

Shacks are set, but where's the smelt?

GILLES GAGNÉ

POINTE-À-LA-GARDE — With Pointe-à-la-Garde's famous ice floe finally becoming a reality at the end of January, a few avid fishermen ventured out to test the fishing conditions. Among them was Eugene Perkinson, a well-known smelt fisherman who started his season as early as possible, but so far, the fishing hasn't been very productive.

"I went on the ice early because I brought my boat with me. It (the result) is not good, really not good. If you catch 30 fish, it is because you are lucky. I had days of one fish, and days of two. Striped bass and seals, both of them working at the same time, have depleted the stock. It is like sea trout, a species that hardly comes here now," says Mr. Perkinson, who resides in Pointe-à-la-Garde.

Like other sports fishermen, he also tried his luck in Pointe-à-la-Croix and Listuguj.



Photo: G. Gagné

The number of ice fishing shacks on Pointe-à-la-Garde's ice floe pales in comparison with that of a decade ago, when dozens were visible in a small area.

"It is slightly better there. I caught 26 or 27 fish, big enough, at a length of 9 to 12 inches, female spawners. Up the river past the reserve (Listuguj), we can't fish and in fact, there are no fish left up-

stream," he adds.

Eugene Perkinson is very worried about the fate of smelt and sea trout, due to the increased presence of striped bass.

"I worked on an excursion

boat in Carleton last summer and we were bringing tourists on striped bass fishing trips. In a three-hour outing, we would catch more than 100 striped bass," he underlines.

"I gutted striped bass with

sea trout in them, and later into the summer, with smelts and lobster, and a big lobster at that," he emphasizes.

With 60 years of sports fishing under his belt, Mr. Perkinson, now 66, has earned a reputation for his skills in catching smelt. During the peak years, he regularly reached the daily limit, of 120 smelts, with ease.

"I used to catch 120 smelt in 25 minutes to half-an-hour. I caught 120 fish only once this year and it took me more than a full tide, about eight hours," he adds.

From what he heard, the few commercial smelt fishermen who haven't given up over the years, also tried their luck off Miguasha, once the ice floe formed. "They told me that they are not catching fish. What you see in grocery stores comes from New Brunswick and they are caught in water free of ice. It looks like the end of an era," Eugene Perkinson concludes.

CABs temporarily suspend Volunteer Transportation Service

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MARIA - The eight Volunteer Action Centres (CABs) in the Gaspé Peninsula are temporarily suspending their Volunteer Transportation Service for seniors aged 65 due to a shortage of funding. However the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS) says it has offered \$80,000 to maintain the service.

"This temporary service cut is necessary due to a lack of funding. Requests continue to increase and this year, the CISSS de la Gaspésie has cut financial assistance to maintain it," says CAB spokesperson and director of the Saint-Alphonse-Nouvelle Volun-

teer Action Centre, Nancy Valois.

In 2024-2025, CAB volunteers covered 477,000 kilometres, to accompany seniors to 4,871 medical appointments.

"To maintain the expensive service, the CABs have had to restrict the offer in recent years, by limiting the number of transports to beneficiaries or refusing transportation outside the region. Our seniors do not have the means to absorb the bill 100%. We are asking the CISSS de la Gaspésie and Santé-Québec to have adequate funding. This is a more than essential service," adds Ms. Valois.

In 2023-2024, the CISSS provided \$200,000 in funding. For 2024-2025, no funding has been granted, despite a request for \$350,000, according to the CABs. The total cost of

the service for the region's CABs is \$485,000.

"During the meetings, one of their arguments was that. They are in budget cuts. They have \$40.7 million to cut. We deduce that we are in these cuts," says Ms. Valois.

The decision specifically affects those aged 65 and over. "Because there are agreements with those 65 and under and there are reimbursements made with the local employment centre," says Ms. Valois.

"The aftermath will be renegotiated. But to ensure the service, we have restricted it. Maybe we will have to sit down together, the eight CABs, to see what we can do to keep it viable and offer the service to the community," she says.

"It is vital. Our population is aging. Caregivers do a lot. This support service, with

transportation and a volunteer, is a valuable support. It is reassuring and they have no other means. We do it with a heavy heart," says Ms. Valois.

"We are asking for adequate funding to maintain the transportation escort service," concludes Ms. Valois.

The service was created in the late 1980s, with users paying between 30% and 50% of the pre-established rates.

In response, the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS acknowledges the CABs' decision, which they estimate will directly impact about sixty users. The CISSS would like to make it clear that the financial aid has not been cut.

A responsible proposal from the CISSS was made to the CABs, offering \$80,000 to help maintain the service. This offer remains on the table.

Exceptionally last year, an additional emergency amount of \$200,000 was offered to them to support their service, adding that the overall funding for the Community Organizations Support Program was even increased for the year 2024-2025. The situation has evolved over the past few months and the current financial situation does not allow for the same to be done this year.

If the decision to suspend the service is maintained, the Gaspé Peninsula CISSS will do everything possible to mitigate the effects of this decision on the population.

The CISSS invites users affected by the measure and who cannot find an alternative to contact the clinical worker responsible for their file.

Court rejects bid to restore Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia riding

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER - On February 21, the Federal Court rejected the request by lawyer Alexis Deschênes and Droits collectifs Québec for judicial review of the decision of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Quebec that eliminated the riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia on April 24, 2024.

In his 32-page ruling, Judge Sébastien Grammond stated that “The reasons given by the Commission to justify the elimination of the riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia were reasonable and consistent with the principle of effective representation developed by the Supreme Court. Indeed, the relative parity of electoral power is the essential component. The Commission was aware of the issues related to the size of the constituencies in rural or remote regions, but



Photo: Archives

The federal map currently in effect in Eastern Quebec.

it was reasonable to conclude that these issues no longer justified the existence of a constituency whose population was nearly 36% lower than the average population of Quebec constituencies.” The judge recalled the entire procedure that led the commission to develop its conclusions. In his analysis, he added that “The Commission clearly

understood the legal principles that governed its mission. It took into consideration the arguments presented to it during the public hearings. It retained certain suggestions that were made to it and it modified the boundary between the proposed constituencies of Rimouski-La Matapédia and Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj in order to respect the boundaries of

the MRCs. However, it maintained its recommendation to eliminate the constituency of Avignon-La Mitis Matane-Matapédia. Although the applicants disagree, this is a reasonable decision. I was not convinced that the Commission made the errors that the applicants accuse it of,” continued Justice Grammond. He also ordered the applicants to pay \$6,000 to the Attorney General and \$2,000 to Elections Canada for costs, including taxes and expenses. “When you file a judicial review, you analyze the decision made by the commission and conclude that the decision is unreasonable. It is always a very difficult remedy to obtain because the judge could be of the opinion that the decision is not the best, but the burden is higher. The judge had to decide whether the decision was reasonable. And that is what he concluded,” responded Mr. Deschênes after reading the decision. An appeal is not out of the

question. “The fight is not over and we will continue to fight for the political weight of our regions. We will analyze the possibility of appealing the judgment. We have 30 days to do it. And if I am elected, I promise to bring this battle to the political stage and, as an MP, to introduce a bill that will aim to protect Quebec’s political weight and ensure better representation of the regions in Ottawa,” says the Bloc candidate for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj in preparation for the next election. Even if an election is held under the new electoral map, it could still be reversed. “It’s an outcome that is possible. Of course it takes a little time, but it’s not impossible,” says Mr. Deschênes. The hearing took place on February 5. The judge had indicated that a decision would be made quickly due to the potential for an imminent federal election.

