

Rail: Single bid leads to a possible second call for tenders

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - According to the Ministry of Transport it is analyzing several possibilities considering only one bidder submitted a proposal following a December call of tenders on one of the four large groupings of contracts for the Port Daniel-Gaspé railroad section. The December 7 call for tenders involved nine infrastructure projects including bridges over the Grand Pabos River, and several retaining walls, including those in Anse-à-Beaufils and Sandy Beach.

The only bidder, Pomerleau, submitted an offer of \$104 million. According to information obtained by SPEC, one option under consideration is to split the contract into several blocks to stimulate competition.

Our sources indicate that

each additional delay becomes problematic for obtaining the required materials in time for the execution of the work.

The same source discreetly suggests that if the deadlines continue to drag out, they fear it will no longer be possible to reach Gaspé in 2026.

For the moment, only one contract has been awarded, to Groupe Séma, based in Sainte-Flavie, for the rehabilitation of the bridges over the Grande-Rivière and Anse-à-Brillant. The bridges over the Émile-Couture stream in Grande-Rivière and near the beach in Gaspé will also be rebuilt. The total amount of the contract is \$74.9 million.

Another call for bids launched on December 11 concerns six bridges to be repaired in Pabos Mills, Pabos and Anse-à-Beaufils.

The company Stellaire



The contract to relocate a section of track in New Carlisle and Paspébiac could be the source of a dispute between Pomerleau and Transports Québec.

Photo: G. Gagné

Construction of Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures submitted a bid of \$37 million to carry out this work. However, the contract has still not been awarded, according to the electronic tender site of the Government of Quebec.

The result of the last call for tenders carried out in March for two of the bridges to be repaired in Gascons, a third between Gascons and Newport, a fourth in Newport and a fifth in Douglstown, as well as the replacement of a

bridge between Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé and Grande-Rivière will be known on June 12.

This project also includes the construction of a retaining

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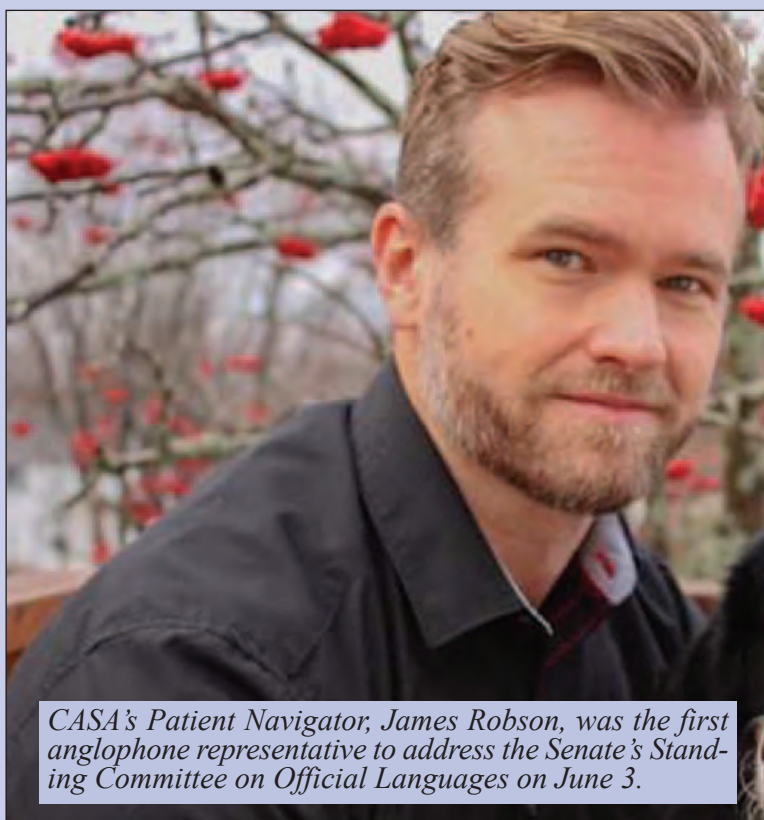
Anglos plead for stable healthcare support funding before the Senate Committee

CYNTHIA DOW

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: The Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages heard from a number of English-speaking Quebecers on June 3, in Ottawa, including CASA's Patient Navigator, Jim Robson.

Mr. Robson's testimony was based on examples of the types of problems anglophones encounter while trying to access healthcare in English. "I knew they'd hear about the numbers, the demography and statistics, so it was important to me to show them how the challenges emotionally impact our English-speaking community," explains Mr. Robson.

His first story was about a woman with cancer who did not sleep for three weeks upon hearing that she would have to go to Rimouski for treatment. Once she had spoken to Mr.



CASA's Patient Navigator, James Robson, was the first anglophone representative to address the Senate's Standing Committee on Official Languages on June 3.

Photo: Courtesy James Robson

Robson who said he could accompany her and help her prepare for her treatment, she told him, "I actually had a good night's sleep last night." Her

main concern was the fact that service in English at Rimouski, especially among the administrative staff, is lacking.

Another case he shared was

that of a social worker who, after months of working with a patient, was still unsure of her exact needs. Mr. Robson met with the woman to develop a list of her requirements. "It just took a half hour of my time, but meanwhile this woman had been waiting for these services for months."

Based on his own experience in trying to get services from a psychologist in English after a diagnosis of PTSD, Mr. Robson noted that accessing mental healthcare in one's mother tongue "can be a matter of life and death."

Another participant at the Senate hearings was Steve Guimond, the Patient Navigator in Quebec City who helps people who have to travel from their regions to healthcare institutions in the provincial capital. He noted that the money the province offers to cover travel costs for patients does not cover all the ex-

penses, and there is no social support network available to them since they are far from home.

Since he started work in March 2018, Mr. Guimond has dealt with 1,200 situations. "Sometimes children are brought in all alone, and often seniors have very long voyages and long stays in Québec (City)," he told the committee members, "Our support considerably decreases stress levels."

Mr. Guimond noted that written medical material continues to be a major challenge, for example, pre-surgery requirements and post-surgery treatment recommendations are generally only available in French in the province's hospitals.

During the question period, Mr. Robson told the Senators, "There is a good willingness

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Coalition for Health Solidarity holds Regional Action Week

Union leaders say the use of private firms in healthcare is unhealthy

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The province-wide Coalition of Health and Solidarity, which includes members from the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, is criticizing the growing use of private firms in the health sector, as highlighted by Health Minister Christian Dubé's current reform.

As part of Coalition's Regional Week of Action, unions representing health sector workers highlighted that, in the aftermath of the pandemic, Minister Dubé promised Quebecers that the Quebec government would put an end to the status quo and implement an action plan to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of the health and social services network.

However, the filing, then adoption under a gag order, of the controversial Bill 15, which involves the creation of the new Santé Québec agency, suggests that the Coalition Avenir Québec government is continuing the work of previous health reforms by centralizing and increasingly privatizing Quebec's public health network.

"By centralizing at the regional and national levels with the Barrette and Dubé reforms, we are making the health network increasingly inefficient. We believe these failures are planned by those who initiate and support these reforms. We weaken the network to make it a mediocre competitor and thus better privatize it and increase the profits of private entrepreneurs. As for citizens' problems, they find themselves completely ignored," says Pier-Luc Bujold, president of the Eastern Quebec Union of Nurses, Practical Nurses and Respiratory Therapists (SIEQ).

"Over the last 15 years, we have seen private health agencies drain the resources of the public health sector and make it inefficient," he says.

A costly use of the health insurance card

"Indeed, the government chooses to orchestrate a system where the ministry subsidizes private companies to provide health care," says Jenny Tardif, Alliance of Professional and Technical Health and Social Service Personnel, (APTS) national



Thirty percent of the Quebec Minister of Health's budget now goes to private healthcare firms, a proportion that has almost doubled since 1979, stresses Jenny Tardif.

representative for the Gaspé Peninsula.

"The government reassures the population by telling people that they will not have to pay anything, because it will be covered by their health insurance card but, in the end, these are Quebecers who, collectively through their taxes, will assume much higher health costs to cover the significant portion of profits inherent to private medicine. Private firms charge two to three times more than what the public system costs," she explains.

According to union organizations, the Quebec government is on the wrong track.

"The minister told Quebecers that opening to the private sector is the solution to the problems of accessibility to the public network even though we know very well that this is rather the origin of the difficulties! Each private clinic or hospital that opens drains public resources and thus aggravates access problems. The doctors, as well as health and social services personnel, do not grow on trees. Each worker who goes to the private sector is one less worker in the public sector. We just cannot allow ourselves to see the private sector monopolize the precious and rare public resources," adds Jenny Tardif.

