

Patasol farm has new owners

● GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – Julie Bacon and Jean-François Chabot recently acquired Patasol Farms, one of the largest potato producer farms in the Gaspé Peninsula. The farm has been operated in the town of Bonaventure for decades by Michèle and Martin Poirier.

In the case of Mr. Chabot, an agronomist employed by Patasol since 2002, the road had been mapped out since 2006. However, for Ms. Bacon, the transition marks a significant shift after working 20 years in the health sector.

Originally from Saint-Prospère-de-Champlain, near Trois-Rivières, Julie Bacon was raised on a dairy farm. However, it was while living alongside Jean-François Chabot that she chose to delve into agriculture. “I started to integrate Patasol gradually,” she says.

Originally from the south shore of Quebec City, Mr. Chabot is a trained agronomist and after his studies and internships in 2002, he found himself faced with three job opportunities in three different parts of the province, the Gaspé Peninsula, Montérégie-Est (the east part of Montreal’s South Shore) and the Lower Laurentians.

“I didn’t want to be a salesman in a fertilizer company. (...) I chose the Gaspé Peninsula. I was doing more outdoor activities at the time and my family was scattered across Quebec. What I liked here was the great diversification of agriculture. It’s more specialized in other regions. Pig farming meant less to me,” summarizes Mr. Chabot.

For four years, he divided his schedule between two well-known companies, Ferme Bourdages of Saint-Siméon and Patasol, located no more than 10 kilometres apart.

“After four years, and considering the responsibilities, I had a choice to make, and I chose potatoes! In 2006, I was identified for the next generation (succession) at Patasol,”



The couple will expand their farm based on the surface area currently under cultivation. That surface can be more productive through adopting different methods.

Photos: G. Gagné

he says.

Discussions regarding a possible transfer of ownership between Jean-François Chabot, Michèle and Martin Poirier were initiated, but they were postponed until 2019 because the owner’s son expressed interest in the company, before changing his mind. Patasol, at that time, had acquired a packaging plant in Lanaudière and the company’s size was much larger than it is today.

“There was a cascade of events, following a period of growth that was a little too fast. The packaging company closed. We put the farm back on track. I was not yet a shareholder but I had been in charge for several years,” says Mr. Chabot.

The burden of interest rates

The transfer of the farm was executed through a bank loan, as per the agreement of both parties instead of being financed by the sellers.

Julie Bacon and Jean-François Chabot encountered challenges with business succession programs due to their age.

“In fact, we don’t fit in any program because we are considered old business succes-

sion candidates,” he stresses.

They nevertheless found some technical support. “We are accompanied in the transfer. We deal with an agro-economist,” he points out.

The business is doing well despite the caprices of the weather in recent years.

“The weather was more difficult last year. We had to leave some produce (potatoes) in the fields, but the quality was good. The markets have been doing well for several years. We cultivate 180 acres of potatoes,” explains Mr. Chabot.

The annual production volume is four million pounds of potatoes packaged on the farm.

“We sell half of the production in the Gaspé Peninsula. The other half is distributed elsewhere in Quebec, with Sobeys,” he says.

The interest rate has been the disturbing element for two years, underlines Julie Bacon.

“This is what is making the headlines, with the increase in inputs, mainly fertilizers. Fortunately, we have been careful with investments but, in agriculture, to make one dollar, you have to invest eight,” points out Julie Bacon.

“When there is a break in the interest rate, it will be necessary to inject into equip-

We (Patasol Farm) were big and it’s not something that interests us. We want to find a balance between professional life and family life,” says Mr. Chabot, thinking of their three children.

Being “old succession candidates”, Julie Bacon and Jean-François Chabot are quietly planning their own succession, without knowing if it will come from their children. Their 17-year-old daughter shows interest in gardening for now.

“I am not pushing her. I might have triggered something. I gave her a plot of land. She takes care of that. She plants a garden. I support her materially. I am trying to have her touch on a bit of everything. I want her to run experiments so that she develops her abilities and her sense of observation. I gave her a few tasks on the farm to check what her interests are,” he describes. “When it is done progressively, it can go in harmony,” concludes Julie Bacon.



Julie Bacon and Jean-François Chabot sell their Patasol brand production but most of their sales are made under the brands of the Sobeys banner.

Cime Aventures fined \$3,750 for failure to identify its boats properly in 2021

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – On March 18, at the New Carlisle Courthouse, Cime Aventures was fined \$3,750 after pleading guilty on a penal charge of failing to properly identify its canoes and kayaks in August 2021. The Department of Wildlife and Parks employees inspected the Cime Aventures base in Bonaventure on August 20, 2021, and found unidentified canoes and kayaks not bearing the Cime Aventures crest.

That failure went against a rule included in the agreement signed between the outfitting company and the Department of Wildlife and Parks. The regulation applies to the whole territory covering the Bonaventure River ZEC.

“It is a penal offence. Some boats didn’t bear the Cime identification on any side, or on one side, or it was just erased,” explains penal prosecutor Cedric Leblanc



Photo: Courtesy of Cime Aventures

All the canoes and kayaks of Cime Aventures are supposed to be properly identified.

Falardeau of the New Carlisle Courthouse.

About 30 canoes and kayaks were not clearly identified as belonging to Cime Aventure, according to Mr. Falardeau, who mentions that the Department of Wildlife

and Parks filed a complaint on November 22, 2022. The complaint was authorized to proceed in court on August 23, 2023, by the Penal Directorate based in Quebec City. It is standard procedure to have the complaints central-

ized in the capital for such cases according to prosecutor Leblanc Falardeau.

The case only proceeded on March 18 because Cime Aventures was until recently challenging in the Superior Court the jurisdiction of the

Quebec government, including the Department of Wildlife and Parks, on the Bonaventure River. Cime’s lawyers argued that the river was navigable and falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

In a decision rendered on February 21, Judge Alexander Pless determined that the Quebec Department of Wildlife and Parks had jurisdiction over the river, which prompted the hearing of the penal case.

Judge Pless also determined that the Department of Wildlife and Parks had failed in its duty of considering other sources of excursions, like autonomous ones, on the river. That aspect, too much traffic on the river, was not directly related to the complaint filed that led to the hearing on March 18. Indirectly though, identifying the Cime Aventures canoes and kayaks can potentially help evaluate its impact on the river.

Minister Marc Miller knew that imposing visa to Mexican workers would hurt fisheries

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration Canada, admitted during a press conference, in Ottawa, on March 21, that he knew his decision to impose temporary Mexican workers with visas would hurt commercial fisheries.

Since February 29, temporary Mexican workers coming to Canada must have a visa. The decision caused and still causes anxiety among owners of seafood processing plants because some of the workers were on the verge of leaving Mexico. Before February 29, only a work permit was required from Mexicans who were coming to Canada to work.

On March 21, Minister Miller was making an announcement about a set of immigration control measures with his cabinet colleague Randy Boissonnault, when he was asked during the question period if he would adjust the visa issue, which has been causing harm to fish processing plants all over the Atlantic Provinces and Quebec.



Photo: Robert Nicolas

Bill Sheehan is far from convinced that the Mexican workers will arrive as planned.

“We knew with our announcement that there would be consequences. What we quickly saw is a certain habit for (Mexican) people who show up at the border and then ask for their visa. It is no longer a gateway that can be made. We are working with the Mexican government to ensure that the visa issue can be worked out as quickly as

possible. According to my estimates, 80% of the people, and maybe 100%, will be able to arrive on time at the processing plants,” said Mr. Miller.

The only question on the matter of Mexican temporary workers employed by seafood processing plants was asked by a journalist from La Presse, one of Mon-

tréal’s daily newspapers. The six Gaspesian journalists who were waiting online for the question period were never given an opportunity to ask a question, as the press conference ended before their turn.

Part of the question coming from a La Presse journalist dealt with the permanent closure of Matane’s shrimp processing plant, announced on March 18 by Royal Greenland, a Danish company that owned the facility since 2011.

The spokesperson of the company, attorney Jean-Pierre Chamberland, pointed out that the difficulty encountered by Royal Greenland to fly 150 Mexican workers to Matane on time for the beginning of the processing season was the straw that broke the camel’s back.

Mark Miller refused to take the blame for the closure of the Matane plant, saying that “37 out of 40 workers required for that plant had been granted their visa.” He seemed to ignore that the needs of Royal Greenland were almost four times more.

On March 21, two hours after Marc Miller’s press con-

ference, Bill Sheehan, vice-president of the E. Gagnon et Fils snow crab and lobster processing plant in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, was quite worried.

“We asked for 125 workers. Twelve have arrived so far because they had their papers before February 29 or received them soon after. Another group of 100 is supposed to arrive next week (around March 27). It might work out but it will be so (accomplished) only when I see the workers,” said Mr. Sheehan.