FEDERAL MAP: Disappointment among Gaspesian politicians

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Elected officials in the Gaspé Peninsula are disappointed with the Federal Court's decision on February 21 to reject the judicial review of the decision of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Quebec, which eliminated the riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia on April 24, 2024. “It hurts the heart. It hurts the region. All we want is to be represented like the other regions. If our territory is too large, which does not respect the characteristics, the administrative boundaries, the natural borders, it means that our region cannot be well represented,” says Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté. “What the court has just rendered as a decision is that we will apply the purely mathematical accounting principle and the effective representativeness recognized by the Carter Decision of the Supreme Court, we will put that aside and that will end there. I respect

the courts. I hope that this decision will be appealed,” adds the mayor. The parties have 30 days to file an appeal. Mathieu Lepointe, the president of the Gaspé Peninsula Table of Prefects, shares the disappointment. “It is disappointing for the Gaspésie but also for all the regions of the country. It is always a challenge to properly represent our issues and our realities within Parliament in Ottawa, it requires a decent number of MPs,” says Mathieu Lapointe. “We saw it recently with the announcement of Kristina Michaud's departure. We see that it will have concrete impacts on the ground. It will be an even greater challenge for the people who will have to represent these territories that will be immense,” notes the president. As a result of the decision, the Matanie and Avignon MRCs have been merged into the Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj riding, while Matapédia and La Mitis have been incorporated into the



The commission during its visit to Gaspé in September 2022.

Photo: N. Sergerie

Rimouski-La Matapédia riding. The Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Diane Lebouthillier, said she was reserving her comments for the moment. **Provincial boundaries also in question** The situation is happening again at the provincial level. “We see the same kind of situation happening again. That is

why the Table of prefects is very present, even at the legal level, to make our concerns heard and ensure that the Gaspésie does not lose another riding at the provincial level. With two MNAs, it is not too many for the Gaspésie,” says Mr. Lapointe. Meanwhile, elected officials of the Laurentides and Centre-du-Québec are contesting the Act that suspended the revision of the map. The Quebec Electoral Rep-

resentation Commission has proposed merging the ridings of Gaspé and Bonaventure, combining the MRCs of Côte-de-Gaspé, Rocher-Percé, Bonaventure and Avignon, into a new Gaspé-Bonaventure riding, while Haute-Gaspésie would be transferred to the riding of Matane-Matapédia, a Lower St. Lawrence riding. As of April 30, 2023, Bonaventure had 35,898 registered voters, while Gaspé had 30,131, both well below the minimum threshold. The gap was -29.2% and -40.6% respectively. Gaspé ranked as the third least populous riding, behind the Magdalen Islands, which has exceptional status, and Ungava. According to projections of the number of voters based on data from the Quebec Institute of Statistics, the gap with respect to the average for Gaspé should soon surpass that of Ungava. In 2017, the Commission had maintained Gaspé’s negative exception status and granted the same status to Bonaventure.

Police report

Man killed in Nouvelle road accident

A distraction may have contributed to the accident that led to the death of an octogenarian on February 21 on Highway 132 East in Nouvelle. The Sûreté du Québec received a call around 1:45 p.m. regarding a collision between a sedan that was leaving a private driveway and a truck traveling on the road. The victim apparently did not see the oncoming vehicle. The jaws of life were needed to free the victim. Initially both the octogenarian and the driver of the truck, a man in his thirties, sustained only minor injuries, according to the Sûreté du Québec communication officer Frédéric Deshaies. However, the victim succumbed to his injuries in hospital a few hours later. An investigation has been opened to determine the cause of the accident.

Man found guilty of sexual assault

Walter Hottot, 69, from Port Daniel, was found guilty of sexual assault on December 19 for an offence committed between 1983 and 1986. On February 24, he was sentenced to three years in prison by Quebec Court Judge Janick Poirier. The identity of the victim, who was a minor at the time of the events, remains protected. Initially, Walter Hottot was also accused of sexually assaulting a second person, but that charge was dropped.

Walter Hottot was also found guilty of failing to register his name in the sex offender registry in 2023 and 2024. This marks the fourth time he has been convicted of sexually assaulting a minor. His detention began on February 24, as he had not been held in custody prior to sentencing.

His brother, Claude Hottot, 64, also from Port-Daniel, was acquitted on February 21 of sexual assault charges involving two people in a completely separate case dating back to the 1980s. His trial took place on January 9 and 10 at the New Carlisle Courthouse, under the direction of Judge Yves Desautels. While the judge did not find the accused's testimony credible, he ruled that the prosecution's evidence was insufficient for a conviction.

Their sister, Nancy Rideout-Hottot, 59, is awaiting a verdict in another sexual assault case involving three alleged victims, also dating back to the 1980s. Now residing in Saskatchewan, she stood trial from January 21 to 23 in New Carlisle. Judge Richard Côté is expected to deliver his decision on April 11.

Man found guilty of assault with a weapon

A 60-year-old man from Paspébiac is scheduled to return to the New Carlisle Courthouse on May 28 for the release of a pre-sentence report after being found guilty of assault and assault with a weapon. The verdict was delivered by Quebec Court Judge Janick Poirier on February 24. The violent acts occurred between January 1, 1990, and December 31, 2008, and were committed against his three children. The man, whose identity is protected to prevent the identification of his children, was also found guilty of assaulting his adult daughter on January 10, 2022. Additionally, on September 26, 2023, he violated a court order prohibiting him from contacting that daughter.

During the trial, witnesses testified that they had been struck with a belt, a strap

and a stick, as well as slapped in the face. The trial was conducted over two-and-a-half days, taking place on August 13 and 14, 2024, and concluding on October 31, 2024. Defence attorney Caroline Bérubé requested permission from Judge Poirier to have a pre-sentence report prepared, which was granted.

Carleton man charged with EI fraud

Sébastien Bujold, 41, from Carleton, has been charged with 98 counts of Employment Insurance fraud. He was officially charged on February 24 at the New Carlisle Courthouse. He was present in court that day but he hadn't had time to consult the court documents related to his case. Quebec Court Judge Janick Poirier asked him to return on April 22 to familiarize himself with the charges laid against him. He is represented by defence lawyer Willam Assels. The charges stem from alleged false declarations appearing on forms submitted to obtain Employment Insurance benefits. The period of the alleged fraud covers several years.

Police intervention in Nouvelle

A police operation held on February 25 in Nouvelle resulted in the seizure of several assets allegedly acquired through illegal activities. The Attorney General of Quebec initiated proceedings in Superior Court on February 20 and was granted authorization for prejudgment seizure. The seized assets include two buildings, seven vehicles including four cars, as well as valuable goods reportedly obtained through drug trafficking. The Sûreté du Québec officers assisted the bailiff in executing the seizure at 638 Highway 132 West. The Attorney General is acting under the Act respecting the confiscation, administration and allocation of proceeds and instruments of illegal activities to request confiscation in favour of the State. The identity of the property owners has not yet been released, as no charges have been laid as of SPEC's deadline.

Progress in unsolved murder case

Investigators from the Missing persons and unsolved murder cases division of the Sûreté du Québec met on February 26 with a man in his sixties, residing in the Matapédia Valley regarding the 1979 murder of Adrien Allard, which occurred in Causapsal.

On February 10, 1979, at around 7:15 p.m., two individuals wearing snowmobile suits arrived at the victim's residence, where he lived with his brother. The brothers defended themselves and in doing so, Adrien Allard died from his injuries. "The elements of the investigation collected at that time, combined with more recent work, allowed investigators to track down this individual who could be linked to this event. We are talking about DNA elements here," points out Frédéric Deshaies, spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec. A second suspect is also being investigated, but due to the ongoing nature of the case, officer Deshaies declined to provide further details. The man questioned by investigators on February 26 was released but may be called back for further questioning. In the Gaspé Peninsula, other murders remain unresolved, including the killing of Gesgapegiag's Linda Condo in October 1988 and the disappearance of Will Langlois, of Port Daniel in February 1998.

