

Will the Caplan to Port Daniel rail line be ready in 2022?

Gilles Gagné

CAPLAN - The Quebec Ministry of Transport maintains the hope that the repair of the railroad between Caplan and Port-Daniel can be completed before the end of 2022, however, those following the situation still have concerns considering that more than 17 months have passed since the last call for tenders for this rail line.

The management of Transports Québec and government representatives have been saying all year that more calls for tenders will be published before the end of the year in order to repair the line between Caplan and Port-Daniel before the end of 2022.

Louis-André Bertrand, from the ministry's communications department, responded on November 23 to questions sent by The Gaspé Spec to Transports Québec on November 18. He admits, that "plans and specifications must be completed in the coming months and calls for tenders for construction can then be published."

Taking in to account the comment of the "next few months" a call for tenders before the end of 2021 can be ruled out and a submission of bids postponed to midwinter at best. The authorities at Transports Québec are trying to be reassuring by adding that "this work (on the plans and specifications) is very advanced on the eleven remaining structures to be rehabilitated or rebuilt on the section between Caplan and Port Daniel-Gascons. (...) A very important construction season is planned for 2022."

However, those answers are a concern in the Gaspé Peninsula. A member of the Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of the train, Anthony Bernard Prince, of Port-Daniel, has systematically collected for 10 years all information concerning the evolution of the railway repair file

in the region. He recalls that in the past three years, only three calls for tenders for four bridges have been published by Transports Québec in connection with the Gaspésian railway. One of those bridges remains to be completed.

"The last call for tenders, for the replacement of the Ruisselet Bridge in Caplan, was launched on June 12, 2020. The bidding was closed July 27 and I assume that the contract was awarded not that long after the bids were closed. Work started about mid-September. I have a picture taken on September 24 and, by then, the rails were removed and the old bridge was ready to dismantle. The new bridge was completed in May, in advance by the contractor, Hamel Construction. Here, Transports Quebec is talking about 11 structures," notes Mr. Prince.

Despite the speed of completion of the three bridges' construction and repair mandates entrusted by Transports Québec since the end of 2018, all won by Hamel Construction, he is skeptical about the possibility of seeing 11 contracts carried out between Caplan and Port-Daniel before the end of 2022.

"I am very worried. The delay in the calls for tenders will likely postpone the opening of the railway line east of Caplan. At the Coalition, the initial objective is to bring back the passenger train. The longer the delay, the longer it will take to bring that important passenger train east of Matapédia, the Coalition's initial objective. We will have a lot of work to do too to convince VIA Rail to come back first to New Carlisle in a first step before Gaspé. The way things are going right now, they (the people from Transports Quebec) are dreaming if they believe that the railroad will be back in function at the end of 2022. I would like to see it done but the way things are going, it seems impossi-



From the top left, newly elected New Richmond Town Councillor, Natalie Clark, her son Kyle Willett, her mother Sheila Duncan Clark, and her grandchildren Leanne Willett and Ayden Willett.

Photo: C. Dow

Tree-lighting kicks off Noël en Gaspésie activities

Cynthia Dow

On Saturday, November 20, the Christmas tree was lit at the New Richmond Town Hall to kick off another edition of Noël en Gaspésie to get everyone in the festive mood. Music and hot chocolate were offered to nearly 100 people, with plenty of children in the crowd, who turned up for the event. The festival includes a Christmas market to be held at the shopping mall on December 4 and 5 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., children's activities, a Christmas decoration workshop with le Cercle des fermières on December 12, the official opening of Pin Rouge on December 17, Disco on Ice at the arena on December 20, opening of the outdoor rink at Park Chaleurs on December 22 and initiation to cross-country skiing at Duthie's Point on December 28 and 29. More details can be found at the website at noelengaspésie.com

ble," concludes Mr. Prince.

Another member of the Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of the train, Bernard Babin, recalls that the five most active members of his group have collectively devoted thousands of volunteer hours over the past eight years to ensure the repair of the track between Matapédia and Gaspé, then the return of VIA Rail's passenger train by the same token. That service has been suspended on this route since September 2013.

"I am extremely disappointed to see that there will be no call for tenders before 2022. The premier of Quebec François Legault and Minister of Transport François Bonnardel have committed to rehabilitating the Caplan-Port-Daniel section before the end of 2022 (...) With the last COP26 in Glasgow and the climate emergency, all the big experts around the world are saying we must reduce green-

house gas emissions. Does what happens in British Columbia have to take place in the Gaspé Peninsula before we reach action time? The railways are very significantly reducing greenhouse gases," he says.

The president of the Gaspésie Railway Society and mayor of New Richmond, Éric Dubé, has been taking steps for months to ensure that Transports Québec will meet the 2022 deadline. The Society is a municipal entity that has been operating freight trains on the functional portion of the network since 2007.

"With what we see, what we hear and what does not come out, I am very worried that the schedule will not be respected," he affirms, referring in particular to four important projects to replace a bridge at Ruisselet-Leblanc, and repair those at Bonaventure, Shigawake and the Port-

Daniel bridge located west of the station.

Since Transports Québec acquired the Matapédia-Gaspé rail line in March 2015, rail activities have been limited to the Matapédia-Caplan section of the network, or 40% of the 325 kilometres separating Matapédia and Gaspé.

Since 2016, the growth of LM Wind Power's windmill blade plant in Gaspé and the opening of McInnis Cement in Port-Daniel have tripled the Gaspésie Railway Society rail traffic. However, these two plants are located on the portion put dormant by Transports Quebec in 2015. The blades and cement are transported by truck to the transshipment centre in New Richmond, at great expense. In 2020, the railway company's customers generated 4,202 carloads, a total that would be significantly higher

331 new daycare spaces requested for the Bay of Chaleur and Rocher-Percé areas

Nelson **Sergerie**,
LJI Journalist

GASPÉ - No less than 331 new childcare spaces have been added to the requests of the Avignon, Bonaventure and Rocher-Percé MRCs to meet the desperate need of services

In just the MRC de Bonaventure alone, two CPEs (Centre petite enfance) claim a need of 205 places while the total recently released by Quebec is only 74 overall.

The CPE de la Baie requires 140 places spread over its territory. An 80 place facility is being proposed for Bonaventure and smaller projects for Cascapedia-Saint-Jules, Saint-Alphonse and Saint-Elzéar, as well as an expansion in New Richmond.

"We're going to think big. We want to meet the needs of the communities. We also want to meet the needs of communities that were very mobilized," explains the director, Julie Dalpé.

The La Marinière childcare facility in Paspébiac is requesting 65 more spots as well, including a 44-seat facility in New Carlisle and 21 others in Paspébiac. "We remain positive that there will be good news," said director Julie Denis.

Rocher-Percé

In Chandler, the CPE la Belle Journée has requested 79 places in a new building that would be constructed close to the current site on

Hôtel-de-Ville Street. The Town of Chandler is ready to provide the land if Quebec gives its consent.

The management is also looking for family facilities as their numbers have decreased from 42 to 21 in recent months.

In total, there is a hundred or so places missing in the Rocher-Percé MRC and management emphasizes that not a day goes by without new children being added to the waiting list. The ministry assesses the need at 74 places.

Avignon

The Aux Joyeux Marmots childcare centre in Carleton-sur-Mer is asking for 47 additional places in the Avignon

MRC.

Quebec recently released 24 places for the sector, but the needs are more numerous. In fact, there is a need for 100 places.

"We submitted a project for the Nouvelle sector and a second for Pointe-à-la-Croix which were the municipalities targeted by the ministry," specifies the director, Karine Pelland.

In Nouvelle, 34 places are requested, including 10 for infants.

In Pointe-à-la-Croix, 13 new places, including five for infants, would be added to the eight already existing.

Nothing on the Côte-de-Gaspé

The two Côte-de-Gaspé childcare centres did not submit any projects in the most recent call for tenders.

The reason is simple: Family Ministry had granted 111 new places in August whereas the plan provided for only 32. Thus, 31 places will be added to the CPE Voyage de mon enfance on Bolduc Street and a new facility of 80 places near the city centre.

