

## Snow crab prices to stay low, although they could increase as the season progresses

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The price of snow crab will stay low at the beginning of the 2024 season, according to Bill Sheehan, vice-president of E. Gagnon et Fils, which operates the largest seafood processing plant in the province.

Over the last three years, the snow crab landing price has decreased sharply in Quebec. The price went from \$7.49 per pound in 2021, which was a record year, to \$6.74 in 2022. Last year the price dropped to an astonishing \$2.29.

“We hear that the price could be \$2.50 to \$2.75 per pound. We are getting close to \$3. It can and, in fact, will go up. The inventories of last year are low. However, there is a big quota in Newfound-



*Fisheries and Oceans Canada was able to assure a quick season start in Zone 17, on March 24, on the north side of the Gaspé Peninsula and east part of Lower Saint Lawrence, but failed to do so in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence, deplores Bill Sheehan.*

Photos: G. Gagné

land. So, once the most urgent demands for products are satisfied, there will still be 200 million pounds of snow crab to sell from our area, Zone 12 (covering the Southern Gulf

of Saint Lawrence, where most Gaspesian crab fishermen are active) and Newfoundland,” points out Mr. Sheehan.

He, therefore, expects a

better price than last year’s \$2.29 per pound but nothing comparable to the prices of 2021 and 2022.

“There are too many factors over which we have no

control like the state of the economy, the exchange rate, inflation and the wars here and there on the planet. I can say that market conditions are more encouraging than last year though. Last year was a catastrophe,” adds Bill Sheehan.

Overall, the other worldwide suppliers of cold water crab are not expected to flood markets with unusually huge quantities of shellfish.

“Alaska’s role will be null. As for Russia’s crab, normally, the countries buying our products are not supposed to import it (because of the conflict in Ukraine). However, Russian crab is sold to some countries that indirectly sell in North America. We can guess that some crab slips in. The boycott on Russian products

Cont'd on page 3

## Construction of the new NCHS will begin this year

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

NEW CARLISLE - There is every reason to be optimistic that construction of the new New Carlisle High School will begin this year.

The director general of the Eastern Shores School Board, Denise Simoneau, notes that the process is taking longer than expected. When the announcement was made in September 2021, it was anticipated that the new school would open its doors at the beginning of the 2024 school year.

“It’s progressing very well. It (the process) was a bit long. There are many steps to follow to get to the start of construction,” comments the director.

“It’s still quite rare in Quebec to build a small primary-secondary school in a rural area. That’s why it can be a little longer than elsewhere,”

adds Ms. Simoneau.

The authorities have accepted the plans and Ms. Simoneau is hopeful the construction of the new school will soon commence. “We are working on moving the file forward. We hope to start construction at the end of summer. There are still many steps to follow. We should see more progress in the fall. That’s what we hope,” says Ms. Simoneau.

Even though the announcement was made almost three years ago, the budget is still \$32 million.

Currently, 131 students attend New Carlisle High School.

“We hope that with this new school, the clientele will increase, but it will be between 125 and 150 students,” mentions the director, who emphasizes that this new school will be very different from the cur-

rent building.

“To see the plans of the school, the windows, the colours. It’s very different. We have large classrooms. Everything is done for the success of the students,” maintains Ms. Simoneau.

The new school will be built according to the government’s vision of “beautiful schools”, a perspective of community integration and sustainable development, common spaces, modern architecture, natural light, accents of blue and a significant presence of wood and aluminum.

New Carlisle High School has existed for 110 years. It is in very poor condition and is no longer adapted to today’s realities. The current building, built in 1914, had air quality problems, asbestos and mold, according to a report produced a year ago.

Sixteen recommendations



*An aerial view of New Carlisle’s future high school location.*

Photo: ESSB

were made in 2020 to allow students to continue their education while waiting for a new school.

The school board will present the main aspects of the new school at the gymnasium of NCHS on April 4, at 6:30 p.m.



# Increased support for the return of the passenger train to the Gaspé Peninsula

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of the Passenger Train continues to try to persuade VIA Rail to resume services between Matapédia and Gaspé in phases before the end of 2024.

Signatures were collected, both online and in person, at various public events attended by Coalition members over the past year. As of March 26; 18,506 people had signed the petition demanding the return of the train.

Moreover, this support comes without conventional advertising from the Coalition. Additionally, 27 of the 29 municipalities located between Matapédia and Percé adopted a resolution asking VIA Rail to bring the train back to a portion of the Matapédia-Gaspé network once repairs are carried out as far as New Carlisle.

Since this section will be reopened to New Carlisle by late fall, the Coalition is asking VIA Rail to resume services to New Carlisle before the end of the year. Currently, the Matapédia-Gaspé section is operational between Matapédia and New Richmond for freight only, covering a distance of 110 kilometres (70 miles). New Carlisle is located 43 kilometres (28 miles) from New Richmond, with major bridge repair work underway between both points. The track is being moved to the north in an area of Black Cape, in New Richmond, but that contract will be finished before the fall.

Cynthia Patterson, spokesperson for the Coalition of Gaspésians Gaspésiens for the Return of the Train, is looking forward to speaking again with the president of VIA Rail, Mario Pélouquin, who demonstrated more openness during a meeting in Montreal in November compared to his predecessors.

“We were supposed to see each other again at the start of the year, in the Gaspé, but the meeting was postponed twice. We are now supposed to meet him on April 22. We have done a lot of research work since November 1,” says Ms. Patterson.

**Resuming the service is feasible**

Research conducted by the Coalition addresses four points raised by Mario Pélouquin in November as potential obsta-



Photo: G. Gagné

*Cynthia Patterson believes that the obstacles perceived by the president of VIA Rail can be ironed out without too much hassle.*

cles to the prompt return of the passenger train. These include rolling stock availability, personnel recruitment, the condition of train stations and accessibility to the railway network belonging to the Quebec Ministry of Transport, so that VIA Rail can inspect it before resuming service.

“Regarding the shortage of rolling stock, we have been doing extensive research across Canada into passenger cars, into what is not being used by VIA Rail, and what could be available with Amtrak in the United States. We found enough material to reestablish a basic Montreal-New Carlisle service according to a three, round trip, per week schedule and challenge the obstacle raised by Mr. Pélouquin. It now remains for VIA Rail to make it a priority and allocate the rolling stock there,” assures Cynthia Patterson.

