

## Moncton Hospital lays off several francophone employees By SIMON DELATTRE Tuesday 7 March 2017

### Description

\* This was NOT acceptable when it happened to Anglophone employees – and it is NOT acceptable happening to Francophone employees! \*

THE MONCTON CITY HOSPITAL. – ARCHIVES

Annie Berthelot did not expect her career at the Moncton Hospital to stop so suddenly. After five months without incident, she was suspended. The reason: his level of written English was not sufficient in the eyes of his employer.

Annie Berthelot, recently graduated from the Université de Moncton, was offered an X-ray technologist position in June 2016 by the Anglophone institution.

“I did an interview, they offered me the job provided I pass a test of oral English,” she says.

Originally from the Bathurst area, the young woman considers herself bilingual and passed the test successfully. She said she had no difficulty communicating with patients or making themselves understood. Indeed, oral communication was paramount for this position, she says. In five months of work she had to write a report only once.

Yet, in September, his employer asked him to pass a written evaluation and written comprehension in English administered by the province.

“I was not given an explanation,” deplores Annie Berthelot.

Unfortunately, it has not reached the required level in writing. In early November she learned that she was being laid off. She can try her luck again after six months.

“They told me that I had done nothing wrong at work, that it was only in relation to the English language. They gave me a second chance because they wanted to keep me. After I was suspended, they asked other people in my department who studied in French to take the test.”

Sense of injustice

Two of his former classmates were suspended in their turn.

“These two colleagues have an English-speaking parent, they speak English at home and have nevertheless failed the tests,” says Annie Berthelot.

“They do not ask all francophones to take tests. I have a friend who works in another department, her employer told her that it was not necessary. That’s where I see injustice.”

Currently, Annie Berthelot holds a minimum wage job in a shopping center and has paid an English course online at the CCNB. She plans to get her place back.

It was even more difficult to accept its situation because it observed different practices within the Francophone health authority.

“During my internships at Vitalité, there were English-speaking people who spoke mostly English and were able to express themselves in French with patients.”

She regrets that francophone staff are targeted by these language tests, considering that there are too few health professionals available to provide French-language services at the Moncton Hospital.

“I think francophones have a harder life on the job market than anglophones. Everything is easier if you are unilingual anglophone. Some English-speaking colleagues passed the test in French and failed. They were able to continue working.”

Asked about the situation, Horizon Health Network’s Human Resources Director, says she will not make a statement about a particular case.

“Horizon does not comment on personal matters,” writes Maura McKinnon.

As to whether all Horizon employees should be able to write English perfectly, she replied that patients and their families must be able to receive service in the language of their choice.

“All vacancies reflect the needs of the departments in terms of skills, qualifications and language skills,” she adds. Employees must demonstrate their language proficiency through tests for English-speaking persons who apply for a bilingual position and for employees who speak French as a first language and who apply for a bilingual or unilingual English-speaking position.

#### Vitality case-by-case testing

Contacted by Acadie Nouvelle, the Vitalité health network confirms that many people are hired without fully mastering French. One of his spokespersons, Thomas Lizotte, says it is not possible to determine exactly how many unilingual anglophone employees are in the francophone board.

“An unilingual anglophone employee who is unable to serve a client in the language of his / her choice must imperatively find an intermediary in a position to do so,” Lizotte said.

He added that when hiring, candidates are required to speak in both official languages.

“Once evaluated and if deemed necessary, managers, in conjunction with the Human Resources Department, may choose to further assess a candidate’s second language proficiency (both oral and ‘written). It is important to note that this assessment is done before hiring,” Lizotte writes.

<http://www.acadienouvelle.com/actualites/2017/03/07/moncton-hospital-met-a-pied-plusieurs-employes-francophones/>

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