

Gladys McKay turns 106

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – On the morning of her 106th birthday, Gladys McKay visited the hairdresser at the St. Joseph Residence in Maria, where she has lived for two years. After all, Ms. McKay, who was born and raised in Cascapédia-St-Jules, was expecting friends to visit on the afternoon of December 6 and wanted to look her best. She was also expecting to Facetime with some of her relatives living away.

“I went looking for her in her bedroom earlier today, and she was already gone. I found her at the hairdresser’s with rollers already in her hair,” explains an impressed staff member of St. Joseph Residence.

While her sight is impaired, she can still see movements and lights. She has been confined to a wheelchair for a few years, however, her capacity to communicate remains good.



Donna Coull sits next to Gladys McKay as the 106-year-old Facetimes with relatives.

Photo: G. Gagné

“She still has a very sharp memory and she still speaks well. She is also very proud,” mentions Kathleen Paquet, who lived nearby when Ms. MacKay resided in Cascapédia-St-Jules.

During her Facetime call with relatives, a call facilitated by Donna Coull, Gladys spoke with ease. Her pronunciation was accurate and her replies were quick.

A telephone chain, com-

prising regular calls from relatives and people from the area, as well as regular visits from younger friends, are keeping her mind active and agile.

A year ago, on December 6, 2023, Shirley Campbell, of

New Richmond, met Ms. McKay for the first time, despite being her regular phone pal. This means calling Ms. McKay daily. Ms. Campbell returned this year to join the 106th birthday celebration.

Until November 2022, Gladys McKay lived alone in her house. Neighbours and friends accompanied her during meals and they alternated nights to make sure she did not spend a night alone.

In her career, Gladys McKay was a teacher in New Richmond, and worked for CP Hotels in Lake Louise, Alberta, before resuming her teaching career in Noranda, Abitibi. She then moved to Montreal, where she worked for many years for Alcan, now Rio Tinto-Alcan.

Although the health authorities don’t keep track of the oldest living residents in the Gaspé Peninsula, she could be the oldest citizen of the region.

POZZOLAN PROJECT:

Quebec urges New Brunswick to consider impact on the Gaspé Peninsula

GILLES GAGNÉ

MIGUASHA – On November 29, the Members of the National Assembly unanimously passed a motion asking the New Brunswick government to consider the impact of a pozzolan mine on Quebec’s territory before authorizing the project. In that case, the Quebec territory is first and foremost the Miguasha area of Nouvelle.

The motion also specifies the concerns of elected officials from Quebec regarding the consequences of the Heron Bay open-pit mine project, located specifically in the former limits of the town of Dalhousie, on the health and quality of life of citizens on the Quebec shore of Chaleur Bay.

The Members of the National Assembly also voted to support the impact study for



Since August, regular demonstrations have taken place to either ask New Brunswick authorities to show more transparency in the pozzolan exploitation file, or reject the project completely.

Photo: G. Gagné

Quebec that the public health department wants to conduct on the project.

The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Matane-Matapédia, Pascal

Bérubé, explains that the Parti Québécois (PQ), which tabled the motion, wanted to respond to the demands of the citizens in the Bay of Chaleur area. According to MNA Bérubé,

the mine, which would be located just across from Miguasha, “is currently one of the most discussed topics in the Bay of Chaleur because of the fears it raises. So, it (the

motion) sends the message first that we know it exists. We are asking the New Brunswick government to take precautions, and then we are going to monitor them, that’s pretty much the message.”

At the request of Mr. Bérubé, the National Assembly has sent the motion to the prefects of the MRCs of Avignon and Bonaventure, namely Mathieu Lapointe and Éric Dubé.

Since the middle of the summer, regular demonstrations have taken place, mainly on the New Brunswick side, to express opposition to the venture proposed by a Montreal-based company called EcoRock Dalhousie. One demonstration took place in Carleton on October 29, before the officials of the firm

The Act suspending the revision of the electoral map remains valid... for now

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Superior Court is not suspending the Act adopted by Quebec that put the revision of the Quebec electoral map on hold.

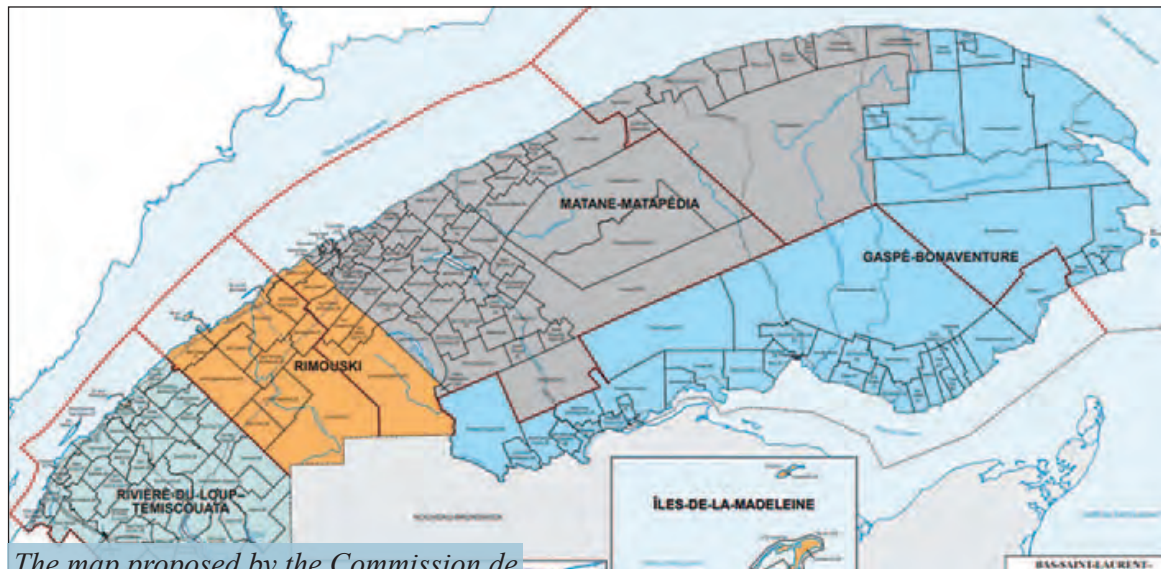
However, Judge Annie Breault of the Superior Court of the District of Terrebonne partially grants the interlocutory injunction requested by elected officials from the Laurentians, and Central Quebec, ordering the Commission de la représentation sur la carte électorale to continue its work.

“When you look at the first reading, you would have the impression of having lost. But, honestly, the Act that stopped the revision of the electoral map remains in force. The only thing the judgment says is that the Commission de la représentation électorale can finish its report. Period. And it (the Commission) must keep its report secret and not submit it to the National Assembly,” comments the mayor of Gaspé and spokesperson for the file for the Gaspé Peninsula Table of Prefects, Daniel Côté.

He is listed as a respondent in the request filed for the table to be an intervening party in the debate.

The elected officials of the Laurentides and Centre-du-Québec regions have filed a legal action against the Director General of Elections of Quebec and the Attorney General of Quebec to have this law revoked and for the process of revising the electoral map to resume.

On May 2, the National Assembly of Quebec, in a unani-



The map proposed by the Commission de la représentation électorale for 2026.

Photo: Archives

mous vote, adopted the Act to interrupt the process of delimiting electoral districts.

The group of MRCs pointed out that the electoral map on the table was then highly detrimental to the principle of effective representation, directly affecting the representation of Gaspésie in the democratic institutions of Quebec.

The group made representations before the court on November 28 to become a stakeholder in the case.

“I assume that the decision that was rendered does not add much more. We could ultimately qualify it as a kind of first victory for our region, even if upon reading the judgment, one might think otherwise. The only victory for our counterparts in the Laurentians and Central Quebec is that the Chief Electoral Officer has the right to finish his report, but must keep it to himself,” analyzes Mr. Côté, who is also a lawyer.

The court, therefore, allows the Chief Electoral Officer to complete his work and eventually file his second report as

provided for in the electoral law if the court were to rule that the Act adopted in May to suspend the electoral law was invalid.

“This is how we are preserving the two Gaspésie ridings, at least for now. There will be a trial on the merits of the matter and a decision will be made in the coming weeks or months. At the same time, in the National Assembly, we continue to believe that the government is doing the work promised, that is to say, to thoroughly review the electoral law. If a new version arrives somewhere in the spring, the appeal will become unfounded,” mentions the elected official from Gaspé.

He hopes that the law will include the concept of elective representation with criteria such as geographic extent or belonging to a territory.

“If the law provides for these elements, we could achieve our ends and end the debate,” he believes.

The pressure is now on the Parliamentarians to resolve the

matter quickly. Mr. Côté also adds that the elected officials unanimously resolved to review the electoral law. “If they agreed that the current electoral law should be reviewed, I dare to hope that they will agree on a new law quickly rather than letting the judiciary do the work of the legislator,” he says.

“For a region like ours that already suffers from democratic underweight, it becomes one of our priorities to have a law that will respect the Gaspé reality and that will ensure us two votes in the National Assembly rather than one,” analyzes Mr. Côté.

Could the Gaspé Peninsula or the other two regions appeal?

“The court came to split the difference. It did not say a categorical ‘yes’ to one party and a categorical ‘no’ to another party. Our colleagues wanted the process to resume. A small part can resume. For our part, we wanted the law that suspends the overhaul of the map to remain in force. For us, it is also a bit of a victory,” says the mayor.

Prosecutors and elected offi-

cial from the prefects' table will be consulted to see if an appeal could be possible, but Mr. Côté doubts that the Gaspésie will go in this direction.

Recall that the commission suggested merging the counties of Gaspé and Bonaventure, grouping 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, a Lower St. Lawrence riding.

As of April 30, 2023, Bonaventure had 35,898 voters and Gaspé had 30,131, far from the minimum threshold planned. The gap was -29.2% and -40.6% respectively. Gaspé was ranked third among the least populous ridings, behind the Magdalen Islands, which has an exceptional status, and Ungava.

According to projections of the number of voters based on data from the Institut de la statistique du Québec, the gap with respect to the average for Gaspé should soon surpass that of Ungava.

In 2017, the commission maintained the negative exceptional status for Gaspé and granted the same status to Bonaventure. However, since the inequalities in representation of these ridings are increasing, the Commission did not wish to renew this status.

In addition to removing a riding in the Gaspésie, the Commission suggested doing the same thing in Montreal, while creating a riding in the Laurentians and another in Central Quebec

Stéphane Sainte-Croix attentive to the \$40 million cuts requested from the CISSS

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Gaspé Member of the National Assembly (MNA) will work to ensure that Santé Québec and the Quebec government take into account the specificities of the Gaspé in the context of the \$40 million budget cuts requested from the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre.

Stéphane Sainte-Croix reacts this way to the reflection launched by the CISSS

on ways to maintain the emergency services at Grande-Val- lée, Murdochville and Paspébiac CLSCs 24/7.

The CISSS is analyzing the idea of replacing nurses with auxiliary nurses who would be linked to remote nurses to maintain the care offered at these establishments. Grande- Vallée Mayor Noël Richard indicated that when a nurse is mobilized in a facility transfer, this would be equivalent to a service interruption in his facility, which he describes as unthinkable in his community.

He points out that the clos-

est hospitals are more than 100 kilometres from Grande-Val- lée.

The Québec government has assured the public that the financial cuts would not result in a reduction in patient services. “The minister was clear on this. We are sensitive to the issue. Once the recommendations are known, we will take note of them and do our work to ensure that the service offer is maintained,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

The MNA indicated that he wanted to give the CISSS time to carry out its exercise to re-

cover the requested amounts. “We will work to maintain the service offer. If it requires us to review the effort in terms of rigour, we will be happy to support our CISSS, but let's give management time to do its exercise and, from there, we can establish our scenario and the work that will come to maintain our service offering,” he says.

Mr. Sainte-Croix understands the particularities of the region, especially the distance to travel to have access to care and the fact that there is no major service hub.

“There is a question of cost behind the territory and the service offering. We dare to hope that the particularities will be recognized for the future,” mentions the MNA.

As for the specific CLSC file, Mr. Sainte-Croix is concerned. “We will remember that this is not the first time that we have had a reflection at this level. We will let the CISSS do its exercise. For the moment, we are listening. We are aware of the issues and we are very sensitive to the issue.”

Lion Electric's troubles: school bus operators worried

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ - The financial woes of electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer Lion Electric are a concern for the region's school bus operators who have to renew their vehicles.

This is the case for Stéphane Synnott, owner of Autobus Synnott, who operates a fleet of approximately 30 buses over a vast territory between Coin-du-Banc and the greater Gaspé region.

"We won't be able to buy any more buses and I don't dare buy from a company that is practically bankrupt," notes Mr. Synnott.

Three other manufacturers are present in Quebec, but the costs are considerably higher. "We're talking about triple the price of a diesel bus with Lion," he notes. An electric bus costs about \$590,000 compared to \$350,000 for a conventional bus.

The lifespan of a conventional bus is limited to 12 years, while an electric bus lasts 13 years.

Mr. Synnott expects to see incentives for EVs disappear, even though carriers must now buy electric buses.

"I have four buses in their last year, (they are) 2011s. I have three 2012 buses that I have to change soon. If I want to buy a bus, I can't even plate it. I won't buy an electric bus from another manufacturer that is triple the price of Lion," says Mr. Synnott.

He hopes the Quebec government will recognize the challenges carriers face under the current circumstances. "We are at an impasse. We are waiting for the grace pe-



The Lion Electric bus from Autobus Synnott in Gaspé.

Photo: Stéphane Synnott

riod for the manufacturer to find money," says the operator.

Honouring warranties and finding spare parts is also a concern for the owner.

Another point that worries carriers is the limited range of electric buses, particularly for long-distance travel.

"We do school transportation but also special transportation. We have a clientele for cruise ships. I can't go to Percé, Rimouski or Rivière-du-Loup like we do every week with sports teams," he mentions.

Even transporting young people to the C.E. Pouliot High School from Coin-du-Banc with an electric bus is virtually impossible.

"Currently, Lion sells it (an EV bus) with 150 kilometres of autonomy. In winter, it drops. If you have to make a detour, you have to think about it," says the owner.

Nevertheless, he agrees with the principle, but in a region like the Gaspé Peninsula, it is a real issue.

"I have nothing against electrification. I have an electric car. The bus is a good idea. We mustn't rush things and let technology take its course. I don't like the way we are being forced to buy electric buses when the technology is not yet mature," suggests Mr. Synnott.

