

For immediate release

QCGN satisfied Bill 10 compromises will protect the rights of English-speaking communities

Montreal – February 9, 2015 – After months of intense and delicate negotiations with Quebec Health Minister Gaetan Barrette and his office, the community obtained some significant changes to Bill 10 that will preserve many of our institutions despite the loss of their individual board of directors. These changes to the government’s health reform legislation will ensure the participation and engagement of English-speaking Quebecers to ensure the health and social service network is responsive to the needs of our communities.

“When he tabled Bill 10 in September, Health Minister Ga etan Barrette stated that his goal was to streamline the health and social service network and to cut costs. While most in our community support these valid goals, we disagreed with the elimination of the boards of directors of our institutions,” said QCGN President Dan Lamoureux.

“The minister made it clear that while he understood that the loss of our boards was not our community’s preference, that we had to compromise,” commented Lawyer Eric Maldoff, who was the community’s chief negotiator with the government. “We believe we achieved everything that was possible given that, in the context of a majority government, this legislation was moving forward with or without our support. We thank Minister Barrette for listening to our community’s legitimate concerns and for addressing many of them within the constraints of his law.”

“Compared to the original bill, our community made important gains,” said QCGN Director General Sylvia Martin-Laforge, noting that the mega institutions that will serve the largely English-speaking communities in Montreal’s West End and West Island will be designated as bilingual; members of our community are assured a place on all of the boards of the new merged institutions and there will be two seats for our universities on the boards of university hospitals – an important consideration for McGill University. Moreover, the new advisory committees that were optional in the legislation as first proposed will be compulsory in all of our recognized bilingual institutions. These committees will be critical watchdogs in ensuring the protection of the social, cultural and linguistic needs of the populations served by their institutions.”

“The amended legislation also reconfirms and strengthens our regional access committees that will continue to have a meaningful involvement in the preparation of access plans for the provision of services in English. The law also ensures that the members of these committees will be representatives of the English-speaking communities of Quebec. Importantly, the regional access committees will have a new role in identifying the people who will sit on boards of the new regional institutions,” said Richard Walling, a past president of the Provincial Advisory Committee on the dispensing of health and social services in the English language. “The legislation also contains important provisions that protect the integrity of our owning corporations which will maintain their veto over any changes to the clinical mission of a given facility, the liquidation of any assets, or any modification of the bilingual status of facilities designated as such under article 29.1 of Quebec’s Charter of the French Language.”

“We are also very pleased to see that the Minister has understood and addressed the particular situation of Jeffery Hale - Saint Brigid's in the legislation,” said Walling who is vice-president of the board of the 158-year old institution. “The measures adopted will ensure that English-speaking residents of the Quebec City area will continue to benefit from the services they need and foster the continued engagement of the community that make Jeffery Hale - Saint Brigid's the very special place it is”.

“Now it is up to our communities to be proactive in this new environment,” remarked former MNA Clifford Lincoln. “The onus is on us to get involved in the boards of the new institutions, the institutional corporations, user and advisory committees, as well as the provincial and regional access committees. The law provides lots of room for our community to engage. Rights are not valuable unless you exercise them.”

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 42 English-language community organizations across Quebec. As a centre of evidence-based expertise and collective action it identifies, explores and addresses strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec and encourages dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions and leaders.

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