

Quebec fishermen want DFO Minister Joyce Murray to review the consultation on redfish

Gilles Gagné

GASPÉ - The Quebec fishermen expect much of the new Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Joyce Murray. In the short term, it is the future redfish fishermen who wonder apprehensively about the direction it will take in anticipation of the resumption of catches of this species under moratorium since 1995.

The cod was also struck by a moratorium in 1993. While cod stocks hardly recovered in most areas of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, redfish slowly returned in force, since assessments dating back to 2019 indicate that its biomass was reaching 4.3 million tonnes then. No other species are currently as abundant in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

A proportion of just over 3 million tonnes consisted of fish exceeding the minimum size of 22 centimetres. This is the minimum size that can be captured but most fishermen still active for scientific purposes prefer to catch larger specimens.

Quebecers, including First Nations, are part of a broad coalition of mid-shore and coastal permit holders from Eastern Canada Atlantic requesting a thoughtful consultation on how to resume redfish catches on a large scale, which is a possibility not expected to occur before



Photos: Courtesy of Denis Éloquin

Mid shore boats are generally characterized by a length of about 20 metres, with some exceptions not significantly deviating from this size. Large offshore vessels are generally over 40 metres in length, sometimes much more. In the photo, Magdalen Islands Captain Denis Éloquin and his crew are carrying out a fishery that is scientifically monitored, as redfish has been under moratorium since 1995. Mr. Éloquin's boat is a mid shore unit, slightly shorter than 20 metres.

2023 or 2024. (Redfish are caught with trawls.)

"Fisheries and Oceans Canada launched a consultation process in September, but it is a botched process so far. We denounce what the DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) is currently doing. This is an initiative from Ottawa. The regions did not have a say in the process," says Patrice Élément of the Association des

capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie (ACPG).

Well known for his role within the Office des pêcheurs de crevette de la Ville de Gaspé (Shrimp Fishermen Board of the Town of Gaspé), Mr. Élément was appointed to represent the ACPG with regard to the eventual revival of the redfish fishery. The expedited consultation by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans wor-

ries the fishermen of the ACPG who may be involved in the resumption of this activity.

"We have to answer five questions tabled in September, questions that look like an elementary school exam. We had until November 1 to respond, without waiving questions. We told ourselves that we were going to read the documents, then summarize and table proposals. In the current process, we cannot change the questions, ex-

cept that the new minister and cabinet were appointed at the end of October and we had this deadline of November 1 to submit our answers! There, we had an extension until November 15. In Ottawa, they dragged their feet for a few years on the subject of redfish, and there was suddenly a rush," criticizes Patrice Élément.

He hopes Minister Joyce Murray will have the tenacity to resist his senior officials pressed to rule on the parameters that will lead to the redfish fishery resumption.

"The big issue on the horizon is the upcoming redfish quota allocations. It is clear that a clash is looming between the offshore fishermen on one side, and the mid-shore and coastal fishermen that we represent. There have been no large offshore vessels in the Gulf since the mid-1990s. We don't want them coming back," adds Mr. Élément.

This desire to keep large fishing vessels away from the redfish fishery stems from the little positive impact their exploitation generates in communities, he says.

"The fish are processed at sea on these large boats and the processing plants in the communities are not taking advantage of it. These boats generally belong to large companies and no one sees the benefits of their fishing,"

Cont'd on page 5

Trawl tests will be carried out

Gilles Gagné

CARLETON - Mobile gear, or trawls, have often been singled out for causing damage to groundfish habitats such as cod and redfish in the years before and after the 1993 and 1995 moratoriums for these two species.

Patrice Élément, of the ACPG, assures us that the context has changed today, two or three years before the alleged resumption of the redfish capture.

"We're not in the same game we were in the 1990s. Our famous Gulf Mobile Gear Coalition is testing different gear types at different locations in the Gulf at different times of the year. We are looking at the effects on other stocks, while minimizing the impact on white hake and cod. We want to make a map, with the places where the tests will have been carried out, and the results," he explains

"The goal is to be able to say the best way to fish for redfish in order to reduce the impact on the ecosystem. In short, we fish in such and such a place, such a species, at such a time of the year," he concludes.

The redfish, a reddish fish, is historically the fish of choice for the famous "fish and chips" but its rarity since the end of the 1980s has prompted processing plants and restaurant owners to turn to substitute species.



Redfish is characterized by a slow growth. There is a span of several years between the 22-centimetre fish in the front row and the largest specimen seen in the photo.

UPA president Michèle Poirier worries about inflation and its effects on farmers

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Union des producteurs agricoles president, Michèle Poirier, worries about the effects the rising inflation rate might have on her region’s farmers.

Some input prices will increase by 30 to 40% in 2022 and the produce revenues are quite unlikely to follow the same upward curve, stresses Ms. Poirier, who also runs a potato farm with her family.

“We are talking about input prices at our farm and other farmers are mentioning it to me. The dominant topic is the expected rising cost of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, fuel and seeds. That is not all. The transportation cost of cattle is supposed to increase by 40% in 2022. Fertilizers are supposed to cost 30 to 40% more over the spring after a slight rise in 2021. Potato and grain seeds are also supposed to increase by 30 or 40% later this year,” she says.

Some Gaspé Peninsula farmers are producing seeds but clearly not enough to supply all of the region’s farmers.



Michèle Poirier fears that some of the farmers’ input will cost between 30 and 40% more in 2022.

Photo: Courtesy of Karina Espinoza-Rivière

“In potato production, our neighbour is producing seeds and I buy everything I can from him but it is not enough. Grain producers are also buying a lot from outside the region. At our farm, we produce less and less grain. We are buying increasingly green fertilizers as well,” adds Michèle Poirier.

She points out that financial support programs are nonexistent for farmers dealing with rising inflationary trends.

“In fact, the Caisses (Desjardins) and Quebec’s Financière Agricole have tightened up their financing criteria

lately. It sure doesn’t help,” she criticizes.

Still room for optimism

Solidarity will become increasingly important in a region like the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

“We will have to help one another in farming more than ever. There is a new dairy farm on the Thivierge range in Bonaventure, started by Marie-Ève Cyr and Maxime Plante, called M et M. Other farmers went to help them during the start up. It was a beautiful thing to watch. Dairy farmers don’t

have it easy. They had to deal with a 12% cut in their revenues last year due to trade agreements and that loss will not be recovered this year. It is a durable loss, collectively,” she states.

“We have a growing number of small producers, people growing vegetables, sometimes in organic farming, apple orchard owners planning to produce cider, producers of small fruits like haskap. Personally, I am saying that in the Gaspé Peninsula, we will survive. In Montreal, people will have a hard time. There is no agricultural land in the city,” she points out.

