

# Shigawake's Jennifer Hayes becomes the first woman to preside over the Canadian Dairy Commission

SHIGAWAKE: – On December 23, Jennifer Hayes, a dairy and beef farmer based in Shigawake, became the first woman to hold the chairperson position of the Canadian Dairy Commission.

Gilles Gagné

Her nomination was announced on January 4 by Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Marie-Claude Bibeau. Ms. Hayes begins a four-year term. She was first appointed to the Canadian Dairy Commission in January 2017 in the role of commissioner, a position she held until the end of 2021.

When asked if it is rather surprising that she becomes the first woman to preside over the Canadian Dairy Commission, her response was: "It is and it isn't surprising. In Quebec, so many women are engaged in farming but women haven't traditionally come forward to apply for those positions."

"It is timely. It is the benefit of the whole UPA structure. Women take their place at the table and hold their place. There are powerhouses in that structure. It took more time in Canada, but more women are taking their place there as well now," she adds. Jennifer Hayes co-owns PineCrest Farms with her father Garry and her uncle Joey. She is part of the third generation of the Hayeses to farm on that property. She holds a master's degree in business administration from Concordia University. She obtained that degree after successfully finishing general studies in English literature, history and geography. Her extensive governance experience, which she obtained through her active participation with the Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA), defending regional interests in dairy, beef and agricultural development, was mentioned by Minister Bibeau upon the announcement of her nomination at the Canadian Dairy

Commission.

"I am confident that she will continue to be an asset to the commission and help the industry remain competitive, productive and innovative," mentioned Agriculture Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau.

The Canadian Dairy Commission is a public corporation established in 1966 with the mandate of coordinating federal and provincial dairy policies. Its board of directors is appointed by the Governor in Council upon the recommendation of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Jennifer Hayes' previous role as a commissioner pertained to the financial aspects of the Canadian Dairy Commission and the organization's partners. She analyzed how different developments affected the bottom line of the organization.

"As president of the Canadian Dairy Commission, I am the face of the organization. I have to ensure that government structures are in place.  $(\dots)$  I have to defend the integrity of our office and the minister's office, at the same time. I have to collaborate with our stakeholders and make sure that all the issues are well understood. It is a little more demanding and busier. We have not experienced a lot of quiet times over the last few years in the dairy industry," she explains. Jennifer Hayes is the mother of two daughters, aged 13 and 10. She came back to the Gaspé Peninsula after a long stay in Montreal, mostly for her studies. "I returned to the farm in 2005, from Montreal, where I had spent 10 years. I never found my place in the city. At one point, I was telling myself: do I really have to cross that bridge? I have a wonderful option in the Gaspé Peninsula," she remembers.



Photo: Dave Felker

Jennifer Hayes is now president of the Canadian Dairy Commission.

2013 and 2019 as a staff member, mainly concentrating in the revitalization of communities.

"I am still involved, but not as a member of their staff. I collaborate with community organizations and municipalities, with business plans and community development," she says.

In 2019, when the chairperson position became available at the Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC), she applied for it. She was not selected then but her candidacy was far from forgotten as a second opportunity occurred in 2021. "My name was retained from the original batch and I was asked if I was still interested and I was. I am sure I was not alone. The process is managed by the Agriculture Minister's office. It is external to the CDC," specifies Ms. Hayes.

demic. That has changed. My first face-to-face meeting took place in December in New Brunswick. (...) The dairy industry is no different than any other industry. We are pushed to use online tools. However, you need that human connection. The human factor is still important," she states, adding that finding a balance will eventually be the goal.

On January 4, Canada lost a decision made by a trade panel that stated Canada violated a trade accord with the United States and Mexico by reserving most of its preferential dairy tariff-rate quotas for Canadian processors. Jennifer Hayes, like other Canadian analysts of the situation, is not so sure that the country lost that clearly. "One thing that stands out from the decision is that it comes in full support of the supply management system. The case also provides a good example about how the CDC works for the industry. The role we will play in this issue is to provide the data and make sure that all the stakeholders understand all the details of the issues we are working on. Often, we are not the decision makers, but we are the moderators and facilitators of the industry. Supply management was put in place by the federal government in the 1960s while agriculture was of provincial jurisdiction. We have to make sure that the information is aggregated and communicated clearly to the stakeholders and the Department of Agriculture," she points out.

When asked to explain her capacity to deal with all her roles, professionally and personally, she replies quickly.

"At the Canadian Dairy Commission, the office has 80 individuals, and expertise in many fields. It is the greatest group of people to work with (...) Honestly, I love what I am doing, like working with community organizations. It charges my batteries. I like challenges, I like getting results and being able to say afterwards that we did it. I have a supportive family. Without the family members, I wouldn't have been able to do everything," she insists.

As if dairy farming and raising children were not enough, she worked in economic development for the Bonaventure MRC between She will have to travel a bit with her new position, but the pandemic is also curtailing that aspect of her responsibilities.

"Commissioners were travelling before the pan-

# THEGASPESPEC.COM

# COMMERCIAL FISHERIES: A year of records in landings value

#### Gilles Gagné

SAINTE-THÉRÈSE-DE-GASPÉ - The value of all Quebec seafood landings reached an all-time high in 2021, with \$439 million. The record stems from higher prices for the two dominant products, snow crab and lobster, two species that brought in just over 87% of Quebec's total revenues for commercial fishermen.

This is the first time that the province's fishermen have exceeded the \$400 million threshold, says economist Ali Magassouba of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The previous record was set at \$388 million in 2017. So that's a jump of at least \$51 million more, because the statistic of \$439.3 million is still preliminary. It dates from a mid-November report and data remained to be compiled at the time. In addition, some shrimp boats were still active at that time.

Fishermen reached this year's record value despite an 8% decrease in the total volume of landings. That volume stood at 42,415 metric tonnes in mid-November.

"Before, we were talking about the three major species: snow crab, lobster and shrimp. Now we can talk about the two major species, since the value of lobster and crab represented a little more than 87% of the value of all Quebec marine landings," specifies Mr. Magassouba.

The fishermen were able to make up for the losses incurred during the year 2020 and its spring, characterized by the enormous uncertainty that the dawn of the pandemic posed on the economy at the time. In 2020, the value of Quebec landings reached \$271.3 million, the first time since 2016 that it was below \$350 million per year. The lobster, snow crab and shrimp prices remained low in 2020. The value of the catch in 2021 represents "a 62% increase over 2020, due to prices. We lived through a 2020 year affected by COVID, when hotels, restaurants, stadiums, casinos and cruise ships were closed for a long time. We expected a rebound this year, but it was more than a rebound. This is a 15% increase in the value of landings compared to the pre-pandemic year, namely 2019," notes Mr. Magassouba. "The scarcity of some products plus difficulties in the supply chain have pushed prices up. Page 2, January 12, 2022 - Spec

There was a lot of new money in benefit programs and in the capital markets.With the support of central banks, hundreds, if not thousands of billions of dollars, have come from governments around the world. This money ends up in the general economy. All sectors end up being influenced by those funds. For online products, the adjustment is easier, but when it comes to fish and wood, with an effect of scarcity; it creates upward pressure," says Mr. Magassouba.

In comparison by maritime sector, Gaspé Peninsula fishermen collectively generated the highest income in Quebec in 2021, with landings of \$199.4 million, all species combined. Their colleagues from the Magdalen Islands finished in second place, with \$138 million, well ahead of the \$84 million from the North Shore. Fishermen from the Lower Saint Lawrence region landed seafood worth \$17.8 million, mostly snow crab.

As for the overall volume of the catches, Gaspesians also came first with landings of 23,687 metric tonnes, that is to say 56% of the Quebec total, while the fishermen of the Magdalen Islands delivered 9,226 metric tons of seafood, or 21.75% of the total. The North Shore fishermen delivered 9,502 tonnes to processing plants in Quebec, for 22.4% of the total tonnage.

