

\$2 billion needed to eventually restart Gaspé Mines

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MURDOCHVILLE: - Osisko Metals might have to invest \$2 billion to restart Gaspé Mines operations following announcements made before the holidays.

That's according to the mining company's chief executive officer, Robert Wares, on the sidelines of a January 13 press conference to launch a committee to maximize local economic benefits surrounding the potential resumption of operations in Murdochville.

In November, in an update, Osisko said the mine site would contain 824 million tonnes of mineralized rocks grading 0.34% in copper and 670 million tonnes grading 0.38%.

This estimate represented a 53% increase in copper equiv-

alent metal content over previously reported indicated resources.

It is estimated to contain 4.91 billion pounds of copper, making it the largest undeveloped deposit in eastern North America.

In December, Osisko acquired 199 mining claims adjacent to the Gaspé Mines site.

The company concluded an agreement with two private claim holders on October 8 for five million common shares and a 2% royalty on net smelter returns, half of which is redeemable for \$2 million.

The claims cover lands around the Gaspé Mines project, including portions of the potential tailings facility and exploration targets located north and south of the Murdochville project.

"We are now at a potentially much larger project. We are



Osisko Metals CEO Robert Wares in Murdochville on January 13.

Photo: N. Sergerie

very optimistic. We have tripled the resource, but half of this new resource is inferred, which involves a lot of drilling

to convert this safer resource category. We want to convert all of these 1.5 billion tonnes to an indicated resource category.

We are looking at 100,000 metres of drilling this summer,"

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Gaspé Mines: A committee to maximize local and regional benefits

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MURDOCHVILLE - The Quebec government is taking the initiative to set up a pilot project for the creation of a committee to maximize local economic benefits from the Gaspé Mines project by the promoter Osisko Metals, in Murdochville.

"The goal is to have a leverage effect. With the eventual opening of the Murdoch mine, the goal is for the local and regional community to be able to take maximum advantage of this economic opportunity. The committee will bring together economic and community stakeholders, local and Indigenous elected officials so that everyone can pitch in and take advantage of the arrival of this significant economic development," explains Maïté Blanchette Vézina, Minister of Natural Resources and Forests



Several people had been invited by the regional minister, Maïté Blanchette Vézina (third from the left) to launch the committee to maximize economic benefits.

Photo: N. Sergerie

and Minister responsible for the Lower Saint Lawrence, the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands regions.

Ms. Blanchette Vézina travelled to Murdochville on January 13 to make the an-

nouncement.

The Minister wanted to find a project with good potential for opening up and target an area that had a desire to engage in economic development. "This is a project in a histori-

cally mining town. The community is keen to see this project. The winning conditions were there to create this pilot project," adds the minister.

The committee, composed of her ministry and other min-

istries, economic stakeholders, MRCs, local elected officials, chambers of commerce and the Micmac Nation, will monitor calls for tenders and the needs of local investment projects to inform regional entrepreneurs of upcoming contracts and direct contracting authorities to local entrepreneurs able to meet their needs.

This pilot project is part of the actions of the 2024-2025 Roadmap for the Harmonious and Responsible Development of Mining Activity, which consists of "implementing strategies that enable host communities to benefit concretely and sustainably from the presence of mining activity."

"It's an asset and an asset that we will be able to use, exploit, and collaborate to ensure the success of the project," points out Osisko Metals Chief Executive Officer Robert Wares.

Four First Nations acquire majority stake in Quebec City's Hilton hotel

The Mi'gmaq are part of the partnership

GILLES GAGNÉ

GESGAPEGIAG: – Four First Nations united under a newly created entity, Atenro, have announced a partnership with InnVest Hotels to acquire a majority stake in the Hilton Québec. The hotel will continue to be managed by Hilton.

The four First Nations represented are the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach by the Taasipitaakin Trust, the Mi'gmaq of Gespe'gewa'gi by Mi'gmawei Mawioimi Resources LP, the Huron-Wendat Nation by the Wendat Investment Corporation LP and the Cree Nation by the James Bay Eeyou Corporation.

Together, they formed the Atenro Limited partnership, named after the Wendat word for "friendship".

This agreement marks a significant step in strengthening the economic participation of First Nations in several economic sectors in Quebec, including the hotel industry. Several First Nations already own or share hotel establishments in Quebec.

"Our new partnership demonstrates the willingness of Indigenous communities to invest in the economy in a sustainable way and to strengthen their financial self-sufficiency. The revenues generated by our other investments, such as wind, allow us to diversify our investments," says Fred Vicaire, chief executive officer of Mi'gmawei Mawioimi Business Corporation, the general partner of Mi'gmawei Mawioimi Resources LP.

"By investing in hospitality properties, we have the opportunity to create spaces that showcase our heritage and allow visitors to learn more about our cultures. It also strengthens our economic position and financial autonomy, while contributing to the sustainable development of our communities," stresses Henry Gull, President of the James Bay Eeyou Corporation.

"This acquisition is a concrete example of how First Nations can play a key role in Quebec's economic develop-



Photo: Audet Photo

Grand Chief Pierre Picard, Huron-Wendat Nation; Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty, Crie Eeyou-Istchee Nation; Fred Vicaire, chief executive officer of Mi'gmawei Mawioimi Business Corporation; and James Wolfe, vice-president of InnVest Hotels.

ment while preserving and enhancing their unique cultural heritage. The development of our communities also requires strategic investments outside the territory," points out Louise Nattawappio, Chief of the Naskapi Nation.

"The Wendat Nation is proud of this major investment, which is also found on its magnificent territory, the Nionwentsio. It is even more significant since it is sealed by an economic alliance with the Eeyou, the Mi'gmaq and the Naskapi. This historic transaction honours the memory of the Wendat ancestors who once had an important network of trade and trade alliances. We continue in the same tradition and set an example for our younger generations where collaboration, ambition and visions can converge into concrete successes that promote our financial independence," said Grand Chief Pierre Picard.

Acquiring shares in a hotel will allow the First Nations to promote their rich culture and traditions with visitors. This includes elements of design, crafts, cultural activities, and unique dining experiences.

"Hilton Quebec is a high-performing hotel in our portfolio, and this very important agreement with our First Nations partners in Quebec allows us to unlock the value of this property while providing

a dynamic new investment opportunity for new owners. Our InnVest team will continue to be actively involved with the hotel as asset managers for the new partnership. We are thrilled to welcome the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, the Mi'gmaq of Gespe'gewa'gi, the Huron-Wendat Nation, and the Cree Nation on this exciting journey," says Lydia Chen, CEO of InnVest Hotels.

The new owners plan to provide employment and training opportunities for members of all First Nations. All current jobs will be maintained.

Located a few steps from Old Quebec City and Parliament Hill, Hilton Québec features 569 modern rooms and spacious suites with spectacular views of the city. Directly connected to the Quebec City Convention Centre, the hotel has the largest ballroom in the city and a total of 22 meeting rooms. It offers a bar, two restaurants, a fitness centre and a heated outdoor swimming pool.

The parties involved retained the professional services of Atmacinta, Cain Lamarre, Plan A Capital and Gowling WLG to carry out the acquisition project and acknowledge the support of Bank of Montreal and the First Nations Bank of Canada

for their commitment to ensure the successful closing of the acquisition by providing requisite credit financing.

The First Nations involved

The Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, located near Schefferville, is the only Naskapi community in Quebec. It was a signatory to Quebec's second modern treaty, the Northeastern Quebec Agreement, in 1978. The Naskapi have a registered population of over 1,500 members.

The Wendat Nation, notably Wendake, is located north of Quebec City. In 1760, it concluded a treaty of peace and alliance with the British Crown, the Huron-British Treaty, which has since been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada. Today, this Nation is home to

more than 5,000 Wendat.

Mi'gmawei Mawioimi Ressources LP is a company owned by the three Mi'gmaq communities of Gaspésie: Gesgapegiag, Gespeg and Listuguj. Through its operational arm, Mi'gmawei Mawioimi Business Corporation (MMBC), MMR LP invests in strategic and diversified projects to stimulate economic development and ensure sustainable benefits for its communities. This commitment is based on a long-term vision, aligned with Mi'gmaq values and respect for their territory.

Founded in 1986, the James Bay Eeyou Corporation or Eeyou Companeé (in Cree) was created under the La Grande Agreement with Hydro-Québec and its subsidiary, the Société d'énergie de la Baie James. Headquartered in Chisasibi, Eeyou Companeé manages the funds provided to the Crees under various agreements with Hydro-Québec. The mandate of Eeyou Companeé is to promote the traditional way of life, improve social conditions, foster economic development, provide training and employment opportunities for the Crees, and facilitate cooperation between the Crees and Hydro-Québec.

InnVest Hotels specializes in asset management, construction and hotel operations. InnVest's extensive portfolio includes more than 100 owned and managed hotels, encompassing recognized hotel brands. Its management team oversees the day-to-day operations of its owned and third-party hotels, InnVest is the largest hotel owner and operator in Canada.