CSN protests against the private sector health care

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - On February 26, the CSN protested against the privatization of the health care and social services network, outside the Chandler office of the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin. The protest was part of the CSN's "For a Truly Public Network" campaign.

Serge Saint-Pierre, president of the Centrale des syndicats nationaux (CSN) regional council for Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, points out that the network has undergone numerous reforms for over 30 years, the last one being the one that led to the creation of Santé Québec last year.

"We have always advocated public health care rather than private health care," Mr. Saint-Pierre points out.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, the

union representative notes that some doctors have left the public network for the private sector. "We are afraid that with the reform that has begun, there will be more and more. When we talk about the private sector, we are talking about profit and people have to pay. The government says it won't cost anything, we will

pay the bill. Everywhere the private sector has set up shop, costs have increased and users have had to pay," notes the president, who wants to raise awareness among users.

"At some point, they will be forced to take money out of their pockets if we make more and more room for the private sector," adds Mr. Saint-Pierre.



CSN activists demonstrated in front MNA Catherine Blouin's offices in Chandler.

Photo: Courtesy CSN

"In the private sector, when cases are too heavy, we return them to the public sector. They only take cases with the possibility of making money, that is to say, cases that are not too heavy," maintains the union representative.

The CSN criticized the lack of access to local MNAs Catherine Blouin (Bonaventure) and Stéphane Sainte-Croix (Gaspé).

"We wanted to talk to the Members of the National As-

sembly and it was never possible," he says.

With the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre facing a \$40 million budget cut, Mr. Saint-Pierre says essential services will be affected.

"Cutting \$40 million in the Gaspésie makes no sense. There are people who will not be able to afford to get treatment, who will not receive services at the local level," says Mr. Saint-Pierre.





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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Canadian hockey is declining despite inspiring victory

On February 20, Canada won the Four Nations tournament against the United States, thanks to a dramatic overtime goal scored by the best player on earth, Connor McDavid, who is increasingly referred to as “Mc-Jesus” by some hockey fans.

That game was about much more than just hockey. It carried political weight, given American president Donald Trump’s recent decisions to impose trade tariffs on Canadian goods and his controversial statements about integrating Canada as the 51st state. That is not to mention the ongoing insults he has hurled at democratically elected Canadian politicians over recent years.

The previous matchup between Canada and the United States in the same tournament had already been marked by intimidation tactics, planned by three American players, brothers Brady and Matthew Tkachuk, as well as J.T. Miller. Within the first nine seconds, they initiated three fights against Canadian players.

Matthew and Brady Tkachuk targeted smaller opponents, Canadians Brandon Hagel and Sam Bennett, who each conceded about 30 pounds to their opponent, and who more than held their own against the two brothers. Meanwhile, Canadian defenceman Colton Parayko was about to make ground meat with J.T. Miller when the linesmen stepped in to stop the fight.

The Americans won the first game 3-1, but the way Canadians reacted to intimidation tactics that night paved the way to their victory five days later in the tournament’s final. We could say that symbolically, the hockey players also reacted to Donald Trump’s bullying.

Three other factors played a big role in that February 20 victory, team play, the starring goaltending of Jordan Binnington and, according to most experts, the presence on Canada’s team of the top three players in the world, Connor McDavid, Nathan McKinnon and Cale Makar

However, despite this victory, there are signs that Canada’s hockey is declining. This trend has been evident over the past two decades, as the country wins a decreasing number of international tournaments. National Hockey League (NHL) statistics further support this concern.

It starts in Quebec

Part of Canada’s hockey decline begins in Quebec, as La Belle Province players have almost disappeared from players’ national selections.

Last fall, Hockey Canada released the list of 32 players invited to Team Canada’s junior training camp for the World Championship played in Ottawa during the holiday season. On that list, there were only two Quebec players. That is only 6.25% of the team’s roster for a province that makes up 23% of the country’s population.

Moreover, in June 2024, for a second year in a row, Quebec-Maritimes Junior Hockey League players were ignored in the first round of the NHL draft. In 55 years, such a thing had never occurred before.

Before the Christmas break, when the NHL re-

vealed the team that represented the country in the Four Nations Showdown, only one Quebecer, Samuel Montembault, of the Montreal Canadiens, was selected and he didn’t play. The selection was considered a testing ground for Finland, Sweden, the United States and Canada in preparation for the Milan-Cortina winter Olympic Games, a year down the road. Again, Quebecers will likely struggle to make the national team.

Quebec hockey fans complain sometimes about the province’s players being neglected by Hockey Canada selectors, but if we take a look at another selection mode, that of the NHL general managers, we see another sign of decline.

In the early 2000s, between 80 and 90 Quebecers played regularly in the NHL. Today, that number has dropped to just 30.

NHL scouts are rarely biased. They will go and watch a hockey player in northern Slovenia if they think he has a fair chance of making it in the league.

Quebec can also count on 20,000 more players than in Finland and 10,000 more than in Sweden, two countries that develop NHL players in large numbers and have enjoyed great success on the international scene.

The population of Quebec reaches 9 million inhabitants now, compared to Sweden’s 11.3 million citizens, and Finland’s population stands at 5.6 million people.

Although the problem of hockey development in Quebec has made headlines on occasions over the last decade, not much is happening on the field, or on the rink.

Over recent years, Hockey Québec’s leaders are focusing on the adoption of sound governance practices by the regions and associations. However, these governance problems and turf wars have been paralyzing Quebec hockey for a long time.

The rest of Canada is declining too

The situation is not as bad in the rest of Canada but there is ample room for concern there as well. The percentage of Canadian forwards and defensemen has dropped from 55.6% to 42.4% in the NHL since the early 2000s. It is a 13.2% loss. In the meantime, the proportion of American players reaching the NHL has gone from 16 to 30%.

Yes, the competition is getting stronger everywhere. The number of Swedish and Finnish players in the NHL is also increasing, and their quality is rising as well.

Canada relies on the largest pool of hockey players, nearly 504,000 players but the country is losing ground against the competition.

A look at the goaltenders gives an indication of what we are missing on, among other things.

Aside from Samuel Montembault, who is still not a top five or even a top ten netminder of the NHL, Quebec has not produced a top goaltender over the last 15 years. Gone are the days of Patrick Roy, Martin Brodeur, Roberto Luongo or Marc-André Fleury.

Team Canada relied on Jordan Binnington and Adin Hill during the Four Nations. Binnington led the St. Louis Blues to the Stanley Cup in 2019, his performance over the past three seasons has placed him 22nd among NHL starting goalies, with a .903 save percentage.

The United States have produced four of the top 10 netminders leading the NHL efficiency rate.

What is Canada’s problem?

André Lachance is an expert with international recognition in the development of sports systems. When he meets European hockey managers, he is frequently told that in Canada, “You don’t need to rack your brains with development methods! You have so many players that it’s easy to assemble a good national team.”

Mr. Lachance figures that it might be the country’s problem. While other countries are racking their brains to improve their structures, better supervise their athletes and better train their coaches, Canada hasn’t hardly changed its approach in 50 years.

Junior players, who are attached to private companies owning teams, are playing almost as many games as professionals, which is pure nonsense for individuals aged 15 to 20.

Renowned goaltending coach François Allaire has remarked that in Canada, elite players are selected when they are 12 and they play against other elite players. Late bloomers, kids aged between 12 and 15, are essentially forgotten.

In Europe, and most American coaches have adopted that model, kids are not selected for elite play until they are 14. They are also encouraged to play other sports and develop their overall skills.

Hockey is a great sport, although it is marred by too much money. It remains Canada’s national sport, but for how long?