In large centres, buses are centralized but, in the Gaspé Peninsula, drivers often have their buses in their private yards.

"Everyone leaves from their house. I can't invest in a \$25,000 terminal without knowing if the driver will be there in the long term!" he explains.

In his experience, an electric bus should have a range of more than 200 kilometres to operate in the Gaspésie.

POZZOLAN:

Cont'd from cover

presented the outlines of the project.

EcoRock Dalhousie wants to exploit an existing quarry and expand its production by turning it into an open pit pozzolan mine. Pozzolan is a volcanic rock used in certain cement powder mixes. Company officials argue that its environmental impact is lower than using 100% clinker because pozzolan only has to be reduced to a fine powder. It consequently doesn't have to be brought to high temperatures like limestone.

Opponents affirm that ex-

ploiting pozzolan will still generate a high amount of greenhouse effect gases, as is the case for every material dug out of the ground. They also stress that pozzolan's fine powder will create a lot of dust and that the silica contained in that dust will generate respiratory problems for the people living near the open pit mine.

In fact, a school is located 200 metres from the quarry slated to become an open pit mine. Houses are also situated even closer.

The annual volume of pozzolan targeted by EcoRock Dalhousie reaches 3 million tonnes. Such a volume will require dredging operations in the channel leading to the Port

of Dalhousie, which has been inactive since 2013.

EcoRock Dalhousie's director general Francis Forlini pointed out on October 29 in Carleton that the open pit mine could necessitate an investment of \$300 million and generate 168 direct jobs. Opponents are quick to point out that dredging between Dalhousie and Miguasha will put well-buried contaminated sediments back into the ecosystem, including the water, the beach and the upper part of the Bay of Chaleur bottom.

They also mention that the Miguasha Park, a site that is part of UNESCO's World Heritage due to its richness in fossils aged 380

Police report

Three Quebec Court of Appeal judges are deliberating on the two years less a day prison sentence handed to Karine Rioux, 36, from Gaspé now residing in Matane. Ms. Rioux caused the death of Patrick Donovan, 63, in an alcohol-related car accident on December 16, 2021, in Gaspé. Earlier this year, on July 4, Quebec Court Judge Denis Paradis imposed a sentence of two years less a day to the woman after she pleaded guilty on September 28, 2023, to two counts of impaired driving causing the death of Mr. Donovan and driving with more than 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood and causing death. Her blood alcohol level at the time was 90 milligrams. Defence Attorney Damir Musaeftic believes that Judge Paradis did not take into account mitigating and rehabilitative factors for a sentence to be served in the community. The criminal prosecutor in that file, Anne Joncas-Côté, believes, on the contrary, that the judge spoke about it in his judgment, adding the principle of deterrence and denunciation in this matter.

The trial of Douglas Quirion, 74, from Gaspé who is suspected of sexual assault on several adult and minor victims, has been set for June 2 to 5. The individual faces nine charges. Mr. Quirion was back in court on December 9 at the Percé courthouse, the events allegedly took place from 1981 to 2011. The investigation that led to the laying of charges against him was entrusted to the serial crime investigation management structure. This Quebec-wide coordination pools police resources as soon as an investigation involves more than one victim and aims to arrest sexual predators.

The determination of the trial date of former Sûreté du Québec (SQ) spokesperson Claude Doiron has been postponed to February 10, 2025, at the defence's request due to family circumstances. Claude Doiron is charged with sexual assault, sexual interference and incitement to sexual contact on a person under the age of 14 years. The alleged incidents occurred in 1988 in Cloridorme. He was not a police officer for the SQ at the time of the alleged acts. The charges against Claude Doiron were laid in June 2023, just days before his retirement.

Police are investigating a suspicious parcel discovered on the morning of December 11 at the Port-Daniel post office. In the midst of a labour dispute, while activities were at a minimum in Canada Post establishments, a package raised concerns around 9:30 a.m. The Sûreté du Québec immediately created a safety perimeter and ordered the arrival of explosives technicians from the police force. "The team arrived at 7 p.m. the same day. Verifications were carried out and the Sûreté du Québec concluded that the package did not present a danger. The security perimeter was therefore lifted around 8 p.m. The investigation is ongoing. We are not revealing where the package came from or what it contained because they are clues that are part of an ongoing investigation," explains Frédéric Deshaies, spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec. Highway 132 was excluded from the safety perimeter determined by the police. Officer Deshaies did not say what prompted the Sûreté du Québec to determine that the parcel was suspicious, because it is also an important element of the investigation.

At around 2:45 p.m. on December 12, police officers were called to the seaside near the Penouille beach in Gaspé following the discovery of a body along the shore by a passer-by. A forensic identification technician and an investigator went to the scene. According to the Sûreté du Québec (SQ), several steps are being taken, particularly to identify the victim and check if foul play can be ruled out. For now, the SQ does not make a link between the body and the October 14 disappearance of Yan Francoeur, 46, from Gaspé who was last seen on De la Reine Street.

million years, will suffer from an open pit mine located right across the Restigouche River, just a few kilometres to the south of the park.

Since the end of September, however, a movement to support the EcoRock Dalhousie initiative has gradually taken shape and voiced its po-

sition in favour of pozzolan exploitation.

Dalhousie was an industrial town that lost a paper mill, a plant producing chemicals for the pulp and paper industry, and a fossil fuel propelled power generating station between 2008 and 2012.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Trade tariffs, another intimidation tactic by Donald Trump

On December 12, the governments of Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador announced a tentative agreement pertaining to the future of the Churchill Falls power dam and the eventual construction of a new power dam in the nearby area of Gull Island.

The agreement might end a 55-year controversy over the electricity rate Quebec was able to negotiate in 1969 for the acquisition of most of the power generated by the Churchill dam, which was built between 1967 and 1974.

The 1969 deal was signed as Hydro-Québec came to the rescue of then-called Churchill Falls Corporation, the Newfoundland and Labrador management unit of the gigantic power dam. Churchill Falls Corporation was experiencing financial and technical problems that were putting the completion of construction at risk. BRINCO, the firm charged to deliver the project, could not find borrowers to fund the venture, and Hydro-Québec could. Moreover, the Quebec utility had just completed the construction of same-sized power dams, like Manic 5.

Hydro-Québec, which took practically all the risk tied to that construction completion, was therefore able to buy electricity from Churchill Falls Corporation at a rate of 0.2 cents per kilowatt/hour, which is one-fifth of a cent. At the time, Hydro-Québec was able to sell it for a much higher price. By today's standards, some of the electricity produced at Churchill Falls is frequently sold for 5 cents to 8 cents, sometimes more, sometimes less, to certain industrial customers or American utilities.

All this is to say that Hydro-Québec, through selling that power for 20 or 40 times more than its acquisition cost, became a major source of frustration in Newfoundland and Labrador, just like the frustration triggered by the mention of Labrador, a territory Quebec wanted and that was detached from Lower Canada (Quebec) in 1809. Quebec politicians advocated for the recuperation of Labrador until 1927, and beyond.

In 1927, British courts decided that Labrador would stay a part of Newfoundland, then a colony administered by the United Kingdom.

Since 1969, the Newfoundland and Labrador government has tried to nullify the 1969 contract signed with Hydro-Québec to no avail as the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that it was a valid deal.

Is the new deal legitimate?

If we keep history books at bay, how can we rate the tentative deal announced in December by Premiers François Legault and Andrew Furey? It might take some time to come to a potent conclusion.

On the Quebec side, political considerations played a role in the recent rush of negotiations. Premier Legault is coming off a disastrous year, marked by poor decision-making, an \$11 billion deficit that forces the Coalition avenir Québec government to make budgetary cuts that were not on the radar screen weeks ago.

Quebec is also facing stern opposition with regards to the development of additional power dams.

Recent Quebec governments have also put emphasis on electricity exports, as they bring in trade revenues. At the same time, some energy experts often affirm that putting emphasis on electricity consumption reduction measures would be much more beneficial for Quebecers. The logic behind that statement is that the cheapest energy is the one that is already there, the one you don't have to get through another high-cost new power dam.

New power dams in Quebec deliver electricity whose production cost hover between 13 and 16 cents per kilowatt/hour. Currently, Quebec households pay 6.7 cents per kilowatt/hour when it doesn't exceed 40 daily, and 10.34 cents when it does exceed 40 kilowatt/hour. Other fees are added, like the access cost to the network.

Quebecers greatly benefit from the fact that old power dams like Manic 5 and all the other generating units built in Northern Quebec since the 1970s deliver electricity characterized by a production cost of 3, 4 and 5 cents per kilowatt/hour, which is called the "heritage block of power."

If Quebec was occupying the negotiation driver's seat in 1969, the 2024 talks would have been far from the same. Without saying that Newfoundland and Labrador was in control of the dialogue this time around, Andrew Furey's negotiation team could count on some leverage.

Churchill Falls supplies 15% of Quebec's electricity, whether consumed or exported. Although the 1969 deal was valid until 2041, 16 years and some weeks down the road, such is the period needed to build power dams nowadays, and those new power dams are now unpopular in Quebec. Besides, Quebec couldn't take the risk of waiting until the last minute to reach an agreement on Churchill Falls.

Little wiggle room for Quebec in the current context

François Legault was also ready to make concessions on the 1969 terms and allow Newfoundland and

Labrador to receive more than 0.2 cents per kilowatt/hour, much more in fact, as effective in 2025, if the tentative agreement becomes a real deal over the next months, the rates will gradually increase to 6 cents, 30 times more than now. Over the next 16 years or so, the average will be 4 cents per kilowatt/hour.

Just with the 2025 adjustment, Newfoundland and Labrador will cash in an increment of \$1 billion, almost 10% of the province's 2024 yearly budget of \$10.3 billion.

The December 12 agreement will first lead to the upgrading of the Churchill Falls power dam, then to an expansion of it by the addition of an underground powerhouse. Those two steps will respectively add 550 and 1,110 megawatts (MW) to the current 5,428 MW capacity of Churchill Falls. In those ventures, Churchill Falls Corporation and Hydro-Québec respectively control 65.8% and 34.2% of the whole dam and that sharing will remain.

Moreover, Hydro-Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, also a public utility, will work together on the development of Gull Island's eventual power dam, which will likely be up and running in 2035. Its capacity will reach 2,250 MW, with Hydro-Québec likely to buy the bulk of it. In that new partnership, Hydro-Québec will own 40% of Gull Island's power generating station.

It is estimated that over the next 50 years, the tentative length of the agreements announced on December 12, each of the two provinces will cash in on gross revenues slightly exceeding \$200 billion.



More importantly, this time around, the First Nations agree in principle with the deal reached by Hydro-Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. Innu Nation grand chief Simon Pokue signed the non-binding memorandum of understanding on December 12.

Innu leaders have rightfully complained for decades that Churchill Falls was built without their consent on their traditional lands, depriving them of hunting and fishing territories, which unfortunately had a great impact on their way of life and health. The Innu nation is still trying to get compensation for those past infringements on their territory.

Negotiated over the last 15 months, the new deal will create a \$9 billion hole in Hydro-Québec's gross revenues between now and 2041. However, what would the Quebec utility have done in the meantime? There is not one river left in Quebec with the potential of Churchill's.

Quebec has also decided to count heavily on other sources of renewable energy, wind and solar power, whose production costs are now lower or equal to hydroelectricity without flooding huge territories.

Besides, a government with genuine vision might decide, between now and 2041, to put emphasis on saving energy, a truly promising eventuality.

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Quebec presents version 2.0 of the PAAR for regional air transport

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - After months of waiting, the Quebec government is finally launching its expanded, simplified version 2.0 of the Regional Air Access Program (PAAR), hoping that it will stimulate air traffic in Quebec's regions. "We are setting the table to improve the situation for all carriers who would like to improve their offer," says the head of air transportation for the CAQ (Coalition Avenir Québec) government and Member of the National Assembly for René-Lévesque, Yves Montigny, who travelled to Gaspé on December 10 to announce the new version with the Minister of Transport, Geneviève Guilbault.

"We want to put the best model in place to allow markets to develop and operate on their own in the long term," adds Mr. Montigny. Among the new features, the "\$500" tickets are being eliminated to make way for a discount modulated according to distance, between 50% and 85%. According to the Québec government, from Gaspé, the discount percentage will be increased from 30% to 50%.

A Gaspé-Montreal flight that cost around \$915, came to \$640. As of February 3, the date of implementation of the adjusted version of the PAAR, the flight will only cost \$500.

Another change is that the two current programs are



Photos: N. Sergerie

René-Lévesque MNA Yves Montigny.

merged into one, and instead of having to fill out documents to recover the credits, they will be directly reflected in the cost of the ticket with the carrier. There is also no longer a limit to the number of trips for one person. Tickets will no longer be offered only to go to Quebec City or Montreal. Discounts can apply to flights between regions or intraperitoneally.

"We are creating better conditions to have more flights for all Quebec citizens, both to go from the regions to the major centres, from the major centres to the regions, but also from one region to another," says Mr. Montigny.

Non-profit organizations and also student trips will now be eligible for version 2.0. However, business clientele will not be entitled to it, even though the Fédéra-

tion des Chambres de Commerce du Québec demanded it.

"For people who travel for work, there is the whole issue of fly-in, fly-out. I don't think it's the government's role to fund workers to get to work. We can't pay for all of Quebec's tickets. We have to draw a line somewhere," explains the Minister of Transport.

The first version of the PAAR, which began in June 2022, was budgeted at \$50 million per year. For 2024-2025, until March 31, 2027, the program is increasing to \$59 million per year.

"We were given an additional \$9 million each year," comments the minister.

In addition, the program will allow people to book their tickets more than six months in advance, which is not currently possible.

According to the Quebec government, the changes made take into account not only the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Regional Air Transport, in place since winter 2023, but also the concerns of the various regional stakeholders. The president of the UMQ Air Transport Committee and mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, welcomes the progress made by Quebec, criticizing Ot-

tawa for its inaction.

"In the current state of affairs, we welcome what the Quebec government is doing, unlike the federal government, which is adding new standards and new constraints that cost carriers and airport managers money, but does nothing concrete," says Mr. Côté.

Regulating regional air transport is once again mentioned, but Daniel Côté is giving the runner a chance with version 2.0 of the program.

