

Hovercraft Sipu Muin reaches Restigouche River for de-icing duties

GILLES GAGNÉ

POINTE-À-LA-CROIX — The hovercraft Sipu Muin, of the Canadian Coast Guard, reached the Restigouche river on April 1 this year, after spending a few days in Gaspé for maintenance purposes.

The strong winds of the last days of March and the first days of April also hampered its progress in reaching the Pointe-à-la-Croix to Matapedia area, where most of its work is concentrated year in, year out. As of the end of April 3, the hovercraft had not started working on de-icing the river, notably because strong winds made it harder to manoeuvre in a restricted space, which is the case at times between the islands seen along the river.

The relatively cold weather that marked the



The Sipu Muin was idle in Pointe-à-la-Croix' former wharf area on April 2, for maintenance purposes and also because the wind was very strong that day.

Photo: G. Gagné

March 28 to April 4 period also slowed down the thaw process, which limited the volume of water on the river. Canadian Coast Guard hovercraft commanders regularly explain that it takes water

under the ice to make the Sipu Muin efficient, as the air cushion generated by the vehicle creates a wave that breaks the ice. However, water is needed under the ice so that the floe can break.

"A slow thaw is perfect for us in order to avoid floods," comments André Mill, a Matapedia business owner who has seen several floods over the last decades in his village. Sipu Muin means "river

bear" in mi'gmaq. The hovercraft was built in Wheatly, Ontario, between 1996 and 1998. Its four Caterpillar engines total 3,779 horsepower, which is huge for its weight of 70 tons. When at full speed, it can travel at 89 kilometres per hour, but its cruising speed is 80.

It travelled between Gaspé and Pointe-à-la-Croix on April 2, facing a strong winds and large waves. It passed in front of New Richmond around noon that day. Hovercrafts have been used on the Restigouche River since the spring of 1995, a year after the huge flood of 1994.

The Canadian Coast Guard sent the hovercraft to the Acadian Peninsula on April 3, 4, 5 and 6 to free some fishing harbours from ice. The Sipu Muin returned to Pointe-à-la-Croix every night.

Lebouthillier refuses debate because opponent's spouse works for the radio station

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON - The outgoing Liberal Member of Parliament for Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Diane Lebouthillier, has ruled out participating in a debate organized by Carleton's CIEU-FM, because Pénélope Garon, the spouse of opponent, Alexis Deschênes, works there.

In a press release dated March 28, titled "Objection, Your Honour: The campaign is taking place on the ground," Ms. Lebouthillier stated "In the interest of neutrality, the team invites media whose staff have or have had family or professional ties with a candidate or political party to recuse themselves from organizing the debates."

The title of her release refers to Mr. Deschênes's profession, a lawyer. She alleges that the Bloc Québécois proposed seven debates during a 36-day campaign. She states that she wants to devote her time "To

meeting people, presenting her concrete record, and listening to the concerns of voters in this immense riding."

She has proposed two debates, one in the Gaspé Peninsula and one in the Magdalen Islands, after April 9, the last day for submitting nominations.

CIEU-FM news director Julie Drapeau had suggested April 8 to the political parties, "For planning purposes, because we are organizing the debate with Carleton's Cegep to encourage young people to follow politics. If Diane Lebouthillier had made the slightest request to hold the debate after April 9, we would have agreed," she added.

CIEU-FM director Sandra McNeil adds "It's a shame we were never able to discuss the debate with a member of Diane Lebouthillier's team. If all media with an employee who currently has or has had a past relationship with a politician



Diane Lebouthillier refuses to take part in the CIEU-FM debate.

Photo: G. Gagné

were to be excluded from organizing debates, there would be virtually no debates during the election campaign."

In a letter sent on March 31 to Gabriel Bourget, president of the riding's Liberal association, Sandra McNeil notes that dia-

logue would have helped dispel some of the points raised by the party.

"But you preferred to lack courage and sow doubt about the integrity of our media and its journalists, who have over 25 years of experience," Ms.

McNeil wrote.

Pénélope Garon is part of the station's hosting team and has no connection to the newsroom, Ms. McNeil assures.

The director of CIEU-FM finds the Liberal team's maneuver akin to a "Tactic to squeeze the media out of the campaign."

"This approach represents a great danger for our democracy, but it doesn't surprise me, coming from a candidate who, at the beginning of the campaign, stated in a press release that she favoured local businesses while boasting that she could reach 90% of her electorate through Facebook and Instagram, social networks where you have been buying advertising since the beginning of the campaign. I'm still looking for the META office in the Gaspésie and the Magdalen Islands. Yet, local and regional media are very present and vibrant," concludes Sandra McNeil.

