

## Quebec budget perceived favourably, despite shortcomings in labour recruitment

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – Many Gaspesian socioeconomical stakeholders found the March 10 budget submitted by Finance Minister Éric Girard was favourable. The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, finds valuable items in it for the regions.

However, the president of the Bay of Chaleur Chamber of Commerce, Luc Leblanc, thinks that more could have been done to address the shortage of manpower.

Daniel Côté, who is also vice-president of the *Union des municipalités du Québec*, the largest group representing municipalities in the province, thinks that the new version of the Maritime Strategy, endowed with an envelope of \$300M for five years, a sum of \$160M for adaptation to climate change, and the \$680M for transport electrification over the next five years will have positive effects in a region like the Gaspé Peninsula. He also noticed the higher tax credit rate for the region in the budget.

"The sum of \$300M for the Maritime Strategy earmarks \$172M for the ports. It is good news, considering that the port



Photo: G. Gagné

*The tax credit of 20% applied to private investments in the Gaspé Peninsula will hopefully stimulate capital injections in the region, says Daniel Côté.*

of Gaspé is part of four Eastern Quebec ports whose property will be transferred from the federal government to the Quebec government. There will be room for the development of our harbour zone," says Mr. Côté.

The Maritime Strategy holds a \$40M provision for the establishment of home trade marine links on the Saint Lawrence River and Gulf,

which includes the zone comprised between the Gaspé Peninsula and Montreal. "We have heard about home trade marine initiatives for decades without concrete moves. I am positively surprised," says Mr. Côté.

The Quebec government, through the *Société du plan nord*, recently abandoned the project to develop a marine link between the Gaspé Peninsula,

Anticosti Island and the Lower North Shore. Could that project be rejuvenated with that \$40M home trade envelope?

"It is hard to tell. There is no echo of that in the budget but we are working the whole file from another angle anyway," says Mr. Côté, also referring to his Anticosti Island and Havre-Saint-Pierre partners in the venture.

Finance Minister Éric Girard was relatively discrete about the manpower shortage in the budget. Daniel Côté noted the presence in the document of a measure calling for \$160M for attracting and integrating labour. "It is included in the regional development measures. I therefore consider that it is inclusive for the regions," he says.

He is in favour of the tax credit given to private investors when they inject capital money in a Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands venture. "It is 20% in the Gaspé Peninsula and it is 10 to 15% in the other regions. The tax credit is adapted to the regional realities: the lower the investments in a region, the more generous the tax credit will be," adds Daniel Côté.

He is also in favour of the \$200M earmarked for climate change adaptation measures over five years, an improvement over the last amounts, and he read in the budget documents about the regions being included in the \$680M envelope for transport electrification.

At the Bay of Chaleur Chamber of Commerce, president Luc Leblanc appreciates the energy transition measures but he notes that the manpower shortage is somewhat overlooked.

"The measures announced in the previous budget in order to better the fiscal reality and to attract older workers could have been greatly improved," he points out.

Quebec's labour market, he adds, is affected in its development of new competences of current workers and the means put in place to correct the situation are not vigorous.

"This budget seems to put emphasis on capital investments so to favour innovation but there doesn't seem to be sufficient training so that they can maximise the use of the equipment," criticizes Mr. Leblanc.

## Fort-Prével at a crossroad

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ: - The Fort-Prével golf club needs \$2 million from Quebec to revamp its accommodations. Without the funding the business may not survive.

In 2015, Sépaq announced the closure of Fort-Prével after accumulating a deficit of \$750,000 in 2014 and \$4 million in previous years.

A local organization, supported by the towns of Gaspé and Percé, as well as the MRCs of Côte-de-Gaspé and Rocher-Percé, took over the club, finishing 2019 with a slight loss.

The president, Gilles Pelletier, estimates that after the renovations, the organization will generate surpluses by increasing prices and thus ensur-

ing its future, but the management of the golf club met a hurdle... politicians.

"We met with the regional minister on March 21, 2019. We made representations. We never got an answer. Not even an acknowledgment," says the president.

The renovation plan provides for the upgrading of 12 chalets and 12 to 16 salvageable motels rooms. Other portions will have to be demolished due to the massive presence of mold while under the management of Sépaq. The pavilion with 12 rooms is part of the work to be undertaken, as are the six rooms in the inn.

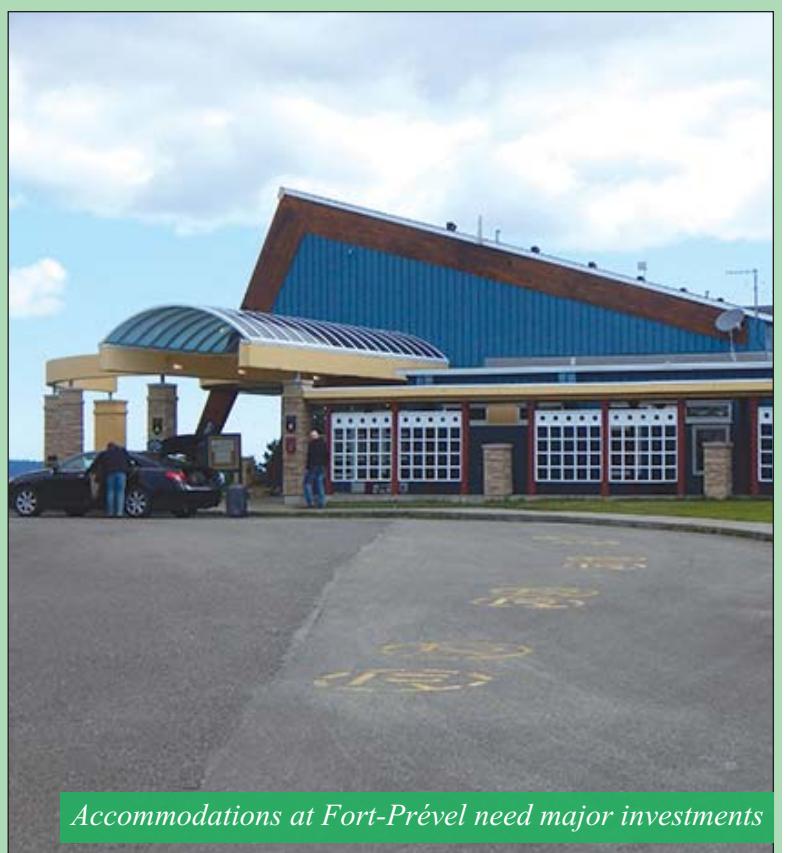
"I don't want just the current maintenance. I want a broader vision. This is what is important. This is an incredible site to

promote, but it takes people who submit a solid business plan," replies the Regional Minister, Marie-Eve Proulx.

The administrators of the golf club made certain representations to Ottawa to enhance the military installations used during the Second World War. The federal government would be ready to consider the matter if Quebec is involved.

The Côte-de-Gaspé MRC supports the organization in its efforts. "We are working on the file. We have resources at the MRC who are working with the Fort-Prével team to table something more solid, a game plan that will do the government's thing," says Prefect Daniel Côté.

The club will still open this summer.



Accommodations at Fort-Prével need major investments

Photo: N. Sergerie





Photo: N. Sergerie

Gasoline price was \$112.4 last Thursday in New Carlisle

## Pump prices not going down as expected

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - The price of gasoline dropped at noon on March 11 to \$1.12 at several service stations in the region, but should have reached \$1.04 per litre on March 12 according to the Energy Board and CAA-Quebec.

