

## Grade 5 and 6 from Wejgwapniag School learn about Indigenous veterans

Anne Trepanier

Student Ambassador Program

GESGEPEGIAG: Grade 5 and 6 at Wejgwapniag School in Gesgepegiag took part in Remembrance Day activities on November 8, 2023, to celebrate Indigenous Veterans Day. Students spent the last few weeks visiting the military museum in New Richmond and learning about the sacrifices their ancestors made for them to enjoy the freedom that they have today. The following are stories from their experience.

**I went to the cenotaph** to take part in the Remembrance Day Ceremony. They presented a new statue in honour of those who fought for our freedom. It is very important to remember those who sacrificed their lives. I'm happy that I got to

take part in this activity. It also taught me a lot of new things about the importance of Remembrance Day. - *Easton*

**My class and I** got to attend the unveiling of our Remembrance Day statue. It's very important to honour our veterans and soldiers who have fought or continue to fight for our freedom. - *Milly*

**For Remembrance Day** I went and watched a statue revealed with my class. My cousin Renee Condo made it. I've known her since I was a baby. I loved seeing the statue she made. All my friends went to a museum, I wish I get to go. My cousin makes really good art. - *Melody*

**Remembrance Day** is important to our Migmaq Nation be-



As part of Indigenous Veterans Day, a monument created by artist Renée Condo was unveiled.

cause a lot of our people went to war. They risked their lives so that the war would not come to our country. At the

museum in New Richmond, we saw a soldier from Gesgepegiag who was awarded a lot of medals. It made me feel

confident that a whole bunch of our people went to war and I feel safe because of them. - *Alexa*

## Crowd of 100 comes out to remember in Cascapedia-Saint-Jules



Linda Hardy was the first to place a wreath on behalf of Mothers of Canada.



Mayor Ashley Milligan placed a wreath on behalf of the Municipality of Cascapedia-St-Jules.

Photos: C. Dow

CYNTHIA DOW

November 11 wasn't a sunny day, but mild temperatures and the lack of precipitation ensured that a good number of people of all ages participated in the cenotaph ceremony organized by Royal Canadian

Legion Branch 172. The branch uses three cenotaphs in circulation: Gesgepegiag, New Richmond and Cascapedia-St-Jules.

This year, the event was held in the latter municipality and, as is their tradition, Branch 172 made sure that all three

languages, Mi'gmaq, French, and English were part of the ceremony.

Linda Hardy laid a wreath representing the Mothers of Canada. Her son Brad has been in the Armed Forces for approximately 20 years and is currently serving on a NATO

mission in Latvia.

A large number of organizations and businesses also laid wreaths, including the New Richmond Rotary Club, BMR, Sexton & Sexton, and A & R Decorations, the local enterprise which makes the unique balsam wreaths.





# Gaspé hospital in desperate need of nurses

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Gaspé hospital needs at least 20 more nurses, says the president and chief executive officer of the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre, Martin Pelletier.

He is in agreement with the Union of Nurses, Practical Nurses and Respiratory Therapists of Eastern Quebec which stated on October 25 that the Gaspé hospital was desperately short of nursing staff, to the point where services are lagging or even uncovered as has happened repeatedly in obstetrics in recent months.

“We are under great pressure because there is a huge shortage of nurses. We are looking for solutions to avoid making existing ones sick. This is not what we want. We want them to keep working,” says Mr. Pelletier.

The difficulty of finding independent labour to fill the gaps makes the task even more difficult.

The union said that the situation was difficult in the departments of medicine, surgery, the operating room,

and the situation is precarious in the emergency department, not to mention that rooms on the 5th floor have been closed for several weeks.

“To no longer use independent labour, we would easily need around twenty nurses. I do not dare suggest other figures because they are huge,” says the president and CEO.

In general, there is a shortage of about a hundred nurses across the CISSS.

### Some good news

There is at least some good news for the hospital: a call for tenders is underway to revamp the hemodialysis unit, a project that has been on the table since August 2022. At that time, the project was estimated at \$2 million.

The project involves moving the department to the former emergency department and outfitting it to increase the number of seats from three to four in a space designed for six seats.

In the spring, the \$4 million budget proved insufficient during the preliminary planning and specifications stage, which led the CISSS to have discussions with the Ministry of



The CEO of the CISSS, Martin Pelletier, would like to have more nurses to give the Gaspé hospital a little breathing room.

### Health.

Despite the increasing costs, the project will move forward but the hope of adding the oncology service had to be put aside.

“If it costs a little more, there’s something else we won’t do. If it costs less, we’ll start something else. It’s in our internal renovation plan. We hope it won’t go too far above the \$4.5 million-mark but it’s very difficult to say at the moment,” says Mr. Pelletier.

### Maria emergency: still no news

Furthermore, Quebec did not respond to the resolution adopted by the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS at the end of September calling for the inclusion of the renovation project for the emergency and intensive care unit of Maria hospital in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan.

“We have no control over that. On the other hand, we re-

main confident. This is what we can say currently. On the CISSS side, our homework is done. There is nothing to complete on this side,” underlines Mr. Pelletier.

A popular mobilization led by the elected representatives of the MRCs of Avignon and Bonaventure is underway.

“We hope that this will provide some movement. We recognize that there are enormous needs in Quebec but we are one of those who also needs it,” says Mr. Pelletier.

### Properties needed

The CISSS is looking for properties to establish multi-service centres in Gaspé, Paspébiac, Grande-Rivière, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Pointe-à-la-Croix and New Richmond.

In Quebec’s plan, these local service points will offer vaccination, testing and screening services.

Other services could be added, depending on the needs. Quebec believes that their implementation will help improve access to preventive health services with easier appointment scheduling.

## Work on New Richmond’s 3rd Range bridge to take six additional months

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – New Richmond’s Third Range bridge, which has been undergoing major repairs since July,

will not meet its initial Christmas reopening deadline, as per a recent notice from Transport Quebec. The updated timeline indicates an additional six months of work, with the offi-

cial active period on the work-site extended until at least June 30, and subject to further updates.

“The bridge will not only be closed until Christmas, it will be closed all winter, as specified to us by Transports Québec. They had to inform us because we have to maintain the constraints regarding garbage pick up and school bus circulation. We have no reopening date but it will likely not be before the summer, or the end of the school year,” points out the mayor of New Richmond, Éric Dubé.

In its last notification, Transports Québec didn’t specify the reason for the extension, but Mayor Éric Dubé received information indicating that, “When they (the contractor’s employees) removed the pillars, they found contaminated soil. It was not in the specifications of the call for tenders so a contract adjustment was made and it is taking longer to dig and recuperate the contaminated material. What happened is that

when the former wooden bridge was replaced in the 1990s, about half of it was buried. It was made of creosoted wood. The delivery of building materials was also delayed,” he explains.

The construction contract was awarded to Groupe Lapalme, a firm based in Magog, Eastern Townships, with an initial amount of \$4.6 million. The adjusted cost is yet to be disclosed.

Throughout the construction period, traffic on the bridge is completely blocked. The project essentially entails

a ‘near-complete’ replacement, with only five steel beams retained from the previous structure built in 1998.

During the works, a few options are available to motorists, as light vehicles can follow a detour via Tommy Road, the Fourth Range West and Doddridge Lane, while heavy vehicles can take a detour via Pardiac Road, Highway 132 and Campbell Road. The bridge’s upgrade is deemed necessary due to the movement of abutments installed in 1998, that require regular adjustments.



Photo: G. Gagné

The Third Range bridge construction site was installed at the beginning of July and work was well underway at the beginning of August.





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# Police report

The Quebec City Police Department is actively working to analyze the data on Jessy Duchesneau’s cellular phone, in an attempt to find more about the disappearance of the 19-year-old. Jessy, who is from Paspebiac, has been missing since the wee hours of November 4. His cellphone was discovered in an underground parking lot a few hours after he was reported missing.

Quebec City Police Department spokesperson, William Robitaille, explains that accessing data on the phone is challenging, “The phone, like most recent cellular phones, is frozen, in the sense that it is very hard to access its data. The phone is under analysis and expertise, carried out by competent people. It was found near the second place where surveillance cameras recorded Jessy walking along Prince Edouard Street, near the bridge passing over St. Charles River. The family recognized the phone. We were not sure at first.”

Officer Robitaille confirms that scuba divers from the Sûreté du Québec revisited the St. Charles River on November 13-14 in search of the young man’s body, “Jessy was last seen near one of the river’s bridges. We cannot neglect that clue even if we do hope to find him alive. We are also investigating on-land clues. We are checking all the clues that are included in a radius determined as a priority zone,” further explains Officer Robitaille.

Jessy Duchesneau’s family continues to actively participate in the ongoing search to locate him. The young man was last seen at about 3 a.m. on November 4, leaving a Quebec City bar near St. Joseph Street. Surveillance initially captured him passing near the bar, followed by another recording near the Prince Édouard location. Sûreté du Québec scuba divers conducted a first search on November 8.

Régis Savoie, 31, from Kedgwick, New Brunswick, was charged with dangerous driving and vehicle theft on November 11 at the New Carlisle courthouse. The suspect allegedly stole a van on Chemin de la Petite-Rivière-du-Loup in Pointe-à-la-Croix around 2:30 a.m. the previous night. The vehicle's owner witnessed the theft and pursued the suspect in another car, leading to a series of collisions between the two vehicles. During the course of the incident, both vehicles came to a stop. The witness exited the car, at which point the suspect allegedly discharged a firearm in the witness' direction. The suspect was arrested shortly after. The criminal prosecutor objected to Régis Savoie’s release and as of November 16, he remained in custody. His bail hearing was imminent as SPEC was reaching its deadline. Additional charges could be added.

