

Another record moose hunting season in the Gaspé Peninsula

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – Hunters in the Gaspé Peninsula broke another harvest record in the 2024 moose hunting season, harvesting 6,084 moose during September and October. This marks an 11% increase compared to the 2023 total of 5,466 moose, which was also a record.

The 2024 total moose harvest includes 3,464 bull moose, 1,975 cow moose and 645 calves. The total of 6,084 moose also represents an increase of 14% compared to the 5,328 animals of the four-year average of 2020-2023.

These totals include moose harvested in reserves. The statistics were released on January 30 by Quebec's Department of Wildlife.

The number of male moose harvested increased by 12% compared to the 3,102 moose taken in 2023 and by 14% compared to the last four-year average of 3,044 animals.

The number of hunting permits sold prior to the 2024 season reached 26,525, compared to 25,973 in 2023. This 2.12% increase is considered a sign of stability by the Department of Wildlife, aligning closely with the four-year average of 25,655 permits.

A high hunting success rate

The 2024 total hunting success rate reached 23%, a 2% increase from 2023, when the success rate was 21%, the same average as the four-year average.

The hunting success rate for bull moose was 13% last fall. This is 1% higher than in 2023, at 12% and also 1% higher than the average of the 2020-2023 span.

In 2024, management conditions permitted the harvest of bull and calf moose, while cow moose permits were distributed through a random draw in the region.



Photo: R. MacDougall

Moose hunters broke another harvest record in 2024 in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Interpretation of results

In its annual report, the Department of Wildlife provided an analysis of the 2024 season results.

“The results of the 2024 hunting season are very positive again this year in Zone 1 (The Sainte-Flavie to Sainte-Flavie Highway 132 loop) as

a whole. While the number of hunters remains at a high level, the number of moose harvested and hunting success are high and have slightly increased compared to the 2023 season and the last four years. The hunting success values remain, however, within the normal annual fluctuations of the last 20 years. The same is true for the harvest of all segments of the moose popula-

tion, namely males, females and calves,” states the summary.

The document also mentions that the relative stability of both harvest numbers and hunting success rates indicates an abundant and stable moose population in hunting zone 1.

The situation of cows and calves

Over the fall of 2024, 9,150 special permits allowing the harvest of cows outside the wildlife reserves were issued by random draw, and 18% of these permits were used by hunters.

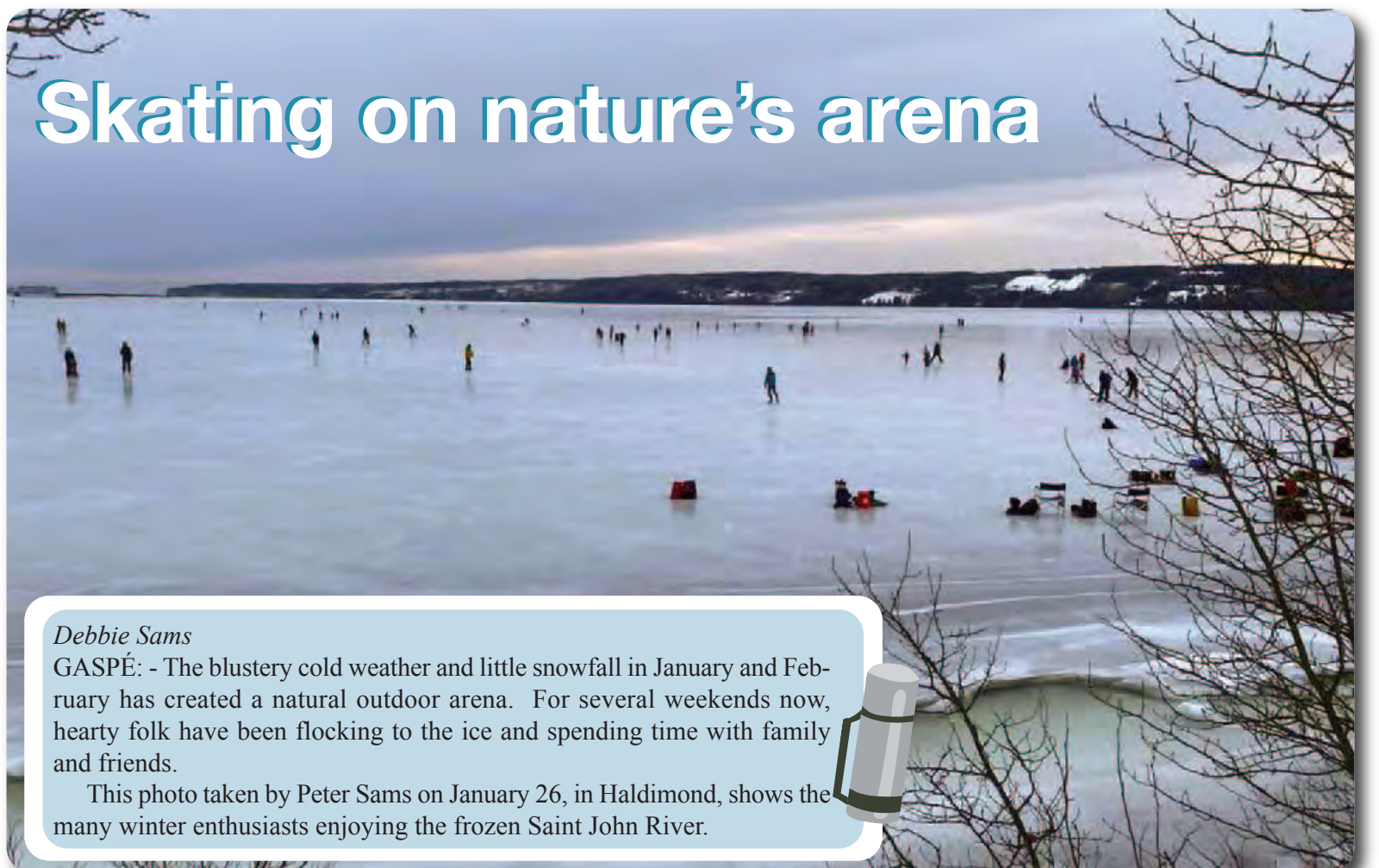
The number of cow moose permits offered by random draw is adjusted annually with the objective of achieving a female harvest that promotes the preservation of a sufficiently balanced adult moose population to allow a good reproduction rate.

