

COVID WEEKLY UPDATE: A flat curve for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands

Gilles Gagné

MARIA: – A new stability is characterizing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands since the beginning of May, as only four new cases were added to the regional total between May 1 and May 8, and two of them were statistical adjustments made by the Quebec Department of Health and Social Services, after re-distributing hundreds of cases throughout the province that had been forgotten due to a computer glitch.

The number of coronavirus cases rose from 168 to 172 during that week, and the number of casualties went from seven to eight. Thirty-four people were added to the list of people who have recovered from the virus. Over the last two weeks of April, the daily average was between 7 and 10 new cases.

Another important statistic comes from the fact that the number of health sector employees who have contracted COVID-19 only increased by one during the week, going from 40 to 41. Those numbers include 17 employees of the regional Integrated Health and Social Services Centre. The increase of one is in fact attributable to a case from that organization.

The week was also marked by an attempt made by the mayor of Pointe-à-la-Croix to solve the Campbellton checkpoint problem. Mayor Pascal Bujold spoke with the New Brunswick government on the morning of May 7 and asked them if more coherence could be shown by the agents controlling the checkpoint located near the J.C. Van Horne Bridge.

The norms applied permitting Gaspésians entry in to New Brunswick to buy essential goods varies a lot, according to Mayor Bujold. Premier Higgs has stated repeatedly that Quebecers must have ac-

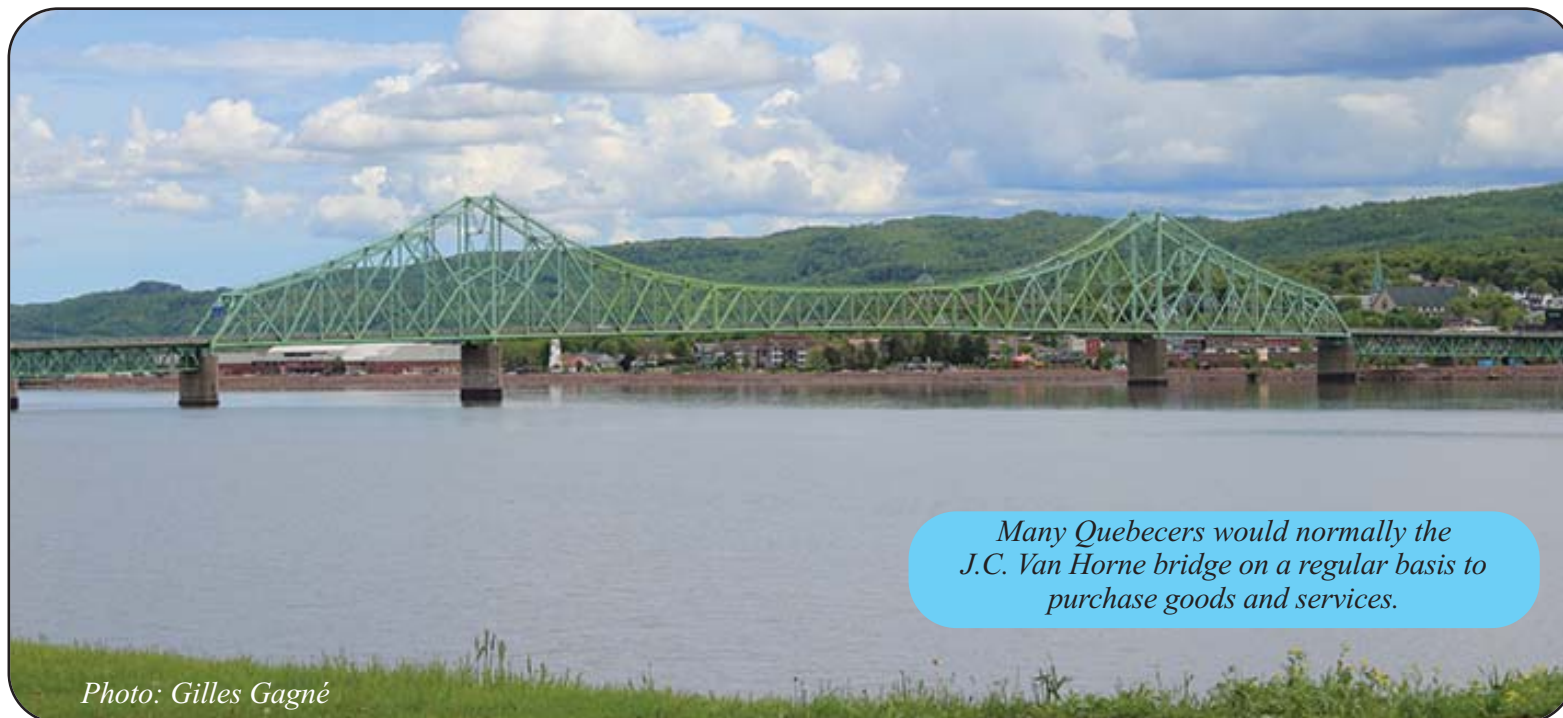


Photo: Gilles Gagné

Many Quebecers would normally the J.C. Van Horne bridge on a regular basis to purchase goods and services.

cess to those essential goods. The New Brunswick decree pertaining to that access is not always respected by those in charge of the checkpoint, namely the RCMP officers and game wardens.

As the SPEC was reaching its May 8 deadline, Mayor Bujold was still waiting on documentation from the New Brunswick government but he was confident he had passed on the message clearly.

“We are too dependent on the goods we buy in Campbellton, but this is our history and it is not the time to address the issue in the middle of a crisis,” he says.

The week was also characterized by Sobeys Quebec’s decision to lengthen, by 14 days without pay, the quarantine imposed to eight Paspebiac IGA supermarket workers who had contracted COVID-19 following the April 17 outbreak. That decision was very much criticized by the CSN union.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Shores School Board released a chart on May 8 presenting the number of students registered for the May 11 elementary level school resumption. Course resumption was called by Quebec’s Ministry of Education, although the parents are not obligated to send their children back to school.

Marjorie McRae, communi-

cations officer for the Eastern Shores School Board, specified that the overall rate of students going back to school is close to 30%.

“Some schools do not have any registrations for the first week because the parents can register for the following week after the schools open,” explains Ms. McRae.

Hugh Wood, director general of the school board added that “these numbers may grow, or decline, over the coming weeks. All elementary schools will open with the exception of two schools on the North Shore, Flemming Elementary and Fermont Elementary, who are missing critical components of their emergency kits.

Although materials have been sent to them, they have yet to receive them. That said, we made the call today to postpone their opening to May 13, hopefully allowing time for their PPEs to arrive.”

PPE means “personal protective equipment” and it consists of masks, gloves, shields and sand gowns.

Enrollment chart for Eastern Shores School Board schools

School	Total enrolment	Total Students attending on May 11/13	%
Shigawake Port Daniel School	81	1	1.2%
Ferment School	20	13	65%
New Richmond High School	43	0	0.0%
Escuminac	32	9	28.1%
Flemming	180	75	41.7%
Metis Beach School	54	29	53.7%
Baie-Comeau High School	32	24	75%
New Carlisle High School	66	0	0%
Belle Anse School	36	0	0%
Grosse Ile School	18	0	0%
Riverview	34	23	67.6%
St. Pat’s	38	15	39.5%
Gaspé	122	41	33.6%

Approximately 29% of ESSB elementary students are enrolled to attend school.



**In order to
gradually restart
activities safely,
let's continue
to protect ourselves.**

The gradual restarting of activities in various economic sectors and businesses is a shared responsibility. Everyone has a role to play to keep things orderly and safe.

[Québec.ca/recovery](https://quebec.ca/recovery)

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Police report

Following an April 14 court appearance, Quebec Court Judge Jean Bécu sentenced Allan Watt (44) and Martina Diaz, both from Kitchener, Ontario to a nine-month prison sentence for the abduction of their own children. Both of the accused had entered a plea of guilty.

Allan Watt and Martina Diaz were arrested by a Sûreté du Québec SWAT team on February 29 in a trailer located in the seventh range of L'Alverne, a community situated in the back country of Pointe-à-la-Croix. At that time, they had failed to respect a January 30 order issued by an Ontario court. That court order was the result of a complaint made by the Family and Children Services of the Waterloo Region.

Martina Diaz has a history of problems with that organization regarding her children: a girl (A.W.) born in February 2018 and a boy, (E.W.) born in May 2019. They were respectively two-years-old and nine-months-old when Allan Watt and Christian Diaz were arrested on the Gaspé Peninsula.

The little girl was supposed to live with her father, who is not Allan Watt. The infant was placed with another family immediately after his birth, which took place in Christina Diaz' home. The baby had never seen a doctor when the couple was arrested.

Martina Diaz served the first month of her sentence in a Quebec City prison and is anticipated to remain there for the rest of the term. The month-and-a-half that elapsed between her arrest and the judgement have been taken into account. She will also have to respect a 12-month probation.

Allan Watt's case is more complicated since a warrant against him was issued by an Ontario police force, notably for having fled a police intervention on January 20 in Caledon, near Kitchener. He was not supposed to drive at that time because of a previous court judgement. He was also charged since 2018 with domestic violence pertaining to a previous relationship, a case that is still not settled.

After engaging in a highspeed pursuit on January 20, the police officers ceased the chase because of the threat it presented for the children and other drivers. The Family and Children Services of Waterloo and the police forces lost track of the Watt-Diaz couple for a while.

While still in Kitchener, Allan Watt and Christina Diaz had consulted in November 2019 the Kijiji online trading site and they had seen a trailer for sale in L'Alverne. They contacted the owner, Normand Daunais, a resident of Victoriaville who was using the trailer and the wooden extension as a hunting camp.

The couple and Mr. Daunais agreed on a price of \$85,000 and even signed a promise of purchase. The trailer is not hooked up to Hydro-Québec and has no running water. At one point in February, the couple reached the camp and asked the owner if they could bring some personal belongings. He agreed but told them that the road is not cleared in the winter. The couple asked a neighbour to do so and they settled there. The trailer is not insulated.