The sharp drop in oil prices on the international scene is slowly having an impact at pumps in the region.

The price at the pump was still down 6 cents from the price of \$1.18 posted when crude prices collapsed.

In Pointe-à-la-Croix, prices were \$1.03 due to a tax credit, in line with the maximum price determined in New Brunswick by the provincial government in effect on March 12.

According to the Energy Board, retailers' profit margin was 24 cents per litre on March 11, when it should be 10 cents.

Both the mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, who raised concerns last September by asking for an investigation at the Competition Bureau and the president of the Gaspé table of prefects, Nadia Minassian, declined SPEC's requests for interviews on the subject.

As Spec was reaching its deadline on Friday, March 13, the price at the pump in New Carlisle was \$1.09.

## A moving date still hasn't been set for the MTQ garage in Gaspé

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - No specific date has been mentioned for the moving of the Ministère des Transports Maintenance Centre located in the heart of downtown Gaspé.

For years, the idea of a relocation in the Augustines Industrial Park has been on the drawing board. This would prevent the many heavy vehicles from travelling on Adams and Jacques-Cartier streets, near two elementary schools.

The move has been expected for years and the minister responsible for the region, Marie-Eve Proulx, indicates that the file is progressing.

"This is a file that is moving forward! Perhaps there will be good news to come," says the minister, who couldn't confirm if that would be in 2020 or not.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, believes that the decision will not be long in coming.

"The file is with the Treasury Board in order to release the funds. It is a sign that the preliminary plans are pre-assembled. The latest news was that it had to be done before the holidays, but we didn't receive any follow-ups," said Côté.

The mayor hopes that the file will be realized in the next year.

# Covid-19: calling for calm

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ: - Even if covid-19 reaches the region sooner rather than later, the Gaspésie Public Health Board is encouraging people not to panic.

No case has been diagnosed in the region so far, and if ever a case turns out to be positive, the Ministry of Health will announce it.

"If you see the progression, it would be very surprising if it didn't appear in the Gaspé. Everybody is ready. All of Quebec is ready and the Gaspé is no exception," says the director of Public Health for the Gaspé, Dr. Iv Bonnier-Viger.

The doctor puts into perspective the impacts so far of this disease: "it kills a little more than the influenza which kills approximately 4000 people per year in

Canada. The coronavirus has not reached this significance in Canada."

The health specialist stresses that there is no need to panic when faced with the virus.

"This is advice to give to everyone. Honestly, there is damage that has been created by this virus that has nothing to do with the disease itself but much more because of panic. We are dealing with a disease that, yes, can create problems and over-react and paralyze the whole economy and create more damage."

Moreover, as of last Friday, there were no overflows in hospitals in the region, even if there was a little more traffic. People are massively using the Info-Santé 811 line, as suggested by the provincial authorities.

Using simple health pro-

tection measures is the best way to stop the virus. "The basic advice, as in any epidemic, is always to wash your hands as often as possible because it is mainly by hands that the virus will be transmitted. This virus does not travel much by air," says the doctor.

A person returning from abroad should pay attention to these symptoms: fever, cough or breathing difficulties, for 14 days.

People are encouraged to call Info-Santé 811 first instead of going to the hospital.

Keep in mind that a multitude of activities have been suspended since Quebec's ban on gatherings of more than 250 people in a public spaces. In the region, hockey tournaments and concerts have been cancelled by the dozen. These measures are in place for the next 30 days.

### SIMPLE STEPS TO FOLLOW

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds;
- Use an alcohol-based disinfectant if access to soap and water is impossible;
- Cover your mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow or a handkerchief when coughing or sneezing;
- Immediately throw the tissues used in the trash and wash your hands afterwards;
- Avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care facilities within 14 days of returning from a foreign country or if you are sick;
- Avoid direct contact for greetings, such as handshakes, and favour the use of alternative practices. For more information, the population is invited to visit: <https://www.quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019/>

# A new chapter for the Chandler municipal garage

Nelson Sergerie

CHANDLER: - A new chapter could be written in the saga of the new Chandler municipal garage.

Following the March 9 public meeting, the municipal council gave itself a few days of reflection before deciding the fate of the municipal garage. The only bid received is \$5.6 million, a sum \$500,000 higher than forecast.

Mayor Louise Langlois, recalls that a year ago, two bidders had submitted proposals in line with the budget for new modern facilities in the Pabos district, just over two kilometres from the town's centre. According to her, a year has been lost and she believes that the saga will resume regarding the location.

"It is obvious that we will relive the same scenario. It will look like the last one. These are employees who work in an unhealthy environment," says the mayor fol-

lowing the council meeting.

Elected officials will try to negotiate certain elements with the only firm to have submitted an offer, LFG, or set out again for a call for tenders.

Councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout has always wanted to see a more modest garage in the town centre. "I still think the same. The location is not ideal. The project is too big. I want a garage that meets the needs of employees, but also respects the ability of taxpayers to pay."

Chandler has finally found a buyer for the Mary Travers site known as La Bolduc located in the Newport district. After long deliberations, the

town council chose Alexis Castilloux's proposal. The promoter wants to have a reception room, an inn and possibly a bistro and kayak rental.

The offer was \$25,000 while another offer was made at \$30,000.

"There were five selection criteria. The project behind the other bidder changed during the bid period," says the councillor for Newport Bruno-Pierre Godbout.

In June 2019, a promoter had paid \$30,000 to build a centre for the promotion of fisheries products, a fish market and a microbrewery, but withdrew its proposal due to environmental constraints.

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# Police report

A March 6 fire completely destroyed a Grand River apartment building and forced its 29 surviving occupants to find housing elsewhere. The fire department was called at 3:45 p.m. and intervened quickly to control the blaze but the building was nevertheless a total loss.

Paulette Nicolas, 77, fell outside after escaping the fire and was hospitalized immediately after, suffering from a broken femur. Her state deteriorated over the evening and she died of hemorrhaging at the Chandler hospital.

Fire chief Luc Lebreux points out that the exact cause of the fire is difficult to pinpoint. "Due to the precarious state of the structure, one wing of the building had to be brought down. I know which apartment the fire broke out in but I am not sure in which room and the occupant of that apartment is deceased." He, however, hasn't completely ruled out finding the cause of the fire. The investigation and insurance inquiries are ongoing.

The municipal value of the building was \$362,500 but a new 17-unit apartment building would cost more than that to construct today, adds Mr. Lebreux. The owner, Délima Cyr, who is waiting on news from the insurance company, is not sure about the possibility of rebuilding, considering her age. She owns many houses and apartment buildings in Grand River.

The Red Cross supplied some of the occupants of the building with emergency clothes, food and three nights in motel rooms, while others were able to get help from family members or friends.

Grand River mayor Gino Cyr and his councillors held a special meeting on Monday, March 9, before the regular monthly meeting in order to approve additional help for the residents who had nowhere to go.

"The Red Cross assistance is valid for 72 hours. On Monday, two couples had found another apartment and another person was able to get a place in one of the Municipal Housing Office buildings. The Integrated Health Centre took charge of two couples who are not autonomous," explains Mr. Cyr. Up to 20 people nevertheless remained without a roof over their heads, and the Town of Grand River approved an emergency fund of \$1,400 to help those citizens by virtue of four additional nights in motel rooms and the meals for five additional days.