If Canada hopes to remain a dominant hockey nation, the county must ask itself: What are we willing to do to stay on top?



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Better access to judicial system for Listuguj residents

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Since February 26, Listuguj residents who require judicial services have access to the Carleton Courthouse, two full days per month if needed, thanks to the collaborative efforts of stakeholders involved in delivering these services.

A ceremony was held on the morning of February 26 to launch the new services. Listuguj elder, Roseann Martin, led the traditional portion of the event, emphasizing the significance of certain cultural symbols for the Mi'gmaq people, particularly when facing the judicial system.

“The seven directions play a big role in our culture. There is spiritual meaning for every direction,” she explained to the audience of close to 50 people, including Quebec Court Judge Janick Poirier, regional Bar President Alexis Deschênes, many lawyers, court employees, police officers and security agents.

Judge Janick Poirier, who received traditional objects from Elder Roseann Martin, underlined the importance for the Quebec Court offering this new service in an effort to bring the justice system closer to Listuguj residents and foster stronger connections.

“We know that some people have to deal with a very difficult background, which notably brings a difficulty to feel trust towards Non-Native people,” she said.

Judge Poirier added that she is aware that the new system is not perfect, as people from Listuguj, who are incarcerated will still appear at the New Carlisle Courthouse since the Carleton facility lacks the appropriate infra-



Several people involved in courthouse activities joined the stakeholders who have worked to improve access to the judicial system for citizens of Listuguj.

Photos: G. Gagné



Listuguj elder, Roseann Martin, right, shows Quebec Court Judge Janick Poirier the meaning of certain items in the Mi'gmaq culture, as court worker Donna Metallic listens.

structure.

“It is an issue that hopefully will be resolved. (...) We are starting a new path today that will help us all,” concluded Janick Poirier.

A long wait

Listuguj court worker Donna Metallic, who assists victims, witnesses and accused, delivered a heartfelt

message following Judge Poirier remarks. She has helped Listuguj citizens in

court for nine years and has advocated for the delivery of services closer to the Mi'gmaq people for a similar period, a struggle that left her doubting about an improved context.

“Most clients we serve don't own a car. We are the link between the justice system and them. They were not even allowed to have the feather with them in court. There is hope and there is faith that we can have better justice for everybody. I am very emotional because I never thought that I would see that day,” explained Ms. Metallic.

Since February 26, Mi'gmaq accused, witnesses and victims can hold a feather when they are called to testify, a historic first in the Gaspé

Peninsula.

Regional Bar President and Legal Aid lawyer Alexis Deschênes praised once more the collaboration of the stakeholders in the progress made in that file since April 2, 2024, the day of the first official meeting related to moving some services to Carleton, which cuts two hours of driving when compared to a same day return trip between Listuguj and New Carlisle.

“There are sometimes beautiful and noble causes in which we believe deeply and for which we have to fight great battles. That's not the case with the idea we're bringing to life today. Yes, bringing justice closer to the First Nation citizens of Listuguj is a beautiful and noble cause in which we believe deeply, but this time, we didn't have to fight big battles to make it happen. This project didn't require any major battle. All we had to do was to get the judicial interveners in the Bonaventure judicial district around the same table,” he stated.

“Please see this as proof that we can improve our justice system for the benefit of your people. If it could be seen as a step towards reconciliation, we would maybe initiate today not only a way to bring justice closer to your community, but something like a better relationship between our people,” concluded attorney Deschênes.

Accessibility issues at Gaspé's blood collection centre

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre is once again facing criticism after the elevator providing access to the Blood Collection Centre at Place Jacques-Cartier in Gaspé broke down on February 24.

With this latest incident, the controversial decision to locate the Blood Collection Centre in this building, especially since one of the escalators has been out of service for several weeks, is once again drawing attention.

These breakdowns complicate access to the service for people with reduced mobility. However, the elevator was back in service on February 25.

In early February, the CISSS acknowledged the accessibility concerns and stated that it hopes to relocate the service back within its own facilities due to financial pressures.

While the former emergency room is one option under consideration, the CISSS is also exploring other possibilities.



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Milk dumped due to February 17 blizzard

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER - As a result of the blizzard that hit the Gaspé Peninsula on February 16 and 17, the region's dairy producers had to dispose of their milk, as milk trucks were unable to collect and transport the production to processing plants in Victoriaville and Plessisville, in Centre-du-Québec, on February 17.

"The road closures meant that we had to dispose of the milk. This is the first time in my life. I had never experienced disposing of milk in relation to a snowstorm," said Normand Barriault, regional spokesperson for the Dairy Producers of Québec.

Trucks were unable to travel between the region and major processing centres due to the closure of Highway 132 in the Gaspé Peninsula and Lower Saint Lawrence during the height of the blizzard.

The regional spokesperson did not have an exact report

on the quantities discarded in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"Given that we are rationalizing as much as possible, we organize ourselves so that the trucks are very active. The next day, they have to pick up other producers. It really hurt my heart," notes the producer.

Milk can only be stored on the farm for up to 48 hours and must be processed within 72 hours.

According to preliminary calculations, approximately 600,000 litres of milk were discarded out of a daily provincial production of 10 million litres.

The loss will be collectively absorbed by all dairy producers in Quebec.

"It's poor compensation, but the producer will be paid for his work. But working so hard, and being forced to dispose of it because of a storm, that's what hurts the most," says Mr. Barriault.

The processors are not involved in this compensation process.

The year 2024 was a good

year for producers. While the cost of inputs has decreased, interest rates have risen. The price paid for dairy calves has reached record levels.

"I don't understand how the consumer is going to pay for this meat in the long term. But financially, producers are doing relatively well," comments the producer.

Like other sectors of the Canadian economy, farmers are concerned about the situation in the United States, as President Donald Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on several Canadian products.

"I hope that this will awaken some consumers to the trend of eating Canadian. I hope that this trend will bear fruit, to demonstrate that we have the right to our food self-sufficiency. Let's stop looking at the United States as an outlet and go to other countries," says Mr. Barriault.

The upward trend in dairy product consumption continues, driven largely but the growing number of immigrants.

February could go down in history for record snowfalls

Nelson Sergerie
GASPE - According to data from Environment Canada, with 124 centimetres of snow fallen as of February 25, the month ranks third in historical data dating back to 1895.

In February 2008, there was 125.9 centimetres of snow. With the residual precipitation that was forecast until February 28, everything indicates that this mark could be reached or even surpassed.

The all-time record was set in February 2013 with 140.2 centimetres of snow.

The 124 centimetres received so far fell mostly in the span of five days, from February 13 to 18, when Gaspé received 117 centimetres, and then in the February 16 and 17 blizzard that left 77 centimetres.

The average snowfall for February is 63 centimetres.

As of February 25, there was 28 centimetres of snow on the ground. This is quite a contrast compared to January when Gaspé only received 26.8 centimetres in total.

So far, since the start of the "winter", 237.4 centimetres of snow has been recorded at the Michel-Pouliot Airport in Gaspé.

The seasonal average for this time period is 258 centimetres.

February in the last 10 years:

Year	Centimetres of snow
2014	121.6 cm
2015	123.2 cm
2016	60.2 cm (No measurements taken Feb. 1 to 12.)
2017	67.1 cm
2018	54 cm
2019	118.4 cm
2020	115 cm
2021	96 cm
2022	119 cm
2023	41.9 cm
2024	33.6 cm
2025	124 cm (As of Feb. 26.)

Total lunar eclipse on the night of March 13/14

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - Residents of the Gaspé Peninsula will have the opportunity to witness a total lunar eclipse on the night of March 13 to 14. A lunar eclipse occurs when the moon passes through the earth's shadow, blocking direct sunlight and causing the Moon to appear red, a phenomenon that occurs a few times a year.