“Regionally, we have to increase our autonomy. We have to buy local. We will need producers of eggs and chickens at one point, to counter inflation hitting products from outside. With Boeuf Gaspésien, we are slowly increasing our number of selling points but cattle farmers will always need outside markets to sell their meat,” remarks Michèle Poirier.

She is glad that a growing number of Gaspesian farmers

have adopted regenerative cultures, with emphasis on the diversity of plants and their rotations. “It is a way to counter the effects of climate change, characterized by longer droughts, storms we were not seeing before, sudden and very intense rain bouts and the emergence of plants that were absent before,” she says.

“We have adopted regenerative agriculture at the farm and we are producing more. Last year, we sold potatoes in the United States, because Quebec farmers produced way more than usual. There were potatoes everywhere on the provincial market. We were lucky to have a permit to export some of ours,” she explains.

“Climate change are forcing people to adapt. It is not the end of the world but it is the start of a new world,” concludes Michèle Poirier.

There are about 250 farmers currently registered at the regional UPA. The value of their annual production hovers around \$50 million, according to the president.

Emergency CPE childcare facility will soon open in Gaspé

Nelson Sergerie, LJ1 Journalist

GASPÉ - To permit parents on the waiting list to obtain a daycare spot, the Centre de la petite enfance (CPE) Le voyage de mon enfance in Gaspé will open a 45-spot CPE in March.

A lease was signed on January 24 for this temporary facility located on Jacques Cartier Street. Development work is underway to allow 24 children access to it starting in March, with the goal of gradually reaching 45 places by the start of the school year in September.

This temporary CPE is a buffer measure while waiting for the new building authorized by Quebec with a capacity of 80 places to come to fruition in the winter of 2023.

Centre de la petite enfance Le voyage de mon enfance also obtained 31 places as part of the expansion of the existing facilities on Bolduc Street.

Even though the CPE has a total of 111 places that were authorized in August, the director, Gilles Chapados, could not offer more emergency spots.

“Having a building that can accommodate 80 children with all the structure and standards of the Ministry of the Family and municipal standards, does not really exist and the second issue, although not the least, is that of staffing,” notes Mr. Chapados.

No need to call

To fill these spots, the first 45 children on the 0-5-year-old list will be called.

Mr. Chapados says there is no need for parents to contact the CPE.

Five educators will be needed to offer the service in these temporary facilities, the development costs of which are estimated at some \$40,000, entirely funded by Quebec.

In the meantime, the search for land for the construction of the 80-place CPE continues.

For the Bolduc facility, the file is progressing.

The CPE was granted these places on August 26 as part of a provincial announcement.

To open the 111 places, it will be necessary to find 25 educators, which is not an easy task when the callback list is practically empty, considering there is a labour shortage.

This is the second emergency CPE to be created in the Gaspé Peninsula. Last May, Quebec allowed the CPE de la Baie in Bonaventure to set up a 26-spot facility in the Centre Bonne Aventure, in collaboration with the Town. Minister Mathieu Lacombe visited the site last July.



Commercial Street project to be updated

Nelson Sergerie

PERCÉ - The Commercial Street project between Highway 132 and the Percé Geopark will be revised.

The Town has requested an update of the implementation study for the new road section. Without redoing the concept from the beginning, several elements will be reviewed.

“We are going to resume what was done in 2016 in terms of landscaping. We will consider what has been done, but we will start again. In terms of development, we want to be eco-conscious. We already mentioned plastic being integrated into the asphalt but we will also look into the sidewalks, as well as the urban furniture, to be integrated with plastic and recycled glass,” specifies the mayor, Cathy Poirier.

“We want to develop a street as a whole that is a model of responsibility in terms of recycling and the recovery of residual materials,” she says.

She also notes, that standards have changed since the first draft and the new study will take this into account.

Interest in Commercial Street continues; however, only one property has been sold so far, to Pit Caribou.

“In recent weeks, we have had a few more calls (regarding available properties),” says the mayor.

After developing a complete file to define what the street will be like, Ms. Poirier points out that the competition will make it possible to specify the preferred uses.

“Without targeting companies, it makes it possible to target types of use. We really want to come up with new services. The fact that there are still pitches will allow us to have more targeted calls. For us, this is good news that will allow more diversity,” says the elected official.

As the design is being worked on, plans and specifications regarding funding are also underway. “Obviously, it will take the final design to know the amount,” adds Ms. Poirier.

Despite the new study, work should begin in the fall for delivery in the spring of 2023.

“It’s a lot of aspects to juggle, but we are still on the same deadline,” concludes the mayor.

Taxpayers in certain sectors hit by an increase in their assessment

Nelson Sergerie, LJI Journalist

PERCÉ - Percé taxpayers will experience variations in their tax bills, depending on which sector their residence is in.

Given that a new assessment roll is being applied in 2022. In the budget adopted on January 25, the council has lowered the base rate from \$1.43 to \$1.22 per \$100 of assessment. Tax bills vary significantly from one sector to another. For Saint-Georges-de-Malbaie, Barachois or Val-d'Espoir, there's an average increase of 18%.

"There are sectors in which there are higher evaluations, versus sectors which have lower evaluations. The important thing for the council was to not go after more tax revenue," says Mayor Cathy Poirier.

The bill for residual materials increases from \$250 to \$285. The tariff component is starting to pay off. At the Recreation and Culture station, revenues increased from \$28,000 to \$308,000 from parking lots and especially from the Emerald River. "We are able to apply them and not see a tax increase as we have often mentioned," adds the

mayor.

The three year capital plan is \$22.8 million and includes sewerage in Val-d'Espoir, work on the Emerald River and the expansion of the municipal garage. The budget of \$7.7 million is up 8% over 2021.

Gargantua site

A major hotel project is under development at the former site of the Gargantua restaurant in Percé. The mayor cannot disclose the details because the project is being carried out by a private promoter but when asked about the changes to be made to the development plan, the elected official underlines that the Town does not want the sector to become largely recreational, but speaks of an exciting project.

"We are talking about the hotel industry, the rental of chalets, the development at the residential limit as far as the Gargantua. There is the possibility of bringing the aqueduct there. It still gives a slightly broader development opportunity than the project itself," explains Ms. Poirier.

The hotel would be open year-round, which makes the project interesting for the de-

velopment of winter tourism, according to Ms. Poirier. The site offers a sublime view.