"If demand really increases with this incentive, we will bet that supply will follow. We are stimulating demand to create additional supply. We would be on a good trend but I continue to believe that the convincing solution in the medium and long term would be to regulate the markets, but carriers are cautious, but we need them to offer the service," continues the mayor.

In the current context, the mayor believes that if carriers generate more profits, services will improve.

"What we would like is for services to be adapted to the needs of the population. Currently, when we leave Gaspé in the late afternoon and return in the morning, it does not meet our needs. We

need to leave in the morning to return in the evening. If we have to sleep outside before returning, it is not profitable for the region," believes the mayor of Gaspé.

"The federal government would be able to put a few million to do similar work to improve what Quebec is doing, but it is radio silence," repeats the mayor.

In October, Federal Member of Parliament Diane Lebouthillier indicated that the federal government considers the organization of flights a provincial responsibility, with the federal government acting mainly in terms of security.



Transport Minister Geneviève Guilbault.

Significant increase in unemployment in November

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - The unemployment rate saw a significant jump in November, reaching 7.4%, an increase of 2.1% compared to October in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

According to Statistics Canada, the number of workers decreased by 1,600 last month, dropping to 36,400. Of this total, 31,400 positions were full-time, while 5,000 were part-time.

The number of unemployed individuals increased by 800 in the last month. Additionally, 700 people withdrew from the labour market last month which explains the significant jump in the unemployment rate.

Despite this decline in employment from one month to the next, the situation remains much better than it was a year ago. In November 2023, the region had 33,100 occupied positions. Compared to last year, 3,300 more people are currently employed.

However, the number of unemployed individuals was 300 higher than last year, when it was 3,200. The unemployment rate at that time stood at 8.8%.

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Gaétan Lelièvre not impressed by PAAR 2.0

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - As an air transport observer for 40 years and someone who has been in charge of the Rocher-Percé and Town of Gaspé airports, Gaétan Lelièvre believes that the adjustments coming in February to the Regional Air Access Program will provide little to no benefits to passengers.

Since the first summit on air transport in February 2018, held in Lévis under the Liberal government of Philippe Couillard, the former Minister Delegate for Regions under the Marois government and Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé believes that little progress has been made.

“Absolutely not, or minimally. Ways to see progress would be to have an accessible and affordable service, which is not the case. From the moment you don’t have a service that is accessible seven days a week, reliable, at an affordable price, I don’t think there is any significant progress for the citizens of the



Gaétan Lelièvre.

Photo: N. Sergerie

regions,” analyzes Mr. Lelièvre.

However, he acknowledges one positive aspect, travellers no longer need to pass through Quebec City and Montreal to be eligible for the discount.

“But, in practice, there is no carrier that provides a connection between Gaspé and the Côte-Nord, Gaspé and Abitibi or Gaspé and Sague-

nay-Lac-Saint-Jean. Yes, we are giving access to a discount for an interregional trip without going through the metropolis or the capital, but will there be carriers that will develop these markets? That remains to be seen. That is the only element that could be positive about the announcement,” mentions Mr. Lelièvre.

“With the current carriers, it is very unlikely that we will

develop these lines. We will have to consider cooperative-style formulas where the regions will be involved, where the government will support these initiatives with a view to regional development and land use and not just to make profits,” adds the regional development consultant.

He does not sense any government will to support initiatives like TREQ or the idea of a cooperative mentioned by the managers of the Mont-Joli Airport.

“There isn’t any concrete action by the government to support this type of initiative. On the contrary, when we look at the announcements, it is a step backwards in terms of service. The \$500 tickets are disappearing. We are told that we will have, for example, in Gaspé a 50% discount. I looked on Pascan’s website and, at a regular price, we have a Gaspé-Montreal at \$1,500 and with the 50% discount, that comes to \$750 that users will have to pay, unlike the old program that offered tickets when there were availabilities at \$500,” calculates

the former elected official.

“What is absurd is that the minister hopes that, with these changes, ridership will increase. I cannot understand this logic, which only applies to the government. We increase prices, we do not improve the service and we think we will increase the clientele? I have rarely heard that. It is a unicorn world,” he says.

Mr. Lelièvre also mentions a study conducted by the Institute for Research in Contemporary Economics (IREC). In that study, Quebec ranked tenth (last place) for air transportation in Canada.

“New Brunswick, with its 800,000 inhabitants, is managing to hold its own. Do we like to compare ourselves with Ontario? We are not just behind Ontario, we are behind the nine Canadian provinces. This demonstrates the need to prioritize this issue. Unfortunately, this does not seem to have been the case for several years and it is not just the fault of the current government. The problem has been in place for years,” concludes Mr. Lelièvre.

\$5.1M for social solidarity in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - Québec is providing \$5.1 million to the Alliance pour la solidarité de la Gaspésie for the next five years, an amount comparable to the last agreement, which in itself represents a reduction when taking into account inflation.

The announcement made on December 9 surprised the Regroupement des organismes communautaires Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, which did not expect this government action, even though the organization was aware of what was coming.

“We are being offered \$5.1 million over five years. That means \$1 million per year for five MRCs. That means between \$200,000 and \$250,000 per year per MRC for about twenty organizations on the ground. That’s not much. \$250,000 does not meet the basic needs of a community group. Community groups need more than \$30 million. We are being told

\$5.1 million,” says Ms. Giguère.

“The amounts remain roughly the same. The needs have grown significantly. What is more distressing is that Minister Rouleau (Chantal, Minister of Social Solidarity) toured the region to hear from the people about the needs in the community in terms of combating poverty and social exclusion. We attended three meetings and felt that we were not listened to at all,” comments the general coordinator of the Regroupement des organismes communautaires, Geneviève Giguère.

“The distress on many levels is increasing and taking other forms. I would like to stop saying that. It is a little discouraging,” she says.

The idea of grouping community assistance into a single envelope is desirable. “For a few years now, we’ve been getting a lot of funding that seems like a lot, but it doesn’t meet the needs. Worse! It confuses us!” states Ms. Giguère, while acknowledging that it’s

becoming increasingly difficult to manage programs.

“It just confuses the issue. It doesn’t strengthen us. We say we want to reduce administrative burdens, but we increase them. It’s become intense. Yes, if we could do a nice cleanup and see to strengthening community groups, and their ability to act, instead of being busy untangling their agreements, that would be a step forward,” says the general coordinator.

Ms. Giguère admits that there have been increases in funding for organizations, but the demand remains high.

“Increasingly, sectors or groups are targeted while we work to strengthen the entire social safety net,” she says. In the context of government budget tightening, Ms. Giguère notes that investing in social services pays off.

“When people have the assurance that their basic needs are met, they become much more contributory in their community. We must make this courageous gesture,” explains the coordinator.

Merger of municipalities in Avignon still under consideration

NELSON SERGERIE

MATAPEDIA - In the western part of the MRC of Avignon, discussions that began a year ago regarding a possible merger of Matapedia and the Plateaux municipalities are ongoing. The preliminary study carried out by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has been concluded and is favourable to a merger, especially since the municipalities involved already share many

services under intermunicipal agreements.

The ministry continues to support the municipalities in collaboration with the MRC as they further explore the potential merger. Several working groups are actively engaged in these discussions. However, the vastness of the territory remains an issue.

A feasibility study of the project is planned to address the issue and provide further insights.



DECEMBER 19 to JANUARY 1
Inclusively

An industrial shipbuilding cluster in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Côte-de-Gaspé MRC dreams of establishing a regional industrial cluster dedicated to shipbuilding within the next five years. This initiative aims to capitalize on federal investments that have supported the renewal of Canada's military and civilian vessel fleets for several years.

The MRC hopes that the region will capture a significant share of the economic benefits of the \$2.5 billion that the Naval Strategy provides for the small vessel niche over the next 25 years.

"We want to position ourselves in this sector. We have a lot of companies that work directly or indirectly in the naval sector. We have four shipyards in Gaspé. We want to show that we exist and we want to create synergy," explains the mayor of Gaspé and prefect of the MRC de la Côte-de-Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

According to him, there is much more than construction that is found in Gaspé and elsewhere in Gaspésie, mentioning as examples welding or companies that manufacture specific parts for a specific use.

The prefect mentions the cities of Sorel-Tracy or Lévis which are already very active in the naval sector and have a rich history in this sense or Saguenay has shown a keen interest in the naval sector even if there is no construction per se.

"We also want to position ourselves alongside these cities. Not in competition, in



Photos: N. Sergerie

The Director General of the MRC de la Côte-de-Gaspé, Bruno Bernatchez, and the Prefect and Mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

partnership. There is not one that is in the same niche. Gaspé will not compete with Davie (Shipbuilding, located in Lévis). Our infrastructures are too small. On the other hand, can we hold our own in boats under 1,000 tons? Are we able to do it with our local companies? The answer is yes, but if we don't raise our hand, we'll fall through the cracks in the floor," says Mr. Côté.

With the Forillon Shipyard, Gaspé and the region are already well positioned at the federal level.

Since 2015, the Gaspé company has obtained two contracts to build ten search and rescue boats for the Coast Guard, for a total of \$75 million.

A year ago, the shipyard obtained another contract

from Ottawa for \$55.5 million to build the first hybrid diesel-electric mid-shore fisheries research vessel for the Coast Guard.

Bringing together companies will allow the region to go further and act in a complementary manner.

"We want this positioning to be strong and a flagship that will shed light on our industry to show that we exist and that we want to be part of this great naval adventure," he says.

While the exact share of federal opportunities for the Gaspé region is uncertain, Mr. Côté remains optimistic. "I have a lot of confidence. We are not new players. Gaspé has always been a shipbuilding platform. We built wooden ships in the 1800s. Now, we have been building

metal, fibreglass and aluminum ships for years. We know that we are good. Now we need to make it known on a national scale," says Mr. Côté.

The federal and provincial governments already funded this type of industrial cluster project in the 1990s.

Mr. Côté says that the levels of government will contribute.

"We expect to have some (government support). First, we position ourselves. We will hire a resource specific to this strategy and we will seek the funding required to keep this industrial cluster alive," says the elected official.

The Forillon Shipyard is very open to the political project.

"It's really about having all the trades that can grow, develop industries around Gaspé that will serve us and help shipbuilding throughout Canada. It's good for the region and the country," says the shipyard's President and Chief Executive Officer

(CEO), Jean-David Samuel.

According to him, there is so much work to be done in the coming years.

"No one is really ready to do everything that is coming. With this cluster, these companies will help us. Right now, we do a lot internally. We are somewhat independent. What we want is to have companies that will come and help us and work with us," says the President and CEO.

"Canada is currently having difficulty having small boats. It is a sector that is not sufficiently represented," he says.

The Forillon shipyard is limited to 800-tonne vessels but is prepared to expand

"We want to reach 1,000 tonnes but especially to make several boats at the same time. There is new construction. We are limited to 1,000 tonnes with the federal government. We are not limited to the private sector or provincial governments. For repairs, there is enormous potential," says Mr. Samuel.



The President and CEO of Chantier naval Forillon, Jean-David Samuel.

ESSB is receptive to regional shipbuilding cluster

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ - The Eastern Shores School Board and the Centre de services scolaire des Chic-Chocs enthusiastically welcome the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC's announcement of the creation of a regional shipbuilding cluster. This structuring project represents an exceptional opportunity for regional economic development, as well as for training and education.

Through a press release, both organizations highlight their willingness to actively collaborate on this initiative to meet the need for specialized workforce. The Eastern Shores School Board and the Centre de services scolaire des Chic-Chocs are ready to mobilize their resources and expertise to support the development of this industrial cluster, a real source of economic vitality and talent retention in the region. The Centre de services scolaire des Chic-Chocs notably offers a welding and fitting training on a regular basis, including a course that starts in January.

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The Literacy Summit

● ANGELINA LEGGO
Gaspésie Literacy Council

Throughout the month of November, the Gaspésie Literacy Council (GLC) held multiple events through a project called the Literacy Summit: More than Reading and Writing. This two year project, funded by Canadian Heritage, had two major goals: to understand the different needs within the GLC's territory and to provide information in different ways to help meet those needs. In a nutshell, the Lit-

eracy Summit was intended to expose people to the many different ways they use literacy skills in their everyday lives and encourage them to create habits that would lead to lifelong learning. It has been a great success!

The Gaspésie Literacy Council covers the same territory as the Eastern Shores School Board (the Lower Saint Lawrence, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and the North Shore). The diversity within these communities means that a lot of flexibility was needed to both offer in-

formation about subjects in common and provide specific support to certain groups in each area. With this in mind, the project coordinator for the Summit has organized 15 different events so far (online and in person), written multiple articles for the GLC and its partners, created tools to share, and planned a social media campaign for November.

Two major milestones

were reached through the Summit. For the first time, a GLC employee travelled to the North Shore to deliver an in-person presentation on Family Literacy and to Rimouski to visit our partners there. The second milestone was drawing together individuals from every major area within our territory (and beyond) for an online presentation hosted by the GLC.

What's coming next?

While the official Literacy Summit wrapped up at the end of November, the GLC will continue to offer support to partners and presentations to specific groups until the middle of March. This project will have a lasting impact on the GLC, as the information from the Needs Assessment, published in Spring 2024, will be used to plan their way forward for several years to come.

What is the Year of the Snake?

Chinese New Year is a cultural phenomenon in China. In fact, the National Museum of Asian Art indicates Chinese New Year is the most important holiday in China, where a 15-day celebration incorporates age-old traditions in commemoration of the nation's culture and history. Chinese New Year also has a global footprint, and celebrations in various countries commemorate this unique event that heralds the arrival of spring and the beginning of a new year on the lunisolar calendar.

One notable tradition associated with the Chinese New Year involves animals. That tradition is traced to an ancient Chinese poem that told the story of 12 mythical animals that descended from the heavens in a particular order. The Rat was the first animal to arrive and help celebrate the coming spring, and the Pig was the last to make its presence known. Each Chinese New Year commemorates a different animal from that ancient poem, which is why celebrations are often characterized as "Year of the (Name Animal)." Chinese New Year celebrants will commemorate the Year of the Snake in 2025. According to National Museums Liverpool, the snake is wise and intense. The Snake emphasizes physical beauty, which is why it's often associated with vanity. Travel China Guide adds that the snake carries meanings of malevolence, cattiness and mystery, but also notes that some in China believe a snake found in a courtyard is an omen of good luck. In addition, Chinese mythology characterizes the creator of the world as having a human head and the body of snake.