The landings associated with Anticosti Island consist essentially of lobster catches and are statistically distributed in three maritime sectors: the Gaspé Peninsula, the North Shore and the Magdalen Islands. Those landings totalled 892 metric tonnes and \$17.7 million in 2021.

# Lobster and snow crab



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After a successful fishing season in Quebec in 2021, preparations will soon get underway for the upcoming season.

off for five years, including 2021 with \$24 million. This is actually less than the value of each of the past five years, particularly the \$49 million sum in 2016.

"Even the shrimp has become almost marginal. It remains in third place of all species, in terms of landings, but groundfish is not far behind. The value of shrimp landings now represents 5% of the Quebec total, but five years ago it was 13% and it has already been 20-25%. This is partly due to the fact that the quantities have fallen, but mainly because the value of lobster has improved significantly, the quantities and prices being better than ever," Ali Magassouba analyzes.

In 2021, groundfish catches delivered to Quebec surpassed those of 2020, with 2,665 met-

ric tonnes, an increase of 5%. The value of these catches, \$16 million, is an increase of 26% from the \$12.7 million in 2020. "The share of Atlantic halibut in all groundfish increased from 50 to 55% between 2020 and 2021. That of turbot has decreased from 33 to 28%. The two species together represent more than 80% of groundfish, in terms of value," explains Mr. Magassouba.

Almost 30 years after the cod moratorium in 1993, that stock is not recovering and the value of its catches remains below \$1 million annually. In 2021, cod catches were only worth \$700,000 in Quebec, mostly concentrated in the Lower North Shore.

In 2021, landings of molluscs and echinoderms, like sea urchins and sea cucumbers, were similar to those of 2020. They increased by 1%, to 3,603 metric tonnes. The increase in revenues, at 9%, from \$8.9 million to \$9.7 million, was more significant. The sea urchin accounts for 36% or \$3.4 million of that value.

As for the catches of pelagic fish such as herring, mackerel and capelin, they continue their slow decline, to decrease by 25%, to 4,277 metric tonnes in 2021, compared to 5,700 tonnes in 2020. This is the lowest volume landed since 2016 inclusively. The value of those catches also follows a downward curve, with a drop of 14% being observed, with a total of \$2.8 million, compared to \$3.2 million in 2020. Since that downward curve is not as sharp as that of the volume, the prices paid to the fishermen were slightly better in 2021 than in 2020.

# Finally, there's progress on the reconstruction of Highway 132 in Carleton-sur-Mer

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

#### dominate

For a second year in a row, snow crab, which traditionally sits at the top of the species in terms of landings value, gave way to lobster. The value of lobster catches has jumped from \$115 million in 2020 to \$202 million in 2021, including a whopping \$104.4 million in the Magdalen Islands alone. The value of snow crab catches nonetheless reached \$183 million in 2021, compared to \$105 million in 2020. The record for this species came in 2017, thanks to catches worth \$210 million.

Revenues associated with shrimp landings have leveled

CARLETON-SUR-MER - An important phase in a project that has been in the works for more than 10 years is about to begin. The reconstruction project of Highway 132 on the majority of the urban perimeter in Carleton-sur-Mer was due to be presented last fall and will finally be looked at by the ministerial committee. In April, that committee will look at major projects in Quebec.

The mayor, Mathieu Lapointe, specifies that the project has been increasingly active for more than a year and that the issues at the technical level that delayed its development have been withdrawn from the file by Quebec. This will allow the project to progress.

"What is important is to be accepted by the ministerial approval committee. Our case is strong. We know that it is a priority for the teams in Rimouski, whereas it is one of the three priority files in Lower Saint Lawrence-Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands. We are confident for the future," says the mayor.

The project was estimated at \$10 million 10 years ago. The mayor isn't commenting on the costs, since the new estimates are not complete, but he had previously mentioned a bill between \$10 million and \$20 million. The work involves replacing the end-of-life aqueduct and sewer pipes.

The Town does not have a precise estimate of the additional costs to repair the breakdowns on the two dilapidated networks.

The project also involves redeveloping the highway between rue du Quai and rue de la Fabrique.

# Second murder trial for Johanne Johnson is cancelled *Police abused procedures*

Gilles Gagné

PERCÉ - Superior Court Judge Carl Thibault freed Johanne Johnson of the charges of murder without premeditation. In a voluminous judgment, the judge specifies that the police officers participating in the undercover investigation to make Ms. Johnson admit the murder of her husband, James Dubé, abused procedure.

The murder dates back to April 30, 1998. It took place in the Grand River family home.

When one of his daughters came from school, she found her father, James Dube, with a bullet in his head. Being a lobster fisherman, James had to get up early. He used to lie down on the living room couch when he got back from the wharf and it was on this couch that he was found dead.

Now 61, Johanne Johnson was not charged until June 2013, after the undercover investigation, which began in December 2012. She was living in Rivière-du-Loup at the time. Originally charged with premeditated murder, she was found guilty of murder without premeditation in April 2016 by a jury of 12 people.

She was then given a life sentence without the possibility of parole for 11 years. However, she was granted a second trial in August 2020 by the Court of Appeal. As a result, Defence Attorney Rodrigue Beauchesne obtained Johanne Johnson's release after serving four years and three months in prison.

According to the Court of Appeal, the April 2016 Trial Judge Michele Lacroix erred in law when she gave her instructions to the jury, in part because those instructions placed too much weight on the testimony of the couple's youngest daughter. That daughter felt animosity towards her mother, who was a victim of domestic violence before the homicide. The second trial began on March 15, 2021, with the hearing of the "preliminary requests," also called voirdire, a step aimed at reviewing the validity of the evidence before the actual testimonies. On April 15, at the conclusion of that stage,



Johanne Johnson, shown here on trial in April 2016, is free of the charges of murder without premeditation first laid against her in June 2013. She cried when she heard Justice Thibault's conclusion. She was released from prison in August 2020, following the Court of Appeal's ruling granting her a second trial.

Judge Thibault deliberated..

The trial was scheduled to resume on October 4, but the judge informed the prosecution and the defense that he did not consider the undercover evidence admissible, in anticipation of hearing witnesses. However, Judge Thibault did not explain the reasons behind his decision, which he made on December 21 at the Percé courthouse.

# Undercover methods prejudicial to the accused

In a 284-page decision, Judge Thibault specifies that the undercover police officers carried out an abuse of procedure by telling Johanne Johnson that she would lose her financial stability and that she would not see her grandchildren again if she did not say the whole truth about the murder of James Dubé.

The judge also noted that Ms. Johnson had previously suffered from financial insecurity, declaring personal bankruptcy in 2007. She had also experienced gambling problems. Undercover police officers also told her that a "big job" was imminent, and that the job was likely to net her \$50,000. The police even said there could be more than one such "big job" over the course of the coming year. In principle, a Mister Big type investigation is not supposed to radically change the financial status of the "target," Johanne Johnson in this case.

mous police officers gradually integrated Johanne Johnson into a fictitious criminal organization dealing, among other things, with the transport of documents and allegedly stolen material.

They ran 51 scenarios between that date and the arrest on June 19, 2013, the day of the confession. During the confession, she met Mister Big, the boss supposedly powerful enough to be able to "erase" her problems, in her case the murder of James Dubé. At that time, the undercover police officers and Ms. Johnson were staying in some the Pin Rouges cottages in New Richmond. She was arrested after stopping at Dépanneur de la Rivière, along Saint-Edgar Road, about one kilometre from the Highway 132 junction.

In his written decision, Judge Thibault further recalls that the police maintained a climate of violence during the six months of the undercover investigation. Although this violence was not directed at Ms. Johnson's place, the accused had been hospitalized because of domestic violence while she was living with James Dubé. On one occasion during their years together, she suffered а fractured collarbone, an injury that was still causing pain to her years later despite a hospitalization period of over a month.

