

Transports Québec reduces investments in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands by 13.5%

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The Quebec Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility will reduce its investments in the road, rail and airport networks of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands by 13.5% during the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 budget years. The amount invested over these two years will go from \$350 million to \$302.5 million.

The biggest reduction will hit the rail network with total investments going from \$144.2 million for the years 2022 to 2024 to \$88.5 million from 2023 to 2025, a cut of \$57.7 million. Since 2013, the Quebec Ministry of Transport investment announcements span over two years and are adjusted annually, which complicates yearly follow-ups.

During an April 17 stop in the Gaspé Peninsula, Transport Minister Geneviève Guilbault downplayed the importance of the budget reduction relating to the rail network. She first specified that a sum of \$21 million had been granted during the Quebec budget in March to

help in its operation of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, the freight carrier using the network belonging to Transports Québec. A portion of \$12.5 million relates to the 2023-2025 period and is not included in the April 17 announcement.

Minister Guilbault also specified that other amounts could be released before the summer for the Matapédia-Gaspé railway when Transports Québec will have completed the evaluation of the business case for the portion of the network located between Port Daniel and Gaspé.

"We have to go through the cabinet (ministers) in this case," said Geneviève Guilbault, specifying why large sums associated with this portion of the line are not announced now.

The 325 kilometres (202.4 miles) of rail between Matapédia and Gaspé are divided into three parts by Transports Québec, the 127-kilometre stretch between Matapédia-Caplan, on which rail service has been maintained continuously since the acquisition of the



The Minister of Transport and Sustainable Mobility, Geneviève Guilbault, indicated more money could come later this year for the Gaspé Peninsula railway.

Gaspé network by Transports Québec; the 72-kilometre, Caplan-Port Daniel section, which should be put back into service in 2024; and the 126-kilometre, Port Daniel-Gaspé section.

The Minister indicated that the Caplan-Port-Daniel portion will be put back into operation

at the end of 2024, a prudent deadline since most of the offers submitted by contractors carrying out the main bridge repair mandates will complete their work before the end of 2023, or early 2024.

As for the Port-Daniel-Gaspé stretch, the timetable for reopening in 2025 was not kept even if it had been announced in August 2019 by Premier François Legault. Minister Guilbault confirmed that the ultimate goal remains unchanged.

"It's reasonable to assume that it will be completed in a few years, sooner rather than later," she said.

She explained the withdrawal from the initial schedule to "the reality of the market," the need to "operate with the administrative pace," the 2022 election, "overheating in the construction industry" during calls for tenders, and the cancellation of certain calls for tenders when prohibitive costs are presented. However, she did not explain, when questioned by The Gaspé Spec,

why the rate of disbursement by Transports Québec only reached \$20 million per year between 2017 and 2022, including the first three years of the Coalition avenir Québec government, before accelerating to a certain degree a year ago. Since June 2018, more than \$7 billion has been invested in the Réseau express métropolitain (REM) in Montreal, at a rate of \$2 billion per year, considering that experts expect the cost of the initiative's first phase at close to \$10 billion.

The final cost of the REM remains unknown. Charles Émond, president of the main promoter of that initiative, namely the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, recently refused to divulge the last cost update of the REM. The \$7 billion evaluation is from June 2021.

To date, if the money injections of the last two years are included, \$142.5 million has been invested into the repair of the Gaspé rail network since May 2017, which equals \$23.75 million per year.

Reactions

For his part, the president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, Éric Dubé, sees as "excellent news" the maintenance by Geneviève Guilbault of reopening the railway line to Gaspé.

He attributes the minister's cautious objective of reopening the Caplan-Port-Daniel stretch at the end of 2024 to a probable desire "to keep room for maneuvering."

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, also expressed relief to see the Quebec government's willingness to repair the whole line. He now dates the return of rail service to his town "at 2027 or 2028."



Photos: G. Gagné

SCFG railway repair 2020: The repair of the Gaspé Peninsula railway line is behind schedule, but the pace of work has accelerated since the spring of 2022.

Fisheries Innovation Hub in Grande-Rivière to become a reality

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - A first step could be taken for the creation of a Blue Economy Zone in Grande-Rivière as Merinov launched calls for tenders for its Fisheries Sector Innovation Hub.

The project consists of erecting an infrastructure in the Grande-Rivière industrial park with workspaces of 2600 square metres on the ground floor and 1000 square metres on the second floor. The project has been in the works for four years.

“There are several sections and entities inside the Innovation Hub. We will have a fish breeding room with modern technology for the treatment of tributaries which is a major issue for the development of the fish farming industry in Quebec, wet laboratories for the production of aquaculture feed, and also for the preservation and long life of crustaceans. We will have laboratories for the production of microalgae and new species of algae in Quebec. We will have a pilot micro-factory for the recovery of algae and marine eco-products,” says general manager, David Courtemanche.

Spaces are also planned to accommodate companies that would come in residence to develop their activities, products



The Fisheries Sector Innovation Hub would look like this once completed.

Photo: CCM2

or prototypes for possible marketing.

“We already have a pipeline of activities or projects planned over the next few years that will fit in with the infrastructure,” explains the director.

The objective is for Quebec to catch up in terms of innovation, particularly in the Atlantic provinces, which have been innovating at a very high rate for the past four years.

“We have to do this catching up. We support companies so that they can innovate new ways of doing things, new processes, implement new approaches, explore new markets, and develop new products. These are elements that must be put forward now to reach or maintain international markets, among other

things, for the marketing of their products,” says Mr. Courtemanche.

“We are positioning Quebec as a world-class player in the Atlantic region. We already have contracts from companies who come from elsewhere, who choose us because we have the know-how or equipment that is not available elsewhere. By having the fisheries innovation hub in Grande-Rivière, it should generate excitement and attractiveness for talent in Grande-Rivière,” says the director.

Over the first five years, 50 jobs could be created or maintained linked to the research centre.

“There are all the peripheral jobs in companies, the young shoots - the start-ups in fact - that should emerge from all

this. The consolidation of jobs with our customers as well, who could break into new markets with new products or modify their processing lines,” mentions the director, who points out that the economic benefits will be calculated in millions of dollars.

This project is part of the future Blue Economy Zone in the MRC of Rocher-Percé and of Rimouski-Neigette. The project has been evolving for several months and the Ministry of Innovation had a favourable eye on the project.

“There is never anything certain in life, but it is going well. I think this is a case that is progressing well. We have very strong support from the stakeholders on the file. It looks good, I would tell you, for the Blue Economy Zone,” says

Mr. Courtemanche cautiously.

Last September, the mayor of Grande-Rivière, Gino Cyr, mentioned half a billion dollars in investments for the Blue Economy Zone following a visit by a delegation from Investissement Québec and the Ministry of Economics and Innovation to validate the potential of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, blue food processing and technology, marine biotechnology and smart navigation and marine technology. The elected official still mentioned in September planned private investments of \$70 million for the first five years.

In the Quebec Infrastructure Plan tabled on March 21, the Grande-Rivière Fisheries and Aquaculture Innovation Centre looked like a done deal.

It is mentioned in the document that the creation of the hub required investments of \$31.2 million: \$2 million is planned for this year and \$19 million after 2024, in addition to the contribution of \$8.9 million from partners.

Recently, the Minister of Innovation, Pierre Fitzgibbon, indicated to the National Assembly that the zone dedicated to fisheries could be a reality soon.

“I think there is merit in having an area there. We are not ready to announce it, but we are working on that,” says the minister.

Developing the Fisheries Innovation Hub will cost more than anticipated

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - Setting up the Grande-Rivière Fisheries and Aquaculture Innovation Hub will cost 50% more than announced in April 2021. In a March 22 decree, which was published in the Quebec government's Official Gazette on April 12, the granting of an additional subsidy of \$8.5 million over the next three years was mentioned.

This financial aid is in addition to that of \$ 17.3 million Merinov received and that was announced in April 2021 by Quebec.

In the decree, we can read that “additional investments are required for the realization of this project.”

The sum will be distributed as follows: \$1.7 million for the 2022-2023 fiscal year; \$5.1 million for the 2023-

2024 fiscal year and \$1.7 million for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

This decree was adopted at a time when a first step could be taken for the creation of a Blue Economy Zone in Grande-Rivière as Merinov launched calls for tenders at the end of March for its Fisheries Sector Innovation Hub in the industrial park.

Last September, the mayor of Grande-Rivière, Gino Cyr, mentioned half a billion dollars in investments for the Blue Economy Zone following a visit by a delegation from Investissement Québec and the Ministry of Economics and Innovation to validate the potential of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, blue food processing and technology, marine biotechnology and smart navigation and marine technology.

In the Quebec Infrastruc-

ture Plan tabled on March 21, the Grande-Rivière Fisheries and Aquaculture Innovation Centre seemed to be already acquired.

With this decree, Quebec is advancing \$25.8 million for the project.

Recently, the Minister of Innovation, Pierre Fitzgibbon,

indicated to the National Assembly that the zone dedicated to fisheries could be a reality soon, adding that he was working on the project.



The Fisheries Innovation building that will be renovated

Photo: N. Sergerie

Police report

On April 14, the Sûreté du Québec police officers of the Avignon MRC detachment in Matapédia, in collaboration with their colleagues from the Bonaventure MRC, as well as the investigators from the major crimes squad, carried out a series of searches and arrests in connection with drug trafficking in Pointe-à-la-Croix. The searches took place in a hotel room on Perron Boulevard west, as well as at a residence on Ruisseau Street. Police officers seized 10 fentanyl tablets, about 40 grams of crack cocaine, 50 methamphetamine tablets, one kilogram of crystal meth, cash, several dozen prescription medication pills and items used for drug trafficking.

During the searches, three men who lived on the premises were arrested by the police, including two men aged 64 and 52 who were released after being questioned. They will eventually be summoned to appear in court when the investigation is completed. Another man, Christian Godbout, 50, remained detained after a court appearance on April 17. He faces various charges related to possession and trafficking narcotics. "This investigation began only a few weeks ago following information received from the public," stresses Sgt. Claude Doiron, spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec.

