

The Gaspé **Spec**

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Gone Fishing

Catch You Later!



On Sunday, February 19, a colourful fishing village appeared along the frozen York River in Gaspé.



Enjoying a little music and a slow paced Sunday, Bruno (forefront), a regular ice fisherman, brought his friend Richard to tag along for the day. Bruno mentioned that the catch is not as fruitful as January's, but that there is no better way to spend a beautiful February day.



Anne and Martin brought Maverick, Gabrielle and baby Madeleine out on the York River for the family's very first try at ice fishing.

Photos: Wendy Dawson

Bonaventure's Services X Wind acquires Techéol for \$12M

● GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – Services X Wind of Bonaventure recently acquired a major player in the windmill maintenance sector, Techéol of Sayabec, in the Matapedia Valley. The announcement was made on February 17 in Bonaventure.

The transaction between the two companies amounts to \$12 million. The new partners had reached an agreement over the fall and had officialized it on paper on November 1. Even if the buyer is Services X Wind, the company will now bear the name of the seller, Techéol.

Christopher Skeete, delegate Minister for the Economy, the Minister responsible for the Fight Against Racism and Minister responsible for the Laval region was present for the February 17 announcement since his government is involved in the transaction through Investissement Québec, which granted Services X Wind a loan of \$6 million. The Business Development Bank of Canada granted a loan of \$2 million, and the shareholders of Services X Wind invested \$4 million to complete the transaction.

"This strategic alliance is based on the common desire to provide the industry with a complete and value-added service offer, not only for wind power, but also also for all renewable energies. Wind farm owners and operators, as well as turbine manufacturers, will be able to benefit from a range of high-level services, now united under one roof," explains Eric Dugas, co-owner and director of business development and innovation at Techéol.

His business partners are Carl Bolduc, general manager of the Canada branch of the company, and Jason Tozer, general manager of the United States branch unit.

Mr. Tozer founded Services X Wind. He says that the purchase of a larger company aims to develop the United States market. The new company will eventually have 150 employees in Canada during the next peak period of the summer and about 30 in the United States.

The two companies have so far been active in 25 provinces or states. Their staff has intervened in 2,000 windmills located in 100 different wind farms. The total staff of the new company reached 130 people, and its direction intends to hire 20 more employees.

Services X Wind already specialized in annual and semi-annual maintenance, foundation anchor bolt tensioning, oil and filter changes, gearbox oil analysis and gearbox borescope inspection. Techéol was mainly specialized in electromechanical maintenance, blade repairs and optimization systems.

In addition to the three loans totalling \$6 million, Investissement Québec is also handing out a grant of \$100,000.

"Thanks to its merger with Services X Wind, Techéol consolidates its leading position in the wind power sector in Quebec and on the North American market. The next few years will lead to a sharp increase in demand for renewable energy. With this announcement, the company stands out favourably to become a partner of choice," says Christopher Skeete.

"The wind sector is experiencing growing demand, and it is clear that Techéol is ready to make the most of the enthusiasm for our green energy. The Government of Quebec is proud to support the expansion of businesses that generate substantial benefits for our regions."

Through a press release,

Cont'd on page 9

A stinky street in Rivière-au-Renard

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Residents of rue du Parc in the Rivière-au-Renard district of Gaspé have been living for years with odours that disturb their daily lives. They are urging the Town to finally act and correct the problem.

One of the residents, Paul Denis, is calling for concrete actions so that a solution can finally be found.

“Rue du Parc has been smelling for several years now. It has become that the street outside stinks. You enter your house: and it stinks. You can no longer receive visitors. It's almost embarrassing,” said Mr. Denis to the town council on February 20.

“We are tired. The intensity of the smells vary along the street. It's necessary that it moves. Otherwise, Public Health will get involved. I don't think anyone would like to live in those conditions,” added the citizen.

The mayor, Daniel Côté, is aware of the situation, explaining that research has been done for years to correct the situa-



Photo: N. Sergerie

The Mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté

tion.

“There have been issues resolved inside some houses where connection deficiencies have been found,” says the mayor.

The Director of Public Works, Michel Cotton, adds that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of Quebec, which owns the network of pipes under the industrial park, has hired a firm to verify the situation.

However, work must wait

until spring, so workers will have access to the pipes.

“We are sectorizing the origin of odours and trying to see where it comes from. The pipes have been cleaned twice, notably last fall. There is a lot of work and I am well aware of the situation,” explains Mr. Cotton.

“We understand that it is unpleasant for the citizens and we will continue to do everything to find solutions,” concludes the mayor.

Major work on the Town Hall

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

GASPÉ: - The renovation of the Gaspé Town Hall could reach \$3 million.

Initially, the municipal team estimated the roof, siding and window repair project at \$1 million, but an architectural firm hired to do a more in-depth assessment revealed other problems.

“We have seen water infiltration for years in certain sections, except that the roof problems are more serious than expected. We will have to go to engineering and possibly have work done. The goal is to have funding from Municipal Affairs. We continue to move forward,” comments the mayor.

The mayor admits that regular maintenance may have been neglected for 40 years, which explains the state of the building.

A significant disparity in gas prices in the Gaspé Peninsula

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

GASPÉ: - There is a significant disparity between the price of gasoline displayed in the Bay of Chaleur and the Gaspé area.

On February 20, motorists in New Richmond were buying regular gasoline at \$1.51 a litre while those in Gaspé had to pay \$1.64.

The mayor does not understand this huge gap “sometimes we pay the right price, sometimes we pay too much and there is a form of inequity that has been created. There is nothing more to understand in the price of gasoline.”

The elected official has still not heard from the Competition Bureau, which was asked in 2019 to analyze this issue. According to data from the Energy Board, on February 20, gas stations had a profit margin of 5 cents in Bonaventure and 16 cents on the Côte-de-Gaspé, a difference rarely seen for several years.

A prefabricated CPE for Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The 80-place childcare centre project, Le Voyage de mon enfance in Gaspé has been selected as one of the 43 prefabricated centre de la petite enfance (CPE) projects chosen by Quebec government as a way to accelerate the establishment of childcare spaces in the province.

The director, Gilles Chapados, mentions that the project, authorized in August 2021, was part of this potential list from the start, for this pilot project in which Quebec affirms that combined constructions should not exceed \$116 million.

The one in Gaspé is estimated at \$4.5 million and will be located near Carrefour Gaspé.

“For us, this is good news, especially to be part of the future of Quebec in terms of the new construction system for CPEs,” says the director.

In his opinion, this new way of doing things will reduce delays by six to 12 months.

With a prefabricated construction they won't have to create compliant plans for the Family Ministry, which would also fall within the approved financial envelope.

“When we talk about a prefabricated CPE, we are talking about a plan pre-approved by the ministry in a pre-approved envelope. These two crucial steps are accepted from the outset. It facilitates the process for a CPE who wants to build a facility,” explains Mr. Chapados.

General plans are already ready, and each CPE can adapt them to its situation, including the conditions of the property chosen for its installation.

According to Mr. Chapados, the \$116 million envelope includes delivery costs for buildings in regions like the Gaspé Peninsula.

“It will be cost advantage that will allow the manufacturer to manage its budget accordingly,” says Mr. Chapados, who believes that overall, there will be economies for the Government of Quebec.

This long awaited new facility for Gaspé area parents should be opened in early or mid 2024.

“When the project was approved in August 2021, we knew that we would be affiliated with the AQCPE and the Family Ministry for the prefabricated construction. There were issues to be put in place to implement this novelty in



Photo: N. Sergerie

The transaction for the CPE site near Carrefour Gaspé has not yet been completed.

terms of regulations and calls for tenders. We had deadlines. The initial advantage to save time, we did not have due to national issues,” explains the director.

The manufacturer will be known in early spring. Once that is determined a timeframe will be established.

The acquisition of the land near Carrefour Gaspé has been complicated and many issues have arisen, particularly the dispute between the Town of Gaspé and Quebec. The Ministry of Natural Resources claimed \$9,957.88 for the land

where the CPE is to be located. This amount was added to the \$381,000 for the housing component on the adjoining land. This issue was very poorly received at the time by the mayor, Daniel Côté.

Mr. Chapados is cautious. “Discussions are going well. We have many partners who want to carry out this project. We are working with the Family Ministry to establish the feasibility and the budget. Before bringing in a prefabricated building, it takes compliant and ready land to accommodate the building. There are still small

details to work out. It is our priority to ensure it does not add further delays due to local issues,” hopes the director.

In addition, the project to expand the Bolduc site downtown, one of the CPE's two facilities, is progressing.

Management hopes to start work in the fall, which also involves upgrading the building built in the 1980s.

“The challenge is to provide services to children during the work. There is an organizational gymnastics to put in place that remains to be fine-tuned,” says Mr. Chapados.



Photo: N. Sergerie

FAIR supports investments to modernize equipment so that companies remain competitive.

FAIR: Quebec delays confirming its extension

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINT-ELZÉAR - Quebec has still not made known its intentions on the renewal of the FAIR program, the Regional Initiatives Assistance Fund, unique to the Gaspé Peninsula and which contained \$8 million for the year 2022.

Every minister with an economic portfolio who has come to the region in the last year hasn't wanted to take the leap regarding the renewal of the five-year program, which ends on March 31.

The last in line was the Minister for the Economy, Christopher Skeete: who was questioned about the FAIR program during his visit to New Richmond, Bonaventure and Saint-Elzéar on February 17.

"I too am eager to find an answer. I know that FAIR is very popular in the region. We have made requests to the Ministry of Finance and we are awaiting a response," says the minister, who wanted to be reassuring.

"If there is one thing that has been clear since my arrival and which was communicated by the Member (of the National Assembly) for Bonaventure a few weeks ago, it is that the program is important. I am not insensitive to this local importance. We are working very hard to

come up with something interesting," added the minister.

"Given the importance of the program, we continue to push on the file and adopt resolutions in this direction to clarify the importance of this program," says the prefect of the MRC of Bonaventure, Éric Dubé.

Business support is an important component of the program for the development of the region. The program, has several elements.