"A surgery, as demonstrated by an IRIS (Institut de recherche et d'information socioéconomiques) study, costs more when it is performed by a private clinic or a private hospital. Let's not forget that you and I pay that through our taxes," stresses Pier-Luc Bujold.

"Santé Québec will control everything from Quebec City. Even community organiza-

tions will have to comply with the requirements of the agency to the detriment of our autonomy of action and the needs of the citizens of the region," says Mr. Bujold.

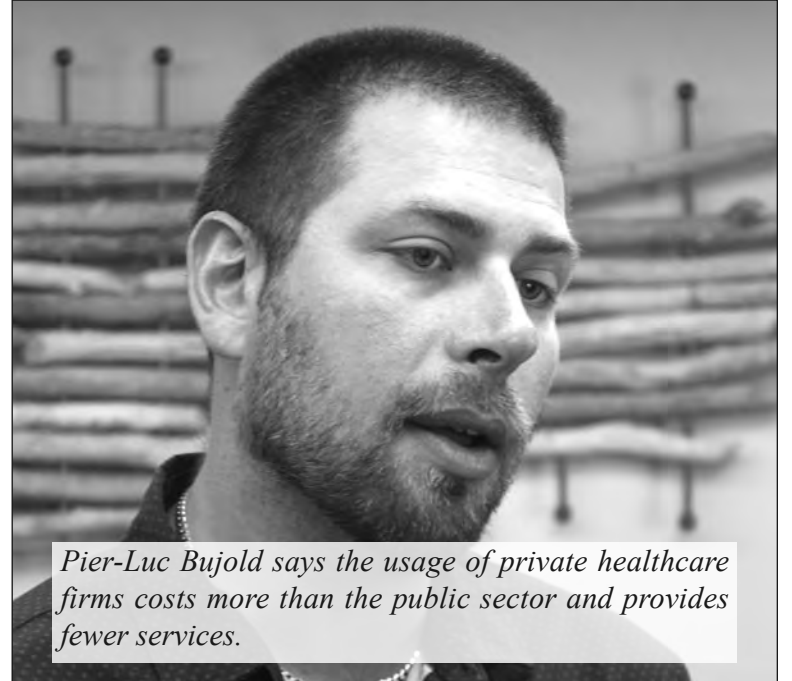
"The Dubé reform was supposed to improve the accessibility and efficiency of the network. We are waiting for the results. Apart from appointing a chief executive officer, Geneviève Biron, from a private company, and a board president, Ms. (Christiane) Germain, who is involved in hotel management, we see that care and service access is increasingly difficult," insists Jenny Tardif.

"With Santé Québec managing everything from Quebec City, what autonomy will remain for the regions? With the creation of Santé Québec and the work of the personnel of the public network, we promote the development of private, for-profit enterprises. For us, the population's health should never be linked to the profit motive of a privileged few," points out Mr. Bujold and Ms. Tardif.

Share of budget going to private firms has doubled in 45 years

Jenny Tardif demonstrates the growing tendency of the last government's increasing reliance on the private sector for the delivery of health services.

"Now, 30% of the Quebec health budget ends up in the private sector. In addition, 52% of the workers who left the public health system opted for the private sector. In 2019, the share of the budget ending up in private firms was 20%, and in 1979, it was 17%. That is almost half of what it is now," she deplores.



Pier-Luc Bujold says the usage of private healthcare firms costs more than the public sector and provides fewer services.

Photos: G. Gagné

"The private sector keeps the lighter cases, which are the most profitable, and leaves the heavier cases to the public hospitals, hence an increasing number of complicated cases in our hospitals," says Jenny Tardif.

"I had colleagues recently undergo training in Chicago, and American experts told them to refrain from neglecting the public sector. They were told that it is gold that we have in our hands," she adds.

The shift to the private sector, which accelerated during the pandemic, can take many hidden forms, states Ms. Tardiff, such as in laboratories for example. "We don't see it too much here in the Gaspé Peninsula but in hospital labo-

ratories, when there are too many analyses to carry out, some are transferred to private laboratories, instead of paying overtime to hospital technicians. No money is saved there," explains Jenny Tardif.

The Coalition for Health Solidarity is a Quebec group of union organizations, community and citizen committees. Its members are also made up of feminist organizations, senior citizens, people with disabilities and caregivers. The defence of the major principles which constitute the cornerstones of the health network since its establishment, namely the public nature, free accessibility, universality and completeness, is the basis of all the interventions of the coalition.

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*Space is limited. Please RSVP by Monday June 17th to Madelyn Hayes at 418-752-5583.

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program

Police report

On June 5, David Guy, 40, from Maria, was sentenced to 13 months in prison by Quebec Court Judge Janick Poirier, for assault on more than one victim and for uttering threats. The incidents took place between March 2020 and March 2021. Mr. Guy was arrested on March 18, 2021, for domestic violence, a case that was concluded in August 2022.

On June 5 at the New Carlisle Courthouse, David Guy entered a plea of guilty to nine of the ten charges against him since the August 2022 case, therefore avoiding a trial. Added to this is another month of detention for breaking into an establishment to steal a defibrillator. Following his prison sentence, he will have two years of conditional probation.

Judge Janick Poirier accepted the joint suggestion of the prosecution attorney, Jasmine Berthelot, and David Guy's lawyer, Pierre Gagnon. Criminal prosecutor Berthelot explains the complex process of arriving at a suggested sentence is not an exact science. "It is necessary to take into account the case law and the penalty range for similar acts," she says.

David Guy was sentenced in August 2022 to four years of imprisonment for 17 years of abuse that he inflicted on his partner at the time. The month following his conviction, he faced new charges - this time for assault while he was remanded in custody at the New Carlisle prison. He received an additional nine months of detention.

Since his March 18, 2021, arrest, after his partner fled from the home the previous night, the man has been behind bars. Had it not been for this third guilty verdict handed down on June 5, David Guy could have been released on May 15 concerning the 2021 accusations, after two years and two months behind bars. Each day spent in prison between March 2021 and August 2022, a period of preventive detention, counted for a day and a half.

However, David Guy is also serving a nine-month prison sentence imposed in the spring of 2023 for assault against other New Carlisle prison inmates. The 13 months imposed on June 5 will be added to that sentence, totalling 22 months effective from May 15.

David Guy's former wife passed away in her home a few days after the imposition of the August 15, 2022 sentence. A Coroner's Office investigation determined that the cause was a consequence of an epilepsy crisis, probably triggered by the stress that stemmed from what she experienced with David Guy. During her life with him, she was repeatedly assaulted, sometimes with a hammer, and deprived of food over certain periods.

The victims of the March 2020 to March 2021 crimes committed by David Guy cannot be identified. A spokesperson testified on their behalf on June 5 but her statement did not lead to a longer sentence for him.

"We took that testimony into account in a certain way because the arguments raised by that person, the fact that she fears him, had already been considered when we agreed on a sentence. We knew about these fears," points out prosecutor Justine Berthelot.

Recently, ammunition was found in the Grande-Rivière sorting centre prompting the Sûreté du Québec communication officer Frédéric Deshaies to make a public statement. "People must understand that the presence of ammunition in recycling poses a significant safety issue for sorting centre employees. Those matters, which contain explosive powder, are sometimes handled by heavy machinery. They are subjected to shocks, heat and factors that can act as a detonator. We take this opportunity to remind citizens that weapons and ammunition can be collected safely at the various Sûreté du Québec stations. People wanting to dispose of a firearm or ammunition only need to contact their local police station and arrange a collection arrangement," explains the police officer. The employees of the Grande-Rivière sorting centre are finding ammunition regularly in the recycling. Frédéric Deshaies also asks people to refrain from throwing ammunition into the garbage for the same reasons.

On June 2, municipal and SOPFEU firefighters fought a vegetation fire in Pointe-à-la-Croix that broke out in a nearby marsh. A surface of 7.4 hectares was affected. Pointe-à-la-Croix fire chief, Pascal Martel, explains that he called SOPFEU because the fire was getting closer to the forest. Firefighters on the ground intervened as reinforcements. The fire was determined to be of human origin according to initial findings made by local firefighters. Since the start of the forest fire season, four fires have been reported in the Gaspé Peninsula, the last of which occurred in Pointe-à-la-Croix, the largest of the season in terms of surface burned. Another fire was reported in the Avignon MRC and two others in the Rocher-Percé MRC, for a total of 8.5 hectares. On June 4, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests imposed a ban on making open fires in or near forests, effective at 8 a.m., in the Gaspé Peninsula and many other Quebec regions.

