

Alliance-Quebec condemns language bureaucrats' involvement in health care

Montreal, Jan. 24 -- The Office de la langue française should butt out of health care, Alliance Quebec President Michael Hamelin said Friday.

“Hospitals are about caring for sick and injured people in crisis,” Hamelin said. “They’re not about promoting the French language.”

“Premier Lucien Bouchard knows that. He told us that when people go to the hospital for a blood test, they don’t need a language test and that statement means as much today as it did when he said it at the Centaur.”

Language Minister Louise Beaudoin has asked that officials of the Office de la langue française review plans for access to health care and social services for Quebec citizens who speak English and Health Minister Jean Rochon has agreed to the request.

“That is appalling,” said Hamelin.

“These access plans followed a process prescribed by law. They were approved by every agency and regional board concerned, organizations which have a very tough job in current circumstances of taking care of people with real problems.

“It took years of work,” Hamelin said. “The plans have to come into effect quickly.”

“This is not a language issue. We are talking about peoples’ health here. With Quebec’s health-care system changing quickly they are a vital part of the province’s social safety net.

“This government has to understand that we can’t have language bureaucrats making decisions on medical treatment. Mr. Bouchard should have his cabinet approve these plans as quickly as possible.

“Hospitals have a lot of other things on their plate as it is.”

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