"Since last fall, there was no more money in the program because it was very popular," explains Mr. Dubé. "What we would have liked to hear beyond the fact that it is in analysis, are the recommendations to the Ministry of Finance. This is why we must remain mobilized and that the region's politicians remain strong to say that this is an essential measure for the Gaspé Peninsula," concludes the prefect, who is eager to see the next provincial budget.

Created by the Marois government as part of the Gaspé Peninsula Recovery Plan, the FAIR program has six components and it aims to diversify the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands economy by creating and expanding businesses, the realization of structuring projects, creating jobs and retaining young people in the region.

Police report

A 57-year-old man from New Richmond, Mark Hardy, is charged with arson and damaging a school bus for less than \$5,000 following the February 20 incident that occurred at about 3:20 a.m. at the Petro Canada service station and convenience store, situated along Highway 132 in New Richmond West. As two men passed by the service station, they noticed a garbage can fire. That fire had already started to cause serious damage to the fuel pump. One of the men used a fire extinguisher, while his friend called emergency services. The exterior of the service station was also damaged during the incident.

"The man under arrest is known to the police. He was arrested close to the service station. He appeared in court later and was sent for a psychological evaluation," explains Sgt. Claude Doiron, spokesperson for the Sûreté du Québec. After his evaluation is completed, Mr. Hardy will return to the New Carlisle courthouse on March 16.

The bail hearing of Jean-Philippe Boulet, 38, from Gaspé who faces many criminal charges, will take place on March 8 at the Percé courthouse, as decided by Quebec Court Judge Jules Berthelot. The accused's bail hearing, and at times his orientation and declaration procedure step, were postponed on February 3, 6, 10 and 13. He also appeared in court on February 16 for the orientation and declaration of his case.

He has been in custody since his January 31 arrest. That day, investigators from the major crimes squad of the Sûreté du Québec, accompanied by police officers from the main detachment of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC and assisted by the canine squad, went to a home on Haldimand Road, in Gaspé, in order to arrest him. He is charged with harassment, intimidation and obstruction of justice. When he was arrested, the police discovered that he was in possession of 125 grams of cocaine, 25 tablets of an opioid substance, several objects used in drug trafficking, as well as a few thousand dollars in cash. He consequently, faces charges of cocaine possession for the purpose of trafficking.

Arrested on January 12 in his apartment on René-Lévesque Boulevard East in Chandler following a drug bust, Pascal Boucher, 44, appeared at the Percé courthouse on February 15, in front of Quebec Court Judge Jules Berthelot, who postponed the case until March 27 for the trial. Pascal Boucher has waived his bail, initially scheduled for January 27. The suspect will remain detained for further proceedings and return to court on February 15. Pascal Boucher is charged with possession of a weapon contrary to a court order, drug possession, drug trafficking, and resisting arrest. The Sûreté du Québec seized 1,065 methamphetamine tablets, three pellet firearms, two of which looked like real handguns, and an undisclosed amount of cash. Information from the public led to the police operation.

On February 21, Sûreté du Québec police officers, following information received from the public, proceeded to intercept a vehicle on Highway 132 in the Petite-Vallée sector on board they discovered and seized approximately 500 grams of cocaine. The driver of the vehicle, Mathieu Element, a 40 years-old man from the Saint-Maurice-de-l'Échouerie sector of Gaspé, was arrested and detained by police. He appeared the following day at the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts courthouse. Mr. Element faces charges of possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking. His vehicle was also seized. A 34-year-old woman who accompanied him was arrested and later released on a promise to appear in court at a later date.

The Quebec region division of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has released a list of offenders fined in recent months for various violations that fall under its mandate. Carleton's Dany Labilloy was fined \$1,500 for fishing Atlantic halibut without having a boat monitoring system. A second fine of \$1,500 was imposed for fishing Atlantic halibut without additional conditions regarding groundfish.

Jean-Marie Duguay, of Pabos, must pay \$1,000 for fishing lobster during the closed season. Snow crab fisherman Éric Langlois, of Cape Cove is fined \$5,000 for having held a fishing activity that disrupts, damages, destroys or removes any marine species or any portion of their habitat in Zone 1 of the Banc-des-Américains Marine Protected Area. Maria's Leo Eddy Ouellette must pay a fine of \$300 because he exceeded the quota limit established for one day of recreational clam fishing. His clams were seized.

Shigawake's Ian Vautier must pay \$750 for refusing an at-sea observer to board his boat to perform her duties. He was fishing flounder. Yves Albert, a snow crab fisherman from Newport was fined \$750 because he went to sea before the time determined at his initial call. Cape Cove lobster fisherman Gerry Dubé has to pay \$300 for illegally operating a boat whose vessel registration number was not legible or completely visible from an aircraft in flight and a second fine of \$300 for failing to have a lobster license on board his boat, and present it when requested by a fishery officer. He must pay a third fine of \$750 for failing to carry a complete, legible and up-to-date record of fishing gear tags on board the boat.

Grande-Rivière's Pêcheries Roger Pinel Inc. Is fined \$750 for having authorized the use of his boat for lobster transport without a transport permit. Timothy Wysote, of Listuguj, must pay \$1,500 for possessing small rock crab less than 102 mm in size. The rock crabs were seized. Jocelyne Berthelot, of Cascapedia, is fined \$300 for illegally harvesting and keeping clams in an area closed by a prohibition order due to contamination. Her clams and fishing gear were seized. Kevin Labrecque, also from Cascapedia, must pay \$300 for the same offence, harvesting and keeping clams in an area closed by a prohibition order due to contamination. His clams and fishing items were also seized.

Many fines were also imposed on fishermen living in other areas of Quebec, including tourists from Montreal. Meanwhile, the most significant fine was imposed on the Montreal firm Signature sur le Saint-Laurent Construction S.E.N.C. for failing to comply with DFO's authorizing conditions for the dismantling of the Champlain Bridge. Fish habitat protection measures were not respected, and the firm must pay a fine of \$75,000.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Churchill Falls: Quebec and Newfoundland-Labrador have a common interest in reaching another agreement

Quebec premier François Legault spent two days in Newfoundland on February 23-24 to start negotiations regarding the renewal of the Churchill Falls hydroelectricity agreement, a deal signed in 1969 that benefited Quebec immensely but had much fewer benefits for Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 54 years, Hydro Québec has collected profits of \$28 billion from the electricity sales generated by the Churchill Falls power dam, compared to \$2 billion for Newfoundland and Labrador. Needless to say, the “deal” of 1969 is hated by the inhabitants of the last province to join Canada’s Confederation.

Since the 1970s, almost every new Newfoundland premier has tried to renegotiate the agreement. The case was even brought to the attention of the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled in 2018 that the deal was legal.

Truth be told, Quebec came to the rescue of Newfoundland and Labrador at the end of the 1960s before reaching an agreement. The construction of the Churchill Falls power dam was underway and was spearheaded by a private company, BRINCO, the acronym for British Newfoundland Corporation, a private consortium formed by a set of international companies to develop natural resources in the province.

The construction of the Churchill Falls generating station started in 1967. By 1969, due to a lack of competence and cost overruns, the project was on the verge of bankruptcy when Hydro-Québec, which had been invited to join the venture as early as 1961, came to the rescue.

It was a risk for Hydro Québec

We are talking about a different era here. Fossil fuels were so cheap at the time that it was possible to produce affordable electricity by burning them. When Hydro Québec negotiated what became the Churchill Falls agreement, a risk was involved. In fact, Hydro Québec took about all the financial risk of the venture, BRINCO having no other partner in sight and no real place to build a power line except Quebec.

The premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, at that time, Joey Smallwood, was a great motivator, and he wanted industrial development, almost regardless of the long-term consequences. So, a long-term deal was reached.

Hydro Québec became a 34.2% shareholder in the project. Since the power lines were built from the dam towards the west, with exports in mind, those lines inevitably pass through Quebec before reaching the United States and Ontario markets.

The 5,428 megawatts of power generated by Churchill Falls have become essentially what Hydro Québec, and to a much lesser extent, Newfoundland and Labrador export year in, year out. It is roughly 15% of Hydro Québec’s annual output.

Back in 1969, besides cheap oil prices allowing public and private utilities to produce electricity with hydrocarbons, nuclear energy was also emerg-

ing and seemed to be another affordable way to produce power. Time mainly proved otherwise for nuclear energy due to long-term and unpredictable contingencies.

So Hydro Québec was really taking a risk for that reason as well in investing at Churchill Falls, which was gradually commissioned between 1971 and 1974.

The oil crisis of 1973 and the ensuing years changed the context. Energy costs, except hydro-electricity, sky-rocketed for many years, a direct by-product of the collusion between private oil giants and several countries that had nationalized their hydrocarbons production.

So the 1969 deal between Hydro Québec and BRINCO quickly became a nightmare in Newfoundland and Labrador. Quebec’s refusal to renegotiate the 1969 agreement sparked Newfoundlanders and Labradorians’ anger.

Effective in 1976, the deal was valid for 40 years, with a renewal clause of 25 years to be decided by Hydro Québec. Needless to say, the Quebec utility made and is still making big bucks with the Churchill Falls power dam. It pays 0.2 cents per kilowatt and currently sells it for 8.2 cents. The difference is not net revenues for Hydro Québec, which does not divulge its profits on a per-project basis, but one can understand that the deal is advantageous.

Why the hurry to renegotiate?

The majority shareholder of the Churchill Falls power dam has been Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro for years, with 65.8% of control, with Hydro Québec owning the rest.

Now, why is François Legault so hurried to start renegotiating a deal that extends until 2041, so 18 years down the road?

The reality has changed in Quebec, as well as Newfoundland and Labrador, over the last few years. The surpluses that made Premier Legault say until early 2021 that Quebec was literally swimming in electricity will be gone by 2026, thanks to a miscalculation on his government’s part and the gradual transition from fossil fuels to ecological sources of energy.

Despite statements made during the last electoral campaign that Hydro Québec will build more power dams in the coming years, the reality is different. Most good rivers in Quebec have already been harnessed. Planning and leading to the fruition of a power dam now takes between 10 and 15 years.

So, the 18 years between now and 2041 do not represent such a long period. Besides, renewing a deal about an existing generating station is always easier than entertaining talks about an uncertain venture.

