



COALITION CONTRE
l'obésité morbide

MEDIA RELEASE
For immediate distribution

The *Coalition against Morbid Obesity* deplores that Ontario, and not Quebec patients benefit from bariatric surgeries in Quebec

Montreal, February 6, 2009 - Jennifer Schultz and Josée Roy, cofounders of the *Coalition against Morbid Obesity* (<http://lepoidsquitue.com>), reacted strongly to the news that an agreement is about to be concluded between Ontario Health and an eminent Montreal bariatric surgeon. The agreement authorizes morbidly obese persons from Ontario to be operated in a Montreal private clinic with the Ontario government covering the cost of those surgeries. Meanwhile in Quebec, some 3,500 patients are on a waiting list awaiting a bariatric surgery. "Why are Ontarians, and not Quebecers, benefitting from the expertise of our bariatric surgeons? », said Josée Roy.

The MSSS justification makes no sense

To justify its inaction in regards to bariatric surgery, the Quebec Health and Social Services department (*Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec - MSSS*) argues there are not enough bariatric surgeons. "How do you then explain that a Quebec-based surgeon has the time to operate Ontarians? Obviously, the twenty some bariatric surgeons in Quebec are not allowed sufficient OR time to practice full-time", declared . In 2007, the MSSS seriously considered to include bariatric surgery to the list of surgeries to be performed in private clinics. Moreover, it has been promising to submit an action plan on bariatric surgery for the past two years.

Double standards

"We will repeat it as many times as we need to: morbid obesity is a disease. Bariatric surgery is the only efficient treatment of morbid obesity. It is a matter of life and death", added Jennifer Schultz. "Why can't morbidly obese people have access to a government-funded that will save their lives? Even transsexuals will now be able to get their sex change operations in a private clinic setting and fully reimbursed by the RAMQ. For morbidly obese people, it seems that living in Quebec is the worst thing that can happen to them. We really are left on our own. This situation is unfair, unjustified and unacceptable", concluded Mrs. Schultz.

Morbid obesity

Morbid obesity is the starting point for different types of diseases that are often fatal, such as arterial hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, or heart disease. An individual's obesity level can be evaluated by means of the body mass index (BMI), which is calculated by dividing the person's weight by his or her height squared (Kg/m²). Morbid obesity corresponds to a BMI higher than or equal to 40, or higher than or equal to 35 if accompanied by comorbidities.

Bariatric surgery

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), bariatric surgery is considered to be the only effective treatment for morbid obesity. Bariatric surgery includes a series of techniques that are based on two intervention principles: gastric bypass (reduced volume) and intestinal malabsorption (derivation). In

Québec in 2005, the Agence d'évaluation des technologies et des modes d'intervention en santé (AETMIS) tabled a report entitled "Surgical Treatment of Morbid Obesity – Update", which reviews all of the bariatric surgery techniques. The AETMIS recommended establishing an action plan in Québec to define the need for bariatric surgery and devise ways to respond to it.

About the Coalition against Morbid Obesity

Created in February 2007, the Coalition against Morbid Obesity is a non-profit, Québec-based organization that draws on the strength of association to increase awareness of the issue of morbid obesity and to foster better access to bariatric surgery in Québec. Its signature, "Weight that kills", expresses the dramatic situation that is experienced by people who are suffering from morbid obesity. As its name indicates, this disease leads to a faster death for those who are afflicted. For more information, visit www.lepoidsquitue.com.

- 30 -

For information:

Hélène Hains

Cell Phone: 514 776-9577