

Surplus saves Gaspé citizens from a massive tax hike

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Gaspé avoids a 22% tax increase for its taxpayers by drawing \$1.7 million from its accumulated surplus for the 2023 fiscal year.

The budget is up 11.07% to \$32.4 million, driven by inflation and the town's economic boom.

For an average residence valued at \$177,500, the increase in the tax bill will be 4.9% or \$106.85, including service rates.

The rate for aqueduct, sewer and water purification services increases by \$8 to reach \$555. The collection, sorting and treatment of residual materials will increase by \$15 and is set at \$245. The emptying and treatment of septic tank sludge is up \$13.50 to a total of \$160.

Even by appropriating \$1.7 million from the accumulated surplus, the financial cushion will still remain at \$7 million.

"Inflation hurts," says Mayor Daniel Côté at the outset.

"We are going to dip into the Town's surplus to avoid excessive taxes. Some will say that 4.9% is high, but I would tell you that if we did not draw on the surplus, the increase would be 22%," adds the mayor.

New revenue from compensations in lieu of taxes in Quebec City and Ottawa brings in an additional \$700,000 in revenue.

The mayor is also counting on the arrival on the assessment roll in 2023 of the expansion of the LM Wind Power blade factory, Rivière-au-Renard Seniors Residence and the new Transport Ministry garage, three elements that will add income.

"Just that, as investments, is more than \$250 million, so potential increase in property wealth, therefore, increase in tax revenues. That's why this year, we said to ourselves that we know that new revenues are coming. Even by appropriating \$1.7 million of the surplus, we are not in danger tomorrow



Photo: N. Sergerie

Mayor Daniel Côté, presented the 2023 budget using charts.

morning. In the current situation, it was necessary, otherwise, we would have had to pass the bill on to the tax account," says the mayor.

The elected official does not want to speculate on expected income and is also counting on a slowdown in inflation to reduce the growth of the tax bill.

The 2023-2025 three-year capital plan totals \$110 million, of which \$69.6 million are legal obligations.

"Rivière-au-Renard's drinking water and wastewater upgrades: just that, it's more than 50% of the three-year capital plan. However, we expect to receive generous assistance from

the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada to make these investments and if we do not have generous help, we will shift in time. We cannot impact \$109 million of investments solely on the tax bill. It wouldn't make sense. It would blow up the tax bill," explains Mr. Côté.

The Rivière-au-Renard infrastructure project is estimated at \$41.6 million.

The other major expense of the program is the arena component of the future sports complex in Gaspé, valued at \$16.7 million.

"Everyone wants a new arena. I would like to do it tomorrow morning, but if I put it all on the tax bill, you will hate me until the end of your days. I just like to wait for more generous financial assistance programs without having too much of an impact on the tax bill," adds Mr. Côté.

Gaspé issued 808 permits in 2022, including 102 for housing construction for a total value of \$56.8 million including renovation work.

Excluding 2021, which reached \$244.7 million due to the launch of the LM Wind Power plant expansion, this is the largest year in 15 years in terms of the value of construction and renovation permits.

Despite everything, housing needs are significant: 144 units will be launched at the beginning of 2023 while the Town is discussing with outside developers to invest in Gaspé.

Bonaventure to increase tax bill, but it will stay under 5%

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – The Town of Bonaventure adopted a 2023 budget of \$6,126,037 on December 20. The amount represents a rise of 7.61%, or \$433,423 compared to the \$5,692,614 of 2022. However, the property tax rate paid by the Bonaventure citizens will be marked by a lower increase than that, at 4.7%.

Mayor Roch Audet points out that the preparation of this budget was guided by the desire to contain expenditures despite the economic context, marked by an inflation rate of at least 7%. The property increase will be \$1.1448 per \$100 of municipal value in 2023, according to the current

role of evaluation.

Mr. Audet mentions that the increase in the taxpayers' municipal bill is essentially linked to inflation, which hit all municipal organizations.

"With an increase of 1.1448% in the average value of a residence with all services, the tax burden will represent an increase of 4.8% in 2023," says Mr. Audet.

He adds that the increase in municipal value follows a hike in the sale price of houses in the town as well as in a broader area. The average municipal value of a house reaches \$173,786 in Bonaventure now.

The increase will be slightly lower for the citizens who live in areas where the

range of services is not complete, notably those not benefiting from water and sewage facilities.

The tax rate for non-residential buildings will reach \$1.8748 per \$100 of municipal value in 2023 while the tax rate for apartment buildings with six units and more will be \$1.4882. The tax rates for vacant lots receiving full municipal services will reach \$1.7172 per \$100 of municipal value.

The water and sewer rate charged in 2023 will be \$263 and \$148 for the properties receiving only water. The garbage removal fee will reach \$166,01, to which a selective collection and sorting fee of

\$4.88 will be added.

As of December 31, 2022, the Town of Bonaventure's long-term debt was \$14,420,800. The net debt, namely the share under the responsibility of the municipal administration, represents \$8,088,389, or 56% of the total. The share borne by the other levels of government is \$6,332,411, or 44%.

"In its three-year infrastructure project program, we favoured, among a list of initiatives, two that must be done in 2023, for a total investment of \$3,500,000. There is the upgrading of the campground and the construction of the access road to 191 Port Royal Avenue," indicates Roch Audet.

New Richmond citizens see their tax bill increase by 4.8%, less than the inflation rate

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND - The tax bill for New Richmond citizens will increase by an average of 4.8% in 2023, compared to 2022. The additional bill will be \$145 for a home with an average value of \$161,000. The rate imposed on the residential properties located in areas receiving full services will go from \$1.14 to \$1.19 per \$100 of municipal value.

The situation could have been worse, according to Mayor Éric Dubé, because the increase could have hovered around 6.9%, the latest inflation rate. During 2022, it was a little over 7% most of the time.

“The tax bill is not passed on 100% to the citizens because the growth in property wealth brings in new revenues. Secondly, the Town of New Richmond is also able to count on rising subsidies from Quebec, which fortunately reduces the bill,” explains Mr. Dubé.

“The rate associated with the management of residual materials and recycling will increase by 2.8% to a total of \$245.55 for a single-family home, a direct result of the operating cost,” adds Mayor Dubé. The majority of this increase is due to the price per tonne for the disposal of residual materials.

“The rates associated with water and sewerage will increase by \$30 per unit, from \$80 to \$110 for a residence and the special tax related to these services will increase by 4% to total \$0,1553 per \$100 assessment. These adjustments are a result of increased costs for these services and the reconstruction of Terry-Fox Avenue, for example. It should be noted that these two elements remained stable for several years,” he points out.

The 4.8% general tax hike applied to the residential sector will increase by \$24.19 the average bill per home.

The Town of New Richmond will increase by 4% the commercial tax rate. “We decided to limit the impact on the business community in order to give the people in this field more latitude in facing the challenges that are on the horizon,” remarks Éric Dubé.

He presented the budget



Photo: G. Gagné

New constructions played a role in limiting the tax bill increase to under 5%.

on December 20. It will total \$9,245,292 compared to \$8,477,085 in 2022. It is a 9.06% increase, or \$768,207.

In the revenue column, the biggest increase in nominal terms comes from the general tax, which will bring in \$4,804,313 in 2023 instead of \$4,334,269 last year. It represents a 10.85% hike, or \$470,044.

The other revenue increases are lower, percentage-wise, with the exceptions of the in-lieu of taxes-equalization-provincial sales tax reimbursement from the Quebec government, which will increase from \$355,284 to \$420,355, or 18.3%, as well as the water and sewerage tariff. In the latter case, it will bring in \$173,725 this year instead of \$127,500 as in 2022, for a 36.25% hike, or \$46,225.

A second source of money coming from the Quebec government will increase for the Town of New Richmond in 2023, namely the conditional revenues, which will reach \$922,892 instead of \$857,483. It makes a \$65,409 difference.

However, Mayor Dubé thinks that the Quebec government could do more for municipalities.

“The municipal fiscal regime does not allow for audacity and creativity. In Quebec, the revenues of a town are almost exclusively from real estate taxes and tariffs for services. We have almost no other sources of revenue. The government will definitely have to give more power and revenues to towns in the future, if not, tax bills will be impacted continuously. For example, several locations in

North America share consumer tax revenues from their sector or other types of fees shared by the government. In our case, out of a budget of more than \$9 million, the government allots just over \$500,000 for our operating expenditures. The rest, you and I pay on our tax bills,” he stresses.

Inflation hits expenditures

Mayor Dubé points out that “if the most recent budgets were affected by the uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2023 budget is directly affected by the current inflationary situation.”

He uses the example of insurance to illustrate the sharp effect of inflation on the Town of New Richmond budget.

“We are a participant in a consolidated call for tenders with the UMQ (Union of Quebec municipalities) for general, fire, automobile and other insurance coverage and they suggest that we budget an additional 10% over the costs for 2022, which was already \$25,000 more than the previous year! The budget for our insurance will increase from \$181,728 to \$219,830, a jump of close to \$40,000. In 2021, the amount of this budget item was \$125,174. The result is close to 100% in 24 months,” deplores Mr. Dubé.

In the expenditure column, notable hikes are hitting the administration costs, mainly due to maintenance and computer fees, and road-transportation. In the first case, the increase goes from

\$1,427,338 in 2022 to \$1,575,490 this year, a jump of \$148,152, or 10.38%. In the second case, the cost will go from \$1,302,041 to \$1,432,198, a hike of \$130,157, for 10%.

Rising interest rates will surely play a role in the Town of New Richmond's 2023 budget. Éric Dubé takes it calmly though.

“For more than a decade, rates varied between a maximum of 2 and 3% in the municipal sector. All towns, without exception, were able to take advantage of that. However, no one could have predicted that the prime rate of the Bank of Canada would increase from 0.25% in January 2022 to 3.75% in October, an astounding increase of 1,500%! The result is very clear, our current and future renewals in 2023 will be at a rate of approximately 5%. Our interest costs will increase from \$413,736 to \$610,582. This result is close to \$200,000,” he underlines.

Éric Dubé consequently

states that the increase in the debt service is not solely tied to the rising interest rates.

“The reimbursement of capital will increase by \$110,000 to attain \$1,604,700, which is good news. We pay our debts! The total debt service will be \$2,215,282, as compared to \$1,907,336 in 2022. I would like to remind you that the total was \$2,969,187 in 2021, which was the final year for several loans,” he concludes.

The wind power royalties, which amounted to \$250,377 in 2022, will reach at least \$253,982 this year. Those royalties include the money paid by TransAlta for the Venterre local wind farm as well as the payments coming from the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Intermunicipal Energy Board.

As for the three-year capital expenditures program, New Richmond forecasts projects of \$7.1 million. The next two years include projects that are already underway.



