

## Artist's new book focuses on Christmas memories

CYNTHIA DOW

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES - "It reminded me of Little House on the Prairie," Linda Drody told SPEC. She was referring to her first experience of a Christmas service at the little United Church in Cap-aux-Os when Rev. Lorraine Lambert was the incumbent.

The warm memories of that service were so powerful that 26 years later, the Gaspé artist produced a book about it, full of paintings and prose. "The church had no electricity, just a wood stove. It was such a relaxed atmosphere, and the way the minister came to mingle with the congregation after the service to find out how everyone was feeling really reminded me of my favourite television show when I was younger. I loved the homey feeling."

She said the service also brought back memories shared by her mother of going to Midnight Mass in a horse-drawn sleigh.

"The (United) church is still standing but it has been two or three years since there was a service there. The church was actually built in



Linda Drody loves donning costumes, which she did at the Barachois reading of her book.

Photo: Courtesy of C. Patterson

Jersey Cove, on the other side of the mountain. Rev. Isaac Tallman came in 1859 and opened a Methodist church that year. This church was considered the centre for the Methodists between Indian

Cove (east) and Rosebridge (west). Many of the members left Jersey Cove and moved to the United States. Between 1874 and the mid-1880s the Methodist church was dismantled and carried over the

mountain through the Griffon Road with horses or oxen. It was rebuilt in Cap-aux-Os where it remains today, now a United Church," the artist told SPEC.

"This little church is so precious, I said to myself, I need to paint this," Ms. Drody told SPEC. There are 17 paintings in the book entitled *The Christmas Service*. "It's a 'feel-good' book, and a real collector's item," she noted.

The book was launched at a reading organized by the Barachois Library committee on Sunday, December 1. The Christmas Service is available for \$20 from Amazon and you can pick it up at Linda Drody's home as well. She is also hoping to make the book available locally through the boutique at the Gaspé Museum, and a few cafés in Percé.

Meanwhile, the artist also has a lovely whimsical Christmas card available for sale for \$5.50 each. The scene depicts the polar

bear swimmers in front of Percé Rock. "I went a couple of years in a row to see the brave souls run into the icy cold water in Percé. I wanted to honour those who participated in the dip and my original idea was to give out a few cards to friends that participated." Now, however, she has printed up enough copies to sell.

Ms. Drody is currently working on a collection of local stories to be called Down Country Roads. It contains memories shared with her by Gary Briand and others about old-time card parties and other long-lost activities that make the heart nostalgic. "It will probably take me several years to finish that one," the author told SPEC.



Christmas cards featuring the Percé polar bear dip are now available for sale.

Photo: Courtesy of L. Drody

## Quickly cutting \$40M from the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS will be difficult

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre is still facing a \$50 million deficit for the fiscal year ending March 31. The organization, however, is focusing on recovering the \$40.7 million demanded by the Ministry of Health, mentioned the President and CEO Martin Pelletier following the board of directors meeting on November 28.

For the moment, there are no plans to cut jobs. "We are not there, and we are not at a

hiring freeze for nurses. We are using independent nursing workers. The idea is to hire nurses to replace them. What we are going to do is not develop new services so we won't have to create new positions for which we will not be able to respond," says Martin Pelletier.

Some services under development will be reviewed to assess whether they should be maintained.

Several measures are being analyzed to meet the requirements by March. "I will tell you right away. It will not be \$40 million. It will be what we can do. Forty million dollars in five

months would take drastic measures. We will not do that," says the manager. The independent workforce alone represents about \$25 million of the projected deficit.

One example of a measure is to review the housing supply for the independent workforce. Currently, the ratio is one worker per housing unit.

"We will implement a measure that will put two or three independent workers in a dwelling, for apartments with several bedrooms, which would eliminate dwellings," says the president and chief executive officer (CEO).

This measure could generate savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr. Pelletier is not concerned that some workers may refuse to come to the region. "Maybe. On the other hand, we are aligning ourselves with other regions. They (health workers from outside) do not come for vacations. Winter is less attractive than summer in the Gaspésie. We have a choice to make and this is an example of a hypothesis that does not affect care," he says.

The preliminary studies to launch the engineering work for the emergency and inten-

sive care units at the Maria hospital cannot begin before April 1 due to a lack of funds. "We have no guarantee that the project will be included in the PQI (Quebec's Infrastructure Program) in the next year. The guarantee we have is that we will do the studies next year and if the emergency project is only in a year, it will not prevent us from moving forward. It was an idea to get ahead of things by thinking that the project would be announced next April. We will start in April

Cont'd on page 2

**CISSS CUTS:****▶ Cont'd from cover**

and we will have the year to do the analysis if the emergency project arrives in 2026," analyzes the President and CEO.

The MRCs of Bonaventure and Avignon maintain that the project is essential for the Bay of Chaleur area.

"There were promises made. We have been waiting for more than 15 years. We reiterate that the emergency is in the PQI," says Bonaventure Prefect Éric Dubé.

"It is a \$100 million project. We estimate that for \$250,000, we must find solutions to not

delay this project. It's a relatively small amount on the CISSS and health system budget. We have to find solutions," mentions his colleague from Avignon, Mathieu Lapointe.

The elected officials will meet Martin Pelletier on December 11. However, one must not have any illusions.

"I'm going to tell them the same thing that I just explained. The relevance of the project is recognized. The problem is Quebec's financial capacity to put this project in the PQI. It's not at our level. It's going to happen. When? That's the question," says Mr. Pelletier

*Maria Hospital.*

Photo: G. Gagné

# CISSS Cutbacks: CLSC emergency rooms in the territory will remain open

**NELSON SERGERIE**

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

**GASPÉ** - The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS) assures that it will not close the 24/7 emergency rooms at the Grande-Vallée, Murdochville and Paspebiac CLSCs, despite their low attendance at night.

Martin Pelletier, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS, emphasized that no such closures are being considered as the network scrambles to find \$40.7 million in savings to meet a \$535 million budget. "We are not there. We are really not there," says Mr. Pelletier.

This CLSC emergency room question regularly comes up in the news. In 2013, before the creation of the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS, the former regional health and social services agency of the Gaspésie conducted a review that included the issue. It was mentioned in 2017 following the Barrette reform, which had once again caused discontent among the population.

"Can we review the use of resources from these less busy emergency rooms to help other busier emergency rooms at the same time?" wonders Mr. Pelletier, considering that a doctor and a nurse are on site while the volume of activity is lower.

"Another thing we can look at is: do we always need a nurse or could we use a nursing assistant in a network where there is not a lot of night volume? But (the nursing assistant) would be affiliated with a nurse who is already working (at another location)

*Paspebiac CLSC.*

Photo: Michel Couture

and able to be in contact if a case requires the judgment of a nurse. This is another example of transformation work," he says. The union will have to be involved.

The overall labour shortage situation is forcing the region's health network to explore this avenue. "We're going to have to look. It's not just a question of budget, it's a question of survival and maintaining services and the ability to find resources to offer these services. Even if I had the budget, the problem is finding the resources. Changing our ways of doing things is essential to the survival and sustainability of services," says Mr. Pelletier.

This hypothesis, raised following the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS board of directors meeting on November 28, is not being well-received by the Eastern Quebec Nurses, Auxiliary Nurses and Respiratory Therapists Union.

"It's a complete rejection," says union president Pier-Luc Bujold. "The population has

the right to quality service, professional service and we cannot, to a certain extent, replace a nurse with a nursing assistant," he adds.

He provides examples of administering medication in an emergency or managing triage, which could not be done by a nursing assistant.