The management is still looking for land to install the new building. Quebec has already said that if there was a need for additional places, it would be open to granting more.

Obviously, the management of the CPEs seized the opportunity.

Arrested by UPAC in 2016, Nathalie Normandeau is asking for \$2.5 million

Nelson **Sergerie**,
LJI Journalist

GASPÉ - Arrested by the Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) in March 2016, Nathalie Normandeau files a \$2.5 million lawsuit against the Quebec government.

The former Liberal Deputy Premier and Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure said in a press release on November 22 that she had initiated a process with the Attorney General of Quebec in order to obtain compensation for the damages suffered.

It holds UPAC and the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions responsible for the damage caused. "These accusations were the result of faulty investigations and were rather motivated to promote the renewal of the mandate of Commissioner Robert Lafrenière and the creation of UPAC as an independent police force," says Ms. Normandeau.

The original application was filed on October 22, and the motion was sealed for 30 days due to the privilege of the ongoing investigation. The order expired on November 22 at 4:30 p.m.

"I will have to learn to live with these accusations which mortgaged nearly five years of my life. The damages have been numerous and for this reason, I am asking for a sum of \$2.5 million," says Ms. Normandeau.

Since the case will be going to court, Nathalie Normandeau



Nathalie Normandeau and François Roussy in easier days.

Photo: G. Gagné

will not offer any additional comments.

On September 25, 2020, Judge André Perreault ordered the stay of proceedings against her and the other co-defendants because of delays deemed unreasonable.

At the time, the former deputy premier said she wanted to be tried by the court to clear her name.

Ms. Normandeau was accused of fraudulently subscribing to an election fund, corruption, and breach of trust.

Last January, the now Montreal radio host imagined that her defence had cost more than the cost of an average mortgage in Quebec City.

At the time of her arrest, she had lost her host job on FM-93 in Quebec City.

Roussy hasn't decided

For his part, the former mayor of Gaspé, François Roussy, continues to weigh his options.

Arrested at the same time as Nathalie Normandeau, the former mayor complained about having lost four and a half years of his life.

Mr. Roussy says he still has time to think about what to do since the deadline is still far away. Before proceeding any further, he wants to hear the findings of UPAC's Office of Independent Investigations into Media Leaks in the Guy Ouellet case.

Mr. Roussy was accused of breach of trust for obtaining undue advantages.

Childcare centres vote for an unlimited general strike

Nelson **Sergerie**, LJI

GASPÉ - The pressure is mounting in the negotiations between the workers of the early childhood centres and the Quebec government.

The workers of the eight CPEs affiliated with the CSN in the Gaspé voted strongly on November 24 for an indefinite general strike to be called at an opportune time.

The vice-president of the Federation of Health and Social Services for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, Kent Denis, specifies that the vote had support of between 85% and 100%, depending on the facilities.

"We don't necessarily want to use them (strikes), we want negotiating days quickly. We want to settle this before Christmas. The women are determined. They will not give up for peanuts," says the union leader.

Quebec convened the unions on November 24 and 25 to restart talks after withdrawing from the negotiating table on November 19. Mr. Denis hopes that with this indefinite general strike vote, the employers will now have a "real mandate" to negotiate.

Quebec favours educators by offering much larger increases, justifying them because of the significant shortage and that they are paid less than in other comparable groups.

Quebec also wants them to work 40 hours over five days rather than 32 to 36 hours currently by adding a lump sum.

The union wants to obtain the same treatment for all categories of workers. Child educator ratios and children with special needs are also issues.

A fragile solidarity

So far, parents stand in solidarity with the demands of the workers. But after 10 days of striking, a crumbling begins to be felt. "It is part of our fears, but we ask parents to support these women because they are not fighting only for them, but for the children and the future of the children of Quebec and the future of the CPE," argues Mr. Denis.

Other unions also went on strike during the same period. Members affiliated with the CSN adopted at the end of the summer a bank of 10 days of strike which is now exhausted.

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Pete Dubé's lawsuit against the Quebec government: the judge will deliberate

Gilles Gagné

CARLETON - Judge Benoit Moulin of the Superior Court will deliberate over the case of Pierre "Pete" Dubé, a businessman from Matapedia claiming compensation of \$975,000 from the Quebec government. Mr. Dubé believes three provincial ministries are responsible for the floods that damaged his properties, especially the April 2019 floods.

During the trial, held on November 19 at the New Carlisle courthouse, Mr. Dubé testified and filed documents attesting that the Department of Public Security had recently ratified an order in council making his residence admissible for the "general compensation program and financial assistance in the event of real or imminent disasters."

This document was unknown to Judge Moulin and attorney Marc-Antoine Patenaude, who defends the three departments targeted by Pete Dubé's legal action, namely Public Security, Transports Québec and the Ministry of Forest, Wildlife and Parks.

Justice Moulin imposed a condition before taking the case under deliberation, that the parties ensure, by means of a sworn declaration from the Public Security department, the compensation likely to apply to the residence involved.

In his request to institute proceedings, Pete Dubé, who is representing himself, sought compensation for his residence and for the Motel Restigouche; two neighbouring properties on Des Saumons Street that have repeatedly been inflicted by damage over the years.

He states that the role played by the Civil Security branch of the Public Security Department since the winter of 2007-2008 in communications

with the Canadian Coast Guard has increased in the icebreaking operations between that winter and April 2019.

He refers to the floods of 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2019 as proof. Between 1995 and 2007, a local committee familiar with the Restigouche River communicated directly with the Canadian Coast Guard, and no flooding had occurred during that span, he said.

The November 19 trial got off to a bad start for Mr. Dubé, since his hotel establishment, owned by the company J. Albert Dubé Limitée, can only claim damages on condition of being represented by a lawyer, which is not the case.

"Personally, you cannot claim damages on behalf of a company," said the judge. "If you continue with the process (of claiming compensation for the Motel Restigouche), the company must be the plaintiff. Otherwise, the procedures are limited to your residence."

Pete Dubé, said after reflection, that it is impossible for him to continue with (the company) J. Albert Dubé. "I can't afford it." He therefore continued the trial on the basis of possible compensation taking into account only the damages inflicted on his house.

His only witness, Renaud Quilbé, a hydrologist, said that logging can help increase water flows during spring melts, an argument dear to Pete Dubé to explain the sudden and significant flooding of the Restigouche River.

In cross-examination by Attorney Patenaude, Mr. Quilbé indicated that the flow depends on the type of cut and the speed of reforestation after this cut.

Marc-Antoine Patenaude's first witness, Steve Boivin, an adviser to the Ministry of Public Security acting as a liaison officer with the municipality of



Pierre "Pete" Dubé

Photo: G. Gagné

Matapedia and the Canadian Coast Guard during spring ice-breaking operations, stressed that his ministry did not have control of the hovercraft assigned to clearing rivers.

During Mr. Boivin's testimony, Pete Dubé had just criticized the late arrival of the hovercraft in Matapedia in April 2019 because of the decision of the Canadian Coast Guard to de-ice a fishing port in the Acadian Peninsula, 200 kilometres from Matapedia. That decision was made three days before the water level started to flood parts of the village on the morning of April 20. Things got worse the ensuing night, as businesses and apartment buildings were heavily flooded.

Mr. Boivin also said that 2019 was "a record year" for flooding in Quebec. He noted that his ministry had "no equipment" to clear a river like the Restigouche and that it had a "mandate to mitigate the consequences" of the flooding.

Pete Dubé concluded, noting that Steve Boivin worked from Quebec City, "you don't know anything about the river."

Forestry engineer Annie Malenfant, of the Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks, also said that forest cuts on public land carried out in areas of the Restigouche River watershed met current standards.

Police report

A motorist was involved on November 22 in a road accident on the Lemieux Road in Val-d'Espoir. Following the accident that took place around 4:45 a.m., police feared for the life of the 47-year-old man from the region. He had lost control of his vehicle, which left the road. The victim suffered from a serious head injury and was still conscious when the emergency services reached the location of the accident. At one point, his condition deteriorated. Taken by ambulance to the Gaspé hospital first and then flown to a Quebec City hospital, his condition eventually stabilized even though he remains in serious condition.