"We also launched a Gofundme funding campaign. The Town of Grand River added \$3,200 to its contribution as part of that campaign, and the MRC allotted \$2,500. A citizen, Nicol Desbois, donated \$5,000," says Mr. Cyr.

The goal was set at \$33,000. As of Friday, March 13, close to \$15,000 had been raised. Mayor Cyr points out that the Optimist Club also helped considerably during the weekend that followed the blaze, notably through feeding people.

Carl Lévesque, 41, from Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, was arrested on March 11 in connection to the January murder of Maxime Dugas-Lepage. Carl Lévesque appeared at the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts courthouse the same day and was charged with complicity after the murder, shortly after being arrested in his First Avenue home.

Steven Lévesque, 46, from Montreal, was charged on January 27 with the non-premeditated murder of Maxime Dugas-Lepage, whose body is still missing. A second man, Maxime Labrie, 29, from Rimouski, is also charged with complicity after the murder. He also appeared at the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts courthouse on January 27. Both Steven Lévesque and Maxime Labrie are originally from Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

## BLOCKADE:

# Canada's Transport Minister ignores question about compensation

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – Canada's Transport Minister Marc Garneau totally ignored the essence of a question asked by Kristina Michaud, Member of Parliament for the riding of Avignon-Mitis-Matane-Matapédia, who wanted to know if the federal government is thinking of providing compensation to the Gaspésie Railway Society to make up for the losses sustained during the 25-day blockade in Listuguj.

The question was asked on March 9 at the House of Commons, four days after the barricade was lifted. The translation of the question and answer was forwarded by the House of Commons. The question was asked in French.

"Mr. Speaker, the rail crisis has had a huge impact on the economy in Eastern Quebec. The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie is still taking stock, but we already know that losses exceed half a million dollars. The Bay of Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce has sounded the alarm and is worried that it will take months for the economy to recover. The Chamber asked the federal government for assistance last Thursday. The lack of federal leadership is what caused the rail crisis to drag on. Will the government compensate companies for their losses?" asked Ms. Michaud, who represents the Bloc Québécois.

In his answer, Liberal Party Minister Garneau never mentioned the matter of compensation.

"Mr. Speaker, in this government, we believe it is important to follow a process for reconciliation. That is what we have done. The rail blockades were unfortunate, but we worked very hard, around the clock, to resolve the crisis. I am pleased to see that trains are moving again on rail lines across the country," he replied.

The director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Luc Lévesque, said minutes after the blockade was lifted on March 5 that he had no ex-



Kristina Michaud did not receive an answer to her question about compensation for the Gaspésie Railway Society.

Photo: G. Gagné

pectations regarding the eventual payments of compensations by the federal government even if the transporter lost \$500,000 in revenues during the blockade.

The premier of Quebec, François Legault, mentioned that he would seek compensations from the federal government but he has remained discrete about the issue since March 5.

Meanwhile, rail traffic was slowly getting back to normal on March 10, as the 150 cars loaded with windmill blades, cement, lumber and woodchips stranded during the blockade had left the Gaspé

Peninsula line.

An empty windmill blade train entered the line in Matapédia and was sent to New Richmond on the morning of March 11. That traffic is the biggest source of revenues for the Gaspésie Railway Society and its management was very worried about the possibility of losing the hauling contract with GE (General Electric), the company controlling LM Windpower, the owner of the Gaspé plant.

On March 10, Luc Lévesque expressed "reasonable optimism," regarding the probability of keeping that contract.



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## Commentary

Gilles Gagné

### The right things to do

Covering the coronavirus pandemic these days is often like trying to hold a computer in one hand and write with the other, while walking and interviewing people at the same time. It is a bit like following a moving yet mostly invisible target.

Quebec Premier François Legault seemed a bit indifferent to the pandemic during the first weeks of the crisis. On Monday, March 9, the day before the budget, his tone was that of a man who was seeing green lights everywhere. There was no need to restrict any activities. Truth be told, at that time, the number of coronavirus confirmed cases in Quebec was four.

The green light was still dominant on March 10, budget day, while the budgetary exercise had provisions for a covid-19 worsening scenario, which came the following day, when World Health Organization officially used the word pandemic to describe the rising phenomenon. A yellow light started to appear at the National Assembly in Quebec City.

François Legault's attitude changed radically a day later, on March 12, as he declared that public gatherings of over 250 people had to be cancelled, effective the same day.

On March 13, he declared that all the schools, from elementary to university levels, including day cares, are closed for two weeks. Further notice will be communicated before or around March 30.

François Legault is often superficial. He rarely goes in depth in most files, including business files even if he was a sound entrepreneur before entering politics, however, he has proven in the past that he can, sometimes, recognize his mistakes, or shortcomings.

He did not admit his coronavirus shortcomings upon making big adjustments in the way Quebec will tackle that pandemic, but he made those adjustments. For now, it is the most important thing.

As of March 13, there were 180 confirmed cases in Canada. This is quite low by international standards, however, the country's experts are studying what is going on elsewhere and suggested the measures adopted on March 12 and 13. They looked at the rising curves of coronavirus occurrence that manifested in other countries and concluded that the best way to keep that curve down is through adopting strict rules.

As Dr. Iv Bonnier-Viger, director of the Gaspé Peninsula Public Health Board, explains, the prevention rules are put up to keep the occurrence curve as low as possible, and spread that occurrence over a longer period. There will likely be thousands of covid-19 cases in Quebec in coming weeks, and the Gaspé Peninsula will not be spared. This seems unavoidable, however, there is a great difference between 3,000 cases and 30,000 or 300,000, province-wide. While most people will not develop symptoms, others will. Some of them will have to be

hospitalized, like certain babies, certain seniors and people with a weak immune system.

The idea is simple, stresses Dr. Bonnier-Viger. We must avoid congestion in hospitals. If the number of cases treated remains, even over a longer period instead of being characterized by a sudden surge, the medical teams will be well positioned to deal with all of them instead of having to choose between individuals, as specialized equipment will be required for people with breathing problems.

François Legault acted in a responsible way when he said that the crisis will be long and painful. He also did the right thing by asking Quebecers to show a civic sense and empathy, values that will likely attenuate the effects of the pandemic in the province.

As it is often the case, the Canadian government was slower than the provinces in reacting to the crisis, asking the country's citizens to refrain from travelling internationally on March 13. Cruise ships of over 500 passengers in capacity cannot make stops in the country until at least July.

The whole thing looks exaggerated for now but truth be told, the context is far from as tragic as a world war. Most people living today have no memory of World War II. They were not even born, as only people of about 80 years of age or more can remember what happened in 1945.

Some of our grandparents and great-grandparents lived through two world wars. The conditions back then were much tougher than today's. Staying calm, showing patience, and civic values look like the three things to do for a while. We will in fact be happy one day if today's crisis is exaggerated.

## Guest Commentary

Emma Buckley

### The world of winter sports

When I was young, I loved the Olympics. Every four years, my brother and I pored over statistics relating to jumping, throwing, swimming and running. We marvelled at the skill and courage of Olympic athletes. From our living room, we watched live coverage of Australian sportsmen and women striving for Olympic glory. This inevitably involved getting up in the middle of the night, given that the Olympics were being telecast from Los Angeles or Barcelona. In fact, the only thing I knew about Montreal as a teenager was that the city hosted the 1976 Olympics.