On April 20, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's major crimes investigation unit and the office of the Prince District in Prince Edward Island confirmed that the body of Jacques Dunn, a resident of Cap-des-Rosiers in Gaspé, reported missing at sea on December 30, was found on Prince Edward Island. A citizen walking along West Point Beach on March 21 discovered the body and then notified the RCMP. After lengthy identification procedures, the body of Jacques Dunn was identified to the satisfaction of the coroner's office.

On December 30, the Sûreté du Québec was notified of the disappearance of the 68-year-old man after he went shellfish fishing along the banks in the Cap-des-Rosiers sector. He might have slipped and fallen in the water after losing his balance while walking on rocks, or he might have lost consciousness after a stroke or something else, adds Sgt. Doiron.

After a week of intensive searches along the banks by police officers, divers, firefighters and several volunteers, the victim had unfortunately not been located. "Foul play is ruled out in that case," mentions Sgt. Claude Doiron. Family members of the victim confirmed the identity of Mr. Dunn after seeing photos of his body following the March 21 discovery but the police needed more factual information in order to officially confirm that it was him.

On February 22 at the New Carlisle Courthouse, Marc-André Robichaud, 56, from Pointe-à-la-Croix was found guilty of sexual assault on a victim under the age of 16. Mr. Robichaud is appealing that verdict. To justify the appeal, the attorney of Marc-André Robichaud refers to erroneous instructions given by Judge Manon Lavoie to the jury. The defence and the criminal prosecutor will have to prepare a brief for the hearing, the date of which has not yet been set. After two weeks of trial, a jury also found Robichaud guilty of causing bodily harm to the victim during the March 2019 assault in Pointe-à-la-Croix.

The sexual crimes trial of Steve Vallée, 46, ended on April 6 at the Percé courthouse. The man from Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé is accused of sexual assault, contact and incitement to sexual contact with a minor for events that occurred in 2011 and 2013. The victim, two witnesses and the suspect testified in the case before Judge Richard Côté, who will render his decision on May 19. Steve Vallée will return to court on April 27 to set a date for another trial in a different sexual assault case. The victim was a minor between 1995 and 2001 when the alleged events occurred.

Sûreté du Québec investigators are investigating the origin of an April 15 suspicious fire that occurred in Cap-des-Rosiers. The fire started around 9:30 p.m. and destroyed a house in the heart of the village, as well as a car parked nearby. The Sûreté du Québec (SQ) estimates the damage at \$60,000. The two people who were in the house escaped without any injuries. "It could have been caused by foul play. Nobody has been arrested so far in connection," says Sgt. Claude Doiron.

Sory Keita, who is the suspect of the November 2022 attempted robbery at McDonald's restaurant in Gaspé, is returning to closed therapy for his addictions after escaping in March from the Toxi-co-lodge detox centre located in Upton, Montérégie. In January, the court had agreed to send the man to that centre.

On March 7, the accused allegedly feigned discomfort, requiring him to go to the hospital with an attendant from the centre. After gaining the trust of the attendant, Keita obtained permission to get cigarettes at a convenience store. The attendant never saw him again. According to CHNC, the suspect eventually surrendered at a Montreal police station on March 14. Judge Denis Paradis offered the accused a second chance. He will return to closed treatment for six months.

The Sûreté du Québec is investigating a fire that is believed to be of a criminal origin in New Richmond. On April 5, the SQ was called to assist the firefighters around 8:15 p.m. at 260 Pardiac Street. The two-unit building was destroyed by the blaze. Sgt. Claude Doiron indicates that the building was uninhabited at the time of the fire. "The investigation is ongoing. There have been no arrests so far, but we have reason to believe that a criminal act caused the blaze," he says.

A house was destroyed by a fire on April 13 in Listuguj. The community fire department was called around 9:30 a.m. when a fire broke out in the single dwelling home located on Micmac Drive. The Pointe-à-la-Croix fire department was called to assist with a tanker truck. A dog and a cat died in the blaze but no other injuries were reported. The house is a total loss.



Percé will become the owner of the Assomption School in Val-d'Espoir.

Photo: Facebook

Percé finalizes purchase of the Assomption School in Val-d'Espoir

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCE - Percé will finally be able to acquire the Assomption School in Val-d'Espoir, which has become the site of the Permaculture and Innovative Agriculture School.

On April 3, 2018, the René-Lévesque School Board, which is now the René-Lévesque School Service Centre, offered the surplus building to the town after deciding to divest itself of the former school. It wasn't until March 1, 2022, that the Town of Percé finally expressed an interest in acquiring the school by offering \$25,000, to which it received a favourable response a few weeks later.

However, the school service centre had to justify the fact that the building had become surplus to the Department of Education before it could proceed, which it did on March 8. "We had asked, at the time, to put it (the acquisition) on ice since we already had five community buildings. We asked for a delay to find a vocation. Not long after, the permaculture school project arrived following the pre-feasibility and feasibility studies we had started in 2018. By 2023, the permaculture school had taken off. Frankly, it is a project that fits very well," says Percé Mayor Cathy Poirier.

All that remains is to final-

ize the transaction before the notary and the sale will be made without a legal guarantee. The centre has a first-refusal clause should the town wish to sell the school.

The town has ensured that the building is in good condition.

"Obviously, there will be some conversions that need to be done to make it suitable for the permaculture school. We're getting into the building. It's beautiful but it is a building that is in very good condition," says the mayor of Percé.

The permaculture school will officially take off this spring. "It began last fall with the first courses but, effectively, it is the hiring of resources with the coordinator and the beginning of the courses in the summer. We can say that the school of permaculture and innovative agriculture of Val-d'Espoir is a project that we can classify as one that has been achieved," says the mayor proudly.

A benefactor has donated \$1 million to support the school's operations in an endowment fund. The interest earned will be used to cover the operating costs of the project.

The town is only providing the building. The Percé Economic Development Society is in charge of the development and operation of the school. "It's really an autonomous entity," concludes the mayor.



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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Back to normal for Pierre Poilievre: misinformation at its best

The leader of Canada's Conservative Party, Pierre Poilievre, recently proved that the softer side he had shown following the September 2022 leadership race was just an accident or, more likely, a strategic move. His plea to convince Twitter that CBC is the equivalent of the Russian or Chinese media proved once more that he is unfit for duty as an eventual prime minister of the country.

Over recent weeks, Mr. Poilievre lobbied to convince Twitter's brass, notably its relatively new owner, Elon Musk, that CBC must be labelled a "government-funded media" in the category of "media receiving varying degrees of government involvement over editorial content."

A government-funded media can be independent of the government. In most democratic countries that fund a media that belongs to the government, like CBC in Canada and BBC in the United Kingdom, their radio stations and television channels are endowed with a charter confirming their independence. Wartimes can lead to exceptions, as was the case during World War II.

Over the last decades, CBC and BBC have become staples of reliability and journalism independence.

So, the CBC bashing campaign and the lobbying drive to influence Twitter were pure manipulations and bad faith on Pierre Poilievre's part. He is intelligent enough to make a difference between a publicly-owned media, partially funded by the government, which is CBC Radio Canada, and a propaganda organization like most of the Russian and Chinese media.

He, nevertheless, made a clear link between CBC and the media evolving in totalitarian countries. He frequently refuses to answer questions from CBC reporters, despite their relevance. He alleges that the reporters are working for Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party.

In fact, five days after granting CBC a status that reminded people of Russia's media, Twitter backtracked and recognized its independent status, in the footsteps of a similar recognition granted belatedly to BBC.

Canadian Press also targeted

On April 13, Mr. Poilievre also refused to answer a Canadian Press journalist, alleging that she was biased, notably because her articles are recuperated by CBC. However, the Conservative leader cannot ignore that the Canadian Press is privately owned and that most daily media in the country, private or public, subscribe to its services.

There again, the Conservative Party leader tries to please the cross section of his partisan base that hates the media. Whether he really thinks that what he does is fair and legitimate, or not, remains unknown.

By doing so, he tries to undermine one of the foundations of Canada's democracy.

Without being perfect, the news service of CBC RadioCanada is a model of probity, professionalism and integrity. Most of the other media's newsrooms generally walk straight as well, and the presence of CBC Radio Canada is influencing that rigour, like community-owned radio station newsrooms in rural regions.

Pierre Poilievre, who has been advocating for a movement to defund CBC, cannot ignore as well that there is a difference between a public broadcaster's newsroom and its entertainment department but his decision to opt for political opportunism dictates his way of waving the truth.

Oddly, his bashing methods have so far spared the Radio-Canada side of the public broadcaster. Again, political opportunism prevails over truth, common sense and fairness. Mr. Poilievre knows that Radio-Canada is more popular in Quebec than CBC is in the rest of Canada. He also knows that Radio-Canada is very often the only way for francophones living outside Quebec to get some news coverage in their language. So, to protect the 11 seats the Conservative Party holds in Quebec, he remains quiet about Radio-Canada.

The silence of the Conservative Party Members of Parliament representing a Quebec riding regarding Pierre Poilievre's methods is quite embarrassing. Over the last weeks, they have systematically refused to answer questions about their stand on the matter. It speaks volumes about the control their leader has over their say.

Another intriguing and rather worrying factor that

marks Pierre Poilievre's pretension as a true Canadian leader rests in the way he needed the blessing of Twitter, an American giant that has become a democratic farce since its acquisition by Elon Musk, to prove the alleged CBC bias. Mr. Poilievre exulted upon learning on April 17 that Twitter had approved his viewpoint. It smacks of cultural colonialism on the Conservative Party leader's part.

It is not the first time. His Donald Trump-like methods have proven his lack of statesmanship on numerous occasions. His declaration that bitcoin was more reliable than the Bank of Canada to deal with monetary policy is one example. Canadians would have lost a high proportion of their wealth, had they listened to the suggestion put forward by Mr. Poilievre.

This doesn't exclude him as a winner of the next federal election, which will likely come at one point in 2025, a rather predictable moment for a country run by a minority government, which is generally characterized by uncertainty. The deal between the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party maintains that stability.