The situation between Christina Diaz and Normand Daunais deteriorated after a few days. The transaction was still not signed and she began threatening him. After doing a bit of research on Christina Diaz' facebook page, and seeing her comments on the Family and Children Services, Mr. Daunais contacted that service on February 28.

The Sûreté du Québec called in assistance in order to retrieve the children. A major intervention took place on the night of February 29. The children were in bad condition and were transferred to Maria Hospital where they were kept for several weeks before being sent back to the Family and Children Services of Waterloo. Both had important developmental problems and were suffering from muscle hypotonia (lack of tone), dehydration and malnutrition. SWAT police officers also found more than \$100,000 in cash in the couple's personal belongings.

The Sûreté du Québec has released the identity of the body found on April 29 along the shores of the Restigouche River in Pointe-à-la-Croix. It was the body of Maxime Landry, who was reported missing in Carleton on October 10, 2019. He was originally from the Pointe-à-la-Croix area. He had last been seen walking near Alexander Street in that village that day. The body did not have any signs of violence and nothing leads the investigators to believe that foul play was involved.

A 23-year-old man from Port Daniel-Gascons was arrested on April 30 and will be summoned to appear in court in August to face charges of dangerous driving. He had put photos of himself online, speeding at more than 200 kilometres per hour on Highway 132 in Port Daniel-Gascons. He was released after being questioned by the police. His vehicle was seized and he will have to respect a set of conditions before his court appearance, including a ban on driving a motor vehicle and a ban on the use of social media.

Psychiatrist Mélanie Lessard suspended for a month

Gilles Gagné

MARIA – The discipline committee of the *Collège des médecins* imposed a temporary suspension of one-month to psychiatrist Mélanie Lessard because of statements she made to a lawyer working for the *Régie de l'assurance-maladie du Québec (RAMQ)*. Dr. Lessard practices her specialty mainly in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts,


Those “unworthy, inappropriate, inconvenient and derogatory, even threatening words,” as mentioned in the 29-page decision, were uttered following a *Régie de l'assurance-maladie* decision to claim \$627,000 of overbilling on the part of Mélanie Lessard. That overbilling was carried out over a period of five years.

At the time, she was mainly based in Drummondville but the decision document also points out that she practices in Maria and Gaspé as well. Sainte-Anne-des-Monts has been her main location since the summer of 2019.

Specializing in pediatrics psychiatry, Mélanie Lessard expressed her inappropriate and derogatory statements between January 30 and February 11, 2019, through two emails and two messages left on an answering machine. She has never acknowledged her guilt. The discipline committee found her guilty on November 22, 2019. The representations on the sanction were held on February 3 and the decision was rendered on March 20.

The psychiatrist offered an apology to the RAMQ lawyer in May 2019, more than two full months after the derogatory statements. That delay played a role in the temporary suspension, mentions the decision document. On February 3, Mélanie Lessard's attorney asked the discipline committee to limit the sanction to a verbal reprimand, based mostly on her letter of apology. That request was rejected.

The temporary suspension will not be effective until Mélanie Lessard has exhausted any means of contesting the decision, which is an appeal, if she takes that option. The COVID-19 crisis could also delay the application of the temporary suspension.





Commentary

Gilles Gagné

An experiment

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have often heard that we are building an aircraft that is already flying, the expression used to explain that nobody has experienced the kind of situation triggered by the coronavirus, as far as severity and acuteness are concerned.

In Canada alone, millions of people are now unemployed, while at the beginning of March, one of the country's main concerns was the shortage of manpower. In Quebec, as of May 8, a few more than 2,700 people have died of the COVID-19 infection, about 90% of them over 70 years of age, and the total number of infected people was a bit more than 36,000 citizens.

The famous coronavirus curve was flat, which was the initial goal of the Public Health Board National Director, Dr. Horacio Arruda, however, that flatness, the plateau, was stuck at rather high numbers, as the daily number of confirmed new cases was still about 900 on the average, and the number of casualties was close to 100, also on a daily basis.

The so-called downward trend was still expected to appear in sight, but it was late in coming. The situation in some private and public seniors' residences was still worsening after the first week of May, just like the overall situation, no matter the age, in the Montréal-Nord suburb.

The general COVID-19 situation in Quebec was the worst in Canada, worse than in Ontario but better than in the United States and Europe's main countries but it was still a major cause of concern, barring the eight Quebec regions that

were "closed" at the end of March.

In that context, what urged the Quebec government to deconfine certain aspects of Montreal and its immediate suburbs' life, like schools and a rather high number of industrial facilities and stores, given that the risk factor is still high? On May 7, Premier François Legault postponed the May 18 deconfinement until the ensuing week, but he maintained the possibility of further delays.

Premier Legault had been cautious enough to warn Quebecers, upon the first deconfinement announcement, that the situation could be modified at any moment, considering the unknown nature of the coronavirus and its effects on humans, which are still being discovered, it seems.

So, the government did the right thing by postponing the Montreal and surrounding areas deconfinement and by repeating that another delay is not out of the question. The additional attention given by the two levels of government to the people experiencing, or on the verge of experiencing mental health problems, was also a sound move, however, one must wonder why the government has not decided to first decompartmentalize the eight regions between themselves, and check how it would go, before allowing the Montreal area to travel freely elsewhere in Quebec.

It would have added a step in the overall deconfinement process but what is an additional week or two, when you already have been confined for two months?

Allowing a relatively high number of Montrealers to reach the Quebec regions in a short amount of time will only increase tensions between the urban and the rural worlds. There are enough daily tensions coming from dealing with the coronavirus; it is not necessary to create new ones. The two realities will increasingly need each other in a not too distant future, for tourist, food and industrial purposes, as it will be important to augment the autonomy of smaller territories in strategic fields.

Again, it is easy to play the peanut gallery analyst and blame the Quebec government for

jumping the gun on the lifting of some confinement rules.

A look at what happened in Ontario might be of some help here. Premier Doug Ford has certainly been more driven by the economy than by public health since accessing power, yet he decided to remain cautious about a gradual deconfinement. The schools will remain closed until September and the resumption of economic activities will be considerably slower than in Quebec, despite its budgetary cost. We must keep in mind that Ontario's overall debt is bad, compared to the Quebec situation.

Were François Legault and his cabinet blinded by the extremely high popularity rates reached during the first days of the pandemic, around mid-March, when Quebec was dealing with a handful of infection cases and no casualty?

At one point around March 20, François Legault's popularity as a premier reached 94%, a modern era record. His government is still receiving about 87% support as of May 8, but chances are that it will decrease again soon. During the same period, Justin Trudeau's popular support in Quebec has risen from 44 to 67%.

It is pretty sure that François Legault would gladly go back to mid-March. He would certainly adjust many things, even if his government's performance since the beginning of the pandemic is relatively good.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Spec readers,

First of all, I'd like to thank our local newspaper for the current, accurate updates on the coronavirus pandemic in our region.

On another note, the article written by Kathy Hayes was a wonderful addition to the newspaper. It was informative. Hope to see more of her articles.

Anne MacWhirter,
Hope, Quebec

I am thoroughly enjoying the articles by your writer Emma Buckley.

As an Australian who has never been to Canada, I am impressed that Emma can speak so enthusiastically about living there, coming as she does from a subtropical climate on the other side of the world. Her essays sparkle with enthusiasm about every aspect of her life there.

Her latest offering on self-sufficiency is thoughtful, and timely in these days of world uncertainty.

I hope she keeps up spreading the good word about Canada,

Barbara Trehy,
Armidale NSW, Australia

The Gaspé Spec

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208-B Gérard D. Levesque
New Carlisle, Que.
G0C 1Z0

Tel: 418-752-5400

specs@globetrotter.net
thegaspéspec.com

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Gilles Gagné



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IN BUSINESS FOR 35 YEARS



Guest Commentary Emma Buckley

Everyone has a story to tell

95-year old Quebec author Janette Bertrand recently made an appeal to seniors in Quebec to write down stories about their lives during the COVID-19 confinement. As part of her project, *Écrire sa vie*, Madame Bertrand posts short videos online to guide would-be memorialists through the writing process, and she has a quick response for those who would use excuses such as poor writing skills or lack of tech know-how: get your grandchildren to help out!

At first glance, this looks like just another interesting project to pass time during confinement but it is much more important than that. It encourages grandparents to transmit their stories and knowledge to their children and grandchildren, as humans have done since time began. These stories teach us about who we are and where we've come from. They bond families together (even if they can elicit moans of "not again!" as Uncle Bill launches into the same tale for what seems like the hundredth time). Learning about our parents' and grandparents' lives helps us to understand them -

and ourselves - more deeply. For the teller, talking about certain difficult periods in their life – only if they are ready to do so – can be therapeutic.

Madame Bertrand is also sending a strong message on behalf of her fellow seniors, the most vulnerable demographic facing COVID-19: our lives are (still) valuable, and our stories are worth telling.

It is the stories we tell within our families about parents and grandparents who have passed away that help keep them alive in our hearts. My grandmothers' lives were, like everyone's, both ordinary and extraordinary. Granny Buckley, feisty and forthright, was one of 12 children born to dairy farmers. Granny joined the convent after she finished day school, in part to further her education. She left before taking her vows because her superiors told her that she might struggle with the vow of obedience, but her faith remained a constant throughout her life. Granny's Irish heritage shone. She loved a good laugh, a song round the piano, and a tippie.

If Granny Buckley was the life of the party, my mum's mum, Grandma, was sitting quietly in the corner, smiling. Grandma was good-natured and calm. She was always up early when we visited them in the holidays, greeting me in her kitchen with a hug and a glass of orange juice she'd squeezed herself. She grew veggies and fruit trees and broke apples in half with her bare hands, a feat we kids tried – and always failed – to replicate.

Grandma and Grandpa were a part of the huge wave of European migration to Australia in the 50s. They left their beloved mountains in Austria with their little daughter (my mum), a couple of suit-

cases, and no knowledge of English. Such a move at that time was seismic. Communication was by letter only or, in the case of bad news, a telegram. Grandma made just one trip back to Austria, 14 years after migrating. It was the only time she saw her own parents again. Like thousands of other migrants, my grandparents worked long hours at factory jobs and saved up to buy their own home. Hard-earned holidays were spent at the coast in their vintage orange VW camper van, fitted out with loving care by my grandpa.