According to the first elements of the investigation, the motorist's driving was not adapted to the conditions of the road, which was covered with ice. The Sûreté du Québec is continuing its investigation to establish the exact circumstances of the accident.

Meanwhile, a collision involving two cars on Perron East boulevard in Caplan later the same morning left one person with minor injuries. The accident happened just before 10 a.m. The five people in the two vehicles were taken to Maria hospital. It was a preventive measure for four of them, as they were not injured. Traffic was restored about an hour after the accident, after being rerouted towards the second range.

All police services in Quebec, in collaboration with the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ), will intensify their interventions from November 26, 2021, to January 3, 2022, as part of the national concerted driving operation, also called ONC, targeting impaired driving, whether by alcohol, drugs or a combination of the two. Those interventions will result, among other things, in the presence of control where mandatory screenings could be carried out randomly.

On the occasion of the launch of the ONC Alcohol-Drugs on November 26, points of roadside checks were held throughout Quebec, during the day, in the evening and night. In addition, throughout this ONC, an awareness campaign will be deployed especially on the various social media platforms of police organizations and the SAAQ. This campaign aims to remind drivers of the consequences of driving while impaired by alcohol, drugs, or a combination of the two.

Despite the awareness campaigns, the police presence and the many options available to avoid driving, each year, on average, from 2015 to 2019, alcohol was the cause of collisions resulting in 85 deaths, which represented 24% of total annual deaths on the roads, and 220 seriously injured people, which amounted to 15% of the seriously injured people total.

Each year, on average, from 2015 to 2019, the presence of drugs or medication was found in 37% of deceased drivers who were tested. The presence of drugs does not necessarily mean that the driver's abilities were impaired at the time of the collision.

Cannabis was the drug most often detected, as 21% of deceased drivers had consumed that product. This concerted national operation is organized as a partnership between the Sûreté du Québec, the Police Department of the City of Montreal, the Association of Police Directors of Quebec, the SAAQ and Quebec Road Control.

Gaspé hopes for a quick response from Quebec for the industrial road

Nelson sergerie, LJI

GASPÉ - Gaspé is hoping for an answer before the holidays, as time is running out for the construction of the industrial road between LM Wind Power and the Sandy Beach port.

The manufacturer needs this route to ship its future 107-metre wind turbine blades by ship as the plant expansion proceeds.

The mayor, Daniel Côté, maintains that the talks with Quebec which would finance a large part of the project estimated between \$12 million and

\$15 million are continuing.

He is not very talkative about the nature of the discussions, only that he hopes for an agreement by the holidays.

"It's been around long enough that I'm confident we'll fix it in the next few weeks. We have an obligation of getting a result. The road is an essential condition for the success of the plant. It's that simple. This is the keystone of the development of Gaspé happening there. We must succeed. The government knows about it and is sensible. We are at the table.

We negotiate. We don't have a choice but to have a result before the holidays," says Côté.

Once an agreement is reached, the deforestation work would be done in the winter in parallel with the design of the plans and specifications to start the work at the end of the thaw, for delivery in September 2022.

Railway branch

The idea of creating a railroad branch to link the Augustines Industrial Park to the rail network has not been abandoned.

The mayor asked the So-

ciété du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie to keep the file open. In his eyes, this is an "incredible project" for the future development of the industrial park.

Resumption of tenders for the hangar at the airport

Gaspé must resume the tender process for its new hangar at Michel-Pouliot Airport.

The purchase and construction of the building was valued at \$3.5 million. "Either it was too expensive, or the tender criteria wasn't met. The lowest bid could not be accepted be-

cause it did not meet the criteria of the quote," explains Côté.

The federal program provided for completion by March 31. Ottawa is footing 90% of the bill. The mayor hopes to obtain a delay, especially since there are others in a similar situation.

This project is part of the airport improvement work. The runway and its approaches were redone in 2020. The fences and the power distribution centre are also in the process of being renovated.

Gilles Gagné



Commentary

Time to show empathy and humility

On November 23, Quebec's ombudsman Marie Rinfret released her final report to pinpoint specifically what went terribly wrong in the province seniors' residences during the first wave of the pandemic, between mid-March and May 2020.

Although most Quebecers heard numerous accounts of the tragic fate of thousands of seniors during that span, the report summarizes the situation like no one else had done and proposes precise and basic measures to avoid a duplication of that embarrassing situation.

In a relatively short but concise, accurate and clear report of 72 pages, Ms. Rinfret states that seniors were cast aside in long-term care residences, individually and, even if it sounds like a paradox, collectively. The word collectively applies because Quebec's health authorities put the pre-pandemic emphasis of eventual care in hospitals, not in long-term care units, usually referred to as CHSLDs.

The ombudsman stresses that the Department of Health officials knew the CHSLDs had no wiggle room before the pandemic, as they already lacked personnel, protective equipment, moved to the hospitals in the latter case, and management, as hundreds of such positions had been abolished by the previous government. The decision to pack the long-term care residences with seniors previously treated in hospitals just worsened the situation.

Moreover, the caregivers, those family members, friends and volunteers who help seniors in CHSLDs on a daily or weekly basis, were forbidden to go.

By mid-March 2020, the long-term care situation was ready to explode, and it did, starting on March 23. It took until mid-April before the Quebec government acknowledged that the situation was out of control.

By then, health employees contaminated in hospitals had been sent to long-term care residences to provide

help, insufficient help because 25% of them contracted COVID. They were sent to CHSLDs without being tested. Most of the 3,890 Quebecers who passed away during the first wave of COVID were seniors who often died alone, unattended, many times of dehydration, starvation, but also of asphyxia, because the coronavirus paralyzed their lungs.

It took quite a while, points out Marie Rinfret, before the mask became compulsory in hospitals and long-term care residences. It also took too long before the understaffed management identified the hot and cold zones in health establishments. The whole health system wasn't digitized at that point and the way communicating information about the exact daily situation in those institutions was still done by fax in March-April-May 2020.

Quebec had aligned its pre-pandemic strategy along with Italy's, only to discover later that the Italian network sustained one of the worst per capita death tolls in the world.

British Columbia performed much better, with a network of long-term care residences that is more modern, better equipped, sufficiently staffed and characterized by a lower number of residents per room.

It is an understatement to say that Quebec, and many more areas of the world, neglected the magnitude of the upcoming pandemic. The health authorities barely sent a "very general" warning to their network establishments on January 26, and not much more after. In their March 10 budget, Finance Minister Éric Girard and Premier François Legault uttered a few words about the pandemic, and only did so upon the insistence of the press. The references to the COVID-19 virus only took up a couple of lines in a document of hundreds of pages. Two days later, the government decreed a state of emergency.

It is often easy to criticize after the events, especially 18 months later, when "Monday morning quarterbacks" highlight that things should have gone differently.

The Quebec government was not alone thinking that the pandemic didn't warrant substantial consideration before March 12. Exactly at the same time, Health Canada described the risk of a pandemic spreading to the country as "low", only to call it "high" a day later, without an explanation.

Ombudsman Marie Rinfret showed enough grace in

her report to avoid pointing fingers at specific culprits. She uncovered what went wrong and identified what needs to change.

The reactions of former Health and Social Services Minister Danielle McCann and Premier François Legault in the period that followed the publication of the ombudsman report were not too impressive.

They basically repeated that they did their best with the information that was available at the time. Mr. Legault reacts negatively to criticism and Marie Rinfret's report was no exception. He worked seven days a week, watching CNN and things did not look too bad. He also allegedly learned at the last minute that the health system was short of 10,000 employees.

He takes criticism personally that has been expressed repeatedly since the spring of 2020, as if Marie Rinfret was targeting him or other people, while she did not.

In fact, she offers an extended hand to the Quebec government. She invites Premier Legault and his cabinet to react once a year, in writing, to her annual report, which should be normal for a government that is supposed to care about the well-being of its citizens.

Does the faltered way the Quebec health system handled the first wave of the pandemic justify a public commission? It probably does, for the families of the victims, who are still trying to understand why their next of kin died alone, unattended.

It would also be useful to reinforce the conclusions of ombudsman Marie Rinfret, especially if government officials maintain their tendency for ignoring them.

