

Rhéal Pitre Sports opens new store

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – On March 29, up to 1,000 people converged on the new Rhéal Pitre Sports store in New Richmond. The store opened on the date set by majority shareholder Alain Pitre last year when construction started, although he was reluctant about releasing that date.

Alain Pitre had planned for the March 29 opening because it was the first day of the 45th year of business for the company founded by his father Rhéal, who opened the initial store in downtown New Richmond in 1979.

“The store was opened 44 years ago but 44 years is not too glamorous so I prefer talking about the first day of our 45th year in business,” explained a smiling Alain Pitre, as he was ready to tackle the second day at the new store.

He also stresses that, although he was fully confident in the Carleton-based Construction Scandinaves ability to deliver the \$5.5 million project on time, the uncertainty tied to the availability of certain types of building materials also convinced him to be careful about predicting an exact opening date. With 28,000 square feet of surface over two floors, the equivalent of 2,600 square metres, the new building houses the biggest sports store east of Quebec City and likely Quebec’s biggest store of its kind, since Rhéal Pitre Sports has added banners to its supply of products.

“We have a unique status among the banners spearheaded by Groupe Côté Reco’s. We have four banners: Chaussures Pop, Go Sport, Ecotone and Centre du Travail. We have added Chaussures Pop and Centre du Travail to the two other banners. We are currently the only sporting goods store in Quebec to present such an inventory in so many diversi-



Shareholder Étienne Bélanger, founders Rhéal and Juliette Pitre, shareholder Nancy Lamontagne, shareholder and president Alain Pitre, and shareholder Véronik Nolin were on hand for the ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 29.

fied fields. Through adding popular shoes from Chaussures Pop and work clothes from Centre du Travail, we become the flagship of Groupe Côté Reco in that company’s efforts in convincing more businesses to adopt our model, based on quality and diversity,” explains Alain Pitre.

Without flying the banner of Chlorophylle outdoors products, Rhéal Pitre Sports is a retailer of that company. “We want to be a one-stop destination,” he adds. Chlorophylle products are also part of the Groupe Côté Reco portfolio, the latter firm acting as a marketing tool for such banners.

The labour challenge

Recruiting manpower represents a challenge no matter the economic sector and the retail business makes no exception. However, Alain Pitre points out that his team’s recruitment has progressed well over the last months. The store’s staff

hovered around 28 to 30 people at the old location.

“We presently have a flexible team of 75 people called for the first days of operation. We will select 45. It is going relatively well. We have a beautiful niche of candidates, retired people who heard about our needs and who

called us, saying that they are available for a day or two weekly because they want to get out of the house, and make a bit of additional money in order to pay themselves a little treat sometimes. We have notaries, engineers, game wardens, among others, who have

called us, people with qualifications and a desire to work with the public,” says Alain Pitre.

He can count on three associates in the business, his wife Nancy Lamontagne, her daughter Véronik Nolin and Étienne Bélanger.

“We (Nancy and Alain) have formed a small management company. Véronik and Étienne were employees. He is the son of François Bélanger (a well-known local ski instructor and outdoors enthusiast), people who are very close to us. Étienne is almost like a son. Our group has developed a beautiful chemistry,” underlines Alain Pitre.

Decisions about the future of the former store building have not been made yet. “We have ideas. We have projects but we are open to any discussion,” he says.

Alain Pitre will not miss the floods that occasionally marred the former building, mostly between December 2010 and December 2020.

“I didn’t move the store because of the flood factor. It was not the number one stake, not at the top of the list. We needed to expand but I wouldn’t have chosen a water hole,” he concludes.



The new store has a coffee station for the customers.

Photo: Mia Ste-Marie

Eastern Energy Alliance adds 16.8 megawatts to its portfolio

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

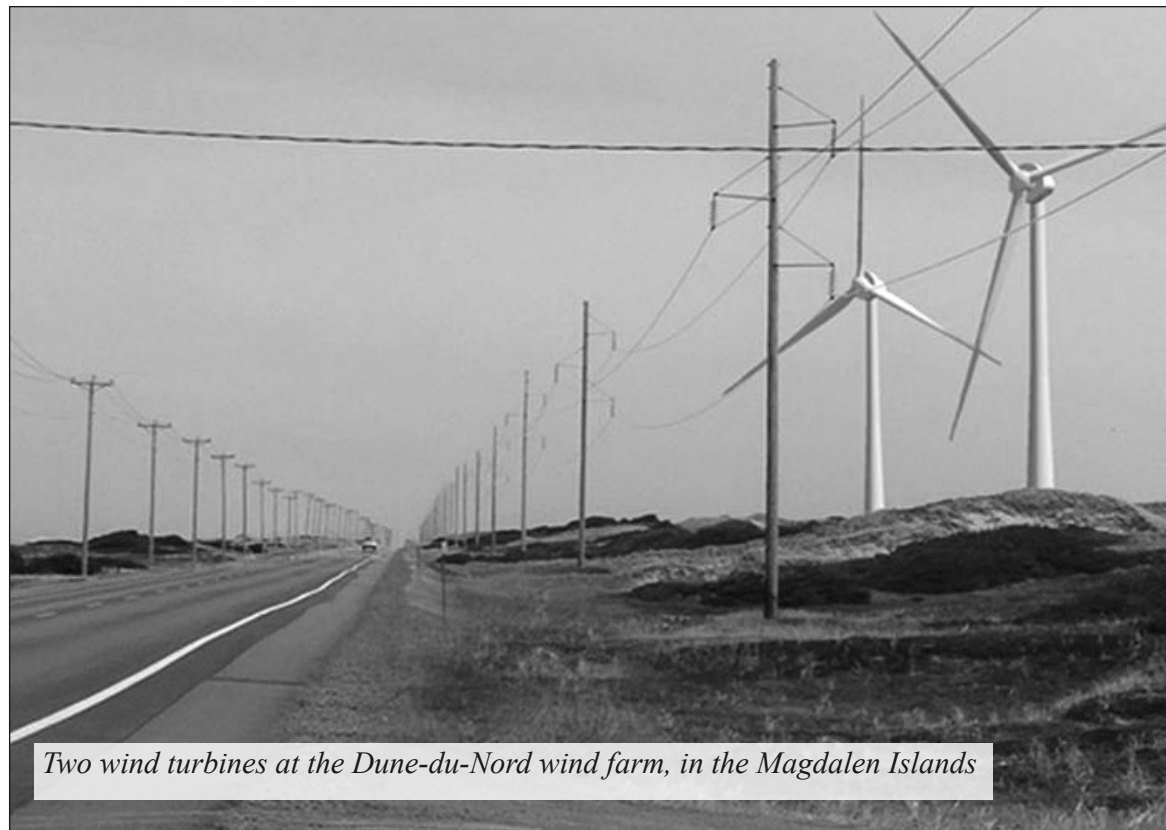
MAGDALEN ISLANDS: Two weeks after winning 800 megawatts of wind energy in the December 2021 tenders, the Eastern Energy Alliance is signing a private contract with Hydro-Québec to install four wind turbines with a capacity of 16.8 megawatts in the Magdalen Islands.

On March 29, the alliance, which is teaming up with Valeco Énergie Québec in this project, signed a 30-year contract with the public utility. This is a logical continuation of the Dune-du-Nord project with two wind turbines that generate 6.4 megawatts in partnership with Valeco and Plan A Capital, a wind farm commissioned in September 2021.

"I'm still smiling today!" says the president of the Inter-municipal Energy Board of the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands and vice-president of the Alliance, Simon Deschênes.

"This is excellent news for the wind power sector, the Gaspé Peninsula, the Magdalen Islands and all of Quebec for the reduction of greenhouse gases," adds Mr. Deschênes.

With this wind farm, of which the construction is conditional on obtaining government, environmental and regulatory authorizations, it will be possible to avoid consuming nearly 11 million litres of oil per year, in addition to



Two wind turbines at the Dune-du-Nord wind farm, in the Magdalen Islands

Photo: Eastern Energy Alliance

the 7 million litres saved thanks to the Dune-du-Nord wind farm.

Together, the two wind farms will generate a total reduction of around 40% in oil consumed compared to 2019 at the thermal power station which supplies the island with electricity.

The Grosse-Île wind farm will represent an annual reduction of 34 kilotonnes of CO₂ (carbon dioxide) equivalent per year, or the equivalent of the emissions of 7,400 vehicles.

Negotiations for this "phase 2" of wind turbine development on the island took place as soon as Dune-du-Nord was commissioned.

"On the site itself, we were

chatting with the leaders of Hydro-Québec. We had already had the okay to start discussions to see if we could not extend the wind farm. Since September 2021, we have done different scenarios and financial modeling and today is the culmination of all this work with different partners with the signing of an electricity purchase contract for the next 30 years, comments the president.

In addition, Hydro-Québec will add a 10-megawatt energy storage system to the Magdalen Islands thermal power station to optimize the integration of this new production.

The alliance will closely follow the evolution of this

system.

"It is an additional tool to prevent large fluctuations on the network. We see it in a good light because it can give us indications for the future when building new wind farms. Is this a system that we should put in place from the start? Is this a system that is being developed in Quebec? For us, that gives us a new technology that can be used as tests for future energy projects in Quebec," says the president.

For the moment, Mr. Deschênes remains cautious about the investments required for this new wind farm due to inflation and interest rates, but it could represent \$2.5 million per megawatt installed or a

total amount of \$42 million.

On September 2, the Quebec Energy Board rendered a decision requesting that additional studies be carried out on the various scenarios envisioned for the energy transition in the Magdalen Islands.

Still, with the objective of continuing the decarbonization of the island and in accordance with this decision, Hydro-Québec will explore other scenarios in close collaboration with the community.

As for the underwater cable connection project, approval delays and global supply difficulties mean that essential equipment for its realization is now either unavailable or extremely expensive. In 2018, the government-owned company was already estimating the bill to be at least \$700 million.

Hydro-Québec is therefore suspending the scenario of such a connection to its main network for an indefinite period.

The government-owned company planned to deploy cables from Percé to supply the island with energy rather than operating its thermal power plant with a capacity of 66 megawatts.