Photo: G. Gagné

Far from an ice floe in Pointe-à-la-Garde

GILLES GAGNÉ

POINTE-À-LA-GARDE – The temperatures of November and December were above seasonal average most of the time, with the result that the ice floe is far from a reality in Pointe-à-la-Garde, the region's favourite spot for leisure smelt fishing. There were patches of thin ice around midday, January 3, and the three ensuing nights were colder than anything felt in the Baie des Chaleurs area over the previous two weeks, but the eventual ice floe will need colder temperatures than minus 10 degrees in order to develop before the end of January. Considerably less stable than Pointe-à-la-Garde due to the presence of bigger waves and stronger winds, the Miguasha area is not showing more promising signs for the commercial smelt fishermen. A cold wave lasting a week or so is needed before people can eat the fresh and delicious small fish.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Chandler Town Council during the adoption of the budget on December 20.

Average tax increase of 5.29% in Chandler

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - Chandler is standardizing its water and sewer taxes, which has a different impact on citizens' tax bills depending on the neighbourhood.

The rate for the aqueduct will be \$110 and that of the sewers will reach \$145 for 2023.

Compared to the rates applied to each of the districts in the past, these combined amounts represent an increase of \$22 for Chandler, a decrease of \$3 in Saint-François, \$42 for Pabos Mills and \$50 for Pabos while Newport will pay \$16 more next year.

"It is something that should have been done a long time ago to look at balancing these debts. We have been merged for more than 20 years," says the mayor, Gilles Daraïche.

Even if the base rate drops from \$0.86 to \$0.85 per \$100 of assessment, the modulation of the rates for infrastructures and the \$15

increase for residual materials result in an average increase of 5.29% on the tax bill.

"We had three scenarios: one at \$0.87, one at \$0.88 and one at \$0.89. It did not satisfy us. We asked our finance manager to do other scenarios and, finally, we opted for a scenario at \$0.85. If we can have a small impact on the taxpayer's tax bill, so much the better," says the mayor.

For a \$200,000 house in Chandler, the increase will be \$171 or 6.29%, while it will be only 3.79% or \$103 in Pabos.

The most massive increase will be in Newport where, for the same house, the amount will be \$219 or 8.75%.

"There have been significant increases in the level of gasoline and fuel that we have to absorb. In Chandler,

we have an increase of more than \$100,000. Quebec should, if there was good will, help the municipalities," says the mayor.

The three-year capital plan amounts to \$19.5 million, including \$12 million for water treatment in the Newport district scheduled for 2024.

"The plans and specifications are not yet finished. Obviously, we will have to meet with the government to get the best funding possible. It's a minimum of \$12 million, but it's an essential project," explains the mayor as the development of the neighbourhood is hampered by the inability to add new construction in this sector.

"We know that everything costs more. At \$12 million, that was the real cost a few years ago. We may have reached \$15 million now," suggests Mr. Daraïche.



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Police report

On January 1, Mr. Alexandre Couture, 27, from Bridgeville, lost his life after his vehicle left the road in Percé. The accident occurred on Highway 132 around 3:30 a.m. in the L'Anse-à-Baufils area. When Sûreté du Québec police officers arrived at the scene, they found the driver alone in his vehicle, which had ended up in a ditch. According to SQ spokesperson Sgt. Claude Doiron, speeding could be the cause of the violent accident. "An autopsy will be carried out on the body. He lost control of his vehicle for a reason unknown at the moment and it rolled over several times," he adds. At first glance, alcohol didn't seem like a contributing factor to the accident. The victim was pronounced dead upon his arrival at Chandler Hospital. A police officer specializing in collision investigation carried out the analysis of the scene. Highway 132 was completely closed to traffic for about three-and-a-half hours.

A 68-year-old mussel fisherman from the Cap-des-Rosiers sector, Jacques Dunn, has been missing since December 30. Emergency services were called at about 4 p.m. that day because the man had not returned home after sunset and his family were worried since he had left several hours earlier. On January 4, after an evening and five days of searching, the operation was suspended. "The search is interrupted. We did six days of intensive searching with all the emergency partners. In the first hours, we discovered some objects belonging to the fisherman. The decision to suspend the search was made after consultation with family members. Like in all similar cases, the file remains open. We will continue to gather information. Residents are asked to keep an eye out and notify us of any unusual sightings on the sea or on land," explains Sgt. Claude Doiron, spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec. The man was mussel fishing, while wearing high boots, putting his mussels in a floating bucket. "Did he stumble, and fill his boots with water? Was he caught off guard and dragged by the current? Did he faint? We don't know. We can say that everything was attempted to find him. We first received support from the Armed Forces helicopter, then the SQ helicopter. Our divers participated in the search. The weather was not always easy. The conditions were far from favourable on Sunday (January 1). We will resume the search operation if a clue provides us with information allowing us to find the man," adds Sgt. Doiron.

On November 29, a 58-year-old Gaspé man, Raynald Cloutier, was fined \$564,000 for false tax returns. The man, who acted as an accountant, admitted his guilt to six counts at the Percé courthouse. He was attaching false receipts to increase his tax returns. He carried out the same manoeuvres for 66 of his clients, who benefitted from false tax reductions. A complaint from two clients led investigators from Revenu Québec and the Sûreté du Québec to the suspect's home on boulevard Petit-Cap in March 2020. The investigators then seized computer equipment and documents to support their inquiry.

The Sûreté du Québec investigation team from the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC detachment, in collaboration with the investigation team from the major crimes squad of Chandler, proceeded to arrest a 40-year-old man from Gaspé, in connection with a robbery that occurred on November 17 at the McDonald restaurant in Gaspé. Sory Keita was arrested in Gaspé on December 20 and appeared in court on December 21 on a charge of robbery. He has been remanded in custody since his appearance and will come back to the Percé courthouse on January 12 for his bail hearing. On November 17, a suspect reportedly went to the fast-food business on Montée Wakeham in Gaspé where he allegedly forced access to the place and then hit the employee who was there, injuring him slightly. The suspect initially wanted the contents of the safe, but his strategy failed.

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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Why do we need to rely so much on McKinsey's advice?

Over 20 months between March 2021 and November 2022, seven federal government ministries and agencies spent \$84,379,259.89 to get advice from the American consulting firm McKinsey and Company on various topics, notably "advancing the cultural evolution" of the Canadian Armed Forces, helping them be more diverse and inclusive.

The calculation was made by the Canadian Press and CBC-Radio-Canada and released in a January 3 article. The report mentions that the National Defense Ministry alone spent \$18,356,565.55 on seven contracts in those 20 months.

Indirectly though, the National Defence received much more advice from the New York based firm. Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) also required the services of McKinsey between March 2021 and November 2022. This other federal department often signs contracts to service other government entities. So, PSPC coughed up \$45.7 million in 20 months for 18 contracts, including 11 on behalf of National Defence. Neither ministry detailed the objectives of the contracts listed nor a breakdown of the amounts attached to each contract.

Those mandates totalling \$84,379,259.89 follow a stretch that was not as advantageous for McKinsey with regard to the federal government. An early 2022 article published by the Globe and Mail indicated that in 2020-2021, five federal government departments had paid a total of \$17.2 million to McKinsey to get some counsel.

One conclusion can be drawn quickly following the publication of the articles. The federal government intensified five-fold its dependence on McKinsey's services during a shorter period.

However, there is much more to that trend, and it mainly spells trouble and worries for Canadian taxpayers.

First of all, what do our government and the McKinsey people accomplish with that money?

It is tough to get details. One of the contracts valued close to \$5.7 million was intended to "advance (National Defense's) cultural evolution through stakeholder analysis." A second contract worth \$1.6 million aimed to "advance cultural evolution through the development of a diversity, equity and inclusion framework." The Canadian Press was unable to get more details from National Defence, notably about the notion of "cultural evolution."

In December, Defense Minister Anita Anand saw progress made by the military in implementing recom-

mendations made by former Supreme Court Judge Louise Arbour. The same day, during an intervention before the standing committee on National Defense, Ms. Arbour accused the Canadian Armed Forces personnel of dragging their feet in this very file, having seen resistance "to removing the military's jurisdiction over the investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual assault and other related crimes."

Why aren't we paying civil servants to assess such situations?

There are about 260,000 civil servants working for the federal government across Canada. Although they are often heavily criticized by an important cross section of the population, they do a sound job, overall. The poor leadership at the top of the government hierarchy is more often the main problem than the civil servants themselves.

It is, therefore, hard to understand why ministers and deputy ministers think it is impossible to get inspired counsel from such an important workforce of civil servants. In fact, resorting to them would probably create opportunities to find new leaders. It would create emulation and boost the confidence of the federal staff. Too often over the last decade, the federal government has gone outside the ranks of civil servants for strategic decisions, and it has rarely yielded good results.

Have we forgotten the Phoenix pay system disaster, implemented by the Conservative Party government eight years ago? The abomination of that system managed by worldwide giant IBM is still hurting thousands of federal civil servants. Some of them have gone bankrupt because of that decision to rely on a private firm instead of developing and managing internally a pay system.

It is one thing to occasionally ask a third party to give advice on certain issues. It is a completely different thing to spend between \$84 million and \$85 million in 20 months to hire "experts" from the United States that will show us how to improve situations in a Canadian context. The Liberal Party government is currently implementing a parallel system that has far from proven its efficiency. It is all the more difficult to assess the work of McKinsey, considering that the documents prepared by the company remain mostly secret.

The doubtful orientations of the advice

It is totally relevant to cast doubt about the orientations of the advice offered by McKinsey and Company. Not surprisingly, the firm generally favours solutions offered by private enterprises, its bread and butter. It has done so in health topics and financial stakes in the past, among other fields.

Some of McKinsey's reports, when divulged publicly, look like pasted versions of previous documents. The orientations are, therefore, predictable. So, why bother hiring the company?

There is also an ethical issue on the line. Before the war triggered by Russia in Ukraine, McKinsey and Company provided advice to Russia regarding an oil and gas

export strategy regarding Germany and was found to have offered its services to Germany about importing oil and gas from Russia. There is an obvious conflict of interest here but the financial bottom line is the only important stake for McKinsey.

Why would Canada deal with crooks of that nature? The Coalition Avenir Quebec government is far from presenting a good record in that field as well as it paid a high price to McKinsey to get support at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A CBC-Radio-Canada report revealed that Quebec extended \$35,000 a day to the American firm from April to June 2020. As if that was not enough, the public broadcaster also proved that François Legault's government used McKinsey experts to provide advice for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, as if American counsel was a symbol of competence during the pandemic. The United States has demonstrated one of the worst performances of pandemic management among the industrialized countries of the world. Truth be told, the south of the border disaster during the pandemic was largely attributable to Donald Trump's government incompetence.

A government can learn from the better performance of other governments instead of relying essentially on private firms like McKinsey. Representatives of such consulting firms will often defend their position by saying that they are the only ones able to tell the truth to ministers, prime ministers and premiers.

