

The Gaspé **Spec**

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SPDS students spread *Christmas* cheer

NEW CARLISLE: -Shigawake Port Daniel School is known for its elaborate Christmas concerts. However, this year the school is under construction due to a new gymnasium being built and their stage is currently unavailable for use. Staff had the option of holding their annual concert at a different location or choosing to do something completely new and creative this year. As a result, instead of having a concert, the students decided to spread some Christmas cheer to local seniors.

On December 10, students from grade 3 to grade 6 visited the Gilker Residence in New Carlisle. They sang to the seniors and the Gilker Residence organized games for the children and seniors to play afterwards. The seniors enjoyed the performance and great fun was had by all.

The next day, on December 11, grades pre-k to grade 3 visited the Three Star Golden Age Club in Port Daniel and sang to the seniors there. The students practiced their songs in advance and were quite proud to sing them for an audience.



*Tidings of
Holiday Cheer*



Recruiting in the health sector is a major challenge

Thierry Haroun

GASPÉ PENINSULA: With so many available jobs in the health sector that Gaspésians are not filling, the Gaspésie Health and Social Services Center (CISSS) has no choice but to look for specialized workforce elsewhere in the province. Organizers of the latest recruiting initiative have confirmed that their

campaign was a success.

The campaign was organized by *Vivre en Gaspésie*, which specializes in promoting the Peninsula to major cities, such as Quebec and Montreal. The campaign, called “Open Heart Surgery,” was presented to university students in Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Rimouski from December 4 to 7. The campaign reached a total of 130

students. Currently, there are close to 200 jobs available. “There are so many jobs available that we decided to reach out where future graduated students are. We have nursing jobs available, as well as psychology, ergotherapy, social work and so forth. Our region is faced with an important challenge given also that 18% of the 3500 employees of the CISSS are aged 55 and over. We decided that it was better to go out there and reach out for these future specialists rather than wait here and hope for the best. The other reason why we did this is because there is a serious competition be-

tween regions to hire them!” states Christine Blanchette, recruiting agent for *Vivre en Gaspésie*.

Positive outcome

“The high point of our mission was at Rimouski University. We had the chance to meet four groups that are soon completing their (Bachelor Degree) in Social Work and seven of those students have confirmed their intention to come and work here!” adds Christine Blanchette. It’s a step in the right direction she emphasized. “Yes, it’s a very good start and when we had our

debriefing with the CISSS authorities, we realized how much this mission was a great way to promote the Gaspé Peninsula, its way of life and the many job opportunities.” Christine Blanchette also confirmed that this type of initiative could be repeated in the future.

“In terms of media coverage, this mission was a success because the Gaspé Peninsula was promoted through the reports,” said Lucie Lamarre, Personnel Management Agent at the CISSS, who also sees this outcome as a positive in the long-term.

News briefs

The Annual Dwayne Chicoyne Quadoree

Silven Normandin

BARACHOIS: - It is hard to believe that ten years of the Quadoree has come and gone. It has been a great experience and we hope you have enjoyed it too. The organizers are very appreciative of the support the Quadoree has garnered. On July 28, 30 ATVs took part in the ride and many more people met at the Barachois Legion (branch #261) at the end of the day. Like all the previous years, it was an amazing day of 4-wheeling, great stories and many laughs. This year, with your support, \$1800 was collected. Due to your generosity over the last ten years a total of \$18,500 was raised. All of the proceeds have been donated to Ethan’s trust fund.

The end of religious signs

Thierry Haroun

The new CAQ Québec Government has announced that it will hold its promise that will forbid all civil servants that hold a job of authority, such as judges and policemen, to wear a religious sign on the job. This new law will also include teachers. A teacher could lose his or her job if they don’t follow the new ruling. “It’s really not a subject of debate for us currently. We think that there are other priorities and challenges that this government should tackle such as making sure that there are enough teachers, administrative personnel and other youth specialists in our schools. We will of course look into the question when the Bill on the matter will be made public,” stated Anne Bernier, President of the Eastern Quebec Teachers Association (STEEQ-CSQ). “Why create a problem when there is no problem!” says Sylvain Mallette, President of the *Fédération autonome de l’enseignement*. He confirmed to Spec that if needed, his union will not hesitate to defend its members before the courts in the case of a firing.