Jean-Maurice Aubut, from Chandler, was arrested on June 1 by the Sûreté du Québec for breaching conditions and probation. He appeared in court on June 3 at the Percé Courthouse and was remanded in custody. He will remain for the remainder of the proceedings. As the SPEC was reaching its June 7 deadline, Jean-Maurice Aubut was scheduled to return to court on June 10, where additional charges could be laid against him. Sûreté du Québec spokesperson Frédéric Deshaies would not comment on whether the accused could soon face other charges linked to a series of thefts committed in the Newport sector of Chandler. "I can only say for now that we are investigating a series of thefts perpetrated in vehicles and a break-and-enter in a residence," he says. The June 10 court appearance will also take place at the Percé Courthouse.



Chandler Mayor Gilles Daraïche.

Photo: N. Sergerie

More vandalism in Town of Chandler

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER - According to Chandler Mayor Gilles Daraïche, who has witnessed several acts of vandalism, the arrival of warmer weather has once again prompted the resurgence of the crime.

Since 2022, similar vandalism crime waves have taken place in the Town of Chandler. The vandalism last year even necessitated the demolition of some infrastructure.

"We had to demolish the Lac Vachon observation post because three fires had been set. It was becoming dangerous for the population," says the mayor. He adds that just recently the town received photos of garbage that was on fire and that littering near the garbage cans is also an issue.

After the first vandalism waves, the town added surveillance cameras at strategic locations. One of them captured a mischief committed on Chandler wharf when an individual threw a brand-new picnic table into the water.

"We have images and will have them analyzed by the Sûreté du Québec. We can see the young man very clearly, and when we say young, he's not 12, it's more like 17, 18 or 19. He's not young anymore. He should think before he acts," says the mayor.

Young people should think first. Maybe their mothers and fathers are paying for it (the infrastructure). They don't think. In the end, it's everyone's money that gets thrown away," points out Mr. Daraïche.

Towards a substantial surplus

The town has not yet received the financial statements for 2023, but everything points to a surplus and, according to the mayor, it will be substantial.

"We'll be very happy to announce it soon. It will be an encouraging balance sheet for the future. Obviously, we've managed very tightly, as I've been saying ever since I took office. We're going to present something very good to our taxpayers," says Mr. Daraïche, who has received preliminary information from the financial auditors. Without providing more detail, the mayor implies this surplus would be on a scale not seen in 20 years, since the end of the Gaspésia paper mill, which brought in \$1.2 million in revenue for the town.

As Chandler has no real accumulated surplus, this cushion will be welcome. "In a town, you need a cushion. When the unexpected happens, it's important. It's insurance for future expenses," notes the mayor.

A renewed appeal for civic-mindedness

"All the money we put into improving the Town of Chandler is tax money, our parents' money, our friends' money.

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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Interest rate reduction: a good start but patience is required

The Bank of Canada made its first interest rate cut on June 5, a move that was highly anticipated. Between March 2022 and August 2023, the policy rate, which is determined by the Bank of Canada, a public entity, increased steadily from 0.25% to 5% to fight inflation.

The June 5 move was not a major decrease, from 5% to 4.75% but that step was eagerly awaited by the many households and businesses that have felt the tough impact of rising interest rates on their mortgages, their investment capacity and, more generally, the entire economy.

The low policy rate that ruled before March 2022 had almost become a tradition, as it had lasted since the 2007/2008 financial crisis, remaining under 2% between 2007 and 2022.

Between the emergence of the pandemic, in March 2020, and March 2022, the Bank of Canada had further and gradually reduced that policy rate, to a paltry and symbolic level of 0.25%.

However, the inflation rate that followed the economic stimulus programs implemented by various governments to counter the detrimental effects of the pandemic needed to be taken care of, according to the Bank of Canada. Most citizens shared that viewpoint, but the interest rate rise hurt just the same.

At its worst period, the overall inflation rate reached close to 8% in Canada.

The policy rate is used by private banks to determine the interest rate they will impose to lend money to consumers and enterprises. The interest rates used by private banks are always higher than the policy rate because they want to be profitable, in fact highly profitable. The policy rate is used for transactions between our central bank, namely the Bank of Canada, and private banks.

A modest break

While an interest rate reduction is good news, the tiny drop of 0.25% will not have a huge impact

on people who will renew their mortgages over the next few weeks.

Tiff Macklem, the Bank of Canada Governor, indicated on June 5 that the policy rate drop will likely continue but at a slow rate, and always adjusted to the economic reality at hand when decision time comes.

It means that the policy rate might not decrease in July. The next adjustment will then come in September.

For a consumer who contracted a five-year mortgage in June 2019 at a fixed commercial rate of 3.25%, when the policy rate was 1.75%, renegotiating a mortgage this month will undoubtedly lead to an increase in fees, as he, or she, or the family must expect a commercial rate higher than 4.75%, probably over 6.25%, without insurance fees, if they are necessary.

So, the break won't happen right away for a significant cross-section of mortgage holders. The owners that had negotiated a two-year mortgage in June 2023 at a commercial rate of 6.5% will benefit from a slight increase this month, but it will remain modest until further policy rate reduction. Most experts say that it would be surprising to see the policy rate lose more than 1% before the end of 2024.

The inflation rate will be the main factor influencing Tiff Macklem and his governing council. However, that inflation rate is fueled by many factors.

Overall, Canadians use their credit card and their credit line way more now than five years ago. The credit line rate hovers around 13.7% in many banks right now. It is considerably higher than the 10.45% of 2019, and it especially squeezes cash-strapped households.

The price of fuel, another significant consumable for most household budgets, is subjected to several highly unpredictable variables, like the war between Russia and Ukraine and the assault conducted by Israel in the Gaza Strip. Ukraine's trouble with Russia has led to a significant rise in food prices.

Moreover, the fast increase in Canada's population puts constant pressure on the price of housing, whether it takes the form of rents or mortgages.

These factors feed inflation and might have an upswing effect on its rate, which might convince the Bank of Canada governing council that the policy rate will skip a reduction in July or September.

For a long time, as in 30 to 40 years, negligence of the Canadian and provincial governments regarding the necessity to encourage the construction of affordable multi-dwelling housing for young families really hampers today's society's capacity to cope with a serious shortage of apartments and

houses.

The responsibility is not solely the governments', as people have also adopted a habit of living in a much larger per capita space.

The influence of the American context

A 2.7% inflation rate is getting close to the 2% the Bank of Canada targets. However, another factor will make our central bank hesitate before deciding on a streak of policy rate reductions, and it is the context prevailing south of the border.

The United States' Federal Reserve, which is the American counterpart of the Bank of Canada, has not been hasty in lowering its policy rate, maintaining a rate between 5.25% and 5.5%.

Traditionally, the Bank of Canada's path never deviates far from that of the Federal Reserve because the two economies are closely intermingled.

Moreover, a significant difference between the two policy rates, the Canadian one being constantly lower, would lead to a depreciation of the Canadian dollar. Our imports from the United States would cost us more money and our exports would increase sharply, two factors likely to stimulate inflation.

For the moment, Tiff Macklem doesn't see the two closest economies of the world taking different routes, far from that.

Globally, the interest rates will remain a break on economic growth and will keep imposing constraints on mortgage holders, tenants and the producers of goods and services.

Patience is therefore required. In most inflationary periods, the improvement of the situation spreads over several quarters before taking shape and this period of a highly controlled policy rate will require some time before yielding results.

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

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

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TOURIST TAX: Percé withdraws request for permission to appeal

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ - Percé is backtracking on its request for permission to appeal to the Court of Appeal as the town sought to overturn the June 2023 decision invalidating the tourist tax.

"We discussed it. We wanted to negotiate, but the mayor kept redirecting us. We got together and decided that this was the best decision in the interests of the population," explains Councillor Michel Rail to justify the decision adopted by a five-to-one majority, at the June 4 meeting, in the absence of Mayor Cathy Poirier.

"The merchants are ready to negotiate with us - not with the mayor, but with the councillors, because they know we need a fee that will satisfy both parties," states Mr. Rail.