# Police report

Karine Rioux, 34, of Gaspé, faces two criminal charges following the December 16 accident that claimed the life of Patrick Donovan, 63, also of Gaspé. The woman is charged with one count of impaired driving causing death and one count of driving with more than 80 milligrams of alcohol in her blood. The driver, who struck the victim, on Gaspé Boulevard at the end of the day on December 16, was released under several conditions including a ban on driving and consuming alcohol. The appearance was very short on the afternoon of December 17 at the Percé courthouse. The accused will return to court on January 24.

Quebec Court Judge Janick Poirier sent Brandon Metallic, 29, charged with non-premeditated double murder, for a psychiatric assessment to verify if he is fit to stand trial. This decision by Judge Poirier may come as a surprise, since the Administrative Tribunal of Quebec ruled on December 16 that the Listuguj man was fit to stand trial. However, as the Mental Disorders Review Commission of the Administrative Tribunal of Quebec does not have the jurisdiction to judge in place of the Quebec Court, Judge Poirier preferred to verify once again whether Brandon Metallic is indeed fit to stand trial. This assessment will be relatively short since the accused will return to court on January 13. A new report should then be ready. Since June 7, Brandon Metallic has undergone a lengthy psychiatric evaluation and treatment in order for him to be able to stand trial. He is charged with the murder of a young girl and a man in his early twenties. This murder happened on May 15 and the charges were laid the following day.

Incarcerated since March 18 for domestic violence, David Guy, 37, of Maria, faces a new charge. According to the criminal prosecutor, the suspect broke one of his conditions by attempting to contact someone involved in the case, which he was prohibited from doing. David Guy is suspected of having committed an assault with a weapon as well as uttering death threats and causing bodily harm to his wife and three other people. In the case of his former wife, his actions allegedly took place over 17 years, between 2004 and 2021. The man is suspected of having hit his former wife in the head with a hammer on March 17, 2021. She was hospitalized that day after fleeing the house. As the SPEC was reaching its January 7 deadline, the accused was expected to return to court on January 10. The new defence attorney is awaiting evidence from David Guy's ex-prosecutor, Hugo Caissy, who withdrew from this case. David Guy is also accused of assault which injured, mutilated and disfigured his wife and put her life in danger.

A psychiatrist will assess the mental state of a former Oblate Father who is accused of sexually assaulting a minor in New Richmond in the 1980s. Jean-Guy Lavoie is accused of having committed sodomy on a victim who was 15 years old at the time of the first alleged facts. The alleged actions date back to a period that spanned between January 1983 and November 1986. The man is also charged with gross indecency and sexual assault during the same period. The case was heard at the New Carlisle courthouse. On December 14, the 89-year-old defendant who resides in Chambly, appeared by videoconference alongside his lawyer, Simon Chartier. At the request of the defence, Quebec Court Judge Celestina Almeida ordered a psychiatric assessment of the accused. This evaluation will be done at the CISSS du Haut-Richelieu, very close to Jean-Guy Lavoie's place of residence.

From the moment the undercover investigation began on December 6, 2012, anonyThe judge concluded that "the prejudicial effect of the evidence admission here

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The purpose of this assessment is to determine if he is fit to stand trial, explains Florence Frappier-Routhier, criminal and penal prosecutor. The goal is to ensure that the accused will have access to a fair trial and a fair defence. As the SPEC was reaching its January 7 deadline, the accused was to return to court on January 10, as his assessment should be completed. On December 14, before the judge, Jean-Guy Lavoie had difficulty following the directive of his lawyer when asked to give his full name. The address on his driver's license still matched that of the Missionary Oblates of Quebec in Trois-Rivières a year ago. He was arrested in Marieville in the Montérégie region on December 8, 2020, and first appeared at the New Carlisle courthouse on January 12, 2021.

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# **Editorial** page

Gilles Gagné

# Commentary



# Vaccination - food for thought

Since mid-December, the COVID pandemic has developed into another giant nightmare. As of January 7, 2,000 people were hospitalized in Quebec due to the coronavirus and 20,000 health sector employees were sidelined because they contracted COVID.

The situation is so chaotic that the population was asked to refrain from getting tested in the designated testing centres put in place in the spring of 2020 by the Health Ministry. The reason comes from a shortage of testing supplies. You can only go for a test if you have symptoms and, even in that case, recommendations change by the day and you might be told to stay home unless you get really sick and require hospitalization.

The absence of 20,000 health employees in the context of an already present shortage of staff threatens an already precarious balance in Quebec hospitals. The same context prevails elsewhere in the country.

On January 7 still, Quebec Health Minister Christian Dubé authorized hospitals to cancel 80% of the surgeries scheduled for the coming days, maybe weeks. The reason is simple. The number of beds in intensive care units can no longer greet everybody requiring that type of care.

Maybe a specialist can better explain what Minister Dubé has been trying to get across for weeks.

Doctor Mathieu Simon runs the intensive care and pneumology unit of Quebec City's Cardiology Institute. On January 5, the number of patients doubled in his unit. He sees two types of COVID patients, non-vaccinated youths who are extremely sick and much older people, in the latter case extremely vulnerable people like the patients who were most affected during the first COVID wave of March, April and May 2020.

Some of the sick youth have refused to get vaccinated. Most of the elderly patients are vaccinated. The

## Emma **Buckley**

## **Guest Commentary**



# All creatures great and small

"You're from Australia!" exclaimed the nurse who was taking my blood pressure, "I would love to go, but I'm terrified of spiders."

You'd be surprised how often I've heard this phrase since moving to Canada. Sometimes the object of terror is snakes, sometimes it's sharks. It's got me thinking about how irrational our fears are. A recent study from the country of my birth revealed that more Australians were killed in recent years by horses than by all the country's venomous creatures put together. Spider antivenom has proved to be a literal lifesaver: the last recorded death by spider bite was in 1979. (Of course, the number of deaths from animals is tiny compared to all the other potential dangers that hide in plain sight, from cars and stepladders to cigarettes and fatty foods.) Poor spiders have to coexist with a human race that prefers its animals cute and cuddly. Having eight eyes does not guarantee popularity, it seems. Strange-looking they may be, but spiders are also a resilient life form that has been evolving for more than 300 million years. Like all insects, they form a vital link in the delicate ecological chain. Like most insects, their numbers are declining worldwide due to, amongst other things, intensive agriculture, habitat loss and climate change. Spiders are a vital food source for birds, reptiles and amphibians. Their loss has huge consequences for entire ecosystems.

latter have often been infected, directly or indirectly, by the youth. That context creates the "perfect storm," to use Dr. Simon's words.

On paper, there are 800 intensive care beds in Quebec. The fact that 20,000 health employees sidelined by the COVID-19 cuts that capacity to 600 beds.

Currently, about 200 of those beds are taken by COVID patients. While the Omicron variant seriously affects a smaller proportion of the infected people, roughly one third of those who would have been hospitalized during the first wave of 2020, one would think that the situation is under control.

Dr. Mathieu Simon knows otherwise. The problem stems from the fact that Omicron affects at least four times more people than the first forms of the coronavirus. Four times one third makes more than one. So, the current situation is potentially much more serious than the context of the spring of 2020.

The only factor preventing Quebec from experiencing a worse scenario in its intensive care units is the fact that 85% of the population has received the first two shots and seems to be willing to get the third shot as soon as possible. That's why no more than 200 intensive care unit beds were occupied by COVID patients as of January 5.

However, Dr. Simon knew then that he and the rest of Quebec's health care staff were sitting on a potential time bomb. During the first four waves of the pandemic, there was generally a period of two weeks between the first signs of outbreaks and an increase in the number of hospitalizations. The Omicron variant has cut that period to three days. That's why he was so worried about the coming days.

The 200 cases in intensive care units in January could mean 500 cases 10 days later. The problem with the COVID patient is that they usually stay between 10 and 12 days under intensive care. As Mathieu Simon explains, one COVID patient occupying an intensive care bed prevents 10 to 12 people from getting important surgeries such as a heart artery bypass or cancer tumor removals. Such cases generally require no more than one day of intensive care, he says.