Cancelling the carbon tax outside Quebec affects border gas stations in the Gaspé Peninsula

GILLES GAGNÉ

POINTE-À-LA-CROIX — The abolition of the carbon tax on fuel sold at gas stations in northern New Brunswick is causing headaches for Gaspe-sian gasoline retailers located near the border. Jean-François Landry of Pointe-à-la-Croix, is one of those retailers and he has seen his customer base drop by 60 to 70% since March 31.

Mr. Landry's gas station is located 300 metres from the J.C. Van Horne Interprovincial Bridge, going to Campbellton, New Brunswick, where the abolition of the tax has resulted in a 20-cent per litre drop in fuel prices at most retailers.

"We sell our gas at cost price and we have a 14-cent difference, to Campbellton's advantage. On March 31, we were selling it for two cents less than at a Campbellton station where I checked prices," explains Jean-François Landry, who operates that station under the Ultramar banner.

"We saw the tax abolition coming, but we were supposed to get a border discount, according to what the company told us. It wasn't written (as a commitment). We learned on Friday (March 28) that there would be no discount," adds Mr. Landry. He is 36 years old and bought his business with a partner in 2021.

His cost price is 155.9 cents per litre. Until Sunday, he was selling his gas for around \$1.60. He doesn't know how long he can endure the lack of profit from his main source of income. A convenience store is located in his gas station building.

"On gas, I had a profit margin of 4 cents per litre. One product brings customers to another (product). If you don't have gas, you don't have the rest. People don't just come to buy a bottle of water. We've lost 60-70% of our customers. That's a big difference," Mr. Landry insists.

Ultramar's management assured him that there was nothing they could do to ease his burden and that he should refer to the government. So he contacted the office of the Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin, to see if the Quebec government was considering measures to alleviate



Gas retailer Jean-François Landry of Pointe-à-la-Croix had hoped for adjustments from the Quebec government before the federal election ended on April 28.

the imbalance created by the federal government, which was in full election campaign mode.

Canada's new Prime Minister, Mark Carney, decided to abolish the carbon tax for individuals just before the start of the campaign.

"At Ms. Blouin's office, I'm told that the issue was discussed in caucus this morning (April 2), that it's a big issue, but that there won't be a decision before the April 28 election," notes Jean-François Landry.

He hopes that the elected members of the Coalition Avenir Québec government and the rest of the National Assembly understand the precarious situation that fuel retailers like him are facing, and that 28 days with virtually no profit, with significant payments to be made, is a long time.

"When you're in Quebec City, everyone has the same price. The situation is different in the border areas. (...) We're giving ourselves one to two weeks to assess the situation, and then we'll have to make decisions. We can't keep eight employees while selling nothing," he assures.

He communicates regularly with two other gas station owners located within the 20-kilometre Gaspé border area, who have benefited from a tax reduction since 1982 to protect their competitiveness with their New Brunswick counterparts. Quebec implemented its own carbon tax a decade ago and it is still imposed, but to oil companies. It is also half the size of the federal tax.

Mr. Landry would approve of additional relief to make his business competitive again.

One of the other owners, André Mill, of Matapedia, 18 kilometres from Pointe-à-la-Croix, hasn't seen a difference in gas sales between March 31 and April 2, but he knows it's only a matter of days.

"For now, the distance between here and Campbellton is limiting travel, but the price difference will affect us. When there's a difference of two cents, the word gets around and people go to New Brunswick. There's going to be an impact. We sell a bit of everything here, hardware items as well as auto parts. When people go to fill up their tanks in Campbellton, they'll take the opportunity to buy something else. It'll take a week for it to show up," estimates Mr. Mill, who, with his brother Richard, owns two auto-related businesses.

Met by The Gaspé SPEC in Campbellton, a New Brunswick retailer who wished to remain anonymous, a requirement imposed by his banner, noticed a significant increase in his fuel sales since the morning of April 1.

"We're very busy, but it's not just because of the price difference with Pointe-à-la-Croix. Our price has gone from \$1.62 to \$1.42 per litre (141.9 cents precisely). It's psychological. We're also selling more to the New Brunswick crowd just because it's cheaper! It's like when the price goes up by 5 cents. People come



Only the J.C. Van Horne Bridge separates Campbellton, in the background, from Pointe-à-la-Croix and Listuguj.

the day before. People will drive half an hour to save \$3. The price difference may not last," says the retailer, who wouldn't be surprised if the situation changes after the federal election.