The cow moose harvest increased by 8% compared to 2023, with 1,828 animals taken. This represents, a 17% increase compared to the four-year average of 1,695.

The calf harvest reached 645 animals, marking a 20% increase from the 536 calves of 2023 and by 9% increase compared to the last four-year average of 590. The calf harvest success rate was 2.4%, slightly higher than the 2.1% recorded in the last four-year average of 2.3%.

Cont'd on page 10

Skating on nature's arena



Debbie Sams

GASPÉ: - The blustery cold weather and little snowfall in January and February has created a natural outdoor arena. For several weekends now, hearty folk have been flocking to the ice and spending time with family and friends.

This photo taken by Peter Sams on January 26, in Haldimond, shows the many winter enthusiasts enjoying the frozen Saint John River.

GIMXport secures three years of funding

GILLES GAGNÉ

CHANDLER – GIMXport, the organization which promotes exports in the Gaspé Peninsula, has secured federal funding until the spring of 2027, receiving an allocation of \$570,000 for the period between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2027.

The funding was announced at the end of January by Soraya Martinez Ferrada, Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions. The \$19.7 million allocated for Quebec was revealed amid economic turmoil created by the president of the United States, Donald Trump, who has threatened to impose a 25% tariff on Canadian goods imported by American companies.

This announcement also came 10 months into the first year of the three-year funding period, suggesting that the

yearly over three years for our operations. This is a slight increase compared to our previous agreement. The supplemental amount will be used to pair with other export clubs that could work with us on joint projects. It takes at least another export club in that case,” explains Gino Cyr, director general of GIMXport.

GIMXport is also receiving \$170,000 annually from Quebec’s Department of Economy and Innovation. To reach its annual budget of close to \$600,000, the organization secures an additional \$125,000 from other sources, including its 100 members.

Guessing what Trump will do

GIMXport’s members are concerned about the potential tariffs Donald Trump has threatened to impose on Canadian goods entering the United States.



Photo: G. Gagné

Lumber is already subject to a 14% tariff when exported to the United States. Adding 25% would make it costly, south of the border, even if the first tariff of 14% is regularly reimbursed when Canada wins its trade tribunal battles.

new markets for some Gaspé Peninsula redfish processing plants. We are waiting to see what will happen with Trump. He is an opponent of renewable energies, which could have an impact on the region. In the lumber industry, the producers are already paying a 14% tariff and he (Trump) would like to add 25%. In the lumber industry, we think we have to concentrate on added-value products,” added Mr. Cyr.

He thinks the situation in commercial fisheries and the risk of processed lobster and snow crab being hit by a 25% tariff compared to that of the 2009 recession when lobster prices were quite low.

“In 2009, we were able to get enough government funding to start a 2009-2015 program whose aim was to sell processed lobster to Europe. Currently, we are mainly reacting to (Trump’s) threats. I think we should work on being proactive. Trump is not there for two weeks; he will be

there for four years. We have free trade agreements with other countries, on other continents. Someone will have to pay the 25% tariff. The exchange rate between Canada and the United States helps us to a certain degree but if there is a gap of \$2 per pound between what is offered for our lobster and what the buyer is willing to pay, the fisherman will likely have to accept most of the cut. We will need government help to be patient with our inventories while we find new markets,” analyzes Gino Cyr.

He also fears the possibility for the governments to focus on infrastructure programs to counter the economic downturn tariffs could trigger and forget about trade. “All the economic diversification programs’ budgetary en-

velopes are currently empty. Market diversification takes between three and five years before getting results. There is a cost attached to that (the results). Enterprises can pay a share of that cost but the governments will have to take a share as well, if they want to help during the crisis. The Gaspé Peninsula, the Magdalen Islands and the North Shore, to a lesser extent, because the fisheries are not as important there, need some support. Big infrastructure programs are okay but 85% of our gross domestic product comes from small and medium-sized enterprises,” concludes Mr. Cyr.

Two uses for the funding

Out of the \$19.7 million contributions for Quebec, \$16.1 million will serve to boost export activities, while \$3.6 million will be used to assist and supervise innovation projects by growing small and medium enterprises and to foster support for foreign direct investment. The export organizations help businesses that do not yet export or that wish to export to new markets to, among other things, take advantage of new market opportunities and acquire knowledge on developing international markets.

They also answer all questions on exporting and find good resources in the areas of customs, regulations and certifications to better understand their capacity to export, develop an export plan including an action plan to enter foreign markets and obtain personalized guidance based on the business’s needs.



Photo: Simon Carmichael

GIMXport Director General Gino Cyr favours a proactive strategy to help companies that could be penalized by trade tariffs.

Government of Canada recognizes the importance of diversifying the country’s export destinations. That aspect was mentioned in the press release issued by Minister Martinez Ferrada.

The announcement took place during a roundtable discussion with the Minister and economic stakeholders from Quebec that also involved the participation of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne. This discussion focused on the importance of protecting the economy in Montréal and across all Quebec regions in the face of U.S. tariff threats.

“We receive \$290,000

“We are surely trying to make some predictions about what will happen. In commercial fisheries, we are trying to find



**COMMISSION SCOLAIRE
Eastern Shores
SCHOOL BOARD**

**ADOPTION OF BY-LAWS
PUBLIC NOTICE**

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that the Eastern Shores School Board adopted the amendments to By-Law 11 Complaint Resolution Process. The complete document can be found on the ESSB website: www.essb.qc.ca

Given at New Carlisle, Quebec this 6th day of February 2025.

*Denis Gauthier,
Secretary General*



**COMMISSION SCOLAIRE
Eastern Shores
SCHOOL BOARD**

**PUBLIC NOTICE
CHANGE OF PLACE AND TIME**

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that the meeting of the COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS of Eastern Shores School Board scheduled for March 17, 2025 in Rimouski, Québec will be held at the Administrative Offices of the Board situated at 40 Mountsorrel Street, New Carlisle, Quebec at the following time:

- The COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS will meet at **6:00 p.m.**

Given at New Carlisle, Quebec this 5th day of February 2025.