Negligent people failing to get vaccinated only force health decision-makers to carry out difficult arbitration choices. What do you do when the victim of a serious

When I was young, we sometimes had surprise, rainy-day visits from a type of large, leggy spider known as a huntsman. Huntsman spiders are fearsome looking, but they are timid and generally harmless (bar the negative cardiac effect of witnessing one scurry across your car dashboard). Huntsman spiders don't spin webs to trap their food, but instead run it down with a lightning fast, crab-like motion. (The golden huntsman can achieve speeds of up to 30 body lengths per second; clearly leaving Usain Bolt's five-body lengths per second in the dust). Another type, the social huntsman, is highly unusual in that it lives in large family groups (spiders are generally solitary), sharing food amongst themselves and devoting more time to child raising. Huntsman spiders are useful as well as fascinating: providing natural road accident needs hospitalization in a unit already full of COVID patients?

Some people would be willing to decide that the nonvaccinated COVID patient should get unplugged. Our system, however, has not worked and still is not working that way. We treat lung cancer cases of people who have smoked all their lives, for example.

People refusing to get vaccinated should sit down and think. Here is a bit of food for thought. A high number of surgeries has been delayed over the last 22 months due to the pandemic. Some of those not-so-urgent surgeries of April 2020, called "elective surgeries" in the health system, have now become unavoidable. A certain number of people have already died because of the system's incapacity to deal with the pandemic and their cases.

The health care staff members are exhausted. They are also sick in many cases and, in the short term, there are very few signs indicating that the context will improve. That exhaustion understandably leads to cynicism within their ranks. Doctors, nurses and caregivers are under the impression that they are the only ones making sacrifices, even if they are not.

Close to 90% of the Quebec population has opted for vaccination, often with reluctance, but most people understand the consequences of letting the COVID-19 take control of our daily lives. Many people have sacrificed a normal social life, family gatherings and a wide range of their favourite activities over the last 22 months. As Dr. Mathieu Simon puts it, the Omicron variant could be the last transitional step between the current chaos and a sickness we will more easily be able to deal and live with.

The goal of vaccination is to take care of the people who are supposed to take care of us.

It is perfectly legitimate to hate pharmaceutical companies. They are often run by greedy managers. However, the short-term goal has very little to do with conspiracy, pharmaceutical greed, government control or whatever theory anti-vaxxers come up with. The short-term goal is to regain a degree of normalcy in our society, for the sake of all cross sections of the population. That's the kind of food for thought experts like Dr. Mathieu Simon want people to reflect upon, whether they are vaccinated or not.

Besides, they've thrived on this planet for so long - so much longer than we have – that they must be a fairly remarkable life-form.

Back at the hospital, I did my best to convince the nurse that if she ever visited Australia and exercised some caution, she had nothing to fear from spiders.

Sadly, they have much to fear from us.

\*Some common safety tips: shake out your shoes before putting them on and don't put your hands into rock or wood piles (spiders); stay on the path and tread heavily when bushwalking (snakes); and when swimming at the beach, don't swim at dusk or go out too far (sharks).

and effective pest control as they slurp down their preferred treats of mosquitoes, cockroaches and flies.

I clearly remember the childhood incident that turned me into a spider advocate. It was nighttime and I was getting ready for bed when a large huntsman materialized on my bedroom wall. I screamed and my sister raced in armed with a can of insect spray which we unleashed onto the poor thing. It fell to the floor then started valiantly climbing a curtain in search of safety, all the while getting slower and slower, like a toy with dying batteries. My sister knocked the spider off the curtain, then gave it two hefty whacks with my running shoe, leaving a disturbingly large, oozing mess on the floor. I was traumatized by the poor spider's bloody end and horrified by our ruthlessness. I vowed to not harm another spider again if I could help it.

Afterwards I opted for long handled brooms rather than running shoes to get spiders out of my room. I see them now as fellow creatures with their unique and valuable place in the grand, mysterious scheme of things.

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# New Richmond to increase taxes by \$50 per house, on average

#### Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – Inflation played a significant role in the Town of New Richmond council's decision to increase the municipal tax bill for 2022. The town administration had to raise its garbage and recycling fees, as well as its municipal tax rate, in order to cope with inflation. As a result, the owner of a house valued \$161,526, the local average, will pay \$50.17 more in 2022 than in 2021.

The total average bill will reach \$2,617.30 instead of \$2,567.13 a year ago. That 1.95% hike is significantly less than the cost of living increase points out Mayor Éric Dubé. The major part of that hike, namely 1.80%, comes from the municipal tax, while the rest stems from a 6% garbage and recyclable materials tariff adjustments.

"In the current inflationary context, we are pleased with this result. I would also like to remind you that 2021 was marked by a tax rate freeze, in order to favour a large proportion of citizens, in the context of the new real estate assessment role," pointed out Mr. Dubé during his December 20 budget speech.

The municipal council adopted that night a balanced budget of \$8,477,085. It represents an important drop of the total amount, considering that in 2021, the proposed budget reached \$9,262,575. It was \$785,490 more than this year in the revenue column, the main reason being the end of a multi-year conditional payment coming from the Quebec government and linked to the water and sewerage works carried out along Perron Boulevard 12 years ago.

In the expense column, the end of the reimbursement of the Town of New Richmond loan tied to that project also reduced the municipal debt load, as the "debt subsidized by the government" budgetary item went from \$1,572,415 to \$462,973.

Overall, New Richmond's total amount earmarked for its debt went from \$3,117,897 in 2021 to \$2,036,940 in 2022. Those latter amounts include the budgetary item called "debt, temporary financing fees (of the) operating fund," which will slightly increase from \$1,545,482 to \$1,573,967 between last year and this year.

## Expense increases

"Even though we made strides on many levels over the past year, the impacts of this pandemic and the subsequent uncertainty remain evident. The effects of inflation are real and directly affect our finances and that of our citizens on a daily basis. We had to use discernment in order to minimize the negative effects caused by this situation. However, it is impossible to sit back and deny the facts: the marked increase in the cost of living is very real and has repercussions in all our departments," added Mayor Dubé in his speech.

The budget earmarked for municipal roads necessitated an increment of almost \$89,000 in 2022, an increase of 7%, at \$1,302,041. The portion going to the road network amounts to \$832,292, a 9% hike, while the snow removal item amounts to \$406,917, an increase of 5%.

"The situation is more complicated regarding the town's insurance costs. This market is currently in a state of upheaval. The increase in construction costs and the multiplication of natural catastrophes have resulted in increasing premiums to \$181,729 in 2022. The increase for this expense between 2021 and 2022 totals \$55,000, or 45%! We must not forget that this expenditure has steadily increased over recent years. For comparative purposes, in 2019, the cost was \$79,957," said Mayor Dubé on December 20.

## Cuts

In order to cope with inflation, the municipal council made cuts in certain cost items. The budget for economic development will be reduced by almost \$61,000 in 2022, from \$385,619 to \$324,752. This budget expense includes the sums required for the debt service of the Little Cascapedia Regional Park, \$150 000 annually, and the New Richmond Economic Development Society, \$82,000 per year, used to pay the debt tied to the industrial park building now owned by LFG Construction.

"We have finished paying the debt of the Summer Festival (which took place between 2010 and 2012). That budgetary item is mainly used to pay old debts. The infrastructure budget is not included in economic development. I have a small discretionary budget I use to organize small events at Taylor Point or to support the Bluegrass Festival and other small events in need of support. I have not curtailed any economic development efforts over the last eight years because our economic development budget is used to pay old debts. Infrastructure projects are moving forward because the money comes from other budgetary items," explains Éric Dubé.

