

Drinking water agreement now signed between Paspébiac and New Carlisle

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The Town of Paspébiac and the Municipality of New Carlisle announced on March 27 the signing of a drinking water agreement that will allow New Carlisle residents, whose properties are connected to the aqueduct system, to benefit from clear water. It will be supplied by the Paspébiac system.

The Town of Paspébiac has a high-quality groundwater source with high capacity, while New Carlisle has faced issues for 22 years, including the presence of iron and manganese in its source.

Furthermore, New Carlisle's topography and the distance from its existing groundwater infrastructure make it very expensive for it to provide good-quality service to its residents. The pooling of Paspébiac and New Carlisle's infrastructure will largely resolve this problem, explains New Carlisle's mayor, David Thibault.

"I find it is a historical agreement. We have been sharing a common treatment system for sewerage water. Now, it is the turn of sharing our drinking water source," says Mr. Thibault.

Both municipalities started studying the possibility of sharing Paspébiac's groundwater in 2022, and since its capacity allowed it, they initiated discussions about an agreement the following year.

"There are many highlights stemming from that agreement. The Quebec government provides, under the PRIMEAU (Programme d'infrastructures municipales d'eau) program, a grant covering 65% of a drinkable water project when a municipality works alone and that share increases to 95% for a common project. For Paspébiac, the total cost of the project, at \$385,000, would mean an expenditure of \$135,000 if the government covers 65% of it, and only \$20,000 if the grant rises to 95% of the tab," explains David Thibault.



Paspébiac director general Denis Langlois and mayor Marc Loisel, along with New Carlisle mayor David Thibault and director general Denise Dallain, are pleased to officialize the drinkable water agreement.

Photo: G. Gagné

A \$3 million saving for New Carlisle

The Municipality of New Carlisle's infrastructure linked

to the project will cost a significant amount, about \$10 million, according to the 2022 study, as a tank must be built to maintain the pressure across

the drinkable water network. However, by sharing a project with Paspébiac, New Carlisle will save \$3 million.

"At a 35% rate of funding

support, New Carlisle would have to contract a loan of \$3.5 million. It means reimbursing \$215,000 annually for 30 years. At 95%, we will only borrow \$500,000, which means paying back \$30,000 annually for 30 years. I would like to thank the Town of Paspébiac for its cooperation in discussions and our municipal council. It proves that working together provides advantages for the future," adds mayor Thibault.

The \$385,000 invested by Paspébiac will essentially be used to buy and install equipment that will enable municipal employees to monitor water pressure data remotely from the pumping stations, with a cellular phone or computer.

Although the presence of iron and manganese was not

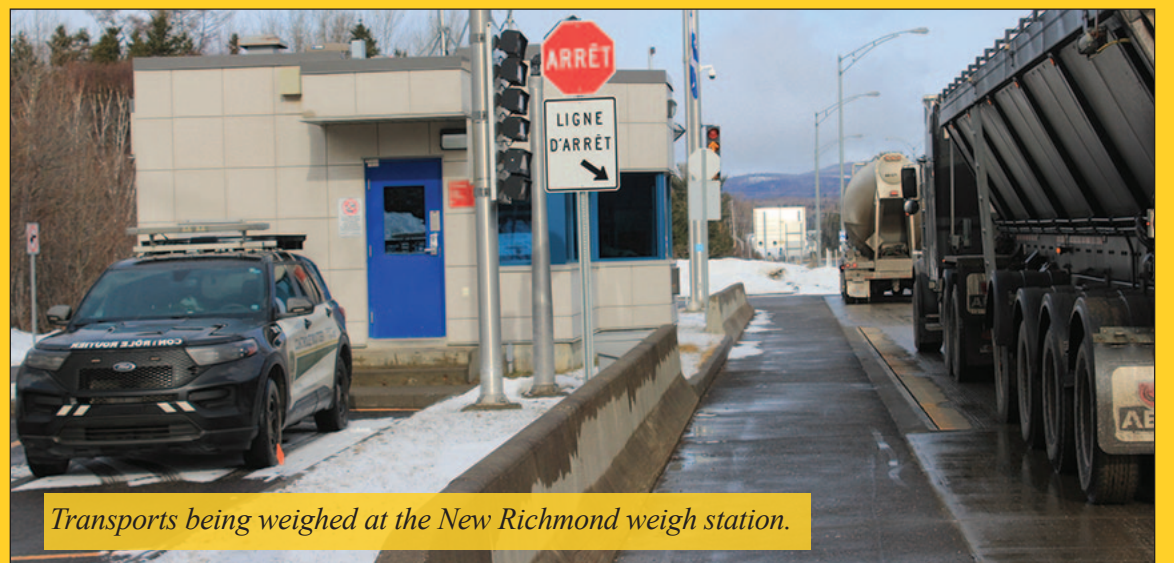
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The heavy vehicle load restriction period is underway

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND: – March 24 marked the beginning of the thaw period in Zones 1 and 2, which covers most of Quebec. During this period authorized loads are limited due to the reduced load-bearing capacity of the road network. In Zone 3, which covers Quebec's northernmost regions, the thaw period started on March 31.

The load restrictions not only apply to the thaw period, but also the period during which the roadway recovers its load-bearing capacity. The load limits imposed during the thaw period are intended to protect road assets for the benefit of all road users and ensure a safe network. The Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility and



Transports being weighed at the New Richmond weigh station.

Photo: G. Gagné

the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec remind various industry stakeholders of the importance of complying with transportation regulations. Failure to comply may result in penalties.

Zone 1 covers southern Quebec, including Gatineau, Montreal, Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières, and Quebec City,

and extends to Rivière-du-Loup. Zone 2 is located immediately north of Zone 1 and includes the La Vérendrye and Laurentides wildlife reserves, as well as Témiscamingue, Saguenay, Lac-Saint-Jean, the North Shore, Rimouski, the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands. Zone 3 is located

north of Zone 2 and includes Abitibi, the Chibougamau-Chapais region, and the Ashuapmushuan Wildlife Reserve. The "En période de dégel" (thaw period) road sign, installed along public roads, indicates the obligation to comply with the load restrictions in effect.

Girard Budget: Good and bad for the Gaspésie, according to the Table of Prefects

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER: - The Girard budget, tabled on March 25, contains good and bad aspects according to the Gaspé Peninsula Table of Prefects.

The greatest concern is the return to the feasibility study for Section 3 of the Gaspésie rail refurbishment project, instead of pursuing the realization of the venture. "What does that mean? At the very least, we're losing a year. We're very concerned by this news," notes Table of Prefects President Mathieu Lapointe.

However, the project for new emergency and intensive care departments at Maria Hospital, which has been requested for several years, appears in the Quebec



Photo: G. Gagné

Mathieu Lapointe.

Infrastructure Plan (PQI).

"This is excellent news. This line in the PQI will allow the CISSS (Integrated Health and Social Services Centre) to move forward and complete a functional and technical plan.

Following that, the project will continue its progress." We will have an assessment of the anticipated costs and a line item with the amounts in the PQI. We are moving forward to carry out this project," notes Mr. Lapointe.

Regarding housing, the committee wanted to see funds allocated to affordable and social housing, and the budget allocates \$500 million over 10 years.

"This is good news. The challenge will be to leverage these funds. We have broad guidelines in the budget, but the details will come with the tabling of the appropriations," he notes.

The committee also notes several investments in the economy.

"This could be interesting for the Gaspé Peninsula, par-

ticularly in the forestry sector and innovation. There are mentions of the Maritime Strategy. Will there be gains for the Gaspé? We don't have that answer at the moment," continues the president.

However, there are also major disappointments. "There is a significant decrease for the PAFIRSPA and sports and recreation infrastructure." There's no money next year for this program. There's also the DÉPART program, which has been reduced. There's \$15 million for the next two years, whereas a few months ago we were told \$30 million per year would be allocated. This is a significant decrease that concerns us," says Mr. Lapointe.

He also notes that the word "fishing" did not appear

in the budget, even though a crisis is hitting this sector with dwindling resources, particularly shrimp, and the impacts of U.S. tariffs.

"There are no specific measures for the fisheries sector. We expected to have something at that level. That said, there are a host of measures worth several million to revive the economic sector. Will our fishing businesses be able to access this funding? That's the question we're asking ourselves," he notes.

He notes that \$192 million has been announced to diversify markets. We'll have to wait a few weeks before we see the full impact of the budget on the Gaspé Peninsula.

"There are several unanswered questions," concludes Mr. Lapointe.

Maria hospital included in the PQI

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Maria hospital has finally been included in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan (PQI), but this "good news" has been overshadowed by the derailment of the rail refurbishment for Section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

The document states that "The Ministry of Health and Social Services will submit to the government for approval, over the next year, applications for studies for new major projects, namely the Drummondville and Maria hospitals, as well as Phase 3 of the program to add spaces in MDAA (Maison des aînés et alternatives)."

"I'm really happy. This is excellent news." This is exactly what we asked for. I appreciate it all the more in the current economic context, considering that four health projects have been added to the PQI. Despite the very great needs everywhere, this means that we have done a good job, and the urgent needs of the Maria hospital have been recognized," says Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Catherine Blouin.

The elected official emphasizes that studies are underway, but there are still steps to be



Photo: N. Sergerie

Bonaventure MNA welcomes Maria hospital's inclusion in the PQI.

taken before it can be reviewed by the ministry. "It's definitely planned that it will be reviewed in 2025-2026 once the CISSS de la Gaspésie portion is completed," adds the MNA, who hesitates to predict when construction of the project will be completed.

The prefect of Bonaventure and mayor of New Richmond is pleased with this step that has finally been taken. "It's a relief. We understand that this is a process that will take a few years, but at least we're on the way. We were expecting it last year, but now we're seeing it this year," notes Éric Dubé.

He hopes the project will be completed fairly quickly. "There are several steps. I understand that the first step,

from what I've learned with other projects I've worked on with the PQI, is the studies to determine what it will take, the feasibility, and determining a cost. We understand that it's not just \$10 million, it will exceed \$100 million. This is good news for Chaleur Bay," says Éric Dubé.

The Eastern Quebec Nurses, Auxiliary and Respiratory Therapists Union is pleased to see the first step complete, but intends to monitor the process closely.

"It's a bit of a saga. There will be a hospital, there will be an emergency room. There will no longer be a hospital, there will no longer be an emergency room. We're not just writing it down, we're writing it down... It's a bit like we're starring in the same movie, as the third link," notes union president Pier-Luc Bujold, referring to what's happening with the third link in the Quebec City region.

Mr. Bujold hopes the timeline will be shorter than the 25 years it took to complete the new emergency department in Gaspé. "Having it put on paper in an official commitment creates hope for the future," he notes.

In the meantime, the union is calling for investments in the current emergency department to ensure the health and safety of patients and staff.

Appointment of Ms. Kathryn Thibeault as Director of the National Historic Site

Gilles Gagné

PASPEBIAC - The Board of Directors has appointed Kathryn Thibeault as Executive Director of the Paspébiac National Historic Site, succeeding Louise Cyr.

Passionate about local culture and heritage, Ms. Thibeault brings a strategic and dynamic vision, as well as solid experience in complex project management. Her leadership and financial management skills will be essential assets in pursuing the Site's conservation and enhancement mission.