Percé wharf management

After being renovated, Percé will be entrusted by Quebec with the daily management of the wharf ceded by Ottawa to the province in September 2020. Rather than creating a port authority, the Town will take on the responsibility of hiring a harbour master to manage traffic, sanitary maintenance and manage the pontoons in the spring and fall.

Percé will receive a sum from Quebec which is part of the negotiations for this agreement, but an amount of \$112,000 was mentioned when the budget was tabled.

"These are not costs that are added to the municipality. We are paid via a management contract. We have a portion left for administration. It will earn us a good 10% in management fees. It is advantageous and it is with the objective of diversifying our income," explains the mayor. However, there is no question of ensuring the maintenance of the infrastructure as such, which will remain under the responsibility of Quebec.

Law to end hydrocarbons

Nelson Sergerie, LJI Journalist

GASPÉ - The law promised by the government of Quebec to put an end to the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in the province will be tabled "immediately," according to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Jonatan Julien.

In an interview about 2021 results and 2022 prospects, Jonatan Julien who is also the minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula, noted elements mentioned last November on the fact that Quebec would reimburse the industry for the costs incurred such as leases or certain work.

"We will indicate the terms of reimbursement of certain costs. We will certainly not pay for any speculative gains. That is not our intention," declares the minister who is saving the fine print for the submission of the project.

Environnement Vert Plus maintains that the monetary deposits of \$450,000 paid to the province for the closure of the Haldimand 1, 2 and 4 wells by

Pétrolia, now Pieridae, are not sufficient to cover the costs.

"The estimated amount for closing and restoring the sites is more in the order of \$1.5 million. So, a little more than \$1 million is missing to close it all," explains the spokesperson for the environmental group, Pascal Bergeron, who admits that the company complied with the rules before 2018. The Liberals did not adjust the amounts during the implementation of the hydrocarbons regulations.

The minister says that his bill will take this point into account. "Within the bill, the mechanisms will be robust and will allow us to have the assurance that the sites will be rehabilitated in an adequate manner," assures Mr. Julien.

Moreover, Radio-Canada reports that Quebec will appeal the decision in favour of Gaspé Énergies, which challenged the Minister's refusal to grant a permit to drill at Galt based on the separating distances, information that we were unable to validate with Minister Julien's office before going to press.

Wind power has the wind in its sails

The wind energy sector has come a long way with the CAQ government during this mandate, as Premier François Legault had loudly disparaged when he was in the opposition. The sector should obtain a promising portion of the pie regarding Quebec's future energy needs, considering an initial call for tenders for 300 megawatts before the holidays.

The minister mentions a bit more about what's to come. "We can clearly see that the needs have increased for 2026 and 2027. They will be present, and the wind power sector will play a major role," he says.

Alliance de l'Est wants to become a partner of Hydro-Quebec and the Government of Quebec for future projects. The minister has good things to say about the alliance. "I'd like this alliance, which is well organized, to be precisely a partner of choice. We work with them and Hydro-Québec to ensure predictability," states the elected

Cont'd on page 8

Police report

A second trial for Johanne Johnson, 61, originally from Grand River, charged with murder in 2013, has been ruled out. Criminal and Penal prosecutor, Annie Cyr, will not appeal Judge Carl Thibault's decision to put a stop to Johanne Johnson's second trial. She is accused of the non-premeditated murder of her spouse, James Dubé. The homicide occurred on April 30, 1998.

Judge Thibault explained his decision on December 21, ruling that the police officers who conducted the undercover investigation of Johanne Johnson in 2012-2013 had abused the procedure to make her confess to the murder, relying on her vulnerability to violence and money. She had been the victim of domestic violence and had experienced financial difficulty prior to the "Mr. Big" style investigation.

Prosecutor Cyr mentions that "the absence of error of law in the analysis of the judge does, therefore, not allow us to appeal the decision. We owe deference to the judge (...) who analyzed the Mr. Big operation in the light of the teachings of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Hart decision rendered after the operation involving Mrs. Johnson." She adds that "although our interpretation is not the same as the judge, we owe deference to his opinion." James Dubé was shot in the back of the neck in broad daylight, while he was sleeping on the sofa in the living room of the family home. He was a lobster fisherman who usually napped after lunch. The murder weapon was never found. The Hart decision, like other Supreme Court verdicts, becomes retroactive when favourable to the defendant. It was rendered in 2014, a year after the investigation into Johanne Johnson.

Ms. Johnson was found guilty in April 2016 during her first trial, but the Court of Appeal ordered a second one due to errors in the law made by Quebec Court Judge Michèle Lacroix who had failed to properly inform the jury regarding the validity of certain evidence, notably the animosity towards the mother felt by one of the couple's two daughters. Johanne Johnson served four years and three months of her 11-year sentence before being released in August 2020 following the Court of Appeal's decision granting the second trial.

Excavation Nicolas et Fils of Percé is fined \$30,000 by Revenu Quebec for falsifying a document. The numbered company that operates the excavation company had modified a certificate from Revenu Québec in order to participate in a call for tenders from the Government of Quebec. The now defunct Centre de services partagés, or Shared Services Centre, one of the organizations linked to the Quebec Treasury Board, wanted to create a bank of contractors to rent heavy machinery but the approved companies had to meet their tax obligations. Excavation Nicolas applied to make that list. However, the administrator of the company, Jean-François Nicolas, initially sent an expired certificate. Informed on February 28, 2019, he sent a new document on March 7, 2019 which had been falsified. Mr. Nicolas pleaded guilty. The certificate was required for certain contracts. The Shared Services Centre was dissolved on September 1, 2020, for reasons not tied to that affair.

Chandler needs to cut spending

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

CHANDLER - Chandler taxpayers are avoiding the worst as the town council passes a budget with no spending increases for the next year, as a new assessment roll impacts landlords. The budget of \$12 million is identical to 2021.

The property value increased by 8.8%, but to limit the impact on taxpayers, the base property rate is reduced from \$0.90 to \$0.86 per \$100 of assessment. Equalization decreases by \$270,000.

Chandler has little room to manoeuvre, and the council has to dip into \$75,000 from its meagre accumulated surplus. "We can't say that we are rich on that side. Be careful. We must not misuse our expenses. You must compress. But in the coming years, we will see certain relaxations that will allow us to breathe a little better," explains the mayor, Gilles Daraïche.

For the Chandler district taxpayer, the average evaluation increases by 10%, from \$140,000 to \$154,300. Even if the base rate is reduced by 4 cents per \$100 of assessment, a tax of \$38 for asphalt and the increase of \$35 for residual materials, when all components are tallied it will equal an overall increase of \$83. Elsewhere, the average value increases by 11% in Newport, 6.5% in Pabos, 6.4% in Pabos Mills and 4% in Saint-François.