Justin Trudeau's lack of consistency, when it is time to deal with the quality of federal services, currently favours the Conservative Party's drive to win the next election. Despite Pierre Poilievre's regular trash talk, he stands a chance of winning in the 2025 election considering that in the Canadian system, which favours multi-party, a party can win with about 35% of the electorate support.

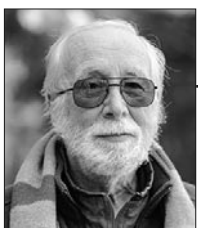
In January 2006, Stephen Harper won a minority government with a 36.27% rate of support and he would even have won with a lower proportion of the electorate.

A lot of people will say that a leader using Trump-like lies, libel and insults cannot win in Canada. There is nothing less certain. As of now, Pierre Poilievre regularly leads in the surveys conducted across the country even if the means he has deployed over the last few years disqualify him as a responsible statesman.

Pierre Poilievre excels at unifying small groups of people who feel betrayed by the political system, who express anger at the country's so-called elite, and who feel powerless in front of phenomena such as inflation and sanitary rules.

Excluding his electoral victory would be a big mistake. Mr. Poilievre's supporting cast will apply surgical political tactics in the ridings where the Conservative Party stands a chance to win. The division of the ballots between four or five other parties, as well as a weak participation rate, might do the rest.

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Fred Kirch

Guest Commentary

The Gathering Storm

For five decades, businessman Donald Trump abused legal processes to bully people with whom he did business. Attack and delay became the hallmarks of Trump's way of doing business. Reportedly, he filed over 3,000 civil cases, which would be a Guinness world record if they kept track of such things.

He continued these practices until he was elected president and ostensibly turned over management of his business to two of his sons.

Leading up to the election in 2020, apparently behind in the polls, Trump began to claim that if he lost the election, it could only be because of fraud. He never produced any evidence to support his claim, but his followers accepted that the election was stolen.

Subsequent investigation found an insignificant amount of fraud. Ironically, most of the fraudsters had voted for Trump.

Ultimately, his claim led to the January 6 riot at the

Capitol Building, with Trump demanding that vice president Mike Pence return the election results to the states where Trump supporting legislators would change them. A handful of very vocal lawyers backed Trump's demands, but the vice president could not legally do it.

Immediately after the election, Trump had lawsuits filed on his behalf in several states challenging the results of the election. Of the 60 cases filed, some going to the Supreme Court, all were dismissed. Many of the lawyers who filed cases on Trump's behalf are being investigated by bar associations for professional misconduct because it is improper to file a lawsuit without any evidentiary support.

At this point, the tables are turning. Where in the past, Trump was always on the attack, he is now on the defensive in a head-spinning collection of civil lawsuits and criminal investigations. He is still trying to use delay, but increasingly the judges involved are no longer willing to entertain his demands for delays.

As an example of cases that have been resolved, the Attorney General in New York State sued to dissolve Trump's charity which he was improperly using for personal expenses. More recently, his business, The Trump Organization, was found guilty of falsifying business records to cover up tax fraud. It is anticipated that the fine, in that case, will be over a million dollars.

At the same time, Trump's long-time financial chief, Allen H. Weisselberg, pled guilty to tax fraud and served time in jail.

A few days ago, Trump was criminally charged in New York City Court with 34 felonies relating to the falsification of business records to cover up the payment of hush money just before the election. In a few

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Daniel Côté reassured by LM senior management on the future of the Gaspé plant

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, says Gaspé is very well perceived within the LM Wind Power group in Denmark. On March 27, while visiting Scandinavia, he toured the company's headquarters in Kolding and Lunderskov.

During the tour, he had the opportunity to meet Bjarne Nielson from the senior management of LM Wind Power. "The discussions I had with senior management reassured me about the future of Gaspé in the wind power industry and the global wind power industry as well, which is far from having finished growing. I think the sun will shine for a long time on LM (Wind Power) in Gaspé," affirms the mayor.

Mr. Côté says they didn't discuss any further expansions as the current priority is "to

meet the employment housing needs in Gaspé."

The company recognized how the Town of Gaspé supported LM Windpower during its expansion phase. "They told me several times how much they appreciated our openness and the proactive approach of the Town of Gaspé in the LM Wind Power expansion file and how we went about creating the road link that was essential for the survival and development of the plant. They appreciated our approach and our material. I think that all of this ensures that we are well positioned within LM Wind Power for future projects," says the mayor.

"Gaspé is very much in the forefront at the head office. We can see that Gaspé has innovated a lot and that the plant is very efficient, hence the fact that it has undergone two

major expansions," comments Mr. Côté.

The mayor says that at the Interpretation Centre, the name of Gaspé is everywhere. It is mentioned that the longest blade in the world will be manufactured in Gaspé.

"It is a great source of pride. You are on the other side of the world, you are in the middle of Denmark, in Kolding, in Lunderskov, where these facilities are and you see that Gaspé is at the forefront," he states.

The Canadian flag was hoisted on a pole in front of the plant for Mr. Côté's visit. "For them, they were receiving a great visitor. It was important to receive me," says Mr. Côté.

The mayor was also able to visit the company's Technological Centre, in particular, the test benches where the blade prototypes are submitted before production is started anywhere in the world.



Bjarne Nielson from the senior management of LM Wind Power in Denmark and Daniel Côté.

Photo: Daniel Côté's Facebook



Photo: MRC de la Côte-de-Gaspé

The campaign relies heavily on visuals.

Be proud to live in the Côte-de-Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Côte-de-Gaspé MRC has created a campaign to promote pride in its residents.

The campaign consists of three videos featuring testimonials from 17 citizens from the MRC and a dedicated website: macotedegaspe.ca.

"In Gaspé, we have the Pure Pleasure campaign that was reduced during the pandemic and that we will relaunch, but for the entire Côte-de-Gaspé, we must develop a sense of belonging to the area. We must show the rest of the world how proud we are of our area," says the prefect and mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

"My world, my territory,

my inspiration is the name of the campaign. We want people to take ownership of the territory and be proud to belong to it. We want to take the best inspirations and put them forward," adds the prefect.

In addition to the dedicated website, the eight-minute video vignettes which include both newcomers and long-time residents can be found on the MRC's YouTube account, on social media and in the five municipalities that make up the territory.

The My World capsule allows viewers to discover what characterizes a typical Côte-de-Gaspé person and the commonalities of its inhabitants. It depicts a welcoming and very human environment where people take the time to greet

each other, and where proximity creates a strong spirit of mutual aid.

The capsule, My Territory, talks about the landscapes that make Côte-de-Gaspé residents feel at home after returning from a trip, and how it fascinates residents every day. It describes a territory that seduces them every day with the sea, cliffs, mountains, salmon rivers and sunrises.

Finally, the My Inspiration segment reveals the colour of the MRC, the influence of the sea and mountain landscape on its vibrant culture and what local culture represents, beyond music and the arts. It's about a tightly woven community where it's easy to make a difference and a territory where vastness breeds great ideas.

Fewer spruce budworms present in the Gaspé Peninsula in 2022

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

GASPÉ - According to the Society for the Protection of Forests against Insects and Diseases (SOPFIM), the spruce budworm is experiencing a slight decline in the Gaspé Peninsula, as the affected area decreased from 1.7 million hectares to 1.4 million hectares between 2021 and 2022.

"The decline is less noticeable. The budworm is still present in the Gaspé Peninsula, versus the Lower Saint Lawrence," explains the director general of SOPFIM, Éric Lacroix.

In the Lower Saint Lawrence region, the ravaged area decreased by almost half, going from 1.6 million hectares to 831,000 hectares, a situation that Mr. Lacroix struggles to explain. "It is surprising. This was not expected because when budworms colonize a new area, we expect a presence for about 10 to 15 years. In the Lower Saint Lawrence, it's been nine years. It is a bit early to see the budworm leave the area. We are wondering if there will be a return of the budworm next year," says Mr. Lacroix. Even more surprising data: the most devastated sectors went from 496,000 hectares to 26,000 hectares.

"In the Gaspé Peninsula, it will perhaps continue because we are not 15 years after the start of the epidemic," explains Mr. Lacroix.

Faced with this observation, the intervention strategy will remain the same this year with five air bases that will be set up in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Gaspé, Grande-Rivière, Bonaventure and Charlo, New Brunswick for the west of the territory. Twenty planes will be spraying insecticides.

"There are still many areas with moderate to severe defoliation that will require our presence," says Mr. Lacroix.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, it is expected that spraying will begin near the beginning of June.

Across the province, 476,000 hectares will be treated compared to 627,000 hectares in 2022. Last year, the protection rate reached 97.4% of the sectors treated. In Quebec, 9.1 million hectares are affected, down from 12.2 million hectares in 2021. SOPFIM's 2023 budget is \$48 million compared to \$52 million in 2022.

Surgery department could expand at Sainte-Anne-des-Monts hospital

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CAPLAN - The surgery department of the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts Hospital Centre is being reviewed in order to establish clear operating rules.

The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS) is talking about an overhaul to ensure the sustainability of the service and increase the volume of activities.

"The prospects for the future are good. We want the activities to continue. What is being done is to overhaul the operation of the operating room in order to have clear rules for everyone and ensure better optimization of the room. Our ultimate goal is to increase the level of activity in the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts operating room," says Martin Pelletier, President and CEO of the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS.

A dispute between workers led to a suspension of activities in December. In addition, the nurses' union addressed concerns regarding medical issues.

Activities restarted at the end of January, particularly with the support of agency staff.

"We had the staff evaluated on-site and exposed them to other operating rooms. Some people passed the assessment and others did not, which forced us to hire independent labour to restart the service," explains Mr. Pelletier.

"We are preparing an action plan to consolidate activities and surgeries have returned to the same level as before the crisis last December. We are even taking a step forward to make improvements," says Mr. Pelletier, who estimates that it will take about six months to reach a level of satisfaction.

The Ministry of Health is involved in the process. The work is being done collaboratively.