I was totally unaware that there was another type of Olympic Games, one that took place in the snow. The Winter Games were simply not on the Australian sporting radar at that time. I didn't know anyone who skied or skated. Over the years, interest

and participation in winter sports has grown, and Australian athletes have achieved some modest success at the Games. Interestingly, our early medals were won by gymnasts who retrained as aerial skiers, however, most Australians will never see snow falling outside their window. There are more places to ice-skate in Gaspésie than in the whole of Australia.

It was with this lack of winter sporting experience that I arrived in the Gaspé Peninsula.

I was a keen runner in Australia, and assumed I would do the same exercise here. Not long after I arrived, I set out for my first jog. My running outfit – a mix of summer running clothes layered over winter woollies – was eclectic, to say the least. The experience was not pleasant. The frigid air hurt my fair-weather lungs. The wind stung my face and numbed my chin. Trucks roared past me and I was worried about slippery patches of ice on the road. The running would have to be paused until spring, I decided. With the running on hold, I bought some snowshoes. Trudging along on these strange contraptions I discovered some of the beautiful winter landscapes in Gaspésie. The scenes were magical: frozen waterfalls, steep cliffs and ravines of gnarled cedar trees. But still, I found it difficult to force myself

to go outside. I enjoyed the healthy feeling of being out in nature on a cold, bright day, but I wasn't enthusiastic about the activity itself.

A few years later I discovered cross country skiing – now my favourite winter sport. Learning to ski has not been easy. Learning any new skill as an adult evokes a range of emotions, from frustration and self-doubt, to exhilaration. I would add 'humiliation' to that list, which is how I felt attempting to get on and off the ski chairlift while juvenile ski stars whizzed down the slope beside me. Not only did I have to learn how to move, I had to learn how to fall. I knew ways to avoid injury when swimming in the ocean, not when skiing. Losing my balance going downhill on the trails, I would lean forwards instead of backwards, making for some spectacular faceplants.

Over Christmas we bought some backcountry skis, which are effectively off-piste cross-country skis. Serious backcountry skiers do multi-day excursions in remote, mountainous terrain, sleeping in a hut or their tent. They climb steep hills using seal skins attached to their skis, then zoom all the way down. Backcountry skiing is a flourishing sport, and the Chic-Choc Mountains in Gaspésie are considered one of the best places for backcountry skiing in Québec.

I would describe our approach as more "backcountry-lite". I still don't like hills! We leave the house, cross the road, put on our skis and head off across the fields and into the woods. In many places in the world, skiing is considered a sport just for the wealthy. Here in Gaspésie, it is truly accessible. When I put on my skis and set off through the fields I feel like I am committing a radically egalitarian act. One day during the last Winter Olympics, my boyfriend and I went out skiing with his siblings at Morin Heights. It was a good workout, with a glorious sprint at the end. Afterwards, exhausted and happy, we sat around in our thermals and cheered on Alex Harvey racing against the Norwegians. I was just as thrilled as when I cheered on the Australian swimmers with my brother, all those years ago.



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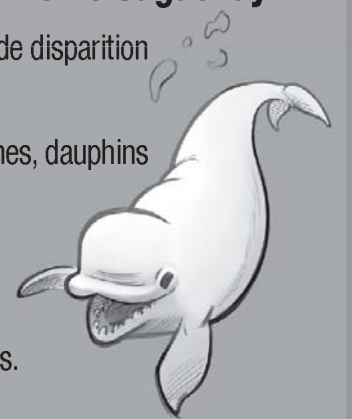
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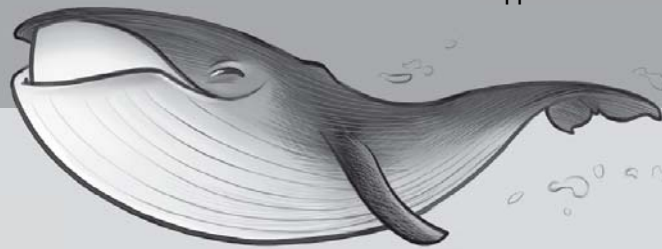
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- Si un jeune accompagne un groupe ou un adulte.
- Lorsqu'une baleine est au repos.

À l'intérieur du parc marin Saguenay–Saint-Laurent, une réglementation supplémentaire s'applique : [parcmarin.qc.ca/proteger](http://parcmarin.qc.ca/proteger)



### DO NOT DISTURB

When watching marine mammals, whether whales or seals, it is **PROHIBITED** to:

- Touch or feed them
- Swim or interact with them
- Move them, lure them elsewhere or entice them to move
  - Separate them from their group or go between an adult and its calf
- Encircle them or trap them between a vessel and the shore or among several boats
  - Place yourself in their path
- Approach them when they are resting



The *Marine Mammal Regulations* protect whales and seals from human disturbance.

### NE PAS DÉRANGER

Lorsque vous observez des mammifères marins, que ce soit des baleines ou des phoques, il est **INTERDIT** de :

- les toucher ou les nourrir
- nager ou interagir avec eux
- les déplacer, les attirer ailleurs ou provoquer leur déplacement
- les séparer de leur groupe ou passer entre un adulte et son petit
- les encercler ou les coincer entre un bateau et le rivage ou entre plusieurs bateaux
- vous placer dans leur trajectoire
- les approcher lorsqu'ils se reposent

Le *Règlement sur les mammifères marins* protège les baleines et les phoques du dérangement humain.

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POUR  
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# Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie's pilot project with Anglophone community yields good results

Gilles Gagné

BONAVENTURE: – The pilot project conducted by *Accès micro-crédit Gaspésie* with the anglophone community that began in October 2018 has reached an interesting number of potential entrepreneurs and the organization is confident to receive further funding for the continuation of that initiative.

A wrap-up of the 14-month pilot project reveals the potential of supporting entrepreneurs who would normally have a difficult time getting conventional bank financing.

Since 2007, *Accès micro-crédit Gaspésie* (AMCG) has offered funding to a group of small entrepreneurs but there was a need to better reach the anglophone community, which greeted the pilot project quite well, points out its project manager, Roberta Billingsley.

“In 14 months, this pilot project has generated 26 new English-speaking clients. Seven of them are members of a First Nation Community. Thirteen have an annual revenue of \$20,000 or less, 19 are



Roberta Billingsley was project manager of *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie's* pilot project with the anglophone community.

women, eight are under the age of 35, four had already been working on a business plan, six were referred to us by another service provider or collaborator and two micro-loans have been issued,” she explains.

Other numbers confirm the relevance of the pilot project, as a total of 48 participants attended the activities hosted in English and over 40 members from the English-speaking

community liked its facebook page. Moreover, *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésien's* newsletter is available in English and now reaches 70 English speakers.

“Our first English edition of the AMCG blog on our website received its first English contributor. Twelve established anglophone entrepreneurs participated in some way during the project so far and have expressed that they are more

aware and compelled to promote AMCG's services and support. Thanks to word of mouth, and key stakeholders, we continue to add to a registry of 71 English-speakers who are or may be pursuing various self-employed or entrepreneurial projects in the region,” adds Roberta Billingsley.

*Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie* provides more than micro-loans. Its mission, besides contributing to the economic and human development of the community, also includes offering support and accompaniment to its clients. The organization can provide loans of up to \$20,000 and the average loan is \$6,000.