“The personnel question is not complicated. You can't get workers if you don't advertise positions. I am sure that these positions will find takers. The stations are not an obstacle either. The New Carlisle, New Richmond, Carleton and Matapédia stations are in good condition,” she adds.

The Coalition believes a solution can be found to replace the highly vandalized Bonaventure station. Ms. Patterson also believes there is still time to upgrade certain stations between New Carlisle and Gaspé. The complete reopening of this line is planned for the fall of 2026.

The section between New Carlisle and Port-Daniel is expected to open for freight traffic before the end of 2024 or early

2025.

In November, the president of VIA Rail mentioned that they had not yet been granted access to the Gaspé section by Transports Québec to conduct inspections for passenger services.

“We want the Quebec government to invite VIA Rail to inspect the railway line as soon as it is ready to New Carlisle. We think this process will be relatively simple,” underlines Cynthia Patterson, who now has over 35 years of activism under her belt in advocating for rail services in the Gaspé Peninsula.

“We are constantly working on our requests through correspondence. I am happy to see that Mr. Pélouquin is proactive, that he is asking the federal government for funds to increase the fleet of passenger cars, which is constantly being done in Europe and which we want to see here,” notes Ms. Patterson.

“At the public events we attended throughout the fall, people told us how much they need passenger rail. We will resume our public presence soon,” she promises.

**Patience**

VIA Rail suspended its service between Matapédia and New Carlisle in September 2013, marking over 10 years since the suspension which was primarily due to the state of some bridges. The public carrier had ceased its service between New Carlisle and Gaspé for similar reasons in December 2011.

Since the spring of 2015, the railway section between

Matapédia and Gaspé, spanning 325 kilometres (202 miles), has been under the ownership of the Quebec Ministry of Transport. However, it wasn't until May 2017 that Transports Québec decided to repair the entire railway. In addition, no major work was carried out before the beginning of 2019.

Transports Québec has since fallen considerably behind in the pace of work, particularly between June 2020 and February 2022, when no call for tenders for the repair of the bridges was published.

A total budget of \$872 million is dedicated to the complete refurbishment of the Matapédia-Gaspé line, including \$517 million required for the section between Port Daniel and Gaspé.

Freight transport between Matapédia and New Richmond is provided by the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), an entity under the control of the four MRCs covering the territory between Matapédia and Gaspé. The SCFG will also offer freight services to Port-Daniel and Gaspé.

Freight traffic declined in 2022 and 2023 in the Gaspé

Peninsula because Transports Québec was unable to fulfill its commitment to repair the line to Port Daniel.

This prevents cement traffic from increasing, especially when relatively close destinations, like southern New Brunswick, are concerned. There is a road-railway transshipment facility in New Richmond but load transfer is not advantageous financially over shorter routes. What leaves Port Daniel in a truck and trailer, then stays in the trailer until its destination. Input for the Saint Mary's cement plant could also be hauled by rail but the same transshipment constraint makes the operation more expensive.

In 2021, the SCFG hauled 4,636 carloads, compared to 3,150 in 2022 and 1,998 last year. Cement plant-related traffic was expected to make up for the May 2022 end of windmill blade traffic generated by LM Wind Power in Gaspé.

That traffic was also transshipped in New Richmond due to the state of the railway infrastructure east of New Richmond. LM Wind Power will likely generate some traffic once the line is repaired to Gaspé.

## Orléans Express drivers will not strike

Nelson Sergerie, LJI  
GASPÉ - An agreement in principle has been reached between the Union representing drivers and Orléans Express, eliminating the possibility of a strike.

After more than a year of negotiations and approximately thirty sessions, the parties have concluded discussions, with the help of a conciliator and a mediator.

Salaries and benefits were the main issues of the negotiation. The previous agreement expired on March 31, 2023, and the new agreement in principle is for four years.

The details of the agreement were not disclosed by the Union of Service Employees, local 800, which represents the 77 Orléans Express drivers.

Ten days ago, union members voted 96% in favour of an indefinite general strike, if necessary, and adopted light pressure tactics.

Orléans Express notably serves the Gaspésie, Rimouski, Quebec and Montreal areas.





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Photo: N. Sergerie

*The Cascapédia River bridge does not need to be reconstructed, according to the MTQ.*

# MTQ confirms the Cascapédia River bridge does not need to be rebuilt

**NELSON SERGERIE**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CASCAPÉDIA-SAINT-JULES - Addressing concerns raised on social media regarding the potential reconstruction of the Cascapédia River bridge which spans across Highway 132 in New Richmond, the Quebec Ministry of Transport (MTQ) has re-

sponded by email that no intervention is needed. Furthermore, the MTQ also specifies in the email that a complete reconstruction is not part of their long-term plans.

Speculations about the bridge's condition surfaced online, prompting discussions about its potential replacement due to perceived signs of wear.

The 328-metre Cascapédia River bridge, built in 1961, was closed between May 2017 and June 2018 to address damages caused by flooding. During this period, a pier and two spans were replaced at a cost of \$6.8 million. The detour which was used during that period also required an investment of \$3.5 million to ensure the safety of road users.

**CRAB:**  
**Cont'd from page 1**

represents one more barrier. We think that Russian crab will not be a factor bringing down the price here. Its biggest effect is that Russia sells on the Asian market. At Boston though (the seafood show that took place during the second week of March), Japanese buyers were there and interested in buying," explains Mr. Sheehan.

**Season start**

As of March 28, Bill Sheehan's biggest concern was Fisheries and Oceans Canada's endless decision-making process regarding the snow crab fishing season start.

"We had a meeting of the "ice committee" on March 15 although it is ill-named this year because there is no ice on the sea. So, there is no ice in the Gulf but the Canadian Coast Guard is not ready with its search and rescue boats even if we have known since

the end of January that it wouldn't be a big year, ice-wise. We are wasting time with that element and given the water temperature, which is warmer, the right whales will likely be here earlier and some areas will be closed to fishing," deplores Bill Sheehan.

Most crab fishing stakeholders were hoping for the season to start on March 23, then on about every day until another ice committee call, which was scheduled for March 30 as the SPEC was reaching its deadline. An April 1 go-ahead was then expected.

"April 1 is a Monday. If the fishermen go to sea that day, they will only bring back crab two days later at best. So, processing will only start on Wednesday or Thursday. It cuts the number of processing hours that week for our workers but nobody thought of this in Ottawa," also deplores Mr. Sheehan.

