food banks. The Green Party of Canada will establish a national program to support small-scale organic farmers and keep local food affordable for low-income consumers. The precautionary principle, which advocates for a minimal risk approach when information about potential risk is incomplete, will be adopted in agri-food legislation of imports and pesticide use within Canada. The Green Party of Canada will also establish a health advisory panel on nutrition and country of origin for food labeling and further the ongoing development of strict national organic certification standards so that Canadians can make well-informed healthy choices.

**3. Create and implement a National Poverty Reduction strategy**

In striving for social justice, the Green Party of Canada upholds that all Canadians have the right to adequate financial resources to meet basic needs. The Green Party of Canada also recognizes the link between poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. ‘Basic needs’ include the ability to make environmentally sound and health promoting choices in all aspects of life. The Green Party of Canada supports an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$10 per hour across Canada, to be adjusted yearly with inflation. Income disparities will be further reduced by a re-investment in community-based programs that improve the social safety net for all Canadians.

**IN FOCUS:  
Lifecycles, Victoria BC**

LifeCycles is a non-profit organization that cultivates awareness and initiates action around food, health, and urban sustainability in the Greater Victoria community by promoting community gardens, research, educational activities and youth skills development. The Green Party of Canada is a strong supporter of this community-based approach to food and nutrition.

**D) BUILDING HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY**

*Health policy* debates tend to be dominated by the demands and requirements of the healthcare industry. *Public health policies* cover everything from screening programs to restaurant inspections, communicable disease control, quarantines, and some aspects of workplace health and school health. As described in the Ottawa Charter (and the health promotion literature), *healthy public policy* exists when health is on the agenda of policy makers in all sectors and at all levels and when they are aware of and willing to take responsibility for the health consequences of their decisions. Driven by principles of social justice and equity, healthy public policy aims to make the *healthier* choice the *easier* choice for those affected. This challenging task requires the identification and removal of obstacles and a commitment to coordinated action by diverse sectors, including commerce, industry, voluntary organizations, the general public and all levels of government (Draper, 1991). The Green Party of Canada understands these inherent challenges and is ready to make healthy public policy a top priority in Canada.

**Addressing a need:**

Three recent Canadian reports concerning the future of health care (Kirby, 2002; Romanow, 2002; Naylor, 2003) have identified the social determinants of health as important to addressing population health from a public policy perspective. Socio-economic disparities between Canadians continue to grow. The poverty gap – the gap between the poverty line and the average income of poor families – increased over the last decade, even as the economy boomed (Scott, 2002). Low income is becoming increasingly concentrated among Canadian women, with associated health consequences for both themselves and their children (Raphael, 2003). Nearly one in five immigrants experience a state of chronic low income, which can lead

to unsafe working conditions, poor nutrition, inadequate housing and trouble accessing health and social services (Colour of Poverty, 2007). The current Conservative federal leadership has recently announced plans to cut funding for the Canadian Health Network, a collaborative on-line program that provides reliable, non-commercial information about how to stay healthy and prevent disease (Goar, 2007).

Health can no longer be categorized neatly within one government portfolio. Rather than advocate for the creation of a separate Ministry of Health Promotion at the federal level (as has been created in several provinces), the Green Party of Canada favours another approach that does not risk creating a 'silo' for health promotion that will isolate it from other crucial work on the determinants of health (see items 1 and 2 below).

### **Green Party MPs will work to:**

#### **1) Develop a federal Health Impact Assessment Board**

The Green Party recognizes the wisdom and value of 'whole-of-government' approaches to healthy public policy, linking across sectors and settings. To incorporate health impact assessment (with a determinants of health focus) as part of all federal government policy reviews, the Green Party will establish a federal Health Impact Assessment Board, similar to (and in collaboration with) the current Environmental Assessment Board. The National Collaborating Centre on Healthy Public Policy will assist in the design, implementation and evaluation of this and other initiatives described in this section.

#### **2) Broaden and strengthen the mandate of PHAC**

As an arms length body created in partial response to the recommendations of the Naylor inquiry into the public health experience with the SARS crisis, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is well positioned to advance a health promotion agenda in Canada. PHAC's mandate already includes both health promotion and understanding and responding to the social determinants of health (as described earlier in this document) The new Ministry of Health Promotion will develop its own policies to improve the state of health promotion in Canada. The creation of this jurisdiction is needed to foster healthy public policy and to establish an environment that makes achievement of the other four health promotion action areas possible.

#### **3) Create a high-level inter-ministerial committee on health equity**

The development of healthy public policy is enabled by strong visionary leadership and accountability structures that reinforce a commitment to an integrated understanding of the intersection of human, economic and ecosystem health.