"She is a newcomer, having settled in Port Daniel with her spouse. She worked in industrial design in Quebec City, her hometown. She was quickly recognized for her management capacity (in her job interview in Paspébiac)," notes Nicole Grenier, president of the Paspébiac Historical Site.

She is very interested in culture and since moving to the area she has become involved with the Chèvres dansantes in Grande-Rivière. Ms. Thibeault had also already visited the Site and was very impressed.

The Board of Directors is confident that Ms. Thibeault will successfully complete the ongoing projects, including reception infrastructure, building restoration, enhancing the site's appeal, and the process of achieving UNESCO World Heritage status.

At this time the Board also recognizes the exceptional work done by the previous director general, Ms. Cyr, who led major development projects and ensured the Site's sustainability as a Development Officer and then as Director.



Kathryn Thibeault is the new director general of Paspébiac's Historical Site.

Photo: Courtesy of Paspébiac's Historical Site

Municipality of Saint-Alphonse Criticized for Call for Tenders

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Saint-Alphonse has received a reprimand from the Autorité des marchés publics (AMP), which concluded that the municipality failed to comply with the regulatory framework in effect during the awarding process for a public contract for the acquisition of a snow removal truck.

Acting on its own initiative, the AMP noted that the public call for tenders included technical requirements referring to specific brands or models. This violates the Municipal Code of Quebec, which requires municipal bodies to describe their needs in terms of performance or functional requirements.

According to the organization, this approach has the advantage of increasing the pool of potential bidders and giving them more flexibility to pro-

pose innovative solutions to meet needs at the best cost, all of which promotes sound management of public funds.

To be able to exceptionally state descriptive characteristics such as a product's brand or model, municipal bodies must demonstrate that they are unable to do otherwise for reasons of intelligibility and offer bidders the opportunity to propose equivalent products.

During the audits, the municipality explained that it could have defined its needs and requirements without stating brands or models, but that it deemed it preferable to do so to make the public request for tenders more precise and attractive to potential bidders, on the advice of an external consultant responsible for overseeing the contractual process.

For the AMP, however, this justification does not allow it to invoke the exception au-

thorizing it to specify its needs by referring to brands or models.

On the contrary, their removal would maximize the attractiveness of the request for tenders, since these references have the effect of limiting the solutions that can be proposed. The AMP recommends that Saint-Alphonse amend its public tender request to describe its needs in terms of performance or functional requirements.

The municipality must also implement procedures to ensure that it will do so in the future and that, in the event of an exception, it will be able to justify the use of brands or models in compliance with the conditions set out in applicable laws.

These procedures must be communicated to municipal staff involved in contract management, as well as to anyone advising it on this matter.

More than \$50 million for water and sewers in Gascons

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PORT-DANIEL-GASCONS - The construction of the water and sewer system in the Gascons sector of Port-Daniel-Gascons will cost at least \$50.5 million.

Seven firms submitted proposals following the tendering process that ended on March 18. The lowest bid is for \$50,484,000, while the highest is \$63,875,000. The difference between the first and fifth bid is only \$500,000.

"It's not really a surprise. Between \$50 million and \$51 million, four bidders have indicated this price. They are within the range," notes the Mayor of Port-Daniel-Gascons Henri Grenier.

The Quebec government allocated a total budget of \$40 million, including plans and specifications.

"We will analyze the compliance of the lowest bidder's bid. Then, we will send it to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for a comprehensive review. They will inform us whether or not they are increasing their financial assistance. I am not giving up," affirms the mayor.

The municipality cannot contribute more, nor can the



Photo: N. Sergerie

The bill for drinking water will be steep.

users. "If Quebec does not increase the amount, we will not be able to move forward with the project as is because the cost for users would be enormous. It is unthinkable, inconceivable," says Mr. Grenier.

A public health issue prompted the municipality to act, as residents are consuming unsafe water.

"We will make representations. If the government provides the necessary funding to complete the project in its entirety, we will move forward," he said.

However, Mr. Grenier asserts that he has a Plan B.

"Drinking water will be part of Plan B. I can't back down on drinking water. Eighty percent of the population consumes non-potable water. I can't put an X on the project," says the mayor.

For now, the elected official refuses to provide a figure for the overall cost, including plans, specifications and site supervision, if the \$50.5 million bid is accepted by the Quebec government.

Construction was scheduled to begin by early summer at the latest. The mayor hopes for a quick response from the Quebec government to determine the next steps.

Police report

Domestic violence charges are dropped

Charges filed against Chandler councillor Raynald Leblanc, 58, in connection with a domestic violence case were withdrawn at the Percé Courthouse. Mr. Leblanc was initially charged with assault and harassment last year. The case was settled in two minutes at the courthouse before judge Denis Paradis on December 9. Mr. Leblanc told CHNC he felt persecuted by the proceedings filed against him, saying he suffered unfair and cruel treatment that he attributes to political revenge in the context of a separation. Mr. Leblanc is looking to the future and rebuilding his life peacefully, while completing his term. The alleged actions had nothing to do with his position as councillor.

Child pornography offenses

The Chandler Major Crimes Investigation Division, in collaboration with the Bonaventure MRC police force, arrested Étienne Dion of Bonaventure on March 26 in connection with child pornography offenses. The 36-year-old man appeared at the New Carlisle Courthouse the same day to face charges, including production of child pornography. The man was released pending further legal proceedings. He will have to respect a set of conditions in the meantime. Police officers had previously searched the suspect's home, and computer equipment was seized for analysis. "It was part of a planned operation, and the police officers of the Major Crimes Division worked in collaboration with another squad, a team investigating online sexual exploitation of children. From there, we were able to proceed to the arrest of the suspect because of evidence found during the investigation. That evidence will be presented in court by the Criminal and Penal Directorate," says Frédéric Deshaies, spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec. The public is encouraged to report any online sexual exploitation of young people to cyberaide.ca.

December 2023 violent break-in

One of the four perpetrators of a violent break-in that took place in December 2023 in Percé, Tommy Albert Lantin, 26, was back at the Percé Courthouse recently for the representations on his eventual sentence. The criminal and penal prosecutor, as well as the defence attorney presented their respective positions. The suspect, who has no prior criminal record, had previously entered a plea of guilty to charges related to this case and to misdemeanor in another case. The prosecution is requesting a 10-month prison sentence, and Tommy Albert Lantin's attorney is seeking 12 months to be served in the community. His accomplice, Jonathan Racette, 30, of Port-Daniel-Gascons, was sentenced to two years less a day in prison earlier this year. André Roussy, 38, was sentenced to 33 months in prison. As for Michael Bourque, 29, the case is still active. At the centre of this case is an attempted theft of narcotics. The victim was severely beaten.

Fraud over \$5,000

Judge Janick Poirier has reserved judgment on the fate of André Bilodeau, 66, accused of fraud of over \$5,000 involving the Desjardins group over and forgery of documents. The Quebec City native stood trial recently at the New Carlisle courthouse. The individual testified in his defence, and the criminal prosecutor called two witnesses. On August 10, 2021, Bilodeau and an accomplice wrote a cheque for \$23,000 and transferred the amount from Caplan's savings account to a branch in northern Lac-Saint-Jean. Several withdrawals were made before the account was frozen because the cheque had no funds. His alleged accomplice, Christiane Fortin, 74, was sentenced to nine months in prison to be served on weekends, 12 months of community service, and one year of probation. Judge Poirier will deliver her decision on April 25.



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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Quebec budget: past
cheques to combat inflation
haunt government

On March 25, Quebec’s Finance Minister Éric Girard tabled a \$125.45 billion budget characterized by a \$13.6 billion projected deficit, which represents 10.84% of the province’s total expenditures for the financial year that started on April 1.

This deficit is far from reassuring, all the more considering that a chunk of about \$450 million is expected as Quebec’s share of a capital gain tax payment that is supposed to come from Ottawa, a capital gain tax that Mark Carney and Pierre Poilievre, engaged in a federal election, have proposed to abolish.

A budget is a forecast. Minister Girard expects a \$13.6 billion deficit if the trade tariffs imposed by American president Donald Trump are limited to 10%. The deficit will soar to \$15 billion, a precipice, according to the expression used by Minister Girard, if those tariffs reach 25%.

All Finance ministers, no matter where they are, currently deal with a mix of instability and rationality, courtesy of Donald Trump, a sick man whose ignorance of basic economic principles is creating chaos in a wide set of countries, including his own.

Let’s assume that Quebec’s deficit will probably hover around \$14 billion for the coming year. It means that the next five years will be difficult for most Quebecers, considering that current uncertainty warrants a foundation of sand to that budget.

Yet, in economic terms, it is not a disaster, money-wise. A projected deficit of \$13.6 billion represents 2.2% of Quebec’s gross national product. Dozens of industrialized countries would take such a “small” rate with relief, as they are dealing with percentages that are 10% or 12%, sometimes more.

Still in economic terms, a budgetary deficit rate of 10.84% representing 2.2% of the gross national product is not out of control, and it doesn’t generate an immediate crisis. It can however represent a source of acute concern in an unstable context like that triggered by the United States.

An impact on health and education services

Éric Girard limited the health ministry expenses to 3% for the coming year, and projected a paltry 2% hike in 2026-2027. Treasury board Minister Sonia Lebel, a close colleague of Minister Girard, assured that the projection for 2026-2027 would fill the needs of the population.

Through saying that, she contradicted a statement of another colleague, Health Minister Christian Dubé, who clearly affirmed in 2024 that any budget increase of less than 3% for his department forces expenditure compressions.

Another unwritten societal rule suggests that you align your education expense increase percentage at least to that of health, because the two departments are intermingled.

The best way to reduce your health expenses in the medium to long term is to provide the population with a solid education. It notably increases the understanding of prevention measures and a sane way of life. It therefore cuts health expenses.

A quick look at what’s happening in the United States is a testimony to that link between health and education.

The American education system is largely dependent on private enterprises, whose first goal is to make money. The proportion of American people with a high school diploma has been shrinking for decades and the health situation south of the border is now a disaster, largely attributable to a system based on the private sector as well. It won’t come as a surprise that the United States’ health system is driven by profits.

That money factor, whether analyzed from the angle of the poor or the wealthy classes, was a determining factor in the election of Donald Trump in November.

The role of "inflation" cheques

Coming back to the Quebec budget, we can see that the decisions made in an attempt to make up for the impact of inflation by François Legault and Éric Girard during the preparation of the 2021 and the 2022 budgets now have an impact on today’s budgetary situation.

Altogether, the Quebec government handed out \$10.3 billion in cheques to the population, specifically \$7.1 billion in 2021 and \$3.2 billion in 2022. In the latter case, it was announced in the spring

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Arthur Poirier-Roy

Guest
Commentary

A Bus Ride and a Lingering
Question: Decency in a
Time of Law 96

The bus shuddered to a halt near Gesgapegiag, and a woman, her child by her side, stepped aboard. She was hesitant, her eyes darting around the unfamiliar faces, a quiet anxiety radiating from her. We didn’t exchange names; she preferred anonymity, and I respect that. As a journalist, I strive for objectivity, seeking perspectives from experts and locals alike. But this time, I felt compelled to speak from my own experience, to give voice to a reality often overlooked.

The echoes of the Law 96 debate still resonate. We dissected the impact on immigrants, on anglophone Quebecers, but perhaps we failed to fully grasp the burden placed on the lower middle class, those living amongst us in the Gaspésie. The weight of those legislative changes isn’t felt in the abstract debates of the past, but in the harsh realities of the present.