The Town of New Richmond tabled a compulsory 2022-2024 three-year infrastructure plan. It includes several projects for a total value of \$9,381,000. That plan relied heavily on federal and provincial subsidies. Several projects were placed in that plan, including the repair of the arena and the municipal garage. Work is underway at the arena.

## **Revenue increase**

This year, the Town of New Richmond budgeted \$250,000 in the revenue column linked to wind energy rovalties. compared to \$230,000 in 2021. That money comes from New Richmond's participation in the wind farms owned by the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands' Intermunicipal Energy Board and the Venterre wind farms, partly located in the limits of the town.

"Our participation in the Intermunicipal Energy Board provides us with slightly over \$220,000 now, with the rest coming from Venterre. It was \$120,000 when New Richmond joined the Board in 2014. It was one of my first moves after being elected. Our director general at the town, Stéphane Cyr, was telling me the other day as we were preparing the budget how complicated it would be to make ends meet without that money and he is right," says the mayor.

Éric Dubé affirms that the future looks bright for New Richmond.

"The 2021 year was prosperous regarding renovation and construction in the commercial and industrial sectors. The worksites at Eurovia, Ford and Subaru New Richmond, les Entreprises PEC in the downtown sector at the Carrefour Baie-des-Chaleurs shopping centre and the commercial building housing Telus and the Gym, among others, will definitely increase our tax base over upcoming months. Our global tax base was hovering around \$330 million a year ago. It hasn't changed much in 2021 but the benefits of all those investments will be felt, budget-wise, in 2022," he remarks.

He praises the work of the three new councillors elected on November 7: Pamela Dow, Natalie Clark and Maryse Bujold. "I can already confirm that they have assumed their functions with aplomb and are a marvelous addition to the group of elected officials. Furthermore, with their arrival, there are as many female as male councillors. This is a first for our Town! We are proud to undertake another mandate of four years committed to the prosperity of our Town."

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS)

## COMITÉ PROVINCIAL POUR LA PRESTATION DES SERVICES DE SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX EN LANGUE ANGLAISE

This call for applications seeks to recruit members to be part of Comité provincial pour la prestation des services de santé et des services sociaux en langue anglaise ("Provincial Committee").

The Provincial Committee is being struck under a recently passed regulation, with the Minister of Health and Social Services tasking Secrétariat à l'accès aux services en langue anglaise et aux communautés ethnoculturelles to form a selection committee to launch the call for applications and recommend qualified candidates to the Minister, who will then appoint the 11 members to the Provincial Committee.

# The Gaspé Spec SCHEDULE

Please note that The Gaspé Spec office will be temporarly closed and employees will be working from home offices due to major building renovations.

Customers can continue to reach us by phone 418-752-5400 (leave a voicemail message) or by email at specs@globetrotter.net The Provincial Committee is mandated under the regulation to advise the government on (i) providing English-language health and social services, and (ii) approving, evaluating, and updating all regional access programs for the provision of English-language services.

Applicants must have an understanding, knowledge, and experience of cultural, historical, and linguistic issues relating to Québec's English-speaking community. They must also show an in-depth knowledge of the issues confronting the community in terms of health and social services provision and of how the health and social services system is organized and governed.

Applicants must be ready to deal with the many challenges involved in improving access to English-language health and social services and enhancing the vitality of English-speaking communities. The deadline for submitting applications to the selection committee is February 5, 2022 at 5 p.m.

For more on applicant profiles or to get an application form, see the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) website at <u>Québec.ca/callofapplications</u>.



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# 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

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect us all.





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# Marinard passes into the hands of a Newfoundland company

Nelson **Sergerie**, LJI Journalist

GASPÉ - Important news in the fisheries sector is that Marinard Fisheries of Rivièreau-Renard changed ownership just before the holidays. The new owner is Daley Seafoods Newfoundland of and Labrador.

The transaction, announced in a press release on December 20, ensures the long-term viability of Pêcheries Marinard. "Our team is happy and enthusiastic to work with Marinard as well as the potential offered by the community of Rivièreau-Renard. The plant management team was friendly, professional, and welcoming qualities we like to build on. Our company believes in the use of advanced technological equipment, and this is one of the reasons we see so much potential in Marinard. The technology of the plant as well as the experience of the employees allow us to be operational now. The employees are qualified and competent people who will contribute to the growth of the company. Our management team is literally impatient and can't wait to start the year. Our plan is simple: work hard to be efficient and deliver the highest quality product, and that gives us a lot of pleasure," says Terry Daley of Daley Seafoods.

According to what we've learned, Daley becomes the majority shareholder of the shrimp processing plant, but our sources haven't clarified whether this is a full purchase. The value of the transaction was not disclosed.

Daley will be able to count on state-of-the-art facilities and more than 150 competent employees. The management team remains in place and Whitecap International Seafood will continue its role of exclusive distributor of northern shrimp for Les Pêcheries Marinard, a role it has held since 2009. This partnership has enabled Marinard's sales to expand in North America, in Europe and Asia.

A family business, Daley is already present in Quebec with the Crustacés Baie-Trinité plant. It has two others in New Brunswick, in Baie-Sainte-Anne and Pointe-Sapin.

With the acquisition of Marinard, Daley is implementing its strategic development plan which aims to commercialize more products in the Canadian market, North America and overseas.

Daley also ensures that it will maintain the certifications of the Rivière-au-Renard based company as that allows him to sell in global markets.

The transaction does not come as a surprise to the Quebec Shrimp Fishermen's Office since the owners had said they wanted to sell for some time. The director, Patrice Element, does not see this transaction in a negative light.

"While it didn't really affect either the operations or our relationship with the processor, there was still some uncertainty from the beginning with the rumours of potential sales to different groups. Now it's done. We know what to expect. This is not bad news," says Mr. Element, noting that the Daley family has been involved in the seafood business for several years in Newfoundland and is known in the area.

# Average tax increase of 2.9% in Gaspé

# Nelson Sergerie,

have to suffer an average tax hike of 2.9% or 61% in 2022.

5.2%.

was to continue. We want to of \$61,721. continue supporting develop-Daniel Côté.

and insurance.

The main differences are LJI Journalist the insurance costs which increased by nearly \$80,000: GASPÉ - Gaspé taxpayers will the renewal of the contract for the collection of residual materials which increased by The Town adopted a budget nearly \$300,000, the transport of \$29.2 million on December of septic tank sludge which 20, up 4.72% from 2021, well increased by nearly \$55,000, below inflation estimated at the snow removal contract for new roads which is up by "Gaspé is in growth mode. \$45,897 and the increase in The town council's decision the Sûreté du Québec's share

Construction had a banner ment. To achieve this, we are year, spurred by the expanproposing an average increase sion of LM Wind Power's of 2.9%," explains the mayor, wind turbine blade plant. If we subtract the investment of The elected official noted \$160 million, that's nearly that 80% of expenses cannot \$80 million invested in about be reduced, such as the con- 800 projects including the tribution to the Sûreté du Maison des Seniors de Riv-Québec, various contracts, ière-au-Renard at a cost of \$30 million and the new

garage of the Ministère des Transports, a \$21 million project.

"We had a record year. We have 161 new residential units. In the past two years, we have reached more than 70 rental housing units," Mr. Côté also notes.

The previous record for investments in 2006 was \$115 million, mainly due to the construction of the Anse-à-Valleau wind farm.

The three-year plan is comprised of expenditures of \$129 million including the upgrading of the Rivière-au-Renard waterworks and sewer networks (\$41 million), the Industrial Road between Parc des Augustines and the Port of Sandy Beach (\$21 million) and the multisport and arena complex (\$21.3 million).



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# Announcements

# Obituaries



#### **BERTHELOT: Adeline Marie**

It is with great sorrow that the family announces the passing of Adeline Marie Berthelot at her residence in Elliot Lake on Sunday, December 19, 2021.

