Green Party Response to FSNA Key Issues – September 30, 2008
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In keeping with the values of the Green Party, many issues that are addressed throughout Vision Green will benefit all ages including seniors, such as policies to eliminate poverty, provide affordable housing, accessible public transportation and support the Canada Health Act.

Our policies are designed to protect and respect the contribution of our oldest citizens and give them economic and social security and it is with this vision that we are commenting on your four key issues.

Marriage-date related restriction

With respect to fairness and using the same qualification criteria, federal superannuation plans would be reviewed and brought in line with existing Canada and Quebec Pension Plans.

National Pharmaceuticals Strategy

The Green Party has a two part strategy. First we must address the medical and social costs of polypharmacy, one of the leading causes of hospitalization for seniors. An education and monitoring program is also needed to address medication non-compliance, a common practice that wastes millions of drugs and money. Physician education, other than that provided by pharmaceutical companies, is also needed to ensure that people are getting the most appropriate drug and only when the benefits outweigh the risk. Ensure that medication is not a substitute for non-pharmaceutical therapies that may be equally or more effective.

We then have two policies summarized below.

Reduce the Costs of PharmaCare

- Initiate a public inquiry into the rising costs and over-prescription of drugs.
- Immediately embark on a commission to study and conduct a cost-benefit analysis on the feasibility of establishing, in cooperation with the provinces, a new crown corporation to bulk purchase and dispense generic drugs to pharmacies and the feasibility of establishing a national PharmaCare Program that ensures that effective pharmaceuticals are available to all Canadians who need them.

Comprehensive Home Care Plan

Your recommendations for a Home Care Program are inclusive and well developed. The Green Party has the following policy in Vision Green.

- Develop, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, a set of national home care objectives in a National Home Care Policy, that incorporates and improves upon existing policies affecting eldercare, including but not restricted to: ensuring

couples needing support and care can continue to live together economic allowances (such as tax rebates); living choices; transportation and respite care.

Flexibility and choice is also needed as carers and care recipients needs change. Our current culture and system needs additional affordable and supportive living choices so that Canadians can age with respect and dignity while receiving the best possible care. Family carers require monetary and social support and professional care providers need a higher level of wages and training to attract quality workers in sufficient numbers.

Supporting someone in their home requires numerous other policies and initiatives to ensure that a person giving or receiving care has choices that contribute to the success of home care. Some of our policies listed below contribute to a person's overall best care.

- Ensure all seniors who qualify are made aware of available federal income supplements available and instructed on how to apply for them.
- Review in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, the current social and legal policies to ensure that citizens and law enforcement officials recognize elder abuse, prevent it where possible, and proceed with appropriate charges and punishment when elder abuse has occurred.
- Help develop national guidelines for care of the frail elderly who have special needs and require care by geriatric specialists.
- Establish and fund a special program to provide grants to non-profit societies setting up palliative care hospices.
- Guarantee people the right to a living will so the person has the choice to die with dignity.
- Ensure financial assistance for low-income spouses and relatives who provide end-of-life care at home for patients who would otherwise need to be hospitalized or in institutional long term care.
- Ensure that health care is provided in the communities where people live.
- Ensure Aging in Place where possible.

Poverty Among Canadian Seniors

The Green party recommends a simpler solution to poverty, that would collapse various programmes such as welfare, disability pensions, seniors benefits, unemployment insurance, within one simple single payment system, administered through taxes. To be cost-effective, however, government will require time to negotiate a coherent programme with the provinces/territories and other levels of government.

- Launch as a first step towards universal GLI provide additional income support of $5000/year to adults currently receiving provincial welfare cheques. Through negotiations with each province this modest income support payment will *not* be subject to claw back.

Additional polices will also reduce poverty.

And expenses will be reduced through an Affordable Housing and National Home Care Program.

- Remove taxes from lowest categories so that no taxes are paid by those below the poverty line (Canada's Low Income Cut-Off measure).
- Offer people the mobility they need to find work, shelter and other necessities through free transit passes for those on income assistance.
- Increase Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors by 25%.
- Augment the government's measurement of "progress" (our Gross Domestic Product-GDP) with a Genuine Progress Indicator - a Canadian index of well-being (that annually measures how well we are doing on quality of life indicators, including eliminating poverty. (See economy section.)

The Green Party recognizes that seniors have a wealth of experience and have contributed immeasurably to the development of the nation we currently celebrate. They should be involved in creating the solutions to our society's problems and challenges; not considered as one of the "problems."

We believe that all seniors have the right to live their retirement years in dignity and continue to contribute to society to the best of their abilities and desires. Government must provide the supportive services and opportunities to make that possible. We believe that the government must take the lead in educating the public about end of life issues, including the limits to artificial life support systems, surgical operations and chemical therapies to extend life and postpone the inevitable transition from life.