Quebec will need 100 additional terra-watt/hour between now and 2050 to reach carbo-neutrality. A terra-watt/hour means 1,000 billion watts per hour on an annual basis. Churchill Falls currently delivers 30 terra-watt/hour to Hydro Québec. A failure to renew the Churchill Falls deal would mean that Quebec must find 130 terra-watt/hour before 2050. It would complicate things significantly.

Newfoundland and Labrador’s position is better than ever now. However, it is far from perfect. The province is still reeling from the very bad decision to invest in the Muskrat Falls power generating station, also on the Churchill River, an initiative marred by cost overruns, which prompted a federal government intervention.

The province has received support amounting to \$5.2 billion from the federal government for Muskrat Falls, a project that was initially supposed to cost about \$6 billion, for an output of 824 megawatts, almost seven times less than Churchill Falls. The tab has now reached a tad over \$13 billion, and will increase again because the power lines delivering electricity to Newfoundland still require work.

Meanwhile, the Innu First Nation is considering legal action against the provincial government, which failed to respect the conditions of an agreement signed before the construction of Muskrat Falls.

Premier Andrew Furey is considering scenarios of rerouting the Churchill Falls electricity towards the island instead of sending it to Quebec. Potential European customers want to add green hydrogen production plants in Newfoundland and Labrador, while British entrepreneurs are even talking about building a power line under the sea to satisfy some of that country’s needs for cleaner energy.

Given the frequent dismal results in managing Newfoundland and Labrador’s mega projects of the last 60 years, reaching an agreement with Quebec looks like the best solution.

Let’s bet that it will not cover a period of 65 years. Let’s also assume that the next deal will include indexation measures instead of a fixed revenue over two-thirds of a century. Who knows what the price of electricity will be in 2041?

The two provinces seem condemned to reach another agreement. Negotiations will be long and difficult. So, starting them early is a good decision.



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4,000 megawatts of wind energy call for tender is imminent

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-ANNE-DESMONTS - The call for tenders for 4,000 megawatts of wind power from the Quebec government could be launched very quickly.

This is the opinion of the president of the Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands Intermunicipal Energy Board, Simon Deschênes, who took part in the annual conference of the Association québécoise de la production d'énergie renouvelable (AQPER) in Quebec from February 20 to 22.

Mr. Deschênes' hypothesis is based on the remarks of the Quebec Minister of Energy, Pierre Fitzgibbon, who participated in the conference.

"I remember two words



Photo: N. Sergerie

Simon Deschênes.

from Mr. Fitzgibbon's speech: flexibility and predictability. These words are important, especially flexibility to accelerate the construction of new

wind farms," said Mr. Deschênes.

The Minister mentioned the immediate need for 4,000 megawatts of wind power in

2027 and 1,000 megawatts per year for ten years.

"How does it translate in real life at the level of a call for tenders or by private contract or something else? Let's wait to see the terms. He mentioned that the new tender would be launched any day. We suspect it could happen in the coming days," says Mr. Deschênes, who has waited for this signal for several years. "What is important is to prepare well for the future, and Eastern Quebec, with the Eastern Energy Alliance, will be a very active player in Quebec's future energy transition."

On the other hand, the minister wanted to refrain from commenting on the results of the call for tenders expected since the Christmas holidays.

"He relies on Hydro-Québec. Hydro-Québec is in control. We are always told that it is for the end of the first quarter at Hydro-Québec, that is to say, by March 31. He did not want to reveal any information. He still asked for a little patience," reports Mr. Deschênes.

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 alliance submitted six projects representing a power capacity of 1,156 megawatts distributed in the western sector of the Lower Saint Lawrence and the eastern sector of Chaudière-Appalaches.

Eastern Alliance expands its horizons

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-ANNE-DESMONTS - The MRCs of L'Islet and Montmagny in Chaudière-Appalaches and the Wolastiqiyik Wahsipekuk First Nation (Malisets of Viger) join the Eastern Wind Alliance, which becomes the Energy Alliance from the east.

Discussions between the Energy Boards of the Lower Saint Lawrence and Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands and the new players in this new alliance was initiated a year ago.

The territory covered by the Energy Alliance is vast and covers from Montmagny to the Magdalen Islands.

This new partnership covers 16 MRCs and 209 communities and territories.

"It's official. We created the legal entity, which is now a company. This will be the new vehicle for developing the energy transition throughout eastern Quebec," says the president of the Gaspé Peninsula Energy Board, Simon Deschênes.

The development of the wind power component in Eastern Quebec inevitably passes through the west of this immense territory.

"Everyone is aware. There are bottlenecks. There is a lack of power (capacity) in the transmission lines. We are working with the Government of Quebec and Hydro-Québec to improve these infrastruc-

tures. It requires major investments. We wanted to demonstrate the places available and where the wind deposits are significant. We wanted to expand our energy portfolio. We sniffed out the opportunity," adds Mr. Deschênes.

The alliance submitted six projects as part of the last call for tenders, representing a power of 1156 megawatts distributed in the western sector of the Lower Saint Lawrence and the eastern sector of Chaudière-Appalaches.

The results were expected in mid-December, but it isn't unheard of for Hydro-Québec to postpone deadlines from time to time. It is now being mooted by the end of the state corporation's quarter on March 31.

"We are playing the patience game. Quebec needs energy. Private producers are ready. We are ready. As soon as the winners are announced, there will be a first start-up meeting. I talk as if we were going to win - I'm not in on the secret of the Gods - but still, time is running out, and we'll be ready," says Mr. Deschênes confidently.

The company's creation makes it possible to clarify the situation between the companies and Hydro-Québec.

"In the regions, we are proud of the model, but when we sit down with senior executives from private partners, Hydro-Québec or others, what is the Eastern Alliance?

We had no legal entity. I think it will demystify the whole thing around what could seem vague on occasion," explains Mr. Deschênes.

The alliance invests 50% of the capital in the projects, and the private sector makes up the difference.

The royalty split will not change. "The distribution will be done fairly to all the territories of the MRCs. Nothing changed with the creation of the Eastern Alliance. I will

even go further: the two boards remain, and when the Eastern Alliance redistributes the profits, it will be redistributed to the boards and they will do what they want with the money," explains Mr. Deschênes.

The Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Energy Board paid out \$4.5 million to the municipalities in 2022.

In his eyes, the alliance is becoming necessary for energy development in eastern

Quebec.

"The social acceptability is there. We have a good knowledge of the territory. We are able to put the expectations or the irritants of the communities in connection with the arrival of a wind farm. We are here to ensure that the projects are carried out with respect for the communities while participating in the energy transition and reaping the economic benefits," concludes the president.

Capitation Campaign (Tithes) 2023 for your parish "To Walk Better Together"

Brothers and sisters of the Church in Gaspésie and Îles-de-la-Madeleine, at the beginning of this year 2023, after a year of celebrations of the centenary of the founding of the Diocese of Gaspé, we continue our journey under the movement of the Holy Spirit.

"To Walk Better Together" why this theme? It is to be in communion with the universal Church. "Walking Together" was also the theme of Pope Francis' pilgrimage to Canada in July 2022.

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Mgr Gaétan Proulx, O.S.M., Bishop of Gaspé

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Credit: Photographique of the Osservatore Romano



Prepared for a prolonged disaster

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Towns of Gaspé and Percé are ready to face any eventuality if ever they had to relocate citizens temporarily during major disasters or prolonged power outages, as was the case on February 4 when a Siberia-like polar vortex hit the region.

The violent winds that hit the areas of Corner of the Beach, Bridgeville, Barachois, Bougainville and Douglastown caused a power outage lasting several hours over a large territory affecting hundreds of people.

The two towns responded by posting messages on social media to indicate that places were available to welcome them. The first measures of their respective emergency measures plans were launched.

In Percé, it was suggested to report any potentially problematic situation by calling the fire chief, while Gaspé announced that the town hall was

available for people who were without any electricity.

However, in the minutes following the blackout, a vast community outreach was launched on social networks with many citizens inviting those without electricity to come to their homes.

If the power outage had lasted several hours, the next steps in the emergency response plan would have been deployed.

"In addition to the town hall, we also have the Mont Béchervaise ski centre with which we have an agreement to use the chalet. We also had the option of using the York Community Hall if ever 200 people showed up at the Town Hall," explains the mayor, Daniel Côté.

If the outages are prolonged, there are agreements with the schools, including École C.-E. Pouliot and the Gaspé campus of the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles.

"It is provided for in the emergency measures plan,"



Poles were broken by the force of the winds in Bougainville.

Photo: Facebook, Chantal Lejeune

says the mayor.

Generators are installed to run large buildings such as the Town Hall.

"A general outage in Gaspé, we have never seen that. But if that happened, there are places

where there are generators," explains the mayor and, in some cases, the town could move people.

Camp cots have been available for several years in collaboration with the Red Cross if ever a disaster was very long, but have never been needed.

On February 4, no one came to the Town Hall during the extended power outage.

"Everyone sticks together. In rural areas, most houses have wood stoves and people could have heat in their houses," reports the mayor.

In Percé, the fire chief, Éric Fugère, follows the weather warnings and firefighters are called to the fire stations as a preventive measure to be ready to react quickly, as was the case on December 23 and 24.

"At that time, we had to relocate two families because the

outage was going to be extended," says the fire chief. They were moved to a hotel in Chandler until the situation was restored, since catering services were available nearby.

The Red Cross supports the affected citizens during such an event.

During a power outage, the fire chief contacts the Hydro-Québec teams in the field to find out the damage and probable recovery times. If ever a breakdown were to be prolonged, this is when preparations are initiated.

"We inform citizens via the website or the Facebook page and if we ever have families who want to be relocated temporarily, they can contact me to secure these people," suggests Mr. Fugère.

People will be moved either to a community centre or to the Town Hall.

"Every situation is different. We are lucky. We have a large territory. If ever the east sector has a power outage, we can always open a community centre or the town hall in the central or western sector," specifies the fire chief who adds that a transport system can be organized for the people who do not have access to a vehicle.

"We are able to accommodate people in the medium or long term," he says.