In the \$17 million three-year capital plan was adopted in December, \$12 million is reserved for water treatment in the Newport district, scheduled for 2023, but the residents of the district will only have to assume 20% of the bill, Finance Director Kim Duffy said at the time.

Another COVID fatality marks the last week of January in the Gaspé Peninsula; second fatality in two weeks

Gilles Gagné

MARIA – A second COVID-related fatality in as many weeks marked the last full week of January in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. The origin of the victim was not been released by the regional Public Health Board but the fatality of the previous week likely was a resident of Maria, according to a reliable source.

Prior to those two fatalities, the region had gone three months without any covid-related deaths. The second fatality of 2022 was announced on January 28. It was the 51st such death since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.

For the week spanning between January 21 and 28, the Public Health Board reported 201 new cases in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, which was

49 more than during the previous week.

The total number of COVID-19 cases in the region is no longer available since January 5, as the PCR tests used to detect cases of COVID-19 are applied to specific groups, namely healthcare workers and patients with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in an acute care unit, people with COVID-19 symptoms living in residences for seniors or handicapped citizens, and people without symptoms admitted or who will be admitted within two days in acute care or special care units.

On January 22, the Public Health Board also stopped releasing daily or weekly statistics pertaining to the number of active cases and the number of people who have recovered from the coronavirus, as they are becoming increasingly difficult to track down.

As of January 28, three people from the region

were hospitalized due to the COVID-19 virus. The peak of the week occurred on January 24, with four such cases.

The Public Health Board now releases more accurate data with regards to the rate for the third vaccination. As of January 24, the rate for the first vaccine was 88.2% in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. For the second vaccination the rate was 82.2% and 57.6% for the third vaccine. The provincial rates were as follows: 85.5%, 79.7% and 37.3%.

Within the region, the area with the highest vaccination rate remains the Magdalen Islands, with 92.5% for the first shot, 87.1% and 68.5% for the second and third shots.

Avignon MRC remains the area with the lowest vaccine rate, with 80.2%, 74.4% and 48.1% for the first, second and third shots.

Editorial page

Gilles Gagné
Commentary



Conservative Party flies towards a dead end

More than at any point since his August 2020 accession to the helm of the Conservative Party of Canada, Erin O'Toole's leadership has been weakened by the poor way he defends his positions. That lack of thoroughness makes him a weak leader in the eyes of the public, and it makes him even weaker in the eyes of his party's extreme or acute right wing partisans.

Erin O'Toole seems unable to develop a strong stance on most important issues concerning Canada. Oil development, climate change, same sex marriage, abortion, euthanasia and the carbon tax, to name a few, have often triggered battles within the Conservative Party ranks.

The gun control law is a classic example of the leader's political meanders. Mr. O'Toole initially committed to repealing all gun law modifications made by the Trudeau government only to state later that the firearms banned in May 2020 would remain banned.

From a rather stern defender of the traditional, non-interventionist positions of the Conservative Party during the leadership race, he softened his positions on issues such as climate change during the convention in March 2021, and during the 2021 summer electoral campaign.

He did so to rally a greater part of the electorate, as Canadians usually favour the centre of the country's political spectrum. However, those chameleon-like positions have weakened his control over the party.

Over recent months, Erin O'Toole's leadership was flatly contested by a range of Conservative Party Members of Parliament and at least one senator. In November, Senator Denise Batters publicly challenged his leadership. During the third week of January, the Conservative Members of Parliament from Saskatchewan added insult to the injury through confirming Ms. Batters as a provincial regional caucus member!

The "Freedom Convoy" consisting of hundreds of truckers who converged on Ottawa at the end of January provided another occasion to witness the eroding leadership of Erin O'Toole.

Those truckers oppose the federal government and the Public Health Agency of Canada's decision to impose full vaccination by January 15 to essential service providers, including them. They are infuriated by the fact that Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos and Chief Public Health Officer Doctor Theresa Tam were unable to produce data linking truckers to COVID-19 infections in Canada.

The adjustments announced by the Public Health Agency stated that unvaccinated or partially vaccinated foreign national truck drivers would be prohibited from entering Canada after January 15. The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also imposed a proof of vaccination to enter the States, effective January 22, 2022. Like Canada, the DHS implemented that requirement for all non-US individuals entering the country through roads or ships.

While Erin O'Toole has expressed reservations regarding the truckers' movement because it is infiltrated by extremist movements promoting the abolition of most government regulations, some Conservative Party Members of Parliament are openly supporting the Freedom Convoy, like Pierre Poilievre and Candice Bergen.

That shouldn't be taken lightly. Mr. Poilievre is the party's finance critic and Ms. Bergen is the deputy leader. The former leader of the party, Andrew Scheer, also supported the convoy. However, another Member of Parliament, Albertan Glen Motz, supports the truckers to such an extent that he intended to personally greet them in Ottawa (as the SPEC was reaching its January 28 deadline). His support was, therefore, more than mere words.

Pierre Poilievre has always been a loose cannon. He likes to make waves and he is pretty good at it. During former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's tenure, Mr. Poilievre obviously relished carrying out dirty jobs. People might have forgotten that he harassed Elections Canada because that utmost defender of democracy was making moves and running advertisements to maximize the electorate's participation rate.

Pierre Poilievre wants to be the Conservative Party leader and has consequently become Erin O'Toole's hidden nightmare. In a recent survey published by the Globe and Mail, 17% of the 1,000 people consulted said that Pierre Poilievre would be the best suited candidate to run the Conservative Party. Mr. O'Toole received 10%.

Canadians will likely not vote until at least the end of 2023, considering that a minority government still runs the country and that nobody wants another electoral campaign in the foreseeable future. After all, the September 2021 election reproduced the results obtained in October 2019. Even the Conservative Party people wishing to oust Erin O'Toole need some time.

The Globe and Mail survey results are not of prime importance for that party because it was conducted with the general public, not Conservative Party members.

However, the survey gives an indication that Pierre Poilievre has a rather high degree of visibility among people with a certain interest in politics. It must also be mentioned that 50% of the 1,000 people surveyed didn't know who the party leader was. This is not good news for Erin O'Toole.

Despite his apparent "fame," Pierre Poilievre will not be a better solution for the Conservative Party because

he will lead it to further marginalization. People rooting for close to no government interventions are already supporting the People's Party of Canada, led by Maxime Bernier. In a desperate attempt to oust the Liberal Party in September, Erin O'Toole tried to lure Maxime Bernier's partisan base and it didn't work.