The cost of living escalates, inflation gnaws at our wallets, and layoffs cast long shadows. Employers across the region lament the lack of workers, yet many refuse to hire those who speak English. These individuals, often driven by necessity, find themselves relegated to positions at places like Maxi or

Tim Hortons, where language barriers are less of an impediment. They yearn for meaningful work, for the opportunity to contribute, especially during these trying times. Instead, they face prejudice, harsh words for their linguistic differences.

Language is not a choice, but a circumstance. It is shaped by upbringing, environment, and opportunity. While the complexities of the job market are multifaceted, the issue of healthcare transcends economic debates.

I’ve heard firsthand accounts of healthcare professionals using Law 96 as a shield to deny patients explanations in English. This is not a matter of policy, but of basic human dignity. How can informed consent be given, how can crucial healthcare deci-

sions be made, when communication is obscured by a linguistic wall? To refuse clear instruction in a language a patient understands directly contradicts the fundamental principle of "do no harm." And to my knowledge, every doctor still takes Hypocrates’ vow.

The woman on the bus, like countless others, needs clear, accessible information to navigate the healthcare system. Her child will learn French in school, and will be immersed in the language. But she, struggling to make ends meet in a flinching economy, cannot simply "Duolingo" her way to fluency. Life is not that simple.

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Arthur Poirier-Roy

Guest
Commentary

Posters Before the Bell:
Democracy's Divisive Beauty

BONAVENTURE - Two days before the official call for the Canadian election, the Bloc Québécois posters were already plastered on every electric pole across the Gaspésie. It was a stark reminder of how politics, for many, boils down to a face, a slogan, a party line, or even a family tradition. But reality is far more nuanced, and democracy demands more than simple allegiance.

This pre-election display brought to mind the 2019 federal election night. I was genuinely sur-

prised by the Bloc's strong showing in Quebec. I had expected a sea of red or orange, yet it was blue that dominated. I smiled, not out of support for the Bloc – but because the results revealed a fundamental truth about Canada: we are a nation of distinct voices.

I fundamentally disagree with much of the Bloc's platform, even today. However, as a journalist, I strive for objectivity. My role is to inform, not to persuade. That night, I smiled because I realized the beauty of our divided democracy.

Our southern neighbours grapple with a two-party system, where a majority win grants unchecked power. Here, with four parties holding significant representation, compromise and negotiation are essential. No single party can dictate policy without securing the support of others. The opposition, if united, can effectively block legislation. Democracy thrives on dialogue, on the acknowledgement of diverse perspectives. When Alberta votes predominantly for one party, Quebec

for another, and Ontario for yet another, it signifies that our system necessitates collaboration.

In a previous article, I highlighted the struggles of anglophones navigating Quebec's Law 96. Regardless of one's stance on the law itself, the issue lies in its creation by a majority government. Such a government can disregard opposition voices, rendering the National Assembly's processes largely symbolic. The outcome is predetermined.

While the ideal scenario might involve independent representatives and non-partisan voting, that's not the reality we inhabit.

Over the coming weeks SPEC will publish articles guiding you through the voting process, along with a series of articles presenting each party's platform objectively. We will outline their stated policies, their environmental stances, the objective feasibility of their projects, and their alignment with the interests of anglophones in the Gaspésie. My goal is to facilitate informed decision-making, free from partisan bias.

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budget and handed out to the population weeks before the electoral campaign.

We all remember the 5% inflation rate of 2021, largely triggered by all the stimulus money thrown in the economy in 2020 by the governments in an attempt to counter the pandemic's slowdown. The inflation rate was also fuelled by a rupture in the supply chain of goods and services, another consequence of the COVID-19 crisis.

Most economists denounced the Quebec government cheques because they mainly generated further inflation. Most people spent those \$275, \$400, \$500 and \$600 payments or credits right away instead of keeping them for harder days.

Emphasis was not put on helping economically vulnerable people deal with inflation. Households earning more than \$100,000 a year received payments, and an inquiry made by a Montreal-based economic columnist, Mario Girard, demonstrated for example that 7,015 people earning more than \$200,000 a year received cheques, in all legality.

An inspired set of measures destined to support

poor households would have cost way less than \$10.3 billion and would have been more beneficial to the society.

A quick look back at the Quebec government projections made in 2022 reveals that Éric Girard and his team were expecting deficits of \$3.75 billion in 2024-2025 and \$3 billion in 2025-2026. We are far from the count, given that last year's projected deficit reached \$11 billion!

This year's projected hole of \$13.6 billion represents three-and-a-half times the assessment attempt of 2022. Yes, economy is not an exact science, as human beings are unpredictable.

What does it say about the next 18 months, considering that there will be an election in Quebec in October 2026?

It says that François Legault and his supporting cast will have a very hard time repeating the electoral gifts of 2022 again next year. Unless a sudden economic surge takes place, which is unlikely in the short term, they will likely settle for something close to austerity, if they are to act like responsible managers.

Accountability and responsible decisions are

not staple values that the Coalition avenir Québec government has adopted since the eruption of the COVID crisis in 2020. As of now, the 2026 re-election of that government, therefore, seems unlikely.

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We, the people, elected this government, and the law exists. But within every society, there must be room for decency, for nuance. Rules, however well-intentioned, cannot supersede compassion. Let us speak to one another in a language we both comprehend. And if we cannot, let us find someone who can bridge the gap.

This is not a call to disregard the law, but a plea for humanity, and a reasonable amount of civic disobedience. It is a reminder that behind every policy, behind every statistic, are human beings, struggling, striving, and deserving of respect. Let us remember that true integration is built on understanding, not exclusion. And let us, in the Gaspésie, lead by example.

LIFE Association hold Annual General Meeting

SHIRLEY DUNCAN
LIFE ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

NEW CARLISLE - L.I.F.E Association (Living Is For Everyone) held its 2024 Annual General Meeting at The Anchor in New Carlisle. During the meeting, the financial reports for the year, audited by Louis Sexton, financial advisors, were accepted.

The Social Integration

Class for adults with challenges in the Bay of Chaleur area was the main recipient of financial assistance for its many activities.

Teacher Vicky Marsh explained the many activities for the group including shopping, bowling in New Richmond, sports at a local gym and outdoors and visits to local attractions, all of which promote social skills. Cooking meals

with the help of Family Ties and CASA were also a favourite activity, along with enjoying treats from Tim Horton's.

L.I.F.E. Association president, Shirley Duncan explained that while the Centre de Readaptation (CR) manages the VIMY PLACE residence, L.I.F.E. owns the building and is responsible for all major maintenance costs, which re-

main significant. Roof repairs were approved for this year, along with some window replacements.

The Board of Directors was reinstated for 2025 as follows: Shirley Duncan (President), Richard Flowers (Vice President and treasurer), Colleen Huntington (Secretary), Joan Manning (Bookkeeper); Vicky Marsh (Social Integration Teacher) Alistair Campbell

(Parent Rep). A Town Council Rep has yet to be chosen. A revised Constitution was also adopted.

The President expressed her gratitude to the The Anchor staff, and residence manager Peggy Dalgleish, and staff, along with those who provided financial support. She also announced that a fundraising campaign would be undertaken again this year.

The federal electoral map will be appealed

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER - Lawyer and Bloc Québécois candidate in the new riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, Alexis Deschênes, is appealing the Federal Court's decision to dismiss the application for judicial review of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Quebec's decision, which abolished the riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia on April 24, 2024.

"I think it is important to submit the case to the Federal Court of Appeal to review the Federal Court's decision, and we will try to convince the Federal Court of Appeal that the judgment of the trial court's decision contains significant errors that require that our appeal be accepted and that the redistribution be annulled," says Mr. Deschênes.

On February 21, Federal Court Justice Sébastien Grammond wrote in his 32-page decision that "The reasons given by the Commission to justify the abolition of the riding of Avi-

gnon-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 its fundamental component. The Commission was aware of the issues related to the size of ridings in rural or remote regions, but it was reasonable to conclude that these issues no longer justified the existence of a riding whose population was nearly 36% lower than the average population of Quebec ridings."

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." He accepted some of the suggestions made and amended the boundary between the proposed ridings of Rimouski-La Matapédia and Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj to respect the boundaries of the MRCs. However, he maintained the recommendation to eliminate the riding 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 the applicants allege."

Mr. Deschênes has not disclosed his arguments for the appeal at this time out of respect for the judicial process. "I don't want to go into the details of the arguments we will submit. I can, however, return to our main argument: in the law, there is a criterion that states that we must be careful to ensure that the ridings created are not too large." However, the result of the redistricting is currently a riding of 30,000 square kilometres. That's as big as Belgium. I cannot accept the idea that this redistricting is reasonable. We will try to convince the Court of Appeal," explains Mr. Deschênes.

The lawyer agrees that the battle will not be easy, but maintains that it must be fought to maintain the region's political clout.

"It's a battle that will go beyond this appeal anyway. It's a battle that we must always fight as residents of the Gaspésie, that our children will have to fight, and our grandchildren too," notes the prosecutor, who will be acting

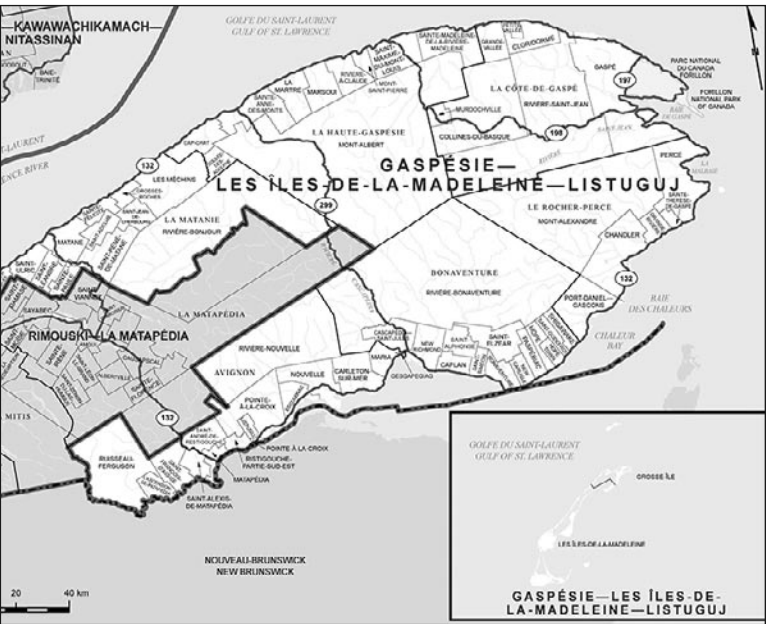


Photo: Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Quebec

The new federal electoral map is being appealed.

alone, although he worked on the case in conjunction with Droits collectifs Québec at the beginning.

The riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia could be reborn if the Court of Appeal overturns the Federal Court's decision. "It's possible. If the Federal Court invalidated the redistribution, it would likely ask the commission to return to its work and grant a deadline to do so. If we can remove ridings in the Gaspé, I don't see why we wouldn't be able to add more.

When the decision was made in February, the Bloc Québécois candidate in the next election said he was ready to bring this debate to Parliament if elected.

The adopted map, presented in the summer of 2022, sparked an outcry from the entire political class in the Gaspé Peninsula.

