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## Hear Québec Urges National Assembly to Protect Patient Safety for People with Hearing Loss Under Bill 1

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** Friday Feb 13, 2026

**Québec City, Québec — February 17, 2026 (11:00 a.m.)** — Hear Québec, the only non-profit organization in Québec dedicated to supporting English-speaking adults, seniors, and families affected by hearing loss, will appear **in person** before the National Assembly's **Committee on Institutions** on **February 17 at 11:00 a.m. in Québec City** to raise serious concerns about the impact of Bill 1 on patient safety and access to health and social services.

**Hear Québec brings a comprehensive perspective, combining clinical expertise with lived experience across the lifespan — including caregivers, educators, professionals, seniors, and individuals personally living with hearing loss.** This breadth of experience allows the organization to speak to how policy decisions translate into real-world consequences across health care, education, aging, and community services.

Hearing loss affects nearly **one in ten Quebecers, and close to half of adults over the age of 75**. Despite its prevalence, hearing loss remains largely invisible and its impact on communication is frequently misunderstood.

**“Hearing loss is not about volume; it’s about clarity,”** said **Heidy Wager, Executive Director of Hear Québec**. “Our delegation reflects lived experience at every level — from families navigating care, to professionals supporting children and seniors, to individuals living with hearing loss themselves. That perspective makes clear that communication access is a patient safety issue, not a preference.”

To illustrate how communication barriers can directly affect patient safety, Hear Québec highlighted real-world situations commonly faced by families.

***In one scenario, a mother from Québec who is Deaf and relies on speech-reading accompanies her teenage child to hospital following a serious altercation over the weekend. The mother is Anglophone, while her children are bilingual. As doctors and therapists explain the child’s condition, treatment plan, and next steps, the information is delivered only in French. Because***

*the mother cannot speech-read in French, she struggles to fully understand what is being communicated.*

*In this situation, the challenge extends beyond the hospital stay. The mother needs to understand diagnoses, therapeutic recommendations, and discharge instructions so she can properly support her child during recovery and continue that support at home. Without clear communication in a language she understands, her ability to advocate for her child, ask informed questions, and provide appropriate follow-up care is compromised.*

Situations like this are not rare. When hearing loss is combined with reduced language access, the risk of **misdiagnosis, delayed treatment, misunderstandings, and loss of informed consent** increases — particularly in high-stress medical environments.

As currently drafted, Bill 1 does not explicitly affirm the existing right to receive health and social services in English. For people living with hearing loss, this omission introduces uncertainty that can compound communication barriers and undermine safe, effective care.

Hear Québec emphasized that its position is **about ensuring clarity and continuity** with existing protections that have long supported patient safety and equitable access to care.

**“When language access becomes unclear, people delay seeking care, appointments take longer, information must be repeated, and emergency services are used more often,” Wager added. “Accessibility is not an added expense — it is preventative care. When communication fails, the system absorbs avoidable costs.”**

**During its appearance, Hear Québec called on the government to ensure that Bill 1:**

- explicitly recognizes the right to receive health and social services in English;
- maintains designated institutions access programs; and
- ensure that linguistic access in health care cannot be narrowed through interpretation or future policy shifts.

“As Québec considers changes with long-term implications, it is essential that patient safety and communication accessibility are not weakened by omission,” said Wager. “Clear, accessible communication protects individuals, supports families, and strengthens the health-care system as a whole.”

Hear Québec remains available to work collaboratively with policymakers and media to ensure that the lived realities of people affected by hearing loss are reflected in public policy decisions.

### **Brief Submitted:**

- [Hear Québec Brief in Response to Bill 1 — Québec Constitution Act, 2025](#)
- [Mémoire de Hear Québec en réponse au projet de loi no 1 — Loi constitutionnelle du Québec de 2025](#)
- [Evidence Summary](#)

## About Hear Québec

Hear Québec is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting English-speaking Quebecers affected by hearing loss through peer support, accessibility initiatives, education, and advocacy.


**More than 75% of the organization's board, staff, and volunteers live with hearing loss,** bringing real-world insight to every aspect of its work.

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