Compatibility is another notion associated with the animals of the Chinese Zodiac that feature so prominently in Chinese New Year celebrations. The Snake is considered most compatible with the Rooster, which the poem suggests was the tenth animal to descend. The Pig (twelfth) is considered the least compatible animal with the Snake.

Chinese New Year is a notably unique celebration. In 2025, the Chinese New Year begins on Wednesday, January 29.



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Help SPEC celebrate 50 years!

● CYNTHIA DOW

NEW CARLISLE - As of May 2025, SPEC will be reaching its 50th year of publication and we have plans to celebrate!

The first thing we would like you to do is mark Saturday, May 17, on your calendars, as that will be the day we kick off our anniversary activities: Exactly 50 years from the first monthly appearance of the SPEC.

Former News Editor, Cynthia Dow, is forming the anniversary committee to coordinate several community activities throughout the year,

which we would like to hold from Matapedia to Gaspé. We're thinking afternoon teas, evening discussions and debates, maybe a few BBQs or a corn boil... the sky is the limit!

But we need your help! Our committee meetings will be held through Zoom so that we can include people from all along the Coast. If you would like to be included in the fun, please contact specnewspaperat50@gmail.com

There will be additional expenses related to the anniversary that Sea-Coast Publications Inc. may not be able to cover out of its regular

budget. So we are asking loyal SPEC readers to provide support by pledging \$50 for the 50th! More information on how you can donate will be available in the new year.

We also hope to prepare a weekly supplement outlining the newspaper's history and some of the most compelling issues we have covered since 1975. Is there a historical event or an issue you would like to see included in these supplements? Let us know!

Over the years, SPEC has proven to be an important connection for Gaspésians of all ages, walks of life, and lo-



cations. Let's continue enhancing that important role by celebrating one of our most

important institutions. All aboard! Contact us at specnewspaperat50@gmail.com

Feminist organizations hold memorial vigil for the victims of femicide

● GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - Five feminist community organizations in the Bay of Chaleur held a memorial vigil on December 6 at the Calacs La Bôme-Gaspésie to honour the victims of femicide, including the 14 women killed 35 years earlier at Montreal's École Polytechnique.

The ceremony concluded the 12 Days of Action to End Violence Against Women. It featured speeches followed by a minute of silence. During the speeches, a list of feminist demands was presented by representatives of Calacs La Bôme-Gaspésie, Avignon MRC's Centr'Elles, the Bonaventure MRC's Femmes en mouvement, l'Émergence and the Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands Feminist Roundtable.

The five organizations jointly organized the vigil to remind people that violence against women concerns everyone, and to promote solidarity in the fight against that violence. Centr'Elles and Femmes en mouvement are feminist action centres where activities are taking place to, among other goals, increase women's autonomy.

During the vigil, Catherine Cyr Wright and Catherine Beaulieu, both working for the Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands Feminist Roundtable, presented a manifesto together.

"Thirty-five years ago, the anti-feminist attack at Polytechnique took place. Fourteen women were killed for the simple reason that they



Photo: G. Gagné

About 40 people gathered on December 6 in Carleton to pay tribute to the femicide victims, notably the women who were killed 35 years ago at Montreal's Polytechnical School.

were women. This violence against women is still present today, as we have seen this year when twenty-five women were victims of femicide in Quebec. It is important to underscore the memory of all those who have been victims of femicide and to fight so that there is not one more," they stated.

They also highlighted the increasing prevalence of gender-based cyberviolence. "For us, feminists, there is nothing new in this. All this violence is part of the same system: patriarchy. It has the same goal: maintaining male domination. Even if it is virtual, this violence has very real consequences for women and

people from gender minorities who are victims of it. It increases social isolation, psychological distress and the fear of speaking out publicly," they added.

Ms. Cyr-Wright and Ms. Beaulieu stressed the importance of regulating virtual spaces, reviewing the laws to adapt them to today's technological reality and raising awareness among actors in the judicial system is essential, but it is not enough. To fight cyberviolence, people must fight against all gender-based violence, whether domestic, sexual or other, regardless of how it is perpetrated.

"At the Gaspé Peninsula Feminist Roundtable, we are

committed to defending the rights of all women and to fighting against all forms of sexist violence, the most extreme of which is femicide. Thank you all for your solidarity and for coming together here tonight. Thank you everyone for being here, wellalieg," they concluded.

Then, Émilie Smith-Lauron and Marianne Morin, both workers at CALACS La Bôme-Gaspésie, an organization that provides support to sexual assault victims, presented alternatively the reality of their duties. They have unfortunately seen, this year again, violence against women and people marginalized by gender.

"As part of our work, we support people who have survived sexual violence and their loved ones on a daily basis. We see that this violence continues to occur in our society. It is not normal that, in 2024, one in three women and one in six men will be victims of sexual violence during their lifetime. It is not normal that nearly half of Indigenous women are victims of sexual violence, and that trans and non-binary people are more at risk of sexual violence than cisgender people. It is not normal that 40% of women with physical disabilities experience at least one sexual assault in their lifetime. It is not normal that, in heterosexual couples, one in nine women is sexually assaulted at least once by her partner. Eight times out of 10, the victim knows the person who assaulted her. Particularly in this

context, we see that sexual violence is part of a continuum of violence, which includes psychological, verbal, economic and physical violence," they both explained.

Ms. Smith-Lauzon and Ms. Morin added that they came together to stand in solidarity with each other, to demand an end to all this violence against women and people marginalized by gender. They want shame and fear to change sides. They want aggressors and society to take responsibility for violence, particularly sexual violence.

"We also want to denounce the rape culture that trivializes this violence, that constantly puts the blame on survivors, that justifies aggressors and that renders invisible multiple trajectories of survivors of sexual violence," they stressed.

"We are instead calling for a culture of consent. A culture where we value and respect the autonomy and free choice of everyone, both in sexuality and in other spheres of our lives; a culture where we denounce inappropriate behaviour from our peers; where we respect consent in all contexts; where we value setting limits and listening to them; where sexuality is synonymous with pleasure, respect and fulfillment; and never violence. We want to tell survivors that we believe them, that we are here, all together, in solidarity. So that there is not one more victim," concluded Émilie Smith-Lauzon and Marianne Morin.

The overall portrait of Quebec fisheries in 2024: Worst volumes in 10 years, but average revenues

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – In 2024, Quebec commercial fishermen recorded a significantly lower volume of catches in comparison with the last 10 years, with total catches amounting to 38,741 metric tons. Their revenues, however, remained stable at \$359 million, a 2% increase from 2023.

According to economist Simon Desrochers of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the situation in 2024 is largely attributable to the decline in shrimp catches in terms of overall volume. Record lobster volumes, however, helped keep total revenues slightly above those of 2023, which reached \$352 million.

“At 38,741 tonnes, the 2024 landings are 17% lower than the average of the last 10 years and even with the adjustments that could come, it will remain the lowest of the last decade,” says Mr. Desrochers, recalling that the available statistics are preliminary.

Although comparable to 2023, the total revenues of fishermen in 2024, at \$359 million, are \$101 million lower than the \$460 million in 2022, the record year in nominal data.

“Lobster landings, worth \$228 million, make 2024 a similar year for this species,” notes Simon Desrochers. In 2023, the value of lobster catches had reached \$232 million. “The value of lobster in the last two years has reached exceptional levels.”

The economist says the same about catches. In 2024, Quebec lobster fishermen recorded overall catches of 14,664 tonnes, another record, compared to 13,765 tonnes in 2023.

“If we look at the share of each species, we see that lobster represents 38% of the overall volume but 64% of the total value. In shrimp, it’s the opposite, because it now only represents 2% of Quebec fisheries. In 2015, it was 21%. This is a big change in trend,” adds the economist.

Simon Desrochers also explains that the data specific to snow crab is “fairly stable”. From 15,205 tonnes in 2023, landings have declined to 13,375 tonnes this year. On the other hand, revenues increased from \$77 million a year ago to \$99 million in 2024, the result



Photo: G. Gagné

A crisis affects pelagic fish in Quebec, even if catches were good on the North Shore in 2024. In the Gaspé Peninsula, landings and revenues were very low.

of a better price.

By adding the share of lobster and snow crab, at 27%, in the compounded revenues of Quebec fishermen, a total of 91% is obtained, an unprecedented concentration for only two species since precise statistics have been recorded by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Groundfish catches, largely dominated by Atlantic halibut, reached \$13 million in value in 2024, while molluscs and echinoderms brought in \$12.5 million, compared to \$4 million for shrimp. Now in serious crisis, pelagic species and other marine species generated revenues of approximately \$2 million.

The Magdalen Islands in the lead

In 2024, fishermen from the Magdalen Islands moved to the top of the maritime sectors of Quebec for the value of landings, with total revenues of \$137.4 million, compared to \$131.5 million for the Gaspé Peninsula and \$77.5 million for the North Shore. Fishermen from the Lower St. Lawrence brought up the rear with \$12.7 million.

In the Magdalen Islands, the volume landed increased slightly from 10,575 to 10,777 metric tonnes from 2023 to 2024. This gain is mainly due to the increase in lobster catches, from 6,996 to 7,445 tonnes. Snow crab landings declined significantly, from 2,235 to 1,880 tonnes.

“This is the second-best year of the decade in the Islands, 17% above (the 2015-2024) average. The 7,745 tonnes of lobster landed are more than double the 2015

figure,” says Simon Desrochers.

Revenue from lobster catches in the archipelago decreased from \$118 million to \$116 million due to a drop in prices, while revenue from snow crab catches increased from \$12 million to \$15 million. This species generated better prices than in 2023.

Gaspé Peninsula details

In the Gaspé Peninsula and Lower St. Lawrence, two regions that are combined for statistical purposes when we go into detail, the volume of catches fell considerably from

2023 to 2024, from 21,418 to 15,207 metric tonnes, a decrease of 29%.

“This is also 44% less than the average of the last 10 years. The year 2024 was the second-best year for lobster, but only 946 tonnes of shrimp were landed in the Gaspé. The year was also very bad for pelagic species,” explains Simon Desrochers.

At \$131.5 million, the total value of catches in the Gaspé Peninsula was the third lowest of the decade in nominal dollars, and the worst in discounted dollars, i.e. taking into account price indexation. “Overall, it’s 30% less in real

(discounted) dollars. It should be noted that 58% of the real value comes from lobster in 2024. As for crab, the value of \$47 million is low since we have returned to 2015 levels,” the economist emphasizes.

Pelagic species catches were dismal in the Gaspé Peninsula in 2024, with catches of 200 tonnes and revenues of \$200,000. This is 11 times less than in 2015.

The North Shore once again stands out for its more diversified landings than elsewhere in maritime Quebec. Total landings reached 12,758 metric tonnes, compared to 9,398 tonnes in 2023 and an average of 11,864 tonnes over the last 10 years.

Pelagic species contributed 3,085 tonnes of the total volume, more than double the 1,455 tonnes in 2023.

“The results were good for lobster with 1,885 tonnes (1,199 tonnes in 2023) and it was also good for snow crab with catches of 4,941 tonnes (4,172 tonnes in 2023). With \$77 million, the value of the catch exceeded the average of \$69 million achieved between 2015 and 2024,” specifies Simon Desrochers.

Snow crab and lobster accounted for \$66 million of the \$77 million total value, representing 85.7% of revenues from all species landed in the North Shore.

Christmas 2024 and New Year's Greetings 2025

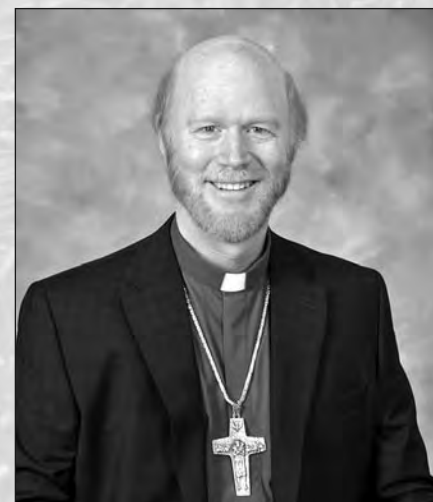
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In this blessed season of Christmas, I would like to echo the Pope's invitation on the occasion of the Holy Year to be "Pilgrims of Hope" for our world. Christmas is a reminder of God's love that is incarnated among us, in the simplicity and vulnerability of a child. It is in this divine birth that we find a hope that does not disappoint.

Jesus Christ, who came among us at Christmas, is the living sign that God never abandons us. He is the Emmanuel "God with us", who accompanies us at every moment.

My wish for you is that this hope lives in you, that it strengthens and guides you throughout this new year, and that God bless you abundantly!

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year 2025!



†Claude Lamoureux
Bishop of Gaspé

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2024 snow crab season consisted of an average volume but rising prices

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Quebec snow crab landings declined in 2024 compared to 2023, reaching 13,375 metric tonnes instead of 15,205, a significant drop of 12%. However, revenues increased from \$77 million to \$99 million, still far from the 2022 level of \$194 million. In the case of revenues, this represents a gain of 28.6%, attributable to a fairly large increase in the price paid to crab fishermen, all things considered, specifies economist Simon Desrochers, of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

“The value of \$99 million is below the average of \$144 million, which has been the average for the last 10 years, but there has been a clear improvement in the price. When averaging the fishing areas, the price reached \$3.46 per pound. This is a 50% gain compared to the 2023 price,” notes Mr. Desrochers.

The year 2023, he recalls, was marked by a resounding drop in the price paid to fishermen, from \$6.53 per pound in 2022 to \$2.33 in 2023, the result of unsold stocks. Consumers decided that they were paying too much for crab. This price had reached \$7.62 in 2021, in the middle of the Covid pandemic, when the sum of money in the economy reached record levels due to 2020 benefits paid by the federal government. This price of \$2.33 per pound in 2023 was the lowest of the decade.

For the first time in 2024, the share of snow crab catches, 35%, of all landed Quebec catches at 13,375 tonnes, was lower than that of lobster, at 38% and 14,664 tonnes.

In terms of revenue, snow crab found itself in second place behind lobster for the fifth year in a row. In 2024, the proportion of Quebec fisheries revenues generated by snow crab landings reached 27%, compared to 64% for lobster. The value of snow crab landings had previously dominated for decades before 2020. These proportions are based on data that is still preliminary, emphasizes Simon Desrochers.