The need to expand its services to the anglophone community came after reflecting on the scope of the service delivery. *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie* then applied for funding to expand in that way and that expansion was accepted. An amount of \$110,000 was raised, with \$90,000 from Canada Economic Development for Quebec regions, and the balance handed out by Des-

jardins and *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie* itself.

“*Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie* introduced the new project to existing service providers who offer entrepreneurship-based programming and financial products. Over 20 organizations joined the conversation about ways to reach members of the English-speaking community or sharpen the connection for integrated service or support. As conversations continue, the interest for collaboration is growing,” adds Roberta Billingsley.

The integration of English services required adjustments, so *Accès Micro-crédit* “committed to the translation of all client-specific documents, promotional materials, website and social-media outreach, as well as offering English editions of service presentations, networking, exchange activities and workshops.” It also implied “establishing a new network of English contacts, facilitators and key stakeholders,” says Ms. Billingsley.

Cont'd on page 7

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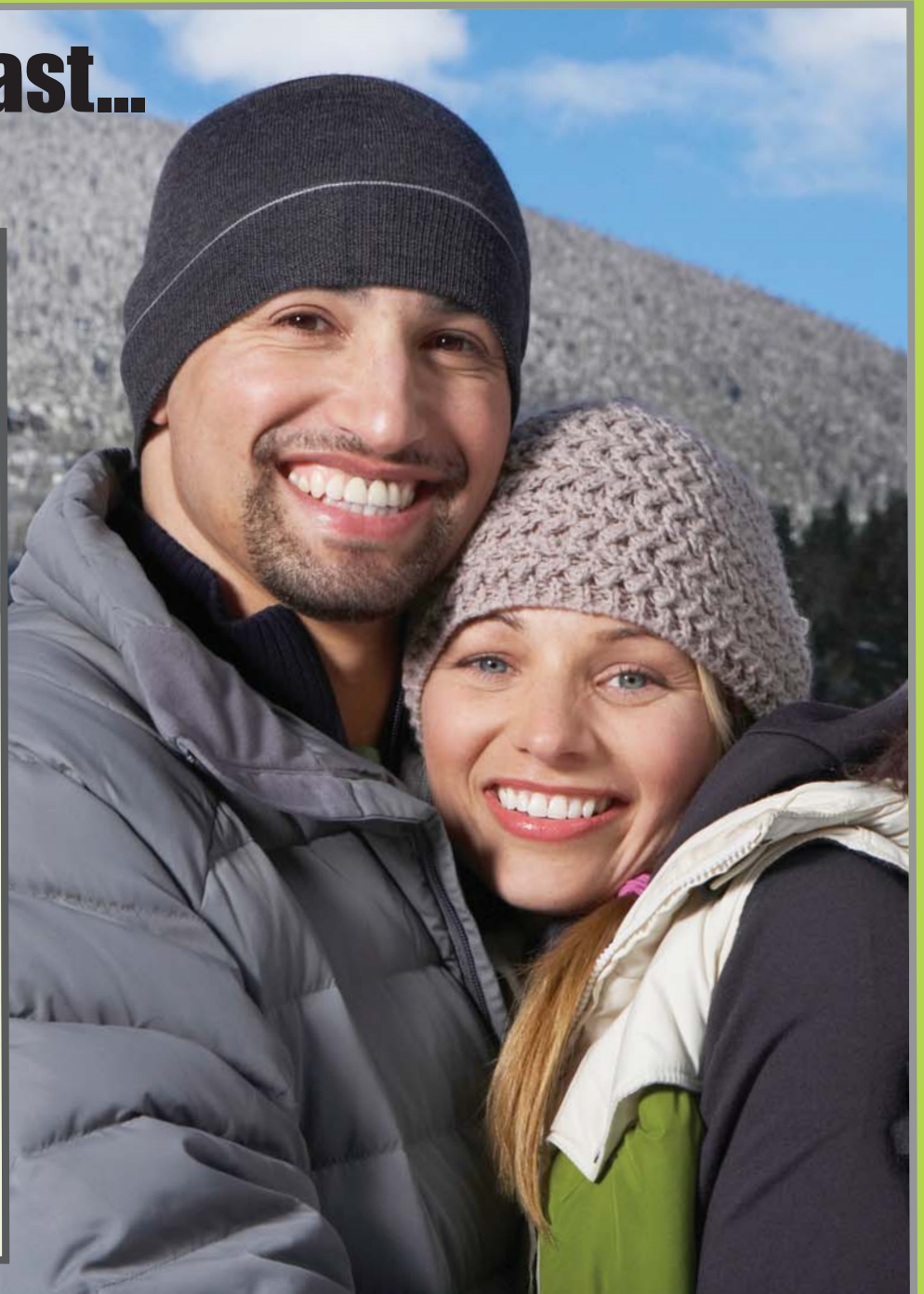
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# Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie can be used for more leverage

Gilles Gagné

BONAVENTURE: – Once an entrepreneur-to-be visits *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie*, many other organizations intervene and add to the toolbox of that entrepreneur. That conclusion can be drawn from the wrap up of the first 14 months of the pilot project, which was presented on February 20 in Bonaventure.

Many people who supported AMCG were at the event, including Dave Felker, a *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie* administrator who also offers business start-up guidance. He describes the work done by AMCG as “amazing.”

“It is very important to work together. Why do they (anglophones) knock at my door at 7 p.m. to talk about their business idea? The (economic development) flyer in French goes directly to the wood stove,” says Mr. Felker.

He often sees what he calls “cultural” differences when the time comes to consider founding a business.

“Francophones are ready to take a lot of risk whereas the English-speaking people won’t want to sign anything,”

adds Dave Felker, stressing that a different approach is needed to maximize the development potential of the Gaspé Peninsula.

Roberta Billingsley points out that the timidity of anglophones projecting to start a business varies but there is a strong, vibrant English community ready to develop plans.”

François Bujold works in economic development at the MRC of Bonaventure. In 2019, the economic development branch of the MRC allocated grants totalling \$264,659 to entrepreneurs, and loans amounting to \$822,000.

He is counting on similar amounts this year to support en-

trepreneurs, including anglophones who have initiated a file at *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie*.

“There is money for loans, grants, support for research, support if consultants are needed and so on. We work with Services Québec supporting self-employed people, because there is a program for that. We also work with the SADC and Femmessor. A file initiated at *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie* can be used as leverage to get more money from the other economic development organizations,” he explains.

Mr. Bujold says all the MRCs of the coast administer a relatively similar economical development service.

Roberta Billingsley insisted on the importance of teamwork when she presented the wrap-up.

“We are all collaborators. We work in some way to support, foster or offer entrepreneurship-based programming, and financial products. It seemed only fitting to invite everyone to come together who played a direct or supporting role in the progressive outreach toward the English and First Nations communities in the last 14 months within AMCG’s pilot project. We held this event to not only present the results of the project, but to demonstrate that there are efforts underway amongst service

providers to enhance service delivery for English-speaking entrepreneurs in the region,” she said.

She added that “it is important to acknowledge that 100% of interveners contacted stated that they are interested in effort-sharing and foster entrepreneurship within the anglophone community.”

Yan Tremblay, coordinator of AMCG, is working on the extension of the pilot project with Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions.

“Other organizations in our network benefit from renewed agreements. We are optimistic for the three-year extension,” he says

## MICRO CREDIT:

▶ *Cont'd from page 6*

The pilot project also meant carrying out the unique aspects of the services offered by *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie*, including accompaniment services, team approaches and the three Rs (reciprocal referral relationships) and follow up.

