

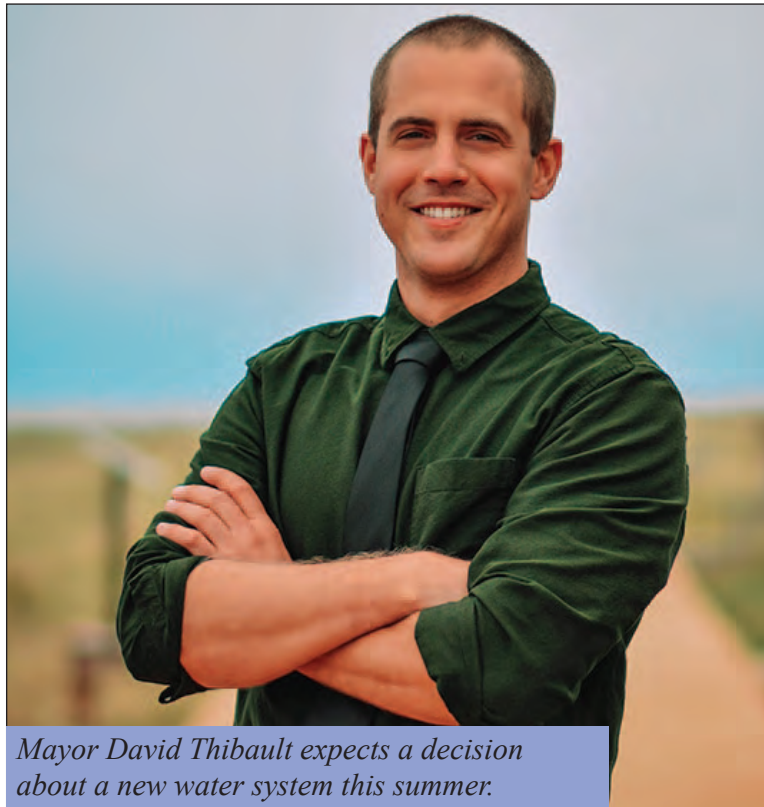
## New Carlisle likely to obtain its drinkable water from Paspebiac

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – A tentative agreement tabled by the Town of New Carlisle is currently under study by the municipal administration of Paspebiac regarding the latter becoming the supplier of drinkable water to New Carlisle residents.

The Paspebiac municipal administration is studying New Carlisle's proposal to check if modifications are required. The mayor of New Carlisle, David Thibault, expects to meet with Paspebiac councillors and public works employees in April to see if they have any other additional questions.

"After studying the project at length, we opted for building a water tank after reviewing three different projects bearing three different costs. The



Mayor David Thibault expects a decision about a new water system this summer.

Photo: Courtesy of David Thibault

PRIMEAU (Programme d'infrastructures municipales d'eau) program could provide

us with a grant covering 95% of the cost if it is accepted by the Municipal Affairs Min-

istry," explains Mayor Thibault.

A filtration plant was another scenario studied at length by the Town of New Carlisle but it was rejected. "We couldn't have received a grant in that case. It was a \$12 million project," he adds.

An underground pipe coming from Paspebiac and reaching the centre of New Carlisle, as well as the construction of a tank, could potentially cost \$10 million.

"With a grant covering 95% of the cost, this would mean a contribution of \$500,000 from the Town of New Carlisle. If we borrow \$500,000 over 30 years, the addition to our yearly budget will be negligible," stresses David Thibault.

He points out that the \$10 million sum is preliminary, as recent construction costs have skyrocketed here and there. Besides, a few steps remain before

reaching a call for tenders.

"We are now moving to the technical aspects of the project. Once the agreement is signed by the two towns, we will submit a grant request to the PRIMEAU program. If we are approved, we will have the plans and specifications prepared. Then, we will run a call for tenders. We will have a price and go back to PRIMEAU, where we will learn if the project can go ahead or not," describes Mayor Thibault.

### Taxpayers bill to remain the same

Currently, New Carlisle's taxpayers connected to the water system pay \$120 per year for that aspect of their municipal bill. Once the new system is

Cont'd on page 10

## Eastern Shores School Board holds public meeting to unveil new school

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – Eastern Shores School Board (ESSB) held a public meeting on April 4 at the New Carlisle High School gymnasium to announce details about the construction of New Carlisle's new school.

The project, valued at \$32 million, was announced in September 2021. If everything goes as planned ESSB and the Quebec government will likely issue a call for tenders for the construction of a new school with a possible delivery date of January 2026.

At the meeting, ESSB chairman, Wade Gifford, pointed out that the new school follows more than three decades of effort by ESSB and its predecessors. He remembers that the first official request to get a new



Architectural image of the new school as presented on April 4 by ESSB.

Photo: Courtesy of ESSB

school in New Carlisle dates back to the late 1980s.

"Well, 35 years hence, we still need a new school," he summed up at the beginning

of the public meeting, attended by just over 30 people.

Mr. Gifford acknowledged that progress is being made. ESSB's superintendent of

services, Trevor Renouf, explained that a majority of the architectural concept and its specifications have been approved by the Ministry of Ed-

ucation.

"The first design was finalized in April 2023. In February 2024, the architectural details of the project were approved at 60%. In May 2024, the call for tenders for the contractors could be published. Certain things could be modified based on the timing of the call for bids," said Mr. Renouf.

The cost of \$32 million mentioned by the Ministry of Education on the September 24, 2021, announcement still stands, he adds, despite skyrocketing costs characterizing the construction sector.

"The concept has been slightly downsized since. The cost of \$32 million includes all the aspects of the projects, including plans and specifications," mentioned Mr. Renouf.

Cont'd on page 3

# \$1.25 million for Mi'gmaq language and culture in Gesgapegiag

GILLES GAGNÉ

GESGAPEGIAG — The Mi'gmaq community of Gesgapegiag signed a \$1.25 million agreement with the Ministry of Canadian Heritage to fund a Mi'gmaq language and culture revival program through the Apo'qon'ma'tultinej Cultural Centre.

The announcement was made on April 2 at the Apo'qon'ma'tultinej Cultural Centre by Gesgapegiag councillor John Martin who is responsible for the language and culture portfolio, and Diane Lebouthillier, the Member of Parliament for Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. Minister Lebouthillier attended the announcement on behalf of Pascale St-Onge, the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

"We are happy to announce this program launch that will enable us to transmit

the end of the line if we don't correct the situation," explains Mr. Martin.

The number of registered members of Gesgapegiag is close to 1,600 people, 700 of whom live in the community. A certain number also live in the nearby towns of New Richmond, Cascapedia-St-Jules and Maria.

"Almost all the people still speaking Mi'gmaq are 40 and older. It is very hard to find younger people that speak the language," adds Councillor Martin.

The decline started after 1985, he says. "From 1979 to 1980, we repatriated our students who were attending schools located outside the community. Over the first years of school, the curriculum was offered exclusively in Mi'gmaq. From the fourth grade and on, half the program was offered in Mi'gmaq and half in English, with a bit of French. In 1985, the Mi'gmaq program was cut. There



Photos: G. Gagné

*Elder William Jerome, Member of Parliament Diane Lebouthillier, councillors Tracy Condo and Dorothy Gedeon, Communication Officer Jeannette Maltan Martin, and councillors John Martin and Shawn Martin gathered on April 2 to announce a \$1.25 million funding to strengthen the Mi'gmaq language and culture.*

projects here and there," points out John Martin.

## More than just a language

The \$1.25 million agreement is part of the Federal Government's Canadian Heritage Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program. It is intended to support the efforts of Indigenous peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain, and strengthen their languages and cultures. In Gesgapegiag, it will unfold from 2024 to 2028 and provide immersive language and culture classes to about 50 students per year.

"The loss of our language is really the result of a government policy over 150 years, maybe longer. The gesture to correct the situation is very important. A language is not only a language. It is part of our history, our culture, our protocols. It is a way of looking at the world. If we lose the language, we lose our way of looking at the world," states John Martin.

He appreciates the fact that, recently, some government actions have emphasized reconciliation but he adds that it is also important to recognize the truth and the harm caused to the First Nations by ensuring, notably through residential schools, that they would not learn their language.

"The same effort must be made to protect our language now," underlines John Martin, who also stresses that "sophisticated technologies sped up the loss of our lan-

guage."