Results by maritime region: slower progress for the Gaspé

It is in the Gaspé Peninsula that the snow crab situation progressed the least in 2024



Photos: G. Gagné

The 2024 recovery in snow crab fishing was slower in the Gaspé Peninsula than on the North Shore or the Magdalen Islands.

compared to the previous year, with revenues increasing only 6.8%, from \$44 million to \$47 million.

This situation is mainly explained by the significant drop in catches by crab fishermen on the Gaspé Peninsula, from 8,799 to 6,554 metric tonnes, a decline of 2,245 tonnes, or 25.5%.

“This was to be expected since there was a quota drop in zone 12 and in other areas where Gaspé crab fishermen fish,” says Simon Desrochers. That quota reduction in zone 12, which covers the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence, was rather important, at 29%.

It is on the North Shore that the recovery in revenue was the most decisive in 2024, with revenues of \$37 million, compared to \$21 million in 2023. This is a gain of 43.2%.

“In zones 13, 14 and 15 where the North Shore crab fishermen fish, quotas have increased,” says Simon Desrochers, while adding that the price has also increased considerably.

A look at the catches supports this reality, as the catches made by the North Shore crabbers increased from 4,172 to 4,941 metric tonnes from 2023 to 2024, a gain of 18.4%.

In the Magdalen Islands, the value of catches jumped 25%, from \$12 million to \$15 million, an increase mainly attributable to the increase in the price of snow crab, assures Simon Desrochers, due to the quota reduction in zone 12, where the Magdalen Islands mainly fish. In the archipelago, catches fell from 2,235 to 1,880 metric tonnes between 2023 and 2024, a decrease of 15.9%. The Magdalen Islands

too rely heavily on zone 12, where the quota dropped sharply.

Strong price variations

In Quebec, snow crab is by far the crustacean among the species that experiences the greatest price fluctuations from one year to the next, considering a relatively short period.

Looking back over the last decade, the price has more than doubled between 2015 and 2018, with a jump from \$2.64 per pound in 2015 to \$5.35 in 2018. The situation was repeated between 2020, when the price was \$3.78 per pound, and the following year, at \$7.62.

On the downside, the context of 2022 and 2023 generated a drop from \$6.53 to \$2.33 per pound, a decline of 64.3%. If one extends this period to the two years between 2021 and 2023, the drop reached 69.4%, since the price was \$7.62 per pound in 2021.

A year ago, Simon Desrochers explained this situation in part by the fact that Americans, by far the largest buyers of Canadian snow crab, will express their nationalism by falling back on Maine lobster when the price of crab is too high, and in an inflationary context like the one experienced in North America between 2021 and 2024.

Snow crab supplies are also

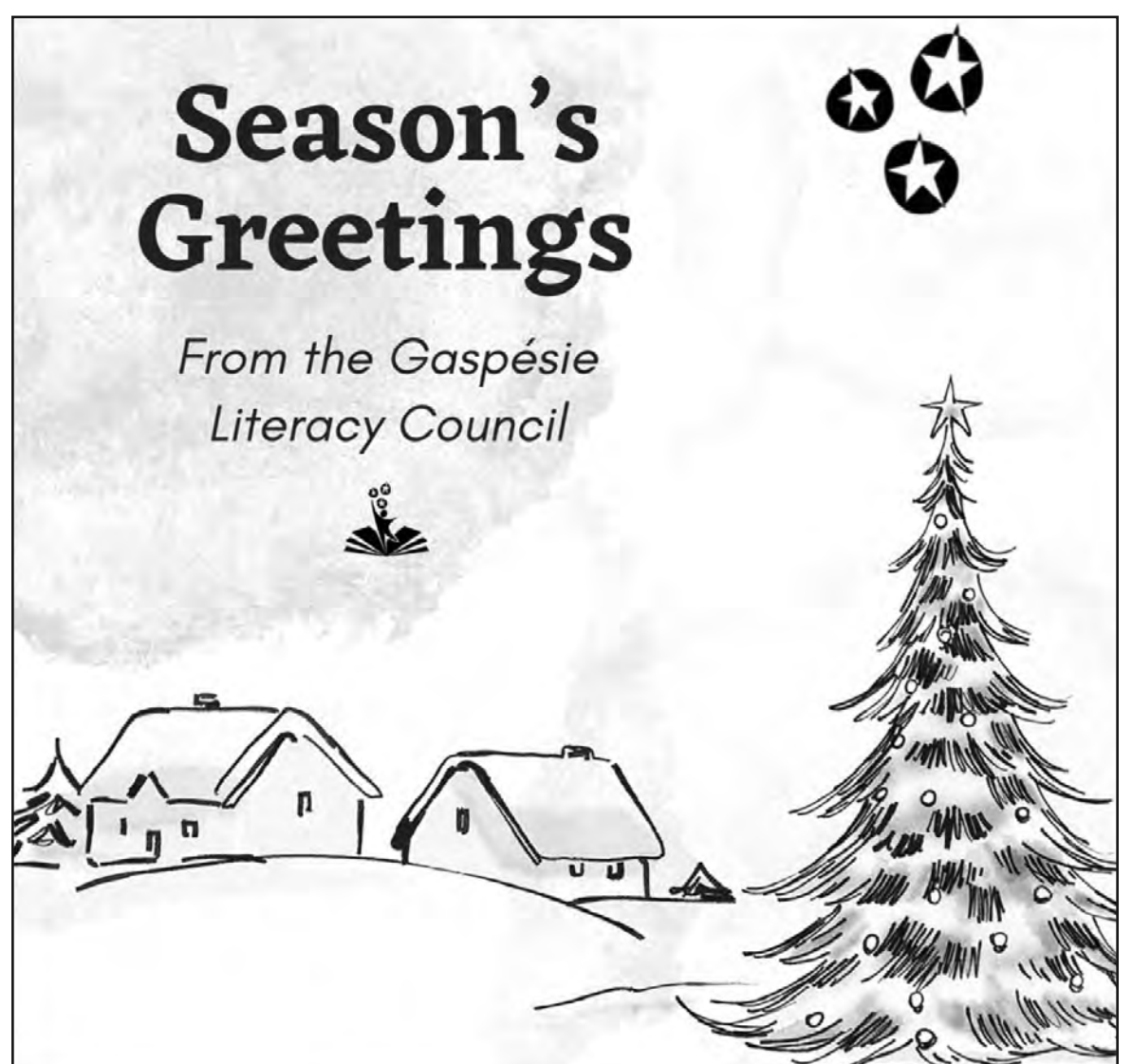
more geographically varied than those of lobster, which is exclusive to eastern North America. The conditions of the global snow crab market therefore also depend on fishing in Alaska and northern Russia.

Southern Gulf still generates significant revenues

By catch sector, as always, and despite a significant quota drop, it was zone 12 that dominated in terms of revenue, thanks to a landing value of \$43.7 million, compared to \$22.9 million in zone 16 and \$12.9 million in zone 17.

In zone 12F, the value of catches was \$6.5 million, compared to \$3.1 million in zone 15 and \$3 million in area 14. In area 16A, catches brought in \$2.8 million for fishermen, compared to \$1.4 million for crab fishermen in area 13 and \$1 million for those in area 12C.

Landings in the three main snow crab catch areas reached 6,136 tonnes in zone 12, in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence; 3,052 tonnes in zone 16, mainly frequented by crab fishermen from the North Shore; and 1,671 tonnes in zone 17, which covers the sector between Trois-Pistoles sector in the Lower Saint Lawrence, and La Martre, near Sainte-Annes-des-Monts, in the Gaspé Peninsula, and an adjacent part of the North Shore.





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Shortbread: A Sweet Tradition Through the Centuries



JILLIAN O'CONNELL

PORT DANIEL - The first known traces of shortbread cookies began to take shape in the 12th century in the Scottish Highlands, though they weren't yet the festive treats we know today. Over time they have become a holiday tradition that sweetens Christmas tables all around the world.

The origins of shortbread are deeply rooted in Scotland, where early versions of the recipe were quite different

from what we bake now. It was made from leftover bread dough that was dried in an oven at low temperatures until it hardened. The name comes from its crumbly texture. Today, shortbread has many variations and regional flavours due to global trade and modern adaptations. The traditional ingredients of flour, sugar, and butter are still used in most varieties.

Shortbread cookies date back to the 12th century but really took off in the 16th century when Mary, Queen of Scots,

was on the throne. Mary popularized shortbread and made it a highlight at Scottish tea parties. It was expensive to make, due to the cost of butter and sugar, making shortbread a luxury item that was only served on special occasions such as Christmas, weddings, and Hogmanay (Scottish New Year's Eve).

As the tradition spread across Scotland, shortbread was adapted in various ways depending on the region. In some places, it was decorated with sugar, while others incorporated spices like cinnamon or nutmeg. But no matter the variation, the essence of shortbread remained the same: a rich, buttery, melt-in-your-mouth cookie that brought joy to families during the holiday season.

By the 20th century, shortbread was mass-produced, packaged in decorative tins, and sent as Christmas gifts around the world. In fact, today, many people associate the sight of a tin of shortbread with the warmth and cheer of the holi-

Shortbread Recipe

The following shortbread recipe is one that many SPEC readers have probably already made at some point. Long-time home economics teacher Carol Gilker often made this recipe with her home ec students at New Carlisle High School.

1 3/4 cups of flour
1/2 cup of icing sugar
1 cup of soft butter

Whip the butter until fluffy. Blend in dries. Roll into small balls and flatten out to about 1/4-inch thickness. Alternatively, you can also roll the dough on a floured surface and use a round cookie cutter. Bake at 350° for 8 minutes.

The cookies are great left as is or garnished with icing and a small piece of cherry.

day season.

From its humble beginnings in the kitchens of the Scottish Highlands to its place as a Christmas tradition in households across the world, shortbread has become a symbol of comfort, generosity, and celebration. In every circle, square and finger of shortbread, there's a taste of history. Each buttery

bite carries with it the spirit of those early Scottish bakers, who created a treat to be savoured by family and friends, year after year. It is a little reminder of the centuries of Christmases gone by and the many more to come, each one sweetened by the simple joy of a cookie shared in good company.



Happy

HOLIDAYS

Wishing you peace, love
and joy this holiday season
and throughout 2025.

diane

Diane Lebouthillier,
MP for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine

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Help wanted! Apply now

PORT-DANIEL - Students taking part in the Journalism Club at Shigawake Port Daniel School invited staff from the Gaspé Spec to visit their classroom on December 2. It was the second time the club had extended an invitation to SPEC.

During the visit, the group briefly discussed advertisements, classifieds and announcements.

Here is a sample of the Club's very Christmassy employment announcements.

HELP WANTED

Looking for a new Santa. You must be able to eat lots of cookies without barfing. Wages 40/hr. Benefits include a free house and you don't have to pay bills for one year. Must love kids, elves, reindeer and all types of cookies. Call the head elf at 111-111-1111.
-Cate, Alex.



HELP WANTED

Looking for an investigator to find Rudolph. Must be able to see in the dark. \$50 per minute, because we're rich. Benefits include free suit and equipment. You must love the Christmas spirit and macaroni. Call Lily and Jasmine at 718-295-7300.



HELP WANTED

Looking for a reindeer. Must be able to fly and read a map. Wages include carrots, candy canes and a day off of work. Benefits include unlimited candy canes. You must love Santa, children and flying. Call 175-418-752. Ho Ho Santa.
- Liam, Tori and Kayliey



HELP WANTED

Looking for Santa's new wife. Must be able to cook food and make potions. Wages are \$30 per hour. Benefits include kisses and holidays to the Bahamas. Must love Santa and Elves also. Call Santa at 1-800-single.
- McKenna and Lucy



HELP WANTED

Looking for a tall elf. Must be able to wrap gifts. Wages \$20 per hour. Benefits include a Christmas suit. You must have Christmas spirit. Call the red nose snowman at 681-RED-BUTTON-TOY.
-Kate



HELP WANTED

Looking for an investigator. Must be able to find the missing reindeer. \$20 an hour. Benefits include a free Christmas gift. Must love the Christmas spirit. Call the North Pole. 111-800-RED-NOSE.
-Aubrey and Kate



HELP WANTED

Looking for an elf who can wrap presents. Must be able to use tape and wrapping paper. Wages \$50 per hour. Benefits include free cookies and milk and hot chocolate. Must love cookies milk, hot chocolate Christmas and us :) Call Santa Leah and Santa Julianna :) at 1-800-hohoho! :)
-Leah and Juliana



HELP WANTED

Looking for an elf. Must be able to dance with me. Wages \$30 per hour but can get fired easily. Benefits include PJs, candy canes and money. Must love kids. Call Santa at : 1-800-Santa.
- McKenna and Lucy



HELP WANTED

Looking for a Santa. Must be able to find his elves. Wages \$35 per hour. Benefits include elves with magic and money. Must love elves. Call Jared at 418-702-8262.
-McKenna and Lucy



HELP WANTED

Looking for a gingerbread man and he must be able to run faster than a fox. Wages 15 buckeroonis an hour. Benefits include free pet hamster. Must love ruining food. Call the manager aka Jasmine and Lilly at #666.



HELP WANTED

Looking for an elf. Must be able to fly. Wages: hair gel. Benefits include 10 monkeys. Must love goldfish. Call 581-700-2033.
-Kayliey



HELP WANTED

Looking for a new head elf. Must be able to yell loudly and be bossy. Wages \$30/hr. Benefits include all you can eat cookies and summers off. Must love elf and Christmas music. Call Santa Claus at 1/2 elf.com
Caution: Santa sometimes accidentally eats the elves and reindeer.
- Cate and Alex



HELP WANTED

Looking for a new present. Must be able to have good stuff in them and make kids happy. Wages equal to the present. Benefits include one free present at the end of December. Must love kids, being opened. Call ghostbusters at ghostbusters.com
-Alex



HELP WANTED

Looking for an elf. Must be able to make toys and wrap the toys. Wages are in cotton candy. Benefits include unlimited clothes and candy. Must love reindeer and Santa and children. Call 418-752-HOHO ask for Santa.
-Liam and Tori



HELP WANTED

Looking for a powerful person. Must be able to find frosty the snowman. \$20 an hour. Benefits include a free Christmas hat. Must love snow and cold weather. Call Mrs. Claus. 1-888-frosty the snowman 801.
-Kate



HELP WANTED

Looking for a new Frosty the Snowman. Must love kids, Santa, elves and reindeer. 1M per hour. Requirements include not running away, not drinking hot chocolate, can't see the sun and you can't melt ever. Must love kids and everyone in the whole entire world. Call who you gonna call, the new headmaster 1-123-4567.
- Leah and Julianna



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Notable Christmas celebrations

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas all over the world. Christmas celebrations include various time-honored traditions that celebrants hold near and dear to their hearts. Depending on where someone lives, their Christmas traditions may look quite different from those in other parts of the globe.

