

U.S. tariffs could affect lobster prices

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - The March 4 imposition of a 25% customs tariff by the American government on Canadian exports to the United States raises fears of a drop in prices for lobster fishermen in 2025, according to Oneil Cloutier, director general of the Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen

Group.

"We know very well that it is the first link in the chain that absorbs the blow before the other links. Fishermen are therefore in a vulnerable position to suffer a drop in prices," says Mr. Cloutier.

"What will be the impact, how long will it last, the effect of the exchange rate, the percentage of the tariff? It is diffi-

cult to say. It may not be 25%. He (president Donald Trump) is imposing a tariff, which reduces the value of Canadian money, and increases the added value of the exported product. The devaluation of our dollar, if it partially covers the tariff, so much the better," analyzes Oneil Cloutier.

Lobster catches along the American east coast have declined considerably over the last decade. They once reached nearly 200 million pounds in the best years, when the crustacean was caught all the way down the coast of New York State. Now, catches are essentially concentrated along the coast of Maine.

Between 2021 and 2024, the annual lobster catches in Maine fell from 111 million to 86 million pounds. That's a 22.5% drop. However, going back to 2015, when catches exceeded 120 million pounds in Maine alone, that decline reaches 30.6%. Including other states that have virtually lost



Lobster catches have sharply declined in the United States over the last decade. As a result, they need Canada's lobster to satisfy demand.

Photo: G. Gagné



Oneil Cloutier says that tariffs, if they are imposed on seafood, will first hurt the fishermen.

Photo: N. Sergerie

their lobster industry, the drop exceeds 50%.

"The Americans are not able to meet their own needs. Will there be a tariff on seafood? That's another question that remains unanswered. Will they (Americans) deprive themselves of it? To use another example from the

forestry sector: they are able to cut more wood in the great American forests, but there is no one left to do it! In lobster, they will not be able to do it. There is no way to fish the same volume of lobster in Maine as before. The resource no longer allows it," assures Oneil Cloutier.

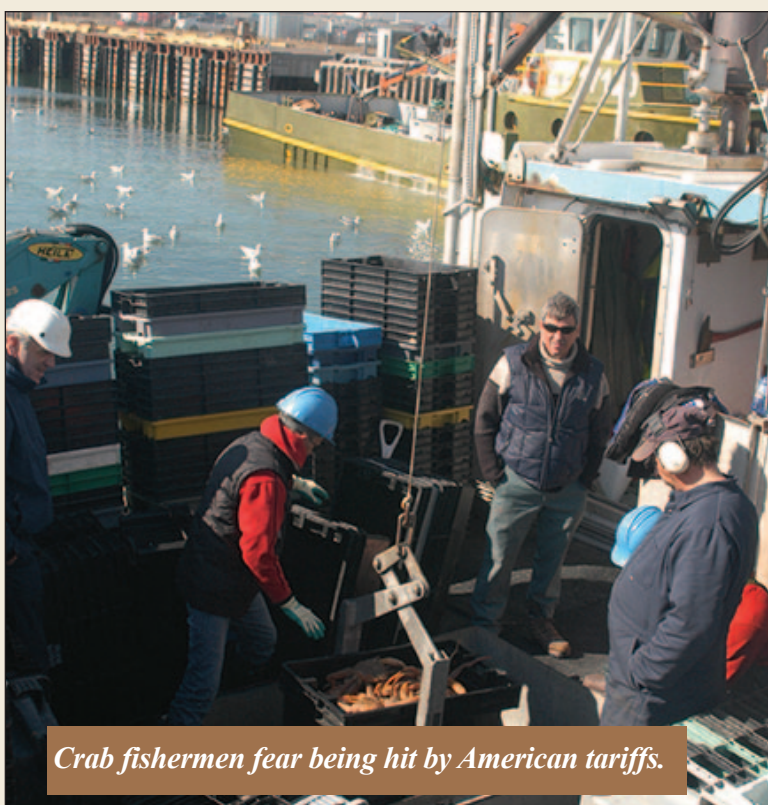
Snow crab: Trade tariffs and reduced quotas preoccupy fishermen

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - Quebec's snow crab harvesting and processing sector is preparing for a tough 2025 due to an overall decline in commercial biomass and tariffs imposed by Donald Trump's government.

Recently, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced a second major decline in commercial biomass in as many years in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, the largest area where Quebecers harvest crab.

According to scientific surveys conducted in the summer of 2024 by biologists from Fisheries and Oceans Canada the crab population is expected to decline by 21%. This follows a 24%



Crab fishermen fear being hit by American tariffs.

Photo: Robert Nicolas

drop in 2024.

The stock fall is worse in zone 12, one of the four zones

of the southern Gulf. It is the zone where most Gaspesian crab fishermen are allowed to

use their permit.

The expected quota drop in zone 12 is 33.3%, which is more than in all four zones of the southern Gulf.

The extent of that reduction in commercial biomass surprised fisherman Daniel Desbois, president of the Association des crabiers gaspésiens. "I was expecting 20 or 25%," he says.

A higher price was planned

The reduced quotas will prevent crab fishermen from fully benefiting from the anticipated price increase expected just weeks before the start of fishing in the southern Gulf. Additionally, the March 4 tariffs imposed by Donald Trump are adding further uncertainty, points out Mr. Desbois.

"We've seen a lot over the years. The imposition of tariffs is worse than anything else. We try to have predictability in the fisheries but we still don't know if the tariffs will apply. If we're going to have tariffs, it's better to know now than two or three weeks after the start of fishing because that will require adjustments. We already have to deal with a 62.32% drop in the total allowable catch in two years," says Daniel Desbois, who fishes in the zone 12 portion of the southern Gulf.

"These are not the worst (quotas) we have seen, but it gives between 160,000 and 180,000 pounds (per boat). It will not have an impact on the price because overall,

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Snow Crab: Processors also uncertain

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - Bill Sheehan, vice-president of the crab and lobster processing firm E. Gagnon et Fils, in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, is uncertain.

“For the price, we have two scenarios. Without tariffs, we are still facing a 33% decrease (in catches) in zone 12. On the other hand, the quota reductions in Quebec are too small to create a scarcity (on the markets). Only in Newfoundland will the harvest be increased, with a 20% rise in quota, which will go from 140 to 168 million pounds. We (in the southern Gulf) will decrease from 60 to 40 million pounds,” analyzes Bill Sheehan.

With Alaska’s crab stocks struggling and Maine’s lobster catches declining, American demand for Canadian seafood is increasing.

“For example, there is less



Bill Sheehan hopes for a postponement or cancellation of tariffs.

Photo: Robert Nicolas

and less lobster being landed in the United States, but when you look at restaurant menus, it’s ‘Maine lobster,’ but 75% of it comes from Canada,” he adds.

In the crab sector, he points out that exchange rate fluctuations play a role in sea-

sonal planning gymnastics, but not as much as prices.

“The currency could be to our advantage. (...) Desjardins’ currency traders advise us to work with a \$1.53 model (one American dollar worth \$1.53 Canadian). Our dollar was at \$1.48 when the

tariffs were imminent. When they were pushed back, the dollar dropped to \$1.41. As we get closer, our dollar depreciates. Last year, it was at \$1.34,” Bill Sheehan recalls.

Despite the uncertainty, Mr. Sheehan remains hopeful. “We know about uncertainty in the fishing world. We have experienced COVID, the cod moratorium, the right whale, recessions, exchange rate fluctuations. We live with the reality that 75% of our product is exported to the United States (...) If it (the tariff) hits before the season, we will see. There are products where the consumer will take the price increase. If it is too expensive, the consumer has the choice to eat other less expensive foods,” says Mr. Sheehan.

However, he questions whether seafood tariffs will actually be enforced. “Donald Trump targeted the automobile industry and it reacted

strongly. He never talked about fisheries. I can’t move my crab plant to Maine, where there is no crab. We still hope to go under the radar. We don’t know much. If I store crab in the United States, who pays the tariff? What do we pay on? On what we sell or what it is worth?” I hope the storm will have passed by the start of the season,” says Mr. Sheehan.

“If the tariff is 25%, he (the American buyer) will reduce what he will pay us by 25% (...) If it were 5%, I could live with it, but 25% is a lot more than our profit margin,” says Bill Sheehan.

He is also concerned about the strengthened relationship between the American president Donald Trump and Russian president Vladimir Putin.

“I fear the end of the ban on crab imports in the United States. That could lower the price we will get in 2025,” concludes Mr. Sheehan.

Gaspé’s Laura Samson Roberts awarded scholarship

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ - Laura Samson Roberts, a distance learning student in Paralegal Studies at the Carleton-sur-Mer campus, is the recipient of one of the ten Paul and Gerri Charette Scholarships from Colleges and Institutes Canada. Laura's journey caught the attention of the scholarship program’s selection committee.

