



Ontario Division
175 Bloor Street East
Suite 700, North Tower
Toronto, Ontario M4W 3R8
Telephone: (416) 922-6065
Fax: (416) 922-7538
Toll Free: 1-800-268-7582
www.mssociety.ca

VIA E-Mail and Chapter Mail

December 22, 2005

Distribution:

Chapter/ Unit Chairs & Executive Directors
Social Action Directors, Chapters/ Units
Ontario Government and Community Social Action Committee
Ontario Executive Committee & Board
Social Action E-Network
Ontario Client Services and Chapter Operations Staff
(Please forward to other interested members)

Government Relations and Social Action E-Alert

➤ **Federal Election Special**

The National Government Relations Committee has developed election information about key MS Society issues which you can use when candidates come to your door or phone and at all-candidate meetings. The questions about the issues are copied below, but they can also be downloaded from the MS Society website. The Candidate Questionnaire and tips for accessible voting are posted on the Government Relations section of the website. There is a link from the home page at either: www.mssociety.ca or www.scleroseenplaques.ca

In addition, we are asking party leaders to provide answers to the issues in the questionnaire. A letter from Alistair Fraser, president and chief executive, has been sent to Bloc, Conservative, Green, Liberal and NDP party headquarters along with the questionnaire. Responses will be posted to the website when they are received in early January.

If you don't know who all your local candidates are, you can go to their websites listed below for that information.

Conservatives – The website (www.conservative.ca) lists candidates and e-mail addresses. The site has a listing of candidates by province and riding.

Green – E-mail addresses of candidates are available on the website (www.greenparty.ca). The site lists candidates by province and riding.

Liberals – The website (www.liberal.ca) lists the candidates by riding. Some, but not all of the candidates, have their e-mail addresses available.

New Democratic Party – The website (www.ndp.ca) lists candidates and their e-mail addresses. The site lists candidates by province and riding.

Government Relations and Social Action E-Alerts Online

The Government Relations and Social Action Alert newsletter is available online. This issue and previous ones are posted to the MS Society website. Just go to www.mssociety.ca/ontario and click on Social Action/ Social Action Alert.

Thanks very much for all of your assistance and enjoy the election. As well, I would like to wish everyone all the best for the Holidays.

Deanna Groetzinger
Vice-President, Communications

\ont-sa-alert-dec05

To unsubscribe from the Government Relations and Social Action E-Alert list, please send an e-mail with the subject line "Unsubscribe" in the subject line to: Deanna.groetzinger@mssociety.ca

Election 2006

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

With the federal election now underway, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is interested in knowing your position on a variety of issues that affect people living with multiple sclerosis (MS). Please take the time to provide your response in the space provided. **Please provide your response as soon as possible.**

Candidate Name:

Name of Party:

Riding:

Income Security and Supports

ISSUE 1: People with episodic disabilities such as multiple sclerosis and other neurological diseases, AIDS, and mental illnesses are often precluded from participating regularly in the workforce because of the severity and unpredictability of their symptoms. Current federal disability benefit programs fall short of providing adequate income support because they are tied to earning an income.

QUESTION 1: Do you support making a new income security and disability supports program a federal priority?

ISSUE 2: Many people with MS are unable to work full time because of the unpredictability of attacks and the severity of symptoms but could manage part-time or occasional employment. The problem is that CPP-Disability does not allow for part-time work on an ongoing basis. Today, it is an “all-or-none” approach which asks people to declare themselves as “permanently unemployable” in order to qualify.

QUESTION 2: Do you support developing a disability benefits program that would allow ongoing part-time work and pay partial or reduced benefits in addition to the current CPP-D program?

ISSUE 3: Currently, caregivers who stop work to care for someone who is disabled are penalized: Not only do they face a loss of income when they leave the workforce, but they compromise the future level of their pension at retirement. This is unfair in view of the fact that caregivers save the government millions of dollars in annual costs for hospitalization or long-term institutional care by enabling disabled family members to stay at home.

QUESTION 3: Do you support providing dropout provisions for caregivers through the CPP program that are the same as the current child-care dropout provisions?

ISSUE 4: Caregivers who are spouses are not currently allowed to claim the caregiver tax credit. It should be noted that spouses often provide care out of love and compassion, not because they are required to do so. We believe that a caregiver-spouse makes an important contribution, and that it ought to be recognized and rewarded through a caregiver tax credit.

QUESTION 4: Do you support extending the caregiver tax credit to spouses of Canadians who are disabled?

ISSUE 5: Access to quality home care is essential for people with multiple sclerosis. MS is chronic and often progressive. In many parts of the country, the current measure providing short-term acute home care including acute community, mental health and end-of-life care does not address the needs of people who disabled or who have chronic health problems.

QUESTION 5: What will your party do to expand home care coverage to include support for Canadians with chronic illnesses or disabilities?

ISSUE 6: Drugs to treat MS are expensive – up to \$25,000 a year to prevent new MS attacks. None are included on provincial drug formularies right now. A national program to assist with catastrophic drug costs has been promised, but is not yet in place.

QUESTION 6: What will your party do to improve and accelerate access to beneficial therapies to the people who need them in a reasonable timeframe?

ISSUE 7: Investment in health research is an investment in both the future health of Canadians as well as in this country’s economic health. While the Multiple Sclerosis Society funds a robust MS research program of \$6 to \$7 million annually, it relies on an overall well-funded publicly-supported research strategy to ensure maximum success.

QUESTION 7: What will your party do to ensure that health research is well supported in Canada?

Thank you.

BACKGROUNDER

About Multiple Sclerosis and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

About Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis is a disease that touches people across a wide spectrum in this country since studies indicate that Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world. Usually diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 40, MS is the most common disease of the central nervous system affecting young adults in Canada. Periods of spontaneous recovery are interrupted by unpredictable attacks that over time result in most people with MS becoming disabled. The result: young Canadians face a progressive and unpredictable disease that cannot be prevented, and that they must live with for 40 or more years.

While MS is unpredictable, most people with MS are eventually unable to work full-time and many experience total disability. In 1991, 44 percent of adults with disabilities (aged 15-44) were not part of the labour force. With MS, however, this is significantly higher. Nearly 80 percent of people with multiple sclerosis are eventually unable to work full time because of the severity and unpredictability of their MS symptoms. The change in work force attachment comes fairly soon after diagnosis: 25 percent have a change in their employment status within five years of diagnosis; 50 percent within 10 years and 80 percent within 20 years.

About the MS Society of Canada

The MS Society of Canada is the only national voluntary organization in Canada that supports both multiple sclerosis (MS) research and services for people with MS and their families. In addition to the national organization, there are seven regional divisions and more than 120 chapters across Canada. The Society's engine is its volunteers. More than 1,500 individuals serve on the national, division and chapter boards and 13,500 individuals organize and deliver service programs, fund raising events, public awareness campaigns and social action activities. More than 100,000 Canadians participate in one of the Society's fund raising events. Eighty percent of the Society's net revenue goes directly to fund MS research and services for people with MS and their families while administration and fund raising costs account for just twenty percent.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is a major funder of MS research in Canada. The MS Society was founded in 1948 and less than a year later was able to provide its first research grant of \$10,000 to the Montreal Neurological Institute. Today, the MS Society supports a research program of \$6 to \$7 million annually. In addition, its related MS Scientific Research Foundation funds large cooperative multi-disciplinary research projects. Together, they are the largest funders of MS research in Canada.