"Finally, a relief. Since the beginning of the implementation of the tax, we have sent legal notices. We'd been complaining about operational shortcomings. Since the beginning, we've been trying to talk to the councillors, but the mayor has always been obstructive. Over the past two months, we've noticed that certain people are no longer present, and we can see that dialogue is finally possible," explains Jonathan Massé, co-spokesperson for the committee representing citizen-merchants.



Photo: N. Sergerie

tee representing citizen-merchants.

"I'm very open to being part of a committee to find an alternative solution where everyone could collaborate," adds Mr. Massé.

The committee is now seeking compensation for the \$155,000 collected by the tourist tax in 2022 before it was overturned by the court.

"We were fighting our own town and our own taxes. We paid a sum three times over, as the town had been informed from the outset that it could not mandate us to collect the tax," claims the co-spokesperson.

The committee estimates its legal costs at around \$100,000, while the town has claimed costs ranging between

\$90,000 and \$100,000.

"We've always agreed on the basic principle that tourists help with infrastructure. It was mainly the user-pays principle that we were contesting," recalls Mr. Massé.

The bylaw on tourist fees was invalidated by the Superior Court in a decision handed down on June 16, 2023.

Adopted in an initial form on September 28, 2021, and amended on June 14, 2022, Judge Isabelle Germain wrote in her 24-page decision that "the Tribunal is of the opinion that both Bylaw 575-2021 initially adopted by the defendant and Bylaw 600-2022 are null and void in that they do not respect the enabling powers prescribed by the LCV (Cities and Towns Act) relating to municipal royalties.

This framework indeed allows a municipality to enter into an agreement to make a third party the collector of the tax, but this role of collector cannot be imposed as in this case. Doing so, it exceeded its powers."

The judge added that "the Court can only find (...) that the provincial legislator has not delegated to municipalities the power to regulate the collection of such a royalty without prior agreement."

Consequently, the bylaws must be declared null and ille-

gal, wrote the magistrate.

Percé suspended the application of the bylaw until the Court of Appeal rendered a decision, which ultimately never came with the abandonment of the application for permission to appeal.

A fee of \$1 was charged on each transaction of \$20 or more in businesses including restaurants, souvenir shops and recreational tourism activities, with exemptions for non-taxable products such as alcohol and cannabis. Hotel stays were taxed at \$1 per night.

The decision to not appeal marks the council's third reversal since May. Last month, they put an end to the Rue du Piémont project and reopened the Tourist Office, in the mayor's absence.

These decisions could be seen as a form of the mayor's positions' disapproval.

"It's true that the council is getting along. You've seen it. The mayor directed some councillors elsewhere and now they've seen the light. We're not against development, but we're not going to dig into citizens' pockets," comments Michel Rail.

Citizens call for Cathy Poirier's resignation

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ - During the question period at the June 4 municipal council meeting, Michel Poissant, a citizen, called for the resignation of Percé Mayor Cathy Poirier. He is among a growing number of citizens who question whether she is still the best person to lead the town.

"If the mayor can't live with the tension, the toxic situation that she has created, that's not our problem. If she is no longer able to do her job, we will ask her to leave her position," said Mr. Poissant.

Linton Couture would have hoped that the mayor would defend her idea of ending the procedures for the tourist tax.

"It's very disappointing to see that she is not here to demonstrate and follow through on her ideas. It's a shame," expressed Mr. Couture.

Director General Jean-François Coderre noted that an elected official is permitted to be absent. Unless there is a medical opinion, the law provides that an elected official can be absent for up to 90 days without being subject to sanctions.

Absent since May, her presence will be required at the August meeting.

The mayor has not returned SPEC's calls. However, Ms. Poirier told Radio-Canada that she was "thinking about it (her future as mayor)."

"There are investigations underway and I think it is important for me to be present, at least until the investigations are over, and then we will decide on the future of this mandate," the mayor told Radio-Canada.

Following an internal investigation, the Municipal Commission and UPAC (Unité permanente anticorruption) have taken an interest in the file of the director of urban planning, Ghislain Pitre, who has been suspended with pay since October under allegations of suspected fraud, theft of large sums of money from the municipality, and falsification of documents.

Mr. Pitre is Cathy Poirier's spouse.





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Little Campers (A) <i>boys and girls</i>	7 - 9 years	June 30-July 5
Girls Camp	10 - 12 yrs	July 7-12
Little Campers (B) <i>boys and girls</i>	7 - 9 yrs	July 14-19
Boys Camp	10 - 12 yrs	July 21-26
Teen Camp	13 - 18 yrs	July 28-Aug 2

ACTIVITIES:
Beach Time,
Group Games,
Field Sports,
Water Sports,
Picnics,
Hikes, Camp
Fires, Tuck Time,
Crafts and
Chapel

**\$140 (includes \$30
non-refundable
registration fee).**

To reserve: etransfer your
registration fee to
rose.roussy@gmail.com
or mail payment to
Nelson Roussy, 371 rte 132
east, New Richmond, QC,
G0C 2B0

**Include camper's name
and which camp they are
attending.**

DFO studies lobster on north side of the Gaspé

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) will soon start collecting data about the lobster stock along the northern side of the Gaspé Peninsula. According to DFO Minister, Diane Lebovillier, one of the main goals of that assessment is to determine if additional lobster fishing licenses could be established.

Ms. Lebovillier, who is also the Member of Parliament for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, made the lobster data collecting announcement online on June 6. Although the main parameters remain to be determined, she indicated that the process has already started.

“Lobster data collection has started in Zone 19 where record landings have taken place in recent years. Fisheries and Oceans Canada needs concrete facts to make the best decisions. No one is better placed than fishermen, who know our waters,” said Minister Lebovillier.

Ten Gaspesian lobster fishermen hold permits in Zone 19, which covers the coast between Mont-Louis and Cape Gaspé. They are participating in data collection this year.

“We will have a better vision about lobster stocks. It will eventually generate benefits for the (traditional) fishermen and Indigenous people. Quebec is opening a new page in history,” added Minister Lebovillier.

“We recently granted 25 exploratory licenses in the North Shore region. We are collecting data along the north side of the Gaspé Peninsula to check if the same thing could happen here,” she explained.

Over the last five years, scientific and exploratory fishing activities have been conducted between Rivière-à-Claude, between Mont-Louis and Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, and Tartigou River, located about 20 kilometres west of Matane, to verify if lobster stocks are abundant in that area. The results were good and the ex-



Photo: G. Gagné

DFO Minister Diane Lebovillier is open to increasing the number of lobster fishing permits on the northern side of the Gaspé Peninsula and the eastern part of the Lower Saint Lawrence region.

periment was extended to this year.

The eastern section of the Lower Saint Lawrence region, as far as Rimouski, will also be targeted in the data collection exercise, mentions Diane Lebovillier.

When asked what the ministry will be looking at precisely as data, notably the duration of the collection, the number of fishermen and who will carry it out, Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s director of resources for Quebec Jean Picard replied that the department is still in the planning stage of the operation and that he is not ready yet to provide details.

“Several stages must be covered before reaching a phase of issuing a commercial fishing license. (...) You need to have the data before determining whether you issue a commercial permit or not,” noted Mr. Picard.

A time frame will also be needed to determine the number of years that will be necessary and then decide if a commercial fishing license will be issued west of Rivière-à-Claude and if some permits will be added between Mont-Louis and Cape Gaspé, he mentioned.

REDFISH: Fishermen are disappointed

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - On May 31, the federal government announced that the redfish quota would increase from the minimum 25,000 tonnes announced in January to 60,000 tonnes. The Association of Captain Owners, however, says it's not worth the trouble.

“At the end of January, we were talking about one trip per fisherman. Now we're up to two redfish trips per fisherman. We haven't necessarily increased the profitability of a redfish fishing business,” says General Manager Claudio Bernatchez.

In a press release sent to media on the evening of Friday, May 31, the Government of Canada stated that “following fruitful and comprehensive consultations with the Redfish Advisory Committee and, based on the latest scientific information on the stock, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Diane Lebovillier, today announced the Unit 1 rockfish fishery management plan for the period 2024-2025.”

In addition, an allocation of 5,000 tonnes will be held in reserve and available upon request to provide an additional incentive to permit holders who have participated in the index and/or test fishery, as well as those who are ready to

fish this year, and/or those who have planned projects for the redfish fishery. Applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

“That's the only good news: 5,000 tonnes have been set aside for those who are already active, but we'll have to see how they apply. For the rest, DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) turned a deaf ear to the demands made by the Gulf Redfish Coalition, from three different provinces, that independent fishermen should have more, but they continued to favour the big corporations with 60% of the quotas allocated,” notes Mr. Bernatchez.