"In terms of collective agreements, it doesn't hold water and, logically, it doesn't hold water to send a nurse from Grande-Vallée to work in Gaspé," says the president.

According to him, these measures would not be attractive and could harm staff retention. "We have already expressed our concerns about this and the CEO tells us that nothing will be done in this regard without having discussions with us and that it holds water. For us, it doesn't hold water," says the union representative.

Former Gaspé Member of the National Assembly, Gaétan Lelièvre, who fought for the survival of the services in 2017

believes that the CISSS is not on the right track with the idea of changing the teams to offer these services.

Mr. Lelièvre notes that this is a security issue. "This is a decrease in the level of security of the population. Political and economic stakeholders must send a very clear message to Quebec: we do not accept these service cuts," says the former minister responsible for the regions in the Marois government between 2012 and 2014.

He points out that health is a basic condition for regional

development. "We know that the government has an \$11 billion deficit to wipe out, but we cannot accept that this is in services as essential as a CLSC that serves communities 100 kilometres from a hospital. This is unacceptable," continues the man who is now a regional development advisor.

For his part, Noël Richard, the mayor of Grande-Vallée, fears service disruptions in the emergency room if the CISSS was to go ahead with this idea. He notes that if a nurse has to go with a patient to the Gaspé hospital, the service would be in danger.

"Because we have a shortage of manpower, we would be in temporary service disruption. This is unacceptable," thunders Mr. Richard. In his eyes, such a cut is non-negotiable, especially since several concessions have been made in recent years on health issues.

"The conversion of ambulance drivers from shift schedules to hourly schedules was not included in this program. We also made concessions on community dentistry, but I will not make any concessions on such an essential service," added the municipal elected official.



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# Police report

On December 3 at the Percé Courthouse, twelve jurors found Keven Labrie, 39, from Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, guilty of the non-premeditated murder of Jean-Philippe Bélanger, 42. The incident occurred in May 2022 in a Sainte-Anne-des-Monts apartment. The victim was stabbed 15 times by Mr. Labrie, including multiple wounds to the head. Mr. Bélanger was initially hospitalized in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts and later transferred to Quebec City, where he died two days later.

Keven Labrie was not in the courtroom when the verdict was rendered, as he had decided to stay in his Percé prison cell for the end of the trial.

The trial began on November 12. It was spread over parts of four weeks for an equivalent of two full weeks of proceedings, according to criminal prosecutor Isabelle Gavioli, who shared prosecution duties with a colleague from Matane, Jérôme Simard.

After presenting testimonies from 30 witnesses, the prosecution concluded its case. Defence attorney Hugo Caissy informed the court that he would not call any witnesses including the accused.

On November 12, Jean-Philippe Bélanger's roommate, Sébastien Lemieux, who was the victim's best friend, testified as a witness to the attack. He was in another room with a friend when he heard Jean-Philippe Bélanger shouting "Stop, you're going to kill me!"

Sébastien Lemieux came out of his room and saw the accused in the living room inflicting several stab wounds to the head and face of his roommate. The witness was able to control Keven Labrie and stop the attack. Jean-Philippe Bélanger was still able to seek refuge in the bathroom before his roommate contacted emergency services. The recording of that emergency call was presented as evidence at the beginning of the trial.

Incarcerated at the New Carlisle prison at the beginning of the trial, Keven Labrie refused to travel to Percé before the third day of the trial, causing a delay in proceedings.

"Mr. Labrie eventually accepted to travel to Percé. Judge De Blois had to expel him from the courthouse on occasion because the accused was interrupting the procedure. Judge De Blois worked hard to have the accused transferred to the Percé prison, which is not equipped, safety-wise, to greet such inmates. There was also an issue with staff training. He was eventually transferred. Considering that Mr. Labrie wanted to stay in his cell during certain parts of the trial, electronic devices were installed in his cell in order to make sure that he would have access to the hearings," also explains criminal prosecutor Isabelle Gavioli.

During each recess, the defence attorney would go and meet with Keven Labrie in his cell to offer him to come back to the courtroom, a time-consuming procedure step.

During the last days of the trial, Keven Labrie would at times accept to be present, but the interruptions he triggered forced the judge to expel him from the courtroom and assign him to his cell.

In January and February, Judge Guy De Blois presided over the non-premeditated murder trial of Brandon Metallic, who was also expelled from the courtroom because of his regular untimely interventions.

"The accused will now come back to court on January 10 for the representations on the sentence," points out Isabelle Gavioli.

A verdict of non-premeditated murder warrants a life imprisonment sentence without the possibility of parole for 10 years. The sentence tied to such cases usually varies between 10 and 25 years.

Simon Dufort Chouinard, 19, from Rivière-au-Renard charged with a count of premeditated murder and another count of non-premeditated murder, will come back to court on March 3, 2025, as discussions will take place between his defence attorney and the criminal prosecutors to verify if an agreement can be reached before a trial.

Superior Court Carl Thibault replied with that option on December 2 at the Percé courthouse when Simon Dufort Chouinard's attorney asked the tribunal to appoint a facilitator to allow the two parties to hold discussions that could lead to an agreement.

"If that (discussions) fails, we go back to court and prepare the trial. The judge that will preside over the trial cannot be the facilitator," specifies criminal prosecutor Isabelle Gavioli.

Two young men, Gabriel Noël and Dylan Samuel Francoeur, died following May 10, 2023, collisions allegedly triggered by the accused and his father, Marc Jules Chouinard, also charged in that affair. The collisions took place on highway 132, between Rivière-au-Renard and Griffon Cove.

The preliminary hearings of Simon Dufort Chouinard ended on April 3, also at the Percé courthouse. His defence attorney did not call any witnesses to testify, while Isabelle Gavioli called 27 witnesses.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Cathy Poirier represented Fumoir M. Émile before the council.

## Percé zoning: Former mayor says she is the victim of revenge

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - A request for a zoning change made by Fumoir M. Émile in Percé was denied by the municipal council on December 3, leading former Mayor Cathy Poirier, co-owner of the business, to say that elected officials acted out of revenge against her.

The request filed by Alain Méthot, consisted of amending the zoning by-law in effect in the Anse-à-Beaufils sector to increase the maximum occupied surface area from 250 square metres to 420 square metres. This amendment would have allowed the installation of a smokehouse on Bonfils Street. The company's goal was to move the facilities closer to Highway 132 rather than maintain operations on Chemin d'Irlande.

"We are extremely disappointed with the municipal council's decision, considering that Fumoir M. Émile is a company that has been based in Percé for 19 years, that hires 10 employees and that we operate year-round. We want to have a slightly more efficient plant, but especially in a much busier location," said Cathy Poirier.

According to the entrepreneur, the zoning allowed for the operation of a smokehouse. However, the mayor questioned the sector councillor, Yannick Cloutier, who justified the council's decision.

"We are talking about a request to increase the area from 250 metres to 420 square metres. The Apur firm recommended having 1.8-metre fences on each side. Mr. Méthot's request concerns a bylaw amendment. We con-

sulted and came to the conclusion that with Apur's recommendation, we were asking you to go back to the drawing board and see if there was a way to make it smaller," said Mr. Cloutier.

Mr. Cloutier provided Fumoir le paternel as an example. That smokehouse has a surface area of 250 square metres and is located not far from the coveted site. Mr. Cloutier, the shareholder and president of the historic Anse-à-Beaufils store noted that its surface area is 469 square metres.

Ms. Poirier also provided examples that are nearby including the hardware store and the Pit Caribou microbrewery, which have larger surface areas.