Mr. Fugère is taking steps with the Ministry of Public Security to obtain funding to equip two emergency shelters with generators.

He hopes to have the funding by the end of winter.

"As I have just arrived, I am assessing all these risks," concludes Chief Fugère.



Patricia St Croix and Rocky Annett opened their home to people who were without electricity in the Barachois sector

Photo: Courtesy Cynthia Patterson

CHANDLER:

Dreams of having a Quebec Major Junior League hockey club

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - The dream of establishing a Quebec Major Junior League (LHJMQ) hockey club in Chandler continues as the Town commissioned a study to see if the Clément-Tremblay sports centre would meet the standards to join the league managed by Gilles Courteau.

"Following the interest shown by the Quebec Major Junior League for Chandler, we took the lead. We did a study on the capacity to receive people in our amphitheatre,"

explains the mayor, Gilles Daraïche.

The major junior league has detailed specifications for a town to host a club.

"The plans made would allow us to accommodate 4,400 people. We are close to the requirements of the Quebec Major Junior League (the league requires 5,000 places). We would have the possibility of having as many boxes as requested. We are getting very close to reaching the possibility of having a club here," suggests the mayor, who adds that there's nothing concrete as of yet. "If it happens one day, we

will be ready!" he adds.

It would cost "several million" to bring the arena up to league requirements. "The Town of Chandler will not have to pay extraordinary amounts for this. We can't afford it and we didn't have that in our plans. If the project is done, it will be as a result of subsidies and the involvement of the private sector," says the mayor who wants to reassure taxpayers.

According to Mr. Daraïche, 40 permanent jobs could be created and 80 others during game days. In addition, "when a team settles, it can result in

hotels coming here. When families come down, we don't necessarily have all the rooms needed to accommodate them," says the mayor.

"We think people from Gaspé to Carleton might want to attend these games. It's high calibre," he says.

Promoters have already shown interest in getting involved in the adventure, but the mayor remains discreet in this regard.

The Rimouski Océanic played two exhibition games last September in Chandler. The league leaders were impressed with the quality of the

ice at the sports centre.

"They don't have that all the time elsewhere and they loved playing here," says the mayor.

According to Mr. Daraïche, exhibition games could be presented to Chandler again next fall.

In addition, a \$145,000 contract was awarded to upgrade the Newport arena for street hockey.

There will be work in the locker rooms and showers, the addition of a bar and other elements as well as exterior elements. Quebec has invested \$100,000 in this project. The Town is injecting the balance.

Air transport: Gaétan Lelièvre believes that the Standing Committee will have its hands tied

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – Regional development consultant Gaétan Lelièvre places little hope of witnessing a significant improvement in regional air services from the permanent committee appointed on February 17 by the Quebec government. The people sitting on this standing committee will essentially have their hands tied, believes Mr. Lelièvre.

This standing committee follows the Regional Air Transport Task Force and the Regional Air Services Recovery Task Force formed in 2020 to improve and future-proof regional air services.

The failures of the Air Access Program to the regions, under which only 21.5% of the \$500 tickets found takers during the first six months of operation, tops the list of shortcomings identified by Gaétan Lelièvre.

“Government authorities made permanent something non-permanent, but let's look at the composition of the permanent committee. It includes the current carriers, the Member of the National Assembly who deals with it, Yves Montigny, who praised the program after its release. It is not even the Minister of Transport (Geneviève Guilbault) who is in charge of the file. She is entrusting it to Mr. Montigny, a parliamentary assistant. The same people are being asked to rethink a concept they've been working on for two years. I have very low expectations,” says Mr. Lelièvre.

“It's like making a recipe with the same ingredients and thinking it will make a different dish. The Government of Quebec did not want to use the right ingredients; a call for tenders with performance specifications. In the standing committee, players were chosen who sit in the government or who cannot criticize it because they need it in other files. These are the same players who laboured and brought forth a mouse, a program with the same weak mechanisms and parameters,” he continues.

Gaétan Lelièvre was a Member of the National Assembly for the Gaspé riding between 2012 and 2018, under the Parti Québécois banner and then as an independent. Through previous functions, during his political, career and since, he has accumulated more



The Regional Air Access Program is designed for use by people living in Montreal and Quebec City, not for the residents of regions such as the Gaspé Peninsula, argues Gaétan Lelièvre.

than 30 years of observing the regional air travel scene.

The model had to be changed

“The government does not want to change the model. It chooses a model that does not work. There were two solutions to try. A cooperative and the government refused to study the file. Premier (François) Legault's excuse? He does not want a second Québecair. But air transport in the regions is a national issue. Quebec could have launched a call for tenders, inviting bigger players, with better means,” he analyzes.

“The situation was perfect to try a new model! The government is the largest ticket buyer in Quebec. It can negotiate volume prices. The price submitted to the government by the carriers selected in the regions must be offered to the general population,” specifies Mr. Lelièvre.

“The government, therefore the taxpayers, pay the excess of \$500. It's an open bar for the companies and they are not able to deliver the goods. Tickets continue to cost \$1,200, \$1,300, or \$1,500. Even by subsidizing mediocrity, we cannot obtain a decent regional service,” he continues.

Québecair was a private company founded in 1953. The state came to its rescue during the economic crisis of 1981. It was sold at a loss in 1986 and 1987. François Legault often says he “played in that film” to explain that his government will not set up a public company to provide regional services. In the “film” to which he refers, he is essentially recognized for having founded Air Transat with former Québecair

pilots.

The Regional Air Access Program (RAAP) was unveiled on April 19, 2022 and launched on June 1. Six months after the start of the service, data shows that it was only used to purchase 21,286 round-trip tickets province-wide out of the approximate 98,800 available.

Poor service

As soon as the April announcement, Mr. Lelièvre was worried about the lack of a real air transport policy for people in the regions, especially since the RAAP is above all, thought of in terms of tourism. It promotes the arrival of people from urban centres to rural areas, rather than constituting a service for Gaspésians, those on the North Shore, Abitibiens and so on.

Moreover, the companies selected by the Quebec government for the RAAP have reduced the size of the planes serving the regional airports, in addition to experiencing various operational problems, in-



Photos: G. Gagné

Economic development consultant Gaétan Lelièvre believes that the air service standing committee has its hands tied.

cluding a lack of pilots and on-board personnel, which caused many flight cancellations and delays. This unreliability has eroded the user base.

“The flights are often made with 19-seater aircraft. Sometimes a SAAB 340, with 34 seats, is used. In addition to cancelled flights, carriers are running out of seats. We return to the problem identified a year ago, when 40% of the time in Gaspé, people are not able to make a round trip within four days and return three days later. In Bonaventure, this happened 60% of the time. It's not fair to say that it's all the fault of COVID,” says Gaétan Lelièvre.

A recent study by the Institute for Socio-economic Research and Information, mostly known by its French acronym IRIS, indicates that regional air services in Quebec are half the traffic than elsewhere in the country, a situation largely attributable to two to three times more expensive tickets.

“It shows that the air system is inadequate. Look at this obligation to go through the airports of Montreal, Quebec, or Saint-Hubert to benefit from tickets at \$500: it is biased, and not for the benefit of the regions. It was for people in urban areas. We forgot about inter-regional connectivity. Regions are practically prevented from connecting with each other. The Gaspé Peninsula and the North Shore maintain important economic and family ties, but the RAAP is not made to travel between these two regions,” criticizes Gaétan Lelièvre.

The government, he says, has “at least removed the cap on the Airfare Reduction Pro-

gram, which provides 30-60% reimbursement of the cost of tickets for certain remote or isolated areas. People from the Magdalen Islands, for example, can benefit from a 60% refund. It is 30% for the people living in the Gaspé Peninsula.

“It might be advantageous for the people in the Magdalen Islands but a \$1,500 Gaspé-Montreal return trip ticket still costs over \$1,000 for Gaspésians. There is no real advantage in using this program here,” he points out.

“When you create a committee, three times out of four, you want to save time. Here, we take those involved and associate them with the problem. (The mayor of Gaspé and president of the Union of Quebec Municipalities) Daniel Côté has his hands tied. He is part of the committee that recommended the program. Regional transportation is not a priority for the Quebec government. Two years of work to achieve this failure. Meanwhile, we hear about a \$40 billion TGV (high-speed train) in the Quebec-Toronto corridor,” says Gaétan Lelièvre ironically.

For tourists

Professor at the Hautes Etudes Commerciales, the Université de Montréal business school, Jacques Roy, a transportation specialist, agrees with Gaétan Lelièvre and other observers, that the Regional Air Access Program and “the \$500 tickets have been implemented to encourage people from the big centres to travel to the regions, to stimulate tourism, to allow people from the cities to go back to see relatives and friends.”

However, Mr. Roy specifies that the Government of Quebec held some calls for tenders to determine the level of grants it would have to pay in order to offer a certain quantity of \$500 tickets.

He is not a totally independent observer in that file, his services having been required by the government.

“I looked at some aspects for the Department (of Transport). The (ticket) prices are acceptable, given the operating costs,” he says.

Jacques Roy also mentions that “a sort of call for tenders was included in the \$500 ticket decision process. Transporters were asked to set up a price and we based our choices on the best fares.”

Regional air transport: Expert says “a centralized bureaucratic logic does not work”

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ – Air transport expert Mehran Ebrahimi says the model chosen by the Quebec government to improve regional transport stems from a “centralized bureaucratic logic. Bureaucrats make formulas that they think work for everyone. But they don’t work.”

As soon as the Regional Air Access Program was presented ten months ago, Mr. Ebrahimi, a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), expressed doubts about its chances of working. Time has proven him correct.

“I had predicted that it would not work for mathematical reasons. It’s like a flower planted in the middle of the desert. (...) Subsidizing a ticket never gives good results. The question is: why didn’t it work? Why apply the same formulas as before? Making the committee permanent is alright. But making a permanent committee that does not have a good grasp of the situation is not a good solution,” he adds.



Photo: UQAM

Aviation expert Mehran Ebrahimi agrees with Gaétan Lelièvre; the current approach has no chance of working if the fundamentals are not revised.

People have to create an ecosystem around the airport that can generate some customers, he points out.