“With all the problems currently experienced in commercial fisheries, imposing visas so close to the beginning of the fishing season was the last thing the industry needed this year. The government just forgot the fisheries in the decision to bring back the visa obligation,” he adds.

The snow crab processing season in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence could start between March 30 and April 1, as there is practically no ice on the sea and around harbours.

Shrimp fishermen file licence buyback plan with Ottawa

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Eastern Canadian shrimp fishermen have submitted a draft license rationalization plan to the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Diane Lebouhiller.

The proposal was submitted to Diane Lebouhiller by the Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie (ACPG), for Quebec; the Fédération régionale acadienne des pêcheurs professionnels (FRAPP), for New Brunswick; and the Fish, Food and Allied Workers (FFAW), for Newfoundland and Labrador.

"It's a blueprint for how many shrimp fishing companies will remain active in the Gulf for the three provinces and, from there, how many would be eliminated from the picture," says ACPG General Manager Claudio Bernatchez.

The move is part of a drastic reduction in the quota.

It will fall from 14,524 tonnes in 2023 to 3,060 tonnes for 2024 and will be distributed as follows: 1,757 tonnes for Esquiman; 488 tonnes for Anticosti; 342 tonnes for Sept-Îles, and 473 tonnes for the Estuary.

Approximately 80 shrimp fishing boats are active in eastern Canada.

"The reception was polite. We were told that we would consider the request, discuss it in Ottawa and eventually follow up," says Mr. Bernatchez.

"Our expectations remain very modest. We're a long



Photo: N. Sergerie

The industry wants Ottawa to buy back part of the shrimp fleet.

way from seeing an end to this. At the very least, we've managed to talk about it, which is good news," he says.

In a written statement, Minister Lebouhiller said she "had a constructive meeting in Ottawa. We discussed the difficult situation currently facing shrimp fishermen in the Estuary and Gulf of St Lawrence, but also the importance of supporting the region's fishermen and processors."

Ms. Lebouhiller, who is also the Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, did not elaborate in her message on the proposal introduced by representatives of the shrimp industry.

"As we know, there are many issues and challenges facing the industry and with climate change and as a re-

sult the warming of the oceans, everything happening underwater is changing right now. The data presented by Fisheries and Oceans Canada this week speaks for itself: the climate crisis is real, and its effects are already being felt in our marine ecosystems. Shrimp are one of the victims, but other species will likely experience similar disruptions over the coming years. That's why we need to think more broadly about the future of fisheries," continued the minister in the statement issued by her office. "We have agreed to keep the lines of communication open, as well as with Aboriginal communities and provincial counterparts, so that together we can overcome the climate challenges currently facing our coastal communities," the memo concludes.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs offers assistance to the Town of Percé

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

PERCÉ - The Town of Percé has confirmed that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is providing assistance and support to the town.

On March 14, the regional management of the ministry had an introductory meeting with town representatives. The ministry's mandate can be quite broad.

In an email, the ministry's public relations officer, Sébastien Gariépy, writes that "under the Intervention Framework for assistance and support to municipalities in municipal management, the ministry can support a municipality at its request. When difficulties arise and are likely to have an effect in particular on services to citizens, the state of municipal finances and the ability of the council to effectively pursue its activities and vote on the required resolutions and regulations."

The regional management then assesses the problem and proposes an approach that may include work meetings, avenues for improving the general functioning of the municipal council as well as help and support from specialized services.

If the situation ever requires the management of a conflict within the municipal council, the regional management can use an approach inspired by mediation.

It is unlikely that a report will follow once the process is complete.

Police report

Marc-André Lavoie, 34, from Nouvelle will return on April 23 to the New Carlisle Courthouse for an orientation and declaration appearance. Quebec Court Judge Yves Desaulniers presided over Marc-André Lavoie's last court appearance on February 28 for his bail hearing. Judge Desaulniers decided that the accused would remain in custody, according to criminal prosecutor Cédric Leblanc Falardeau. Lavoie is charged with assault with a weapon and break and enter in connection with an altercation that occurred on January 30 at a home on Miguasha Road in Nouvelle. In total, he faces 17 charges.

His alleged accomplice, Michael Martin, 36, from Gesgapegiag, faces 18 charges.

On March 15 at the New Carlisle Courthouse, Ricky Ouellet, 33, from Pointe-à-la-Croix received a 36-month prison sentence for drug-related offences. In October 2023, he was found guilty of methamphetamine trafficking. An illegal possession of a firearm was also taken into account when the sentence was rendered. Ricky Ouellet also has to provide a DNA sample. An unfavourable pre-sentence report contributed to the sentence's length. He was arrested in January 2022 when police officers intercepted him after giving a dealer, Carol Lavoie, 52, approximately fifty methamphetamine pills. Carol Lavoie is wanted by the police since he failed to appear at his last court appearance on October 30.

Hugues Roy, 65, from Carleton, was sentenced to five months in prison on March 15, weeks after pleading guilty to one count of assault with a weapon and another to having in his possession a weapon for a dangerous purpose. In May 2022, Hugues Roy also threatened three people in the Avignon MRC office parking lot. In addition to his prison sentence, Mr. Roy is prohibited from possessing a firearm for five years, will undergo two years of probation, and after that, he will be monitored by a probation officer for an additional year. In September 2023, he was also fined \$68,525 after pleading guilty to 33 of the 40 poaching charges brought against him.

Christiane Fortin, 74, from Quebec City, is sentenced to nine months in prison to be served on weekends for using forgery at the Caisses Desjardins' Caplan branch. According to CHNC, Christiane Fortin will also have 12 months of community service and is subject to one year of probation. On August 10, 2021, she wrote a check for \$23,000 and transferred it from Caplan to a bank account at a bank in Lac-Saint-Jean. Several withdrawals were made before it was revealed to be fraudulent. Another suspect, André Bilodeau, 65, also from Quebec City, faces charges in connection with this case.

The Sûreté du Québec recently publicized its annual report on road safety, including the number of fatal collisions and deaths that occurred during the year 2023 in the territory it serves across Quebec. Although each death is one too many, the Sûreté du Québec communication department declared an improvement compared to last year.

Type of accident	2022	2023	Average of 2018 to 2022
Number of fatal collisions	266	240	239
Number of deaths	291	269	259
Number of collisions involving at least one motorcycle	46	40	45
Collisions involving at least one (truck) tractor	58	61	51.4
Number of pedestrian deaths	36	27	27
Number of cyclists killed	6	4	5.8

The report demonstrates once more that the main causes of fatal collisions are reckless driving and speeding (31% of collisions); driving ability impaired by alcohol, drugs or fatigue (16%); and inattention or distraction (9%).

These main causes prove that human behaviour is the cause of the majority of fatal collisions and serious injuries. The continuation of the work of police officers in the field and the adoption of safe behaviours by motorists therefore prove essential to reduce the number of road collisions.

Nearly 20% of victims who died in road collisions were not wearing their seat belts. This situation represents a concern for the police. The Sûreté du Québec is therefore maintaining its efforts to ensure the safety of users of the road networks.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

The CAQ downslide is alive and well

Many people were not surprised by the most recent Léger poll showing that the Coalition avenir Québec government's popularity decline is continuing. Had an election been held between March 15 and March 18, the Parti Québécois would have won it, with a majority at the National Assembly.

The Parti Québécois (PQ) would have obtained a 34% rate of support, which is two points more than in the February poll. The CAQ would have lost three points and received 22% support of the electorate's support. Québec solidaire would have received a nod from 18% of the voters (plus 2), while the Liberal Party, at 14%, and the Conservative Party of Québec, at 10%, would each have lost a point.

In February, Léger's poll gave a 7% lead to the PQ. Now, it is 12%. The March results followed a poll carried out by Pallas, which had similar results

A poll is just a snapshot taken over a few days by consulting a highly limited number of voters, 1,033 in that case. Poll results have often misled decision-makers and political analysts. There is always a margin of error, based on relatively complicated statistical methods, and we often underrate that error margin.

However, there is a complete alignment of other data that strengthens the validity of the above-mentioned results.

For example, the margin of error of most surveys hovers around 5%, 19 times out of 20. The 5% reference deals with the fact that with a sample of 1,033 people surveyed, some wiggle room must be applied because it cannot be as accurate as an election during which 5 million people are going to the polls. The "19 times out of 20" factor deals with the fact that the people who are polled could have decided to give false answers, for example.

Other Léger questions dealt with Quebecers' preference for a premier. PQ leader Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon received the support of 32%, compared to a mere 15% for current Premier François Legault, which is less than half! To add insult to injury, Québec solidaire leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois almost reached Mr. Legault with 14%.