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

Regional museums are suffocating

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Museums in remote regions, including the Musée de la Gaspésie, are denouncing the lack of additional funding for them in the provincial budget announced on March 25.

The group requested a meager \$2.5 million to offset the underfunding, arguing that their operating costs exceed those of urban, intermediate, and peripheral regions by 60% due to distances and logistical constraints.

As a result, they face temporary closures, reduced opening hours, or waivers of permanent and temporary exhibition renewals.

"It's unfortunate. We worked with the five museums in Eastern Quebec to defend a solid, cost proposal that would have benefited some forty museums in remote regions. "We're very disappointed," explains Martin Roussy, Director General of the Musée de la Gaspésie.



Photo: Musée de la Gaspésie

The Musée de la Gaspésie needs funding to fulfill its mission.

The museums note that minister of Culture Mathieu Lacombehas nevertheless done an extraordinary job funding regional organizations.

"But clearly, the battle for museums hasn't been won. We wonder why?" continues Mr. Roussy, noting that a national museum is about to be created, and it's tempting to think that this museum could be funded at the expense of those in remote regions.

The Quebec government is allocating an additional \$200 million for the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.

"We were asking for an investment of \$2.5 million for 43 museums in remote regions. If we apply the rule of three, it's not a big ask. It would have helped us keep our heads above water," he says.

No more miracles are possible. "We've accumulated

deficits in recent years and we've used up the little piggy bank we had for other things. We can't go any further. We're asking for a revision of the Programme Aide au fonctionnement pour les institutions muséales (PAFIM) to incorporate the idea put on the table of adjusting funding for remote institutions. Since nothing has been done, emergency support will have to be provided," calculates the director, hoping to secure a

small portion of the \$2 billion budget set aside for contingencies.

For the Musée de la Gaspésie, the Gaspésienne No. 20 protection project could not be carried out in the current context. "Even if it's an infrastructure budget that isn't directly linked to the museum's operating budget, when we're in survival mode, we don't even have the means to tackle this problem," says the director.

Other possible sources of revenue would include increased admissions or funding through donations, though the current economic climate makes this challenging. "Honestly, we're going to focus on our survival much more than on projects that deserve our attention," says the director.

The organizations advocating for this funding include the Gaspésie Museum, Musée régional de Rimouski, Musée du Bas-Saint-Laurent, Musée de la Mer and Musée de la Côte-Nord.

Lobster sector dissatisfied with current situation

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - The Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du Sud de la Gaspésie says it is fed up with Ottawa not taking the time to listen to independent fishermen.

In a press briefing on March 26 in Chandler, the group stated that since 2018, the Government of Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada have consistently failed to support coastal communities that rely on independent fishermen.

"Although government authorities say that fishermen are the eyes and ears for sustainable fisheries management, we have been excluded since 2021 from the co-management and co-governance committees established between the federal government and First Nations," says the group's director, O'Neil Cloutier. He points out that since 2007, scientists and the fishermen group have been calling for improved knowledge of stocks for sustainable fishing.

Individual lobster fishermen have collectively invested tens of millions of dollars since 2006 to develop a sustainable fishery, ensure resource stability for all, and fight to maintain the benefits of fishing in our communities.

"Yet, under the guise of providing economic support to our coastal communities and acquiring knowledge about lobster, the former federal Minister of Fisheries (Diane Lebouthillier) is playing the apprentice witch by issuing a

large number of exploratory permits. In doing so, she is authorizing a 112% increase in lobster harvests in commercial zones, particularly between Cap-des-Rosiers and Mont-Louis, in a random manner, without taking into account the real economic impacts on fishermen already in difficulty and without knowing whether the resource can withstand such pressure," says Mr. Cloutier.

"More than \$1 billion has been given to First Nations in Atlantic Canada, including \$259 million less than two months ago to support reconciliation in fisheries and the implementation of undefined fishing rights. The survival of individual commercial fishermen is now at stake. What will we do when the individual in-shore fishery ceases to exist? Enough is enough," says Mr. Cloutier.

The group has already launched a court challenge, but Mr. Cloutier declined to say more in order to not hinder the process.

"We're asking Ottawa for a percentage regarding the transfer to Indigenous peoples. It's been done for crab, it's been done for shrimp. What percentage of license transfers do Indigenous people want? We're asking to be part of the co-management discussions with Indigenous peoples and the department," demanded Mr. Cloutier.

The director feels he was sacrificed at the Reconciliation Hall. "Absolutely. That's the case. Unfortunately, this is being very hypocritical because

we already know that the plan proposed in Zone 19 on June 24 was already botched," he notes, arguing that Listuguj requested access to lobster due to the scarcity of shrimp.

Mr. Cloutier points out that his organization proposed to the department four or five years ago that experimental fishing permits be issued to see if there was an abundance, then transform them into exploratory fishing, and after 10 years, issue fishing permits.

"They did this in the new exploratory zone five years ago, and the Wolastoquiyik fishermen and a white fisherman did it scientifically to collect data, and in 2024, these permits were transferred to exploratory permits." When we were consulted, they said we couldn't prevent a region from developing, but permits must be issued strictly for the exploratory zone and not in the adjacent commercial zone. Permits should be issued gradually so that fishermen don't suffer from an overabundance of the resource and a drop in prices, and they said no," says Mr. Cloutier.

"We're pitting fishermen who have emptied their pockets against fishermen who won't pay for their licenses. The first consequence is that banks that provided loans called back and deemed that the risk had changed within a few months. While the fisherman was on his own after paying for an excessively expensive license, we were pitting a fisherman who hadn't paid for his license against him.



Photo: N. Sergerie

This is the risk we explained to DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) and the minister, and she didn't consider it," says Mr. Cloutier.

In effect, he maintains, this is a disguised commercial fishery for Indigenous people.

"We're calling for phase 2 and phase 3 to be cancelled, to see if we can't achieve better integration for these fishermen, taking into account the fact that non-Native fishermen have conceded 100 traps per license to accommodate a larger number of fishermen. But it's random and dangerous for these fishermen without being able to make a profit," continues the group's director.

"We're not saying we don't want to help them. We're saying the Minister of Fisheries has put us in a strange situation by forcing them to invest without knowing exactly whether or not there is lobster where they will have to fish. Exploratory fishermen, let's not put them in the commercial zone, it's useless, we know what's there.

Let's not put fishermen in danger. If the Minister of Fisheries had wanted to help them, for example the shrimp fishermen, why did she only give them 10% of the redfish quota?" says the director, pointing to former DFO Minister and Member of Parliament for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Diane Lebouthillier.

According to the group, politics has taken precedence over science. "She used her discretionary power to implement her plan, which was a disguised plan to allow Indigenous bands greater access, and in the process, she should have thought carefully about helping fishermen who were in trouble. It was done wrong from the start. We created hope, but we didn't help the shrimp fishermen. We even supported them because we thought it was important that before issuing permits, there be some rationalization of the number of individuals to allow others to live better. That wasn't done. They refused to do it," he says.

CSN-affiliated childcare centres add strike days

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The approximately 300 educators at CSN-affiliated childcare centre in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands are giving clear support to their negotiating committee, as a majority of them, gathered on March 19, in the Magdalen Islands and Paspébiac, have almost unanimously adopted a new bank of strike days.

A new strike sequence has already been announced for April 2-4, and a national demonstration is planned in Quebec City for April 3. "At a rate approaching 100%, the workers have decided to continue their pressure tactics

given the lack of progress made in last weekend's (March 22-23) bargaining blitz. The workers are starting to run out of patience," said Serge Saint-Pierre, President of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Central Council.

For the time being, an unlimited general strike is out of the question.

"We'll give it another chance. We're being kind. We don't want to deprive the population of early childhood centre services. But if the government doesn't move, unfortunately, it will eventually have to be considered," says Mr. Saint-Pierre.

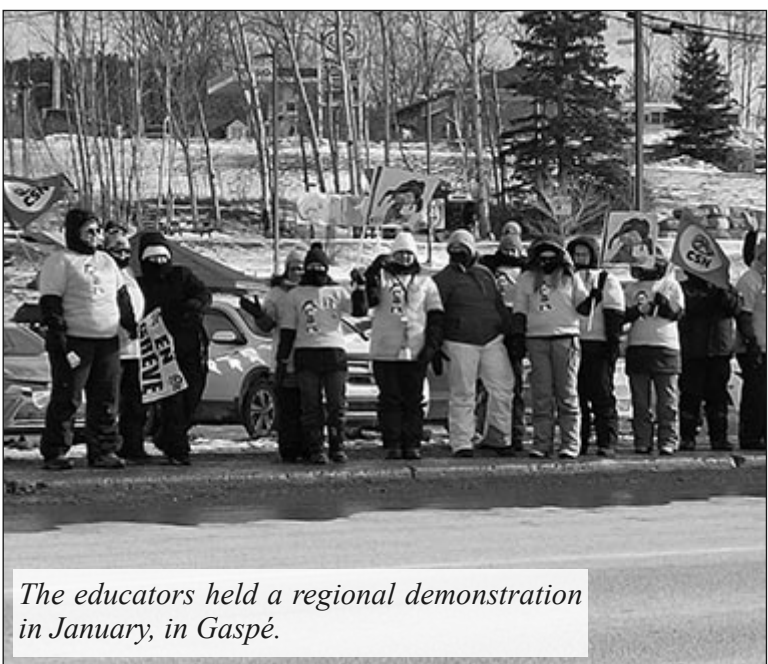
Negotiations are continu-

ing, and the president hopes more days will be added. "We're not going on strike with a light heart," he added.

The workers are demanding, in particular, a lighter workload; better compensation to ensure attraction and retention; regional disparity bonuses for employees in certain remote regions; and measures to improve the quality of childcare services, including clearly defined and respected ratios between the number of educators and children, as well as better support for children with special needs.

According to the CSN, the average salary for a childcare worker is \$29 per hour.

Educators in the region



The educators held a regional demonstration in January, in Gaspé.

Photo: N. Sergerie

had already voted for strong strike mandates last October and November.

Since January, they have held five days of strike action.