“The question is how do we approach regional transportation? If we sat down with local stakeholders to ask ourselves how to create tourism and

business infrastructures, we would have part of the solution,” points out professor Ebrahimi.

He points out that sparsely populated and large countries such as Finland, Norway and Australia have succeeded in developing efficient and busy

regional air transport. In Finland, transporter Finnair is a government-owned corporation.

“Over there, air transport is not thought of as just: a plane taking off and a seat to be filled. We have to start transportation, then planes and infrastructure are levers for economic development. We will support a number of activities around the airport and ensure that the need is created. Afterwards, air transport increases automatically. An isolated airport with two or three people working there is an early 20th century option. Today, airports must be business centres. We have to see how we can bring them (the socio-economic stakeholders) together around the airport, to make it an industrial zone, for example. We create the demand,” explains Mr. Ebrahimi.

“When we don’t create demand, we arrive at a regional airport, and it’s total desert. The solutions are here! It is doable to put money into local stakeholders. We have the potential in the towns and regions,” he says.

Mehran Ebrahimi believes that Quebec Premier François Legault is on the wrong track by refusing to assess the creation of a provincial airline. He points out that the world has changed enormously since the assets of Quebecair were liquidated in 1987.

“In Hydro-Québec, we have one of the five best energy corporations in the world. (...) Why not have a national airline? It’s not just that, a national company, it’s a collective project, that’s what it takes in regional transport. (...) If it (Quebecair) failed, it’s proof that it can succeed. Access to planes is much easier today. Saying like Mr. Legault that ‘I played in this film (to avoid studying the possibility of creating a national carrier)’ is like saying that ‘I don’t want to put horse-drawn carriages on the roads of Quebec because it didn’t work 200 years ago.’”

This kind of statement makes media quotes seem convincing, but when you look closer, it does not jive. It is as if we cannot learn from our mistakes,” concludes Mr. Ebrahimi.

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Black Whale Cookbook: Fine old recipes from the Gaspé Coast

DIANE SKINNER

If you are fortunate enough to own a copy of the Black Whale Cookbook, published in 1948, you already know what a fascinating book it is.

Written by our Gaspesian ancestors and ladies from Montreal who vacationed in Percé 75 years ago, it offers a historical perspective on the eating habits and social fabric of those times. On the title page, it reads, "Famous old recipes handed down from Mother to daughter." The recipes assume a piece of knowledge about making a white sauce, knowing the baking temperature for a wood stove, baking times for cakes and many other culinary skills.

The ingredients are almost exclusively local featuring beef, fish of all kinds (several cod tongue recipes), seabirds, moose, partridge, venison, raspberries, and caribou, from a time when caribou were not yet an endangered species.

Sea Bird Pie

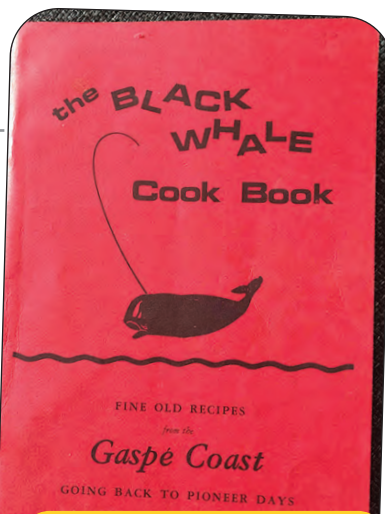
Skin birds and soak overnight in cold water and salt. Cut in pieces, roll in flour and fry in hot fat until well browned. Cover with water, add a few slices of fat salt pork, 3 medium-sized onions, salt and pepper to taste. Stew until tender. Make a baking powder biscuit dough to fit the top of the stew pot. Thicken gravy and lay the dough on top and cook for about half an hour. *Mrs. Muriel LeGros*

Baie des Chaleurs Caribou Roast

Let 6 pounds thick back roast stand overnight in salt water to which has been added juice and the rind of 1 lemon. Roll in flour, place in roast pan, and pour over 1 cup boiling pork drippings to which has been added: 1 tbsp. brown sugar, 1 tsp. cloves, 1 tsp. all-spice, 1 tsp. H.P. Sauce bake in a moderate oven for 1 ½ hours. *Mrs. Hildred Maloney*

Fried Smelt

Scrape and clean smelt very carefully. Drain and dry well between towels. Roll in flour seasoned with salt and pepper. Heat a frying pan and



The Black Whale Cookbook, published in 1948, is a fascinating glimpse into life here on the Gaspé Coast 75 years ago. Not many of today's cooks will make fried cod tongues, molasses candy, wallpaper paste or dark fruitcake.

Photo: D. Skinner

let the fat get very hot and very brown. Lay smelts in the pan, and let them get very brown and crisp. *Mrs. LeGrosley*

Economical White Cake

½ cup butter or other shortening, 1 cup sugar, 1 egg, 1 cup sweet milk, 1 tsp. vanilla, a pinch of salt, ½ tsp. soda, 1 tsp. baking powder, 2 cups flour. Cream butter, add sugar and beat, add egg and beat, add vanilla, sift flour, soda, salt, and baking powder. Add alternately with milk and bake in a moderate oven. *Miss Nellie Kennedy*

Grand Daddy's Cough Syrup

One part honey, one part lemon juice, one part whiskey only Grand Daddy used to sneak in more whiskey. Sip a teaspoon occasionally.

Storing Cranberries for Winter. Wash over berries, put in a stone crock, and cover with cold water. Cover and keep in a cool place. Will keep all winter until March or April. I get mine from Bonaventure Island and enjoy getting them from old Mr. Bruch. *Mrs. Ethel Renouf*

Thanks to Spec reader Gloria De Vouge Seaton who generously sent me a copy of the Black Whale Cookbook because she read in the newspaper that I was looking for one! True Gaspesian kindness. The cookbooks are 75 years old, so exceedingly difficult to find.



Photo: Chic-Chac

Mount Miller will have two snow machines to extend the season

Two snow machines for Mount Miller in Murdochville

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MURDOCHVILLE - Even if the amount of snow received each year is impressive, with some 700 centimetres, Mount Miller in Murdochville wants more and has two snow machines to help extend the ski season.

The investment represents a sum of \$250,000, of which \$100,000 comes from Ottawa. "It will allow us to extend the season, to guarantee operations earlier in the season, in November, in December, to ensure that we have an excellent holiday season and, despite the bad weather during the season, to maintain a quality of slides in season, dream of operating until April and May and combine activities during spring rafting weekends," says Chic-Chac owner Guillaume Molaison.

Even though Murdochville has unparalleled natural snow cover, Mr. Molaison justifies this investment. "We will not be content to be like the others. We are 1,000 kilometres from major centres. You have to provide reasons to get people to travel long distances. We have to have the longest season and the best snow. The conditions in Murdochville allow operations with mechanically worked snow that could not be possible elsewhere over such a long period," adds Mr. Molaison, who dreams of starting the sliding season at Thanksgiving.

The addition of this equipment could allow the ski centre to attract ski teams for training early in the season. Currently the snow machines

are functioning at 90%.

Its ultimate goal is to offer recreational tourism activities year-round. After creating off-trail skiing in Murdochville, buying buildings for housing, the York Lake outdoor centre for summer activities and the church that became the headquarters of Chic-Chac, Mr. Molaison continues to be even more ambitious.

The development of the recreational tourism centre has required \$5 million so far. "To continue with the diversity of products and annual coverage, we will put more effort into the York Lake site to be able to receive users in winter as well, with chalets and the development of new mountains. Without revealing too much about

future plans, the total investments of the Chic-Chac to date are expected to double. We plan to invest \$5 million over the next five years to be able to have a site at Lake York with a four-season outdoor base so that it lives up to our ambitions," says Mr. Molaison.

"Our goal is to offer the best jobs in our industry," says Mr. Molaison, who wants to create well-paid year-round positions.

"He managed to keep this town alive and make the Gaspé Peninsula shine throughout Quebec and even internationally," says the mayor of Murdochville, Délima Ritchie Roussy, in support of the investment announced on February 21.

WIND FARMS:

▶ *Cont'd from cover*

Maïté Blanchette Vézina, Minister of Natural Resources and Forests and Minister responsible for the Lower Saint Lawrence, Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands regions stresses that "the wind sector is experiencing growing demand, and it is clear that Techéol is ready to make the most of the enthusiasm for our green energy. The Government of Quebec is proud to support the expansion of businesses that contribute to and generate substantial benefits for our regions."

Catherine Blouin, Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure, adds that "the Gaspé Peninsula not only has great potential in the wind power sector, but also innova-

tive and competitive expertise on a North American scale. Techéol will be even better equipped to promote our wind power sector thanks to this financial assistance. It fills me with pride to see that our region is a key player in Quebec's green transition."

Lastly, Guy LeBlanc, president and chief executive officer of Investissement Québec mentions that "Investissement Québec wants to make Québec a leader in the green economy, and its support for Techéol is part of this objective. Our regional team is proud to have supported this merger project with Services X Wind. This will allow the company to increase its service offering and expertise, in addition to supporting its growth and expansion into new markets."

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A possible partnership to accelerate the modernization of Fort Prével

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Groupe JGS is showing interest in establishing a partnership with Relance Fort Prével, which is the committee that took over the golf club and its related activities when the Société des Établissements de Plein Air du Québec (Sépaq) abandoned the location in 2015.

The unsolicited partnership offer was presented to some 90 golf club members at the annual general meeting on February 19 in Gaspé.

"We received a partnership and investment offer from the Groupe JGS. On Sunday (February 19), Mr. Jean-François Fortin presented his partnership offer to Relance Fort Prével," indicated the representative of the Relance Fort Prével Strategic Committee, Gilles Pelletier.

"Fort Prével is a gem. The interest is notable due to the fact that the government of Quebec, in the cession, did not go as far as it was supposed to go. The Fort Prével group had to repeatedly ask the government to invest. In our opinion, the site needs a business partnership to develop the immense potential that the site can have," mentions the co-owner of the assets and manager for Eastern Quebec for the JGS group, Jean-François Fortin.