The wind farms managed by the Eastern Energy Alliance (Alliance de l'énergie de l'est) generate royalties for participating municipalities. Last year, those royalties amounted to \$4.5 million in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

A busy summer expected for Forillon

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The first data from the reservation centre for the 2023 season indicates that Forillon Park is heading for a summer equivalent to 2022.

Since March 15, 2,700 reservations have been made which is comparable to the same period last year.

"We had an excellent performance with reservations and the new system," says the manager of visitor experience at the park, Frédérick Sainte-Croix, who underlines a very slight drop of 0.3% in reservations.

"Everything suggests that we will have a really excellent

season which seems to be comparable to last year," he adds.

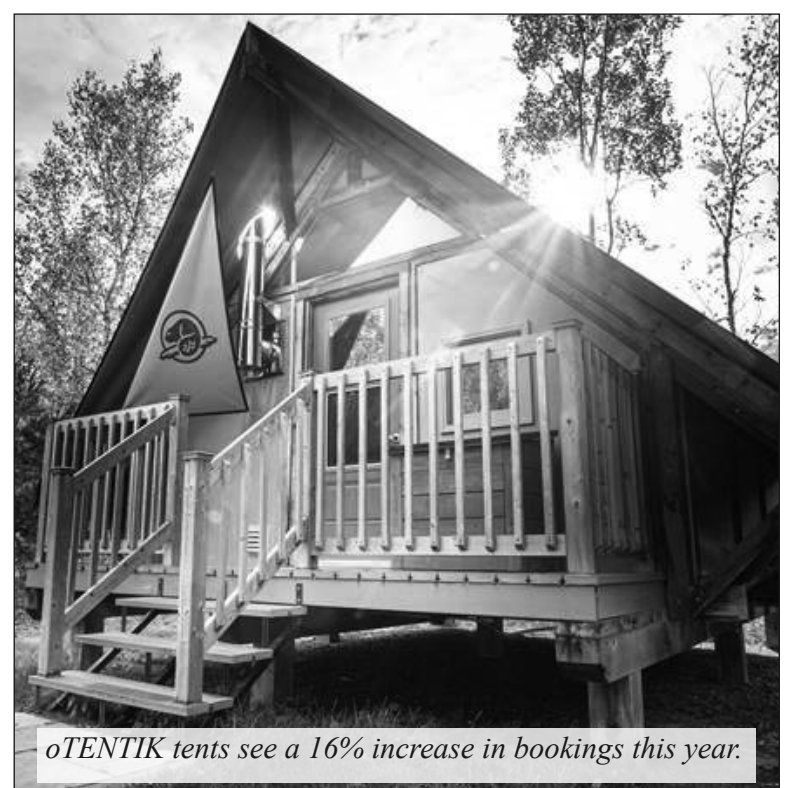
According to him, the attractiveness of the destination and the fact that the park is a product of appeal in the Gaspé Peninsula explains this continued success.

Reservations are mainly for the peak tourist season which is from June to the end of August. "There are still some availabilities but that is the most requested period. There is more availability in early summer or towards late summer and early fall. We invite people to consider these periods which are just as interesting for visiting the park," says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

Ready-to-camp equipment is experiencing strong growth.

"On the launch day, we see an increase in interest for this type of product. If we compare the two launch days, oTENTik tents saw a 16% increase in reservations, micrOcubes almost 40% and Ôasis, 23%. Presumably, interest in ready-to-camp is not diminishing. On the contrary, it even seems to be increasing," says the manager. The park will explore the possibility of improving the availability of these services.

Last year, the park received 24,000 overnight stays. The new products for the 2023 season are expected to be presented soon.



oTENTIK tents see a 16% increase in bookings this year.

Photo: Courtesy of Forillon Park

Police report

On March 28, at the New Carlisle Courthouse, James Brière, 19, from New Carlisle, pleaded guilty to a reduced number of charges and was sentenced to serve a 15-month prison sentence. Mr. Brière was initially charged with assault with a weapon, uttering death threats, pointing a firearm at another man, dangerous use of a firearm, using a firearm while perpetrating a crime and extortion while using a firearm. He pleaded guilty to the charges of assault with a weapon and having pointed a firearm at another man. He thus avoids a trial. Criminal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville-Paradis and defence attorney Caroline Bérubé reached a deal prior to the March 28 court appearance. Judge Janick Poirier, of the Quebec Court, agreed to approve the suggestion of both parties.

According to the evidence brought to the court by prosecutor Maxime Rocheville-Paradis, on October 27, James Brière went to a property located in New Carlisle. The plaintiff was a visitor at that property where people regularly consumed drugs. First accompanied by two other people, James Brière and the plaintiff had an altercation on that premise. "After fetching his weapon in his car, the accused hit the plaintiff with the barrel of his firearm. The plaintiff left on foot but heard a shot being fired. We don't know where the shot went. James Brière then took his car and followed him. He pointed the firearm again at the plaintiff, who was then able to seek refuge on private property," explains the prosecutor.

"Mr. Brière is sentenced to 15 months in prison. He has already served some time since his arrest in November, which leaves him with 236 days to serve as of March 28. He will also have to respect probation of three years, the longest probation time that can be imposed, and will also be followed by a probation agent for 18 months. Part of the probation follow-up will be devoted to solving his drug and violence problems. He has a clear drug addiction. He is also prohibited to possess and use a firearm for 10 years. The age of the accused, who was 18 years old at the time of the crimes, brought us to that kind of settlement. The plaintiff was also the only person that could testify past a certain point of the events," stresses Maxime Rocheville-Paradis.

Marco Albert, 51, from Newport, who is a teacher at the Mgr-Séverin Polyvalent School in Chandler, appeared at the Percé courthouse on March 28. He is charged with three crimes of a sexual nature against a minor. The crimes allegedly occurred on March 25 at the home of the accused. The investigation was launched on the afternoon of March 26 and the accused was arrested shortly after, according to Sgt. Claude Doiron, the spokesperson for the Sûreté du Québec.

"The assault allegedly took place in the Newport area of Chandler. The suspect was detained between his arrest and his appearance in court. (...) He was released subject to several conditions, including the need to have good behaviour, and not to be in the presence of minors," emphasizes Sgt. Doiron.

Marco Albert is charged with sexual assault, sexual exploitation in a position of authority and having incited a minor to touch him and a third party. The investigation by the Sûreté du Québec is continuing in this case. The circumstances in which the criminal acts were allegedly committed are not being disclosed by the police "since they constitute elements of the investigation which will be used in the rest of the case," specifies Sgt. Doiron. Quebec Court Judge Denis Paradis ordered Marco Albert to return to court on April 24 for the orientation and declaration stage in connection with this case. The accused has been suspended by the Centre de services scolaires René-Lévesque, likely until the end of the proceedings.

Karine Rioux, 35, who is facing two criminal charges following a December 2021 accident that claimed the life of Patrick Donovan, 63, from Gaspé, will return to the Percé Courthouse on April 24. Ms. Rioux appeared in court on March 27 for her pro forma trial. This appearance allowed the criminal prosecutor in charge of the file, Émilie Landry-Therriault and the defence, to receive the written notes compiled during the preliminary hearing, which started on December 19 and ended on January 23.

The evidence that will be submitted at the trial was presented during the preliminary hearing. "We might learn about the date of the trial on April 24, 2023," points out criminal prosecutor Émilie Landry-Therriault. The accused, who is also from Gaspé, is charged with one count of impaired driving causing death and one count of driving with more than 80 milligrams of alcohol in her blood. The accident took place on December 16, 2021. The accused was released the following day under several conditions including a ban on driving and consuming alcohol. Quebec Court Judge Jules Berthelot presided over the preliminary hearings.

Lisette Hautcoeur, 58, from Chandler, charged on August 12 with the non-premeditated murder of Richard Allard, 64, returned to the Percé courthouse on March 13, at which point her case was postponed until March 27. That day, the court proceeded to open the seals so that the defence could consult the various warrants that had been obtained during the investigation by the police. Defence attorney Véronique Talbot now represents Ms. Hautcoeur, and she must now take cognizance of these warrants. Quebec Court Judge Denis Paradis adjourned the case until April 24. By this date, both parties should have received all the evidence and the tribunal should be able to set the dates for the preliminary hearing.

The victim, who was living in the same apartment building as the accused, was found dead on July 16 in his home. The nature of the relationship between the accused and the victim remains publicly unknown as the Sûreté du Québec considers it could potentially be an important element in its investigation. Both resided on Mgr-Ross Street East in downtown Chandler. The police admitted at one point that they were "acquaintances," upon the conclusion of the investigation that led to Ms. Hautcoeur's arrest. The death of Richard Allard was initially considered suspicious and the possibility of a homicide was put forward by the police a few days after the discovery of the body. In 2019, Lisette Hautcoeur was convicted of extortion. The court waved a sentence and placed the woman on probation for two years, with community work and a fine. A person found guilty of non-premeditated murder faces a life sentence, with eligibility for parole at any time between 10 and 25 years.

Jeffrey-Jacques Monette, 49, from Paspébiac, who contested a fine for not wearing a mask, will have to pay \$1,546. The man was intercepted on December 21, 2020, in Montreal during a demonstration of several thousand people opposed to the Covid-19 vaccine. The man pleaded that he was not participating in the march but that he was rather looking for a way to reach a grocery store. Quebec Court Judge Sonia Cyr did not believe him. Jeffrey-Jacques Monette will return to court on May 1 for another legal case as he is challenging a fine of \$9,375, including administrative fees, for failing to quarantine in June 2021 after a trip outside the country.

Major impacts at the CISSS if the independent workforce is withdrawn

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

CAPLAN - If ever the 10% of the independent workforce of nurses and nursing assistants were withdrawn from the Gaspé Peninsula's Integrated Health and Social Services Centre, the impact would be major, according to the CISSS president and Chief executive officer, Martin Pelletier.

Quebec wants to put a halt to the use of private agencies in the health network by adopting a law. Meanwhile, a recent survey conducted for the Association of Private Companies of Caregivers of Quebec among 2,000 agency employees determined that 85% of caregivers working in agencies in the Gaspé Peninsula do not want to return to the public and 77% would reorient their careers if they were forced to do so.