In Listuguj, the Petro-Canada gas station has seen a drop in sales since Monday. "The price is 150.9 cents here. There's a big impact because of the price difference," notes the gas station attendant.

Catherine Blouin, Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure, confirms what her staff told Jean-François Landry. She adds that the issue of gasoline retailers in border areas has been brought to the attention of Christine Fréchette, Minister of Economy, Innovation and Energy. "The issue is being discussed. For now, we don't want to

make a decision before the April 28 federal election. We don't know if it's temporary or permanent, depending on who is elected. There are several factors to consider. It concerns Finance and the Economy," says Catherine Blouin.

The Gaspé Peninsula isn't the only Quebec region to share a border with a province where the federal carbon tax has been abolished. Témiscouata also borders New Brunswick, and the Gatineau area in the Outaouais region borders Ontario, she points out.

"I know it's a long wait until April 28, but we have nothing to announce. All kinds of discussions are taking place. I understand the concerns of retailers struggling with the problem," concludes Ms. Blouin.



Photos: G. Gagné

André Mill of Matapedia believes that some of his customers will not only buy gas in New Brunswick, but make other purchases as well.

PERCÉ: Former mayor seeks compensation

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - The former mayor of Percé, Cathy Poirier, is filing a \$370,000 lawsuit against elected officials, municipal officials, and three citizens following "An unjustified smear campaign that nonetheless damaged her honour and reputation."

In an application for an originating action in extracontractual civil liability filed before the Civil Division of the Superior Court, Ms. Poirier is targeting several individuals, including Jason Quirion, former public works coordinator for the Town of Percé; Jean-François Coderre, former director general, and his successor, Michel Fréchette, who left his position in March; Doris Réhel, councillor and pro-mayor; Michel Rail, councillor; and citizens Jean-François Gagné, Linton Couture, and Michel Poissant.

Ms. Poirier is seeking a joint payment of \$250,000 in damages from the defendants, as well as an additional \$15,000 from each of them individually, plus legal costs.

In addition, the former elected official is asking the court to order each individual to issue a public apology. The facts alleged in the motion cover the period between the events leading to Jason Quirion's filing of a union grievance on February 15, 2024, and the filing of the motion on February 19.

Four periods are targeted in the court document: the filing of the union grievance; a complaint to the Administrative Labour Tribunal on March 15, 2024; all the elements surrounding the suspension of

former Urban Planning Director Ghislain Pitre; and the Municipal Commission's investigation into the Town of Percé.

Regarding the grievance and the complaint to the Administrative Labour Tribunal, the motion states that "These false complaints against Cathy Poirier have never been proven, have never been the subject of a conviction following an adversarial hearing, but have had a strong impact on the population of Percé due to the numerous and repeated interventions of the defendants, who had not bothered to verify their veracity, and even knew them to be false." The motion states that the investigation conducted by the Quebec Municipal Commission in July 2024 "exonerates Cathy Poirier from the accusations made against her by the defendants, which are the subject of these proceedings," and targets a letter sent by Pro-Mayor Doris Réhel and outgoing Director General Michel Fréchette, "continuing to attack Cathy Poirier's integrity."

The motion states that Ms. Poirier is aware that an elected official is condemned to face public criticism. "However, an elected official has the right to have her dignity, honour, and reputation respected," the document reads.

Ms. Poirier also states that during this period of personal attacks, she isolated herself at home, and her mental health, sleep, and quality of life were severely affected. The former mayor claims that because of their actions and words, she resigned from her position in July 2024, akin to constructive dismissal, "and for this reason,

Police report

Assault charges

Isaac Moffat-Swasson, 34, from Listuguj, was found guilty of most charges pending against him following two April 2024 trials presided over by Quebec Court Judge Annie Trudel, who rendered her decision on November 4. However, despite the fact that he was found guilty five months ago, decisions about his sentence will likely take several months before being rendered.

Isaac Moffat Swasson was initially charged in February 2019 with assault with a weapon, assault causing bodily harm and uttering threats following an incident that took place in Listuguj. While incarcerated at the New Carlisle detention centre on April 30, 2019, he caused major damage at the prison, breaking furniture and electronics and plumbing fixtures. Sixteen cells were damaged and closed that day. Inmates had to be transferred to another prison because he was arrested with mace that spread to the rest of the prison.

In fact, while some cells were repaired in the short term and made functional again, a set of eight cells remained damaged until recently, as the Ministry of Public Security only started repairing that section over recent months. Isaac Moffat Swasson was charged with mischief, assault on peace officers and obstruction in the work of peace officers.