"What could the smokehouse change? There is no smoke. We are talking about an architecture that will be compliant. You, yourself (councillor Cloutier), are the neighbouring owner of something that is even bigger than what we're asking for. Visually, I don't think the 'too big' argument holds water," says Ms. Poirier, who points out that the land belongs to her daughter's grandfather. The young woman has just invested in the company.

"I invite you to go back to your drawing boards and make us an offer of 250 square metres or 300 square metres," suggests Councillor Cloutier.

"The firm didn't say no. It just suggested putting up screens," replies Ms. Poirier.

"If we have to rebuild a shop, we're not going to do it to the size of what we have. We're going to do it according to our needs," says Ms. Poirier, who suggests that at worst, she will build her new smokehouse

in another municipality.

Turning to councillor Doris Rehel, Ms. Poirier asked for an explanation. "Ms. Rehel was called last week by my colleague Mr. Alain Méthot to get an update because our request is dated April 2. Ms. Rehel responded to Mr. Méthot, surprisingly, that the Town needed to know if he still owns Fumoir M. Émile because it would go down better at the town council," said Ms. Poirier.

"I won't answer," said Ms. Rehel. "It would go down better if Cathy Poirier didn't own Fumoir M. Émile," the businesswoman reiterated. "I never said that," replied the elected official.

Faced with this response, Cathy Poirier turned to the mayor, Daniel Leboeuf. "Please know that I am extremely disappointed and I would like to ask you a question: do you think that, perhaps, there would be a form of relentlessness or a certain vengeance from the town council?" asked Ms. Poirier. The mayor echoed Councillor Cloutier's response, so to speak.

"We wanted to do something good in a convenient environment," she said. Mr. Leboeuf indicated that the areas had to be taken into account.

On December 4, Ms.

Poirier mentioned to SPEC that the towns of Grande-Rivière and Gaspé would be ready to welcome her business with open arms.

The mayor of Grande-Rivière, Gino Cyr, confirmed that he contacted the businesswoman on the morning of December 4 to offer her land in the industrial park and near the airport, which would allow her to export her products more quickly.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, also confirmed that he spoke with Ms. Poirier suggesting a potential site in Rivière-au-Renard, the fishing capital, in the rue du Banc sector.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

## Trade tariffs, another intimidation tactic by Donald Trump

Donald Trump's statement to the effect that he will impose a 25% tariff on goods from Canada and Mexico on the first day of his presidency, which will be January 20, is above all a way to play the bully part and prove to himself that he can intimidate a wide range of people, maybe everybody.

He also committed to imposing new tariffs on China, an additional 10% on already charged tariffs. Officially, those tariffs he might impose on his country's three main commercial partners are supposed to convince their governments to crack down on illegal immigrants, in the case of Mexico and Canada, and drug smuggling into the United States.

However, the main goal is probably to live up to his promise of making America great again. Donald Trump is trying to convince people and probably himself, that if he blocks some imports, American firms will automatically take over and produce the goods that no longer come from Canada, Mexico and China.

There is no doubt that a 25% tariff on Canadian and Mexican exports would hurt the two countries. According to a British Broadcasting Corporation report, 75% of Canada's exports go to the United States and 80% of Mexico's reach their neighbour to the north. As for China, about 15% of that country's humongous exports are sent to the U.S..

What Donald Trump forgets, if he is really serious about tariff imposition, is that some goods cross the border between one and seven times during the manufacturing process. This is notably true in the automobile industry, which is tightly intermingled between the United States, Canada and Mexico. Will those goods be taxed each time?

American business circles have already started lobbying Donald Trump, despite the fact that he is not officially in power yet, in order to make him see common sense, if such a thing is possible.

### Let's not underrate Donald Trump's ego trip

The decree the president-elect threatened to impose on November 26 created havoc in many countries, not just Canada, Mexico and, to a lesser extent, China. European countries sent diplomats to meet with Donald Trump since his November 5 victory, out of fear that they will also be hit by a tariff of some sort, come January 20 or later.

The bully in him, a behavioural form that takes a lot of room in his mindset, must be ecstatic. He is not even back in power and he makes such an impression.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford almost lost his mind. Although his stand expressing the possibly devastating effect of a 25% tariff "To workers and jobs in both Canada and the U.S." is valid, his Mexico bashing, based on the fact that more illegal immigrants and drugs come into the U.S. from that country, was completely unnecessary.

Officially and, in practice, there is still a deal: the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), linking the three countries. So, thanks Mr. Ford for taking a shot at ruining another long-term agreement which has to be negotiated in 2025!

He was not the only Canadian premier to take the opportunity provided by Donald Trump's threatening tariff and swing at Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. It looked like a "Let's try to raise ourselves by taking shots at Canada's most unpopular politician" exercise.

However, Mr. Trudeau, despite bad calls in recent weeks, did the right thing by going to meet with Donald Trump on November 29. Although, from the outside, it looked like a colonial begging the motherland leader to be nice and kind, Canada's prime minister's move was thoughtful and meaningful. Donald Trump has already tampered his intentions, which might have a positive effect on Canada by preventing other silly statements à la Doug Ford or Pierre Poilievre.

The latter once more showed that he is still unable to show statesman manners. With a 20% lead in surveys, he decided to chew Justin Trudeau's allegedly poor results following his trip to meet with the president-elect. Mr. Poilievre's statements were denounced by a wide array of diplomacy experts. The Conservative Party leader experienced a well-deserved bad week as a result.

### How does a tariff work?

It is hard to determine whether Donald Trump bluffs with his tariffs or if he is really ignorant about their potential impact.

During his electoral campaign, he put a lot of emphasis on how his future policies and decisions will do wonders to control inflation.

In fact, across-the-board tariffs on Canadian and Mexican manufactured goods will bolster inflation.

A tariff is a domestic tax levied on products when they enter a country. In the case of Donald Trump's commitment, the charge will be paid by the American firm importing the good, not by the Canadian firm exporting it.

So, a 25% tariff on a \$100,000 lumber quantity

sent south of the border by a Gaspesian sawmill will generate a \$25,000 tax that will go straight to the U.S. government, from the building supply firm that will import it.

Will that building supply firm charge it to its customers? Of course, it will, thus generating inflation in Donald Trump's country. The other solution for the building supply company will be finding that lumber domestically but there is clear consensus in the United States that Canada's lumber is needed down there.

Avoiding Canadian imports would trigger inflation just the same, as American lumber producers would take advantage of a stronger demand for domestic products. In a capitalist world, stronger demand leads to rising prices.

Of all the false statements Donald Trump shouted during the last electoral campaign, he affirmed that tariffs are "Not going to be a cost to you, it's a cost to another country."

This overly simplistic affirmation is widely considered misleading by a majority of trade experts because the bill is paid by importers and, at the end of the chain, their consumers.

During his first term, Mr. Trump imposed a wide range of tariffs. Some of them were kept in place by current President Joe Biden. Many studies carried out south of the border indicate that the burden of those tariffs was essentially borne by American consumers. What will be Donald Trump's choice, come January 20? Will logic prevail or will he stick to a dogmatic view of the economy? Chances are that he will pick and choose instead of applying trade tariffs blindly.

Considering the way the president-elect selected his team of secretaries, the equivalent of ministers in Canada, looking at the fields those secretaries are or were evolving could be a good way to determine where Donald Trump will strike. He will strike away from his friends' fields.

The notion of conflict of interest doesn't look as if it will be a strong point of his administration.