25 patients awaiting surgery

Meanwhile, the new dashboard from the Ministry of Health reveals that as of March 11, which is the latest data available, 25 patients have been waiting for surgery for more than a year in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The CISSS has confirmed that information, but qualifies

it. For example: 13 are related to dentistry, such as when a patient must receive care in a hospital rather than in a dentist's office. The CISSS indicates those individuals will be operated on by the end of the summer. In the other cases, the patient cannot undergo an operation because other treatments are required before obtaining the surgery. In addition, one person refused an operation.

Several absent workers

On March 11, information released indicated that 859 health workers were absent. That number, however, includes vacations and personnel from the Magdalen Islands. In actuality, 440 health workers or 11.4% are absent from the Gaspé Peninsula network for medical reasons.

Of the 900 nurses and nursing assistants working at the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS, 10% of them come from placement agencies. The Quebec government has plans to eliminate the use of agency workers because they cost the network much more than regular workers.

Their departure would have a considerable impact on the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS.

"That means that we would have services that we could not maintain at the expected level," says the CEO, who notes that the Gaspé Peninsula region was provided with three years to prepare.

"We are in action. We have our graduate nurses from outside Canada who are taking their place. We have 36 that should be ready in the fall and we will have another cohort in the fall. In the next year, we will have an additional forty, not counting the recruitment taking place in parallel. We are preparing," he said.

A major issue is the housing to accommodate these workers from outside the country.

The CISSS is looking at a project to house these nurses in modular units. The spokesperson, Lou Landry, indicates that this is a possible solution that is being seriously analyzed.

The CISSS informed the Société d'habitation du Québec of its interests and says that it is following developments closely.

For now, nurses who arrived in the region have all found a place to live, but some have to vacate their place of



The operating room of the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts hospital could experience an increase in activities

Photo: N. Sergerie

residence for the summer. In addition, 51 new nurses will arrive this fall.

Quebec earmarked \$5 million to purchase and install 20 modular units for healthcare workers in its budget tabled in March, following the example of Nova Scotia which launched the idea in January.

Infrastructure improvements

The CISSS is continuing its efforts to improve its housing and care infrastructures.

In its three-year plan, major

projects are planned, including \$10 million to redo the windows and the exterior of the Gaspé hospital centre, \$4 million to redevelop the hemodialysis service in Gaspé and another \$4 million for the oncology service in Chandler.

The CISSS stands out for its capital asset management by carrying out announced projects and using the allocated funds.

This is an advantage when projects are submitted. "Our technical department succeeds in doing the work planned each year so that we use the allo-

cated funds. We have a good rating at the ministry level for the use of dedicated funds. It sometimes opens the door for us to anticipate projects. This is due to the efficiency of the technical services team," maintains Mr. Pelletier, who stresses that this leads to attentive listening from the ministry.

Alternatively, the expansion and renovation of Villa Pabos in Chandler is now valued at \$70 million, \$10 million higher than forecast. The project is being evaluated to make it fit within the announced budget.

Gaspesian crab processors would close their doors before paying fishermen \$3.10 per pound

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-THÉRÈSE-DE-GASPÉ - Crab processors in the Gaspé Peninsula can't offer \$3.10 per pound as indicated in a Superior Court decision rendered on April 17 on the North Shore.

The court found that the price offered by North Shore processors, of \$2.25 per pound, did not respect the marketing agreement involving Zone 16 crab fishermen.

Bill Sheehan, the vice-president of E. Gagnon et fils in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, says that if obligated to pay a price of \$3.10 per pound, processing companies in zone 12 would close their doors.

"It would be a disaster. Already the market conditions are really difficult. There is a lot of pressure for prices to come down. We are only try-

ing to stabilize the price where it is. We are at a low level. This is not where we would like to be. The market conditions are not where we could pay such a price," Mr. Sheehan.

He hopes the first deliveries, over the next few days, to the American market in Boston will yield better prices, "but so far it's not better than it was two weeks ago," says Mr. Sheehan. Last year's inventories continue to saturate the market.

"We, too, would like to sell at a higher price, but there is always someone who offers at a better price, regardless of the origin. There are those who need space and are moving the product. We're on the wrong side of the fence so far," says the vice president of E. Gagnon et fils.

No processing plant in the Gaspé Peninsula or New Brunswick could pay the \$3.10 a pound price. "It's impossible.

We could promise that, but then, we couldn't pay. Some companies have financial difficulties and some have gone bankrupt. Again this year, at the price of \$2.25 and \$2.50, it is not easy. It's not obvious. There are a lot of processing plants that are seeing the price drop rather than increase," argues Mr. Sheehan, who mentions that following a decision in Newfoundland, the price was set at \$2.20.

The only good news at the moment is that 25% of the quotas have been caught so far in Zone 12, the dominant area in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence, after only a week of fishing.

The race against time continues, as crab fishermen try to land as much as possible before the arrival of the right whales.

Processing plants are struggling to respond to the massive influx of crab.

Gaspé to regulate short-term rentals

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - On April 17, the Gaspé municipal council tabled a notice of motion that freezes the granting of new operating permits for short-term rentals such as Airbnbs.

"This notice of motion has a freezing effect. We are going to regulate everything that is not a main residence on the territory. There is an exception: anything that is outside the urban perimeters and very far from municipal roads, we will not touch that. Acquired rights are not affected. Those who already have their permits or certifications, we will not touch that," explains the mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

The regulations were established following a consultation in which nearly 300 citizens participated.

On the permission granted for main residences, the mayor explains that an owner who goes on vacation, for example, for a month in the summer and wants to rent his house will be

able to do so, which was an exception the population asked for during the consultation.

"The regulatory objective is to ensure that we offer the most long-term housing units on the territory as possible. Someone who rents out their primary residence for a month does not change the amount of housing available. On the other hand, someone who takes a building or secondary house that is destined for long-term usage but instead uses it for short-term, creates a loss of a housing unit, hence this regulation," explains the mayor.

The legal framework is adapted to the new law adopted by the Quebec government.

According to the Town of Gaspé, there are about 70 "illegal" rental units, but the mayor explains that it is very difficult to have a clear portrait because some do not publicize their rentals.

"On the other hand, more and more people are complying with the CITQ regulations, but those who do not comply



Gaspé limits short-term rentals on its territory

Photo: Facebook

will no longer be able to do so from now on," says the mayor. The Corporation de l'industrie touristique du Québec requires the registration of tourist accommodation rentals.

The CITQ will have to manage municipal regulations. "We do not have the means to

assume the jurisdiction of the Quebec government," says Mr. Côté.

The regulation applies immediately, even if it will take four weeks to be officially adopted.

"Why are we freezing the notice of motion? It's to pre-

vent people from coming to get a permit in a hurry. We wanted to avoid a multiplication of requests now before people comply. We wanted to block these conversions to keep as many residential units as possible to house families and workers," concludes the mayor.

GASPE:

A new complex to be built for those with autism

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - A 12-unit apartment complex in downtown Gaspé, dedicated to individuals with autism, has to start from the ground up with a bill that could reach \$9 million.

The Knights of Columbus building at the corner of Jacques-Cartier and de la Cathédrale streets will have to be demolished as the building does not meet requirements.

Initially, the project was to cost \$3.8 million. However, on March 22, Quebec granted an additional \$5.2 million to enable its implementation.

"The analysis of the structure showed that we could not build onto this building. It must be demolished and started over. It involves additional costs. These costs were the subject of a request for financial assistance, which received strong political support, and \$5.2 million was further extended by the government," says the mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

The additional money was required not only because of

the issue of demolition and reconstruction but also due to the increase in construction costs, especially since there are specific needs to take into account in its development.

"This is a project that targets a very specific clientele. It cannot be a standard construction of a standard apartment building. There must be a day room. Corridors and bathrooms must have special arrangements for the target clientele. All of this entails additional costs versus a standard apartment building," adds the mayor, who notes that the need for such a building has been demonstrated.

Since 2019, the Demeure Toi organization has worked to create a living environment for those with an autism spectrum disorder. Born from the reflection of parents and relatives of people with autism, the project will meet an essential need.

"It is very good news that the government has listened to our arguments and is following up on them," concludes the mayor.

"With the announcement of this additional sum, we will be able to begin the



This building which belongs to the Knights of Columbus will have to be demolished and replaced by a new one to comply with regulations.

Photo: N. Sergerie

work necessary for the construction of the building. The entire community, which has supported us since our beginnings, will finally be able to see the project come to fruition!" states the president of the organization Demeure Toi, Claudine Dupuis, who is the mother of a young adult with autism.

"I am extremely happy to

see that our government is using all the means at its disposal to ensure that the completion of housing projects is not slowed down by a more difficult economic situation. On the contrary, we support the efforts made by our valued partners, including the organization Demeure Toi, for their project of a 12-unit building and activity centre

for people with an autism spectrum disorder. This is a project carried out by compassionate people who have given themselves the mission of meeting an existing need in their community and who work there without counting their hours," stated the Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix in a press release.

Carleton supports Gesgapegiag in its effort to get more wood from public land

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The Town of Carleton-sur-Mer adopted, on April 18, a resolution supporting the community of Gesgapegiag in its effort to get more wood from public land. In February, Chief John Martin publicly expressed the community's frustration after the Gesgapegiag administration received a letter confirming the government's refusal to allow additional access to public land for wood purposes. That letter failed to expose the reasons behind the decision.

In March, Chief Martin approached the municipality of Carleton in an attempt to gain support for his quest.

Carleton-sur-Mer mayor, Mathieu Lapointe, points out that to his knowledge it was the first time the administration of Gesgapegiag has requested the municipality's support in any matter. He has been sitting on the council since the fall of 2013. The council's decision to support Gesgapegiag was unanimous.

"After receiving John Martin's letter, I discussed the

issue with some forestry stakeholders since I am not very familiar with this field and I wanted to understand the situation. From what I heard, the (Gesgapegiag) request is received very favourably," explains Mayor Lapointe.