"Mr. Moffat Swasson fired his lawyer and Judge Trudel made him understand that he should find a lawyer. He will return to court on April 4," explained criminal prosecutor Fabien Villemaire on April 3, SPEC's deadline day.

During the trial, the accused's lawyer was Peter George-Louis. Prior to that Allan Guttman had represented Isaac Moffat-Swasson.

The February 2019 incident and the April 2019 mischief case were separated in two trials but they were heard consecutively in April 2024. Many witnesses were heard in both cases, according to criminal prosecutor Fabien Villemaire.

Judge Trudel ordered the preparation of three reports following her November 4 decision, he says. "The judge asked for three assessments; one of them being a pre-sentence report; then a Gladu report, in conformity with a Supreme Court decision that requires a report pertaining to Native citizens, given that they are overrepresented in court cases. The court decision must take into account the specific circumstances of accused's upbringing, which requires a community officer working in these cases. The third assessment deals with dangerousness levels," explains Fabien Villemaire.

Two of those reports are ready, that of dangerousness and the Gladu document. However, they are not released yet and their detailed content will only be known once Isaac Moffat Swasson finds a lawyer, points out the criminal prosecutor.

"The (Louis-Philippe) Pinel Institute report says that he is dangerous but the rest of the content remains confidential (...) the pre-sentence report remains to be completed," says Fabien Villemaire, who is based in Quebec City, where the trials were heard.

If Isaac Moffat Swasson has found a lawyer, time will be required by that attorney to get familiar with the two trials' content.

Isaac Moffat Swasson must also face other charges for events that took place at the Bordeaux detention centre in Montreal, notably for an incident that took place on October 6. He is suspected of having held another inmate in forcible confinement. The incident required the intervention of Sûreté du Québec police officers, who were called to assist prison guards. The inmate was not injured.

"Those cases will be heard in Montreal," says Fabien Villemaire, who is not in charge of those files.

Hit-and-run

Sentenced to three years in prison in 2021 for a hit-and-run, Michael Athot, 28, from Grande-Rivière, now faces new charges, still related to driving while he is prohibited to do so. He faces two such charges related to two incidents, one that allegedly occurred in Grande-Rivière on March 20, 2024, and the other in Gaspé between January and April 2024. He is also charged with violating his probation. Michael Athot was arrested the same day a warrant was issued for his arrest, precisely on April 2. He has been detained since. The suspect's preliminary hearing was scheduled for April 8, as the SPEC was reaching its deadline. In May 2020, in Sainte-Thérèse de Gaspé, Mr. Athot, driving a side-by-side, seriously injured a woman in her sixties with his vehicle and fled the scene. He was sent to prison after pleading guilty. The charges against the two alleged accomplices were withdrawn by the criminal prosecutor in that case.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Cathy Poirier announced her resignation on July 2, 2024.

she is entitled to her loss of salary for almost a year and a half between the time of her resignation and the presumed end of her term, representing \$76,223.90, as shown on her T4s."

She also says she is consumed by regret at not having been able to complete her term as mayor and, consequently, at not having been able to complete several projects that she believed were in the best interest of her town.

"Even today, she dwells on the events, questioning the motives behind all this hatred toward her," the statement reads. At the municipal council meeting on March 4, elected officials adopted a majority resolution "that the Town of Percé assume the ex-

penses in the lawsuit filed by a citizen against elected officials, managers, and employees of the town."

Reaction from Mayor Leboeuf

The mayor indicated that a lawsuit had been filed and that he could not comment further. "As provided for in the Cities and Towns Act, the municipality assumes the expenses of its employees and elected officials," stated the Mayor of Percé Daniel Leboeuf.

Ms. Poirier indicated that she would not comment on the motion filed with the court in an interview. However, late on March 30, she took to social media to respond.

Recounting her journey

since her first election in the fall of 2017, she indicated that she had made the decision to commit to contributing to the development and life of her community with passion and determination.

"From the moment I arrived at Town Hall, I wanted to continue the momentum brought by promising and structuring projects for our town, such as the UNESCO Global Geopark or the coastal project. I brought ideas, an ambitious vision, and solid planning for the future. I knew the challenges inherent in politics. I knew this path would not always be easy. Criticism is part of the job, and I was ready to accept it," she wrote

Cont'd on page 13

Commentary

Trade tariffs: what a mess!