Now, having moved myself to the other side of the world, I think often of my grandma. I am seized by a desire to speak with her, and ask questions I never asked before. How did she deal with the strangeness and the loneliness in her new country? Grandma didn't talk so much about herself, or her opinions. This may have been due to her character; she always put others first, and perhaps language; like so many first generation migrants, my grandparents never really mastered their adopted language. I am lucky to have my mum to fill in some of the details, but I wish I had more of my Grandma's stories and, through them, a more profound sense of her.

So, like Madame Bertrand, I encourage our elderly readers to write - or at least speak more - about their life experiences. You choose which stories you share, and whether they are light and humorous or deeply affecting. Everyone's voice is unique, and everyone's story deserves to be told. One day your grandchildren may be very glad that you did so.

Much to be grateful for

Spring's here. Birdsong at dawn. Early morning light. The River has gone out, the ice fled from the Bay, the beach scoured clean. The snowbanks shrink daily, creating deep wells around the bases of trees, and revealing the long-buried woodpile, the flowerbed, and a wooden bench. Snowmelt reveals green growth—the tulips and daffodils I planted last fall. On the east side of the house, the first blades of green grass appear. Brooks are revealed again, brown and gurgling, while above them, pussy willows are opening their tender buds. I'm sitting on my porch steps, and the heady scent of warm earth wafts up, feeling like a benediction. There's more. Crows made their nests weeks ago. Gulls wheel and cry overhead in the blue. Robins, Goldfinches, Sparrows and countless birds are returning from their winter travels. The raccoon has woken from hibernation. Red squirrels chase one another down one tree and up another, and on it goes...

Transformation. Change. It's happening all the time, but in spring, it's more visible. We, too, we're not exempt. The body responds to the seasons—

an influx of hormonal chemicals to wake us up and make us glad to be alive.

Nature is a marvel. But have you looked out there lately, I mean, really looked, to see how things are faring? For everyone, it was a long winter, a winter of deep snow. Many creatures were hibernating (bears, bats, skunks, chipmunks, snakes, frogs, bumblebees)—the lucky ones. (The unluckiest of all are probably the animals that aren't native to this cold land, but that we brought here, such as deer and cats.)

All those that weren't hibernating had to endure the cold and scrounge for something to fill their empty bellies. They had to keep alert and run from predators or chase down something to eat. And all while they got old and injured and sick, while they suffered all the miseries a body is prey to, but with no help coming—no medicine or doctors or hospitals, no fridge full of food, no warm house to shelter in, no extra coats to keep warm.

It was once like this for us, too; and many still live at a basic survival level. Add to that the current crisis. Imagine people who are living in areas of high population coupled with poverty. Try social distancing while sharing a single room with eighteen other people, or escaping infection without running water with which to wash your hands. Dire

situations abound—high population levels, poverty, wars, natural disasters—all while the pandemic rages.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a scary time, but it's not new—there were AIDS, Ebola, and Zika. Before that, polio and tuberculosis. The 1918 Spanish flu lasted two years and took between fifty and a hundred million lives. Between 1347-1351, the plague called the Black Death took seventy-five to two hundred million lives in Eurasia. Diseases, epidemics, even pandemics, come and go. This time'll be no different.

Right now, life is more difficult for everyone. Yet even in the throes of this pandemic, life isn't fair in its distribution of misery. If you and your loved ones are well, you're very fortunate. While some people have financial worries, most of us have our basic needs met and more. Our abundance (food, clothing, medicine, household goods, etc.), is the product of many, many hands that help. Countless others support us. Some of us give back, how and when we're able, but most of us simply wait for this to be over. Let's appreciate our good luck, and if we're able, share, help those less fortunate. Even now, maybe especially now, most of us are simply blessed.

Constance Brochet



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Photo: N. Sergerie

Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure, Sylvain Roy.

Sylvain Roy thinks buying local is the key

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - As Quebec enters its phase of deconfinement and economic recovery, the Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure says it will be important to prioritize buying local.

Sylvain Roy is encouraging the population to join in, but also wants merchants to be reasonable.

"We are asking for solidarity from the population towards businesses, but businesses must not abuse the system and raise prices because there is talk of buying local in the market that is developing. It must be a two-way solidarity," says Mr. Roy.

Since the economy is oriented towards the fisheries and tourism sector, Mr. Roy hopes that these sectors will be supported if they do not qualify for employment insurance.

"We will have to make sure that we support the incomes of all those who will not be able to qualify for employment insurance this summer."

Aid to organizations is doubled

Mr. Roy saw his budget to support community organizations double as part of the government of Quebec's response to the pandemic. The budget increased from \$82,000 to \$164,000, which he will use to help support organizations that directly help citizens. "If we start paying salaries, it will be useless to have this kind of help. Direct assistance to the population to help people get through the hard times that I think will come this fall," states Mr. Roy.

For this reason, Sylvain Roy will only spend about \$30,000 this spring and keep the rest of the money for when the emergency aid currently in place is finished. He will favour organizations that have not received an additional boost from the government in the crisis. "We have to be careful not to overfund some places at the expense of others and then run out of money." The elected representative made sure to have the collaboration of a central organization in the Bay of Chaleur so that everyone would receive a fair share of assistance.



Right whales.

Photo: DFO

First right whale sightings trigger closure of nine fishing grids

Gilles Gagné

The Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans closed nine grids to commercial fisheries on May 8, two right whales were spotted five days earlier in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, near the midway point between the south shore of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. The two right whales were spotted by an aerial surveillance crew patrolling the area specifically to check if whales had reached the Gulf of Saint Lawrence yet.

The nine grids represent a surface of approximately 2,000 square kilometres, so

about 40 kilometres (north to south) by 50 kilometres (east to west). They were closed officially at 5 p.m. on May 8.

The commercial fishermen were informed of the closures four days before they were put into effect.

The two whales spotted on May 3 were mature specimens and were relatively close to one another.

At this time of the year, the closure affected essentially some snow crab, Greenland halibut and red plaice fishermen. Considering that the sightings happened only once, the closure will span over two weeks. Repetitive sighting in the same grids

could spell the end of the season, as commercial fishing would be forbidden until November 15. Other types of fisheries would then be affected.

The sighting of only one right whale leads to the closure of a certain number of grids for 15 days. The number of rectangles depends on the position of the whale inside those pre-determined surfaces. It is around five per sighting, on the average.

There are about 400 right whales left in North American waters, the only place in the world where they live. They are all located on the Atlantic side.

Tourism: Percé wants reassurance

Nelson Sergerie

PERCÉ - The mayor of Percé wants reassurance for numerous concerns related to the next tourist season.

In her statement to the municipal council on May 5, Cathy Poirier says she is working with government authorities to get the answers to her questions.

"Will the tourist season be authorized? Will there be compensation for businesses? There are a lot of costs incurred to start the season. Will the season be profitable? We are working hard to get the answers," she states.

Over a hundred emails were sent to tourism operators to survey their views on the coming summer tourist season in order to document the steps taken with the government.

In addition, reconstruction work on the Percé wharf resumed on May 4. Damage was noted due to the six-week work stoppage. Six weeks will be added to the anticipated date of completion.



Dr. Pascal Cyr
Optometrist



Dr. Stacey Starrak
Optometrist

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Contact Environment and SOS Bats: The Good, the COVID-19 and the Hopeful

Jeanie LeLacheur

The good news is SOS Bats, the collaborative initiative of the Micmac Nation of Gespeg and Contact Environment is beginning its 2020 activities despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Adjustments have been made allowing the organization to reach project objectives of data collection, the creation of awareness activities while respecting confinement and social distancing rules.

As North American bats once again find themselves in the line of fire as a scapegoat for the COVID-19 virus, Contact Environment and SOS Bats turn to Bat Conservation International's (BCI) recently published FAQ on bats and COVID-19 to help address some of the important questions and concerns arising from the situation.

"Scientists are still investigating the origins of how the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic got into the human population. Regardless of the viral origins, COVID-19 is now a human disease and the risk of getting sick is from another person, not from wildlife. You cannot catch COVID-19 from a bat." (BCI)

The FAQ is available at the BCI website or feel free to call the SOS Bats toll-free number 1 833 877 2287 for more information. <http://www.batcon.org/resources/media-education/news-room/gen-news/80-latest-news/1227-bci-s-faq-on-bats-and-covid-19>

The number of bats now dead in North America since the appearance of White-nose syndrome in 2006 is up to 7 million and by now the region is well aware that it has three bat species with an emergency listing through SARA (Species at Risk Act), and that the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) and the Northern myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*) all face eminent extinction without fast and efficient intervention.

White-nose syndrome was confirmed on the Gaspé by Contact Environment in 2016 making data collection and awareness campaigns for this area critical to both the federal and provincial recovery strategies.

Over the past three years partnerships have been forged



Little brown bat in comparison to the size of a quarter.

Photo: J. LeLacheur

with organizations including UNESCO's Geoparc in Percé and the Grotte de Saint Elzear. Both sites continue to support the installation of acoustic bat monitoring equipment at their respective sites and provide information to clients about the serious decline of species at risk, bats and the important role they play in a healthy ecosystem.

Francois Fabianek of the *Groupe Chiropteres du Quebec* is also an important player in the quest to assist the struggling bat species by providing technical support, data analysis and sharing a wealth of experience to the project.

He recently partnered with Contact Environment and SOS Bats to begin a project funded by the MFFP and PAAC. In what is now its second year, it has roost loggers and temperature sensors installed at the mouth of a previously confirmed bat hibernaculum (winter quarters) in this case, caves, in an effort to validate entry and exit of hibernating bats thereby evaluating hibernation time.

This phonological study will reveal over time if this important aspect of bat ecology is impacted by climate change.