It can be enjoyable to learn how Christmas is celebrated elsewhere and perhaps even incorporate a few new traditions into your celebrations. Take a peek at these customs near and far.

• **Seafood and beachside celebrations:** Australia is located in the southern hemisphere, which means Aussies are enjoying the peak of their summer come December 25. A white Christmas is unlikely, unless the "white" refers to white, sandy beaches. Santa is probably swapping his thick coat for a pair of board shorts, and heavy, roast-laden meals are unlikely to make it on to the menu. Instead, Australians dine on seafood feasts and spend Christmas outdoors camping or at the beach.

• **Krampus parade:** Some Christmas elves are not so jolly. Just ask residents of the Austrian, German and Hungarian Alps. Each year in this region, a true "Bad Santa" is the talk of town. Villagers believed that Krampus, a half-man, half-goat creature with a legion of ill-tempered elves, roamed the mountains wreaking havoc. Krampus was said to abduct miscreants and set unruly youth or even intoxicated adults straight. Today, Krampus is more the "bad cop" to Santa's "good cop" persona. Krampus is celebrated as an antihero at parades and other events.

• **Las Posadas:** According to scripture, Joseph and Mary had to make an arduous journey from their hometown to Bethlehem for census purposes while Mary was pregnant. When the couple arrived, they found lodgings were nonexistent, and Mary ended up giving birth to Jesus in a manger surrounded by animals. In celebration of that journey, people in Mexico and Guatemala celebrate Las Posadas, a procession representing Mary and Joseph's journey and their struggle to find lodging.

• **La Befana:** In Italian folklore, La Befana is a witch-like old woman who, like Santa, delivers gifts to children throughout Italy. Instead of this gift-giving taking place on Christmas, La Befana hands out gifts on the Epiphany Eve in a similar way to how the Three Magi brought presents to Baby Jesus. La Befana also is believed to fly through the night sky to sweep away all the troubles of the old year and clear the way for a fresh start.

• **Move over reindeer:** Although reindeer often garner fanfare this time of year, the Yule goat is a Christmas symbol and tradition in Scandinavia and northern Europe. Each year in towns throughout Sweden and other areas, large statues of Yule goats are built on the first day of Advent and stand throughout the holiday season. This tradition dates back to ancient Pagan festivals, and some believe the goat is connected to the Norse god Thor, who rode in the sky in a chariot pulled by two goats. Holiday traditions differ considerably in various regions of the world. Celebrants may want to consider incorporating foreign traditions into their own Christmas celebrations this year.

A sweet surprise that sparked a Christmas tradition

JILLIAN O'CONNELL

This scene is a familiar one to many: it's Christmas, family and friends have gathered for great food and company. Everyone is dressed in their finest, and they're sporting their tissue paper crowns.

One year baker and candy-maker Tom Smith was preparing for a special holiday season and he was determined to create something new, something that would make his store stand out among the many other festive businesses in London.

Tom thought of his trip to France, he remembered the bright colours and playful designs of the bonbons they sold at fairs. It was a simple idea that sparked a vision in his mind. What if he could combine his passion for sweets with the magic of Christmas, creating a treat that was as much about the joy of surprise as it was about flavour? The idea for a Christmas cracker began to take shape.

Tom didn't want just any sweet treat, he wanted something that would bring families together, something to spark conversation and laughter. His first attempt at the Christmas cracker was inspired by the paper-wrapped bonbons he had seen in France. He packaged a sweet, wrapped in colourful paper, along with a small gift



and a tiny piece of paper inside with a joke or a riddle.

Tom added a twist to his idea. The cracker would make a small bang when pulled apart, an effect that was quite harmless but thrilling for the person. The sound of the snap would create a moment of surprise, and within the cracker would be the sweet, the joke, and the tiny gift. It was the perfect combination of flavours, fun, and festivity.

The first Christmas crackers, however, were far from the bright, glittering tubes we know today. They were simple paper twists, with paper hats, jokes, and candies inside. It took Tom time and quite a few prototypes to perfect the concept, making the cracking sound louder and more impressive. People loved the idea of surprise and families would

gather around the dinner table, pulling them apart with eager anticipation, laughing at the silly jokes, and exchanging little gifts.

Tom Smith's Christmas crackers became so popular that they spread across London, and then to the rest of the United Kingdom and slowly around the globe. As the years went by, his small business grew. The crackers were once just a charming little festive novelty and became a special memory of the holiday season.

Today you can purchase Christmas crackers at most stores selling Christmas decorations. They range from a little more than \$1 to over \$20. If you are creative and would like to try making your own, just do a quick online search. There are many free templates available.

Joyeuses fêtes!

Stéphane Sainte-Croix
Député de Gaspé
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Obstetrics services will be reviewed again

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre will be reviewing obstetrics services following the many gaps in services over the past year.

The most recent gap in service occurred in mid-October at the Chandler hospital centre. According to a calculation made by the CISSS, the four hospitals in the region collectively experienced 22 days of service gaps between September 2023 and August 2024.

The issue came back into the news after the Maison des familles in the Haute-Gaspésie expressed concerns on November 28 during a CISSS board of directors meeting. The Sainte-Annes-Monts hospital experienced at least six episodes of service gaps since January.

"We have set up a major organizational project related to the obstetrics service offering, where we will involve mothers and the community in the search for solutions. Despite the continuous post-



Photo: Courtesy of Vanessa Plusquellec

A new reflection is underway at the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS regarding obstetrics.

ing of our positions, despite the nurses who graduated from outside Canada, the recruitment challenge is currently unparalleled for the obstetrics department," says the director of nursing, Maxime Bernatchez. "Our

major project aims to find solutions with the collaboration of midwives in the community. To see how we can decompartmentalize the continuum of care and services," he adds.

"It's always a good idea to

reassess things. We would like to be invited because we have solutions," replies the president of the Eastern Quebec Nurses, Auxiliary Nurses and Respiratory Therapists Union, Pier-Luc Bujold.

In Haute-Gaspésie, all six available obstetrics positions remain vacant. "The obstetrics service offered in Haute-Gaspésie relies exclusively on three independent workforce nurses," says the manager. "We are working hard to see how we can do things differently to ensure the safety of mothers in Haute-Gaspésie," he continues.

The union, however, presents a completely different situation regarding the state of the service in Haute-Gaspésie.

"There are organizational issues that the CISSS de la Gaspésie is aware of and until these organizational issues are resolved, nurses with expertise in obstetrics will not return to work there. We have to resolve that first," says Mr. Bujold, adding that some of these nurses are currently working in other hospital de-

partments.

"It doesn't make sense. Some nurses would be ready to return to work there. They have delivered their issues. It is up to the CISSS de la Gaspésie to resolve these issues," continues the union president.

Nursing assistants are trained to take care of mothers and babies after childbirth. "When a pregnant woman gives birth, we need two nurses. Our current structure allows us to free up one of the two following a birth, and the care is then provided by a nursing assistant," says Mr. Bernatchez.

"The goal of the organization is to ensure the safety of pregnant women. Sometimes, we prefer to refer them to another sector to ensure that the delivery is safe," says Mr. Bernatchez.

In 2019, the CISSS reorganized obstetric services across its four hospitals, aiming to "find innovative solutions in the short term," amid resource shortages. Five years later, the situation has not improved.

Only a few people wait more than a year for surgery in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre reports that only 21 patients have been waiting for surgery for more than a year, mainly in orthopedics.

This is according to the organization, while the Minister of Health, Christian Dubé, admits that the target set for catching up across the network will not be reached in December.

Quebec is no longer setting a target, while the national list stands at 10,707 Quebecers who have been waiting for more than a year.

"We're fairly stable. We have some cases that have been on the waiting list for more than a year in some specialties. There has been no increase or decrease since April 1," notes Jean-François Sénéchal, Assistant Director of the Professional Services Department.

Orthopedics and ophthalmology cases have waiting



An unoccupied operating room.

Photo: N. Sergerie

lists of more than one year. "In orthopedics, this is due to the departure of an orthopedic surgeon in Gaspé, in September, whom we have not yet been able to replace. As a result, we have had to redistribute the cases awaiting surgery among all our troops in the rest of the region,"

says Mr. Sénéchal, who assures us that urgent cases are always given priority.

There are currently 283 cases on the waiting list, with 15 waiting over a year.

"The vast majority have been on the waiting list for less than six months. The rest have been waiting between

six and 12 months. Surgeries are prioritized according to their urgency, and the vast majority are carried out within the expected time frame," maintains the Assistant Director.

The six other cases that are more than a year overdue are in ophthalmology.

"We also have a vacancy, which means that everything that is requested is distributed among our four ophthalmologists practising in our region. There are a few cases that we are unable to carry out in less than a year."

The overall waiting list has 1,000 cases, with over 800 being less than six months old.

"82% of our pending cases are completed in less than six months. We have 20 cases out of 1,000, of which 0.2% take more than a year, and the rest take between six and 12 months," Mr. Sénéchal says.

Oncology cases are treated promptly. "The turnaround time is 56 days and

the vast majority within 28 days. We follow up very closely. We don't have a single case that exceeds the expected time frame," says the assistant director.

Staff shortages may contribute to delays. "It's not just the doctor who operates. There's a whole team around him. Of course, to have an operating theatre room that runs at 100%, you need 100% of our staff. There are times when we are unable to meet all our human resources needs, which means that we sometimes have to wait a little longer for surgery," explains Mr. Sénéchal.

"We manage all our backlogs dynamically and try to meet our deadlines," he adds.

Compared with the rest of the province, Mr. Sénéchal estimates that many other CISSSs would like to have 0.2% of cases waiting for more than a year.

"This is still a favourable position when compared across the province," he notes.

How to Be the Perfect Holiday Guest

Without making everyone regret inviting you

HOLLY SMITH

PORT DANIEL - The holiday season means lots of parties and family dinners, and you'll probably spend time as a guest in someone else's home. Whether you're going to a friend's party or staying with family, being a good guest is important so that everyone has a good time, without you being the reason they can't wait for you to leave. Here's how to be the perfect holiday guest and avoid awkward moments.

RSVP on Time

This is simple but important. If you get invited to a holiday event, respond as soon as possible to let the host know whether you'll be there. This helps them plan food and activities. If you're unsure, it's better to politely say "no" than to leave them waiting. If you say you'll come, don't cancel at the last minute. It can be disappointing for the host after they've planned for your attendance.

Respect the Guest List

If the invitation doesn't mention a plus one or children, inquire with the host before assuming you can bring along a date or your children.

Offer to Bring Something

It's a nice gesture to offer to contribute something, like a dish, dessert, or even a drink. It doesn't need to be fancy, but it shows your host that you appreciate their effort. If they ask you to bring something specific, make sure you don't forget it. If it's a potluck, bring something you know people will enjoy. If they decline your offer, bring a host/hostess gift. Once again it doesn't have to be expensive. It's the thought that counts. A scented candle, bottle of wine, and homemade preserves are all examples of appropriate gifts for the host.

Arrive on Time

Arriving at the right time

is key. It's best to show up around the start time, but being 5-10 minutes late is okay. Don't arrive too early though, especially if the event is just getting started. If the event starts at 6 p.m., don't show up at 5:30 p.m. and expect to eat dinner while the host is still setting up. If you're late, let your host know by calling or texting them.

Respect the Host's Space

You're a guest, not in charge of the house. Don't leave your stuff lying around, and try not to make a mess. If you're staying overnight, make your bed and clean up after yourself. Offer to pitch in with dishes and clean-up. Even if they say "no", they'll appreciate your willingness to help.

Know When to Leave

It's easy to have fun and stay longer, but when the party starts winding down,



it's time to go. If people are cleaning up or the music stops, that's your sign to leave. A good guest knows when the party is over and leaves on a positive note. This way, everyone will want you back next year!

Thank the Host

After the event, always thank

your host. A simple message such as "Thanks for having me! I had a great time" shows appreciation. It's a small gesture, but it leaves a good impression.

Being the perfect holiday guest means being polite, respectful, and considerate. If you follow these tips, you'll make the holidays better for everyone.

Happy Holidays



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The birthing room project in Gaspé delayed by Quebec's financial constraints

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The unique project in Quebec to create a birthing room by the Maison de la famille Parenfant in Gaspé must be delayed due to budgetary constraints imposed by the Quebec government.

Despite this delay, the organization's board of directors is keeping the project alive, hoping to see it come to fruition in the next fiscal year of the Quebec government, which begins in April.

Both the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS) and the Ministry of Health have expressed support for the initiative.

"There is no new funding coming in unless there is an envelope that would eventually arrive. I have no confirmation



Photo: N. Sergerie

The Maison de la famille Parenfant in Gaspé, once expanded, will include a birthing room.

that I will have the funds required to carry out this project. In the current context, I doubt we could have it in the short term," says CISSS President

and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Martin Pelletier.

Despite the funding challenges, the organization is continuing to design the

architectural and engineering plans.

The call for tenders, originally planned for January, will be launched as soon as the

Quebec government confirms funding.

Initially scheduled to open in the winter of 2026, the project's timeline will now be delayed.

To date, 65% of the \$1.2 million budget has been raised, with a grassroots fundraising campaign aiming to raise an additional \$300,000.

This project was imagined by the Maison de la famille Parenfant since the number of births in the Gaspésie does not justify the creation of a birthing centre.

The expansion will double the current facility's size, adding a birthing room, a lactation room and a new large multipurpose room. The new facility will provide families the option to give birth in a neutral, non-hospital setting, supported by midwives.

Tips to make holiday dinners more affordable

"Eat, drink and be merry" is a familiar refrain come the holiday season. Hosting a holiday dinner is a great way to welcome family and friends and encourage them to embrace the festive nature of the season. However, the high cost of foods and other essentials may have certain holiday hosts rethinking their menus and their guest lists this year. A 2024 Pew Research Poll showed Americans worried about the state of the economy cite the price of food and the cost of housing as their foremost concerns. More than 90 percent of Americans say they are "very" or "somewhat" concerned about the cost of food and consumer goods.