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Police report

On January 14, Superior Court Judge Guy De Blois upheld the joint submission of the criminal prosecutor and the defence and sentenced Lisette Hautcoeur, a 60-year-old woman from Chandler, to 15 years in prison for manslaughter. Lisette Hautcoeur admitted to killing her neighbour Richard Allard, 64, on July 16, 2022, in his Chandler apartment, located on Mgr Ross Street, at the Centre Émilie-Gamelin. As aggravating factors, the court considered the high degree of violence of the crime as the victim was stabbed 11 times, the impact on her loved ones, and her criminal record. The sincere remorse of the accused, expressed in a letter read by her son in court, the support of her family members, a high level of rehabilitation and the exemption for the court from a long trial worked in Lisette Hautcoeur's favour. Ms. Hautcoeur, who has been in custody since her arrest, received credit for 1,323 days of pre-trial detention, leaving her with 11 years, four months and 12 days to serve. Her sentence also includes a lifetime firearm ban and a DNA sample submission requirement.

Superior Court Judge Guy De Blois sentenced Keven Labrie, 39, from Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, to 16 years in prison for the May 2022 non-premeditated murder of Jean-Philippe Bélanger, in the latter's apartment, also located in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. Mr. Labrie was convicted by a jury in December and sentenced on January 16 at the Percé Courthouse, six days after the defence attorney and criminal prosecutor Isabelle Gavioli made a joint suggestion of 16 years of incarceration to the court.

Judge De Blois approved that suggestion, underlining the relatively weak rehabilitation potential of Keven Labrie, who stabbed Jean-Philippe Labrie 15 times, to the head among other body parts. The victim remained conscious after the attack but succumbed to his injuries two days later in a Quebec City hospital. Labrie was found guilty on December 3 by a jury of 12 people. He was not in the courtroom when the verdict was rendered, as he spent the last part of his trial in a Percé prison cell. The trial had started on November 12. At the beginning of the trial, the accused refused to leave his New Carlisle prison cell. He also caused many courtroom interruptions when he accepted to attend the trial. Judge De Blois expelled him from the courtroom at times.

One of the two fraudsters at the Paspébiac Tim Horton's, who admitted to stealing \$65,000 from her employer, has been sentenced to two years less a day in prison to be served in the community. Ginette Briand, 61, of Port-Daniel-Gascons, will be subject to a curfew for part of her sentence and two years of probation. Since her involvement is said to be greater, the woman will also have to repay \$10,000 to the owner of the Tim Horton's franchise. In October, her accomplice, Martine Denis, 63, received a similar sentence, but she will only have to repay \$5,000. Over two years, between 2019 and 2021, the two women, who worked at the drive-thru section of the restaurant, collected money from customers who paid in cash by making the transaction disappear from the ordering system. Martine Denis had even put up a sign several times saying that Interac payment was down in order to collect more money. The franchisee's

insurer, who paid \$50,000 as a result of this scheme, could now turn to the two women to recover the sum.

Marco Albert, a 53-year-old teacher from Newport charged with sexual assault, appeared at the Percé Courthouse at the beginning of January to have his trial date set. However, since the initial criminal prosecutor assigned to the case, Émilie Landry Therriault, is now on maternity leave, the file has been transferred to her colleague Isabelle Gavioli. "We postponed this case to February 10, 2025, so that I could review it and discuss it with attorney Caroline Bérubé who is acting as the defence," says Isabelle Gavioli. A teacher at Mgr. Sévigny high school in Chandler, Marco Albert was first charged in March 2023 and underwent his preliminary hearing at the Percé Courthouse in November of the same year. Judge Denis Paradis, of the Quebec Court, ordered a publication ban at the time. During the preliminary hearing, three people spoke, including the alleged victim, who used a legal assistance dog to calm and support her during her testimony. Marco Albert faces charges of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of a minor. The 52-year-old's indictment states that he also touched, invited or incited the alleged complainant to have sexual contact with him, while he was in a position of authority. The events allegedly occurred at the suspect's residence in March 2023. He remains free during the legal proceedings. The René-Lévesque School Services Centre suspended the teacher following his arrest.

Two of the three individuals arrested in connection with shootings on November 24 in the Gascons sector of Port Daniel-Gascons, Gascons sector, remain in prison. Maxime Hamilton, 28, from Cap-Chat, and Réjean Couturier, 49, from New Richmond, recently appeared at the New Carlisle Courthouse and had their bail hearing postponed to February 24 for the former and the following day for the latter. The two men face charges of having in their possession and discharging a prohibited weapon, a sawed-off .20 calibre, wearing a disguise and breaking and entering. Their alleged accomplice, Jennifer Labrie, 26 and a Cap-Chat resident like Maxime Hamilton, face related charges. She was to return to court for her bail hearing as the SPEC was reaching its deadline. Ms. Labrie and Mr. Hamilton were intercepted in Cap-Chat on December 12 in connection with a drug case. Réjean Couturier was arrested on December 17 in New Richmond. He must also face charges of breach of condition, breach of probation, possession of a weapon when prohibited and possession of drugs for the purpose of trafficking. The investigation is continuing in this case. According to Sûreté du Québec Communication Officer Frédéric Deshaies, this incident is linked to recent events surrounding the control of drug trafficking in Gaspésie.

Two young people in their twenties were seriously injured early on January 15 in a road accident in Pointe-à-la-Croix. Emergency services were called around 1 a.m. on Perron Boulevard. East. The victims were taken to the Campbellton Hospital. However, their injuries were not life-threatening. The road conditions and the set of tires that included an emergency tire could explain the road accident.

2025 will be a very busy year at the Percé Courthouse

GILLES GAGNÉ

PERCÉ – The year 2025 is set to be a very busy year in the Gaspé Peninsula courthouses, especially the one in Percé, where a double murder case involving a son and his father should be heard at one point in the coming months. In fact, the year started on a busy note, as Lisette Hautcoeur entered a plea of guilty on January 9, also at the Percé courthouse.

Another murder case will likely be heard in 2025 in Rimouski: the Amqui truck attack, which took place on March 13, 2023. A man originally from Gaspé was killed following that attack.

Additionally the Court of Appeal will likely render a decision in the case of Karine Rioux, a 36-year-old former resident of Gaspé, who contested the sentence she received on July 4, 2024, approximately 10 months after



Photo: CHAU-TVA

Simon Dufort-Chouinard notably faces charges of premeditated murder in the case of Gabriel Noël and non-premeditated murder of Dylan Samuel-Francoeur.

having pleaded guilty to charges of impaired driving and impaired driving causing death. The crime occurred on December 16, 2021, when it claimed the life of Patrick

Donovan, a 63-year-old resident of Gaspé who was walking on the road shoulder after finishing work.

Quebec Court Judge Denis Paradis imposed a prison sen-

tence of two years less a day and a two-year driving ban on Ms. Rioux. When the accident occurred, she was driving with an alcohol level of 0.09 milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood, just over the legal limit of 0.08.

In her appeal, Karine Rioux is attempting to have her sentence reduced to a two-year-less-a-day term to be served at home. She now resides in Matane, with her parents and young son.

The defence and prosecution presented their arguments to three Court of Appeal judges on December 6. The judges have taken the case under advisement and are expected to make a decision this year.

The Rivière-au-Renard tragedy

Two trials related to the Rivière-au-Renard road

tragedy, in which two young men died on May 10, 2023, are still pending at the Percé Courthouse. The legal proceedings brought against a son and his father following this fatal collision will therefore continue in 2025. Simon Dufort-Chouinard, 20, is charged with the premeditated murder of Gabriel Noël and the non-premeditated murder of Dylan Samuel-Francoeur, aged 19 and 18, respectively, both from the Gaspé area.

Using his vehicle, Dufort-Chouinard struck the car of the two victims on Highway 132, between Rivière-au-Renard and Griffon Cove.

His father, Marc-Jules Chouinard, 49, was also involved in this incident with his vehicle, according to initial observations made the day of the tragedy. After being incarcerated a few days after the

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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Will Donald Trump’s tariffs last?

Before taking the oath for his second term as president of the United States on January 20, Donald Trump had already walked back on some of the commitments he made during and before the 2024 electoral campaign. These promises included fixing everything, the alleged failures of now-former president Joe Biden and his opponent during the race, former Vice-President Kamala Harris.

The war in Ukraine is one example. In 2023, he affirmed that he would put an end to it in less than “24 hours.” During a September debate with Kamala Harris, he stated that it “is a war that’s dying to be settled. I will get it settled before I even become president.”

However, two weeks ago, he summarized the problem as being “much more complicated” than expected, and he moved the goal post to a six-month period. Strike 1.

Inflation is another example. From the campaign’s dawn to its end, he vowed to cut food prices. He used again the “on Day One” expression during the summer. In December, one month after the election, he muttered “I’d like to bring them (food prices) down.



Emma Buckley

Guest Commentary

Ditch the fantasy, Mr Trump: most Canadians don't want to be the 51st state

Dear Mr. Trump, I never thought I’d be sitting here writing you a letter. Of course, you’ll likely never read it, and if by some crazy chance you did, you’d likely disregard it, given I have neither wealth nor influence, and your interest in people without one or the other is, let’s face it, low. However, as a Canadian citizen, I feel compelled to address your ongoing fixation on annexing Canada for her natural resources (which would be a violation of international law, but you don’t seem to have much interest in international laws, either).