SOS Bats continues to

monitor a local maternity roost (the places where reproductive females go to give birth to their young) and although it continues to show a slight decline it is still active which is promising. The re-

cent heightened interest in climate change and discussion of a more sustainable region and a possible action plan seems to offer a beacon of hope for the many species at risk of the region. The new Pan-Canadian approach to transforming species at risk by shifting from an individual species focus to a multiple species and ecosystem approach may also prove useful in the plan for combined resources and the move towards positive change. Although Quebec has its own act on threatened and vulnerable species, it will continue to collaborate with the federal government through the Canada Quebec Agreement.

The Gaspé Literacy Council now partners to develop environmental literacy in the region, has hosted SOS Bats

in a Family Fun Day. A bat box sponsored by the GLC will be installed and registered as the first in a Build a Bat Box community activity which is in development.

Renewed efforts are underway to illicit help from the local community in collecting information about bats, asking individuals to be on the lookout and report sightings through the toll free 1-833-877-2287, and for more information about bats in general and the on-going activities visit social media pages of SOS Bats and/or Contact Environment or visit <https://contactenvironnement.ca/>

The organizations involved appreciate the continued support of the population of the Gaspé.



At Bat Conservation International, we are committed to providing and acting on accurate information to protect people and bats. Reports that bats naturally host coronaviruses closely related to the virus causing the COVID-19 pandemic are resulting in misguided fear and, in extreme cases, unwarranted and regrettable persecution of bats. This is detrimental to both bats and humans. We present the following information to address frequently asked questions.

What caused the COVID-19 pandemic?

Scientists are still investigating the origins of how the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic got into the human population. Regardless of the viral origins, COVID-19 is now a human disease and the risk of getting sick is from another person, not from wildlife. **You cannot catch COVID-19 from a bat.**

Will persecuting bats stop the spread of disease or help save human lives?

No! Killing, harming, or harassing bats will not end the COVID-19 pandemic, nor will it protect people from infection. Because bats are not carriers of COVID-19 and play no role in disease spread, indiscriminate killing of bats will not save human lives and does nothing to help protect or improve human health.

What do we know about bats and coronavirus?

Bats are natural hosts to coronaviruses, including some that are closely related to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Other wildlife can also be hosts to coronaviruses. Bats with coronaviruses in the wild are not a threat to human health if protected and left undisturbed. Bats and other wildlife do not spread the disease among humans—only humans spread COVID-19 to other humans.

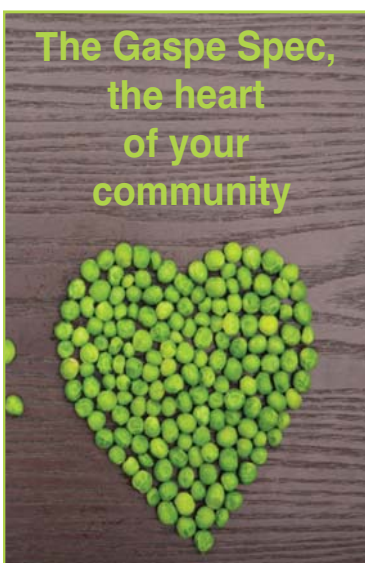
Why should we protect bats?

Bats provide vital ecosystem services such as pest control, pollination, and seed dispersal. Bats are important for global biodiversity and ecosystem health, and many bat species have adapted to living safely alongside us in both urban and rural environments, in our gardens, parks and even roosting around our homes, as beneficial neighbors.

What can we do to help?

Please help by halting the spread of misinformation around COVID-19 and bats. At Bat Conservation International, we work closely with a global network of experts to ensure we provide accurate information as it becomes available. Please check our website for further updates or follow us on social media.

Conserving the world's bats and their ecosystems to ensure a healthy planet



Don't forget your children's mental health!

If your children are worried about the pandemic, the following advice can help you to better support them during the coronavirus COVID-19 events in Québec.

The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the unprecedented preventive measures that have been implemented are a new reality, one that can be especially difficult to deal with. Just like you, your young children and teenagers may worry about what is happening.

Whatever your children's age, they need to be reassured and know that they can count on you and feel that you will protect them.



Listen to them

Allow your children to express their feelings in their own words or through play (dolls, drawings, etc.). Listen to their concerns and their need for reassurance. Respond to their fears with kindness and give them a lot of love and attention.



Speak to them frankly when explaining things

Use simple words that are age-appropriate. Explain that very easy-to-use hygienic measures are there to protect them, including regularly washing their hands, coughing into the crook of their elbow, etc. Show them how they work.

Keep a positive outlook and tell them that doctors and scientists are hard at work on solutions that include medicine and a vaccine. Respond to their questions and always tell them up front when you don't know the answer for now.

Avoid moralizing with your teenager. Ensure that the situation is well understood by your teens and correct any wrong information that they express. Do not minimize the situation and encourage them to call a telephone support hotline if they feel the need.



Keep to your family routine

A family routine and a stable environment are the best ways to maintain your children's sense of security. Ensure that the daily schedule includes wake-up, bedtime, eating, games and structured activities and leaves time for relaxation. Make a healthy lifestyle your priority: Eat right, drink a lot of water, stay active, and try to relax and sleep enough.



Make room for playtime and relaxation

It is so important for your children to find comfort by playing and doing activities they enjoy.

Short of solutions?

Physical activity: Dance, obstacle races, skipping rope, games of skill, stationary cycling, yoga, playing in the back yard, aerobics, bodybuilding, etc.

Creative pastimes: Drawing, crafts, painting, writing, singing, origami, plasticine, knitting, photography, etc.

Games: Board games, blocks, role-play, memory games, hide-and-seek, cards, and dress-up, jigsaw puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku, hidden word, etc.

Entertainment: Listen to music, watch movies and shows, podcasts, TV series, etc.

Relaxation: Read a book or a fairy tale, magazine or comic book; meditate, do relaxation exercises, etc.

Educational activities: Do homework, browse an educational website like ecoleouverte.ca, learn a new language, visit virtual museums, etc.

Other: Cook, help out with the housework, sort photos, etc.



Signs of stress in a younger child

- ✓ Trouble sleeping
- ✓ Displays concern, wants to be held, asks questions
- ✓ Complains of physical pain like tummy ache
- ✓ Behaviour is agitated and challenges you
- ✓ No longer wants to play and doesn't enjoy favourite activities anymore
- ✓ Displays regressive behaviour such as bedwetting



Signs of stress in a teenager

- ✓ Worries about the health of friends and themselves
- ✓ Feels unaffected by the situation or minimizes the danger
- ✓ No longer interested in favourite activities
- ✓ Trouble sleeping, appetite changes (eats too much or not enough)
- ✓ Wants to drink alcohol or take drugs
- ✓ Is aggressive, irritable and refuses to obey public health orders



Take care of yourself

Your children experience events through your eyes. Be attentive to their feelings, emotions and reactions. If you feel it necessary, take a few minutes off by yourself to calm down, in the bathroom, for example.



Maintain virtual social links

Allow the children to maintain their virtual links with friends and/or other family members, such as their grandparents. An active social network helps fight isolation. There are a variety of ways to communicate and even play without being physically present: telephone, chat rooms, video calls, social networks, email and the Web.



Stay informed

You need to stay well informed about what's going on to keep calm when interacting with your children. Always rely on trustworthy resources, like the Government of Québec website: Quebec.ca/coronavirus

Do not let your children loop television reports about the pandemic, and avoid alarmist conversations about the number of deaths, the deterioration of the situation, pessimistic scenarios, etc. with them.

When should I seek help?

If you see no improvement in your child's outlook despite all your efforts at reassuring and comforting or if you observe that the negativity is persistent or even grows in intensity, contact Info-Social at 811 (option 2).

You will receive more information and be directed to a psychosocial health professional that can provide support and advice that meet your needs.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons should dial 1 800 361-9596 (toll free).

Resources

Managing worry:

- inspq.qc.ca/en/tiny-tot
- ecolebranchee.com (French)
- carrefour-education.qc.ca (French)

Adopting healthy lifestyles:

- defisante.ca (French)
- force4.tv (French)

Managing family time:

- ecoleouverte.ca
- alloprouf.qc.ca (French)
- teteamodeler.com (French)
- viedeparents.ca (French)
- naitreetgrandir.com (French)
- vifamagazine.ca (French)

Telephone resources for people needing support or a friendly ear:

- Tel-Aide
This listening centre provides help 24/7 to people suffering from solitude, distress or who need to have someone listen:
Go to www.acetdq.org for contact information on your regional listening centre.
- Écoute Entraide
Community organization that supports people who are emotionally suffering: 514 278-2130 or 1 855 EN LIGNE (365-4463)
- Tel-Jeunes
24/7 hotline for youngsters in need of support: 1 800 263-2266
- LigneParents
24/7 hotline for parents in need of support: 1 800 361-5085

Telephone hotlines for people in psychological distress or contemplating suicide:

- Regroupement des services d'intervention de crise du Québec
24/7 services for distressed people (French): centredecrise.ca/listecentres
- Telephone assistance service
1 866 APPELLE (277-3553)

Quebec.ca/coronavirus

1 877 644-4545

Québec



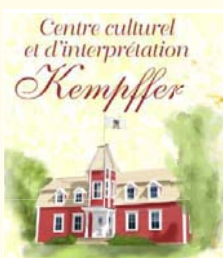
Increase in births on the Gaspé

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - In 2019, 709 babies were born in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands. The last time numbers were close to that was in 2014 when there were 715 births.

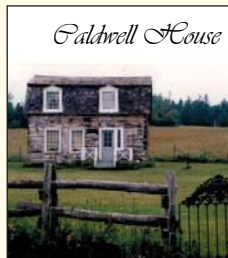
This growth follows a decline observed over the last two years, according to data from the *Institut de la statistique du Québec*.

This gain also translates into an increase in the fertility index. At 1.77 children per woman, the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands ranked sixth in Quebec. This is the best rate in a decade for the region, which contrasts with provincial data as there has been a steady decline in the past ten years. There were 84,200 children born in 2019 in Quebec.