Average annual food-at-home prices were 5 percent higher in 2023 than in 2022, according to the USDA Economic Research Service. Inflation has been a key topic of discussion for much of the last three years. While data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates inflation continues to cool off from all-time highs, consumers are still anxious about how food prices are affecting their bottom lines and their holiday entertaining plans. According to Farmdoc Daily, which offers agriculture-based data analysis, 68 percent of U.S. consumers expected rising food prices to

impact their holiday meals in 2023. Similar concerns may prevail in 2024.

Stretching holiday entertaining dollars comes down to being savvy. With that in mind, hosts can consider these meal modification strategies this holiday season.

Replace a high-cost protein with a more affordable alternative. Sometimes a holiday meal calls for pulling out all of the stops, and that may mean spending more on a special main dish. Rather than a luxury like beef tenderloin or prime rib roast, consider a less expensive dish, such as a pork tenderloin, roasted chicken or even seafood.

Add extra side dishes. Incorporate an inexpensive item like rice, beans or an extra vegetable side dish into the meal so that plates can be filled with the less expensive foods and fewer high-cost items.

Shop the sales. Plan meals around a supermarket circular. While you may have had one holiday dinner idea in mind, once you see what the stores are putting on sale you can stock up on those items and build the dinner around them. If you find a good deal several weeks away from the holidays, buy the items and freeze them until they're needed.

Buy generic or store

brands. Chances are no one will notice if you use generic or store brand ingredients, which can be considerably cheaper than their brand-name counterparts. Many are even manufactured in the same facilities that produce the name brand stuff.

Make an affordable drink. Alcohol costs can add up

when you try to cater to everyone's tastes and preferences. Make one or two bulk drinks, like a holiday punch or signature cocktail, so you can keep alcohol costs in check.

Stretch the snacks. Instead of a charcuterie board filled with expensive cheeses and meats, opt for dips and raw

vegetables or a low-cost cheese ball made with cream cheese and herbs with crackers. Keep snacks to a minimum; otherwise, guests may fill up and then not have room for dinner.

Holiday hosts can embrace various strategies to save money on family meals this season.



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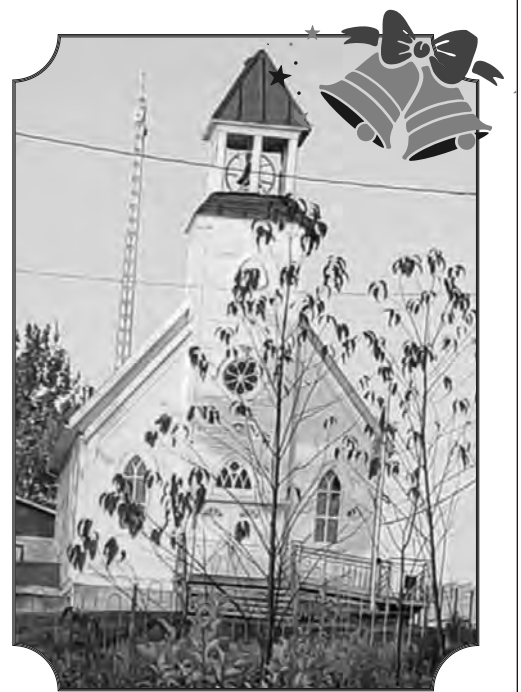
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Message in a Bottle

Seniors meet local entrepreneur at Family Ties

MADELYN HAYES

NEW CARLISLE: On October 3, entrepreneur Shannon Major met with 19 seniors participating in the latest “Getting to Know You” activity.

The Message in a Bottle activity began with participants writing a note to be placed in a bottle and sent out to sea. Of course, they hope that, one day, they will hear that their message has been found in some far-off land.

Shannon’s message emphasized the importance of loving yourself and her belief in using natural products in and on our bodies, which is the basis of her small business. Shannon’s enthusiasm and passion were evident as she shared her knowledge about creating healthy products from nature.

A self-taught entrepreneur, Shannon explained that during the covid pandemic, she began researching how she



Photo: Lydiah Lapointe, Saydie Bourgaize and Lexie Bourdages

Shannon Major guided participants as they created their own face and body salves.

could create “all natural” products, leading to the launch of her business: Wild Willow Soapery.

The recipes her business uses are registered with Health Canada and include various locally sourced ingredients, such as chaga, which

can help with skin irritation, dry skin, psoriasis and more.

Her product line includes all-natural soaps, shampoo and conditioner, dish soap, stain remover and more. Although she uses all-natural products, she recommends consulting with your family

doctor before adding new products to your lifestyle.

Shannon can often be found at local markets. She also sells her products through her Facebook page and at the Gaspesian Way boutique in the CASA building.

As a special treat, Shannon provided a lip salve for each participant and supplied all the ingredients for participants to create their own face and body salve. Participants eagerly selected their preferred natural oils and scents, filling the room with calming, soothing aromas.

Following the activity, a light lunch was served consisting of pumpkin pie with whipped cream, gingersnaps and treasure cookies. Each participant also received a Trick-or-Treat bag to take home. Those in attendance commented that they had enjoyed “a fun and informative afternoon” and offered much praise. “Shannon is very knowledgeable and passionate about natural remedies.”

“Getting to Know You” activities for seniors aged 55+ are offered monthly by Family Ties through funding from the Government of Canada’s New Horizons for Seniors program.

Seniors meet a retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces

MADELYN HAYES

NEW CARLISLE - 19 seniors met at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch, on November 7 to hear a presentation from Master Corporal Gladys Main. Gladys served in the Canadian Army until she was medically retired on November 1, 2022.

At this “Getting to Know You” activity organized for seniors by Family Ties participants were asked to prepare a short letter along with a Christmas card, to send to members of the armed forces, who would not be able to be home for the holidays. Hearts were filled with understanding for the families who would be missing their loved ones at this special time of the year and the importance of remembering their sacrifices.

The participants were also asked if they would like to speak about family and/or friends who had previously served or are currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. Many stood with pride to share stories, show



Master Corporal Gladys Main shared her many experiences from her 22 years of serving in the Canadian Army.

photographs and display medals of their loved ones.

This was followed by the presentation from Master Corporal Gladys Main, who had the undivided attention of the group as she shared many experiences from her 22 years of serving in the Canadian Army. Gladys explained that, as a young girl, she had dreamed of being in the

forces. Everyone enjoyed looking at the photographs she had brought depicting her different deployments. “It was hard to recognize her in combat gear!” commented some of the participants. They also noted that they could have listened to her for hours, as her presentation about serving her country was excellent.



Photos: Courtesy of Family Ties

Participants were given a chance to speak about family or friends who had previously served.

After the presentation, a snack was served, and everyone had the opportunity to socialize and create a poppy craft. Those who were interested could also purchase fundraising items from the Legion. The seniors went home with a tote bag with a beautiful poppy design, a “We Remember” lapel pin and a Canadian flag pin.

Thanks to an anonymous donor, four \$25 gift cards were drawn.

The final “Getting to Know You” activity took place on December 4. This project, for seniors aged 55+, was offered by Family Ties through funding from the Government of Canada’s New Horizons for Seniors program.

The Caring Project: Four years of spreading kindness

HOLLY SMITH

NEW CARLISLE: - Simple acts of kindness can have lasting and exponential outcomes, such as in the case of the Caring Project founded by Ann and John Hall.

In 2020, The Gaspé Spec featured an article by Diane Skinner about the Caring Project, a thoughtful initiative started by Ann Hall of New Carlisle. The idea began when Ann and her husband, John, were at the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital in Quebec City. During a heavy snowstorm, they were having supper and looking out the window when Ann noticed two men outside, wearing only light clothing. She said to John, "They don't even have a scarf!" John replied, "You could knit one."

Those four simple words

sparked what became the Caring Project, a mission that remains close to Ann's heart. Four years later, the project is still going strong despite challenges. "When it started, there were 25 people knitting scarves, including women from Gaspé and members of the Anchor in New Carlisle. Over time, the number of knitters has decreased as some have passed away or become busy with life, but the project has grown in other ways. It's no longer just scarves. People now knit toques, mittens, socks, headbands, shawls, and Afghans." states Ann. Adding that to date, 1,471 items have been donated to those in need.

"People are welcome to knit whatever they like, and donations of yarn and money help keep the project going. At first, shipping the items was difficult, but now volun-



People now knit toques, mittens, socks, headbands, shawls, and Afghans for the Caring Project.

Photo: Courtesy of Ann Hall

teers have stepped up to deliver them to places like the Salvation Army in Moncton, Riverstone Recovery Centre in Fredericton, the Salvus Centre in Moncton and Open Door & Resilience Shelters in Montreal," explains Ann.

The project has grown over time, mostly thanks to friends telling their friends

about it. As a result of the project, Ann has made some wonderful connections, even with people she has never met. She gives an example of a woman also named Ann, who once knitted 100 baby hats for hospitals in Africa, where newborns can't leave without a hat. "That same woman now knits for the

homeless through the Caring Project," says Ann.

The Caring Project does not receive any government funding. "The knitters are people who want to fill their free time with something meaningful. They enjoy helping others and find joy in spreading warmth," states Ann.

When asked if she would do it all over again, Ann didn't hesitate: "Yes! I believe everyone needs help at some point in their lives, and the Caring Project is my way of giving back."

Ann shared with SPEC her favourite sayings that motivate her to continue with her mission of helping the homeless. "Together we can" and "Kindness makes us stronger." The Caring Project proves that even small acts of kindness, like knitting a scarf, can make a big difference in someone's life. If you would like to contribute to The Caring Project you can contact Ann Hall on facebook.



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May the magic of this holiday season touch each Gaspesian home with happiness, hearts filled with kindness, and a softer sentiment that encourages us to love each other more.

Ken Ross, New Carlisle



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New Richmond: Several performances of interest for the English-speaking community

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The winter-spring program at the Salle de spectacle in New Richmond will feature at least four shows that could be of interest to the English-speaking community.

Éric Normandin, Salle de spectacle communication officer and music enthusiast, mentions the February 6 show of country singer Matt Lang, called All Night Longer. However, he urges people to act quickly to secure tickets.

"It is almost sold out. He sold 50,000 tickets during his first tour. He first came here in 2019 and 177 people attended the show. I first thought that we could expect between 250 and 350 people this time around, as he is better known. I also thought that we could set up the hall in a free space fashion so that people could dance. That free space limits the number of seats to 329, and 510 if we open the mezzanine. We also knew that Matt Lang presented his show last summer at the Festi-Plage in Cape Cove (Percé). The show producer



Photo: Courtesy of Éric Normandin

Four shows that should be of interest for the English-speaking community, clockwise, Matt Lang, Wooden Shapes, Misc and Guitar Story 2.0.

told us that he didn't want to limit the number of seats. He was right. We are selling three times more seats than in 2019. In fact, we will sell our 600 seats," explains Éric Normandin.

Another exciting event is

set for March 7, featuring a performance by a band called Wooden Shapes.

"We are excited. We're selling tickets almost every day for that show. We have already sold 130 tickets, about three months before it. It is classical music performed by six musicians from the Trois-Rivières and Quebec City Music Conservatories. They play the cello, the violin, the double bass and the viola. Their repertoire includes rock tunes from Queen, Pink Floyd, Iron Maiden and so on. They released an EP on Spotify with

seven songs. They also play Nothing Else Matters from Metallica only to switch to Crazy Train, an Ozzy Osbourne song. The hall will vibrate in a way that has rarely happened. For people more familiar with the Québécois repertoire, they are also playing a Cowboys' fringants medley that will trigger emotions, considering the death of lead singer Carl Tremblay," adds Mr. Normandin.

He also recommends the May 2 show of Misc, an instrumental jazz trio from Montreal featuring keyboard, bass and drum musicians Jérôme Beaulieu, Simon Pagé and William Côté, the last two having played for another jazz band called Bellflower.

"Their goal is to make jazz more popular. We will present the show in the cabaret formula. The trio members like to play close to the attendees. They often play in small venues, like what could be the equivalent of the middle of a living room with people around them. They are always looking for that proximity. They want to make jazz accessible. They sometimes add a bit of electro-pop music and some sampling sounds. They won the award for the best jazz album at the ADISQ (Quebec Music Awards) and they launched another album in 2021. They are supposed to release a new album in April, just before their show here. It is

eclectic (diversified) music," sums up Éric Normandin.

June 5 will bring Guitar Story 2.0, a tribute to the guitar and the most influential guitarists of the last century. This second show by the group of five musicians and singers brings together outstanding staging, legendary costumes for songs like Rain Purple and Marty McFly, guitar solos, vocal harmonies as well as a brand new wall of around thirty guitars.

"They are playing 64 songs. In fact, they are singing medleys, so, parts of 64 songs because it would take too long to sing them all. They are playing a set of verses, the chorus and a solo. They play many styles: blues, old rock and roll, funk, metal, country songs of Alan Jackson and Johnny Cash, rock songs of Dire Strait, Nirvana and Al Di Meola. There are three guitars, a bass, a drummer, a male and a female singer in the band. They do a draw at every show and give away a guitar they have used during the show as a prize," explains Éric Normandin.

Other notable performances include Gaspesian country singers Alex and Caro, performing in a cabaret setup on May 30. Alex and Caro notably played at the Shigawake Music Festival in August 2021. On May 11, K Danse, the dance school of Manon Lebrun, will present its annual show.

They're just ordinary heroes

They're not Superman.
They're not faster than a speeding bullet,
nor can they leap tall buildings in a single bound;
but they help their neighbours,
give money to strangers;
and feed the stray cats.
They're just ordinary heroes,
ordinary heroes.

They're nine-to-five joes,
who sacrifice youth and dreams for devotion;
women who smile by day,
but cry in the night for their babies—unborn, dead, or simply gone;
men who forge new lives
when they're too soon relegated to park benches.
They're just ordinary heroes,
ordinary heroes.

They're the widows and widowers,
the leftover people;
the abandoned,
the betrayed.
No deck stacked in their favour,
perpetually looking at Lady Luck's back;
life-seared, yet they rise; they suffer and rise; Phoenix-like
from the ashes of pain
and loss; and like magicians,
create something good from nothing. They're just ordinary heroes,
ordinary heroes.

- Constance Brochet



2024 was full of challenges, but also full of new projects, which gave us the opportunity to become the first reference in the field of fabrication, machining and hydraulic.



On behalf of the entire team, we send you our best wishes for the holiday season.

What is a Scottish tablet?