Also, some firms were hit by a 25% tariff due to Donald Trump's perception that Canada was "exporting" large quantities of fentanyl to the United States, while in reality, "Canadian" fentanyl accounts for 1% or less of that drug consumed south of the border. A re-evaluation of that context could translate into a reduction of that tariff from 25% to 12.5%. Small mercies, we could say.

What is the value of an agreement?

One of the main problems characterizing the international tariff crisis is that Donald Trump doesn't respect signed deals. Realistically, he doesn't seem to care. He seems essentially happy by the chaos he is creating because it gives him the impression that

Trump will not be sensitized by arguments coming from outside his country. However, growing dissatisfaction in the United States might affect his

plans as that country gets closer to the 2026 midterm elections. The fragile control the Republican Party has over the House of Representatives might then be lost, which would complicate Trump's life.

**In the meantime,
there is an election in Canada**

The Green Party's usual program priorities go unnoticed in this campaign, as environmental issues have completely been forgotten.

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CAQ rejects petition on Maria hospital at the Health and Social Services Committee

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) has rejected the submission of the petition by Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly (MNA), Catherine Blouin regarding the inclusion of the Maria hospital emergency and intensive care reconstruction project in the Health and Social Services Committee, on the grounds that the project is now included in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan (PQI).

The MNA tabled the document on March 20 in the National Assembly. The document stated, among other things, that in 2012, a clinical and real estate master plan identified major functional deficiencies in the facilities, particularly those of the emergency and intensive care units; that the Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre prioritized the construction of the

emergency and intensive care units at the Maria hospital; that the dilapidated state of the locale prevents confidentiality of patient records from being respected, that infection prevention is difficult; and that the prefects of Avignon and Bonaventure recognize the importance and urgency of carrying out this construction project.

The conclusion of the electronic document requested that the Quebec government include the construction of the emergency and intensive care units at the Maria hospital in the 2025-2035 Quebec Infrastructure Plan. Once this step is completed, the document must propose that the committee review the petition, analyze it, and make a recommendation to the government to include the project in the PQI after consulting with stakeholders.

"This motion was rejected on the grounds that the petition's request was met with

the tabling of the budget and the 2025-2035 PQI last Tuesday (March 25)," notes Parti Québécois Health Critic Joël Arseneau.

According to the PQ (Parti Québécois), the Maria hospital does not appear on the list of projects under consideration in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan, contrary to what the petition requests.

At most, the PQI's brief mentions that the project will be subject to eventual government approval. The document states that "the Ministry of Health and Social Services will submit to the government for approval, over the next year, requests for studies for new major projects, namely the Drummondville and Maria hospitals, as well as phase 3 of the program aimed at adding places in MDAA (Maison des aînés et alternatives)."

"The Quebec Infrastructure Plan has three categories: projects under study, in planning, and in implementation.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Joël Arseneau, MNA for the Magdalen Islands.

Currently, the Maria project is not in any category. The funds needed to renovate the emergency department do not appear in it. What the government has done is to create a kind of category prior to the PQI. It has named three projects, including that of Maria, in Drummondville, and said that we will work on

prioritizing the project in the coming months with the Council of Ministers," explains MNA Arseneau.

"The government decided to launch a communications campaign to try to keep people waiting because we weren't ready, we hadn't made the decision to prioritize this project," the MNA concluded.

Citizen rally calls for the return to safe care in the surgical department of Maria Hospital

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – The Eastern Quebec Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Respiratory Therapists Union, along with some of its members, doctors, citizens, and other staff members, demonstrated on April 3 in front of Maria hospital to ensure the reinstatement of the laid-off nurses and licensed practical nurses.

About 25 people took part in the event, held under a strong wind and abundant snowfall.

"Exhaustion, discouragement, and fear for patient safety are at their peak among the nurses, licensed practical nurses, and respiratory therapists we represent since the Nursing Directorate cut nurses and licensed practical nurses from all shifts in the surgical department of Maria Hospital," explained Pier-Luc Bujold, president of the Eastern Quebec Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Respiratory Therapists Union, mostly known by its French acronym, SIIEQ, affiliated to the CSN.

The union denounces the



Photo: G. Gagné

fact that one nurse and one licensed practical nurse were cut from each shift. It represents one-third of the team.

Since the budgetary cuts were enforced, more than 100 incident-accident reports have been completed in just over a month at Maria hospital, and the number continues to rise.

"What is the Nursing Department waiting for to reinstate the previous care team? Everyone is concerned about patient safety, and there's been no feedback or action

from management following up on their accident reports," laments Mr. Bujold.