In addition to pursuing her studies, she is the mother of three young children and is actively involved in the cul-

tural activities of her community, the Mi’gmaq Nation of Gespeg. She has organized many events for young people, which are opportunities for learning and development. Her dream is to become a lawyer to help families who, like hers, are going through difficult situations. She hopes to offer a better future to her children and to defend the interests of those who do not have access to the legal services they need.

The Paul and Gerri Charette Scholarship Program of Colleges and Insti-

tutes Canada provides financial assistance to students in need who face significant challenges and barriers to participation and completion in postsecondary education. The \$5,000 scholarships are awarded primarily to students attending colleges and institutes located in rural, remote or northern regions.

In 2024, ten scholarships were awarded across Canada. Colleges and Institutes Canada is the national and international voice of Canada’s largest network of postsecondary institutions.



Laura Samson.

Photo: Courtesy of Laura Samson

Upcoming train consultations

Gilles Gagné

MARIA AND CAPLAN - The Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of VIA Rail’s passenger train will soon hold its final three public meetings to raise awareness about the need to bring back the service between Matapédia and Gaspé.

A first meeting will be held in Maria on March 16 at 1:30 p.m. at the community centre, located at 65 rue des Voltigeurs. The last two meetings will take place on March 23 in Caplan, also at the community centre, located at 3 Boulevard Perron East. The English meeting will be from 10 a.m. to noon, and the French meeting will be from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

These three meetings replace previously scheduled ones that had to be cancelled because Micheline Saint-Onge, a member of the Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of VIA Rail’s passenger train, was ill. The last two meetings were originally supposed to be held in New Richmond.

The passenger train service between Matapédia and Gaspé has been suspended since December 2011 for the New Carlisle to Gaspé stretch, and since September 2013 for the Matapédia to New Carlisle portion of the network.

CRAB:

Cont'd from cover

there will be the same crab on the markets given that the global supply remains the same but this market is empty. The forecast for the price paid to fishermen is quite good,” he says.

However, American tariffs could lower the price paid to the fishermen.

“The impact of the tariffs? It is too early to know. It's not a win-win situation, it's a lose-lose situation. Generally, we have an idea of the price even if the Boston Seafood Show hasn't taken place. If there are no rates, or if the rates are postponed, the season will be short and we could fall

through the cracks,” hopes Mr. Desbois.

Scheduled for mid-March, the Boston Seafood Show is North American’s premier event for seafood product negotiations.

Unfortunately, Daniel Desbois expects that American snow crab importers will try to pass the 25% tariff on to Canadian processors and fishermen.

“The average price in 2024 stabilized a little above \$4 per pound. (...) The markets are really good. We expect prices to increase in 2025 (if the tariffs are cancelled or postponed). The importer pays (the American government) the tariffs three days before delivery. If they don’t want to pay, we will be vulnerable because

there is no storage in Canada to support a large inventory,” analyzes Mr. Desbois.

Such storage space could be used to take a chance and wait until the tariff threats are gone or postponed, like they were in the automobile industry.

The imposition of tariffs on all Canadian goods exported to the United States will cause the Canadian dollar to plummet against the American currency, ironically benefiting Canadian exporters.

“There are too many unknowns to make predictions. (...) We remain optimistic. Buyers want them and the markets are empty,” insists Mr. Desbois.



Investment in businesses must be supported in order to increase their productivity.

Photo: G. Gagné

Despite measures, impact from tariffs remain significant, says Chambers of Commerce

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – The Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce and the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcome the strong and unequivocal response of the various levels of government to the tariff war that began on March 4, and underline the importance of business assistance programs for those directly affected.

While the survival of one in three businesses could be at risk if the tariffs are imposed and persist over time, all energies must focus on quickly deploying the programs, limiting the impacts on the businesses and ending this tariff conflict as quickly as possible.

Faced with the worst-case scenario, local and provincial businesses have to make heart-breaking choices, such as passing the costs on to customers or consumers, reducing production, moving operations to the United States, or closing their doors.

All tools at the government's disposal must be considered in order to force the American government to back down.

"Not all exporting businesses are strong enough to absorb a 25% tariff increase. The government assistance announced, in particular the Border/Frontière program, which provides liquidity to businesses affected in the short term, is essential to help them survive. We must also think about the medium and long term, by quickly implementing permanent measures that are effective enough to improve productivity and protect business competitiveness," explains Véronique Proulx, President and chief executive

officer of the Federation of Chambers of commerce.

"Tariff increases represent a major challenge for our businesses, and it is essential that the government measures announced be deployed quickly and adapted to the realities of the business environment. We must do everything possible to protect our economic fabric and ensure the sustainability of our businesses," says Valentine Palma, executive director of the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Beware of the second wave

While the (counter-tariff) response is essential, it must target products that businesses and consumers can easily replace with other suppliers. In particular, Quebec companies must avoid taxing at 25% critical components that they import from the United States and for which they do not have an alternative supplier.

"The Canadian government must avoid imposing a second tax on our exporters. If this second list of products to be taxed includes the inputs of businesses that are already affected by American tariffs, it could jeopardize the survival of dozens of them," adds Ms. Proulx.

Other measures expected to protect our competitiveness

In this period of instability, Quebec and Canada can implement other concrete measures today to protect the competitiveness of businesses, in particular by applying an immediate moratorium on new restrictions related to the retention and renewal of temporary

foreign workers.

Contrary to what one might think, this issue remains a priority for businesses, despite the tariff war.

"Since November, employees with particularly important skills have had to return to their country because their permits have not been renewed. On the one hand, businesses are being asked to be resilient, but the government is preventing successful businesses from honouring their order books. This is creating a crisis on top of a crisis. The government must give businesses every means to weather the storm that is blowing over the economic sector," says Véronique Proulx.

Among the other essential measures to be implemented, according to the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce and the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of commerce and industry, people can favour Quebec companies in public contracts, refuse to increase electricity rates for industrialists, quickly eliminate trade barriers between Canadian provinces, modernize and improve scientific research and economic development tax credits, and reducing the Quebec corporate income tax rate from 11.5% to 10%.

"Governments must send a signal today that they recognize the seriousness of the situation and take action to transform our economy. The key will be to increase productivity: we must both increase the size of our internal market by promoting local content in our public contracts and diversify our export markets. The development of our natural resources must also be accelerated with ambitious deadlines," concludes Ms. Proulx.

Police report

Drug busts in Paspebiac and Nouvelle

Arrested on February 27 during a drug bust in Paspebiac, Éric Maldemay, 48, and Cédric Hammond-Pelletier, 30, remain in custody. The criminal prosecution objected to their release, and as the SPEC was reaching its deadline, they were scheduled to return to the New Carlisle Courthouse for a bail hearing on March 10. Mr. Maldemay is charged with drug trafficking, assault on peace officers, dangerous driving, refusing to stop when pursued by police officers, mischief over \$5,000 on a Sûreté du Québec vehicle and two probation violations. In the past, the individual was sentenced, among other things, to 12 and six years in prison in 2008 and 2023 for drug-related matters. In October, Mr. Maldemay was injured by when a firearm was discharged in a residence in Saint-Alphonse. The perpetrator(s) have not been arrested so far. Cédric Hammond-Pelletier faces charges of possession and trafficking of narcotics, as well as breach of probation. Police officers discovered 1,500 grams of cocaine during the operation.

Sûreté du Québec police officers also conducted a drug bust on February 27 in a house in Nouvelle, an operation that was unrelated to the one in Paspebiac. They were accompanied by a dog handler, in collaboration with an Aboriginal liaison officer from the Matapédia MRC. The search was carried out in a house in Miguasha East. On site, 300 grams of cocaine, methamphetamine, crack, cannabis concentrate, contraband cigarettes, three imitation firearms and nearly \$1,800 in cash were seized. A 55-year-old suspect was arrested in his vehicle in the New Richmond sector. He was released and will eventually be summoned to appear at the New Carlisle Courthouse.

Man pays back money obtained through fraud

Umar Manaf, 37, living in Montreal, who originally pleaded guilty to a fraud charge of over \$5,000, saw the criminal prosecutor agree to reduce the fraud charge to less than \$5,000. The individual has, so far, repaid \$23,000 of the \$25,000, taken from the victim. At the end of February, when the case was finalized, the culprit agreed to repay the remaining amount within six. The victim, a woman in her fifties from the Bay of Chaleur area, had exchanged thousands of emails between April and June 2023 with a man claiming to be "Dr. Wyatt." After several weeks, the latter begged her for \$25,000 to pay for baggage fees at an airport to come and meet her. The man asked her to send him a bank draft. Unable to proceed by this means, the fake doctor convinced the lady to send a cheque to cover the amount. The document was sent to Umar Manaf's company. The latter was filmed cashing it at a bank in Montreal. It was determined that Umar Manaf was likely not "Dr. Wyatt" but that he was acting on behalf of another man. The culprit, a native of Ghana, was facing extradition before his last court appearance.