*Denis Gauthier,
Secretary General*

Police report

An accident that occurred in Hope Town on January 31 claimed the life of a 77-year-old woman. She succumbed to her injuries at the hospital a few days after the collision. Police and emergency services were called to the intersection of Highway 132 and Chemin du Vieux-Moulin following a crash between a car and a tractor. Both drivers were transported to the hospital. The Sûreté du Québec officers have yet to determine the cause of the accident, the investigation is ongoing.

On February 1, the Sûreté du Québec arrested two suspects for drug trafficking after stopping their vehicle on Highway 132 in New Richmond. Police officers discovered 7,000 methamphetamine pills, 60 grams of cocaine, drug paraphernalia and \$700 in cash in the vehicle. The vehicle's occupants, a 26-year-old man and a 30-year-old woman from the Montreal area, were released pending further legal proceedings. They are expected to return to court by summons as several charges should be laid in this case. "The investigation was conducted following information obtained from the public," says Sûreté du Québec spokesperson Frédéric Deshaies.

Steve Duguay, 37, from Chandler, recently entered a written guilty plea seven months after a May 2024 police operation targeting drug trafficking. At that time, the Sûreté du Québec conducted searches at two residences, one on chemin du Lac Sept-Îles in Pabos and another on Commerciale Est in Percé, as well as three vehicles in Percé. At Duguay's home, officers seized 8,660 methamphetamine tablets, 500 amphetamine tablets, 206 Cialis tablets, \$6,845 in cash, trafficking equipment and an accounting list. A pre-sentence report has been requested for Duguay, who will return to court on May 26. As for his alleged accomplice, Keven Dea, also 37, is still facing legal proceedings and will appear at the Percé Courthouse on February 26. Information received from the public led to the arrest of the two suspects.

On January 24, Sûreté du Québec police officers based in the Bonaventure MRC, with the assistance of the Chandler Major Crimes Squad, made two arrests and conducted a drug search at a residence on the Third Range of Saint-Godefroi. The operation resulted in the seizure of about 330 grams of cocaine, more than 200 contraband cigarettes, resale equipment, more than \$2,000 in Canadian currency and six firearms. Two individuals, aged 24 and 36, were arrested and later released. They will be summoned to appear at the New Carlisle Courthouse at a later date and could face several charges related to possession and trafficking of narcotics, negligent storage of firearms, as well as charges under the Tobacco Tax Act. In this case, as well, the operation was carried out based on information received from the public, underscores Frédéric Deshaies, communication officer for the Sûreté du Québec.

Thirty-one snowmobilers out of the 442 intercepted on January 26 in Eastern Quebec as part of a trail safety operation were fined. Authorities issued two tickets for excessive speed, 19 under the off-road vehicle act, eight under other laws and two were expelled from the trails. The operation was held in the Témiscouata, Basques, Rimouski-Neigette, Matanie, Haute-Gaspésie and Rocher-Percé MRCs. Other infractions noted were dealt with such as non-compliance with traffic and equipment regulations.

The province-wide operation by the Quebec police services, in collaboration with Contrôle routier Québec and the Fédération des clubs de motoneigistes du Québec (FCMQ), covered hundreds of kilometres throughout the regions. It was conducted a day earlier in some other regions and targeted snowmobilers whose behaviour could compromise their safety and that of other users.

In Quebec, in addition to the many awareness messages, more than 3,000 snowmobiles, vehicles and trailers were inspected and more than 400 tickets and warnings were issued over the two days. The interventions targeted recurring offences and risky behaviours such as not wearing a helmet, driving while impaired by alcohol, drugs or a combination of both, failure to comply with mandatory stops and signage, excessive speed, driving on public roads and in unauthorized areas and failure to hold a valid driver's license, registration, liability insurance and trail access rights.

The various police forces and partners also took advantage of that national concerted operation to discuss with customers and answer various questions related to the practice of this winter leisure activity.

Throughout the season, all stakeholders will continue their work primarily to ensure the safety of all users of the recreational tourism network.



Photo: Innergex

Phase 2 of the Mesgig Ugju's'n wind farm will be built alongside the existing windmills.

Quebec government approves Mesgig Ugju's'n 2 wind farm

● GILLES GAGNÉ

ESCUMINAC – The Government of Quebec has officially approved the construction of the Mesgig Ugju's'n 2 wind farm in the backcountry of Escuminac. The confirmation of the venture's approval is mentioned in the February 5 edition of the Gazette officielle du Québec, the publication presenting monthly all the decisions made by the government, including decrees.

The Mesgig Ugju's'n 2 project, which is also called MU2, will be built alongside the first wind farm carrying the same name, inaugurated in December 2016. The new wind farm will also be owned by a partnership regrouping the Migmawei Mawiom Business Corporation and Innergex Renewable Energies.

The Migmawei Mawiom Business Corporation (MMBC), is owned by the three Native communities of the Gaspé Peninsula: Gespeg, Gesgapegiag and Listuguj.

MU2 will produce 102.24 megawatts of electricity and will require an investment of \$250 million. Its commissioning is scheduled for December 2026.

The government decree that gives the green light to the project came roughly 220 days after the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE), Quebec's authority in environmental approvals, tabled its report on the venture, at the end of June 2024. The BAPE report followed information sessions held in the

spring of 2022, and public consultations held in December 2023 and March 2024, respectively in Ristigouche South East and Pointe-à-la-Croix.

"We will start clearing the land in March and construction will begin in June. The wood cutting will be carried out by the Listuguj Forestry Department. Our general contractor will be Boréa (the builder of the first wind farm in 2015 and 2016). We have a very tight schedule to respect, as the wind farm must be ready to deliver electricity in December 2026," stresses Luc Leblanc, spokesperson for Innergex.

Components to come from Asia

Until recently, Innergex and the MMBC had not disclosed their wind farm's components suppliers. That has now changed.

"The turbine builder will be Nordex, a German company with a division called Nordex America. The components will all come from Asia, the turbines, the blades and the towers. It is cheaper in

Asia. When the (Hydro-Québec) 480 megawatts call for tenders was issued, there was no clause for Quebec content. So, the participants could take components from all over the world," explains Luc Leblanc.

The turbines will each have a capacity of 5.7 megawatts. A few of them will be derated in order to avoid exceeding the output of 102.24 megawatts appearing on the contract signed with Hydro-Québec. Each tower will be 120 metres in height and the blades will have a length of 80 metres. The towers will be transported to the windfarm location in five sections.