Inadequate Staffing

Since the cuts, it's not uncommon at certain times of the day to find a single nurse or licensed practical nurse caring for 12 patients during breaks or meals, he adds. Normally, one nurse and one nursing assistant are assigned for every 10 to 11 patients, which is clearly insufficient for the mixed clientele of day

surgery, pediatrics, child psychiatry, palliative care and so on.

"The staff-to-patient ratio in the department is neither more nor less dangerous. We must not only consider the number of patients, but also the complexity and diversity of care," the union leader protested.

Pier-Luc Bujold reminds us that those staff cuts derive from the Quebec government decision to slash \$1.2 billion in the health budget province-wide, which translates into a \$40 million cut in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"It doesn't make sense to cut such a huge amount in just a few months in the region, thinking that it can be done without service cuts," he sums up.

Mr. Bujold is not reassured by the March 25 announcement that a 3% upward adjustment is included in the 2025-2026 budget.

"A 3% hike is insufficient," he underlines, referring to Health minister Christian Dubé's statement to the effect that 3% or less

means an underfunded department.

High risk for patient safety

In fact, the reduction in the number of nursing professionals orchestrated by the Nursing Directorate has a perverse effect on the quantity and quality of care provided in the surgical department of Maria Hospital.

"Several situations have been reported to us by the members we represent where they were unable to provide the required care at the required time or were unable to assess patients when required or needed. This increases the risk of morbidity or comorbidity," explains Pier-Luc Bujold.

He insists that the Nursing Directorate must "assume its responsibility to ensure safe care for the population by restoring the care team as quickly as possible. This must be corrected, as it has become unsustainable for both the care team and the patients."

MNAs affirm that railway refurbishment is delayed, not in jeopardy

GILLES GAGNÉ
NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND – The Bonaventure and Gaspé Members of the National Assembly, Catherine Blouin, and Stéphane Sainte-Croix affirm that Quebec’s Ministry of Transport is working to eventually issue more calls for tender for railway repairs east of Port Daniel to complete the refurbishment of the Gaspé Peninsula line to Gaspé.

When the Quebec budget was announced on March 25, the railway section between Port Daniel and Gaspé was downgraded to a “planning” status from the “realization” status it held for two years. This change was referenced in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan (PQI), triggering a lot of questions among regional stakeholders

Some were worried that the whole railroad upgrading project between Port Daniel and Gaspé could be axed, despite the fact that some work has been carried out on it since 2018. In fact, contracts worth close to \$200 million have been completed or are underway along that section of the network.

"We are not cancelling that refurbishment project. We are putting a knee on the ground in order to come back stronger. The project is sent to an evaluation status. The repair costs surpass considerably what had been budgeted. We are taking a step back in order to shed light on the reasons that explain such high costs," explains Catherine Blouin.

According to her, a possible way to save time and money for the continuation of track and bridge works could be to provide local contractors a chance, she says. "We are looking at fragmenting some calls for tenders in order to give local contractors a chance to submit bids. In some cases, it would go faster and cost less," stresses Catherine Blouin.

Quebec’s Ministry of Transport took the opposite approach in 2023, amalgamating several bridge repair projects into one call for tenders, precisely in an attempt to save time and money.

In January, two calls for tenders were cancelled because the tenders were way higher than the bracket amounts suggested by Transports Québec. The cost overrun reached \$150 million in those cases.

Catherine Blouin acknowledges that returning to a planning stage will delay the resumption of traffic east of Port Daniel, but she adds that there is a bit of wiggle room.

“We have no confirmation of an upcoming railroad use between Port Daniel and Gaspé, notably from VIA Rail, as of now. It gives us time to rethink the project. The construction sites underway will be completed as soon as possible. Moreover, the Caplan to Port Daniel stretch will open in June,” she states. She adds that they are thinking of making a committee to bring together the stakeholders and develop a plan. Reducing the speed and the weight of some cars circulating along the line are things that could be looked at according to her.



Photo: G. Gagné

Catherine Blouin and Stéphane Sainte-Croix assure that efforts are being made to return passenger and freight trains east of Port Daniel.

Stéphane Sainte-Croix is in agreement

Gaspé Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Stéphane Sainte-Croix also weighed in on the topic. "Over the past year, in terms of calls for tenders, we've had difficulty reconciling demand and supply. We've faced a significant cost explosion. We've made the decision to bring the section back into planning," he says.

Section three, the stretch between Port Daniel and Gaspé, had \$517 million budgeted since June 27, 2023. In total, 21 infrastructure projects must be repaired or rebuilt on that section, and the railway is expected to be relocated in two locations.

