

# CBC News – Montreal – Quebec criticized for hospital waits

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by Ralph Weber

In a government controlled system, this can happen. It is very unfortunate, but true.

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**Funeral held for woman who waited 4 days for bed**

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**CBC News**

Concern over delayed surgeries and overcrowded emergency rooms dominated question period at Quebec's national assembly on Tuesday, as debates resumed after the holiday break.

The issue has grabbed attention after the recent deaths of two patients — one waiting for heart surgery and the other who had spent four days waiting on a stretcher in the ER.



The emergency room at Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital in Montreal was at 200 per cent capacity when Mariette Fournier arrived there on Feb. 18. (CBC)Opposition Parti-Québécois Leader Pauline Marois reminded Premier Jean Charest of his promise made seven years ago to do away with long waits for health care.

“The emergency rooms are overflowing as ever,” said Marois. “People are dying because they are being forgotten in the hallways.”

Though the recent cases reported in the media are unacceptable, they are exceptions, said Health Minister Yves Bolduc.

More than a half a million operations are performed in Quebec every year, and there are 3.4 million visits to the ER — and most patients get excellent care, said Bolduc.

The minister said the roots of the current situation go back to the mid-1990s, when then-PQ leader Lucien Bouchard was in power.

“They closed hospitals, closed beds and let go 1,500 doctors and 4,000 nurses,” said Bolduc.

But it is time to stop pointing fingers and to resolve the problem, said one patient’s rights advocate.

“[In] the last five years, they hired 2,000 more managers in the system,” said Paul Brunet, president of the Council for the Protection of the Sick. “We don’t need that. We need people who give care.”

### **Families outraged by wait**

The family of a woman who died after spending four days waiting on a stretcher in the emergency room at a Montreal hospital has launched a petition demanding a public inquiry into Quebec’s hospitals.

Members of Mariette Fournier’s family held a news conference Tuesday, the same day a funeral service was held for the 86-year-old, who suffered from Alzheimer’s disease.

The quality of care she received was unacceptable, said her nephew, Bernard Baril.

“It is time for everybody to say, ‘We need to stop that right now’,” said Baril.

When Fournier first arrived at Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital on Feb. 18, she waited two hours just to be put on a stretcher, because there weren’t enough to go around, said her daughter Nicole Campeau.

The emergency room at the hospital was operating at 200 per cent capacity.



Mariette Fournier, 86, died on Feb. 23 after spending four days waiting for a hospital bed. (Submitted by family of Mariette Fournier) Fournier spent four days waiting on a stretcher in the hallway for a bed in the geriatric department.

She died on Feb. 23, one day after officials finally found her a bed.

Doctors said she was killed by a pulmonary embolism — a blood clot often caused by not walking around — and pneumonia that she didn’t have when

she arrived at the hospital.

Fournier’s family said they don’t blame doctors and nurses — they blame the government for allowing health care to become a bureaucracy, rather than a system that cares for people.

On Friday, a retired police officer died after waiting five months to undergo heart surgery.

Jean-Guy Pitre, 65, was “executed” by the province’s health-care system, said his son Daniel.

“We can’t grieve normally because we are so enraged,” he said.