"We are greatly thankful to the people who believed in this project, in our community and at the Ministry of Canadian Heritage," adds John Martin, who sees the passing on of the language from generation to generation as a self-determination approach.

Minister Lebouthillier explains that "collectively, we have a role to play in supporting Indigenous peoples in preserving their languages. Here in Gesgapegiag, the Mi'gmaq language represents a vital link between the past and the future, a gateway to the rich traditions and identity of the Mi'gmaq First Nations. With this investment, we are supporting them to pass on their linguistic heritage to future generations, as we recognize their essential role in doing so. The revitalization of Indigenous languages remains and will continue to be a top priority for me and for our government."

She mentions that "In Canada, more than 70 Indigenous languages are still spoken but each of them is threatened. UNESCO considers that none of them is salvaged." UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture.

## Territory to play a vital role in apprenticeship

Gesgapegiag communication officer Jeannette Maltan

Martin will play a pivotal role in the \$1.25 million program.

"We will share some of the resources with Listuguj, as that community has already implemented a language program. It is inclusive of neighbouring communities. We are working on a 10-year strategic plan. Fishing, hunting, medicine picking and all the other activities linked to the territory will be included in the language and culture learning program," she explains.

Recruitment of instructors is already underway. The program also includes producing educational material and tools, training language instructors and pairing language mentors with apprentices.

"We are also working on the history of Gesgapegiag with our local historian. The most important aspect of the program is to instill our identity back," she concludes.

The Gesgapegiag Council administers the Gesgapegiag Mi'gmaq community. The council is composed of an elected chief and seven council members. The council handles portfolios such as Health and Community Services, early childhood daycare centre, Wejgwapniag School, Mi'gmaq Language, Family and Child Social Services, Gesgapegiag Police and Fire Department.

The Apo'qon'ma'tultinej Cultural Centre was inaugurated in March 2023 and is intended to be a place of exchange and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.



*Councillor John Martin emphasizes that time is a factor in protecting the Mi'gmaq language.*

Mi'gmaq language and culture to the Mi'gmaq and to non-Indigenous people for the next five years," states Gesgapegiag councillor, John Martin. The \$1.25 million in funding will be spread over five years.

The program is welcome because the Mi'gmaq language situation in Gesgapegiag is urgent, stresses Councillor Martin.

"Less than half of the people living in Gesgapegiag still speak our language. It is maybe 30%. A study carried out three years ago showed that 13% of the households have Mi'gmaq as the language spoken at home. So, we are facing assimilation at

is a clear correlation between 1985 and the current situation. When we cut the program, there was a big impact," stresses John Martin.

The decision to cut the Mi'gmaq program in 1985 was made by the band council. Councillor Martin doesn't want to blame that council though as other factors contributed to the decline, notably the role residential schools had on the community and the loss of the Mi'gmaq language that resulted from that governmental practice.

"It is an important step. At last, we will be in a position to plan because it is a five-year program instead of small



Denise Simoneau, director general of ESSB, pointed out that “every inch of the school concept is scrutinized by the Ministry of Education architect.”

Multiple factors were taken into consideration during the design stage of the new school, including dominant winds, sunlight, transportation safety, and parking for buses, staff and students using scooters and bicycles.

“The buses will not move out of the parking lot until all the students are off,” pointed out Trevor Renouf.

Walking to the school, which will be the case for the students living in the vicinity, is also taken into account. The school will be located close to New Carlisle High School.

New Carlisle mayor David Thibault was present to learn more about the project and answer some questions related to the municipality. Safety will also be of prime importance for the town, he assured.

“There is no room to build standard sidewalks along those narrow streets, but there will be a safe space reserved for the students. The final layout of the bus parking lot will decide how we will rearrange circulation along Dover and Craig streets. For now, it looks like a one-way along Dover until reaching Craig and a



Those in attendance had a wide range of questions.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

one-way along Craig going down,” said Mr. Thibault, thinking of ways to facilitate students’ access to some services.

Inside the school, pre-kindergarten and elementary classrooms will be located on the main level, while secondary students will attend classes on the second floor. The building’s design will minimize the interactions between primary and secondary students, a concern for some parents.

#### Lighting, classrooms and physical activity

“There is natural lighting in every classroom,” said Trevor Renouf, adding that the building is conceived to maximize the number of hours of natural light.

The ventilation system, an important part of the Ministry of Education’s priorities, will be very efficient, he added.

The gymnasium will be a key element of the new building, insists Mr. Renouf. “It will be four times the size of the current gym. There will be windows on two sides of the gym without affecting the activities,” he underlines.

Outside, there will be a playground, a soccer field, a track around the soccer field and a sports surface with synthetic grass. “There will always be sunlight in the playground,” indicated Mr. Renouf to express the fact that the location is vast.

At the elementary level, all classrooms will be equipped with restrooms. Movable walls will make it possible to

expand some classrooms.

#### Other services and a name for the school

The new school will include a cafeteria with south-facing windows providing a view of activities in the gym. A common space in the entrance will accommodate activities requiring more room for approximately 140 students expected to attend the new school.

The library will be broken down into sections, including a specific space for books and documentation, 3D printers and collaborative rooms.

Denise Simoneau pointed out that the new school requires a name. She invited the community to participate in the “Name the new school

contest” by filling out a simple form with suggested names and justifications for the choice.

The selection process will be overseen by a committee composed of staff, students, and parent representatives. The contest, launched on April 4, will conclude on April 19. The winning name will be announced during a special on-line event.

“The contest is short because the name must be approved by the Commission de toponymie du Québec,” stated Ms. Simoneau.

“The short timeline also comes from the fact that we want it named before the call for tenders process,” added ESSB communication officer Marjorie McRae.

Built in 1913 and opened in 1914, the old New Carlisle High School will be demolished once the new school is operational. The school board doesn’t want to extend the same name to the new building, as it will serve more than just high school students and covers a wider territory than New Carlisle.



## Police report

Simon Dufort-Chouinard, 19, who is charged with the premeditated murder of Gabriel Noël and the unpremeditated murder of Dylan Samuel-Francoeur following a fatal collision that occurred in Rivière-au-Renard on May 10, 2023, will face a Superior Court trial by judge and jury. The trial will take place unless Simon Dufort-Chouinard decides to plead guilty.

The preliminary hearing concluded on the morning of April 3 at the Percé Courthouse. Two witnesses were heard on April 3 to conclude the preliminary hearing, which had resumed the previous day, after a planned postponement on March 15.

In total, 27 witnesses, including civilians and accident reconstruction experts, testified before Quebec Court Judge Martin Gagnon during five days of hearings, including those of March 13, 14 and 15. Initially, 34 witnesses were scheduled, but the defence ultimately waived seven testimonies. The preliminary hearing normally aims to determine whether there is enough evidence for a trial. In the case of Simon Dufort-Chouinard, the defence has already admitted that there is sufficient evidence for a trial but still requested a preliminary hearing.

The next judicial step will take place on June 3, with the opening of pretrial discussions. Many procedure steps must be dealt with before the trial, which likely won’t occur for several months. Simon Dufort-Chouinard was present in the courtroom for the duration of the preliminary hearing. He has been detained at the New Carlisle prison since his arrest and will remain there until his trial. A publication ban prohibits reporting the facts presented during the preliminary hearing. His father, Marc-Jules Chouinard, faces a manslaughter charge in this case. He was conditionally released on November 20 pending further proceedings.

Detained since December 1, Raymond Junior Belley, 39, from Bégin, in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, has been released while awaiting further proceedings in a pimping case. The accused must respect several conditions, including not being in the judicial district of Gaspé except when required by the court. In addition to the charge of pimping, Raymond Junior Belley is suspected of having distributed intimate images, having advertised for sexual purposes, and of having received advantages from sexual services. The charges laid against him allegedly took place between December 2018 and June 2020 in Montreal, Saguenay, Quebec City, Laval and Gaspé. He will return to court on May 13.

The Sûreté du Québec carried out three drug searches on the morning of April 3 in a house located on des Carrières Street in Grande-Rivière, and two houses located in the Cape Cove sector of Percé, on Lafontaine Street. Michael Athot, 27, from Grande-Rivière, appeared at the Percé Courthouse later that same day to face drug related charges. As the SPEC was reaching its deadline, Quebec Court Judge Martin Gagnon determined that the accused must return to court on April 8 for his pro forma bail hearing. The date of the bail hearing could then be set.