"There isn't a wide range of suppliers showing interest. This is a step back to reschedule section three and ensure our project is considered by suppliers," explains the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) MNA.

He suggests that the rail line may be recommissioned in 2027 or 2028. "There's already detailed planning for the work to be done. They're known and analyzed from a technical perspective and budgeted. We're going to redo our homework considering the budget targets we're unable to meet. The market is saturated for infrastructure in Quebec," analyzes Mr. Sainte-Croix.

However, he doesn't think the new delay will add to overall cost. "We are firmly com-

mitted to completing this project. We have prioritized and budgeted for it. We are facing market challenges. We will work in the coming months to find solutions and maintain the pace to deliver the Gaspé railway," he says.

"We must deliver it if we want to see the economy linked to it. We are convinced of the impact of rail on the development of our economy," adds Mr. Sainte-Croix.

"I'm not worried. We're already at work. We're in discussions with the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie. Everyone is hard at work. We delivered the first two sections as agreed. We encountered challenges for which we found solutions," Mr. Sainte-Croix recalls.

Resumption of Medical Transportation Service for Seniors

Nelson Sergerie

MARIA - The Medical Transportation Service for seniors aged 65 and over, offered by the Volunteer Action Centres in the Gaspé Peninsula, has resumed after a one-month suspension.

Although the funding situation hasn't been finalized, the Volunteer Action Centres (CABs) decided to resume service on April 1. However, users will have to pay more, with their contribution increasing from 50% to 75% of travel costs.

"Let's say someone has an appointment 200 kilometres away. There is a reimbursement of \$0.54 per kilometre and the 50% contribution is \$54. At 75%, it will be \$81. "It's a significant increase for the beneficiaries, but we have no choice because for the moment, we don't have confirmation of funding from the CISSS de la Gaspésie," explains Nancy Valois, director of the Saint-Alphonse-Nouvelle Volunteer Centre and spokesperson for the CABs.

Discussions are continuing with the Integrated Health and Social Services Centres (CISSS), and the CABs have been informed that the organization cannot move forward with increasing funding since the details of the March 25 budget have not yet been released by Santé Québec.

Last year, the CABs received \$80,000 in funding, after receiving \$200,000 in one-time support two years ago. However, maintaining the service requires \$400,000 annually.

"Our goal is to have funding added to our overall mission, to increase our amount so that we can adequately provide this service," says Ms. Valois. During discussions, the CABs felt that the CISSS recognized the importance of the service.

"Everyone is trying to find a solution," she said, hoping for support from the region's Members of the National Assembly.

MNA sees a positive side to sports and leisure envelope

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ: – Asked to comment on the announcement made in the March 25 budget regarding the sports and recreation infrastructure program, Gaspé riding Member of the National Assembly Stéphane Sainte-Croix takes a different view of the region's mayors' findings, who criticized the budgetary envelope earmarked for year 2025-2026. Mr. Sainte-Croix recalls that his government promised a budget of \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years in 2022. "We're at \$400 million in year three of our second mandate. We've announced an additional \$300 million, which will bring us to \$700 million on a \$1.5 billion promise. There will be a second call for projects. We can imagine that with the municipal elections this fall, we'll reach an agreement with partners to ensure that projects are ready to be submitted and we'll move forward," says the elected official, who maintains that his government is ahead of schedule on its promise.

Federal Elections: Candidates Officially Announce their Standing in the April 28 election

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Three candidates in the upcoming federal: Alexis Deschênes (Bloc Québécois), Liberal Diane Lebouthillier (Liberal Party of Canada), and Jean-Pierre Pigeon (Conservative Party of Canada) have cast their ballots with the returning officer for the riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj.

Alexis Deschênes was the first to do so on March 26, in Gaspé. "... the first candidate in Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj to file my nomination papers," Mr. Deschênes wrote on social media, showing the documents in front of the Elections Canada office.

Diane Lebouthillier did the same the next day. "That's it, it's official! I filed my nomination papers with Elections Canada today. I love my region. I love the people who live here, and it will be an honour to appear on your ballot for the fourth time," stated Ms.



Diane Lebouthillier in front of the polling station in Gaspé.

Photos: Facebook

Lebouthillier, showing her documents in front of the Elections Canada office.