There is more. The Parti Québécois' lead among the francophones is 17%. The lead spreads to every major part of the province, which is not reassuring for Mr. Legault. In Montreal, the lead is 8%, and it rose to a whopping 20% in Quebec City, a CAQ stronghold until recently. Quebec City and Lévis area citizens have not forgiven the failure of the Third Link project, an initiative that was denounced just about everywhere else. In October 2022, at the outset of the electoral campaign, the CAQ had a lead of 23% in the Quebec City area over the Parti Québécois, whose score was never outstanding in the capital.

In the other regions of Quebec, when poll results are amalgamated, the PQ lead over the CAQ reaches 10% now.

Québec Solidaire leads in support for the 18-34 age bracket, which is not surprising, as the party has worked hard since its foundation to reach that electoral clientele. As for people aged 35 and over, the PQ stands 10% above the CAQ.

The former PQ supporters are coming back

François Legault reacted to the survey by saying that he will keep making changes according to his plan, without dealing with his popularity which is plummeting.

Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon also reacted to the Léger poll by stating that his strategy to talk regularly about sovereignty doesn't hamper the popularity of his party, and his support as a potential premier.

Truth be told though, the rate of support for Quebec's sovereignty remains at 36%, a standstill that has prevailed in recent years. The PQ is stronger because its former members and supporters, tired of an unstable leadership between the 2014 electoral loss and the poor strategy of Jean-François Lisée before the 2018 election, among other things, are coming back.

In fact, the confidence link between the CAQ and the electorate is broken, and not only because of François Legault. His close supporting cast is also to blame.

Pierre Fitzgibbon's bulldozer methods in economic development, Christian Dubé's failure to fix the health system, even a little bit, the tedious negotiations with public sector's employees, Bernard Drainville's improvisation in education, Benoit Charrette's weak environmental positions and Éric

Girard's \$11 billion deficit, announced three days before the Léger poll, are some of the reasons that have eroded the electorate's confidence.

The list could go on and on, but Housing Minister France-Élaine Duranceau to the effect that tenants should invest in real estate in order to deal with the housing shortage was also quite disconnected from reality. What about Éric Girard's announcement that the government would pay between \$5 million and \$7 million to help the "poor" Los Angeles Kings in holding two exhibition games in Quebec City, come October 2024? The game will take place across the street from a food bank, whose clientele has been increasing.

The Léger poll results are the heritage of arrogance, the arrogance displayed since the beginning of the CAQ government's second term in October 2022. The Teflon government of the 2018-2022 term no longer exists.

We must keep in mind that in that October 2022 election, the CAQ rate of support was 40.9%. The drop in 17-and-a-half months therefore stands at a whopping 19%, which is probably a record, or pretty close.

Will François Legault stay?

Premier Legault, who half-jokingly said before Christmas that he wanted a compass to retrieve his political bond with the public, must wonder three months later what he can do to restore a good relationship with Quebecers.

Since the end of 2022, he has committed repeatedly to running for a third term in 2026. However, if the current slide continues for the CAQ, and if he doesn't decide to pull out of politics soon enough to allow a leadership race before the 2026 election, the high brass of the party might start applying pressure on Mr. Legault and ask him to resign.

The succession might not be easy to find. Rumours have it that Éric Girard might leave and run for the Conservative Party at the federal level, while Pierre Fitzgibbon apparently thinks of going back to the business world. They would hardly be charismatic leaders anyway for a declining party.

Who else would stand for a party whose complete name also includes "Équipe François Legault"? Who can find a way to reconnect the CAQ with the public?

Success usually finds paternity quite easily. Failure is often an orphan.




**Four Generations
of Monument Craftsmen**

HIGHEST QUALITY - BEST PRICES

MONUMENTS, MARKERS, CEMETERY LETTERING,
LASER DESIGNS AND PORTRAITS

SALES REP:

Steven Imhoff 418-752-6041
581-233-2101

Covering Port Daniel to New Richmond



ESTABLISHED - MAY 1975



Publisher:
Penny MacWhirter



News Editor:
Gilles Gagné



**Circulation/Office
Manager**
Holly Smith

JOURNALISTS:
Nelson Sergerie
Cynthia Dow,
Jeanie LeLacheur

208-B Gérard D. Levesque
New Carlisle, Que.
G0C 1Z0

Tel: 418-752-5400
specs@globetrotter.net
thegaspespec.com

(Taxes included)
1-year (paper or digital): \$50
6-months (paper or digital): \$29
Outside Canada:
1-year paper to United States
\$175, International \$370

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

SPEC welcomes letters to the editor on subjects relevant to topics covered by the paper. Letters must be kept within 300 words or less and may be edited for clarity or to remove any slanderous, sexist, racist or homophobic statements. We reserve the right to reject any letters. Opinions or letters published do not necessarily reflect the editorial policies or beliefs of this newspaper. All letters must bear the handwritten signature of the writer and include the address and number(s) for verification purposes (address & phone number will not be printed). The Publisher shall not be liable for slight changes or typographical errors that do not lessen the value of an advertisement. The Publisher's liability for other errors or omissions in connection with any advertisement is strictly limited to publication of the advertisement in any subsequent issue or the refund of any monies paid for the advertisement.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
Elaine Sexton
Fred Kirch
Maria Chatterton
Bethany Paetkau
Hayden Sams,
Bonita Annett
Patricia Ste-Croix Annett
Roger Wise









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

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

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - As the first round of registrations for the 2024-2025 school year at the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles came to a close on March 1, several enrollment records were surpassed.

The college received 783 applications for its four campuses. "We're really pleased with that. We've also noticed that the retention rate for young people from the Gaspésie and the Magdalen Islands is 83.5%. Last year it was 77%. That's the highest retention rate we've ever had. We also received 227 applications from students in other regions of Quebec. That's a record too," says the Director of Studies, Serge Rochon.

Last year there were 908 applications, but this figure needs to be put into perspective.

"There were applications from international students, particularly from Africa. There was a rumour that a bursary would be paid by the Quebec government. Applications from all the CEGEPs in Quebec skyrocketed, so the figures weren't really good," explains Mr. Rochon, who prefers to compare them with 2022, which saw 606 applications.

The Gaspé, Carleton-sur-Mer, and the Fisheries and Aquaculture school (EPAQ) in Grande-Rivière campuses are also seeing registration increases.

The Magdalen Island campus is in a class of its own. "It has to do with the demographics of the only high school on the islands. They've lost around ten enrollments compared with last year," notes Mr. Rochon.

Despite the crisis in the fisheries sector, Serge Rochon is somewhat surprised that enrollments at ÉPAQ have been maintained.

"There are still some sectors that are doing well, like



Photo: N. Sergerie

The CEGEP de la Gaspésie et des Îles is increasingly the number one choice for secondary school students in the region.

lobster, for example. It's still attracting a lot of young people and we're very pleased. Of course, we've suspended the Aquatic Products Processing program, but it's been on hold for a few years, and I think that's related to the situation in the fishing industry," says the Director of Studies.

The enrollment for professional fishing, marine mechanics and aquaculture programs is doing very well.

The latter attracts both Quebecers and many students from France.

"We're doing well despite the circumstances. There's still a future in the fisheries sector, and the message we've just heard from young people is that we still believe in it and we're signing up," explains Mr. Rochon.

In addition to the aquatic products processing program, the Art et lettres program in the Magdalen Islands has also been suspended.

Early Childhood Education was not offered because the program is under review and will not be offered again this year.

"Several years ago, it was said that the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles was in a

vulnerable situation. I remember some years when six, seven, eight or even nine programs were suspended for a year. We're not there anymore. We're in better times. The CEGEP's performance and reputation are good," says Mr. Rochon.

With the increase in the student population, housing them remains a major challenge.

Last year, an appeal was made to the community and all the students found a place.

There will be more rooms available at the student residence on the Gaspé campus.

"A dozen students gave up their plans to study in Gaspé last year (because of the housing shortage). We're confident that we can meet their needs. We've carried out work on the interior of our residences, which will be able to house 25 more students, and we're recovering some office space. We're working with community partners to find other solutions," says the Director of Studies.

Last year, even chalets were rented to accommodate students.

The project for a residence in Carleton-sur-Mer is progressing, while the request for such a facility in Grande-Rivière is being studied by the

year there were around thirty of them but, on average, we have 25. This means we can maintain our English-language programs in Gaspé. We have mobility agreements with English-language CEGEPs like John Abbott, which keeps our English-language section stronger," explains Mr. Rochon, who is always keen to meet the needs of anglophone students.

The Adventure Tourism Techniques course is already at full capacity, as is the Adventure-Study option, which allows students enrolled in pre-university programs at the Gaspé campus to experience several outdoor sports.

The Medical Records, Legal Techniques, Computer Techniques and Adventure Tourism programs have also been very well received and, as a result, spots in the second round, which is set to open on May 1, are limited.

Ministry of Higher Education.

The CEGEP's English-speaking clientele is holding steady, with 22 students enrolled at the Gaspé campus.

