



COALITION CONTRE  
l'obésité morbide

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**For immediate distribution**

**The *Coalition against Morbid Obesity* submits its petition  
and asks Minister Couillard to follow suit with his action plan**

**Montreal, June 12, 2008** - Josée Roy and Jennifer Schultz, cofounders of the *Coalition against Morbid Obesity*, met media representatives today as *Action Démocratique du Québec's* health and social services spokesperson Éric Caire presented their petition to the Quebec National Assembly. "Over 600 people across Quebec have signed our petition. Most of them also forwarded personal testimonials that cannot leave anyone indifferent. The MSSS must act now and introduce its action plan on bariatric surgery scheduled for June 2008. It should be noted that in addition to their morbid obesity, these people are affected by multiple related pathologies that are very costly to our healthcare system", declared Mrs. Roy. "The number of bariatric surgeries performed annually in Quebec must increase substantially. Some 300,000 Quebecers suffer from morbid obesity, 3,500 are waiting to be operated and less than 1,000 bariatric surgeries are being performed annually. This is a fatal disease, just like cancer or diabetes. Why are those people denied the one treatment that can save their lives?", added Mrs. Roy.

**Your cause is not sexy!**

Last February, at a meeting with Health and Social Services Department (MSSS) cabinet officials, the cofounders of the *Coalition against Morbid Obesity* were told "Your cause is not sexy", thus implying it was hopeless. "Following the meeting that had us more worried than ever about the fate of morbidly obese people in Quebec, we decided to launch a petition to raise awareness," affirmed Mrs. Schultz. "Prior to becoming morbidly obese, we were obese. Well, 47% of Quebecers are overweight, and, to make matters worse, morbid obesity rates grow faster than those of obesity. Far from being a lost one, our cause is more pressing than ever", added Mrs. Schultz.

**Justified claim**

According to its representatives, the MSSS intention is to increase from 1,000 to 1,500 the number of bariatric surgeries performed annually, gradually over the next five years. This is a losing proposition that the *Coalition against Morbid Obesity* deplores greatly. Indeed, in comparison with the 2% minimum requirement recognized by the *National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence*, some 6,000 bariatric surgeries should be performed annually in Quebec. The petition's objective is to ensure that Quebec complies with that minimum requirement standard. "Where obesity is involved, prevention is essential. But for the 300,000 morbidly obese people in Quebec, bariatric surgery is the only efficient treatment. And don't take my word for it, the World Health Organization is the one saying it!", concluded Mrs. Roy.

**Eloquent testimonials**

"I'm 20 years old. I weigh close to 400 pounds. I have high cholesterol and my blood press is limit. Chances are I will develop Type 2 diabetes over the next few years. My name is on a waiting list for bariatric surgery, but I was told my turn may only come up in seven years. All I want is to lead a normal life," said Robert Martinez in his testimonial. "My husband and I are very concerned about his future. I wrote twice to Minister Couillard, but to no avail. The government must increase funding for bariatric surgeries. I want my son to live a normal life. This is not a privilege: it's his right," said Mrs. Joanne Rankin, Robert Martinez' mother.

**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 ( $\text{Kg/m}^2$ ). 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 these.

**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](http://www.lepoidsquitue.com).*

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