In reality, that truth should come from civil servants from all ranks. They are paid for that. Canada's former Auditor General, the late Michael Ferguson, denounced the fact that civil servants were slowly deprived of their power, feared criticizing the hierarchy and were, therefore, becoming dysfunctional, notably due to the dependence on private firms.

There are enough civil servants and organizations in Canada to provide wise counsel to the governments. A change in current practices is needed and it must come soon.

The Joy of January

The **J** in January means "Joy-full" but a month "Jam" with snow.

The **A** in January means to dress "Accordingly" and to "Accept" winter as it is.

The **N** in January means cold "North" winds and help "Neighbours" close by.

The **U** in January means you cannot "Under-Estimate" the month by temperature.

The second **A** in January is the "Absence" of rain is a blessing.

The **R** in January means "Rather" unpredictable with those long-range forecasts.

The **Y** in January means a "Year" filled with positivity and helping each other.

Ken Ross
New Carlisle, Quebec.

Cinema Paradiso presents movies in their original English version

GILLES GAGNÉ

CHANDLER – Since the beginning of January, Chandler's Cinema Paradiso has been presenting movies in their English original version, at 7 p.m. on Mondays. It is presented as a test by the owner of the cinema, Rodrigue Huard, who made a Facebook post of that news. He mentions that if the January test proves conclusive, more original versions of movies will be included in the cinema schedule. The SPEC tried to reach Mr. Huard on January 5-6 in order to know if the test will last past January but he was not available.

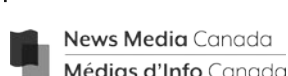


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(Taxes included)
1-year (paper or digital): \$46
6-months (paper or digital): \$25
Outside Canada:
1-year paper \$165 digital: \$46

Published every **Wednesday** by:
Les Publications de la Côte Inc.
(Sea-Coast Publications Inc.)



We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.
We acknowledge special funding from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications.



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Percé cuts its spending in 2023

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - Percé cuts its expenses to present an average tax increase of 3% on a budget down by \$330,000 to reach \$7.4 million in 2023.

This decrease is explained in particular by the discontinuation of snow removal on the road network under provincial jurisdiction.

Revenues from transportation went from \$735,670 to \$90,000. Expenditures in this area go from just over \$1 million to \$861,090.

The mayor, Cathy Poirier, mentions that if Percé had bid on a contract renewal, the municipality would have had to buy new machinery, which would have a greater impact on the budget.

The base rate increases from \$1.22 to \$1.2566 per \$100, of municipal value in



Photo: N. Sergerie

The mayor of Percé, Cathy Poirier, indicates that tourism promotion has been revised downwards for 2023.

addition to the increase in residual materials of \$15 and an equivalent amount for

wastewater.

For a \$100,000 home, the increase will be \$51.

The Town will appropriate \$144,000 from the surplus of \$1.4 million.

The Town will put the brakes on tourism promotion. "The biggest cut, if we can say so, is at the level of tourist promotion. There was \$75,000 annually from citizens' pockets to promote the Town of Percé. This year, we said to ourselves that, with all the new ways of promoting, we want to drop the paper and go to social networks, which allow us to target customers," explains Ms. Poirier.

She mentions that, for example, the Town cannot cut snow removal.

Ms. Poirier also mentioned the missed goal regarding the tourist fee. The net \$133,000 raised in 2022 cannot be used due to the legal dispute with the opponents. "In the years to come,

we will be able to get more money than we have cut in recreational tourism. Will there be a tax reduction? We want it. What we are going to free up from the current budget will be able to be re-offered to the citizens," says the elected official.

The three-year capital plan totals \$20 million.

The rue du Piedmont project cost \$3.9 million, but the amount is not complete. "There are works that will be done in 2023. It will be the underground infrastructure. The second part remains an estimate. These are not the final estimates because there are still choices to be made," explains Ms. Poirier.

The \$4 million municipal garage warehouse and \$5.2 million for Parc Rivière Émeraude are also in the plans.

Quebec wants to order more than 4,000 megawatts of wind power

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-ANNE-DES-MONTS - Quebec puts a brake on the call for tenders for 1,000 megawatts of wind energy and 1,300 megawatts for renewable energy which was due before the end of 2022 to develop a plan to order more than 4,000 megawatts of wind power over the next few years.

This turnaround is welcomed by the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Intermunicipal Energy Board which sees it as another opportunity for growth.

"This is more than encouraging news," says the president of the management, Simon Deschênes, who was worried when rumours circulated in recent weeks about the fate of this call for tenders.

The Minister of Economy, Innovation and Energy, Pierre Fitzgibbon, announced on December 19, the postponement of this call for tenders announced last April in Gaspé by Premier François Legault.

The minister indicated this in a press release that asked Hydro-Québec to quickly implement a supply strategy that will allow, by 2030, the optimal development of wind power supplies in cooperation with the in-



Photo: N. Sergerie

The president of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine intermunicipal energy board, Simon Deschênes

dustry.

Hydro-Québec was quick to react by announcing this strategy which, it says, will make it possible to respond effectively and at the best possible cost to significantly increase the production of renewable energy by 2030.

The amounts of energy provided for in these cancelled calls for tender will be fully met by a new mechanism, which will target the development of more than 4,000 megawatts of wind energy in favourable areas.

Asked whether the Eastern Alliance already has proj-

ects for 4,000 megawatts in its plans, the president of the Gaspé company remains cautious. "It's difficult to answer. I would tell you that we are thinking big and everything is possible," declared Mr. Deschênes who was limited in his response. He intends to speak with his partners to review the possibilities.

"I don't want to put on the smoke screen by saying yes. Everything is beautiful but rest assured that we will optimize our chances of having the maximum number of megawatts in the context of a call for tenders of more than

4,000 megawatts," says the president.

This reality highlights the need to coordinate the installation of future wind farms in areas where it will be possible to connect them to the Hydro-Québec transmission network more quickly and at reasonable cost.

The Eastern Alliance has already mapped its territory which extends from Montmagny, in Chaudière-Appalaches, to the Lower Saint Lawrence and Gaspé Peninsula.

"It's already done for us. We know that the strong wind potential is in eastern Quebec. There are integration capacities on the territory. We had been selling the idea for at least two years that the wind power sector should obtain predictability over time. Now here is the signal that the industry was waiting for," says Mr. Deschênes.

In addition, the Alliance has commissioned a study to determine exactly what tools

are needed to eliminate the bottleneck that exists in Rivière-du-Loup that makes it difficult to transport the energy produced by possible parks in the Eastern Lower Saint Lawrence and Gaspé Peninsula.

The terms of the new supply mechanism, which all promoters will be able to take advantage of, will be communicated soon according to the state-owned company.

According to recent Hydro-Québec forecasts, Québec's electricity demand will increase by 25 terawatt hours over the next 10 years.

In December 2021, a call for tenders was launched for 480 megawatts of energy from renewable sources and another 300 reserved for wind power.

The bids were submitted in July and the results, which were to be known this month, will not be known until the beginning of 2023.

The Eastern Alliance had submitted 11 projects as part of these calls for tenders.



Forillon Park is considering reopening in the winter

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Forillon Park could reopen again in winter, 10 years after being forced to suspend its activities following budget cuts decreed at the time by the Conservative government of Stephen Harper.

"We want to look at the opportunities for the winter season. As we know, the winter activities and spinoffs are improving in the Gaspé Peninsula and we want to see what place Parks Canada has in this recreational tourism system," says the director of Forillon Park, Élisabeth Lacoursière.

A partnership has already been established with several groups including Griffon Aventure and the Griffon Cultural Centre which offer, among other things, skiing, snowshoeing, and fat tire bikes. This winter, the Griffon Cultural Centre also launched their yurt rentals.

"The results of the partnerships we have are positive and we will continue to look at that with our partners. We want to continue to be an economic lever for these organizations as well. We are really in a mode of listening and observation and we will look more officially at this question over the next few months," adds Ms. Lacoursière.

In November 2012, some 300 people demonstrated in front of the Parks Canada offices in Gaspé to demand that winter activities be maintained at Forillon Park.

Letters had been sent by a committee that had been formed at the time to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the minister responsible for Parks Canada, and other stakeholders.

The 2010 master plan concluded that the park needed to improve its winter activities and extend the tourist season to become an economic force.

Park management said at the time that maintaining winter activities would cost \$100,000.

The cuts had been criticized by the defunct Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Regional Conference of Elected Officials (CRÉ).

The timing of bringing up the winter activities issue co-



Photo: N. Sergerie

A snowmobile maintaining a cross-country ski trail when the park was still open in winter, before 2012.

incides with the tabling of Forillon Park's master plan for the next 10 years.

This exercise is a requirement of the Canada National Parks Act and the plan guides the management of the park.

"It's collaborative work with the team, with the community. We started the exercise in 2018-2019 to see the state of the situation," explains Ms. Lacoursière.

The protection of natural and cultural landscapes is obviously part of the document. "We want to remain an anchor and an economic lever. We are happy to have forged more and more ties in recent years with the local community, in particular with the Micmac Nation of Gespeg, with the Regroupement des personnes expropriées and their descendants. We want to remain a good neighbour while serving all Canadians who visit us a lot," says the director.

Nearly \$100 million has been invested in recent years to upgrade the park's infrastructure and investments and interventions will continue.

"There is still work to be done. We are pleased with the announcements of recent weeks on investments for the cultural heritage of Grande-Grave. What will occupy us in the face of climate change and erosion in the coming years is the Cap Bon-Ami sector. We have already started taking steps to establish the situation and plan the

visit experience. We want to have a natural environment that adapts and is healthy," says Ms. Lacoursière.

She also wants to keep a cultural environment that is representative of the history and experience of the park.

The plan also calls for improving the health of the park's forest. "We recognize that the state of health of the forest is not what we would like, especially with the budworm epidemic and the moose population. We have been taking data on the moose population for a few years and there are signs that we have a situation of overabundance and that is already being measured. We are spraying to counter the budworm and we are looking at the measures for the overabundance of the moose population," explains the director.

The park does not want to move forward to welcome more visitors. A job has to be done first. "If we want to accommodate 200,000 people in the park, there is a question that must be asked and we make it a priority in the master plan: we want to see how we can ensure that the experience of the visit remains of high quality and that the safety of the visitor remains assured. We want to look at all the mobility and connectivity of the sectors to see if we can improve active transportation in different sectors," says Ms. Lacoursière.

Ville de
PERCÉ

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given by the present that the municipal Council of the Ville de Percé has adopted its 2023 budget as well as its three-year program of capital expenditures during the meeting held on December 20, 2022.