Of the 55,000 tonnes available, 58% went to the offshore mobile gear fleet (32,300 tonnes for vessels over 100 feet), 15% to vessels under 65 feet (8,162 tonnes), 5% to vessels between 65 and 100 feet (3,146 tonnes), 412 tonnes to by-catch, 5,500 tonnes to Gulf shrimp fishermen and the same proportion to Aboriginal groups.

For Quebec shrimp fishermen, this proportion represents only 2,310 tonnes.

“We have no information to the effect that shrimp fishermen would be interested in going fishing, especially since under the management measures, there will be a good part of the year when the fish will only be fishable in pelagic



Photo: Télé-Gaspé

Claudio Bernatchez, director of the Association of Captain Owners.

mode and very, very far from the Quebec coast. This requires adaptations to the boats, and I don't see many fishermen taking the risk of investing, especially in the current situation where many are in difficulty,” points out Mr. Bernatchez.

For vessels under 65 feet, 3,578 tonnes are reserved for the Quebec coastal fleet.

“For us, it won't change a thing. The battle will have to go on,” says the general manager.

Since the beginning of the difficulties in the shrimp fishery, the fishermen have not received any financial support.

Cont'd on page 8



ANNUAL GENERAL Meeting

JUNE 20, 2024
5:00-7:00 PM

Cascapedia River Museum
275 RTE 299, Cascapedia St-Jules,
G0C 1T0




RSVP by June 14
418-752-5995 Ext. 115
shannondaye@
casa-gaspe.com

THEGASPESPEC.COM
418-752-5400

Better monitoring of Saint Marys Cement

GILLES GAGNÉ

PORT DANIEL - Since the Ministry of the Environment tightened its monitoring of the St. Marys Cement plant in Port Daniel, the number of incidents involving polluting particle emissions in the air or water has decreased from an average of 34 to 8 per year.

This tightening took the form of an order sent to St. Marys Cement in September 2022 to stop the release of contaminants into the environment beyond permitted standards. The order followed episodes of sticky clinker dust emissions in July 2020, August 2020 and June 2021.

Moreover, May 17, 2022, was marked by a spectacular overflow of cement powder at one of the plant's loading silos.

As a result, the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 were characterized by 35, 34 and 32 "events" or incidents reported to the Ministry of the Environment, sometimes by the company, sometimes by citizens, for a total of 101 incidents in three years, just under an average of 34 per year. An incident does not always result in standards being exceeded.

In 2023, eight incidents were reported to the Ministry of the Environment, and three in 2024, as of May 24.

The findings were presented to the population of Port Daniel-Gascons and the surrounding area during a public meeting held on June 5 by the Ministry of the Environment and the Public Health Department of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

The management of St. Marys Cement also admitted in the summer of 2022 to having experienced 10 equipment breakdowns and committed to investing \$40 million to repair or add systems to correct the situation.

The September 2022 order was followed, between September and November 2023, by the establishment of two particle measurement stations



Pierre-Olivier Morisset (standing) from the Public Health Department reports that the smoke from the June 2023 forest fires was 15 times denser in fine particles than the emissions from St. Marys Cement measured between September and November 2023.

Photos: G. Gagné

and a portable laboratory to verify the accuracy of the data provided by St. Marys Cement to the Ministry of Environment. In this sense, the ministry was responding to the apprehensions expressed by the citizens of Port-Daniel-Gascons during a public meeting held at the beginning of August 2022.

The data collected by the two stations between September 1 and November 6, 2023, remained below the standards of the Ministry of the Environment, whether for very fine particles, called PM2.5 (for a 2.5 microgram diameter or less), larger particles, called PM10 (10 micrograms or less) or total particles.

Referring to the tables made public by his ministry on June 5, the spokesperson for the Ministry of the Environment, Yan Larouche, concluded: "that all the contaminants that we measured respected the standards, and that they amply respected them."

Station 1, located approximately 300 metres from the plant, further reported particle data suggesting that from September to November 2023, accumulation was worse upstream of the cement plant than downstream, with "upstream" meaning against the wind.

"We do not have a precise explanation for the sources of

dust. Our equipment measured dust while the winds were contrary (upstream). There are therefore other sources of dust. (...) This includes the trucks which circulate at the cement plant," explains Yan Larouche.

The ministry's data was also quite similar to that collected during the same period by St. Mary's Cement.

Forest fires worse than the cement factory

The worst data related to particles present in the air surrounding the cement plant date back to the end of June 2023, during an episode of smoke coming from forest fires ravaging northern Quebec. This data, collected by St. Marys Cement devices, reported five times more particles than at the time of the worst emissions projected by the cement plant between 2020 and 2022 inclusively.

A resident of Port-Daniel-Gascons, Michèle Langlois, who lives in "the last house before the cement plant," is not reassured by the statistics from the Ministry of the Environment.

"My house is white, outside and inside and sometimes it turns black because of the particles. (...) It burns the throat," she says, aware that the plant uses petroleum coke in its kilns.

Ms. Langlois is also concerned about the presence of silica in emissions from the cement plant, a presence confirmed by the Ministry of the Environment, whose representatives haven't noted any excess of standards. "It can cause silicosis, cancer. It would be interesting to know," she says of the effects of silica.

She would have liked St. Marys Cement to be present at the public meeting. "They're never there," she criticizes.

Another citizen, Pierre Tremblay, refers to the first studies before the construction of the cement plant, a little over 30 years ago, studies in which the impact of silica on the shells of lobsters, an abundant crustacean fished a short distance from the plant. "It would be interesting to know if this effect exists," he says.

Public health

Pierre-Olivier Morisset, research officer at the Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands Public Health Department, assesses that "the concentrations of fine particles in the air

around the cement plant. (...) are similar to those which are measured in rural areas elsewhere in Quebec."

As proof, he uses the example of the 19 fine particles of 2.5 micrograms per cubic metre sampled between September and November 2023 near the cement plant, and the maximum accepted standard of 30. During the fires of June 2023, the concentration almost reached 300 fine particles in Port Daniel, even though the Gaspé Peninsula was spared from the blazes.

The regional director of Public Health, Dr. Yv Bonnier-Viger, added "with the data we have, we see that the risk is very, very low. That doesn't mean that there won't be any. (...) It's a choice we make to have roads. Socially, we need cement to build things but when the plant is nearby, there are disadvantages. Continue to be vigilant," he told the 25 citizens who attended the meeting.

St. Marys Cement, formerly known as McInnis Cement, must complete the corrective measures established following the order of September 16, 2022, by December at the latest. Accompanied by an independent expert, the Ministry of the Environment has until March 2025 to verify if all the work has been completed.

Since it began operating, the owners of the cement plant have been fined five times for releases into the air, into water and for vibrations following blasting. These fines total \$41,822.

Investigations are still underway for polluting and sticky emissions from the summers of 2020 and 2021. They are conducted by the Ministry of the Environment.

St. Marys Cement is a subsidiary of Votorantim Cement, a Brazilian company.

Incidents reported and occurring at the Port-Daniel cement plant

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Incidents	35	34	32	8	*3

*as of May 24.



Michèle Langlois specifies that her house regularly gets dirty due to emissions from St. Marys Cement.

Rail: 11 kilometres of track to be safe in the future on section three

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - A project notice submitted to the provincial Department of Environment by the Transports Québec indicates that work will be required between now and 2030 to secure six segments of the Gaspé rail line on section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

Currently, the vast \$872 million project aims to restore safe rail traffic by 2026 on the entire section between Matapédia and Gaspé.

However, additional sums will have to be invested to ensure the 75-year durability of section three, which is the most sensitive to erosion and coastal submersion.

The document consulted by SPEC notes that coastal protection work will be carried out on 11 linear kilometres, spread over six separate, non-contiguous sites on the railway.

At these six sites, the cumulative intervention distance within the two-year flood limit is greater than 500 metres, i.e. around 3.2 linear kilometres, and, because of the variants studied, it is estimated that a cumulative area equal to or greater than 5,000 m² may also be exceeded.

The sites concerned are Pabos Mills West over a length of 225 metres, Pabos Mills over a length of 1,210 metres, Chandler over a length of 1,190 metres, banc de Pabos over a length of 1,340 metres, Barachois over a distance of 5,700 metres and Douglastown over a length of 1,480 metres.