Driver seriously injured in snowmobile accident

A snowmobiler was seriously injured after his snowmobile hit a tree in the Chandler area. The accident occurred around 2:45 p.m. on March 4 in a wooded area. Police and firefighters rescued the man in his forties, who was taken to the Chandler hospital, where he was transferred to a facility in Quebec City. According to the Sûreté du Québec, the injuries are not life-threatening.



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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

The Ontario election might inspire François Legault

Doug Ford’s third consecutive victory as premier of Ontario on February 27, is considered a feat by Canadian political standards as it is relatively rare, especially considering that it is also a third consecutive majority government.

In Quebec, we would have to go back to the late 1940s and 1950s to see such a comparable winning streak, when Maurice Duplessis also won three straight majorities. He passed away in 1959.

Jean Charest also won three consecutive elections, in 2003, 2007 and 2008, but the second one was a minority victory, which led to the 2008 election, triggered by a major financial crisis. Mr. Charest, who had almost lost in his riding of Sherbrooke in March 2007, seized the opportunity provided by the financial slump of 2008 to launch an electoral campaign, which he won with relative ease.

Doug Ford, who had gotten himself in trouble a few times over the last term, notably regarding his openness to reduce the Greenbelt surface, a zone reserved for nature in the Toronto area, and turn some of it into a real estate area, launched an electoral campaign in the middle of the tariff crisis thrown our way by American president Donald Trump.

A crisis is a good way to ask voters if they want to take a chance with an inexperienced premier, and often, voters settle for stability and keep their current leader. That’s exactly what happened in Ontario. Doug Ford played the “Captain Canada” part right after November 26, the day Donald Trump announced that he would impose tariffs on Canadian goods if the country doesn’t tighten up its border against fentanyl traffic.

Mr. Ford later took advantage of the relative weakness, or inexperience, of his Liberal Party and New Democratic Party leaders to opt for an election, using the crisis theme to justify it.

It worked. His majority remains about the same but his leadership, no matter what the RCMP investigation about the Greenbelt reveals, will not be contested through an election over the four-year turmoil period we can anticipate, given Donald Trump’s erratic behaviour and decision-making.

The summer will be a time for reflection, in Quebec

In Quebec, since the October 2022 election, François Legault and his team have essentially dis-

tinguished themselves by a lack of connection with the population’s needs.

The health system has not improved, despite strong commitments to that effect and the creation of Santé Québec, an agency that is notably moving accountability away from politicians. It would be alright if it applied to health management, but creating a distance between the ministers and their responsibilities can only lead to relative chaos.

The back-and-forth saga of the Third link between Quebec City and the south shore of the capital has become a bad joke, mobilizing way too much energy province-wide for a problem that involves maybe 10,000 drivers, according to serious studies.

The SAAQclic scandal, which has been brewing for two years, represents another gaffe that will drag on for a while. The last Auditor General’s report shows that a \$500 million cost overrun characterizes the Société de l’assurance-automobile du Québec’s decision to improve its online services. We are not talking about erecting buildings here. We are talking about computer programming that will cost \$1.1 billion instead of \$600 million. How can a project get so far off track?

Former minister Éric Caire resigned, or was asked to resign, as a result. He more than deserved it, as he has shown disrespectful manners, a questionable sense of duty and an overall attitude of indifference towards the missions he was asked to deliver. The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) cabinet is stronger without him.

In fact, his presence on that cabinet was a mystery, much like François Legault’s constant appreciation for his work was mind-boggling. People who remember the Quebec premier’s request for a compass before the 2023 Christmas break might conclude that, 15 months later, the premier still hasn’t found one.

A fall election in Quebec?

For all those reasons, and some more, the Coalition avenir Québec has lost ground in surveys since the 2022 election. If the party waits until the 2026 poll, chances are it won’t replicate Doug Ford’s Progressive Conservative Party’s feat of a third straight victory, let alone a third majority government.

Enter a crisis, though, courtesy of Donald Trump. Could the CAQ take advantage of the current context, a trade situation unlikely to improve between now and, say, the end of the summer, to

call an election?

We can bet that the CAQ war room thinkers are already talking about a fall election. It doesn’t mean that it will definitely take place, but chances are the crisis context could be favourable to François Legault.

For now, the CAQ will count on the distraction stemming from the presence of a new federal leader (Mark Carney was way ahead of his opponents as the SPEC was reaching its March 7 deadline) to make Quebecers forget about the SAAQclic scandal.

The federal election, which will likely follow days or weeks after Canada is led by Justin Trudeau’s successor, will also create another source of distraction for the CAQ. That is not counting the tariff war, as April 2 is the new deadline for the imposition of a 25% penalty, give or take, on Canadian goods.

By May, Canada will likely have a new government, whether it is a liberal or a conservative one.

Doug Ford called an election in the middle of the winter. He was favoured by a low participation rate of 45%, a sign that people were not ready for a change, since a protest vote usually warrants a higher voter mobilization.

Would François Legault be tempted to call an election in the middle of the summer, probably marked by a low participation rate?

He and the CAQ think tank will likely wait for an early fall election. François Legault will then be tempted to convince the electorate that his experience will be vital in the trade crisis that will still prevail a few months down the road.

He will denounce the fact that Parti Québécois leader Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon, who comes first in recent surveys, way ahead of Mr. Legault, has committed to hold a referendum on sovereignty during his first term.

By mid-June, the Liberal Party will have selected a new leader, probably Pablo Rodriguez or Charles Milliard. That party might have a hard time convincing francophones and people from rural regions that their program contains something for them, especially if an election takes place shortly after the end of the leadership race.

As for Québec Solidaire, Ruba Ghazal needs some additional time before bringing new ways of showing Quebecers that her party can play a role outside Montreal.

The CAQ’s weighing of the possibility of holding a fall election will gain some attention before long.

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Québec

2024: Slight increase in groundfish and pelagic species

Gaspesians face harder times for herring and mackerel

● GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The year 2024 brought a slight increase in catches for groundfish and pelagic species in Quebec, while the harvest season for molluscs and echinoderms remained stable compared to 2023.

With the exception of Atlantic halibut and redfish catches, it is not an exaggeration to state that groundfish are still in crisis. Although total catches increased from 1,788 to 2,052 metric tonnes between 2023 and 2024, a gain of 14.7%, these two volumes are quite clearly the smallest quantities landed over the last decade.

The picture is only slightly brighter in terms of revenues, as total landings for groundfish fishermen increased from \$12.6 million to \$13.2 million. This \$13.2 million exceeds the figures for only two other years between 2015 and 2022 and by just a little margin. The 2024 figure is far from the \$18 million in 2016, an amount that would be worth \$22.5 million in constant, or indexed, dollars.

Atlantic halibut dominated groundfish catches in 2024, with catches of 995 tonnes, or 48.5% of all that was caught. In value, the dominance of this species is even more remarkable, since the \$11.5 million in landings constitute 87.1% of all revenues attributable to groundfish.

The official resumption of commercial redfish activities has generated an increase in catches from 474 to 711 metric tonnes from 2023 to 2024, a 50% increase, but these 711 metric tonnes remain far from the quota of 2,500 tonnes allocated to Quebec in January by federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Diane

Lebouthillier. The management year for this quota, however, extends until May 15, 2025.

“Yes, in 2024, volumes have increased slightly compared to 2023, due to the end of the redfish fishing moratorium, which had been in place since 1995. The 711 tonnes of redfish landed in 2024 quadruple the volumes compared to the average for the 2015-2023 period when they were 170 tonnes. But the issue is the size of the markets, compared to what is fished in Iceland, Norway and Russia. (...) Redfish, in value, remains very low,” explains economist Simon Desrochers, from Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Despite the moratorium that marked the 1995 to 2023 stretch, a certain level of by-catches was allowed, and exploratory fisheries were also taking place over recent years, especially in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Mr. Desrochers notes that the situation for Atlantic halibut, despite a slight drop in catches in 2024, remains good.

“Things are going very well. The catches of 995 tonnes in 2024 represent an increase of 8% compared to the average for the 2015-2023 period,” he points out.

He notes that for Greenland halibut, “Things are going very badly. Landings only reached 37 tonnes. That’s a drop of 91% when you look at the average from 2015 to 2023. In terms of quantities and revenues,” he states.

For reference purposes, in 2016, Greenland halibut fishermen, or turbot, delivered 2,849 metric tonnes, worth \$10.2 million. Considering that the average price of turbot was \$2.01 per pound in 2024, the 37 tonnes landed generated revenues of \$165,000 at most.