I’m not sure whether you genuinely believe what you said - that most Canadians would like to be a part of the USA - or if you are once more presenting something as fact that isn’t. Sure, some people will say you’re just trying to establish a good bargaining position or divert attention vis-à-vis the upcoming Canada-US trade negotiations, but I think your words are very dangerous, Mr Trump. You understand better than most that if you say something often enough, people will start to believe it, whether it is factually correct or not. Enough people believing lies can lead to some dark places indeed.

I can assure you that the Canadians I know don’t share your enthusiasm about their country being the 51st state. I can’t necessarily speak for all of them – Canadians are a diverse lot, Mr. Trump – but I can tell you a few things that I love about my adopted country that I’d miss very much should they be supplanted by the American equiv-

It’s hard to bring things down once they’re up. You know, it’s very hard.” Strike 2.

Additional promises

The third strike could come from government spending, oil drilling or illegal immigration. There is a vast choice of broken promises, and it is a chance because committing to such promises will likely bring chaos south of the border, and then around the United States.

Let’s start with government spending. It allows us to talk about Elon Musk, the billionaire supporting a pro-Nazi political party in Germany. Donald Trump asked Mr. Musk to run the so-called Department of Government Efficiency and cut federal expenditures.

In the middle of the electoral campaign, Elon Musk said that he could cut \$2 trillion from the government’s annual budget of \$6.9 trillion. A trillion dollars is 1,000 billion dollars. It is a 29% slash. In today’s inflationary world, a zero-budget increase is a feat. A 29% budgetary cut is unthinkable. It would paralyze many government activities and guess who would suffer the most? Low-income people, do not stand high on Donald Trump’s agenda, despite statements supporting the contrary during the campaign.

Elon Musk must have thought of the unthinkable recently because, in a mid-January interview, he said that the \$2 trillion number is a “best-case scenario” and added he has a “good shot” at slashing close to \$1 trillion. When you possess a personal fortune of about \$400 billion, who are you to decide about citizens’ priorities?

Immigration is another potential third strike where “Day One” occupied an utmost spot. “On Day One of my new administration, the invasion of savage criminals ends. And on that same day, the largest deportation in American history begins,” affirmed Don-

alents. I feel fortunate that I can get medical treatment when sick without having to worry about how I’m going to pay for it. I feel safe when I walk into a shopping centre in this country, where stricter regulations around guns and gun ownership mean that mass shootings are an anomaly, not the dreadful norm as they are in your country. I am grateful that most Canadians are not devotees of a media channel where entertainment, lies and outrage masquerade as news, exacerbating the divide in a divided country. But I’m just a newcomer; my Canadian-born friends have lived and loved their Canadian culture for a lifetime. They’d have lots of say on the matter – maybe you should ask them.

I am aware that your words resonate with lots of people, Mr Trump. My own aunt is a fan of yours. She’s a bit older than you and is bewildered by the Australia she sees around her today: societal change, faces that look different, and non-binary pronouns. Since she latched onto social media I’ve heard many outrageous tales and flawed theories that follow the same tired playbook of blaming the same vulnerable scapegoats. She’s frightened, and no one likes to be frightened, Mr Trump: it’s much easier to be outraged and blame others than unpack your fears and the lack of certainty in life. And you - with the most important platform in the world – fuel this outrage with your words.

Speaking of important platforms, I wanted to add a word or two about your friend, Elon. You don’t seem too concerned about the multiple conflicts of interest that would materialize in his role as co-chair on your new government advisory panel. He’s not supposed to be using this role to get wealthier, or to try to weaken legislation that may be an inconvenient hurdle to his business interests, yet you’re giving him the opportunity to do just that. Backing you in the election was certainly a windfall for him: he’s now wealthier than three-quarters of the worlds’ nations combined. In a democracy, all men should have an equal voice, but Elon’s voice – his vast influential capacity - is drastically louder than the average person’s.

I must share with you this fantasy I have where

ald Trump in October.

He had said a month earlier that he would “Seal the border” to “stop the invasion immediately”. Although in 2019, the Trump administration conducted raids on farms to target workers without papers and considering that the president’s entourage has vowed that similar operations will take place in the coming weeks, Tom Homan, the man appointed to run border affairs, has only said so far that “The president is going to concentrate on public safety threats and national security threats.” That is what he mentioned to CBS News, using a less than vigorous tone.

In other words, a massive part of the American economy depends on agriculture, and an equally massive part of the agriculture output depends on “undocumented workers,” immigrants without papers. The whole agriculture and food production sector (read influential lobbyists) must have been knocking at Donald Trump’s door in an attempt to make him understand common sense, given that such raids and massive deportations would trigger further inflation and market share losses.

The oil drilling issue is also problematic in the United States right now. “Your energy bill, within 12 months, will be cut in half,” stated Mr. Trump in September. He added that by drilling more, the hydrocarbons would find more oil and gas reserves.

Such a price reduction pledge could work if the oil industry was run by the American government. However, oil and gas prices are determined by the global markets, and American companies go by that principle. Donald Trump doesn’t control energy costs.

The tariffs he will likely impose on Canada’s products can only increase the price of oil and gas in the United States unless he exempts those Canadian commodities from the 25% tax. That factor wouldn’t

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Elon is suddenly transformed into a passionate environmentalist, dedicated to protecting biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Imagine what that money could do! Of course, this fantasy would be decidedly unexciting for you.

I have a growing suspicion that Elon sees the environmental degradation of our planet as an unfortunate but necessary by-product of colonizing space. For the vast majority of humans and all other species, however, Earth is – and always will be - our forever home. Maybe Elon could check in with his latest version of AI as to how long our home will be habitable if we keep consuming natural resources at the rate we’re going.

You’ve no doubt got a lot on your plate so I’ll finish up here, Mr Trump. Please park your expansionist fantasies and focus on using your loudspeaker to encourage harmony, goodwill, cooperation and solidarity in your own backyard and beyond. After all, all people really want is to live in peace and have their children thrive in peace. Is it really too much to ask?

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Slight traffic increase in 2024 for the SCFG, due to delay in line refurbishment

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) reported a slight 3.4% increase in freight traffic in 2024, a situation essentially attributable to delays in the refurbishment of the railroad between New Richmond and Port Daniel, as last year was supposed to yield way better results.

The number of cars hauled by the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie trains went from 1,998 in 2023 to 2,066 last year, an increase of 68 cars.

The increase stems from a 63% hike in lumber traffic generated by the Groupe Lebel sawmill in Nouvelle and a 1.6% increase in cement traffic, which originates from Port Daniel, with a transshipment in New Richmond. Cement hauling is the main source of traffic for the SCFG with a tad over 50% of the SCFG carloads.

The hike was attenuated by a 7.7% decrease in woodchip traffic between the Nouvelle sawmill and the White Birch Paper mill in Rivière-du-Loup. Woodchips represent the second source of traffic for the SCFG, carload-wise, with lumber coming in third.

A corporation controlled by the four MRCs of the south part of the Gaspé Peninsula, the SCFG doesn't reveal the exact number of carloads of its customers, as the latter requires some discretion about their statistics, for competitiveness reasons.

A transition year in 2024

The director general of the SCFG, Luc Lévesque, remarks that 2024 was a transition year, as the transporter is preparing to run trains between New Richmond and New Carlisle, then to Port Daniel, where Saint Mary's Cement is waiting for the track to be serviceable.

"It is a transition period in the sense that many projects are under discussion and are starting to move forward. We were in fact expecting that some projects would come to fruition over last summer but they didn't. There are issues with the interest rates that played a role and we are experiencing the post-Covid transition. We have a project to move some wood fibre to plants that are located outside



Photo: G. Gagné

Woodchip traffic went down by 7.7% in 2024 out of the Groupe Lebel sawmill in Nouvelle.

the region and there will be other sources of traffic. There are real possibilities. Sometimes, projects are longer to land. It is the same thing for cement hauling. However, they are tied to reopening the track to Port Daniel. In 2024, everybody was expecting the reopening of the line to Port Daniel. That delay also slowed down traffic progress," explains Mr. Lévesque.

"I can't blame the customers for postponing projects, after the multiple delays that have marked the last years. They are waiting to get a functional track before moving. As soon as it will be carried out (the railroad refurbishment to Port Daniel), the projects will materialize. I expect traffic increases and projects to take off the ground. Our traffic numbers should be better in 2025, and increase over the coming years as well," states Mr. Lévesque.

In October, the owner of the line, Quebec's Minister of Transports, announced that the line reopening to Port Daniel would not happen before the end of the spring, due to construction delays and the fact that Saint Mary's Cement will not be ready to load part of its production in railcars before May or June.

The upgrading of the railway will cost \$872 million, and its completion between Port Daniel and Gaspé is scheduled for the end of 2026 or more likely, sometime in 2027.

Growth potential

The volume of cement is expected to rise in 2025 for two reasons. First, at some

point over the end of the spring or the beginning of the summer, it will be loaded right at Saint Mary's cement plant in Port Daniel, which will phase out the transshipment cost stemming from the fact that trucks are used between the plant and New Richmond's silo, where cement is transferred to railroad cars.