The Coroner's report on the same crisis is underway. Quebec's Health Commissioner is also preparing a report on the same matter. In the latter case, considering the lower degree of independence between the commissioner and Health Minister Christian Dubé, the impact will likely be reduced.

If a public commission is instituted though, something Mr. Dubé and Premier Legault don't want any part of, it could be wise to take into account the work that has already been done so far by Marie Rinfret and coroner Gehane Kanel. The commission's report would then be published faster and its recommendations would be implemented accordingly. We owe it to the victims of the pandemic's first wave, their families the elderly citizens who are still alive.

Emma Buckley



Guest Commentary

Dear ladies: pain is not our birthright

Looking back, I can't pinpoint exactly when the pain started. I was in my early 30s, and recently arrived in Gaspésie, when I became aware that an old abdominal scar, the only trace of a strangulated hernia I'd had as a child, had started to hurt.

The pain – which fluctuated between a stabbing and burning sensation, and made me hobble for a bit when I stood up – was perplexing and frustrating. It came and went with my monthly period, causing the area around the scar to swell.

I decided to bring it up to my family doctor. My doctor (who has since left the region) was a large, imposing man, or at least that's how I remember him. In faltering French, I tried to explain the problem. "Have you tried taking painkillers beforehand?" my doctor suggested. "Some of my female patients take Ibuprofen before their period starts, they say it helps with the cramps." "But this is not cramping!" I thought, but didn't say out loud. Instead, I nodded mutely while frustration churned inside me.

The problem continued. On a visit to Montreal a year or two later, the pain was so bad that my partner insisted we go to emergency at a nearby hospital. The female doctor was puzzled. "It looks more muscular, judging by the way you're moving when you stand up," she said. She pressed down around the scar, causing me to yelp in pain. "I'll organize for an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) at your local hospital," she said. The MRI revealed

nothing out of the ordinary.

Over the next few years, I broached the topic here and there, to another doctor, to a gynecologist. "Pain and swelling in abdominal scar" became a recurring Google search. The search results regularly displayed something called endometriosis; a condition where tissue usually found inside the uterus somehow makes its way outside of it, clustering around nearby organs. The hormonal changes that drive the menstrual cycle also affect this tissue, causing it to become inflamed and painful.

I had some of the symptoms but not all, so I pushed this theory to the back of my mind. Besides, I reasoned, if it was endometriosis, surely a doctor would have picked it up by now?

Earlier this year, visiting a new gynecologist for an unrelated matter, I took a deep breath and launched into the same old story. She felt the hard lumps around the scar and ordered an ultrasound. The doctor performing the ultrasound ordered a biopsy. The call came from my gynecologist: it was endometriosis.

I felt relief: finally, I had a diagnosis, and with it the possibility of treatment. I also felt sadness and anger. For a decade I had accepted as normal something that wasn't. It is neither some rare, unusual disease: the condition affects up to 10% of women. Why then did my former doctor and others not explore this possibility? Why do so many women wait years and years before diagnosis? Physical pain is not an inevitable part of the feminine condition, despite an ago-old myth that says it is.

Learning and talking freely about this topic can help to debunk this myth. I have great respect for our medical professionals, but like people working in any field, their competence and knowledge can vary. They are also working within a flawed system, and sometimes these flaws become gaps that people fall through. All the more reason to assume greater responsibility for our own

health. We should be curious about our bodies and receptive to any changes we notice. We need to deepen our awareness of health matters and be alert for signs and symptoms. Above all we need to speak up and voice our concerns - to our families, friends, and doctors - without shyness, embarrassment or, heaven forbid, shame.

As well as causing chronic pain and affecting overall quality of life, endometriosis is linked to infertility. So, ladies, if you experience endometriosis symptoms or pelvic pain that your intuition tells you is not normal, don't meekly accept a diagnosis of normal. Do what I should've done all those years ago: insist on tests that can confirm or rule out endometriosis.

The Gaspé Spec

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Old New Richmond station sidings put back in place

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – From the beginning of 1890s until 1972, the New Richmond Station was located just north of what is the Highway 132 overpass today, east of the roundabout. Even though the former Paspébiac train station was moved to the current location close to Saint-Edgar road, it was still called the New Richmond station.

For years, the siding at New Richmond Station remained active, mostly because of the linerboard mill activities, as empty boxcars were often parked there.

After the closure of the mill in August 2005 and given the diminishing freight activities in the area, the siding switches were removed and the siding itself more or less

fell into oblivion, as grass, hay and earth accumulated over it for 16 years.

Considering the rejuvenation of freight activities in New Richmond starting in December 2016 with the windmill blade traffic and, joined by the McInnis Cement traffic in July 2017; the operator of freight trains, the Gaspésie Railway Society, recently decided to put back in place two tracks that had already existed at New Richmond Station.

One track, on the east side, was uncovered, cleaned and will be upgraded and lengthened from 1,000 to 1,500 feet.

The other one, on the west side, was removed shortly after the Highway 132 overpass was built. It will be rebuilt from the east side of the overpass and west, stretching



New Richmond station sidings: The old siding on the east side was still in place, but buried in grass, hay and earth.

Photo: G. Gagné

in total over 2,500 feet.

“It will give us some buffer space for the empty windmill blade flatcars and the cement cars. We are always reaching our limits in the current yard and it is com-

plicating our shunting operations. The lack of space often forces our train crews to make six stops between Matapédia and New Richmond to leave cars in different sidings. The windmill blade traffic contract is expiring at the beginning of 2023 but we are interested in getting other contracts in that field and we have other projects as well,”

explains Luc Lévesque, director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society.

The new sidings will have a capacity of about 40 windmill blade flatcars and a few over 80 cement cars.

They will be operational before the Christmas break if the new switches are delivered before mid-December. It is a \$500,000 project.

REGIM shuttles will return for the Christmas holidays

Gilles Gagné

CARLETON – From December 16 to January 5, REGIM’s shuttle between the VIA Rail station in Campbellton and the region’s south shore municipalities located between Nouvelle and the town of Gaspé will be back on the road.

The shuttle will run according to the VIA Rail train schedule and be geared specifically to train passengers. However, non-train passengers will be able to book shuttle seats as well. The full schedule and list of stops is available at www.regim.info. Passengers must book their tickets on the VIA Rail website.

“Even if the number of trains is limited, we believe that it’s important to continue to provide the shuttle service so that there’s a connection with interregional transportation while waiting for the train to come back to the region,” says Daniel Côté, REGIM president, prefect of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC and mayor of Gaspé.

Summer 2021 report

During the summer of 2021, the shuttle service was made possible because of the gradual return of the VIA Rail Halifax-Montreal service from August 11 to September 30, 2021. Thirteen trips occurred during that period, making it possible for 47 passengers to get from point A to point B. Note that only one train was



Photos: Courtesy of REGIM

The REGIM shuttle will again link the communities of the south part of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Campbellton train station.

available per week in each direction.

“Again this year, despite a smaller schedule, people continued using the service. There certainly is a public need for these shuttles. We’ve also seen it in the number of requests and questions we get concerning the service,” Marie-Andrée Pichette, REGIM’s executive director, explained.

The Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie – Îles-de-la-Madeleine (REGIM) offers various passenger transport services like public transit for all of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, special routes for specific needs and paratransit in the Haute-Gaspésie and Baïdes-Chaleurs MRCs, which is a service for handicapped people.

The VIA Rail service was suspended the end of September 2013 in the Gaspé Peninsula. Between the first week of August and the end of September 2013, the service was offered by buses because the line was not considered safe by VIA Rail’s direction.

In the case of the New Carlisle to Chandler stretch of railroad, VIA Rail’s trains have not circulated since mid-December 2011. The service east of New Carlisle was bus service until the suspension of September 2013.

As for REGIM, people can get more information about the transit options, make some reservations through visiting www.regim.info or contacting customer services at 1-877-521-0841, Monday to Friday during business hours.

THEGASPESPEC.COM



The following is a list of families and businesses who purchased symbolic wreaths from Branch 64 in memory of veterans.