The former Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament and current mayor of Sainte-Flavie mentions that the door has been opened to see the possible scenarios. "We mentioned to them



Photo: N. Sergerie

The Fort Prével accommodation pavilion.

several directions that an offer could take, and we are very happy with the receptivity. The board of directors had the approval to discuss with us in order to relaunch Prével with all the funds necessary to allow the site to develop and reach its full potential," says Mr. Fortin.

The members put basic conditions on the table: maintaining the recreational and family component of the site, golf activities and capitalizing on the military history of the place, conditions that the promoter is ready to accept.

"What surprised us the most was the interest shown by the promoters in making Fort Prével a site that could become a must in the region, a bit like we had envisioned when drawing up our business development plan," explains Mr. Pelletier.

"Absolutely! This is something which is both fundamental and which is the basis of our intervention at Prével. (...) We want to develop the site on the accommodation side, which would be unifying to allow people to stop there and enjoy it," says Mr. Fortin.

"We are part of the continuity of the efforts and the vision of the people in place," he adds. The parties' exchanges are only beginning to find a common development vision.

"We want to make sure that if we ever move forward, that the interests of each other are compatible and that we will ensure that each of the parties included in this process can find their benefit," explains Mr. Pelletier.

Fort Prével updated its phased business and development plan last fall. The first is

an upgrade to the golf clubhouse, clubhouse and inn and is estimated at \$2.24 million.

Phase 2 highlights the site used during the Second World War with a reception structure focusing in particular on the installations in place at the time to defend the region and Canada against the Germans.

The other parts of the second phase include installing water games for children and upgrading the accommodation component by offering more upscale facilities to generate more income. This second part is now estimated at \$2.79 million.

JGS already owns the Gaspésiana hotel in Sainte-Flavie, the Boule Rock golf club in Métis-sur-Mer and Aquamer in Carleton-sur-Mer. "The Gaspésie is a promising, magnificent region with great

development projects. To have a private group that shows interest in development, I believe that it can strengthen the regional economic fabric with new money, which makes it possible to consolidate the achievements," says Mr. Fortin, who isn't excluding other regional acquisitions.

At its annual general meeting, Relance Fort Prével revealed that it achieved sales of over \$1 million last year for the second year in a row. In 2016, during the first year of operations, revenues were \$325,000.

The club can now count on an accumulated surplus of \$450,000.

"We are still well anchored.

We now have in quotes an interesting business that may interest investors. It is a sign of pride to see that investors were interested in us. We said to ourselves that we probably have done the right things over the past seven years," believes Mr. Pelletier.

The Mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, was surprised at the first approach of the promoter who went to the town hall before addressing Relance Fort Prével.

"We will follow this closely. In terms of quality of life, we minimally want to keep a golf course. If a private person wants to renovate the hotel and improve the tourist offer, I say to myself why not? The rest, the ball is in the court of Relance Fort Prével and the private promoter," says the mayor.

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The Cost of Dying

WENDY DAWSON

From the moment of our very first breath, we have already begun the countdown to our very last, the biggest mystery, of course, is when that last breath will be taken? If that were a readily answered question, life would be a very different experience. It is difficult to imagine the chaos of a society where everyone would walk around perfectly aware of their respective expiry dates.

A 2019 study¹ by the University of Bar-Ilan in Israel concluded that our brains are not wired to consider our own mortality. From a very young age, as soon as children understand that all people die, our minds unconsciously shield us from these thoughts, allowing us to live a happier and more care-free life.

As Jim Morrison said, “No one here gets out alive.” So why is it that we give so little thought to something as definitive as death? Much like many other experiences we have, death, or the planning for death, is a complicated process, one that is heavily tangled in red tape and, more importantly, associated with significant costs.

Dying is Big Business

According to IBSISworldwide, a market research agency that collects information from more than 700 different industry categories, the funeral industry in Canada generates 1.6 billion dollars in market activity each year. The profit margins on funeral home services range from 30% to 65%, with annual profits hovering around 10% for funeral service providers. You don't have to be good at math to understand that is a lot of money.

In addition to a sizable market, the funeral industry projects an annual growth at a rate which will hover between .06% and 1% into 2032. Very few industries can present a business plan with this kind of stable growth.

That said, like many businesses affected by COVID, so too, ironically, was the funeral industry. Our lack of ability to gather and celebrate lives and to mourn our loved ones was thwarted by COVID rules and regulations, and families were forced to reconsider how to say goodbye to loved ones lost during that time. The big profit centres for funeral homes, such as organizing viewings, the requirement to move the deceased from one area to



another, even the sale of caskets, were dramatically affected as the choice to cremate became the preferred alternative allowing families to gather at a “later date” to say goodbye to loved ones.

Historically speaking, funeral homes and their operations were often family businesses. Passed on from one generation to the next, the owners' knowledge of their community and repeated family business over generations held an important place of trust in communities. Today however, fewer and fewer independent funeral homes exist, as is the case here on the Gaspé Peninsula, they instead operate under the banner of large corporations - corporations of course whose focus is to feed a bottom line which is far removed from the community-centric service once offered by these funeral homes.

Can You Afford to Die?

Dying, like almost every other major life event, affects ourselves of course, but more importantly impacts the families and loved ones we leave behind. Dying requires planning, coordination and, more importantly, payment. Perhaps it is not in our habit to talk about death because, as noted earlier, our brains just don't want us to. Still, the fact remains if you don't think about a plan for your inevitable departure from this realm, you might be leaving a huge challenge for the loved ones you leave behind.

And so the big question is, can you afford to die? The answer might shock you.

Funeral costs are essentially broken down into three cate-

gories, basic costs, professional fees and then, what the industry refers to as “send off” fees.

The prices vary from province to province. However, in Quebec, the average cost of a basic burial funeral is \$5,500.00. This amount does not include the actual memorial service or church costs (through the funeral home, these amounts range from \$800.00 to \$2000.00). This does not include the purchasing, opening and closing of a grave site which can cost between \$1,000.00 and \$2,500.00. This does not include the transportation of the deceased from the funeral to their final resting place, a very real challenge to those that hope to be buried alongside loved ones miles away. To be expected, there are strict rules and regulations surrounding the transportation of the deceased and these fees, depending on the distance and means used to transport the body, can go into the thousands, even tens of thousands of dollars. Even just calculating these additional services using modest estimates, a basic burial funeral can quickly add up to just shy of \$10,000.

By contrast, in Quebec, the cost of a basic cremation funeral can cost between \$2,000.00 and \$5,000.00. Again, extra charges can apply. Does the deceased need to be collected from a personal residence? Does the deceased weigh over 250 lbs? Does the deceased have a pacemaker, an artificial hip, or breast implants? If so, any of these issues can cause your bill to be doubled or even tripled depending on the factors to be considered. And again, this amount does not include the actual memorial service or church costs, the purchasing, opening

and closing of a grave site, or the transportation of remains to their final resting place. Shockingly, moving a body and moving remains can carry the same price tag depending on the deceased's final destination.

These are important things to know about because in the throes of grief, it is very possible that we do not have the heart or energy to properly consider all of these items and may blindly agree to unnecessary expenses or services that will leave a lasting financial impact on the family of the late loved one.

So how should one proceed in organizing something that our brain is not meant to process? The best answer is with some emotional distance and some foresight.

Pre-planning a funeral offers a major financial benefit and an opportunity for the planner to ensure their personal preferences are respected. This allows the family to proceed with a funeral, confident that the choices and selections of their loved one are being honoured. In preparing for their own funeral, the deceased has provided their loved ones the time to grieve their loss without having to be preoccupied with a looming bill that some might find insurmountable. Pre-arranged funerals can be paid for in increments, and most important of all, the cost of a pre-arranged funeral is fixed at the time that the contract is finalized and since 2021 in Quebec, a record of the contract is filed with a provincial pre-arranged funeral register. Ninety percent of the funds from your pre-payment are kept in trust until your passing. This means that your funeral costs are fixed and will not increase with time. Pre-planning a funeral would seem

to be an ideal solution.

The fact is, in a time when many are wondering if they are going to prioritize the payment of their grocery bill or their hydro bill, the idea of pre-planning and paying for a funeral worth thousands of dollars, no matter how modest the payment required might be, is simply not a priority for most.

And sadly, death is not reserved for everyone's “later years.” Accidents happen, diseases happen, soul-crushing and life-changing moments happen when you are forced to consider the loss of a loved one, unexpected and well before their time. What to do then?

For over 20 years, the Government of Quebec has provided a one-time death benefit to the estate or survivors of the deceased. This amount, currently set at \$2,500.00, is under tremendous scrutiny as it has remained unchanged for over a decade and is taxable. In addition, the eligibility of this amount hinges on whether or not the deceased has contributed “enough” to C.P.P. or Q.P.P. This amount is paid out to survivors no more than 60 days after the government has been advised of your passing.

In addition to the aforementioned benefit, the Government of Quebec offers a Special Funeral Benefit. The determination of a person's eligibility for this amount is done by special request; it must be demonstrated that the deceased has limited income and their estate is unable to pay for funeral expenses.

If someone must live through something as awful as the loss of a young child, funeral expenses can be reimbursed by the provincial government. The parent, however, must be eligible for social assistance or social solidarity benefits.

Finally, a person who is a beneficiary of Social Assistance payments can also apply for yet another type of Funeral Benefit to help cover funeral costs.

While all of those payments are helpful, none are guaranteed and again, are only received weeks, sometimes months, after the funeral service.

The Funeral Association of Canada states that in recent years, crowdfunding has become a popular option for Canadian families that need support to cover ever increasing funeral costs.

Crowdfunding allows funds

Cont'd on page 16

Can an earthquake happen in Quebec?

DIANE SKINNER

Yes, they can, and they have, and they continue to happen. Earthquakes tend to be mostly unpredictable, and around 5,000 occur in Canada every year. Most are low intensity, last a few seconds and cause no damage. There are three zones in Quebec that are most prone to earthquakes.

Charlevoix-Kamouraska
This is the most active zone

in Quebec. It runs along the St. Lawrence River, in the Charlevoix and Charlevoix-Est MRCs on the north shore, and the L'Islet and Kamouraska MRCs on the south shore.