By supporting the freedom convoy of truckers, Mr. Poilievre moved closer to the People's Party of Canada and to movements like Canada Unity which, on January 25, called "all levels of government (to) cease all vaccine mandates, reemploy all employees terminated due to vaccination status and rescind all fines imposed for non-compliance with public health orders." The Ontario leader of the convoy, Jason LaFace, of Canada Unity, affirmed that the intent of the January 29 Ottawa protest was "to dissolve government".

A certain proportion of Freedom Convoy supporters proposed repeating in Ottawa, the events of Washington's, January 6, 2021, Capitol attack.

So, Erin O'Toole's days as leader of the Conservative Party seem numbered. His attempts to put the blame on Justin Trudeau's government for Canada's rising inflation rate is lame, as it stems from a tendency observed in most industrialized countries. Pierre Poilievre's rhetoric on the same subject is even weaker.

Even the moderate Conservative Party Members of Parliament seem lost in the current context, destabilized by Erin O'Toole's darting and Pierre Poilievre's opportunism.

A lot of the party's members are dreaming of a comeback by Stephen Harper. However, it is far from sure that the electorate would support his dictator-like control and political orientations. Within the party's rank, nobody seems to offer another viable option, which doesn't bode well for the next election.

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“This time, we consider that, no, the question of historical shares should not be defended. The redfish fish-

"Here in Rivière-au-Re-

The management of four seafood processing plants in the Gaspé Peninsula have assured the *Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie* that they will be there when the redfish fishery resumes. They are Lelièvre, Lelièvre and Lemoignan, from Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé; Pêcheries gaspésiennes from Rivière-

On the Atlantic side, which includes the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, it is generally recognized that offshore vessels potentially capable of fishing

"We are not worried. If it is not the large offshore fishermen who have it, the overall quota will go to the inshore and mid shore fishermen, and 40% of active mobile gear fishermen in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence are from Quebec," he says.



A more detailed explanatory document of this budget is available on the City's website (ville.perce.qc.ca).

Three-year program of capital expenditures for **2022-2023-2024** is as follows:

Issued in Percé, on January 26, 2022

Gemma Vibert,
Clerk



Time to make an appointment for your COVID-19 booster dose.

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Stay protected longer thanks to the booster dose.

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to protect yourself from COVID-19 and its variants.**

Teacher Appreciation Week

February 6 to 12

Diane Skinner

During Teacher Appreciation Week, parents and school boards have the opportunity to celebrate the special people that spend countless hours educating our children. More than that, many, if not most, of these educators go beyond these expectations and guide, encourage and inspire their students. The term "in loco parentis" refers to the role teachers play during the school day – it means that the teacher takes on the role, even partly, of the parent. One of the guidelines that teachers in training are taught is that they should structure the learning environment by being firm, but kind and judicious.

The commitment of teachers is often remarkable with responsibilities that often extend beyond the school day. When we look back, as adults, we likely have some or even one particular teacher who made a difference in our lives.

A very wise principal once shared this very simple exercise with his staff. He asked each teacher in turn, at the end of the school year, to say the name of one student they felt they helped in a significant way. The staff quietly shared those names out loud, but it was a tremendously moving few moments. After all, any class is made up of individuals who are unique. Sometimes a student will impact greatly on a teacher's memories also.

Enjoy reading these memories by students, now adults, who though they had some difficulty choosing just one teacher that positively impacted their lives, shared their choice with Spec readers.

My kindergarten teacher at Hopetown Elementary School was Kay Ross. I always remember her smile, her giggle and her soft voice. Thank you for joining in on the fun and playing *Baby Beluga* on the record player. We always looked forward to our dance time. I think that your enthusiasm for singing really brought the fun to our class.

Thank you!
Tracy Major, Class of 1989

Ricky Shannon was my grade 6 teacher at Gaspé Elementary School. Although he was an extremely skilled teacher, he taught his students much more than math and science. Mr. Shannon prepared his students for "the real world" as he called it. He led his classroom through the concept of mutual respect, responsibility, consequences for one's actions, and kindness. After 21 years, I still hear his words of wisdom and guidance in my head and have applied those "real world" lessons throughout my studies, career and personal life.

Thank you, Mr. Shannon!
Chelsea Flowers

I had many teachers growing up and attending New Carlisle High School that had a positive impact on my development and journey; but there is one that stands out the most, which is Guy Gallibois. A favorite teacher for many students, but an undeniably guiding figure for myself earlier in my life.

This man influenced my initial decision to go to Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles in Gaspé, Quebec, which led me to completing my DEC in Social Sciences. He helped me through positive support and by believing in me that I could do things I did not think myself capable of at the time. As well, that led me to completing my B.A. at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Quebec.

I believe his guidance led me to always search for higher challenges in life, which led to my career pursuits in the Canadian Army.

I chose to write about Guy Gallibois for Teacher Appreciation Week because he was a positive guiding figure in my teenage years and I cannot imagine where I would be today in my journey without his steadfast support.

I'm sure many other students who have had the chance to be friends with Guy and experience his guidance would share the same sentiment I express in my words here. Thank you, Guy, for everything you've done as a teacher, educator, and most importantly, a mentor.

Marshall Billingsley



Marshall Billingsley says that teacher Guy Gallibois was a guiding figure in his life. Pictured left to right: Guy Gallibois, Marshall Billingsley and his mother Cindy Billingsley at his CEGEP graduation in Gaspé in 2019.

"I've heard it said
That people come into our lives for a reason
Bringing something we must learn
And we are led
To those who help us most to grow
If we let them
And we help them in return.
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true
But I know I'm who I am today
Because I knew you."
- From the musical, Wicked

Carol Gilker was our Home Economics teacher in New Carlisle Junior High throughout the late 90s. Mrs. Gilker has this calm energy about her, stern, but she always had this little sparkle in her eye. Mrs. Gilker taught us many valuable skills like cooking, sewing and so much more.

She was a wonderful teacher with much patience and always a kind heart. She unknowingly taught me to be more confident during a time when I needed it most. I will always hold a great appreciation for Mrs. Gilker, my favourite teacher.

Shannon Major



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Cégep de la Gaspésie
et des Îles

Lelièvre criticizes high cost of airfares

Nelson **Sergerie,**
LJI Journalist

GASPÉ - It costs at least twice as much to fly between the Gaspé Peninsula and Montreal as an equivalent trip in the provinces bordering Quebec.

That observation was made by former provincial Minister of Regions, Gaétan Lelièvre, who is also a regional development consultant. Mr. Lelièvre presented the media with a document describing the airfare situation in the region.

