

QCGN Statement on Bill 15 and Closure

Montreal – December 8, 2023 – As predicted, the Legault government is imposing closure to ram through its massive, complex Bill 15 that will upend Quebec's health- and social-services network.

In so doing, the Coalition Avenir Québec government is thumbing its nose at the thousands of Quebecers who have raised significant concerns about this ill-thought-out bill. This includes the 6,400 who signed our petition demanding more consultation; six former premiers who publicly denounced it; as well as unions, health professionals and many, many others.

The Parti Québécois's self-righteous stance in opposing an offer of four more days of National Assembly committee discussion of the bill did nothing to help. Those four more days could have been useful in uncovering yet more weaknesses in this terribly flawed bill.

The enormous effort to centralize the health and social-services network, part of the CAQ government's command-and-control strategy, will do nothing to ease the crises in our hospitals where people have died in overcrowded emergency rooms while waiting to see a doctor, or in long waiting lists for surgery or lab results, or in the provision of family doctors.

Having consulted with experts, we are also extremely concerned by the way the bill establishes a historic first in giving Santé Québec the right – now with a requirement to consult bodies appointed by the government itself – to revoke minority-language access to health and social services. This has never happened. This same government made a solemn promise during debate on Bill 96 last year to not touch the English-speaking community's access to health and social services in their own language.

Will those bodies have a determinant role in the decision, or will they simply be asked for their opinion? Health Minister Christian Dubé must clarify what is now confusing.

This is what Premier François Legault said in May 2022: "I want to reassure everybody speaking English, even if their fathers went to an English school or not... [providers] will not refuse to treat a patient in English if it's needed. I want to be very clear, there is no change at all in the actual situation of services given to anglophones and immigrants in English in our health-care system -- that's clear."

If his government had wanted to live up to that promise, why did it feel the need to add this weapon to their arsenal – at the last minute, and through confusing amendments?

It is now crystal clear that no one can trust this government on anything.

From education to health care, from university tuition to trying to reduce the presence of unions in the management of the public service, the CAQ government wants to control everything it touches with as little public input as possible. That should worry all of us as Quebecers very much indeed.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (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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