Setback for Port-Daniel-Gaspé railway refurbishment

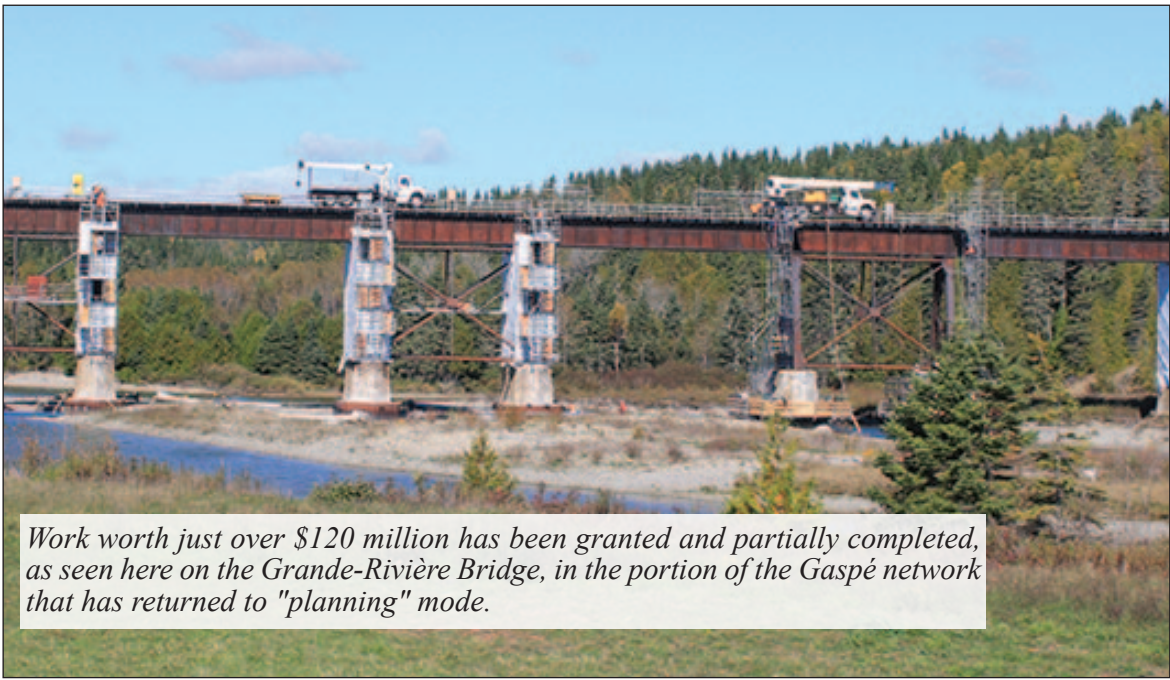
GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The Quebec government has postponed the refurbishment of the railway between Port-Daniel and Gaspé, reducing it to "planning" rather than "implementation," the status it held before the March 25 budget. Politicians and citizens in the Gaspé Peninsula are irritated and concerned about the change in status.

The Quebec government has repeatedly committed to completing the rehabilitation of the 325-kilometre Matapédia-Gaspé railway section. The project was announced on May 5, 2017, and has been confirmed numerous times, including in June 2023 by Transport Minister Geneviève Guilbault, and again the following November by Premier François Legault.

Éric Dubé, mayor of New Richmond and president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, was unpleasantly surprised to learn of the delay in the refurbishment project when he was informed on the evening of March 25 that he would receive a call from a representative of Transports Québec, the owner of the railway since 2015.

"We certainly didn't see it coming, that the remaining work on section 3 (Port-Daniel-Gaspé) is back in the planning stages. I don't know the consequences, but it's reasonable to assume that it will result in additional investments and a delay. Does this jeopardize the project? I can't answer. We're expecting a meeting with the people from Transports-Québec shortly," said Éric Dubé.



Photos: G. Gagné

The Matapédia-Gaspé railway rehabilitation project has a budget of \$872 million since June 2023. Of this total, \$517 million was earmarked for the Port-Daniel-Gaspé route, a 127-kilometre stretch characterized by rugged terrain and several bridges.

To date, just over \$120 million in contracts have been awarded for this section. Some rehabilitation work on the railway itself has been completed since 2020, but several bridges remain to be repaired.

Éric Dubé is aware that the \$872 million sum must be increased in light of cancelled calls for tenders in recent months because they were too high.

"The last time we looked at the tender results, there was a shortfall of \$150 million. We're aware that a lot of money would be lost if we accepted these calls for tenders. The government wants to break them up to see if savings could be made, but any delay risks increasing the bill. We were expecting the calls for tenders to be issued in the

spring. We're falling back into uncertainty, a buzzword these days. We're falling back into planning reassessment. That's all I know. There are no clear guidelines. Does that put the project (between Port-Daniel and Gaspé) in jeopardy? I don't know," adds Éric Dubé.

Ten years ago, a study estimated the total cost of upgrading the Gaspé railway at \$122 million, but the Quebec government's delayed decision to proceed with this upgrade, the escalating costs during the pandemic, and numerous postponements in the publication of calls for tenders since 2020 have contributed to the ballooning bill.

Despite nearly eight years having passed since the announcement of the refurbishment of the entire Gaspé railway network on May 5, 2017, not a single additional kilometre of track has been made available to the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), a municipally-controlled entity created in two waves, in 1996 and 2007, to save the region's network from abandonment. The railway is currently operational between Matapédia and New Richmond, a distance of 112 kilometres.

During the summer, the railway will reopen to the Port-Daniel cement plant, a further 86 kilometres. Cement is already among the commodities transported by the SCFG, but from New Richmond, and after a costly truck-to-railcar transshipment between the two points.

No money for the Quebec Infrastructure Program

A look at the 2025-2035 Quebec Infrastructure Program reveals that the "planning" referred to in the

government's budget documents does not allocate any new money to the Gaspé railway in terms of "implementation" for the budget year beginning April 1.

A sum of \$259.7 million appeared in the same document a year ago.

A regional development consultant and former Minister of Regional Development, Gaétan Lelièvre, from Gaspé, is more concerned than ever about the delays in completing the railway refurbishment project, a project to which he has devoted considerable time as a volunteer.

"The railway refurbishment project has been put on hold. There's no new funding. It's a step backward! It means the planning hasn't been finalized and the government is no longer committed to carrying out work. What will come of the planning? This is the first time in years that we haven't had any money for new work. Once a project is on hold, is it possible that the conclusions regarding the complete rehabilitation of the network will change?" The government had initially set the (completion) timeline for 2026. We're a long way from the cut-off date. If we want to finish by 2028, the new deadline, we have work to do. When a project is put on hold in the government, it's worrisome," laments Mr. Lelièvre.

Additional concerns for the passenger train

Anthony Bernard Prince, of Port-Daniel, who has been involved in the Coalition of Gaspésiens for the Return of VIA Rail's Passenger Train for 10 years and has been an observer of the railway scene for 15 years, is very disappointed with this turn of events.

"I'm disappointed but not surprised. When the government announced another postponement of the delivery of a functional railway to Port-Daniel and Gaspé, it was supposed to issue revised calls for tenders before the spring, and to break them up. Since they weren't published until spring, I thought we'd lose the 2025 construction season. That's certain now," Mr. Prince added.

"However, I don't see them (the government) abandoning the Port-Daniel-Gaspé refurbishment. There's already significant work done, and there's great potential for LM Wind Power (a wind turbine blade manufacturer) in Gaspé. Furthermore, if the Murdochville mine reopening project succeeds, there will be a great need for rail transportation from Gaspé," Mr. Prince continued.

"What concerns me most is the return of passenger trains. VIA Rail's goal is to return to the Gaspé only when the railway is operational all the way to Gaspé. If we can offer VIA a guaranteed return date to Gaspé, it could encourage its management to return in stages, something we've been asking the Coalition for for years. In the absence of a return date to Gaspé, VIA Rail people may think that the project will be cancelled, and use that as an excuse not to return," he fears.

Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté laments that the Gaspé region risks fighting again for infrastructure from which it should already be reaping the full benefits.

"On the one hand, we need to get all the information from the Ministry of Transport, specifically the Project Monitoring Office. From what we're seeing, we've fallen back into 'planning' and feasibility studies. It's a bitter disappointment. If that's true, we're back in the fight. This infrastructure is owed to us. The government has twice committed to delivering it to us in 2023, and that delivery has already been delayed several times," says Mr. Côté.

VIA Rail's passenger train service has been suspended in the Gaspé region since December 2011 between New Carlisle and Gaspé, and since the summer of 2013 between Matapédia and New Carlisle, due to the state of the infrastructure.



Éric Dubé intends to clarify the Quebec government plans for the Gaspé railway as soon as possible.

Kathleen Paquet chosen as Volunteer of the Year

CYNTHIA DOW

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: - When Cascapedia - Saint-Jules held a volunteer recognition event in early February, Kathleen Paquet got quite a surprise! “You’ve got to be kidding,” she said as she realized that the person the Mayor was talking about for Volunteer of the Year was none other than herself.

“I’m very honoured and pleased, but you know, volunteering is in my DNA,” she told SPEC. “My mother was often in charge of all kinds of campaigns, from the Red Cross to the WI (Women’s Institute), to the church, and she would send us out on weekends to collect funds.”

Kathleen received her award for over 50 years of service to the Grand Cascapedia Branch of the Women’s



Photo: Miranda Willett

On the left, Cascapedia - Saint-Jules Mayor Ashley Milligan hands Volunteer of the Year award to Kathleen Paquet on the right.

Institute, an organization where she has served as President, Vice-President, County President, and Convenor. “Now we are the last Branch standing in the county,” she

noted with some nostalgia.

In addition to her work with the Women’s Institute, Kathleen volunteers for many other events, such as helping with the turkey dinners at the Fall Fest and supporting activities undertaken by the United Church.

She is well known with local readers for running the town’s Book Room, where people can borrow books of all kinds. “I took this over from Helen MacWhirter Campbell about a dozen years ago,” she explained. This task suits her well, as one of Kathleen’s own hobbies is reading. “I read every day, at least an hour, and I like to read on a variety of subjects.”

Kathleen was just a few weeks short of having 33 years of service under her belt when the liner board mill in New Richmond closed in 2005. Afterwards, she worked on a project at the Cascapedia River Museum, spent a few winters out West, did the night shifts at Richmond Manor, and then spent 15 or 16 years working at Middle Camp with her sister, Alice Jane.

The volunteer event was organized by Leisure Services Coordinator Miranda Willett, who explained to SPEC that the volunteer banquet was held on February 1. The town provided a supper, and Dave Felker from CASA was on hand to discuss the importance of community involvement and the impact a volunteer can have. Each President from a local organization presented an award of appreciation to one of their volunteers, with the town choosing the Volunteer of the Year.

PineCrest Farm wins award for region’s best milk

CYNTHIA DOW

SHIGAWAKE: - “Dad and I were so proud that PineCrest won the first place milk quality award for the Gaspésie-Les Îles,” says co-owner of PineCrest farms, Jennifer Hayes.

“Dad (Garry Hayes, PineCrest co-owner) has always been so conscientious of taking pride in what we do, and practices in good management that he instilled decades ago still hold true today.”

Ms. Hayes went on to say, “A huge thank you to our herdsman, Rodney Benwell, who is top notch in milking those girls everyday, and taking pride and care in getting the job done right.”

The LaitXcellent awards for best quality milk have been handed out in each region by the Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA) since 1987 to recognize the farms which

meet the highest quality standards. At the UPA annual meeting held in early March, Ferme Isidore Charest et Files won the silver medal, and Ferme Benoît Soucy won the bronze for 2024.

“Canadian dairy farmers are committed to producing quality dairy products, and so it’s a great source of pride to be recognized for producing top quality milk,” Ms. Hayes explained. “Most consumers probably don’t realize that each and every milk pickup across the country is sampled every time, providing producers with the data we need to keep our quality production on track. That commitment provides our consumers the reassurance that our Canadian dairy products meet the quality standards they expect and deserve.”

In addition to running the family farm, Ms. Hayes also serves as the Chair of the Canadian Dairy Commission.



Photo: Courtesy of the UPA

Photo: From the left, UPA regional president Normand Barriault presents the gold award to Jennifer Hayes and her father Garry Hayes of PineCrest Farm in Shigawake.