The budget is as follows:

OPERATING EXPENSES	2023	2022
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	\$1 224 095	\$1 206 927
PUBLIC SECURITY	\$541 465	\$544 797
TRANSPORTATION	\$1 874 390	\$2 054 520
ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE	\$1 207 065	\$1 187 778
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	\$45 500	\$45 244
URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	\$1 071 720	\$1 271 150
RECREATION & CULTURE	\$394 800	\$385 100
FINANCING CHARGES	\$347 985	\$302 984
	\$6 707 020	\$6 998 500

RECONCILIATION FOR TAX PURPOSES

REPAYMENT OF THE LONG-TERM DEBT	\$598 000	\$603 500
TRANSFER OF INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES	\$10 000	\$20 000
RESERVE FUNDS	\$199 525	\$208 350
SURPLUS APPROPRIATION	(\$144 545)	(\$127 850)
	\$662 980	\$704 000

TOTAL EXPENSES AND RECONCILIATION FOR TAX PURPOSES

	\$7 370 000	\$7 702 500
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REVENUES

TAXES ON THE PROPERTY VALUE	\$3 843 950	\$3 777 430
TARIFF FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES	\$1 196 400	\$1 152 500
PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES	\$520 090	\$503 620
TRANSFERS	\$1 028 060	\$924 280
SERVICES RENDERED	\$531 500	\$1 173 670
IMPOSITION OF RIGHTS	\$86 000	\$106 000
INTERESTS	\$55 000	65 000
OTHER REVENUES - Dues Wind park	\$109 000	
TOTAL REVENUES	\$7 370 000	\$7 702 500

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 2023-2024-2025 is as follows:

INVESTMENT	2023	2024	2025	TOTAL
Administration				
Works on city hall	0	0	1 650 000	1 650 000
Energy efficiency of buildings	0	0	100 000	100 000
Total Administration	0	0	1 750 000	1 750 000
Fire safety				
Fire truck	546 000	0	0	546 000
Acquisition of equipment	40 000	0	0	40 000
Total Fire safety	586 000	0	0	586 000
Publics works				
Pickup truck	40 000	0	0	40 000
Signaling - planning	15 000	0	0	15 000
Municipal garage multifunction warehouse	4 024 216	0	0	4 024 216
Warehouse layout	150 000	0	0	150 000
Local road infrastructure (PAVL)	0	0	4 000 000	4 000 000
Cartography and inventory	20 000	0	0	20 000
Implementation fixed preventive maintenance plan	50 000	0	0	50 000
Dismantling water intake	80 000	250 000	0	330 000
Eco-conscious commercial street	1 300 000	1 900 000	0	3 200 000
Total Publics works	5 679 216	2 150 000	4 000 000	11 829 216
Environmental hygiene				
Aqueduct, Sewage treatment:				
Pickup truck	0	0	40 000	40 000
Multi gas detector	30 000	0	0	30 000
Water source protection	22 575	0	0	22 575
Total Environmental hygiene	52 575	0	40 000	92 575
Urban planning and development				
Rivière-aux-Emeraudes municipal park development	0	5 200 000	0	5 200 000
Development of the C-D-B beach site	10 000	50 000	50 000	110 000
Cap-d'Espoir community center park	0	30 000	50 000	80 000
Cap-d'Espoir 2 ^e Rang park	20 000	10 000	0	30 000
Bridgeville park	20 000	10 000	0	30 000
Val d'Espoir park	20 000	0	0	20 000
Barachois warf	0	100 000	100 000	200 000
Saint-Georges rest area	20 000	10 000	0	30 000
Signs	25 000	0	0	25 000
Event structure	700 000	0	0	700 000
Daycare project	30 000	0	0	30 000
Total Urban planning and development	845 000	5 410 000	200 000	6 455 000
Total of investment activities	7 162 791 \$	7 560 000 \$	5 990 000 \$	20 712 791 \$

Issued in Percé, on December 21, 2022

Gemma Vibert,
Clerk

Forillon Park experiences nearly a 10% drop in attendance in 2022

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - After experiencing its best year in 20 years with 181,000 visitors in 2021, attendance at Forillon was down 9.3%, to 164,000, in 2022.

Despite that decrease, Forillon Park administration considers this assessment to still be very positive. "We had a record year in 2021, which was almost a historic high. With the easing of health measures and the opening of borders, people were expected to return internationally. We are back to statistics closer to normal, closer to 2019," explains Visitor Experience Manager, Frédéric Sainte-Croix.

The camping accommodation component also unsurprisingly experienced a decrease, dropping from 28,400 overnight stays to nearly 24,000 overnight stays. However, ready-to-camp options such as the Otentik tents, microcubes and Ôasis facilities experienced a strong increase of 40% compared to the reference year of 2019.



Credit: Courtesy of Parks Canada

Attendance at Forillon Park was down in 2022.

"It's still a significant increase. The ready-to-camp option is increasingly popular. It is a fairly popular tourist trend. It is called glamping, or comfortable camping. People are increasingly abandoning the trailer or the tent. You travel with less equipment and you have comfort. This is in line with the current tourist trend," says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

In 2022, interpretation activities were reinstated with

guides at the cultural and nature levels.

New companies have settled in Forillon, such as a new food operator at the recreation centre and new collaborations including the Astronomy Club.

"We have added products for people with reduced mobility, such as a new wheelchair adapted for trails," says Mr. Sainte-Croix as an example.

In addition, several con-

servation projects are underway or being continued which have generated results that will be useful for the protection of cultural and natural resources in the future.

Among these projects, the conservation team has established a portrait of the park's amphibian population, a first step in a long-term process to assess the state of health of wetlands in Forillon.

In addition, the park is currently completing the pro-

duction of a bat conservation plan through a multi-park project carried out jointly with La Mauricie National Park, the Quebec management unit of federal government-owned parks and the Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve.

Of the many conservation projects that were set in motion this year, there was the conservation, restoration and enhancement project for the beaver pond sector announced in August 2022.

For 2023, the park management remains optimistic even if an objective hasn't yet been set. "We will see what the future holds for us, but we will continue to work very hard to remain competitive and to continue to attract a lot of people to the Gaspé Peninsula. People travel to the Gaspé to come to Forillon. We continue to work hard at renewing ourselves," says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

A computer migration will mean that the opening of the reservation centre for the 2023 season will be delayed. The date for the system being up and running isn't yet available.

PRICES IN EFFECT UNTIL JANUARY 31, 2023

22 SENTRA

LEASE
from **5.49%**



84m Finance		NCF	Banks
Sentra S CVT	Rate	6.24%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 347	\$ 359

23 MURANO

4.99% | **48 MOS. FINANCE**



84m Finance		NCF	Banks
Murano S	Rate	5.74%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 571	\$ 601

23 KICKS

LEASE
from **5.99%**



84m Finance		NCF	Banks
Kicks S	Rate	5.99%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 334	\$ 348

23 PATHFINDER

LEASE
from **5.99%**



60m Finance		NCF	Banks
Pathfinder SL	Rate	6.49%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 1,074	\$ 1,095

22 QASHQAI

LEASE
from **4.24%**



84m Finance		NCF	Banks
Qashqai SV FWD CVT	Rate	5.49%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 425	\$ 451

22 FRONTIER

CC SV 4WD

\$613 MONTHLY | **60 MOS. LEASE**
\$995 DOWN



60m Finance		NCF	Banks
Frontier CC SV	Rate	5.99%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 908	\$ 937

23 ROGUE

LEASE
from **4.49%**
Excludes S FWD/S AWD



84m Finance		NCF	Banks
Rogue SV AWD	Rate	5.74%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 558	\$ 587

22 ARMADA

SL Midnight Edition

\$998 MONTHLY | **24 MOS. LEASE**
\$5,750 DOWN



60m Finance		NCF	Banks
Armada SL Midnight	Rate	4.99%	7.29%
	Payment	\$ 1,415	\$ 1,495

* Bank rates based on market data as of January 3rd, 2023



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2022 – The year that was

DIANE SKINNER

“We have a whole new year ahead of us and wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all be a little gentler with each other and a little more loving. Have a little more empathy and maybe – next year at this time - we will like each other a little more.” Betty White

2022 is behind us, in the rear-view mirror. A new year lies before us and what will it hold? The current news is certainly not very uplifting. Wars, viruses, economic challenges. Readers of The Gaspé Spec have enjoyed articles all through 2022 about local events, government, social programs, elections, COVID, the economy, Police Reports, cultural happenings, commentaries and Reflections, and a whole lot more. There is no other way that keeps readers informed so extensively in English. The Gaspé Spec keeps you informed and entertained. How many of these articles can you recall? Those who say there is “nothing in the paper” might want to look over the newspaper again. Below are a few of the stories that were published in the year 2022 in the Gaspé Spec. How many do you recall?

January

- Shigawake's Jennifer Hayes becomes the first woman to preside over the Canadian Dairy Commission.
- CASA supports seniors in Bonaventure MRC.
- Rail GD signs another contract with VIA Rail for the refurbishment of dining cars.
- Service Canada targeted by hackers; hundreds of workers deprived of EI benefits for weeks.
- The number of COVID cases declined in the region, but the 50th fatality occurred.

February

- Quebec fishermen want DFO Minister Joyce Murray to review the consultation on redfish.
- Emergency CPE childcare facility will soon open in Gaspé.
- Bloc Québécois says Service Canada has lost control of identity theft and fraud attempts.
- Mountain ski touring is now supervised in six Gaspé Peninsula centres.
- Saint-Godefroi mayor resigns due to hate mail.

March

- Two workers tell their story and share concerns about the attitude of Service Canada.
- Two large snowstorms hit the Gaspé.
- Ukrainian-Gaspesian fears Europe-wide conflict and urges other countries to join Ukraine's fight.
- Gaspésie Railway Society loads last windmill trains for a while.
- Quebec budget leaves major holes in sports and recreation infrastructure replacements.

April

- Osisko Metals interested in buying former Murdochville mining locations from Glencore.
- Hong Kong vet celebrates his 100th birthday.
- Diane Lebouthillier speaks out about the caribou situation, seniors and EI reform.
- New tenders for wind energy.
- Legault denies pre-election campaigning.

May

- CASA organizes Community Clean-Up Challenge.
- Lobster prices comparable to 2021.
- After spotting rare polar bear, Sophie Bonneville thought “I'll go get myself a 649 ticket.”
- Grass fire almost reaches SPDS
- Cement overflows from a silo located at the Votorantim Cimentos complex in port Daniel.

June

- Avian flu confirmed in case of gannets.
- New fishing boat for Listuguj is delivered.
- Quebec government unveils final details of air access program.
- Permanent closure of the head section of the New Richmond wharf for safety reasons.
- New Carlisle Detention Centre in need of improvements.
- Groupe Lebel invests \$4.5 M in Nouvelle sawmill to optimize lumber production.