## During the postal strike...



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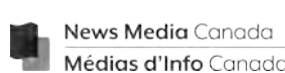
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# 2024 Lobster Season: Upward push continues, as the Gaspé Peninsula experiences a slight drop

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Lobster landings in Quebec continued their rise in 2024, according to data compiled by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Catches increased for an eighth consecutive year, reaching 14,664 metric tonnes, while revenues reached \$228 million, a slight decrease of \$4 million compared to 2023.

This revenue decline is solely attributable to the price paid to lobster fishermen, since it fell from an average of \$7.43 per pound in 2023 to \$6.99 in 2024, a decrease of 5.9%. In 2023, total landings in the Magdalen Islands, Gaspé Peninsula and the North Shore had reached 13,765 metric tonnes.

Lobster catches now account for 64% of the value of all Quebec catches, all species combined. This was 31% in 2015. Of the 930 “active stakeholders” in the capture of marine products in Quebec, 605 hold a lobster fishing licence.

“In 2024, we saw a continuation of the upward trend. The 14,664 tonnes landed are 58% higher than the average from 2015 to 2024. During this period, the North Shore posted the strongest growth. Catches increased from 150 tonnes to 1,885 tonnes between 2015 and 2024. Catches in 2024 are 272% higher than the average of the last 10 years,” says Simon Desrochers, an economist at Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

## The region-by-region results

The Gaspé Peninsula suffered a decline in quantities of lobster and revenues in 2024. Landings still reached 5,334 metric tons, compared to 5,570 tons in 2023. This is a slight decline of 236 tons, or 4.2%. This total of 5,334 tons is still the second-best in history for Gaspé lobster fishermen.

To put this data into perspective, in 2015, total landings for Quebec reached 5,895 tons, including 2,118 in the Gaspé Peninsula. So, the 2023 or 2024 data for the Gaspé Peninsula almost match those of the whole province nine years ago.

The Gaspé Peninsula’s \$83 million in catch value in 2024 also exceeds the value of all



The 2023 Gaspé Peninsula record of 5,570 metric tonnes was not broken in 2024, but the landings of 5,334 tonnes rank second historically.

Photo: G. Gagné

Quebec landings in 2015, at \$74 million, in nominal terms, therefore not indexed.

Between 2023 and 2024 alone, the increase in catches on the North Shore jumped from 1,199 to 1,885 tons, a jump of 63.6%.

The value of landings on the North Shore reached \$29 million in 2024, which is more than the \$26 million in revenues earned by Gaspé lobster fishermen in 2015. These numbers show how much the lobster fishery has grown on the north shore of the St. Lawrence.

“The Magdalen Islands remain the main lobster fishing sector in Quebec. However, the Islands’ share has dropped from an average of 57% between 2015 and 2023 to 51% in 2024,” emphasizes Simon Desrochers to illustrate the faster gains made by the

Gaspé Peninsula and North Shore lobster fishermen over the past decade.

However, growth in landings in the Magdalen Islands remains strong. Catches in 2024 reached 7,445 tons, which is 449 tons, or 6%, more than the 6,996 tons in 2023. This was the third consecutive increase in catches. A 10.3% decline in catches was recorded in 2021, compared to 2020, with the exception of the last five years.

Revenues from catches in the archipelago fell slightly between 2023 and 2024, from \$118 million to \$116 million, a figure that is still preliminary, like all the others, for the current year. The results are still close to the record of \$123 million in 2022. In 2021, these revenues exceeded the \$100 million mark for the first time, reaching

## SQ bill doubles in Port-Daniel-Gascons

Nelson Sergerie

PORT-DANIEL-GASCONS - The bill for Sûreté du Québec (SQ) services in Port Daniel-Gascons has doubled, which will have a significant impact on the municipality's budget.

The town was surprised to see the bill increase from \$133,000 to \$266,000 for 2025.

“The bill is justified by the increase in the municipality's real estate wealth,” explains the Mayor of Port Daniel-Gascons Henri Grenier.

“It was unexpected. It will have an impact on the budget. It's one more headache,” says Mr. Grenier.

Quebec's municipal elected representatives will be calling for a review of the calculation of the bill via resolutions to be adopted by the municipalities.

“We want a recalculation and for there to be a floor and a ceiling (price). We are talking about a floor of 2% and a ceiling of 7%,” says Mayor Grenier.

Previously, the cost of SQ services was shared 50/50 between the municipalities and the Quebec government.

“That doesn't hold water anymore. There have been changes. For the municipalities, the bills have increased,” says Mr. Grenier.

\$105 million.

Since 2015, the average price paid in Quebec by live lobster processing and marketing plants has only fallen below \$5.46 per pound once, and that was in 2020, the first year of the pandemic when fishermen were under the impression that the season could be cancelled.

The record price was paid in 2021 at \$8.39 per pound, and it has fallen steadily since then, dropping to \$7.86 in 2022, \$7.43 in 2023 and \$6.99 in 2024.

## The growth of Quebec lobster in the global market

“The last decade has been a boom period for the Quebec lobster industry,” says economist Simon Desrochers.

“Whether in Quebec or Canada, we are seeing a sharp increase in the quantities caught, especially compared to the United States. In 2000, Quebec catches represented 7% of all catches landed in Canada. In 2022, our catches represent 12% of landings in Canada. Warming waters mainly explain the situation,” he points out.

“The value of the catch of \$228 million this year is 60% higher than the average for the 2015-2023 period. It is still 39% with the adjustment coming from inflation (in discounted dollars). There was a slight drop in revenues in 2024 compared to 2023, but lobster has remained the most

lucrative species for the past five years in Quebec,” says Mr. Desrochers.

Before 2020, snow crab was systematically finishing in first place as the species generating the highest revenues.

The price of lobster has been volatile to a certain degree over the past decade, he says, “but for the past three years, it has continued to decline. It is dependent on several factors. The United States is buying less, the exchange rate is one of these factors and buyers on the North Shore are far from major markets, which can contribute to lowering the price paid to fishermen in this region,” he analyzes.

Despite three successive decreases in the price paid at landing between 2021 and 2024, “If we look at an average, we are at \$7.42. If we compare it to the average from 2015 to 2021, it is higher. In real terms, it has gone down,” specifies Simon Desrochers, emphasizing the price taking into account inflation.

The Fisheries and Oceans economist examined the path followed by Quebec lobster and its destinations when it is sold elsewhere.

“Seventy percent of Quebec exports are sold in Canada and 20% in the United States. Quebec producers are selling more and more to China. The percentage is low but, in 2000, the volumes (sent to China) were almost non-existent,” concludes Mr. Desrochers.

## A fairly green November

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - Gaspé received only 39% of the expected snowfall in November. A total of twelve centimetres was recorded by Environment Canada, all of which fell on November 29. The normal snowfall for November is 32 centimetres.

Additionally, there was more rain than usual. The total precipitation reached 141 millimetres, or 134% of the normal of 105 millimetres.

The temperature was also quite high, with an average of 2.4°C, 2.2°C above the norm of 0.2°C, a significant deviation in terms of weather.



On November 29, Gaspé received 12 centimetres of snow.

Photo: N. Sergerie

# Quebec businesses oppose being handed the entire bill for the increase in electricity rates

GILLES GAGNÉ

**BONAVENTURE** - The Québec Federation of Chambers of Commerce (FCCQ) and the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry are asking the Quebec government to remove the massive increase in electricity rates for businesses from its energy reform plan. As the Trump administration takes office and the threat of a historic increase in rates looms, this measure could worsen our productivity gap and seriously harm the competitiveness of local businesses.

According to the Chambers of Commerce, the government is on the wrong track by targeting Quebec businesses, which are already subject to strong commercial, pricing and regulatory pressures. The cost of electricity must remain competitive.