Heritage New Carlisle

« Pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine »
"For the Preservation of Heritage"



The mission of the Heritage New Carlisle Committee is to promote the Cultural, Historical, and Physical aspects of New Carlisle's unique heritage! The past season has been a busy one during which time the Municipality had the opportunity to move the Caldwell House to Heritage New Carlisle land, giving us another historical building on the site. We thank them for their kindness in all the work they have been able to do for us.

We were delighted to have a visit from Laurence (Larry) Kempffer, the grandson of Langler and Julia Kempffer. He enjoyed many activities in the area and hopes to return again soon. Our doors have been open to several groups who have come to share our wonderful exhibits. Julia's Tea Corner was a great success with three sittings each time, and folks often enjoyed sitting on the gallery on a sunny Wednesday afternoon. Some were even on hand to witness the Caldwell House being moved.

The Traditional Skills Project (a grant from Canadian Heritage) was a huge success with people from many areas of the coast participating. This allowed the centre to be open all winter, and it was during this time the Board realized we need to take a close look at ways to insulate the walls of the Kempffer Centre and to change the windows. Meanwhile, we have been granted another project through Canadian Heritage, "Every Building Tells a Story," which is another arts and culture project. This project will run through the next two years.

Thanks to the Emergency Measures Fund (\$1,000) offered to us through the Caisse Populaire du Centre-Sud gaspésien, and to volunteers from the SarGIM Pepinière, kindness of Mr. Freddy Boudreau, we were able to have the roof of the Caldwell House covered, windows covered, and protected for the winter. We have applied for help to replace the windows in the Caldwell house, re-seal the log structure, and cover in the bottom. Thanks to the MRC of Bonaventure, we have 75% of the financing for a feasibility study and action plan over the next five years which will look at the needs for increasing awareness of our mission, as well as improving accessibility and mobility for visitors. As you will understand, these improvements will require additional funding during unusual circumstances. Some activities will have to be done while respecting the government guidelines.

Anyone interested in maintaining two historical buildings we can all be proud of - we need your support. We are authorized to issue tax receipts for donations of money, services, and/or goods.

We thank those who have come forward so far and have expressed interest in these projects. It is very encouraging to the board of directors....Again we truly thank you! We must stay strong and work together to achieve our goals...

124 Gérard D. Levesque Blvd, P.O. Box 444, New Carlisle (Quebec) G0C 1Z0
Telephone : 418 752-1334 Fax: 418 752-1335 Email: heritagenc@globetrotter.net

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



Birds and Buds

Spring is coming! Have hope that the renewal of nature will take place soon. When it does, it will help to make us feel better about the future. We need that right now. Watch for these signs.

Birds and buds: Watch out for fat little robins hopping in the yard. Listen to the birdsongs at first light. They are singing their songs of hope. Watch for tiny birds taking their first flight, accompanied by their parent, launching from the newly bud-filled trees. Put birdseed in your feeders. Children can make a quick easy feeder by using a pinecone rolled in peanut butter and then in birdseed and put a string on the cone and tie to a tree. Voilà! An instant birdfeeder.



Then you can watch the birds come to feast upon the seeds and take pictures! Not much in the world is as cute as a hummingbird fluttering outside your window. You can buy a feeder which attaches to your window. Fill it with hummingbird nectar. To make the nectar, mix one-part sugar with four parts of water until all the sugar is dissolved. Do NOT add red dye, as some sources suggest. Not needed. Enjoy the tiny visitors!

Potholes: Nothing says spring like potholes that rattle your teeth and put your car out of alignment. Until the workers fill those holes, just try to avoid them while driving a little slower.

House and yard cleanup: What a wonderful feeling it is to deep clean your home and be ready to open all the windows to let in the fresh breezes of spring. This is the time of year to clean the baseboards and wash the walls. Get rid of any clutter and take a deep breath of satisfaction that everything is clean and in its place. Raking the yard and picking up branches gets you outside which will raise your spirits. It is also time to think about turning the soil in your garden and getting ready for a busy season of growing vegetables. This is a good example of "prepare today and tomorrow will take care of itself."

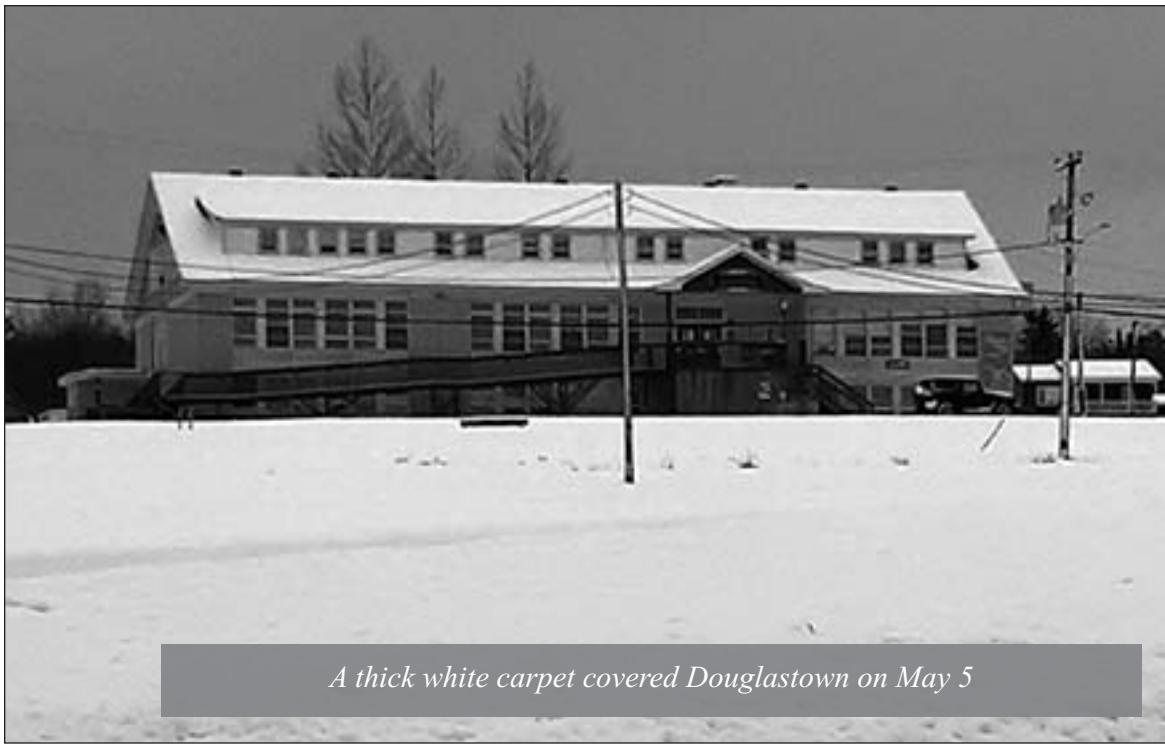
Water flowing: The sound of water flowing in streams and ditches is like sweet music. It means that all the ice and snow is gone and nature is providing the water necessary for animals and plants. Thank you, Mother Nature.

Laundry: Hanging out your laundry is a wonderful thing, and we have the Gaspesian breezes that help it to dry quickly. The smell of the sheets on your bed at night will give you the deepest, most relaxed sleep ever.

Flies: They're back! They appear in the windows and gather when the sun is warm. This is what they were waiting for. Sun and warmer days woke them from their sleep. Their life cycle begins in the spring when they lay their eggs in the soil. They will be with us all summer and fall.

Smell of the soil: The smell of the damp soil in spring is unmistakable. It smells stronger and more earthy. Breathe in the lovely smell, especially early in the morning.

Signs of springtime on the Gaspé are all about our five senses. Look for it, listen, smell, prepare to taste food from your garden and touch the earth. This is the right time to get back to nature. She is right here waiting for you.



A thick white carpet covered Douglastown on May 5

Photo: N. Sergerie

Lots of snow...

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - On May 5 Gaspésians awakened surprised when the Gaspé region received 17.4 centimetres of snow during the night. Despite this late snowfall, no record was broken as 19.1 centimetres had fallen in 1943. Observations indicate that about 30 centimetres had fallen in Murdochville and Parc de la Gaspésie. The normal for May is five centimetres!

The beginning of May looks more like the beginning of April. In its monthly review, Environment Canada notes that spring is slow to set in. The average temperature observed at Michel-Pouliot Airport was 0.4 degree Celsius while normal is 1.5 degrees, a difference of 1.1 degrees. Snowfall was 49 centimetres, 12 more than normal. However, by April 30, 437 centimetres of white gold had fallen on Gaspé, well above the normal of 372.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois speaks with Gaspesian politicians

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - The Bloc Québécois will bring fisheries and tourism issues to Ottawa.

The leader, Yves-François Blanchet, held a virtual meeting on May 1 with elected officials from the Bonaventure and Rocher-Percé MRCs. Mr. Blanchet says that tourism is crucial and is threatened, even though he believes that Quebecers have a deep affection for the region and that in the absence of an opportunity to travel outside the borders, they will remain in the province.

Mr. Blanchet wonders if the current programs are responsive to the realities, but above all what will happen in tourism, for example, once the measures are implemented. "To what extent are you capable of transferring programs to the next season, when you're a company in the tourism industry? It is not clear because they aren't built that way. Maybe we'll have to invent other things. I'm trying to think of some ideas," says Mr. Blanchet.

About fisheries, the Bloc leader fears that the Gaspé Peninsula will lose out. "The programs developed are for processors. We understand that the Maritimes will come



The leader of the Bloc Québécois, Yves-François Blanchet.

Photo: N. Sergerie

first and that there won't be much left for the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. There are major concerns," says Mr. Blanchet.

Gains for seniors and students

While workers and students have already received support, it would be normal in the eyes of the Bloc that seniors get their share. Discussions are being held with the government. "For us, it's simple: groceries, the cost of services and the social distancing needed by family members who lend a hand also affects seniors. We want a \$110 per month increase on old age pensions."

The Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Member of Parliament Diane Lebouthillier confirms that Ottawa continues to analyze assistance to seniors. "There are discussions about seniors. There should be announcements coming."