As of March 28, a little over 100 Mexican workers out of 125 expected this year had

reached the E. Gagnon et Fils' processing plant in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé. At one point over mid-March, the company feared that the visa requirement suddenly imposed by Immigration Canada on February 29 to Mexican workers would delay their arrival by at least a month.

"We owe their presence here to the fact that we obtained online visas before February 29," points out Bill Sheehan.

E. Gagnon et Fils hires a total of 600 people during peak snow crab and lobster processing season.



## Police report

An avalanche which occurred on March 26, shortly before 5:30 p.m., on Mount Médaille, approximately 8.6 kilometres in the backcountry of La Martre, a village located 35 kilometres east of Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, has resulted in the death of three men, in their thirties, from the Eastern Townships.

The victims were part of a group of four men, who were driving snowbikes, which are vehicles that look like dirt bikes propelled by tracks.

"The emergency call came in at about 5:30 p.m. and it was made by the fourth member of the group, who was looking for his friends, who had been buried by an avalanche. The emergency service managed to get to Mount Médaille, including a specialized emergency Sûreté du Québec team, firefighters and paramedics. The three men were found shortly before 11:30 p.m. They were sent to the nearest hospital where they were pronounced dead," explains regional communication officer Frédéric Deshaies of the Sûreté du Québec (SQ). The fourth member of the group, who was in shock, was hospitalized.

To shed light on the circumstances, SQ experts are investigating the accident, which occurred in a glen's steep slope. The investigating team includes a forensic technician specialized in accident reconstitution.

The victims are identified as Joël Crête, 35 (Coaticook), Nicolas Vanasse, 30 (Coaticook), and Bryan Forgues Morissette, 33 (Saint-Denis-de-Brompton).

The accident took place in an area located outside the territory covered by Avalanche Québec, an organization mainly active in the Parc de la Gaspésie and the surrounding area. The recent snowfalls and ensuing mild weather created favourable avalanche conditions, as a layer of heavy snow capped a layer of light snow. This factor, combined with the steep slope, triggered the Mount Médaille avalanche.

Kevin Richard, 30, one of the two suspects in a home invasion that occurred overnight between March 23 and 24 in New Richmond, will remain in custody. The accused appeared at the New Carlisle Courthouse on the morning of March 27 and was scheduled to return to court on March 28, after SPEC's deadline, for the continuation of the procedures. Mr. Richard, who has an extensive criminal record, is charged with break and enter, assault, uttering death threats, mischief under \$5,000 and breach of probation. Mr. Richard was arrested on the afternoon of March 26 by the Sûreté du Québec. His alleged accomplice, a minor, was arrested on March 25 and released on a promise to appear in court at a later date. The two occupants of the house suffered minor injuries during the event. According to communication officer Frédéric Deshaies, the occupants and the alleged criminals knew each other. Kevin Richard was the subject of an arrest warrant before March 23.

Incarcerated since his arrest for drug-related offences and sexual assault, Billy Langlois, 43, from Chandler, recently postponed his bail hearing. He wishes to undergo therapy for his addictions before pursuing further legal proceedings. Billy Langlois was arrested at his home on February 29 following a search of the Saint-François Road area in Chandler. He faces charges of possession for the purpose of trafficking cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine. He is also charged with breach of probation. Billy Langlois, who has a lengthy criminal record, will also have to face a charge of sexual assault on a minor for an incident that occurred several years ago.

### 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.

*Spec Management*



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s messy decision-making

Over the last decades, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has stood out much more for its poor management than for its effectiveness. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the ministry’s decision-making over the past 40 years is that history keeps repeating itself.

All too often, the scenario unfolds the same way. Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s scientific team identifies a problem and sometimes proposes a solution, yet decision-makers delay action for years. By the time a solution is finally implemented, it no longer fits the issue, as it has worsened almost beyond repair.

The recent decision to resume commercial redfish catches in 2024 is a prime example of the scenario described above.

In the summer of 2017, there was a consensus among the ministry’s biologists to the effect that the redfish stock, at 2.6 million metric tons, was strong enough to support a gradual resumption of commercial fishing. However, the fish were hardly growing anymore because there was not much to eat and they consequently had a tough time reaching the commercial size of 22 centimetres.

At the time, the redfish stock made up almost 80% of all the living species in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. It doesn’t take a genius to understand that without controlling the redfish population, there wouldn’t be enough to eat in the sea before long and that redfish would resort to cannibalism in order to survive.

Since then, the redfish stock, surprisingly and briefly, increased to 4.3 million tons, and then nosedived to reach 2.3 million tons in 2023.

In the meantime, the shrimp stock in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence also declined significantly, to such an extent that the 2024 quota amounts to only 10% of the 2014 allocation, at 3,060 tons instead of 30,711 tons.

So, decision-makers in Ottawa chose to ignore the recommendations made by scientists in 2017, opting for inaction out of perhaps fear that resuming commercial redfish activity would ruin the positive effect of a moratorium imposed in 1995.

The same scientists who recommended opening redfish catches in 2017-2018 repeated their message over the five ensuing years. They soon added to their explanation that most redfish would not reach 22 centimetres, and that the new commercial

size was likely 20 centimetres.

The biologists even recommended that the 2024 quota could reach as much as 318,000 metric tons, without long-term detrimental effects on the stock, which will decline to a certain point over the next decade.

Recommendation ignored! Instead of taking such advice into account, the decision-makers, through their inaction, created another problem, the scarcity of shrimp, a significant component of the redfish’s diet.

Furthermore, Fisheries and Oceans Canada Minister Diane Lebouthillier announced on January 26 a quota of 25,000 metric tons of redfish for this year, with the possibility of adjustments later in the season.

The mistakes of the past?

When questioned about the low quota, roughly 1% of the total stock, Minister Lebouthillier defended the decision, stating that she refused to repeat the mistakes of the past and deplete the redfish population.

Speaking of mistakes of the past, 59% of the 25,000-ton quota allocated to large boats over 85 feet in length come from the Maritimes. In fact, most boats, outside of the Quebec fleet expected to catch redfish, have a length between 100 and 125 feet. A boat measuring 125 feet can store roughly 600,000 pounds of fish, compared to about 60,000 to 80,000 pounds for the 65-foot midshore boats owned by shrimp fishermen.

Those shrimp fishermen only received 10% of the 25,000-ton quota, way too little to make ends meet, as they will likely not get more than a week or two worth of work.

Most observers of commercial fisheries are also quick to point out that the big trawlers of over 100 feet were mainly responsible for the redfish stock decline from 1985 to 1995.