The drug bust led to the seizure of approximately 690 grams of illicit cannabis, cocaine and hashish, approximately 50 methamphetamine pills, a certain amount of cash, equipment used for drug trafficking, 13 hunting weapons and one vehicle seized as criminal property. Mr. Athot faces charges of drug possession, drug possession for the purpose of trafficking and driving a vehicle while he is prohibited from doing so.

A 37-year-old man from Cape Cove and a 35-year-old woman from Grande-Rivière were also arrested during the operation and released on a promise to appear in court at a later date. The Sûreté du Québec operation was conducted by the major crimes investigation squad in collaboration with Rocher-Percé MRC investigators, patrol officers as well as the tactical intervention group. The drug bust was carried out following information received from the public.

The Sûreté du Québec informs the population that an increase in attempted fraud is taking place in Eastern Quebec, more particularly in the greater Chandler area. Fraudsters mainly target elderly people. They communicate with the potential victims by falsely presenting themselves as a representative of a government entity. The fraudster asks several questions regarding the energy consumption of their property and tries to sell a heat pump. For the moment, around ten reports have been made recently, fortunately without any financial loss reported.

The Sûreté du Québec asks people to resist pressure and the urge to act quickly, as well as refrain from giving personal information to potential fraudsters unless people can determine their identity and the fact that the call is not fraudulent. The police also ask people to never send money to strangers and never provide a credit card number unless they have been able to validate the identity of the person or organization with whom the transaction is to take place.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

A budgetary striptease

Since mid-March, the Liberal Party of Canada government has been presenting a set of budgetary measures that should normally have been tabled in the April 16 federal budget, a strategy that is quite unusual but not unheard of.

As of April 5, federal announcements were made in housing, day cares and school meal programs for students. Rarely in recent years have we seen such a budgetary “striptease”.

Other examples come to mind though if we dig 15 years in history. In January 2009, Conservative Party Prime Minister Stephen Harper, amid a recession that had started the previous fall, began unveiling announcements that should normally have been made upon tabling his budget, which usually occurs in March or April.

At the same time, the automobile industry was nosediving to such an extent that General Motors and Chrysler were technically bankrupt, in the United States and Canada. The American and Canadian governments agreed on a plan to save the two companies, among others, and massive loans and grants were handed out to them. Canada supported the automobile industry by allotting GM and Chrysler amounts totalling \$9 billion. In today’s money, that amount would represent about \$14 billion.

In January 2009, a budgetary “leak” occurred in Canada, forecasting a nearly \$55 billion deficit for the coming year.

In reality, the leak was a perfectly planned strategy by the Harper government to diffuse the shock created by what was then the highest deficit ever tabled in Canada in nominal terms. Stephen Harper still advanced the presentation of the budget to the end of January, but the shock tied to the deficit was behind. People could therefore concentrate on the measures contained in the budget.

By the way, a \$55 billion deficit in 2009 would amount to about \$75 billion in 2024 dollars.

The prime minister is using a wide range of measures

In certain ways, Justin Trudeau’s strategy is different from that of Stephen Harper. Despite the constant rant of current Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre to the effect that the Liberal Party is spending money carelessly, Canada’s long-term debt is the lowest of all the other G7 countries, the biggest economies in the world if we exclude China and India. The debt-to-GDP ratio is the metric comparing a country's public debt to its gross domestic product (GDP).

Our debt control is much more desirable than that

of Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Italy and Japan. Our debt-GDP ratio stands at 31.6%, compared to Germany’s 45.6%. They are the only two countries with a ratio under 50%. All the other G7 nations have ratios exceeding 96%.

However, the money we send to Ottawa could indeed be spent more wisely.

This factor has undoubtedly convinced Justin Trudeau to concentrate his premature budgetary announcements on sectors that have generated flack from the Conservative Party and the public in general, namely housing and support to families through more affordable daycares and free school meals for children who are still hungry when they leave their homes in the morning.

The Liberal Party chose the week following Easter to intensify its announcements. The House of Commons parliamentary work benefited from a break, which gave Justin Trudeau and his cabinet members some time to give money here and there. We saw that in the Gaspé Peninsula with Minister Diane Lebouthillier’s housing announcement.

The week following Easter is also quiet in the news, which allowed Mr. Trudeau to benefit from much-needed positive attention, considering the poor results in recent polls.

Using the other parties’ tools

Justin Trudeau’s current budgetary strategy is somewhat inspired by Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre and New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jagmeet Singh.

The prime minister is trying to change the general perception of voters who, as of now, give a certain credibility to Pierre Poilievre when he says that Justin Trudeau runs a spendthrift government.

On the one hand, the Liberal Party government recently announced funds tied to social measures like housing and daycares, but on the other hand, it keeps investing in the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion, whose tab is now reaching \$34 billion, five times more than the initial estimate of \$6.8 billion in 2013.

However, despite Mr. Poilievre’s love for oil and gas projects, he has hardly criticized the federal government’s decision to keep investing in Trans Mountain.

Justin Trudeau found another way to constrain Pierre Poilievre, to a certain degree let’s say, through borrowing from the Conservative Party program a housing policy forcing cities to impose density around public transport. It is directly inspired by Mr. Poil-

ievre’s rather thin program.

It forces the conservatives to speak out but they can hardly criticize such measures, except to say that they thought of it first. It also brings the spotlight to one of the most evident weaknesses of the Conservative Party, major shortcomings in proposing solutions to Canada’s problems. As the country gets closer to an election that will likely take place in the fall of 2025, criticism as a political program will prove far from enough.

The prime minister’s budgetary strategy is also a source of concern for NDP leader Jagmeet Singh. During his recent announcements, Justin Trudeau has systematically fallen in provincial jurisdictions. He did so by establishing constraints that must be respected by the provinces if they are to benefit from the federal money.

The most evident form of jurisdiction trespassing can be seen in the \$5 billion envelope for social housing, which will force provinces to adopt a tenants' charter and an owners' charter. Mr. Trudeau therefore shows a very uninhibited way of dealing with the provinces.

It is reasonable to assume that Mr. Trudeau borrowed that strategy from Jagmeet Singh who, on the second day of the 2019 electoral campaign, suggested that an NDP government would build a hospital in Brampton, Ontario, thus making a square intrusion in the domain of the Ontario government, as health is essentially provincially administered.

Justin Trudeau is making the bet that citizens, or at least the electors who are likely to vote for the Liberal Party, will not care about the jurisdiction factor. They want services, no matter where the money comes from.

In Quebec, however, such a strategy might backfire, as Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet will be quick to point out that the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party should mind their own business and fix federal problems, such as the Phoenix pay system, a system put up by IBM.

Fifteen years after its implementation, 80% of the 300,000 federal civil servants have experienced slight to major problems getting the pay they deserved and still deserve. The system was introduced in 2009 by the Conservative Party government, which failed to fix it, and the Liberal Party government has failed to fix it as well or replace it.

In the short term, Canadians will focus on the April 16 budget and check if Justin Trudeau’s slow unveiling strategy works. Will it change people’s perceptions about his government? It might take a couple of months before we see the results or lack thereof.

NEWSPAPER

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ESTABLISHED • MAY 1975

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New Carlisle, Que.  
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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.)

CMCA AUDITED

QCNA

News Media Canada  
Médias d'Info Canada

Canada

Québec

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

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# Snow crab price already up in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The snow crab fishing season started on April 1 in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence, with an overall quota of 25,710 metric tons, a 29% drop from the 2023 contingent. The price of the first landings made at the E. Gagnon et Fils processing plant in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé reached \$3 per pound.

It is more than the starting price expected by E. Gagnon et Fils vice-president Bill Sheehan five days before the opening of the season. He was talking about a price of \$2.50 per pound but he was also predicting an upcoming rise. In 2023, the average price over the whole season was \$2.29 per pound.

“We are already at \$3 for the first landings and it will increase a bit more. I hesitate before predicting the degree of the next rise but we could cautiously say \$3.25 to \$3.50 per pound,” explains Bill Sheehan.