The Bloc Québécois has asked that the Canadian Emergency Benefit for Students be fine-tuned to allow them to earn \$1,000 in working income without penalty on the benefit. Mr. Blanchet is not worried about the more than \$250 billion dollar deficit because it will be spread over a long period of time. According to him the interest rates will remain low for 10 to 20 years.

CHANDLER: Municipal garage sparks another debate

Nelson Sergerie

CHANDLER - The saga of the municipal garage continues once again in Chandler.

After council rejected a project that was decreased to \$4.8 million last month, one of the two advisers who had spoken in favour of the selected project, Denis Pelchat, expressed his concerns on May 4, when the minutes of the meeting were adopted.

"What is being considered is a cost ceiling and not the many needs of the Town. This will generate costs in the future that will be 100% payable by the citizens and that's a concern," says the elected official, not without some annoyance among the councillors who voted against the bill.

Mr. Pelchat is also concerned about a possible lawsuit, but he did not want to discuss that issue in any depth. "We didn't even know where this project would end. We acted cautiously," replied one of the councillors, Gaétan Daraiche, who rejected the project.

Councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout was reassuring. "We have received preliminary sketches of the garage that we have planned for about 3 million dollars. It is a very nice garage that will respect the taxpayers' ability to pay.

On April 9, 2009, council rejected the submission of the only interested party by a 4-2 margin. LFG, which had reduced its bill from \$5.6 million to \$4.8 million, a portion of the work would have been done internally.

\$20,000 to defend the mayor.

Elected officials also paid \$19,536.60 in connection with the appearance of Mayor Louisette Langlois before the *Commission municipale du Québec* in June. The Executive Director, Roch Giroux, explained that it was a legal obligation because "the municipality must assume the defence of elected officials and pay any legal fees for that defence."

The Municipal Commission reproached Mayor Langlois for disclosing confidential information to citizens; having a conflict of interest in resolutions; and coaxing a citizen to ask for legal fees. The citations are in connection with complaints of psychological harassment of executives and administrators of the CNESST.

Some daycare centres will remain closed

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - At least 30 percent of family day care providers (RSGs) in Eastern Quebec affiliated with the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ) have no intention of opening their doors on May 11, causing a major headache for many parents.

"We have people who are vulnerable. We have people who are caregivers or who have chronic illnesses. They may be at risk if they get COVID-19," explains Cathy Côté, union spokesperson, who represents about 90 workers in Côte-de-Gaspé and Rocher-Percé area.

Her counterpart at the CSN, Kathleen Chassé, who represents about 100 RSGs in Bonaventure and Avignon, added that the concern was credible, especially since the regional cases of COVID-19 are concentrated in this area. "It's really worrisome to think that we're putting our families at risk to meet a need. You have to do it safely, and when you want to do it right, you have to take the time to do it."

According to Ms. Chassé, the pandemic is further weakening the network as some RSGs are questioning their future in order to protect their families, and others have already announced their retirement, which will only increase the problem of a lack of childcare spaces.

The CSQ is also criticizing the fact that those who do not open their doors are not paid.

Uncertainty in the tourism industry

Nelson **Sergerie**

GASPÉ - It's hard to predict what the tourist season will be like this summer. If there is a real season, it would only start in mid-July, depending on the different people interviewed by The Gaspé Spec.

The key element in a decision to open a tourist facility will be the extension of the federal wage subsidy after June 15. That's because some owners believe that the losses would be less significant if they remained closed instead of operating their businesses. "For sure, there may be fewer employees, fewer hours of operation, fewer services. Everything has to be redefined. One of the questions asked is: Am I going to have help to pay the employees?" states Percé

tourism manager, Marie Leblanc.

Several scenarios are on the table at Destination Gaspé, but its director, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, points out that there are too many unknowns. "The accommodation of clientele in terms of lodging, food, activities, the status of national parks also means that there are a lot of gray areas that make it difficult to come to a conclusion," says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

The Regional Director of Parc du mont Saint-Joseph, Vincent Landry, also has questions about the coming summer. "Deep down inside, I'm convinced that, yes, there will be a season. Will it be like any other season? I am convinced that it won't," says Mr. Landry. He pointed out that outdoor activities

could save some money, while the provincial indicators are good.

A government without an answer

Even though Tourism Minister Caroline Proulx promised in the media that there would be a tourist season, the government itself is not in a position to move forward with anything. The premier himself indicated on May 4 that he was unable to say when the basic elements will be allowed to open. "People who are in restaurants, hotels, culture, when it is time to reopen, we're going to try to help them financially. In the short term, we do not foresee not reopening."

The same response came from Regional Minister

Marie-Ève Proulx as political players and economic experts have expressed their expectations at recent meetings to get a handle on the situation about the pandemic.

"The people of the Gaspésie expect to have an answer but, right now, in the particular situation in which we live, there are some answers we can't give right now," she says.

Aware of the coming deadlines, the elected representative says that it is Public Health that will decide what happens next. For her part, the member for Gaspé would like there to be a tourist season. "With our natural spaces, we are lucky to have great tourist spots in the region to visit," says Méganne Perry Mélançon. We hope that it will resume when

we get there. when all the distancing measures have been worked out with the Department of Tourism. The elected representative points out that it is high time the Legault government made its intentions known.

Tourism Gaspésie consults

On April 29, Tourisme Gaspésie launched an extensive consultation to draw up a portrait of the current situation and to discuss the issues at stake in each sector of activity. These virtual meetings are being held until May 27. The organization remains confident that the Quebec government will soon unveil a calendar of events to be held in the near future, to specify the restoration of certain tourist activities.

Sobeys prolongs quarantine period of eight workers at the Paspébiac IGA without pay

Nelson **Sergerie**

PASPEBIAC - *The Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (CSN union), is criticizing a decision made by Sobeys Quebec regarding the lengthening by 14 days without pay the quarantine imposed to eight employees at the Paspébiac IGA grocery store who were infected by COVID-19 following the April 17 outbreak.

Those eight employees were quarantined the two weeks that followed April 17. That quarantine was imposed by the Public Health Board of the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, in collaboration with the owners, Nancy Arbour and Gilles Leblanc. The outbreak also affected employees of the New Richmond IGA.

By beginning of May, they had completed their quarantine but instead of resuming work, the eight employees were forced by the management of Sobeys, the firm which owns the IGA banner, to add 14 days to the already completed quarantine. They were also informed that they would not be paid.

CSN's spokesperson for this file, Rémi Bellemare-Caron, finds that Sobeys is showing a "rather cold" behaviour towards the eight Paspébiac IGA employees.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, the employees have worked hard, without

being able to take a break with their friends. They take risks, because of the possibility of being infected, in an essential service. They contracted the infection at work and to thank them, the company prolongs their quarantine, without pay," criticizes Mr. Bellemare-Caron.

Depending on their revenues and schedule at the Paspébiac supermarket, the eight employees received support from one of the two federal programs designed to help people dealing with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, employment insurance sick benefits if the quarantine lasted less than 14 days, or the Canada Emergency Response Benefit if it was longer.

"The Canada Emergency Response Benefit gives \$2,000 per month but those employees were supposed to go back to work. A clerk makes \$3,000 monthly. Sobeys' decision makes them lose \$1,000 on a per month basis," explains Rémi Bellemare-Caron.

The Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Public Health Board did not ask for a longer quarantine for the IGA employees, since they had already satisfied the conditions of 14 days without working and the absence of symptoms for a week.

"It is a company decision," points out Clémence Beaulieu-Gendron, communi-

cation officer at the Integrated Health and Social Services Centre and the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Public Health Board.

That organization considers someone "recovered" based on an assessment made by the treating doctor and the designated health care professional.

In the assessment, the following characteristics are taken into account before lifting isolation measures; the absence of acute symptoms for 24 hours, excluding a residual cough, the absence of fever for 48 hours and a span of 14 days since the beginning of acute sickness or of the isolation period.

The spokesperson for Sobeys Québec, Anne-Hélène Lavoie, took almost a full day before returning The Gaspé SPEC's call.

She says that the food giant maintains its decision to lengthen without pay the quarantine period of the eight Paspébiac employees.

"We have a very rigorous protocol. The goal is to offer a safe environment for our workers and our customers. We require the quarantine to be prolonged for 14 days after the disappearance of the last symptoms," notes Ms. Lavoie. SPEC repeatedly asked Ms. Lavoie why Sobeys would not pay the salary of the eight employees, given that the company norms exceed the Public Health Board's requirements,

given the excellent sales made by the supermarkets since the start of the pandemic and given the hard work shown by the employees during that stretch despite the risks they must face on a daily basis.

"We ask our employees to ask for the CERB (Canada Emergency Response Benefit)," she repeatedly answered without adding anything.

The management of the IGA stores of Paspébiac and New Richmond made an unsuccessful attempt to reopen

on April 19 but the rising number of infected employees forced a second closure, after the April 17 one, however, the stores remained open for online and telephone orders.

The SPEC also tried to reach co-owner of the IGA (Paspébiac and New Richmond) Nancy Arbour to obtain her comments regarding the instructions dictated by the owner of her banner but she did not return the calls. Up to 130 people work for the two supermarkets.

DECONFINEMENT: Daniel Côté trusts the Public Health

Nelson **Sergerie**

GASPÉ - The mayor of Gaspé agrees with Public Health regarding the lifting of roadblocks scheduled for May 18 in the Lower St. Lawrence and Gaspé Peninsula. An online petition is circulating calling for the maintenance of roadblocks in La Pocatière, in the Lower St. Lawrence, until the end of June.

Mayor Daniel Côté spoke about the issue at the May 4 municipal council meeting that addressed various aspects related to citizens' concerns, including tourism and trade. "Should the region be opened up as soon as possible? Would it have been better to deconfine the economy within a region before opening the borders? We must rely on the opinion of the only recognized specialists in Quebec, namely Public Health."

The mayor repeated many times that the basic rules must be respected to avoid the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Public Health guidelines will be released within the next few weeks for day camps, sports, culture and tourism.

"There will be no choice but to gradually deconfine to avoid further problems related to isolation or mental health. We won't have any choice, but to live with the virus at our sides," he says.

