

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

SPECIAL EDITION



HEALTHCARE IN ONTARIO

REFRAMING THE FACTS, DEFENDING OUR REALITY

Dear citizens of Temiscamingue,
I write to you today with urgency and determination.

In recent days, many of you have reached out to me: cancelled appointments with Ontario specialists, demands for immediate payment, growing uncertainty... And not a single official notice from the RAMQ or CISSSAT.

In response to these troubling developments, I acted immediately.

WHAT WE UNDERSTAND SO FAR

Following numerous discussions with Ms. Julie Germain and Ms. Caroline Roy of the CISSSAT, Mr. Frank Dottori, Ms. Claire Bolduc of the MRC of Temiscamingue, and several concerned citizens, here is how I understand the situation:

- Approximately 2% of Quebecers who receive care in Ontario are from our region.
- The remaining 98% are already subject to the standard interprovincial process: either the Ontario physician bills RAMQ directly and is reimbursed at a lower rate than in Ontario, or the Quebec patient pays the full Ontario rate and then requests partial reimbursement from RAMQ. In both cases, the patient may end up paying part of the cost out of pocket.
- In Temiscamingue, since the 1980s, an unofficial arrangement allowed CISSSAT to act as an intermediary between RAMQ and Ontario doctors in North Bay, ensuring direct payment and covering the difference in rates through its own operational budget. This model will end on August 1st, aligning our region with the rules applied elsewhere in Quebec – but without taking into account our specific geographical and human reality.

According to CISSSAT, this decision aims to reallocate staff and end the coverage of rate differences in order to comply with general interprovincial reimbursement rules and address a significant financial deficit.

But the local consequences are serious.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US, TO THE BEST OF OUR UNDERSTANDING

- RAMQ continues to cover medical care in Ontario. It is incorrect to claim otherwise.
- CISSSAT continues to refer patients to Ontario.
- Ontario physicians can still treat you. Again, it is incorrect to claim otherwise.
- However, some physicians may now request immediate payment at the higher Ontario rate, or refuse patients if they find the process too complex.

The result: service disruptions, lost follow-up care, unnecessary stress.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

The first step is to talk to your Ontario physician now that you are informed of the facts. Some citizens who explained the situation to their doctor were able to reschedule their appointments.

I have clearly expressed my dissatisfaction to CISSSAT senior management. Other actions and formal positions from the Town will follow.

In the meantime, I've worked with CISSSAT to ensure that complaints related to this change are being collected.

see other side



If you’ve experienced a service disruption, please file a complaint with the CISSSAT Complaints Commissioner. Even if it is not formally admissible, it will still be recorded and can help support our future efforts and advocacy.

- Possible reasons to file a complaint include:
- Loss of follow-up care with an Ontario physician
 - Excessive distance required to access care in Quebec
 - Insufficient reimbursement for travel expenses

**Each complaint documents real impacts.
Every voice matters.**

OUR GEOGRAPHICAL AND HUMAN REALITY

In Temiscaming, North Bay is our main access point for healthcare.
We are 81 km from North Bay, compared to 95 km from Ville-Marie, 224 km from Rouyn, and 320 km from Amos or Val-d’Or.
This is not a preference — it is a necessity.

I am also very aware that the financial compensation offered to patients for travel falls far short of covering the actual costs.

This is especially true for our seniors, families, children, and workers.
Moreover, nearly one-third of our citizens have English as their first language.

Accessing care in Ontario, in English, is simply common sense.

POOR COMMUNICATION, REAL CONSEQUENCES

I share your frustration — these consequences were avoidable.

If not by maintaining the former practice, then at the very least through a respectful and proper communication process — a basic principle of change management.

I also share the view of many: CISSSAT is not ready to receive all of us.

We’ve all experienced the system’s weaknesses, being forced to travel up to 650 km for a pre-op appointment that could have been done by phone — even after insisting.

AS MAYOR, FORMER MANAGER AND MANAGEMENT ADVISOR, HERE IS MY COMMITMENT

I have — and will continue to — call out CISSSAT and the government for these client service issues, which are easy to fix.

My work with the new Department of Fluidity and Proximity (which I will tell you more about soon) will be relentless.

I do not have the authority to change an interprovincial agreement or negotiate a unique one for Temiscaming.

But I do have the power to challenge CISSSAT decision-makers, Ontario physicians, and both the Ontario and Quebec governments.

- I commit to:
- Keeping you informed with full transparency
 - Pressuring the authorities to officially recognize our care corridor, so that we are no longer taken hostage or treated as second-class citizens

What we’re experiencing here is not comparable to the rest of Quebec.
This is not a political battle. It is a human one.

Our reality deserves to be heard, acknowledged, and respected.

I remain by your side and will continue to champion this issue with strength and conviction.
The status quo is no longer acceptable.

It’s time to act.

Alain Gauthier
Mayor of Temiscaming

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