"Quebec businesses, whether large or small, play a crucial role in the economy of our regions. Energy competitiveness is a key factor in supporting their growth and attractiveness. We believe that maintaining competitive electricity rates is essential to fostering sustainable and equitable economic development throughout Quebec," says Valentine Palma, executive director of Baie des Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"The electricity rate increases sought by the Quebec government are based on poor premises. We cannot isolate the cost of electricity, compare it to our neighbours and conclude that bills for our businesses are too low. In the case of our large strategic industries, our clean, cost-competitive energy is often one of the few competitive advantages we have over our international rivals. SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) have already suffered enough from the rate increases of recent years. Today, more than ever, we need to help them grow," says Véronique Proulx, president and chief executive of the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce.

## Electricity, Quebec's key argument

The cost of electricity is a key element for companies in sectors such as manufacturing, aluminum, steel, wood, mining and chemistry, as it can represent 20% to 60% of production costs. It is a key argument that Quebec cannot do without to attract and retain investment, adds Ms. Proulx.

"If the government goes ahead with this measure, pillars of our regional economy will be weakened. Their competitors, whether in the United States, but also in China, India or Russia, benefit from many

advantages that lower their production costs. All we are asking is to leave our flagships, one of the rare advantages that we are able to offer them: clean energy at a competitive price," assures Ms. Proulx.

## Businesses have already done their part

Since the post-pandemic inflationary surge, Quebec SMEs have absorbed the majority of electricity rate increases. These reached 6.5% on April 1, 2023, then 5.1% on April 1, 2024. The increase planned for 2025 is currently 3.9%.

"For several years, it has been local businesses that have been forced to artificially subsidize the 3% increase cap that residential customers have benefited from. This has contributed to the inflationary spiral by increasing the operating costs of SMEs and has hidden the real cost of the energy transition from citizens. It is high time to put an end to these distortions and to entrust the Régie de l'énergie (Quebec's Energy Board), an independent tribunal, with the task of establishing fair and equitable rates, based on the real cost of electricity," concludes Ms. Proulx.

## Tariffs promised by Donald Trump denounced

Meanwhile, Quebec's Fed-



Photo: G. Gagné

*The Chambers of Commerce argue that private enterprises have already paid their share of electricity rate hikes. Imposing additional hikes would slow down their progress.*

eration of Chambers of Commerce has collected comments from several members since Donald Trump's November 26 announcement to the effect that the United States will impose a 25% tariff on imports coming from Canada and Mexico if the borders are not better protected. The Federation had also conducted a pre-election survey to assess members' concerns.

President-elect Trump is activating the lever that Quebec businesses fear the most, namely import tariffs, according to a Federation Observatory survey.

The November 26 announcement "is of great con-

cern to our members and is creating a significant sense of uncertainty. In concrete terms, this could lead our businesses to invest in the United States, to the detriment of Canada, in order to maintain their access to the market. In addition, this will lead to a decrease in our exports, given that 75% of our exports are destined for the United States. Our supply chains are closely linked. We are asking the federal government to put the necessary measures in place to avoid a tariff war that ultimately harms the competitiveness of the North American economy," states Ms. Proulx.

## The 25% tariffs mentioned by Trump scare Gaspesian exporters

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

**CHANDLER** - The United States President-elect Donald Trump's plan to impose customs tariffs on Canadian products in January raises concerns for GÎMEXPORT.

Trump announced his intention to sign an executive order imposing a 25% tariff on all imports from Canada immediately after taking office.

"When we initially talked about the 10% that was imposed, we are trying to be more competitive, to innovate, to increase our production capacity to reduce costs and we can also rely on the exchange rate that can compensate but going from 10% to 25% can really have an impact, consid-



Photo: N. Sergerie

*GÎMEXPORT Director Gino Cyr:*

ering that 80% of seafood products are sent to the United States," explains the director,

Gino Cyr, who believes that it is now important to look at market diversification.

GÎMEXPORT participates in various trade fairs to try to create contacts.

For example, during the pandemic, crab processing companies reoriented their exports. "Our companies had set aside certain niche markets like Japan to sell the crab caught as quickly as possible because we were afraid with the (right) whales and the health measures of not transforming the supply. Today, knowing that with the 25% tariffs, consumers will decide to shift their purchases to other products; If we ensure that we are not able to get the products to the United States, we will have to make diversification

efforts," mentions Mr. Cyr. Markets were developed during crises, but once they were over, it was a sort of "return to normal".

"What is important is to maintain our international relations and the markets in place so that our eggs are not all in one basket," he recalls.

The 2008 crisis led the organization to look for new markets for lobster in Europe and Asia.

"The goal was to take the supply and distribute it to other markets. This helped increase the price by focusing on the characterization of the product. The process lasted three years. Following that, there was no renewal. In 2016, the government chose to no longer support this type of ini-

tiative, unlike the Maritime provinces, which are continuing their efforts," illustrates Mr. Cyr.

"What I find deplorable today: if we want to develop new markets, we'll start practically from scratch," he laments.

The manager had the opportunity to speak with economic experts in recent days to try to understand the potential impacts of these customs duties.

"What is suggested is to diversify markets and invest in modernizing equipment to increase the level of production," summarizes Mr. Cyr.

"25% overnight. It's the (American) consumer who will end up paying," says the director.

# The Gaspé Peninsula will be heard in the legal debate on the provincial electoral map

**NELSON SERGERIE**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

**GASPÉ** - The Gaspé Peninsula will finally be heard in the challenge of elected officials from the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec who are seeking to cancel the law that suspends the process of reforming the electoral map.

The court accepted the request of the elected officials of the region during a hearing in Saint-Jérôme, in the Laurentians, on November 27.

"The court accepted that the Gaspésie be an integral part of the upcoming judicial start. It was the first fight that we had to give. We received 100% of what we asked for: we wanted a so-called conservative intervention. That is to say, to be able to produce evidence and

hear witnesses when we get to the debate on the merits," explains Daniel Côté, spokesperson for the electoral map file for the Table des préfets de la Gaspésie.

Mr. Côté who is also the mayor of Gaspé points out that the proposal for the new electoral map would result in the Gaspésie losing a riding.

"I have nothing against Drummondville, but the new map would give the city of Drummondville and the surrounding villages three members of the National Assembly while Gaspésie would only have one member. That's what doesn't make sense in the current debate," says the mayor, who once again refers to effective representation, a principle that is not defined in the electoral law.

"That's what the Carter decision of the Supreme Court said in 1991: it's about something other than one voter, one vote. It is also the geographical area, the administrative boundaries, belonging to the territory, and access to the members of the National Assembly. This is the kind of thing that must be taken into account and the electoral law should be written down in black and white. I think that is what the National Assembly wanted to do by suspending the process," Mr. Côté adds.

According to him, the judge who heard the case was a great listener and understood the issue. "In her opinion, not hearing from Gaspésie didn't make sense. Just being heard by the court, being able to support an argument that will probably

support that of the Attorney General of Quebec by providing regional insight, will give a boost to the debate," he believes.

The hearing on the merits will likely be held next May. "This is the kind of constitutional case that could end up before the Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court. It could happen that we have years of legal debate," says the mayor.

The elected officials of the Laurentides and Centre-du-Québec were requesting, while waiting for the substantive debate, an interlocutory injunction to suspend the Act that suspended the revision of the map.

A decision could be rendered soon on the injunction or the judge will give the time when she plans to do so.

"If the judge does not grant the interlocutory injunction, we will wait a few more months before having a legal debate. This is time gained for the National Assembly to consider the revision of the Election Act," continued the mayor.