Predeceased by her husband, Paul Edmond Berthelot. Loving mother of Rachel Delorme (Brad), Nicky Lafontaine (Adam), Jason Berthelot (Nicole Holden), Jody Kingshott (Lorne), and stepmother of Edward Berthelot, Roland Berthelot, and Carole Berthelot. Dear grandmother of Ethan, Lucas, Benjamin, Laken, Josh, and Justin Delorme; Darian, Ryley, Ashton, and Jaydin Lafontaine; Brayden Daynard, Alexis and William Kingshott; Kimberly and Amanda Berthelot; Stephanie and Hope Berthelot, and great-grandmother of Cameren, Alexandra, Abigail, Mason, Adrian, Addison, and Janet. Also survived by brothers and sisters Kathleen (Kay), John, and Blair. Predeceased by Arnold, Geraldine, Luke (Duke), Reynald, and Jacqueline. She will also be sadly missed by her loving friend Dean Belanger.

A private visitation was held at the Elliot Lake Funeral Chapel and Cremation Centre. A funeral mass was celebrated on Thursday, December 23, 2021, at 3 p.m. from Paroisse Ste Bernadette Parish.

Interment to take place at a later date in Woodlands Cemetery, Elliot Lake. Memorial contributions to a charity of your choice would be greatly appreciated by the family. Online condolences to the Berthelot family may be made at www.elliotlakefuneral chapel.com.



Burial will take place in the summer of 2022 at Saint James Anglican Church in Port Daniel.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Saint James Anglican Church in Port Daniel, Chandler Hospital, or the Hayes Bursary Fund.

Thank you to the entire staff of Chandler Hospital for the excellent care given to Mom over the past three months. Thank you to all the family and friends who supported Mom and her children.

Lois will sorely be missed on the hill and by all who had the opportunity to have met her. She was a pillar in the community and well beyond and stood for everything related to family, friends, Shigawake, and the Gaspé as a whole.

She was who you would want as a mother, a sister, a friend, and a community leader.



**DEVOUGE: Lorna** January 28, 1938 - November 8, 2021

It is with great sadness that the family of Lorna De-Vouge (Vibert/née Harrison) announces her passing on Monday, November 8, 2021.

She will be lovingly missed by her husband: Ivan Devouge; Ivan's two sons: Doug and Gord; her sister Martha Cook; her niece: Heather Cook; and her nephew: David Cook.

She will be dearly missed by all other family and friends from Brantford to Cascapedia. Lorna is predeceased by her late husband: Ross Vibert and her sister: Marjorie.

Lorna will be laid to rest in the spring with her mother and father in Cascapedia-St-Jules, Quebec.



thing he wasn't willing to attempt. His passion and love for school as a child led him to pursue a career in teaching. It was while teaching in Wawa that he met the love of his life. A move from Wawa took him and Janice to Ottawa and then eventually to Smith Falls, where he raised his family and went on to become a well-respected elementary school principal.

Wayne adored his grandchildren and cherished spending every weekend with them in his home on the Mississippi Lake. Saturday night euchre games with friends, early morning fishing, seasonal hunting, long snowmobiling trips, and taking care of everyone around him were Wayne's favourite pastimes. His love for travel took him and Janice to many destinations around the world.

Most recently, Wayne and Janice moved in with their granddaughter Ashley, her husband Nathan, and their five children. During this time, Wayne was able to spend every waking moment surrounded by those who adored him. He enjoyed family walks, trips to the soccer field, entertaining Everly, and long drives around the countryside.

As per Wayne's wishes, the burial of his ashes along with those of his wife Janice and son Gregory will take place at the Knox Presbyterian Cemetery in Westport. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. For those who wish, memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Society.

Funeral arrangements are under the care and direction of Munro & Morris Funeral Homes Ltd., 20 Main Street, Maxville (613-527-2898).

As a Memorial to Wayne, a tree will be planted in a memory woods. A tree grows; memories live. Condolences may be made online at www.munromorris.com.



#### **MARION: Yorkston John**

It is with a heavy heart that I announce the peaceful passing of my father, York Marion, on December 14, 2021, at the age of 95. He was predeceased by his loving wife Ena Syvret Marion on July 28, 2015, at 78 years old.

York spent his life as an International Associate of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers. This year he would have celebrated 60 years in the Union, local 721.

He was a dedicated Shriner and Mason. They were both longstanding Legion members in Minden, Ontario, and Barachois, Quebec. They dedicated their time and efforts to helping others in need. As supporting members of the Malbaie Church, you could always find them at the harvest suppers serving meals or taking tickets. After retiring and moving back home to Gaspé they were together in all things, very rarely seen apart. They loved visiting the veterans and playing cards and doing puzzles. If they weren't at home tending their flower and vegetable gardens, they were at a barbeque or breakfast for the Legion or the Masonic Lodge. My dad loved spending time in the woods and outdoors. My mother loved baking, embroidering, and visiting with friends and relatives. She loved sending cards. There was not an occasion, birthday, baptism, wedding, or get well that was missed. If anyone needed a hand, York was there. They will be missed by all who knew them. As per my father's wishes, he did not want any funeral service. Any donations you wish to make can be to the Hospital for Sick Children.

**BRIAND-WILLIAMS: Lois Marie** August 22, 1929 - December 9, 2021

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Lois Williams at Chandler Hospital at the age of 92 on December 9, 2021.

Predeceased by her parents: Emmanuel and Mary Briand; brother: Richard (Dick) Briand; her husband: Lester Williams; and sons: Robert (Bob) Williams and Randy Williams.

She leaves behind her sister: Ella Beck; brother: Gary Briand; children: Auley, Connie, Hollie-Jean, and Bradley; and grandchildren: Nicholas, Ryan, Jonathan, Jordan, Shanna, Jasmine, and Emily. She also leaves behind two great-grandchildren: Austin and Hailey; and many nieces, nephews, and friends.

**DIER: Wayne Frederick** 

With heavy hearts, the family announces the peaceful passing of Wayne Dier on December 25, 2021, in his 88th year. Husband of the late Janice Dier and predeceased by his son Gregory, parents Fred and Stella Dier, and sisters Wilma and Virginia. Cherished grandfather to Ashley (Nathan McDonald) and Krysten O'Reilly and great-grandfather to Everly, Gregory, Charlotte, Cody, and Myles. He will be lovingly remembered by his surviving sister, Roma Wing, as well as his many nieces and nephews.

Wayne spent his childhood on the family farm in Westport, Ontario, where he developed a love for everything outdoors, from fishing and hunting to guiding tourists to local fishing hot spots. There was never any-

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# In Memory

#### WYLIE: Arnold

In loving memory of our daddy. Daddy, some days we can hear your voice And we turn to see your face, Yet in our turning it seems The sound has been erased. Who will we turn to for answers When life does not make sense? Who will be there to hold us close, When we are feeling very tense? *Oh, Daddy, if we could turn back time,* And once more hear your voice, We'd tell you that of all the daddies You would still be our only choice. Please always know we love you, And no one can take your place. The years may come and go But your memory will not be erased. Today, Jesus, as you are listening In Your home up above, Would You go and find our daddy, And give him all our love.

Rest in peace and know that we will never forget you.

## Long Time Spec Supporter Remembered

Lois Williams was a strong supporter of The Gaspé Spec since it was founded in 1975. She embraced her role in advertising sales in the early days when she worked for the newspaper as an advertising representative.

She meandered up and down the coast, connected with both French and English business owners, and made lifelong friends. She looked forward to reading SPEC's weekly publications and was a lifelong advocate for the English-speaking publication. Lois was also known for gifting SPEC for birthdays, Christmas, and for any random reason. We are grateful for the friendships she fostered while working with the newspaper.