The support provided by

the organization has had positive effects, as its customers and participants, as well as the staff, have expressed and observed “an increase in self-confidence as well as individual capacity.

Time management is challenging and hinders developing their plan, mainly amongst women,” says Ms. Billingsley. Moreover, there is a willingness to learn and apply simple

bookkeeping and there are recurring questions around tax obligations: Aboriginal taxation, business registration, incorporation, regulations and permits.

In the case of an eventual extension of the pilot project, or a permanent addition to *Accès Micro-crédit Gaspésie*, some participants voiced an interest to know more about the entry point for entrepreneurial

support. They would also like to benefit from workshops on feasibility study and business planning, or pre-start up.

“Local mentorship and coaching in English has been requested, like training and courses online or in a group in person. Participants also want regular opportunities to engage with other English-speaking entrepreneurs,” states Roberta Billingsley.



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## Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



### A Breath of Spring

*"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."*

The first day of spring officially arrives on March twenty-first, but on the Gaspé you can wait a little longer for the weather to realize that the calendar says spring is here. This year, according to the Farmers' Almanac, the spring season will technically arrive earlier, on March nineteenth. Will the spring weather align with this date? Likely not.

We start to search for signs daily so that we can confirm that winter has indeed departed. We look for the many slight changes that signal that spring has commenced. You see, the much-anticipated season arrives slowly, but surely, here on the Gaspé. Maintain hope. It will happen.

So here are a few of the signs that spring is here, or at least on the way:

**Crab fishing.** The men and women venture out onto the still frigid waters to catch their quotas.

**Capelin.** When you can see the gulls swooping on the water you know the spring capelin are in.

**Clothes on the line.** Once again, we can view the beauty of washing on the line, flapping in the wind. The earlier in the day that you hang out your laundry the better chance it has of drying by dinnertime. I once overheard a woman say she suspected a neighbour of washing her clothes the night before so that she was first to hang out her laundry in the morning. Don't be fooled, it is a competition.

**Birds.** Baby birds are out taking their first flight. So sweet.

**Spring flowers.** Daffodils, crocus, lily of the valley, and tulips finally poke their shy heads out of the ground. Much later lilacs will be in full bloom. We wait patiently.

**Spring cleaning.** It is time to do the big cleaning. Wash the walls and ceilings. Wood heat is the best, but we must always clean up after it. Throw open the windows to let in the fresh, though still frigid, air.

Clean the yard and get prepared to mow the grass. This is an art, almost an obsession here on the Peninsula. Neighbours look at an unmowed lawn as slothful. So, clean that yard and be ready to mow.

**Bees.** We welcome the arrival of the bees because we appreciate how critical they are for our ecosystem.

**Clothing.** Oh, nothing improves our optimism about the changing season more than getting out our lighter, brighter clothes. Capris, sandals and t-shirts are taken out of storage, washed and ready to wear. Now we are prepared!

**Garage sales.** This is a sure sign that spring has arrived. Garage sales, or lawn sales, will continue throughout the season.

**Bikes.** Bikes and motorcycles go whizzing by and it is wonderful to see children and adults out enjoying the fresh air.

**Gardens.** Tilling will soon begin and avid gardeners have ordered their seeds long ago. They are tiny little bits of hope. We anticipate the beautiful, fresh vegetables that will be on our tables in the fall.

The seasons come and go as they should. It is a time of rebirth and revival and we welcome this change. We need this change. We crave the warmth of the sun on our faces. So, prepare to shake off the last bits of winter, just as we watched the last bits of snow in the fields melt away.

Now if the temperature would just get a wee bit warmer...

## Gaspesian Notables: William Wakeham

**"Bluff, handsome, weather-beaten by a thousand gales, William Wakeham knew the coast, its natural and its human history, as no one else could."**

Diane Skinner

Who was William Wakeham and why should we care? Although he was not born on the Gaspé Peninsula he left his mark. William Wakeham was reportedly handsome with a weather-beaten face due to the lengthy periods he spent at sea. At one time he knew this coast better than any man and served Gaspesians as a physician and as a fisheries officer.

Wakeham was born in Quebec City in 1844 and educated at Victoria College, Cobourg, in what was then called Upper Canada. After graduating he returned to Quebec City and attended Military School. He went on to study medicine in Montreal, and obtained his license to practice in 1866.

After this, Wakeham moved to the Gaspé where he worked as a

doctor for approximately ten years. Then William returned to Quebec City where he became the head doctor for three years at the Belmont Retreat for Alcoholics. His research into this field led to the publication of his findings on the causes of alcoholism. At this point his medical career ended because he chose to return to the Gaspé, but not to practice medicine.

In 1879, Wakeham began a new career as an inspector of Canadian Fisheries. His territory included the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Labrador. His mandate was to ensure the protection of the fishing industry. He wrote yearly reports on his findings. His job also involved hearing the complaints and disputes of fishermen and fishing companies. He had the authority to enforce certain maritime laws and to issue fishing permits.

Wakeham was the ideal person for this job. Much was expected of him and he fulfilled his duties admirably. He settled boundary disputes between the U.S. and Canada. The results of his efforts led to the establishment of an international commission on fishing in this area and beyond.

He was also concerned about pollution which demonstrates that he was a man ahead of his time. All of his research and study provided the basis for many future international fishing agreements.

He was an explorer as well and led expeditions to the Hudson Strait. The results of these trips include establishing the rights of Canada near Baffin Island and in the Arctic.

Then in 1909, Wakeham was asked to complete a study about whether lobster was being overfished and to predict the future of lobster fishing on the Gaspé. He had concerns and it led to the creation of a national policy so



Photo: William Topley

*William Wakeham has been honoured by having nine geographical features named after him, including the town of Wakeham.*

that lobster fishing would be monitored and regulated by the government. It seems a pity that the same regulations were not in place for cod fishing.

After this Wakeham retired and moved into the house then referred to as "One Ash" in the town of Gaspé.

Wakeham's legacy is he "knew the coast, its natural and its human history, as no one else could." This was according to John Mason Clarke, a noted paleontologist of the time. Wakeham never wrote his memoirs but we can conclude he loved the Gaspé Peninsula, because he established a beautiful home and returned here to end his days. Wakeham never married, but devoted his life to his work. He did not seek fame or glory. That was not his style. He died in Gaspé in 1915.

In his honour, the name Wakeham has been given to nine geographical features, including in the Hudson Strait, the Saguenay, and of course the town of Wakeham right here on the Gaspé Peninsula.

### Teachers' Guide

#### Comprehension:

1. Recount Wakeham's early life up to his graduation from medical school.
2. Describe his medical career.
3. Wakeham was an inspector for Canadian Fisheries. Explain his role.
4. Wakeham was also an explorer. Tell about this part of his life.
5. What did he contribute to the control of lobster fishing?

#### Vocabulary

**Define:** mandate, admirably, legacy, memoirs

**Extra:** On a map of Canada, locate the geographical features that are named for William Wakeham.

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# Announcements...



## Obituaries



### BOURGAIZE: Eunice

It is with sadness we announce the passing of Eunice Rennia Bourgaize on Tuesday, February 4, 2020, in Montreal. Daughter of the late Nelson and Ada Bourgaize (Langlois). Born in Ship Head, Gaspé, on January 12, 1948. She lived most of her life in Montreal.