July

- CBC show still standing to film in New Richmond.
- 2010 flood: Sunny Bank citizens win case over Transport Quebec.
- Osisko Metals will buy Glencore's mining assets in Murdochville.
- Pascan denies boarding to a father and his infant for being a few minutes late.

August

- The dunes and forest of the Malbaie Salt marsh sandbar benefit from two years of work and \$500,000 investment.
- Cement plant is far from having solved all its problems.
- Gaspé Truckers' Association implements pressure tactics.
- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau admits foreign worker rules need to be reviewed.

- DFO once again makes a last-minute announcement regarding herring quotas.

September

- Federal Liberal MPs from Quebec meet in Gaspé and Percé.
- New Richmond's Rotary Club donates \$21,000 to local organizations.
- New Richmond resident wonders why she can't get dialysis closer to home.
- Environment Ministry orders Saint Marys Cement to stop dust discharges.

October

- Herring fishermen and processors experience a rocky season.
- Last surviving Hong Kong veteran from the Gaspé Peninsula passes away.
- Simon Prévost's challenge raises close to \$221,000 towards palliative care facility.
- Gaspesian country singer, Pamela Rooney, wins two awards in Texas.

November

- Kidney donor named “ambassador of health.”
- Osisko Metals satisfied with results at Mount copper.
- No date for employment insurance reform.
- Lightning causes rare November fire.
- MTQ opts for regrouped calls for tenders between Port-Daniel and Gaspé.
- Gesgapegiag Christmas Market a big success.

December

- Jenn Harrison files a complaint with the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS.
- LM Wind Power presents first 107-metre blade.
- Independent workforce causes a deficit for the current fiscal year at the Gaspé peninsula CISSS.
- Frett design obtains Health Canada certification for its reusable surgical mask.



The Board of Directors and staff of
The Gaspé Spec
wish all our readers, advertisers
and supporters a
Happy New Year!

GASPÉ PENINSULA:

Nearly a quarter of work is seasonal according to a study

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - A study conducted by Segma Research on behalf of the Pabok Unemployment Action Movement reveals that 23.4% of all jobs held over the past year in the Gaspé Peninsula were seasonal.

The report was submitted on December 19 by the coordinator of the Movement, Nadia Mongeon, to the Member of Parliament for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, Diane Lebouthillier. Ms. Mongeon was accompanied by approximately 15 people.

Statistics

Unsurprisingly, the accommodation and food service sector depends the most on this type of employment with 62.5% of those jobs being seasonal. That is 1,818 positions.

The primary and secondary sector, such as the fisheries and forestry sector, still monopolize 2,740 seasonal jobs.

The MRC of Bonaventure has the most seasonal positions with 27.4% of jobs, or more than one in four, while the proportion drops to 19% in the MRC of Rocher-Percé. The vast majority of seasonal work is full-time with 86.2% while 13.8% is part-time. The part-time rate is highest in the commerce sector at 26.6%.

The average duration of seasonal work was established at 16.9 weeks; 76.6% of hours worked are between May and September. A seasonal worker works an average of 37.1 hours per week at an average wage of \$18.90 per hour.

The majority of seasonal positions generate 560 hours of annual work or less, of which 29.3% provide less than the only eligibility for employment insurance benefits.

Seasonal positions are mostly held by women (59.5%) and almost a third by those under 35 (30.5%). 43.5% are workers aged 50 to 64.

According to information gathered by the firm, the total payroll for seasonal jobs in Gaspé Peninsula is between \$203 and \$250 million per year.

Nearly a third of businesses (29.6%) using seasonal work were unable to fill certain positions in the past



Credit: Courtesy

Workers went to the office of Diane Lebouthillier in Grande-Rivière on December 19 to discuss the impacts experienced by the current employment insurance situation.

year.

“What we wanted to show is that seasonal employment is really something that is part of our economy and that represents a lot of money and a lot of workers,” says Nadia Mongeon.

“We wanted to support our requests and show that our requests were not superfluous and irrational. They correlate with the reality on the ground,” adds the coordinator.

“We want Minister (Carla) Qualtrought to use this data to support our claims,” says Ms. Mongeon.

According to her, Minister Diane Lebouthillier seemed surprised by the document.

“The people present expressed their reality. I think it did her good to see the other side of the coin,” says Ms. Mongeon.

In response, two days later, Diane Lebouthillier ensured that the reform will take into account seasonal work.

“Most of the data, I already knew about. I know that we are in an environment where there is seasonal work in the tourism, fisheries and agricultural sectors. I was already aware,” says the MP.

During the meeting in Grande-Rivière, a worker said that after his season in a fish processing plant, if he goes to work elsewhere and leaves this second job to return to the factory, it is marked “voluntary departure,” which subsequently deprives him of benefits.

“I fully agree with what was brought. The Act is outdated and was written over 50 years ago. This law does not respond to the current particularities of the labour market. This is a good example. We are losing what we have

learned and the Act also does not take self-employed workers into account. Our offices are aware of what is happening. We deal with a lot of these cases. People are also eager for the reform to be announced,” explains Ms. Lebouthillier, who mentions

that it will be tabled in 2023 and the minister responsible for the program has met with all the players involved in recent months.

“The beginnings and ends of fishing are standardized by the federal government. As we said, there is no one fishing in January. We had these discussions and it is one of the particularities on which I found it important with my colleagues to take into account the seasonality of certain workplaces,” says Ms. Lebouthillier.

There were also representations from seniors who wanted to work without being penalized on the guaranteed income supplement.

Some criticize her for being less combative on the reform of employment insurance than when she was prefect of the MRC du Rocher-Percé. At that time,

she fought tooth and nail to change the reform.

“If I had to do it again when I was prefect, I would do the same thing again,” she says, recalling that the Harper reform “had been wild” and did not take into account the particularities of the environment.

“We had terrorized people where they had to work 100 kilometres from their environment. I spoke about it with the minister about the seasonality of work. But I have always advocated employment, to create jobs in order to get people out of the famous speech of ‘are we going to make our stamps’. It’s more profitable for an environment when people are working,” suggests Ms. Lebouthillier, especially in the current economic situation.

“I am a strong advocate for work,” she concludes.

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Rising interest rates force Town of New Richmond to delay capital payment for Pin rouge

Sharing the bill with neighbours would be convenient, affirms Éric Dubé

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The skyrocketing increases in interest rates since January 2022 will force the Town of New Richmond to postpone the payment of capital on its \$2.8 million debt linked to the Little Cascapedia Regional Park, in which the Pin rouge ski centre is included.

The Town of New Richmond usually earmarks \$150,000 annually to reduce the debt linked to the ski centre, its cottages and the Taylor Point campground. The amount is divided into two almost equal shares, one for interest and one for capital payment.

However, between January and November 2022, the Bank of Canada policy rate went from 0.25% to 3.75%, with a huge effect on commercial interest rates.

"Not only will the annual amount of \$150,000 fail to cover our interest payments, but we have to add \$25,000 to deal with the rising burden of interest alone. There will be no capital payment in 2023," explains the Town of New Richmond mayor, Éric Dubé.

The Little Cascapedia Regional Park debt had been reimbursed for nine years prior to 2023. At that rate, the debt would have been paid in 2050. However, that reality will change since interest rates are not expected to change much for at least two years and will likely not go as low as they were prior to January 2023.

"The future of this organization is a constant challenge. By itself, New Richmond is not in a position to achieve this. If the region wishes, in the medium and long term, to preserve the activities of the Pin Rouge mountain, other organizations will have to get involved. I am confident that when the situation arises, some people will get involved," adds Mr. Dubé.

New Richmond citizens deserve a break, says Mayor Dubé

During the December 19 presentation of the municipal budget, he added that "with the current economic situation, this moment may come

sooner rather than later. The Town has done enough for nearly 20 years and now has a duty to share the burden with others. This mountain with its high-quality equipment is an important loss leader for tourism in both winter and summer."

Still in his speech, he added that "the region must make sure to preserve this achievement, but a town of 3,800 inhabitants is not able to do so, especially when you consider that the centre is not even located on our municipal territory. You can perceive this message as a call for help or even as a public warning. It's up to you to judge, but I consider it important for me to be very honest with you on this subject. We are adding \$25,000 next year solely to compensate for the increase in interest rates for the Regional Park and that we will no longer be able to do. The citizens of New Richmond deserve a break."

Asked later if he has started to talk to his fellow Baie-des-Chaleurs mayors, Mr. Dubé says that, so far, everything has been done informally.

"I have not talked to the Government of Canada and Government of Québec people. I have not sent letters to the neighbouring mayors but they know my position. They know that we no longer have the means to pay the entire bill. We will hit a wall at some point," he points out.

Éric Dubé explains that the Town of New Richmond has sometimes come forward with loans to Pin rouge without asking for reimbursement.

"We invested \$200,000 at one point because there was an urgent need for equipment. There was a year when the season started that there was no money to pay the employees so we lent the money and we never asked to be paid back," he explains.

The current long-term debt of Pin rouge amounts to \$2,793,000. It is supposed to be reimbursed by 2050. Mayor Dubé says that the deadline is theoretical although it would sure be advantageous to finish paying the debt by that time. "It is not a term loan. It is a credit line,"



Photo: G. Gagné

Since the Town of New Richmond took control of Pin rouge, the municipality has paid the regional share of the facility's long-term debt and its operational deficits while the users are coming from all over the Baie des Chaleurs area and beyond to enjoy various winter activities.

he mentions.

The example of the Bruce Ritchie pool

Éric Dubé doesn't hide that he has the deal signed by New Richmond's neighbours for the Bruce Ritchie pool in mind when he thinks of an eventual sharing of the Pin rouge annual deficit.

"We receive \$98,000 per year for five years. The amounts are based according

to the percentage of use made by the citizens of the neighbouring towns. The debt load is still New Richmond's but we receive some help. The first agreement for the pool was a cheap deal for the other municipalities and they have since accepted the principle of reality," he explains.

The Town of New Richmond is also paying the full tab of its arena, currently under repair, and the full bill of the concert hall.

"We might seek the same kind of deal for the arena but there is one in Caplan and a brand new one in Bonaventure," adds Éric Dubé.

Over the last two years, the Taylor Point campground made an annual surplus of around \$200,000. The amount is integrated into the Little Cascapedia Regional Park overall budget. The surplus includes the money coming from the summer renting of the Pin rouge cottages.

Bonaventure mayor, Roch Audet, open to discussion

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The mayor of Bonaventure, Roch Audet, reacts somewhat positively to the release of the Town of New Richmond budget and the speech of Mayor Éric Dubé, who says that his taxpayers will no longer be able to take the entire burden of the Pin rouge ski centre a year down the road.

"I am 100% open to a dialogue on the issue but it will have to be a structured discussion. I have been asking for a strategic plan in the Bonaventure MRC for nine years and it hasn't happened. I think it is a necessary exercise and it requires some time. We will not meet for an hour on a Tuesday evening when we are exhausted," says Roch Audet.