Reid Sawyer: The family / Lionel Gilker: Crystal and Tracie Smith / Dave Doherty: Family / Everett Dea: Margaret Flowers and family / Lorne Beck: Ella Beck and family / Edward, Ralph, Aubrey, Leighton Huntington and Lester Flowers: Flowers family / Gerald LeFlock, Ken MacDonald, Weston Palmer, Alvin and Frank Scott: Scott family / Goldie Ramier: Celia Smith / Delaney Veterans: Ida Delaney / Thomas Craig: Bessie and family / Lauder, Carl, Bert Sweetman, Walter and Bert Lawrence: Margaret Sweetman and Gary Major / Baptiste Pearson: Norbert Frances Nadeau / Raymond Enright, Charlie Dea, Tony Ahern: Margaret Sweetman / Lloyd and Claude Huntington: Huntington family / Austin, Frank, Merle Assels: Sue and James Assels / James Starnes: Shena and family / Alex Woods: Mary Woods / Bill Smith: Veronica Smith and family / Clyde Gallon: Clyde Gallon / Arthur Gallon: John, Irene, Fauline and families / Francis Flowers: Lisa and family / Charles Smith: Yvette Smith and family / Albert Billingsley: Landis Assels and family / Arnold Ross: The family / Smith Astles: Gino, Gina, Tina and family / Herman Woodburn Astles: Cynthia Astles / Lodge Vets: Robert Lodge / Leonard Marsh: Marsh family / Charles Young: Ross Smith / Arden Court: William Court and family / Duncan Flowers: Diane and Barbara Flowers / Frank Weary: Leila Scott and Wanda Mooney / Sid MacWhirter: MacWhirter family / Clyde Gallan: Lance Gallan and family / Roland Prentice: The Prentice family / Len and Ken Gilker: Carol Gilker and family / Everard Murray Mercier, Everard Clinton Mercier and George Carney: the Merciers and Carney Family / Veterans: Darryl and Lorraine Grey / Municipalite de Saint Godefroi / Municipality of New Carlisle / New Carlisle Fire Department / Heritage New Carlisle / Materiaux Gaspésiens / Dépanneur 2000: Mandy Clark and Joey LeBlanc / Les Constructions de la Baie: Joey LeBlanc.

We all have questions about the **vaccine**

Why should I get my child vaccinated if they're at lower risk of complications from COVID-19 than an adult?



While some symptoms of COVID-19 may seem mild, others—like shortness of breath—can last for months.

Even though children are less at risk of developing complications, they can still easily transmit the virus.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your children and their loved ones.

**Get answers to all your questions
about the vaccine at**

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

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect us all.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



Tis the season for giving

The darkness was cheap and Scrooge loved it.

A Christmas Carol written by Charles Dickens was published in 1843 and its lessons are still as important today. Dickens had great sympathy for the poor and he hoped that his book would lead to more kindness and generosity for the wretchedly poor in Victorian England. His idea was that people who had enough could and should be more generous.

In the beginning of the story, Scrooge was a grumpy and lonely miser who had no Christmas spirit. On Christmas Eve he is visited by the ghost of his former partner, Jacob Marley. Scrooge is told that he will be visited by three spirits who will help him find the meaning of Christmas.

The Ghost of Christmas Past shows him the Christmas of his childhood and early adulthood. He sees that during those years he lost his generosity and compassion for others.

The next visitor is the Ghost of Christmas Present who shows Scrooge how others are celebrating Christmas including his employee Bob Cratchit and his family including his son, Tiny Tim.

The third and final visitor is the Ghost of Christmas Future. This spirit shows him how his life will be if he does not change his ways. If he does not practice generosity, he will die a lonely man with nobody to mourn him.

In the end, Scrooge is a changed and much happier man who spreads Christmas cheer and is generous to others.

As Christmas approaches, we all have an opportunity to spread some Christmas cheer. We have a chance to be generous. We are all busy planning and buying presents for family and friends. This Christmas let's all try to spread the real meaning of Christmas by giving to someone who receives very little or giving to a local charity.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Give a gift to someone elderly in your community. This does not have to be pricey – it really is the thought that counts. Consider taking them a hot meal or offer to drive them somewhere. Honour your senior community.

Give to a local charity, one where the money you donate stays right in the community. Giving to a local charity will give the most benefit right in the area in which you live.

Ask friends and family to make a donation in your name to a charity.

It sets a great example for children too!

Ask a local church for suggestions for what you could donate for a family in need. This can be done anonymously by using the church as the "middle person."

If you know of an individual or family who is struggling financially discretely give them some cash so they can buy what they need.

This can be done anonymously.

Donate scarves, mitts and hats to the local school.

There are always children who come to school who are not warmly dressed.

The popular program "Shoebboxes for Sailors" is still on hold this year due to COVID-19 concerns. What about adopting the concept and filling "Shoebboxes for Neighbours?" Fill a small box with usable items including gloves, toiletries and candy. There are many people right in the community who would appreciate a little box of surprises. Churches, do you want to start this in your community?

Simple acts of kindness at Christmas will benefit you too. Perhaps the Christmas spirit is waning in you and this is an opportunity to ignite those warm feelings.

Keep Christmas well.

Just a thought: *And it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, all of us!*

Christmas crafts for wee ones Week 1: Santa

Diane Skinner

Making Christmas crafts with your children or grandchildren can be so much fun. Ignore the mess because it is all about having fun and being together. It makes us slow down a bit during a busy time, and that is a good thing!



This craft for a young child can include a discussion about shapes! This Santa is constructed from a circle and a triangle.

Santa Mask

Materials:
Paper plate
Cotton balls
Red construction paper
Red and black marker
Scissors, glue
Method: Some steps will require adult assistance

1. Cut out eye holes.
2. Add glasses, brows and red nose.
3. Trace hat on red construction paper and cut out. Glue on.
4. This is the fun part! Glue cotton balls for beard and one on the hat.

Santa

Materials:
Glitter crafting paper
Red construction paper



Who's got a beard that's long and white? Santa's got a beard that's long and white! (Lyrics from a children's song)

Wiggly eyes
Cotton balls
Scissors, glue
Method:

1. Cut face into a circle.
2. Add triangle hat.
3. Glue on wiggly eyes.
4. Add cotton balls for beard, moustache and hat pom pom.

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Grand River gantry crane: division continues between Quebec and Ottawa

Nelson **Sergerie**,
LJI Journalist

GASPÉ - The issue of the Grand River winter storage and gantry crane still divides Ottawa and Quebec. The two levels of government are maintaining their positions on the file.

Questioned on November 18 on the sidelines of a press conference regarding the Fisheries Fund, Quebec Fisheries Minister, André Lamontagne, is adamant that he wants the project to be financed by the fund.

"We have \$42.8 million, and the goal is to make sure that the money is used in the best possible way. So far, what we have looked at is to use this fund to help us in this project," said the provincial minister.

For her part, Federal Minister Diane Lebovitchillier maintains her position. "As much on the side of those in the industry as on the side of the fishermen, we do not want to modify the criteria. That will be done in the discussions that Mr. Lamontagne will have with Minister Murray (Joyce, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and Coast Guard). They will make their decision," commented Ms. Lebovitchillier.

In January, the fishing community urged Minister Lamontagne to respond to the request for a 60-tonne gantry crane, initiated in 2017 and estimated

at \$2 million. Since then, the dispute between the two governments has remained unresolved.