So, Minister Lebouthillier officially refrains from repeating yesteryear’s mistakes but she allocates the bulk of the redfish quota to the owners of the boats identified as the source of the moratorium imposed 29 years ago!

She is not the first Fisheries and Oceans Canada minister to become entrenched in old habits though.

At the end of the 1980s, her predecessors, for political reasons, refused to acknowledge the decline in cod stocks. The moratoriums imposed in 1992 in Newfoundland and 1993 in Quebec are still

in place, 31 and 32 years later. Somehow, the political reasons of the past have changed shape. There are only two federal constituencies in Quebec inhabited by fishermen likely to catch redfish this year and beyond. There are probably between 10 and 15 constituencies in the Atlantic Provinces with such fishermen.

On another point, it is fair to say that the population of seals has grown immensely since the mid 1970s, to such an extent that those sea mammals have played a major role, with overfishing and changing environmental conditions, in the decline of cod and the lack of recovery of that fish stock. Seals also have and continue to have a significant impact on the decline of pelagic fish stocks, such as mackerel and herring.

The reduction of their stock also casts a shadow over the capacity of the processing plants to supply bait to the fishermen with local herring or mackerel. Depending on foreign bait supplies is never a positive sign, as depending on fishermen living abroad is a sign of dependency.

An astounding degree of disconnection

One of the main reasons for the ineffective decision-making process at Fisheries and Oceans Canada is undoubtedly the geographical distance between the capital, Ottawa, and the fishing grounds.

Many decision-makers or those forwarding recommendations to the minister have never set foot on a wharf, let alone on a boat. They would have a hard time distinguishing between a cod and a halibut. More importantly, this distance is generating a degree of indifference that prevents the country’s commercial fishing sector from reaping the potential benefits of the resources and ensuring their sustainability.

In the 1970s, when Fisheries and Oceans Canada decided to establish a “regional” office to supervise Quebec’s commercial fisheries, they opted for... Quebec City, hundreds of kilometres away from commercial activities, a city not even located along saltwater. Gaspé would have been perfect for that office. By doing so, Fisheries and Oceans Canada added a layer of disconnection.

Sometimes, an arm’s length allows people to make sound decisions. However, that distance must be coupled with competence. In commercial fisheries, competence must be as close as possible to the resources and the fishermen. It is far from what we have been witnessing for over 40 years.

NEWSPAPER

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*The Gaspé Spec*

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# Bonaventure River: Cime Aventures seeks to appeal Superior Court decision

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – Cime Aventures is seeking permission to appeal the verdict rendered on February 19 by Superior Court Judge Alexander Pless. Although this verdict partially vindicated Cime Aventures, its management is contesting the constitutional interpretation made by the judge in his ruling.

In the case, which was heard in Montreal, from April 4 to 6, 2023, Cime Adventure argued that the Government of Quebec, through its Ministry of the Environment, the Fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks, does not have the right to unilaterally impose a limit to the number of watercraft, especially canoes and kayaks, that the company's customers use on the river.

Cime's lawyers argued that the Bonaventure River was a navigable watercourse and that this aspect is under federal jurisdiction and, therefore constitutionally outside the jurisdiction of the Quebec government.

Judge Pless agreed in his February 19 verdict with the Quebec ministry on the navigation point, stating that it is under provincial jurisdiction. However, the judge accepted Cime's argument on another important point of his verdict, namely that this same ministry lacked fairness in



Photo: Courtesy of Élodie Brideau

*Élodie Brideau, the director general of Cime Aventures expressed the company's position in a press release, choosing not to give interviews while the case remains in the courts.*

the treatment reserved for the Bonaventure company. The judge noted that the ministry made Cime bear the weight of almost all the traffic on the Bonaventure River.

Judge Pless noted, in particular, that the ministry had not taken into consideration the fact that several excursionists were independent, therefore, that they did not use the services of Cime, and that the number of sports fishermen has doubled on the river since 2004.

Cime's new request spans 24 pages. The company notes what its lawyers describe as "errors of law" by Judge Pless. The authorization con-

tract between the Quebec government and Cime Aventures is often mentioned in the request.

The document emphasizes, among other things, that the petitioner (Cime) "submits that the trial judge erred when he described the dominant objective of the Authorization Contract imposed on the petitioner as being the management of public lands and the management of wildlife, while 'the main characteristic' and the dominant objective of this Authorization Contract are to regulate navigation activities, as revealed by the clauses of this Authorization Contract."



Photo: G. Gagné

*Cime Aventures takes judgment to the Court of Appeal. The company notes, in particular, that traffic has also increased among salmon fishermen.*

## Tensions peaked in 2020

Tensions between canoeists and sports fishermen have existed on the Bonaventure River for several years, as on other rivers. In 2007, the Quebec Ministry of Wildlife and Parks forced Cime Aventures to sign a business authorization or, in the request, an "authorization contract", aimed at confining the company's activities.

The very high traffic during the first summer of the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer of 2020, prompted the ministry to impose more restrictive limits on the number of watercraft that Cime could send on the river in 2021. Until 2020, inclusively, Cime could rent out 260 boats per day during their peak season and 210 in the low season.

The 2021 business authorization reduced this capacity by 20% and increased the company's operating costs. Cime, by bringing the case to court on July 22, 2021, also requested and obtained a safeguard order, to maintain its activities while awaiting the hearing of the case in April 2023 and the possible judgment. The safeguard order was renewed in 2022 and 2023. Judge Pless' decision was rendered February 19, 2024.

Following the request to seek an appeal, Élodie Brideau, the director general of Cime Aventures, chose not to give any interviews, she instead published a press release. She particularly highlights the points on which the

Pless decision proved the company right.

"On the other hand, with respect, the constitutional analysis of the judgment remains at too abstract a level. Thus, we argue that this analysis focuses on examining the authorization contract regime in general, rather than examining Cime's authorization contract itself. In doing so, the decision fails to consider the effects and the real and avowed objective of this authorization contract, namely the control of navigation activities," states the press release.

"The appeal procedure only targets (...) the constitutional portion of the judgment. Cime Adventure intends to continue discussions with the ministry in accordance with the decision relating to procedural fairness using a positive approach based on facts," also mentions the Cime Aventures press release.

According to Judge Pless, this "procedural fairness" is the element that was lacking in the government's approach, since only the traffic generated by Cime Aventures was targeted to limit traffic on the river.