Bonaventure Mayor
Roch Audet

He also stresses that the talks cannot cover solely the Little Cascapedia Regional Park issue. It has to be broader.

"We must consider the whole set of infrastructures. We have to analyze things

from a wide angle. We also have (in Bonaventure) some infrastructures shared with our neighbours, like we have the golf course, a pool and an arena. I acknowledge the fact that Pin rouge covers a bigger territory. We must also avoid the temptation to ask for help when it is going bad but shut our mouths when we make money. The debate will also have to take into account decisions made in the past. It would be hard to live with the effects of past decisions we were not consulted about.

Moreover, the Bioparc doesn't only belong to Bonaventure, for example. It is a regional attraction. The same thing applies to the Bonaventure River. I have spent a lot of time in order to improve things. A lot of people benefit from that river," he points out.

LOBSTER:

Another good season in terms of catches and income in the Gaspé Peninsula *The Magdalen Islands fishermen smash their previous record*

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The Gaspé Peninsula lobster fishermen experienced another excellent year in 2022, although they did not break the regional record with regard to catches and revenues, however, their Magdalen Islands colleagues registered record landings and revenues.

In fact, the landings and revenues were so good in the Magdalen Islands that it made up for the slight drop experienced by the Gaspé Peninsula and North Shore lobster fishermen. Overall, the Quebec lobster fisheries set new records in landings and revenues.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, lobster catches have increased almost every year since 2013, but 2022 was an exception, due to very difficult weather conditions during the first two weeks of the season. In 2022, catches reached 4,263 metric tonnes, compared to 4,719 metric tonnes in 2021, a decrease of 436 tonnes.

This 9.6% volume drop largely explains the decline in landing revenues, which fell from \$88.8 million in 2021 to \$74.4 million last year, a 16.2% decrease.

Research analyst Marilou Des Roberts, of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, recalls that “the 6.7% drop in the price paid to lobster fishermen also contributed to the drop in income for Gaspésians.”

Quebec-wide, lobster fishermen reached a record volume of catches with 11,908 metric tonnes, 875 metric tonnes more than the 11,033 in 2021, the previous record. This is an increase of 7.93%.

Moreover, even though the price did not reach a record high in 2022, it remained at a high threshold, which allowed the industry to set an all-time high in landed value. It amounted to \$208.7 million, nearly \$2 million more than the \$207 million of 2021 when a record price had been set. This is a 0.97% increase in these total revenues, a figure which remains preliminary, with the 2022 catch statistics likely to change slightly.

The value of 2022 lobster catches is only \$1 million under the largest annual income attributable to a single



In 2022, the Gaspé Peninsula lobster fishermen did not match the numbers of 2021 but it was nevertheless a very good year.

species. This record of \$210 million was set in 2017 in the snow crab sector.

“Lobster is overall the most lucrative species for a third year in a row, even though the price has fallen from \$8.52 per pound (in 2021) to \$7.95 this year. It's 6.7% less,” points out Marilou Des Roberts.

This price of \$7.95 is the second highest price in the history of Quebec lobster catches, in nominal value, after the 2021 record.

Marilou Des Roberts points out in particular that in the Magdalen Islands, lobster landings increased by 1,411 metric tonnes from one year to the next, reaching 6,986 tons in 2022, compared to 5,575 tons in 2021. This is a major increase of 25.3%.

The revenues increased to \$123.2 million in the archipelago, up \$18.4 million from \$104.8 million the previous year. This is a significant jump of 13.93% between 2021 and 2022. In the Islands, lobster represents 64% of all volumes of marine products landed, volumes that reach 10,883 metric tons, and 75% of the total value of landings. This value, all species combined, reached \$165 million in 2022.

Lobster fishermen on the North Shore experienced drops in volumes and revenues in 2022. “Quantities fell by 11% and there was a drop of 3% in value,” reports Marilou Des Roberts.

The North Shore has long been a marginal player in terms of lobster landings, but the last seven years have changed the situation. In

2015, that region's fishermen landed 157 metric tons, representing \$1.7 million in value. The all-time high came in 2021 with catches of 739 tonnes generating \$14.3 million in revenue for fishers.

The year 2022 remained very good when put in a context of 10 years since the catches totalled 659 tonnes and they generated revenues of \$11 million on landing. This is six-and-a-half times more spin offs than in 2015.

Still a high price

Marilou Des Roberts recalls, that despite the drop of 6.7% in Quebec-wide's average price in 2022, “the price of lobster was 16% higher compared to its pre-Covid level.” In 2019, that price was \$6.66 per pound.

In the past seven years, the price of lobster has fallen below \$6.50 per pound only twice, at \$5.69 in 2015, and \$5.04 in 2020, the first year of Covid, during which most

Quebec lobster fishermen, worried about seeing the season cancelled because of the pandemic, accepted a guaranteed price of \$5 per pound.

Due to spawning conditions favoured by vigorous measures to protect mature specimens in the Magdalen Islands and the Gaspé Peninsula starting in the second half of the 1990s, Quebec lobster catches have increased dramatically over the years, particularly since 2015.

From 5,908 metric tonnes and \$74 million in landed value in 2015, the numbers have roughly doubled in volume and tripled in revenue.

The 2022 numbers remain preliminary for now. Some partial catch data for Anticosti Island were not available in December 2022.

In the medium term, the Haute-Gaspésie and Eastern Lower Saint Lawrence region could also become interesting areas for catching lobster. Exploratory fishing is being conducted between La Martre, east of Sainte-Annes-des-Monts, and the Tartigou River, in Baie-des-Sables, west of Matane, and these trials are yielding encouraging results.

Protect 30% of the Gaspé Peninsula, says Solidarité Gaspésie

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Solidarité Gaspésie is asking the Government of Quebec to walk the talk by protecting 30% of the Gaspé Peninsula, as proposed by Premier François Legault in the Quebec Nature Plan presented as part of COP 15 on biodiversity to Montreal.

The organization indicates that the Gaspé Peninsula currently has 1,605 square kilometres of protected areas, which represents 7.86% of its territory.

To reach the 30% target, some 4,500 square kilometres would have to be added by 2030.

“It's a huge effort,” says the spokesperson, Eileen Jessop for this file at Solidarité Gaspésie.

“We are well behind the Quebec average and we want to catch up with the rest of Quebec and we think we deserve our 30%. We don't want to find ourselves in a situation where there are fewer protected areas than in the rest of the province,” says Ms. Jessop.

She reiterates that the econ-

omy of the Gaspé Peninsula is based on the environment that surrounds us.

The proposed solution already exists: in May 2015, the Gaspé Peninsula Wood Producers Union published a proposal for protected areas within the framework of forest certification.

“There are several that have been made. There have been high conservation value identifications that were part of forest certification. These forests have never been protected. All the work has already been done. The first axis that we propose is that all the protected areas refused seven years ago could be put in place now,” suggests Ms. Jessop.

She mentions that these territories only represent 14% of the objective set by the Quebec Nature Plan.

“The second axis that should be done immediately is to respond to the Independent Commission on Caribou which recommended an immediate moratorium on logging in the range of caribou and especially

the ban of cutting in high altitudes because the trees grow a lot slower because it takes longer to restore the balance,” adds Ms. Jessop.

Solidarité Gaspésie mentions that these are two proposals tabled by the government that were refused by the government itself.

“These are two concrete actions that can be taken immediately because there is already a long delay compared to what was recommended in 2015,” says the spokesperson.

The organization recalls that large logging at altitude took place in the habitat of vulnerable species, such as the Bicknell's thrush, according to the Chic-Chocs Protection Committee this fall.

Solidarité Gaspésie reminds us that in addition to the proposed trails, there is also that of a protected area on the territory of the ZEC des Anses.

“We've been working on this for a year now and it is an extension of the protected area proposed in 2015,” says the spokesperson.

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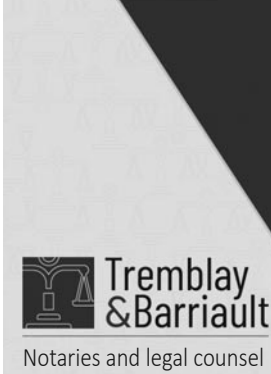
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Caring for unwanted and stray cats

Amy Day's compassionate initiative

DIANE SKINNER
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

NEW CARLISLE: Animal lover, Amy Day, recalls loving and caring for animals as a young girl. Now she has created a concrete plan to help to shelter and protect the stray cats living in New Carlisle.

Amy says, "For as long as I can remember, even as a kid, there have always been a lot of stray cats running around my home in New Carlisle. When I was young, I used to take care of kittens, by making them little shelters with anything I could find, or setting up a place for them in my tree house with a little space heater. My grandparents always taught me to love animals and help when I can. So, this initiative has been a long time coming."

In 2021, Amy, herself a dog owner of sweet little Lilly, started feeding a stray cat outside of her apartment. The cat returned every night and still does. Amy started doing some research, thinking about the approaching cold and harsh winter weather, and about how to make inexpensive DIY cat shelters.

What she found was an article with photos and instructions on how to make a shelter using a plastic storage bin. Amy went to her closet where she had a bin with some papers in it, so she emptied it. She then followed the instructions and made a shelter which she placed outside her door with some cat food in it.

Amy sat by her window for hours waiting for the stray who had been coming every night to appear and finally she arrived, went into the bin and slept in there! She adds, "That's how the kitty shelter initiative began."

This year, with a bit more research and with help from her sister, Shannon, the next step was to make more bins. The sisters put out a call to the community, asking if anyone had any spare storage bins or straw to help shelter the stray cats. Shortly after, messages started flooding in!

People commented about how much they loved the idea and how they wanted to help. Amy says what happened then was very encouraging. "Some people dropped bins at my door, some people transferred us money, some people donated straw and the Reseau de protection animale even shared my post. Some people



Photo Credit: Shannon Day

Amy Day (right) and her sister Shannon Day (left) shown with Poppy, Amy's rescue cat. At the bottom are some of the materials used to make inexpensive, life-saving cat shelters.

asked for an instructional video on how to make their own."

All you need for the bins is a 63L storage bin with a lid that clips on, some Styrofoam to line the sides and straw! Our goal is to give them to people who have a lot of strays on their property, and they can place them in a secure area, where they won't blow away."

Why are there strays in the town? Amy tells SPEC that she can remember strays being around years ago when she was a young child. She mentions that the cost of getting a male kitten neutered in the area is around \$235, so that can be a deterrent for some cat owners. Amy suggests that if you are unable to get your cat fixed, then you should try to keep it inside. Amy comments, "I've seen some really heartbreaking things happen to cats. Some who froze to death or have lost their ears due to frostbite. I recommend not to just pass by cats, or any animal in need. They hurt and they feel pain,

just like we do and if something is in pain, you should try to help. There are local organizations that can sometimes help although they are often bombarded with requests, and there are local community members who will try to help."