Quebec Fisheries Fund

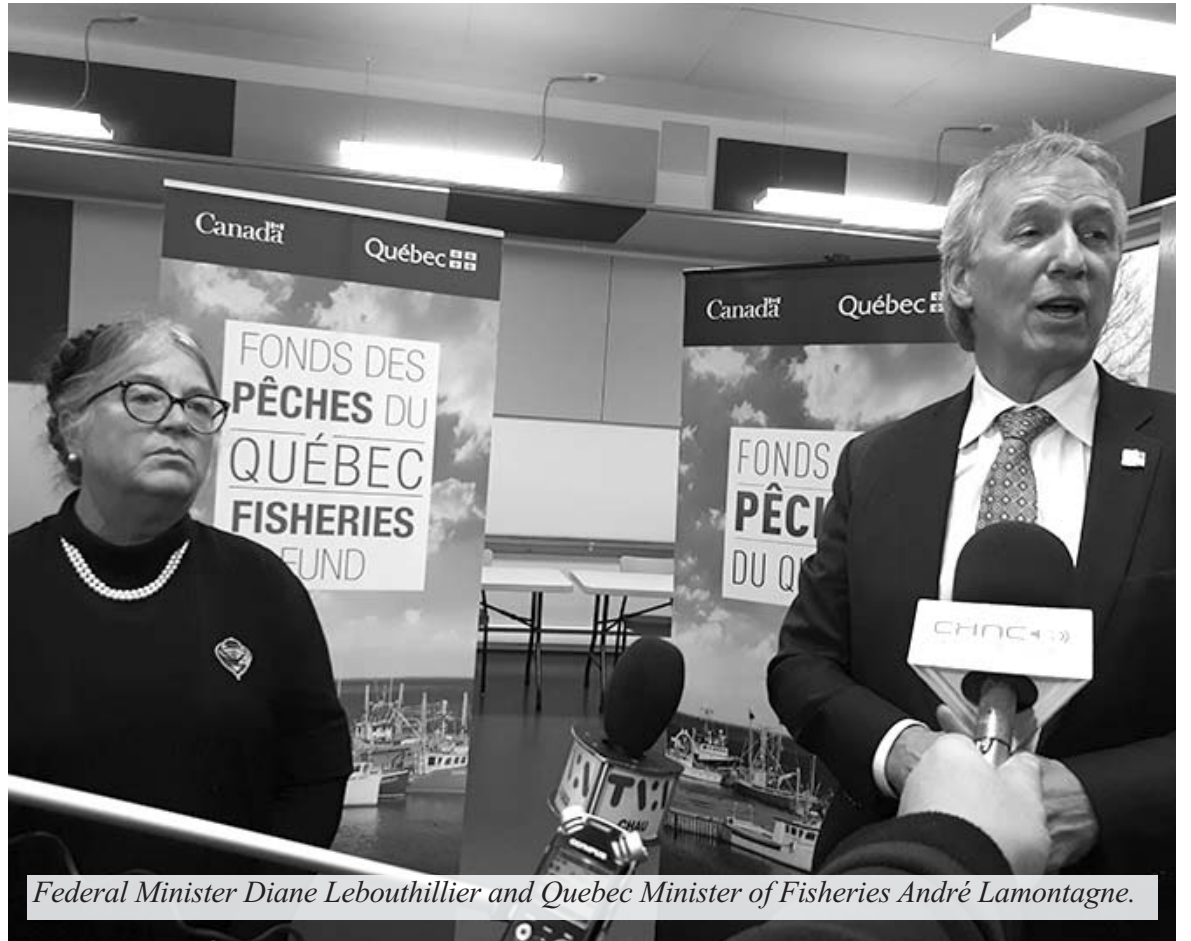
The ministers were present in Rivière-au-Renard to announce a contribution of \$1.3 million for six projects funded through the Quebec Fisheries Fund. The Government of Canada's contribution to these six projects in the Gaspé region is \$895,761, and the Government of Quebec's contribution is \$383,899.

Merinov is receiving more than \$370,000 to develop and test a new generation of fishing gear, equipped with light bait, for the capture of Greenland halibut.

The Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie (RPPSG) is receiving more than \$520,000 to develop a new national logbook by fleet.

9182-7683 Quebec Inc. (Yan Bourdages) is receiving more than \$90,000 to purchase and install a Simrad Trawl Eye monitoring system on the Meridian 66, a shrimp fishing vessel. He will also then receive nearly \$100,000 to purchase and install a Marport M5 monitoring system on board the Amélie-Zoé II, also a shrimp fishing vessel.

Pêcheries Desbois et Filles Inc. will receive also nearly



Federal Minister Diane Lebovitchillier and Quebec Minister of Fisheries André Lamontagne.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

\$100,000 to purchase and install a Marport M5 monitoring system on board Le Royale III, a shrimp fishing vessel.

Pêcheries Mario B. Inc. is receiving more than \$95,000 to purchase and install a Simrad Trawl Eye monitoring system on the Mario B. 1, a shrimp fishing vessel.

Since the start of the Quebec Fisheries Fund in April 24, 2019, to October 15, 2021, 125 funding applications received during this period, 59 projects were approved, for a value of

\$9,196,092 and 15 projects in the ministerial approval process, for a total value of \$2,464,845. The total investment generated by the 59 approved projects amounts to \$20,458,685.

The combined contributions from the federal and provincial governments total an investment of \$42.8 million in the fund over five years.

Help for shipyards

Two shipyards in the Gaspé

will receive assistance from Quebec to develop hybrid and aluminum boats.

Forillon Naval Shipyard in Gaspé will receive \$210,000 to develop diesel-electric technology for ships weighing at least 100 tons. The project is estimated at \$525,000.

Naval Design Newport's FMP will obtain \$195,000 to design and manufacture a small-size aluminum fishing boat prototype incorporating mild hybridization. The total investment is \$487,000.

RAIL:

Cont'd from cover

if it could extend its service eastwards.

"These are big revenues that don't come in for the railroad, since the revenues depend on the tonnage and the distance travelled. There are seven trucks running 24 hours a day between Port-Daniel and New Richmond to load cars that should be in Port Daniel. Other business opportunities are being lost because the railroad is not available east of Caplan. It also worries us about respecting the 2025 reopening target in Gaspé. We are not at a standstill, while waiting for cement and blades, we also have plenty of other projects in the works. Rail is a development tool. The other two MRCs (Percé Rock and Côte-de-Gaspé) have local projects to carry out," emphasizes Éric Dubé.

In May 2017, the Quebec

government finally decided to repair the Matapédia-Gaspé line section, as the elected officials and socio-economic leaders of the Gaspé had been demanding this repair with vigor since 2014. The governments of Jean Charest and Pauline Marois had previously released funds to initiate improvements made necessary by the age of bridges, some dating back to 1890. The Couillard government granted \$100 million in May 2017.

On the eve of the 2019 election campaign, the federal government added \$45.8 million to the equation, an amount dedicated to mitigating the effects of coastal erosion on the railroad.

In February 2020, Transports Québec released an additional \$135 million for the Gaspé Peninsula railway. In August of this year, the amount invested by this ministry since 2017 was \$80 million.



CASA is excited to partner with the Centre d'action bénévole Saint-Siméon-Port-Daniel and the Collectif Aliment-Terre this year for the annual Guignolée.

Your generous donations will be given in the form of food vouchers to individuals and families in need who reside between St. Simeon and Port Daniel.

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Three ways to donate in 2021!

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- Cash donation in person at Collectif Aliment-Terre
- Cheque by mail to Collectif Aliment-Terre, 8-A, Boul. Gérard-D-Levesque E., Paspébiac



Children aged 5 to 11 can now receive COVID vaccination

Nelson **Sergerie**,
LJI Journalist

GASPÉ – On November 24 the campaign to vaccinate children aged 5 to 11 for COVID is now underway in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands public board department is hoping to inoculate a good majority of the 4,725 children in the region.

To achieve this goal, the Integrated Health and Social Services Centre of the region has set-up six vaccination sites, located in Pointe-à-la-Croix, Maria, Paspébiac, Chandler, Gaspé and Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. In addition, mobile clinics could be added, if necessary.

Appointments can be made via the clicsanté.ca site. At the appointment time, children must be accompanied by a consenting parent.

The campaign will begin on December 1 in 45 primary schools in the region. The information will be transmitted directly by the schools and the children who will be vaccinated will have to present a consent

form signed by the parent or legal guardian.

“In the schools, there will be a suitable physical environment with fun decorations for children and activities that will respect health rules,” explains Johanne Méthot, the director of vaccinations at the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre.