Drawing on experience with the *Ontario Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being and Social Equity* that was disbanded when Mike Harris' Conservatives came into power, and building on the work of the *National Collaborating Centre on Determinants of Health*, Green MPs will work to establish a high level inter-ministerial committee that reports directly to both PHAC and the Prime Minister, with responsibility for synthesizing, communicating, and initiating action on health equity, grounded in an understanding of the social determinants of health. This will be timely, given that the World Health Organization's *Commission on the Social Determinants of Health* is set to release its groundbreaking report and recommendations in the coming months. A high level inter-ministerial committee will be essential to the timely and effective implementation of the recommendations of the Commission.

#### **4) Renew federal leadership and funding for healthy communities**

The World Health Organization's healthy community movement is a successful approach to the development of healthy public policy at the local level, utilizing participatory democracy and community development principles and processes. It has taken root around the world, with sometime spectacular results. As previously noted, Canada was an early pioneer in the international healthy communities movement, with a strong federal presence in research and

program funding. A few provincial coalitions and networks remain (most notably in Quebec, Ontario and BC), but federal leadership waned and activity is no longer pan-Canadian in scope. Green MPs will work to restore federal leadership and funding for a truly sustainable and well-resourced pan-Canadian healthy communities movement. This will take the form of a *Federal Healthy Community Initiatives Fund* (described on page 2) that could be administered through the grants and contributions fund of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

## **5) Develop an National Food Policy (see A5 above)**

### **E) REORIENTING HEALTH SERVICES**

Canadians value universal and timely access to high quality health services and treatment options. They also want more to be done to prevent illness and promote health. Healthcare professionals, particularly those working in inner city environments and with marginalized groups, are frustrated at the ‘revolving door’ that is created when patients are treated and discharged back into unhealthy (abusive, contaminated, substandard) environments. Meanwhile, limits on the public purse mean that money spent on costly high-tech end of life treatments (that may prolong life, but not necessarily quality of life) is money that cannot be spent on (often more cost-effective) disease prevention and health promotion programs, or addressing more fundamental determinants of health such as poverty and social housing.

Reorienting health services means expanding the mandate of the health sector beyond its current responsibility for providing clinical and curative services to include a health promotion focus. Health services must be culturally sensitive, support the needs of individuals and communities and open channels of communication between the health sector and the broader social, political, economic and physical aspects of society. The Green Party of Canada knows that the real answer is to develop a fully-integrated health system that focuses on solving the underlying problems affecting our health and well-being, rather than just treating symptoms as they arise.

#### **Addressing a need:**

Canada has the natural, financial and social resources to supply citizens with healthy food, safe water, comfortable shelter, higher education and a health care system that delivers high quality care to Canadians on the basis of need, not income (Romanow, 2002). However, health care costs claim a rising percentage of Canada’s available public resources each year, without corresponding improvements in individual or population health outcomes (Day & Tousignant, 2005). The Green Party of Canada recognizes the importance of primary health care and community-based services to Canadians and will not decrease funding for these services. However, to achieve health for all, the strengths of health promotion, such as its broad perspective and ability to involve other sectors, must also be recognized and mobilized.

#### **Green Party MPs will work to:**

##### **1) Improve access to mental health services**

Green MPs will work to improve access to essential mental health services and community mental health promotion programs:

- increase transfer funding for non-institutionalized mental health patients including children and youth, to provide adequate community-based support and outpatient and inpatient care by qualified mental health practitioners, including in rural Canada where lack of facilities and trained professionals is acute
- support the development of initiatives to reduce the use of psychoactive drugs through better rehabilitation and prevention programs, especially for children
- ensure that vulnerable groups, including minorities, indigenous peoples and recent immigrants, have timely access to high quality, culturally appropriate, and meaningful mental health services

- require greater involvement of people dealing with personal mental health problems in research planning, policy development, program evaluation and other decisions that affect their lives and communities

**2) Restructure education of health care professionals**

Post-secondary institutions devoted to training future health care professionals must incorporate adequate training in health promotion into the curriculum. Green MPs will work with relevant stakeholders, accreditation bodies, and educational institutions to ensure that specific criteria for all health care professional education programs in Canada are developed to address the health promotion needs of the population. Restoring funding for the Canadian Health Network (see A2 above) will also ensure access to quality health information on a wide range of health promotion topics for health professionals through-out their careers.

**3) Expand funding for, and Canadians' access to, multidisciplinary health teams and centres**

Several models for community-based primary care delivered by multidisciplinary teams exist in Canada. Examples include Community Health Centres in Ontario and CLSCs in Quebec. Both tend to have much stronger health promotion profiles than other healthcare delivery models. However, most Canadians do not have access to these proven approaches. The Green Party of Canada would like to see funding for, and access to, these multidisciplinary community-based primary health teams expanded across the country. Green MPs will work with relevant stakeholders to help make this happen through federal health transfer payments, special funding for pilot project development and evaluation research, and other mechanisms.