Secondly, CN Rail, which takes over the cement cars once they have reached the end of the track used by the SCFG in Matapedia, has recently agreed to reopen for freight purposes its line between Bathurst and Miramichi, which opens the Moncton and South-eastern New Brunswick cement market to be served again by train.

"Saint Mary's Cement owns a silo in Moncton. The railway switch was cut a few years ago. As long as CN was not offering a regular service between Bathurst and Miramichi, the Moncton market was only served by trucks. We even hope to send cement railcars to Moncton in March, before the track is serviceable to Port Daniel," explains Luc Lévesque.

The SCFG is also looking for inbound traffic for the cement plant, like silica or other types of input that currently reaches the Port Daniel facility by truck or marine barges.

Luc Lévesque is pleased with the increase in lumber traffic coming from Groupe Lebel's sawmill in Nouvelle, as the 2024 number is about twice that of 2020. It remains just over half of the 2013 record, though.

"The important factor is that it is increasing. On the other hand, the Saint-Elzéar

sawmill did not use our services in 2024 after resuming rail shipments in 2023. We are still working on that file," says Mr. Lévesque. The 2023 start was modest, with just a handful of cars.

The SCFG director general sees another opportunity for pulpwood shipments to a plant he is currently not allowed to identify, though it is located outside the Gaspé Peninsula, but not very far.

"We have been working on that deal for a while. We were close to reaching an agreement at one point and we had some cars available for that traffic. Now, those cars are no longer available but we will find a solution," he points out.

Passenger traffic

The SCFG experienced a setback last year in its attempt to buy 12 Budd automotive passenger cars from a Vermont company, AllEarth Rail. The units were built in 1959 and had previously been owned by VIA Rail before being sold to the Dallas Area Rapid Transit. The SCFG, which was paying a priority fee to acquire the Budd cars, wanted to use them for the revitalization of its tourist train. However, its priority right was nullified in mid-2024.

"The Budd cars are still up for sale. We were not able to get the support we were looking for," says Mr. Lévesque simply.

The SCFG administrators also thought that the Budd cars could represent a solution for a quicker return of VIA Rail's passenger train between Matapedia, New Richmond and New Carlisle.

"The SCFG can be a part of the solution and facilitate, con-

tribute to accelerate the return of the passenger train. However, we cannot impose it. VIA Rail was indifferent to our Budd cars solution," criticizes Luc Lévesque.

When the Dallas Area Rapid Transit put up for sale the 12 Budd cars acquired by Vermont's AllEarth Rail, VIA Rail was one of the bidders in an attempt to reacquire its former rolling stock, and failed.

The SCFG owned the Matapedia to Gaspé line between June 2007 and the beginning of 2015, when the burden of maintaining the railroad became too much for the transporter under municipal control, especially in the austerity context implemented by the Liberal Party government of Philippe Couillard. Traffic was blocked east of Caplan in 2015.

Transports Québec took until May 2017 before announcing a full repair program between Matapedia and Gaspé. Despite its start almost eight years ago, the refurbishment program has not led to traffic resumption east of Caplan. In fact, in the summer of 2023, Transports Québec initiated repair works in the Henderson road sector that reduced the serviceable portion of the railway to Matapedia and New Richmond, instead of Matapedia and Caplan.

While the hauling of windmill blades fabricated by LM Wind Power in Gaspé contributed heavily to the traffic increase between the end of 2016 and May 2022, the end of the export contract consisting of supplying blades to Texas and neighbouring states prompted a decline in traffic over the last three years, compared to the 4,636 carloads peak of 2021.

Freight traffic on the Transports Québec line over the last decade

YEAR	NUMBER OF LOADS
2015	1633
2016	1741
2017	2786
2018	4323
2019	4236
2020	4202
2021	4636
2022	3190
2023	1998
2024	2066

Mayor of Gaspé alleges Pascan inflated its rates; the company denies claims

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté is accusing Pascan airline of inflating its rates following the announcement of the updated Regional Air Access Program (PAAR) 2.0 tabled by the Minister of Transport, Geneviève Guilbault in December at Michel-Pouliot airport in Gaspé.

Daniel Côté made this statement following a detailed analysis of the new PAAR program that will be in effect as of February 3. The PAAR program is not the problem.

"When we apply the government discount percentage to the PAL Airlines ticket, we arrive at around \$500 for a round trip Gaspé-Quebec or Gaspé-Montreal. With Pascan, it doesn't work. The prices were inflated shortly before the announcement. The prices are \$600-700 for a round trip and not \$500," calculates Daniel Côté, who indicates that before the program was announced, the two carriers displayed an equivalent price grid.

The Québec government has been made aware of this issue. "We were told that they were going to check and dis-

cuss the issue with Pascan. They were a little surprised," maintains the elected official on the sidelines of the January 13 council meeting.

In his opinion, the program remains good, whether it be the program that now applies to flights between Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, the fact that non-profit organizations can benefit from the program or the end of the maximum usage limit for users.

Pascan retorts that fares were not inflated before the announcement, according to co-owner Yani Gagnon, who learned of these comments from The SPEC. Before reacting further, Mr. Gagnon wanted to speak with Mayor Côté.

A profitable airport

Unlike other regional airports that are recording deficits, the Gaspé airport is doing well. The mayor mentions that the Michel-Pouliot Airport should end the 2024 fiscal year with a balanced budget, based on overall expenditures of \$1.5 million.

Regular use by two carriers, Pascan and PAL, generates landing fees. In addition, the

airport brings in more revenue with additional services. "All the aircraft electricity charging systems, we provide the fuel, the de-icing of the aircraft, all the services are now offered by the airport instead of dealing with a subcontractor. We are now making a profit from these operations, which makes the activities profitable," illustrates the mayor. For example, Baie-Comeau recorded a deficit of \$350,000 in 2024.

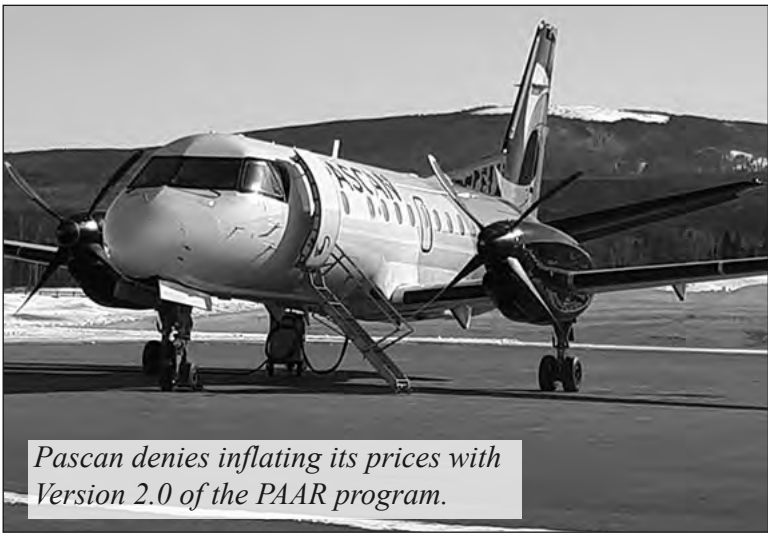
Bilingualism: No news from the Quebec Government

Gaspé has not heard back from the Quebec Government following a request to give a little more latitude to communicate in English with citizens of the English-speaking community.

Bill 96 requires communications in French, except in tourist communications or in emergency situations.

"There is no response. The law was adopted for all of Quebec. There is no exemption for Gaspé. I imagine we will have to respect it," says Mr. Côté.

Vision Gaspé Perce Now will translate and transmit the communications. "They do it



Pascan denies inflating its prices with Version 2.0 of the PAAR program.

Photo: N. Sergerie

of their own free will. I applaud this initiative," notes the mayor, who would like Quebec to take into account the historical particularity of Gaspé.

Canadian and international instability

The threats of 25% tariffs by American President-elect Donald Trump, the resignation of Liberal leader and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on January 6, and the uncertainty caused, not to mention world events, particularly those in South Korea or armed conflicts, are of concern to the mayor of Gaspé.

Daniel Côté mentions that

several sectors of the local and regional economy are at risk. "Our fishing industry exports a lot to the United States. Our wind industry exports almost exclusively to the United States. If there are 25% tariffs on everything manufactured here, it will hurt our economy," notes the elected official.

"We have to stick together, our business community or our council have to stick together to at least provide a minimum of stability to weather this storm. It's part of my wishes for 2025," the mayor mentions as a possible solution, admitting that in the end, it might not change much, but he adds that it's worth a try.

VISION

Gaspé - Percé Now

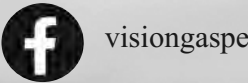
"**Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN)** is dedicated to supporting the English-speaking communities of the Gaspé-Percé region by developing health and social services, preserving cultural heritage, and advocating for their rights.

VGPN works to foster collaboration with Francophone and Mi'gmaq neighbors and ensure access to essential services while promoting economic development.

VGPN is also committed to opening up the conversation about mental health and illness, offering partnerships, workshops, and conferences to inform the community, answer questions, and help change societal perceptions of mental health issues."