The shipping route and final docking port for the components remain to be decided, points out Mr. Leblanc.

The approval conferred to the project by the Government of Quebec will have the promoters respect a number of conditions regarding the restoration of wetlands and aquatic environments, noise climate monitoring during the construction and dismantling phases, as well as bird and bat monitoring.





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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

In the meantime,
in Quebec, volatility
hits the polls

A Léger poll conducted between January 31 and February 2 indicates that the Quebec Liberal Party is making progress in voting intentions. Compared to a similar survey conducted in December, the party, currently led by interim leader Marc Tanguay, has gained 5%, rising from 16% to 21%.

The survey also gives a 34% support rate to the Parti Québécois (PQ) of Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon, a gain of 4%.

The Quebec Liberal Party now finds itself tied with the reigning Coalition avenir Québec, which also received 21% support from the 1,017 people consulted in the Léger survey.

The Quebec Conservative Party, led by Éric Duhaime garnered a 14% support rate, a slight increase of 1% compared to December. Québec Solidaire, however, lost 3% and only reached 10%, amidst internal tensions and the paternity leave taken by leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, known for his fierce debating skills.

The poll was conducted before the Liberal Party decision to reject the leadership candidacy of former Montreal mayor and federal minister Denis Coderre, for reasons not explained as the SPEC was reaching its deadline.

The absence of Mr. Coderre from the list of leadership race leaves four men battling for the position, former federal minister Pablo Rodriguez, Charles Milliard, who used to run the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Marc Bélanger, a business lawyer originally from Matane, and Mario Roy, a Beauce farm owner.

The reason for the removal of Denis Coderre from the list of leadership candidates was not known when the Léger survey was carried out but it is certainly perceived favourably by a majority of liberal partisans, as he had become an embarrassment for the party, due to his personal problems with taxes and his loose-cannon attitude.

The 6% gain in Léger's latest survey is taken with caution by interim leader Marc Tanguay. First, it is just a survey among others, with a 3% margin

of error 19 times out of 20, which means that once out of 20 times, the error margin could be greater. Nevertheless, Léger is a reliable source, even if Quebecers' opinions can be volatile in surveys.

Marc Tanguay sees in his party's comeback the need for a strong Canadian market and a Quebec within the Canadian federation. However, with American tariff threats, Quebecers fear layoffs; there is consequently nothing to celebrate at the moment.

The rise of the Liberal Party in this poll shows that people tend to come back to old political parties in tough times, which is the case currently.

Less encouraging
for the CAQ

The Léger survey is almost devastating for the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ). Premier François Legault always puts forward the economic strength of the party he founded 13 years ago.

However, despite having passed the midway point of its second term in power and given Mr. Legault's penchant for traditions, the CAQ is still not considered a traditional party by the electorate. Since the beginning of the crisis triggered by American president Donald Trump, the Quebec premier has tried to adopt a reassuring tone in his speeches, the way he did during the first year of the pandemic, with good results popularity-wise, as he won another landslide in October 2022.

François Legault's strategy doesn't seem to work anymore. Fourteen months ago, before the 2023 Christmas break, he asked for a compass, admitting that the year since the 2022 election had been tough.

He has obviously neither found nor received a compass since December 2023. Despite his wealth of experience in politics, considering his previous career with the Parti Québécois, he plans lame strategies that rookies would not even think of.

For example, the CAQ government expressed during the first week of February an openness to re-examine projects like the Energy East GNL Québec pipelines.

Far from everybody will agree with that position, triggered essentially by the possibility of Donald Trump imposing a 10% tariff on Canada – read mainly Alberta and Saskatchewan – hydrocarbons. Alberta and Saskatchewan will push hard to make it happen though in an attempt to depend less on the American clientele or to simply increase their pro-

duction.

But who in the CAQ government thought that it was a good idea to send the Environment Minister Benoit Charrette to invite oil and pipeline companies to submit projects to him, that he would be willing to assess them, considering their economic importance?

If the CAQ government thought it was a good idea to make such invitations, why didn't François Legault ask a minister with an economic portfolio to do so? Because Economy and Innovation Minister Christine Fréchette is a woman?

Asking the Minister of the Environment to send such invitations as running pipelines through the watershed that supplies drinkable water to at least 60% of Quebecers would have been an outdated concept 40 years ago. Imagine now!

The Energy East and GNL Québec projects were essentially put to mothballs for economic reasons, not for environmental purposes, no matter what their former promoters say.

It looks as if Premier Legault won't find a compass before the 2026 election in Quebec.

Dwindling support for
Quebec's sovereignty

The Léger poll also measured support for Quebec sovereignty. It stood at 29%, its lowest level in five years, according to the firm. It seems contradictory, given that the Parti Québécois has gained 4% of support between the two latest surveys.

The contradiction probably stems from the fact that the PQ is considered a traditional party for Quebecers, since it has been around for close to 57 years. So, it is seen as a refuge in crisis time. Another recent Léger survey tends to demonstrate that 25% of the people willing to vote for the PQ are federalists!

At the same time, some Quebecers are feeling more Canadians than ever, largely due to the threat posed by Donald Trump's government.

All those numbers will change between now and March, April and so on. However, they feed discussions and they influence our political leaders, even if they say the opposite.

Surveys are interesting and must be taken with a grain of salt, considering that 10% of voters are making their choice only once they see a ballot. It is a growing tendency that will likely not change overnight.

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Fréchette steps down as director general of Percé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - Michel Fréchette, who has been the director general of the Town of Percé since July 29 surprised the municipal council when he submitted his resignation a few minutes before the start of the February 4 public meeting.

Once the council was seated, Michel Fréchette handed the mayor and each of the councillors a four-page letter in an envelope, explaining the reasons for his resignation.

The decision of the town's top civil servant is surprising,

as he had signed a five-year contract, which included a one-year probation period and required two evaluations before he could become permanent in his position.

Moreover, the initial agenda of the council included the hiring of an external resource to conduct "a summary mid-term evaluation of the general management," an item that was removed after Mr. Fréchette's letter was submitted.