Gaspesians take the lion’s share in groundfish species

In terms of groundfish, the Gaspé region leads the maritime sectors in terms of catch value, with nearly \$9 million in revenue from these species, compared to \$4 million for fishermen on the North Shore. In terms of prices, Atlantic halibut is the only groundfish species to have experienced a decline, but it was modest, from \$5.57 per pound in 2023 to \$5.38 in 2024, which represents 3.4%.

The price of turbot increased from \$1.97 per pound to \$2.01, while the price of cod increased from \$1.29 to \$1.65 from one year to the next. The price of redfish has increased from \$0.35 to \$0.51 per pound.

Audon Honvah, another economist at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, notes that the price of redfish remains low despite the increase in 2024. He also analyzes the price of Atlantic halibut.

“But there are developments, for China and Japan. Fishermen’s associations are working to sell it elsewhere. The price was only \$0.51 per pound but redfish is like a new species that people are starting to fish. For prices, halibut is a little volatile, if we compare it to other species but at \$5.38 per pound, it is the best price,” notes Mr. Honvoh.

The improvement in the

price of Greenland halibut above the \$2 per pound mark had only a very limited effect on the overall income of fishermen, given the low quantities landed, he adds.

Pelagic species: progress on the North Shore

While catches of pelagic species doubled between 2023 and 2024, going from 1,657 to 3,319 metric tons, the totals for these two years constitute the lowest data in the last decade.

These results were achieved thanks to catches made on the North Shore since catches in this region jumped from 1,455 to 3,085 metric tons from 2023 to 2024. This represents 93% of Quebec catches in 2024.

The North Shore’s leading position is therefore, transposed in terms of revenues, since 80% of revenues related to pelagic species were concentrated there, or \$1.2 million of the \$1.5 million landed in Quebec.

Herring virtually monopolized all revenues, with \$1.3 million in landed value. Capelin dominated the scene concerning the \$200,000 balance, since mackerel catches, under moratorium, were negligible.

Stability for molluscs and echinoderms

In the field of molluscs and

echinoderms, the overall data illustrate a very stable situation, both in terms of volumes and revenues. Harvests increased from 3,878 to 3,885 metric tons from 2023 to 2024, a gain of 7 tons, a preliminary figure like all the statistics currently revealed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The North Shore clearly dominated in this sector, with harvests rising from 2,073 to 2,276 metric tons, accounting for 58.6% of the total. The Gaspé Peninsula ranked second with 843 tonnes in 2024, compared to 767 tonnes in the Magdalen Islands.

The North Shore also clearly leads in terms of revenue, with \$7 million of Quebec’s total revenue of \$13 million generated overall. Fishermen and harvesters in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands delivered products worth \$3 million in both cases. The 2024 data is identical to that of 2023 in terms of revenue.

Sea urchins and scallops are the two species that brought in the most in 2024, generating revenues of \$4.2 million and \$3 million respectively. Sea cucumber and whelk followed with \$2.7 million and \$1.2 million in revenues generated during the last season. Stimpson’s surf clam brought in \$1 million. Overall, the results between 2023 and 2024 were relatively stable in terms of income.



Photo: Courtesy of Denis Éloquin

Redfish catches increased in 2024, but at 711 tonnes, they remained far below the 2,500 tonnes quoted allocated to Quebec fishermen in January 2024. The low per-pound value of redfish also represents an entry obstacle.



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Shrimp in 2024: Another year to forget

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ – Quebec shrimp landings continued to decline again in 2024, reaching only 961 metric tonnes. This was the fourth consecutive decline in catches of the small crustacean. In 2020, catches reached 10,862 tonnes, over 11 times more than in 2024.

The revenue associated with these 961 tonnes totalled \$3.4 million, representing a mere 0.947% of the total value of \$359 million of Quebec marine products caught in 2024. This is 14 times less than the \$49 million associated with catches from 2015, which reached 18,371 metric tonnes by Quebec shrimp fishermen.

In 2015, shrimp accounted for 21% of Quebec fishermen’s total revenue and 32% of their total catch volume. In 2024, shrimp accounted for only 2.5% of the total catch volume of 38,741 metric tonnes.

Between 2015 and 2024, the annual average revenue generated by shrimp fishing reached \$27.4 million, which is eight times more than the 2024 total.

From 2020 to 2024, catches fell from 10,862 tonnes in 2020 to 9,515 tonnes in 2021, then to 7,846 tonnes in 2022, and finally to 4,506 tonnes in 2023.

“The average for the last 10 years is 10,660 tonnes. So, 961 tonnes in total is very low. The TAC (total allow-



Photo: Pêche Impact

Shrimp landings were weak in 2024, a decline that has been ongoing steadily since 2020. The sector is far from the abundance that characterized the 2000s and the mid-2010s, like in this picture, taken in 2013.

able catch) had dropped by 79% before the season,” says economist Simon Desrochers, of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, referring to the 2024 quota of 3,060 tonne.

The 961 tonnes does not take into account landings delivered outside Quebec by fishermen from New Brunswick or Newfoundland, who also operate in the four zones accessible to Quebec shrimp fishermen.

“Fifteen shrimp fishermen were active this year, and they made 69 expeditions at

sea. In Quebec, a third of shrimp fishermen were active this year,” also points out Simon Desrochers.

The Estuary zone generated catches of 353 metric tonnes worth \$1.3 million, compared to 343 tonnes generating \$1.2 million for the Anticosti zone. In the Sept-Îles area, only \$700,000 was paid to fishermen for the 170 tonnes caught there. Quebecers only harvested 53 tonnes worth roughly \$200,000 for shrimp caught in the Esquiman area, which is dominated by Newfoundlanders.

Small consolation, a rising price

The average price of shrimp has climbed steadily since 2020 reaching \$1.18 per pound in 2021, \$1.50 in 2022, \$1.55 in 2023 and \$1.81 in 2024. This last increase represents a 16.8% rise.

Over the last 10 years, the price of shrimp has fluctuated between \$1.09 per pound in 2020, the first year of the pandemic, and \$1.81 in 2024. The worst downward fluctuation was recorded between 2019 and 2020, when the price fell by 65 cents per pound, a situation illustrated by a price going from \$1.74 to \$1.09.

“The price was \$1.37 based on the nominal average for the 2015-2024 period and \$1.61 per pound in discounted dollars,” notes Simon Desrochers.

In 2024, only the plants in the Grand Gaspé region, namely Pêcheries Marinard in Rivière-au-Renard and Crevette du nord atlantique in Griffon Cove, processed appreciable volumes, although significantly lower than in other years, of shrimp caught in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. On the North Shore, volumes are more modest and the crustacean is often processed directly on the boat.

The fire that destroyed the Eastern Quebec Seafood plant in Matane at the end of

March 2024, a plant belonging to the Danish consortium Royal Greenland, cut off a major player in shrimp processing. The company, which was also a lobster buyer, has not indicated what it will do with its Matane property. A storage building is the only remaining part of the plant.

Some boats were still fishing in November when Fisheries and Oceans Canada released its first overall shrimp fishing data.

In addition, the two Grand Gaspé plants processed shrimp imported from Iceland or Greenland. However, the data on processing at Pêcheries Marinard and Crevette du nord Atlantique were not all available when the Gaspé SPEC inquired about statistics.

Consequently, it was not possible to know whether or not the two Gaspé plants had managed to pull through in terms of sales, particularly exports.

“We have access to export data, but there is always a three-month lag between exports and the availability of the data,” says Simon Desrochers.

The decline in shrimp stocks is mainly attributable to a fast expansion in redfish stocks. Back in 2018, biologists who specialize in redfish stock assessment declared that it was time to resume that species fishing, which only occurred in 2024 commercially.

Lower bear hunting results in 2024

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - The total black bear harvest decreased to 194 animals in 2024, down from 214 in 2023. This represents a 9% decline and an 11% drop compared to the five-year average from 2019 to 2023, according to an annual report issued by Quebec’s Department of Wildlife.

In 2024, hunters harvested 133 bears, accounting for 69% of the total, while, trappers harvest 61 bears, making up the remaining 31%. The spring black bear harvest amounted to 188 animals, including 129 by hunting, for 69%, and 59 by trapping, for 31%.

That spring harvest was down 6% from the 201 bears

of 2023 and 11% below the 2019-2023 average of 211 animals.

The fall black bear harvest was significantly lower, with only six animals taken, four by hunting, for 67%, and two by trapping, for 33%, which is seven less than in 2023 and one less than the 2019-2023 average.

Based on the voluntary declaration of the hunting zone when purchasing permits, an estimated 869 hunting permits were sold in the Gaspé Peninsula, including 865 for residents and four for non-residents. This number of permits increased by 9% compared to the 797 licences of 2023 and remained stable compared to the five year average of 825 from 2019-2023.

Overall hunting success in

2024 was 15%, which is 3% lower than in 2023, at 18%, and 3% lower than the average between 2019 and 2023.