**4) Expanded support for computerized health promotion aides**

Only 10 percent of Canadian doctors receive computerized alerts about potential prescribing problems and drug interaction complications (other countries in a recent Commonwealth Fund survey ranged from 23% to 93%). Computer aids are also proven to greatly assist physicians in health promotion counseling (Skinner, date) and in the detection of previously undisclosed spousal abuse (Ahmad, 2007). Support for these cost-effective alert systems must be increased in order to broaden their coverage and uptake.

**5) Support harm reduction strategies**

Addressing addiction and mental health from a harm reduction perspective has worked in many European countries with substantial Green Party representation. The main objective of harm reduction is to mitigate the potential dangers and health risks associated with the risky behaviours themselves (Canadian Harm Reduction Network, 2007).

**6) Fund more community-based health research**

Research methodologies that include perspectives of all citizens will allow for a more meaningful representation of the health problems of greatest concern to Canadians. Existing federal health funding bodies (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, for example) could be encouraged to do more on this front.

**7) Address environmental impacts of health services**

The health sector must take responsibility for its contribution to environmental degradation. Developing more environmentally sustainable methods of providing safe and effective health care can lessen the onset of climate change and encourage the world to pay attention to the reciprocal interaction between health and the environment. Innovative solutions for greening healthcare have been identified by the *Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care*.

**8) Expand healthcare coverage to include basic preventive dental care and the services of some allied health professionals**

The Green Party would like to see an expansion of healthcare coverage to include basic preventive dental services and to cover medically necessary services that could be provided more

readily, effectively, holistically, and cheaply by qualified allied and complementary healthcare professionals. The gradual inclusion of midwifery and nurse practitioners in many hospitals and healthcare settings are two qualified success stories, but many other opportunities exist.

#### **9) Establish a minimum budget for health promotion**

Despite the significant opportunities for cost-effective investment in the future health of Canadians, health promotion and disease prevention currently account for less than 1 percent of the overall healthcare budget. The Green Party would like to see 1.5% of the healthcare budget devoted to health promotion and disease prevention. In view of the many determinants of health outside the formal health care system, we also favour examination of the potential to introduce protected budgets for health promotion within the budgets of several other Ministries, (e.g. Agriculture, Citizenship and Immigration, Environment, Labour, National Defence) as well as key Canadian agencies (e.g. Canadian International Development Agency - CIDA).

### **Funding**

Recognizing that investing in the health of Canadians by addressing the social determinants of health is both a financially and environmentally sustainable approach, the Green Party of Canada proposes an initial minimum of 1 percent of the health budget be allocated for health promotion initiatives such as those described in this Green Paper. Sound and transparent strategic planning and subsequent budgeting will be conducted, with inclusive participation from community representatives from across Canada. It is important to note that funding for these initiatives will not be drawn out of existing funds for health care, but rather from its own federal funding 'envelope' funded in part from 'sin' taxes on tobacco, alcohol, and (the proposed tax to be levied on) junk food. The Green Party of Canada is prepared to invest in the health of Canadians, and to make health a priority. We are assured that this investment in prevention through social justice, ecological wisdom and community strengthening will pay for itself in the high quality of life and increased productivity of future generations of Canadians.

### **Conclusion**

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion defines health promotion as the process of enabling people to increase control over their own health and well being. The policies outlined in the Green Party of Canada's Health Promotion platform aim to achieve these goals for all Canadians by providing better services, infrastructure and collaborative leadership and by addressing the social determinants of health. The Green Party of Canada upholds values of social justice, participatory democracy, sustainability and ecological wisdom and knows that Canadians value these principles as key to health and well-being. The Green Party of Canada also knows that a society embodying these attributes is an equitable society, one in which communities, families and individuals are healthier and happier.

**Let's make Canada a health-promoting nation together. Support the Green Party of Canada to make these policies a reality.**

*"We need more than rhetoric; we need action. I am therefore recommending a greater emphasis on prevention and wellness as part of an overall strategy to improve the delivery of primary care in Canada, the allocation of new moneys for research into the determinants of health, and that governments take the next steps for making Canadians the world's healthiest people" (Roy Romanow, 2002 in The Future of Health Care in Canada).*

Contact:

Blake Poland, PhD  
Health Promotion Critic, Green Party of Canada  
[blakepoland@greenparty.ca](mailto:blakepoland@greenparty.ca)

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