On Thursday, November 9, Sûreté du Québec police officers of the Rocher-Percé MRC detachment arrested two men, both residents of Percé, on charges related to firearms offences. Clifton Thibeault, 44, appeared in court on November 9 and returned for his bail hearing on November 10 and was released on conditions. Similarly, Jamie Cotton, 48, appeared in court on November 13 and was released with conditions, mentions criminal prosecutor Isabelle Gavioli from the Percé courthouse. The charges brought against them include various charges related to firearms, such as aggravated assault, breach of conditions, uttering threats, and possession of drugs for the purpose of trafficking.

In addition to the arrests, searches were executed at a business and at two residences in Percé. During the searches, police seized 57 long guns (shotguns and hunting rifles), 20 handguns, approximately 8 pounds of bulk cannabis, a little over \$1,500, resale and drug production equipment, 9 air guns, five crossbows, more than 1,000 various ammunition items, and two cellular phones. A vehicle was seized due to illegal possession and because of its involvement in criminal activities.

Isabelle Gavioli points out that Quebec Court Judge Annick Boivin postponed the files until January 22, 2024, for the orientation and declaration step of the legal procedure.

The two men were arrested as part of the CENTAURE strategy which, according to the Sûreté du Québec, has the mandate to ensure constant pressure on organized crime and to actively fight armed violence in Quebec. CENTAURE allows all partner police forces to maximize their efforts at the national,

regional and local levels, targeting both the supply, importation, distribution and illegal possession of firearms.

Lucas Dalpé, 25, from Gaspé, faces charges of uttering death threats and threats causing bodily harm directed at Sûreté du Québec police officers. He was arrested in downtown Gaspé, near Accueil Blanche-Goulet, the food bank and shelter, on November 14. The apprehension followed a significant deployment of police officers and occurred around 2 p.m. Mr. Dalpé appeared at the Percé courthouse the following day. The man was already known to the police. As the SPEC was reaching its deadline, Lucas Dalpé remained in custody, awaiting his bail hearing.

The Municipality of Nouvelle, in collaboration with the Sûreté du Québec, officially inaugurated the Neutral Zone project on November 13. The Neutral Zone is located in the parking lot of the Nouvelle town hall, at 470 Francoeur, and has been operational since its inauguration.

The purpose of the Neutral Zone is to provide a secure space for various activities, such as facilitating transactions between buyers and sellers from online platforms or enabling separated parents to exchange custody of their children. This predefined zone is equipped with continuous 24/7 video recording to enhance safety and security and, while the location is not constantly under police surveillance, the presence of cameras allows for event reviews if necessary. Video recordings are retained for a period of 90 days. The zone is clearly identified by ground markings and permanent signage in the town hall parking lot.

This project, in partnership with the municipality of Nouvelle, is inspired by a pan-Canadian initiative and aims to offer citizens a place under surveillance in order to carry out their exchanges and thus prevent thefts and attacks. The concept of the neutral meeting zone has existed elsewhere in Canada for several years, including British Columbia and Ontario.

The Sûreté du Québec is now added to the few police forces that have deployed the initiative in Quebec to date. The Sûreté du Québec, therefore, hopes that citizens will not hesitate to use it to ensure that their exchanges take place as securely as possible.



Sergeant Ghislain Rouillard, responsible for the Avignon MRC auxiliary station, and Rachel Dugas, mayor of the Municipality of Nouvelle, show the neutral zone located in front of the town hall.

## UPAC arrives in Percé

**NELSON SERGERIE**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

**PERCÉ** - After meeting with various stakeholders within the Town of Percé over the past few weeks, the Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) visited Percé’s Municipal Hall on November 14.

According to our infor-

mation, investigators met with the general director of the Percé, Jean-François Coderre, and various municipal employees in connection with the suspension, with pay, since October 30 of the director of Urban Planning, Ghislain Pitre.

Mr. Pitre is the subject of allegations of fraud, theft of large sums of money and fal-

sification of documents.

The attorney for the Town of Percé, Simon Cossette Lachance, confirmed on the afternoon of November 14 that UPAC was indeed at the municipal hall.

At the November municipal council meeting, the attorney indicated that the allegations raised, without mentioning the information

obtained by SPEC, were serious. This led to the launch of an administrative investigation to verify the allegations, specifying that the suspension with pay follows a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada in order to respect the presumption of innocence.

The decision is purely administrative and the mayor,

Cathy Poirier, who is also Mr. Pitre’s spouse had not been informed of the process.

During the question period, however, citizens raised doubts about the impartiality of the mayor, to which the attorney indicated that there was no conflict of interest because the mayor was excluded.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Who still thinks that it is a great idea?

On November 14, Quebec’s Minister of Finance, Éric Girard, stirred significant controversy when he proudly announced that the Los Angeles Kings will play two exhibition games at Quebec City’s Videotron Centre in early October 2024. What heightened the tension was the government is ready to throw in between \$5 million and \$7 million to offset potential deficits associated with this initiative.

The announcement was made amidst mounting social tensions in Quebec, as only a week prior, that same minister had informed Quebecers that six months of rough budgetary times were looming.

Furthermore, the timing of this revelation, just one week prior to the November 21-22-23 general strike called by the Common Front, raises eyebrows. The Common Front is made up of four unions, uniting 420,000 individuals primarily employed in the health and education sectors. A staggering 80% of them are women, who have by and large not benefited from pay and working conditions improvements as much as other cross sections of the population. The gap between government offers and what the Common Front is asking hovers around 10% over five years and negotiations have basically stalled.

Minister Girard, a fierce hockey enthusiast much like Premier François Legault, argues that supporting the four-day stay of the Los Angeles Kings in Quebec City will generate spin offs the same way the Montreal Canadian Grand Prix car race does.

He anticipates that the Quebec City event will generate \$10 million in spin offs but he admits that no study was carried out to confirm that number.

An odd sense of priorities, to say the least

It doesn’t take hours of reflection to conclude that the choice made by Minister Girard, assisted by Premier Legault to use a hockey analogy, will become a standard for years to come in the category of poor priorities.

He provided opposition parties with a wide array of arguments, likely to echo far beyond the current National Assembly session.

Prior to Minister Girard’s economic update on November 7, Banques alimentaires du Québec, the food bank network, asked the government for \$18 million in additional funding to cope with skyrocketing demands. Minister Girard and Treasury Board Minister Sonia Lebel fell short by \$8 million, an amount slightly exceeding the maximum

amount the Quebec government is ready to cough up to bring the Los Angeles Kings to the capital! It is a random occurrence for sure but it provided that fine press line to Gregory Kelley of Quebec’s Liberal Party.

Although hockey is Canada and Quebec’s national sport, handing out grants to professional organizations, particularly without a thorough assessment, invariably ignites controversy, often leaning towards the negative.

Some older people probably remember the January 2000 proposition made by then federal minister, John Manley, to the effect of possibly handing out money to the six Canadian teams playing in the National Hockey League at the time (the Winnipeg Jets had moved to Atlanta, before coming back) in order to cover 25% of their deficit, as the difference between the Canadian and American currencies was making it hard for them to make ends meet. Mr. Manley’s idea was expressed on a Tuesday and by the ensuing Friday, it was forgotten, due to the public outcry against the notion of supporting hockey’s millionaires.

A similar debate surrounded the construction of Quebec City’s \$370 million Videotron Centre, for the hypothetical return of the Nordiques, an aspiration that never materialized and which might never happen. The outcome was different then as Quebecor was able to convince Jean Charest, the premier at the time, of the centre’s relevance, although it continues to be a source of controversy.

The Ottawa Senators might soon be looking for a new owner, however, even though their book value is about \$1 billion, which is one of the lowest in the NHL, chances are that Quebecor’s big boss, Pierre-Karl Péladeau, won’t be a taker, at least not alone.

There also isn’t sufficient proof that the Quebec City business class would generate additional takers. Moreover, NHL’s commissioner, Gary Bettman, has shown little enthusiasm for the move of any franchise to a smaller market like Quebec City, despite its strong hockey tradition. Instead, he has shown a clear preference for setting up NHL teams in American markets, even those in desert regions.

Returning to local issues, we must consider that the amount the Coalition avenir Québec government will likely extend to pay for the October 2024 event deficit is more than the total amount given yearly by the same government to the 68 amateur sports federations in the province.

There are schools without gymnasiums in Quebec, or without proper sports fields to allow youths and adults to stay or become physically active and healthy. The same reality hits hundreds of municipalities that have consistently appealed to the same government to increase its allocations in order to

keep Quebecers moving, an initiative that would likely lead to the reduction of healthcare budgets.

Éric Girard and François Legault, however, decided to favour a hockey club that is worth around \$1.8 billion instead!

Some other ministers of the Coalition avenir Québec are extremely upset over the decision. Think of Sonia Lebel who will soon meet with Quebec’s union leaders. While \$7 million only represents a drop in the bucket of the sums that are mentioned in negotiations pertaining to public employees, the symbolic gesture of granting funds to bring hockey players, each earning millions annually, to Quebec City is bound to upset her.

In an interview conducted a day after Mr. Girard’s hockey announcement, Transport Minister Geneviève Guilbault, who is often criticized for her money-pinching stance on commuter transport, was unable to say anything clearly positive about the eventual coming of the Los Angeles Kings.

An attempt to break a Quebec City jinx?

The Coalition avenir Québec government has not only made controversial decisions over the last months, as controversy invariably occurs in politics, but its main leaders have opted for choices that show a blatant lack of judgement.

The attempt to bring back power dams as Quebec’s solution to our energy needs, the renewed interest in the Third link project between the capital and Lévis hours after the by-election loss in Jean-Talon, the poor management of the aerial service file, the handling of tuition fees for students from outside Quebec, the pitiful negotiations with public sector employees, and the way Transport Minister Geneviève Guilbault handles talks with municipalities about commuter transport only give a partial sample of the Legault government’s mismanagement lately.

One might wonder where the troubleshooters are who are supposed to advise the cabinet or have we reached a point where Premier Legault and his main ministers, excluding Sonia Lebel and Geneviève Guilbault, don’t listen to anybody anymore?

Meanwhile, tickets to witness the Kings play against the Boston Bruins and the Florida Panthers come with a significant price tag, ranging from \$55 to \$170. Despite this, they will likely be in high demand.