That cautiousness is motivated by the fact that the Newfoundland snow crab fishermen were on strike as of April 4 and also because an important North Shore area, Zone 16, remained open by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

“The quantity of the crab quota coming from New-



foundland hovers around 60,000 tons, which represents 130 million pounds, compared to 56 million pounds in our zone. The Newfoundland snow crab will reach the markets when the strike is over. How much will the Newfoundland plants pay then? It is lower than our price, so we might have to adjust. For now, I can say that the demand is very strong,” adds Mr. Sheehan.

The first catches were good too. “I can’t talk for the other plants but the volumes are good. We don’t see the effects of the 30% quota reduction. In general, we get more crab than last year, if we take into account the first four days of fishing. It is a really

good start,” he points out.

E. Gagnon et Fils is buying the landings of about 40 crab boats, including those of most Native fishermen from Lisituguj, Gesgapegiag and Gespeg. Between 7 million and 8 million pounds of snow crab are expected to be delivered to the Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé plant, the largest buyer of snow crab in Quebec.

The plant employs approximately 600 people, including 400 production workers, women and men coming from a stretch of coast between Shigawake and Douglastown and approximately 120 Mexican workers.

Gaspesians and Magdalen Islanders receive about 30% of the quota allocated in the

Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

**Matane’s Royal Greenland plant destroyed by a fire**

On the evening of March 29, the Royal Greenland shrimp, snow crab and lobster processing plant was destroyed by a major fire. The blaze occurred 11 days after the announcement by the Danish company that the plant was closing permanently and was to be put up for sale.

“We had been contacted by the company as a potential buyer of the plant after the closure announcement. We are very busy assuring the op-

erations of the Marinard shrimp processing plant we acquired last fall. The Matane plant was a very big plant and we didn’t know at the time what kind of supplies they had. In shrimp, the local supplies were limited for sure considering the drastic quota cuts in the Saint Lawrence Estuary. We would have gone there to check for sure. The fire makes it impossible now,” comments Bill Sheehan.

The Sûreté du Québec (SQ) major crime squad is investigating the cause of the fire.

“The fire occurred on March 29 and the file was transferred to us on March 30 following certain information obtained (from Matane’s fire chief). We cannot reveal the nature of that information. It remains at the level of the investigation. Some items were sent to experts. The fact that the investigation is being conducted by the major crime squad does not necessarily mean that it is of criminal origin. When a fire department cannot rule out the criminal option, automatically, the responsibility for the investigation falls to the SQ, and that comes down to major crimes. We will provide no further details until there is progress on this matter,” sums up SQ’s communications representative, Frédéric Deshaies.

## Four towns receive help from Ottawa to equip themselves in the event of an emergency

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The towns of Gaspé, Percé, Chandler and Carleton-sur-Mer have obtained funds from the federal government to acquire emergency measures equipment.

The Town of Percé will purchase two 100-kilowatt generators, 50 blankets, 50 cots, as well as a satellite telephone and portable radios for communications in the event of a possible disaster.

The total bill reaches \$368,395, paid via the fund set up following Hurricane Fiona in September 2022.

“This is an envelope that remained with Canada Economic Development which allowed us to equip ourselves

to be more proactive in the event of a disaster. We had some equipment, but not of this scale,” says the mayor of Percé, Cathy Poirier.

The first generator will be installed at the Oasis de Percé, the community centre. “Why this choice? Because it is central, but above all because it is the most suitable establishment with a large gymnasium, a large living room, and a large kitchen with several fridges. It’s the best place to receive citizens,” says the mayor.

The second generator will be installed at the Municipal Hall, which would be the emergency management centre in the case of a disaster. The generators have a 48-

hour run time.

The Town of Percé included investments for emergency measures in its three-year capital plan. “Our plan included the acquisition of a \$20,000 generator. We were a long way from the equipment we want to offer the population. Power cuts and ice storms come to mind. These are weather situations we’re experiencing more and more. We’re happy to have this 100% financial assistance. For Percé, there are no costs,” explains the mayor.

Carleton-sur-Mer will also be receiving generators. The two devices will be acquired for \$238,600 and their installation will cost \$40,100.

The Town will install the

generators at the Municipal Hall since that building is targeted to coordinate emergency operations, and at the Charles-Dugas space which serves as a refuge to accommodate disaster victims.

Carleton-sur-Mer has wanted to acquire generators for years.

The mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer, Mathieu Lapointe, cannot comment on the funding until the federal government makes an official announcement.

The Town of Chandler will receive a generator as part of the financial support granted by Ottawa. The town will purchase a 50-kilowatt generator at a cost of \$100,000, along with a com-

plete multi-purpose telecommunications system for an equivalent amount.

This system will allow firefighters, public works teams and Civil Security to communicate via a single system to increase efficiency during emergency measures.

In total, with related purchases, the Town of Chandler will receive nearly \$210,000 to make these acquisitions fully paid for by the federal government.

It was announced in the March 27 SPEC that the Town of Gaspé would invest \$500,000 in emergency equipment, including six powerful generators for \$404,000, \$42,000 for installations and \$54,000 for parts.



# Closure of Matane shrimp processing plant will have limited effect on Marinard plant's supply

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The closure of Matane's seafood processing plant by Royal Greenland on March 18 will have limited effects on the operations of the Pêcheries Marinard shrimp processing facility in Rivière-au-Renard, affirms Bill Sheehan, who bought the Marinard plant with his brother George last fall.

The Rivière-au-Renard plant will gain little supply out of the closure of Matane's facility because of the highly reduced shrimp quota announced over the winter by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

For the four shrimp fishing zones covering the Northern Gulf of Saint Lawrence, that quota will only reach 3,060 metric tons, 10 times less than the 2014 contingency. Moreover, the part earmarked for the Quebec fishermen is limited

to 1,080 tons, which amounts to 2,376,000 pounds.

It would have represented roughly 800,000 pounds for each of the three Quebec shrimp processing plants still active in 2023, Royal Greenland in Matane, Pêcheries Marinard in Rivière-au-Renard and its neighbour to the east, Crevette du Nord Atlantique in Griffon Cove. Now that the Matane plant is closed, it leaves about 800,000 pounds to be shared between Marinard and Crevette du Nord Atlantique, given that the three plants were buying equal quantities from the fishermen, which is not certain.

"The supply recuperable from Matane is relatively small, considering our plant's capacity. We might get our share of it but we are putting our efforts into acquiring imported northern shrimp from Greenland, Labrador and other areas where it is fished," explains Bill Sheehan.



Bill Sheehan wants to import large quantities of shrimp to keep the Marinard plant active 10 to 11 months a year

Photo: G. Gagné

plains Bill Sheehan.

After buying the plant, a transaction that was initiated in September and concluded in November, Bill Sheehan, George Sheehan and the Marinard staff prepared the facility

for a winter processing season and started importing shrimp in January.

"It went well. We rehired 70 local workers, who hadn't worked much in 2023. We get our imported shrimp through

containers unloaded at the port of Halifax. It is therefore less competitive than if we could get it from a closer port. We are working on a solution," says Bill Sheehan.

Shrimp fishing is far from hitting a slump in Greenland and along the Labrador Coast, he says, as there are areas where the quota has doubled. "We are targeting an annual processing volume of 10 million pounds at Marinard. Instead of spreading the schedule over two shifts, we will work over one shift, with 70 to 75 local workers and 12 foreign workers, and process shrimp over 10 to 11 months a year. We will stop for our annual maintenance shutdown, which is now," adds Mr. Sheehan.

During the top years of shrimp processing at Marinard, the plant transformed as much as 18 million pounds of landings annually.

## A Gespeg-Ottawa partnership for the co-management of Forillon Park

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - Forillon Park and the Micmac Nation of Gespeg have reached a historic agreement to co-manage the park.

The 25-year agreement was presented with great fanfare during a traditional Mi'gmaq ceremony. A revision of the agreement will take place every 5 years.

The Agreement for Reconciliation and Recognition of Rights concerning Forillon Park has five major components: conservation, development and preservation of Mi'gmaq culture, traditional and harvesting activities, economic opportunities and employment.

"It's a historic announcement that shows us the work the Canadian government must do to move towards reconciliation and work in harmony on the development of the territory," says Diane Lebouthillier, Member of Parliament for the Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

"We are announcing the establishment of a shared governance framework. In the coming weeks and months, we will set up a collaborative management committee where the Micmac Nation and Parks Canada will each have three representatives. It is at this table that the different themes will be discussed, and management measures proposed for the national park," explains the interim director of the Gaspésie Management Unit for Parks Canada, Mathieu Côté.