Silent impact of recurring COVID infections

Cynthia Dow

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: - Five years since the COVID pandemic stopped the world in its tracks, the virus is still with us, and continues to make people sick. As many as 1 in 5 Canadians have experienced symptoms of long COVID. At press time, Maria Hospital was closed to visitors due to another outbreak. CBC’s flagship science program, Quirks and Quarks, ran an interview on Saturday, March 15, indicating that scientists are finding that each infection can lead to long term cellular and organ damage. “David Putrino, who’s been studying COVID’s long term effects at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, says even mild or asymptomatic COVID infections can lead to a wide range of silent long term health impacts — compromising our immune, vascular, circulatory, renal, metabolic, gastrointestinal systems and even cognitive function,” says a CBC release. For more information, listen to the podcast from Quirks and Quarks at <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-51-quirks-and-quarks/clip/16134088-beyond-long-covid-reinfections-causing-silent-long>

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COVID-19 hit the Gaspé Peninsula on March 21, 2020

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - COVID-19 entered the Gaspé Peninsula five years ago, on March 21, 2020.

The virus has since claimed 202 lives in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, according to data from the Institut national de la santé publique du Québec as of March 26, 2025.

A teacher from Paspébiac was the first to test positive for the new virus at the time. The Regional Public Health Department declared her recovered five days later.

The first cases recorded in the region were imported from people arriving from a trip and appeared to be associated with the school break. The region's distance from major cities was a slight advantage.

"Being in a remote region is an advantage in this situation. With each wave of the virus, it arrived a few days late, which allowed us to prepare," notes Dr. Yv Bonnier Viger, who was the regional director of public health at the time of the pandemic.

At the time, the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre had to reorganize its care units to make beds available for people who would catch the virus.

"We had time to warn people and do more prevention and be careful because there were

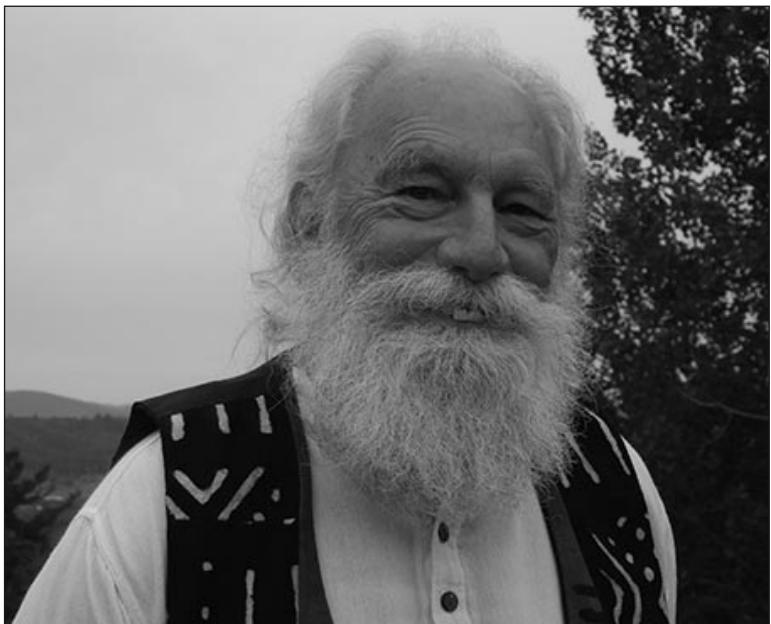


Photo: N. Sergerie

Former Regional Director of Public Health, Dr. Yv Bonnier Viger.

waves in other regions that were going to affect us. That helped in recent years," recalls Dr. Bonnier Viger, who was the director at the time. The specialist is referring to the H1N1 flu crisis that hit Canada in 2009, which was not as severe.

Lessons had been learned at that time. "And the lessons we learned in 2009 were almost forgotten. Our pandemic response plans, or disaster plans in general, need to be put into practice. We may have them, but if we don't take the time to practice them, they become useless because we have to reinvent ourselves in the heat of the moment," the doctor analyzes.

Today, the plans have been revised, and they still need to be put into practice. "We need to learn from our experiences, so yes, we're a little better equipped than we were," says Dr. Bonnier Viger.

We now need to convince provincial administrators that each region needs to be treated independently rather than applying wall-to-wall measures, as we saw during the pandemic.

"This is a learning process that hasn't yet been fully understood by national authorities, even though Quebec is very different. It's essential that we have the flexibility to better align and adapt measures," the specialist maintains.

The lockdown measures may have helped. "It helped us. Was it too harsh? I think at times, yes," says the specialist.

Initially, no one could have predicted that the elderly or those living in residential homes would be more affected than those living in houses or in environments with large spaces.

"We need to be sensitive enough to adjust the measures and agree on exceptions from time to time. This is something we still need to work on because it's not always easy to send a general message to the population while also wanting to be nuanced enough to avoid harming those who are a little more vulnerable," says the doctor.

The living environments of seniors, hard hit by the pandemic, are better protected, but decisions still need to be made at this level. "We weren't sufficiently aware of the danger of concentrating vulnerable people in one place," he admits.

The vaccines have sparked quite a debate, particularly among specific segments of the population. "People who claim that the vaccine has caused more problems than benefits should be able to produce very serious studies, which unfortunately isn't the case at the mo-

ment. Vaccines have helped a lot. What the political authorities haven't understood is that vaccines don't protect against the virus, but rather against the complications of infection. There have been all sorts of questionable measures, such as vaccine passports, because even when vaccinated, people could transmit the virus. But they have been very effective in preventing many deaths," explains Dr. Bonnier Viger.

A booster shot will be necessary, just like the seasonal flu booster shot and "vaccines are adjusted year after year," says the doctor.

Public health had been weakened by the cuts implemented by the Barrette reform to the healthcare network.

The crisis has reminded us of the usefulness of the network. "This led to investments during the pandemic that weren't all maintained. We've regained almost the same response capacity as before Gaétan Barrette's cuts. We need more. There's just been some catching up, but there haven't been more resources to develop prevention. It's a message that remains to be understood at the national level: investing in prevention remains the best solution," demands the former director of public health.

WATER:

▶ *Cont'd from cover*

making the New Carlisle water undrinkable, its frequent brown, pink or yellow taint was unappealing, and caused stains on clothes after washing.

"We get calls for people whose water is clean when they start a laundry load, but as it goes, the clothes come out of the machine with brown stains," underlines New Carlisle director general Denise Dallain.

"I have people who don't get water when they turn a tap on," David Thibault also mentions.

Paspébiac mayor Marc Loisel also praises the work of the New Carlisle municipal administration over the last years.

"Municipal infrastructures are becoming more and more costly. When we get such collaboration, it allows us to be more efficient and save money," states Mr. Loisel.

Paspébiac and New Carlisle will share future oper-

ating costs based on the volume of drinking water consumed. Thus, both towns will benefit economically from pooling their infrastructure.

Future payments for upgrades and all expenses associated with drinking water supply will be split with the municipality of New Carlisle, pro rata to consumption flows. Moreover, fire protection and residual pressure in the Paspébiac West sector will be greatly improved.

"This will come from the water that will circulate in both directions, once the new system is up and running," points out David Thibault, who also heads the Bonaventure MRC firefighting department.

The drinkable water systems of New Carlisle and Paspébiac will not require pipe installation since they are already connected and only separated by a valve.

A drinkable water treatment station for New Carlisle would have amounted to \$18 million, an exorbitant bill for a municipality of that size.

New Carlisle has experienced problems with iron and manganese contents in its drinkable water since going from a surface water source to an underground one in 2003. This switch was imposed by a law adopted by the Quebec government in 1998.

Delivery targeted for the summer of 2026

David Thibault intends to put pressure on governmental authorities in order to secure the funding for the joint system project as soon as possible in 2025, with a goal of starting construction in New Carlisle construction before the end of the year and securing the operational go-ahead in the summer of 2026.

"I don't see any reason that would make the government change its mind on the project. The government has already paid for the studies," he stresses.

The sewerage of New Carlisle has been treated by the Paspébiac system for 35 years.

Launch of the "Royal Rifle" Commemorative Salmon Fly

Honouring Service, Preserving History

Press Release

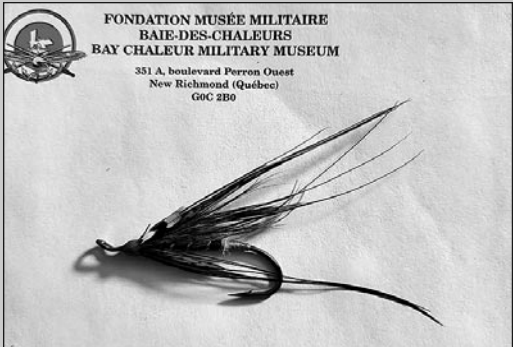
The Baie-des-Chaleurs Military Museum proudly presents the launch of the Royal Rifle, a limited-edition commemorative salmon fly created to honour the brave men from our region who served with the Royal Rifles of Canada, particularly those who fought in the Battle of Hong Kong during World War II.

Designed and handcrafted by renowned fly-tier Larry Duthie of Cascapedia St-Jules, the Royal Rifle salmon fly embodies both the resilience of soldiers and the artistry of traditional fly-tying.

To mark this special occasion, a numbered collector's edition of just 50 flies, will be released, each available for \$100.00. This exclusive fly is a meaningful collector's piece for anglers, history enthusiasts, and those dedicated to preserving our military heritage. All proceeds from the sale will directly support the Baie-des-Chaleurs Military Museum, ensuring that the sacrifices and stories of our veterans continue to be honoured for generations to come. The collector's edition is available online at www.mmbdc.ca

Anglers can purchase flies for use on our region's rivers at Mal-tan's in Gesgapegiag and at the Cascapedia River Society's office in Cascapedia St-Jules throughout the 2025 salmon fishing season.

Join us in celebrating history, honouring our heroes, and supporting a worthy cause.



Gaspésie's Forests: Regulations, Industry, and the Quest for Balance

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

ST-ELZEAR: - Gaspésie's forests are a precious resource, and their management is a complex balancing act between environmental protection, economic needs, and the realities of a working industry. Government regulations play a significant role in ensuring the long-term health of these forests, but these regulations also have implications for the timber industry, creating a dynamic tension between conservation and utilization.

One of the government's primary goals is to protect forest ecosystems and promote sustainable harvesting practices. This involves a range of measures, including regulations on clear-cutting, promoting methods like CPRS (Cut with Protection and Soil Regeneration), and establishing protected areas. "The government and everyone has a responsibility to safeguard this resource for future generations," says forest engineer Alexandre Lepage. "And we in the industry, for the most part, agree with the need for regulations that prevent the depletion of our forests." It used to be very different, we'd cut every-



Gaspésie's forest management is a delicate dance between government regulations and industry needs.

Photo: Facebook

thing and not look back.

However, these regulations can also have unintended consequences. The need to adhere to specific guidelines can, at times, lead to inefficiencies and increased costs for timber companies. Mr. Lepage points out that this can contribute to companies moving operations or closing down, leaving behind a legacy of abandoned infrastructure. "You end up with thousands of kilometres of unused roads crisscrossing the territory," Mr. Lepage explains. "It's not an ideal situation, and it can be frustrating for those of us trying to work efficiently." This massive presence of un-

used roads has lasting effects on both the flora and fauna.

A key point of discussion is the degree of control the industry has over where harvesting takes place. While companies generally support regulations aimed at preventing the overall loss of forest mass, there is a desire for more flexibility in operational planning. "We're not asking for a free-for-all," Mr. Lepage clarifies. "We understand the need for oversight. But we believe that, in certain situations, we can better determine the optimal locations for harvesting, even from an ecological perspective." The idea, he sug-

gests, is that companies could work with the government to demonstrate that remaining in a particular sector and reusing existing roads would be more beneficial for the forest in the long run.