Overall interpretation

The decrease in the black bear harvest, coupled with the decrease in hunting success, indicates that the black bear population has declined in the Gaspé Peninsula over the last five years.

Furthermore, the increase in the number of hunting permits over the last five years indicates an increase in activity by hunters.

The black bear harvest density across the entire region fluctuates annually around 0.9 bears per 100 square kilometres. In 2024, it was 0.8 bears for that same area.

According to the Department of Wildlife, the results of the black bear density inventory conducted in 2023 in the Murdochville sector will help determine whether the bear population has actually decreased between the 2015 and 2023 inventory and to calculate a rate of exploitation by hunting and trapping. In 2015, a density of 1.9 black bears per 10 square kilometres was estimated.

Since black bears are one of the primary predators of young mountain caribou in the Gaspé Peninsula, strong hunting and trapping pressure can contribute to better caribou survival within their range. Outside of this area, however, overexploitation of the black bear would be a concern.

Quebec-wide, the total

black bear harvest in 2024 reached 6,142 animals, including 5,298 by hunting, or 86%, and 844 by trapping, or 14%. This marked a 27% increase from the 4,824 bears harvested in 2023 and a 12% increase compared to the five years average that spanned between 2019 and 2023, at 5,480 animals.

The number of hunting permits sold reached 20,023, or 18,632 for residents and 1,391 for non-residents. It was a 11% increase compared to the 18,056 permits of 2023 and an 8% increase compared to the average of the 2019-2023 stretch, at 18,583 bears. Overall hunting success in 2024 was 26%, which is 3% higher than in 2023 and 1% higher than in 2019-2023.

Small Steps, Big Impact: Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles & REGIM partner for a greener Gaspésie

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON - At Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles, a quiet revolution is underway. Beyond the classrooms and labs, a shift in commuting habits is taking place, driven by a commitment to sustainability and a recognition of the power of collective action. The institution is actively encouraging employees and students to embrace eco-friendly transportation, and the results are impressive.

Annie Léonard, a Cégep employee, is a prime example. For the past two years, she's been a regular rider of the REGIM (Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie Îles-de-la-Madeleine), the regional bus service. Her employer subsidizes a portion of her bus pass, making it a financially attractive alternative to driving. But for Annie, the benefits extend beyond cost savings. She's consistently impressed by the dedication of the REGIM drivers, who go above and beyond to serve the students, whom they also drive to the Cégep since 2014. "The drivers make

an incredible effort to best serve the students," she says. She's witnessed them adapt their routes to accommodate students, even turning back if they've missed a stop. They keep lost items safe and recognize the students who've misplaced them, creating a sense of community on the bus. "It's more than just an environmentally conscious choice," Annie explains. "It's a humane experience."

For Cégep employees, the incentives are clear. Parking spaces on campus are expensive, designed to discourage single-occupancy vehicles. This has fostered a thriving carpooling culture, with teachers sharing rides and splitting parking costs. The Cégep has also installed electric car charging stations, which are used by a growing number of teachers. This visible commitment to sustainability creates a positive atmosphere, demonstrating that the institution is taking concrete steps to reduce its carbon footprint.

A partnership between the Cégep and REGIM has further amplified the impact. The



Photo: Arthur Poirier-Roy

Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles is leading the way in sustainable commuting, encouraging employees and students to embrace public transit and carpooling. A partnership with REGIM and employee initiatives are driving positive change.

REGIM now provides bus service for students, replacing the traditional yellow school buses since 2014, according to the bus company. This collaboration, as Annie notes, fosters a sense of shared responsibility between the municipality and the region.

Annie has also seen firsthand how raising concerns can lead to positive change. She's

previously requested improvements like better lighting at bus shelters and a crosswalk near a stop, demonstrating that the Cégep administration is receptive to suggestions.

The financial benefits of taking public transit are undeniable. Considering the wear and tear on a vehicle, the rising cost of fuel, the carbon tax, and on-campus parking fees, the

subsidized bus pass, costing Annie only \$60 per month (down from \$100), is a "no-brainer." Despite this, the bus service struggles to fill up its seats on some days, showing partial adoption at best from the local population.

While electric cars may not be accessible to everyone, there are always options for those wishing to lower their ecological footprint. Simply filling up your car with colleagues, instead of driving alone, is a great start. The Cégep's efforts demonstrate that real change is possible when individuals and institutions work together. All it takes is a willingness to ask.

Do you have a story to share about commuting in the Gaspésie? The Gaspé Spec invites readers to reach out and share their experiences with public transportation, whether it's a wish for improvement or a positive story about how the REGIM has helped them. Let's continue this conversation and work towards a greener future for our region.

Full disclosure Arthur Poirier-Roy works for the Cégep.



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Shamrocks, Shenanigans, and the Spirit of Saint Patrick's Day

HOLLY SMITH

PORT DANIEL - Gaspésians love a good reason to celebrate, and Saint Patrick's Day is no exception! Whether you have Irish roots or just enjoy a bit of fun, March 17 is the perfect time to embrace a little green, enjoy some good company, and maybe even

test your luck. Did you know that many Gaspésians have Irish ancestry? In the 19th century, Irish immigrants settled in several areas of the coast, bringing their traditions with them. That's why you might still hear an Irish tune played at a local gathering or find Irish surnames throughout the re-

gion. Even if you're not Irish by blood, you can still claim the spirit of the holiday. As the old saying goes, "Everyone's Irish on Saint Patrick's Day!" Before the fun begins, it's a good idea to brush up on your Irish knowledge so you can have an answer when someone inevitably asks, "Why do we celebrate St. Patrick's Day anyway?"

St. Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, is credited with bringing Christianity to the island and, according to legend, chasing all the snakes out of Ireland. A feat that's both impressive and suspicious, considering Ireland never had snakes to begin with. Over the centuries, March 17 became a celebration of Irish heritage, culture, and, of course, good times.

Why Wear Green?

We all know about the lucky four-leaf clover, but did you know that wearing green is supposed to make you invisible to leprechauns? That's right, those mischievous little

creatures are apparently big fans of pinching anyone not sporting the right colour. So unless you want to be the target of some good-natured fun, it's best to throw on a green sweater, scarf, or even a toque.

Pot of Gold

There's also the age-old tradition of trying to find the elusive pot of gold hidden by mischievous leprechauns at the end of the rainbow. It is believed that leprechauns guard their hidden treasures, which are considered symbols of the pursuit of luck and for-

tune. There's something about Saint Patrick's Day that brings a bit of warmth to an otherwise chilly time of year. Maybe it's the promise of spring just around the corner, or maybe it's just the cheer of coming together as a community. Either way, whether you're celebrating at home, at a local event, or just wearing a little extra green, take a moment to enjoy the fun. And who knows? If you're lucky, you might just spot a leprechaun sneaking around in the snow, though chances are, it's just a snowmobiler or your neighbour's kids in a green jacket!



Leprechaun Laughs

How do you know if a leprechaun likes your jokes?
He'll be Dublin over with laughter!

Where do leprechauns hang out on a sunny days?
The Paddy-o!

Why did the leprechaun lose the race?
He jiggled instead of jogged!

ST. PATRICKS DAY QUIZ

GOODLUCK!

PENNY MACWHIRTER

1. Historians generally believe that St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in _____, (not Ireland) near the end of the 4th century. (7 letters)
2. Despite his status as a patron saint, St. Patrick was never _____ actually _____ by the Church during his lifetime. (9 letters)
3. One of the legends associated with St. Patrick, is that he stood atop an Irish hillside and banished _____ from Ireland. Scientists, however, say that it's highly unlikely that there were any snakes to begin with and there are no fossils to prove otherwise. (6 letters)
4. Belief in leprechauns likely stems from Celtic belief in _____, tiny men and women who could use their magical powers to serve good or evil. In Celtic folktales, leprechauns were known to be cranky, and were in charge of mending the shoes of the other fairies. (7 letters)
5. The _____, a three-leaf clover, has been associated with Ireland for centuries. According to legend, St. Patrick used the plant as a visual guide when explaining the Holy Trinity. (8 letters)
6. While people in Ireland have celebrated St. Patrick since the 1600s, the tradition of a St. Patrick's Day _____ began in Florida, United States on March 17, 1601 and actually predates the



7. March 17, 461 AD was not St. Patrick's birthday, it's the day he _____. (4 letters)
8. During most of the 20th century, St. Patrick's day was considered a _____ holiday in Ireland. All pubs would close their doors for the day. (3 letters)
9. Green as an Irish colour has _____ origins, dating back to the Great Irish Rebellion of 1641. (7 letters)
10. Worldwide, over 13 million pints of _____, a popular Irish stout is typically consumed on St. Patrick's day. That is equal to nearly two and half Olympic-sized swimming pools. (8 letters)
11. At age 16, St. Patrick was kidnapped by Irish raiders and sold as a slave to a Celtic priest, in the area now known as Northern Ireland. He was forced to tend to _____ for 6 years in the mountains. (5 letters)
12. After escaping from capture in Ireland, St. Patrick returned to Roman-Britain. It's said that one night had a _____ that the people of Ireland were calling him back to tell them about God. (5 letters)
13. To celebrate St. Paddy's Day in Ireland, Dublin hosts a huge festival that lasts _____ days. (4 letters)
14. Beer that is green in colour is associated with St. Patrick's day. But before that, green beer referred to beer that was too young to drink because it wasn't _____ fully _____. (9 letters)
15. The song _____ is considered the anthem of St. Patrick's day. (2 words-8 letters total)

St. Paddy's Spelling Scramble

- COSKHAMR _____
- DILERAN _____
- PRHA _____
- DLGO _____
- NEGRE _____
- RIBNOAW _____

Answers in the next issue.