"I am as shocked as you are. We knew from the start in his letter of intent that he did not intend to make a career at the Town of Percé. He came to bring back a certain stabil-

ity. I have not read his letter of resignation, which is quite long. We will study it in council and we will take note of it," comments the mayor, Daniel Leboeuf.

The announcement of this departure, which will be effective March 6, creates another gap in the organizational structure, considering that currently there is no clerk or director of public works and urban planning in the public administration.

"One complication does not wait for another," the mayor commented.

The Town had ordered an organizational diagnosis in January. The work began the

same day his resignation was announced.

"They're coming to give us tips on how to get organized. We really need them. They're going to help us with the process of hiring a director general. Maybe it's coming at the right time to question everyone's responsibilities," says Mr. Leboeuf.

Mr. Fréchette's hiring was not a unanimous decision within the council. He replaced Jean-François Coderre, who left the position by mutual agreement on June 21.

Mr. Fréchette declined to comment on February 4, giving the council time to review his resignation letter.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Many were surprised by Michel Fréchette's resignation on February 4.

Former director of urban planning for the Town of Percé faces charges

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The former director of urban planning for the Town of Percé, Ghislain Pitre, is accused of fraud and breach of trust following an investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commissioner.

The Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) investigation tends to show that, between 2009 and 2023, Mr. Pitre allegedly used the services provided by municipal employees under his direction for his own benefit.

In addition, between 2021 and 2023, the accused allegedly took advantage of subsidies awarded under the financial assistance program for heritage restoration of the Ministry of Culture and Communications, for which he was responsible, for personal purposes.

He would have benefited from more than \$5,000 of

public money for the renovation of his house, depriving other citizens of subsidies.

The Municipal Commission's report from last July mentioned some \$80,000.

He will appear on March 10 at the Percé Courthouse.

In December 2024, UPAC asked the Town to lift the professional privacy surrounding the administrative investigation that led to Mr. Pitre's dismissal.

The organization requested access to the report following a request for disclosure from prosecutors from the Bureau of Serious Crime and Special Affairs of the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions.

UPAC had committed to using the report only for the specific purposes of the request and to keeping the document confidential until criminal charges were filed if the investigation were to come to that point.

On November 14, 2023, UPAC went to the Town Hall to meet with the then Director General, Jean-François Coderre, and various municipal employees in connection with the suspension of the former executive.

At the time, the executive was the subject of allegations of fraud, theft of large sums of money and falsification of documents.

An administrative investigation was launched to verify these allegations, with the Town indicating at the time that the suspension, with pay, followed a decision by the

Supreme Court of Canada in order to respect the presumption of innocence.

On July 17, 2024, the town council dismissed the former executive following the filing of the 340-page administrative investigation report in labour law, by the law firm Therrien, Couture and Joli-Cœur. The council adopted a resolution a few minutes after learning of the document ordered during his

suspension with pay on October 30.

Since the case was at risk of being brought to court, the municipal council had made no further comments on the resolution adopted that validated the dismissal.

The former executive is contesting his dismissal, and the hearing before the Administrative Labour Tribunal was postponed several times.

The bill for the adminis-

trative investigation amounted to \$131,250.

The mayor of Percé is reserving his comments following the announcement by the Anti-Corruption Commissioner.

"This is a judicial matter. We will not comment. We will wait with you for the judgment," Daniel Leboeuf said simply on the sidelines of the February 4 municipal council meeting.



Ghislain Pitre will be in court on March 10

Photo: Archives



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Abolition of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia riding

Droits collectifs Québec confident of reversing the decision

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Droits collectifs Québec remains confident following the February 3 hearing before the Federal Court regarding the judicial review application challenging the abolition of the federal riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia.

“We come out of this quite confident. We have presented the arguments of fact and law for maintaining the riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia. The Attorney General of Canada and Elections Canada have done their job. There was a good exchange of arguments,” notes the attorney for Droits collectifs Québec, François Côté.

“Is Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia a riding that is characterized by distinctive elements? Is there really a prejudice suffered by

voters in the electoral division? The opposing parties argued the opposite. It remains to be seen how the judge will weigh the arguments,” adds Mr. Côté, noting that the magistrate was very attentive and interested in the debate before him.

The judge is aware that time is of the essence, as elections could occur fairly quickly.

“He openly said that he was sensitive to time in the case and would try to render a decision as soon as possible. We sense a desire on the part of all parties to settle this matter before the elections,” maintains the attorney.

The big question raised by Droits collectifs Québec is: do the voters of the Gaspésie have the right, in the name of the principle of elective representation, to have their own constituency or not?

The application for judicial review is based on an opinion

formulated by the Supreme Court of Canada in the context of the Reference re Provincial Electoral Boundaries in Saskatchewan and the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

Before the debate, Mr. Côté indicated that “We had to ask ourselves the question of whether democracy and life across a state is only a matter of absolute numbers, or is there such a thing as regional interests, that local particularities deserve to have a distinct voice even though numerically, they would not be on an equal footing. And the answer to this question for more than 300 years in our modern democracies is yes, they deserve it,” he said.

Regions, communities, geographic areas and regional histories also count in the debate. The Attorney General of

Cont'd on page 9



Photo: N. Sergerie

Educators demonstrated on February 6 at noon in front of the Gaspé rest area. Similar demonstrations were taking place all over the Gaspé.

CPE workers strike once again

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Approximately 300 educators in Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, affiliated with the CSN, struck again on February 6 to activate the renewal of the collective labour agreement that expired on March 31, 2023. Parents whose children at-

tend one of the 12 Early Childhood Centres (CPEs) once again needed to make alternative arrangements.

This marks the second day of strike action out of five adopted last fall. “Unfortunately, the discussions have not progressed enough for the strike movement across

Cont'd on page 9



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Happy Valentine's Day

Young Voices, Big Imagination

The students of Shigawake Port Daniel School's Journalism Club have put their hearts and creativity into poems and drawings, they're excited to share with Spec readers. SPEC is thrilled to feature their work in this edition and hope you enjoy these thoughtful, heartfelt, and creative works. Who knows? You might just find yourself inspired by the next generation of writers and artists!