"It's been a good year. Last

Registration by campus

Campus	2024	2023*	2022
Gaspé French	523	575	365
Gaspé English	22	31	26
Carleton-sur-Mer	123	156	107
École des pêches	92	94	52
Iles-de-la-Madeleine	45	60	57

*The CEGEP is not considering 2023 due to the specific situation of international students.

Low inventories could be a good sign for Gaspesian lobster fishermen

● GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The Gaspé Peninsula is one month away from the beginning to commence its lobster season. The region's buyers and processing plant owners envision a potentially good season in 2024. However, they indicate that an exorbitant price at the start could send the wrong message to the major food distributors.

Roch Lelièvre, president of Lelièvre, Lelièvre et Lemoignan, a processing plant based in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, recently returned from the Boston Seafood Show, the largest seafood Expo in North America and he saw some trends taking shape.

"The inventories are low for both types of products, live and processed lobster.

There is practically no inventory of live lobster," comments Mr. Lelièvre.

Mr. Lelièvre bought the catches of 14 Gaspé Peninsula fishermen in 2023 and he has reached an agreement with all of them for 2024. He also buys the landings of 40 New Brunswick fishermen and, to a minor extent, Prince Edward Island fishermen. Mr. Lelièvre's processing plant bought 4 million pounds of that shellfish last year.

"The risk I see this year is starting at a price that is too high. The wholesalers could stop buying our lobster in big quantities at a time. Suppose that they start paying \$25, for example, and that they think it will decrease to \$24 a few days later, they will only buy a palette instead of 10," explains Mr. Lelièvre.



Demand for lobster should remain high in 2024 due to low inventories.

Photo: G. Gagné

"We must avoid what happened in the crab sector in 2022. That sector is still reeling from the mistake of having started the season with a price that was too high," Mr.

Lelièvre adds.

"If we start reasonably, price-wise, there is a chance of doing good business. As I said, we must keep in mind that if the price is too high, people will eat it (lobster) once, but not twice," concludes Roch Lelièvre.

Bill Sheehan, vice-president of the firm E. Gagnon and Fils, also from Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, liked what he saw in Boston. His company is the primary buyer of lobster in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"I had never seen so many people showing such interest in sea products. It was one of the biggest Boston seafood expos in 42 years. There was some hype. The lobster inventories are effectively very low. There is a very small quantity of processed lobster left," he comments.

The price of live lobster landings reached \$18 per pound at the beginning of March in Nova Scotia, just before the Boston Seafood Show, but Bill Sheehan stays calm when asked to comment on that. In 2023, the average landing price in Quebec was \$7.65 per pound.

"The scarcity of catches explains the price. The catches are so poor that most

fishermen don't even go to sea. Catching 400 pounds at \$18 per pound is not any better than 1,000 pounds at \$7 or \$8," says Mr. Sheehan.

A lot of factors can influence the price between March 21, when he spoke with the SPEC, and when the season will commence.

"We anticipate a (fishing) go-ahead that will likely take place on April 27, and on May 1, in New Brunswick. What will happen in a month, or five to six weeks? There is not enough volume on the market right now for it to be an indicator. Who will buy lobster at \$18 as a landing price? I can only say that the conditions are there for us to have a good season and keep the momentum we have had for several years now," Mr. Sheehan underlines.

In 2023, the Gaspé Peninsula lobster fishermen delivered 5,616 metric tons of catches worth \$95 million upon landing time, both all-time records. At \$7.65 per pound, the price was not a record, as it compares to \$8.52 in 2021 and \$7.95 in 2022. The volume increased enough in 2023 to counter that price drop and yield record overall revenues for the fishermen.



Thaw period now effective in the Gaspé Peninsula

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND - While in some parts of Quebec the thaw period began on March 4, in the Gaspé Peninsula, the restrictions were effective as of March 25. During the thaw period, weight limits are reduced due to the road network's carrying capacity.

Load restriction dates, however, may be suspended or delayed depending on changing weather conditions. Transports Québec reminds the public that thaw periods not only cover the thawing period but also that which allows the roadway to recover its bearing capacity, usually until the end of May. During the thaw season, road inspectors intensify their weighing activities on heavy trucks, both at checkpoints, like in New Richmond on March 19 (photo), and on the road network. These interventions target all heavy vehicles.

As explained by Transports Québec, the load limitations imposed during thaw are intended to protect the road for the benefit of all road users.

To this is added the preservation of a safe network. During thaw periods, the road is 30 to 70% more fragile than normal. A single overloaded vehicle can cause significant damage as the wear and tear on the road increases exponentially instead of proportionately. On the other hand, a slight reduction in loads considerably reduces the damage caused to the roadway. It is for this reason that load restrictions are imposed on heavy vehicles during thaw periods. Generally speaking, these restrictions vary from 8% to 20% of the load permitted apart from the thaw period.

That period is determined following monitoring of the progress of thawing in the roadway. This monitoring is done using sensors distributed across the entire Quebec road network. Weather forecasts are also taken into consideration.





VILLAGE
Real Estate Agency

Suzanne Landry
CERTIFIED REAL ESTATE BROKER AEO
418-752-0792
suzannelandry@royallepage.ca
www.suzannelandry.ca

Friendly bilingual service
from Matapédia to Port Daniel
24 years experience

The deficit is due to bad decisions and CAQ failures, says Parti Québécois leader

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - The leader of the Parti Québécois (PQ), Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, notes that the new deficit of \$11 billion announced on March 12 by the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government is not just the result of the economic situation or a particular situation but rather a series of bad decisions and significant failures towards its relationship with the federal government.

In terms of CAQ decisions, the PQ leader recalls that while the government had a surplus or was close to a balanced budget, the CAQ chose to offer financial aid and fiscal benefits to almost the entire population, regardless of income, when it should have targeted only the middle class and the most vulnerable.

“This government has also chosen to embark on numerous useless projects which ended in failure: 4-year-old kindergartens, Blue Spaces, empty Maison des aînés seniors’ homes, studies on the Third link and the tramway, among others,” he adds.

In terms of relations with the federal government, he also recalls that the CAQ, when all of its promises to repatriate federal budgets are taken, is in a shortfall of around \$14 billion.

“It would be simple to say that the deficit is due to the poor performance of the economy. This is false. It is not mainly due to the situation, but to the bad decisions of the CAQ and its inability to recover our own federal money as it had promised. It is also the result of a lack of planning, of short-sighted day-to-day management,” says Mr. Saint-Pierre-Plamondon in a press release.

Costly failures against the federal government

The Parti Québécois had asked the government during its pre-budget expectations to quantify the costs of federalism, and the PQ leader emphasizes that the government did it, but incompletely.

“We gained cause because we see that from the start of the budget and on numerous occasions thereafter, we address the question of the amounts that we should normally recover from the federal government, but which were refused. How-



Parti Québécois leader Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon points out that the CAQ government failed to live up to its budgetary promises.

Photo: G. Gagné

ever, we see that the CAQ has not mentioned or quantified everything. When we look at (CAQ) promises vis-à-vis the federal government, there is a shortfall of approximately \$14 billion. The least of things for the (CAQ) government would be to quantify in detail the promises,” continues Mr. St-Pierre Plamondon.

New revenue: the CAQ must respect its promises

The Parti Québécois questions the government's refusal to seek new sources of income in a situation where the deficit is increasingly high.

“We agree that it was necessary to do cleaning in business tax credits, but we do not understand the government's refusal to find new sources of income. However, one does not have to look very far: we simply ask it to keep its own promises! If we put an end to the incorporation of doctors and if we changed their method of remuneration, we could generate nearly \$1 billion in new revenues. The CAQ deprives itself of that when it was the party itself that promised this money. It should honour its promise,” adds Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon.

Return to balanced budget

The Parti Québécois also notes that the return to budgetary balance planned by the CAQ is being achieved with forecasts which are, to say the least, optimistic, and even devoid of objectivity.

“The government has encrypted a totally random sum of \$1 billion in optimization gains through state corporation efforts. It's not serious. If the CAQ has not managed to make

efficiency gains in nearly six years in power, while it promised constantly to “clean up”, why would it suddenly manage to recover one billion dollars per magic? Note also that it plans to recover 660 million thanks to a ‘strengthening of tax control and recovery.’ Again, why would the CAQ be able to recover so much money suddenly that it was incapable of in six years?” continues the PQ leader.

PQ highlights the right measures

The Parti Québécois nevertheless notes several good measures in the budget, some

of which were longtime requests.

“We can only rejoice at the end of a great injustice which deprived disabled seniors of their share in the RRQ (Régie des rentes du Québec, Quebec's Pension Plan) and investments in SOPFEU (Société de protection des forêts contre le feu), two requests from the Parti Québécois. We must also underline investments in Youth Protection and the Breakfast Club,” stresses Mr. St-Pierre Plamondon.