In the document filed, the Ministry of Transports specifies that "the project includes work to protect against coastal hazards. It is planned that this work will be carried out following the rehabilitation of the Gaspésie railway between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé (scheduled for the end of 2026). It aims to alleviate coastal erosion and flooding problems at six distinct, 'non-contiguous' sites in the marine/coastal environment."

Several solutions are being analyzed to correct the six sites: relocation of the rail track outside the constraint zone associated with coastal hazards; local recession of the rail track; and raising the rail track.

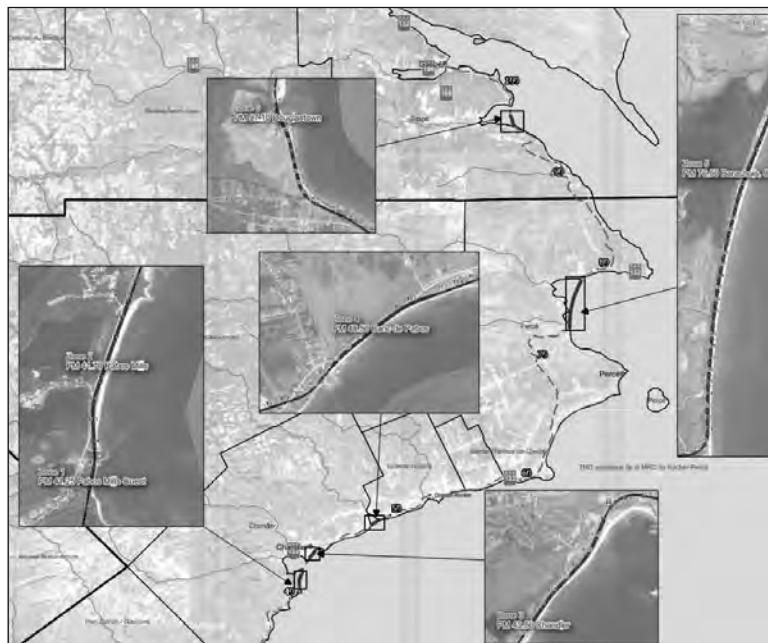


Photo: Ministry of the Environment website

The five areas requiring attention in section three.

The solutions and variants will be analyzed according to four main aspects: technical, transportation and rail safety, environmental and socio-economic.

Considering that work is underway to bring the railroad back into service, and that work to protect the railway infrastructure from the impacts of weather, will be carried out subsequently, work methods will be adapted to avoid compromising, as far as possible, the maintenance of rail service.

Several stages are planned before arriving at a definitive solution.

These include hydraulic studies, ecological characterization, environmental studies, archaeological potential, sediment transport, geomorphology, bathymetry, surveying and geotechnical surveys. This will be followed by preliminary and final designs, plans and specifications, information sessions, impact studies and environmental and government authorizations.

Once these steps have been completed, the Ministry notes that, depending on the results of the preliminary study and impact assessment, 'site-specific' measures will be put forward to ensure the rail's long-term viability. These include raising and relocating the tracks, building new stonework, beach recharging, building retaining walls, and other measures that may be applicable.

Other solutions and new combinations of these could be studied as part of the preliminary design.

In the preliminary analy-

ses of the hydraulic studies carried out between 2019 and 2022, the Ministry indicates that maintaining the sites in their current state would be insufficient to ensure the sustainability of the rail line.

According to a 2021 study by the Université du Québec à Rimouski's (UQAR) Laboratoire de dynamique et de gestion intégrée des zones côtières (LDGIZC), the six sites targeted by this project are located in sectors that are exposed or will be exposed in the next ten years.

For this reason, these sites are exposed to erosion and submersion for 'two-year' recurrence events, which can lead to several issues such as damaged track, damaged or destroyed berm, unfavourable longshore drift and insufficient space for vegetation recovery.

The document mentions that when section 3 of the railroad was in operation, the operational approach in the event of a storm was to close the section to traffic.

Once the storm was over, an inspection of the closed section was carried out and maintenance work was done before allowing rail traffic to pass through again, reflecting the importance of the coastal flooding issue along this section and the high risk it represents for rail traffic. It usually took two to three days to restore the railroad after major storms.

The Ministry points out that, although some of the variants under study propose relocating the existing track, the project will nevertheless advocate that work be carried out within the existing right-

of-way wherever possible.

This approach will reduce potential impacts on the adjacent human and biophysical environments in the area.

One of the central design principles will be to minimize permanent and temporary encroachments on sensitive environments, with priority given to coastal wetlands and bodies of water.

According to the preliminary timetable submitted by the Transports Québec to the Environment Department, the environmental impact study and preliminary design will be submitted in December.

The notice of admissibility is expected in March 2025 and a recommendation from the Minister in September 2026.

In the meantime, the final pre-project would be submitted in December 2025, with preliminary and final plans and specifications in December 2026, for construction between 2027 and 2030.

No preliminary estimates for the project are mentioned in the document.

"All the infrastructure for which repairs have been made has a lifespan of 75 years for new infrastructure. Section 3 is scheduled for commissioning in 2026. Temporary work has been carried out to bring it back into service. The impact study project aims to ensure the structure's long-term via-

bility for 75 years," explains Michel Couture, coordinator and team leader of railway projects at the Transports Québec.

Using the banc de Pabos as an example, Mr. Couture points out that riprap has been installed, and the rail still needs to be laid.

"This work is reaching the level of recommissioning. To make the structure sustainable for 75 years, this is part of the study," explains Mr. Couture.

The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) was aware of the process. "The ministry wants to have the necessary needs for additional investments assessed in the coming years to deal with climate change," notes SCFG president Éric Dubé.

"We know where the railroad has been for 100 years. It's a good sign that the ministry is doing this work. What we understand is that after 2026, there will still be investments to be made to ensure its safety and operation to Gaspé," emphasizes Mr. Dubé.

The total bill could eventually reach \$1 billion. "I'd probably say 'Yes', but I don't want to make any assumptions until the tenders have been called. I don't know the extent of the technical challenges and financial requirements, and I think that's what the study will be used for," says the president.

REDFISH:

Cont'd from page 6

"Absolutely nothing. There's no indication from DFO or MAPAQ (Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec) that this fleet will be able to stay in place. For the time being, some are stopping their operations, while others are going bankrupt," says Mr. Bernatchez.

Quebec was already lagging behind the Maritime provinces when it came to marketing redfish, and the risk of losing what little ground had been gained was great.

"The lobbying of large corporations and the Canadian government's increasingly avowed position of favouring large corporations does nothing to help the Quebec industry, which is going

to be the big loser," says the General Manager, who notes that despite discussions since January 26, when the opening of the redfish fishery was announced, nothing has been changed.

The redfish fishery will open on June 15 in this two-year transitional phase 1 to gather information on fishing habits, collect by-catch data, and continue to expand the redfish market.

The second phase will focus on long-term development to establish a sustainable redfish fishery.

Once the 2024 fishing season begins, the department will launch consultations on establishing fleet shares and sub-allocations for aboriginal groups, shrimp harvesters in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence, and in-shore and mid-shore fleets for Phase 2 of the fishery.

Pit Caribou fined for environmental non-compliance

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ - On October 5, the Microbrasserie Pit Caribou in Anse-à-Beaufils was fined \$5,000 for failing to comply with the Environmental Quality Act.

The Ministry of the Environment accused the company of installing an overflow pipe on the process water retention pit, which resulted in the actual or potential release of contaminants into the environment, namely processed wastewater, not covered by the initial authorization.

The Ministry's intervention was prompted by two complaints.

The first was made on June 12, 2023, by the Town



Pit Caribou Microbrewery has failed in its environmental duties.

Photo: Facebook

of Percé, after receiving complaints from its citizens "that the microbrewery seemed to

have a wastewater management problem," stated an email from the ministry.

Following these complaints, the company contacted the ministry's analysis and environmental quality control, which carried out several inspections.

Two weeks later, another complaint was lodged concerning "an accumulation of dubious and foul-smelling substances on the shoreline in the area of the establishment, and to the effect that the company had carried out repair work on riprap without authorization."

Inspectors made four visits and collected samples between June and December.

"Notices of non-compliance were sent to the company on August 8, 2023, and February 21, 2024, notifying it of breaches of the Environ-

ment Quality Act and the Regulation respecting activities in wetlands, water bodies and sensitive areas," continues the ministry, which indicates that it is not ruling out any recourse to ensure a return to compliance.

The company has also begun the process of modifying its wastewater treatment system.