The judge did not establish negotiation parameters in anticipation of the 2024 season, which begins on June 1.

The Quebec government did not react to the judgment of Alexander Pless and it did not react to the request from Cime Adventure filed in the Court of Appeal.

The lawyers of Cime Aventures filed the permission to appeal documents on March 22.

## Measles has not yet reached the Gaspé Peninsula

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

GASPÉ - So far, there are still no cases of measles in the region, according to the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Island Department of Public Health.

While the number of cases continues to rise in the Montreal region, with 28 cases confirmed by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) as of March 27, some hospitals in the metropolis have implemented mask-wearing policies.

The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre has not increased its protective measures for the time being. However, the infection control team remains attentive and is monitoring developments in the province.



# Progress on the new Vieille-forge Theatre in Petite-Vallée

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PETITE-VALLÉE - Another significant milestone has been achieved in the construction of the new Théâtre de la Vieille-forge in Petite-Vallée with the erection of the steel structure on the site.

“The work is progressing well. The contractor completed the steel structure over the past week. Now, it’s at the stage of the wooden structure which is being constructed on the building,” says Marc-Antoine Dufresne, the assistant artistic director and director of communications and marketing of the Village en chanson.

Once the wooden structure is installed, the building will be closed, and the windows will be installed in late spring



The steel structure of the building is erected.

Photo: Village en chanson de Petite-Vallée

and early summer. Interior construction will also commence during this period.

“The inauguration remains scheduled for the summer of 2025. However, the building will be completed a little earlier to get the establishment up to speed before officially

opening the doors to the public,” explains the communications director.

The new building will cost nearly \$20 million. After the functional and technical studies, the project amounted to \$14 million in 2021. The Government of Quebec then granted \$9.8 million and Ottawa a little more than \$3 million, in addition to a fundraising campaign of \$1.7 million.

“There is little doubt that the financing necessary for the construction of the building will be authorized. We have not yet had an official announcement from the two levels of government. We will wait until the governments announce the financing before divulging the final costs of the project,” notes Mr. Dufresne.

## Winter is resuming its rights and a normal season is within reach

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Over a one-week period, 80 centimetres of snow fell on Gaspé. According to Environment Canada, 42 centimetres of snow fell at the Michel-Pouliot airport in Gaspé on March 21, followed by 38 centimetres during the March 24 storm.

Since the beginning of the month, 159 centimetres of snow has accumulated in Gaspé, double the typical amount of 72 centimetres for March. This makes 2024 the second snowiest March of the decade, surpassed only by 2014 when 171 centimetres accumulated in March.

With the large amount of snow received in March, it brings this winter to a more seasonal average. So far, this year, 331 centimetres of snow has fallen on Gaspé, with the usual average being 372 centimetres.

New Richmond also received a significant amount of snow during the March 24 storm. Environment Canada estimates between 30 and 40 centimetres fell during the storm.

The March 24 storm didn’t hit New Carlisle quite as hard, where only 28 centimetres of snow was measured. The Nouvelle sector received 24 centimetres of snow during the late March storm.



Winter returned to the Gaspé Peninsula with a vengeance, as seen here on Rue de la Reine in Gaspé after the March 24 storm.

Photo: N. Sergerie



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# Sarah Nellis secures spot on the national fly fishing team

CYNTHIA DOW

Once again, Sarah Nellis has been selected to compete on Canada’s national team for the 2025 Ladies World Fly Fishing Championship, set to take place next year at Island Park, Idaho, United States.

Ms. Nellis is well-known in the field — or should we say, on the water — and won

last year’s national championship held in Montebello, Quebec. She intends to return to the national event to be held in Alberta this fall.

She started competitive fly fishing in 2022 and was chosen to compete on the 2024 team, but timing and cost made it impossible to participate since the event was held in the Czech Republic. In 2023 she was part of the

Canadian contingent that came second at the international championship in Kamloops, British Columbia. “The best team result for Canada ever at a World Fly Fishing tournament!” she exclaimed.

“I started fishing when I was 17 years old. I was working as a student for the Cascapedia Society, and then it just had this snowball effect in my life,” the 28-year-old told SPEC. She works as an independent sports fishing guide and helps manage other independent guides as well.

“I’ve picked up fishing skills from everyone I’ve had the pleasure of fishing with. To this day, I am constantly learning. I love that it is a non-stop challenge that allows me to spend most of my time outdoors, I love the profound sense of community with fellow anglers and, of course, I love convincing a fish to take my fly!” says Ms. Nellis.

To participate in the world championship, it is necessary to raise funds as Fly Fishing Canada does not cover all the expenses. “Obviously, there

are a lot of costs associated with this. Because of timing, I will probably have to fly to the event (in the US). We haven’t really discussed how we will fundraise yet. Last time we did an auction and a 50-50 draw. People were very generous,” explains Ms. Nellis.

The species of fish targeted at these various competitions depend on what species are native to the area where the event is held. So far Ms. Nellis has been mostly involved in trout fishing (brook and rainbow).



Sarah Nellis is frequently seen casting her line on the Cascapedia River.



Photos: Courtesy of Sarah Nellis

Canadian teammate Samantha Breault from Alberta joins Sarah Nellis in celebrating their silver medal at the Worlds competition in 2023

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Page 7, April 3, 2024 - Spec



# Community support for local food production vital

## April 14 gathering to discuss solutions

CYNTHIA DOW

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: “It’s getting critical,” Luc Potvin told SPEC, “Those who are feeding us are having a hard time feeding themselves.” He was referring to the fact that local vegetable farmers have seen, on average, a whopping 85% decline in net revenues

since the pandemic. “This is a dangerous situation. We are losing the capacity to feed ourselves.” So the organization Baie des Saveurs, of which Mr. Potvin is a member, is holding a community consultation on Sunday, April 14, to look at several potential solutions to help local farms become sustainable and prosper over the

long term. Baie des Saveurs is an association of local producers and food preparation companies that offer direct sales of organic produce to people in the Bay of Chaleur area. There are five locations where purchasers can pick up their orders from November to April. The farms also sell baskets of fresh produce regularly throughout the summer months to those who subscribe.

Now the organization wants to bring some new ideas to local farmers and consumers as to how agricultural land can be protected for the future and, therefore, local production of food is assured over the long term.

The April 14 event is to be held at the community centre in Maria, at 65 Rue des Voltigeurs, beginning at 9:30 a.m. The consultation will include presentations from a variety of organizations and farmers from across the province who have been experimenting with different ways to include community participation and diversify revenue sources.

