



**TRANSPLANT  
QUÉBEC**

*Ensemble pour  
le don d'organes,  
pour la vie  
depuis 50 ans*

## PRESS RELEASE

Embargo until April 24, 2022 at 7 a.m.

### **CONSENT TO ORGAN DONATION:**

#### **Three out of four Quebecers believe that the family should not have the final word**

**Montreal, April 24, 2022** – More than 70% of Quebecers do not believe that the family should have the final word when it comes to donating their deceased loved one's organs, and close to 80% believe the family should not go against their loved one's final wishes, according to new findings released just days before the start of National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, which runs from April 24 to 30. The findings come in response to a survey carried out by Transplant Québec, which asked Quebecers if a loved one or family member should be able to go against the wishes of a deceased person who has registered with one of the two organ donor registries or signed their health insurance card. In reality, organ donation is far more complex.

While recognizing the intention expressed in advance by the donor, in practice medical teams speak to the donor's loved ones concerning consent to organ donation before the process is initiated. The family, which is already dealing with the sudden loss of a loved one, is thrust into a tragic and painful situation that it is ill-prepared and ill-equipped to handle. "It's important that we respect the wishes of individuals who want to donate their organs. That said, we cannot remain insensitive to the pain of their loved ones, who are overwhelmed with emotion at the unexpected death of their kin and are asked to assimilate all this information in a relatively short time. They're also asked to take a position on a subject that may never have been raised by the deceased or even discussed at family gatherings," said Louis Beaulieu, the executive director of Transplant Québec.

"In the face of suffering, and in response to unpredictable and different reservations and reactions on the part of family members, it becomes difficult for clinicians involved in organ donation not to take into account the refusal of loved ones to recognize the deceased's wishes, even when they're clearly expressed," said Dr. Matthew Weiss, medical director of organ donation at Transplant Québec. This situation is not unique to Québec. Even organ donation professionals working in jurisdictions where presumed consent takes precedence, such as Spain or France, will not oppose a grieving family's refusal to consent to organ donation. Consequently, the refusal of families to allow organ donation is the primary cause of loss of potential organ donors across the world.

Transplant Québec recognizes that a disconnect exists between public opinion and the law, that a family in crisis also requires care, and that a person's expressed wish to donate their organs should be respected. As Louis Beaulieu said: "Transplant Québec holds the view that a public consultation would allow a diversity of Québec voices to determine together what a 'yes', officially expressed, really means at those critical times when organ donation is possible."

#### **One in two people has discussed their intention to be an organ donor**

While the vast majority of Quebecers (92%) say that they are in favour of organ donation, the refusal rate among families remains high. When families are unaware of the wishes of the deceased, some tend to refuse donation. Transplant Québec invites every Quebecer to speak to their loved ones about their intention to become an organ donor as soon as possible. For further information and to register your consent with one of the registries: <https://ditesle.ca/fr>

**About Transplant Québec**

Transplant Québec has a mandate from the Minister of Health and Social Services to save lives and improve the health of persons in need of a transplant by coordinating the organ donation process, ensuring the equitable allocation of organs, supporting best clinical practices through consensus-building and the mobilization of its partners, and promoting organ donation in the society at large. Transplant Québec therefore works to ensure that the greatest possible number of Quebecers waiting for an organ can benefit from a transplant in as timely a fashion as practicable.

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**Sources:**

Transplant Québec  
Survey conducted in partnership with Léger  
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**Information:**

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