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Open for drop-ins Monday, Tuesday,
and Thursday
9 a.m. until 3 p.m.
Closed for lunch (12-1 p.m.)



Reflection unmasked

PENNY MACWHIRTER

HOPE TOWN - Local photographer Shannon Day highlights the importance of mental health with a photoshoot titled Reflections Unmasked – A Visual Representation of Mental Health. Ms. Day says her first experience with this kind of project occurred during the height of the pandemic when she did a photoshoot with students from New Carlisle High School. Participants wrote one word on facemasks about why mental health is important. “It was a powerful experience because it helped open important conversations, especially with young people, and it resonated with my online audience,” says Ms. Day.

“The Reflections Unmasked photoshoot features broken mirrors, symbolizing hidden struggles and the way we see ourselves. Mental health affects us all differently, but it’s often something we keep private. My hope is that this project will show how common these experiences are, encourage open dialogue, and help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health,” explains Ms. Day.

Like many, Shannon has struggled with my mental

health, particularly with anxiety. “I’ve faced panic attacks, intrusive thoughts, and a lot of fear around my health, including hospital visits because I thought my panic attack would kill me. Coupled with childhood trauma, it was a difficult mix,” says Ms. Day. She adds that seeking various types of support and realizing she was not alone has been key to her healing journey. “I have seen firsthand, through my public speaking engagements and photography; the impact that being vulnerable and open with others has. People feel less alone and more willing to seek support,” explains Ms. Day.

The photoshoot combines two things Shannon is passionate about: photography and mental health. “I believe this art can be a powerful tool to address social issues, particularly mental health. I see it as a way to create impact, raise awareness, and spark conversations. I feel best when my work contributes to something greater than just the image itself,” says Ms. Day.

Seven models participated in the photoshoot, originally Shannon had hoped to have 10 models but she’s pleased with the turnout she’s had. Shannon

says “Mental health is still a difficult topic for many to open up about, and I completely understand that. It’s tied to a lot of stigma—people are afraid of being seen as weak or ‘crazy’, but the reality is, that mental health struggles are just as common as physical ones, and it’s important that we start treating them with the same understanding and compassion.”

Shannon was incredibly grateful to the brave women

who volunteered for this project. “It often takes people willing to be vulnerable to help others feel understood. Their courage to share their stories and experiences is what makes this project meaningful and impactful,” says Ms. Day.

Shannon plans to share the photos from the photoshoot on social media, especially on her Facebook page, S.D Captures. “As part of Bell Let’s Talk Day, an initiative I support to en-

courage conversation around mental health,” says Ms. Day.

Shannon wants to remind SPEC readers “That mental health is something we all experience, and it’s okay to not be okay sometimes. Seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness. By continuing to talk openly about these issues, we can help break down the stigma and create a more understanding, supportive community for everyone.”



Shannon was incredibly grateful to the brave women who volunteered for this project.

Photo: Shannon Day



Health and Social Services



Community Liaison

Shannon Marsh is CASA's dedicated Community Liaison. With over 12 years of experience, Shannon supports community members, vulnerable families and ANYONE who is facing barriers and needing support!

Shannon serves as the vital link connecting community members to the professional help they need. She will help you navigate towards brighter, healthier days.

If you or someone you know could use a helping hand, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Remember, there's strength in community, you are never alone. We're in this together! 🌈

"Seeking support when needed can involve talking to a therapist or counselor, reaching out to friends and family, or joining a support group."

"Seeking support can help you learn coping skills, gain insight into your thoughts and behaviors, and develop a support network." -

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Workplace leadership: Leading by example

PENNY MACWHIRTER

HOPE TOWN - January 22 is Bell Let's Talk Day, an annual campaign that was launched in 2010 to promote awareness and action about mental health in Canada. The campaign is built on four pillars: anti-stigma, care and access, research, and workplace leadership.

Many organizations and businesses on the coast can be considered leaders in workplace mental health.

Amie Chicoine, the Resource Manager at Vision Gaspé-Perce Now tells SPEC that mental health is a priority for her organization. "Mental health directly impacts our capacity to function on a day-to-day basis, our productivity, as well as our ability to focus and feel motivated. We also understand that mental health goes hand in hand with our physical health," explains Ms. Chicoine. She adds, "We care about our team's well-being."

Vision Gaspé-Perce Now offers monthly or bi-monthly meetings where employees can chat with their resource manager and discuss issues of

concern. The organization also offers team-building activities outside the workplace, including having brunch, spa evenings, painting nights, thematic activities, retreats and flexible working conditions. Additionally, the management team has taken workshops and training in dealing with workplace mental health, and staff have had the opportunity to attend sessions on topics like dealing with conflict and setting boundaries. Ms. Chicoine tells SPEC that employees will participate in a workshop titled Protecting your Well-Being.

"Mental health is not something that we have or we don't have. It is a part of us all. However, supporting our own as well as each other's mental health reduces stress, burnout, and absenteeism, leading to a more positive and efficient environment, in both our work and personal life," explains Ms. Chicoine.

Vision Gaspé-Perce Now offers a variety of activities to the public, including board game nights, crafting, mindfulness sessions, chair yoga, walking, delivering packages to the housebound, speaking

at Wellness Centres, music night and a Wellness Café. Amie also mentions that there will be a Youth Mental Health Fair in February.

Family Ties in New

Carlisle is another organization which prioritizes the mental health of its employees. Executive Director, Heather MacWhirter tells SPEC that Family Ties em-

ployees are caregivers, and in order for them to care for others they must be well themselves. "So, wellbeing begins

Cont'd on page 15



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Supports and accompanies people in their efforts to integrate into the community.

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Mental Health

"Having worked in the field of mental health for 25 years, I am deeply aware of the challenges faced by those who suffer from it. The Bell Let's Talk campaign reminds us how crucial it is to continue speaking openly about mental health and supporting those in need. This is a cause that affects us all and deserves our full attention and solidarity. Together, let's ensure no one is left in the shadows," **The Honourable Diane Lebouthillier, MP for the Gaspésie - Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard**

Constituency Offices diane.lebouthillier@parl.gc.ca	Main office - Grande-Rivière 104-153 La Grande Allée East Grande-Rivière, Quebec G0C 1V0 Telephone: 418-385-4264 Fax: 418-385-4276	Ste-Anne-Des-Monts 27-464 Ste-Anne Blvd West Ste-Anne-Des-Monts, Quebec G4V 1T5 Telephone: 418-764-2890 Fax: 418-763-0067	New Richmond 211-99 Suzanne-Guité Place New Richmond, Quebec G0C 2B0 Telephone: 581-355-0060
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Family Ties Celebrates Family Literacy Day on January 25 with “Let's Go Green Together” theme

CAROLYN TAYLOR
Ass. to the Director, Family Ties

NEW CARLISLE - For over 25 years, Family Ties has been celebrating Family Literacy Day with its members. This eagerly anticipated event promotes awareness of the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family.

Over the years, the event has encompassed a wide variety of creative and inspiring themes chosen by ABC Life Literacy Canada. From exploring the magic of fairy tales, travelling the world through books, and learning in the great outdoors, to setting a world record for reading Robert Munsch books, this special event has always succeeded in making reading and learning an enjoyable experience for families.

In addition to celebrating Family Literacy Day every January, Family Ties promotes literacy for all ages throughout the year. The aim is to remove



Photo: Courtesy Family Ties

Participants at the 2023 Family Literacy Day held by Family Ties.

barriers that anglophones may encounter due to a lack of access to services and books in English. The organization’s library enables Family Ties members to borrow English

books free of charge. The Born to Read program encourages early literacy by providing books and materials to English-speaking families of children aged 0-5 years.

Through various programs, parents are able to access tools and resources to use with their children, including visits from a speech-language pathologist. The Scholastic Book

Clubs offered by Family Ties enable families to purchase affordable English books for children without the need of a credit card, and books are also offered as gifts on a regular basis.

This year’s Family Literacy Day theme is Let’s Go Green Together. A whole range of exciting and interactive activities have been planned for elementary students attending New Carlisle High School. There will also be a special event held at Family Ties on Saturday, January 25, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., for children aged 0-6 years and their families. Activities will include crafts, books and story-time, as well as the opportunities to make household cleaners from natural ingredients, craft reusable cloth bags, and learn other ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle together.

Family Ties believes that as well as being the key to success, LITERACY IS LITERALLY FUN!

Reading can be a fun and healthy habit

PENNY MACWHIRTER

HOPE TOWN - In today’s world, where people are constantly rushing to and from work and spending much of their days on technological devices, reading can provide a calming factor. It can help you relax by lowering your heart rate and easing muscle tension. If you have difficulty falling asleep at night, reading a chapter in your favourite book can help.

Immersing yourself in a novel can be a healthy way to escape from everyday stress for a short period of time. Studies have shown that reading can help with depression and lower blood pressure. Keep in mind reading will only help reduce stress if the topic isn’t something that you find upsetting.

In addition, if money is tight, reading can be an inexpensive type of entertainment. To save money visit your local

library, flea market or exchange books with friends.