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Lesser Known Irish Myths and Legends

HOLLY SMITH

St. Patrick's Day is here! Time to enjoy some green food, dance an Irish jig, or at least wear a green shirt. But behind all the shamrocks and leprechauns, there's a whole world of Irish myths and leg-

Leannán Sidhe: A Fairy That Might Wear You Out

Are you a romantic? Well the Leannán Sidhe might just be your fairy soulmate, just be careful what you wish for. This beautiful fairy will fall in

do anything, even binge-watching your favourite television show or read The Gaspé Spec over a cup of coffee. So, if an evening feels unusually tiring, it might not be your partner's fault. It could just be Leannán Sidhe helping herself to your energy for her "fairy" needs!

The Changelings: Fairy Babies That Aren't Quite Right

Imagine one day, your child starts acting really strange. They're eating dirt like it's candy, crying over absolutely nothing, and insisting on wearing a plastic tiara while trying to ride the dog like it's a horse. What if it's not even your kid? According to old Irish myths, the fairies might've swapped their fussy baby with yours, leaving you with a changeling. Before you start panicking and looking for strange marks or asking around if anyone's seen UFOs, just remember: it's probably just your toddler being a toddler. But maybe the fairies took the "good" child and left you with a little free spirit to keep life interesting!

The Leprechaun's Secret: It's Not Just About Gold

The classic leprechaun story is familiar: find a leprechaun, get his pot of gold, and live happily ever after. But what if there's more to it than just the gold? Some myths say leprechauns are actually guardians of ancient wisdom, not just treasure. So next time a leprechaun is spotted, skip asking "Where's your gold?" and ask for the secret to the universe instead. He might just share the secret to getting through your next family reunion without losing your cool, how to actually enjoy

your retirement, or at least tell you the trick to remembering where you left your keys.

While you're enjoying your green drinks or maybe just wearing green, so you don't get pinched, remember that Irish myths aren't just about leprechauns and rainbows. From shape-shifting tricksters to tired fairies, Irish legends are full of strange and funny stories. Who knows? Maybe one of these creatures is hiding out on the Gaspé Coast, just waiting for you to cross their path.



Sláinte! (That's Irish for "Cheers")

ends that might not be known to everyone. These stories are way more interesting than just chasing after pots of gold. Here are a few wild Irish myths that will make anyone laugh.

Púca: The Shape-Shifting Trickster

Not all Irish creatures are sweet little fairies. Some, like the Púca pronounced "Poo-ka" are troublemakers. The Púca loves to change into different animals, such as a horse, rabbit, or even a black goat. Imagine riding along the coastline, only to spot a mysterious shadow following you. Is it a weird-shaped tree? A curious rabbit? Or could it be a Púca causing a little mischief?

Banshee: Not Your Average Ghost

The Banshee, the ghostly woman who wails in the night, is well known creature. However, there's more to the story than just screaming. In some legends, she's spotted washing clothes in a stream. Maybe the poor woman is just tired of being the one stuck doing laundry, imagine centuries of sorting socks and scrubbing stains. No wonder she's got a bone to pick with the living!

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PENNY MACWHIRTER

With the worldwide situation becoming increasingly serious and stressful, St. Patrick's Day provides a great opportunity to celebrate and have a little fun. Whether you decide on an intimate family dinner, or a lively shindig, Leprechauns big or small, are bound to enjoy these "golden" ideas.

Entertainment

A fun St. Patrick's Day idea is to set up a photo booth. Ask your friends and family for help gathering items such as a top hat, sunglasses, beer mugs, a green tie or scarf, a pipe and a cutout of a mustache. Using green and yellow construction paper make signs that say things such as: "Too cute to pinch", "I pinch back" and "Let the shenanigans begin".

Have a St. Patrick's Day trivia quiz or name that song (Irish songs) and offer gold (chocolate) coins as prizes. Dice drop can be a rather entertaining game and can be tai-

lored to suit your party. Take two dice (larger ones are easier to work with) and set them aside. Next you will need to make a list of 6 actions, such as: do a jig, take a shot, or sing an Irish folk song. A second list should include 6 ways to execute the actions, such as (on one leg, standing on a chair, or with a partner). Next you will tape or glue the items from your list onto the dice. Allow each person at the party a chance to roll the dice and entertain the crowd.

Don't underestimate the power of a good playlist. Plan ahead and have a playlist of Irish songs ready.

Decor

Typical St. Patrick's Day decor will consist of golds and greens. Pretty decorations do not have to be new. Using what you already have is better for your pocketbook and the environment. Take a quick look around your home, you're bound to find plenty of green and gold-coloured items (table-



cloth, placemats, bowls, etc). Your next step is to pair and assemble your items, such as taking a gold-coloured platter, top it with candles, a small green plant and chocolate coins, tada! You could also take an empty Irish whisky or Guinness bottle and use it as a vase.

Another easy and frugal centerpiece idea consists of putting red rod branches in a vase and hanging shamrock cutouts from them. Be creative, it will make decorating so much more fun!

Creating an edible centerpiece is also a fun idea, that'll

be a hit as the evening progresses. Fill a clear bowl or vase with green- or rainbow-coloured candies and scatter chocolate coins on top.

Food

Start your party with a fun appetizer, such as a fruit platter in the shape of a rainbow, with little containers of dip at the ends to represent the pots of gold, alternately you could have a green/yellow only veggie platter. If you opt for a more traditional Irish meal, bangers and mash, Irish stew or corned beef and cabbage are easy, yet hearty ideas. To finish your meal, serve soda bread, potato cake or shortbread cookies with a cup of Irish coffee.

Dress code

Inform attendees that there is a green and gold dress code. If possible, have some extra accessories on hand for anyone who forgets to dress-up.

Sweet Irish Soda Bread

Preheat the oven to 375.

In a large mixing bowl combine 3 cups of flour, 1/4 cup of dark brown sugar, 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda, 1 teaspoon of salt. Cut in 2 tablespoons of butter. Mix gently until the mixture is crumbly.

Make a well in the centre and add 1 1/4 cups of buttermilk* and a beaten egg. Mix until the ingredients begin to come together. Then fold in 1/2 cup each of raisins and dried cranberries.

Put the mixture on a floured surface, folding and turning it several times until it forms a ball.

Score the top of the ball with an "X" and place on a greased baking sheet. Cook for 35 minutes or until golden brown.

*If you don't have buttermilk, add 1 tablespoon of vinegar to a measuring cup and fill to the 1 1/4 line. Wait 10 minutes before adding to the recipe.

Irish Coffee

While the coffee is brewing, begin your prep work by getting out a clear mug and adding 1 teaspoon of brown sugar or maple syrup and 1 1/2 ounces of Irish whisky.

The next step is to whip 35% cream lightly.

Once your coffee is ready, pour it over the brown sugar. Finish by pouring the whipped cream over a spoon, allowing it to gently land on top of the coffee.

Irish stew

Coat 2 lbs of 1/2" cubes of stewing beef pieces in 1/4 cup of flour. Sauté in olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a large pot and sauté 2 cups of diced potatoes, 3 celery stalks (sliced), 3 carrots (cut in 1/2" pieces), 1 onion (diced), and 6 garlic cloves.

Deglaze your pot with 3/4 cups of red wine and 3/4 cups of Guinness beer.

Add the beef cubes, 4 cups of beef broth, 2 tablespoons of tomato paste, 1/2 teaspoon of sugar, 2 tablespoons of Worcestershire sauce, 1/2 tablespoon of thyme or summer savory and two bay leaves to the pot. Simmer for 2 hours. *Can be cooked in a slow cooker for 4 hours.*

Once cooking is complete, mix 1 tablespoon of flour with 1 tablespoon of cold water to create a slurry. Add it to your pot and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes or until thickened.



