

ACTION ON FRENCH LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES URGENTLY REQUIRED, ACCORDING TO THE COMMISSIONER

Toronto, May 7, 2009 - François Boileau, Ontario's French Language Services Commissioner, is urging the government to take action on French language health services. In his *Special Report on French Language Health Services Planning in Ontario*, made public today, the Commissioner made eight recommendations, including a recommendation that the proposed regulation on Francophone community engagement be amended without delay.

The Commissioner wants the government to equip the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) with planning entities, as provided in the *Local Health System Integration Act, 2006*. "An advisory committee is not a planning entity. Clearly, the proposed regulation needs to be amended to create planning entities, as provided for in the *Act*. These planning entities will enable the LHINs to understand the needs of the Francophone communities they serve, once and for all," stated Mr. Boileau.

The Commissioner also recommended the creation of a French Language Services Coordinator position within each LHIN. "This position must be added to each of the LHINs so that they are accountable for their decisions to the government and to the Francophone community. They must be able to justify the actions they take on French language health services. Having a coordinator position filled by a senior official will put an end to inadequate French language health service planning," added Mr. Boileau.

For the Commissioner, failure to take action will have serious consequences for the Francophone community. Action is urgently needed because access to French language health services is an issue in quality of service. For this reason, Mr. Boileau is insisting that the Francophone community be involved in the planning of its health services. He is calling on the government, service providers, and the community to work together as never before to improve the health of Francophone citizens.

"The Francophone community must no longer be put on a waiting list. It has specific needs. It has an aging population. Hence the urgent need for action. We cannot ask a vulnerable, eighty-year-old patient to fight to receive medical services in French. For this reason, it is vital that French language services be developed and offered on the basis of the specific needs of Ontario's Francophones. It is up to the ministries and the LHINs to more adequately plan and adapt the health services that are offered to Francophones," emphasized Mr. Boileau.

The Commissioner expects that the government will respond positively to his report and follow up on his recommendations.

"The government has demonstrated that it has good intentions and it has listened in recent months, particularly during the controversy over the proposed regulation. Consequently, I expect to see the same openness when it comes time for the government to respond to my special report," concluded the Commissioner.

QUICK FACTS

- This special report is the first of its kind since the French Language Services Commissioner was appointed in August 2007.
- The *French Language Services Act* enables the French Language Services Commissioner to present to the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs special reports on any matter relating to the *Act*.
- The Office of the French Language Services Commissioner was created in 2007. It has a mandate, under the *French Language Services Act*, to conduct independent investigations in response to complaints or on its own initiative; to prepare reports on its investigations; and to monitor the progress made by government agencies in the delivery of French language services in Ontario.

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