Announcements...



Obituaries



COFFIN: Bryce Lewis

Our dear dad, Bryce Lewis Coffin, 81, passed away on March 1, 2020, in Gaspé, Quebec. He returned to his hometown of Gaspé, after the passing of Shirley Davis Coffin, his adored wife of 45 years.

He leaves behind his four daughters: Tina Crowell (Bob), Shelley Rudderham (Joe), Susan Coffin and Natalie Muise; his 11 grandchildren: Jennah, Melanie, (Aziz), Meghan, (Ray) Andrea, Matthew, Mykela, Sydney, Nicholas (Bob Kenney), Cameron, Sophie and Davis (Bill Muise); his seven great-grandchildren; his two sisters Mabel Carter and Ivy Miller (Glenn); sister-in-law Edie Coffin; and many cousins, nephews and nieces including Ellen who spent so much time with him. He was predeceased by five siblings: Harold "Hallie" Coffin, Elvin "Teddy" Coffin, Vera Olsson, Pauline Patterson and Pearl Patterson; and three nieces, Cindy Boyle, Flo Coffin-Davis and Dorinda Patterson.

He started his career in the Air Force and then moved on to the mining industry where he became recognized as an expert in the geological gold mining field. He received many awards, certificates, wrote articles and gave several television interviews based on his knowledge and expertise. He worked in many Canadian provinces throughout his career, finishing this journey in Bedford, Nova Scotia, where he became co-owner of a gold exploration company. Everyone who encountered Bryce respected and valued him for his knowledge and professionalism.

His four daughters will always remember him for being very supportive of them, for his sense of humour, for his dedicated work ethic that he instilled in them and for his incredible love of nature, sports and current events. Besides the love he had for his four daughters, grandchildren and family, Bryce was an active UCT (United Commercial Travellers) member, a Legion member and a volunteer firefighter. His sports passion included playing ball and curling. He was also ready for a quick game of cards at any moment, especially with Keaton, Todd, Eric, Stan or any of his sons-in-law.

In his youth, his claim to fame was "I was always the first or second in my class, but there were only two of us."

Bryce was always ready with a good story. We would listen to them while enjoying one of the many delicious meals that he loved to prepare or while sitting on his front step.

We will be forever grateful to the many people who spent their time helping our father when we could not be there with him, especially his sister, Ivy Miller; and the staff at Monseigneur Ross who made the last month of his life as pleasant as possible. He touched the lives of many with his spiritual qualities. He will be incredibly missed by everyone who knew him.

Due to the necessary restrictions of COVID-19, the funeral for our dad that was to take place May 29, 2020, will be postponed until next year. We will post the date in the Spec and on facebook late in the spring of 2021. We sincerely pray that he is resting in love and in peace. God bless him.



LEAPER, Keith Harold

1943 - 2020



Keith, aged 76 years, passed away on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Keith is survived by his beloved wife of 55 years, Barbara (nee Robertson), his K-9 Magnum and his sister Judith (Raymond Lyons).

Keith was seventeen when he was employed by Trans-Canada Airlines, renamed Air Canada in 1965. He worked at the GSE shop in Montreal for thirty-eight years. Following their retirement, Keith and Barbara relocated to Calgary where, on a part-time basis, Keith worked for Air Base.

Keith was a people person and made friends easily. There were times Barbara would have liked to put him on a leash. Keith enjoyed a game of golf, visiting with friends and dining out.

As a Noble of the Al Azhar Shrine Temple of Calgary, he took his duties seriously. Driving a Shriner's Sabre Patrol mini car in parades was not a chore but a joy.

Keith will be sadly missed by his family and his many friends. Friends may find comfort in the realization that Keith has happily been reunited with his K-9 kids, Kimo, Sam, Vicki and Zero over the Rainbow Bridge.

In view of the current health crisis, a celebration of Keith's life will be held at a later date with the burial of his cremated remains in New Hope Cemetery in Cambridge, Ontario. If desired, memorial donations may be made in Keith's memory to the Shriner's Hospital for Children c/o Al Azhar Shriners, (5225-101 Street N.W., Calgary, Alberta T3L 1S4). Messages of remembrance may be left for the family at www.southcalgaryfuneral-centre.ca



SEXTON: Joseph Ethelbert (Bert)

1925 - 2020

It is with great sadness that we announce the recent passing of Bert Sexton on April 12, 2020. He leaves to mourn Shirley (Coull), his beloved wife of over 70 years; his daughter Linda; son Terry (Shirlyn); and daughter Colleen (John); his granddaughters Lianne (Michael) and Colleen (Neil); and great-grandchildren William, Charlotte, Julianna, Kira and Madeline. He is lovingly remembered by his sisters Mary, Ethel, Bertha and Ann (Ian) and his many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brothers Joe, Philip, John and sister Teresa.

Bert was a proud veteran of WWII; served overseas in Europe and was involved in his local Legion branch. He worked at Northern Electric for over 40 years and enjoyed his retirement caring for his family, being involved with his church and with Shirley at his side skiing, playing golf and travelling. Bert loved his family, community, country and especially Gaspé.

Due to the present circumstances, there will not be a service at this time.



In Memory



WILLETT: Ralph James

In memory of Ralph James Willett.

July 1, 1949 - May 12, 2017

*The years are quickly passing
The time slips by and life goes on
But in our hearts, you're never gone.*

*There is always a face before us
A voice we would love to hear.*

We think about you always.

We talk about you too.

Your smile, we will always remember

Of you we loved so dear.

We have so many memories

But when someone you love becomes a memory


The memory becomes a treasure

And those memories will never grow old.


Cherished and missed with loving thoughts. Marilyn, his family and friends.

SUBMISSIONS FOR THIS PAGE MUST BE IN BY THURSDAY AT 4 P.M.

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On the lighter side...



SCHOOL DAYS

We urge all teachers on the Coast to please send or email their old class pictures to share with our readers.



Grade 5 - 1984 - New Carlisle High School

Front row: Jason Murphy, Chad Clark and Arden Court

Back row: Aaron Sawyer, Travis Prentice, Troy Henry, Derek Sawyer, Chad Kierstead and Kevin Gallan.

Go ahead...play with your food



HOROSCOPES

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

You'll have a lot of energy and inspiration this week, Aries. Feel free to do anything you put your mind to, especially some recreational activities.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, you may be feeling especially affectionate this week. With an open heart, you could be ready to delve into a new layer of your relationship or find a new romance.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

People may be wise to give you a

wide berth for the time being, Gemini. Your dander is up, and it may be a good time to look for ways to reduce stress.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, it is very possible that you will meet someone new this week who has the potential to become a lifelong friend. Be observant of every new face and name in your circle.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

A volatile situation could reach its breaking point soon enough, Leo. Arguments that have slowly been brewing will culminate. Fortunately, things will quiet down afterward.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, even though you are tempted to go in many different directions

over the next few days, you'll need to pick a course and stick with it if you are to get anything done.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, this week you may find yourself taking centre stage at a family gathering or with a group of friends. Use this opportunity to make your voice heard.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Be careful that your actions are not taken the wrong way, Scorpio. Do not take on traits that you would otherwise disagree with. Lighten up and be joyful this week.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, take a breather whenever you can because there is a whirlwind of activity soon to come your way.

Enjoy any breaks that come your way in the days ahead.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Your willpower may be weak lately, Capricorn, and you may be eating or doing things that you'll regret later on. Ask a friend to guide you away from temptations.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, someone may offer you a promotion or another more influential position. Do not let this go to your head, but enjoy the success that has come your way.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, if you have noticed you are running into obstacles in your quest to meet your goals, you may want to step back and consider a new path.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

MAY 10

Mat Franco, Magician (32)

MAY 11

Sabrina Carpenter, Actress (21)

MAY 12

Rami Malek, Actor (39)

MAY 13

Robert Pattinson, Actor (34)

MAY 14

Mark Zuckerberg, Entrepreneur (36)

MAY 15

Andy Murray, Athlete (33)

MAY 16

Janet Jackson, Singer (54)

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Roger Lee Martin: Touching hearts with music

Diane Skinner

GESGAPEGIAG: - Musician Roger Lee Martin entertained listeners on his facebook page on Sunday evening, May 3. He was assisted by his wife of 43 years, Kathy, who worked the camera and read the incoming live messages. He lovingly refers to her as “Mama.” People watched and listened as he performed old classic American music and told stories. His audience was watching and listening from the safety of their own homes during this pandemic.

Roger has been performing in public since the age of 16 when his first show was held at the New Richmond Legion. When he arrived, he was told he could not enter because he was underage, but finally he was admitted with the warning not to drink. This was after the rest of the group said they would not perform without him. His love of music began at the age of 13 when he was singing a Hank Williams song in his room and he could hear the door slowly open. His grandmother looked inside the room. Roger Lee asked if he was bothering her to which she replied, “No, I thought I was hearing my son.”

His father passed away on



#StayHome
It could save lives

Watch Roger Lee Martin will perform live on facebook on May 17 at 7 p.m.

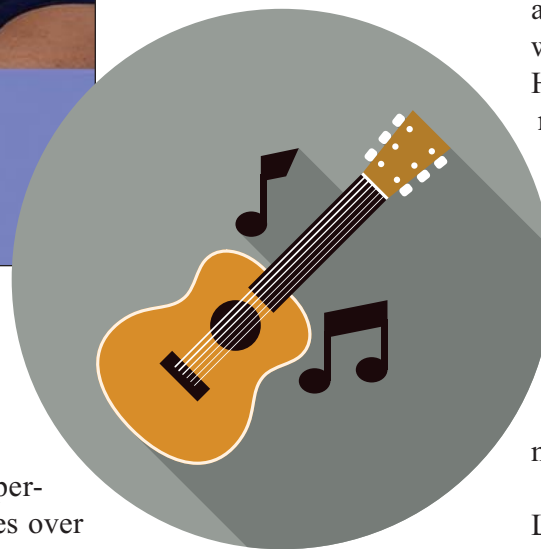
Christmas Eve when Roger Lee was just two years old. If you ask him today what his favourite song is, he quickly answers it is a song his own father wrote called *I'm Dying with Tears in my Eyes*. Many years after his father passed away, he found the song on an old reel-to-reel tape. He wrote down all the lyrics and he is proud to perform it in his

shows. It is how he honours his father.

