

For immediate release

## **No time to waste before government imposes massive centralization of health and social services – and adds a new threat to English access**

**Montreal, December 1, 2023** – There is fresh urgency to sign a petition demanding the Quebec government slam the brakes on its massive Bill 15, which is designed to create a vast centralization of our health and social-services network.

The imperative arrives in the form of a last-minute, government-proposed amendment, suspended for the moment, that would give its new central controlling body, Santé Québec, the power to strip health institutions of their right to offer services in a language other than French if the numbers no longer warrant.

“We are shocked that Health Minister Christian Dubé would try to drop an amendment like this into Bill 15 at the last moment, days before the government is about to invoke closure to ram this bill through the Nation Assembly,” said Eva Ludvig, President of the Quebec Community Groups Network.

“This is part of a very nasty pattern with the CAQ: it seems the only way they feel they can protect and promote French in Quebec is to restrict or deny the rights and access to services of the English-speaking community here – even when those minority-language rights are guaranteed by law.

“So from bilingual municipalities, to school boards, to university tuition hikes for Canadian students outside Quebec, and now to health care, it is clear this government is targeting the English-speaking community as a way to counter the Parti Québécois’ recent rise in the polls.

“While the QCGN is delighted that in a mere two weeks almost 4,500 people have signed the petition demanding the government put a hold on Bill 15, which will erase local community involvement in our hospitals and other health and social-services institutions, this new twist is not only worrisome on the linguistic side, but further evidence the bill is not ready,” Ludvig said.

“As is clear by the hundreds of amendments the government has itself presented, and the fact the Assembly’s Committee on Health and Social Services has yet to examine more than 500 of its 1,180 articles, it is evident this legislation is nowhere near ready to be adopted. Its flaws are numerous and its implications far-reaching,” Ludvig said. “The government appears to be still making it up as it goes along.”

Numerous community and patient advocates as well as doctors, nurses and other health-care workers have also shown strong opposition to many aspects of the bill. Opposition MNAs from the Liberal Party, Québec Solidaire, and the Parti Québécois have also spoken strongly against this bill, while six former premiers, representing both Liberals and the PQ, took the unprecedented step of writing a public letter urging the government to reverse course, calling the proposed legislation “dangerous.”

“This is a bad bill that will do absolutely nothing to address the worsening crisis in our emergency rooms, worsening delays in surgeries, and growing numbers of people who don’t have access to a family doctor,” said Ludvig.

“Only this week we read that a record five Montreal emergency rooms were at more than 200-per-cent capacity, with wait times reaching more than 50 hours. And it’s not just in the ER where we’re seeing a collapse. The demand for home care for seniors has skyrocketed, with a wait list growing to more than 21,000 – an increase of 119 per cent since 2019.

“Quebecers who are fed up with this situation can do something. They can tell the government to focus on the provision of services, not more bloated administrative structures that have proven inadequate in other provinces. They can send a message to their MNAs. They can send comments to the Committee on Health and Social Services at this [link](#). And they can [sign our petition](#). There is absolutely no time to waste.”

The Quebec Community Groups Network ([www.qcgn.ca](http://www.qcgn.ca)) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together English-language community organizations and individuals across Quebec. Its mission is to identify, explore, and address strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of English-speaking Quebec and to encourage dialogue and collaboration.

**For further information:**

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