Before it is done, we might have the time to figure out if bringing the Kings to Quebec was an attempt by the CAQ to rebuild a bridge between the party and the Quebec City electorate, disgruntled by uncertainty surrounding the Third Link, or just another questionable move by the finance minister and the premier.

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# Coalition for the return of the passenger train meets with VIA Rail president

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON — Representatives of the Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of the VIA Rail passenger train, along with Éric Dubé, the president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, met with the president and chief executive officer of VIA Rail, Mario Péroquin, on November 1 regarding the public transporter's intentions to resume its service on the Gaspé Peninsula.

Although VIA Rail's president didn't commit to a date for the resumption of traffic or a potential reopening of segments along the Matapédia to Gaspé line, a query repeatedly posed by the Coalition, its spokesperson, Cynthia Patterson, described the encounter as "surprising and promising."

"I am inclined to give him some time to reflect on the file. I call that meeting surprising and promising because Mr. Péroquin said that he will come to the Gaspé Peninsula in early 2024, either in January or February. It is his idea to come here in the middle of the winter. He said it before we had to ask him. That makes me want to continue discussions with him," says Ms. Patterson, a Barachois citizen who has dedicated 38 years to advocating for the protection and improvement of rail services in the Gaspé Peninsula.

There is room for hope, more so than over recent years, during which VIA Rail's management stayed physically distant from regional issues such as the resumption of the service between Matapédia and Gaspé.

"Number one, we had the meeting. Secondly, we were not squeezed out of time and, thirdly, we had a real discussion," stresses Cynthia Patterson.



Photo: Eve-Danièle Veilleux, VIA Rail Canada

Rémi Bujold, of Consilium Relations; Éric Dubé, president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie; Cynthia Patterson, Coalition of Gaspésians, for the return of VIA Rail's passenger train spokesperson; Mario Péroquin, president of VIA Rail; Lucie Desrochers, Gilles Lamy and Bernard Babin, all administrators of the Coalition; as well as Michael Acosta, executive officer of VIA Rail's commercial affairs.

son.

She notes that despite the positive atmosphere stemming from the meeting, the challenges are far from over. As a result, she's exercising discretion in revealing specific details of certain aspects of the discussions at this time. However, she is open about the themes covered in the exchange.

"We told him that 'This is your train but also our train.' We talked about everything, the time frame (for the service resumption), the possible return to New Carlisle before Gaspé, what Gaspésians should have as a service, the availability of rolling material and human resources (as VIA Rail will have to train new employees in the region). I talked about the elderly, the most vulnerable part of the population for whom the bus is not an option," she mentions.

"For now, we do not want to negotiate publicly. It is clear

that there is an intention from him and us to continue this conversation," adds Ms. Patterson. She thinks that if Mr. Péroquin visits the Gaspé Peninsula, he will gain a better grasp of the unenviable public transport situation and understand the urgency of resuming VIA Rail's service as soon as possible. This viewpoint has been consistently emphasized by the members of the Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of the VIA Rail passenger train, a stance that predates the organization's formation.

The last VIA Rail train to operate east of Matapédia dates back to the beginning of August 2013. The service was temporarily suspended because a saline solution had then been used as a defoliant, which caused damage to grade crossing signals. A bus replaced the train until the end of September 2013 at which time VIA Rail's service was indefinitely sus-

pended due to the condition of some bridges. At the time, the passenger train had been stopping in New Carlisle since December 2011 as urgent repairs were ordered on a bridge located in Chandler.

When VIA Rail's service was offered between Matapédia and Gaspé with three weekly return trips to Montreal, ridership peaked at nearly 30,000 passengers yearly. This made the Gaspé Peninsula train more popular than the combined ridership of the two other Quebec regional trains, linking Montreal to Abitibi and Montreal to Saguenay-Lac-Saint-

Jean.

The Gaspé Peninsula train also boasted the highest cost recovery ratio among VIA Rail's regional trains.

Transports Québec, the ministry that owns the line between Matapédia and Gaspé, has committed to reopening the railroad between New Richmond and Port Daniel before the end of 2024. Additionally, they plan to reinstate the section between Port Daniel and Gaspé before the end of 2026.

In the weeks ahead, the president of VIA Rail will have ample opportunities to think of Gaspésians as the Coalition has presented him with 350 postcards signed by Gaspésians requesting a prompt return of the passenger train. The postcard campaign was launched at the beginning of the 2023 summer. Hundreds of additional postcards were also sent to the Member of Parliament for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, Diane Lebouthillier; to the Minister of Transport Canada, Omar Alghabra (until the end of July); and to the new Minister of Transport Canada, Pablo Rodriguez since then.

"He acknowledged the ones he previously received by Canada Post and he is still receiving some. He will be receiving more," predicts Cynthia Patterson, as volunteers will have people sign additional postcards at public events over the coming weeks.

## VIA Rail's media relations' department sticks to old press line

Gilles Gagné

CARLETON — In a recent round of questions sent by SPEC to VIA Rail regarding the delays that have plagued the Ocean train, which links Halifax to Montreal three times weekly and which is also the only passenger train that stops in the Gaspé Peninsula, in Matapédia, the transporter's media relations service addressed regional train services but largely sidestepped issues related to the Ocean.

"We have always maintained that we will resume our service to Gaspé when the rails are safe and allow competitive travel times, and this is still our intention. Aside from the condition of the track, there are also several other factors to consider for VIA Rail, including the availability of rolling stock and labour, as well as the region's station upgrades. We will carry out internal analyses and work together with the owner of the infrastructure to prepare for the return of passenger rail between Matapédia and Gaspé. We do not intend to resume partial service to New Carlisle. We will communicate further when we have more information," stated the unsigned reply received on the evening of November 9.

SPEC had not inquired about the Gaspé Peninsula train in its last communications with VIA Rail, neither on October 18 nor on November 9.

Cynthia Patterson doesn't put much emphasis on that kind of reply from VIA Rail. "I don't give (VIA Rail's) media relations any weight in the current context," she declares.



Photo: Gilles Gagné

The only place in the region where Gaspésians have access to VIA Rail trains is Matapédia.

# Pascan Aviation faces service cuts and layoffs as grant ends, prompting concerns from a MNA

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE - The Member of the National Assembly for the Magdalen Islands riding and spokesperson for the third opposition group on transportation, Joël Arseneau, strongly condemns the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government's decision to terminate the Assistance Program for the Maintenance of Essential Regional Air Services.

Pascan Aviation, which serves the Gaspé and Bonaventure airports, has already implemented a budget cuts strategy. In a letter sent to its employees, the company foresees imminent layoffs.

Although the program's termination became effective on September 30, the CAQ government was unclear about extending the \$10 million program initiative until November 6. During this period of uncertainty, they hinted to air service providers, including Pascan, that the budgetary update on November 7 might include provisions for an extension.

"We are completely abandoning the regions to their fate," deplores Mr. Arseneau, "The consequences promise to be catastrophic for regional air links. The impact for citizens, patients and businesses risk being disastrous."

Quebec's Department of Transport alleges that the Assistance Program for the Maintenance of Essential Regional Air Services was initially implemented at the onset of the pandemic as an emergency measure. They argue that the pandemic's context is now over and that ridership has returned to its pre-COVID crisis



Joël Arseneau fears that the CAQ government cuts in aerial service grants will have a domino effect that will be felt over the medium to long term.

level recently.

Joël Arseneau disagrees with the Quebec Department of Transport's stance. "When the program was implemented in April 2020, the ridership was greatly reduced, almost null in fact, because of COVID but the link needed to be maintained in order to carry parcels, patients, specialized staff and so on. Then came Air Canada's June (2020) decision to pull out of eight important regional links across the country, including the Magdalen Islands' service, except for the months of July and August, which is still the case."

He emphasizes that during the summer of 2020, the Quebec government was planning to create an air service policy. "François Bonnardel (then Quebec's Minister of Transport) brings together stakeholders and they meet from July 2020 to lay the foundations of a new system, which was supposed to be a real regional air service policy. I still remember his description of what he wanted: reliable, affordable and long-lasting. He invites the stakeholders to submit briefs: Régionair, the UMQ (Union of Quebec Municipalities), the FQM (Federation of Quebec Municipalities), Air Creebec and Pascan. They are invited to submit what they can do and start on a new basis. In March 2022, Minister Bonnardel pointed out at the National Assembly that the future aerial policy will be based on the stimulation of supply. Two months later, the minister announced the RAAP (Regional Aerial Access Program) and the \$500 tickets, a failure that has not met its goals, by far. There is consequently still a need for an essential service program in the regions," analyzes Joël Arseneau.

He also underlines that the cost of the program, \$10 million for the six months ending on September 30, was not exorbitant.

"We don't know if the sum was completely used by air providers. We know that Pascan was the main user. We don't know how much was put in the program since its inception in March 2020," he stresses.

**Clientele has not returned to pre-pandemic levels**

Joël Arseneau finds it hard to believe the Quebec government's claim that ridership has



Pascan Aviation has not released the details about its round of budgetary cuts but for now, the Gaspé Peninsula is not affected.

Photos: G. Gagné

returned to pre-March 2020 levels.

"I asked for some statistics and I am still waiting for them. They were not presented upon the government's confirmation to the effect that the Assistance Program for the Maintenance of Essential Regional Air Services was cut. I take the plane regularly, and I can say that before the pandemic, 10 to 15 people were getting off the plane in Gaspé, and it is now one or two," specifies Mr. Arseneau.

In a letter sent to its employees and obtained by the SPEC, Pascan outlines a cost-cutting plan spanning from November 9 to 15. The company invites employees inter-

ested in reducing their working hours, taking vacation time between now and the end of the year, or planning to leave the company to inform the transporter by November 10. Temporary layoffs at Pascan were initiated on November 15.