If they were to be removed from the network now, Mr. Pelletier is clear that it would have a "major impact. This means there would be services that we would not be able to maintain at expected levels. It's very clear that it's not an option," says the CEO.

Remote regions like the Gaspé Peninsula have three years to prepare for the new law, but the CISSS is already taking steps.

"We have our nurses outside Canada who are taking their place. There are still 36 that should be ready next fall. There is another cohort that will arrive in the fall. Next year, we will have another forty added. We're betting a lot on that and that doesn't take into account the recruitment that we're going to do in parallel too. We won't let up," says Mr. Pelletier.

The CISSS currently has 985 nurses and nursing assistants, including 101 from agencies.





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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

An orange-red federal budget heavily influenced by the NDP

A minority government like that of the Liberal Party of Canada must always be careful upon tabling a budget because such an exercise must be approved by the House of Commons and a failure to get that approval means the country's citizens will soon vote.

Such an outcome would, nevertheless, have been really surprising following Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's March 28 budget. The Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party (NDP) reached an agreement following the 2021 fall election preventing, for now, the possibility of an unfavourable House of Commons vote that would defeat Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government.

Despite the poor financial situation of his party, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh was able to heavily influence Minister Freeland's budget, to such a point that some political columnists are calling it the "Singh budget" because it is tainted with measures that are traditionally promoted by the New Democrats.

A goods and services tax refund means to curtail abusive fees and exaggerated interest costs, the green energy tax credit, measures to ensure that the development of renewable energies will lead to improved salaries, remunerated apprenticeships, and dental insurance regardless of provincial jurisdiction in the matter represent a set of more orange-coloured measures, the colour of the NDP, rather than Liberal red.

Jagmeet Singh, therefore, had reasons to smile on March 28. He was influential in the design of the budget and chances are that there won't be another election before 2025, as if Justin Trudeau is managing a majority government. It leaves some breathing room for the NDP in its attempt to straighten up its finances and be ready for an election no earlier than two years down the road.

It remains a budget marked by another increase in expenditures, which raises the question of a return to a balanced budget. In 2018, the Liberal Party government vowed to restore a balanced budget five years down the road, after four deficits.

On March 28, Minister Freeland explained briefly that there would be a fifth "red ink" budget, stressing that the looming recession has changed the government's plan. She didn't seem too worried by that fifth deficit.

In fact, she provided two explanations that seemed to contradict one another. She first explained that the government would eventually apply cuts to the administrative side of the ministries. That's fine, but the current government is plagued by a deep lack of efficiency in departments such as immigration, Employment Insurance and the delivery of passports, to name a few. Administrative cuts could trigger an aggravation of the service quality.

In other interviews, Minister Freeland explained that selecting budgetary items where cuts can be applied is difficult and, in some cases, she flatly asked show hosts to suggest places where they could slash expenditures. She forgot that politics often go hand in hand with decision making.

There was something in her tone that made people believe that she never really thought of balanc-

ing Canada's budget during the current term.

As a matter of fact, Canada's return to a balanced budget looks distant. Minister Freeland has an obligation to publish an overview of the situation expected five years down the road and a deficit of \$14 billion is still planned for 2028.

It is true that deficits can be misleading sometimes. Depending on the amount earmarked for debt reduction which can be significant, a yearly deficit or a streak of deficits does not always represent a source of deep concern because a country can declare several deficits in a row and still send its long-term debt down.

Canada is not there but its long-term debt, despite a humongous amount of about \$400 billion devoted to the pandemic, has remained under control, thanks to the high level of economic activities sparked by the support provided to the population during the Covid-19 crisis. Canada's debt remains one of the lowest, if not the lowest, among the world's industrialized countries.

Some political and economic observers deplore the fact that Canada has derived far from the "sound management" years of former Finance Minister and Prime Minister Paul Martin but that era, coupled with the tough nine-and-a-half years of Stephen Harper's tenure, left Canada with serious shortcomings as a supposedly modern country. Research budgets were heavily cut and the country's inequalities between the poor and the wealthy have reached alarming levels.

The last two decades explain to a certain degree, but not all, the projections of Chrystia Freeland regarding new expenses for the next six years. Not so long ago, she was expecting new expenses of \$106 billion. They now stand at \$160 billion.

It now looks as if the clash between the Liberal Party and the Conservatives will only expand between now and the expected electoral campaign of 2025. In 2015, running deficits after the austerity years of Stephen Harper gave the edge to Justin Trudeau. It remains to be seen if the same strategy will still be fruitful two years down the road.

The Plan for a Green Economy

Meanwhile, Justin Trudeau's government took the opportunity provided by the budget to launch its Plan for a Green Economy, an \$80 billion strategy covering 10 years.

Honestly, such a program is necessary, especially if Canada is to respect its commitment to neutralize its carbon emissions by 2050, which is tomorrow in terms of adjustment. In fact, Canada is already late and the 2020 election of Joe Biden in the United States has changed the North American reality regarding greenhouse gas emissions.

President Biden is really serious about curtailing

those emissions and he has launched a plan worth hundreds of billions of dollars to achieve that goal. The American plan sent Canada to the back of the classroom in environmental matters and it was time to react.

The climate change issue will only worsen in the coming years and the countries that have a step ahead technologically will limit the damage caused by weather elements. Those countries will also be economically stronger because they will be in a position to sell the technologies they have developed.

In that regard, Canada must make up for its negligence over the last couple of decades. First, Canadians are huge energy consumers, a reality that forces the country to produce way more electricity and hydrocarbons for its domestic needs than it should.

Secondly, except for a couple of clusters, Canada is lagging behind just about every industrial country in energy research. We mostly apply here technologies that have been developed elsewhere. There are a few exceptions in hydroelectricity, wind power and tar sands exploitation but, overall, we could fare much better.

Recent studies have shown that Canada, as a whole, will need to invest between \$140 billion and \$160 billion annually to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. If the federal government coughs up \$10 billion yearly, the provinces and the private sector are also expected to contribute quite heavily.

The federal government, along with the provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan, are counting quite a bit on carbon capture to reach their goal. As of now, that technology has mainly been a lure as most experiments have failed to reach targets. Throughout the world, 10 of the 13 biggest carbon sequestration experiments have not reached their goals, usually settling for less than 50% of their objectives.

This is not very promising. Most carbon capture ventures are spearheaded by companies, often oil and gas firms, trying to avoid reducing carbon emissions at the source, so before emitting them. It implies investing less in the industrial process.

It is most worrisome that in the Liberal budget, carbon capture seems to play a significant role to the detriment of much more efficient means. Some aspects of the Plan for a Green Economy will take a long time before getting off the ground though and there is still time to adjust for the Trudeau government.

Speaking of taking time to implement, such will be the case for the dental care strategy. Two years will be needed to prepare the plan, and two more years to reach the potential clientele. It is like saying that this aspect of the budget was an electoral strategy.



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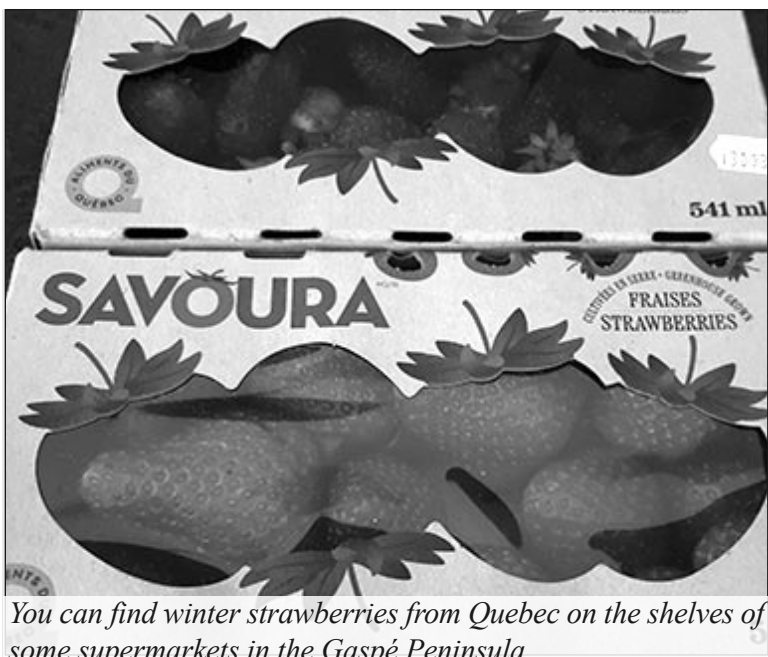








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You can find winter strawberries from Quebec on the shelves of some supermarkets in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Photo: N. Sergerie



Photo: N. Sergerie

The Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles could be welcoming more students this fall.

Winter strawberries could be produced locally within three years

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINT-SIMÉON - Ferme Bourdages Tradition in Saint-Siméon thinks winter strawberries could be produced in the Gaspé Peninsula within a few years. This is the idea launched by the Ferme Bourdages Tradition in Saint-Siméon when larger Quebec producers such as Savoura or Demers marketed this fruit on the shelves of certain grocers in the region more extensively this winter.

Quebec-grown winter strawberries taste different than strawberries imported from California or Mexico. The flavour is similar to strawberries grown in Quebec during the summer.

"Of course, we are thinking about it, but we want the industry to experiment a bit. We still have labour challenges. Winter (growing) could be an option, but we would like to give ourselves two or three years to seek external experience," explains the co-owner of the farm, Pierre Bourdages, who says he doesn't want to reinvent the wheel.

"We want to see if production costs can improve. It's expensive. It's a lot of investment," says Mr. Bourdages.

The Gaspé Peninsula does not have the same temperature as in the Lévis region where Demers is located or the Eastern Townships where Savoura berries are grown.

"Energy remains the biggest challenge because you have to heat the greenhouses," says Bourdages.

In the meantime, the farm will try to improve its production techniques at the start and end of the season.

"We want to extend the summer season to have it start at the beginning of June and extend towards the end of October. The first actions could be to improve the covers, and the techniques in the field and perhaps develop off-ground quietly, not quickly, to improve our techniques," analyzes the co-owner.