A St. Patrick's Day Wish

Following a month of cold temperatures and lots of snow, March brings with it St. Patrick's. Along our winding coastline, many small towns celebrate this day with Irish spirit and traditions from days gone by.

On March 17, why not wear a green scarf or an Irish symbol? Visit a friend who may be waiting for you to have a sip of hot Irish tea or a small piece of Kiwi pie, offering warmth to conversations filled with laughter, kindness and maybe even a bit of jest.

Let this St. Patrick's Day fill your pockets with green charms of fulfillment, and may your home be filled with some Irish music, jokes or that elusive four-leaf clover, which may be especially hard to find this time of year.

Enjoy St. Patrick Day to the fullest, everyone!

Ken Ross

Group progressing on purchase of Matapedia train station

Artistic hub will maintain the station's original calling

GILLES GAGNÉ

MATAPEDIA – A group of citizens has initiated steps towards the eventual acquisition of the Matapedia train station, ensuring it remains an artistic hub, while also protecting services to the passengers using it.

Between 2021 and 2024, the train station operated under the name Matapedia Station - Artistic and Community Hub as an art centre, managed by Montreal's Quartier Éphémère and Carleton's Vaste et Vague, another art centre. Both are recognized charitable organizations dedicated to supporting the research, creation and dissemination of visual arts artists.

"After three-and-a-half years of sustained programming, placing the reception and presentation to the public of some fifteen artists from diverse backgrounds and cultures at the heart of its project, the Station has reached a certain maturity and is accelerating its pace. Its development vision - which consists of receiving the building free of charge and then carrying out renovations and development work, opening four new spaces, enhancing its offer and its historical character - requires a solid anchoring in the community," explains Caroline Andrieux, a Matapedia-based art historian.

Ms. Andrieux has been the acting project manager of the Matapedia station since September 2021. Local support is taking shape through a new organization called Matapédia Jonction Pôle, recently founded by three artists, Maryse Goudreau, of Escuminac; Pierre D'Amours, of Ristigouche South East; and Pierre Durette, of Causapschal. One of the goals is to take over operations of the station, which has been managed by the same team since its inauguration in September 2021. Luc Vallières, who is the coordinator, and Caroline Andrieux want to

make it shine to its full potential, she specifies.

"The name Matapédia Jonction Pôle refers to its location on the territory, its river and viewpoint crossings, the famous salmon pool, the Junction Pool, its interprovincial border position, a railway and ideas crossroads, a threshold between fresh and saltwater, a tribute to its Mi'gmaq origins, "mata" meaning junction, to which is added its magnetic effect and its ability to polarize audiences around art and heritage," says Caroline Andrieux.

She recalls starting to work on the concept of an artistic hub for the Matapedia station in 2021. "I even sent a letter to VIA Rail in 2018, like a message in a bottle, over the fall of that year," recalls Ms. Andrieux.

Talks with the public transporter for the acquisition of the station have been ongoing for years

"In fact, since the beginning of our conversations, it (the property transfer) was a condition right from the start because VIA Rail wanted to find a taker, since the municipality was unfortunately not interested," states Ms. Andrieux.

Acquisition for one dollar

Since the beginning of the talks with VIA Rail, four years ago, it was also clear that the acquisition of the Matapedia train station would be made at a nominal cost, which means one dollar. Caroline Andrieux points out that Matapedia Jonction Pôle has a fairly big project for the building.

"Our goal to acquire it is still targeted. It is surely complicated. Discussions are still very active with VIA Rail. We are waiting on the certificate of location. We are asking VIA to deliver it. We don't want to acquire two kilometres of platform! We are only supposed to own the land that is at most 30

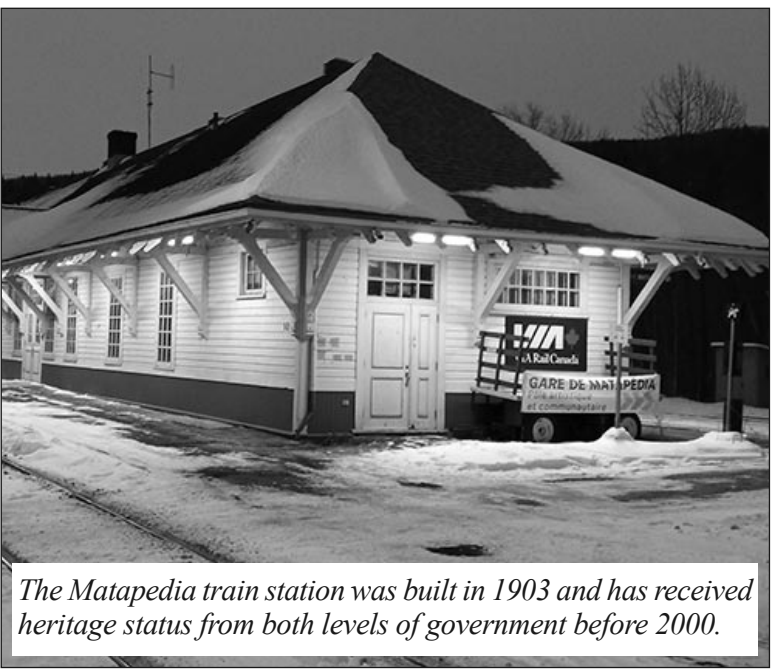
feet from the tracks. We are also required to refrain from organizing exhibitions outside the station, except for a sculpture that can be removed," notes Ms. Andrieux.

"We must reach an agreement regarding the problem of contamination in the building. There is a bit of mold and asbestos in the furnace of the basement. If we change to the building, there are asbestos slabs and paint containing lead. It is a small problem though. VIA Rail has carried out studies on those aspects," she adds.

A major project to revamp the station

For now, the Matapedia Jonction Pôle organization consists of four people. The group will soon expand in order to conduct a major revamping project for the building.

"We had to be local instead of being recognized as a Montreal organization (due to the presence of Quartier Éphémère). We needed more local involvement. We as a group of four founded Matapédia Jonction Pôle but we don't have official board members yet that can back us in our vision. We need to find people that can support us legally, ad-



The Matapedia train station was built in 1903 and has received heritage status from both levels of government before 2000.

Photo: G. Gagné

ministratively and with good communication skills. We will also need people with money and that have access to a network in order to land a development project of \$1.5 million. It was initially \$1 million but the inflation hit us too," underlines Caroline Andrieux.

The revamping project aims to restore the station to its original exterior, which was lavender.

"We will need to change the heating system, which burns bunker oil, a source of concern, and improve air circulation. We want to operate a café, with a MAPAQ certified kitchen for

visitors and hikers who take the neighbouring trails," says Caroline Andrieux.

VIA Rail is ready to invest in the restoration of the platforms, the building's decontamination and fixing the leaks. "For the artists, we want to add a workshop and connect the garage to the waiting room in order to improve the experience of the visitors. We want to keep offering services to the VIA Rail passengers by cleaning their area, the restrooms and the waiting room so that the public will benefit from a good service," concludes Caroline Andrieux.

Station welcomes Nova Scotia art students

GILLES GAGNÉ

MATAPEDIA – The Matapedia Station recently welcomed the 23 Master of Fine Arts students from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), and their professor Craig Leonard, as part of an in-situ creation session. The public was invited to discover their creations between February 5 to 9. These meetings are special and with friendly moments for both the public and the artists.

The activity, initiated by Craig Leonard, was a way to test these young artists in an impromptu creation exercise, drawing inspiration from the local surroundings. The artists, Bianca McDonald, Devon Pennick-Reilly, Echo Ji, Forbes Sang, Ginger Yu Yu, Gracia Isabel Gómez Cantoya, Hana Steincamp, Janelle Ledua, Jenny Shi, Katherine Diemert, Liam MacAloney, Nadine Sures, Nour El Sabeh, Quinn O'Connor, Sarah Young,



Nova Scotia arts students recently spent some time at the Matapedia station in order to create spontaneous art pieces.

Photo: Courtesy of Caroline Andrieux

Shay Donovan, Yue Li, Yuting Song, Arielle Twist, Arjun Lal, Vanessa Iafolla and Autumn Star created specific and spontaneous works.

Their mediums, which were very diverse, included ice sculpture, metal, and found elements, photography from sensitive paper and phytogram, sound captured from a hydrophone, drawing based on natural elements collected during walks, narrative and experimental film.

NSCAD University is lo-

cated in the historic centre of Halifax. The school's faculty, teachers and alumni are among Canada's most renowned artists and educators. The University's Master of Fine Arts program is an intensive, full-time studio program that recognizes and considers a range of diverse and innovative practices, and provides students with the opportunity to develop their work in a context of intense, interdisciplinary critical discussion.



Photo: Courtesy of Caroline Andrieux

Caroline Andrieux, pictured here speaking to attendees of the Matapedia station, assures that the building will continue offering services to VIA Rail's clientèle after the transaction.