If you are serious about reading but having difficulty learning to love your new habit, starting a book basket might help you enjoy the pastime a little more. In your basket put your novel, be sure to choose a topic you will find interesting. Then choose a colour theme and start collecting supplies such as, pens, bookmarks, stickers, notepads, book light, etc. In

your notepad, write down favourite quotes, information or words you’d like to look up later, etc. If you typically have trouble keeping track of characters, use your notepad to make a character map that you can refer back to. Keep your basket handy for when you might have the opportunity to dive into your novel. If you have a friend who also enjoys reading, making a book basket for each other can be a fun activity.



Fun fact
Children with highly literate parents are exposed to 30,000,000 more words than children of parents with lower literacy levels.
-ABC Life Literacy



Where Literacy is Literally Fun

At Family Ties we promote literacy through:

- Family Literacy Day
- A library of English books available to our members free of charge
- The Born to Read program, providing families of children aged 0-5 years with quality books and materials
- Tools and resources for parents to use with their children
- Offering books as gifts to participants of the Youth Programs
- Encouraging the importance of enjoyment and bonding through family reading time



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Prioritizing family literacy, while having fun!

PENNY MACWHIRTER

HOPE TOWN - As Family Literacy Day approaches, you may be wondering what exactly family literacy is. It is when the entire family, all generations, work to improve the reading and writing skills of the entire family. When adults make a habit of reading to children and organizing literacy activities, they keep their own skills sharp and help children improve their skills. As an added bonus, they spend quality time together, strengthening relationships between family members.

Family Literacy exposes a child to the maximum literacy possible before starting school. In addition, several studies show that when a child has support from adults in their family, they're more likely to be successful and engaged at school.

"Children raised in families that prioritize family literacy score ten points higher on standardized reading tests and are more likely to attend a post-secondary institution," says ABC Life Literacy.

Improved literacy skills will result in improved math and science skills as well. In addition, literacy can make a difference in a child's social skills, self-esteem and perception of education. Essentially, they are building skills and knowledge that they'll take

with them throughout their lives. As for the adults in a family, prioritizing literacy activities can also affect their self-esteem, improve employment opportunities, and broaden their understanding of current affairs and democracy.

The great thing about Family Literacy Day is it's a great time to reassess your family's reading strategies and plan new activities for the year ahead.

Here are a few tips for the adults

Read in front of your children/grandchildren: Although there are probably several habits you may try to limit in front of your children, such as the amount of time spent watching television or scrolling on social media, reading should not be one of them. It is important to show your children that you're passionate about reading and that you value reading material.

Keep a reading journal: The book reports we remember from childhood have evolved into reading journals, a much more personal and pleasant way to analyze and keep track of your reading. All you need is a blank notebook, coloured markers or pens, post-its and a little creativity.

Visit the library: If you are fortunate to live near a library, visit it regularly and sign a

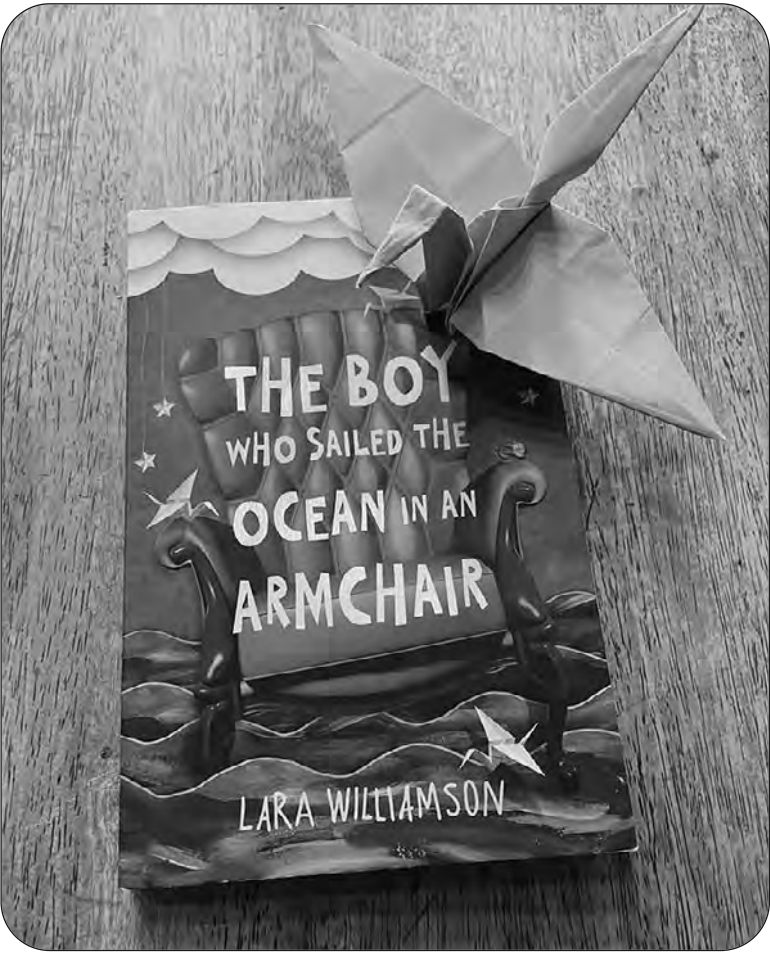


Photo: P. MacWhirter

Create a craft project that complements the theme of your reading.

book or two out for yourself as well.

Get a subscription: Subscribe to a newspaper or magazine and demonstrate your excitement when the latest issue arrives.

Encourage reading-out-loud: Ask older siblings to read to younger children or to help them read their questions when playing board games. Young children could also be encouraged to read to their

favourite dolls or action figures.

Don't miss an opportunity: There are opportunities for literacy everywhere and as you evolve in your literacy journey, you'll become adept at spotting them. Some examples include product labels, nutrition information, assembly instructions, road signs, advertisements, turning on television captions and greeting cards.

Fun literacy activities

Visit a museum or historical site (there will be lots to read and discuss)

Play "Name that song"
Make a shopping list, you can be the scribe for younger children. Have older children be your scribe.

Play the "telephone chain game"

Read a book and then watch the movie together.

Have a weekly board game night (there are many board games that also involve other skills such as math or science).

Start a home library and make library cards for your books.

Listen to audiobooks in the car.

Bake or cook together. There is a lot of reading involved in following a recipe.

Build something together. Whether it's a building block set or a new piece of furniture, read and follow the instructions together.

Start a family dinner book club. Pick a book, set a schedule (if reading independently), have a family meeting to discuss the menu and activities and give each family member a task so they can contribute.

Write a short story, or children's book together.

Canada Reads Longlist

The Canada Reads longlist was released in early January. All the books on this year's list have the power to change how we see, share and experience the world around us.

The 15 books on the list are:

- The Whispers by Ashley Audrain
- Watch Out for Her by Samantha M. Bailey
- A Two-Spirit Journey by Ma-Nee Chacaby, with Mary Louisa Plummer
- What I Know About You by Éric Chacour, translated by Pablo Strauss
- The Pull of the Stars by Emma Donoghue
- When the Pine Needles Fall by Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel, with Sean Carleton
- Etta and Otto and Russell and James by Emma Hooper
- The Other Valley by Scott Alexander Howard
- Jennie's Boy by Wayne Johnston
- Becoming a Matriarch by Helen Knott
- Dandelion by Jamie Chai Yun Liew
- However Far Away by Rajinderpal S. Pal
- Clyde Fans by Seth
- Girl Runner by Carrie Snyder
- All Our Ordinary Stories by Teresa Wong

The panalists and the books they are championing will be released on January 23. The debates will take place March 17 to 25. Visit <https://www.cbc.ca/books/canadareads> for more information.

The Gaspésie Literacy Council (GLC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to lifelong learning

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Ottawa to provide \$10M for 11 projects in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

BONAVENTURE - The federal government is granting \$10.1 million to 11 businesses and organizations in the Gaspé Peninsula to support their development, resulting in total investments of \$86.5 million.

"When we look at the Gaspésie promoters, people who work very hard for economic development and producing wealth in the Gaspésie, we see how dynamic, job-creating and diversified our businesses are in the territory. This is positive for a region like ours," said Diane Lebouthillier, Member of Parliament for the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, and Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, who made the announcement during a press briefing on January 10 in Bonaventure.

The Bioparc de la Gaspésie in Bonaventure receives the largest share, with \$2.7 million non-refundable out of a total investment of \$7.8 million. The project aims to improve and enhance the tourism offering by implementing the first phase of its 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

This includes the overhaul of four ecosystems, the creation of new animal habitats, the expansion and renovation of the animal care building, the construction of an exhibition pavilion, the redevelopment of public spaces, the expansion of sanitary spaces, the development of digital and scientific content, as well as a marketing strategy.

Merinov receives \$2 million to strengthen its innovation and technology transfer capacities by establishing the Merinov Innovation Hub in Grande-Rivière to better support the Quebec fisheries, aquaculture and bioresources industry. The spaces will offer five technological platforms related in particular to sustainable fishing gear, microalgae, the valorization of algae and co-products, a fish breeding room with modern effluent treatment technologies and ecophysiology and biology laboratories. The project is worth \$31.2 million.