Mr. Lelièvre, who has been following this file for about ten years when he was director of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC, notes that, for too long, the regions of Quebec have been deprived of adequate service or even a deterioration of services.

According to Mr. Lelièvre, the reason is very simple: the cost of the ticket is prohibitive.

For equivalent distances across Canada in January, Gaspésians paid up to four times more. The consultant notes, for example, that a Gaspé-Montreal flight equivalent to 800 kilometres costs



Gaetan Lelièvre

Photo: N. Sergerie

\$1,085, while the same distance Halifax-Montreal was only \$318 and Charlottetown-Montreal, \$433.

The capacity of aircrafts flying to the Gaspé Peninsula creates an artificial scarcity. Mr. Lelièvre discovered that from January 3 to 17, 40% of flights leaving Gaspé had no round-trip seats to Montreal available.

A similar observation was made for Bonaventure airport. On January 10 it was noted that over the next 15 days, 60% of

flights had zero availability.

“We have never seen such a worrisome situation in the Gaspé Peninsula. Such a high-ticket cost, but half the time there are no seats on the plane. That’s something new and that is unheard of. It shows that we are in a period of concern regarding air transportation,” says Mr. Lelièvre.

**A hindrance
to development**

According to him, this situ-

ation hampers regional development efforts and initiatives.

“It is impossible to develop the region's international potential when a European tourist has to pay between \$1,000 and \$1,500 for a flight from Montreal or Quebec to Gaspé when his Europe-Quebec ticket only cost him \$600. What an aberration!” notes the former minister.

Mr. Lelièvre also draws upon certain conclusions made by the Institute for Contemporary Economic Research on November 2, 2021, which point out that the major shortcomings in regional air service deprive Quebec of \$3.8 billion in gross domestic product and \$800 million in Quebec Sales Tax each year.

**Quebec must
buy tickets**

Mr. Lelièvre is revisiting his idea of asking Quebec to go to a call for tenders, so that the government would use its purchasing power to impose a ceiling price for regional flights.

After obtaining a price for its needs, the government could demand competitive pricing and conditions for all customers in the regions.

“Only the Quebec government holds this powerful lever to thoroughly reform the inter-regional air transportation system and finally democratize this essential social and economic service in Quebec,” says Gaétan Lelièvre.

Quebec has been promising a new policy for air transport for the past year.

According to the government an announcement should be made soon.

HYDROCARBONS:

Cont'd from page 3

official.

In July 2020, the Alliance submitted projects with the MRCs of L'Islet and Montmagny totalling 1,200 megawatts including six 200-megawatt wind farms that would inject \$6.4 billion into the economy.

Virtual visit to the region in February

The minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula will hold meetings with the elected officials and prefects of the region around mid-February to provide an update on the projects prioritized this year. He will meet the mayors and prefects, one MRC at a time, but due to the health safety context, these will be virtual meetings.

Providing an overview of 2021, the minister describes the last year as fantastic from several points of view. “The progression of 1300 people in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, a record number of visitors, we must continue on this momentum,” wishes Mr. Julien.

With a positive net migration; housing and daycare issues remain priorities. “We have initiatives that Andrée Laforêt (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing) is currently working on with formulas that will be innovative. I think there will be great announcements on that side,” suggests the minister.

Even with elections soon (October 2022), Mr. Julien does not want to put off working on the development of the region.

He says he wants to remain very active in conveying the requests of the elected officials to the government.

Lebouthillier meets with air carriers

Nelson **Sergerie,**
LJI Journalist

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - Regional air transportation issues will be brought to the federal government's attention by the Member of Parliament for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, Diane Lebouthillier.

Ms. Lebouthillier had a virtual meeting with the two carriers present in Gaspé, Pascan and Pal Airlines, on January 21. The meeting was initiated by the mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, who is also the president of the Union of Quebec municipalities and chairman of the Air Transport Committee. The main purpose of the meeting was to hear what the carriers had to say.

Ms. Lebouthillier, who is also the Minister of National Revenue, has also experienced difficulties using air transportation when travelling to Ottawa.

“I had the opportunity to travel to Ottawa in November and December. It is complex and complicated. It's impossible to get to Ottawa in one day, which I could do before,” says the minister, who does not hesitate to criticize the departure of Air Canada in April 2020.

“Air Canada left cowardly, abandoned the Gaspésie and



Diane Lebouthillier is a user of aircrafts to go to Ottawa and she finds it complicated and arduous.

Photo: N. Sergerie

left, leaving us in a terrible state. It was very nonchalant, without taking the people of our region into consideration,” adds Ms. Lebouthillier, while welcoming the fact that the two companies have taken over from the national carrier.

Among the main points of the meeting was the issue of expenses involved with landing such as de-icing or NAV Canada services at airports which represent up to 50% of the plane ticket prices.

“In our requests we strongly suggest continuing to provide financial assistance to passengers. In Gaspésie, we are talking about a 30% discount (of

the cost of a ticket with the Quebec program). We want to continue helping people,” says Ms. Lebouthillier.

“We are discussing operating costs but also all the collaboration between carriers and especially for the larger carriers to collaborate with the smaller ones to allow efficient service in interline agreements,” adds the MP.

For Daniel Côté, these exchanges are important because Ms. Lebouthillier will be able to convey the message directly to her government and to the Minister of Transport. This is a positive point in his eyes which can only improve the services.

Gaétan Lelièvre thinks government decision makers fear the collapse of a few airlines

Gilles Gagné

GASPÉ - Gaétan Lelièvre is trying to make the Quebec government understand that the impending Regional Air Transport Policy, which was supposed to be released a year ago, is “uselessly” costing tens of millions of dollars of public funds annually.

The document he presented to journalists on January 25 was first sent to Transports Québec Minister François Bonnardel and Premier François Legault. Mr. Lelièvre doesn’t understand why the government of Quebec does not subscribe to his way of seeing things, the call for tender process regarding tickets bought for civil servants, considering the economic and social advantages. “I feel that the government is in a dilemma, stuck between taking the side of the handful of carriers in Quebec, which have failed to offer a competitive model, and the interest of all Quebecers. The call for tender process that I advocate will no doubt have an impact. Some companies will close, yes, but beyond a company that has had its chance, the government must put the interests of citizens and regions first. It’s hard? Yes, but when we go to a call for tenders for the MHUC (the McGill University Health Centre, one of Montreal’s main hospitals) or the metro, does the government worry about the contractors who lose? No, they let the free market decide. After repetitive failures, some contractors will go “belly up.” We never hear about the government worrying about them. I cannot find another reason for the government’s current hesitation,” he analyzes.