High-density summer and fall strawberries represent 80% of Quebec strawberry production. Fall strawberries continue to take up more and more of that percentage each year.

When Mr. Bourdages consults current producers, the consensus is that Quebec consumers are present. "The excitement is there. People want quality and to be closer (geographically) to the harvest. When the strawberries come from California or South America, of course, there is the distance, the cost, the freshness, etc. Yes, the customers are there," he says. For consumers, the cost is the main concern, especially when inflation is causing food costs to explode.

"It's still quite expensive. People have the choice to buy less expensive fruit. It's a challenge that we will have to work on, but we have the cost of energy to take into account, which is quite expensive. We're watching, and the customers are there to consume. They like the product," says the producer.

A container of Quebec winter strawberries sells for between \$5 and \$6 for 340 grams, while some grocery chains often advertise discounted American strawberries in order to attract customers to their stores.

Promising first round of registrations at the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Foreign student applications are boosting numbers in the first round of applications for the fall 2023 semester at the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles. As of March 1, the deadline for the first round of applications, the Cégep received 900 applicants compared to 606 received in 2022.

"You have to be careful, however, because in all CEGEPs there has been a strong increase in international applications. Often, they are more fragile requests that will not materialize," explains the director of studies, Serge Rochon.

In total, 139 registrations originated from France, compared to 85 last year. "The French (from France) have agreements with Quebec. Often, one out of two requests actually materialize," notes Mr. Rochon.

For Africa, obtaining authorizations is more complex because African students must obtain study permits and seek funding.

"The CEGEPs have sent the message to the various ministries saying that a little less bureaucracy and more efficiency is needed to allow more students to come and study here, and it would be good for the CEGEPs in the regions," notes the director of studies.

Another interesting element: 50 additional students from secondary schools in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands have registered at the regional CEGEP, which means that the retention rate is 77%.

"That's an increase from last year. It is not only international students who are responsible for the growth, but it's also from within the region, and also Quebecers: there are 200 (applicants) who come from other regions of Quebec," points out Mr. Rochon proudly. Mr. Rochon says the Cégep has the space required to welcome so many new students.

In other good news for the Cégep, it has been confirmed that the electrical engineering program will be offered again this year, thanks to sufficient registrations.

However, the Early Childhood Education course in Gaspé and the Aquatic Products Processing course in Grande-Rivière will once again be suspended.

"As for the rest, we are able to launch all our programs in the fall semester, which is good news. Often, we had programs such as Accounting and Management on one campus or the other that were fragile, that we had to suspend, but that is not the case this year," says Mr. Rochon.

"The Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles has succeeded in positioning itself well, selling the idea of studying in the regions,

in an extraordinary territory," assumes Mr. Rochon to explain the successful enrollment, and why he believes students chose the Gaspé Peninsula. Scholarships could also play a role in why students choose the Gaspé Peninsula.

Per campus, the francophone sector of Gaspé Cégep received 575 registrations compared to 365 last year; and the anglophone sector increased by six for a total of 31.

"We must not forget that many francophones study in English and take advantage of our anglophone section, which increases the number of groups, such as in Adventure Tourism Technique, where we have an anglophone section. This is the case in the Humanities and in the Natural Sciences. There are not many French-speaking CEGEPs that have an English section. This is an additional attraction for the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles," says Mr. Rochon, who hopes to have more registrations for the 2nd and 3rd rounds.

Registrations at the School of Fisheries and Aquaculture of Quebec located in Grande-Rivière increased from 52 to 94 while the Magdalen Islands campus increased by three bringing their total to 60.

Finally, at the Carleton-sur-Mer campus, registrations increased to 156 in the first round this year compared to 107 in 2022.

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Federal budget 2023: Fiscal imbalance to the detriment of Quebec's interests, say Bloc Québécois leader and regional Member of Parliament

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Yves-François Blanchet, leader of the Bloc Québécois, and Kristina Michaud, Member of Parliament for Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia, had a cold welcome for the March 28 federal budget in which the Liberal government delivered on their commitments made to the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Blanchet and Ms. Michaud say that Justin Trudeau's Liberal government confirmed in that budget that it forced health agreements with Quebec and the provinces while failing to provide adequate protection against a deterioration of the economic situation.

"The government of Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh is abusing the fiscal imbalance, outdated credits and an underfunded health system to meet commitments to maintain power. We will also have to closely monitor substantial tax credit amounts intended for the ecological transition, but likely to benefit companies which are anything but ecological, like the oil companies. Without a safety net in the event of a recession, this second chapter of the Liberal-NDP government should ensure its immediate survival, regardless of the specific interests of Quebec or the requests made by Quebec's socio-economic stakeholders. It seems to leave room for maneuvering for a much more electoral budget in 2024," notes Mr. Blanchet.

The NDP request for dental care fulfilled

NDP budget demands for dental insurance and extended coverage improvement of the GST (goods and services tax) return, renamed for the occasion "reimbursement for groceries," are fulfilled in the budget. The new sums included in the disappointing agreements between Ottawa and the provinces on health financing are also budgeted until 2028.

"Without being great news for Quebec households, some will find comfort in this prolonged support in the face of the rising cost of living. It



Photo: G. Gagné

Kristina Michaud, like many Gaspésians, is still expecting more from the federal government in housing and a better Employment Insurance program.

looks like the government just ticked the most basic boxes to get through another year. One will have to look elsewhere than in this document to find any vision for the future," states Kristina Michaud.

\$21 billion towards an environmental transition

The other key element consists of investments reaching close to \$21 billion, mainly in clean electricity tax credits, green economy, transportation and green technologies.

"The Bloc Québécois criticizes the fact that a significant part of these sums could help companies like the oil companies to pollute less rather than to reduce their production and move into the 21st century. The impact of these non-negligible sums remains to be determined. Because they are presented under the form of tax credits or funds administered by Crown corporations, it will be difficult to monitor these investments and ensure the accountability of beneficiaries. The Bloc will be vigilant to avoid any form of greenwashing," assures the Member of Parliament for Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia.

About the possibility of greenwashing, she adds that "I am always very happy to see money for the fight

against climate change. As a lot will likely take the form of tax credits, whether the form of energy is clean or not, will be hard to assess. It looks as if the government wants to make a little greener oil through carbon storage, which is an unproven technology. Green oil will never exist. Companies, which make billions of dollars in profits, have the moral duty to improve their environmental record and they should enter by themselves in the reduction of the impacts. We are still in the process of dissecting all this information but is it a camouflaged help? We must worry about that. The government had promised to end subsidies to the fossil fuel sector in 2023, but is this the right way? We think it is not," says Ms. Michaud.

Quebec requests omitted

The 2023 fiscal year does not meet the main pre-budget requests made by the various Quebec interest groups.

"The budget only partially responds to two demands from the Bloc Québécois. We underline the reinforcement in the financing of education in French outside Quebec, but we regret that it is drowned in a total budget including support for English in Quebec. Light reinvestments allow hope for better services to the population

from the government. Otherwise, unsurprisingly, health transfers stick to the insufficient level of this winter's forced agreement. The seniors will not find a penny more to ensure their quality of life. Employment Insurance is completely neglected, despite the difficulties of the regime. While the government would have had to refocus on the fundamental missions of the federal level in the event of a possible recession, it delivers a budget that shows more vision for its own immediate future than for Quebecers," concludes Kristina Michaud.

Housing, agriculture and unemployment insurance

Kristina Michaud is disappointed to see that the federal budget "doesn't contain much to deal with the housing shortage. There are some investments for Native housing but all the amounts come from existing programs. Housing is a joint jurisdiction (provincial and federal) and I am sorry to see there isn't much in this budget to solve the current crisis, which is affecting cities and rural areas."

She saw a few positive measures, notably a sum of \$333 million for dairy farm-

ers, "which comes after some of the (farmers') requests" and \$30 million specifically for the Eastern Canada farmers dealing with the rising cost of fertilizer. At the federal level, Eastern Quebec is included in Eastern Canada.

Kristina Michaud also praises budget initiatives that will limit credit card interest fees, the eventual imposition of universal battery chargers and the right to repair appliances.

"We may be on a way to set up a consultation period on these consumption issues. There is nothing concrete yet but there is a good intention there. I hope the government will hurry up," she says.

Kristina Michaud is disappointed by the standstill regarding the Employment Insurance regime though. "The federal government will maintain a temporary measure that was to end shortly, however, the real Employment Insurance reform is not even mentioned in the budget, despite being asked for fiercely. (Gaspésie-Magadalen Islands Member of Parliament and Minister) Diane Lebovillier had hinted recently that it would come. It looks like the government will be waiting for a crisis. Still, that (a reform) would be a good idea," she concludes.



COMMISSION SCOLAIRE
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AVIS PUBLIC / Public Notice

Conformément à l'article 392 de la Loi sur l'instruction publique, un avis public est par les présentes donné que le Conseil des commissaires de la Commission scolaire Eastern Shores a l'intention de modifier le RÈGLEMENT 14 et procéder à son adoption lors de la réunion du 9 mai 2023.

Règlement 14 : Délégation de pouvoirs

Ce projet de règlement peut être examiné au bureau du secrétaire général de la Commission scolaire Eastern Shores, situé au 40, rue Mountsorrel, New Carlisle (Québec).

Donné à New Carlisle, Québec, ce 28e jour de mars 2023.

Pursuant to Section 392 of the Education Act, public notice is hereby given that the Council of Commissioners of Eastern Shores School Board intends to adopt at the meeting of May 9, 2023 the following BY-LAW:

By-Law 14: Delegation of Powers

A draft of the By-Laws may be examined at the office of the Secretary General of Eastern Shores School Board, situated at 40 Mountsorrel Street, New Carlisle, Quebec.

Given at New Carlisle, Quebec this 28th day of March 2023

Denis Gauthier
Secrétaire général / Secretary General

CAQ MNAs praise the Quebec budget

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The two Coalition Avenir Québec Members of the National Assembly from the Gaspé Peninsula believe that the Girard budget tabled on March 21 meets the expectations of Gaspésians, despite the numerous criticisms launched the day after the budget was tabled.