Just for Laughs

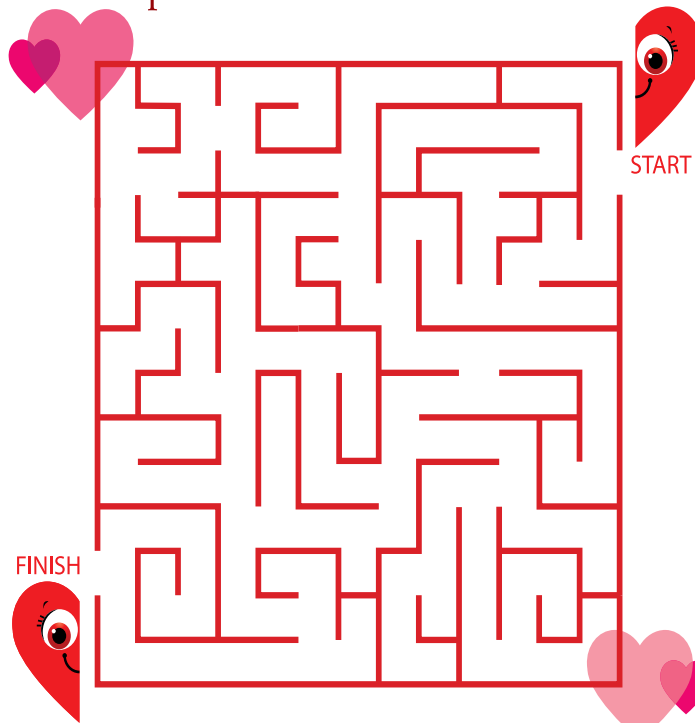
What did the octopus say to their valentine?
I want to hold your hand,
hand, hand, hand, hand,
hand, hand, hand!

Why are roses so popular on Valentine's Day?
They're scent-imental!

What did the magnet say to the refrigerator?
I'm very attracted to you!

Why did the monkeys get married?
They were bananas about each other!

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Fun and Affordable Valentine’s Day Ideas for Couples and Families

HOLLY SMITH

Valentine’s Day is all about love, but that doesn’t mean you have to spend a fortune to make it special. Whether you’re planning a romantic evening with your partner or a fun-filled day with family, there are plenty of simple and budget-friendly ways to celebrate.

For couples, skipping the expensive restaurant and cooking a nice meal together at home can be just as romantic, not to mention way cheaper. Light a few candles, play your favourite music and enjoy a cozy dinner. If cooking isn’t your thing, order from a local restaurant or grab some takeout from your favourite canteen. After dinner, bundle up and take a winter walk by the water, whether



it’s along the shoreline, one of the beautiful boardwalks along the coast, or even a quiet trail in your town. The crisp air and ocean views make for a perfect, peaceful

moment together. If you’d rather stay indoors, why not have a spa night? Run a hot bath, get some face masks, and give each other back massages to

unwind. To make the day extra meaningful, write each other love notes, because sometimes, the simplest gestures mean the most.

Let’s remember that Valentine’s Day isn’t just for couples, it’s also a great time to celebrate with family! Kids love getting involved, and baking some heart-shaped cookies or cupcakes is a perfect way to include them. You should expect a little mess, but that’s part of the fun! If you want to get creative, make homemade Valentine’s Day cards for grandparents, family and friends.

If your family enjoys outdoor activities, take advantage of winter on the Gaspé Coast! Spend the day playing in the snow, building a snow fort, or even heading out to slide. Take a drive to your favourite

spot for skating, lace up your skates and hit the ice for a fun afternoon.

Prefer to stay warm? Set up a game night with board games or cards, or create a scavenger hunt around the house with little Valentine’s-themed clues leading to small surprises. And, of course, a family movie night with cozy blankets and homemade popcorn is always a great way to end the day.

Valentine’s Day doesn’t have to be about fancy gifts, spending time with the people you love is what matters most. So, whether you’re sharing a meal, playing in the snow or just enjoying each other’s company, the most important thing is making memories together. And if there’s chocolate involved, even better!

Show your local business some love this Valentine’s Day

PENNY MACWHIRTER

Valentine’s Day brings with it a great opportunity to support the businesses and economy that it is important to you. Determine ahead of time if you will be concentrating on local purchases and experiences, or if you will also support provincial and national economies as well.

A locally made gift adds a personal touch and helps support the community. Ask around, there are likely some great shops that you haven’t heard of or visited. Think outside the box. There is no rule set in stone that you must buy roses and chocolates for Valentine’s Day. Be creative.

Here are some thoughtful locally made gift ideas

Handcrafted jewelry: There are many artisans that create one-of-kind pieces of high-quality jewelry. You might even find one that that makes jewelry out of repurposed materials, thus helping the environment as well.

Sweets: Local bakeries are likely to have special Valentine-themed chocolates and sweets.

Herbal creations: Teas and herbal mixes can often be found at Farmer’s markets in the summer, but many grocery and specialty stores carry them year-round. Ask about a relaxing blend.

Home spa items: Planning a

home spa date can be a great way to show your loved one how special they are. Look for locally made candles, bath bombs, wooden bath tray, etc.

Plants: A potted plant from a local shop is another great idea that can bring happiness to your loved one for a long time. Many shops will have special heart-shaped plants and pots for Valentine’s Day.

Local foods: Have an indoor picnic with specialty foods from local businesses, include cheeses, preserves, wine or specialty beer.

Photoshoot: Do a romantic photoshoot with an independent local photographer Not only will the experience be fun and provide you with an opportunity to spend time together

but you will also have the photos to hang in your room afterwards.

What can you do?

Let your Sweetheart casually know that this year, you’d really appreciate gifts that encourage a certain economy, perhaps even give them a few examples.

Don’t fret if you don’t have a Valentine, you can most definitely treat yourself to some local products or you could treat someone else who is also alone.

Most of all remember that Valentine’s Day isn’t just about gifts. It’s about spending time with your loved ones and making memories.

The origins of Valentine’s Day

PENNY MACWHIRTER

St. Valentine

Although Valentine’s Day is synonymous with love, romance and affection, it roots are quite darker.

Many historians believe Valentine’s Day started from the ancient Roman festival Lupercalia, which is held on February 15. The festival involved animal sacrifice, revelry and the pairing off of men and women.

Eventually such pagan rituals became less popular and in the 5th century AD, the festival was banned.



St. Valentine is the patron saint of lovers, people with epilepsy and beekeepers.