There are three varieties of eclipses

Penumbral eclipse: Occurs when the moon only passes through the Earth's outer shadow (penumbra) resulting in a subtle dimming.

Partial eclipse: Occurs when only part of the moon passes through the Earth's darker shadow (umbra).

Total eclipse: The most

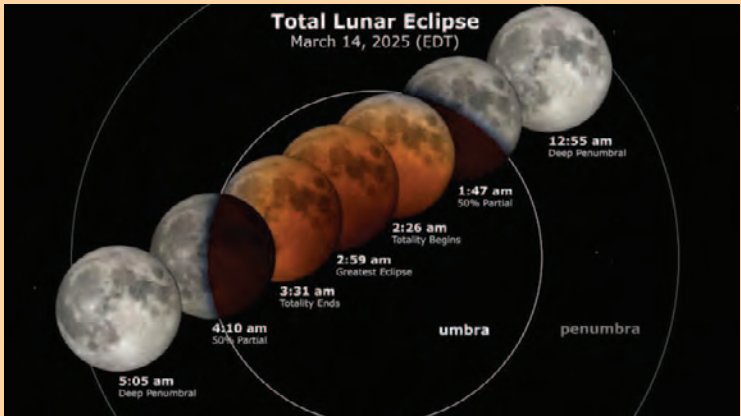


Photo: NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio

spectacular, takes place when the entire moon is within the Earth's shadow, turning it a deep red colour. This reddish hue is caused by sunlight filtering through the Earth's atmosphere, which is the only one that can reach the moon. In fact, this white light is filtered by our atmosphere and the slightest variation in the quantity of particles present will affect the brightness of the eclipse. It is this filter that gives the moon this red tint, like during a sunset.

The March 14 partial eclipse will begin at 1:09 a.m. and end at 4:47 a.m., while the total eclipse will be visible between 2:26 a.m. to 3:31 a.m. The event can be easily observed from home with the naked eye or with small binoculars. Unlike a solar eclipse, a lunar eclipse poses no risk of eye damage. Additionally, a partial solar eclipse will take place on March 29, offering another exciting event to look forward to.

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CMQ observer satisfied with progress in Percé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The Town of Percé is demonstrating a clear commitment to improving its governance. This is the key take away from the report published on February 20 by Minister of Municipal Affairs Andrée Laforest. The report was prepared by observer Mélanie Robert, who was appointed following last July's damning finding by the Commission municipale du Québec (CMQ).

Mélanie Robert's mandate was to verify whether the measures put in place by the town, in response to the CMQ's recommendations were effectively addressing the identified issues.

The final report was presented to council members and the general management team on February 19.

Throughout her mandate, Ms. Robert noted a clear desire to rectify the situation, both on the part of the town's employees and the members of the council.

She notes that the town has already taken serious and significant steps to remedy certain problems, including the active participation of its staff and council members in information sessions, and the invitation extended by senior management to various bidders to carry out an organizational diagnosis.

The council ensures that it has all the information necessary for decision-making, in



Photo: N. Sergerie

particular by introducing decision summaries for more complex or extensive files.

Ms. Robert also notes that the town is in good financial health and the main internal control and monitoring mechanisms are in place.

However, she recommends that the Regulation decreeing the rules for budgetary control and monitoring be updated, in particular to specify the areas of jurisdiction for which each delegation applies and to update the amounts thus authorized. The undersigned also recommends that these mechanisms be accompanied by work tools that promote a better understanding of the budget management process among teams while ensuring sustainability in the transmission of best practices in this area.

It should be noted that this recommendation could also be enhanced by those, where applicable, of the human re-

sources representative who will issue an organizational diagnosis.

The observer reiterates the importance for the town to ensure complete management and appropriate monitoring of sensitive or difficult labour relations files. She points out that specific training in conflict management exists and that specialized support resources are available.

She suggests that the town update its Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Incivility and Violence in the Workplace.

The administration must continue its efforts to ensure sound management of the town.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs is confident that other actions will be deployed to this end, in the interest of the entire community.

The ministry is also closely monitoring the situa-

tion and remains available, particularly through the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Regional Directorate, to help and support the town in carrying out its duties.

"The seven recommendations of the Commission's investigation department have almost been completed. We still have a few small tasks to complete before the rest of the year," says Mayor Daniel Leboeuf.

One of these is the organizational diagnosis ordered in February and which will be

completed in the spring. In July 2024, the CMQ report concluded that wrongdoing had been committed in the Town of Percé.

The Commission's president, Jean-Philippe Marois, noted a worrying culture regarding compliance with applicable rules within the town.

This culture is reflected in a flagrant lack of internal control measures and monitoring mechanisms. This is the main problem identified by the investigation.

Thus, the situation in which the town is currently immersed is caused by numerous dysfunctions, which are only the symptoms of this serious case of mismanagement and for which the responsibility cannot be attributed solely to the general management. The commission noted that significant disagreements persist within the administration and have led to the resignation of several employees. As for the town council, it does not seem to realize the extent of the situation or show any desire to rectify it.

Percé: No permanent director general before 2026

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The Town of Percé does not intend to fill the position of director general of the municipality before 2026. Instead, the town will rely on an interim director due to the number of files that need to be resolved quickly.

"The council contacted the municipal associations of Quebec - the Fédération québécoise des municipalités and the Association des directeurs municipaux du Québec - which have banks of experienced candidates who could come in the interim to manage all the upcoming files in Percé in 2025," emphasizes the mayor, Daniel Leboeuf.

Among these files, the

mayor cites the negotiation of the collective agreement, the organizational diagnosis, the recruitment of new people and the municipal elections in November.

"(We have to) take advantage of the experience of a director general for the municipality to help us set this up and then recruit a permanent resource," says the mayor.

The organizational diagnosis will contain recommendations. "We must continue the recovery and once advanced, perhaps in 2026, we will recruit permanently. We will find someone who wants to make a career in our beautiful town with a municipality that functions well and that has all its

directors," says Mr. Leboeuf.

Now four months into his term, the mayor believes harmony has returned to the Town Hall. "The discussions are much more cordial during public meetings. I avoid controversy. It reflects the climate at the town hall. It's friendlier," says the mayor, who emphasizes the work of the civil service to keep the town up and running.

Recruitment continues to fill vacant positions. The position of director general will become vacant on March 6. The incumbent, Michel Fréchette, resigned on February 4, a few moments before the start of the public council meeting. He had only been in the role for seven months.

Gaspé approves 86-unit affordable housing project

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Les Habitations de la montagne's 86-unit affordable housing project has received final approval from the Gaspé municipal council, allowing the project to move forward.

The approval was given during a special council meeting on February 24. "The last stumbling block in the file was a resident of the sector who opposed the project. There were discussions between him and the developers to mitigate the impacts of the project," said Mayor Daniel Côté.

The units will be located near the MAPAQ (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) offices in the Sandy Beach sector of Gaspé.

Modifications were made to address concerns, including traffic management during construction with a fenced-off area and reduced visual impacts.

The developer has until 2029 to complete construction. While not speaking on behalf of the developers, the mayor estimates that the units could be ready by late 2027, with construction set to begin in 2026.

"According to the latest available statistics, we went from a vacancy rate of 0% to 1%. It's still a good improvement, but we're still far from the equilibrium threshold. That's why we're continuing to invest in housing," says Mr. Côté.

Over the past five years, 533 residential units have been built in Gaspé. "The shortage is getting less and less severe. At one time, we never saw any housing listed. Now, there are some. It's a sign that we're on a positive trend in the housing shortage," believes the mayor, who is maintaining the pace to bring in construction.