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ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20 Aries, you are self-confident and know who you are, which helps you take charge of situations. Many people rely on you, and you feed off that accountability.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21 Taurus, you may feel like you have to be a mediator between two sides, and that only adds to tension you have been feeling recently. Take a deep breath and a step back. GEMINI - May 22/Jun 21 Gemini, perceptions can be misleading. Look at a confounding situation from another angle. A new perspective may be all you need to see things more clearly. CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22 Cancer, a get-together with loved ones could do everybody some good. You may need to find the secret that can pull them everyone together, even if it's only for a day. LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23 Leo, a friend of yours may be feeling like a third wheel on

group outings. Consider playing matchmaker, or make plans for a get-together with just this individual.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22 Virgo, someone may try to burst your bubble in the next few days, but you won't let it get in the way of your lively, imaginative nature. As time goes by, others will come around. LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, the last thing you want to do lately is slow down, but you may have to do just that or special moments may pass you by. Carve out time to spend with loved ones. SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22 Scorpio, someone is trying to stay on task this week but you are all about a less serious approach. Let others focus on the tasks at hand, even if you can't. SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21 your audience and don't get too down if some jokes don't go over well. Consider toning it down for a bit.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18 Aquarius, what you see in the mirror just isn't matching up to what you're thinking in your head. Look to wise friends for answers as to why this is.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20 Pisces, if you are finding difficulty finding satisfaction at work, it may be time to start looking for something new to do. Put out some feelers.



# Not more COVID!

Time (and COVID!) takes you by the wrist and directs you where to go.

Yes, COVID is still with us. Just because some people decided it was over did not make it so. Admittedly, some of us began to relax a bit and maybe did not follow protocols as stringently as in the early days of the pandemic. In the spring of 2020 we were washing all our groceries when we brought them home, maintaining social distance, wearing masks and using sanitizer until our hands were chapped and raw. We wanted to leave all that behind, but that is not our choice.

Before this is all over and done with, I believe we will have to go through the whole Greek alphabet to find names for the new strains, which are inevitable. The virus is mutating and its goal is to infect living creatures and replicate. So far it is doing its job and the vaccine can help to slow this all down and maybe one day this will all be a memory.

We hear in the news that Omicron is less serious but never get lulled into false security by that. Always check the sources of your information. Use trusted scientific sources. Beware of news agencies that have hidden political agendas. Make no mistake, this pandemic and our responses to it have in many senses become political. We have families torn apart depending on their response to the virus. To vaccinate or not? To follow all government directives or not? We live in a time of turmoil when what we need is unity and harmony. We are not experiencing that and that is sad.

What do we know about this new variant, Omicron? We hear that it is less severe but can still cause serious illness and even death. What is striking, as proven by infection numbers, is how fast the variant can infect people. Scientists are still learning about Omicron and gathering data about how it affects people who are vaccinated, unvaccinated or who have had a previous COVID infection. One factor is that people get sick faster and symptoms may be different than with other variants.

It appears that most people who are up to date on their COVID vaccines will experience a mild illness that resembles a common cold. The most common symptoms are cough, tiredness and either congestion or a runny nose. Loss of smell and taste is less common with this variant. However, one fact seems to be emerging and that is that if you have had your vaccines and the booster you will likely have a milder illness. Scientists are still gathering data to determine what Omicron will do to those who are not vaccinated. Recent data from Quebec (January 5, 2022) is real and its scary: cases rose by 14,494 and deaths jumped to 21. How much more real does it need to be for all to believe that we need to work together to limit this? Every single day we have choices: To follow the guidelines, to get vaccinated, to limit contact with others, to consider the facts about COVID and the newest variant and whether or not to be kind and compassionate to others. Let's choose seeking trusted sources of information and kindness. We have missed out on an opportunity to come together to fight this pandemic. Start today. Do not be a "Karen" (apologies to all Karens who are kind and considerate) and consider empathy for others. It's a tough world out there, astonish others with your kindness.

Sagittarius, technology is designed to make processes easier, but you may find you get fouled up by devices this week. Try doing things the old fashioned way for a bit. CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20 Capricorn, others may not share your sense of humor. Play to

**FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS JANUARY 9** Nina Dobrev, Actress (33) **JANUARY 10** Rod Stewart, Singer (77) **JANUARY 11** Mary J. Blige, Singer (51) **JANUARY 12** Jeff Bezos, Entrepreneur (58) **JANUARY 13** Liam Hemsworth, Actor (32) **JANUARY 14** LL Cool J, Rapper (54) **JANUARY 15 Drew Brees**, **Broadcaster (43)** 

# THEGASPESPEC.COM

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# **Elder Abuse: The shameful secret**

#### Diane Skinner

Recent studies have revealed that during the course of our current COVID pandemic, the abuse of elderly has increased. We are more isolated and stressed and some of the most vulnerable in society, the elderly, are suffering because of this.

Some have called this an invisible epidemic and the Canadian statistics reveal that elder abuse affects between four to eight percent of our seniors. However, these statistics are likely lower than in actual fact. It is a form of abuse that is most likely underreported. This happens for a myriad of reasons: shame, fear, or having nobody to turn to. The abusers may be family, friends, neighbours or caregivers. If an elderly person relies on the abuser for care, they are reluctant to report it out of fear of having nobody to look after them.

## Abuse can take a number of forms including

Neglect: This may occur when the basic necessities are not fulfilled. This could include inadequate food, clothing, medicine or even a warm, safe place to live. This can be deliberate or a situation where the caregiver is not aware of the needs of the senior.

Physical abuse: This is a horrible possibility to imag-



We should always treat our elderly the way we want to be treated when we get older. Photo: D. Skinner

ine, yet it does occur. It may come from rough treatment, careless administering of medication, deliberate overmedication or even the use of restraints.

**Emotional abuse:** Treating seniors in such a way is so disrespectful. In elderhood all individuals ought to be treated with great respect. This abuse can take a number of forms: humiliation, intimidation, threats, and insults. Financial abuse: Using the senior's money or other assets without the person's consent or knowledge is a form of abuse. Pressuring the elderly individual to give them money could be a criminal matter when it is outright fraud or theft.

Sexual abuse: This is almost unimaginable, but nonetheless it does occur. Sexual abuse is behaviour that is directed to an elderly without consent or in some cases without being aware of the violation. These unacceptable behaviours include harassment, inappropriate touching, sexual comments and of course sexual assault.

The sad statistics point to the most frequent abusers being family and the second most common caregivers. During the pandemic our society has been examining the treatment of seniors in some nursing homes which has been revealed to be less than adequate. Any and all forms of abuse are wrong. Our elderly deserve to be treated with dignity and the utmost care and respect.

We should always treat our elderly the way you want to be treated later in your life.

# Support for seniors in Bonaventure MRC

#### Diane Skinner

NEW CARLISLE: - Sally Walker, the Outreach Worker for anglophone seniors (aged 50 and over) in the MRC of Bonaventure with the Committee for Social Action (CASA) has participated in the ITMAV (Initiatives de Travail de Milieu Auprès des Aînés Vulnérables) project for three years. Her role as outreach worker is to support and accompany seniors who require assistance to find the support they need. Meeting with the seniors in their own home, Sally has assisted and supported many seniors who needed help to navigate the health system. In some cases, this assistance was required to help the senior deal with psychological, physical and/or financial abuse. Sally tells us, "Most of the time it is difficult for a senior to come forward with any type of abuse."



ices offered are free, confidential and bilingual. If you encounter any difficulties with these other agencies, Sally is available to help you navigate the system.

## **Assistance for seniors:** Support line for seniors experiencing any type of abuse: 1-

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**MURDER** 

clearly outweighs its relative probative value. The Crown, therefore, has not discharged its onus of proving the admissibility of the confession in evidence on this aspect of the analysis," mentioned Judge Thibault on December 21, referring that last point to the probative value of the evidence.

Judge Thibault also dismissed that day a request filed by Defence Lawyer Rodrigue Beauchesne to stop the proceedings against Ms. Johnson. The conclusion of the rejection of the final interview's confession, however, has a similar effect.