Dear Mum to Spyros (Aida), Sophia and Dimitri. Nannie to Amanda, Karlie, Ashley and Zachary. Sister to Dolly, Merle, Clayton (Eleanor), Lennox, Bradford (Shirley) and George, the father of their children. Lovingly remembered by many nieces, nephews, family and friends.



### KENNEDY: Dorothy "Dopsy" Mary

Passed away at home on Monday, March 2, 2020, at the age of 63. Cherished daughter of Mera and the late Mac (McAuley) Kennedy. Loved sister to Grace Dorais (Charles) and Gerard Kennedy (Kerry). Dopsy will be forever loved and remembered by many extended family and friends.

A visitation to celebrate the life of Dopsy was held at Adams Funeral Home, 445 St. Vincent Street, Barrie, Ontario, on Friday, March 6, 2020. Memorial donations to the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated. Condolences may be forwarded to the family through [www.adamsfuneralhome.ca](http://www.adamsfuneralhome.ca)

A celebration of Dopsy's life will take place in the summer of 2020 in Douglastown, Quebec.

### Look who is 90!

*John E. Diotte*  
New Richmond, Quebec

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**URGENTLY NEEDED:** Volunteers to deliver Meals-on-Wheels in the New Carlisle area. If you are interested, please call Rita at 418-752-5577, ext. 3.

## COAST ROUND-UP

### GASPÉ:

#### Bake Sale

The Gaspé County Women's Institute Bake Sale planned for March 14, from 10-12 p.m. at the Gaspé Carrefour has been postponed until **Saturday, March 21**, at the same time and place. The tickets on the "Basket of Irish Cheer" will be drawn on March 21 at 12 pm. Thanks for your support.

### DOUGLASTOWN:

#### Community Centre

**Wednesdays:** Workout class 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. (with baby), stretching and foam roller. With Isabelle Provencher. \$70/session, \$8/drop-ins. Sessions to March 25.

### BARACHOIS:

#### Legion Branch 261

**Every Monday:** The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 261, will be having a money bingo at 7 p.m. at the Legion. 18+ only.

**Every Thursday:** Cards and games from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Free. For more information, contact Lloyd Roussel at 418-645-3700 or 418-645-2786.

### PORT DANIEL:

#### Three Star Golden Age Club

**Every Wednesday:** Pé-tanque from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Cost \$3. Come and join the fun and learn a new game!

**Sundays:** Line dancing from 7-8 p.m. Cost \$8. Everyone welcome.

**March 22:** Breakfast/Brunch \$10 adult, \$5 children under 10 yrs, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**March 28:** Military Whist.

**April 4:** Spaghetti Supper.

### PORT DANIEL:

#### St. James Anglican Church

**March 30:** Gift bingo at the Three Star Golden Age Club beginning at 7 p.m. All are welcome.

### SHIGAWAKE:

#### Shigawake

#### Community Centre

**April 11:** Breakfast for all from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$10 adults, free Easter Bunny and breakfast for children under 12.

**April 13:** Gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. All welcome.

### SHIGAWAKE:

#### Advance Notice

#### St. Paul's Anglican Church Women

**July 18:** Tea, bake and craft sale will be held from noon to 2 p.m. at the Shigawake Community Centre, Adults \$7 and children 6 and under free. Door prizes. Everyone is welcome.

### HOPE TOWN:

#### Hope Baptist Church

Hope Baptist Church welcomes you. Sunday School for all ages at 9:45 a.m. and Corporate Worship at 11 a.m. on Sundays. Prayer Meeting and Bible Study at 7 p.m. on Wednesdays. Young Peoples for grades 7-11 at 7 p.m. on Fridays. 305 Route 132 West, Hope Town, 418-752-5838.

### HOPE TOWN:

#### Community Centre

**Every Thursday:** Weekly crib tournament beginning February 6 at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Linda at 418-751-4398.

**Saturday, March 28:** Sports Club will be holding a crib tournament at 1 p.m. at the Hope Town Community Center. \$10 per person. Please register your team by Friday, March 27. To register Linda 751-4398.

**April 11:** Military Whist beginning at 8 p.m.

### NEW CARLISLE:

#### Bible Chapel Services

**Sunday:** Breaking of Bread for Believers - 9:30 a.m.; Night service - 7 p.m.; **Wednesday:** Bible Study and Prayer - 7:30 p.m. All are welcome.

### NEW CARLISLE:

#### Heritage New Carlisle Upcoming Workshops

**March 21 & 28:** Needlepoint. ~~CANCELLED~~ with animator Noellie Doiron. Cost \$35.

**April 4 & 11:** Stained glass Workshop 1. **April 18 & 25:** Stained glass Workshop 2. Workshops animated by Mario Boulianne. Cost \$25 per workshop.

To register please contact heritagenc@globetrotter.net, telephone 418-752-1334 or facebook.

### NEW CARLISLE:

#### Royal Canadian Legion

**First Tuesday of every month:** General Meeting at 7 p.m.

**March 29:** Brunch held at St. Andrews Anglican Church in New Carlisle from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$10 per adult and \$5 per child under 12.

**April 18:** Crib afternoon tournament beginning at 1 p.m. Bring a partner. \$10 per person. To register call Norma at 418-752-6214.

### CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

#### Royal Canadian Legion

The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 172, meets monthly every third **Saturday** at the Legion located at 55 Gallagher St.

### CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

#### Book Room

**Every Wednesday:** The book room is now open from 1 to 4 p.m. For more information, call Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

### CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

#### Fifty Plus

**Every Tuesday:** Grocery Bingo at 7 p.m.

**Every Thursday:** Dame de Piques beginning at 1 p.m.

**April 17:** Jam session open

to all musicians and spectators. Doors open at 7 p.m. with entertainment beginning at 7:30 p.m. Welcome to all.

### GESGAPEGIAG:

#### Important Meeting

This is to inform the community members of Gesgapegiag and the surrounding area that Gesgapegiag Healing Lodge (NNADAP) hosts AA meetings and is open to everyone. If

you are interested in a lifestyle free of alcohol and substance abuse and have the desire to change, you are invited to attend meetings every **Monday** at 7 p.m.

### GESGAPEGIAG:

#### N.A. Meetings

N.A. Meetings held every **Tuesday** at 7 p.m. at the Mawiomi Treatment Centre located at 85 School Street in Gesgapegiag. Everyone welcome! For more information, call 418-759-3522.

### CHRISTIAN BIBLE SERVICES

The purpose of these services is to become acquainted with the example and teachings of Jesus. People of all beliefs are welcome to attend. The services are free and no participation will be required.

#### Services will be held:

#### Thursdays,

**March 19, 26** and

**April 2** at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall:

99 Place Suzanne-Guité, New Richmond.

#### Sundays,

**March 22** and **29**

at 4 p.m. at the Community Centre:

55 Rue Gallagher, Cascapedia-St-Jules.

### UNITED CHURCH

#### Sunday, March 22

10:30 a.m. Hope Town

### ANGLICAN

### CHURCH OF CANADA

#### Sunday, March 22

#### New Carlisle

11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

#### Hope Town

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

#### Shigwake

10 a.m. Morning Prayer

### PARISH OF GASPÉ

#### Sunday, March 22

#### St. Paul's - Gaspé

9:30 a.m. Lent 4

**Don't miss the deadline!**



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## Great Ideas for old WINDOWS & DOORS



### Guess Who?

I am an actress born in Florida on March 5, 1974. Before earning my big break, I starred in many B movies and sold food at the mall. I gained mainstream recognition for movies like "Training Day" and "Girl in Progress."