“It is very difficult to interpret a budget and it can leave room for interpretation but it must be remembered that this is the budget for year 1 of this legislation. Some announcements will follow, measures and programs that will be known in detail over the coming months. With this budget, we know the main orientations of the government,” says the MNA for Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin.

“It is a prudent, responsible budget, which emphasizes the basic missions of the government. It is a budget that gives oxygen to Quebecers and that respects our promises,” adds Gaspé MNA, Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

In terms of housing, municipal politicians in the region are criticizing the lack of resources to promote the construction of



MNAs Stéphane Sainte-Croix and Catherine Blouin with Premier François Legault (centre) during the election campaign last September in Gaspé.

apartments.

“We hear a lot about the 1,500 additional homes. What I want to say to people is to stop seeing a single measure, but to look at the game plan as a whole” says Ms. Blouin.

She and her colleague from Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, mention that \$3.8 billion has been invested since 2018 and they will continue to build housing for Quebecers.

In addition, \$191 million is added to allow the Accès-Logis program projects to finally get off the ground, projects that have already been announced.

“Any project that holds water, the Ministry of Housing

will be there to support it,” adds Ms. Blouin, who mentions that there’s a sum of \$105 million to renovate low-rent housing, where the region has aging infrastructures.

On sports infrastructure, both Ms. Blouin and Mr. Sainte-Croix recall that the promise of \$1.5 billion over 10 years will be respected.

“There was a misinterpretation of the budget. We made a commitment to invest \$1.5 billion over 10 years and I want to reassure everyone: we will keep our promise. We are injecting a first \$300 million for this year alone. We also have an additional \$110 million to off-

set cost increases for ongoing projects. I am thinking in particular of PAFIRS,” she says about an existing program that supports the financing of leisure and sport infrastructure..

Regarding the FAIR, Catherine Blouin affirms that programs expired on March 31. The government will be reviewing the way that the program supports economic development.

“The ministry has developed a new program partly inspired by FAIR. This is why \$85.8 million has been allocated for regional development in Quebec. Once again, the Gaspésie is well placed. Don't worry, I asked a lot of questions. I have been assured that all the MRCs in the region will be supported by the new program,” says the elected official. When it comes to the regional air transportation crisis, Mr. Sainte-Croix mentions the \$10 million in emergency support for the industry. “We are at the rendezvous. We want to make sure to improve transportation in the region, namely air transportation,” says the MNA, noting a reflection will be done to find solutions to improve transportation.

On the repair of the rail, the

MNA for Gaspé recalls the objective of finalizing the work of phase 2 according to the planned deadline and Quebec is working to complete the planning for section 3.

“I can reassure our citizens. It's in the PQI (Programme québécois d'infrastructures). Our desire to move forward and ensure that this project is realized is very real and the professionals are working hard to ensure that we arrive at a final plan and include the budgets at this level,” reassures Mr. Sainte-Croix.

On the assertion of the Union of nurses, nursing assistants and respiratory therapists of Eastern Quebec, which only speaks of health dusting, the member for Gaspé does not agree.

“To assume the costs of the system goes without saying. We are on a bill at the Health Quebec level that will change our approach to health. There has nevertheless been a concrete increase since we took office in the budgets allocated to health and we are continuing our momentum. This is a priority of the Legault government,” replies the MNA who mentions that the system will become effective and efficient.

New technology developed to facilitate the release of right whales from snow crab traps

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - A new technology has been developed by Merinov and the University of Quebec at Rimouski to facilitate the disentanglement of right whales in snow crab traps. The innovation presented on March 23 in Grande-Rivière is a prototype of a system with a double breaking threshold that allows snow crab traps to be brought up during fishing but will break when a whale exerts pressure on the rope to untangle.

“It is a double sill weak link, i.e. a system placed between the trap and the vertical cable, which connects the trap and the surface buoy to allow when a whale becomes entangled in the vertical wiring, to break, allowing the whale to facilitate its release,” explains industrial researcher and head of the fisheries technology centre, Jérôme Laurent.

The force of tension will determine whether it is an action for the lifting of the trap or the entanglement of a whale.



Photo: Merinov

The system is placed on the trap to facilitate the release of a whale if it becomes entangled in the rope

“These are not the same levels of tension. The fisherman will exert tensions of 2,500, 3,000 or even 3,500 pounds on the rope for one to two minutes during lifting. A whale, when it gets entangled, will exert pressure for several minutes. What allows the weak link to make the distinction is really the du-

ration and the amount of tension,” explains Mr. Laurent.

The breaking point for whales has thus been established at 1,700 lbs and the threshold for snow crab fishing traps at 3,500 lbs, based on both the available scientific data and data learned at sea by Merinov teams aboard fishing

boats.

The idea came from a fisherman, the president of the Association des crabiers gaspésiens, Daniel Desbois, when the problem of the right whale arrived in 2017-2018.

Merinov structured the project and found the financing. UQAR was approached for its engineering expertise and the fishermen came up with the specifications.

This solution was imagined and the design was developed in 2019, and last summer a first experiment was carried out. Different versions of the technology have been designed to meet whale protection requirements and UQAR has developed the solution.

“The tests were done in the laboratory with the University of Quebec in Rimouski with different scenarios. The systems met expectations and we did a sea trial. It was not in fishing conditions. It's encouraging, but the real test will be this fishing season when the system will be tested in real conditions,” says the researcher.

The Marine Mammal Pro-

tection Act classifies fish products exported to the United States according to the frequency of marine mammal bycatch. Exporting countries must demonstrate that it imposes measures to reduce these catches.

The stakes are high because Canada exports 60% of its marine products to the United States.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada funded a large part of the project, determined the criteria and developed the specifications that will be imposed on fishermen.

“Ultimately, it is Fisheries and Oceans that will approve the system developed and it is the role of the Canadian government to validate the proposed solution with the American government,” mentions Mr. Laurent, who says the project required an investment of close to \$1 million.

Commercialization and marketing will be handled by three business partners, including the fisherman and key player in this industrial research project, Daniel Desbois.

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Easter Greetings

- Diane Skinner

Quick Easter Quiz

1. What part of their chocolate Easter bunny do most people eat first?
2. Why does the date of Easter vary?
3. Easter is celebrated at the end of a special 40 days called _____.
4. Are Good Friday and Easter Monday statutory holidays in Quebec?
5. Easter is the second largest candy-consuming special day. What is the first?
6. The concept of the Easter Bunny originated in what country?
7. What is the most popular colour of jelly beans?
8. The most popular non-chocolate Easter candy is _____.
9. Original Easter baskets were made to look like _____.
10. Using the letters in Easter (all or some) make at least 20 words. Go for the gold and try to make 40 words!
11. What big Hollywood actress starred in the movie Easter Parade?
12. Who wrote the 1902 children's book Tale of Peter Rabbit?
13. What item does the rabbit in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland always carry with him?
14. Which Disney film features a rabbit called Thumper?
15. Easter Island is part of which country?
16. Which country has a traditional style of painting eggs, known as pysanka?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

All About Easter

Easter egg hunts, bunnies and chocolate – Easter is full of history and traditions.

Did you know that...

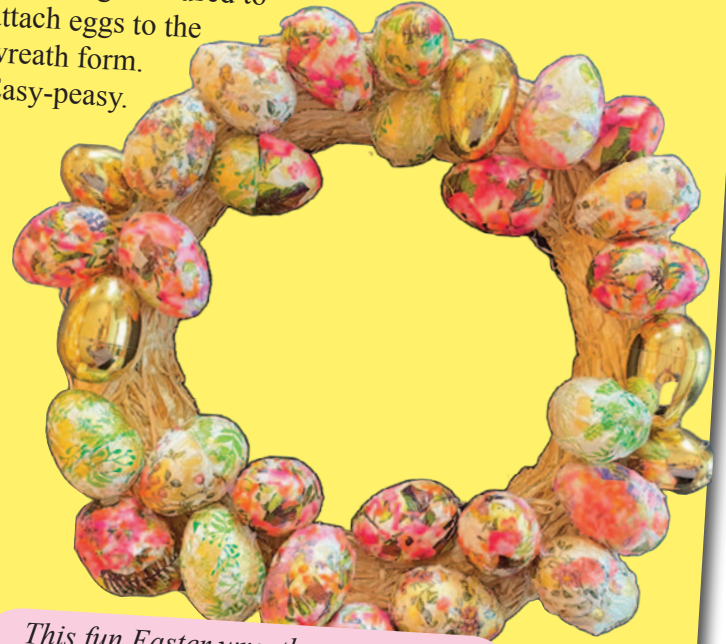
- The date of Easter changes every year. This year Easter will be Sunday, April 9. Easter always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the March equinox. This means that Easter can occur from March 22 until April 25.
- Easter marks the end of the 40 days of Lent.
- Easter is a Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Eggs are associated with Easter because eggs were traditionally forbidden to be eaten during Lent. Then on Easter, eggs were permitted to be eaten once more.
- Eggs are associated with Easter because they are a symbol of fertility and rebirth.
- The week before Easter is Holy Week. It begins with Palm Sunday, then Maundy Thursday (day of the Last Supper), Good Friday (Christ's crucifixion), and Holy Saturday (the day between the crucifixion and the resurrection).
- In April 2024, Easter will fall on Sunday, March 31.
- Easter is the only time when it is perfectly safe to put all your eggs in one basket.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1 - 75% of people eat the ears first. 2 - The date of Easter varies as it is based on the lunar calendar and the position of the moon. Easter falls on the Sunday after the full moon after the Spring Equinox. 3 - Lent 4 - In the province of Quebec either Good Friday or Easter Monday must be given as a paid statutory holiday, however, many businesses will give both days. 5 - Halloween. Third place goes to Valentine's Day. 6 - Germany. 7 - Red. 8 - Peeps (Marshmallow candies shaped like bunnies, chicks or other animals). 9 - Nests! 10 - Some of the words include: eater, resear, tease, rate, tear, reset, erase, steer, stare, aster, tree, terse, rats, rate, seat, star, seer, rest, case, cats, art, tee, east, tea, tar, see, ear, ate. 11 - Judy Garland. 12 - Beatrix Potter. 13 - A watch. 14 - Bambi. 15 - Chile. 16 - Ukraine

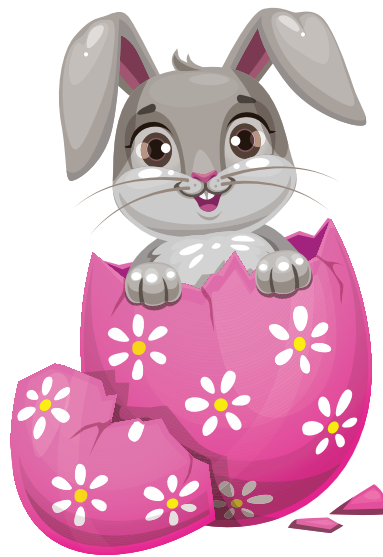
Easter wreath

The wreath (pictured) was made using a straw wreath form. Cover your surface with newspaper. Then using plastic hollow eggs, cover the eggs with ripped up pieces of quality printed paper serviettes. You could also use tissue paper in a variety of colours. Using Mod Podge and a brush, glue the pieces to the hollow eggs. After drying, a hot glue gun is used to attach eggs to the wreath form. Easy-peasy.