Cont'd on page 9

Southern Gulf snow crab: Biomass drops by 21%

GILLES GAGNÉ

PASPEBIAC – The latest snow crab stock assessment conducted at the end of the summer of 2024 reveals a 21% drop in biomass in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. This is the second major drop in biomass in as many years, since the 2023 survey resulted in a 24% drop compared to the 2022 survey.

The biomass available for the 2025 fishing season was 51,786 metric tonnes according to the 2024 survey, compared to 67,731 tonnes in 2023, says biologist Tobie Surette of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The quota of the southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence is usually announced only at the end of March or beginning of April. The decision belongs to the management branch of the ministry, not the scientific team. The Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands fishermen usually benefit from 30% of the quota. It is the biggest zone accessible to Quebec crab fishermen.

“Snow crab go through cycles, with an abundance of ups and downs. Crab is still in the declining phase of its cycle. Between 2018 and 2022, the biomass was between 78,000 and 85,000 metric tonnes,” says Mr. Surette.

At 67,731 metric tonnes, the 2023 survey was in line with the average biomass since annual assessments began at Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

For comparison purposes, Mr. Surette notes that during the most worrisome low in the past 20 years, in 2009-2020, snow crab biomass surveys had the stock at a range of 31,000 to 35,000 metric tonnes, about 20,000 tonnes lower than the current level. “Crab moves in 10-year cy-

cles. There were also other lows in 1989-1990 and 1998-1999,” notes the biologist with 25 years of experience in snow crab assessment.

The commercial biomass, at 51,786 tonnes, is distributed in varying proportions between zones 12, 12E, 12F and 19, with a clear lead for the former. Thus, the summer 2024 survey would give a biomass of 42,090 tonnes to zone 12, then 717 tonnes to zone 12E, 3,395 tonnes to zone 12F and 5,271 to zone 19. A balance of just over 350 tonnes is reserved for an unassigned sector and buffer zones.

Tobie Surette warns that Fisheries and Oceans Canada surveys do not automatically translate into predictable quotas by the ministry managers.

However, if we apply the decision rule associated with the precautionary approach adopted for a little over 20 years in the southern Gulf of snow crab snow crab management, an exploitation rate of 35.73% would be imposed on the commercial biomass in 2025. The southern Gulf quota would therefore be 18,503.14 metric tonnes this year.

In zone 12, the quota would reach 15,086.81 tonnes, compared to 261.71 tonnes in zone 12E, then 1,273.94 tonnes in 12F, and 1,889.68 tonnes in zone 19.

By comparison, the 2024 quotas were 22,626.39 tonnes in zone 12, 204.88 tonnes in zone 12E, 1,868.25 tonnes in zone 12F and 1,427.06 tonnes in zone 19, for a total of 26,126.59 tonnes overall. If this scenario is approved, it would represent an overall decrease of 29.18% in 2025.

In the spring of 2024, Fisheries and Oceans Canada managers set a quota of 26,126.59 metric tonnes, exceeding the theoretical quota



Snow crab fishermen can expect another sharp quota reduction in 2025.

Photo: Robert Nicolas

that would have resulted from the strict application of the decision rule inherent to a commercial biomass of 67,731 tonnes. This theoretical quota was 25,710.72 tonnes.

This difference in proportion between the 21% decline in commercial biomass resulting from the 2024 theoretical survey and the hypothetical quota loss of 29.18% comes from the fact that the exploitation rate was adjusted downward due to the way the precautionary approach is defined.

A 2025 quota of 18,503.14 tonnes would approach a moderate probability that the commercial stock would end up in the cautious zone, according to the name given to the precautionary approach.

This situation would result in part from the fairly large margin of error established by the scientific team of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, which reaches approximately 5,800 tonnes, both upwards and downwards, out of the 51,786 tonnes total, a proportion of 11.26%.

Not the first historical low

The decline in biomass in the 2023 and 2024 surveys seems sudden, considering that the last decade had mainly been marked by increases or by periods of stability, instead of serious lows like the one in 2009-2010.

On that point, Tobie Surette specifies that "The last low was in 2009-2010, and from 2011 to 2022, the biomass reached 78,000 to 85,000 tonnes, a strong period. Biomass is a function of the quantity of small crabs growing to reach legal size, and there are fewer of them."

Could snow crab, like other species, be affected by climate change and environmental conditions, factors

that would have an impact on the productivity of the southern Gulf stock?

Tobie Surette responds that he and his colleagues are monitoring water temperature variations quite closely, and he says that the situation in the southern Gulf is not comparable to that of the Bering Sea, which borders Alaska, where very large drops in stocks and a significant increase in water temperature have been documented.

“In the southern Gulf, we are talking about fractions of a degree. We see marginal areas that seem to have temperatures that are too warm. We do not see a major impact in areas where crab is abundant. Everything (the changes) seems rather modest, but we are keeping an eye on it,” says the biologist. The observations made during the 2024 survey thus seem to indicate a decrease in juvenile crabs.

“The survey provides demographic information. From 2019 to 2021, we saw impressive quantities of small crabs. These crabs take five, six or seven years before arriving in the commercial fishery. A fraction of this recruitment is undergoing mortality. We are trying to determine the mechanism (which influences the decrease in small crabs). We see three reasons. There were so many that the quantity of food could not support this population. It hatched and (it) grew up in places less suitable for crabs, or it practices cannibalism. When the big crabs are hungry, they can eat the small crabs,” explains Tobie Surette.

The time has not come to worry excessively, adds the biologist, who for the moment excludes fluctuations resulting from climate change or other environmental factors.

“The fluctuations are probably due to cannibalism, instead of climate change mechanisms, and to unexplained mortalities,” suggests Tobie Surette.

The 2024 recruitment has therefore reached a threshold below average, but “the recruits should contribute to increasing the stock within two or three years. If this (the decline in recruitment) continues, it would become worrisome,” he adds.

The quantities of small crabs from 2018 to 2022 suggested a possible recruitment boom.

Water temperature

Tobie Surette doesn’t deny that there is a warming of the water in certain parts of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but he specifies that for the moment, this warming is hitting more the shallow and deep sectors, which includes the layer of water near the shores, where the depth is generally shallow.

“We are seeing significant signs of warming; lobster evolves in the upper layer of warm water. The habitat of the snow crab is located below this warm layer, in a deeper layer, from 120 to 150 metres. Below 150 metres, we also see a warmer layer of water. The layer of water where the crab lives is sandwiched. There is a more modest warming of the intermediate layer, where crabs evolve,” specifies Mr. Surette.

The tolerance limit of the snow crab is located at water of 5 to 6 degrees Celsius. “It prefers (a temperature) below 3%, the larvae like an even colder temperature,” adds the biologist.

The late formation of ice, and the absence of ice, have not yet had an impact on the layer of water in which the snow crab lives, he assures.



The surveys are carried out on the Avalon Voyager II.

Photo: Courtesy of DFO

Snow crab: What can we expect in 2026?

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – What can the main players in the snow crab sector expect in 2026? Stability or another decline?

“Our forecast, and it depends on the TAC (total allowable catch in 2025), is that we expect another drop for next year, from 51,700 to 43,000 metric tons,” Tobie Surette says cautiously.

For several years, biologists studying the Gulf of St. Lawrence have noticed an acidification of the water, a phenomenon that could have a long-term negative effect on

the strength of shells. Is this an observable phenomenon so far?

“We are doing some studies on this subject. The impact is less on the larvae than on the large crabs. The crabs float in the water column; this could create problems, but so far, the snow crab seems to show tolerance to this,” says Tobie Surette.

Should fishermen and fish plant owners be worried in the immediate future about the snow crab in the southern Gulf? Is it doomed to decline like shrimp, turbot and pelagic fish such as herring and mack-

erel?

Tobie Surette notes that species recoveries are possible, as in the case of Atlantic halibut.

