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Ontario Ensuring Active Role for Francophones In Health Services *McGuinty Government Establishes New French Language Health Planning Entity*

Ontario is setting up a new French language health planning entity to ensure the needs of francophone communities in Northern Ontario are reflected in local planning.

The new French language health planning entity will be working with the North East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and the North West LHIN to provide guidance on:

- Methods of engaging the francophone community in the area
- Health needs and priorities of the local francophone community
- Identifying francophone health services and health care providers currently available to the community
- Improving access to French language health services in the area.

"This French language health planning entity will ensure that French-speaking residents have a meaningful say in providing access to French language health services in our area," said Monique Smith, MPP for Nipissing.

"It's important that Ontario's francophone residents have access to the health care services they need in French. Our new entities will prove an invaluable resource and help ensure our franco-Ontarians have a stronger voice in local health planning," said Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

"This new entity will further help to ensure that Francophones of Northeastern Ontario have equitable access to health care services and that health care planning within our LHIN moves forward in collaboration with our Francophone partners," says Louise Paquette, CEO of the NE LHIN.

"The Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario is pleased to have been selected as the French-language health planning entity for Northern Ontario. We hope to continue building excellent relations with the North's LHINs in order to continue to best represent the interests of the North's Francophones on health-related matters," said Fabien Hébert and Gaëtane Pharand, Réseau des services de santé en français du Nord de l'Ontario.

QUICK FACTS

- The creation of French-language health planning entities was a key recommendation in the French Language Services Commissioner's Special report on French Language Health Services Planning in Ontario, which was released in May 2009.
- Though there will eventually be six entities across the province, only two are being named today – one in Northern Ontario and one in Eastern Ontario. The Ministry has accepted the recommendations of an Expert Reference Group, which has asked for revised proposals for the four entities for Southern Ontario by September 2010. These will be evaluated and a final determination will be made regarding the entities for Southern Ontario.

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Monique Smith, MPP
Nipissing

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- There are about 600,000 francophones living in Ontario - the largest francophone community in Canada outside of Quebec.

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