This fun Easter wreath was easy to make. Gather your supplies and prepare the work surface with old newspapers.

Photo: D. Skinner



Bunny Kisses

I'm hopping down the bunny trail
Leaving Easter thoughts and wishes
And because you're such a sweetie
I've brought some bunny kisses!



Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



A brand-new Easter Bonnet

Buying a new hat for Easter used to be such a big thing. Ladies, both young and old, would don their new hat and outfits and show them off proudly at church on Easter Sunday. This small but important ritual of the past was thrilling, but unfortunately those days are gone now and with them the excitement that such a purchase would bring. On one hand we can say that the pressure is off us to buy a new hat and outfit. On the other hand, it is a loss of the thrill of dressing up and showing off just a tad.

Many rituals from the past have been lost and this is in great part due to the fact that the rules of how to look and act are much less rigid today. This allows for freedom of personal expression. That's a good thing. Our clothes tell others who we are and how we see ourselves. Let's consider both sides of this concept.

School uniforms: People who say "yes" to school uniforms say it makes life easier for parents and students in the morning. There is no fretting about what to wear. You simply get dressed in your school uniform. Further, students who do not have a lot of money for cool or designer clothes are not embarrassed at not having that clothing. Everyone seems to be equal. Those who say "no" cite lack of freedom of expression through clothing.

Women in pants: Throughout much of modern Western history, pants (trousers) were worn primarily by men. In the 1930s, actresses such as Katharine Hepburn and Marlene Dietrich were wearing trousers and this was viewed as slightly scandalous. During World War II, women were working at non-traditional jobs which meant wearing trousers. In the 1960s, blue jeans were introduced for women on a larger scale. They were a hit. Easier to move in, work in, sit in, it just made sense for women to wear slacks, jeans or pants. Young ladies of today would be shocked to think that less than 100 years ago this was considered unfeminine. Except for particular religious groups, women wear jeans and pants in most situations today, not all, but most.

Wedding and funeral attire: It used to be a strict guideline that one wore black to funerals and never wore white to a wedding, unless you were the bride. That has all changed. People wear anything and everything to both weddings and funerals. This is freedom of expression, freedom to choose. Is there a downside to this? Perhaps only in the minds of those who strictly follow those old traditions. It can be said that how we choose to dress honours the bride and groom.

Though most people believe in the freedom of expression through clothing there are, of course, some mostly unwritten rules. Clothing that is too revealing or sexual can be inappropriate, for example, in the workplace. Clothing must be safe. That is, hanging strings or fringe near machinery would be an obvious no-no.

However, I think we can still make a case for the brand-new Easter bonnet!

How much fun would it be for people, young and old, to restart the Easter hat tradition? Hats could be whimsical or adorned with flowers. The hats could have veils or be made of straw. They could be traditional or rainbows of colourful confection. You could purchase a hat, decorate one you already own or find one at a Marché aux Puces or even make one. How much fun if we all did that and paraded around, either in church, or out and about the town with our new hats? I support this freedom - the freedom to wear an Easter bonnet!

*In your Easter bonnet, with all the frills upon it,
You'll be the grandest lady in the Easter parade.
I'll be all in clover and when they look you over.
I'll be the proudest fellow in the Easter parade.*

-Irving Berlin



The Easter Bunny and other traditions

Diane Skinner

The Easter Bunny tradition began in Germany where he was referred to as the Easter Hare. This dates all the way back to 1680. The Easter Hare, it is said, decided whether children had been good enough to deserve an Easter treat. Today, children may be visited by the Easter Bunny while they sleep. He will leave chocolate eggs and other treats that children will find hidden around the house or even outdoors. Egg hunts are proof that your children can find things when they really want to.

Will you be wearing your Easter bonnet with all the frills upon it? If you do, you may be the "grandest lady in the Easter parade." The song, *Easter Parade* (also referred to as *The Easter Bonnet song*) was sung by Judy Garland in 1948. Many years ago, ladies of all ages would buy a new hat to be worn to church. It was an exciting day as the ladies showed off their new headwear!

Hot cross buns were originally made by monks who gave them to the poor at Easter time. "Hot cross buns, hot cross buns. One a penny, two a penny. Hot cross buns." This popular treat is a sweet, spiced bun with a cross decorating the top. An old myth is that buns baked on Good Friday and shared with a friend, will guarantee that you will remain friends. That seems a small price to pay for a true friend.

Easter lilies are considered the official flower of Easter. These lovely white blooms are traditional symbols of hope and purity. The legend is that the lilies grew where drops of Jesus' sweat fell as he knelt to pray. Try making paper lilies with a child. Trace your hand on white paper. Cut it out, roll it and glue or tape the bottom. The fingers can be curled by rolling them on a pencil. Add a stem from a pipe cleaner or a coffee stir stick. Make a few and place them in a small jar or vase.

Happy Easter!

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Tales of Douglastown

JEANIE LELACHEUR

DOUGLASTOWN: - What better time and place to launch the Tales of Douglastown exhibit than the Saint Patrick's Day Cultural Showcase hosted by the Douglastown Community Centre on what is, without a doubt, one of the most celebrated days of the Douglastown community.

Funded by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, the in-house Tales of Douglastown exhibit is a celebration of its people, their stories and an interesting means to help collect and preserve the heritage of a community.

Project Manager Tam Desgroseilliers, although relatively new as director of the Douglas Community Centre, hails from the Magdalen Islands and recognized the similarities between the Douglastown reality and those of other communities in the province.

We watch as generations continue to age and the voices, rich with memories and stories, become fewer and fewer. We see the younger generations leave to study and work



Angelina Leggo researcher and content creator, Tam Desgroseilliers Director Douglas Community Centre and Tesia Hackett from Vision Gaspé-Percé Now

Photo: J. LeLacheur

and often settle elsewhere and the truth is that time changes everything. Newcomers eager to call more rural areas like the small village of Douglastown home bring new stories and experiences, and so these naturally occurring changes were all part of the drive behind the project.

Like Tam, the steering committee, comprised of Vi-

sion's Gaspé-Percé Now's Tesia Hackett, Nancy-Wright Clapson and Stella Briand Kennedy, as well as the consultation group wanted to make sure the Douglastown history and its unique heritage and cultural contribution would not only be remembered but also shared and appreciated by new eyes within the community and region.

Ukraine: A year of support

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND - The war in Ukraine has now been raging for a little more than 13 months. As the world became aware of that armed conflict in February 2022, residents of the Bay of Chaleur were quick to react in response to the brutality affecting the Ukrainian population.

In New Richmond, a first rally which took place on March 17, 2022, was organized to bring awareness of the situation and to mobilize volunteers to support those affected by the war who would like to seek refuge in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The Ukraine-Baie-des-Chaleurs Solidarity Committee was formed at that rally, supported in its efforts by the Zmazhenko family, a Ukrainian family established in New Richmond for about ten years. Many initiatives have emerged, making it possible to raise funds directed either to non-governmental organizations or to provide direct medical aid in Ukraine.

In May 2022, the committee set up the Ukraine-Baie-des-Chaleurs Support Fund to facilitate the reception and integration of Ukrainians fleeing

the war.

This fund, headed by the Bas-Saint-Laurent-Gaspésien-Îles Community Foundation and supported by the Carrefour jeunesse-emploi Avignon-Bonaventure, has raised \$15,401 to date from the public, businesses and organizations in the region. The amounts raised have been used mainly for transportation of the 10 people who settled in the region between June and December 2022.

They were welcomed and housed by families. Several material donations were also received such as clothing, furniture, dishes and so on.

"We could have greeted more people in the Bay of Chaleur area but the housing shortage got in the way," points out Josée Kaltenback, spokesperson of the Ukraine-Baie-des-Chaleurs Solidarity Committee.

In addition, in order to promote encounters between re-

cently arrived refugees and people of the Bay of Chaleur area, an evening of intercultural exchanges organized with the SANA (Service d'aide aux nouveaux arrivants or Welcoming Service for Newcomers) brought together more than one hundred people at the New Richmond Community Centre in November 2022.

"People displaced by the war in Ukraine have found respite here in the Bay of Chaleur. The welcome and support of local residents and businesses have been remarkable since the beginning. Committee members and newly settled nationals thank them from the bottom of their hearts," adds New Richmond resident Ms. Kaltenback.

"This devastating armed conflict, which unfortunately continues to strain and test the courageous Ukrainian population, will eventually bring us to support new refugees over the next year," she points out.

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Angelina Leggo who is the communication and media coordinator for the Gaspé Literacy Council was also the research and content creator for the project and on-site for the launch of the exhibit featuring its industry, music, and the Douglastown Brick.

"If you'll take a moment to notice, all the prominent buildings in Douglastown have the same colour bricks, not the traditional red but a lighter colour which has been preserved and restored over the years. Father Nellis is to be thanked. A man of personality and persuasion, he made sure the buildings all kept their distinguished tone even to the point of having the building plans changed and sending back the red bricks that con-

tractors brought to finish the post office. (From the Douglastown Brick panel)

Picture it. Cars on the ice, lumber camps and sawmills, church and school construction, music, the many concerts at Saint Patrick's School, and, of course, Pamela Rooney and the Exceptions at the Douglastown Country Festival, all woven together as a snapshot of the past.