"The logic of the request comes from the fact that a volume of 50,000 cubic metres is what it takes to justify the acquisition of a multi-functional wood harvester, along with paying for its maintenance and the team operating and repairing it. Chief Martin wants to create specialized jobs in his community and, in order to achieve this, it takes a minimal volume of wood," adds Mathieu Lapointe.

Currently, the forestry workers of Gesgapegiag benefit from a volume of about 14,450 cubic metres of wood annually.

Mayor Lapointe has checked the capacity of the public forest to supply that volume of wood and he has received a satisfactory answer.

"From the echos I received, there is wiggle room

(for harvesting the wood), for the capacity to process it, and the potential to find plants in the limits of the Avignon MRC to do it," points out Mr. Lapointe, who is also the prefect of that MRC.

The Groupe GDS Sawmill in Pointe-à-la-Croix and the Groupe Lebel Sawmill in Nouvelle are the main wood processing plants of the MRC. The Carleton resolution mentions that considering the fact that the community of Ges-

gapegiag is located on a restricted territory of 600 acres with much marshland and given that the community has developed forestry as an axis of socio-economic development, this allows the creation of several jobs in the surrounding communities and municipalities; and considering that the community is asking for a wood supply of 50,000 cubic metres which will be processed at local sawmills, it is proposed that

the Town show its support to obtain the requested volume. The request for 50,000 cubic metres was made in 2021, with the goal of supporting Gesgapegiag's socio-economic development, another point mentioned in Carleton's motion, which was sent to Maité Blanchette-Vezina who is the Minister of Natural Resources and Forests and Member of the National Assembly for the Rimouski-Neigette riding.



Carleton mayor, Mathieu Lapointe, and his council support Gesgapegiag's request to get more wood.

Photo: G. Gagné

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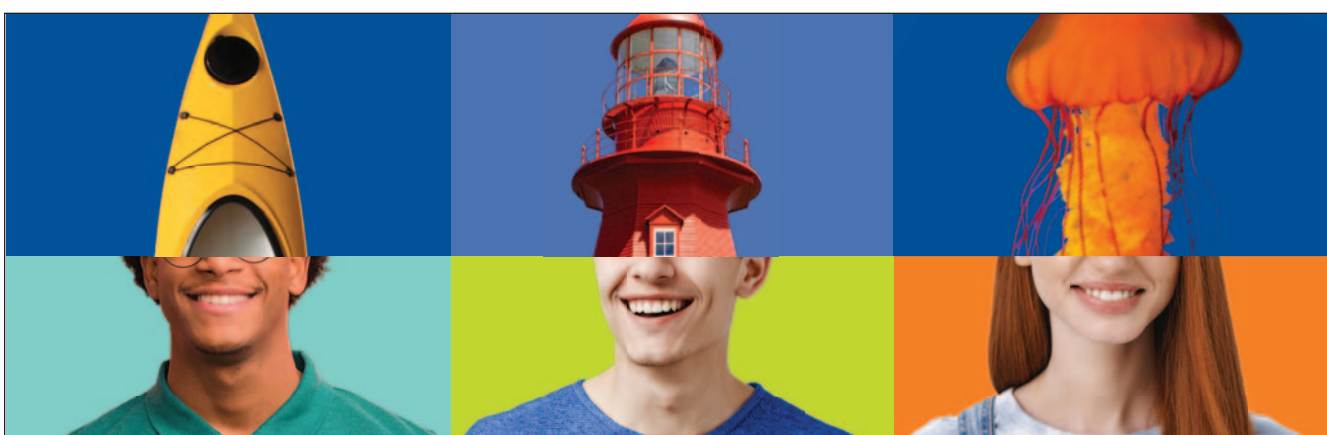
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Hiking the Mont Albert Loop

Rugged and unspoiled Gaspesian beauty

DIANE SKINNER

Every once in a while, the Gaspé Peninsula is mentioned in a travel article or in one of National Geographic's Top Destinations issues. When we see these articles extolling the unspoiled beauty of our peninsula, we feel proud that others have taken note.

In the Spring 2023 CAA magazine, one of the five Canadian locations mentioned, is the hiking trails at Mont Albert. The article, Epic Canadian Hikes, praises the beauty, but also mentions the difficulty of the Mont Albert Loop in the Gaspésie National Park.

The article states, "It's knock-your-socks-off scenery throughout this challenging wilderness trek. A caribou sighting will ice the cake."

The trail is just over 20 kilometres and has a rise in elevation to 1,101 metres. It takes an average of seven and a half hours to complete. Though always a beautiful experience, some hikers will say that the best months of the year to visit and hike this challenging trail are from May to October.

The Hikers

James Robson, Patient Navigator for CASA, hiked the Mont Albert Loop in June 2020, and it took he and his daughter about seven hours for the return hike. James tells SPEC, "The way up was nice with a pretty good incline. (We went up the short route and down the long route.) The way down was a little more difficult. It is much longer and much of the hike is on rocks, but the view was worth it. We had to go through mountains and streams, even jumping from one stone to the

next to get over a stream. I was with my 11-year-old daughter and even though she was tired, she absolutely loved it. We plan on doing this again soon."

James Robson offers some advice for those planning to hike the Mont Albert Loop. He suggests wearing footwear with good ankle support because there are lots of stones throughout a large part of the hike and to plan on hiking for the full day so that you can take your time and enjoy the views. Even though James and his daughter hiked in June there was still snow on the summit, so packing a windbreaker is a great idea.

On that June day, it was sunny and warm so James recalls, "We had a lot of company on the trails – we probably passed 20 to 30 other hikers on our trek."

Nicholas Denis, who is a 13-year-old, grade 7 student at New Carlisle High School, had a very exciting adventure when he climbed the trails at Mont Albert in March. He trained for five weeks under the guidance of retired Eastern Shores School Board teacher, Guy Gallibois and Ann Kelly, by going on long hikes each Sunday. Nicholas and four other NCHS students: Rebekah Lapointe, Samantha Major, Joshua Gallon and Gabriel Chatterton, along with Guy and Ann, by all accounts had a wonderful and memorable hike. They were well-prepared with food, water, a Tupperware survival kit put together by Nicholas' mom, a compass, a whistle, an emergency blanket, a flashlight and ski poles.

Through a telescope, Nicholas and his fellow students did spot a caribou that was fairly close. The icing on

the cake! The group slept overnight in a rustic chalet and Nicholas is very proud of his firemaking skills! The hike took place on March 11, so when asked if the group of hikers was cold because there was still quite a bit of snow in the mountains, Nicholas says, "If anything, he was hot because he had dressed in layers."

Descending the mountain trail was made a great deal easier by the use of a Zipfy, a lightweight compact sled. To use the Zipfy, you must sit with your feet and legs facing forward to use them to stop the sled. Simply drop

your heels to either slow yourself down or come to a complete stop, you can also control your Zipfy by leaning to the side to steer. That does not always work perfectly or in Nicholas's case, the Zipfy worked too well! Nicholas and his friends took turns descending about 100 metres at a time and then passing it over to the next person to use. When Nicholas was descending, he was sliding so quickly that he passed Ann Kelly and managed to yell, "Watch out!"

Jeannette Maltin Martin, Director of Communications and Policy in Gessapegiag, is an experienced hiker who states that "Mountains are my happy place." In the summer of 2022, she was married atop Mont Ernest-LaForce in Parc de la Gaspésie and she recalls that other hikers stopped, waited and watched respectfully while the ceremony was taking place. Jeannette wore a lovely traditional wedding dress and her hiking boots. She



The joy of the hike and the "knock-your-socks-off scenery" make climbing the Mont Albert Loop in Parc Gaspésie a memorable experience. Photo: Courtesy of James Robson



Jeannette Maltin Martin during her wedding atop Mont Ernest-Laforce in the summer of 2022. Notice the juxtaposition of elegant wedding dress and practical hiking boots. Photo: Courtesy of Jeannette Maltin Martin



(Left to right) Ann Kelly, Rebekah Lapointe, Samantha Major, Joshua Gallon, Nicholas Denis, Gabriel Chatterton and Guy Gallibois were excited to board the bus on their way to hike Mont Albert Loop in March. Photo: Roxanne Major Denis

fell in love on top of a mountain so it seemed logical to marry there since her husband, Denis Gauthier, is also an avid hiker.

During the summer of 2022, Jeannette hiked the Mont Albert Loop three times which she found to be challenging, both mentally and physically. Sometimes she takes her hand drum to play at the summit. Jeannette also carries a first aid kit, water, a blanket, electrolytes, a hat, sunscreen, bug spray and a whistle.

While hiking she has spotted moose and caribou. She has hiked the mountain solo and had a close encounter with an annoyed caribou. He snorted and stamped his hooves so Jeannette backed off and waited to give the caribou his

space. When he walked away, she continued her hike.

Jeannette has hiked in all seasons, including during whiteouts and very high winds and stresses, however, cleats are a necessity in winter months. She has also hiked in the pouring rain, continuing on with soaking wet boots, and still says it is always worth the climb. Her curiosity about the flora of the mountainous regions is piqued by the moss, trees, flowers and plants that can be used for traditional medicines.

Hiking in the mountains is great for mental health and when Jeannette completes a climb, she feels calm and peaceful. Most of all she feels a connection to Mother Earth and her ancestors.

CIME AVENTURE TRIAL: The parties will have to wait a few months for a decision

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – Judge Alexander Pless, of the Superior Court, took under advisement the case initiated by the Bonaventure-based excursion company, Cime Aventure, which has been challenging, since 2021, the power of the government of Quebec to limit the number of canoes and kayaks that it rents for excursions on the Bonaventure River.

Before concluding the trial on April 6, Judge Pless indicated to the lawyers representing Cime Aventure, the Quebec government and a party involved, the Association des pêcheurs sportifs de la Bonaventure (Sports Fishermen's Association), that he "hopes to make a decision that will allow the parties to live together."

Cime Aventure alleges that the Bonaventure River is a navigable waterway falling, therefore, under federal jurisdiction and that the Quebec Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks should have invoked Canadian law before unilaterally attempting to limit the number of its canoes and kayaks circulating on the Bonaventure River.

