

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

SPECIAL EDITION #3



ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IN ONTARIO ONGOING ACTIONS AND STRONG SUPPORT

Dear citizens of the Town of Temiscaming,

For several weeks now, we have been facing an unprecedented situation: the loss of our access corridor to healthcare in Ontario. Many of you attended the municipal council meeting on August 12, where more than 150 citizens from Temiscaming, Kipawa, and Kebaowek gathered to express their concerns and support their elected officials.

Following this citizen mobilization and the commitments I made to you, several concrete actions have been taken. Today, I would like to present a detailed overview.

MEETING WITH DOCTORS IN NORTH BAY

An essential meeting was held with doctors who provide medical services at the North Bay Regional Health Centre and who are members of the Ontario Medical Association – District 9.

WHY ARE MOST DOCTORS REFUSING PATIENTS FROM QUÉBEC?

- **Lack of RAMQ registration:** In the past, CISSSAT managed this procedure. For doctors, undertaking this process individually is complex, especially with the requirement for French-language certification.
- **Administrative costs:** Registration with RAMQ involves fees and management time. Since the volume of Québec patients is limited, it does not justify the necessary resources.
- **Billing issues:** RAMQ often reimburses less than the billed amounts, without explanation and with long delays. This represents a loss of income, which used to be covered by CISSSAT.
- **Burden on patients:** Doctors do not want to force Québec patients to pay upfront, with the risk of only partial reimbursement.
- **Pressure on CISSSAT:** Since 2023, doctors have tried to resolve disputes with CISSSAT but have not received any satisfactory response. Their refusals also serve as a way to force dialogue.

THEIR VISION OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- A ministerial decree, like the one in the Outaouais region, would be insufficient. Unlike Ottawa, North Bay does not have all specialized services. Some patients must be transferred to Toronto, which complicates referrals and follow-ups, especially for Québec patients.
- The real solution lies in signing an interprovincial reciprocal agreement for medical care between the Québec and Ontario governments. This agreement would secure access to healthcare and prevent each patient from being treated as an exception.
- Alarming signs are already present: the cancer centre in Sudbury has begun refusing Québec patients and, even more concerning, has started transferring back to Québec those already under treatment.
- The way forward also involves creating a discussion table that includes CISSSAT and Ontario authorities to agree on a healthcare corridor adapted to our reality.

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OTHER ACTIONS RECENTLY TAKEN

- **Resolutions adopted by the municipal council:**
 - Immediately reinstate past practices to help relieve the current crisis.
 - Reform the regional advisory committee, promised during centralizations but never implemented.
 - Create a joint committee with Ontario to improve the healthcare corridor and ensure follow-up for our citizens.
- **Approaches to CISSSAT:** An official letter was sent to management demanding:
 - Deployment of additional resources in Témiscaming.
 - Implementation of a clear prioritization process so that our citizens are not systematically placed at the bottom of the list.
- **Approaches to Public Health:** We have called upon the regional Public Health Directorate for the deployment of additional resources in Témiscaming and to formally acknowledge the situation.
- **Regional and institutional support:** The mayors representing the Témiscamingue region have shown unanimous support. A resolution from the MRC of Témiscamingue was adopted, and the Ombudsman was contacted.
- **Economic stakeholders mobilize:** RYAM and the Témis-Accord Chamber of Commerce have sent us letters of support. These organizations recognize that access to healthcare is not only a health issue, but also a crucial factor for the attractiveness of our region and local economic development.
- **Direct citizen support:** If you are feeling helpless, confused, or overwhelmed by the procedures, you can contact the City at 819-627-3273, ext. 104. Your contact information will be forwarded to community volunteers who will reach out to assist you in your efforts.
- **Minister Dubé’s Office:** Recently, the office of the Minister of Health and Social Services has been contacted, and we are awaiting consultation/meetings for a definitive solution.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA VISIBILITY

It is important to note that CISSSAT’s communication has so far been very limited. Citizens have received little in the way of clear explanations, and the measures undertaken have not been sufficiently explained or shared publicly.

To address this lack of information, we have multiplied our public statements. Interviews have been conducted in local newspapers to give our community a voice and to shed light on the real consequences of this crisis.

Our situation must not be brushed aside.
It cannot be ignored.
We have the right to be heard and respected.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING MEETINGS

- August 26: Meeting between elected officials from Temiscaming and Kipawa and CISSSAT senior management.
- August 28 at 7:00 p.m.: Public meeting organized by CISSSAT senior management at Dottori Hall. This will be a unique opportunity for every citizen to be heard and to ask questions directly.

MY COMMITMENT TO YOU

- I would like to reaffirm my commitments:
- To keep you informed with full transparency at every step.
 - To continue pressuring authorities so that our healthcare corridor is officially recognized.
 - To maintain mobilization until concrete solutions are implemented.

Our situation is not comparable to the rest of Québec.
This is not a political issue, but a human one. It affects our health, our dignity, and our quality of life.

The status quo is not acceptable.
We must act together, starting now.

Alain Gauthier
Mayor of Temiscaming