New Richmond to receive additional CPE spots

Thierry Haroun

NEW RICHMOND: - The Quebec Government recently announced that it is allocating 21 new places for the Centre de la petite enfance (CPE) Pousse-Pousse in New Richmond. This CPE (for children under five) is the only one on the Gaspé Peninsula that has received new places out of the 1,207 announced by the Quebec Government for the province. For the New Richmond CPE, these places will generate an investment of \$500,000 and create four new jobs. The CPE has three years to complete the construction work that will need to be done. Currently, this CPE has 99 places in two installations and employs 35 people. The cost for the Quebec Government for these 21 new places is valued at \$280,000 annually under the form of a subsidy. “We are very happy of course with this important announcement because it will respond to a growing demand from parents in our area,” Rémi Lavoie, Chairman of the CPE, told Spec.



Photo: Maïté Événements/communications

The “Open Heart Surgery” recruitment campaign was held at various Quebec Universities in hopes of recruiting future health professional graduates.

Happy Retirement

Dear Pauline



You were a colleague who was very much appreciated, and to see you leave after 28 years, is not easy. We will have to take double shifts to be able to do as much as you did. You had a multi-tasking ability that helped our little economic development team to be very efficient.

You sat on the selection committee to choose your successor and said that you are leaving in peace, which we all hope. Knowing you, we know that you will benefit from this new period in your life to reorganize your time between family (now that you are a grandmother), trips, leisure activities and certainly a few other things. Pauline, happy retirement and drop in to see us from time to time.

Nomination

Lisa-Ann Clark

We are proud to announce your nomination to the position of administrative support at our SADC Rocher-Percé.



Lisa Ann worked for more than 10 years in the domain of accounting, in the private sector. She studied Professional Accounting at Montréal school ; l'École des métiers de l'informatique, du commerce et de l'administration de Montréal (EMICA).

She was looking for a stimulating work environment that will allow her to contribute to her career development and success. In our organization she also found a way to contribute to economic development of MRC Rocher-Percé.

Congratulations and welcome to our team.

SADC

Centre de services administratifs
Rocher-Percé



Photo: G. Gagné

Residents of downtown Gaspé can now count on a new drinking water system.

A new drinking water system for downtown Gaspé

Geneviève Gélinas

GASPÉ: – Since November 8, approximately 4,600 residents of downtown Gaspé have been provided with drinking water from groundwater wells. The new system, which costs more than \$8 million, should make the boil water advisories scarcer.

Before November, downtown Gaspé homes were supplied with water taken from the St. John River. Whenever the river flooded, the water would become cloudy and the treatment system wouldn't work as efficient as usual, forcing the Town to ask residents to boil their water before drinking it.

Last spring, the boil water advisory lasted for 25 days, from April 27 to May 22. In the spring of 2016, the residents had to boil their water for close to 50 days in April, May and June.

The new system was built between the summer of 2017 to the fall of 2018. The Carleton-based company, Construction LFG, drilled three wells on the

south shore of the St. John River. The total capacity is 9,504 cubic metres per day. The users of the drinking water network utilize an average of 3,750 cubic metres of water daily.

The underground water doesn't need to be filtered but it's still chlorinated. Some residents found a difference in the taste of the water. "The water is similar, its hardness is the same and it shows similar parameters. The water will be more stable in the long term, there will be no increase in its turbidity after heavy rains or snow thaw, for example," wrote Jérôme Tardif, the spokesperson for Gaspé, in an email sent to the SPEC.

A two-week running-in period took place between November 8 to 22, during which the residents had to boil their water.

It's too early to know the exact cost of the new system,

but "even if the expenses are not complete and unexpected costs are still possible, we're still under the initial estimate of the Town, which was \$8.7 million," writes Mr. Tardif.

The contract awarded to Construction LFG was \$5.94 million. Several costs are not included in that contract, such as professional fees, the land purchase cost and finance charges.

In 2017, Ottawa and Quebec committed to paying a part of the cost, which is approximately \$3.83 million from the federal government and \$2.09 million from the provincial government. The Town is supposed to pay the difference.

A disagreement persists between the Town of Gaspé and the Quebec Municipal Affairs Ministry about the unexpected costs and the amount to be paid by that level of government. The amount at stake is about \$500,000.

Police report

Dominyck Terry Beaudin, 23, from Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé was sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in a federal penitentiary following the decision by Quebec Court Judge Denis Paradis, rendered on December 13 for a case of assault on his son, a three-month-old baby.

The accused is charged with assault with a weapon causing bodily harm. The offence was committed on February 24, 2018 against his son, a three-month-old baby. He is also charged with assault causing bodily harm that put the baby's life in jeopardy for an offence that was committed two days later. Dominyck Terry Beaudin had entered a plea of guilty earlier in the procedure. He was also charged with breach of probation.