The company also announced that its flights between Mont-Joli, Sept-Îles and Wabush will be axed by December 4. As SPEC approached its deadline, there was no mention of service cuts for the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

"The company is in a survival mode in a way. Its management was led to believe that the Assistance Program for the Maintenance of Essential Re-

gional Air Services would be extended past October 1. For six weeks, its services were maintained as if the program would continue. There is some financial catching up to do. For now, our region is not experiencing service cuts but we must look further down the road. We must fear budget cuts and ticket price hikes," summarizes Joël Arseneau.

"François Legault (Quebec's Premier) doesn't care about regional development. We have been telling him for years that what carriers need, and what regional residents want, are structuring measures for reliable and affordable air service. He refuses that," concludes Mr. Arseneau.

## Marked resumption of cruise ship visits to Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Due to a good recovery for cruises in 2023, Gaspé seems to have regained a sense of normalcy similar to that which prevailed before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Destination Gaspé indicates that, for the season (May 12 and October 22), 26 ships anchored in Gaspé Bay, welcoming 13,006 cruise passengers and 7,735 crew members. This is double the attendance data for 2022 when 21 ships welcomed 5,940 cruise passengers and 4,286 crew members.

"We had only one cancellation, which resulted in 26 ships stopping in Gaspé. We are almost back to normal when it comes to the cruise industry for Destination Gaspé," says the interim director of Destination Gaspé, Igor



Photo: N. Sergerie

Cruises are resuming their travels to the Gaspé Peninsula.

Urban.

In the spring, the organization hoped to receive a total of 30,000 people, but the cruise ships are not yet sailing at full capacity, with a rate of about 87% capacity this year.

Destination Gaspé has taken a different approach by focusing on smaller ships, partly due to the presence of

Cont'd on page 15



# \$5.8 million from the Fisheries Fund for 35 projects

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

NEWPORT - Thirty-five projects will be supported under the Quebec Fisheries Fund to the tune of \$5.8 million in order to improve the efficiency, quality, and sustainability of the fish and seafood sector in the province.

Of that \$5.8 million, the federal government will contribute a sum of \$4 million and the Quebec government will provide \$1.8 million.

“It is important to be able to help the sector move towards the future in terms of new technology and innovation, both in terms of capture and processing,” said the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands and Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Diane Leboutheillier, during the announcement on November 14 at the Newport wharf.

While \$14 million remains in the Fisheries Fund envelope and the Ottawa-Quebec agreement is due to end next April, the MP is not yet able to confirm if the fund will be extended for an additional two years, as requested by Quebec to ensure that the entire envelope is used.

“There are other projects on the table. It is a tool that is important for the community to propel the community into the future,” the minister states.

Among the most important projects supported by the fund in the Gaspé Peninsula, Merinov will receive the lion's share with two qualifying projects.

Merinov's H2O project will receive \$420,992. It aims to improve the environmental performance of marine product processing plants in the Gaspé Peninsula and Montérégie, particularly with regard to processing water management.

Merinov's second project aims to improve the selectivity of gillnets for Greenland halibut fishing in Quebec. It will reduce bycatches and the risk of marine mammal entanglements. The initiative will receive \$177,199.

The Association of Owner Captains of the Gaspésie will receive \$231,084 to acquire safety and communications



Photo: N. Sergerie

Minister Leboutheillier made the announcement on November 14 on the Newport wharf.

equipment for fishing boats.

The Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen Group will receive a total of \$140,000 for projects aimed at testing different types of alternative bait for lobster fishing to replace mackerel and herring. They will also carry out experimental fishing for snow crab using a new system of rope-free buoys.

Amounts of \$50,000 and \$70,000 will be used to support several initiatives by fish processors and for fishermen to acquire equipment for their boats.

“These are companies that will improve their productivity and their quality at the end of the day and all that benefits the industry and we are very happy about that,” mentions the Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé and parliamentary assistant to the Quebec Minister of Fisheries, Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

### DFO data is not perfect

Diane Leboutheillier agrees with the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development who recently indicated that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans had failed to collect scientific data to manage fisheries' sustainably.

“We must have even more relevant data for the future,” said the minister, considering that the capture sector is experiencing significant upheavals due to climate change.

The minister notes concerns in several species. Regarding the shrimp situation, everyone is asking for a decision before the holidays, but the minister repeats that the decision will come in January at the latest.

“I don't want to relive in shrimp what we experienced in groundfish and cod. We will win together, but we can lose together. But I really intend for us to win together,” explains the minister.

Ms. Leboutheillier says she is happy in her new role, having been appointed to DFO on July 26 by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

“I'm always like a fish in water. For me, it's a ministry that I love. It's an environment that I love. It's the economy, the culture. It's an environment that I identify with a lot. I want to thank the fishing sector because when I need to have additional information, the openness of the community to respond to it (is there) and we see how people care about the environment,” comments Ms. Leboutheillier.

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# Court grants ownership of the Copper Interpretation Centre to the Town of Murdochville

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MURDOCHVILLE - Murdochville obtains a court decision and takes control of the Copper Interpretation Centre, closed since 2017.

The Town of Murdochville filed legal action in January 2022 to seize the facility due to unpaid municipal taxes, and a judgment in favour of the municipality was rendered last June and modified in September.

“For the future of the Copper Interpretation Centre, we must have a reopening plan with a non-profit organization on which councillors would sit,” says the mayor of Murdochville, Délisca Ritchie Roussy.

The elected official does not want the town to take over the daily management of the building, suggesting that operating it municipally would incur much higher operating costs.

“We could give them a lease with resource support from the town,” the mayor further suggests.

The establishment had been closed since 2017 following a tragedy that claimed the lives of two people just days after a volunteer committee had restarted activities. The centre was owned by a non-profit organization, and the administrators had abandoned it in early 2017.

Between 2013 and 2017, the centre had accumulated a loss of \$120,000.

“There was nothing left. It’s one of the beautiful buildings in the town, and we said to ourselves that it didn’t make sense to see such a beautiful site closed when, in the summer, people would visit, creating an atmosphere. We said to ourselves, we’ll take it,” explains the mayor.

The town had already contributed to the operation of the building by paying for electricity and insurance before its closure.

“We’re trying to open for

the next tourist season,” she continues.

Copper should always be the main focus of the centre. “Yes, but there could be other things like interactive elements. We will be accompanied by people who know it,” says Ms. Ritchie Roussy.

The centre was rebuilt in 2013 following a fire. It is still in very good condition.

“There are no big investments to make. Just a little repair. It’s a beautiful building. It’s practically new,” says the mayor.

**Photo:** The Murdochville Copper Interpretation Centre was rebuilt in 2013 after a fire.  
*Credit: N. Sergerie.*



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# BLUE ZONE: All that’s missing is the political announcement

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - All that is missing is political approval for the Blue Economy Zone to become a reality with a branch in the Rocher-Percé MRC.

This is what the president and chief executive officer of the Blue Zone, Martin Beaulieu, indicates.

“I think that the various stakeholders, the promoters, Investissement Québec, and the Blue Zone team, have worked well to bring the file to the final stage for a decision by the Quebec government,” says Mr. Beaulieu.

Initially, there was talk of spin-offs totalling \$500 million via the creation of a blue economy zone.

However, since the concept was made public, promoters have approached people in the area or have been referred by



The CEO of the Blue Zone, Martin Beaulieu

Photo: Archives

Investissement Québec International.

“Today we are now talking about a project worth \$1 billion. These are really partnership projects with the area,” underlines Mr. Beaulieu.

There are several small projects in the area, but also larger ones.

“There are major investment projects by Quebec companies, but also foreign companies,” adds the president and CEO.

The planned billion dollars

does not include parallel investments.

“For example, the \$1.4 billion expansion project of the Port of Montreal is not included. The day this project is realized, we will change the face of the port, and the investments will involve our research centres. Knowing that it is an infrastructure over 30, 40 or 50 years, the innovation aspect of these projects becomes extremely important,” he indicates.

### The Blue Zone is more than just fishing.

“It’s beyond that and it’s connected. When we talk about an electric fishing boat, for example, that brings us closer to other shipowners or shipyards elsewhere in Quebec. This brings us closer to maritime innovation and other companies in Quebec or outside Quebec

that manufacture batteries or motors. It’s much broader,” he continues.

The turbulence in various fisheries, such as the shrimp fishery, will be closely monitored by the Blue Zone.

“An objective of the area is to work with these resources in an optimal and sustainable way. We can continue to collect, but what do we do with the biomass once collected? How can we promote, beyond the fish filet, the entire fish or species? It’s becoming an important issue,” says the president and CEO.

Mr. Beaulieu does not want to set a date for an announcement from Quebec which he hopes will be before Christmas.

“It’s looking like we’re going to get our signals sooner rather than later, before the end of the year,” concludes the president and CEO.

## Beach recharge work being done in Percé

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - Emergency work is being carried out over the coming weeks to protect the Percé walkway which was damaged last fall.

Storms in September and December 2022 caused significant damage to the infrastructure.

The walkway near the Normandie Hotel required repairs as sea water eroded most of the rock supporting the walkway to the point where a section no longer had any rock foundation underneath.

Additionally, a concrete descent had been broken in two due to erosion.

The Town of Percé submitted a bid on behalf of the Ministry of Public Safety, and it will cost \$1.9 million to protect the sector this winter.

“This is emergency work which will last at most six weeks. This is a recharge that must be completed in 2024 to protect Anse du Sud with a



The emergency beach recharge will aim to protect this section near the Normandie Hotel.

Photo: N. Sergerie

new recharge. Currently, though, it’s to prepare for the upcoming December storms,” explains the mayor, Cathy Poirier.

In recent years, these high intensity storms have caused damage in most parts of the Gaspé Peninsula.

“Since 2018, Percé has been part of a pilot project. There have been others in Quebec since. These types of structures are supposedly being perfected and what we are told is that the crest was not high enough. This is why a ‘fix’ needs to be made. What I’m saying is that we have to make sure that the next peak will last over time. Will it last a little longer? Possibly because it will be higher but, in the long term, there will be new monitoring to be done. It will tell us about the future,” adds the mayor.