Western Quebec Zone

This zone stretches from the Ottawa Valley to Montréal to Témiscaming, and up to the Laurentians. The urban areas of Montréal and Ottawa-Gatineau are also located in

this zone. About 200 small earthquakes occur yearly, in this region, but most are so small they go unnoticed.

Lower Saint Lawrence and the North Shore

This zone is located in the St. Lawrence estuary, between the North Shore and Lower Saint Lawrence regions.

In 2012 a small earthquake shook people awake in Matane, but no damage was reported.

March is here!

Spring equinox (and more) is coming!

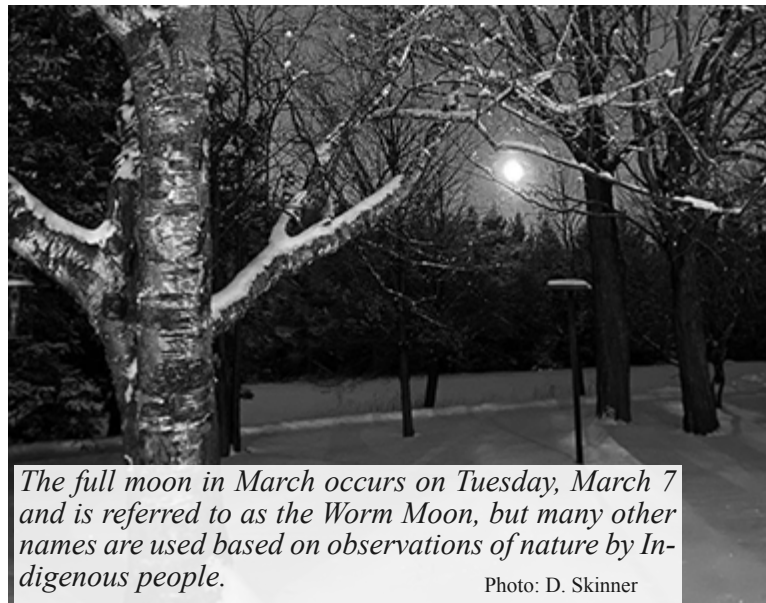
DIANE SKINNER

*The brown buds thicken
on the trees,
Unbound, the free
streams sing,
As March leads
forth across the leas
The wild and windy spring.*

March has arrived! This is the month of transitions. Will it be in like a lion or a lamb? The weather will be changing, and the spring equinox is a mere three weeks away! This third month of the year is the second to have 31 days in it. In the Northern Hemisphere, the beginning of spring occurs this year on March 20. If you live in the Southern Hemisphere (for example, Australia or South America), it will be the first day of autumn on the 20th.

The word March comes from the Roman god of war, Mars. The floral emblem of March is the daffodil, a flower that gives us hope that winter will end and warmer days are ahead. The zodiac signs for the month are Pisces (until March 20) and Aries (from March 21 onward). The gemstones for people born in March are aquamarine and bloodstone. Aquamarine resembles the colour of the sea – it varies from deep green-blue to light, slightly greenish blue. The stone symbolizes purity of spirit and soul. The bloodstone could not be more different. It is typically a dark green cabochon (a polished gem) and contains red spots of iron oxide. The red iron oxide is what gives the stone its name. This stone symbolizes health and strength.

March marks a number of important and commemorative days. It is Irish Heritage Month and St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on the 17. March 8 is International Women's Day, a global day celebrated annually to highlight women's rights, in-



The full moon in March occurs on Tuesday, March 7 and is referred to as the Worm Moon, but many other names are used based on observations of nature by Indigenous people.

Photo: D. Skinner

cluding gender equality, reproductive rights and abuse against women. March 14 is Commonwealth Day, marked in 54 countries in the Commonwealth. March 21 is International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, an issue where some progress has been made but still has a long way to go. March 31 is International Transgender Day of Visibility, founded in 2009, whose goal is to celebrate and raise awareness of discrimination faced by transgender people.

March brings us Daylight Savings Time, this year, on March 12, the practice of advancing clocks by one hour during warmer months so that darkness falls at a later (on the clock) time. What happened to the discussion by governments to eliminate this disruptive practice?

March 15 is the Ides of March! There are legends about this day, originating from the murder of Julius Caesar, not a good day for him. Some consider it a day when you might experience bad luck. This March there is not one Friday, the 13!

Monday, March 20, is the beginning of the spring equinox, sometimes referred to as the vernal equinox, in the Northern Hemisphere. After

this date, the Northern Hemisphere begins to be tilted more toward the sun, resulting in an increased number of daylight hours. So, earlier dawns and later sunsets. As we are well aware, the amount of daylight has been slowly increasing each day since the winter solstice on December 21, 2022.

The full moon this March will occur on Tuesday, March 7, and it is the Worm Moon. It refers to the beetle larvae, which begin to appear this month. This month's full moon is also referred to as Eagle Moon, Goose Moon, Crow Comes Back Moon, Sugar Moon, Wind Strong Moon and Sore Eyes Moon. All names come from observations of nature by Indigenous people

*The March wind roars
Like a lion in the sky,
And makes us shiver
As he passes by.
When winds are soft,
And the days are warm
and clear.
Just like a gentle lamb,
Then spring is here.*

Have you heard the expression, "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb?" It refers to the change in weather in a month when the weather is very changeable. In 31 days, it will be April!

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



Devastation in Turkey and Syria

Rescuers are searching for people trapped under collapsed buildings, this week in Turkey, after another earthquake hit. The area was destroyed by a magnitude 6.4 earthquake just weeks after massive earthquakes devastated Turkey and Syria. The first quakes killed over 44,000 people, but that is an estimate. The final toll could be much higher. Aftershocks are still occurring, and buildings weakened by the first quakes are still in danger of collapsing. Thousands of survivors are homeless and searching for food and shelter.

Turkey is a large peninsula that connects Asia and Europe and is surrounded by the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The population is close to 85 million. The largest city in Turkey, Istanbul, is partly in Asia and partly in Europe.

Turkey is one of the most earthquake-prone areas in the world, and over the past 70 years has experienced 13 earthquakes! The fault (a fracture in the earth's rock where there is movement) extends hundreds of kilometres, and the movement is constant. Each year the fault moves about 20 centimetres back and forth.

Turkey is an ancient country and some of the earliest settlements in the world were established there. About 4,000 years ago, an Empire was built, and the Hittites ruled it for hundreds of years. In 334 B.C. Alexander the Great overtook the area, and then the Romans ruled the area, which they renamed Constantinople. When the Roman Empire fell the area became part of the Byzantine Empire.

After WWI, Greece invaded the country, which led to a war of Independence. In 1923 Turkey became an independent republic (a state where the power is held by the people and the elected representatives). Women gained the right to vote in 1934, while in the province of Quebec women did not get that right until 1940.

The population is diverse, a result of the many groups that invaded and conquered Turkey over thousands of years. The majority of the people are Sunni Muslim, and about 20% are Kurdish.

A popular meal is made from lamb and often includes eggplant and yogurt. If you have sampled Turkish delight, you will know about its sweet and flowery taste, made with rose petals.

The most popular sport in Turkey is soccer, followed by weightlifting and wrestling. About 2 million Turks work in Germany and most congregate in small communities together.

The head of the government is the Prime Minister, currently Erdogan. An Assembly is elected by the people. Turkey was a founding member of the United Nations, established after WWII. Turkey has been a member of NATO since 1952. Its location, being in the Middle East, is important for defence in the region. It is bordered by eight countries – Greece, Bulgaria, Iraq, Syria, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Iran.

When watching the news about the horrific earthquakes we need to be mindful of a country with history (13 UNESCO World Heritage Sites), culture, economy (it has one of the world's oldest and largest malls!), language (90 % of the country speaks Turkish – though over 30 languages are spoken in the country), government and people. Their recovery will be long, slow and challenging.



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Announcements



In Memory



O'RIEILLY: Mary Ingrouville

April 16, 1923 - February 27, 2016

O'REILLY: Catherine Mary

August 19, 1952 - February 19, 2020

Grief never ends... but it changes.

It's a passage, not a place to stay.

Grief is not a sign of weakness,

Nor a lack of faith...

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Your beautiful family xoxxo

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Deadline

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COAST ROUND-UP

GASPÉ:

Cancer Society Membership Renewal

New memberships and renewals are being accepted. \$15 per person or \$25 per couple. All new membership and renewals can be sent to Gaspé Cancer Foundation, P.O. Box 6078, Gaspé, Quebec G4X 2M6. Payment can also be made by e-transfer to gaspe45@hotmail.com. Please include your name, address, phone number and email address. For more information, please contact Tony Patterson at 418-368-3276; Beatrice Coffin at 418-368-1566 or Patricia Ste. Croix at 418-649-3779.

GASPÉ:

The Future of Camp Fort Haldimand

Camp Fort Haldimand needs you! If you are interested in keeping this site an active part of our community, please join us and be a part of the future of Camp Fort Haldimand. There will be a public meeting on Tuesday, **March 7 2023**, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the York River Community Hall. Please

come out and join the team! Please note, in case of snow the meeting will be held on Thursday, March 9 same time and place.

GASPÉ:

Royal Canadian Legion

Please be advised that Legion memberships are available for \$50. Returning and new members welcome.

PORT DANIEL:

Three Star Golden Age Club

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

March 4: Music night beginning at 7 p.m. \$5 per person

March 17: Pot luck supper beginning at 5 p.m. for members and guests.

April 28: Gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. \$10 a strip and \$20 a series.

May 13: Mother's Day tea from noon to 2 p.m. \$10 per person.

SHIGAWAKE:

Community Centre

March 4: Ski-doo Rally

April 10: Gift bingo - Details to follow.

HOPE TOWN:

Sports Club

March 10: Super gift bingo at the Optimist Club in Saint Godefroi beginning at 7 p.m.

March 11: Snowshoe Rally beginning at 11 a.m. registration between 10 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. Teams must consist of three or four people with at least one adult. Games on ice will begin at 1:30 p.m. Deal or no deal at 7 p.m. (ages 18 and older). Cost: \$5 tickets must be purchased in advance.