“In the short term, we are monitoring the situation on an annual basis. For the long term, if the waters continue to warm over 20, 30 or 50 years, there will be an impact. There is a stock south of ours, in Nova Scotia; we should know before,” notes the biologist.

Female crabs are not fished and for the moment, their situation is not worrisome, specifies Tobie Surette. “The quantity remains high

but the recruitment of new mature females has been low. We thought we would have more female recruits,” he mentions.

To sum up the overall snow crab context, Mr. Surette adds that the biomass situation is “Below average and in a period of decline (but) we are in a cycle that should increase in two or three years.”

Snow crab stocks have been assessed yearly in the southern Gulf since 1988. However, the statistical series are comparable only since 1997 due to changes in reference areas.



Biologist Toby Surette has participated in snow crab surveys for 25 years.

Photo: Courtesy of DFO

RECLAIMING OUR ROOTS: Can Traditional Farming Save the Gaspésie?

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PASPEBIAC - Gaspésie, a region renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and vibrant tourism, faces a quiet crisis. While tourists flock to the coast, drawn by the promise of authenticity and local flavour, the very foundation of that appeal – small, traditional farms – is crumbling under the weight of an outdated agricultural model. Many farmers, like a young farmer from the Baie-des-Chaleurs, are struggling to survive, caught between the rising costs of industrial agriculture and the bureaucratic hurdles that favour large-scale operations.

This farmer, who wishes to remain anonymous, paints a stark picture of the challenges facing his family farm. "In Quebec," he explains, "we don't see farming as a way to feed ourselves, but as a path to wealth." This shift in perspective, he argues, is at the heart of the problem. A century ago, farms were family endeavors, not businesses. They operated on a circular model, integrating crops, livestock, and natural resources in a self-sustaining cycle. This fostered a deep understanding of soil health and ecosystem function, a hands-on knowledge passed down through generations.

The 20th century brought a revolution, heralded by Nobel laureates Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and Norman Borlaug, whose innovations in fertilizers and plant breeding dramatically increased yields. Famine became less of a threat, but agriculture transformed into a business. The focus shifted

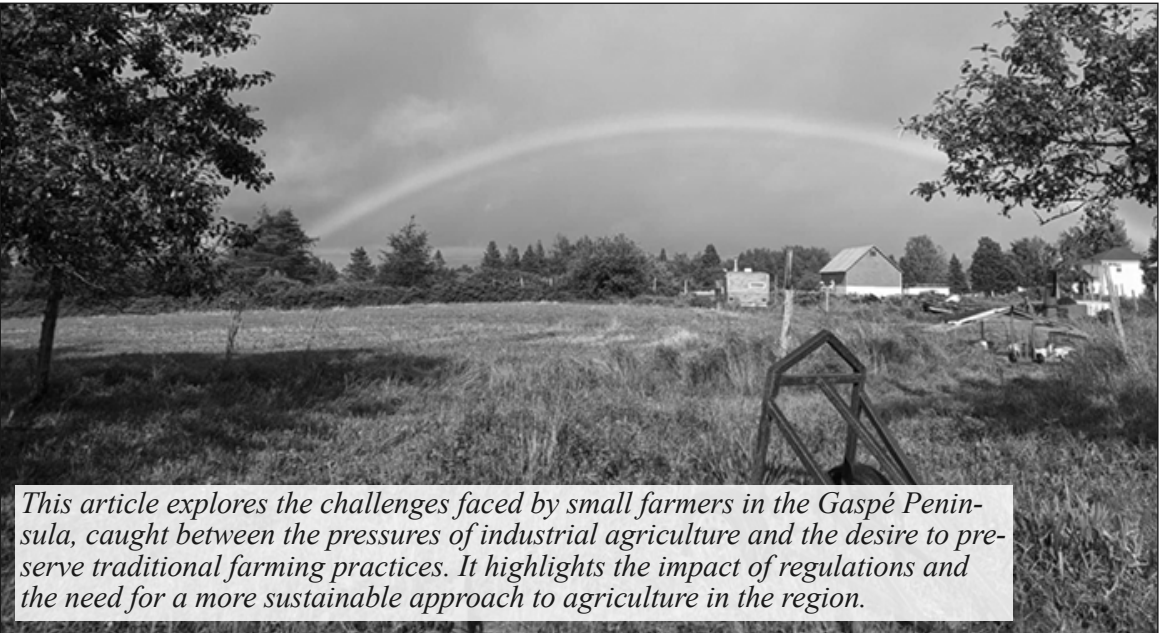
from feeding communities to maximizing profits. Monocultures, mechanization, and pesticides became the norm, slowly eroding the rich biodiversity of traditional farming.

A new generation seeks to return to smaller, environmentally friendly models, preserving both traditional knowledge and unique crop and animal varieties. But they face significant obstacles. One major hurdle is the mandatory union membership with the UPA required for registered farms. The hefty fees are manageable only for those who scale their operations, prioritizing industrial farming over traditional methods.

Furthermore, union regulations often restrict on-farm slaughtering, forcing farmers to transport animals to distant facilities, adding to costs and pushing them to sell their meat in cities rather than locally. Ironically, studies, including one from the University of Córdoba, demonstrate that on-farm slaughter often results in better animal welfare and hygiene due to reduced stress.

For the Gaspé Peninsula, this is particularly troubling. The region's tourism industry thrives on the promise of unique, local products. Small traditional farms are the backbone of this appeal. Beyond the environmental concerns surrounding industrial agriculture, allowing farmers to return to their roots would revitalize the region's economy and preserve its unique character. It's a matter of supporting a sustainable model that benefits both the planet and the people of the Gaspésie.

The union's focus on registered businesses also leaves



This article explores the challenges faced by small farmers in the Gaspé Peninsula, caught between the pressures of industrial agriculture and the desire to preserve traditional farming practices. It highlights the impact of regulations and the need for a more sustainable approach to agriculture in the region.

Photo: A. Poirier-Roy

smaller farms invisible, preventing them from accessing crucial support and making it nearly impossible to break even. And the shift from inheriting farms to purchasing them adds another layer of financial burden, as the real estate costs are considerable.

This shift has left many Gaspésie farmers struggling to adapt. How are they navigating this complex landscape? How are they balancing tradition with the demands of a changing climate? In upcoming articles, we'll speak with local farmers about their experi-

ences, exploring the innovative ways they're adapting their practices to survive and thrive in this challenging era. Do you have a story to share about farming in Gaspésie? We invite you to write to the Gaspé Spec if you'd like to contribute to this important conversation.

HOUSING:

Cont'd from page 7

The elected official also highlighted Gaspé's population growth, with 490 new residents added in the past year.

“In my humble opinion, the growth is far from over.” As long as we can build housing, I think there will be people to occupy them and contribute to our development,” continued the mayor.

With new residents comes an increase demand for day-care spaces.

The project for 100 new spaces at the Voyage de mon enfance Centre petit enfance (CPE) is also taking a step forward as the Town has

agreed to sell part of the land it owns near Carrefour Gaspé.

However, the project for the 144 units that was supposed to be built on the adjoining land will not see the light of day, according to the mayor.

“The project was aborted because of the elements already mentioned. There are legal proceedings in the file. I won't go too far in my remarks. The project has not been working for some time. We want to take back the land to do something else, whether it be housing or something else,” said the mayor. In February 2024, the Town threatened to use its termination clause, granting it the right to take back the land, since the

deadlines had become too long for the project to be completed. A warning was applied in September.

Logements CVP had purchased the municipal land in September 2021 for \$300,000, though it was valued at \$566,000 at the time, with plans to develop Le Domaine de la Baie.

The investors had also deposited a \$266,000 security deposit, repayable in four installments each time a complex was built.