Groupe AEM Canada of Cap-Chat is also receiving \$2 million to increase the production capacity of the start-up company that specializes in the

manufacture of high-purity alumina. This \$27.7 million project will allow it to acquire and install specialized equipment, expand a building to add clean calcination rooms and increase its working capital.

Cuisimer of Saint-Maxime-du-Mont-Louis receives \$1.9 million to increase production capacity and improve the productivity of the seafood processing company. Cuisimer will expand its plant, add lobster tanks, a lobster sorter, a conveyor and cooling and air conditioning systems. The project requires \$7.5 million in investments.

Several smaller projects are also being supported through Canada Economic Development for Quebec.

Les Bateliers de Percé will receive \$333,750 of \$445,000 to modernize and expand its boat to increase capacity.

The Accès Micro crédit Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine project is being granted \$252,000 non-repayable on a \$965,000 project to promote the economic development of official language minority communities in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Is-

lands, by offering support, coaching and training activities to English-speaking entrepreneurs.

The Parc régional Petite-Cascapédia receives \$250,000 non-repayable funding to create a zone for beginner downhill skiers and snowboarders, part of a total investment of \$780,000.

The Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du Sud de la Gaspésie will be able to complete the technological development of the JOBEL national software package (electronic logbook allowing fishermen to transmit their commercial fishing data) and its marketing in the Atlantic provinces with a contribution of \$201,000 from the federal government.

The Village en chanson de Petite-Vallée received \$180,000 for marketing the 2024, 2025 and 2026 editions of the Festival en chanson de Petite-Vallée.

A sum of \$144,500 is reserved to enhance the tourism offer of the Corporation de développement de La Martre by setting up historical interpretation trails of the La Martre

lighthouse by creating and implementing an escape game in the lighthouse keeper's house, including rental improvements, as well as by developing an artifact exhibition room, a \$205,000 project.

Finally, Concept K will be able to improve its productivity and increase its production capacity with \$125,000 out of \$610,000 to acquire and install new production equipment and relocate the activities of the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts service point to a new location.

"The Gaspé Peninsula is going to be a part of Canada's economic recovery and we see that with our promoters, we have to hold our own. We are a tourist region, a resource region. We are a region that innovates in fisheries. Investing in the region is profitable for the region, for Quebec and for Canada," says Ms. Lebouthillier.

This announcement comes despite parliament being prorogued until the end of March. "That doesn't stop departments from operating, working on projects and making announcements," says Ms. Lebouthillier.

Diane Lebouthillier says the post-pandemic period hurt Justin Trudeau

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - On January 6, when the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, Diane Lebouthillier spoke about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's departure as soon as a successor has been chosen. She noted that the post-pandemic period hurt Justin Trudeau.

"The Prime Minister had told us that during the holiday season, he would be thinking about it. It's clear that when he announced his decision with everything that has happened since 2015, I was very moved," said Ms. Lebouthillier.

A major factor explaining this departure is the end of COVID-19. "Despite all the work that was being done, people needed to have someone to blame for everything and unfortunately, it turned out to be the Prime Minister,"



Photo: N. Sergerie

MP Diane Lebouthillier.

explains Ms. Lebouthillier, who is a social worker by training.

According to her, the message was no longer getting through to the population. "Even with the programs and actions taken, people had difficulty with Justin Trudeau. That's what I heard in the rid-

ing," says Ms. Lebouthillier who supported her leader until the last moment.

"He is someone with a good heart and sensitive to the people around him. I want us to remember the legacy he left," mentions the MP.

She recalls in particular

the implementation of the Canada Child Benefit, the Canada Workers Benefit, the dental care program, investments in the riding and work with Indigenous people.

"For me, the Prime Minister will have my eternal gratitude," she says. Ms. Lebouthillier is not changing her plans and will still be a candidate in the next election, which will possibly take place in the spring.

"When I see people, I ask them if they think that one day, I will no longer be able to do the job, tell me, and I will leave my place to someone else. What I hear in the community is Diane, you have to stay put and run in the next election."

For the moment, the Liberal MP has no preference for the race for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Dominic LeBlanc has already closed the door, but some are asking him to reconsider his position. Others have shown interest as well.

"We have a lot of people who are thinking about it. There will be rules in place. We will see who will run. I will respect democracy," replies Ms. Lebouthillier.

"They are all colleagues around the table and they are all competent," adds the elected official. She reiterates the importance of having a strong interlocutor in the face of American threats.

"With what is happening with the United States, nothing should be taken lightly. Mr. Trump's comments must be taken very seriously," warns Ms. Lebouthillier.

Since the announcement of Mr. Trudeau's departure, the Liberals seem to be gaining ground in the polls. "It's like a hockey game. We're going to work until the last second and it's not over until it's over. With the legacy Mr. Trudeau will have left, I am convinced that we will be able to win the next election," concludes the Gaspesian MP.

Announcements



Obituary

CHICOYNE: Stanford Melvin
1940-2024

Suddenly passed away while awaiting surgery at the Ste. Agathe Hospital in Quebec, on December 13, 2024.

Stan (Stanny) was the only son of May and Stanford Chicoyne (late) of Barachois West, Quebec.

He is survived by his partner, Penny Barratt, and his four children: Larry (Donna), Paula, (Randy), Kristin (Cactus) and Amy (Brad).

He loved his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was a great story teller, with a vast knowledge of the people of the (Ridge) and the Gaspé Coast. He had a keen mind and had several inventions to his credit.

He inherited his love of singing from his father, Stanford Sr. One could hear his wonderful voice above others in Church as he knew every hymn as well as the classic songs of yesteryear.

Stan's sisters are Verna Gray, Shirley Leary, Carol Appleby, Phyllis Chicoyne, and Sharon Cotnam.

A Memorial Service will be held at St. Pauls's Anglican Church in Barachois West in the Summer of 2025.

He made us laugh, he made us cry. He was loved. Rest in Peace brother.

*Deadline for
this page is
Wednesday at 4 p.m*



In Memory



GOYETTE: Eric

In loving memory, 1984 - 2012.
*Right from the time we lost you,
Life hasn't been the same.
We wish we had another chance,
To see your smile again.
The sun still rises with each dawn,
Night still follows day.
But there's always something missing,
Ever since you went away.
The tide comes in, the tide goes out,
The sands of time pass by.
But thought of you will never fade.
We hope you are peaceful wherever you are,
Life has surely lost it's sparkle the world often feels
Blue, but what gives us strength,
And hope is the precious memory of you.*
Love Mom, Jean, Patrick, Emilie, Noemie and Nelly.

Obituary - 150 words - \$50
150-250 words - \$55
250+ words - quote will be provided
In memory: 150 words - \$35
150-250 words - \$45
**Funeral, Celebration of Life,
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Birth, Prayer, Birthday - \$35**
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Photo: \$10 extra.

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YORK:
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Winter Carnival**
February 7: 6 p.m. Disco skating; 7 p.m. bonfire, fireworks, cash bar and music with Coco and Dodo.
February 8: Pal airlines family day. 10 a.m. family snowshoeing; 1 p.m. masquerade, tea boiling contest, ice bowling and nail driving; 3:30 p.m. hockey bottine; and 7 p.m. Texas holdem.
February 9: 1 p.m. bingo; 5:30 p.m. super bowl party with pizza, hot dogs, wings and nachos.
February 11: 7 p.m. tuck tournament, bring a partner.
February 12: Polyvalent activity day.
February 13: 7 p.m. line dancing with JR country dancer.
February 14: Valentine Hoedown dance, 6 p.m. for ages 6-12; and 8 p.m. for

ages 13-17.
February 15: Snowmobile poker run, 7 to 10 a.m. breakfast; 10 a.m. leaving York rink; 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. return to hall; 7 p.m. dance with music by John Gedeon.
HOPE:
Hope Baptist Church
Sundays: Sunday School starting at 10 a.m. Worship service beginning at 11 a.m.
NEW CARLISLE:
New Carlisle Legion
Every Monday: From January 20 to February 17, a five-week cribbage tournament will be held starting at 7 p.m. \$10 one time registration and \$3 per player per night, bring a partner.
Wednesdays: Shuffle board beginning at 4 p.m. Line Dancing beginning at 7:30 p.m. for \$7.
Thursdays: Darts begin-

ning at 7 p.m. for \$10.
Saturdays: Pool beginning at 8 p.m. \$1 per game.
February 4: General meeting at 6 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.
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-

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Worship Wednesday
10 a.m. St Paul's

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Sunday, January 26
New Carlisle
9 a.m Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Horoscopes

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, charm is one of your strongest attributes. This week your magnetism is magnified and can work to your advantage. You might attract people who can help with a situation.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, it is never easy to reevaluate finances and cut back. However, this is the week when you likely have to keep your credit card in your wallet; otherwise, the bills add up.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, now is the time to turn great opportunities into big ideas. Make a plan of action and spell out the steps necessary to see an opportunity come to fruition. Ask for help, if needed.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, others are supportive of a new project you re-

cently proposed. Maintain that support by staying focused on the tasks at hand. It's time to move things along.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

You are open to new activities and friendships, Leo. Luckily, you may not have to work too hard to make these things happen. Bring new members into existing friend groups.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Do whatever it takes to have some quality time to yourself, Virgo. This may include taking a trip or booking a relaxing day at a nearby spa.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, allow some time to pass by before offering an assessment. Responding too quickly might produce a knee-jerk reaction that could prove regrettable down the road.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Take extra care dealing with a sticky situation at work, Scorpio. You may need to be very careful about check-

ing for mistakes in detail-oriented tasks without stepping on any toes.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

You might need to bargain to get something you want this week, Sagittarius. Figure out what you are willing to give up and then identify a person you can work with.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Clear communication is needed right now, Capricorn; otherwise, you may fall victim to hearsay or crossed signals. Get the facts before sharing your opinion.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Start contemplating big changes pertaining to your employment situation, Aquarius. An opportunity might come along that proves too good to pass up.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

The feelings you have for someone will help you overlook any imperfections you have noticed, Pisces. Keep your relationship strong by focusing on this person's good points.