On January 30, Pit Caribou submitted a request to the ministry for a modification to its ministerial authorization for this purpose.

The environmental analysis of this application is in progress. For the company, this investment would represent several hundred thousand dollars to comply with the Ministry's requirements.

Gaspé municipal update: Redfish and Destination Gaspé garner attention

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, is not very impressed by the May 31 announcement of quotas allocated for the redfish fishery this year.

He believes that increasing the minimum quota from 25,000 tonnes announced in January to 60,000 tonnes is a very small step.

"It could potentially provide more spinoffs, potentially more processing, potentially more markets, but it does not solve the shrimp crisis. It is a small balm on a gaping wound," notes the mayor.

According to him, going out with such a quota is not profitable and the value of the redfish is not worth it.

"If there was some help so that businesses could generate a small profit margin, it would probably be more interesting to go there. From what I'm told, everyone would operate at a loss. Who would want to lose money going to work?" emphasizes the mayor. Hence the importance of having some form of government support to get through the crisis, he notes.

The distribution of the quota is also problematic in his eyes as the larger Atlantic boats can fish close to 60% of the overall quota.

The mayor supports the Association of Captain Owners in its demands and mentions how the community is discouraged because of the small shrimp and redfish quotas, as well as the absence of a plan to support local fishermen.



The Gaspé town council held its June 3 meeting in Rivière-au-Renard, as its town hall is closed due to major renovations.

Photo: N. Sergerie

Destination Gaspé

Criticism is being heard in the tourism industry and in some nonprofit organizations in Gaspé on the salaries granted to workers - particularly the management of Destination Gaspé.

Via a delegation of power, Destination Gaspé is essentially a tourism department of the Town of Gaspé. "We delegate to an organization. It is not an organization like the others. We see clearly a paramunicipal organization that is under a certain control of the municipality," says the mayor.

According to information obtained by SPEC, the salaries of the director and assistant director of Destination Gaspé are causing a ruckus in the community, along with the impression that there aren't many

projects on the table.

Three people out of nine have left the Destination Gaspé board of directors. "Three different reasons were given: someone left their

tourism business, a volunteer left due to lack of time and the other for another reason," specifies the mayor.

He mentions that the salary structure was prepared by a professional firm in organizational development, based on comparable positions.

In his eyes, Destination Gaspé's management roles are comparable to municipal management positions given the magnitude of the task involved.

"On the general management side of Destination Gaspé, the salary is very close to the lowest salary class of the manager for the Town of Gaspé, but below the other municipal management positions," specifies the mayor. The other three positions are also in the target market for professional positions.

"I also hear the squabbling in the community. Honestly,

we analyzed everything to be able to hire competent employees. We are in a labour shortage and to have competent people, we have to pay them," says the mayor, who says he is comfortable with the salaries paid in agreement with the elected officials and the board of directors.

The decision to have a parallel organization was a logical one. "It pays better to have it as an NPO (non-profit organization). It costs less to run and we have access to more financial assistance than having it in the municipal apparatus," maintains the mayor, specifying that it is a strategic decision.

The town council meeting on June 3 was held at the Élias-Dufresne Centre in Rivière-au-Renard, where future meetings will also take place over the next few months while the Town Hall is being renovated.

RAIL:

▶ Cont'd from cover

wall at Pabos Mills and culverts.

Potential dispute between Pomerleau and Transports Québec

Furthermore, Pomerleau, which is moving the track in New Carlisle and Paspébiac, is reportedly in dispute with Transports Québec.

The conflict would relate to elements of the site which were not included in the Ministry of

Transport's construction site specifications, according to information obtained by SPEC.

Pomerleau requested adjustments for this additional work and, according to what we learned, lawyers are now involved.

In response to our questions, the ministry wrote that when carrying out the work, if a contractor believes that it is harmed in any way in relation to the contract clauses, he must notify the ministry with supporting proof.

Without an agreement, the contractor can then submit a

claim.

"Site dispute situations are confidential and only concern the ministry and the contractor involved," stated the ministry in an email, but will not comment on the matter publicly.

On the Pomerleau side, it is specified that "our teams and those of the ministry are collaborating to project progress, as is also the case for all of the achievements on which we work. However, given the legal content of the exchanges, we cannot comment further at this time," mentions the company in an email response.

SENATE:

▶ Cont'd from cover

on the part of healthcare providers (to serve people in English), but with the new Law 14, they are still not sure what they are allowed to do.”

Budget issues were part of the preoccupation of the Senators, as well as the Executive Director of the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), Jennifer Johnson. She told the Senate committee that there are only two Patient Navigators in the province so far, and “variations around the province trying to meet the needs of the communities.”

She explained that the federal government does not want to be seen getting into providing health services, which is a provincial jurisdiction, so she has had to find

funding for the Navigators hither and yon. “By 2026 we would like to have a Patient Navigator in every region,” she told the committee.

Ms. Johnson told SPEC during a subsequent interview that “I haven’t yet convinced a funding partner to fund this permanently.” She noted that similar positions have recently been supported by Quebec’s Health Ministry for First Nations communities, “so that will give them the evidence base they need to support the concept.”

There were a few questions about the efficacy of sending the federal health support dollars for the English community directly to the province rather than to the community organizations, but the response from Hugo Bissonnet of the 4Korners group in the Laurentians was, “How could we be sure it would be spent on

the needs of the English-speaking community? A lot may well be eaten up by administrative costs.”

Ms. Johnson echoed that concern when she spoke to SPEC. “I am sure a lot of the francophone groups outside Québec have the same concerns. We have to ensure that we continue to receive funding directly. Our networks are doing amazing things on small amounts.”

CHSSN had been asked to invite Québec anglophone representatives to the hearings to share their experiences in accessing healthcare across the province. Other presenters included Brittney Chabot from the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean community organization, Kayla Kippen from the Coaster’s Association and Chloé Régis, an American mother who told the Senators she is leaving the province due to traumatic experiences she had birthing two children in Québec hospitals.

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, you may have to shuffle your schedule a bit this week to accommodate some interesting ideas that you have come up with on the fly. It’s a good thing you’re adaptable.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, think about where you want to go in the upcoming weeks, because you have some pretty influential supporters who can help propel you in that very direction.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21

Gemini, you may be involved in a few different projects right now, but often you start things and do not finish them, which can be frustrating to others. Do not take on any additional tasks.

CANCER – June 22/July 22

You have some high hopes regarding something that has been taking up your time for quite a while, Cancer. Although you’re getting good feedback, don’t count your chickens just yet.

LEO – July 23/Aug 23

Leo, if you haven’t been doing so already, it is important to set aside some savings so that you’ll have a safety



net in the future. It’s essential that you are not just living for today.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, get together with your significant other or another partner and figure out how to divide the workload that has been bogging you down. It’s alright to admit that you need help.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, if you think about it, you have been procrastinating a bit more than usual. It might be because your tasks are not interesting you much. That could mean finding new hobbies.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, get essential tasks out of the way early this week, because it’s likely you will not be enthusiastic about mundane jobs later on. Save plenty of time for fun and entertaining.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Emotions are roiling right now, Sagittarius. Perhaps it

is not the best time to reach out to an estranged friend or family member. Instead, wait things out a little longer.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

It is time to disconnect from all of the gadgets and feeds that are constantly drawing your attention, Capricorn. Enjoy a technological detox and reconnect with friends.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, you are a major force to reckon with when you pair your creative visions with solid, grounded plans. Things will start falling into place soon enough.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20


This week you get a free pass to put yourself first and foremost for a change, Pisces. Go to the head of the line, because it’s all about you for the next few days

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

- JUNE 9:** Johnny Depp, Actor (61)
- JUNE 10:** Bill Burr, Comedian (56)
- JUNE 11:** Peter Dinklage, Actor (55)
- JUNE 12:** Dave Franco, Actor (39)
- JUNE 13:** Ashley & Mary-Kate Olsen, Businesswomen (38)
- JUNE 14:** Donald Trump, Politician (78)
- JUNE 15:** Ice Cube, Rapper (55)

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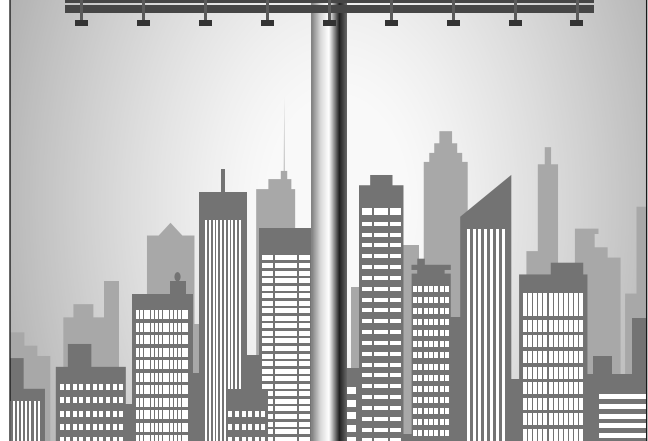
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Announcements



Obituary



PACKWOOD: Lorne Ian

Passed away peacefully at Victoria Hospital in London, Ontario on May 31, 2024, in his 76th year.