“We are cutting health, schools and regional development. Why are we waiving savings in air transport which would materialize through asking carriers for a ceiling price that would, by extension, favour the civil society, the general public? It is a question of vision and will. This problem should have been fixed years ago. In the evaluation of tenders, a ceiling price for the civil society would be an advantage for bidders in the model I propose,” he adds.

As a former municipal manager, at the Town of Gaspé and at the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC, Gaétan Lelièvre



Photo: G. Gagné

The conventional model used by Pascan and Air Canada has failed in Quebec and it is time to choose another way of operating airline services in Quebec’s regions, assures Gaétan Lelièvre.

literally studied the aerial situation over more than a decade, as it was part of his responsibilities.

In 2010, he calculated that in Gaspé alone, the various levels of government are paying \$3.5 million in excess tickets because they pay at least twice the amount that would be reasonable for a trip to Quebec City or Montreal.

“My numbers are conservative. There were at the time 10,000 people making round trips to Montreal or Quebec City annually. They were paying at least \$1,000 per ticket and 70% of them were civil servants, so their tickets were paid by the government. Assuming that it would be normal to pay \$500 for that kind of trip, and that 7,000 of them are civil servants, it is easy to understand that at the Gaspé airport alone, the government was spending \$3.5 million more than what it should. That is just for the small Gaspé airport. Imagine in Sept-Îles! Now, how many civil servants based in Montreal or Quebec City are flying towards the regions annually, paying too much as well? Could it be 70,000 people or more in Montreal? I don’t have the total but that’s why I don’t hesitate to say that the Quebec government spends “uselessly” tens of millions of dollars in plane tickets yearly,” emphasizes Gaétan Lelièvre.

He doesn’t fly and nobody paid him for the 30-page document sent to the government.

“I invested a week in this, with my employee. The order comes from Gaétan Lelièvre! I am no one’s lobbyist. It is not the TREQ cooperative, which is trying to convince the government that another model would cut ticket costs

to a reasonable level. The TREQ managers are surely not happy with my report because I favor a call for tenders for the purchase of government tickets and they do not want a call for tenders. I believe in the TREQ file because it is innovative, with the cooperative model. It will look for the base and customer loyalty. Offering Gaspé-Montreal for less than \$500 in a modern aircraft would be ideal for regional populations. It deserves to be assessed. If someone comes to me with a better scenario, my support will go to that scenario,” he concludes.

Gaétan Lelièvre adamantly defends the point that affordable airline services will benefit all the regions of Quebec.

“Many people say that Montreal is the lung of Quebec. So, can we be plugged into this lung? In the current dynamic of exorbitant prices, Montreal and Quebec City are also losing. The synergy that should exist between urban Quebec and rural Quebec is weakened. If the regions benefited from affordable airfares, business opportunities and social cohesion would be better. I am from Gaspé but I love my metropolis and my national capital. I see people from communities outside Quebec going to my metropolis and my capital for less than people from here. It’s not normal,” he criticizes.

He adds that the region’s capacity to promote its schools would be greatly improved through affordable airfares.

“There will be a shortage of tens of thousands of places in Montreal CEGEPs in 2029 while our CEGEPs are empty, compared to what they have

already had as a clientele. There were 1,500 students at the Gaspé Cegep when I was there in the 1980s. There is less than half that number left. Young people from elsewhere in Quebec would like to live an adventure without feeling isolated. For workers, it would be the same thing. We are lucky with our recent demographic results. We are successful in attraction, but the challenge is retention. Efficient means of transport are a mandatory condition for regional development,” says Gaétan Lelièvre.

While he is not an expert in the model of air services developed in Canada’s other provinces, he assumes that cheaper tickets make flying more attractive.

“These are private companies that do not give their figures, but the government could check. The problem in Quebec is more acute than ever! Is this willful blindness on the part of our government? They have to move! It’s frustrating to repeat such obvious things. The cost of our archaic air system is enormous for Quebec’s finances. The departure of Air Canada in June 2020 is not a tragedy, it is an opportunity. The temporary \$40 million program to help Quebec airlines is becoming permanent. It’s a money pit. They are voluntary subsidies in disguise for companies that have not been successful for decades. Who better than the government to include a regional development clause when deploying the regional air transport policy? If Transports Québec does not have the skills in air transport, it would be good to add other ministries, like Health and Education, since the problem of air services af-

fects everyone. Otherwise, let the Government of Quebec withdraw. Would we be ready to work with the federal government? The expertise is there, even if it is a level of government that is far away,” concludes Gaétan Lelièvre.

He is supported by Parti Québécois Parliamentary Leader Joël Arseneau, who is also Member of the National Assembly for the Magdalen Islands riding. As an Islander, he is a frequent user of air travel.

“The pandemic led to the departure of Air Canada from the Islands; the void created by Air Canada must be filled, not by another dominant monopoly carrier but by a carrier or model that leads to lower prices. The TREQ model says that, if supply is attractive, demand will come. What hurts is a lack of predictability for TREQ, but also for Pascan and PAL, the other carriers in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Islands. Everyone is on the brakes while waiting for the regional air transport policy of the Legault government. How do we plan and invest? Everything is blocked now and the companies cannot plan for the summer of 2022, rent aircrafts, hire pilots and staff when they are in nothingness. We need to improve the price and the offer. It’s as if we never managed to have an affordable model. Air transport is left to those who absolutely need it,” says Joël Arseneau.

He further notes that the airfare reduction program, improved in 2018, is good for some citizens. “But it is not good for fares, since the airlines have no incentive to lower prices. Innovation must come through improvements like those proposed by Gaétan Lelièvre,” he says.

The airfare reduction program reimburses up to \$500 yearly to a Gaspé Peninsula traveller and is applied to 60% of the total cost. In the Magdalen Islands and on the Lower North Shore, the maximum yearly amount is \$3,000, also applied to 60% of the tickets’ total cost.

“In the Gaspé Peninsula, that program means that a traveller will only be reimbursed once a year, because our ticket price is almost always above \$1,000. That doesn’t make it affordable and it is far from enough to change travelling habits,” stresses Mr. Lelièvre.

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Announcements



Obituaries



MAHER: Michael

August 19, 1933 - January 16, 2022

On Sunday, January 16, 2022, at the CISSS de la Gaspésie, CHSLD Mgr Ross, Mr. Michael Maher, residing in Douglastown, passed away at the age of 88 years.