On February 26, the baby was immediately transferred from Chandler hospital to the Sainte-Justine hospital in Montreal due to the state of his injuries. He was suffering from a brain hemorrhage, multiple fractures including his scapula, ribs and ankle, as well as major shoulder and hip trauma. Judge Paradis pointed out, based on a report from the Sainte-Justine hospital, that the state of the baby can be compared to the case of someone suffering from cerebral palsy.

Judge Paradis emphasized in his sentence decision that the trauma caused to the baby will prevent him from having a normal life. The baby will never go to school, he will never ride a bike, never play with his friends, he will never talk and he is almost blind.

Considering the fact that Dominyck Terry Beaudin has already served 345 days of prison, the remaining sentence amounts to seven years, six months and 20 days. Defence attorney Claudie Gallant-Bergeron of Amqui and crown prosecutor Richard Hotton had already agreed on a common sentence prior to the decision rendered by Judge Paradis.





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Diane Lebouthillier

MP for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

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Commentary

Gilles Gagné

Equalization payment discussions could spice things up

The last couple of weeks have been interesting in Quebec with remarks and talks about the relevance of continuing to pay equalization payments to la Belle province. Especially after a statement made by Premier François Legault to the effect that it makes more sense to build new power dams in Quebec to feed neighbouring provinces rather than accept dirty oil from Alberta.

Former federal government minister Jason Kenney, now the leader of Alberta's United Conservative Party, couldn't have hoped for better timing on François Legault's part, because the dirty oil statement provided him with a great weapon in the middle of a pre-electoral campaign. Now only months away from an election, he will likely win against current premier Rachel Notley.

Mr. Kenney had quickly replied to the Quebec premier, saying that if he is elected, he will hold a referendum about a renegotiation of the equalization payment program.

Quebec will get \$13 billion in equalization payments from the federal government in 2019, out of a total envelope of \$20 billion.

The envelope used by the federal government to pay equalization payments is funded by the taxpayers of the whole country, not by the provincial governments. The federal government and the provinces established equalization payments to reduce the fiscal imbalance between the provinces.

When the Quebec government will receive \$13 billion in equalization payments, part of that money will come from Albertans paying taxes to Ottawa, but close to \$3 billion will come from ... Quebecers paying federal taxes.

Jason Kenney and many other Albertans also emphasize that Quebec should not receive equalization payments because its provincial budget is characterized by surpluses while Alberta's budget bears a significant deficit.

Preferring to use petty politics and bash Quebec, Mr. Kenney forgets to mention that Alberta has been losing money in recent years essen-

tially because its provincial administration has decided to keep its income tax very low, and has refused to impose a provincial sales tax for decades. So the Alberta government is waiving important sources of revenues that would lead to a balanced budget or surpluses.

Jason Kenney and his supporters also affirm that Quebecers refused to help Alberta when they opposed the Energy East pipeline project. Apparently, they have not been informed that TransCanada, the promoter of that venture, pulled out of it essentially for business reasons, because it wouldn't have been profitable.

Mr. Kenney's supporters also seem to ignore that Justin Trudeau did a big favour to their province through buying the Trans Mountain pipeline from Kinder Morgan, a company that abandoned the expansion project of that pipeline for a number of reasons, legal and also business-related.

Between 2002 and 2011, when the oil markets were going well, the Canadian dollar went from \$0.64 American dollar to US\$1.01. Albertans forget that during that period, the revenues associated to petroleum products artificially maintained the Canadian dollar way higher than it should have been, thus depriving the manufacturers of Quebec and Ontario of billions of dollars in export revenues annually. We haven't heard Jason Kenney on that point at all.

During that same decade, the Western Provinces were able to convince the Canadian government to count only 50% of their natural resource revenues, a situation that caused them to greatly underestimate their contribution to equalization payments. Again, the leader of the United Conservative Party was silent on that issue.

It was not mentioned at all over recent weeks that Quebec is now buying most of its crude oil from Western Canada, instead of importing it from overseas. This is the result of the inversion of the Enbridge 9B pipeline.

Jason Kenney and his supporters have repeatedly forgotten to mention that the exploitation of Alberta's tar sands will increase the country's greenhouse gases effects significantly and that as time passes, a potentially high number of Canadian exporters of manufactured goods will either have to make up for that through reducing their own emissions or those manufacturers will be submitted to a boycott from countries that take environmental issues seriously.