A significant aspect of Gaspésie's forest management strategy involves mimicking the natural effects of forest fires while also minimizing the fires that happen, bringing human influence close to inexistence. The government's approach aims to replicate the ecological disturbances that would naturally shape the forest landscape. As Mr. Lepage explains, "The government's

approach is to try to mimic the effect and frequency of a normal forest fire." This involves techniques such as leaving smaller forest materials (less than 10 cm in diameter) on the ground to mimic the post-fire environment and following the natural contours of the land in harvesting operations. That also means that climate change has an impact on the industry because the amount of actual forest fire will impact how much the industry can cut.

To minimize the impact on the forest floor, companies are increasingly utilizing specialized equipment. Mr. Lepage describes the use of "vehicles with long reach and a mechanical arm" to harvest timber, reducing the need for extensive ground contact and minimizing soil disturbance.

Ultimately, the challenge lies not necessarily in whether control resides solely with the government or with the companies but rather in fostering clear and effective communication between the two. Finding a balance between regulations and industry input, based on open communication, is essential for ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of Gaspésie's forests.

Forestry on the Verge of a Technological Leap

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

ST-ELZEAR: - The forest industry in the Gaspé Peninsula, often perceived as traditional, stands at a crucial turning point. According to Alexandre Lepage, a forestry engineer and expert consultant, the adoption of cutting-edge technologies could radically transform the daily lives of woodworkers, while improving profitability and environmental sustainability.

Artificial Intelligence: A Valuable Ally

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers unprecedented opportunities. Drones, for instance, enable forest monitoring with unmatched precision, reducing the need for constant human presence on the ground. AI can also analyze geomatic data to optimize cutting paths, resulting in significant time and efficiency

gains.

Furthermore, AI could revolutionize the logger's role through visual assistance, dramatically streamlining the selection of trees for cutting. Imagine smart glasses, or a heads-up display integrated into the machinery's window, overlaying real-time analysis onto the logger's field of vision. This visual augmentation would highlight optimal trees for harvesting, based on pre-programmed criteria and AI-driven assessments of the forest's health and composition. This eliminates the logger's need to make complex, on-the-spot decisions, a process that currently consumes significant time and slows down operations. By providing instant, data-driven recommendations, this technology would minimize human error, leading to a substantial boost in efficiency. This increased efficiency translates directly to less time spent by machinery in the for-

est, reducing fuel consumption, soil compaction, and overall environmental impact. The logger, equipped with this visual AI, would be able to work with precision and speed previously unattainable, becoming a highly efficient operator guided by intelligent data.

Economic and Environmental Benefits

The adoption of these technologies could empower small woodworkers to enhance their efficiency and increase their earnings. As Mr. Lepage points out, data collected by cutting machines is often underutilized and thrown away. AI could analyze this data to optimize harvesting, reducing costs and time spent in the forest.

Environmentally, the use of drones and AI significantly contributes to lowering the industry's carbon footprint. Soil Protection and Regeneration

Cutting (CPRS), a method that mimics natural disturbances like wildfires, can be optimized through these technologies, ensuring that sufficient forest remains to replicate natural greenhouse gas absorption. Beyond this, the harvested wood, when used in construction, acts as a long-term carbon sink. Unlike a typical forest, which maintains a relatively neutral relationship with greenhouse gases through ongoing cycles of growth and decomposition, wood used in buildings effectively removes and stores carbon for the structure's lifespan. This transforms the wood industry from a simple resource extractor to a vital player in carbon sequestration, offering a tangible solution to mitigating climate change.

Challenges to Overcome

However, the Gaspésie

forest industry faces significant challenges. The lack of skilled labour, costly machinery investments, and the absence of unionization are obstacles that must be addressed.

Additionally, the system of private land ownership, which varies regionally, hinders the adoption of common standards and industry standardization.

Untapped Potential

Despite these challenges, the Gaspésie forest industry holds immense potential. Wood construction, for example, offers considerable environmental benefits by storing carbon and utilizing a renewable resource.

The adoption of advanced technologies could position the Gaspé Peninsula as a model for sustainable forestry, where economic efficiency and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

Diane Lebouthillier is saving her ammunition for the campaign

NELSON SERGERIE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE - The outgoing Member of Parliament and Liberal Party candidate in the constituency of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj prefers to talk about her record rather than discussing the issues that will be her priorities ahead of the April 28 election.

"We're only on the second day of the campaign. It's time to take stock of the past year. My regional priorities will be revealed during the campaign in due course," said Diane Lebouthillier, in a virtual press briefing held on March 24.

In office since 2015, Ms. Lebouthillier maintains that the federal government has invested in some 800 projects totaling more than \$1 billion



Photo: Diane Lebouthillier's Office

Diane Lebouthillier's official campaign photo.

in the riding. She also takes a swipe at Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet.

"When I hear Mr.

Blanchet talking about the fisheries, and at some point he's going to say that squid will save the fisheries in the Gaspésie, I get furious and I'm not going to let that go," she says, questioned about the possibility of running a positive campaign as suggested by her leader.

She was then referring to past comments made by the Bloc leader, who was suggesting ways to alleviate the effects of the herring and mackerel moratoriums.

On the topic of agriculture, she assures that the Liberals will protect supply management.

According to her, the question at the ballot box will revolve around who will be the best prime minister to face the American president during the turbulence caused by American tariffs.

Rémi Massé attempts a return to politics

NELSON SERGERIE

RIVIÈRE-DU-LOUP - Rémi Massé, a former Liberal Member of Parliament for Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia, from 2015 to 2019, is running in the Côte-du-Sud-Rivière-du-Loup-Kataskomiq-Témiscouata constituency in the upcoming federal election.

Active in the Rivière-du-Loup region, Rémi Massé developed the Halles d'innovation et de formation avancées, a \$30 million project.

He confided that his commitment to the regional economy has always been part of his core beliefs.

The election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States weighed in the balance and gave him the desire to return, indicating that he had received calls from former colleagues,

Mark Carney's entourage, and ministers to gauge his interest. He will face the incumbent Conservative candidate, Bernard Gendreau, who was in office from 2009 to 2011 and has held the position continuously since 2015.

The Bloc québécois candidate is Diane Sénécal.

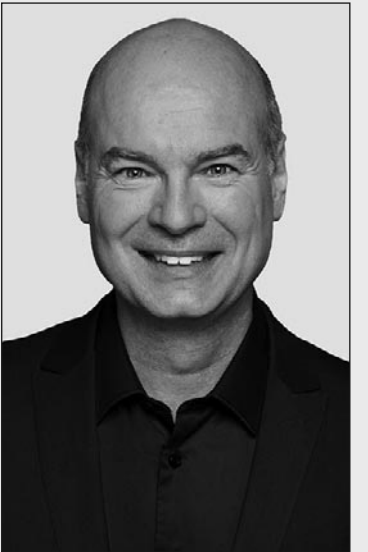


Photo: Facebook

Rémi Massé

Alexis Deschênes wants to defend the Gaspé Peninsula forestry industry

GILLES GAGNÉ

SAINT-ALPHONSE - The Bloc Québécois candidate for Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, Alexis Deschênes, launched his campaign on March 25 at Scierie Saint-Alphonse, a sawmill also known as Rosario Poirier Inc., which is affected by the threat of United States tariffs. He wanted to get a feel of the thoughts of the workers at the sawmill.

He said he is committed to defending this important sector of the regional economy. The forestry sector employs hundreds of workers in the riding. Fifty percent of Quebec's lumber is exported to the United States.

"Tariff threats are already having an impact on our region's forestry industry. The uncertainty and unpredictability surrounding the imposition of US tariffs are already causing a slowdown," he said.

Stakeholders are holding their breath ahead of April 2, the scheduled date for the 25% tariffs to come into effect, which would add to the 14.5% duties already imposed by the United States to Quebec's lumber industry.

"We are dealing with a

moving political environment. Yes, the lumber industry is already paying a 14.5% compensation tariff, to which 25% will be added on April 2. But Donald Trump has also stated that he will impose a 250% tariff on dairy products and lumber. That's why it is hard for now to define what kind of measures we recommend. Canada Economic Development has planned some measures. Rosario Poirier is exporting 70% of its production to the United States but first sells to a middle company which finalized the export operation. Under current rules, the Poirier family would qualify for financial support, even if most of their production goes to the American market," explains Alexis Deschênes.

"We consequently want programs that will be adapted to that kind of reality, with flexible admissibility criteria. Rosario Poirier runs a company with his son and his granddaughters. It is a fine operation. We don't want a de-structured regional economy," he adds.

Alexis Deschênes points out that Scierie Saint-Alphonse is also looking for other markets, either in Canada or overseas.

"Part of the problem also comes from the fact that most

Canadian sawmills have turned towards the domestic market, which is flooded right now. Secondly, pallet wood components, which is the main production of Rosario Poirier Inc., is not characterized by a very high value. Exporting to Europe costs a lot in transport and it is a long shot for pallet wood," says Mr. Deschênes.

"Also, some fear a possible economic recession, which would also hurt our forestry industry," explains the Bloc Québécois candidate. "We must support our forestry companies. I am committed to supporting them through the coming crisis," explained Mr. Deschênes.

"Overall, we must also diversify our export markets and, first and foremost, develop our domestic market. In this regard, the Bloc Québécois proposal to promote local purchasing in federal government contracts could increase opportunities for Quebec softwood lumber," he added.

The Canadian government can play a role in alleviating the burden felt by the lumber industry and other industries.

"The Canadian government buys for \$37 billion worth of contracts annually. Favouring local firms should be auto-



The Bloc québécois candidate launched his campaign on March 25 in Saint-Alphonse.

Photo: Alexis Deschênes

matic, considering the trade war triggered by the United States. Developing our domestic market is a must, even if it is not as big as the American market," insists Mr. Deschênes.

Under the theme "Building a strong economy in the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands to face the new global reality," Mr. Deschênes will present his various proposals to voters between now and election day on April 28.

He will suggest ways to emerge stronger from the ongoing trade war with the United States. Several sectors of the regional economy will

be addressed, and several proposals will be made.

On March 7, the Bloc Québécois candidate called for financial support from the federal government for economic diversification missions in the fishing sector in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

Alexis Deschênes is a Legal Aid lawyer based in New Richmond. He is also the president of the Bar for the Gaspé Peninsula, the Magdalen Islands and the Lower Saint Lawrence region. He is a former Radio-Canada and TVA journalist. He came back to the Gaspé Peninsula ten years ago.

Federal election: The Conservative Party of Canada

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

In this article and those that will follow, we aim to provide a grounded approach to exposing electoral promises as they stand now.

The Conservative Party of Canada. This party has been a significant player in Canadian politics, often advocating for fiscal responsibility and economic development.

Economic Policies

The Conservative Party plans to implement bigger income tax cuts, reducing the lowest income tax bracket

from 15% to 12.75%. This change is expected to save a person making \$57,000 about \$900 per year. Additionally, the party seeks to support skilled trades such as electricians, plumbers, and home technology workers by expanding training halls, offering direct grants and providing faster access to employment insurance for apprentices in licensed trades.