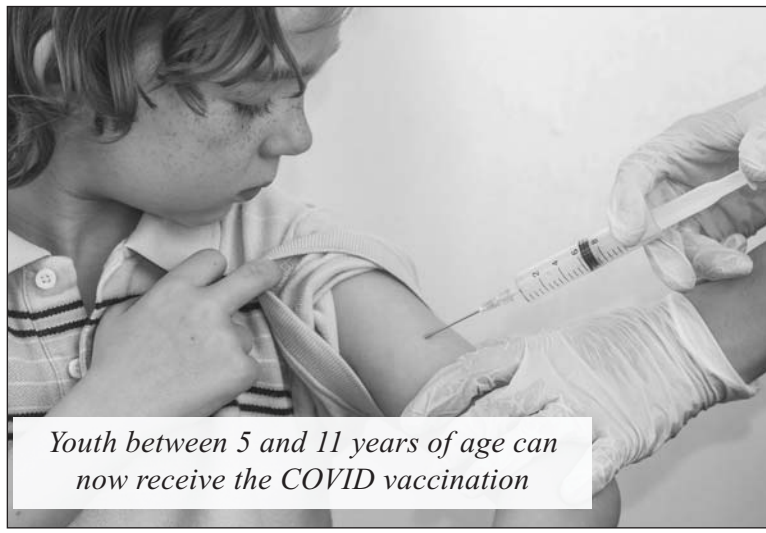
The first dose will be given over the next two weeks and the second will be given towards the end of February in order to respect an eight-week delay between the two injections.

Effective vaccine

According to the Regional Director of Public Health, Dr. Yv Bonnier Viger, studies on 3,000 children have determined that the vaccine is 92% effective after two doses.

“The United States, which has started to vaccinate more widely, has noticed that there are no significant side effects. We are facing a safe vaccine,” says the specialist.

“There are children who



Youth between 5 and 11 years of age can now receive the COVID vaccination

have had COVID who have had discomfort or have had COVID for a long time. It exists. There are children who had to be hospitalized and ended up in intensive care. (...) I have grandchildren of that age. Of course, I would have more desire for them to be vaccinated since it is a safe and effective way to avoid these complications rather than having to go to the hospital to visit them,” he adds, wanting to be reassuring.

Children from the Indigenous communities of Gesgapegiag and Listuguj will also be vaccinated through their community health centres.

Less impact on schools

Schools in the Rocher-Percé MRC were hit by a major wave

of outbreaks this fall.

The specialist points out that the vaccinations would have prevented the closing of classes.

“When we have an infected child, we will see if there are any unvaccinated children who are at risk of being infected as well. It is only these children who will be removed,” says the specialist, following the model that has been applied so far in high schools affected by the virus.

In addition, studies are continuing for vaccination in children under five years of age. The results are expected in early 2022.

Minister Julien reiterates the end of hydrocarbons

Nelson **Sergerie**, LJI

GASPÉ - The court ruled in favour of Gaspé Énergies, which challenged article 23 on the Hydrocarbons Regulations, which prevented it from drilling at the Galt site, near Gaspé.

The company revealed to the daily Le Devoir newspaper on November 18 that it had an interest in resuming oil exploration, but the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources assures us that his government wants to put an end to the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in Quebec, as mentioned in October by the Legault government.

Jonatan Julien used article 23, a provision which prohibits any drilling within 1000 metres of a waterway, to refuse permission to Gaspé Énergies, which was contested by the company which has demonstrated in court that there would be no impact on the environment.

The court ruled that this section of the regulations was not published, which contravenes the Regulations Act.

Jonatan Julien's argument was based on this article to refuse to issue the authorizations.

In Rivière-au-Renard, on November 18, he criticized the Liberals who had not completed the adoption of section 23, however, in September 2018, the then minister, Pierre Moreau, guaranteed that it was a robust bylaw that virtually prevented any project near waterways.

Jonatan Julien continues to analyze the judgment with government lawyers, without saying clearly whether he would appeal the decision.

He says that a law will come that will put an end to hydrocarbons and deal with compensation on licenses granted fairly, compensating companies.

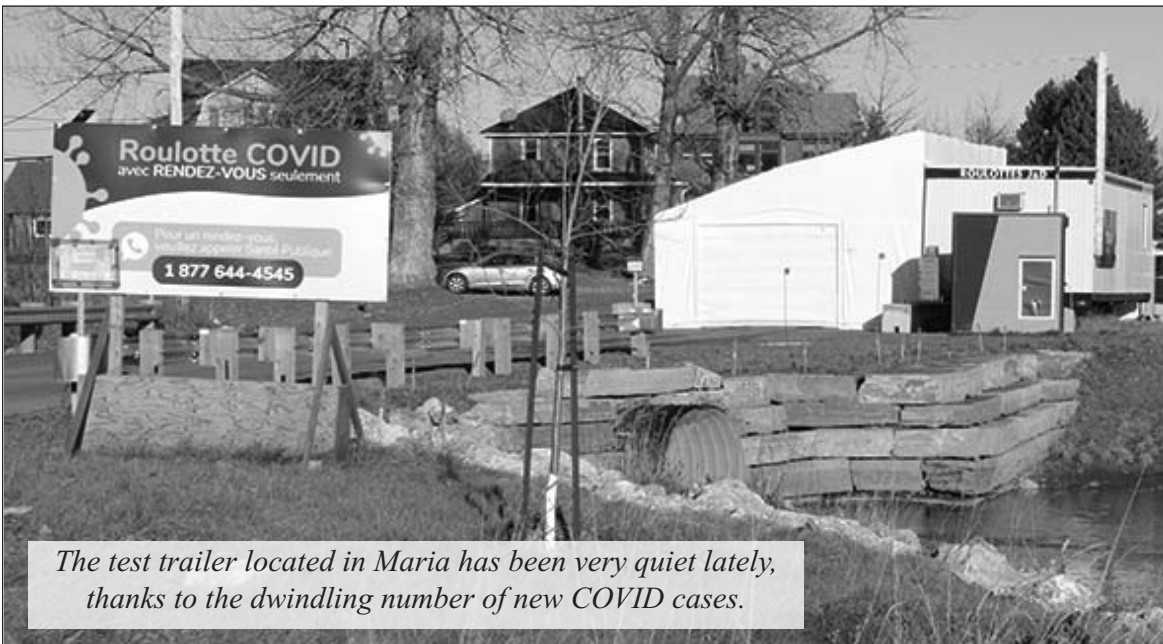
“If we change the legal corpus and come to prevent activities that were previously allowed, we must find a way to compensate on the right basis: then, it will be on the costs that have been incurred. It's fair to do it. We are looking at the different scenarios to be fair and equitable,” explains Julien, who has not advanced on the request to compensate for any theoretical lost profits.

Act quickly

Quebec must use the legislative route quickly to prevent any exploration at the Galt site, according to those involved who have always refused oil exploration in the region.

“I imagine Minister Julien will come up with a Plan B. I'm sure they have investigated the matter. We hope it will be fairly quickly,” reacted Lise Chartrand, president and spokesperson of Ensemble pour l'Avenir durable du Grand Gaspé, the day after the court ruling.

Quebec must move quickly, according to Member of the National Assembly Méganne Perry Mélançon. “The Minister of the Economy said that if the decision was in the company's favour, he would start talks to withdraw public investments. We must move forward with a bill that will put an end to this sector,” said the member for Gaspé. The Parti Québécois is about to table its own bill to this effect.



The test trailer located in Maria has been very quiet lately, thanks to the dwindling number of new COVID cases.

Photo: G. Gagné

COVID-19 numbers continue to decrease in the region

Gilles **Gagné**

MARIA – The number of new COVID cases continued to decrease between November 19 and 26 in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, as only 9 new cases were reported during that period, compared to 13 and 23 over the previous two weeks.

The number of active cases as of November 26 was 12 in the region, compared to 16 at the end of the previous week, 28 two weeks prior to that and 50 at the end of November's first week.

In fact, the fourth week of November would have been

almost exempt of COVID cases had the six cases of November 25 not occurred. Four days were marked by zero coronavirus case, one day by only one and one day by only two.

Geographically, the majority of the week's new cases were in the Avignon MRC, with four, but the other cases were spread all over the region, with two for the Haute-Gaspésie MRC, and one each for the Bonaventure, Percé Rock and Côte-de-Gaspé MRCs.