"The co-management committee will have to manage this, and our voice will be heard. If ever there is something that goes against our values, the co-management committee will have to manage it so that our values and our existence are recognized," adds Gespeg councillor Emily Roberts.

Traditional activities, particularly moose hunting, could be permitted if there was an overabundance of the animal within the park limits, such as a few years ago.

"Among the themes addressed by the committee is the practice of traditional and harvesting activities. Guidelines will be developed jointly by Parks Canada and the Micmac Nation of Gespeg. There will be a filter to align thinking, including visitor safety in the national park, resource



Several members of the Gespeg Nation attended the federal government's announcement.

Photo: N. Sergerie

conservation, and access to the park for other visitors. But harvesting activities will indeed be discussed," emphasizes Mr. Côté.

On other aspects, several ideas are in place, mentions Ms. Roberts, but they will be discussed in the co-management committee.

Meetings are scheduled regularly, depending on the files on the table.

"There will be several meetings per year, but this is new for Parks Canada in Forillon and the Nation. Everything needs to

be developed," explains Mr. Côté.

"It's also a priority for our community," adds Ms. Roberts. The financial aspect of the agreement will remain confidential.

Last year the park announced its master plan for the next 10 years.

"The master plan does not contradict what we are announcing today. In the master plan, the park was open to collaborating with the Micmac Nation of Gespeg. What we are announcing is a way to give a

voice to Gespeg's participation in the management of the national park," says the interim director of the park.

The agreement concluded between Gespeg and Forillon is the third in Eastern Canada.

An agreement was concluded in the Lower Saint Lawrence between the Malécite Nation of Viger and Parks Canada for the Saguenay-Saint-Laurent Marine Park in the Rivière-du-Loup region and another in New Brunswick.



# Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé: Launch of the final major call for tenders for rail refurbishment

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - As previously announced by Premier François Legault last November, the Ministry of Transport published on March 21 the last of four major calls for tenders for the refurbishment of the rail between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

In total, five bridges will be repaired, one bridge will be rebuilt, and a retaining wall will be built.

Two of the bridges to be repaired are located in Gascons, a third between Gascons and Newport, a fourth in Newport and the fifth is in Douglastown.

Furthermore, the bridge between Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé and Grande-Rivière must be replaced.

The project also includes the construction of a retaining wall in Pabos Mills, as well as culverts located along the line.

Contractors have until April 22 to submit their bids, and work should begin this summer.

On November 17, during his visit to the Gaspé Peninsula, François Legault announced the first in a series of four calls for tenders for section three. That same day, a

first call was launched for the refurbishment of the bridges over the Grande-Rivière and Anse-à-Brillant; those of the Émile-Couture stream in Grande-Rivière and the beach in Gaspé will be reconstructed. The Séma group in Sainte-Flavie offered to carry out this work for \$74.9 million.

On December 7, a second call for tenders was published for nine infrastructures, including bridges, notably the one over the Grand Pabos River which led to the suspension of rail traffic between New Carlisle and Gaspé in December 2011, and several retaining walls in Anse-à-Beaufils and Sandy Beach. For this contract, only Pomerleau submitted an offer of \$104 million.

A third call for tenders was released on December 11 concerning six bridges to be repaired in Pabos Mills, Pabos and Anse-à-Beaufils. The closing date for calls for proposals was the afternoon of March 27. A company from Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Stellaire Construction, submitted the lowest bid, at \$37 million.

The contracts for the three calls for tenders remain to be awarded, according to the Quebec electronic calls for

tenders site.

In total, 21 different infrastructures need to be repaired or rebuilt in section three, and the railway is expected to be relocated in two areas along this section.

Last June, Quebec indicated that an additional \$637 million was needed to complete the rehabilitation of the rail between Matapédia and Gaspé for a total investment of \$872 million. At last count, \$310 million had been invested.

Section three between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé needs half a billion dol-

lars, or more precisely, \$517.6 million by 2026 and should be ready in fall 2026 for commissioning in December 2026.

Remember that for section two, between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons, \$300 million will ultimately be required to reach the end of this line portion in December 2024.

In the Quebec Infrastructure Plan published in March, it was indicated that the Quebec government planned to inject \$233 million into section three between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé this year

and \$259 million next year.

More than \$83 million is also planned for the Caplan to Port-Daniel-Gascons section, including \$73 million this year.

Finally, the first section between Matapédia and Caplan required \$54.5 million.

Initially, the Liberal government of Philippe Couillard released the first \$100 million on May 5, 2017, for its refurbishment, promising to reach Gaspé in 2022. In August 2019, Premier François Legault targeted 2025 and the envelope increased to \$235 million in 2020.



The bridge between Grande-Rivière and Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé will be rebuilt.

Photo: Facebook

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# The current electoral map will remain in effect for the 2026 provincial election

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The provincial electoral map will remain as is for the 2026 election.

A consensus has been reached among the four parties sitting in the National Assembly to halt the work of the Electoral Representation Commission and to examine the criteria necessary to maintain political weight for the regions, particularly the Gaspé Peninsula.

“We looked at things from our side and communicated with our colleagues and we came up with a two-step proposal: first, a bill which stops the work of the Commission. We do not want to make them work unnecessarily which takes the 2022 map to 2026. In phase two, reflection and consultation and new criteria with colleagues,” explains the Minister responsible for Democratic Institutions, Jean-François Roberge.

When asked about the fate of the Gaspé Peninsula, which saw the region go from two to one constituency and Haute-Gaspésie merged with Matane-Matapédia, the minister did not want to get involved.

“I will be careful not to decide in front of you the results of the discussions we are going to have. We have, in the back of our minds, that we do not want to change the recipe and arrive at the same result. If we change the criteria, it is to arrive at the end with a different result. We will consider all possible criteria,” notes the minister.

The four parties have agreed to keep the issue non-partisan. The minister was joined by representatives of the Parti Québécois, the Liberal Party and Québec solidaire.

Mr. Roberge is not closing the door to increasing the number of members of the National Assembly.

“This is one of the things that could be considered in phase two. The door is open. I do not arrive today with definitive criteria. I want an open and sincere discussion with colleagues,” adds the minister.

Unsurprisingly, this position adopted by the elected representatives of the National Assembly delights those in the region.

The MNA for Bonaventure,



Photo: G. Gagné

*The MNA for Gaspé during his appearance before the parliamentary committee on the electoral map in February.*

Catherine Blouin, who fought for the Commission to visit the Gaspé Peninsula to hear citizens' voices, is satisfied to see that the mobilization has produced results.

As for what happens next, she doesn't know what type of discussions will take place next. “It is clear that the current criteria are not suitable. We cannot rely only on the number of voters with such a large territory with a large number of municipalities. All the representations that we have made of the fact that we should not rely only on the number of voters. It is criteria like these that will need to be reviewed,” explains Ms. Blouin.

However, she does not want to comment on the possibility of maintaining two MNAs for the Gaspé Peninsula.

“We want to change the recipe. If we want to change the recipe, it is to have a different result. I think it will benefit the Gaspésie,” she notes.

Her counterpart from Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, notes that the strong mobilization of the Gaspésie is probably what pushed the issue along.

“There was a consensus among parliamentarians. The 125 MNAs voted in favour of maintaining the electoral weight of the Gaspésie. There were very clear messages that led us to achieve this result,” notes Mr. Sainte-Croix.

In his view, territorial questions and respect for natural communities must also be taken into account when developing the criteria for electoral redistribution.

On the inclusion in the law

of an exceptional status for the Gaspésie to maintain two ridings, the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) does not rule out any possibilities.

“Mr. Roberge was clear. The door is open. Everything is on the table. Several issues have come to light in recent months. Our job will be to reconsider them at their true value and ensure that we have the proposals most likely to arrive with the best possible representation for the political weight of the regions,” analyzes the MNA for Gaspé.

“I am very happy with the evolution of this file. It was inconceivable that the proposal currently on the table could be applied, to the detriment of people in the regions and, above all, to the detriment of the political weight of Eastern Quebec and Gaspésie. The mobilization, led in particular by the MNAs from Bonaventure and Gaspé, bore fruit,” indicates the minister responsible for Gaspésie, Maïté Blanchette Vézina.