On May 2, 2024, the National Assembly of Quebec, in a unanimous vote, adopted the Act to interrupt the process of delimitation of electoral districts.

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

## Gaspé succeeds in reducing residual materials bill in non-residential areas

**NELSON SERGERIE**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

**GASPÉ** - A major turnaround, the Town of Gaspé has reached an agreement with Matrec to reduce the costs of residual material collection for the commercial, institutional and industrial sectors.

Twelve years ago, the Town had transferred this collection to the private sector and the contractor reached an agreement with the customers for the billing but, in September, the town council announced its intention to take it all under its wing after complaints were received at Town Hall when it was suggested that the bill was doubling, tripling or more.

A 90-day notice had been adopted by the town council for a change effective in January 2025.

A clause in the contract allowed the Town to do so. "When Matrec saw that, they were open to negotiating. As part of this negotiation, they agreed to lower the rates for merchants by 34% in addition to bringing the contractual clauses back to September 2026. They committed to freezing the rates for 2025 and increasing them to the cost of inflation in 2026," explains the Mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté. "It will also give us time if we repatriate everything into a single contract," says the



Photo: N. Sergerie

*Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté.*

mayor.

Following this negotiation, the gap between what the Town would have billed starting in January via the tax account versus the agreement reached with Matrec no longer justified Gaspé taking over the service.

"It's difficult to calculate for each specific case, but overall, it probably would have been the same. But by going back to the same, it would have been a real headache for the Town to repatriate all that and redo the contracts. It would have been much more complicated. The result makes sense. I hope our merchants and industrialists will be happy," says the

mayor.

### Bill 96

Gaspé's municipal council has adopted a resolution requesting flexibility in Bill 96, which mandates that all municipal communications be in French.

"We don't have the same history as Montreal and its suburbs. Here, we have always lived very harmoniously between francophones, anglophones and the Mi'gmaq community," explains the mayor.

According to census data, the proportion of English speakers in Gaspé declined from 13% in 2016 to 11% in 2021.

"It is not in Gaspé that French is in decline. Why apply the same rule to Gaspé where English is in decline in favour of French? Why penalize our anglophone community when the problem is not here?" asks Mr. Côté.

"I hope that our reality is recognized and that we can have some form of modulation, but honestly, I have little hope for a result," says the elected official.

If the law is not changed, Vision Gaspé Perce now has offered its services to translate communications into English. Gaspé does not have bilingual town status. In the 1940s and 1950s, half of Gaspé's citizens were English-speaking. There

are exceptions in the law for emergency measures, tourism and financial information.

Changes mentioned in minor emergencies

The mayor of Gaspé is concerned by the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre's reflection on the modification of the composition of the teams in the emergency departments at the Murdochville and Grande-Vallée CLSCs. On the sidelines of the organization's board of directors meeting on November 28, President and CEO Martin Pelletier indicated that serv-

ices are not being reduced, but he mentioned changes in the way care is provided, such as replacing a nurse with a nursing assistant.

"We are somewhat afraid of a service cut. These are hubs that are far from the Gaspé and Sainte-Anne-des-Monts hospitals. We are talking about an hour's drive. A nursing assistant can do some of the work, but cannot do everything that a full-time nurse can do in terms of care," explained Mr. Côté, who has heard concerns from

**Cont'd on page 12**

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# A hefty bill for recycling

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER- The cost of collecting recyclable materials is exploding in the Bay of Chaleur area.

Elected officials from the Avignon MRC, which manages the issue on behalf of the Bonaventure MRC, have awarded a \$15.4 million recycling collection contract to Groupe Matrec for a five-year term, with two optional additional years.

The contract represents an average annual cost of \$2.2 million.

It is the lowest compliant bidder, says Prefect Mathieu Lapointe, even though the other proposal from Exploitation Jaffa was for \$14.2 million.

However, irregularities led



Photo: N. Sergerie

*The cost of recycling doubles in the Bay of Chaleur area.*

elected officials to reject the lowest offer. "GFL (Matrec) was compliant and respected the tender specifications. There were major non-conformities

in the case of Exploitation Jaffa's bid," said the prefect, who could not provide details on the non-conformities.

The bill is double compared

to the contract concluded in 2021 with Groupe Bouffard, which became Matrec, when collection costs around \$1 million per year.

"There are new elements that have been added to the contract, including large recycling bins in businesses. In the old contract, it was before the pandemic. There has been a big change. Everything has increased: trucks, diesel. We were expecting an increase. Doubling seems enormous to us," he said.

The situation in the Bay of Chaleur area is not unique since the phenomenon is seen everywhere in Quebec.

"These amounts will be reimbursed by Éco Entreprise Québec. This will not be reflected in citizens' tax bills. Ultimately, it is the population of

Quebec that pays for all these costs," the prefect mentioned.

There are only a few major players left in Quebec in the collection of residual materials.

"There are fewer and fewer players. Groupe Bouffard was bought by GFL Environnement. Two bidders on a \$15 million contract, that's still major," he said.

To address the rising costs, the MRCs of Avignon and Bonaventure have set up an intermunicipal waste management board that includes 24 municipalities.

"We will analyze the option of equipping ourselves with our trucks. We will do the analyses to see what will be the most advantageous. What we did not consider before, we will now analyze," the prefect concluded.

## UPAC requests report on administrative investigation into Ghislain Pitre

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) is asking the Town of Percé to lift professional secrecy surrounding the administrative investigation that led to the dismissal of former urban planning director Ghislain Pitre.

The request, sent by UPAC on December 2 to the Town of Percé, asks for access to the report following a request for disclosure from prosecutors from the Bureau of Serious Crimes and Special Affairs of the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions (DPCP).

In the resolution's recitals, UPAC committed to using the report only for the specific purposes of the request and will keep the document confidential until criminal charges are filed, should the investigation lead to that outcome.

While the report remains protected by professional secrecy, the request aims to facilitate UPAC's work.

On December 3, the municipal council unanimously adopted the resolution lifting professional secrecy for the investigation after consulting with Therrien, Couture, Jolicoeur, the firm mandated by the Town to investigate the allegations.

In July, the council dismissed Mr. Pitre in a special meeting by a vote of five to



Photo: N. Sergerie

*Percé council lifts professional secrecy on the administrative investigation into Ghislain Pitre.*

one following the filing of the law firm's 340-page administrative investigation report on labour law.

The council adopted a resolution a few minutes after learning of the document ordered during his suspension with pay on October 30, 2023. Since the case could go to court, the municipal council did not make any further comments regarding the resolution adopted to validate the dismissal.

Mr. Pitre filed a complaint with the Administrative Labour Tribunal on August 13. In response, the council adopted a resolution in September to mandate a law firm to defend the Town following

the complaint.

Serious allegations against the former Director of Urban Planning led to his suspension which, in turn, prompted the administrative investigation. The cost of the investigation amounted to \$131,250.

Furthermore, following a question asked by a citizen, the public learned that the council hasn't taken any steps to recoup the compensation paid between the time of the suspension and the dismissal of the former employee.

The Director General, Michel Fréchette, mentioned at the public meeting that a reflection was underway, but since there was no trial, no decision has been made. A claim

could be possible, depending on the outcome of any criminal proceedings against Mr. Pitre.

On another note, the letter asking the Minister of Municipal Affairs to intervene with the Municipal Commission in order to force a meeting between the commission, elected officials, the Town and citizens was sent to the Minister.

The mayor applied his veto at the November council meeting, which was subsequently overturned in a special session.