The Attorney General of Quebec established that the Forests, Wildlife and Parks Department had full power to act and protect salmon and their habitat, a position shared



Photo: G. Gagné

Sports fishermen prefer quiet conditions when they are casting for fish.

by the Fishermen's Association, which manages the ZEC of the Bonaventure River.

Judge Pless indicated that it is the safeguard order, governing the activities of Cime Aventure according to the norms of 2020 and the previous period, that will have force of law this coming June, when the summer season begins. This statement suggests that the judge's decision may not be made for a few months.

The case is being followed by numerous stakeholders across Quebec since its outcome may change the relationship between the river's main groups of users.

During the trial, the lawyer for the Bonaventure River's Sports Fishermen Association,

David Blair, and the Attorney General of Quebec attempted to demonstrate that the Cime Aventure activities exceed the river's capacity, considering the importance of protecting its ecosystem.

Cime Aventure's lawyer, Robert Daigneault, argued that the canoeing and kayak activities on the river are far from being generated exclusively by the company he represents.

Judge Pless stressed on a few occasions during the trial that canoeing and kayaking will continue on the river even if Cime Aventure is forced to sharply reduce its current quota of excursionists. Such a reduction is at the root of the lawsuit initiated by Cime in June 2021.

with their approval. However, they told us that the two proposals were not accepted and that we are going to arbitration," adds Mr. Element.

In addition, a meeting was also scheduled with the Régie des Marchés Agricoles et Alimentaires du Québec for April 20 and the date for arbitration was set for May 12.

"We would have liked it to be done more quickly," says Mr. Element, as three boats have already left Rivière-au-Renard on April 19 and 20 to start their season since the Crevette du Nord plant in Anse-au-Griffon has already indicated that they are ready to accept the catches.

Currently, Marinard is not opposed to opening, but the office had no news from the

Fruits de mer l'est du Québec plant in Matane.

Since the beginning of April, three boats from the North Shore have been fishing in the Sept-Îles area. "So far, the catch rates have been worrisome and remain so," says Mr. Element, but since the region's shrimp fishermen will fish throughout the Gulf, a better seasonal picture will emerge next week.

The Quebec Shrimp Office mentions that the door remains open to conclude an agreement before the appearance before the Régie.

Arbitration was requested on April 13 by the Quebec Shrimp Office.

Currently, shrimp fishermen will receive last year's landed prices which were

TRANSPORT:

▶ *Cont'd from cover*

Air transport: patience

Although Minister Guilbault recognizes the shortcomings of the Quebec Regional Air Transport Plan, she has no concrete measures to correct the situation. Air travel in Quebec's rural regions is marred by many factors, in particular flights cancelled for lack of planes or employees, the lack of seats on planes and a ticket discount program concocted for tourists rather than to meet the needs of the regions.

"We give ourselves a year to get there," she says about improvements, noting that "we must also wait for the expiry of the current programs."

She trusts the regional permanent committee, appointed during the winter and made up of the same people who established the essentials of the program heavily criticized since its inception in June 2022.

"We have to solve the problem of flexibility and frequency," she says.

The price of asphalt for municipalities:

Asked about the prohibitive price of asphalt for municipalities and the desire expressed since 2011 by certain mayors that Transports Québec's negotiations with asphalt producers can also benefit cities and villages, Minister Guilbault answered that "it's part of the discussions" she has entertained since her nomination in October.

The question was launched 12 years ago by the mayor of

Nouvelle at the time, Richard Saint-Laurent, who deplored that his municipality paid \$149 per tonne for asphalt, compared to the \$105 paid by Transports Québec, from the same supplier. Elected officials in the Gaspé have relaunched their plea to get cheaper asphalt prices many times since 2011, sometimes giving up, considering the ministry's reluctance at acting in collaboration with them.

Meanwhile, the roads of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands will benefit from \$48.2 million between 2023 and 2025, for the improvement of the surface (mainly through new paving), compared to the \$56.1 million announced one year ago. An amount of \$54.6 million will be devoted to improving structures, compared to \$57.6 million for 2022 to 2024.

The amount earmarked for improvements aimed at making the network more efficient and safe will amount to \$106.7 million. It was \$85 million a year ago.

Airport projects will receive \$4.5 million between 2023 and 2025, slightly less than the \$6 million announced last year. It will essentially go to the Bonaventure airport.

In 2022-2023, the disbursement rate for investments made in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands by Transports Québec was 89% of the amount announced.

Meanwhile, in Quebec, the transport-related sums to be announced over the next few weeks will amount to \$7.43 billion between 2023 and 2025, a historic high, indicated Geneviève Guilbault.

Shrimp: A request for arbitration

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Hoping to avoid arbitration, shrimp fishermen submitted two proposals to shrimp processors on April 20. However, both offers were immediately rejected.

"We are not far apart in terms of supply and demand," says the director of the Quebec Shrimp Office, Patrice Element.

The first offer concerned the first part of the season, until June 30, and the second covered the entire fishing season.

"Very frankly, as these two proposals were close to what the processors offered us, we were confident that one of the two proposals would meet

\$1.60 per pound for large shrimp, \$1.38 for medium ones and \$1.22 for small shrimp. This brings the average price to \$1.33 pending an arbitration decision or a negotiated price.

All agree that this will be a season of shared losses.

"Last year, on the office side, we said that it was not a year of profit sharing, but of loss sharing. If we look at the quotas to be fished, the operating costs, the potential catch rates and if the markets trend towards the views of the processors, it is clear that we will still be in a loss sharing mode. The goal is to come up with something fair to get through the season," says Mr. Element.

On the heels of a 12% de-

crease in quota last year, shrimp fishermen were hit by a quota decrease of 8% (14,524 tonnes) this year.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Fishermen and processors do not agree on the price of shrimp.

Two of the captured caribou are pregnant

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-ANNE-DESMONTS - In the Parc de la Gaspésie, two of the six female caribou captured and installed in enclosures for protection against predators are pregnant.

The Minister of the Environment for the Fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks made the announcement following the captures which took place between March 18 and April 6.

"Pregnancy has been confirmed for two female caribou. You should know that an ultrasound is not always possible depending on the position of the animal, therefore, it can be difficult to see a pregnancy. We have four females whom we don't have (sufficient) data yet. We have sent hormonal analyzes to the laboratory and

will have the answers in the coming weeks," explains Marion Barbé, who is a biologist for the Minister of the Environment for the Fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks.

Other laboratory tests were also conducted. "Tests were done on the captured female caribou and were sent to laboratories to know their level of parasitism, as well as blood tests to have more answers on their state of health, but everything was fine," mentions the biologist.

The female caribou were spotted by helicopter in reconnaissance flights earlier this winter. During the mission, they were caught with a net gun. They were anesthetized and airlifted to the Mont McGerrigle sector enclosure, which is sufficient to meet the needs of the six female caribou, there their vitals were

taken before they were awakened.

"Observations show that the awakenings went well and they were already walking around in their habitat (shortly after arrival)," says Ms. Barbé.

"They (the captured caribou) roam the enclosures and they naturally feed on arboreal lichen because you have to know that the enclosures are wooded with rich and dense mature spruce forests. Otherwise, they are fed in feeders. They spend their time between eating, walking and ruminating," says the biologist.

The pregnant caribou will give birth between late May and mid-June. Thereafter, they will remain in captivity for a period of five to six months in order to protect the fawns from predation during the first critical months of

their life.

"We hope to avoid disturbing their behaviour during their captivity and that they will return to their eating habits from the start. From what we observe, most of the time, they feed naturally without going to the feeders," notes Ms. Barbé.

Specialized personnel are on-site at all times to ensure that the caribou continue to adapt well to this new protective environment.

The purpose of caribou enclosure is to ensure the protection of the caribou population which is in a very precarious situation. It is essential to promote tranquility.

Initially, the planned budget was \$1.1 million per enclosure, in addition to related costs, but the costs have increased in the current context. Considering work, in particular, on the second en-

closure, has not yet been completed, a more recent analysis of the overall cost of the project is not yet available.

Originally, the first captures were planned for 2022, but construction delays postponed the first operation by a year. The construction of maternity enclosures at Mount McGerrigle and Albert began in the fall of 2021. The enclosures are cleared of snow, providing a safe environment for caribou, while reducing the environmental footprint.

The Quebec government must unveil its caribou protection plan by June.

The estimated size of the caribou herd in the Gaspésie is 34.

In addition to the six female caribou captured, two male caribou were also captured, they were fitted with radio collars and released immediately.

The Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of the passenger train gets astounding petition support

GILLES GAGNÉ

PORT DANIEL - As SPEC reached its deadline on April 21, the Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of the Passenger Train had close to 13,500 signatures. In addition to signatures of support from Gaspésians, there are signatures of citizens from elsewhere in Quebec, as well as the other Canadian provinces. In less than three weeks, more than 13,000 people rushed to sign an online petition asking the federal government and VIA Rail to restore passenger train service between Matapédia and New Carlisle before the end of 2023. They also demanded the return of train service to Gaspé as quickly as possible. "I'm very happy with the results," says Coalition member, Anthony Bernard Prince.

According to Mr. Prince, for now, the petition will remain open with no concrete closing date. Close to 500 signatures are received daily and, on some days, more than 1,000 signatures are collected.

The Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of the Passenger Train launched the petition on March 30. Gaspésians east of New Carlisle haven't had access to a passenger train service for over 11



Photo: G. Gagné

Since the summer of 2013, Matapédia is the only Gaspé Peninsula point served by VIA Rail as the train linking Montreal and Halifax stops there.

years. For the section between Matapédia and New Carlisle, the service has been absent for over nine years.

As the owner of the line since the spring of 2015, the Quebec Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility funds the repair of the region's railway and bridges, thus likely making the resumption of train circulation, including VIA Rail's passenger, safe between Caplan and New Carlisle before the end of 2023.

The Coalition is therefore

asking the federal government and VIA Rail, a corporation owned by that level of government, to fulfill their legal mandate to provide adequate rail passenger transport services in the region.

