

“When Language Policy becomes a matter of Life and Death”

Montreal – December 4, 2023 The latest changes to Bill 15, whether withdrawn or not, will not change the ongoing threat to healthcare for English-speaking Quebecers. That is because Bill 96 requires all government bureaucrats to ensure the exemplary and primary use of French in all public institutions unless excluded by exception.

This means the English-speaking community needs to fight for every single exception until such time as this divisive, mean-spirited, discriminatory law can be rendered illegal by the courts since our Federal government continues to do nothing to stop it. “We expect many are still in disbelief that in a country such as Canada, basic rights are under attack. However, make no mistake, there indeed will be a continuous bombardment - the latest potentially being a matter of life and death,” says Andrew Caddell, president of the Task Force on Linguistic Policy.

The amendment to Bill 15, which was tabled in the National Assembly on November 29th is an affront to all fair-minded Quebecers, and a sop to extreme nationalists, says Andrew Caddell. “We have been watching the discussions on Bill 15 with great concern, as the centralization of any government service is bound to be problematic for any minority community. But this latest amendment is the stuff of our worst nightmares.”

Bill 15 would create a government corporation controlling all health care services run from Quebec City, rather than offering the current autonomy and oversight of regional committees and health administration. This amendment would limit health care services to an ambiguous description of “where numbers warrant” . While he has offered to withdraw this egregious amendment, we don’t believe for a second that Health Minister Dube didn’t know the details nor the impact of such an amendment.”

Since Bill 142 was passed by the Bourassa government in 1986, English-speaking Quebecers and citizens of other minority linguistic groups have had the right to be served in their language. “This was a land mark law, which has been copied by other provinces. The reason is simple: offering a diagnosis or explaining a complex medical procedure, especially in the stress of a health care emergency, is vital for patients. It is literally matter of life and death”, says Andrew Caddell. “This is why oversight committees with the CIUSS and the CISSS were established. With the stroke of a pen, all this would be gone. It is outrageous.”

Caddell added that the definition of who is an English-speaking Quebecer varies across government levels: “For municipalities, it is someone whose mother tongue is English. For public services under Bill 96 the criteria is education in Canada. We believe anyone who uses English as their main language is an English-speaking Quebecer. And, there are 1.25 million of us, according to Statistics Canada.

The Task Force on Linguistic Policy/Comité spécial sur la politique linguistique was formed in June of 2021 to fight Bill 96 and Bill C-13, the amended federal Official Languages Act which now incorporates Bill 96. It is active in the community, boasts thousands of subscribers and followers on social media and uses crowdsourcing to finance its efforts and lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Bill 96 on behalf of everyday Canadians. *Learn more at www.TheTaskForce.ca.*

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Fighting Bill 96 is what we do. www.TheTaskForce.ca