



One Voice Coalition

Wednesday, February 5, 2020

To the members of the Regional Access Committee,

One Voice is a newly formed affiliation of community organizations which serve the English-speaking senior population of Montreal and Laval. There are some 20 organizations associated with One Voice and each organization connects with between 250 to 2000 seniors in a year. The staff and volunteers of our organizations are extremely engaged with the individuals they serve and one of the ways they assist their members is by acting as their advocates when they are interacting with the health care system. A recurring concern both for ourselves and for the seniors is the confusion surrounding accessing health care in English. Though there is a knowledge that there are some basic rights to health care in English, there is a widespread bewilderment as to how these rights are made tangible in the current system, what the limits of those rights are, and where seniors should be pushing to receive services in English and where they do not, in fact, have a right to such service. We have seen that this confusion leads to a reluctance to request services and written information in English or to report upon the lack of linguistic access. Along with confusion, there is, in some cases, a fear that insisting upon English will lead to an indifference to an individual's medical needs, or some kind of penalty. In addition, though the greater Montreal region is perceived to be a place where health and social services in English are relatively easier to access, the landscape is arguably much more difficult to navigate.

One Voice is aware that the Access Programs for the regions are currently being revised and we have a request for one outcome from this process. Given both the confusion and anxiety surrounding access to health care in English in Quebec, the Access Committee would be providing an enormous service to the ESC by providing a 2-3 page brochure which, in clear and simple language, would explain the provision of English-language services in our region. Such a brochure would not only provide clarity for English-speaking seniors themselves but would help us, and other members of the community, as we assist our seniors as they navigate the health care system.

If the members of One Voice can be of any assistance in this process, we of course are most willing.

Yours,

One Voice Coalition

Anna Farrow - English Speaking Catholic Council

Judy Wong - Catholic Action Montreal

Almage Seniors Community Center

Contactivity

Extra Miles Senior Visiting Program

Henri-Bradet Day Centre

Lasalle D & D 50+

N.D.G. Senior Citizens' Council

New Hope Senior Citizens' Centre

Pastoral Home Services (Archdiocese of Montreal)

Prevention CDN-NDG

REISA

St. Antoine 50+

St. Columba House

Seniors Action Quebec