

NB Ambulance has “deviated from it’s obligations” (Translated using Google Translate)

Description

Complaints to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in New Brunswick follow one another, but the situation is not improving, it is deteriorating. Today NB Ambulance has fewer bilingual employees than previously.

Again, the Commissioner of Official Languages of New Brunswick is criticizing the organization responsible for delivering ambulance services in the province. In her latest report, Acadie Nouvelle has obtained a copy, Katherine d'Entremont, states that NB Ambulance (NBA) has "deviated from its obligations under the Official Languages Act" and makes several recommendations.

The latter report stems from a complaint by Murielle and Danny Sonier of Moncton. The events date back to December 2, 2016. Concerned about the health of her brother who suffers from heart problems, Murielle dials 911. Firefighters were the first to arrive on the scene. Two ambulance attendants then arrived.

Les Sonier requested a service in French.

"We do not speak French", that's what the paramedical workers answered, according to Ms. Sonier. Ms. Sonier was forced to act as an interpreter for her brother who does not speak very well in English.

"I, acting as a translator, I am not comfortable. I am not a nurse or a doctor. I could put my brother in danger. You have to be able to communicate with the patient in his or her language," Mrs. Sonier told Acadie Nouvelle.

This is not the first time that the Sonier have filed a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. A similar situation had occurred in 2013. A complaint had been filed and the Sonier had appealed to the courts. ANB acknowledged that it had breached its obligations and promised to rectify the situation. Three years

NB Ambulance responded by e-mail to the interview request from Acadie Nouvelle organization says that it needs more time to analyze the Commissioner's report.

"Ambulance New Brunswick understands that it is legally obligated to serve patients in the language of their choice and this is a priority for us. We received the document containing the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages on August 24. We will review its recommendations carefully and respond to them as requested," wrote Karen Rawlines, ANB Communications Specialist.

The ball is now in the government's court according to the language law expert. It is up to the government in Fredericton to take the necessary steps to ensure that ANB fulfills its obligations.

The Ministry of Health said by e-mail Monday afternoon, working with ANB to ensure that the organization meets its linguistic commitments. The ministry spokesperson said that the NBCC is now offering training in French and that the hiring of paramedics is a priority.

"This technical training for future paramedics will help the province ensure that patients get services in the official language of their choice throughout New Brunswick," said Sarah Williams, Ministry of Health spokesperson.



"The Office of the Commissioner does not take the position that the use of this system is contrary to the obligations of the institution and does not allow for the provision of a service to members of the public who, Expresses in English and French throughout the province," the Commissioner said.



<https://www.acadienouvelle.com/actualites/2017/08/28/ambulance-nb-a-deroge-a-obligations-katherine-dentremont/>

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