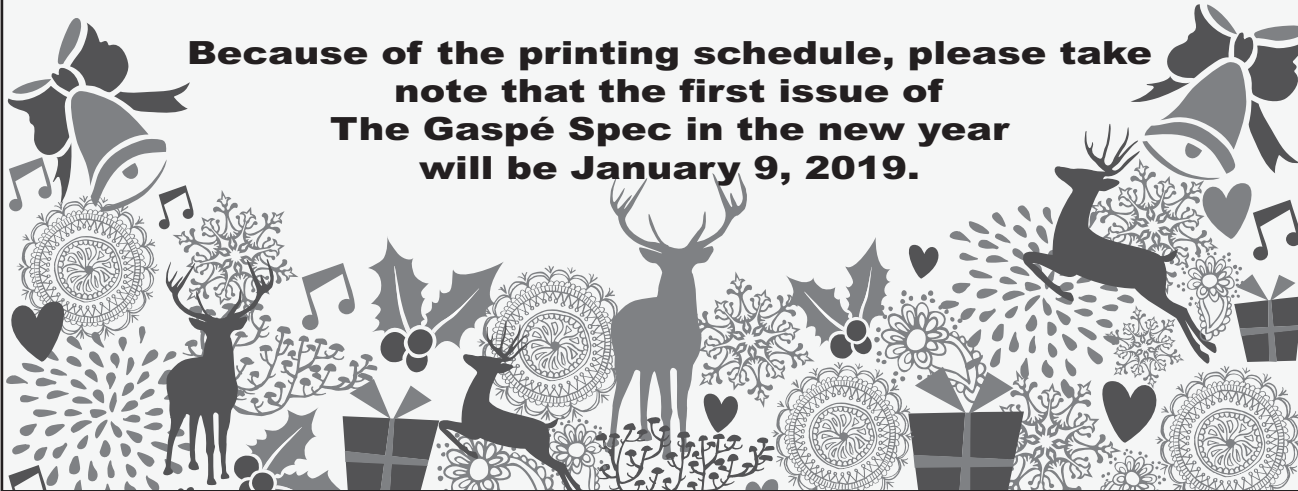
Currently, the gas emission reduction of Quebec is countered by sky-rocketing emission increases in Alberta and Saskatchewan. For each ton cut in Quebec, ten tons of additional polluting emissions are generated in the Western Provinces. One must wonder if Jason Kenney believes that pollution exists.

THANK YOU!

We take this opportunity to say thank you to all our loyal supporters, subscribers, advertisers, volunteers and contributors. We wish each and everyone of you a peaceful holiday season. We thank you for your support and look forward to a new year of publishing news on the Coast.

This is the last issue of The Gaspé Spec for 2018. The office will be closed on Friday, December 21, 2018 and will reopen on Friday, January 4, 2019

Because of the printing schedule, please take note that the first issue of The Gaspé Spec in the new year will be January 9, 2019.



The Gaspé Spec

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Fishermen try to get senators to support Bill C-68

Ariane Aubert Bonn

PERCÉ: - On November 21, the Association of Independent Captains, a Canada-wide group, met with a number of senators in Ottawa to raise awareness about the importance of adopting Bill C-68. The bill deals with the importance of independence for fishermen.

O'Neil Cloutier, director of the Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen Group, was among the captains who took the opportunity to increase awareness of the importance of this bill for the future of fishing communities. This lobbying activity took the form of a gourmet dinner consisting of seafood.

"The bill is currently in the hands of senators. We wanted to make them understand that it is very important that fishing licenses are granted only to owner captains if we want to maintain the vitality of our communities," says Mr. Cloutier.

To explain his train of thoughts, he cites British Columbia as an example where factories hold a majority of the



Photo: G. Gagné

O'Neil Cloutier is confident that the independent fishermen were able to catch the attention of senators.

permits. "The communities have emptied. People do not live there anymore," he says.

Diane Lebouthillier, Minister of National Revenue, was asked to comment on the issue. She says that selling licenses to factories would be dangerous for the economy. "If the factory is sold to foreigners, for example, we could see factory boats appear or (we could) lose control over our fisheries," she says.

A favourable reception

O'Neil Cloutier says that the claims of the independent captains have been well received. "There were people from different political colours during the meeting of course, but everyone understood the message. They understand that it's about the vitality of the economy of coastal communities, a way of life."



Photo: G. Gagné

Repairs have been made to the 3rd range bridge.

Third range bridge reopens two weeks late

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: - The 3rd range bridge was recently repaired by Quebec's department of Transportation. The western pillar had been slowly shifting inwards. The repairs were initially supposed to finish on November 23 but they were postponed due to a delay in the delivery of parts.

The bridge reopening was re-scheduled for December 4 but was delayed once more as the parts were still not in place. It finally reopened on December 10.