Survived by wife Adel; children: Paul, Sara, Karla, Crystal and Kevin; many grandchildren; and siblings: Hilda, Elaine and Keith. Predeceased by brothers: Eric and Gordon.

A private family celebration of life will take place. Interment in St-George de Malbaie, Quebec at a later date.



Funeral Announcement



PATTERSON: Elaine Kathleen

January 31, 1936 - July 12, 2023

A service and funeral to celebrate the life of Elaine Kathleen Patterson will be held at St. Andrew's Church, York, on Saturday, July 13, 2024, at 2 p.m. All are welcome. A reception at the York Community Centre will follow.

Deadline to submit an announcement is Wednesday at 4 p.m



In Memory

WALKER: Ila Marguerite Munro

April 16, 1943 – June 14, 2022

*You gave me a smile,
That no one can steal.
You gave me a purpose,
In life that was real.
You gave me much more,
Than I could ever repay.
God put peace in my heart,
When he called you away.
I choose to be thankful,
Not to be sad.
For all the wonderful,
Years that we had.*

Gone but not forgotten, until we meet again, husband Ray.



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250+ words (quote will be provided)

In memory: under 150 words (\$35), 150-250 words (\$45)

Funeral, Celebration of Life, Card of Thanks,

Engagement, Birth, Prayer, Birthday (\$35)

Wedding (\$55)



All photos are an additional \$10

COAST ROUND-UP

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

YORK:

York River Community Hall

June 17: The Annual General Meeting for the York River Community Hall will be held at 7 p.m. at the Hall, 702 Boulevard York west. It is important for the public to attend and help support our beautiful hall. Two members from those attending will be chosen at this meeting to sit on the committee and represent the public.

YORK:

YORK ACW

July 20: The York ACW will be holding its Summer Sale and Afternoon Tea beginning at 2 p.m. at the York River Community Hall (702 Boul de York Ouest). There will be handicrafts, baked goods, mystery parcels and a white elephant table. Afternoon tea will be served for \$7.

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

June 17: A gift bingo will be held starting at 7 p.m. at the Shigawake Community Centre. All proceeds will go to St. Paul's Anglican Church.

HOPE TOWN:

Sports Club

July 20: Hope Town Sports club will be hosting a gift bingo at 7 p.m. at the Hope Town Community Centre.

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

Legion memberships are available for \$45. Returning and new members welcome. Please be advised that there will be no monthly meetings for June, July and August.

NEW CARLISLE:

Bible Chapel Meetings Sundays: 9:30 a.m. Break-

ing 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: Book Room

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

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: 50+ Club

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

June 16: Father's Day brunch from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. 13+ \$16, 7-12 \$8 and 0-6 free.

July 6: BBQ from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. 13+ \$16, 7-12 \$8 and 0-6 free.

August 17: BBQ from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. 13+ \$16, 7-12 \$8 and 0-6 free.

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND Sunday, June 16

10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN Sunday, June 16

10 a.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, June 16

New Carlisle

11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Hope Town

2 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Shigawake

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, June 16

St. James - Wakeham

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Every Wednesday

St. Paul's - Gaspé

10 a.m. Morning Prayer

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First visit of the Lieutenant-Governor to her land in Gespeg

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - Quebec's Lieutenant-Governor hopes that, by the time her mandate ends in at least five years, reconciliation between non-Natives and First Nations will have been achieved.

In an exclusive interview with SPEC on June 1, in Gaspé, Manon Jeannotte vocalized her wish. When she was appointed Lieutenant-Governor by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last December she had made reconciliation her main objective.

"I'd really like people to say, 'Well done, we've had a real reconciliation.' It takes openness on both sides. We've managed to talk to each other and understand each other. That's what reconciliation is all about," says Ms. Jeannotte.

She admits it's a challenge. "Yes, it is. Today, I asked myself the question because we're in Gaspé, Gespeg. When I was elected chief, I wanted reconciliation Gespeg in Gaspé, Gaspé in Gespeg. As Mi'gmaq Lieutenant-Governor in Gaspé, I told myself how it would be received. I got a great reception today. Go beyond prejudice and stand side by side," says the Lieutenant-Governor, who has been in office since January.

Ms. Jeannotte was wrapping up a provincial tour in which she handed out Lieutenant-Governor's medals to seniors who have contributed to the development of their communities throughout the Gaspé region, and to students who have distinguished themselves through their commitment to



Manon Jeannotte took advantage of her visit to present Lieutenant-Governor's medals to those who have distinguished themselves in their communities.

Photo: N. Sergerie

their studies.

The ceremony was held in the Salle des études on the Gaspé campus of the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles, and the deserving students came from all over the peninsula and even the Magdalen Islands.

"I'm very happy. At first, I wondered if I was going to come at all, and now I'm finishing my regional tour in Gaspé. I'm very moved. Returning to Mi'gmaq territory is quite an honour," she says.

Ms. Jeannotte is the first Aboriginal to hold the position of Quebec Lieutenant-Governor, marking a page in history. "I never thought I'd make history one day," says Ms. Jeannotte.

"I've been very well received by Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike. I received a lot of congratulations and a lot of love. On the regional tour, people say I'm simple, it's fun, it could have been more formal. My human warmth is still

there. Even though I'm Lieutenant-Governor, I'm going to stay close to people, and that's what I want to transpose into my mandate," says Ms. Jeannotte.

During the medal ceremony, people were able to catch a glimpse of the Lieutenant-Governor, who took the time to chat with each of the recipients.

"There aren't many medals that recognize community and volunteer involvement, and that's what the Lieutenant-Governor's medal does. I think it's great to go around Quebec and thank people for what they do. Society needs volunteers. Hospitals, cities - if we didn't have volunteers, we wouldn't be able to do what we do," says Ms. Jeannotte.

"People don't know much about what a Lieutenant-Governor does. Beyond the whole business of giving Royal Assent to legislation or signing Orders-in-Council, there's the whole community aspect. I can

go for coffee with seniors. I can receive them in my office. The whole part of being close to people is important. I can receive consuls, and ambassadors, but the big part is community," explains Ms. Jeannotte.

Since her appointment almost six months ago, following a call from the Canadian Prime Minister, she has been coming to grips with the job.

"You can never imagine being a Lieutenant-Governor in your lifetime. Not me, anyway. I didn't know much about what it was like. I learned by reading. I was a little afraid of whether I'd like it, I had fears, but I love it. I didn't think that much about it. The part of giving medals is giving happiness. I see the sparkle in people's eyes. It's happiness," says Ms. Jeannotte. Since taking the position, she has been filling commitments and meetings made by her predecessor Michel Doyon. Next, she will start filling up

her own schedule.

"Next year, when I do my regional tour, I'd like to take the opportunity to do a ceremony in a community and see how we can bring together Natives and non-Natives and say, 'There you go! Let's have a cup of coffee together and take the time to talk to each other,'" says the Lieutenant-Governor, looking forward to the rest of her mandate.

Ms. Jeannotte was appointed on December 7 by Justin Trudeau and officially took office on January 25.

The former chief of the Micmac First Nation of Gespeg is the 30th lieutenant-governor in Quebec's history, the second woman and the first person of Aboriginal descent to hold this position.

Ms. Jeannotte was a councillor from 2011 to 2015 before becoming chief of the Nation's Council between 2015 and 2019, where she represented and defended the interests of the Gespeg community and established more open relations with elected officials and the population of Gaspé.

With Ken Rock, she launched the First Nations School in Montreal in October 2020 and ensured its start-up in November 2021.

She was its director between February 2022 and the beginning of 2024.

Under her leadership, the school has trained 448 participants in two years, 65% of whom are women, approaching the goal of 1,000 participants in five years.

Her term of office is for a minimum of five years.

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