During the basic recharge, it was mentioned that this work should have more or less frequent adjustments, if necessary.

“There was the 2018 recharge. There was a second recharge in 2019 to make adjustments, and there hasn’t been one since. Would there have been one in 2020, 2021, less important, but which would have protected certain sectors? Would we be where we are today? I can’t answer

that,” says the mayor of Percé.

“One day the Town of Percé must not find itself with this responsibility. Have you seen the call for tenders? We’re talking about \$1.9 million. If the town was to find itself with a responsibility of this magnitude, I do not need to draw you a picture. The town would not have the financial capacity to assume such a large amount,” mentions the mayor.

According to the mayor, as this is the continuation of the 2018 project, the town already deposited its capital investment.

Following the storm of December 30, 2016, which destroyed the old walkway built in the 1970s, a coastal rehabilitation was initiated by replenishing the beach with pebbles and moving certain buildings at a total cost of \$20 million, including \$16 million from Quebec, and \$3 million from Ottawa. The balance was the responsibility of the Town of Percé.



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# HIGH GASOLINE PRICES:

## Energy Board focuses on the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

NEWPORT - The Energy Board is once again looking into the high prices of gasoline in the Gaspé Peninsula.

This is what the Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, confirmed after prices rose again without any real reason on November 14 in several areas of the region.

The Minister of Energy, Pierre Fitzgibbon, went further after asking the Energy Board to explore what was happening recently in the Quebec City region.

“To expand the scope of data analysis from consumer prices, we understand that the phenomenon that we see particularly in the Gaspé region is experienced elsewhere in Quebec. It’s good news that the minister is allowing us to broaden the focus on the issue that we have been raising for some time,” comments Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

In some regions of Quebec, gasoline is selling between \$1.50 and \$1.55 per litre.

The gap between these prices and those of the region is between 15 and 20 cents, despite a tax credit which should normalize the prices in the region with those of large centres.



The MNA for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix is open to filing with the Competition Bureau again.

“I think that there are enough observations that we have made in recent months and recent years, myself and others before me, and we have come to the conclusion that there are enough indicators that allow us to see what we cannot understand in terms of price variation from one region to another in Quebec. With the mechanisms we have adopted to stabilize prices, I think we are making progress in a positive way,” continues Mr. Sainte-Croix.

The MNA did not contact the Competition Bureau following the September response, which suggested providing evidence of possible collusion.

“I still haven’t contacted the Competition Bureau again but with the evolution of the last few weeks, we will take the time to see how things are mov-

ing. But our intention remains firm. We are going to have a discussion on this issue,” says the MNA.

Premier François Legault went even further on November 16, during a visit to Gaspé. “Pierre Fitzgibbon, the Minister of the Economy and Energy, took action on the matter in Quebec City where there was a similar situation. He is currently analyzing the situation here in the Gaspésie but we will not accept that oil companies make excess profits at the expense of Gaspé residents,” said Mr. Legault.

The premier is not ready to adopt a decree to set a maximum profit margin.

“We do this with the Board. This is what we did in Quebec City and this is what we are currently looking at with the Gaspésie,” said Mr. Legault.

On the evening of November 14, the price at the pump increased from a range of \$1.63 to \$1.66 per litre to \$1.73 in several areas of the Gaspé Peninsula.

Based on data from the Energy Board, the price should have instead been \$1.67 on November 15.

CAA-Quebec estimated a litre at \$1.68, which is far from the prices displayed by several retailers.

In September, a notice from the Energy Board revealed that the average annual price of a litre of gasoline was among the highest in Quebec for three of the last five years, namely 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The Board set the price per litre at \$1.0871 in 2020, \$1.3763 in 2021, and \$1.8196 in 2022.

In addition, prices in 2018 (\$1.3124) and 2019 (\$1.2569) placed the region in fourth place in the province, within a few tenths of a cent from first place.

Another observation: the estimated retail margin of Gaspé retailers had increased much faster than the Quebec average.

In 2018, the average Gaspé margin was 9.08 cents compared to 6.35 cents for Quebec, representing a difference of 2.73 cents more in the region. In 2023, the Gaspé average is

13.80 cents so far, compared to 9.83 cents in Quebec, a difference of 3.97 cents.

The increase in the gap between 2018 and 2023 was established at 4.73 cents by the Energy Board, while this increase was only 3.48 cents in Quebec.

The net margin, that is to say the retailer's profit once operating costs determined by the Energy Board are eliminated, is 8.30 cents this year, compared to a provincial average of 5.26 cents.

This means that Gaspé Peninsula retailers make an average profit of 3.04 cents higher than their counterparts.

In 2019, the Town of Gaspé asked the Competition Bureau to investigate gasoline prices in the Gaspé Peninsula after noting between June 3 and August 26 an average margin between 8.3 and 18.5 cents per litre higher than the estimated minimum price by the Energy Authority.

At the beginning of 2020, the Energy Board established that Gaspé retailers had accumulated a profit margin twice as large as the Quebec average in 2019.

In its report, the Energy Board even indicated that in five years the Gaspé Peninsula was, in 19% of cases, the region with the highest price in Quebec.

## The Gaspé Peninsula under scrutiny by Desjardins: a slowdown is imminent

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - According to an economic study released on November 9 by Mouvement Desjardins, the economic growth in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands will slow down in 2024.

The increase in gross domestic product is estimated at 2.2% in 2023 and will decrease to 1.7% in 2024.

Its nominal value is projected at \$4.321 billion in 2023 and \$4.394 billion next year.

Desjardins notes that efforts have been made in recent years to diversify and transform the economy.

Even though economic activity is still largely focused on natural resources, the wind sector is increasingly contributing to the region’s development.

The region is also home to Merinov, one of the largest industrial research centres spe-



There is a shortage of manpower in most of Gaspé Peninsula's economic fields, notably in the lumber industry.

cializing in fishing technologies, aquaculture, seafood processing and marine bioresources.

The fishing industry is being greatly challenged by climate change, making research and innovation all the more necessary.

Desjardins also mentions the upcoming establishment of

the blue economy innovation zone, jointly with the Lower Saint Lawrence.

However, the workforce challenge remains as the number of vacant positions stay higher than what was observed before the pandemic.

The strategy to continue attracting newcomers has resulted in a gain of 742 people,

but concentrated in the 55-64 age bracket, which does not increase the workforce pool.

The arrival of these people puts pressure on housing while the vacancy rate will remain practically zero at 0.3%, and 0% in the Town of Gaspé.

After slowing down to 155 this year, housing starts are expected to resume and reach 175, which remains far from the 210 in 2022.

Desjardins notes that this is not enough to fill the housing shortage, and the rise in interest rates has reduced new projects in 2023.

Real estate transactions will experience slight growth in 2024 to 1,049, an increase of 35 over 2023.

The average property sale price will increase from \$217,389 this year to \$248,821 next year.

For 2024, the disposable personal income per capita will be \$36,162, a gain of 2.9%.

However, the unemployment rate will increase to 11.3%, an increase of 1% from 2023, while the number of people employed will decrease from 34,500 this year to 34,100.

The difficulties in the fishing sector will be particularly felt, especially in the shrimp industry, while the lobster sector is expected to remain stable.

Total investments, across all sectors of activity, are expected to conclude at \$734 million in 2023, a slight gain of 0.4% over 2022.

By sector, the sum is \$542.5 million from the public sector, up 10.7%. The private sector’s share is \$191.7 million, down 20.5%.

The return of the railway is noted in regional investments, with a total of \$872 million invested for the complete rehabilitation from Matapédia to Gaspé.



# Overfishing, seals, and cold winters lead to the decline in cod stocks

## Part two of a two-part report

● GILLES GAGNÉ  
*Part 1 was presented in the November 1 issue.*

NEWPORT – Three factors have strongly contributed to the decline of cod stocks in the Atlantic and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, as explained by the late biologist Alain Fréchet. He was interviewed during a documentary produced by Carleton-based firm Gaspa in 2008.

Having worked for the Maurice-Lamontagne Institute in Mont-Joli for nearly 30 years and specializing in cod stocks, he maintained for years that overfishing, the unbridled proliferation of seals, and a succession of cold winters between 1985 and 1995 juxtaposed to lead to a decline that continues today.

The cold winters resulted in weaker cod, and those skinny fish were unable to reproduce in numbers similar to the previous generation. By the second half of 1993, stocks were so depleted that the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans implemented a moratorium in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence in August and a second one, affecting the Northern Gulf, in December, 30 years ago.

Roch Lelièvre, president of the Lelièvre, Lelièvre et Lemoignan firm, remembers that a considerable number of recently renovated or new fish processing plants, amidst a dispute between federal and Quebec ministers known as the “de Bané-Garon war,” had encouraged fishermen to intensify their fishing efforts to supply the processing industry.

“There were all these plants that wanted cod to justify their existence,” summarizes Mr. Lelièvre. Pierre de Bané, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and Jean Garon, Quebec Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, engaged in a tough battle to demonstrate which government was the best, in the wake of the constitutional tensions between Quebec and Ottawa in the early 1980s.

One Gaspesian fisherman remembers the period between 1980 to 1995 as being so stressful that he chose to remain anonymous when commenting on those years.

“Midshore fishermen

wanted to catch 700,000 to 800,000 pounds per year. They were pushing to be part of the millionaires' club, not millionaires in money, but millionaires in catches. Scientists wanted to reduce quotas well before the moratorium because they knew that the resource could not provide these quantities. Politics was involved because it would have been frowned upon to cut quotas before elections,” remembers the anonymous fisherman.

The Progressive Conservative Party, through Minister Tom Siddon, increased the cod quota to 127,900 tonnes in eastern Canada in 1988, an election year, compared to 125,500 tonnes in 1987, even though catches had fallen by at least 25% since 1985.