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PERCÉ COURTHOUSE:

▶ Cont'd from Page 3

deadly collision, he was released in November 2023. However, on November 5, 2024, additional charges were laid against Marc-Jules Chouinard, including two non-premeditated murders, leading to his return to prison as requested by the criminal prosecutor Isabelle Gavioli. The father now faces 11 counts in total.

Jealousy has been suggested by friends of the victims as a potential motive for the alleged murders.

The trial dates of the two men are yet to be set, but that procedure step could take place this year. In November, Isabelle Gavioli mentioned that her case evidence was ready, and the defence did not present counter-evidence during the preliminary hearings. The files of the two men will return to the Percé Courthouse on March 3 for the next term of the Superior Court. Their trial date could then be set.

The Amqui tragic truck attack

The case of the man accused of carrying out the truck attack that occurred on March 13, 2023, in Amqui will likely be heard in 2025 at the Rimouski courthouse. Steeve Gagnon’s trial date has not yet been formally set.

He returned to court on December 2, but his case was postponed to March 3. The case made the headlines across Canada.

A management judge has also been appointed in Steeve Gagnon's case to ensure that the proceedings take place within the scheduled time-frame.

The 40-year-old man from Saint-Léon-le-Grand, near Amqui, surrendered to the authorities after the tragic events that claimed the lives of Gérald Charest and Jean Lafrenière, aged 65 and 73, respectively, both from Amqui. A third victim, 41-year-old Simon-Guillaume Bourget, an Amqui resident who was born and raised in Gaspé, died of his injuries days after the attack.

Nine pedestrians were hit on Highway 132 in downtown Amqui on a sunny, mild and what was until then a quiet Monday afternoon near the end of the winter.

Steeve Gagnon is currently held in custody in Trois-Rivières awaiting trial.

A trial date for Claude Doiron

Since June 2023, Claude Doiron, 60, the former spokesperson for the Sûreté du Québec for the Gaspé Peninsula, the Magdalen Islands and the Lower Saint Lawrence regions, has been charged with sexual crimes.

His arrest warrant was issued on June 14, 2023. At the time, he was attending a training session for retired police officers since he was set to retire a few days later.

He appeared at the Percé Courthouse on December 9, and his case has once again been postponed until February 10, when a trial date could finally be set. He has opted for a trial in front of a judge alone.

The sergeant faces charges of sexual assault, sexual interference and incitement to sexual touching of a person under 14.

The alleged acts occurred between May 1 and September 30, 1988, in Cloridorme, on the north side of the Gaspé Peninsula. At the time, he was working for another police force than the Sûreté du Québec.

Important civil law cases will also be heard in 2025, pertaining to the federal electoral map, the provincial electoral map and the Cime Aventure case. Cime Aventure filed an appeal following a Superior Court judge decision rendered by Alexander Pless, who stated that the Quebec government had the right to limit the number of canoes on the Bonaventure river. He also declared that Cime had not been treated fairly by the government in the process that led to the imposition of clientele constraints.

MENTAL HEALTH:

▶ Cont'd from page 8

with the individual. At Family Ties we recognize this and offer services and activities to enhance the wellbeing of our staff so that we can better serve our community,” explains Ms. MacWhirter.

Family Ties has a welcoming and inviting staff room, offering its employees a space to gather, connect and unwind. “The space is equipped with self-care books, yoga equipment, healthy snacks, puzzles, board games and art supplies,” says Ms. MacWhirter.

Additionally, Family Ties begins its weekly staff meetings with wellness practices, including stretching and mindfulness meditation. “Also, during our staff meetings we delve into wellness topics such as maintaining boundaries, creating a sense of belonging and practicing our values,” adds Ms. MacWhirter

“Team-building is a vital part of our work and, in order to strengthen connections, we offer regular activities such as eating a homemade lunch together on a monthly basis and getting to know each other outside of the work context by participating in activities such as crafting, walking, playing board games and bowling,” says the director.

In 2023-2024, a grant from the Canadian Red Cross en-

abled the Family Ties staff to participate in three retreats focusing on individual well-being, community collaboration and dealing with difficult situations. These retreats were not only informative but provided an opportunity for the staff to strengthen their relationships and get to know each other better. “A common thread that was mentioned at many of our staff training sessions was the development of a mindfulness practice. Mindfulness basically means bringing your attention to the present moment and being fully engaged in your life with acceptance and non-judgement. Mindfulness helps us to deal with stress, worry, and anxiety. There is a plethora of information online about mindfulness as well as many books such as those written by Tara Brach, Jon Kabat-Zinn and Jack Kornfield. Also, several members of the Family Ties staff feel that being outside and moving in nature is a beneficial way of coping with mental stress. A walk on the beach or in the forest can do wonders for our mental health... and we are so fortunate to be surrounded by outstanding natural beauty,” explains Ms. MacWhirter.

Family Ties offers several mental health services to the public, including a walking group, seniors drop-in at the library, and various well-being activities as part of their regular programming.

MURDOCHVILLE:

▶ Cont'd from cover

says Mr. Wares.

These latest announcements have allowed the company to raise \$100 million to continue the research.

“The financial markets were very surprised. No one expected the resource to be this large. I am very confident that we will be able to define it in a pit model and lead to a huge operation over 30 years,” he says.

“We have a good chance of increasing the grade slightly. When you are talking about an open-pit operation of this magnitude, every decimal point of copper percentage counts. The price of copper is holding up very well. I am considering \$4.50 per US pound in the long term, which would make such a project very profitable. Our project is economical at \$4.25, but we are at the limit,” says

the Osisko Metals manager and former Mines Gaspé geologist.

The preliminary economic study should be published in 2026 and the feasibility study at the end of 2027 and the decision for exploitation would be made at the end of 2029 with the permits obtained.

This year’s drilling campaign will look for new mineralized zones. “With the new claims, we have two targets to drill this summer: one north and one south of Murdochville, which could potentially be new discoveries,” says Mr. Wares.

Pumping tests will be done this summer to dewater the Mount Copper pit, which has so far been the main target of Osisko Metals’ exploration campaign. “To better quantify the impacts of dewatering and if all goes well, we hope to begin dewatering in late fall or in 2026,” says the CEO.

When the resource was at 500 million tonnes of copper, the company mentioned an investment of about \$1.4 bil-

lion.

“We had continued our economic studies and we were at \$1.4 billion. With what we are aiming for, which is much bigger, I am sure we will exceed \$2 billion,” the manager calculates.

Osisko met with Ressources Pélican, which wants to renovate the Grande-Vallée wharf, which could change the copper shipping plans.

Rail was mentioned to send the copper to Rouyn-Noranda and vessels for shipments to Europe.

“For rail, we had a meeting with Ressources Pélican to ship to Abitibi. It could go through (the wharves of) Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Grande-Vallée. It is the economic studies that will determine the best method: a combination of road and rail transport. We don’t know, but one thing is certain: for Europe, it will leave from Gaspé,” explains Mr. Wares.

Continued from page 4

allow him to deliver his promise to the effect of cutting energy prices in half though.

Strike 3, 4 and 5. In baseball terms, it is pretty close to a double strikeout.

Spotlight on trade tariffs

Most Canadians remember the overnight trade tariffs Trump imposed on aluminum and steel in 2019. Close to 75% of the aluminum used south of the border comes from Canada, essentially from Quebec, where all the country’s aluminum plants are located, with the single exception of the Kitimat facility in British Columbia.

In response, the Canadian government countered that tariff with simple measures, targeting specific products coming from United States areas represented by the Republican Party and imposing equal tariffs on Bourbon liquor and Harley-Davidson motorcycles, for example.

The strategy worked. Can it work again? Undoubtedly, but some consensus will have to be reached within Canada before. The first American blow has to be replied to by a Canadian blow.

Despite being nine times smaller than the United States, population-wise and economy-wise, Canada possesses some trade ammunitions. Our energy sector sells a lot to the United States. The auto parts industry is vital to American car makers.

Talking about cars, why wouldn’t Canada start, come the first American tariff, with an equal tariff on Tesla’s electric cars? Tesla is mainly owned by Elon Musk. They are the most popular electric cars in Canada, and 25% of such vehicles sold in Quebec come from Tesla.

Here’s some food for thought, what is stopping Canada from introducing such tariffs, especially ones that would affect Donald Trump’s inner circle the most?


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