Annie Cyr, criminal and penal prosecution attorney, will take the time to read Judge Thibault's decision before ruling on her final position. On December 21, she told him that she had no other evidence that could restart the proceedings the same day.

"We have 30 days to appeal the decision. The decision is voluminous, 184 pages, 1084 paragraphs. We'll analyze that and see what we can do. We had the result concerning the cancellation of the trial on September 17. We knew the conclusions, that the judge had quashed the second trial, but not the reasoning behind the decision. We're going to study that," Attorney Cyr told the SPEC.

Conducted over six and a half months, the undercover evidence cost \$163,495.14, of which approximately \$20,000 was given to Johanne Johnson. The murder weapon, the rifle that James Dubé kept in his boat, has never been found. It had been stolen from him two weeks before the murder. In her confession, Johanne Johnson

witness. Help from CAVACs is Toll Free: 1-866-892-4331 available whether the perpetrator of the crime has been identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted. The CAVACs work in collaboration with experts from the legal community, health and social services networks and community organizations. CAVACs treat victims of crime with respect for their needs, and they proceed at a pace that is comfortable for each person they assist. The assistance centres believe in the victims' abilities to manage their own lives and make the decisions that affect them. Services are free, confidential and bilingual.

said she got rid of it along a forestry road north of Chandler.

# **POLICE REPORT**

#### **()** Cont'd from page 3

Arrested by the permanent anticorruption squad, also called UPAC, in February, 2021, the former director general of the Municipal Housing Board of Gaspé, Daniel Samuel, will avoid prison time. The 70-year-old man recently pleaded guilty to breach of trust, theft over \$5,000 and forging documents. Over a period of 12 years, Daniel Samuel kept and used for personal purposes a lawn tractor, a brush cutter and a power broom from the organization he was working for. The man also bought doors for \$62,000 for the Société d'habitation du Québec before cancelling the order and transferring the credit to the Gaspé Municipal Housing Board, a move that was supposed to favour the Villa des Buissonnets project. In addition to a \$5,000 donation to the community, Samuel received an 18month suspended sentence.

#### \*\*\*\*

Magella Huard, 58, from Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac, was recently found guilty of sexually assaulting a minor under the age of 16. Quebec Court Judge Jannick Poirier did not believe the accused after a two-day trial in September. She issued her decision two-and-a-half months later. The acts Magella Huard was charged with took place from the summer of 2003 (when the girl was only five years old ) to 2010. Those acts began with sexual touching before culminating in a full relationship in 2010. Repre- sentations on the sentence for sexual assault and invitation to sexual touching will take place on April 26. Magella Huard remains free but subject to severe conditions for the rest of the proceedings.

Sally Walker is the Outreach Worker for Anglophone Seniors 50+ in the MRC of Bonaventure.

#### Photo: Courtesy of CASA

Sally assures seniors that there is help available for them and it can begin with a call to her at the CASA office (418-752-5995 ext. 111), Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sally can also be reached on her cell phone at 428-752-0855.

The following list includes several helpful agencies, along with their contact information. Sally points out that the serv888-489-2287

Info Sante 811: A nurse will listen and point you in the right direction for the service you need.

## Local CLSC numbers:

Chandler - 418-689-2572 Gascons - 418-396-2572 Paspebiac - 418-752-2572 Caplan - 418-388-2572 St.Omer - 418-364-7064 Pointe-a-la-Croix - 418-788-5454

Matapedia - 418-865-2221

Crime Victims Assistance Centres (CAVACs): front-line services to any crime victim or Local: 418-689-4331

CALACS Sexual Assault **Prevention and Aid Centre:** community organisation that offers help, support and accompaniment to victims of sexual assault who are 14 years of age and older as well as to their loved ones. CALACS offers direct help and support, prevention and awareness activities to the community as well as participating in advocacy and the fight against sexual violence.

The services offered by CALACS Sexual Assault Prevention and Aid Centre are free, confidential and bilingual.

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# Young man donates \$10,000 in lottery winnings

#### Cynthia **Dow**

"I thought to myself, might as well keep it in New Carlisle," Jacob Smith told SPEC. He was referring to the \$20,000 he won on a scratch ticket, with the proviso that half be given to a charity.

Jacob had a deadline to decide which charity to support, or Loto-Quebec would have made the decision for him. It was, however, an easy decision for the 19-year-old. "Both of my grandparents on the Flowers side had cancer before they died, and they both had received help from the Linda Lemore Brown Foundation."

Nonetheless, Foundation President Judy Buttle told SPEC, "I'm amazed that a young fellow that age would think of the Foundation and I had never heard of that lottery before. We can't thank Jacob enough for his generosity."

The Loto-o-suivant ticket was bought on November 29. Jacob was contacted by Loto-Quebec in early December to say that he was one of only 50 people in the entire province to win.

The lottery awarded another Gaspesian, Carole Dubé, who gave her donation to the Fondation du cancer du sein du Québec, and Magdalen Islander Waldron Errol Clarke who chose Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Grosse-Île.

In all, this particular lottery resulted in \$500,000 being given to charitable organizations across the province.

As reported in a previous SPEC article, the LLB Foundation has had a difficult time during the COVID pandemic because its fundraising activities have been sharply curtailed. One of its major events is a curling bonspiel that has not been held for the past two years.

The Foundation offers financial support to cancer patients throughout the Bonaventure MRC, from Cascapedia-Saint-Jules to Shigawake. They issue tax receipts for all donations over \$10.

As for his half of the takings, Jacob intends to save it. "I would like to invest it, perhaps put it on a house one day," he explained. The young man works in construction and lives



Photo: facebook

in New Carlisle. He is the son of Christa Flowers and Troy Smith.

Given this win, will Jacob

be buying more scratch tickets? "I do once in a while, but not often," he told SPEC. "It can become a habit."

# **COVID-19 situation explodes in the Gaspé Peninsula, but still below Quebec's average**

#### Gilles Gagné

POINTE-À-LA-CROIX – The COVID-19 situation exploded in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands between December 21 and the end December. Until December 15, the average number of new daily cases hovered around three, then five until December 21. Since December 28 and until at least January 6 (when Spec went to press), every day was characterized by at least 100 new cases.

The peak was reached on January 3 with 120 new cases. Every MRC of the Gaspé Peninsula was hit hard during that stretch. The situation was quieter in the Magdalen Islands but still way more active than at any period since the beginning of the pandemic.

Considering that Quebec consistently reported about 16,000 new cases daily during that period, the Gaspé Peninsula declared less than its population proportion, which would have been around 175 new cases per day.

As of January 7, the number of active cases in the whole region had reached 776, down a few from the previous day's record of 785.

There was one slight sign of relief from January 5 to 7 in that the number of recovered cases was sometimes rising above the number of new cases. It was notably the case of January 7, as 115 healed cases were reported, compared to 106 new cases.

As of January 7, two people were hospitalized because of the coronavirus. Since November 24, a total of 11 people from the region have been hospitalized but except for one case, they spent a short amount of time in one of the region's five hospitals. As of January 7, no fatality had been recorded in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands since the beginning of the fall.

The slowdown imposed on laboratory-checked COVID tests the first week of January will complicate the accuracy of the regional statistics, even if those tests were conducted for a longer period in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands than in some other parts of Quebec. Some COVID cases will likely not be reported to the health authorities.

Vaccination-wise, the director of the region's Public Health Board, Yv Bonnier-Viger, reported on January 6 that close to 30,000 third vaccine shots had been given since the end of December. That number represents almost one-third of the population.

Meanwhile, on December

29, the Health and Social Service Integrated Centre of the Gaspé Peninsula informed the population that given the rise in cases over the last days, the Public Health Board no longer communicates individually with each of the COVID-19 positive case contacts.

The procedure remains clear on a few points though. People in contact with a positive COVID-19 person are also considered high-risk contacts and must therefore go into isolation for 10 days after the last contact with the original case.

There is a high risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus when people go inside without a mask.



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