Rumour had it that the bridge was being raised to increase the clearance for windmill blades but that scenario was ruled out by Stéphane Cyr, director general of the Town of New Richmond.

"The problem had nothing to do with windmill blades. The work was necessary to solidify a pillar and there is no bridge lifting," points out Mr. Cyr.

The work was not signified by any means along Highway 132, which became a source of frustration for a number of users going east, as the detour sign was only placed well into the third range. It meant returning to Highway 132 and using the westward access.

Stéphane Cyr mentions that Transport Quebec's answer to that remark was that the sign location respected the norms.

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Christmas
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MARIA
NEW RICHMOND
BONAVENTURE

Mental health and wellness initiative for English-speaking communities receives important funding

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – The Gaspé Peninsula Mental Health and Wellness Task Force will receive significant funding from the Government of Canada and the Bell community fund called Let's Talk. The two amounts total \$70,416 and will be used to support a new mental health and wellness initiative starting in 2019.

The initiative will help increase awareness about mental health services for people living in the region. The grants will be used to create partnerships with regional organizations in the mental health sector, develop a resource guide highlighting services available in English regions, and offer a series of community awareness events.

The events will include two one-day forums about mental health and wellness, one in the Bay of Chaleur area and one in the Gaspé area.

"We are very pleased to receive this significant financial support from Canadian Heritage and the Bell Let's Talk Community Fund to help launch our new mental health and wellness initiative in Gaspésie," says Cynthia Dow, chairperson of the Mental Health and Wellness Task Force.

"Mental health affects all of us and it is important to ensure that people living in English-speaking communities in the Gaspésie region have access to mental health services in English. Providing information, support, understanding and compassion are crucial in helping to reduce the suffering for people living with mental illness," she adds.

The Government of Canada is providing funding in the amount of \$60,416 over two years, to be administered by the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) through the Official Languages Funding Program. Bell's Let's Talk is contributing \$10,000 and it will be administered by Family Ties.

Bruce Wafer, CASA board member and the president of *Centre l'Acalmie* (a Pointe-à-la-Croix organization that provides services to people experiencing psychological distress), says that "it is still often a challenge to serve the anglophones and members of the Native communities in English. It is not easy to find people who can work in Eng-



Some of the task force members are Bruce Wafer, Barbara Flowers, Kim Harrison, Tammy Martin, Cynthia Dow, Nancy Gédéon, Brenda Ross-Jerome and Tom Payette. Vanessa Guyader, third from the right, represents Bell. Missing were Sandy Astles for Eastern Shores School Board, Heather MacWhirter for Family Ties, as well as Jessica Synnott and Cheryl Henry-Leggo for Vision Gaspé-Percé Now, as well as representatives from the Magdalen Islands.

Photo: G. Gagné

lish."

The Mental Health and Wellness Task Force was established in the fall of 2015 with three main goals: initiate a conversation in the region (in English) about mental health and wellness, identify the needs and barriers with in the English-speaking community and empower them by providing information.

In the fall of 2016, a forum organized in Chandler strengthened the links between the partners of the task force and was instrumental in accurately pinpointing the needs of the community. "In 2017, we looked for money and that's how we were able to get Canadian Heritage and Bell's Let's Talk involved," says Cynthia Dow.

The task force brings together community members, health care providers and community organizations to work collaboratively on these goals.

As part of the department of Canadian Heritage programs, the Development of Official Language Communities component is designed to foster the vitality of Canada's French and English-speaking minority communities. Through partnerships and agreements with organizations, provinces, territories, municipalities, federal departments and agencies, this program enhances access to quality education and services in the language of these minority communities.

The \$10,000 Bell Let's Talk Community Fund grant, sponsored by Family Ties, will support a series of six to ten mental health and wellness community awareness sessions in 2019 between Matapédia and Gaspé. "Those

workshops will be offered to the parents and the youths. We must keep in mind that one-fifth of the population will deal with mental health issues at one point," emphasizes Heather MacWhirter, of Family Ties.

"Bell will help cover costs related to these events; travel costs for coordinator, volunteers, and speakers, the cost of room rentals, refreshments and materials for the series of awareness sessions," adds Ms. MacWhirter.

"Having doubled the annual Bell Let's Talk Community Fund to \$2 million this year, we are helping some 47 organizations across Quebec improve access to mental health services for those af-

ected by mental illness," says Mary Deacon, chairperson of Bell Let's Talk.

"Mental health is like physical health. You must take care of it. The sooner we intervene when people experience mental health problems, the higher the chances of complete healing," insists Nancy Jérôme, of the Integrated Health and Social Service Centre of the Gaspé Peninsula, often referred to as CISSS.