**Municipal elected officials also welcome this decision**

“This is excellent news as we feel that our regional realities are being listened to. Now, we will have to work so that this is translated into a modified law in which we no longer only have the population criterion as criterion number one,” notes the president of the Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie, Mathieu Lapointe.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, believes that, for the good of the regions, a system must be found that takes

into account the extent of the regions.

“Some will be tempted to go towards proportional representation. I am warning because it would not be the best for the regions of Quebec. What would be better is beyond the population criterion. We must take into account the extent of the territory, respect for MRCs and administrative regions, and have a limit on the number of MNAs per territory of regions, that would be the bare minimum,” comments Daniel Côté, who is also prefect of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC.

His counterpart from Haute-Gaspésie, who saw in the Commission's proposal his MRC to be merged with the Matane-Matapédia constituency in another administrative region, also sees this as positive news.

“We are not losing any ridings in the Gaspésie. It's good news. We should be happy about it,” notes Guy Bernatchez.

“Let Haute-Gaspésie remain with Gaspé. It's not that we have it against Matane but we have forged links with Gaspé over the years and for continuity for economic development and more, this is good news,” continues Mr. Bernatchez.

The Commission suggested merging the ridings of Gaspé and Bonaventure bringing together the MRCs of Côte-de-Gaspé, Rocher-Percé, Bonaventure and Avignon to create Gaspé-Bonaventure, while Haute-Gaspésie would be transferred to the constituency of Matane-Matapédia, a riding in the Lower Saint Lawrence region.

As of April 30, 2023, Bonaventure had 35,898 voters, and Gaspé 30,131, far from the minimum threshold planned. The gap was -29.2% and -40.6% respectively.

Gaspé thus ranked third among the least populous constituencies, behind the Magdalen Islands which has an exceptional status, and Ungava.

According to projections of the number of voters based on data from the Quebec Institute of Statistics, the gap compared to the average of Gaspé is expected to soon surpass that of Ungava.

In 2017, the commission maintained the negative exception status for Gaspé and granted the same status to Bonaventure.

However, since the inequalities in the representation of these constituencies are increasing, the commission did not wish to renew this status.

## Extensive forest damage after December storms

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - The violent storms in December caused significant damage to the forest in the Haute-Gaspésie MRC.

At the request of various stakeholders, the Ministry of Natural Resources conducted detection analyses using satellite imagery. Images from February 2023 and February 2024 were compared, revealing differences in forest cover on 2,500 hectares.

This damage is likely attributable to windthrow from the December storms.

Further analyses are awaited for areas that are more difficult to detect.

The exercise may be repeated this summer, once the snow has melted and the foliage is present.

For this first survey, only the Haute-Gaspésie MRC area was analyzed.





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# The Electoral Representation Commission is concerned by actions of politicians

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The Electoral Representation Commission of Quebec is becoming concerned by Members of the National Assembly, who plan to table a bill to stop the revision of the electoral map for the 2026 election.

In a press release issued in reaction to the National Assembly's intention to introduce legislation to maintain the 2022 electoral map in 2026, and the reflection initiated to review the criteria for the next exercise, the three commissioners note that "in their view, the legitimacy of the electoral map revision process must rest on its independence and impartiality."

The Commission notes that the current electoral map was established using demographic

data from 2014. Ten years later, it already contains significant inequities in representation, which will increase by 2026.

"A stoppage of work would compromise the fair and equitable representation of voters for the next elections," added the commissioners, considering the constituencies must follow the evolution of voters who move around the territory. Growth is stronger in some regions than in others.

"Elected officials can explore other delimitation models. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. We will make ourselves available, if necessary, to collaborate in the reflection," specifies the president of the Electoral Representation Commission and Director General of Elections, Jean-François Blanchet.

The commissioners mention that the current delimitation criteria is legitimate and democratic, recalling an order from the Supreme Court recognizing that they were of paramount importance, in the interest of fairness towards all voters.

The Commission adds that the Electoral Law establishes three main parameters: it allows the number of constituencies to range from 122 to 125, it specifies the need to consider the number of voters gathered in each constituency rather than the total population living there, and it also sets a maximum and minimum difference that each constituency can have concerning the average number of voters at 25%.

The Act provides two criteria for fair and equitable representation: relative equality of

voting and respect for natural communities.

The relative equality of the vote implies that the vote of voters in each constituency has relatively the same value. If a constituency has half as many voters as another, the vote of those voters carries twice as much weight.

The mandate of the Commission is to limit this scenario, out of consideration for the entire electorate.

Taking into account only this mathematical criterion, the mandate of the Commission would consist of dividing Quebec into 125 constituencies of 51,000 voters.

However, fair and equitable representation also involves

bringing together, within the same constituency, groups that have common characteristics. People don't live in groups of 51,000 voters with common interests.

This is where the plus or minus 25% deviation from the average comes into play.

It allows demographic, geographic and sociological considerations to be taken into account, such as population density, the surface area of regions and the territories of municipalities.

Since the commissioners take natural communities into account, the number of voters in each constituency varies from 40,632 to 60,791, in their preliminary proposal.

## Mayor abruptly adjourns Percé municipal council meeting

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ - Tensions run high between councillors, citizens and the mayor of Percé, who abruptly ended the municipal council meeting on April 2, when questioned about her behaviour and obligations concerning the Code of Ethics for elected officials.

Business owner Jean-François Gagné questioned Cathy Poirier on the Code, citing point 6.3.1.

"It is prohibited for any member to behave disrespectfully towards other members of the municipal council, municipal employees and citizens through the use of vexatious words and gestures," mentions Mr. Gagné.

In response, the mayor stated that she had respected this point.

"You have not made any vexatious remarks towards anyone?" asked Mr. Gagné of the mayor, who replied that she had never made such comments.

It was at this moment that the mayor ended the meeting. "Do you know what? End of question period. It's over for tonight. I adjourn the meeting," Ms. Poirier suddenly decreed to the surprise of the councillors and citizens who were in attendance at the council meeting.

Incredulous, the councillors and even the director general, Jean-François Coderre, did not know what to do in the moments following the unilateral adjournment of the meeting.

The mayor suddenly disappeared from the municipal hall, without answering questions from journalists.

The remaining council members tried to seek answers as to whether the session was indeed over. After a discussion, they left the council table.

Councillor Michel Rail became the spokesperson for elected officials. "I am very disappointed for the population. It doesn't deserve this. They are taxpayers and in the context in which we live, I understand that they ask questions about the director of town planning who is suspended with pay. Anger is brewing among the population and, in my opinion, the actions of the mayor towards the citizens, towards us, the elected officials, to get up and end the session, I do not find that fair," explains Mr. Rail.

The councillor confided that he had filed a complaint with the Quebec Municipal Commission about Ms. Poirier's conduct towards him.

"When Mr. Gagné asked the question about misconduct against elected officials, it (her response) was totally false. I have a complaint against her

with the Quebec Municipal Commission. She is far from respectful. All the other elected officials were witnesses. It happened during a work session," says Mr. Rail, who did not want to elaborate further due to the circumstances.

This is not the first time that the mayor has been taken to task for her behaviour. In March, the union representing the Town's unionized employees filed a grievance against the mayor. According to information obtained by SPEC, the grievance refers to verbal assaults and inappropriate behaviour carried out by Cathy Poirier.

The president of the Central Council of the CSN Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Serge Saint-Pierre, did not want to confirm the content of the grievance, nor the person targeted, but confirmed that the document was filed when questioned.

This is a collective grievance, that is to say, filed on behalf of all the members who thus express that they are fed up with the situation which has been ongoing for several months.

The hearing is scheduled to be held in principle on April 10, before the Administrative Labour Court in Gaspé, on the grounds of "obstruction or domination of the activities of a union."



Kristina Michaud has unconditional support from her leader Yves-François Blanchet.

Photos: N. Sergerie

## Kristina Michaud wants to take on outgoing MP

NELSON SERGERIE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - After several weeks of reflection, Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament Kristina Michaud has announced her candidacy in the new riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj for the next federal election.

It is a heartbreaking choice for the current Member of Parliament (MP) for Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia, who will lose her riding in the overhaul of the federal electoral map, which eliminates this constituency.

She made the announcement at what she calls a "symbolic location" for the fisheries, the École des pêches et de l'aquaculture du Québec, on April 4 in Grande-Rivière,

a stone's throw from the offices of Liberal MP and Fisheries Minister Diane LeBouthillier.