He leaves to mourn his life partner: Mrs. Lorraine Jacob; as well as James (Elaine), Terry, Donna, Robert, Lisa, Sheila, Patsy, Ann, Lisa, Boyd and his stepson Steven and many friends.

The family received condolences at the Valère Fortin Funeral Home in Gaspé on Saturday, January 29, and Sunday, January 30, 2022 from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. The funeral service will be held in the summer.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Valère Fortin Funeral Home in Gaspé.

**LINDA LEMORE-BROWN
FOUNDATION
Annual General Meeting**

The meeting will be held via Zoom on
February 15, 2022.

For the Zoom like, please contact Ashley at
ashley@casa-gaspe.com or message the
Linda LeMore-Brown Foundation
facebook page

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deadline: Wednesday at 4 p.m.
to appear in the following
week's issue.

Obituary/Wedding: \$40 (with
picture \$45) for up to 300 words.
If it is more, we will give
you a quote.

All other announcements: \$30
(with picture \$35) for up to 20
lines. If it is more, we will give
you a quote.

*Items must be printed clearly
or typed and can be submitted by
mail or online.*



MORIN: Patrick

February 23, 1949 - January 17, 2022

On Monday, January 17, 2022, at the CHSLD Mgr Ross in Gaspé, Mr. Patrick Morin from Gaspé passed away at the age of 72 years and 11 months.

Mr. Patrick Morin leaves to mourn: his sister Alvina (Harvey); brother Eddy (Delvyna); niece Tracy; nephew Francis (Candy) and their children Summer and Payton and many close family and friends.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Valère Fortin Funeral Home in Gaspé. More information to follow at a later date.

The Gaspé Spec

Please note that The Gaspé Spec office is temporarily closed and employees are working from home offices. Customers can continue to reach us by phone 418-752-5400 or by email at specs@globetrotter.net



In Memory

BOURGAIZE: Eunice

In loving memory of our dear sister who passed away February 4, 2020.

Sadly missed along life's way,

Quietly remembered every day.

No longer in our life to share,

But in our hearts, you're always there.

Forever in our hearts, loved and sadly missed by Dolly, Merle, Clayton (Eleanor), Bradford (Shirley) and families.

PHOTO QUALITY

When submitting a photo for this page, please send in a digital photo (.jpg) to
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It is essential that the photo is not a copy printed at home or by the funeral home.

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ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

It is time to slow down a little, Aries. Even you cannot keep up a hectic pace for very long. Invest time in relaxing pursuits like yoga or reading to unwind your brain.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, you may feel it necessary to prove your point at all costs. Stubbornness will get you nowhere right now. Listen to what others have to say.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

There are two sides to every story, Gemini. It is best not to attach yourself to one version of the tale just yet. Hear everyone out and then come to an informed conclusion.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

There is no time like the present to turn over a new leaf, Cancer. Think about the areas of your life that can use some improvement and focus on the steps to get there this week.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

Someone from the past comes back into your life and you will not know how to react, Leo. First as-

sess what this person wants and how you left off years ago.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, it might be time to accept the help or advice that someone is offering to you. You don't always have to forge new paths to prove your worth.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, if you are thinking about making a major lifestyle change in the near future, start fleshing out the plans this week. Gather feedback from the ones you love.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, past mistakes provide opportunities to learn. Continue to forge a new path. Recognize that others have made mistakes and can provide support.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

A big idea is blooming, but you need to get a handle on how you can finance this endeavor, Sagittarius. It may be worth seeking investors.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

It is time to mend fences that were broken a few years ago, Capricorn.

Holding on to past issues will not prove fruitful. Sit down and work through your issues.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

You certainly catch more flies with honey than vinegar, Aquarius. Focus on being warm and welcoming in conversation and your points will be well-received.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Something regarding your health may be on your mind, Pisces. Schedule an annual physical and discuss your concerns.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

JANUARY 31

Justin Timberlake, Singer (41)

FEBRUARY 1

Harry Styles, Singer (28)

FEBRUARY 2

Duane Chapman, Reality Star (69)

FEBRUARY 3

Isla, Fisher, Actress (46)

FEBRUARY 4

Hunter Biden, Lawyer (52)

FEBRUARY 5

Darren Criss, Actor (35)

FEBRUARY 6

Rick Astley, Singer (56)

Caplan’s Distillerie des Marigots wins gold medal at World Gin Awards

Gilles Gagné

CAPLAN: The Distillerie des Marigots, founded in 2020 in Caplan, recently won the gold medal at the World Gin Awards, in the “contemporary gin” category, courtesy of its product called Récif.

On January, 21 the founder of the distillery, Joseph Saint-Denis-Boulanger received an email announcing the good news.

The “contemporary gin” category is reserved for gins incorporating more ingredients than juniper. “Our gin is prepared with aromatics from the Gaspé Peninsula,” says Mr. Saint-Denis-Boulanger, a trained engineer who came back to his native region in 2019 to launch the project, after working in his profession for a few years in Montreal.

The World Gin Awards are part of the World Spirit Awards, held in London, England. The jury is made up of experts.

Joseph Saint-Denis-Boulanger submitted the application for his “gin de bord de mer” or “seaside gin” in June 2021, less than a year after the beginning of its sales in Caplan and in SAQ stores. He plans to eventually distribute it internationally.

“It (the award) becomes a selling point with the SAQ and importers. It gives credibility to the product. I could increase my production to export. It is a goal. The exports will happen when I’m ready. It is long-term work. You have to find a distributor. The domestic market in Quebec is yet to be developed. There is a lot of wiggle room. We have to define how we will do it,” he notes, very happy about the international gold medal.

The Distillery des Marigots’ construction began in 2019 and its production was supposed to start at the end of May 2020 in order to have products ready for the then coming tourist season, however, the pandemic struck the France-based manufacturer of the distillery equipment, the all-important still included, which came in four months later than expected.

Then, the manufacturer’s technician’s arrival was delayed, due to problems with Canadian Customs, as it was not clearly mentioned in his papers that he was coming to Quebec for two installations: one in the Montreal area and one in the Gaspé Peninsula. Joseph Saint-Denis-Boulanger was finally able to sort out the red tape woes and he spent seven days installing



Photos: G. Gagné

Joseph Saint-Denis-Boulanger worked very hard to build and install his distillery.

the still with the technician. The Distillerie des Marigots started its production on time for the 2020 Christmas season.

In French, “courir les Marigots” means playing hooky, or hiding to avoid work. (A few decades ago, it notably applied to fishermen hiding in a cove instead of going at sea.)

The Récif gin is his main product for now and it won an international award less than 14 months after its first sales in Quebec.



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Page 12, February 2, 2022 - Spec