

Follow-up sent by Stéphane Robichaud, Chief Executive Officer of the New Brunswick Health Council, regarding the study on minority-language health services

Hello,

Further to my appearance before the Committee, I thought it would be useful to submit these additional notes. As time was limited, I was not able to present these comments in person.

The topic of determinants of health was discussed, and there was mention of including language as a determinant of health. I am sharing the following observations in case the Committee was inclined to pursue this in its final report. The use of the term *determinant of health* depends on how it is defined. My observations focus on the use of health determinants in the context of an analytical framework, such as the one used by the NBHC for analyzing population health. In this context, language is a factor that influences the health determinant category of quality of health services—in other words, how being able to communicate in the language of one's choice influences the quality of health services received. In the context of the quality of health services, indicators regarding access can be used to determine whether patients were able to communicate in the language of their choice. When there is a communication barrier, this is when this factor influences other dimensions of health service quality such as efficiency, appropriateness and safety. Administrative data identifiers are needed to better assess these other dimensions.

With respect to funding agreements with the federal government, there needs to be greater attention to expected outcomes. This has been a significant weakness since the introduction of publicly funded health services in Canada. However, the situation cannot be improved without greater attention. That is why measures of health service quality, such as access to services in the language of choice, are useful.

In this context, language itself is not the determinant but rather the ability of individuals to receive service in the language of their choice.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to your deliberations.

Stéphane Robichaud
Chief Executive Officer