Housing and Infrastructure

While the Conservatives have not addressed the housing crisis directly, they propose creating "shovel-ready zones" with pre-approved per-

mits for major resource or energy projects. They also plan to invest \$1 billion over three years to build a road network connecting mining sites to Ontario's highway network and First Nations communities. However, it remains unclear whether they have consulted with First Nations on these plans.

Environmental Policies

The Conservative Party intends to abolish the carbon tax for both consumers and large companies. They do plan to offer tax credits for clean energy but there is no mention of direct investment in this sector.

Their focus remains on promoting resource extraction and giving more freedom to private companies, without addressing the housing crisis, the current rise in the cost of living, or the broader economic situation.

Social and Military Policies

The Conservatives aim to reach the 2% Gross Domestic Pro (GDP) defense spending target required by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This target is of significant interest to the United States (U.S.), but European countries care little about it. Given recent events where the US has proven to be a less re-

liable ally, the necessity of adhering to this target amidst a trade war is questionable.

Feasibility and Impact

While all these promises are feasible, the lack of regulation for powerful companies, whose primary objective is profit, should inspire caution. Private companies are not typically known for promoting fair salaries and worker well-being. For instance, the Murdochville mining project could restart faster than planned under these policies. Many of the Conservative promises appear rhetorical rather than specific, leaving ample room for interpretation.

Federal election: The Liberal Party of Canada

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

In this article and those that will follow, we aim to provide a grounded approach to exposing electoral promises as they stand now.

The Liberal Party of Canada. This party has been in power for 10 years now, often sharing power as a minority government.

Economic Policies

The Liberal Party plans to reduce the lower income tax bracket by one percent for individuals earning less than \$55,867 in taxable income. This tax reduction is expected to save \$558 per person, although their official announcement states the saved money to be \$825 per

two-person household. This tax cut does not affect provincial tax rates but does impact a significant majority of people in Gaspésie. In reaction to U.S. tariffs, they propose waiving the one-week waiting period for Employment Insurance and allowing Canadian businesses to defer income tax and GST/HST to improve their liquidity and help them weather the trade war.

Environmental Policies

Their environmental policies include continued investment in green technologies, which has been ongoing but is always a welcome change. They also plan to cut the consumer carbon tax. There have been no official comments on green-technology car rebates, although

the industry seems to be shifting to a more varied world, and there has been no talk of more regulations for bigger companies.

Housing Policies

On housing, the Liberals plan to cancel the GST (buyer's tax) on first-time homebuyers, helping families afford their first home. They also want to increase government funding for the construction of affordable houses.

Social Policies

Both healthcare and education are supposed to receive increased funding, but no concrete actions have been outlined to change things. Of course, in Quebec, this would also fall under provincial control. They want to change

the insurance system to provide faster support for blue-collar workers and have backed down from their capital tax augmentation. This is a significant gesture. Trudeau's capital tax gain increase from 50% to 66% for those making more than \$250,000 in capital gains was the first significant tax imposed on the rich in years. The fact that Carney has canceled it before it ever took place speaks volumes. To make over \$250,000 in capital gains in a year, a person would realistically have to be worth over \$3.5 million to begin with, a situation very few people are in.

Feasibility and Impact

On the feasibility of these measures, the party has announced several significant

tax cuts, yet more spending in housing, green technology, healthcare, and education. They have not announced how they plan to significantly reduce the money they get, yet spend more. For anglophone residents in the Gaspésie, one should note that they didn't name anything specific on a lot of those promises, except for the tax cuts, and Ms. Leboutillier has not announced any specific project regarding the Gaspésie. This election marks a shift from Prime Minister Trudeau's vision, the implications of which remain to be fully understood.

This article aims to provide a clear and detailed overview of the Liberal Party's concrete promises for the 2025 elections. Stay tuned for more articles on other parties' platforms.

Do you see what we're saying?

DAVE FELKER
Project Coordinator

NEW CARLISLE: - I've been trying to find the time to write this article but I've been busier than a cow lickin' twin calves, I tell ya. Anyways, have I got a story for you, me son?! Family Ties is launching a new project called "Do You See What We're Saying?" aimed at celebrat-

ing the unique expressions from the Gaspé Coast. It seems like every community has their own way of saying things! Through the project, Family Ties will be offering a whole range of art workshops in different municipalities within the MRC of Bonaventure. That's right...

Up the bay and down the bay! Prit'near all the workshops will be taking place in

New Richmond, Cascapedia St Jules, Shigawake and New Carlisle, son. Local artists will learn ya some techniques in woodcarving, photography, mixed media and more, enabling participants to create a piece of art which illustrates their favourite Gaspesian expression.

Now I imagine yer all some excited about this. But there's more. Go way! Yup. If you send in your favourite

expressions, you might get your name in print. Boogity-Boo son, go and sit down! At the end of the project, some of the art and expressions will be featured in a special edition 2026 calendar. There is also an exhibition planned for October at the Fall Fest in Cascapedia.

So, start sending in those expressions with a few words about what they mean to you, how they are used, or any lit-

tle story to go with them. Please send them by private message to the Family Ties Facebook page or to Dave Felker at david@projetrural.com. Also, follow Family Ties for information about the upcoming workshops. There'll be some turrble pile of 'em. This project was made possible through funding from Canadian Heritage.

Announcements



Obituaries



ADAMS: Patricia

Born in Gaspé on February 19, 1953, Patricia was an inspiration to many, through kindness, grace and finding joy in God's gifts.

Pat lived her life seeing the best in others and helping them anyway she could. A career teacher and a life-long student, Pat's chosen occupation was her passion and vocation in this life. Evident in her endeavours of teaching English, weaving, dog training, horsemanship, farrier skills and animal homeopathy. A teacher and trainer in the truest sense Pat delighted in working with animals and people, loving to see both grow to their potential. She showed all who got close that hard work, works and that life is found in the simple things.

The tranquility of the ocean, a cool sea breeze, sunsets over the St. Marjorique hills and starry nights over a pasture, "...we are living in a postcard," she said often. With this in mind she sought to leave all places she visited or inhabited natural, and better from her presence for the next generation.

Pat is survived by son William (Sarah); daughter Sheena (Steven); four grandchildren: Brynley, Holden, Quinten and Adrian; and sisters Linda Delisle-Smith and Elizabeth Adams. Remember Pat with joy, the laughter and the good times. A funeral and celebration of life will be held at 11 a.m., July 19, 2025, at St. Majorique Church (37 rue Fontenelle, Gaspé Quebec).

*"When the dreams you're dreamin' come to you.
When the work you put in is realized.
Let yourself feel the pride but,
Always stay humble and kind."*



PHILLIPS: Shirley Ann

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of Shirley Ann Phillips Patterson at the age of 84, with her family by her side. She is survived by her loving husband of 63 years, Bruce, son Ronnie, daughter Susie, granddaughter Samantha and sister Judy. She is predeceased by her daughter Sandi and brother Gerald.

Will You Walk With Me

*"Through the darkest night
When my world goes wrong,
Will you make it right will you guide my lips,
In all I say will you walk with me every day,
Will you walk with me, ease my pain,
Will you walk with me give me hope once again,
When my eyes grow dim will you let me see
Dear Lord, will you walk with me."*

We wish to thank our family, friends and neighbours for their constant support and kindness during this difficult time. We also wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Doctors, Nurses, Caregivers and Home Support Services that provided ongoing loving care. We are so grateful for you all.



In Memory

DAWSON: Emma

In memory of Emma Dawson November 3, 1919 - April 3, 2017.

*I lost a mother with a heart of gold,
How much I miss her can never be told.
We shared our troubles to help us along.
If I follow her steps, I will never go wrong.*

*I miss you from your rocking chair,
Your loving smile and gentle air.
Your vacant place no one can fill,
I miss you mother and always will.
She was a mother so very rare,
content to have me always there.
On earth she toiled, in Heaven she rest.
God bless you mom. You were the best.
You left me with beautiful memories.
Your love is still my guide,
And though I cannot see you,
You're always by my side.
Love: Barbara Ann*

WARD: Wilma Beatrice Huntington

In loving memory of our mother, mother-in-law, grandmother and great-grandmother, who passed away on April 8, 1990.

*Years go by, but memories stay,
As near and dear as yesterday.
It's not the words, they are but few,
It's the memories we keep of you.
No longer in our lives to share,
But in our hearts you are always there.*

Always loved, always remembered, never forgotten by your loving daughter Frances (Bernie), grandson Mark (Erin) and great-grandsons Reid, Cole and Benn; grandson Kevin (Courtney) and great-granddaughters Avery and Carys; sons Ken (Chris), Everette and Wayne (Monique), grandson Dave (Josiane), great-granddaughter Julia, great-grandsons Elliott and James; and grandson Brian.

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



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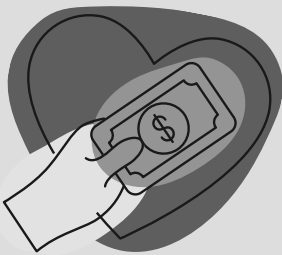
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208B Gérard D. Levesque,
New Carlisle, Québec, G0C 1Z0 or call us at
418-752-5400 to donate by phone.

COAST ROUND-UP

COAST ROUND-UP: \$8 per week
CLASSIFIED: \$8 per week

GASPE:
Gaspé Cancer Foundation
April 6: The Gaspé Cancer Foundation will hold their AGM at the Gaspé Legion beginning at 1 p.m., light refreshments will be served following the meeting.

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

NEW CARLISLE:
New Carlisle Legion
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 5: Mega gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m.
May 6: General meeting at 6 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.

NEW CARLISLE:
New Carlisle Funeral Association
May 10: The New Carlisle Funeral Association will be having a Mother's Day tea at the New Carlisle town hall from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Cost: adults \$12 and children under 10 will be \$7.

NEW CARLISLE:
Bible Chapel Meetings
Sundays: Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School - 2 p.m.
Thursdays: Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:
50+ Club
Tuesdays: Weekly bingo every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. \$10 for three cards. Extra cards are \$1 each.
April 19: A turkey dinner will be held from 4 - 6 p.m. cost: 13+ \$20, 7-12 \$10 and 0-6 is free.
May 11: A Mother's Day brunch will be held between 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. cost: 13+ \$20, 7-12 \$10 and 0-6 is free.
April 21: Meeting at 6:30 p.m.
May 19: Meeting at 6:30 p.m.
June: No meeting.
June 15: A Father's Day brunch will be held from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost: 13+ \$20, 7-12 \$10, and 0-6 is free.
July: No meeting scheduled.
September 20: A Harvest Bingo will begin at 1 p.m. - until finished, doors open at 12 p.m.
September 21: Meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.

October 19: Meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.
November 16: Meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.
December 21: Annual General Meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:
Bible Meetings
We invite you to Bible Meetings at the Cascapédia - St. Jules Community Centre on **Wednesday, April 9.** at 7 p.m. and on **Sunday, April 13,** at 4 p.m. We use only the Bible and no collections are solicited. For more information please call: 506-260-8091.

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.

UNITED CHURCH
HOPE TOWN
April 6
2 p.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH
NEW RICHMOND
April 6
10 a.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
Sunday, April 6
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

PARISH OF GASPÉ
Sunday, April 6
St. Andrews - York
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Tuesday, April 8
St. Pauls - Gaspé
7 p.m. Evening Prayer

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