"Fisheries are going through a major crisis. The last few months and years have been difficult, and we can imagine that the next few years will be difficult. We must preserve that. We must have elected officials who listen to the industry, who will fight for them and bring their voice to Ottawa," says the Bloc MP from the neighbouring riding.

Living in Val-Brillant, in the Matapédia Valley, she spoke with her colleague Maxime Blanchette Joncas to explore her intentions for candidacy in Rimouski-La Matapédia, and she did not want

Cont'd on page 12

**WATER:**

**Cont'd from cover**

in place, the per-house tab should be around \$67 yearly, says David Thibault.

"It will be lower at \$67 instead of \$120, but we will not lower the water tax rate. We will need to maintain fire hydrants, and an operator will be required to take care of the new system. Our current system is increasingly costly to operate. It is old, the parts are hard to find when something breaks, and their cost is rising," says Mr. Thibault.

If the new system is installed, New Carlisle residents will no longer see the brownish-red coloured

water, which they will not miss, agrees the mayor.

"Our water remains drinkable, but the manganese in it turns red when mixed with chlorine. Without chlorine, it wouldn't turn red, but it is forbidden to bypass the addition of chlorine," he underlines.

After the April meeting with the Town of Paspebiac, David Thibault expects a decision during the summer. "I am targeting a construction start in the summer of 2025 and, six months later, the new system should be up and running," confirmed New Carlisle's mayor.

He affirms that the Town of Paspebiac will benefit from the revenues stemming from a drinkable

water system managed jointly with their neighbours.

"It will allow Paspebiac to modernize its system and manage it online, which is not the case right now, as their municipal employees must move around to make checks," says Mr. Thibault.

For now, he will not reveal the place earmarked for the eventual water tank of New Carlisle. It will likely be near the centre of the town, he says.

The average daily consumption of the 400 houses connected to New Carlisle's drinkable water network stands at 850 cubic metres. Some households are not connected to the network. With the new system, the water tank will be refilled during the night when the consumption is low.

**ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20**

There is more to any situation than the money factor, Aries. When a new opportunity comes your way, look beyond the payoff to see what the heart of the offer entails.

**TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21**

Look to your family members if you need inspiration on a new project, Taurus. Use loved ones as a sounding board for all of the ideas that are bouncing around.

**GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21**

The willpower that you have been relying on lately is still going strong, Gemini. That is excellent and it's having a profound effect on other areas of your life.

**CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22**

Cancer, gossip is not something you usually delve into, but you may get roped into a conversation this week. Try not to give any weight to the rumours swirling around.

**LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23**

Leo, you shouldn't be boastful about your abilities, but try not to be too modest. Accept the credit you are given. Graciously embrace all of your good



press.

**VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22**

An interesting invitation might come your way, Virgo. It could open the door to a very busy social calendar if you accept and do some key networking.

**LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23**

Libra, an issue that you were worrying about is unlikely to surface. Stay in the present instead of looking ahead to all of the things that might go wrong.

**SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22**

It may seem as if you are operating on autopilot, Scorpio. Days seem a carbon copy at this point. Do something to alter your routine.

**SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21**

It's best if you avoid crowds for the time being, Sagittarius. You will benefit from some quiet time that only comes with being alone or within small groups of close friends.

**CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20**

You are not normally characterized as "impulsive," Capricorn. However, this week you may surprise everyone. An opportunity to travel or another venture could drop in your lap.

**AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18**

Aquarius, if you are not feeling challenged, you have to find activities that will get your brain moving again. Do whatever you can to spark some excitement.

**PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20**

The choices coming your way are quite varied, Pisces. It can be overwhelming, so do not make any rash decisions until you work through all of your options.

**FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS**

**APRIL 7: Russell Crowe, Actor (60)**

**APRIL 8: Skai Jackson, Actress (22)**

**APRIL 9: Elle Fanning, Actress (26)**

**APRIL 10: Mandy Moore, Singer (40)**

**APRIL 11: Ken Carson, Rapper (24)**

**APRIL 12: Saoirse Ronan, Actress (30)**

**APRIL 13: Al Green, Singer (78)**



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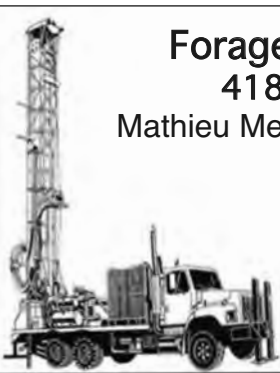
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# Announcements



## In Memory

**WARD: Wilma Beatrice Huntington**

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

*We cannot lose the ones we love  
For even when they're gone,  
We feel their gentle presence  
In the hush of every dawn.  
We see them in the sunlight  
That makes the day so bright,  
In the flowers of springtime  
And in the stars at night.  
The heart is like a treasure chest  
That's filled with souvenirs,  
It's there to keep the memories  
We gathered through the years.  
We cannot lose the ones we love  
For they will always stay,  
In all that's bright and beautiful  
Around us every day.*

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

## Recent Graduate



Congratulations to Dr. Claire Hyatt (great-granddaughter of Leonard and Linda Dow of Port Daniel, Quebec and granddaughter of Jean Dow of Thunder Bay, Ontario) for graduating from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

Claire will be doing her residency for Family Medicine over the next two years in Fort Frances, Ontario.

Deadline for  
this page is  
Wednesday at 4 p.m



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*Covering Port Daniel to New Richmond*

# COAST ROUND-UP

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

**COAST ROUND-UP**

**GASPÉ:**

**Cancer Foundation  
AGM**

**April 28:** The Gaspé Cancer Foundation will be holding their Annual General Meeting at the Gaspé Legion beginning at 1 p.m. Light refreshments will be served following the meeting. Thank-you for your continued support for this viable asset to our communities.

**PORT DANIEL:**

**Three Star  
Golden Age Club**

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

**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 TOWN:**

**Sports Club**

**May 25:** The Hope Town Sports Club is hosting a gift bingo starting at 7 p.m. at the Hope Town communtiy centre. All proceeds will go towards UCW hall renovations. Anyone who wishes to make a donation please contact; Gwen McLellan Ross, Joanne Ross Flowers or Linda MacWhirter.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**ROTARY CLUB WINNERS:  
The winners for March**

**1 and 2 are:** Jeanne-D'arc Leblanc and Michelle Cayouette.

**The winners for the  
week of March 3 are:**

Rock Harvey, Gilbert Berthelot, Luc-André Otis, Juliette Gagné, Jacinthe Roy,

Irene Burton and Ralph Campbell.

**The winners for the  
week of March 10 are:**

Claude Cyr, François Boissonnault, Gale Martin Harrison, Martine Robertson, Lena & Frank Cleary, Huguette Landry and Richard Cormier

**The winners for the  
week of March 17 are:**

Gérald Bujold, Hélène Beaulieu-Lafond, Anne-Marie Lepage, Jean-Claude Lévesque, Mario Bouchard, Amy-Chloé Bernard and Gaston Cavanagh.

**The winners for the  
week of March 24 are:**

Josée St-Onge, Francis Barriault, Mathieu Cormier, Judith Savard, Sylvie Duranleau, Gisèle Cavanagh, Rémi St-Onge and Matériaux St-Charles.