In the spring of 1997, during the election campaign prior to the June 2 election, Minister Fred Mifflin granted a quota of 6,000 tonnes for Atlantic Canada, including Quebec, after a three-year moratorium. Fisheries and Oceans later raised this quota to 13,000 in 2002 before instituting a second moratorium in 2003.

The notion of a moratorium appeared to struggle in finding its way into the minds of decision makers in Ottawa. A quota of 3,000 tonnes was granted in 2004, another election year in Canada. It wasn't until 2022 before another strict moratorium was imposed, even though symbolic quotas of 1000 tonnes punctuated 2019, 2020 and 2021.

### A culture to change, according to Réginald Cotton

A commercial fisherman for nearly 50 years who fished groundfish during his first 30 years, Réginald Cotton, from Rivière-au-Renard, admits to having been skeptical when the moratorium was imposed in 1993. He had fished in the south and north of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

“I was skeptical because I had alerted the government in the early 1990s. We no longer saw cod in conventional places,” he says. The fisherman also saw stock assessments in places where there had never been cod.

Réginald Cotton notes that almost every cod fisherman was in disbelief at the scale of



Photo: Jean-Philippe Thibaulte

*Réginald Cotton is confident that redfish will not solve all the problems of commercial fishing.*

the crisis, particularly because good catch years had been recorded in Quebec until 1987.

“The fall was so rapid. Many measures have been harmful to our industry. The seals are still there and it's worse than ever,” he summarizes.

He stayed in the fisheries by acquiring a quota of shrimp, a species that has struggled in recent years.

The seal population has increased tenfold in the Gulf and Eastern Atlantic since the spectacular appearances of French actress, Brigitte Bardot, on the Magdalen Islands in the mid-1970s speaking out against Canada's seal hunt.

Mr. Cotton pities the new Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Diane Lebouthillier,

who will have serious decisions to make in the coming months.

“What is she going to do with these hot issues of shrimp, turbot, and redfish? I'd rather be in my shoes than in hers,” he says.

With a biomass of between three million and four million tonnes in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the redfish exceeds in total mass all other species combined. The reopening of its fishery, seen as a way to slow the decline of shrimp, will be complicated, warns Réginald Cotton.

“It's an industry that needs rebuilding, from capture to markets. I fear we will see the resumption of redfish fishing based on a model where fishermen will fill their boats while the processing plants will not

take it. Fishing has become a culture, going offshore, coming back, and putting plant employees to work. If we fish it like before to make blocks (of frozen redfish), we won't get paid sufficiently. I lived through the time when processing plants rationed quantities upon landing. Even with the current abundance of redfish, if we fish like before, it won't work,” he says.

“I'm coming back from Europe. The fishermen leave for five to six days, they catch several species, 6,000 or 10,000 pounds, in impeccable condition. When we tell them that here, we bring back 30,000, 35,000 pounds, when it's not 60,000 pounds per trip, they find that very abundant. If we don't change practices, everyone, fishermen and consumers, are going to hit a wall again. You have to focus on quality,” adds Mr. Cotton.

“We lost 10 years with the redfish. Fishing should be resumed. The fish do not reach 22 centimetres, the official commercial size, because there are too many redfish. Changes are needed in our way of seeing things. I went to Portugal several years ago. On my plate, I was served a whole fish, from head to tail. It was excellent. It's not just the fillet on the fish. Taking just the fillet leads to waste. We must ensure the sustainability of stocks. I don't hear a lot of people talking about that, focusing on quality. They do it elsewhere. Those who make blocks of frozen fish will still be paid in pennies,” he concludes.



Photo: Courtesy of Denis Éloquin

*Redfish now represents 82% of the whole biomass of all species found in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.*

# The decline of cod: A brief overview

 **GILLES GAGNÉ**

NEWPORT - A brief review of data, including a table and two charts, helps us understand the extent of the sudden decline of cod in the three fishing sectors of maritime Quebec and in eastern Canada, even though it had been deteriorating for several decades.

### Key Points:

- Despite moratoriums over the last 30 years, the cod stock in the north and south of the Gulf of St. Lawrence hasn't recovered.
- The situation in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence is particularly alarming with a biomass index in 2018 at only 2.5% of the index of the 1980s. This is 40 times less.
- As of early 2018, the Southern Gulf spawning stock biomass, which means cod of reproductive age, is estimated at 13,900 metric tonnes, the lowest in the 69-year time series and only 4% of the high biomass levels of the 1980s.
- Predation by gray seals is considered the main cause of the high natural mortality of this stock over the past two decades.
- Over the past 20 years, cod have gradually moved out of

their traditional feeding areas, going from shallow waters to deeper waters during their feeding season in the Southern Gulf. This shift appears to be the result of the increased risk of predation by gray seals in shallow waters during the summer. This change also coincides with the decline in the condition of cod. Specimens are thinner and weaker now than they were 40 or 50 years ago.

- Considering the current abundance of gray seals in this ecosystem, the recovery of this cod population appears unlikely, and the likelihood of extinction is high.

- In the northern Gulf of St. Lawrence, the spawning stock amounts to 42,900 metric tons. The situation there is a little less precarious, but it remains very worrying.

*Source: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, based on the 2018 assessment of Atlantic cod (Gadus morhua) in the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, the most recent available assessment.*

*Note: Assessments were conducted annually by Fisheries and Oceans, when commercial fishing was active. Since the 1990s, several years go by before a new assessment is conducted.*

## Was the moratorium declared in 1992 or 1993?

*Gilles Gagné*  
NEWPORT – It is often mentioned in the news that the cod moratorium was declared in 1992. This is accurate for Newfoundland, where the moratorium was officially announced on July 2 of that year by then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, John Crosbie, a Newfoundlander. At the time, it was evident that a terrible outcome was looming, as cod fishermen from Newfoundland were returning to harbours empty-handed. A day prior to the official announcement, Mr. Crosbie attended a Canada Day celebration in Bay Bulls, a fishing village close to St. John's, Newfoundland's capital.

He was faced by hundreds of angry fishermen and plant workers who blamed him, rightfully to a certain extent, for his role in destroying the fishery that had fed their families for so long. In fact, John Crosbie had been appointed to his Fisheries and Oceans Canada Minister position on April 21, 1991. On July 1, 1992, he had been in office for 14 months and 10 days. The resource had already suffered significant damage by the spring of 1991, as biologists had started warning decision makers since at least the mid-1980s.

Mr. Crosbie, who had just fought in Ottawa to get a fair compensation package from his fellow Cabinet colleagues in the previous days, lost his calm after being yelled at for minutes and let out a sentence that remains famous, 31 years later.

“I didn’t take the fish from the damn water, so don’t go abusing me,” he shouted back.

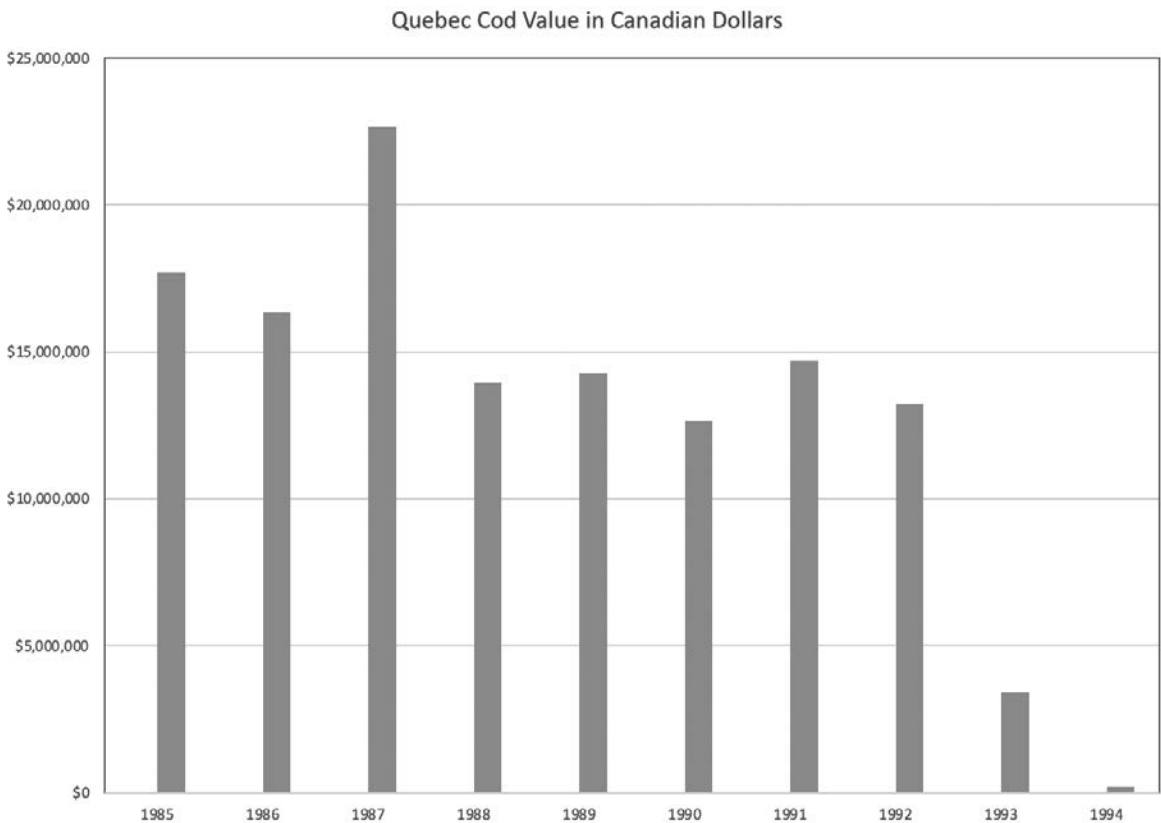
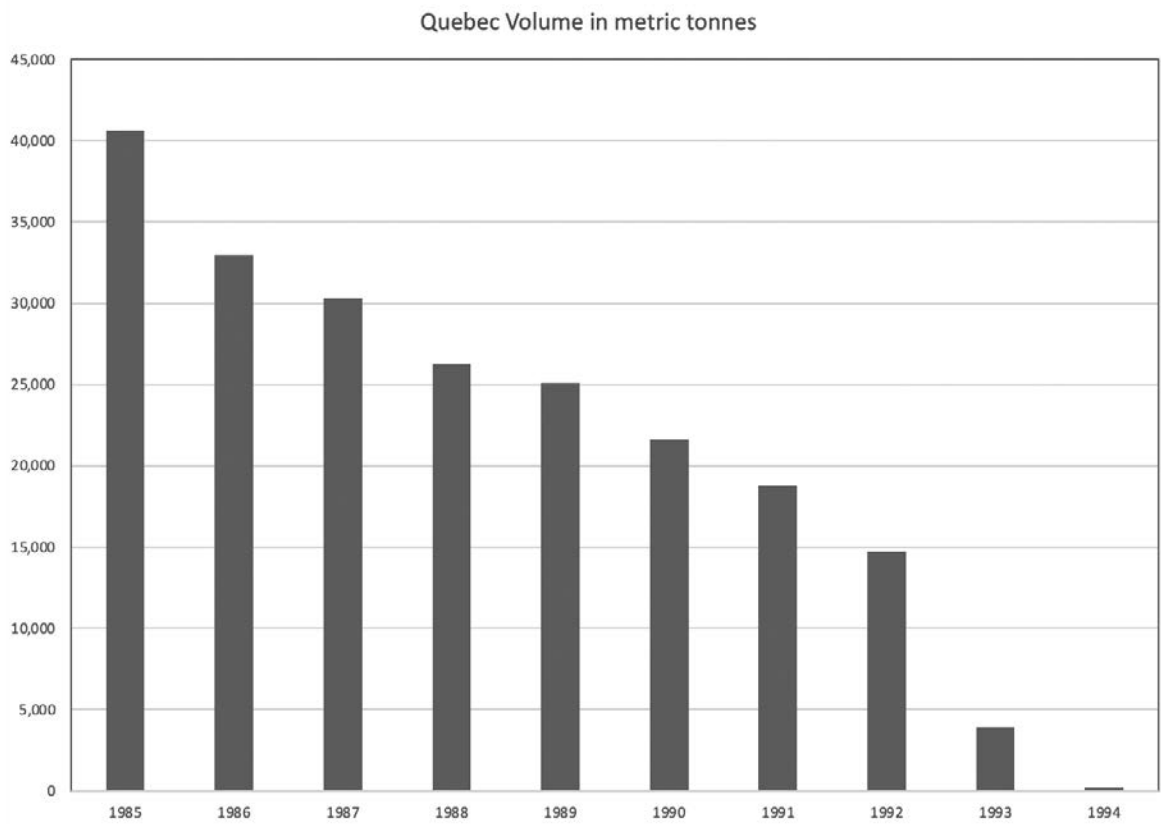
After quitting federal politics in 1993, John Crosbie later admitted that the cod moratorium was the hardest political moment of his life, as it resulted in 35,000 job losses in Atlantic Canada.