An absence of important measures

However, the Parti Québécois

has difficulty explaining the absence of certain measures, especially in sectors where investments are urgent.

“Before a complete generation of first-time buyers have their right to access property confiscated within five years, there is not a single measure in the budget to promote access to property. This is completely disconnected from reality. We are also disappointed to see that, once again, we do not understand the urgency of investing more in-home care. Quebec is a Western Hemisphere dunce in this area and experts have been telling us for many years that without significant investments, we are heading into a wall,” says the PQ leader.

“The little help to the media, while this sector responsible for transmitting the culture of our people is collapsing, is also inexplicable, especially when we remember that the Minister of Culture had a supposed plan in hand. Add to this the lack of immediate support for farmers and the lack of tax incentives to encourage the return of seniors to the labour market. It's disappointing and, once again, we are faced with an incapable government to grasp the urgency of the situation in several cases,” concludes Paul St-Pierre Plamondon.

RéGÎM sets ridership record in 2023

Nelson Sergerie
Local Journalism Initiative

GASPÉ - Despite experiencing a slump during the pandemic, the Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands intermunicipal transport authority (RéGÎM) achieved record ridership in 2023.

“Public transportation is gaining popularity in the region,” remarks RéGÎM president, Daniel Côté. “The record was around 80,000 to 82,000 trips and, in 2023, we exceeded 85,000 trips. It's good news. The more people there are on board, the more funding it creates and the more funding there is, the more we can improve the journeys,” adds Mr. Côté.

The president can't say for sure why the transporter had such a good turnout in ridership. “The price of gasoline has skyrocketed. Maybe people wanted to save money. Increasingly, people also have a social and environmental conscience when it comes to taking public transportation. We also try to make our services better known. It can give a boost to traffic,” Mr. Côté attempts to explain.

The RéGÎM plans to improve its services with a development plan. “It's advancing. We decided to better adapt the trips according to the schedules of mass customers. In the Rocher-Percé MRC there have been efforts, and on the Magdalen Islands side efforts are currently being made. These are the places where we have the least public transit traffic. We are trying to get closer to the data we have in the other MRCs in the territory,” he says.

Paratransit services have also seen growth, although they haven't reached record levels. “As it is a specific clientele, we are not aiming for records,” specifies the president.

Furthermore, due to the increase in the use of bicycles last summer, the RéGÎM plans to enhance its bike-sharing program, which has been in place for two years.

“Based on these results, we were offered the opportunity to purchase very gently used bicycles from the Orford region. They were ridden for a maximum of two months. An operating cost problem with the system in place meant that they wanted to get rid of them. We got them at less than half the cost price,” says Mr. Côté.

Bicycles were already available in Gaspé, Carleton-sur-Mer, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts and New Richmond.

“On the Gaspé side, we wanted to have additional funds and other municipalities raised their hands to have them. This will be rolled out during the year,” says Mr. Côté, who leaves it to the new municipalities participating in the program to make their own announcements.

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY FORUM

COLLECTIVE BRAINSTORMING FOR SOLUTIONS!

Opportunity for representatives, service providers and English-speaking community members to exchange knowledge, address needs, and find solutions together.



**Centre
Multifonctionnel,
63 QC-132 Ouest,
Gascons, QC
G0C 1P0**



**APRIL 23
8:00AM-4:15PM**



**LUNCH WILL
BE PROVIDED**

4:15PM Networking and cocktails

REGISTER NOW



**Please RSVP by calling
the CASA office at:
418-752-5995**

CASA PRESENTS

HOMEGROWN 2024

WORKSHOPS

APRIL 5TH

4PM - RELEASE A SONG WITH SUCCESS. PART 1: MANAGING RIGHTS - MARIE-LOU BRIERE BERTHELOT

8PM - MUSIC JAM AND COLLABORATION

APRIL 6TH

***10AM TO 2PM - VISUAL ARTISTS AND ARTISANS MARKET. RESERVE YOUR TABLES FOR JUST \$10.**

10AM - MUSICIAN NETWORKING, EXPERIENCES, MARKETS, NEEDS, IDEAS, OPPORTUNITIES. - MARIE-LOU BRIERE BERTHELOT, MAX BUJOLD, MELISSA GIRVAN AND MORE.

2PM - RELEASE A SONG WITH SUCCESS. PART 2: DISTRIBUTION AND PROMOTION - MARIE-LOU BRIERE BERTHELOT

3PM - PRESENTATION OF SERVICES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTS. - CULTURE GASPESE AND THE MINISTER OF CULTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

5PM - VISUAL AND MUSICAL ARTISTS NETWORKING ACTIVITY, MEET AND GREET

PASPEBIAC CULTURAL CENTRE

ALL WORKSHOPS ARE FREE FOR PARTICIPANTS, THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS.

***ONLY THE MARKET COSTS \$10 TO HAVE A TABLE**

Secrétariat aux relations
avec les Québécois
d'expression anglaise
Québec

SADC Société
d'aide au développement
de la collectivité
DE GASPÉ

culture
GASPESIE

CASA

SADC Société
d'aide au développement
de la collectivité
DU ROCHER-PERCÉ

Canada

Percé Geoparc turns to a social financing campaign

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The Percé Geoparc is launching a \$50,000 social financing campaign to improve its facilities in order to keep its UNESCO accreditation, which is up for renewal.

After a financial turnaround, the process must be redone to keep the label.

"We have a mission this summer, which is to revalidate our status as a world geopark with UNESCO, and this will entail some expenses and improvements before the inspections, which is why we are launching this socio-financing campaign to help us achieve this goal," explains Percé Geoparc president, Daniel Leboeuf.

The administration will have to target several elements in its goal of maintaining its UNESCO recognition. "First, signage: when you enter Percé, it's sometimes difficult for someone unfamiliar with the geoparc to find clear directions. We want to redo our signs at the two entrances to the town and in the town to facilitate access. We've been

asked to redo our geoparc map with trails and geosites. We need to be more specific," says Mr. Leboeuf.

In addition, a showcase to display Canadian and world-wide geoparks will also be created. Mr. Leboeuf adds that the necessary improvements will also include partner collaboration contracts, management of issues and improving how the Geoparc is marketed.

All these elements were requested by UNESCO, hence the reason for the two-year renewal of accreditation which expires in April.

The Geoparc's financial situation has also improved. "Raymond, Chabot, Grant Thornton have given us the 2023 financial statements, and I'm happy to say that we're no longer in the red. It's less of a concern for the future," says the president.

In 2022, the geoparc recorded a deficit of \$350,000, which forced the organization's management to be cautious. "We didn't deepen our debt despite the financial difficulties. We haven't borrowed more. We're repaying our initial loans. The rise in interest rates



Photo: N. Sergerie

The Percé Geoparc seeks to renew its UNESCO accreditation.

is affecting us a little, but we haven't taken out any additional loans. We've affected our working capital, but we're going to rebuild it over the next few years," says Mr. Leboeuf.

Projects for four-season chalets have been put on ice indefinitely. "We've set up a redevelopment committee to take a serious look at our mis-

sion with the board of directors, co-op members and other tourism stakeholders to define projects for the next five years. I can't say any more, as the committee is still deliberating," he says, hoping to find the right solutions that won't cause any more financial worries.

Reconstruction of the sanitary block will be delayed as it is linked to the Rue du Pied-

mont project.

The social financing campaign is led by Chef Ricardo Larrivée, who has been based in Percé for several months and the finale of the fundraising campaign will be a benefit dinner hosted by the chef on May 4. "He's a friendly, dynamic man. He'll be hosting the fundraising evening," says Mr. Leboeuf.

Ottawa funds six generators for Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Town of Gaspé has received \$500,000 from the federal government to purchase and install generators as part of the town's emergency measures plan.

The federal funding comes from a residual envelope of the Fund created to support the victims of Hurricane Fiona in September 2022, which caused significant damage in Atlantic Canada and, to a lesser extent, in the Gaspé Peninsula.

With this amount, the town purchased six generators for \$404,240, covering installation costs of \$41,437, and the parts to install them for an amount of \$53,838.

"We managed to cap the costs after the calls for tenders at around \$500,000. We had access to a grant that could reach \$700,000," mentions the mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

"We have six mega generators of various powers: from 25,000 watts to 200,000 watts,



Photo: N. Sergerie

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

single-phase and three-phase, to equip six of our community buildings in the town's territory which could serve as shelter in the event of a natural disaster or other emergencies that would require housing people," explains the mayor.

Some halls are already equipped with kitchens, if nec-

essary, and partnerships with the Red Cross have provided cots.

"The important thing is that we can offer shelter and warmth to people in the event of a prolonged outage. We have this basis," says Mr. Côté.

