

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

SPECIAL EDITION #2



ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IN ONTARIO

OUR REALITY CANNOT BE IGNORED

Dear citizens of the Town of Temiscaming,

Since my first message about healthcare in Ontario, many of you have contacted me: cancelled appointments, requests for advance payment, worry, and confusion. Yet, there has been no official explanation from CISSSAT to justify these changes.

I have continued to act on your behalf.

Recently, I met with the President of the North Bay Regional Health Centre and his team, together with Mr. Frank Dottori, to get clear and direct answers for our community. This meeting confirmed the information I already shared and added new details about what has truly changed for us.

WHAT IS THE SAME – AND WHAT HAS CHANGED

- Hospital and medical care in Ontario is still covered by RAMQ. This has not changed. But very few doctors now want to use the RAMQ process.
- CISSSAT still refers patients to Ontario, but many Ontario doctors are refusing these referrals.
- Ontario doctors can still treat Quebec patients, but most choose not to.
- Some doctors who still see Quebec patients now charge the Ontario rate. You must then pay the difference after asking RAMQ for a refund. Others simply refuse patients because the billing process is too complicated.

WHY THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED

The issue is not related to North Bay Hospital or hospital care, but rather to the relationship between physicians and the administrative framework of interprovincial medical care agreements.

There are two agreements in Canada:

- **Hospital services:** All Canadians can receive hospital care in another province “free of charge,” with costs billed directly to their home province. Quebec (RAMQ) is part of this agreement.
- **Medical services (doctors, specialists, tests):** This agreement allows patients to see a doctor “free of charge” in another province — but Quebec did not sign this agreement.

For decades, CISSSAT helped bridge the gap by handling the paperwork and covering the cost difference. The Outaouais region still does this today.

It is the CISSSAT’s unilateral abandonment of this practice that explains why some doctors are now demanding payment or refusing, in most cases, to see patients from our region.

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WHY MOST DOCTORS REFUSE QUEBEC PATIENTS

According to discussions with the Chief of Medical Staff:

- Doctors are not registered with the RAMQ, as the CISSSAT used to handle the entire process.
- Registering with the RAMQ is seen as complicated, including French language certification.
- Billing the RAMQ results in lower fees, which the CISSSAT used to compensate.
- They do not want to ask patients to pay up front and then deal with partial refunds.
- This is also a form of pressure: doctors have been trying to resolve certain issues with the CISSSAT since 2023, but the CISSSAT has not made itself available or receptive.

In short: this situation is creating service interruptions, broken follow-ups, and unnecessary stress for our citizens.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If your appointment is cancelled or you are asked to pay, speak directly with your doctor. Some citizens have been able to keep their appointments after explaining the situation and agreeing to be billed.

I have also raised our concerns with the executive leadership of the CISSSAT, expressing our disagreement and asking for concrete actions.

In the meantime, the CISSSAT is now collecting complaints about these difficulties.

Each complaint helps document the reality and supports our efforts.

Possible reasons for a complaint:

- Ending of follow-up with an Ontario doctor
- Travel distance too great to access care in Quebec
- Inadequate reimbursement for travel

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**Every story matters.
The more of us who speak up, the stronger our message will be.**

MY COMMITMENT AS MAYOR

On August 12, the Town of Temiscaming will adopt and send firm resolutions to the CISSSAT: we demand a quick return to the previous practice to restore continuity of care, while waiting for a permanent solution to be put in place.

I will also request the reinstatement of a local citizen committee so that our voice is heard in regional healthcare governance and our reality is fully understood. We can no longer accept that decisions about us are made from a distance, without our representation.

I will ask that the CISSSAT make itself available to meet with its Ontario counterparts, work together to resolve the issues, and restore care pathways in our region and in our language.

I commit to:

- Keeping you informed with transparency
- Continuing to put pressure on the authorities for official recognition of our healthcare corridor
- Maintaining the mobilization until our reality is respected

Our situation is unique. It cannot be compared to the rest of Quebec.

This is not a political debate: it is a human issue, essential to our quality of life.

I remain by your side. I will defend this matter with energy, consistency, and determination.

The status quo is not an option.
It is time to act.

Alain Gauthier
Mayor of Temiscaming