The Coalition published in February a 15-page brief outlining the needs pressing the

region in this regard and advocating for the restoration of the service, even partially, as a first step. The lack of a passenger rail service causes significant harm to the entire region regarding access to health services and education. It affects the region's economy, tourism, environment

and social activities.

The Coalition is also seeking the support of municipal councils, prefects, provincial and federal politicians as well as socio-economic and community organizations in the region.

The signatories of the resolutions of support received by the Coalition are asking for the phased resumption of VIA Rail's service, starting with New Carlisle, by the end of this year, possibly relying on the regional bus service for passengers to the east. The supporters also ask for the resumption of service to Gaspé and intermediate points as soon as the condition of the railway infrastructure will allow it.

In the coming weeks, the Coalition intends to present the petition and other demonstrations of support to the Member of Parliament for the Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands riding Diane Lebouthillier, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Federal Minister of Transport Omar Alghabra and the new President of VIA Rail who has not yet been named.

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Gaspé Municipal Update

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The mayor of Gaspé believes that asphalt costs should not explode this year.

In 2022, out of an estimate of \$600,000 by the town, the only bid received was by Eurovia for \$1 million.

On April 17, Gaspé mayor, Daniel Côté, raised the asphalt issue with the Minister of Transport, considering there is a monopoly running rampant on the Gaspé Peninsula. Mr. Côté hopes that the costs will decrease as a result and that the file will experience a positive

outcome.

“We saw a competitor arrive at some point and the prices fell. If someone tells me that there is no link between prices and the monopoly situation, I would not believe it. So, I'll wait for the call from the people at Eurovia who want to close the door on me again tomorrow, but that doesn't bother me. I can live with that. I work for the people, not for a company,” said the mayor following the April 17 municipal council meeting.

For the 2023 season, the mayor believes that indicators such as the price of oil have re-

mained stable compared to last year. He, therefore, expects a price similar to 2022 per cubic metre.

Drinking water

Mr. Côté, who is also president of the Union of Quebec Municipalities is pleased to see Quebec announce \$2.4 billion over 10 years for municipal water infrastructure.

For Mr. Côté, this predictability over time is welcome. Of this amount, \$1.4 billion is reserved for municipalities with less than 100,000 inhabitants.

“Even if they dropped \$10 billion in new money tomorrow morning, we would not be able to deliver the work. In the current situation, the new money proposed by (Municipal Affairs) Minister (Andrée) Laforest is very well received,” explains Mr. Côté.

This money will mainly be used to solve current problems. “There are several water pipes that must undergo work. Gaspé is no exception. There are leaks in our network. Before making any new developments, we must solve the problems of leaks in the aqueduct network,” explains the mayor.



Photo: N. Sergerie

The mayor of Gaspé hopes to see stability when it comes to the paving of streets

Chandler Update: Town makes a final offer to their unionized employees

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - Negotiations between the 41 CSN unionized employees and the town of Chandler could enter a turning point as the town files what it calls a final offer.

According to the pro-mayor, Bruno-Pierre Godbout, the proposal would fit with the union's main demand on salary, one of the last two points in the dispute.

Mr. Godbout, who sits on the negotiating committee for the town, also issues a warning. “We are at around 16.5% (pay raise over five years). It will be brought to the municipal council and we will see what they think of it. I would not be surprised if the council asks to revise or modify the salary offers if they are not accepted. Thereafter, we will go to mediation or arbitration,” says Mr. Godbout who calls this proposal “the last chance”.

A point of importance to the union members, the revision of salary levels, is not part of the town's final offer.

Questioned during the day on the state of the negotiations, the president of the CSN union, Serge Saint-Pierre, indicated that he would not comment on the state of the negotiations.

On April 11, about twenty unionized employees demonstrated on the sidelines of the municipal council meeting and the 41 workers adopted a five-day strike to be called at a time deemed appropriate.

The president of the local union, Lisa Cyr, indicated that all the normative aspects were settled. Only the salary and the salary grid remained to be reached.



Photo: N. Sergerie

The workers demonstrated before the council meeting on April 11.

Highway 132

The town of Chandler and the Department of Transportation once again discussed upcoming work on the portion of Highway 132 in downtown Chandler that has been partially closed since January following a 14-inch pipe rupture.

Transports Québec was to carry out the work at the end of spring in order to put the road in an acceptable state while waiting for major repairs which should be done in 2025.

As requested by the ministry, the town will take advantage of the major construction site to carry out work on its infrastructure.

Tenders for spring work are underway. In addition, the department submitted a proposal to repair Hôtel-de-Ville, Commerciale and Jacques-Cartier streets, which were used as a detour during the closure of Highway 132.

“We have not assessed the damage, but it is quite significant. We see several craters.

These are not streets designed for heavy traffic,” notes Mr. Godbout.

Invoice implicating the ex-mayor

Just over \$10,000 was added to the bill for the saga between the former mayor, Louisette Langlois, and the Town of Chandler in the case of the Municipal Commission of Quebec.

With the two new invoices totalling \$10,760 from the Morency law firm representing the town, the total now reaches \$330,700.

These invoices were produced when Chandler filed a motion in January 2022 claiming \$230,411 from the former mayor alleging that she multiplied the procedures before the commission, the Superior Court and the Court of Appeal in an attempt to overturn the 180-day suspension in 2021 for 20 breaches of the Code of Ethics for elected officials.

The Town of Chandler re-

serves the right to adjust its claim. If nothing changes, the case should be heard in court in June.

SDEIC

Chandler invested

\$260,000 of the \$395,000 received by the defunct Société de développement économique et industrielle de Chandler (SDEIC), which was liquidated two years ago.

Among the projects supported, \$85,000 was used for the Camping des bâtisseurs, put on hold this year, \$79,500 for the dek hockey surface in Newport and \$35,000 for a fence at the Pabos Mills ball field.

As for investments, a sum of \$10,000 for a deck at the Mich Café is also listed. Complaints were made and later rejected by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs about this \$10,000 investment. The town hall says that the project was seen as an economic development project and that SDEIC had previously underwritten similar projects.

Following the liquidation of the SDEIC, \$135,000 still remains in the organization's envelope.

Call for Tenders

The St. Andrews United Church Cemetery Committee is currently accepting bids on a contract to cut and trim grass on church properties.

Duties and responsibilities of the lawn maintenance contract include mowing/trimming the the grass at the New Richmond and Black Cape cemeteries, and mowing/trimming the grass at the United Church Manse (210 Blvd Perron Ouest, New Richmond, Quebec).

Other responsibilities include removing debris and garbage from the cemetery grounds, to be done in the spring as early as possible, and levelling gravesites and grounds, as needed. Topsoil and grass seed will be provided. Both clean up and grounds maintenance are to be billed separately from the lawn care contract.

Please submit your bid in writing/email to:

Kim Fessenden
365 rte 132E
New Richmond, Quebec G0C 2B0
email: skfincook@yahoo.com

Deadline for submission: Friday, May 5, 2023.

Announcements



In Memory

BOURGAIZE: Nelson

In loving memory of a dear father, grandfather and great-grandfather who passed away April 29, 1985.

*Your presence we miss
Your memory we treasure
Loving you always
Forgetting you never.*

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

CLARK: Jesse

A little bit of everything to everybody

*Sad are the hearts that love you
Silent are the tears that fall
Living here without you
is the hardest part of all.
You did so many things for us
Your heart was kind and true
And when we needed someone
We could always count on you.
The special years will not return*

*When we are all together
But with the love in our hearts
You walk with us forever*

Loved at missed always. The Clark family.

YOUNG: Clark

November 10, 1943 - April 27, 2022

*We don't need a special day
To bring you to our minds.
The days we do not think of you
Are very hard to find.*

*Each morning when we wake,
We know that you are gone,
And no one knows the heartache,
As we try to carry on.*

*Our hearts still ache with sadness
And secret tears still flow.*

*What it meant to lose you,
No one will ever know.*

Our thoughts are always with you.

Your place no one can fill,

In life we loved you dearly,

In death we love you still.

Time passes and memories stay. Loved and remembered every day, Barbara Ann, David, Lori and Emma.

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GASPÉ:

Royal Canadian Legion

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GASPÉ:

Cancer Foundation

All new membership and renewals, \$15 per person or \$25 per couple, can be sent to Gaspé Cancer Foundation, P.O. Box 6078, Gaspé, Quebec G4X 2M6, or 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.

April 23: The Gaspé Cancer Foundation AGM will be held at the Gaspé Legion beginning at 1:30 p.m. A light lunch will be served.

YORK:

York River Seniors AGM

May 6: The FADOQ York River Senior Citizens Club will be holding its Annual General Meeting at 4 p.m.

at the Gaspé Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 59. The AGM will be followed by cocktails, a Chinese supper and live music for dancing. The price of tickets is \$25 with a \$10 rebate for members who will have attended the AGM. Draws for door prizes will be held during the event. Members are welcome to attend only the meeting if they wish. For more information and to purchase tickets contact: Ron Mundle 418-355-4732, Tony Patterson 418-368-3276, Debbie Sams 418-368-2977, Alfred Cassidy 418-368-2011. Deadline for purchase of tickets is April 30.

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.

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

HOPE:

Hope Baptist Church

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

May 6: Bake sale fundraiser beginning at 9 a.m. at the New Carlisle Town Hall.

HOPE TOWN:

Sports and Recreation Club

May 20: Gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. at the Saint Godefroi Optimist Club. Bring your dabbers. Organized by the Hope Town Sports and Recreation Club and the Saint Godefroi Optimist Club.

NEW CARLISLE:

Linda LeMore-Brown Foundation

May 17: The Linda LeMore-Brown Foundation will be having their Annual General Meeting beginning at 4 p.m. at the CASA office. Please contact Ashley Renouf at 418-752-5995 extension 107 or email: ashley@casa-gaspe.com to confirm your presence.

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 CARLISLE:

Funeral Association

June 18: The New Carlisle Funeral Association will be

having a Father's Day Brunch from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Adults \$15, children ten and under \$10. Hope to see you all there.

NEW CARLISLE:

Royal Canadian Legion Branch #64

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

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!