Announcements



Obituaries



MCGREGOR: Cletus Joseph

Cletus Joseph McGregor, passed away peacefully in the early morning hours of January 19, 2025, at the age of 78, in his beloved Gaspé, Quebec.

Born July 2, 1946, in Seal Cove to James and Victoria, Cletus was the youngest of 12 children. Cletus was happiest spending time on his dirt bike, hunting and playing his music. The family relocated to Montreal in 1966, where Cletus met the person who would become his lifelong friend, Gary O’Keefe. Storytelling was an integral part of their bond and remained that way over the decades, despite the physical distance between them. In 1967, Cletus met Jacqueline Belliveau, the love of his life. The couple was married on June 15, 1968, and resided in Montreal, welcoming their son, Dannie Joseph in 1969, followed by Christine Mary, three years

later. The family relocated in 1975 to Saint-Georges-de-Malbaie, outside of Gaspé, where they established a working farm, and went on to welcome William Joseph in 1977, Rosemary in 1979, and Gary Joseph in 1985. Life on a farm is never easy, but laughter and music were always present in the family home.

Another big move brought the family back to Montreal in 1988, and eventually to Caledon East, Ontario in 1990. There they resided for many years, welcoming daughters-and sons-in-law, and eventually grandchildren and great-grandchildren into their large, bustling family home. Cletus was always happy to spend time with his family and friends, his dogs and outside on his tractor or strumming on his guitar and found great satisfaction in his work for the Region of Peel.

A final move in 2005 brought Cletus and Jackie back to Saint-Georges-de-Malbaie, where they lived their Golden Years on the shores of the beautiful Gulf of St Lawrence.

Cletus is survived by his wife Jacqueline; children Dannie (Grace), Christine (Gary), William (Samantha), Rosemary (Peter) and Gary (Christine); grandchildren Rebecca, Natasha, Shawna, Ashley, Ryan, Connor, Nathan, Breanna, Brandon, Haley, Lily, Owen, Aspen; and great-grandchildren Shylla, Jace, Zayne, Sophia and Riyadh; as well as surviving siblings Hermaline and Mary and countless cousins, nieces and nephews.

A Celebration of Life will be held in Montreal in the Spring. Donations in Cletus’ memory may be made to The Alzheimer’s Society of Canada, the Canadian Lung Association or the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

*“To live in hearts we leave behind,
is to live forever.”*
-Thomas Campbell

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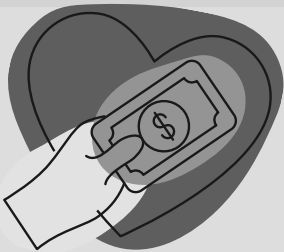
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Wednesdays: Shuffle board beginning at 4 p.m. Line Dancing beginning at 7:30 p.m. for \$7.
Thursdays: Darts beginning at 7 p.m. for \$10.
Saturdays: Pool beginning at 8 p.m. \$1 per game.
Sundays: Singles Cribbage tournament every Sunday at 7 p.m. for five weeks, starting March 9. Registration is \$10, followed by \$5 per player each week.
April 1: General meeting at 6 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.
April 5: Mega gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m.

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.

ROTARY CLUB WINNERS:
The winner for February 1 is: Sophie-Geneviève Gagnon.

The winners for the week of February 2: Danny Boudreau, Alice Marsh, Micheline Morin, France Leblanc, Éthel Sexton, Céline Leblanc and Judith Rondeau-Chalifoux.

The winners for the week of February 9 are: Gilles Pelletier, René Leblanc, Marilyn Coull, Co-

lette Cyr, Corrine Huard, Lucille Cormier and Thérèse Richard.

The winners for the week of February 16 are: Chantal Daraïche, Gabriel Babin, Club 50 ans et plus, Alek Henderson, Jeanine Larche, Robert Couture and Pierre-Luc Cormier.

The winners for the week of February 23 are: Bruno Couture,



Brigitte Bourgeois, Gabriel Lacroix, Claire Cormier and Pierre-Luc Cyr.

The winner for February 28 is: Mariette Thibodeau.

Luck of the Irish!

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Sunday, March 16

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St. Paul's - Gaspé
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Tuesday, March 16
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7 p.m. Evening Prayer

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March 16
9 a.m. Service

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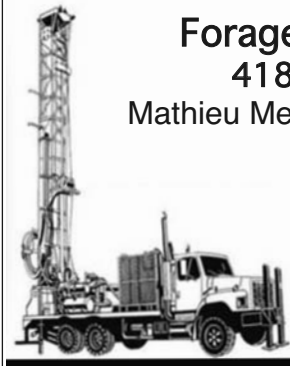
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Award-Winning Documentary by local filmmaker to Premiere on Knowledge Network

CYNTHIA DOW
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES - The 88-minute English version of Lucas, an Endangered Human Species, directed by Gaspésie filmmaker Éli Laliberté, will premiere on Knowledge Network on Tuesday, March 18, at 12 a.m. EST and Wednesday, March 19, at 3 a.m. EST.

This powerful documentary follows Lucas Larocque-Laliberté, a young French/Mi'gmaq hip-hop artist who happens to live with Down syndrome, and his father as they explore how the world perceives and treats people with Down syndrome (DS). Blending personal storytelling with a broader re-



Photo: Courtesy of E. Laliberté

flection on inclusion and human diversity, the film challenges societal perceptions and raises an important

reflection on the value of human life.

Already celebrated on the festival circuit, Lucas, an En-

dangered Human Species received the Humanitarian Award at the Festival Vues sur mer and has been nominated for multiple Prix Gémeaux, a testament to its impact.

Following its Knowledge network premiere, the film will also be available for streaming online, ensuring that audiences across Canada can engage with this compelling story. The 52-minute French version first aired on Radio-Canada's program Dochumanité last November, and is still available on ici.tv

Down syndrome is caused by an extra chromosome in the 21st pair of the 23 pairs

of chromosomes found in every human cell, and results in mild to severe intellectual disability. Mr. Laliberté's film asks the value of the life of a person with DS, given the fact that the Quebec government is making testing for DS, also called "Trisomy 21," readily available to expectant parents. Quebec does not keep statistics on the number of abortions linked to genetic testing, but in Denmark 90% of fetuses believed to have DS are aborted.

The subject of the documentary may sound grim, but it is littered with happy times as Lucas celebrates with his family, enjoys his high school graduation, makes new friends in Europe, participates in sports activities for DS people in Montreal, and performs rap and hip-hop in Montreal and Belgium.

"Lucas is teaching us how to navigate becoming who we are. So many people are tired of advocating for acceptance of who they are (e.g. with racial and gender issues). Lucas walks above all this: he sees the human being in others before any of us. He has the key that we are all looking for," Mr. Laliberté explained.

12-hour Pin Rouge Challenge to be held on March 29

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The 12-Hour Pin Rouge Challenge, a sporting and charity event, invites participants to engage in 12 hours of uninterrupted or relay sports activities. The event, which will be held on March 29, offers a variety of activities such as downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, walking and fat biking.

Beyond the simple sporting challenge, the 12-Hour Pin Rouge Challenge highlights the community's solidarity with two non-profit

organizations, the Maison de soins palliatifs de la Baie-des-Chaleurs (Palliative Care House) and the Pin Rouge Tourist Station. The event presented as a unique opportunity to push personal limits while supporting important causes for the region.

Registration requires a minimum of four people per team, and participants must choose a discipline: downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, walking or fat biking. The team captain must register the team's donation. Participants must raise a minimum of \$125 for the Palliative Care Home.

It is recommended that participants continue practicing their chosen discipline in preparation for the challenge.

The athletes' meeting will take place on Friday, March 28, at 6:30 p.m., where participants will receive their armband and the event schedule, for more details, visit: www.pinrouge.com.

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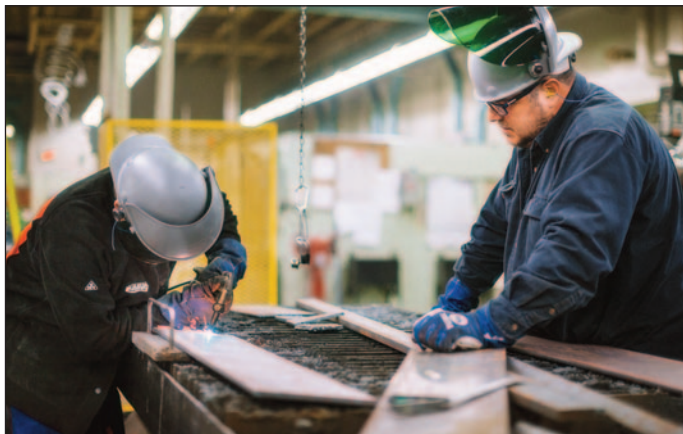
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