One of the initiatives being

considered by Mr. Potvin’s own farm, Les Jardins Viridis, is a land trust to ensure their fields behind Maria are used for agricultural purposes only in perpetuity.

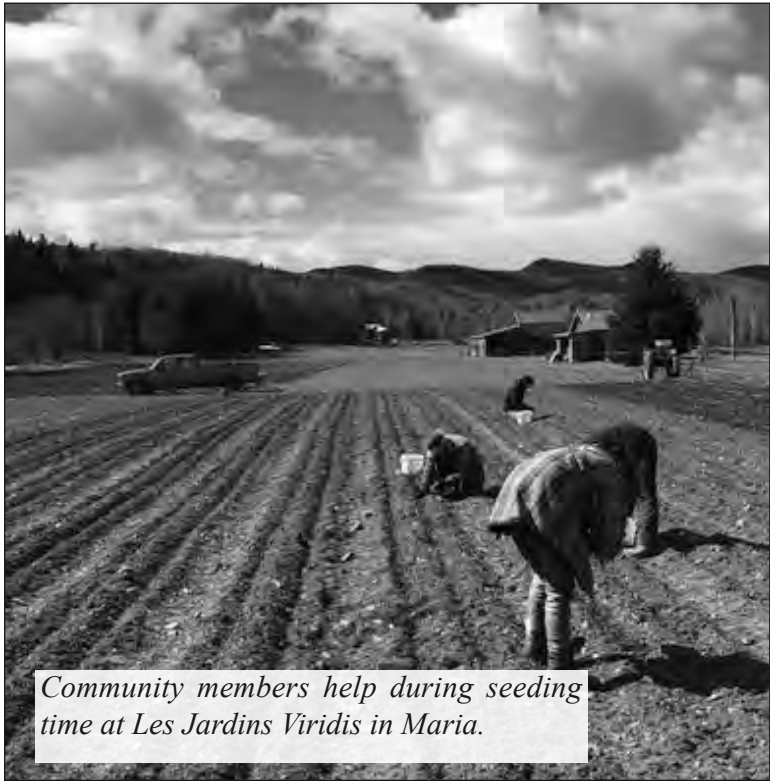
Other presentations will examine the potential of different revenue sources such as offering yurt camping opportunities, community gardens, and partnerships with organizations such as La Source Alimentaire Bonavignon. Participants at the event will also be looking at how to include people in production, who may not have the money to invest in a land trust but could give their time during seeding and harvesting.

“Hundreds of people come out every year to help us with the harvest. So the community spirit is there. We just need to better organize it,” Mr. Potvin explained.

Coming out of the April event, he would like to see a small network of people interested in following through on different initiatives. “We have to find local solutions and community support is vital. During the first years of the pandemic, there was a lot of interest. Now we need to find other ways to ensure our local food production continues well into the future.”

The all-day event has been sponsored by Innergex, with the help of the MRC Avignon, the UPA, the organic bread shop La Mie Véritable and La Source Alimentaire Bonavignon.

For more information about Baie des Saveurs, visit their website at <https://baiedesaveurs.ca/> or contact: [info@baiedessaveurs.ca](mailto:info@baiedessaveurs.ca) to register for the consultation.



Community members help during seeding time at Les Jardins Viridis in Maria.

Photo: Courtesy of Luc Potvin

## The bill continues to rise in the Louisette Langlois case

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - The bill surrounding the saga of the former mayor of Chandler, Louisette Langlois, continues to increase with an additional \$7,678 added to the bill.

In March, the municipal council paid an invoice of \$5,908.43 to the legal firm representing the Town of Chandler, while Ms. Langlois’ attorney invoiced an amount of \$1,769.78, bringing the total cost of this ongoing case 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 controversy surrounding the Municipal Commission’s imposition of a



Photo: N. Sergerie

Former mayor of Chandler, Louisette Langlois

180-day sanction from January to July 2021, related to violations of the code of ethics.

As of now, no hearing date has been scheduled in this case.

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# Interregional migration: Population of the Gaspé Peninsula is on the rise

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - According to data from the Quebec Institute of Statistics (ISQ), for the seventh consecutive year, the Gaspé Peninsula has had a positive interregional migration balance with a gain of 304 people.

"It's excellent news. We didn't know how it would go. It's almost above our expectations," says the director of the Stratégie Vivre en Gaspésie, Danik O'Connor.

The data covers the period from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023.

Interregional migration has been declining across Quebec since the "roaring twenties" of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This explains why the balance is lower, but it remains excellent news for the Gaspésie," says Mr. O'Connor.

"This is the seventh positive migratory balance for the region. There is no other so-called remote region that achieves this (level of) performance. Indeed, it is becoming the norm and that is positive," notes Mr. O'Connor.

The 0-14 and 25-74 age groups are experiencing a growth in numbers. "There is only the student portion between 15-24 years old where some of our young people have to leave the region for postsecondary studies. Historically, we have always had a negative balance, but if we compare it with 20 years ago, we have gone from an era with a balance of -500 to -100. These are incredible gains that we have made even at this level," explains Mr. O'Connor.

The region also saw the lowest exodus ever recorded by the ISQ, with 1,258 departures.

"We must not forget that the quality of life in our region, the quantity of jobs available and the positive social fabric are factors in people remaining in the region. We must remember that our region is the happiest in Quebec. I say, 'Why leave a place when you are happy!'" counters the director.

When broken down by MRC, Bonaventure has the highest net balance, with an increase of 79. The Rocher-Percé MRC follows closely with an increase of 77. The MRCs of Avignon and Haute-



Interregional migration results in a net gain for the Gaspé Peninsula

Photo: N. Sergerie

Gaspésie experienced population increases of 66 and 65 respectively. However, the MRC of Côte-de-Gaspé only saw a gain of 17 people.

It is difficult to explain why the Gaspé area didn't experience the same level of growth as the rest of the region. "As we speak, we cannot make any hypotheses, but the question of housing may come into play. The situation was more difficult in Côte-de-Gaspé. This can explain why we have a positive migration balance, but it is a little

lower," says Mr. O'Connor.

If there were more housing in the Gaspé Peninsula, the net migration could have been higher.

"We carried out different types of surveys. We surveyed more than 1,000 Quebecers to measure the power of attraction of the Gaspésie overall. We are told that our region is extremely attractive and if we had more housing available, we would be able to attract more people," notes the director.