Ms. Jerome and Tom Payette therefore put emphasis on the necessity to communicate early with people who are or look vulnerable. Mr. Payette often applies the HALT principle in his interventions, especially with peo-

ple experiencing a drinking problem. "H as in hungry. If you are hungry, eat. A as in angry; if you are angry, talk. L as in lonely; if you are lonely, call someone and T as in tired. If you are tired, take care of yourself first," he says.

The Mental Health and Wellness Task Force members are glad to count on partners including CASA, CISSS-GIM, Eastern Shores School Board, Family Ties, FNAREC (First Nations Regional Adult Education Centre – Gesgépégiac campus), and Vision Gaspé-Percé Now. Considerable support has also been received from AMI-Québec, *Nouveau Regard*, the RCSSS and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Taking advantage of the up-coming holidays to focus on seasonal mental health issues, Cynthia Dow mentions that the joy of the holidays is often over-shadowed for some people by loneliness, isolation and resurgent grief.

"This can be a difficult time of year for many, so we ask everyone to consider those who may be alone this holiday season. Reach out to those who may be missing a loved one who has died or is far away. Always have non-alcoholic drinks at your parties to support those who are struggling with substance use. Spread the joy of the season where it is most needed," she says.

Christmas Greetings from Bishop Gaétan Proulx, O.S.M.



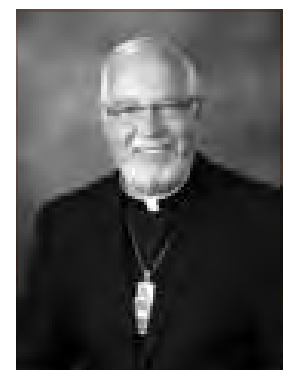
To live in peace, to propose peace, to be an instrument of justice and peace, is the message that our Catholic Church in Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands wants to reaffirm for Christmas and the New Year.

Coming into our world, Jesus tells us about God. This is an opportunity for Christians to rediscover how much God loves humanity with tenderness, for he has given us his Son. He calls us to be witnesses

of his love and instruments of peace.

On the occasion of this feast of Christmas, I invite you to take all the personal initiatives necessary that could help to bring peace in our various living environments: at school, at work, in our families, our social and Christian communities. In doing so, we will be signs of the Kingdom of God among us.

† Gaétan Proulx, O.S.M.
Évêque de Gaspé



(Crédit, photographie Dachowski)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2019!

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Dixie Lee

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Mobile unit to provide health services for children

Geneviève Gélinas

GASPÉ: – Children residing in the Bay of Chaleur and Percé Rock MRCs might have access medical and psychosocial services in a mobile unit, effective next summer. The social pediatrics centre Acroche-Cœur Gaspésie-Sud wants to set up in Chandler and offer a mobile clinic in three MRCs.

The social pediatrics centre is a non-profit organization which offers medical, psychosocial and legal services in the same place. It is intended for vulnerable children, in order to detect, reduce or eliminate the stress that could affect their development.

Elsa Cyr, who is in charge of the project at the Percé Rock MRC, believes that the social pediatrics centre will fill a gap. “We want to create a services corridor by using all resources: public, private and community resources. We want to reach people who don’t use the traditional services because they’re reluctant or because it’s too far from their home.”

There are between 1,000 and 2,000 vulnerable children in the Avignon, Bonaventure and Percé Rock MRCs, estimates Ms. Cyr. *L’Acroche-Cœur* wants to provide services to at least 75 people in its first year.

The social pediatrics centre will have two part-time social workers, a coordinator, a pedi-



Photo: G. Gélinas

The Côte-de-Gaspé social pediatrics center was given toys and furniture to equip its premises in Rivière-au-Renard, shows coordinator Mona Sirois.

atrician and a lawyer. They will meet children and their families at their main premises, to be established in Chandler, and will visit them in their communities, in a recreational vehicle (RV).

The services will also be offered in English. “That’s planned, we’re aware of that need,” says Ms. Cyr.

The first social pediatrics centre in Quebec opened at the end of the 1990s, in Montreal, an initiative of Doctor Gilles Julien, a pediatrician. There are now more than 30 centres in Quebec. The oldest on the Gaspé has been operating in Cap-Chat since 2011. An-

other centre will soon start in the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC.

“The stats prove that the (social pediatrics centre) intervention works well. It increases the protection factors and decreases the risk factors. We analyze the needs and strengths of children and we work on them,” explains Elsa Cyr.