**UNITED CHURCH  
NEW RICHMOND  
Sunday, April 14**

10 a.m. Service

**UNITED CHURCH  
HOPE TOWN**

**Sunday, April 14**

10 a.m. Service

**ANGLICAN  
CHURCH  
OF CANADA**

**Sunday, April 14**

**New Carlisle**

11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Hope Town**

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Port Daniel**

10 a.m. Morning prayer

**PARISH  
OF GASPÉ**

**Sunday, April 14**

**St. Paul's, Gaspé**

10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Every Wednesday**

**St. Paul's - Gaspé**

10 a.m. BCP Morning Prayer

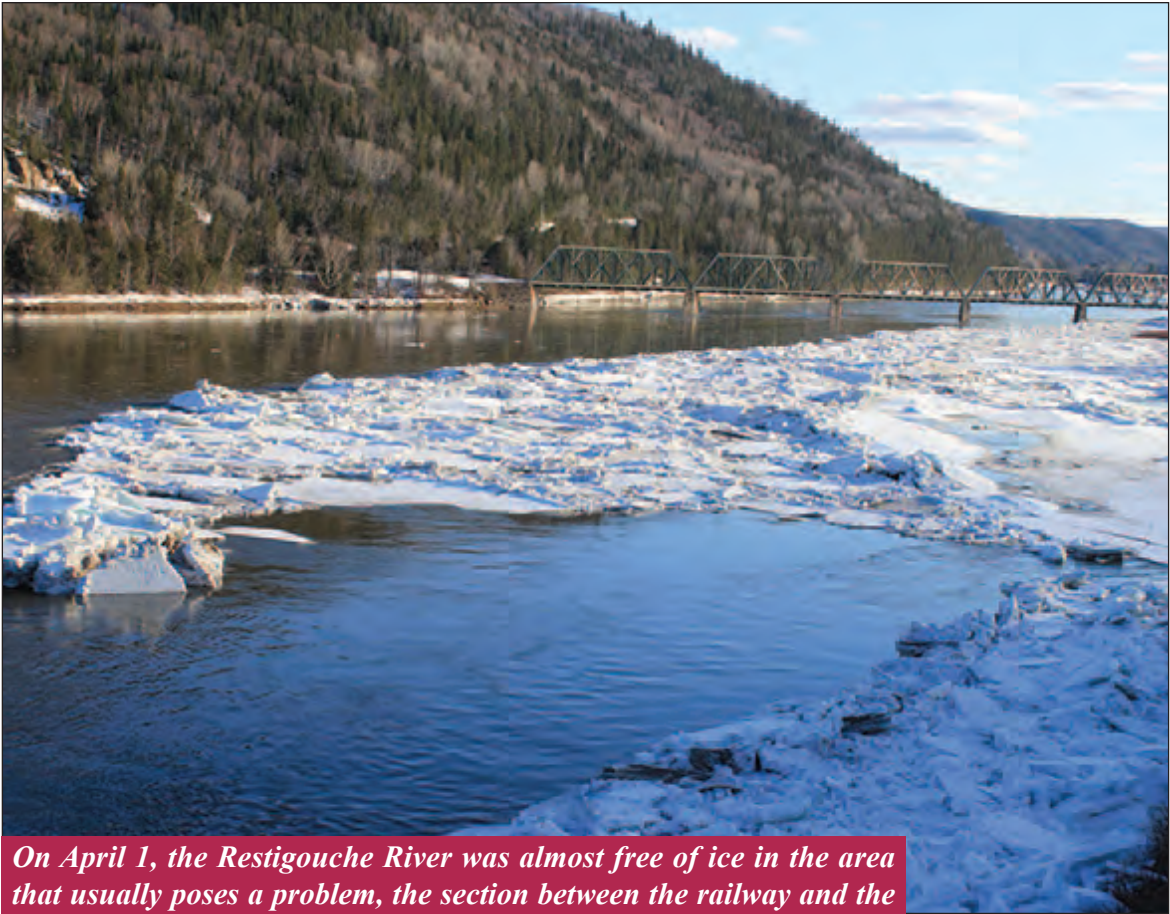
Do you have an upcoming event?  
Send all your announcements to  
holly.smith@globetrotter.net

Deadlines for this page is Wednesdays at 4 p.m.



SCAN ME





On April 1, the Restigouche River was almost free of ice in the area that usually poses a problem, the section between the railway and the interprovincial bridges.

Photo: G. Gagné

# Restigouche River early breakup leads to smooth ice clearance

GILLES GAGNÉ

MATAPEDIA – Even in mild winters, the end of March always brings its share of anxiety for the residents of Matapédia and the surrounding area. The winter of 2023-2024 was quite mild, to such an extent that it looked like springtime during a fair part of it. Despite this, some people remained a bit anxious after mid-March, because there is almost always enough ice on the Restigouche River to cause a flood.

However, for the second consecutive year, the very gradual thaw, which started this time around the end of February, allowed the ice to melt slowly. Further aiding this was the arrival of the Canadian Coast Guard hovercraft Sipu Muin on March 22 in Pointe-à-la-Croix and upstream.

The hovercraft initially worked on the lower part of the river, before reaching the sector near the Interprovincial Bridge, close to the village of Matapédia.

“The water level started to increase on Saturday morning (March 30) around 6 a.m. as the ice coming down the river piled up along the railway bridge. It came as a certain surprise as most people thought that there wouldn’t be a jam this year. The Restigouche River water even started moving up the Matapédia River. It flooded the old soccer field of the village. By mid-afternoon though, the ice jam crumbled, mainly on the New Brunswick side of the railway bridge and the water level went down,” explains Serge Normandeau, a Matapédia business owner who has been following ice jams for 50 years.

He remembers the floods of 1974 and all the important ones that punctuated the Matapédia springs since then.

The most important flood occurred in 1994, on April 16 and 17. Millions of dollars of damage were sustained that year. Relatively important floods also occurred in 2008, 2014 and 2019.

The 2021 situation was a cause of concern because the water level started to rise early

during the spring, on the evening of March 28. Some basements were flooded and the hovercraft started to work the following day. A light flood, so to speak, affected a certain number of basements located along Des Saumons Street that year. The hovercraft worked almost a full week before the water level went down.

Last year, the hovercraft came twice, first between March 28 and April 4, then again from April 13 to 15. It left on April 15 after the river was clear of ice as far down as the Broadlands sector in Ristigouche-South East.

A Canadian Coast Guard hovercraft has been intervening on the Restigouche River since the spring of 1995, a consequence of the major flood of 1994. The name of the hovercraft during the first years was Waban Aki. Sipu Muin means river bear in Mi’gmaq. Before coming to the Restigouche River on March 22, the hovercraft spent a week clearing the ice in the fishing port of Shippagan and Caraquet, New Brunswick.

MICHAUD:

Cont'd from page 9

to fight against members of her political family.

“My goal is not to start the electoral battle right away, but the current candidate and MP does not have a very stellar record. We met with citizens to offer solutions that come from the community,” says the candidate.

Without elaborating on the themes that will be in the electoral campaign, she mentions fisheries, housing, the environment, the return of the passenger train, and air service.

Ms. Michaud is counting on the unconditional support of her leader.

“Normally, a party leader doesn't take up a candidate's cause before the nomination. I won't even mind going so far as to say that I am entirely, totally and irrevocably behind the idea of Kristina being the Bloc Québécois candidate here,” says Yves-François Blanchet.

Ms. Michaud noted that the new riding covers six MRCs, the Magdalen Islands, approximately fifty municipalities, 1,278 kilometres of coastline, twenty fishing wharves, four national parks, 14 wind farms and three Indigenous communities.

Ms. Michaud adds that she has a desire to continue the work she has begun. “The Gaspésie and the Islands deserve to be represented by a person who wants to work in the same direction as them, who brings their voice to Ottawa and not a person who

comes from Ottawa to impose a decision,” states the candidate.

The current Member of Parliament for the Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine was quick to react to Ms. Michaud’s announcement. “I would first like to welcome Kristina Michaud to the race. We can understand that following the redistribution, and the fact that the Bloc Québécois already has its MP in the future riding of Rimouski—La Matapédia, it was really the only option left,” says Ms. Lebouthillier.

The Liberal MP mentions that for generations, both provincially and federally, Gaspésians and Magdalen Islanders have always chosen to elect candidates from their constituency to represent them.

“If Ms. Michaud is really interested in her new voters, I would first invite her to leave Rimouski—La Matapédia, her current riding, and move to the Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj as soon as possible. The Gaspésians and Magdalen Islanders are neither a Plan B, nor a consolation prize,” remarks Ms. Lebouthillier.

“At the moment, for family reasons moving is not an option. I am open to acquiring property in the new territory of the constituency. I have even already started looking,” replies Ms. Michaud.

Diane Lebouthillier announced her intention to run in the new riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj on February 9 in Matane.

## SPEC hours

The Spec office at 208B Gérard D. Levesque is open to clientele Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please use the **front door**.

It is important to note that we are able to check voicemail but the direct line into the office still requires some repairs, so it is essential when calling to leave your name and number, along with a brief message.

We are able to accept payment by credit card but because of the phone lines we are not currently able to accept debit card payments.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation while the building was under renovations, we look forward to seeing you in person once again.



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