March 12: Old timers vs Young timers hockey beginning at 1:30 p.m. Gift bingo for children 13 and under beginning at 1:30 p.m. Can-teen service will be available Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Items include hotdogs, fries, mini pizzas, soup and chilli.

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 Le-

gion memberships are available for \$45. Returning and new members welcome.

Wednesdays: Line dancing every Wednesday in March at 7:30 p.m. \$7 per person.

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!

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

NEW CARLISLE:

Life Association

March 11: Gift bingo in collaboration with The Anchor at the New Carlisle Royal Canadian Legion beginning at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30 p.m.) \$10 a series or three for \$20.

NEW CARLISLE:

Bible Chapel Meetings

Sundays: 9:30 a.m. Breaking of Bread for believers. 2 p.m. Gospel meeting and Sunday School.

Thursdays: 7 p.m. Prayer Meeting and Bible Study. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

NEW RICHMOND:

United Church Luncheon

March 5: Luncheon from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Church Hall. Soups, sandwiches, tea, coffee and desserts. \$8 per person. Take out available. All proceeds will go to the humanitarian fund.

UNITED CHURCH

NEW RICHMOND

Sunday, March 5

10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH

HOPE TOWN

Sunday, March 5

2 p.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, March 5

NEW CARLISLE

10 a.m. Morning Prayer and Annual Vestry Meeting
SHIGAWAKE
10 a.m. Morning Prayer

Wakeham York Winter Carnival

CHELSEA FLOWERS

The Wakeham-York Winter Carnival celebrated its 52nd-year last week in Gaspé, bringing the community together again for fun and entertainment. The events saw high participation from all age ranges.

The carnival is organized by a volunteer-run committee which was formed in 1971 when a group of committed volunteers began to build a full-size hockey rink and rink-house. For the past 52 years, this committee has maintained the rink. The profits from the annual carnival go exclusively towards maintaining the outside skating rink, used by local citizens and the wider Gaspé.

According to Andy Patterson, an original committee member from 1971, "In terms of attendance, this year's carnival was probably one of the largest ever, but when it comes to raising funds, it is difficult to overshadow the carnivals in the 70s and 80s. At that time, teenage girls from the area competed in selling tickets to become Carnival Queen."

This year's carnival took place from February 11 to 19. The first weekend saw the annual Family Day, with over 60 individuals participating in various

events. The day began with family snowshoeing in the morning and kicked off the afternoon with the famous masquerade! Other exciting competitions for the whole family included tea boiling, ice bowling, nail driving, tug of war and hockey skills. The evening finished with a bonfire and fireworks.

On Sunday, the carnival hosted a Super Bowl party for the first time! Other events through the week included a tuck tournament, bingo and a poker night.

The major event happened on Saturday, February 18. The committee put on the annual breakfast, serving more than 100 people. After breakfast, there was a snowmobile poker run, which had approximately 70 sledders registered. Participants followed one of two trails; those without passes drove up the St. John River to an opening where they had lunch and enjoyed the gorgeous weather. The other group took the snowmobile trail to Chandler Road, crossed the Bailey Bridge and descended the St. John to join the others. To finish off the wonderful day, a dance was held with music from local artist, Nash Stanley.

Tickets were sold to help



The masquerade is always a popular event at the Wakeham-York winter carnival

Photos: Dayna Patterson

fundraise for the rink. 1st prize was a round trip airfare for two with Pal airlines (winner: Tom Roberts), 2nd prize was a day of salmon fishing for 2 people with equipment (winner: Sylvie Desrasp), 3rd prize was a Stanley toolbox with tools (winner: Peter Sams) and finally a day of salmon fishing

(winner: Dale Patterson).

Andy Patterson speaks to the importance of the carnival's continuance and its impact on the community: "The annual carnival breaks up the long winter we endure in Gaspé, and brings people together, many of whom see each other only once a year. Especially on

the snowmobile run, people come from all over the Gaspé area and as far away as Montreal to participate. We received many compliments this year, and many are already looking forward to the 2024 Carnival."

With special collaboration from Andy Patterson.

The Wakeham York Winter Carnival committee would like to thank the volunteers and the community for their support. SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:

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- Subway
- Techeol (With Jonathan Coffin)
- Thoney Fournier
- Tim Hortons
- Transport Fournier
- Transport Plourde
- Tupperware - Arianne Fournier
- Uniprix
- Ville de Gaspé
- Vision Gaspé Perce Now
- York River Seniors



Andy and Kevin Patterson take part in the nail driving competition.



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FUNERALS:

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to be collected through social networks and in the community. While some potential donors might balk at the user fees and donation service fees, these amounts total less than the hidden service fees we pay every time we make a credit card purchase. Crowdfunding helps the family by providing quick access to funds raised and allows family and friends to support the deceased's family with something more practical than flowers, for instance. In addition, friends and family from further away can feel useful in their ability to donate to their family's needs. Donations can also be made anonymously, and most importantly, the crowdfund allows those organizing the funeral to provide updates to those that provided precious financial support.

So what is to be done, on the day of your first visit to the funeral home when a 35% deposit on services is required? The truth is that such a large expense coupled with the grief of loss will undoubtedly cause additional undue stress on the family and loved ones left behind.

Creative Options

If COVID taught us anything, it is that there are many different and creative ways to mourn our losses and our loved ones.

Many of us attended ZOOM funerals during the pandemic or had small intimate family gatherings, and in some cases, held no funeral at all. Most importantly, COVID has proven that the rushed approach to funeral arrangements is no longer necessary, especially when considering the option of cremation.

According to the Canadian Funerals website, there has been a steady annual uptick in a practice called Direct Cremations (across Canada, prices for this service vary from \$580.00 to a little over \$2,000.00). While a funeral home arranges the actual cremation, the families of the deceased agree to no viewing, no funeral and no memorial service. Instead, these families may choose to buy an urn for a fraction of the price on Amazon or have a personalized or custom-made vessel.

Formal visitations and services are being replaced with intimate and personalized memorials for loved

ones, allowing for a more casual and authentic send-off.

Others might feel best if they are able to spread the ashes of their loved ones in a special area or bury them close to home on a family homestead. Despite popular opinion, this practice is both accepted and legal in the province of Quebec as long as certain minimal conditions are met.

Those that wish to pursue a traditional burial can also benefit from cost savings by shopping at Costco or other online suppliers for their casket or by using an online funeral service, direct competition to local funeral services, be they privately owned or part of a funeral home chain.

Regardless of our reflections and our thoughts about what our final goodbye might look like, one thing is certain, conventional approaches are not the only ones available to us in the changing landscape of funerals and memorials. In light of the fact that the church does not hold the same place in the hearts and homes of many as it once did, alternative end of life options are becoming more and more common.

While not yet available in our region, other less expen-

sive, inspiring and environmental practices are gaining popularity. Options that include biodegradable urns, shroud burials, tree pods, alkaline hydrolysis and finally, eternal reefs are all options that are currently available in other parts of Quebec.

Love, Support and Community

While the price tag of a funeral can be daunting, the stress and sadness of planning and paying for an end of life service can be alleviated if we remember during those times that we truly are not alone. While we might feel isolated during those moments, we are surrounded by others who feel our pain and sadness and want to help.

When going to a funeral home to finalize funeral plans, it is a good suggestion to bring someone with you that has some distance from your loss, in whom you have trust, that can guide you in decision making with some clarity.

People often feel powerless in helping us navigate our grief, so if help is offered and the action can support you then, by all means, accept the assistance. Others who lost loved ones before us can also

provide insight or guidance into the practical steps that must be taken with regard to the red tape that follows us right into the end of our lives.

In Anglophone communities along the Gaspé Peninsula, grief and loss are often far-reaching. We know of each other even if we haven't necessarily met. We have crossed paths at school events, fairs, community supporters and market stalls. Grief might feel very isolating, but often unbeknownst to us, our loss is felt by many.

Death and Taxes

It was Benjamin Franklin who said that "nothing is certain except death and taxes," and with that certitude we should, at least on occasion, speak about our end of life wishes. We should have conversations about medically assisted dying, estate planning, wills, child care, and custody because they are all realities that change dramatically with our passing. Doing so will provide some comfort and peace of mind for those we leave behind.

Special collaboration with Holly Smith.

¹<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1053811919306688>

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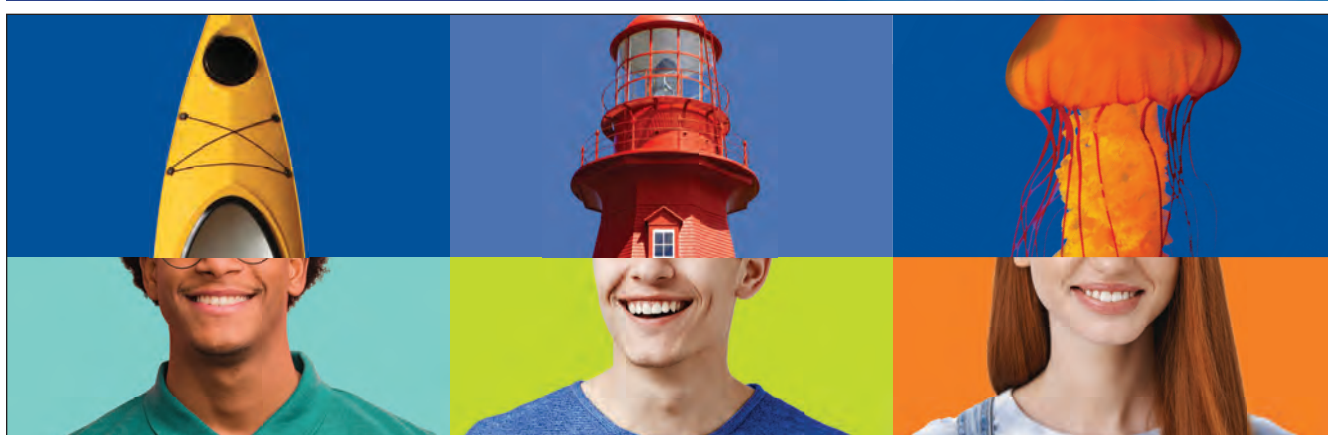


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