The Town received an acknowledgement of receipt from the Minister's office. Citizens would like to know

the content of the letter sent to the Minister. However, before doing so, the Town is checking with the Access to Information Commission to see if such a request can be accepted.

The Town has also requested a legal opinion on this issue. On October 8, Quebec Municipal Commission (CMQ) President Jean-Philippe Marois sent a letter rejecting the Town's request to clarify certain elements to discuss the never-declared accountability.

Director Michel Fréchette stated that the report mentioned the effects of the issue, without mentioning the cause, which is what the Town was seeking to know in a request sent on October 1.

In a report released in July, the Direction des enquêtes et des poursuites en intégrité municipale (DEPIM) concluded, based on paragraph 4 of section 4 of the Act to facilitate the disclosure of wrongdoings against public bodies, that there was a serious case of mismanagement in the Town of Percé.





# 3% growth at Forillon Park

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - Forillon Park is recording a 3% growth in attendance in 2024, reaching 167,000 visitors.

"This is a season that we consider successful. It's an interesting increase and one of the highlights is the 20% increase in traffic in June and September," says park director Mathieu Côté.

For several years, the park, in collaboration with tourism industry players, has been promoting the stretching of the season to attract tourists starting in May and to stay at least until Thanksgiving.

"The increase in late season traffic has positively impacted overnight stays, which have reached 27,000. That's a 4% increase compared to 2023. When the overall numbers increase, it pulls each of the overall numbers up," states Mr. Côté.

Ready-to-camp accommodations have also grown in popularity. "We had an 8% increase in June and 35% in October. That's a significant increase," notes Mr. Côté.

Since the good weather has been stretching into late October for the past few



Photo: Parc Forillon, Mathieu Dupuis

*Forillon Park sees its season stretch.*

years, management is not ruling out extending the season until the end of October.

"We're thinking about and planning different aspects: not just Parks Canada, but the entire industry. Climate change has beneficial effects at certain times, but on the other hand, we can have more intense bad weather at other times. I'm not telling you that it will be like this for next season, but it's part of our thoughts," explains Mr. Côté.

The park does not have a very active offer in the winter, but partners offer cross-country skiing on trails. Yurts are also available for rent in the Portage sector of the park but Parks Canada is not yet considering a return to more active activities in the winter.

"Before extending it over too long a period, we are working on improving our offer for the fall season or at the beginning of the season to attract more visitors during a

period when we already have some of our staff employed," suggests Mr. Côté.

Several projects to preserve and enhance Forillon's natural and cultural heritage have been completed. These include the repair of the roof of the Grande-Grave service building, the restoration of the façade and windows of the Hyman & Sons Store, as well as several improvements made to the park's trails.

The house restoration project in the Grande-Grave sector is progressing. "We are in a call for tenders for the conservation part of the Joseph Gavey house. The call for tenders will close at the end of the year and we should have work in 2025. We recently signed a contract with the Balsa firm in Gaspé to work on planning the conservation of the Élias Gavey house and the Joseph Gavey hangar," Mr. Côté points out.

This year, work to finalize the access roads to the houses and a search for water to drill a well for the houses was completed.

The federal government is investing \$9.8 million for the conservation and enhancement of the heritage of the ex-

propriated families of Grande-Grave, an amount announced in November 2022.

In conservation, the renaturalization of the old Route 132, previously known as Route 6, in the Cap-des-Rosiers sector is continuing. "The 5.5-kilometre section on the old route has been renaturalized. This summer, there was a lot of work to remove bridges and culverts over the streams to return them to their natural state. The land was reprofiled and there are still 15,000 trees to plant in 2025," says the manager.

Partners and collaborators of the park held various events such as the Mawimi of the Micmac Nation of Gespeg, the sunrise show with Martin Léon presented by Musique du Bout du Monde, the Ultra Trail Forillon presented by Événements Gaspesia, as well as the tribute event to Marie-Laure Rochefort, organized in collaboration with the group representing the appropriate people of Forillon and their descendants last September.

The 2025 season will begin on May 30, with the camping reservation centre opening on February 5.

## Chambers of Commerce urges the Quebec government to improve air services

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - As part of the consultations that ended on December 2, the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce and the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce are calling on the Government of Quebec to adopt a Government Aviation Strategy that would improve the supply of services in the region, for the benefit of local populations and their economy.

The Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce and the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce, respectively the FCCQ and the CCIBDC under their French acronym, had previously welcomed the implementation of the Programme d'accès aérien aux régions (the Regional Aerial Access Program, or PAAR) while emphasizing the need to go further.

By making Quebec businesses and non-profit organizations eligible for reduced fares, passenger volumes

could be increased and carriers could be allowed to maintain a constant supply, for the benefit of the air sector and public confidence in this essential mode of transportation.

"Air transportation is a fundamental pillar for the economic development of the Baie-des-Chaleurs. It not only strengthens business ties but also attracts new investments and promotes worker mobility. By supporting the accessibility and quality of air services, we can provide our businesses with the tools they need to grow and remain competitive on the market," explains Valentine Palma, executive director of the CCIBDC.

"Quebec's economic growth depends on the development of each of our regions, regardless of their distance from major centres. Businesses and NPOs (not-for-profit organizations) must be eligible for the PAAR to facilitate travel between them. Such openness will promote

the mobility of business people and will certainly contribute to the influence of businesses," adds Véronique Proulx, president and chief executive officer of the FCCQ.

The FCCQ and the CCIBDC believe that it is clear that government officials need to rethink Quebec's current model. Only a handful of Quebec carriers are able to serve the most remote regions, such as Eastern Quebec.

Valentine Palma and Véronique Proulx affirm that the current model needs to be revitalized to ensure that the territory is covered by at least one air service, and at a lower cost.

### Long-term needs

The budgets allocated to modernizing and repairing airport infrastructure are clearly insufficient compared to the needs of the sector. The maintenance of airport infrastructure must once again be-



Photo: G. Gagné

*Criticism has often been expressed over recent years over the lack of reliability of regional air services.*

come a priority for the government as the asset maintenance deficit in transportation infrastructure continues to grow, as expressed in a study published by the FCCQ in November 2024.

The aerial workforce needs will also be significant in the coming years for all

categories of personnel combined. Whether in navigation (pilots, operators, etc.) or maintenance (mechanics, assembly, etc.), the labour shortage in this sector creates its share of challenges, observed Ms. Palma and Ms. Proulx.

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**AIR SERVICES:**

▶ *Cont'd from page 9*

They base their assessment on a recent study conducted by the CAMAQ, the Comité sectoriel de main d'oeuvre en aérospatiale du Québec, the organization monitoring aerospace labour needs in Quebec.

"During the pandemic, there was a wave of early retirement in addition to seeing training schools temporarily close their doors. Considering that, in the next decade, nearly 26,000 positions will need to be filled according to the CAMAQ, we must make sure to pull out all the stops to encourage the next generation by providing advantageous incentives to future piloting students who already have to pay tens of thousands of dollars to cover their training costs," concluded Ms. Proulx.

Over the years, aerial services in the Quebec regions have often lacked reliability and affordability. The shortage of manpower, the maintenance of aircraft, the price of tickets and the state of runways have often hampered those services.

The Quebec government's "\$500 tickets program," ini-

tially offered to people living in Montreal and Quebec City as a tourist tool, was heavily criticized because it didn't allow citizens living in other regions to use the program to board a plane to go elsewhere than in the capital or the metropolis. Ensuing adjustments were called largely insufficient.

The Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a business network of nearly 400 members in the Avignon and Bonaventure MRCs. Through its mission, the CCIBDC promotes the economic and social development of its region while ensuring the interests of its members through its power of representation and action.