In Quebec, the cod moratorium was imposed more than a year after coastal and mid shore Newfoundland, on August 31 in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence and on December 20, 1993, in the Northern Gulf.

Total allowable cod catches by location and revenues for Quebec cod fishermen

Year	Quota in metric tonnes (Eastern Canada, Quebec included)	Quebec Volume* in metric tonnes	Quebec Value* in metric tonnes
1984	167,000		
1985	167,000	40,652	\$17,707,998
1986	152,100	32,950	\$16,356,772
1987	125,500	30,293	\$22,663,827
1988	127,900	26,238	\$13,937,703
1989	127,900	25,075	\$14,294,250
1990	111,000	21,607	\$12,658,960
1991	83,000	18,780	\$14,718,712
1992	78,000	14,719	\$13,237,863
1993	18,000	3,936	\$3,411,890
1994	0	195	\$199,800

*\*Data from the north and south of the Gulf of St. Lawrence are included. In the case of 1994, the presence of landings resulted from accidental or scientific catches. Official data on catches and revenues were not compiled by Fisheries and Oceans Canada before 1985.*





ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20  
It's important to pay attention to your physical health this week, Aries. It's key to give your body plenty of rest and healthy foods to strengthen your immune system.  
TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21  
Something out of the ordinary may happen to you this week, Taurus. You don't know what to expect, but be aware of your surroundings and the people you meet.  
GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21  
This is a perfect time to review your goals or to-do list, Gemini. If you don't have things jotted down, brainstorm with friends on what you may want to accomplish, then make plans.  
CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22  
Cancer, do not turn anyone away if they come to you looking for assistance. Someone in need is likely to seek you out in the days to come and you should be ready.  
LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23  
There is no shame in taking a day off or slowing down for a breather, Leo. Spend the day in bed or lounging on the couch if you desire. Give yourself a break if you've been running around.




VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22  
If emotions are high, Virgo, you might need to figure out a way to relieve some stress. Turn on the music loudly and dance around in your home while singing along.  
LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23  
Libra, you could feel sluggish a few days this week. Once some friends urge you to get out and do something, you'll quickly feel reenergized and ready to have a good time.  
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22  
Scorpio, failure can be a tough pill to swallow, but if you don't succeed at something you have to get back up and simply try again. Don't let one setback eat at you for long.  
SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21  
Don't let your pride get in the way of rekindling a friendship Sagittarius. Rather than drum up old news, talk about the things you look forward to doing

together.  
CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20  
Capricorn, things may work out if you give them another chance. Don't throw in the towel on your ideas just yet. Figure out a new angle and then get started on a new course.  
AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18  
Take the blinders or rose-colored glasses off, Aquarius. You can't adequately handle a situation unless you know all of the facts and have a clear grasp of reality.  
PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20  
If things are starting to feel boring, it might be time for a change of pace, Pisces. Simple things like changing around the furniture or taking a new route home can help.

**FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS**  
**NOVEMBER 19: Adam Driver, Actor (40)**  
**NOVEMBER 20: Joseph Biden, U.S. President (81)**  
**NOVEMBER 21: Carly Rae Jepsen, Singer (38)**  
**NOVEMBER 22: Dacre Montgomery, Actor (29)**  
**NOVEMBER 23: Miley Cyrus, Singer (31)**  
**NOVEMBER 24: LiAngelo Ball, Athlete (25)**  
**NOVEMBER 25: Christina Applegate, Actress (52)**

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# Announcements



## In Memory

**ROSS: John Denzil**  
In loving memory of a dear husband, father and grandfather who passed away on November 16, 2022, at the age of 74.  
*We think of you in silence  
We often speak your name  
But all we have are memories  
And your picture in a frame.  
Your resting place we visit  
And put flowers there with care  
But no one knows the heartache  
As we turn and leave you there*  
Always loved and will never be forgotten, Gwen (wife), Joanne (daughter), Mark (son-in-law), Pamela (daughter), John (son-in-law) and grandchildren: Connor, Emma, Jared and McKenna.

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website at  
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## Happy 60th Anniversary



November 23, 2023  
Dorothy Wafer and  
Sterling Bujold (Dot & Buzz)  
Fleurant Point, Escuminac, Quebec  
  
*Congratulations to a wonderful couple.  
Love and best wishes from family and  
friends from far and wide!  
You're an inspiration to us all.*

**Obituary** - 150 words - \$50; 150-250 words - \$55; 250+ words quote will be provided  
**In memory:** 150 words - \$35; 150-250 words - \$45; **Funeral, Celebration of Life, Card of Thanks, Engagement, Birth, Prayer, Birthday** - \$35; **Wedding** - \$55. *To add a picture with any of the above: \$10 extra*



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# COAST ROUND-UP

**COAST ROUND-UP: \$8 per week**  
**CLASSIFIED: \$8 per week**

### COAST ROUND-UP

**ROSEBRIDGE:**  
**Christmas Carol Service**  
**December 1:** The annual Christmas Carol Service will be held at the Rosebridge United Church beginning at 7 p.m. Please come out and join us for readings, stories, and singing of Christmas Carols. Refreshments will be served after the service. Everyone welcome.

**YORK:**  
**York ACW Christmas Sale**  
**November 25:** The York ACW will be holding a Christmas Sale beginning at 2 p.m. at the York River Community Centre, 702 Blvd. York West, Gaspé. Homemade handicrafts, baked goods, mystery parcels, white elephant table and used books will be for sale. It will be followed by afternoon tea (\$5 per person). Everyone welcome.

**PORT DANIEL:**  
**Three Star Golden Age Club**  
**Tuesdays:** Pétanque from 7

p.m. to 9 p.m. every Tuesday evening. Cost is \$3.  
**December 2:** Annual Christmas dinner at the club beginning at 5 p.m. Members \$20 and guests \$25. Tickets must be purchased in advance by contacting Margaret Ann Mauger or Landis Assels.

**SHIGAWAKE:**  
**Community Centre**  
**December 4:** Christmas gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. Can-teen available. Everyone welcome.

**HOPE TOWN:**  
**Sports Club**  
**November 25:** Christmas gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. at the Saint Godefroi Optimist Club. Bring your dabbers.

**HOPE:**  
**Hope Baptist Church**  
**Sundays:** Sunday School starting at 10 a.m. Worship service beginning at 11 a.m.

**NEW CARLISLE:**  
**Royal Canadian Legion Branch #64**  
Please be advised that Legion

memberships are available for \$45. Returning and new members welcome.  
**Wednesdays:** Line dancing beginning at 7:30 p.m. \$7 per person.  
**December 1:** Gaspesian Comedy Group beginning at 9 p.m. \$10 per person.  
**December 2:** Gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m.  
**December 4:** Paint and Sip, supplies included, beginning at 7 p.m. RSVP with Tammy by calling 418-752-8514.  
**December 5:** General meeting at 7 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.  
**December 9:** Christmas Dance with Tammy Adams. \$10 per person.  
**December 17:** Santa at the Legion beginning at 1 p.m.  
**December 23:** Nash Stanley beginning at 9 p.m. \$10 per person.  
**December 31:** New Years Eve with DJ Ash.