According to him, there is

a strong trend for growth in positive net migration.

"If we look at the trend of the last 15 years and we remove the two years of the pandemic, we are still with a positive migration balance of 200, 300 and 400. If the situation remains similar and in terms of housing too, we can predict that we will continue on this path and that is where we must go. With the labour shortage, we need to attract people to the region. We hope to continue this trend," concludes Mr. O'Connor.

## New Richmond Taekwondo athletes compete in Quebec

ELAINE SEXTON  
Community Correspondent

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: On March 16, four athletes from Taekwondo Rock Mercier located in New Richmond competed in the Taekwondo provincial qualification tournament in Quebec City.

The competition consisted of Poomsae (forms) and sparring. Jacob Ferland, Jayce Coull, Léo Romagné and George-Emry Tremblay all gave their best, earning seven

medals out of a possible eight, a remarkable achievement for the athletes, as well as their dedicated parents, and coach Rock Mercier.

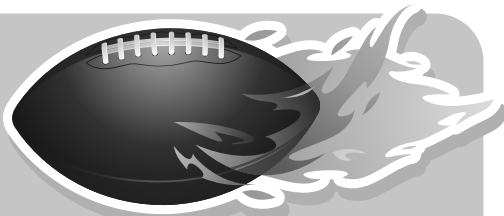
Jacob and Jayce, both from Cascapedia-St-Jules, are yellow belts with a green stripe. George-Emry is a green belt with a blue stripe, and Léo is a red belt. They are both from New Richmond.

With information provided by Cynthia Wetherall (Jacob Ferland's mother).



Photo: C. Wetherall

Our youth  
are our  
future



If you have a child or a team you'd like to celebrate, please consider submitting the information and a photo to The Gaspé Spec at [specs@globetrotter.net](mailto:specs@globetrotter.net).



**ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20**  
Grit and guts will get you what you deserve this week, Aries. You may have an opportunity to make a good deal of money, so give this plan careful consideration. Ask for advice if the need arises.

**TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21**  
Taurus, there has been change in your life and you may want to blame the stars. Things will move out of your comfort zone and you will have to sharpen your ability to adapt.

**GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21**  
Gemini, you may be questioning the relationships in your life at the time being, but don't worry too much. If you hit a rough patch, things will clear up in a few days.

**CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22**  
A big shift in your perception and attitude will bring new components to your life that you may not have anticipated. This week you'll certainly have a few eyes-wide-open moments.

**LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23**  
There will be no hiding out this week, Leo. You will soon learn that things will come your way at a rapid pace. Do your best to keep up, mighty Lion, as it's bound to be exciting.



**VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22**  
Virgo, you might be willing to throw caution to the wind and get away on a moment's notice. There are affordable ways to do this if you are willing to do your homework.

**LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23**  
Libra, even though some drama may be swirling in your universe, you find it tolerable because it's coming at you in small portions. Just stay on the sidelines as much as possible.

**SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22**  
Scorpio, if boredom has set in, it's better to look to new experiences instead of doing something rash just for the thrill. See which classes you can take or find new restaurants to explore.

**SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21**  
Self-care and healing are what you should focus on right now, Sagittarius. You may have been pushing your needs to the side lately and you need to make this a priority.

**CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20**  
You are not normally characterized as "impulsive," Capricorn. But you may surprise everyone this week. An opportunity to travel or another adventure could drop in your lap.

**AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18**  
Try to create some tranquil spaces at home, Aquarius. You can use a haven, especially when a lot of stuff is thrown at you outside your home.


**PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20**  
Pisces, you may be on a mission this week to get things done. Don't rush in your efforts to complete everything or you are bound to make mistakes that are not easily fixed.

- FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS**
- APRIL 1**  
Randy Orton, Wrestler (44)
- APRIL 2**  
Pedro Pascal, Actor (49)
- APRIL 3**  
Paris Jackson, Model (26)
- APRIL 4**  
Robert Downey, Jr., Actor (59)
- APRIL 5**  
Hayley Atwell, Actress (42)
- APRIL 6**  
Peyton List, Actress (26)



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# Announcements



## In Memory



**ASSELIN: Anthony**  
January 28, 1926 - April 10, 2002  
**ASSELIN: Kevin**  
January 28, 1953 - April 19, 1983  
*I don't need a special day,  
To bring you to my mind.  
The days I don't think of you,  
Are very hard to find.  
Each morning when I awake,  
I know that you are gone.  
And no one knows the heartache,  
As I try to carry on.  
My heart still aches with sadness,  
And secret tears still flow.  
What it meant to lose you,  
No one will ever know.  
My thoughts are always with you,  
Your place no one can fill.  
In life I loved you dearly,  
In death I love you still.*  
Sadly missed by Marlee and Boyd.



**COPAGE: Raymond**  
4 years ago today,  
We said our tearful goodbyes.  
It broke our hearts to watch you go,  
And left us wondering why.  
We thought of you today,  
But that is nothing new.  
We also thought of you yesterday,  
And every day before that too.  
Remembering you is easy,  
We do it everyday.  
But missing you is heartache,  
That never goes away.  
The life we shared will never die,  
It lives within our heart.  
Bringing us strength and comfort,  
While we are apart.  
You'll never be forgotten,  
And every day we'll shed a tear.  
But it's only because we love you,  
And wish you were still here.  
God has you in his keeping,  
But we will have you in our hearts.

Sadly missed and forever in our hearts: your loving wife: Doreen; children: Michael (Linda), Terry (Kelly), Donna (Cantal), Beverly (Bob), Brenda; grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**DAWSON: Emma**  
**November 3, 1919 - April 3, 2017**  
*For all you were to me in life,  
And all the joy you brought.  
Your memory is with me,  
In every single thought.  
The pain I felt at losing you,  
Will never go away.  
But knowing that your're in my heart,  
Helps me through each day.  
When you were here I always felt,  
That nothing could go wrong.  
But your're my still my inspiration,  
And your memory keeps me strong.  
And though my heart is heavy,  
It's always full of love.  
And that's enough to comfort me,  
While you're in heaven above.  
You saw me take my first breath,  
I saw you take your last.  
But goodbyes are not forever,  
Goodbyes are not the end.  
They simply mean I'll miss you,  
Until we meet again.*  
Your loving daughter: Barbara-Ann



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**Wedding** - \$55

*To add a picture with any of the above: \$10 extra.*



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## COAST ROUND-UP

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

**COAST ROUND-UP**

**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 18:** The Hope Town

sports club is hosting a gift bingo starting at 7 p.m. at the Hope Town community 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:**  
**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 Legion memberships are available for \$45. Returning and new members welcome.