Roger Lee has performed in many places over the years and has been an emcee at a variety of events including the 2019 Powwow in Gesgapegiag. He has been the emcee at the New Richmond Bluegrass Festival for 17 years, but thinks that this year there will likely be no

festival due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He has performed online a number of times and says that people have watched from coast-to-coast. His neighbour, who lives right across the street, recently got internet for the first time just to listen to Roger Lee!

During last Sunday's “Kitchen Party” on his facebook page, people made comments and requests from many places which Kathy read as they came in. Norma Huntington Chedore says, “I love his music and singing.



My favourite song, though there are so many, is *I'm So Afraid of Losing You*.” During Sunday evening's show, he also sang the song *Green Beret in Mi'gmaq*.

When contacted about this

article, Roger Lee asked, “Wow, I'd be honoured but first I must ask, ‘Why me?’” There are so many Gaspesians doing the same thing. You have the very lovely and very entertaining Pamela Rooney of Douglstown, Nash Stanley and others.”

When I got in touch with Pamela Rooney today, she said, “I met Roger Lee a few years back at the New Richmond Bluegrass Festival where I was performing. It was there I heard him singing around a campfire jamming with other talented musicians and the first thing I thought was, ‘Wow, I love his style.’” His love for classic country music touches so many people, especially during this hard time of COVID-19 by sharing his live shows on facebook. Keep up the good work, Roger Lee, you have a wonderful talent and voice and you are putting a little sunshine in so many homes.”

The answer to Roger Lee's question, “Why me?” is this: He brings sunshine to people at a dark time, a smile to their faces and they love his music. He touches their hearts. Next Sunday, May 17 at 7 p.m., tune in to Roger Lee Martin's facebook to listen and enjoy.

New World – New Words

Diane Skinner

The world as we knew it has shifted. We are learning new ways of socializing, shopping and keeping healthy. So much information is coming our way daily through news that we have to constantly sift our way through it. What is true? What is conspiracy theory? It is information overload. Here are some of the new terms that we now hear and read about daily. The meanings of some will be obvious to many people, but they are included to help those who feel unsure.

Virus: A virus is a type of germ that is very tiny and when they get inside your body, they can make you very sick. We have all been affected by viruses – colds, flu, chicken pox and measles are all caused by viruses. Antibiotics do NOT work on viruses. Antibiotics help if you have an illness caused by bacteria. To avoid getting a virus, wash your hands well and often, especially

before you eat, after going to the washroom or have been out in public places.

Social distancing: We hear this term a lot. It is a good thing because it helps to slow down the spread of a virus. If you keep enough distance from other people (six feet or 2 metres – which is a hockey stick length) you reduce the chance of breathing in their droplets. This is caused when someone is infected with the virus and they talk, cough, sneeze or even breathe. Maintain the distance. Respect the distance.

Self-Isolating: Refers to people voluntarily staying home to prevent coming into contact with the virus.

Quarantine: This is when people OR items, such as packages are kept separate from other people for a period of time. Those who have been in contact with people who have the virus, or who test positive with no or mild symptoms must

quarantine for 14 days. This stops the virus from being passed on to others. The virus can live on bags, boxes, paper, metal and other surfaces. This is why people quarantine their mail (for example, in a garage) for a couple of days before they touch it. Some people wipe down their groceries with sanitizing wipes or alcohol mixed with water. Then they can safely touch it. Still, wash your hands well after touching these items. Avoid touching your face.

Pandemic: A disease that affects a great number of people of a large area, such as a province, country – or in this COVID-19 outbreak, much of the world.

Flattening the curve: A chart that helps us to see the number of new cases over time. Flattening the curve happens when the number of people with COVID-19 slows down. We hope to see fewer new cases and social distancing, masks,

and hand washing help to do this. When the curve flattens, it shows that doing these things has contributed to the flattening.

Prepper: Right now, many of us wish we had been preppers. They are people who believe that a disaster or a pandemic is likely to occur. They prepare for it. They stockpile food, tools, water and other items such as crank radios in case the power is out for a long time. Wood stoves and wells are important for preppers. They have freezers full of meat, cupboards or pantries filled with canned goods, dried beans, dried fruit,

flour, yeast and powdered milk. The world has changed – what some are calling the “The Great Realization” – and the way we need to face this is with a different way of thinking and different expectations. New world. New words.

Note: The Great Realization video can be viewed on YouTube where it has gone viral. It is a heartfelt poem being read to a child in the form of a bedtime story about the better world we may have after the pandemic. Don't pass this one by. It is worth viewing. “We all preferred the world we found to the one we left behind.”



Get going on gardening

Diane Skinner

There is no better season to begin gardening than this one. Having a garden and being able to provide your own food is a plus in these days of food uncertainty. There is an old saying, “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.”

If you are unsure how to begin to garden, local organic gardeners Annie Poitras and Joel Parisé will help get you started to feed yourself and your family with some expert advice.

Annie’s first suggestion is to think about what you and your family like to eat. This will help you to decide what to plant. The second thing to think about is how much time you have and are willing to put into your garden.

Annie buys some seeds but also saves some from foods she has grown in the previous season. In the garden, they grow about 25 different kinds of vegetables, and many different varieties of each. They also grow ten different herbs and about ten kinds of fruit. Also, Annie



Local organic gardener Annie Poitras grows enough vegetables so that she can go all year without buying any in the store!

grows flowers and medicinal plants.

She has never had any real problems with animals in her garden, except for her own farm animals. There is a groundhog who prefers to eat weeds! The birds are no problem, thanks to their cats, and their land is surrounded by fenced pastures so the deer are not a problem either.

Annie and Joel practice organic gardening and use manure and compost for fertilizing and manually remove pests or put netting over

the plants. The main thing about organic gardening is prevention: crop rotation, companion gardening and placing each plant in the right conditions. They have been doing it this way for 11 years and have always had great harvests. This method also helps to improve the quality of the soil.

The Gaspé has a relatively short growing season so some plants do better such as radishes, lettuce, beans, peas and beets. If you have a larger space, squash, pumpkin, zuc-

chini and corn grow well too. Traditional crops like potatoes, turnip and carrots are also good choices. Strawberries, apples and raspberries also grow well. Certain varieties of tomatoes can be grown here, but a greenhouse will increase the yield. A greenhouse is also the best choice for peppers, eggplant, basil and melon.

Annie cans tomatoes and makes pickles, salsa, beets, jam, apple sauce, sauerkraut and ketchup. She freezes green vegetables and corn. She stores root vegetables and cabbage in her dirt basement and onions, garlic, squash and pumpkins in a room in her house. That way they can go all year without buying vegetables!

Annie shares a few more tips for gardeners. “Include flowers and herbs in your vegetable garden as they keep away pests and attract beneficial insects as well as being pretty! Also, don’t grow the same vegetables in the same spot from year to year. That way you will get better crops and avoid pests, diseases and lack of nutrients. Cover the alleys with a thick layer of straw to avoid weeding those and

keep the humidity in the soil and encourage worms to work for you.”

She reminds beginning gardeners to “gather information before starting and start small with things you like to eat, and beware: growing food is addictive!”

When asked to comment about the current pandemic, this is what Annie had to say: “I think that the crisis we are going through now brings us back to what is really important in our lives and how our system and modern way of life made us dependent on big multinational businesses. In times like this we realize that we shouldn’t depend on prod-

ucts that come from the other side of the world and we can’t rely on grocery stores to feed us.

We have the opportunity of living in a place where food is abundant.

We have the sea, the forest, fields and a whole lot of space! Of course, not everybody will be self-sufficient, but we can rethink the way we eat according to the seasons. Buy local products as much as possible. Support our local farmers, get a subscription for an organic vegetable basket, and grow what you can.”



Are you a Prepper?

Diane Skinner

One of the words that we hear more often now, though it is not new, is prepper. A prepper is a person who prepares well ahead for a serious disaster or emergency. These events could lead to a lack of food, water and other supplies. Preppers take the saying “prepare for a rainy day,” very seriously. They look at others right now who are out of toilet paper, flour, yeast and meat and wonder why they did not plan ahead. They knew this rainy day was coming. They were ready.

In a way, our grandparents and great-grandparents were

preppers. It was not that they predicted a disaster, but they were self-reliant. They could not run to the grocery store every day. They may not have had the means or the money to do so. They had cold cellars for root vegetables, pantries for jams and preserves and giant bags of flour and sugar. They had chickens for eggs and a cow for milk. Planning for the future kept their families fed.

Many Gaspésians of today have prepper tendencies. We come from a history of it. The deep freeze is full of meat and the cupboards are full. There are jars and jars of jam, homemade pickles and even bottled carrots and beans from the gar-

den. If our cupboards are full, we do not have to line up at the grocery store or order online and wait a week or more to pick up food. Many are doing just that right now.

We often hear people say we need to learn some important lessons from this time. Perhaps the most important is to become more self-sufficient. To be able to look after ourselves and our family, we should stock up. Learning to make jam and pickles would be an advantage. Knowing how to dry fruit and even tomatoes might come in handy. Having a half dozen laying hens would sure be helpful. People who live in the city are

at a bit of a disadvantage, but they could become “modified preppers.” Keeping a full cupboard, pantry and freezer is a wise choice.

Ruth Flowers always keeps her freezer and pantry well stocked. She says “I think I stock up because our parents and grandparents did. It was instilled in us that we had to stock up for the hard winter ahead, because ‘you never know!’ It was a saying I grew up with. Also, the convenience of going to the pantry and not having to run to the store is

great. It says a lot about being organized. I am also glad that I am a Costco shopper. These days having large quantities of goods on hand is a plus. We used to love our grandmother’s pantry. There was always something good to eat in there. I’m proud to be like our parents and grandparents.”



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New Richmond office
581 355-0060

Email: diane.lebouthillier@parl.gc.ca

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