The project included four buildings of 36 units each, with one to be constructed per year until 2026. CVP had committed to breaking ground by December 31, 2023.

Announcements



In Memory

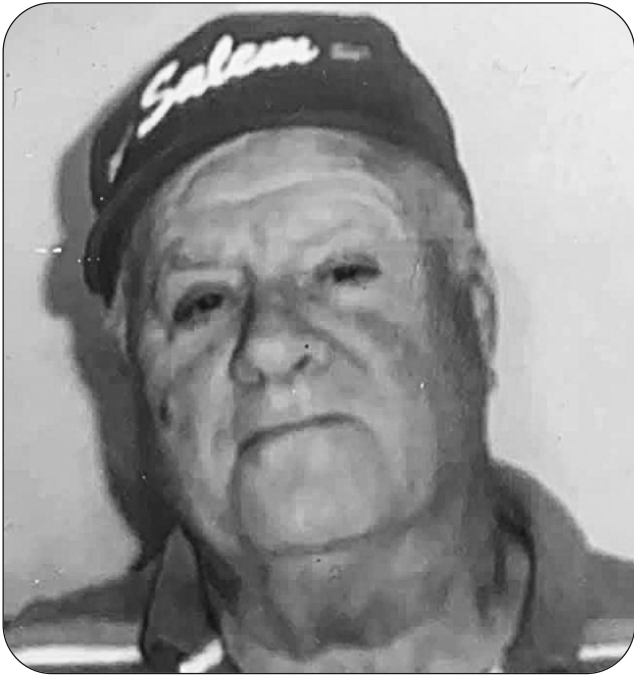


ALMOND: Emily Ann
*Momma- Momma- Momma- Lou
Its been two years, I miss you too.
When it rains, I think of you.
When it snows, I think of you.
When the sunshine hits my face,
I feel your presence and your grace.
I have a smile, I laugh and tear,
Because I know the our time is near.
The mansions that the lord speaks of,
You occupy a spot above.
My work on earth is not quite done,
But when it is, you'll see your son.
Within a sec or maybe two.
Your fam awaits to see you soon,
Oh Momma- Momma- Momma- Lou.*

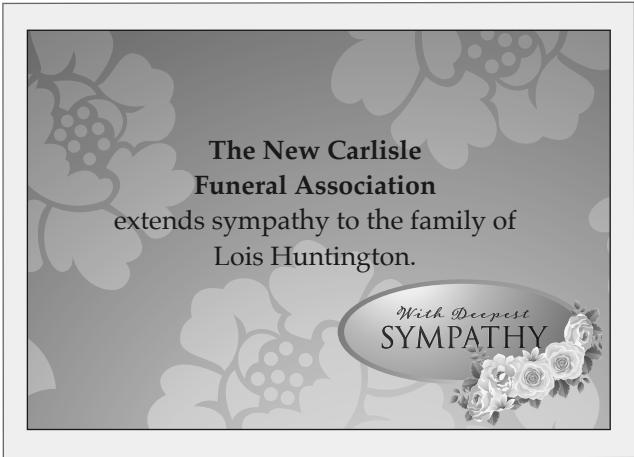
Until we meet again Mom. We all love you and miss you xoxo. Love from your hubby Peter and fam Debbie, Barry, Paul, Judy, Peter, Michael, Robert, Sandy, Rob, Tanya, Charlie, Brady, Emilie, Dave, Elowyn, David, Gina, Jessica, Kyle, Abby, Amelia, David, Katelyn, Tobin, and the mystery girl in July who's name is to be determined.

FLOWERS: Alma
In loving memory of a precious grandmother who passed away March 2, 1983.
*Like falling leaves,
The years slip by,
But precious memories never die.
You live with us in memory still,
Not just today,
But always will.
Those we love don't go away,
They walk beside us every day.
Unseen, Unheard but always near;
Still loved, still missed, Still very dear.*
Lovingly remembered and cherished forever by Carol and Richard Smollett.

FLOWERS: Doris Eveline (Gallon)
In loving memory of a precious mother who passed away January 5, 2023.
*A mother holds a special place,
Within her family's life and heart.
Through all the years of growing up,
She played an endless part.
Although, time changes things,
There's something you should know.
Our special love for you Mom,
Is one aspect we'll never outgrow.
We hold you close within our hearts,
And there you shall remain.
To walk with us throughout our lives,
Until we meet again.*
With all our love, daughter Carol and son-in-law Richard.





MCWHIRTER: Lindsay
In loving memory of a dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who passed away March 2, 2016.
*Goodbyes are not forever,
Goodbyes are not the end.
They simply mean we'll miss you,
Until we meet again.*
Always remembered and sadly missed by your wife Viola McWhirter and family.



MCWHIRTER: Shown
In memory of Shown McWhirter who passed February 27, 2023.
Shown leaves to mourn his mom Viola, brothers Lornie, Marvin, Kerrie and Darren; sisters Melanie and Gail; girlfriend Nora, two children Ryan and Deshown; and grandchild Nixon. Shown we miss you, until we meet again.

SMOLLETT: Robert
In loving memory of a dear brother who passed away March 2, 2014.
*He bade no one a last farewell,
He said goodbye to none.
His spirit fled before we knew,
That Robert from us had gone.
At night the silent stars look down,
On a grave not far from here.
Where one sleeps the one we won't forget,
The one we loved so dear.
Unseen, unheard but always near,
Still loved, still missed, still very dear.*
Lovingly remembered by brother Richard and sister-in-law Carol.

Thank You
We would like to thank everyone who sent cards, took time to call, left messages and brought food when my sister, Carolyn Simon Gavey, passed away unexpectedly. Please accept this as a personal thank you. It was greatly appreciated.
Eleanor and Clayton Bourgaize



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Thursdays: Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

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

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

**UNITED CHURCH
NEW RICHMOND**
March 9
10 a.m. Service

**UNITED CHURCH
HOPE TOWN**
March 9
9 a.m. Service

**PARISH OF
GASPÉ**
Sunday, March 9
St. Paul's - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Tuesday, March 11
St. Pauls - Gaspé
7 p.m. Evening Prayer

**ANGLICAN
CHURCH
OF CANADA**
Sunday, March 9
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
You might feel like you have extra energy to chase goals and take bold actions this week, Aries. Your natural drive will be strong. Find opportunities to assert yourself in new areas.
TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
You may feel compelled to slow down and nurture your inner self this week, Taurus. Take time to reflect on your values and personal goals. If you have been feeling overwhelmed, get some rest.
GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
You are in a social mode this week, Gemini. Your communication skills will take centre stage, and it's a good time to

collaborate or share ideas with others.
CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, your focus could shift toward long-term career goals in the next few days. Work to identify a clear vision of where you want to go and the path to get there.
LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, this week brings an adventurous energy that implores you to expand your horizons. Consider travel, new experiences or educational pursuits to make the most of your time.
VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
You may find yourself dealing



with intense emotions this week, Virgo. You might realize that time is running out on something and you really need to make a move.
LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Relationships are especially important to you right now, Libra. Whether it is friendship, romance or business, your interactions with others are bound to be intense.
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, this week requires heightened focus on daily routines and personal health. It's a good time to prioritize self-care and improving your habits. A shift in your environment might help.
SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Sagittarius, your creativity and passion are elevated this week. You feel ready to pursue personal projects since your inspiration is booming.
CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Family matters takes precedence and garner your attention this week, Capricorn.

You may feel a desire to create a sense of stability in your personal space. That may translate to redecorating.
AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, communication is key this week, whether it's in social circles, at work or at home. You will engage in good conversation and exchange interesting ideas. Learn all you can along the way.
PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Finances come into focus this week, Pisces. You may wonder how you can improve your financial situation and make smarter choices when it comes to money.

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