

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

SPECIAL EDITION #8 HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN ONTARIO

A NECESSARY STEP, BUT NOT ENOUGH



Dear Residents,

Access to healthcare should never depend on a postal code. Since late July, I have made a clear commitment to defend healthcare that is accessible, humane, and adapted to our border reality. I reaffirm this commitment every day, because living in southern Témiscamingue should never be a disadvantage.

Last week, the CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue finally issued a communication regarding the healthcare corridor to Ontario. This announcement had been long awaited. I wish to share it with you and explain what it concretely means for our community.

Access to Medical Services in Ontario

On January 22, 2026, the CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue received guidelines from the headquarters of Santé Québec clarifying the transitional arrangement that will be implemented to facilitate access to health services in Ontario for residents of southern Témiscamingue.

This arrangement stipulates that residents wishing to access health services in Ontario must inform the CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, which will help document the situation. Furthermore, residents will be guided so that the institution can provide support with billing and compensate for the difference in rates for the services concerned. This temporary arrangement will be in place until a permanent solution is adopted, following the work of a working committee.

Early next week, the CISSS of Abitibi-Témiscamingue will communicate with the public to clarify the implementation procedures that will be put in place in the following days. You are encouraged to stay tuned for further communications on the institution's website and Facebook page.

If you have any questions : transfertmedtk@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

Source : <https://www.ciass-at.gouv.qc.ca/en/access-to-medical-services-in-ontario/>

MY ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

This communication represents an important step forward. It finally confirms the implementation of a transitional measure to facilitate access to certain healthcare services in Ontario. For many residents, this comes as a real relief.

That said, we must remain clear-eyed: **announcing is not acting, and moving forward is not the same as resolving the issue.**

- **Yes**, this file has been unreasonably difficult to advance since the Premier's public announcement in early December. The delay between the political commitment and its concrete implementation by the CISSSAT had real, avoidable, and unacceptable human impacts on our population.
- **No**, the resignation of the former Minister of Health did not hinder this file. Given the complete absence of responses or follow-up from his ministry, it is reasonable to conclude that he was never actively involved in this matter.

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- **Yes**, the arrival of the new Minister of Health, Ms. Sonia Bélanger, has made a difference. Her experience as a former CISSS CEO and her reputation for human-centred management helped unblock a situation that had stalled for far too long.
- **Yes**, we can be relieved that things are finally moving. However, it would be premature to speak of restored trust. That trust has been seriously shaken. Concrete actions must come before any talk of recognition. The coming days will be decisive.
- **Yes**, several residents are right to point out that the CISSSAT communication makes no mention of direct outreach to Ontario physicians. For the healthcare corridor to function properly, it is essential that these physicians be formally informed that the facilitating administrative practices have been reinstated. I strongly insist that this action be included in future commitments.
- **Yes**, I also wish to acknowledge the extremely difficult situation experienced by healthcare workers in Temiscamingue since August 1st. The lack of clear directives, administrative pressure, and management of new referrals placed these teams under significant strain. Their professionalism deserves respect and support.

Finally, if I demonstrate such determination—and will continue to do so—it is also because, with more than 30 years of experience as a senior executive, coach, and management advisor, I share your deep frustration with the lack of accountability within our public systems.

Be assured that I share your assessment of the situation entirely. We are not at the stage of declaring victory, despite the important step that will be taken this week.

EXPECTED NEXT STEPS

It is now up to the CISSSAT to take concrete action. What matters most now is what happens on the ground. We expect the institution to:

- clearly explain to residents the steps to follow and the associated timelines;
- officially communicate with Ontario physicians;
- reinstate the necessary administrative mechanisms;
- provide regular and transparent updates to the population.

Trust is rebuilt through actions, not words.

TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

This temporary measure is only a step. A lasting solution is required. A working table, led by the Premier's Office, must propose a stable, fair, and border-reality-appropriate solution. We will monitor this work closely.

Dear Residents,

Thank you for your patience, your solidarity, and your trust. **This file has been challenging, but it demonstrates the strength and resilience of our community.**

We are moving forward—**together**. And we are moving forward for **real**.

I will remain committed, vigilant, and present until durable solutions are truly in place.

Alain Gauthier

Mayor of Temiscaming