**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:**  
**Christmas Bazaar**  
**December 2:** A Christmas Bazaar will be held at New Carlisle High School from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Entry fee \$2 with a chance to win a prize. All proceeds go to the St. Andrew's Anglican Church, New Carlisle. If you would like to rent a table, please Agnes Blais on Facebook.

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:**  
**50+ Club**  
**Tuesdays:** Grocery bingo every Tuesday beginning September 5 at 7 p.m. \$10 for

**UNITED CHURCH  
NEW RICHMOND  
Sunday, November 26**  
10 a.m. Service

three cards. Extra cards are \$1 each.  
**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:**  
**Book Room**  
**Every Wednesday:** The book room is now reopened. Anyone who needs assistance can contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

**UNITED CHURCH  
HOPE TOWN  
Sunday, November 26**  
10 a.m. Service

**ANGLICAN CHURCH  
OF CANADA  
Sunday, November 26**  
**NEW CARLISLE**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**HOPE TOWN**  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer  
**SHIGAWAKE**  
11 a.m. Holy Baptism

# Social Notes

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**Social notes can be emailed to:**  
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or call 418-752-5400

**Do you miss reading the Social Notes section?  
If so, you are not alone.**

We would like to bring the **Social Notes** back but in a new and revamped way. Easy peasy, you'll be able to submit your own news by email or by calling the office and leaving a message (be sure to include your name and number)

### Examples of Social Notes material

Out-of-town visitors, get well wishes, birthday celebrations, welcoming new neighbours, anniversaries, etc. Just send us your notes and we'll do the rest!



# CBC Radio’s “Long Dash” – Its Time Has Come

MEL SIMONEAU

Without CBC’s “Long Dash,” residents of Gaspé, New Carlisle, and New Richmond might never again, at 1:00 p.m., taste the brown sugar hedonism of hot Canadian butter tarts.

Last month, CBC Radio and the National Research Council (NRC) ended its decades-long collaboration of the broadcast of the NRC time signal (1 p.m. ET). November 5 would have been its 84th broadcast, making it the country’s longest running radio segment.

For many, the time signal was an old friend and a starting or ending point of various daily routines such as that dessert of ambrosial tarts.

CBC Radio ended the time signal broadcast because the signal was no longer a measure of accurate time. The time signal, colloquially “the long dash on CBC,” had been transmitted through a series of delays via several platforms (over the radio/satellite/internet) thus leading to gaps in time. In 2018, CBC Radio installed hybrid digital radio transmitters, and that affected accuracy by up to nine seconds. (By extreme contrast, some atomic clocks are reported to be accurate within one second over 300 million years).

Of course, CBC Radio listeners weren’t tuning in for precise seconds. In 1939, when the official time signal began, listeners usually paid attention for practical reasons. Sailors set their

watches to the right time to ensure accurate sailing, train engineers and staff to ensure accuracy of train schedules, and the staff at banks and stores across the country to manage their businesses.

Individual citizens also took a moment to set their pocket watches and wristwatches, and this is an integral part of the long dash: Canadians taking a moment. It is (or was) time to take time: to pause, to listen, and to state aural senses. Back then, Lorne Greene and his voice of gravitas announced what was then the Dominion Observatory Time Signal and, until early October, various CBC announcers across Canada broadcast the official time. The time signal was first about practicality and a mid-day respite in Quebec and Ontario, and finally nostalgia. While the long dash was heard across the country at different times over six time zones, the pause was quick reflection and the pause was us – from St. John’s to Victoria. From its initial pragmatism, the signal evolved to become embedded as part of Canadian identity.

The long dash nostalgia isn’t limited to boomers. One CBC listener says her 16-year-old daughter loved it: “She’s been listening to CBC her whole life and always turned up the volume at 1 p.m. in anticipation. She is actually genuinely sad to see it go.”

Another CBC listener reminds us that some Canadians don’t have cell phones: “Se-

niors and those in poverty are likely to be more negatively affected. The elimination of the time signal hurts our weakest parts of society.”

The National Research Council (NRC) still maintains its “talking clock” telephone lines (613-745-1576 in English and 613-745-9426 in French), announcing the time (ET) at regular 10-second intervals. The NRC line isn’t, however, the strangely compelling comfort of the time signal broadcast. Some homesick expatriated Canadians were said to tune to CBC Radio purposely just before the 1 p.m. news. Thanks to hearing the long dash, some of their melancholy dashed.

In his classic, *The Englishman’s Boy*, Guy Vanderhaeghe begins the novel with “Even from such a distance Fine Man could smell their camp, the fried pig stink of white men.” It’s a resonant first sentence of Canadian literature.

Gordon Lightfoot’s paean to Canadian fall resonates with his *Seven Island Suite* lyrics: “to the sunset through the blue light of a fiery autumn haze.”

This sensible line and sentence proudly chimes our culture: “The National Research Council official time signal. The beginning of the long dash indicates exactly one o’clock, Eastern (Standard/Daylight Saving) Time. *Mel Simoneau, from Murdochville, has appeared in the Literary Review of Canada, the National Post, and the Montreal Gazette.*

## CRUISESHIPS: Cont’d from page 6

right whales and the regulations to protect them.

“There are now smaller expedition-type boats that come to anchor in Gaspé Bay or mooring at the Sandy Beach wharf. This allows us to have a more intimate relationship with cruise passengers and to be more realistic about our reception capacity,” says Mr. Urban.

For 2024, the outlook also looks promising.

“We are lining up for

around 33 ships scheduled at the moment. There may be cancellations this winter and changes to routes. But in my opinion, we can expect something similar to this year,” says Mr. Urban.

Gaspé has been working with other ports on the St. Lawrence for several years to attract cruise ships in winter.

Destination Gaspé has already confirmed visits for the winter of 2025.

“We already have three vessels reserved. These will be planned test stops. We are going to test the market with

Ponant, which is a cruise line with expedition ships. In 2024, we are doing a familiarization tour with this industry to show what we are capable of offering and then we will take action with three boats in 2025,” mentions Mr. Urban.

In 2021, 25 stops were cancelled, and 47 in 2020 due to the pandemic.

In 2019, 25 vessels anchored in Gaspé for a total of 17,000 people.

The economic benefits were estimated at \$7.5 million in 2018.

## Reflections

by Diane Skinner Flowers



### Juniper: The tree that defies categorization

*“The odour of burning juniper is the sweetest fragrance on the face of the earth, in my honest judgment. One breath of juniper smoke, like the perfume of sagebrush after rain, evokes magic. Long may it burn.” Edward Abbey*

Juniper is a tree that defies categorization. Is it an evergreen? Is it hardwood or softwood? I can confirm that the smell of burning juniper in a wood stove is simply beautiful, one of the loveliest odours that nature offers to us. However, the juniper tree gives so much more than firewood.

Juniper trees and shrubs can be found all over the world and there are more than 50 species of junipers. They possess some unique names such as Flaky juniper, Alligator juniper, Seaside juniper and Himalayan Black juniper. The juniper that grows on the Gaspé is the Common juniper. This species can be found from the Arctic, in fact all through North America, Africa, Tibet, and South America. They grow in the northern Himalayas at an altitude of 4,900 m (16,000 feet) which is said to be one of the highest tree lines on the planet.

They are a hardy tree that can thrive in a wide variety of environments. Junipers can be found in woodlands, dry and rocky areas and in wide open spaces. They are survivors.

Junipers vary greatly in shape and size and can grow to over 100 feet tall or be low-spreading shrubs. They are evergreens and have needle-like or scaly type leaves. The needle-like leaves are hard and sharp, so watch when handling them as they can be quite prickly. Most species of juniper produce berries which are often blue in colour but may also be red-brown or orange. If you gather a few of the berries in your hand and inhale you can smell that lovely aroma.

Juniper berries are used as a spice and have been as far back as Ancient Egypt. During the Middle Ages juniper berries were used to make an alcoholic beverage. Of course, they are a common ingredient used today to make gin or juniper brandy. The berries are said to taste piney and a bit citrus. As they mature the berries taste sweeter with an herbal scent. It is a valued spice because it has many layers of flavour. The spice is used to enhance pheasant, partridge, rabbit, and venison.

Juniper berries are steamed to produce essential oil. This oil is said to have a variety of uses and benefits. The aroma of the oil is woody and spicy and is said to have a calm and grounding effect. The oil may be beneficial for the health of the skin. Some use it internally, but be cautious because none of these uses when taken internally has been proven to be beneficial and could possibly be harmful.

Junipers are gymnosperms which means that they have no flowers but do have seeds in their berries. The seed coating is tough and is normally broken down after being eaten by a fruit eating mammal. Thank you to bats for distributing those berry seeds! Junipers provide food for moths and butterflies and some feed on the bark of the juniper. Gymnosperms are susceptible to rust disease, which also attacks apple trees.

Sometimes juniper is referred to as cedar, but this is not technically accurate. They are not cedars. However, juniper is sometimes used in the same way for lining chests because of its lovely aroma. Remember hope chests lined with cedar?

Juniper wood is quite hard, though it is technically a softwood. Junipers seem to be a contradiction that do not fit neatly into a category. It can be used for fence posts and firewood, and to make furniture, panelling and flooring. It is said to have a “lovely smooth finish, a nice colour and a pleasing aroma.” Juniper can be finished as particle board and veneer.

As with many plants, Native cultures used the juniper for many purposes and used it to make hunting bows and for traditional Indigenous medicines. Even the juniper ash was consumed as a source of calcium by some Indigenous groups.

Scottish people burn juniper at New Year’s (They call it Hogmanay.) and the smoke is said to help to cleanse and bless the home, similar to sage.

Junipers, the hardy tree that does not fit neatly into a category, has many uses, but the smell of juniper burning in a wood stove is one of the pleasures of wintertime on the Gaspé.

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