The Listuguj Mi'gmaq Government reported an outbreak on November 25, with

three new cases but no new case was noticed the following day.

The region's vaccination rate is progressing very slowly. The first dose rate went from 82.8% to 82.9% between November 14 and 21, based on the last numbers available. The booster shot has now been given to 80.8% of the population, compared to 80.6% as of November 14. The provincial rate was standing at 79.8% on November 21 for the first shot, compared to 79.6% a week earlier. It has risen to 77.7% for the booster shot, compared to 77.5% as of November 14.

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NEW CARLISLE:

Christmas Bazaar

December 4: A Christmas Bazaar will be held at the Gilker Residence from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Covid restrictions are in effect. Have your vaccination passport on hand.

NEW CARLISLE:

Christmas Bazaar

December 11: Christmas Bazaar for St. Andrew's Anglican Church from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the New Carlisle High School.

NEW RICHMOND:

St. Andrew's United Church

December 5: White Gift Sunday.

December 12: Angel Tree Sunday - Angels can be bought for \$5 by contacting Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

December 19: Food Bank

Sunday - Bring in your non-perishables for the local food bank.

December 24: Christmas Eve service with communion at 6 p.m.

A warm welcome is extended to all to join us for these special Christmas services.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

Fifty Plus Club

December 4: Christmas craft and Bake sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. You can rent a table for \$10 by calling Linda at 418-392-6950. Grocery Bingo every Tuesday night at 7 p.m.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

Christmas Parade

The 1st Annual Cascapedia-Saint-Jules Christmas Parade will take place on **Saturday, December 4**, at 6 p.m. All floats, decorated vehicles and sponsors are welcome. Please register your float or vehicle with Lisa Cleary by email: lcleary79@gmail.com. Dead-

line for registration is Wednesday, December 1. The parade will end at the Cascapedia Saint Jules Community Centre. Prizes for Best Overall Float, Best Themed Float, Best Costume, Most Christmas Spirit, and Best Ugly Christmas Sweater will be awarded to attendees. Floats are to meet at the corner of Rte 299 and Rue des Ponts, no later than 5:15 p.m. Santa is excited to see everyone in attendance this holiday season.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

Book Room

The book room is once again open on Wednesday afternoons from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. A large selection of books is on hand. For more information, please contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

ROTARY CLUB WINNERS

The winners for the month of November are: Succession

Éric Imhoff, Francis Leblanc, Diane Bujold, Nathalie Pichette, Gisèle Boudreau, Annie Veillette, Johanne Pelletier, Jules Bérubé, Martine Robertson, Mathilde St-Pierre, Donna Fallu, Francis Barriault, Denise Cyr-Gagnon, Paul Goulet, Janique Ouellet, Craig Henderson, Sylvie Boudreau, George Sullivan, Nicole Babin, Jean-Yves Bossé, Pierrette Cyr, André Labrecque, Gilles Pigeon, Eurovia, Jean-François La marche, Georges St-Pierre, Bertin Brière, Fabien Gagné, Johanne Michaud and Ted Meredith.

The winners for the month of December are:

Pamela Dow, Lyne Boissonneault, Jean-Pierre Landry, Catherine Grégoire-C., Jean-François La marche, Gaston Carnavagh, Denis Leblanc, Matériaux St-Charles, Wilson Cochrane, Gaétane Bourdages, Rita Maldemay, Roch Dugas, Réal Cormier, Laval Cyr, Eva Gignac, Charles Greene, George Sullivan, Émilien Rioux, Ken

Duguay, Léon Arsenault, John Leblanc, Manon Guité, Peggy Brimsacle, Catherine Grégoire C., Alban Cyr, Félix Côte, Jean-Sébastien Bourque, Tom Duncan, Gilles Pigeon, Adèle Henry, and Luella Gill.

UNITED CHURCH

Sunday, December 5
2 p.m. Hope Town

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, December 5

New Carlisle

11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Hope Town
10 a.m. Morning Prayer
Shigawake
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, December 5

St. Paul's - Gaspé
9:30 a.m. Morning Prayer

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Christmas cheer?*

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New Carlisle, Quebec, G0C 1Z0
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order online at the thegaspespec.com

Eco-friendly and economical Christmas wrapping

Diane Skinner

After unwrapping gifts on Christmas, you may be one of the many people who looks at the mountain of wrapping, ribbons and bows and other material piled on the floor and feel a twinge of guilt. It's a big mess but a great deal of what we use to wrap gifts is not even recyclable. It goes straight into the garbage and then to a landfill where it sits and sits for many years because it does not break down. More and more people are aware of the impact of all the garbage that impacts the health of the planet. Can we do something about this? Absolutely and it just takes a slightly different approach.

A few small changes can add up to make a big difference:

- Save brown paper bags from the grocery store. They make great rustic looking wrapping and are 100 % recyclable. Stay with the rustic theme and add a sprig of greenery from a coniferous tree, (spruce, pine, cedar, fir, balsam). Those are 100% biodegradable. Wrap with string or raffia to keep the theme!
- Have children decorate the brown paper bags with stamps. For example, cut a half potato and cut into shapes, such as stars, holly leaves and candy canes. Dip into water soluble paint and allow children to create unique wrapping paper.
- Use old maps, calendars, magazines and newspapers for wrapping paper.
- Avoid using foil or metallic



Photo: D. Skinner

To see if gift wrap is recyclable, just crunch it up. If it stays in a ball, it is most likely recyclable, however, tape, bows and ribbon are not recyclable so remove them first.

type wrapping. It cannot be recycled. The metallic foil paper contains plastic! Remember: anything that has glitter, texture or shine cannot go in the recycling.

- Name tags can easily be made from last year's Christmas cards. Simply cut off the front and trim to size.

- Do you sew? Save the scraps to wrap gifts. These can be reused too!

- If you use Christmas bags, just flatten them and reuse them next Christmas.

- Wrap a gift in a beautiful kitchen tea towel. Then the wrapping is part of the gift!

- Reuse the tissue paper, or shredded paper that is inside online orders. Easy. No-cost.

- Use the original box that the gift came in. Simply wrap with those leftover brown paper bags or reusable cloth bags.

- Forget about bows and ribbon – unless you plan to reuse them.

We all want our gifts to look appealing. With a bit of pre-planning and just thinking of Christmas wrapping in a different way, you can achieve that by being eco-friendly and economical. Besides, you may inspire others to be kinder to the environment too.

Impromptu choir welcomes you

Press release

This year, treat yourself to a special moment of your own. Join the Impromptu Choir!

To become part of the choir, you just need a good ear, and a taste for expressing yourself differently, all in great company. By joining the choir, you will also have the chance to be conducted by the incomparable Guy-laine Fournier, who will showcase your talent.

Ready to resume its activities after this long hiatus caused by COVID-19, the regional classical singing Impromptu Choir is looking for new voices to join the ranks of its choristers. Rehearsals will begin in January 2022, Thursdays, at 7:30 p.m., in Bonaventure.

Come and discover classic pieces, from Gilles Vigneault's Grand Mass to Vivaldi's Gloria, as well as several other works that will make up the next show scheduled for fall 2022. These songs will undoubtedly appeal to the ear. In this, we join the primary mission of Impromptu, which is to highlight the classical repertoire through choral singing, to make it known to the people of Gaspé.

Does your son or daughter love to sing or maybe your boyfriend pelts out the greatest hits in the shower? Let us know if you're interested in joining a dynamic



group by contacting Mr. Louis Roy at louisroy57@gmail.com or at the phone number 418 392 6316.

The Impromptu Choir was founded in 1991 in Paspébiac. Since that time, many shows and beautiful projects have been carried out.

Indeed, the choir has performed in Montreal as well as in several municipalities in eastern Quebec and in New Brunswick.

From Christmas concerts to orchestral collaborations, the range of pieces repertoire over the years is rich and varied.

A repertoire of classical music, old music, traditional folk songs... characterizes the choir.

Come live a different experience with us. You just have to love classical music and love to sing.

The choir holds its activities in Bonaventure and brings together choristers from all over the Bay of Chaleur. Come sing with us.

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