On a more personal note visitors are given a pen and post it note at the entrance and are invited to add names or details to the panels with a plan to add the changes. The exhibit will soon be available online through the Douglas Community Centre but, if you're in the neighbourhood, why not drop in?

HARASSMENT: Another mayor resigns

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

CLORIDORME - Harassment and intimidation in the municipal world claimed another victim when the mayor of Cloridorme, Pierre Martin, resigned following a stormy meeting on March 13.

"My decision was made following repeated harassment from a group of citizens, harassment that was made against all elected officials and more particularly recently against the director general and myself," mentions Mr. Martin who, because of his medical history, is no longer able to cope with the stress caused by the situation.

Mr. Martin is not ruling out seeking justice against some of his critics. "There have been personal attacks on the Internet, alleging incompetence. This is a group that conveys this every day. Still on Wednesday, even if I am no longer mayor, it is still going on. I will have to take procedures accordingly towards this person. My health cannot allow that," adds the ex-mayor.

"It always comes down to the same people. We can name the group of people. We know who does it, but we cannot accuse a specific person. Now I know who is accusing me on the Internet and I will act accordingly. It's a shame. It gives the municipality a bad reputation, despite the fact that we had a good council," suggests Mr. Martin.

According to him, the tax increases of the last two years would have caused discontent, especially that of 8% for the 2023 budget.

Mayor Martin is the second elected official from the Estran sector to resign in March.

At the beginning of the month, his neighbour from Petite-Vallée, Mélanie Clavet, resigned.

In addition, in February 2022, another mayor, Genade Grenier, resigned as mayor of Saint-Godefroi, saying that he had received numerous letters of intimidation and insults.

The Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé is concerned about the recent resignations of the mayors of Cloridorme and Petite-Vallée. Stéphane Sainte-Croix believes that these gestures are unacceptable and do nothing to encourage participation in democracy. Social networks amplify the phenomenon.



Photo: Municipality of Cloridorme

*The former mayor,
Pierre Martin.*

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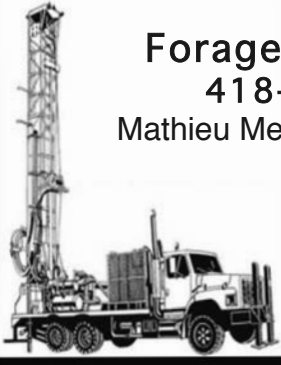
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Announcements



Obituaries



BUDD: Valerie Eunice

On Monday, February 27, 2023, Valerie Eunice Budd passed away at the age of 71 at the Peter Lougheed Hospital in Calgary, the city where, she worked and lived for many years.

Born in New Richmond on May 18, 1951, she was the second of five children. Her parents, Myles Budd and Ethel Fallow predecease her.

She will be dearly missed by her sisters Myrna (Hervé) and Jacqueline (Brian); brothers Randy (Rachel) and David (Julie); and two very close friends, Mel Sopher, soulmate and Ann St-Onge, a lifelong friend who travelled out west with her in 1977. She will also be missed by nieces and nephews: Peter, Richard (Nadine), Roxanne (Reginald), Shawna Lee, Mathew, Laura (Josh), Sarah (Mathieu) and Scott; great nieces and nephew: Jakob, Samuel, Sofia, Leina and Thomas.

Interment service will be held at a later date in the summer of 2023. Donations in her memory can be made to a charity of choice.



ROSS: John Denzil

March 31, 1948 – November 16, 2022

It is with great sadness that the family of John Denzil Ross announces his sudden passing at his home on November 16, 2022, at the age of 74.

He will be forever missed and lovingly remembered by his wife of 53 years, Gwenda McLellan; daughters Joanne (Mark) and Pamela (John); and grandchildren Connor, Emma, Jared, and McKenna, who he adored with all his heart.

He was the son of the late John Ross and

Freda Huntington. He also leaves to mourn his sisters Joan (Frank), Frances, and Janice; brother Dennis (Francine); brother-in-law Guy (Sandra); as well as many family members and lifelong friends who he considered family. He will be remembered as a kind, generous, and hard-working man who was very proud of his Shigawake roots. He was a businessman, councillor, and mayor, who volunteered at countless community organizations.

The family of the late John Denzil Ross would like to thank relatives and friends who expressed their sympathy at the church service. A warm thank-you for the cards and all the donations to the Shriners Hospital where Den was a patient growing up. Special thanks to his two sons-in-law Mark and John for digging the grave; his brother Dennis for carrying the urn; and his two nephews Johnny, who wrote and read the eulogy, and Jordan for carrying the flowers. Thank you to Rev. Momberg for his wonderful, meaningful, and comforting service. A thank-you to the paramedics and police officers for their gentleness and kindness during our difficult times.

We miss you so much Den, we love you. Rest in peace. The Ross Family.



In Memory



COPAGE: Raymond

In loving memory of a dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who passed away April 1, 2020. (3 years ago)

*As time goes by without you,
As the days turn into years.
They hold a million memories,
And a thousand silent tears.
You meant so very much to me
That nothing they can say
Can heal the pain that's in my heart,
As I think of you each day.
No matter how I spend my days
No matter what I do,
Before I close my eyes at night,
I always think of you.
My heart still aches with sadness,
Since the day you had to go,
For what it meant to lose you
No one will ever know.*

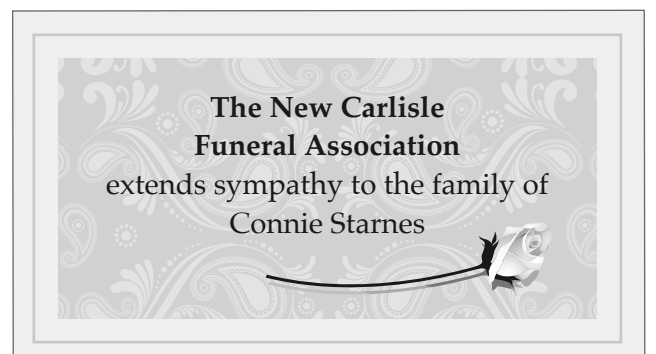
We love and miss you very much. Your loving wife: Doreen; children: Michael (Linda), Terry (Kelly), Donna (Cantal), Beverly (Bob) and Brenda.

WARD: Wilma Beatrice Huntington

In loving memory of our mother, mother-in-law, grandmother and great-grandmother, who passed away on April 8, 1990.

*To us, you were so special,
What more is there to say,
Except to wish with all our hearts,
That you were here today.
You couldn't say goodbye to us,
You couldn't see our tears,
But you left us with beautiful memories,
We will treasure through the years.*

Always loved, always remembered, never forgotten by your loving daughter Frances (Bernie) and grandson Mark (Erin) and great-grandsons Reid, Cole and Benn; grandson Kevin (Courtney) and great-granddaughters Avery and Carys; sons Ken (Chris), Everette and Wayne (Monique) and grandson Dave (Josiane) and great-granddaughter Julia, great-grandsons Elliott and James; and grandson Brian.



Announcement Prices

Obituary and Wedding → \$40 (picture + \$5)
Up to 300 words. If it is more, we will give you a quote.

All other Announcements → \$30 (picture + \$5)
Up to 20 lines. If it is more, we will give you a quote.

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

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COAST ROUND-UP

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

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

Coffin at 418-368-1566 or Patricia Ste. Croix at 418-649-3779.

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.

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.

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

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

SHIGAWAKE:
Community Centre

April 7: Kids crafts from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

April 10: Gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m.

HOPE:
Hope Baptist Church

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

NEW CARLISLE:
Royal Canadian Legion Branch #64

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

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.

NEW CARLISLE:
Bible Chapel Meetings

Sundays: 9:30 a.m.

Breaking of Bread for believers. 2 p.m. Gospel meeting and Sunday School.

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

NEW RICHMOND:
United Church Luncheon

April 16: Luncheon in house or takeout from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Church Hall. Chili, biscuits/buns and dessert. \$10 per person. All proceeds will go to the humanitarian fund.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:
Book Room

The book room is now open. Anyone who needs assistance can contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

UNITED CHURCH

NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, April 9
10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH

HOPE TOWN
Sunday, April 9
2 p.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Saturday, April 8
NEW CARLISLE

5 p.m. Holy Saturday

Sunday, April 9
NEW CARLISLE

6 a.m. Chapel Sunrise

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

PORT DANIEL

11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, April 9

9 a.m. St. Paul's, Gaspé

Holy Eucharist - Easter



ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
A message from a romantic partner or business associate could come this week, Aries. Keep a watchful eye on your email inbox or the regular mail.
TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, this week you can expect to have an interesting conversation with someone about a topic you're fond of discussing. It could spark a new friendship.
GEMINI – May 22/June 21
You likely will have a lot of physical and mental energy this week, Gemini. Figure out a project you can stand behind and put that energy

to good use.
CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Keep an eye on the front door, Cancer. A delivery may be coming your way in the next few days. It's not something you ordered, but could be a gift.
LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, you could use a diversion this week. When a friend seeks your company, this can be the perfect way to direct your mind somewhere else.
VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, financial paperwork could take up some of your time in the days to come. It's a necessary evil to keep things on track. Seek help from someone else if you get frustrated.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Speaking with someone else on a fascinating subject triggers your curious side, Libra. You may want to take a class or pursue this subject in another way.
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Your emotions might get the better of you this week, Scorpio. Try to focus attention onto something that doesn't trigger negative feelings. Distraction could be the key.
SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Stimulating social occasions are what you need right now, Sagittarius. Such get-togethers will introduce you to new people and new ideas that can inspire.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Capricorn, this week you have an opportunity to impress others and get them talking, likely changing their opinions of you. Make every effort to win others over.
AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
It's important to keep in touch with friends even if they have moved away, Aquarius. Phone calls, texts and video chats can bridge the gap created by physical distance.
PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, tally up your investments because they could be worth more than you think, especially if you are invested in real estate.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS
APRIL 2
Pedro Pascal, Actor (48)
APRIL 3
Paris Jackson, Model (25)
APRIL 4
Robert Downey, Jr., Actor (58)
APRIL 5
Pharrell Williams, Producer (50)
APRIL 6
Peyton List, Actress (25)
APRIL 7
Russell Crowe, Actor (59)
APRIL 8
Skai Jackson, Actress (21)

ANNOUNCE ALL YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

Does your organization have a Coast Round-Up plan? If so, don't forget to send SPEC information about your upcoming activities.

