



NEWS

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER LAUNCHES AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ANNOUNCED CLOSURE OF A PARTIALLY DESIGNATED HOSPITAL

TORONTO, November 17, 2014 – The French Language Services Commissioner is launching an investigation into the announced closure of Penetanguishene General Hospital, an agency in which some services are partially designated. Even though they are protected by the *French Language Services Act* (FLSA), a quasi-constitutional law, these services are currently in danger of being eliminated without due process under the Act.

The Commissioner is urging the government to postpone the elimination of the French-language services provided at the former Penetanguishene General Hospital until the FLSA process has run its course, to ensure compliance with the letter and the spirit of the Act. “The initial response of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care appears to be the right one, since it is impressive in its clarity, its rapidity and its willingness to properly remedy this unacceptable situation. We will now have to observe in the field what is being done with services that are currently designated and protected,” Commissioner Boileau explained.

“The designation of an agency, even if it is only partial, reflects a commitment and official recognition of its capacity to provide services in French. That is not an end in itself, but rather a means of guaranteeing the active, continuing delivery of French-language services in the field, to meet the particular needs of the population being served,” added the Commissioner. “Designation is granted following a complex, rigorous process, and any change of status, especially revocation of a designation, should be made with equal rigour, in keeping with the Act and with the population concerned having an opportunity to make its views known.”

In his investigation, the Commissioner will examine the planning, the process and the public consultations that took place before the decision was made to close this partially designated hospital. The Commissioner’s investigation will focus on the Office of Francophone Affairs, which is responsible for managing the process of revoking the designation of a public service agency, or for amending a regulation designating a public service agency so as to exclude or remove a service from the designation. The investigation will also involve the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN, which oversee the delivery of high-quality health care services in the region.

The Office of the French Language Services Commissioner reports directly to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.