The southern Gaspé social pediatrics centre will hold its constitutive general meeting on December 19, at 5:30 p.m., at Bonaventure’s Loco Local, 193A, Grand-Pré Street.

social pediatrics centre is also progressing well. *L’Équipage* wants to open its doors to children and their families in January. The organization will settle in a low-rental housing facility located at 15, des Cordiers Street in Rivière-au-Renard, to serve the Val-Rosiers area, that is to say from Cap-des-Rosiers to L’Anse-à-Valleau.

A social worker and a coordinator were hired. A specialized nurse practitioner, a doctor and a lawyer will also

offer their services to children.

L’Équipage coordinator, Mona Sirois, estimates that there are about 155 vulnerable children in the Val-Rosiers area. The challenge is to make them visit their social pediatrics centre. “We’re going to make a round of visits to schools, nurseries and partners such as family houses, to meet with their staff and discuss about how they could refer us children.”

L’Équipage will also start doing garage music, where children can get training on the instrument of their choice. For that project, the social pediatrics centre will hire a musician who has a diploma in special education or psychosocial work, and rely on the involvement of volunteers.

The social pediatrics centre is entitled to a \$50,000 grant from the Quebec government and the Doctor Julien Foundation. In addition to that amount, it needs \$100,000 to start, but its management has already raised \$70,000.

“We have to join forces and help those children. (...) A lot of children of the Youth Protection Centre now have children themselves. People know that we must help them, if we want things to get better in 20 years,” Ms. Sirois says.

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Entrepreneurs successful at Christmas Market

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – Hundreds of shoppers attended the Christmas market on December 1 and 2 at the Carrefour Baie des Chaleurs in New Richmond. The activity was part of the Noël en Gaspésie (Christmas in the Gaspé Peninsula) series of events organized yearly to highlight the holiday period in the New Richmond area. Darlene Milligan, who sold maple products from Hillbilly Ranch's sugar camp, Jolene Starnes, Caitlin Barter of Topsy Canoe Designs, and a number of other craft makers were also on hand to sell local Christmas gifts. All the people approached by SPEC were quite happy with the results of their sales, the feedback they received and the interactions they made with the public. Darlene Milligan mentioned that the turnout was beyond her expectations.





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Extreme skating comes to Percé

Geneviève Gélinas

PERCÉ: – Between January 31 and February 2, the first ever extreme skating race on the coast will take place in Percé. Skaters will start training on the track located behind the Percé town hall as soon as January 1. Jerry Sheehan, who came up with the event, wants people to try a sport he enjoys, as well as visit Percé in the winter.

Mr. Sheehan participated in his first extreme skating race in 2016. “It’s fast, you have adrenaline and there’s a healthy competition. We offer each other skating tips; nobody wants the other one to get hurt.”

“It will be a good show,” Mr. Sheehan promises. The participants, dressed in their protective hockey gear, are going to race on a 300-metre long track, with a drop of 15 metres. There will be obstacles such as jumps, tight turns and successive small bumps.

“The aim of the race this year is to attract the public in general and people who say that they’ve always wanted to try that,” states Mr. Sheehan. The track will be a beginner-intermediate one. “It will be a good challenge but without hurting anyone.”

The Percé track will be open for a month and will be

one of the first training tracks for extreme skating in North America. “For the whole month of January, I expect visitors from the Gaspé, New Brunswick and even from urban centres,” says Mr. Sheehan.

The track will be well-located. “There will be a good slope and a nice view of Percé Rock,” Mr. Sheehan points out.

The track is built directly on the ground. “We blow the snow, we shape it, we let it harden and then we hose it. We set up rink boards in the tight turns,” Mr. Sheehan explains.

He and his co-organizers intend to start building the track after Christmas. Mr. Sheehan has some experience. Last year, he built an 80-metre-long extreme skating track with his friends in his backyard, in Cap-d’Espoir. “I made a nice one at home with a garden hose. With the firefighters’ hoses, I should build something nice!”

Mr. Sheehan will be supported by Bruno Richard, co-president of the Bathurst and Memramcook races in New Brunswick. Mr. Richard has also participated in the Red Bull Crashed Ice world cup for a dozen years.

“We’re negotiating with the All-Terrain Skate Cross Federation, to see if we remain an amateur race or if we’ll be part of the racing circuit,” says Mr.



Photo: Mark Roe

Jerry Sheehan, organizer of the Percé extreme skating race, practices that sport himself. On the picture, we see him at the Riders Cup in La Sarre, Abitibi.