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- time
- cost



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The Battle of Vimy Ridge, 1917

DIANE SKINNER

The Battle of Vimy Ridge began on April 9, 1917, and concluded on April 12, 1917. It was a series of battles fought near Arras in northern France. Beginning in the fall of 1914 until 1917, the German army held a ridge of about eight kilometres. This was an important strategic location because from Vimy Ridge, they could observe the Allied troops over a long distance. Several times the Allies unsuccessfully tried to capture the Ridge from the Germans.

It was 106 years ago, on April 9, that the Allies attacked once more. Four divisions of Canadians attacked three divisions of the German 6th Army who were defending the area. The battle was won by the Canadians on Easter Monday,

1917. It was the first time that Canadians had attacked in WWI as a national unit, however, the cost was high. There were, during those few days, over 10,000 Canadians killed or wounded. At the time, Canada had 100,000 troops, so that meant 10% of the men fighting were affected.

The brave Canadians achieved something that the British and French troops could not. It is considered a symbol of Canadian identity and it showed the world that Canadians could be an "elite fighting force."

The success at Vimy Ridge was not the end of the war, as it continued for another 19 months.

In the municipality of New Carlisle, Vimy Street is named in honour of this significant and important battle.



Photo: National Archives of Canada

The Battle of Vimy Ridge during World War I was a key event in Canada's development as a nation.

The flu is making a comeback

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The flu season is intense this year with nearly 1,000 cases identified by the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands Public Health Department.

So far, more than 990 cases have been reported, which is much higher than last year when only a few cases were reported, according to Dr. Ariane Courville, a medical specialist in public health and preventive medicine. In 2020-2021, no cases appear in the statistics.

"It is difficult to compare the seasons with each other, es-

pecially since COVID because trends concerning the prescription of tests have changed during the pandemic, mainly last year," explains the medical specialist.

"The indications for testing have been expanded, but we can say that it is still a very active season if we compare it to seasons where COVID measures were in place," she adds. The season started in November and seventy-five percent of the cases were recorded before Christmas.

"For this season, if a doctor was hesitant and unsure, he would test for COVID-19 and influenza, if there were in-

fluenza symptoms. It certainly increased the number of tests for influenza," says Dr. Courville.

These statistics are for people who have been tested, but it's a safe bet that more cases of the flu have occurred in the territory. "The number of positive tests is just the tip of the iceberg," says Dr. Courville.

"There is often influenza B which starts to increase in the spring. We can say that the bulk of influenza A seems to be behind us, but there is a small increase in influenza B. Generally, the peaks are smaller. I would say the bulk of the flu season is behind us.

But we can be wrong and be taken by surprise, but it seems to be behind us," says the doctor.

The vaccine given in the fall is 50% effective.

"What has been circulating this year is the H3N2 strain. Usually, the vaccine is not as effective for that strain. 50% may not sound like much, but for a flu shot, it's pretty good. We have seen years where there was no efficiency but usually, we stay between 40 and 60%. In very good years, we have 70% efficiency. At 50%, we are still very happy," says Dr. Courville.

Last year the peak was

recorded in May and as early as December, which may make it a little more difficult to predict the next few months.

"What is obvious is that we are going to monitor all the respiratory viruses better and better because we have seen cases of RSV (respiratory syncytial virus which mainly affects children) and other viruses that we will monitor. We are going to understand better and better how they are transmitted and their seasonality. This is at least an achievement of COVID or at least I hope so," says Dr. Ariane Courville.

Passover: A celebration of new beginnings

DIANE SKINNER

Pesach, the Hebrew word for Passover, is an eight-day festival, this year from April 5 to April 13, representing rebirth and new beginnings. It is the celebration of the Jews leaving Egypt and escaping from slavery and it is one of the Jewish religion's most sacred holidays. Passover's main event is the seder which is a festive meal where excerpts from the book of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy from the Old Testament are read aloud. Passover food is unique, partly because it is forbidden to eat leavened foods, such as bread or even pasta. This has its origin in the history of the Jews

exodus from Egypt. The Jews had to flee quickly and did not have time to wait for their bread to rise. So, instead, they eat matzoh which is unleavened bread.

According to the Bible, the history of the Jewish people settling in ancient Egypt goes back to Joseph, the son of Jacob and the founder of one of the 12 tribes of Israel, who moved there with his family when there was a famine. For years everything was peaceful, but as the number of Jews increased, the Egyptians began to see them negatively. When Joseph died, an Egyptian pharaoh ordered that the Jews be made slaves and that all male Hebrew babies were to be

killed.

One of these babies was Moses who was adopted by the pharaoh's daughter! Moses fled Egypt as a young man but later returned after an encounter with God to lead the people of Israel into freedom. The Pharaoh refused but relented after Egypt was struck with a series of plagues. The angel of death passed over the houses of the Israelites, sparing their children from the plagues. This is where the term Passover comes from.

Jesus himself is, of course, a Jewish man who celebrated the Passover during his earthly life. The 12 apostles were, likewise, all Jewish.

Christians share the Old



Matzoh is a thin-cracker-like unleavened bread made with flour and water and eaten at Passover by Jews. Easter and Passover both symbolize the movement from death into life, from slavery into freedom.

Testament in common with the Jewish religion. When we hear about prejudice, it can be baffling – yet when we learn about

how human beings are different but also the same, it opens our hearts and leads to understanding.

Boujee Beauty

“Confident women always look good!”

DIANE SKINNER

NEW RICHMOND: Boujee Beauty, a lovely salon and spa offers luxury aesthetic services to local women and men of all ages. Owner and operator, Gabrielle Verdon, tells SPEC, “I wanted to create a safe and professional environment for aestheticians to work together and to create a new and fun environment.” (Note: Boujee, sometimes spelled bougie, means luxurious in lifestyle yet humble in character.)

During Covid, Gabrielle started doing nails as a project to keep herself busy. As her clientele grew, she saw there was a real need for aesthetic services in the region.

With the desire to fulfill that need, Gabrielle started to search for a commercial space, during the fall of 2021, that would allow her to expand the services she offered, and enable her to work on other projects.

Gabrielle was fortunate to have found a space that be-

longed to a local hardware store owner. Working day and night for two weeks with the owner, friends and family, Gabrielle finally has a fully operating retail salon.

The concept for Boujee Beauty is to provide clients with a variety of luxury services. She works closely with Noémie Marcoux. Together they are able to offer manicures, pedicures, facials, massages, reflexology, spray tans and waxing.

In addition to the services offered, Gabrielle has incorporated a boutique at the entrance where local products made by women are available for purchase. Gabrielle adds, “It is important to me to highlight minority artists from our region. In the boutique, you can find home decor, jewelry, beauty products, and even fresh flowers in the summer. Working closely with other women-owned businesses is really what is important to us.”

Gabrielle is a culinary school graduate who was

working fulltime in Montreal. She moved back to the Coast during the pandemic because, like many others, she went from working fulltime to losing her job. She states, “Boujee was my pandemic project that really took off!”

She still works privately in the culinary industry but Boujee has allowed her to live and work on the Coast fulltime. She adds that she has always appreciated the boujee things in life and her salon has allowed her to share that with others by helping them to feel their best.

Gabrielle hopes to increase her client base and believes that people need to remember that self-care is important and can make you feel great. “Empowered and confident women always look good.”

For more information call 514-978-1616 or visit the Boujee Beauty New Richmond facebook page. The Salon is located at 216 Blvd. Perron Ouest, New Richmond.



Boujee Beauty works closely with other-female-owned businesses and their unique items are offered for sale at the salon.

Photos: Courtesy of Gabrielle Verdon

ÈST éco-cabines: Glamping and Thermal Spa

In a dense and mature cedar forest in Miguasha, ÈST éco-cabines features a relaxing experience thanks to its glamping cabins and thermal spa. A meeting with Louise Landry, co-owner.

IN WHAT WAY IS YOUR BUSINESS UNIQUE?

“By being near to nature with exceptional comfort” mentioned Louise. Cabin glamping is also distinctive. “This is a new offering which is not found elsewhere in the region.” The business also features a self-service welcome desk without compromising on client service. “Everything is thought out to allow the client to be independent on-site and not depend on a reception desk.”

HOW DID SUPPORT FROM THE SADC HELP YOU?

“We had financial support with the Youth Strategy Fund and a regular loan,” mentioned Louise. “This was a \$1.5 million project. We needed seed capital to start up.” She also underlined the support given by an SADC business counsellor, Vanessa Ratté. “We received a lot of advice and discussed matters with her to check on weaknesses in the business plan.”

TELL US ABOUT A RECENT NOTEWORTHY ACHIEVEMENT OF WHICH YOU ARE ESPECIALLY PROUD.

Louise mentioned the environmentally friendly aspect of the business. “When we had the eco-cabins built, it was clear to us that we would cut as few trees as possible in our cedar grove. We selected each tree. We made an ecological choice.” “We also installed odourless, electrical compost toilets.” Lastly, wood, which is a long-lasting material, was used to build the units.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANYONE WHO IS CONSIDERING STARTING UP A BUSINESS IN THE BAIE-DES-CHALEURS REGION?

“Do it, have confidence in yourself!” burst out Louise. According to her, the region has a great entrepreneurial potential which is untapped. “We had numerous partners who supported us, such as the SADC, the Avignon MRC, Investissement Québec and Economic Development Canada. There are all kinds of resources. You are less likely to delve into the great unknown when partners are there to support and help you.”

Maxime Leclerc and Louise Landry escaped life in Montreal to found ÈST éco-cabines in 2021. It features lodging in cabins and a thermal spa with a dry sauna, a Hamman, two tubs (cold and hot) and two relaxation areas (outdoor and indoor).



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