Although there are several theories regarding Valentine, there are many historical stories about him being a rule breaker, and secretly marrying couples. At the time marriage was banned by Emperor Claudius II of Rome because he thought unmarried men made better soldiers.

Eventually Valentine was caught and executed on February 14 of year 270. Right before he died, he supposedly wrote the first Valentine to his love. She was his jailer’s daughter.

Valentine’s Day

February may be a short month, but Gaspesians can weather the cold, windy and snowy weather. The approaching Valentine’s Day will bring with it the warmth of love, hugs and compassion. Gaspesians’ love connects us, and with God’s love and patience, we can embrace Valentine’s Day with joy, emotions and laughter.

A basket of chocolates on February 14 can brighten the day of someone you love, and a small act of thoughtfulness can spark a lifetime of true friendship.

Folks often face challenges, Valentine’s Day brings us together to extend our goodwill and the true spirit of kindness to our families and one another.

Let our hearts be filled with joy and gratitude this Valentine’s Day. Please grasp this day with gifts of openness, companionship and togetherness today and forever.

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Spring will be late, according to Fred the groundhog

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - Spring will be late if we are to believe the 16th prediction of Fred the groundhog in Val-d'Espoir.

"Fred is telling us that spring will be late," announced the mayor of Percé and Fred's spokesperson for the event, Daniel Leboeuf, shortly after 7:10 a.m., the sunrise time in this area.

It was a cold day with temperatures in Percé reaching -16°C and -24°C with the windchill when Fred saw his shadow on the steps of the church.

The protocol remains the same.

The initiator, Roberto Blondin, took the groundhog in his hands and showed it to the over one hundred onlookers while speaking with it. The result of the prediction was then announced.

The atmosphere was festive a few moments before, as the children danced to the event's theme song in the presence of several sponsors. The Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, was on-site for the first time, and the representative of the federal Member of the National Assembly, Diane Lebouthillier was also there.

"When we thought of this, it was to make our school, our

village, known," mentions the Groundhog Day organizer, Roberto Blondin.

The event is broadcast on the internet, and several television channels replay the images thanks to the webcast by the Rocher-Percé Community Television, which allows the event to reach the entire world.

In addition to the prediction, pancakes were served inside the church to also mark Candlemas, on February 2.

According to Météomédia, until 2024, Fred has had a success rate of 64%, which places him first among groundhogs, ahead of Sam in Nova Scotia, Phil in Pennsylvania and Willie in Ontario.



Photo: TVRP Screenshot

Roberto Blondin listening to Fred's prediction.

CHANDLER: \$12,000 bill for Bruno-Pierre Godbout's defence

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - The legal bill for the defence of Chandler Newport councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout, who is accused of fraud, now totals \$12,087.25.

Mr. Godbout faces three charges related to expense accounts submitted in 2021.

His preliminary inquiry was scheduled for February 11 at the Percé Courthouse, where the Crown intended to call four witnesses.

The judge will have to determine whether the evidence is sufficient to proceed to trial. The Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit had indicated in January 2024 that its investigation suggested that between February 1 and July 31, 2021, Mr. Godbout, who served as pro-mayor during the former mayor, Louisette Langlois' suspension by the

Commission municipale du Québec, allegedly produced and used false expense reimbursement claims.

The UPAQ estimates the amount of the fraud at approximately \$10,000.

Mr. Godbout faces charges of fraud, forgery and use, possession or trafficking of a document and remains suspended from the council until either a stay of proceedings, acquittal or the end of his term.

Despite continuing to receive a salary, he has not sat on the council since April 9, when the Commission municipale du Québec filed an action for a declaration of provisional incapacity, a procedure to which he acquiesced.

However, if found guilty, Mr. Godbout will be required to repay his salary from April 8, 2024, along with his legal fees. These legal expenses are reminiscent of the case in-



Photo: N. Sergerie

Bruno-Pierre Godbout.

volving former Mayor Louisette Langlois, as the saga surrounding the Town of Chandler's claim against her has so far cost the Town more than \$400,000 in legal fees, while no date has yet been set to hear the case on the merits.

The Percé Courthouse registry issued the certificate of complete file on January 7.

The parties are now awaiting a hearing date for the motion. In January 2021, the council adopted a resolution leading to the filing of the claim by the Town, emphasizing in particular that the accusations against Louisette Langlois resulted from serious or intentional misconduct, by giving precedence to her personal interest, by having committed actions intentionally and premeditatedly, all to achieve her ends.

After hearings in July 2020, the Commission concluded that the former elected official was guilty of 20 breaches, including conflicts of interest, in December 2020.

Before the hearing on sanctions, Ms. Langlois attempted to obtain a stay of proceedings and contested the notice of sanction against her,

going so far as to ask to reopen the investigation. However, administrative judge Sandra Bilodeau rejected the requests.

The former mayor later took the case to the Superior Court, where her appeal was dismissed in July 2021. She faced the same outcome in October 2021 before the Court of Appeal.

In addition, the claim against her accused her of repeatedly initiating legal procedures to delay proceedings.

The Town adjusted its claim to more than \$300,000 and is now referring to the costs incurred in the present procedure.

The total cost of this legal battle has now reached \$404,786.

RIDING MAP:

Cont'd from page 6

Canada, in his brief, argued instead for numerical parity.

The adopted map, presented in the summer of 2022, provoked an outcry of protest from the entire political class in Gaspésie.

Avignon and Matanie are included in the new riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj while Matapédia and Mitis are in Rimouski-La Matapédia.

The Federal Court had not granted a stay to maintain Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia pending a decision on the merits.

CPE:

Cont'd from page 6

Quebec to be put on hold," commented Serge Saint-Pierre, President of the CSN's Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Central Council.

"We're a little fed up with the government's refusal to respond to our demands," continued Mr. Saint-Pierre.

The workers are pushing for a lighter workload, higher pay to improve attraction and retention, regional disparity bonuses for employees in

certain remote regions, and measures to improve the quality of services for children, including clearly defined and respected ratios between the number of educators and children, as well as better support for children with special needs.

The other unions representing educators have settled with the Quebec government. "The demands between the other unions and the government and the CSN and the government are completely different. We're asking for

even more. I remind you that the ultimate goal of our demands is to retain and attract workers in the province's early childhood centres. We consider our demands to be essential elements in attracting and retaining workers in CPEs," explains Mr. Saint-Pierre.

