



The English Speaking Catholic Council

Le conseil catholique d'expression anglaise

RESPECT MINORITY AND COMMUNITY RIGHTS IN ANY HEALTH CARE REFORMS

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Montreal, April 19, 2004

The English-speaking Catholic community in Quebec is more than a third of a million strong. Historically, the English Catholic community has created and supported institutions such as youth agencies, seniors' residences/long term care facilities, hospitals and home care programs.

Over the years, the institutions of the English-speaking Catholic community have become fully public, serving all in need. However the link with the community remains an important one.

The health and social services network is going through extensive reform right now. Health care planners in Montreal have proposed the creation of 12 new territorial structures that would bring together the resources of CLSCs, long-term and general care hospitals and private clinics into new front-line health and social service delivery organizations.

The English Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC) welcomes any process that genuinely improves services to citizens, especially to seniors. But reform of health and social services must be undertaken with great care. In particular, we insist that the historic link between institutions and the communities that they serve not be broken.

For the English-speaking Catholics in Montreal, there are two institutions that have a particularly close relationship with the community – Saint Mary's Hospital and the Father Dowd Home. In Quebec City, Saint Brigid's Home is rooted in the local English Catholic community.

Over the years, the nature of the relationship between the community and these institutions has evolved. But there has always been management and control through community representation on Boards of Directors, substantial charitable giving through the institutions' foundations and strong volunteer participation in the day-to-day life of these establishments.

We believe that patients and the wider health network have benefited from these historic partnerships between community and institutions and we have insisted with health planners that any reform must protect them.

The ESCC has also underlined for the planners that language is an essential component of quality of care in health and social services

We have made important strides over the years in ensuring access to English language services through the protection of community-based institutions and through the system of regional Access Plans as well as other legal and administrative means.

Members of our community in regions like the West Island and the Monterégie have praised local health care institutions for the quality of English language services that are available in their public establishments. These established patterns of service provision to English-speaking Quebecers must to be respected in any reform.

The ESCC also firmly supports the recommendations being made by Saint Mary's Hospital and by the unified Board of Directors of Father Dowd, St. Andrew's and St. Margaret's Homes that would allow them to continue to make their important contributions to health care in Montreal.

Saint Mary's has an exciting future as part of the McGill University hospital network and should continue to provide high quality hospital services as an independent institution to citizens from the Centre-Ouest region and beyond. Father Dowd, St. Andrew's and St. Margaret's Homes envision a dynamic new consortium of community-based institutions that promises to enhance services while maintaining strong community ties.

In Quebec City, Saint Brigid's Home has presented proposals for its own future that are respectful of the spirit of the reform and consistent with its history of outstanding service to the people of that region.

We see opportunities in this reform process to enhance accessibility and quality of health and social services for all Quebecers, particularly for English-speakers. But we also see risks.

As a bottom line for responsible reform, the English Speaking Catholic Council insists that no community, region or neighborhood should find itself with fewer services and with fewer protections for services in the minority language at the end of this process than it had at the beginning.

A true commitment to caring demands no less.