May 2: General meeting at 7 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.

May 6: Gift Bingo beginning at 7 p.m. \$10 per series or \$20 for three series. Canteen service available.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

Book Room

The book room is now open. Anyone who needs

UNITED CHURCH

NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, April 30
10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH

HOPE TOWN
Sunday, April 30
10 a.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, April 30
NEW CARLISLE
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
HOPE TOWN
10 a.m. Morning Prayer
SHIGAWAKE
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, April 30
No Service

**DEADLINE FOR THIS PAGE:
WEDNESDAY AT 4 P.M.**

*Please send your Classified or
Coast Round-Up to:
holly.smith@globetrotter.net*

- Continued from page 4

days, after years of delay, a lawsuit brought against Trump by a woman who claims she was sexually assaulted by him and subsequently defamed by him will finally go to trial in New York State Court.

This is just the beginning. Several investigations are going on that could lead to more criminal charges. The most dangerous of these for Trump is his purposeful mishandling of classified documents. People found guilty of this offence invariably serve time in prison.

The next more serious is the prospect of charges from a county district attorney in the State of Georgia concerning election misconduct. Among other things, on one occasion, Trump called the head of elections in Georgia and threatened him if he couldn't find 71,000 more votes for Trump. Charges have not been brought yet but are contemplated against several people, including Trump. At the same time, the Attorney General of the State of New York appears to be headed for charges against Trump for having low-balled the value of his properties for tax purposes, tax fraud, while dramatically inflating the value of his properties when requesting bank loans, which is also fraud.

Lastly, a special federal prospector is investigating what led up to the January 6, 2021 riot and is clearly focusing on Trump's possible involvement in its planning and execution.

Trump has continued to rely on his tactics of attack and delay, but unlike in the past, they are no longer working. Time is running out for Donald Trump.



Taking vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin, may prevent dementia or slow down the progression of the disease.

Does vitamin D help to lower the risk of dementia? *The sunshine vitamin*

DIANE SKINNER

According to a recent study from the University of Calgary, the incidence of dementia in those who took Vitamin D supplements was lower.

The statistics from this large-scale study are pretty impressive. Around 40% fewer patients were diagnosed with dementia over 10 years in the group who took Vitamin D. You can buy these vitamins in the pharmacy, no prescription is needed, but always check with your doctor first. Vitamin D can be absorbed through the sun or by eating certain foods that are high in that vitamin. These foods include cantaloupe, parsley, spinach, kale, kiwis, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, lemons, strawberries and oranges. Vitamin D is also found in eggs, liver, and oily fish

The best results were in people who had no signs of dementia. If there are already signs of dementia, the results are not as dramatic, but Vitamin D still benefits the patient by slowing down the progression of dementia.

How does Vitamin D work? It reduces inflammation and stress in the brain. The vitamin also reduces the amount of plaque in the brain that has been linked to Alzheimer's.

Adults over 50 are recommended to take 600 IU per day, while for those over 70, a dose of 800 IU daily is optimal. Taking more is not necessary. In fact, it is not recommended.

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Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



A Tremendous Thing

A friend passed away recently. She was a colleague who became a friend over time. She was a fiercely strong woman, in some ways ahead of her time. She went on to become a very successful and respected principal after we had taught together for a number of years. I recall a meeting where she challenged our principal at the time, when he referred to a special needs student in a less than courteous way. It was an uncomfortable moment for all. But the truth be known, she was 100% right to do so. You see, she had a daughter who was both physically and intellectually disabled. The principal's comment offended her on both a personal and professional level.

Over the years we both moved on and pretty much lost touch. I regret that. Everyone has a busy life and things to do and places to go, but that's an excuse. How long does a phone call take, a meeting up for coffee or even an email to maintain contact with a friend? We didn't do any of those, so when I received the news that she had passed away, I was shocked because she was fairly young and also shocked because I knew nothing about her life's journey over the past decade. After reading her obituary, I discovered that her mom passed away last January at the age of 100. My friend did not make it that far. I also know that she had nine grandchildren. These details about her life were very important milestones in her life, but I hadn't known about any of them.

We are all part of a web of life. We come into the world and we have connections to the past. We become the present and after we are gone others will keep building on that web. What we do while we are here is in great part dependent upon the decisions we make. We are creatures who have free will. For some, this is as much a curse as a blessing. There are times when life "grabs you by the wrist and directs you where to go." Our lives can also be propelled by things we cannot control. This may be the decisions of others, illnesses and environmental happenings but the foundation of our life's direction is mainly determined by our own choices.

Making the decision not to maintain contact, that's a choice. I can make the excuse that I lost touch with my friend because we were too busy. Busy, well, yes. However, a brief message or phone call says so much. It says you matter to me and I care about how your life is going. It can mean a lot to an old friend, and it can mean a great deal to the person who makes that call. After attending her Celebration of Life get-together, I made a promise to my future self. I will maintain contact with old friends. This, of course, does not mean every person who has crossed my path. This does not mean reconnecting with people who were harmful or negative. Let those people go. Think to yourself, "If that person passed away today, would I have regrets? Do I wish I had called them to reminisce or have a laugh or even commiserate?" If you say "yes" to these questions, make a promise to start contacting one or more of those old friends today.

I am challenging you and myself today. Make a list. Connect with old friends. Try not to feel the profound regret I am feeling this weekend. The writer, E.B. White, expressed it so well in her book *Charlotte's Web*. "Why did you do all this for me?" Wilbur asked, "I don't deserve it. I've never done anything for you." "You have been my friend," replied Charlotte, "That, in itself, is a tremendous thing."



S.P.D.S Student Ambassador Program: School Update

Aster visit

Submitted by: Ryan Bertrand and Preston Horth

On Friday, March 10, Aster brought their inflatable planetarium to SPDS. Students enjoyed a presentation on stars, constellations and planets. All students from preschool to grade 6 went into the inflatable planetarium. "I think everyone had lots of fun. There was even a constellation named Orion which sounds like Ryan my name," says Grade 6 student Ryan Bertrand

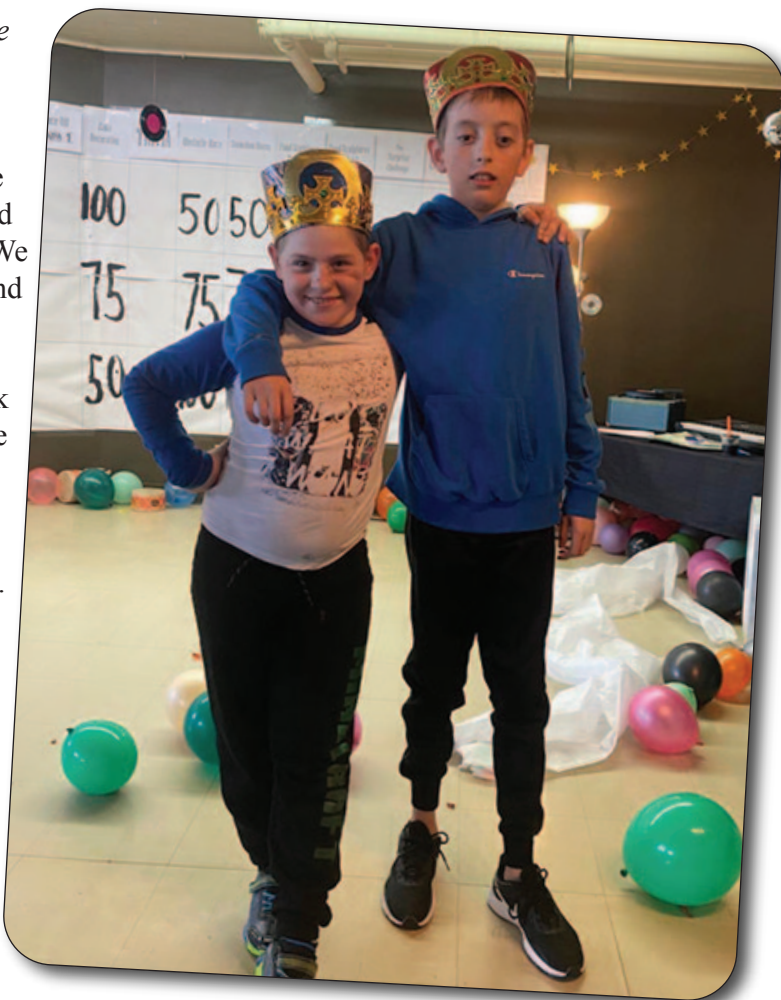


Winter carnival

Submitted by: Jake Major, Sophie Ross and Tommy McRae

The students from SPDS had a Winter Carnival from February 21 to 24. One of the activities was snowshoeing. Some of the students did food sculptures and the captains decorated cakes. We went to the arena in Gascons and we did races: frontwards and backwards. Lined up in our teams, we were shooting a puck with a hockey stick in a net. We did a coin race as well to raise money to help cover the costs. We went sliding at Pont Rouge and the school bought us lunch. We also got to try out floor curling in the gym.

There were three teams: The Pop Rockets, the Country Belt Buckles and the Black Stars. The Black Stars team won the Winter Carnival, earning the most points throughout the week. Overall, all the teams had fun.



Basketball tournament

Submitted by: Luke Couture, Masen Dea and Jared Flowers.

On Friday, March 17, Grades 3 to 6 students went to Gaspé Elementary School for a Mini Basketball Tournament. Grades three and four had seven teams and Grades 5 and 6 had six teams, but there were more people in the grades 5/6 teams. Six schools from ESSB attended the tournament. "We went to the mini basketball tournament for fun. It was cool how many people came to the tournament," says Grade 6 students, Luke Couture and Jared Flowers. SPDS students had to be at the school at 6:15 a.m. sharp and left the school around 6:30 a.m.. We got there (Gaspé) around 8:45 a.m. and the games started at 9 a.m.. Grade 6 had five people who participated in the tournament, grade 5 had four, Grade 4 had six and Grade 3 had one participant.

We arrived back at SPDS around 4:15 p.m., and everybody had a good time, stated Masen Dea.

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