Besides her adorable dog Lilly, Amy owns a rescue cat, Poppy. She mentions that her friend Shannon Marsh found the cat trying to stay warm in the late fall beside a car motor. Amy cautions people to watch out for cats who are doing this to keep warm. She was asked to shelter Poppy for a few days but quickly ended up loving her, so she kept her. Now Poppy is warm and loved and has a new best friend, Amy's dog Lilly.

Amy made a video about the process of making the shelters and put it on TikTok, and people started messaging her about it, asking for more information about how to make them and some people asked if she was going to be making more. People took a lot of interest in it.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



Language doth change

Language changes. The words we use, and the structure and even the meaning of those words change over time, whether we like it or not, and some people do not. In language, as in society, things are constantly changing. Though some people feel that changes in language are regrettable, others view them as bringing new and better, and sometimes simpler and more direct ways to communicate. All languages change over time including the difference in the way words are used or even the emergence of brand new words.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary the "word of the year" for 2022 is gaslighting. Though this word has been around since the mid-20th century, its use has increased over the past year and there has been a shift in its meaning.

The word comes from the title of a 1938 play, and later a movie, which involves a man attempting to make his wife believe that she is going insane. The husband's tricks involve causing the house's gas lights to dim – but when his wife asks him about that he denies that anything is happening with those lights.

In 2022, the meaning of gaslighting is at once simpler and larger. It fits in with our times when we are hearing "fake news, deepfake and even artificial intelligence." The word has evolved to mean a deliberate conspiracy that is part of a much larger plan. Gaslighting applies to both personal and political areas. It has become a much more popular word because it is used in everyday language, not in the narrow sense of the mid-20th century. In today's world, deception is everywhere so it is a useful word to describe events in these times.

Language and the way in which we use it varies greatly from culture to culture, region to region, and person to person. In a clever scene from the 1948 movie, Mr. Blanding Builds His Dream House, his wife is describing the colours she would like for her house:

Mrs. Blanding: "I want it to be a soft green, not as blue-green as a robin's egg, but not as yellow-green as daffodil buds. Now, the only sample I could get is a little too yellow, but don't let whoever does it go to the other extreme and get it too blue. It should just be a sort of greyish-yellow-green. Now, the dining room. I'd like yellow. Not just yellow; a very gay yellow. Something bright and sunshine-y. Now, this is the paper we're going to use in the hall. It's flowered, but I don't want the ceiling to match any of the colours of the flowers. There are some little dots in the background, and it's these dots I want you to match. Not the little greenish dot near the hollyhock leaf, but the little bluish dot between the rosebud and the delphinium blossom. Is that clear? Now the kitchen is to be white. Not a cold, antiseptic hospital white. A little warmer, but still, not to suggest any other colour but white."

Mr. Delford : You got that Charlie?

Charlie the painter : Red, green, blue, yellow, white.

Mr. Delford : Check.

Language will continue to evolve, and some choose to communicate with more formal language. Regardless of the words we select to communicate, we still manage to understand one another. Let's enjoy and embrace all that the evolution of language and the words we choose to communicate have to offer.

Announcements



Obituaries



GIRARD: Cora Lucas

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Cora Lucas on December 27, 2022, at the age of 89, surrounded by her family.

She was predeceased by her husband, the late Leonard Girard, from Malbaie, and her son Roger Lucas.

Cora leaves behind her three daughters Gale (Ed), Kathy (Neil), Penny (Rock); her eight grandchildren Kris, Cheryl, Candy, April, Devin, Jessica, Mandy, Derek; 12 great-grandchildren; sisters Olive, Verna and Ada, and many other relatives and friends.

The family would like to thank the caring doctors and nurses at the Gaspé Hospital ICU Department.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Hôpital Hôtel-Dieu de Gaspé or to the Canadian Cancer Society. A celebration of life will be held in the summer of 2023.



KENNEDY: Mera Mary

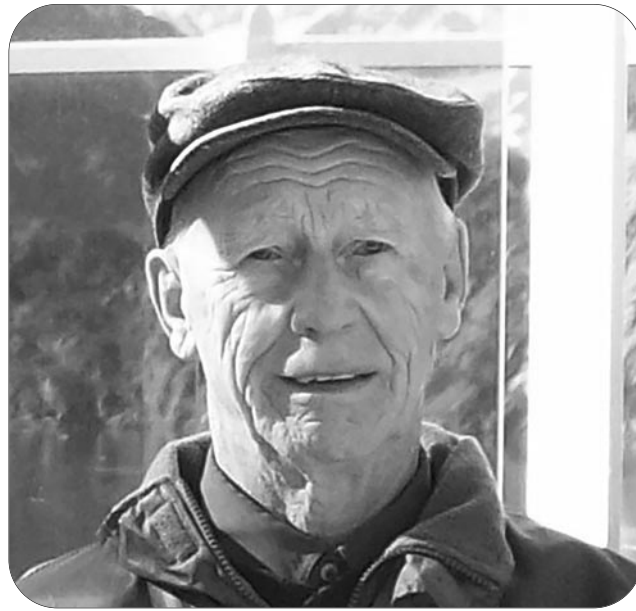
July 24, 1929 - December 13, 2022

Passed away peacefully at her home, in Greenwood, Nova Scotia, with her daughter by her side, on December 13, 2022, at the age of 93.

She was predeceased by her husband Mac (McAuley) Kennedy and her daughter Dorothy (Dopsy) Kennedy. Cherished mom to Grace Dorais (Charles) and Gerard Kennedy (Kerry). Fun Grandma to Danielle Craig (Nate), Gillian, Katie and Jenna. Great-grandma to Max and Oliver. Beloved aunt to Elizabeth and Glenda also many other nieces and nephews. Will be greatly missed by her lifelong friends Marguerite Rooney and Ella Beck, also extended family and friends from across Canada.

She was a well-respected country girl to the end, always up for an adventure. A funeral mass will be held in the summer of 2023 in her hometown of Douglstown, Quebec. Memorial donations can be made

to the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the Canadian Cancer Society. Arrangements have been entrusted to Middleton Funeral Home.



VIBERT: Keith Percival Harold

May 23, 1932 – December 26, 2022

"... stopping here to watch [the] woods fill up with snow."

— Robert Frost

Peacefully with family by his side, generous, selfless and beloved Keith boarded the train for Heaven at 90 years young. He is predeceased by his parents Wilfred Vibert and Eva Bechervaise and his wife Mary Jensen. An ever-doting father, he is survived by his loving children Donald, Steve (Alice) and Tanya (Bruno) and his beautiful grandchildren Brayden and Emily, all of whom were his pride and joy. Over the years, siblings - Wilma, Kathleen, Weston (Joyce), Stan (Lise); in-laws - Fredrick, Robert, Dorothy (Garold), Barbara (Frank), Betty (Brian), Katheryn (Paul), Karen (Kent); many nephews and nieces, and countless friends, appreciated Keith's caring, supportiveness, and quick-witted humour.

Along with his commitment to family, Keith made time to give back as an Anglican church warden and a school board commissioner for what is now the Eastern Shores School Board. An outdoorsman who enjoyed cross-country skiing and walks in the woods with his dog, be they filling up with snow in the winter or teeming with life in the spring, sum-

mer and fall, Keith maintained a love of travelling to visit family that mirrored his time working for CN Rail and VIA Rail. After his retirement, friends and neighbours knew that spring had arrived when Keith and his welcoming smile, and a friendly wave, could be seen sitting on his veranda. A service and Celebration of Life to be held in Gaspé at a future date to be determined.

There is a new storyteller in the lounge car of the train. There are some familiar faces and new friends gathering around the consummate gentleman with the smirk on his face and a glimmer in his eye. There is love all around, and out the window, twilight is fading on the kind of night that would fill the woods with snow.

Enjoy your well-earned rest, Dad, and keep'em laughing. xoxo.

Online condolences can be made at <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/en-ca/obituaries/aylmer-qc/keith-vibert-11088242>

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COAST ROUND-UP

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Royal Canadian Legion

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PORT DANIEL:

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Tuesdays: Pétanque from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. every Tuesday evening to have fun and learn a new game. Cost is \$3.

HOPE:

Hope Baptist Church

Sundays: Sunday School starting at 10 a.m. Worship service beginning at 11 a.m.

NEW CARLISLE:

Royal Canadian Legion Branch #64

Please be advised that Legion memberships are available for \$45. Returning and new members welcome.

Wednesdays: Cribbage beginning at 7 p.m. Bring a partner.

Thursdays: Open from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Fridays: Darts beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Saturdays: Open at 2 p.m. Everyone welcome.

February 7: General meeting at 7 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.

NEW CARLISLE:

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Thursdays: 6:30 p.m.

Prayer Meeting and Bible Study. Everyone welcome. For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

Book Room

The book room will be open beginning **January 11**. Anyone who needs assistance can contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

**UNITED CHURCH
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Sunday, January 15**

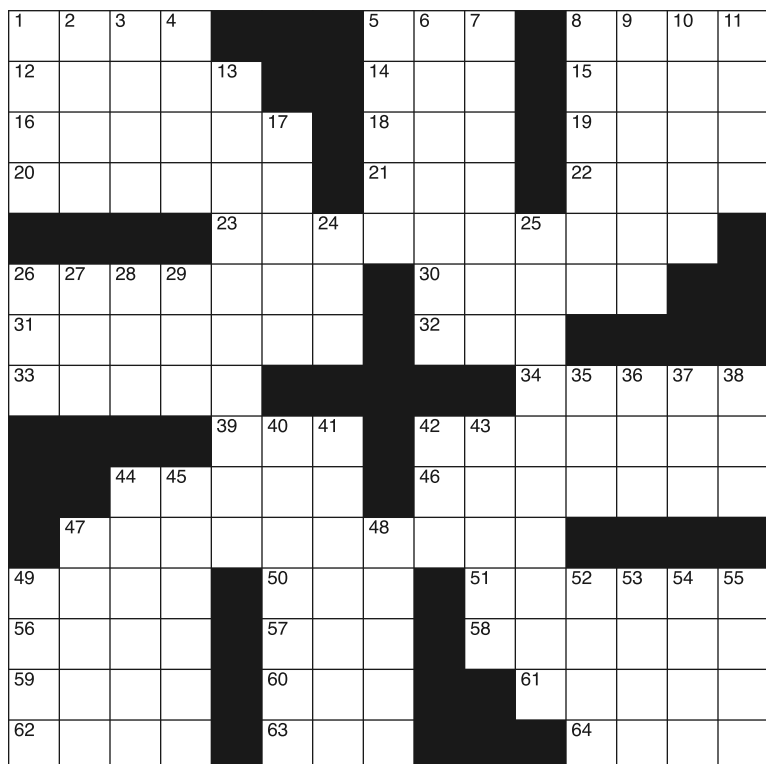
10 a.m. Service

**UNITED CHURCH
HOPE TOWN
Sunday, January 15**

10 a.m. Service



CROSSWORD



Warm up this winter with a cozy beverage

(NC) Need something exciting to sip when you come out of the cold? Swap out the hot chocolate for this sweet treat with heat instead.