Answer: Eva Mendes



I am first on earth, second on heaven.

I appear twice in a week, never in a month, but once in a year. What am I?

Answer: The letter E

## SUDOKU

		8	5			2		
2						7	6	
	4	7		1	5			
	6	9				8		
7								
	3		6		7			
				5		9		
	6		1	9		4	3	

Level: Intermediate

### Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

5	7	6	2	1	9	8	4	3
4	1	8	3	7	5	6	9	2
2	9	3	4	6	8	7	1	5
7	5	2	9	8	6	4	3	1
1	6	9	5	4	3	2	8	7
3	8	4	7	2	1	5	6	9
8	2	5	1	9	4	3	7	6
9	4	7	6	3	2	1	5	8
6	3	1	8	5	7	9	2	4

ANSWER:

## Go ahead...play with your food



## HOROSCOPES

### ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

You may be facing the consequences of a little overindulgence this week, Aries. It may take a bit for you to get back on track. Use every opportunity to rest up.

### TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, if you are moving from one job to another, you may have to put your social life on hold for a bit until all components of this transition are working smoothly.

### GEMINI – May 22/June 21

Gemini, obligations at work or at

home are building up and you may be experiencing extra stress. The key to feeling better is to take some of the responsibilities off of your plate.

### CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, a lack of communication between you and a close friend or relative may have you wondering if this person is okay. Just be persistent with your inquiries.

### LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, caution is called for any time a financial presentation is made that affects your finances. Properly vet all potential investments and anyone guiding you in this process.

### VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, you may be putting your best self forward, but unless you get others

to take notice, you won't be able to make an impact. Enlist others to help.

### LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, your ingenuity and imagination have been wavering lately. Thankfully, that doesn't mean you won't be able to get things working again. Stay the course.

### SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Financial matters come to the forefront this week, Scorpio. You may have depleted your reserves a bit faster than expected. It's probably time to curtail your spending.

### SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, you may need to say something to a loved one that shows how much you support this special purpose. Give careful consideration

to what you want to say.

### CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Use this week as an opportunity to catch up on some rest, Capricorn. Your schedule has been jam-packed for some time now, and your energy stores are depleted.

### AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, you may be stuck in the middle of a situation with two people you care about. Be an impartial listener to both instead of taking sides. Offer advice if it's sought.

### PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, you may be hit with a bit of melancholy this week, but it quickly subsides when you touch base with someone whose energy is contagious.

### FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

#### MARCH 15

Eva Longoria, Actress (45)

#### MARCH 16

Lauren Graham, Actress (53)

#### MARCH 17

Mia Hamm, Athlete (48)

#### MARCH 18

Sutton Foster, Actress (45)

#### MARCH 19

David Ross, Manager (43)

#### MARCH 20

Ruby Rose, Model (34)

#### MARCH 21

Scott Eastwood, Actor (34)



# Robert Barter, next-to-last Gaspesian Hong Kong veteran, dies at 98

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES – Robert “Bob” Barter, one of the seven surviving Canadians who took part in the Hong Kong battle, died on February 28 at the Saint Joseph Residence in Maria. He was 98 years old.

Born on December 18, 1921, in Grand Caspédia on Walsh Alley where his parents had a farm, Mr. Barter was only 19, a few months short of 20 years in fact, when he joined the Royal Rifles of Canada in Quebec City.

According to information available on the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association website, Robert Barter, whose army number was E29987, was a Lance Corporal of the Royal Rifles’ First Battalion, part of the “D” company.

“Members of “C” Force from the East travelled across Canada by CNR troop train, picking up reinforcements en-route. Stops included Valcartier; Montreal; Ottawa; Armstrong, Ont.; Capreol, Ont.; Winnipeg, Man.; Melville, Sask.; Saskatoon, Sask.; Edmonton, Alta; and Jasper, Alta; arriving in Vancouver, BC on October 27 at 0800 hrs,” mentions the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association documentation.

Joined during the railway trip by the Winnipeg Grenadiers, the soldiers from the East sailed from Vancouver on October 27 aboard two ships and arrived in Hong Kong on November 16 after brief stops in Honolulu and Manila. Equipment earmarked for “C” Force use was loaded on a third ship that never reached Hong Kong as it was rerouted to Manila when hostilities commenced on December 8.

Consequently, Robert Barter and his companions were part of an under-equipped unit and they fought until being captured on December 25, 1941. He was a prisoner of war at Stanley



*A young Bob Barter in uniform.*

Camp until December 30; moved to North Point until September 26, 1942; and moved again to Shamshuipo, all in Hong Kong, until January 1, 1943. From there, he and other prisoners were moved to Omine, Japan, until September 22, 1945, when they were freed. Some soldiers were freed in August. By then, he had been a prisoner of war for almost 45 months. Like all the soldiers who had been prisoners of war in Japan, he suffered from malnutrition.

“When he returned from prison camp, he was hospitalized for quite a long time. He actually left before it was recommended because he continued to feel imprisoned there. He didn’t stay in the service after prison camp. He returned to the Coast and began farming, and also worked for the pulp and paper mill for quite a long time,” now explains Caitlin Barter, his granddaughter.

At the March 5 funeral, Caitlin and her sister Kelsi Barter presented the eulogy. They explained that before leaving for Hong Kong, he had

was his love for Bertha that kept him alive during the war,” they said.

“Bob valued hard work and had a strong work ethic. Times were not always easy but he set an example for many. He and Bertha put their family first and were always keen to lend a helping hand to a friend or neighbour,” added Caitlin and Kelsi Barter during the eulogy.

“Over the course of his life, Bob was proud to be involved in many organizations, such as the Royal Canadian Legion, Masonic Lodge, Shriners, 50 Plus Club, Saint Andrew’s United Church, The Caspédia River Society, and the Municipality of Grand Caspédia. He believed in the success of his community and took pride in its accomplishments,” they also underlined.

Robert Barter entertained a passion for salmon fishing. “Grandpa was always determined and enjoyed a challenge. It was always exciting to watch him play a salmon. Whether it was with Roddy Coull, Joe (his son), or alone; it was always an impressive

feat. What seems like not so long ago, too impatient to wait for Joe, he went fishing alone. He put himself in some sort of predicament, unable to start the boat motor and scared to lose his fish. He ended up taking a swim, but still managed to land his salmon,” explained Caitlin and Kelsi Barter.

With the passing of Robert Barter, there are only six surviving Hong Kong veterans in Canada, including Gaspesian Philip Doddridge of New Richmond.

Tom Eden, a Gaspesian who has a passion for history with regards to war and veterans, points out that 203 Gaspesians took part in the Hong Kong battle, including 52 from the New Richmond and Caspédia-St-Jules area. It is usually considered like an exceptional contribution, given the size of the region.

Additional information about the participation of Robert Barter in World War II can be obtained through the link: <https://www.hkvca.ca/cforcedata/indivreport/indivdetailed.php?regtno=E29987>



*Two past presidents of Branch 172, the late Robert (Bob) Barter (left) and Philip Doddridge (right) flank the late Lance Ross at his induction into the Canadian Veterans Hall of Valour in 2005. All three were members of “D” Company of the Royal Rifles of Canada.*

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