



**2006-2007 Budget
PRESS RELEASE No. 3**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CNW CODE 01**

2006-2007 Budget Speech

Health and education

Investing in our future

*“A responsible Québec is a Québec that honours the choices we have made
and that invests in our common values.”*

- Michel Audet

Québec, March 23, 2006 – Finance Minister Michel Audet’s 2006-2007 Budget Speech reaffirmed that the priorities of the Québec government are health and education by announcing substantial new investments. In 2006-2007, nearly \$1.3 billion in new credits will be allocated to health and social services and an additional \$660 million will be injected into the education system.

Health: always our top priority

“We were elected with a mandate to redress our health care system. Three years later, we have made real progress,” declared the Finance Minister.

Mr. Audet underscored the progress achieved:

- The organization of services has been improved, waiting lists have been reduced and the congestion in emergency rooms is being relieved.
- A mental health action plan and an action plan regarding services for seniors losing their autonomy have been drawn up.
- Eighty-nine new family medicine groups have been added and twelve others are in the process of being accredited.
- A better distribution of specialists and general practitioners has been ensured.
- Twelve network clinics have been created to take into account the specificities of the Montréal area.
- Ninety-five health and social services centres have been set up.
- Two regional centres for medical training have been created—one in the Mauricie region and one in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region.
- Noteworthy improvements have been made in the areas of cataract surgery, cardiac surgery and radiation oncology.

Once again, the new funding for health and social services is in line with the government's commitment to continue investing in health. "Again this year, almost two thirds of the increase in government spending will go to health. That represents an additional \$1.3 billion, an increase of 6.3% from last year. All told, since we came to power, we have raised the health budget to \$22.1 billion, \$4.2 billion more than under the previous government," Mr. Audet pointed out.

The new resources allocated for the coming year will:

- improve access to surgery and emergency room protocol;
- step up the fight against cancer;
- enable further implementation of the action plans regarding seniors and mental health;
- provide better support for young people in difficulty and better help for women who are victims of violence and other vulnerable groups;
- increase prevention and protection efforts.

New capital investments of \$485 million will also be made and used to fund, among other things:

- leading-edge medical equipment;
- the addition of new beds in long-term care centres;
- an action plan for seniors losing their autonomy;
- radiation oncology and cardiology facilities.

The Finance Minister also announced improvements to the tax credit for home support for elderly persons. An amount of \$159 million will be allocated for care and services provided to seniors who wish to remain in their own homes. This represents an additional \$54 million that will enable the government to:

- broaden the services eligible for the tax credit to include nursing services for seniors living in a seniors' residence or their own home who need special care;
- raise the rate of the tax credit for home-support services from 23% to 25%%;
- simplify the procedure for obtaining the tax credit, which will enable 290 000 seniors—180 000 more than at present—to remain in their home longer;
- raise the limit on the expenses eligible for the tax credit from \$12 000 to \$15 000 to take into account people with higher expenses.

"We have reversed the trend in health care and we will continue to implement concrete, sustainable solutions to remedy the mistakes of the past," affirmed the Finance Minister.

Education: the future of our children

"In our competitive world, the societies destined to succeed are those that cultivate knowledge. Education is the surest path to prosperity. It is also the best means of reducing poverty," Mr. Audet went on to say in the 2006-2007 Budget Speech.

This year, the government will inject another \$660 million into the education system, raising the education budget by 5.4% to \$13 billion. Since 2003, the government will have invested \$1.6 billion more in education.

With the additional resources for 2006-2007:

- another \$100 million will be invested to better assist students with learning disabilities or behavioural problems;
- one and a half hours of teaching time a week will be added at the elementary level as of this fall;
- English will be taught as of Grade 1.

The Finance Minister also announced an additional amount of almost \$300 million that will make it possible to finance:

- the construction of the John Molson building at Concordia University;
- the updating of existing technical programs, and the creation of new ones, at the college level;
- the addition of information and communications technology equipment;
- the conversion of science laboratories for the second cycle of secondary school.

"What we want is to encourage young people to work resolutely toward achieving success," declared the Minister.

- 30 -

Source: Michel Rochette
Press Officer
Office of the Minister of Finance
(418) 643-5270