Golden milk is a traditional Indian hot beverage considered by many to have soothing properties. Simple ingredients combined with milk makes for a creamy and delicious version of this traditional drink at home.



Golden Milk

Prep time: 5 minutes Serves: 2

Ingredients:

- 2 cups milk
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp honey

Directions:

In a medium saucepan, add milk and bring to a simmer. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring often. Remove from heat and stir in turmeric, black pepper and honey. Pour into cups and enjoy.

CLUES ACROSS

1. Bond villain Mikkelsen
5. A team's best pitcher
8. French river
12. Mountain nymph (Greek)
14. City of Angels airport
15. Military force
16. Scrawny
18. Value
19. One billionth of a second (abbr.)
20. Highly seasoned sausage
21. Trouble
22. Prong
23. Showing varying colors
26. Cloaked
30. Renters sign one
31. Acquires
32. Type of language (abbr.)
33. Partner to pains
34. Third portion of the small intestine
39. Excessively theatrical actor
42. Infraction
44. Classical music for the stage
46. Slogged
47. One who terminates
49. Breakfast is an important one
50. Moved earth
51. Medical procedures
56. Genus of clams
57. Not well
58. Comparative figure of speech
59. Covered thinly with gold
60. Principle underlying the universe
61. A parent's sisters
62. Professional engineering group
63. Coniferous tree

64. Impudence

CLUES DOWN

1. Female parents
2. Region
3. Transaction
4. Heroic tale
5. Of algae
6. Luminous intensity unit
7. Uncovers
8. French commune name
9. Poisonous gas
10. Pearl Jam's bassist
11. Horse groom in India
13. Destroyed
17. A way to alter
24. Promotional materials
25. American state
26. Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand
27. "Modern Family" network
28. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series
29. Exercise system ___-bo
35. Type of bulb
36. Opposite of beginning
37. Utilize
38. Type of student
40. Deficiency of moisture
41. Areas of the eye
42. Select
43. Sheets of floating ice
44. Priests who act as mediums
45. Roof of the mouth
47. Unnatural
48. Illuminated
49. There are three famous ones
52. Large, fast Australian birds
53. "Dracula" heroine Harker
54. Substitutes (abbr.)

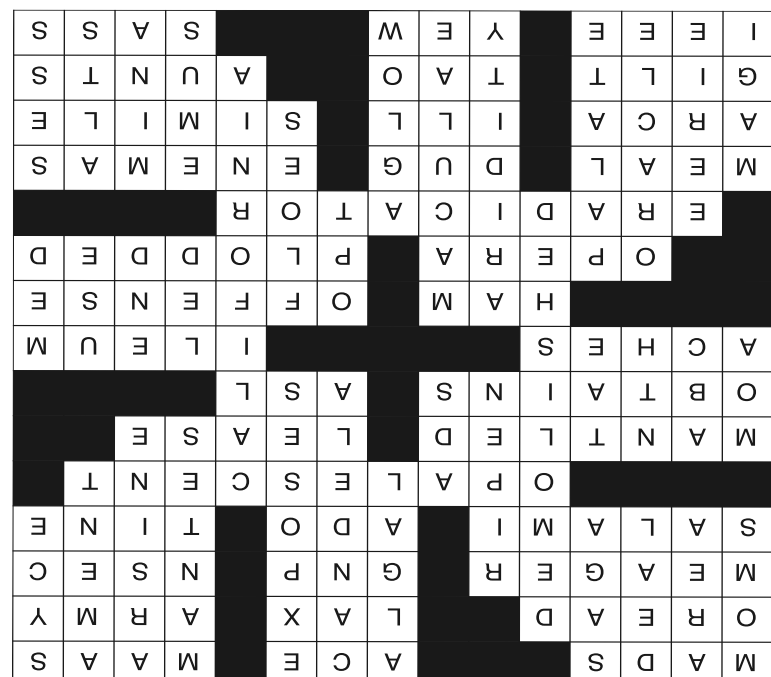
WINTER SCENES WORD SEARCH

M E U H B K D R A G C I T C R A M L R A
 H N L Y G W F L U R R I E S L B Y H G N
 W I N E T T V B C T H Z T A W I T R L N
 F N S N G T M A Y T O O A I Y C F M O C
 Z T U M L C F L G E S F F U M R A E V S
 B I T I N G O A M V I I F L H S R R E R
 Z N L H V R Y C U U N G F L N R D Y S E
 Z E W C Y T A L H D Y I U V E C R D E B
 M E L L K W C A Z W Y F G U Y E O C F M
 N R G K Z E B A V L E E B B Z S O C E M E
 O G K A N O R A K E L G R N W U N E D C
 N R T W U H M C E U N L G E Y N C H A E
 E E R I C F O N S L U N R K H U D B D D
 F V T H Z H F T H T A I A W I U U I R W
 D E M V D C E E D W F G T L G O V A D I
 M I N E R R B T W A O I Z H F C Z C R H
 F V K L Y T B I C I C L E L O Z T I E Z
 Z U Y V B I T T E R N E W K I R E T A G
 Y W L Y V V B D L O C M T L Z G U R V
 Y U S L L I H C D F A G B F D N F U Y W

WORDS

- ANORAK
- ARCTIC
- BALACLAVA
- BITING
- BITTER
- BLIZZARD
- BLUSTERY
- CHILLS
- CHIMNEY
- COLD
- DECEMBER
- DRAFTY
- DREARY
- DUVET
- EARMUFFS
- EVERGREEN
- FIREWOOD
- FLANNEL
- FLEECE
- FLURRIES
- GALE
- GLOVES
- HOCKEY
- ICICLE

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.



ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, you are willing to take risks and never afraid to try new things. This benefits you as you seek new solutions regarding how to get things done.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21

Gemini, when a project at work lands on your desk, you may be ambivalent about it. You appreciate the challenge, but already have a long list of things to do.

CANCER – June 22/July 22

Could this be the right time to think about making a career move, Cancer? The new year marks a fresh start, and perhaps you have had your eyes on a new work opportunity.

LEO – July 23/Aug 23

There's more than meets the eye this week when someone from your past suddenly pops up on your radar again, Leo. Learn all of the facts be-



fore you make assumptions.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, try to stay in the loop around the office. Doing so might pay professional dividends that could open the door to new possibilities.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

You've been keeping quite busy, Libra, but don't forget to make time to touch base with friends and loved ones from time to time. Keep those lines of communication open.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Patience is a virtue of which you are in short supply recently, Scorpio. You have no control over the timeline on certain things and that can be frustrating. Wait it out.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

It's time to tackle all of those tasks you have been putting since the end of last year, Sagittarius. If you need help getting organized, reach out to someone you trust.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Think about all the possibilities you have before you, Capricorn. When you

consider all of the positives in your life, the negatives just may fade away.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Your name is on the lips of so many people. That is likely because you are affecting change wherever you go. Keep forging ahead because you are helping others.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Now that spending has ceased, take a closer look at how you can budget for the new year. Make your money work for you, Pisces.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

JANUARY 8

Cynthia Erivo, Actress (36)

JANUARY 9

Nina Dobrev, Actress (34)

JANUARY 10

Rod Stewart, Singer (78)

JANUARY 11

Jamie Vardy, Athlete (36)

JANUARY 12

Jeff Bezos, Entrepreneur (59)

JANUARY 13

Natalia Dyer, Actress (28)

JANUARY 14

Dave Grohl, Singer (54)

A Historic Relic: My spittoon

Bob Chisholm

I do have a spittoon, believe it or not. It has been in our house for a countless number of years and I have no idea where it came from. I have tried to give it away to members of my family, as a historic relic, but the answer is always “No!”, accompanied by a look of disgust.

While the spittoon is regarded today as part of a rather disgusting habit of long ago, it is part of our history and should be worth preserving.

A quote from the Internet - “A spittoon (or spitoon) is a receptacle used for spitting into, especially by people who chewed tobacco. Spittoons appeared both in the United Kingdom and the United States under the same name about 1840.”

I can actually remember from the 1930s and 1940s that some men chewed tobacco (mostly older men, I think). A chewer had a “plug” of tobacco (that’s what they were called), which was very dark in colour and rectangular in shape, like a small cake of



Bob Chisholm’s spittoon is made of brass.

soap, but quite firm. I can even picture that each plug had the manufacturer’s “insignia” attached, like a thumbtack. The chewer always carried a jackknife in his pocket. Every boy or man carried a jackknife in those days. You would never know when you might want to carve something out of a piece of wood, or have a “chaw” of tobacco.

Anyway, the chewer would cut a piece off the plug with his jackknife and put it in his mouth, even before closing the blade, which I suppose was a matter of convenience.

When the chewer was out of doors, the next step wasn’t any problem. He would simply spit it out, whether on your front doorstep, in the barn or in the vegetable gar-

den, or elsewhere. Anywhere was considered acceptable, at least from the point of view of the chewer.

Now, whether in the chewer’s house or when visiting friends, there would most likely be a spittoon for his convenience. It would be quite hospitable to allow the visitor to pull out his plug of tobacco and his jackknife and have a chew. Probably the host would pull out his plug as well. It was recognized, no doubt, that some chewers were accomplished spitters and they could hit the spittoon bang on nine times out of ten, often from half the width of the living room. Maybe some hosts would have the receptacle positioned closer at hand, assuming there was only one spitter chewing at the time. I suppose it had to be shared. I don’t know how that worked.

I can’t imagine that any chewer could be 100% accurate all the time. There must have been misses. Not so bad on linoleum but not so good if the floor was covered with a nice rug. Who had to clean up all this mess? And who had to clean the receptacle every so

often? It had to be done sometime by somebody!

What about oral hygiene? It is hard not to think of the man’s poor wife, if he had one! But Whoa! I think I better end here. Enough is enough!

As far as I know, very few men chewed tobacco after the middle of the last century, which is only about fifty years ago, or a bit longer. Maybe it simply became unfashionable. The health hazards of tobacco were not known until sometime later.

My spittoon is stored downstairs in my workshop, tucked away in a corner. I don’t put it on display in the living room, even though I would like to (but only sometimes), because too many people would think I have gone off the deep end. I don’t think my family would approve anyway!

Never mind. I still like my spittoon. It is a historic relic and evidence of a habit which went out of fashion many long years ago. It is made of brass.

Maybe I’ll polish it up one of these days.



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