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

**UNITED CHURCH  
NEW RICHMOND**  
**Sunday, April 7**  
10 a.m. Service

**UNITED CHURCH  
HOPE TOWN**  
**Sunday, April 7**  
10 a.m. Service

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA**

**Sunday, April 7**  
**NEW CARLISLE**  
10 a.m. Morning Prayer

**SHIGAWAKE**  
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist followed by Annual Vestry Meeting

**PARISH OF GASPÉ**

**Sunday, April 7**  
**St. Andrew's - York**  
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Every Wednesday**  
**St. Paul's - Gaspé**  
10 a.m. BCP Morning Prayer



# An unforgettable International Women’s Day event

SHANNON DAY  
PENNY MACWHIRTER

PASPEBIAC: On March 8, the Centre Culturel in Paspébiac was the vibrant setting for an unforgettable soirée in celebration of International Women’s Day. Guests attending the event organized by the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) were greeted with a delightful mimosa station, hors d’oeuvres, and a captivating photographer’s photo booth, setting the stage for an evening of celebration and socializing.

## Registration

Registration for the event opened promptly at 7 p.m. on February 15, as previously noted in multiple public announcements. When the registration link went live on the CASA Facebook page, the 80 available seats, excluding staff and guest speakers, were all



Kathy Gallon presenting Agnes Blais with the Shine Your Light award.

Photos: Kayla Caplin photography

her vision for the evening, she organized a series of engaging events that captured the essence of Women's Day.

The success of the event demonstrates the teamwork of the entire staff, whose commitment and passion transformed their tasks into a labour of love. Year after year, the Women's

everyone feels included and valued.

## The event

As the festivities unfolded, attendees indulged in spirited conversations and enjoyed the company of fellow guests before the commencement of the evening's events.

Brenda Buttle has attended several of CASA’s Women’s Day events over the years, she says, “As a woman, and especially as a senior, all the speeches and entertainment make me feel excited, as if I were a teenager out on a first date. My excitement is overwhelming.” Ms. Buttle also notes that the table settings and meals were extraordinary. This year she attended the event with her friend of over 40 years, Ivy Huntington. “The atmosphere felt as if everyone was your sister, meeting and greeting people I didn't know.” She adds that the smiles and laughter stayed with her, even after the event was over.

Every moment of the Women’s Day event brimmed with significance, from the captivating keynote address delivered by Jill Stewart, a respected therapist from Prince Edward Island, to the heartfelt

stories shared by courageous women such as Shannon Day and Gladys Main.

Musical entertainment was provided by the talented Pamela Rooney, a rising country music performer, along with the enchanting vocals of Melissa Girvan from the band Triculturals.

As the atmosphere buzzed with energy, attendees eagerly participated in engaging activities such as lively lip sync battles.

For many attendees, the event represents an opportunity to get dressed up, look their best and spend time with those they care about the most, which was the case for both Vanessa McGie and Kaneesha Smith.

“I love a girls’ night, any excuse to get dolled up and have a fun evening,” says Vanessa McGie. When asked what her favourite part of the evening was, she had difficulty choosing. Among her favourites were the guest speaker, lip sync battle and the mimosa bar. “I attend with my mom every year. It’s become a tradition for us now. She enjoys it and it’s nice to do things together. This year I was with her and a couple of friends too. We had a wonderful evening,” adds Ms. McGie.

"I always look forward to CASA’s International Women’s Day Shine Your Light event. It is an opportunity to get together with other women to share empowering stories and, of course, to have a good time. In small communities like ours, we do not always get a chance to dress up and get together, so when one presents itself it is hard not to get excited. I attended the event with my mom and three sisters. Four women who I can say have positively influenced who I am as a person today. We got a chance to talk, laugh, and eat great food,

all while enjoying the organized activities,” says Kaneesha Smith. She adds that although there were many highlights throughout the evening, her favourite parts were listening and dancing to Pamela Rooney singing and, of course, getting their annual family photo taken to commemorate the evening.

For many the highlight of the evening came when Kathy Gallon, the organizer of the event presented the "Shine Your Light" award to Agnes Blais, honouring her remarkable dedication to community volunteering.

The Shine Your Light Award recognizes the dedication and commitment one makes to their community, with nominations coming from the community. CASA posts the information on Facebook and the general public is invited to make nominations with explanations of why they think the person is worthy of the award.

## The message

For CASA, the event provided the organization with an opportunity to pass along several key messages, with a primary focus on empowerment, fostering connections, and raising awareness of our collective unity. By emphasizing these themes, CASA sought to inspire women to recognize their strengths, build meaningful connections with others, and understand that we are all part of a larger community, united in our shared experiences and challenges. Our aim is always to uplift and inspire women.

The event was made possible with financial contributions from Canadian Heritage, Community Health & Social Services Network, MRC Bonaventure, SADC Baie-des-Chaleurs, YES Montreal, and Access Micro Credit.



The lip sync battle was a huge hit, entertainment-wise.

claimed within a mere 13 minutes, a testament to the overwhelming interest in the Women’s Day event.

With such a rush to register, organizers encountered unexpected glitches in the registration process. Ultimately, over 50 individuals found themselves on the waiting list. Despite the challenges, CASA was able to accommodate an additional 30 women, bringing the total attendance to an impressive 144 participants – the largest turnout to date.

## Planning

Kathy Gallon, CASA’s Senior coordinator, spearheaded the planning of the Women's Day event, using her expertise and dedication to create a memorable evening. With

Day event is a highlight for the staff who thoroughly enjoy the planning process, as well as the event itself.

It takes true teamwork and dedication to organize and execute the Women's Day event. Those in attendance can easily observe the care taken by CASA staff, who have gone above and beyond their typical duties, taking on tasks such as setting up photo booths to capture those special moments, meticulously arranging tables to create an inviting atmosphere, and serving the food. In addition to handling logistics, they also actively engage with participants, facilitating activities and ensuring



The CASA staff pose for a group photo. Back row: Fay Gallon, Murielle Groulx, Meredith Griffiths, Kathy Gallon, Ashley Renouf, Chelsea Vantol, Carissa Dempsey. Front row: Shannon Day, Cindy Carney, Kayla Gallan, Shannon Marsh, Sally Walker and Tammy Chatterton