Sheehan. For now, the La Sarre race in Abitibi is the only Canadian race listed on the All-Terrain Skate Cross circuit.

Mr. Sheehan wants the Percé race to be more than a one time deal. “This year is a test year, but I want the event to become recurrent.”

Most Quebecers have heard of the Red Bull Crashed Ice race which used to take place in Quebec City. The Percé race isn’t in the same category, Mr. Sheehan explains. “Our track is less steep, the obstacles are smaller. That’s less dangerous and less expensive.” To organize the race will cost approximately \$15,000.

There will be prizes ranging from \$75 to \$ 500 for the best

male and female participants. The individual qualifications will take place on January 31 and February 1. The finals will consist of four skaters descending at the same time and will take place on the evening of February 2. As for recruiting racers, it is going very well. The registration period began on December 3. As of December 4, approximately a quarter of the 100 spots had already been filled.

Mr. Sheehan, who is a municipal councillor in Percé, also wants to attract winter tourists.

Mr. Sheehan expects that there won’t be enough accommodation for everybody in Percé, where several hotels close their doors in the winter.

“I’m going to house a few people at friends’ homes. Or we’ll send them to Grand River or Gaspé. It’s a shame that we’re inviting people, and then sending them to the neighbors.”

The extreme skating race is only one of several activities being organized in Percé this winter. There will be an outdoor rink, sliding, dog sledging, a drag trail for snowmobiles and snowshoe trails, Mr. Sheehan enumerates. “We have a nice playground which wasn’t exploited in the winter,” he says.

An antique snowmobile race will take place in mid-January. The winter activities will culminate with Festi-Neige, from February 14 to 17.

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Coroner determines that the doctor shortage did not cause death

Geneviève Gélinas

GASPÉ: – The fact that there was no doctor present at the Paspébiac CLSC after midnight did not contribute to the death of Gérald Cyr. The coroner's report concluded that the man passed away from a heart-attack last year during the night of November 23/November 24.

The 74-year-old man, in cardiac arrest, "was most probably already dead when the paramedics arrived, and if not, shortly after," wrote coroner Renée Roussel.

Her conclusions are in line with those of the internal investigation made by the Gaspésie Integrated Health and Social Service Centre in the weeks after Mr. Cyr's death.

When the paramedics were called at 11:45 p.m., the medical staff at the Paspébiac CLSC sent them to Maria hospital instead of to the Paspébiac CLSC. That change in itinerary requires 30 additional minutes to reach. The CLSC was about to close its emergency service because there was no doctor on duty after midnight.

The coroner didn't look at the response time of the ambulance service. Mr. Cyr was at his home, in Bonaventure. The paramedics were on-call at their home, not in the ambulance, because of the type of schedule and remuneration system they were on.

The 12-minute delay between the call and their arrival could have been shortened, they argued, if they had been waiting for the call in their ambulance.

Since Mr. Cyr died, the CISSS committed to having a doctor on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at the Paspébiac CLSC. Furthermore, the Bonaventure paramedics now have full-time schedules and wait for calls in the ambulance.

In her report, the coroner mentions the reanimation technique used on Mr. Cyr. The cardiopulmonary resuscitation "done before the arrival of the paramedics was conducted on the bed, which made it much less efficient," the coroner wrote.

"Under those circumstances, the chances to resuscitate Mr. Cyr after, by paramedics or medical care, were almost impossible," she adds. To practice cardiopulmonary resuscitation, one must lay the victim on a hard surface, like the ground.



Photo: A. Bonn

The decision was made at a December 12 special meeting.

Town of Chandler wants to know more about the SQ raid that took place in Newport

Ariane Aubert Bonn

CHANDLER: - Chandler's elected officials are asking for a meeting with the regional management of the Sûreté du Québec in order to understand the methods used during the December 7 raid at a tribute event for Newport volunteers.


According to town councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout, 14 police officers aboard seven patrol cars intervened with a search warrant in hand, a method deemed excessive by Chandler's elected officials.

In a special meeting, four out of six councillors voted to mandate the articling firm Morency to obtain more information, a resolution that Mayor Louisette Langlois is opposed to, for reasons of cost and lack of a clear mandate.

However, a majority of councillors endorsed the decision, since the legal firm is already accompanying the town administration in other files and the elected officials are satisfied with its performance.


The four councillors want more details on the circumstances surrounding the raid. "The investigation, reports, complaints, the population wants to know," says councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout.

During the meeting, councillor Denis Pelchat wanted to dismiss any rumour of political revenge in connection with the police intervention. Mayor Langlois adds that there would have been no reason for an elected official to oppose a municipal activity.





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