

For immediate release

QCGN Begg to Differ on Premier’s Interpretation of English Signage in Hospitals

Montreal – January 10, 2019 – Premier François Legault’s statement that English-speaking Quebecers have the right to services in their language but not to English signs is wrong. Bill 101 in no way prohibits the use of English on hospital signs as they relate to health and safety, maintains Geoffrey Chambers, President of the Quebec Community Groups Network.

“It’s senseless to argue that you have access to health and social services in English if you do not know where the services are located,” Chambers commented. “Not to have clear signage is an obstacle to services. If you cannot find the service, it is not available to you.”

In a press release issued only in French, the regional health authority in Lachute, Le Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) des Laurentides, announced in December that it was removing English from all signs at the local hospital to be conform with Quebec’s Charter of the French Language. This decision followed an intervention by the Office québécois de la langue française.

The removal of English signs that had been posted for many years triggered an outcry from the local population – both English- and French-speaking. Outraged protesters included mayors of surrounding towns and villages, who said they were deeply disappointed by the decision. Over the last few days English-speaking community representatives also weighed in with similar reactions.

The Premier told reporters Thursday he doesn’t see the importance of bilingual signs. This is reminiscent of Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who fails to see the importance of minority-language services for members of his French-speaking community.

Premier Legault, who reserved for himself ministerial responsibility for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers when he named his cabinet, should not take major decisions on issues of importance to English-speaking communities before consulting with our representatives, Chambers said.

Chambers seeks an immediate meeting with the Premier to clarify this situation and avoid future misinterpretations of this sort.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together 59 English-language community organizations 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.

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Le Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) des Laurentides informe la population qu'au cours des prochains mois, l'ensemble de l'affichage intérieur et extérieur du Centre multiservices de santé et de services sociaux d'Argenteuil sera revu, et ce, afin de se conformer aux lois et aux règlements qui régissent l'affichage public au Québec, notamment le Programme d'identification visuelle du gouvernement du Québec ainsi que la Charte de la langue française.

« Même si la réglementation en vigueur prévoit que l'affichage public doit se faire en français uniquement, je tiens à préciser que d'offrir des services dans les deux langues demeurera toujours une priorité.

Du personnel habilité à répondre aux questions de la clientèle en français et en anglais sera en tout temps présent sur place », a mentionné le président-directeur général du CISSS des Laurentides, M. Jean-François Foisy.

Au Québec, seuls les établissements désignés comme offrant majoritairement leurs services à des personnes d'expression anglaise ont la possibilité d'afficher en français et en anglais. Cette désignation est déterminée par le gouvernement en vertu de l'article 29.1 de la Charte de la langue française.

