

Speech
by Commissioner François Boileau

*Forum sur les services
de santé en français (SSEF)*

Toronto, Ontario
Wednesday, November 15, 2017

5 minutes



- The Minister of Francophone Affairs and Community Safety and Correctional Services and member for Ottawa-Orléans, the Honourable Marie-France Lalonde
- The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and member for St. Paul's, the Honourable Eric Hoskins;
- Dr. Bob Bell, Deputy Minister of Health and Long-Term Care;
- Tim Hadwen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health System Accountability, Performance and French Language Services;
- Mariette Carrier-Fraser, Chair of the French Language Health Services Advisory Council of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;
- Distinguished guests.



- Good Afternoon. Both Ministers delivered on what we discussed last spring
- I would first like to thank you all for inviting me to say a few words today at the French language health services forum.
- The FLS Forum is a rare opportunity for the ministry to provide clear directions on how it wants to shape the relationships between the key players in the delivery of French language health services. I would like to wholeheartedly thank the Ministry for hosting today's important event.



- As you know, healthcare has been a priority at the Office of the Commissioner since the very beginning of my term.
- In my last annual report (16-17), I recommended to the minister of Health and Long-term care to work on developing innovative strategies for francophone citizens so they know where and how to find French-language health care.
- My position is clear: Access to French-language services in healthcare should not be a coincidence.



- Patients must be able to access a platform that will help them identify the areas and offices where healthcare professionals offer French-language services.
- It is time to put patients first again, including Francophone patients, by offering them concrete avenues for finding health services in French.
- The Réseau de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario has developed an interesting tool: a system for collecting data and statistics that enables the Réseau to identify health care professionals who can provide services in French, details about the services, and where they are located in their region.



- This initiative makes it possible to generate essential information about the capacity to plan, evaluate performance, and make sound decisions, thus improving access to health services in French.
- While we applaud the clear mandate letter and support the recent amendments to Regulation 515/09, these changes will need to be implemented with a clear focus on accountability.



- This level of accountability was lacking before, because most identified HSPs with specific contractual obligations with regard to FLHS did not significantly improve the delivery of FLHS in the last 30 years.
- In Toronto, for example, no hospital is designated, even partially, and the only three community agencies that are designated are the Centre francophone, the Centre d'accueil Héritage and Action positive. This is hardly an integrated health system.



- However, as per the revision to Regulation 515/09, the development of contractual agreements, accountability frameworks and the required reports on access, accessibility and integration of FLHS in each LHIN, will be critical in the next few months.
- Within the LHINs and entities, implementing the “mapping” and monitoring tool developed by the Eastern Ontario Network is therefore a priority.



- We must ensure that health service providers understand the importance of this rigorous approach. It is up to the entities to occupy the ground and do their job in dealing with health service providers and healthcare professionals.
- The collaboration between the LHINs and the French Language Health Planning Entities is critical in order to establish new strategies, to allow better access and to improve the integration of French-language health services.



- Entities are not subordinate to the LHINs. They are partners of the LHINs.
- LHINs ought to be able to justify their decisions, actions or inactions.
- In the same spirit, Entities must perform in accordance to Regulation 515/09 and stick to their prescribed work. It is not us versus them. Entities are within this integrated health system, they should act like they belong.
- You are not advocacy groups nor watchdogs. I am a watchdog!



- We have initiated a special study on the designation process for agencies under the *French Language Services Act*.
- Through a preliminary analysis of the documentation and interviews with various stakeholders and service providers, current issues relating to validation of the process, the rigidity of certain criteria, delays in processing requests, and the weakness of the process for evaluating designated agencies have been identified.



- The study will focus on its criteria, the process, the actors involved, the support provided and the required follow up post-designation.
- The report will also significantly focus on the identified health service providers.
- There are currently 200 identified HSPs and although some of their contractual provisions speak to French language health services, very little progress has been achieved on the ground.



- Moreover, as Entities and LHINs reassess their portfolio of identified HSPs and the services they must provide in French, they will need to be keenly aware of the need to ensure that there is no regression or loss of FLHS.
- This has been a challenge, particularly when identified and designated service providers have merged with non-designated or not identified service providers...



- To this effect, it is essential that a systematic approach be implemented to flag all French language service, governance and communications requirements long before considering such mergers and integrations.
- In this study, we will propose concrete recommendations to assist in increasing the provision of FLHS by these providers in the coming years. We are hoping to release this new study in the beginning of the year 2018.



- In closing, and given the importance of the upcoming transitions, I hope that the Ministry will convene the participants of Forum for a follow up meeting in six months.
- Thank you very much for being here, we are optimistic for today's meeting.