The allocated funds needed

to be used by March 31, a task accomplished by the town council on March 18.

Transports Québec's former service centre

In another file, the dismantling and decontamination of the former Ministry of Transport service centre in downtown Gaspé is progressing.

"There are several steps which have been taken and others to be taken. It's a process that has been going on for around fifteen years," says Mr. Côté.

At the time, the Town had transferred land near the Augustines Industrial Park to the Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI) for the construction of offices for the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources in exchange for Quebec Ministry of Transports (MTQ) land downtown.

"With this donation, we shared the costs of demolition and decontamination. The SQI pays for the decontamination of the land and the Town for the demolition of the build-

ings. To make things easier, we are giving the SQI the mandate to demolish, but the Town will assume the costs in a memorandum of understanding which is in the process of being implemented," explains the mayor.

Demolition is considered the safer option.

"Decontamination is a box of surprises," he notes.

Calls for tenders are expected to be launched in April, with demolition planned for this year and decontamination to follow in late 2024 or 2025.

"We hope that the land will be released in 2026. This year, we will begin a public consultation process to find out what we will do with this land and that of the arena that we want to move nearer to a versatile space. Two large blocks of land are becoming available downtown and the people will be consulted by the end of the year," Mayor Côté concludes.

For the moment, the Town is refraining from advancing demolition and decontamination costs to avoid disruption to the calls for tenders process.

It's the end of an era for Together for the Sustainable Future of Greater Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - After a little over a decade of existence, the environmental group Ensemble pour l'avenir durable du Grand Gaspé (Together for the Sustainable Future of Greater Gaspé) is shutting down.

The decision to close was reached at a general meeting, as administrative tasks had become overwhelming for the group.

"We lack the financial and human resources to start taking cases again. It's not that the environment doesn't need environmental groups like ours, but we felt the exhaustion among our people," explains Lise Chartrand, the group's president and spokesperson.

The group was formed in 2010 but was formally created in 2012 when oil drilling was being carried out at the

Haldimand 4 site, near Forest Street, close to downtown Gaspé. The well was drilled some 300 metres from the residences.

"I feel like we all gave a lot in this battle. It was unheard of to have an oil well in a residential area. People feared for the water. It was something to question decisions and confront certain individuals," says Lise Chartrand who joined the group and became president in 2012.

The group's efforts included organizing numerous demonstrations to oppose oil activities in the Gaspé region, which led to concrete actions from Quebec.

"It ended well when the CAQ government adopted the famous law prohibiting the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in Quebec. I'm not saying that this victory is

just ours, but we had a lot to do with it. Also, there is the notion of social acceptability which is now part of the vocabulary and speeches of elected officials who present a project," adds Ms. Chartrand.

The organization worked on various environmental issues, including advocating for the return of trains, which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by removing trucks from the roads. Pesticide application concerns will be addressed by the Société de conservation ZICO de la Baie-de-Gaspé.

"Before (my involvement with) Ensemble for the Sustainable Future of Grand Gaspé, I was an environmental activist. I will always remain vigilant because I am very touched by everything concerning this issue," concludes Ms. Chartrand, the longtime activist.



Credit: N. Sergerie

Lise Chartrand during a stormy demonstration against oil in 2014 in Gaspé.

Finally, work on drinking water in Gascons

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PORT-DANIEL-GASCONS - Construction of a water and sewer system is set to begin at the end of the summer in the Gascons sector of Port-Daniel-Gascons after more than 20 years of waiting.

The municipality was finally able to reach an agreement with the government of Quebec to review the financing of the project, now estimated at \$40 million.

In 2018, the project was valued at \$28.6 million, with the government of Quebec granting \$26.6 million.

Under the new agreement, the government of Quebec will pay 95% of the actual bill for the water portion and an equivalent proportion for the sewer portion, up to a maximum of \$22.1 million.

"This is good news. We've received confirmation that the project is a priority. It's still a significant financial contribution," says Mayor Henri Grenier with relief.

The balance will be paid for by residents, who will receive the services via a sector tax.

The mayor will be seeking the cooperation of affected residents, and will be meeting with them shortly.



Photo: N. Sergerie

"Land acquisition and easements are not subsidized. This means that 100% of the costs will go on the bill of the taxpayers who will receive the service. I'm expecting people to cooperate," says Mr. Grenier.

Tenders for construction will be issued by early April.

"If all goes well, it's very possible that construction could start in late summer or early fall. We're talking about ten kilometres of pipe. It's a minimum of two years," says the mayor.

An agreement had been reached with the Town of Chandler to supply Gascons from the Newport district.

The search for water in the Gascons area had proved unsuccessful.

Studies have shown that the water source identified in 2009 would not be sufficient to supply the 400 or so homes, 80% of which have non-potable water. "That was demonstrated with studies. That helped move the issue forward," says Mr. Grenier.

In office since 2009, the mayor says this is probably the largest file of his political career.

"You could say yes! I'm in my fourth term, and from the very first days of my first term, we were talking about this file," notes Mr. Grenier.

CHANDLER UPDATE: New construction will no longer receive tax credits

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - A lack of interest in the tax credit incentive for new housing and business construction has resulted in the Town of Chandler cancelling its incentive program.

"The requests have not increased in Chandler. We decided to remove it. We'll see if we can put new incentives to replace it. For the moment, we have decided to withdraw these two regulations," explains the mayor of Chandler, Gilles Daraïche.

The mayor cannot explain why the incentive program didn't work in Chandler, when in Gaspé and the Bay of Chaleur area, the idea worked well.



Photo: N. Sergerie

"The investments are not made on our end. Some people could invest and perhaps decide to invest elsewhere. Some people come to visit (to ask questions)," says Mr. Daraïche.

Meetings are planned over the coming weeks with possible promoters.

An even higher bill

The bill surrounding the saga of former Chandler mayor Louise Langlois has increased by \$7,678. The municipal council recently paid an invoice of \$5,908.43 to the firm representing the Town of Chandler, while the former mayor's attorney invoiced \$1,769.78 to bring the total of this saga to \$360,678.

These invoices are linked to the request filed by Ms. Langlois who wanted a stay of proceedings against her.

The Town is seeking \$230,411 in damages following the saga surrounding the 180-day sanction of the Municipal Commission from January to July 2021 in connection with the code of ethics. As of now, no hearing date has been scheduled in this matter.

Gin in bulk: A first in Quebec at Caplan's Distillerie des Marigots

GILLES GAGNÉ

CAPLAN – Caplan's Distillerie des Marigots becomes the first micro-distillery in Quebec to offer liquor in bulk, specifically its Récif gin.

Customers must bring back their own empty bottle of Récif. Since the product inside is sterile, the bottle does not need to be washed by the customer. It can be refilled endlessly. The store team fills their bottles with them. To encourage this practice, the distillery "buys back" the bottle by offering a \$3 credit.

After only a few weeks, the bottle-filling trial has received an enthusiastic welcome from customers.

"People are happy to save money, but they are even happier to directly measure their contribution to reducing bottle consumption. For my part, I find that it creates even more proximity between my business and the community. People come to help themselves. My gin is one of the products they al-



Courtesy of: Distillerie des Marigots

A \$3 refund per bottle is given to the clients who go to Caplan's Distillerie des Marigots for a refill.

ways have at home. We see them return with their empty bottles. We can talk about the cocktails they made and suggest new recipes. It creates a special bond," explains Joseph St-Denis Boulanger, owner and master distiller.

Since its opening in 2020,

the distillery has been collecting its bottles, thanks to a drop-off bin where customers can deposit their empty bottles, which are then washed and sterilized before being reused in production. This new bulk gin offering makes it possible to avoid produc-

tion steps while giving customers a form of deposit.

"People who came to place an empty bottle in the return bin most of the time came in to buy a new bottle. It was nonsense not to offer a filling solution. It's so simple. We care about the impact

of our actions at all levels, and we are proud of our artisanal production: offering gin in bulk is perfectly aligned with our philosophy and our values," adds Mr. St-Denis Boulanger.

For the moment, only Récif gin is available as a fill, but the pilot project could extend to other products if demand is there. For the first year of the project, the distillery team hopes to reuse around 100 bottles. The Caplan firm also wants other players in the industry to follow suit.

The Récif gin filling is only available at the Distillerie des Marigots. Bottles of Récif are also sold on-site in certain SAQ branches and at SAQ.com.

Since 2020, the Distillerie des Marigots has offered products typical of the Gaspé region. The firm's first product, Récif gin, has been rewarded many times for its character, local taste and audacity. The distillery houses a Charentais still, which is very rare in America, and its team collaborates with internationally renowned artisans.

CSN files a grievance against the mayor of Percé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The situation has gone from bad to worse in the Town of Percé as the union representing the town's unionized employees has filed a grievance against the mayor.