With its group of 120 Chambers of Commerce and nearly 1,000 corporate members, the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce represents more than 40,000 businesses operating in all sectors of the economy and throughout Quebec. The largest network of business people in Quebec, the FCCQ, is both a federation of Chambers of Commerce and a provincial Chamber of Commerce.

# HOROSCOPES

**ARIES** – Mar 21/Apr 20

Your pioneering spirit is in full swing this week, Aries. Embrace new challenges and don't hesitate to get out front and take the lead. You just might inspire others with your confidence.

**TAURUS** – Apr 21/May 21

Make finances a priority this week, Taurus. A bit of budgeting could ease some of the financial stress that has been affecting you lately. Indulge in a small luxury as a reward for hard work.

**GEMINI** – May 22/June 21

Conversations could be interesting this week, Gemini. You're curious about what others do when they are home behind closed doors. Don't pry too much.

**CANCER** – June 22/July 22

Cancer, nurture your relationships this week, particularly if work has garnered most of your attention of late. Pay attention to your own needs, too, and enjoy some relaxation.

**LEO** – July 23/Aug 23

Employ your natural charisma to forge new connections and network at upcoming events, Leo. You are good at sharing ideas and expressing yourself with confidence.

**VIRGO** – Aug 24/Sept 22

Tackle one job at a time and focus on what is important to get done this week, Virgo. It can be easy to get side-tracked by side projects. Or that might be your way to procrastinate.

**LIBRA** – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, surround yourself with positive influences this week. You want others supporting you at every turn while you take on an important project that comes up.

**SCORPIO** – Oct 24/Nov 22

Use your intense focus and attention to detail to delve into projects that require those specific skills, Scorpio. In fact, someone may ask you to work on a project for these traits alone.

**SAGITTARIUS** – Nov 23/Dec 21

Embrace the unknown this week. Let yourself get led off in different directions from those you normally travel, Sagittarius. Who knows what you may find along the way?

**CAPRICORN** – Dec 22/Jan 20

Revisit your goals and make a plan for the future, Capricorn. Remember to take the people closest to you into consideration. Do not trample them in the process of getting ahead.

**AQUARIUS** – Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, collaborate with like-minded individuals who are ready to think outside the box. It is amazing what you can accomplish when you multiply your power.

**PISCES** – Feb 19/Mar 20

You might need to warm up before the creative energy starts to flow, Pisces. Don't worry, once you have the right inspiration, things will begin moving at a rapid pace.

**FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS**

**DECEMBER 13**

**Taylor Swift, Singer (35)**

**DECEMBER 14**

**Vanessa Hudgens, Actress (36)**



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# Announcements



## In Memory

### DUGUAY: Kenneth (Ken)

In loving memory of a dear husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, brother, brother-in-law, uncle and friend. Ken, Dad, Grandpa (Papa), Uncle Ken.

*Our lives go on without you,  
But nothing is the same.  
We have to hide our heartaches,  
When someone speaks your name.  
Sad are the hearts that love you,  
Silent are the tears that fall.  
Living without you is,  
The hardest part of all.  
You did so many things for us,  
Your heart was so kind and true.  
And when we someone,  
We could always count on you.  
The special years will not return,*

*When we are all together,  
But with the love in our hearts,  
You will walk with us forever.*

We miss you. Never more than a thought away, Sarah, Darrel (Ondena), Shelly (Louise), Crystal (Lewis), Anna, Rhea, Graham and Alexandra.

**Obituary - 150 words - \$50**  
150-250 words - \$55  
250+ words - quote will be provided

**In Memory: 150 words - \$35**  
150-250 words - \$45

**Funeral, Celebration of Life,  
Card of Thanks, Engagement,  
Birth, Prayer, Birthday - \$35**  
**Wedding - \$55**

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

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## COAST ROUND-UP

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

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

**SHIGAWAKE:**  
**Shigawake Community Centre**  
**December 13:** Beginning at 5 p.m. there will be a children's bingo with hot dogs and a special visit from Santa.  
**December 14:** Christmas Market from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Crafts, baked goods and yard sale items. To reserve a table please contact a member.

**NEW CARLISLE:**  
**New Carlisle Legion**  
**Mondays:** Mini bingo beginning at 7 p.m.  
**Wednesdays:** Line Danc-

ing beginning at 7:30 p.m.  
**Every Friday:** Open at 7:30 p.m. drop in to play pool, shuffleboard, etc.  
**December 14:** Christmas dance with Tammy Adams beginning at 9 p.m. \$15 entry fee, for tickets please contact Kathy at 418-752-0854 or Agnes at 418-751-4042.  
**December 15:** Santa Claus is coming and bringing the grinch from 1-3 p.m. There will be hot chocolate and cookies, crafts with Kayla and a reading corner with Family Ties.  
**December 27:** Live music with John Gedeon beginning at 9 p.m. \$10 entry fee.

**NEW CARLISLE:**  
**Bible Chapel Meetings**  
**Sundays:** Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30

a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School - 2 p.m.  
**Thursdays:** Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:**  
**50+ Club**  
**December 18:** The annual AGM meeting for the 50+ club will be held at 1 p.m. followed by the general meeting at 1:30 p.m. Every-



one is welcome.  
**Tuesdays:** Grocery bingo every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. \$10 for three cards. Extra cards are \$1 each.

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:**  
**Book Room**  
Please be advised that the book room is open. Anyone who needs assistance can contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

**UNITED CHURCH  
NEW RICHMOND**  
**December 15**  
10 a.m. Service

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**UNITED CHURCH  
HOPE TOWN**  
**December 15**  
10 a.m. Service

**ANGLICAN  
CHURCH  
OF CANADA**

**Sunday, December 15**  
**New Carlisle**  
7 p.m. Festival of lessons and Carols  
**Shigawake**  
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**PARISH OF  
GASPÉ**

**Sunday, December 15**  
**St. Paul's - Gaspé**  
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Worship Wednesday**  
10 a.m. St Paul's

## The Perfect Christmas Gift

To facilitate your purchase during the postal strike, you can call the office at 418-752-5400. If you're ordering online, please leave your phone number so we can make arrangements to send your gift card.

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**GASPÉ:**

**▶ Cont'd from page 7**

specialists in the health network.

This is the third time in a decade that the fate of the 24/7 emergency services at the CLSCs in Murdochville, Grande-Vallée and Paspébiac has been in the news.

"I hope the inevitable does not happen. With all the proj-

ects on the drawing board, there should normally be an economic resurgence in Murdochville and Grande-Vallée, therefore, an increase in the population. An increase in risks related to industrial activities that will require 24/7 services in emergencies. I hope that we will think about the future and that we will not only take into account current demographic data," notes the

mayor who is also prefect of the MRC of Côte-de-Gaspé.

**Work at the Town Hall**

The Town of Gapé is asking the Quebec government to reduce its subsidy to its initial promise due to the additional costs incurred by the work.

Initially, the project was \$4.3 million, but following the calls for tenders, the cost of

the work was just over \$3 million. The government assistance of 65% had been reduced accordingly.

In the meantime, an unforeseen amount of \$700,000 has arisen. "This unforeseen event that no one saw coming is likely due to a design error. We are asking the ministry to assume part of this additional cost. Initially, it had budgeted \$4 million for the project. We

assume that it had budgeted that way," hopes the mayor.

In the meantime, the claims process against the architectural firm to which the fault is attributed continues. "We hope to reach an agreement with the firm. Except that in any good agreement, will we get 100% of our gain? If not, we turn to the ministry so that it does its part," notes the mayor.


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