PENNY MACWHIRTER

Chances are that you've savoured a bite or two of a deliciously sweet Scottish tablet and didn't know. Scottish tablet looks like fudge, has similar ingredients and is often referred to as fudge, but it can definitely hold its own when it comes to sweet indulgences.

Both fudge and tablet are made by melting sugars and "beating" the mixture until it forms just the first consistency. Fudge is creamy and smooth in texture, while Scottish tablet is harder and crumbly. Basically, the base ingredients are the same, but the tablet is boiled to a hotter point than fudge.

Although it is unknown when exactly the Scottish tablet was first served, evidence does



suggest that it dates back to the early 1700s. The Household Book of Lady Grisell Baillie, from that time period, mentions a tablet in it.

Traditionally the tablet was made using a heavy pot over an open fire, requiring skill and

patience to achieve the perfect consistency. Today the utensil of choice for stirring tablets is the same, a wooden spoon. Another similarity is that tablets are still considered a special treat, often served during holidays and gatherings.

Scottish tablet

You will need a heavy bottom pot, candy thermometer, wooden spoon and a 9x13" buttered pan.

- 1 cup of unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces, more for greasing the pan
- 2 cups whole milk
- 4 pounds superfine sugar, about 9 cups
- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- Flavourings like pure vanilla extract or whisky, to taste, optional.

In a large saucepan, heat the milk on low. Add the butter until melted. Add the sugar and increase the heat. Bring the mixture to a hard boil for 5 minutes, stirring continuously. Once 250 degrees is reached, add the condensed milk and lower the temperature to low. Stir until medium bubbles form (approx. 25 mins). Place the pot on a pot holder on the counter and begin to beat with an electric mixture until it loses its shine (approx. 5 to 10 minutes). Add extract and spread into the prepared pan. Allow to cool for 30 minutes before marking slices. Wait until completely cool to serve.

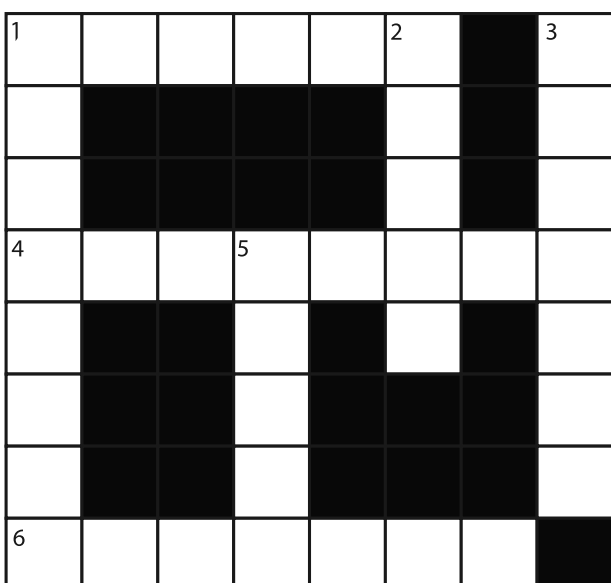
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 N S I W W O R U M G L F L S C E K E G T
 W T H S E I W E C M Y R P A V Z R W R W
 R P H I L G N Y P S R I W B D W V A M H
 N G T L L T K D S P V E S Y U E V U T Y
 B M S G U L W E P M B N O S S E S O F F
 U U G M F W P S G U A D S W L F B I P P
 N L W N D O V M O B N S A S U O N A M F
 D O Y I R C S D W V F R P P G S S C H T
 L E T A Z D G T M O H E B G V K P N P T
 E V W T D C O L U P E M A P K C D F M N
 S O E N F R R W B D I N B R F A E E N D
 F G T U L A E T N L C E P P S R S K L O
 Y G M O H Z T G C H N T N P Z T F R Z S
 C T W M R A H V A H I C O A S T I N G N
 C C D B T V G V M W E L C N N I K D U V
 D E S O D Z U O G L I S L C I K M H L T
 U E E O V H A A C H I L L R E E T S C H
 L L I A R T L Z C Z O O M R K C L S N R

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

- | | | | |
|--------|----------|----------|----------|
| WORDS | COASTING | MOMENTUM | STEER |
| BLADES | DOWNHILL | MOUNTAIN | THRILLS |
| BUMPS | FAST | ROPES | TOBOGGAN |
| BUNDLE | FRIENDS | SLED | TRACKS |
| CHILL | HILL | SNOWY | TRAIL |
| CLIMB | LAUGHTER | SPEED | ZOOM |

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

1. Retail locations
4. Put off doing
6. Offering presents

DOWN

1. Looking for items to buy
2. Taste and enjoy
3. Proof of purchase
5. Raise a cup to health

Answers:
 Across
 1. Stores 4. Postpone 6. Gifting
 Down
 1. Shopping 2. Savor 3. Receipt 5. Toast



As Gaspesians enter the New Year with open minds, their hearts are filled with a threshold of possibilities, adventures, goals and destinations unknown. Many of us know that a New Year brings warmth and love and, within us, we trust that their path will guide them throughout 2025.

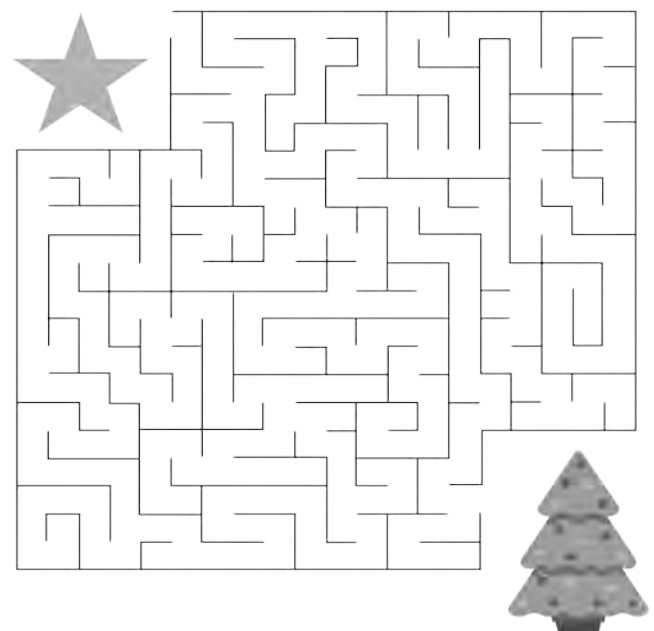
Let this New Year give us joy to fill our days, peace to fill our hearts and love to fill our lives. Each Gaspesian believes in themselves and is capable of more than we can imagine - goodness in their hearts, caring in their soul and a helping hand at their doorstep.

Wishing everyone a "Happy New Year" filled with peace, happiness and a meaning, with glory to God in the highest and peace on earth.

- Ken Ross, New Carlisle

HOLIDAY MAZE

Help the star reach the Christmas tree!



Announcements



Obituary



LANGLOIS: Donald (Captain Don)

Captain Don, passed peacefully with his family at his side on December 6, 2024, at the St. Catharines General Hospital in his 87th year. Beloved husband of Carole for 63 years. Loving father of sons Danny (Laurie), Kerry (Julie), Terry (Joan). Loving grandpa to Linda, Tyler, Luke (Bobbie), Wayne (Amber), Jesse (Lindsey), Amy (Richard). Great-Grandpapa to Landon, Ava, William and Ellie. Survived by his sisters Gladys and Loraine. Predeceased by his loving wife, his parents Alfred and Dinah, brothers Andrew, Leo, Dawson and sister Elsie.

Don commenced his seafaring career in 1953 and worked his way through the ranks to Captain. He joined the Great Lakes Pilotage Authority in 1972 as a Marine Pilot and retired in 2002. He served on the board of directors of the Pilotage Authority from 1996 to 2007. Don was a member and past president of the Corporation of Professional Great Lakes Pilots, member of the International Shipmasters Association and former member of the Canadian Marine Pilots and

Canadian Merchant Service Guild.

Don was a loving father, grandfather and great-grandpapa. He cherished nothing more than watching his grandchildren and great-grandchildren play hockey or figure skate. Both Don and Carole could always be found at games or events, cheering enthusiastically. Don was known for his generosity, often offering a little extra for every goal scored or assist made.

A service was held at the George Darte Funeral Chapel on Thursday. A Funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Alfred Roman Catholic Church on December 13 followed by Rite of Committal at Victoria Lawn Cemetery. Donations may be made to the Cancer, Heart and Stroke Foundation or a charity of your choice. Online Guestbook: www.georgedartefuneral-home.com



In Memory

CLARK: Ralph, Della, Morris and Jessie

*I feel a warmth around me,
Like your presence is so near.
And I close my eyes to visualize
Your face when you were here.
I remember the times we spent together,
And they are locked inside my heart.
As long as I have those memories,
We will never be apart.
Even though we cannot speak anymore,
My voice is always there,
Because every night before I sleep,
I have you in my prayer.*

Loved and missed always. The Clark Family.

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 needed 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 (Ondina), Shelley (Louise), Crystal (Lewis), Anna, Amelia, Rhea, Graham and Alexandra.

Happy Birthday



On Saturday, December 7, family and friends gathered to celebrate the 98th birthday of Sarah Watt Mackenzie. Wishing her many more years of health and happiness.



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, December 22

New Carlisle

11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Port Daniel

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Monday, December 23

Location TBA

7:00 p.m. Mission of St. Mary

Magdalene Service

Tuesday, December 24

New Carlisle

9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

Port Daniel

4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

Shigawake

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

Wednesday, Christmas 25

8:00 a.m. Christmas morning in the chapel

Sunday, December 29

No Service



Christmas Services Schedule

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND

Sunday, December 22

10 a.m. Service

Tuesday, December 24

4 p.m. Christmas eve hymn with Holy Communion

Sunday, December 29

10 a.m. Service

Sunday, January 5

10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN

Sunday, December 22

10 a.m. Service

Tuesday, December 24

No Service

Sunday, December 29

2 p.m. Service

Sunday, January 5

2 p.m. Service



PARISH OF GASPÉ

Wednesday, December 18

St Paul's - Gaspé

7 p.m. Healing Evening Prayer

Sunday, December 22

St Andrew's - York

10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Tuesday, December 24

St Andrew's - York

3 p.m. Christmas pageant with Holy Eucharist

7 p.m. Christmas Service with Holy Communion

Sunday, December 29

St Paul's - Gaspé

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Worship Wednesday

10 a.m. St Paul's

COAST ROUND-UP

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

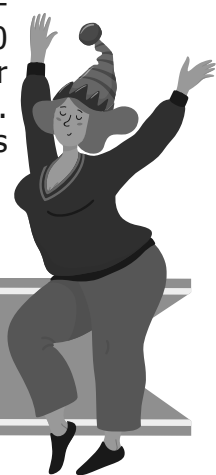
NEW CARLISLE:
New Carlisle Legion
Mondays: Mini bingo beginning at 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Line Dancing beginning at 7:30 p.m.
Every Friday: Open at 7:30 p.m. drop in to play pool, shuffleboard, etc.
December 27: Live music with John Gedeon beginning at 9 p.m. \$10 entry fee.

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

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



COAST ROUND-UP:
 \$8 per week or annual plan \$80
CLASSIFIED: \$8 per week

HOROSCOPES

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
 Aries, a special person in your life deserves all of your attention. Romance might be on your mind, and you'll look forward to all of the time you can spend together.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
 You may feel artistically inspired this week, Taurus. Explore projects like home improvements or crafting. There are many things to try.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21
 Your attendance at a wedding or another special event could have your thoughts moving in a romantic direction, Gemini. Maybe you're thinking of taking your relationship to another level?

CANCER – June 22/July 22
 Cancer, forge ahead in your efforts if you aspire to learn a new skill or take on a different project. This might involve meeting new and interesting people. Expand your social network.

LEO – July 23/Aug 23
 Leo, it is important to put others first this week, particularly your spouse or romantic partner. You don't want any hurt feelings circulating right now.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
 An unexpected visitor might come your way in the next few days, Virgo. This could require overhauling your schedule and even space in your home to make room.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
 Family and friends will have a difficult time changing your mind once you have taken a stance, Libra. You have dug in your heels on this topic.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
 Scorpio, new work assignments or additional business may complicate matters in the days ahead. That can be great during times of year when spending can get out of control.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
 As you prepare for the colder temperatures, holistic arts, acupuncture, herbs, and therapies might be on your mind, Sagittarius. You don't want to be sick this go-around.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
 Capricorn, you will try to meet the demands of your need for information this week. Chances are you'll be reading the newspaper and news outlets as much as you can.


AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
 You cannot gain traction right now, Aquarius. Perhaps you haven't met the right people yet? Keep your eyes and ears open for new opportunities.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
 Pisces, if a career change has been on your mind, the new year might be a chance to get those gears moving in the right direction.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS
 DECEMBER 18
 Christina Aguilera, Singer (44)
 DECEMBER 19
 Alyssa Milano, Actress (52)

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Over the river
and through
the woods,
**may the holiday spirit
reach you wherever
you are this season!**

As we reflect on 2024, we're filled with gratitude for the good friends and neighbours who make this community such a wonderful place to live and work. Folks like you have brought so much meaning and happiness to our year, and we thank you for your trust in us and your continued support of The Gaspé Spec. We hope your Christmas season is merry, bright and beautiful, and your New Year happy in every imaginable way.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Sea-Coast Publications Inc. Board of Directors and employees of The Gaspé Spec.

This is the **last issue** of The Gaspé Spec for 2024.
The office will be closed on **Thursday, December 19, 2024.**

Staff will be available beginning **January 2, 2025.**

The first issue of The Gaspé Spec
in the new year will be **January 8, 2025.**

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I SPY 



Wishing everyone
a Merry Christmas
from all of us at the
Sipuminu Society
and the Cascapedia
River Museum



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Fax (418) 392-5070
cascpdia.ds@globetrotter.net

275 route 299,
Cascapedia-St-Jules, Qué.
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Fax (418) 392-5070
cascapedia_museum@globetrotter.net

BMR

MERRY CHRISTMAS

*Thank you to our loyal employees
and valued customers.*

HOLIDAY HOURS
December 24: 8 to 11 a.m.
December 25 and 26: Closed
December 31: 8 to 11 a.m.
January 1 and 2: Closed

Les Matériaux Gaspésiens
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418-752-5933

Merry Christmas

*and thank you to our loyal
employees and valued customers.*

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

From the CASA Staff and Board of Directors