According to our sources, the grievance alleges instances of verbal abuse and inappropriate behaviour carried out by Cathy Poirier, the mayor of Percé.

The president of the central council of the CSN union for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, Serge Saint-Pierre, declined to confirm the specifics of the grievance or the individual targeted, but confirms that the document has been filed.

This is a collective grievance, filed on behalf of all the members expressing their disappointment with the situation which has lasted for several months.

For the time being, Mr. Saint-Pierre prefers not to grant any interviews, or make any



Credit: N. Sergerie

Cathy Poirier is targeted in the grievance filed by the CSN.

additional comments, in an attempt to avoid making an already difficult situation worse.

Meanwhile, the investigation launched by the Directorate of Municipal Integrity Investigations and Prosecutions (DEPIM) of the Quebec

Municipal Commission is ongoing, one month after issuing a warning to the Town of Percé in a letter made public on February 19.

The Commission is not providing any additional information since the investigation

remains confidential, despite the exceptional gesture made a month ago when an email ordered elected officials and municipal employees to collaborate and keep discussions confidential.

The Commission is conducting an investigation "into possible breaches of the rules of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct applicable to elected officials of the Town of Percé, as well as possible reprehensible acts committed or about to be committed."

The investigations department also mentioned having been informed of the internal investigation carried out among town employees and emphasized at the time that despite several attempts, it had been impossible to obtain details on this mandate or its progress.

The Commission intended to meet several people, including employees and elected officials and asked them to maintain the strictest confidentiality and not to reveal the content of the exchanges with

anyone.

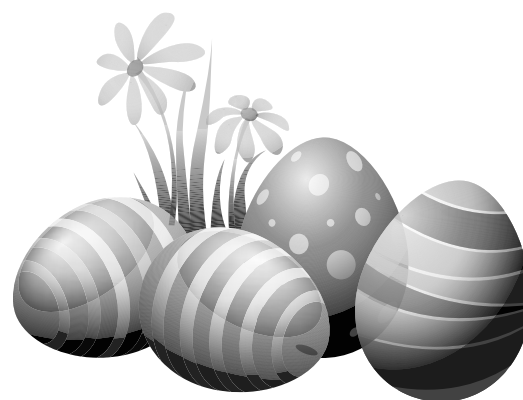
The town launched its own administrative investigation after suspending the director of Urban Planning, Ghislain Pitre, with pay on October 30, 2023, over allegations of suspected fraud, theft of large sums of money from the municipality and falsification of documents.

The Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit visited the Municipal hall on November 14, 2023, to meet with the town's director general, Jean-François Coderre and various municipal employees in connection with this affair.

At the November municipal council, the town prosecutor, Mr. Simon Cossette Lachance, indicated that the allegations raised were serious, which led to the triggering of an administrative investigation to verify these allegations. He clarified that the suspension with pay follows a court ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada in order to respect the presumption of innocence.

Mr. Pitre is the spouse of Mayor Cathy Poirier.

Have an Eggcellent EASTER



CLOUD EGGS

Ingredients:

2 large eggs
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 cup Gruyere cheese (grated)

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 450°. Line large baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Separate egg whites and yolks, placing egg whites in large bowl and yolks in small bowl.
- Season egg whites with salt. Using electric mixer, beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Gently fold in grated cheese.
- Spoon egg whites into 2 mounds on prepared baking sheet. Add a small dent in center of mound with back of a spoon. Bake for about 3 minutes or slightly golden.
- Place egg yolk gently in center of each egg white cloud and season with salt. Bake for about 3 minutes or until yolks are just set.

BREAKFAST STRATA

Ingredients:

4 slices of dense white or whole-grain bread
4 eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/2 tsp dried thyme or oregano
6 slices Canadian-style bacon (chopped)
1/2 cup cheddar cheese (shredded)

Instructions:

- Place bread in single layer in greased 8-inch square baking dish.
- Beat eggs, milk and thyme in medium bowl until blended, then pour over bread. Sprinkle with bacon. Refrigerate, covered, at least 30 minutes or as long as overnight.
- Heat oven to 350°F. Remove strata from refrigerator, uncover and let stand while oven heats.
- Bake, uncovered in centre of oven, for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake until cheese is melted and strata is puffed, golden and firm in centre, about 5 minutes longer.

GRANOLA MUFFIN FRITTATAS

Ingredients:

8 large eggs
2/3 cup milk
3 1/2 cups granola with nuts and dried fruit

Instructions:

- Heat oven to 350°F. Generously coat inside of 12 paper cupcake liners with cooking spray, then place liners in muffin pan.
 - Beat eggs, milk and salt in bowl until blended. Add granola, mix well and spoon into cupcake liners.
 - Bake at 350°F until wooden pick inserted in centers comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove cups from muffin pan, cool on wire rack and enjoy warm.
- Leftovers can be quickly warmed up in the microwave for a fast and easy breakfast on the go.

Egg Facts

2 Eggs = 13 Grams of Protein

Eggs are a complete protein source, because they contain all nine essential amino acids!

Most of the Nutrients in Eggs Are Found in the Yolk!

These include iron, folate, vitamins A, D, E, B12 and more.

2/3 of the Fat Found in Eggs Is Unsaturated.

Healthy fats help our bodies absorb nutrients, and support healthy brain and nervous system function.



Source: Egg Farmers of Canada



CASA

Bright Beginnings

A shining start for children ages 0-8

168 Gérard D. Levesque Blvd,
New Carlisle, Que.

Tel.: 418-752-5995
Toll Free: 1-877-752-5995

E. GAGNON & FILS LTÉE

Gaspe Shore

E. GAGNON TRANSPORT

ARRIVAGES DE GASPÉ GASPE HARVEST

E. GAGNON & FILS Thérèse

405, route 132, Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé
(Québec) Canada G0C 3B0
☎: 418 385.3011 📠: 418 385.3021

Lobster • Snow Crab • Rock Crab

Announcements



Obituaries



MACWHIRTER: Anne (nee Dugdale)

Anne MacWhirter (nee Dugdale), a woman of remarkable accomplishments and immeasurable love passed away peacefully at her home, surrounded by her family on March 18, 2024, at the age of 76 years.

Predeceased by her brother David Dugdale. Anne leaves behind a legacy which is cherished and celebrated. Her memory will forever be carried in the hearts of her family - her beloved husband of 56 years, Gordon; loving children: Rob (Cheyenne), Kevin (Mariette), Jeannie (David) and Trudy (Pierre); adoring grandchildren: Audrey (Mathieu), Matthew, Emily, Zachary, Thomas, Kade, and Ariel. Anne will also be fondly remembered by her brother Bob (Gayle)

and her sister Ruth (Jim).

The family will receive condolences on Saturday, March 30 at Hope Baptist Church, 305 route 132, Hopetown, Quebec from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. The funeral service will follow at 2 p.m.

The family wishes to thank the oncology department at Maria Hospital and the Palliative home care services at CLSC for their kindness and compassion in caring for Anne.

A special thank you to Dr. Levesque and Dr. Basques for providing exceptional personal and professional care.

In Lieu of flowers, Anne requested that a donation be made in her memory to the Hope Baptist Church, 305 Route 132, Hope Town, Quebec, G0C 3C1. Or to a charity of your choice.



SYVRET: E. Joyce Hayes

E. Joyce Hayes Syvret, 97, passed away peacefully, with her daughter by her side, on January 29, 2024.

Joyce was predeceased by her loving husband of 73 years, Curtis, her brothers Carl, Henry, John, Jules, Alec, and her sister Jenny. She is survived by her son Kevin (Gloria), daughter Wendy,

grandchildren Amy and Colton(Hayley), great grandsons Carson and Lincoln and sisters Mary, Dorcas, Hilda and Ann as well a very large extended family. Joyce was loved by all who knew her and will be greatly missed.

Service and Burial in Hope, Québec to be held the first week of June with details to follow.



In Memory



ALMOND: Emily Ann

November 22, 1937 - March 10, 2023

In loving memory of Emily Almond.

We just can't find the words to say

How much we miss you,

We so miss you

Each and every day.

Your smile, your hugs, so much more

Your love stays with us,

Here, so near, so dear.

Mummaloo, Mummaloo,

We love you.

Your loving family: Peter (Poppy), Debbie, Judy, Sandy, David and Tanya.

COAST ROUND-UP

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

COAST ROUND-UP

PORT DANIEL:

Three Star Golden Age Club

Tuesdays: Pétanque from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. every Tuesday evening. Cost is \$3.

SHIGAWAKE:

Community Centre

April 2: The Shigawake community centre will be holding a gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. \$20 per series. Canteen service available. Hope to see you there.

SHIGAWAKE:

St. Paul's Anglican Church

April 20: The St. Paul's Anglican church will be holding a spaghetti supper from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Shigawake Community Centre. \$15 per adult and

\$8 for children under 12. Includes dinner, tea/coffee, bun and dessert. Take-out will be available beginning at 4:30 p.m.