The next step has not yet been determined. "It will always be about what happens at the negotiating table. If after Thursday's strike, things get moving, we will see if it satisfies the negotiating com-

mittee. The committee has a mandate to demand certain things. If the committee judges that it is not enough to stop the mobilization or to delay it or put it on hold, the committee may decide whether or not to continue the strike," specifies Mr. Saint-Pierre.

It is too early to discuss the possibility of an indefinite general strike.

In total 13,000 educators across Quebec, affiliated with the CSN will be participating in the strike.

Announcements



In Memory



ASSELS: Charles Edwin

In loving memory of a very dear husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather who passed away February 14, 2023, at the age of 89.

We just can't find the words to say

How much we miss you.

We miss you each and every day.

We don't need a special day

To bring you to our mind.

The days we don't think of you

Are very hard to find.

Our hearts still ache with sadness

And secret tears still flow

No one misses you more than we do.

You are always in our hearts.

Always loved and will never be forgotten by wife Gertrude; daughters: Brenda (Clifford), Darlene (Dave), Wanda (Boyce) son: Charles (Liz) and families.

O' REILLY - INGROUVILLE

Mary Ingrouville O'Reilly - February 27, 2016

Cathy O'Reilly - February 19, 2020

Gerard Ingrouville - April 6, 2020

Daniel 'Buddy' Ingrouville - May 16, 2020

Nancy beloved wife of Buddy - April 2, 2024

Missing you all and our happy gatherings in Gaspé. Rest in Peace, dear ones, your loving family.

Lordy Lordy, Look Who's 30



A very happy birthday to Myriam Beebe, who turns 30 on February 15.

She is a dedicated teacher, a devoted aunt and an eligible bachelorette. She is involved in many facets of the community, volunteering for the summer market, playing on a curling team and alleged winner of the attendance award at New Carlisle town meetings.

Wishing you many great years to come.

Your loving brother.

Obituary - 150 words - \$50

150-250 words - \$55

250+ words - quote will be provided

In memory: 150 words - \$35

150-250 words - \$45

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YORK:

Wakeham-York Winter Carnival

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 beginning at 7 p.m. for \$10.

Saturdays: Pool beginning at 8 p.m. \$1 per game.

March 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 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

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

February 15: The Cascapedia 50+ club presents Nash Stanley beginning at 8 p.m., \$20 per ticket. Tickets sales are limited so get

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February 16 and 23**
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**UNITED CHURCH
HOPE TOWN
February 16**
10 a.m. Service
February 23

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, February 16
St. Paul - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, February 23
St. Andrew's - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Worship Wednesday
10 a.m. St Paul's

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, February 16
New Carlisle
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, February 23
New Carlisle
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

MOOSE:

Cont'd from cover

Off-reserve statistics

The total off-reserve moose harvest reached 5,127 animals, consisting of 2,848 bull moose, 1,669 cow moose and 610 calves. This represents a 12% increase from the 4,562 animals of 2023 (4,562) and a 16% increase from the four-

year average of 4,435 moose. The bull moose harvest increased by 13% from the 2,528 taken in 2023 and by 15% compared to the four-year average of 2,472.

The cow moose harvest increased by 9%, compared to the 2023 total of 1,534 animals and by 19% compared to the last four-year average of 1,403.

The calf harvest increased by 22% from 2023 (500) and by 9% compared to the four-

year average of 560 animals.

The number of moose harvested in wildlife reserves reached 957 animals.

Quebec-wide results

The total moose harvest across Quebec was 20,431 animals, including 15,700 bull moose, 2,578 cow moose, and 2,153 calves, including those harvested in wildlife reserves.

The total harvest increased

by 11% compared to the 2022 restrictive year of 18,405 moose and by 6% compared to the average of the last two restrictive years of 2020 and 2022, that average being 19,218 moose.

The number of hunting permits sold reached 167,618 in the fall of 2024. This represents a 2% decline compared to the average of the last two restrictive years of 2020 and 2022. That average reached

170,427 animals.

The total hunting success rate was 12.2%. This was 1.4% higher than in 2022, at 10.8% and 0.9% higher than the average of the last two restrictive years of 2020 and 2022, at 11.3%.

Overall, 29.78% of the moose harvested in Quebec came from the Gaspé Peninsula, even though only 15.82% of the permits were issued to hunters in that region.

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

A good first impression is really important right now, Aries. Be sure to wear your best clothes and check out your appearance before you meet up with anyone this week.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, you are bound to have a lot of fun this week, and you will spread cheerfulness to others. You might host a party or plan some sort of night out with friends.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

None of the usual strategies to confront family issues are working right now, Gemini. You may need to take a step away and give others distance for the time being until things cool off.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, some tech upgrades can help ensure an exciting new project starts off on the right foot. Enlist others to help and welcome any insight.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

This week is your chance to take a break and let someone else take centre stage for a bit while you



enjoy time out of the spotlight, Leo. Right now you may need a little alone time.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, you know what you have to get done, so it is well past time to put one foot in front of the other and get moving. Others have helped, but you have to see it to completion.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Focus all of your energy on the important people in your life right now, Libra. Other things can wait for the time being. Don't be too hard on yourself for not getting everything done.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, as things in your life continue to evolve, you may be tempted to jump into something new.

You might want to slow the pace and exercise due diligence first.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, have you bitten off more than you can chew this week? If so, you probably have to ask for some helpers to step up and pitch in. Teamwork is a good thing.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Some tough decisions are ahead of you, Capricorn. It might be best to think things through logically and leave emotion out of the equation for the time being.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, it can be dangerous to think you know everything. This week, listen to what others have to say before deciding if their ideas have merit. This approach can benefit all involved.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Step up this week with confidence, Pisces. Now is not the time to be inflexible or shy. Go with the flow as much as possible, and learn and listen along the way.

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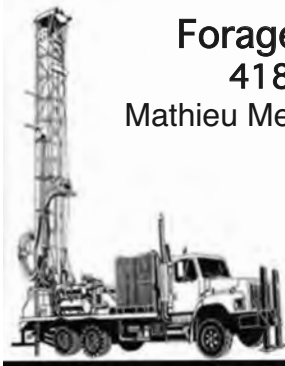
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