HOPE:

Hope Baptist Church

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

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:

Royal Canadian Legion Branch #64

Please be advised that Le-

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

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

NEW CARLISLE:

Life Association

April 6: The Life Association will be hosting a gift bingo starting at 7 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN

Sunday, March 31
2 p.m. Easter Sunday with communion

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND

Sunday, March 31
10 a.m. Service
Monday, April 1
10 a.m. Service

in New Carlisle. 1 series for 10\$ or 3 series for 20\$. Canteen service is available.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: 50+ Club

Tuesdays: Grocery bingo every Tuesday at 7 p.m. \$10 for three cards. Extra cards are \$1 each

April 20: Turkey supper

from 4 to 6 p.m., \$20 (13+), \$10 (7-12), free (under 6).

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: Book Room

Please be advised that the book room is now open. Anyone who needs assistance can contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Thursday, March 28 New Carlisle

7 p.m. Maundy Thursday

Friday, March 29

Stations of the Cross
10 a.m. **New Carlisle**
1 p.m. **Port Daniel**
3 p.m. **Hopetown**

Saturday, March 30 New Carlisle

5 p.m. Holy Saturday service

Sunday, March 31 New Carlisle

6 a.m. Sunrise in the chapel
9 a.m. Service
Shigawake
11 a.m. Service

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, March 31
St. Paul's - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, communication with a spouse or a loved one is vital this week; otherwise, you risk arguments for no reason at all. Sit down and have some frank conversations about your needs.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, when you face adversity you should rest assured that you can handle anything that is thrown at you. Although, you may need a little help from some close friends or family.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, others may not understand who you are and could make assumptions that are inaccurate. They may just need some more information to get a clearer picture.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, many elements of your life are starting to level out this week. That can be a comfort to you because you seemingly have been running around for some time and could use a break.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, others have nothing but good things to say to you this week. Bask in their kind words and adoration, and use this as motivation for future endeavors.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

With no big events on the horizon, you may want to manufacture one to have a reason to party,



Virgo. Start planning your guest list and come up with a fun theme to get behind.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, while you should be mindful of your goals, you also can support those around you as they pursue their own. Serve as inspiration to people in your life right now.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, this is a good time to start tackling some projects around the house that have been put off for some time. Redecorating and remodeling can be an inspiration right now.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Take a step back and reevaluate your approach to a situation because the way you have been doing it just hasn't yielded the results you expected, Sagittarius. Take suggestions and tips.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, high energy may have you swinging at the fences every time you try to tackle something. You may want to dial things back and take a more

measured approach.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Various transitions in your life could temporarily disrupt your daily activities, Aquarius. You'll find a new groove soon enough that will feel comfortable and provide you with what you need.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Don't take stock of what all the naysayers have been dishing out, Pisces. You know yourself better than others and recognize what you are able to accomplish. Get started on plans.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

MARCH 24

Peyton Manning, Athlete (48)

MARCH 25

Katharine McPhee, Singer (40)

MARCH 26

Jonathan Groff, Actor (39)

MARCH 27

Mariah Carey, Singer (55)

MARCH 28

Vince Vaughn, Actor (54)

MARCH 29

Leah Williamson, Athlete (27)

MARCH 30

Celine Dion, Singer (56)



Business & Professional DIRECTORY

Grenier, Grenier & Grenier LAWYERS



Réal Grenier, b.a.ll.l.
Jules Grenier, b.a.ll.l.

96 Gérard D. Levesque Blvd, P.O. Box 519
New Carlisle (Quebec) G0C 1Z0
Tel.: (418) 752-3308 • Fax (418) 752-6935



Gagnon Claveau Law Firm

Isabelle Gagnon
Attorney and family law mediator

Ann-Chloé Boudreau
Attorney

418-392-3542
www.gagnonclaveau.com
info@gagnonclaveau.com

Fully
bilingual
services in
the whole
Gaspé pen-
insula

GAËL TREMBLAY
Notary and legal counsel

TREMBLAY & BARRIAULT, NOTAIRES INC.
119B Perron Blvd West
New Richmond, (Québec) G0C 2B0
Tel.: (418) 392-5282
Fax: (418) 392-6155
E-mail: gaeltremblay@notarius.net



FULLY
BILINGUAL
SERVICE



Forage Moreau Inc.

418-392-9501
Mathieu Mercier - Driller/Owner

- Artesian Well Drilling
- Budgetary Price
- Bilingual Service
- RBQ: 5672-1467-01

foragemoreaumercier@gmail.com

To reach the anglophone
population, advertise in
The Gaspé Spec!

Contact our
Advertising Representative
Heather Imhoff
581-233-2062

gaspespec.revitalization@gmail.com



OHMEGA
Going beyond and reliable since 1982



Electricity - Plumbing
Automation
Industrial computing
Counter sales

3 Rue Cerisiers
Gaspé, Québec G4X 2M1
Tel. (418) 368-5425
Fax (418) 368-7290
www.groupeohmega.com



Dr. Pascal Cyr
Optometrist



Dr. Stacey Starrak
Optometrist

CLINIQUE D'OPTOMÉTRIE L'ÉMERILLON

LENSES CRAFTED ON THE PREMISES

PASPÉBIAC: 104 Gérard D. Levesque Blvd West • 418-752-5553
CHANDLER: 260 René Lévesque Blvd East • 418-689-5553
MARIA: 435 Perron Blvd West • 418-759-5553



Subscribers Like **You**
Make the Difference



St. Pat's celebrated here and there despite stormy skies

Cynthia Dow

NEW RICHMOND: - As usual, St Patrick's feast day brought some messy precipitation on the weekend of March 17, but Gaspésians still found a way to celebrate the Irish saint. The residents of the Richmond Manor were serenaded by four volunteers on the afternoon of March 16: Alistair Campbell, Richard and Mario Boudreau and Fortunat Bourque. On the 17th Jimmy Cahill dropped by the Manor in the evening for more tunes. That same afternoon, an event was sponsored by the Committee for Anglophone Social Action at the Paspébiac Cultural Centre, where about 160 people turned out to enjoy the music of The Irish Narrows. "The crowd came from French and English communities, from all over the coast. It was lots of fun. We really enjoyed ourselves," Dave Felker, one of the band members, told SPEC



Top Photo: Richmond Manor's oldest resident, 101-year-old Margaret Valdron, could not resist the invitation to dance from fellow resident Georges Babin. Credit: C. Dow



Left Photo: The local band the Irish Narrows entertained more than 100 in Paspébiac on the 17th. From the left: Dominick Briand, Kevin Jones, Catherine Maldemay, Nathan Hayes, David Felker and Bethany Paetkau. Credit: Courtesy David Felker



WELDING AND FITTING

COURSE STARTS AUGUST 2024

Do you:

- Have good shape perception?
- Enjoy physical and manual tasks?
- Have good visual acuity, dexterity and good execution precision?
- Have excellent powers of observation?

If so, WELDING is for you!



SCAN ME

Register by August 2024

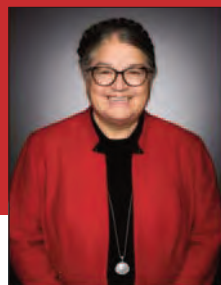
100% placement rate

FREE residence



Centre de formation DE LA CÔTE-DE-GASPÉ

Business & Professional Directory



DIANE LEBOUTHILLIER

MP • Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Serving the English-speaking community of our beautiful region!

Grande-Rivière office
418 385-4264

Magdalen Islands office
418 986-1489

Sainte-Anne-des-Monts office
418 764-2890

New Richmond office
581 355-0060

Email: diane.lebouthillier@parl.gc.ca

diane

AXIO
ARPEUTEURS - GÉOMÈTRES

AXIO
arpenteurs-géomètres inc.
land surveyors

151B, Avenue de Grand-Pré, Bonaventure (Québec) G0C 1E0

Alexandre Babin, Arpenteur-géomètre
C abag@axioag.com

Guillaume Lapierre, Arpenteur-géomètre
C glag@axioag.com

Membre de l'Ordre
des Arpenteurs-Géomètres du Québec

418 534-3113 / info@axioag.com
axioag.com

T 418-364-7082 / 1-844-664-7082

LFG
CONSTRUCTION

PROUD PARTNER IN YOUR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS FOR MORE THAN 45 YEARS!

constructionlfg.com

Gaspésie—Les Îles | Côte-Nord | Bas-Saint-Laurent

BUILDINGS ENERGY AND CIVIL ENGINEERING INDUSTRIAL MECHANIC

ENERGY
TRANSPORTATION GROUP

WHAT MAKES US DRIVEN TO BE DIFFERENT?

www.shipENERGY.com

DISCOVER MORE