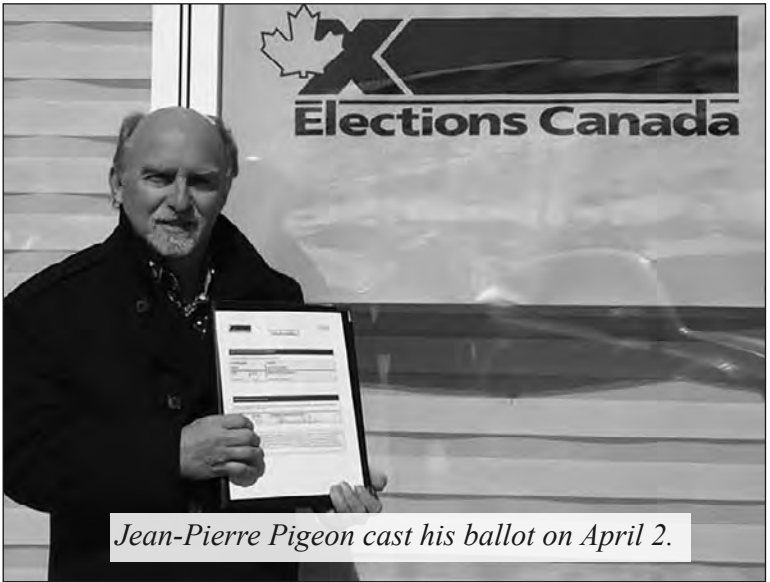
Conservative candidate Jean-Pierre Pigeon, for his part, did the same on April 2. "On a beautiful sunny day, my nomination papers were filed with Elections Canada in Gaspé," Mr. Pigeon wrote on social media. He took advantage of his visit to Gaspé to meet with Mayor Daniel Côté to discuss campaign issues.

The People's Party of

Canada candidate Christian Rioux was scheduled to file his ballot on April 3. The New Democratic Party still does not have a candidate in Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj. NDP Party officials indicate there will be a candidate, but it is premature to announce it. It is likely that the candidate will be someone from outside the region, similar to when Lisa Phung ran in the riding in 2021. The nomination deadline is April 7.



Alexis Deschênes was the first to cast his ballot.



Jean-Pierre Pigeon cast his ballot on April 2.

Fishermen need and deserve answers

Since 2018, the Government of Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada have consistently failed to support our coastal communities that rely on independent fishers.

The Professional Fish Harvesters of Southern Gaspé Association (RPPSG) is asking all candidates in this federal election, to provide them with clear answers on the future of their fisheries and its management.

Under the guise of providing economic support to our coastal communities, the recently disavowed Minister of Fisheries authorized the increase in lobster harvests by 112% in the northern Gaspé Peninsula in commercial areas in a random manner, without considering the economic impacts on fishermen, and without knowing if the resource could withstand it.

In the face of the tariff war, despite the demands of independent fishermen from February 2025, no measure to support our fishing enterprises has been put in place. Yet, like farmers, fishers must take on a lot of debt to feed our people and are the cornerstone of the fisheries economy on which we all depend.

We believe in a sustainable commercial fishery driven by science-based evidence for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishers. Our most current challenge is the uncertainty that surrounds many aspects of the fishery.

Our survival is now at stake. What will we do when individual inshore fishing ceases?

Enough is enough.



Elections: Bloc Québécois proposes an inquiry into the management of fisheries

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Continuing his federal election campaign, Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet is proposing an independent inquiry into the management of fisheries.

During a stop in Rivière-au-Renard on April 1, Mr. Blanchet met with the director of the Quebec Shrimp Fishermen's Office and held a press briefing with fishermen and his candidate running in the riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, Alexis Deschênes. The Bloc Québécois leader criticized Fisheries and Oceans Canada's management, particularly denouncing the arbitrariness in management, the distribution of quotas, and the competition between fishing associations.

"It seems essential to us that all these issues identified by the true economic stakeholders in the fisheries sector be taken into account. This requires a two-step approach: having an independent investigation of the department that will ana-

lyze the process of allocating fishing rights to understand what is not working, and the investigation should lead to recommendations that would not be managed directly by the department or the whims of a minister, as we have seen far too often here, but through a process with specific criteria," said Mr. Blanchet, referring to the outgoing Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Diane Lebouthillier, and the Baïes-des-Chaleurs fishermen who were unable to obtain exploratory lobster permits on the north side of the Gaspé Peninsula.

The next steps would be entrusted to an independent entity to remove politics from the process. "I consulted with associations and people from the region and the Magdalen Islands before making the proposal, and I have no problem coming to that conclusion, because I believe it will achieve consensus among the fishermen," notes the Bloc Québécois leader.

The inquiry would focus on fisheries in the Gulf of St.

Lawrence. The Bloc Québécois has made many proposals in the past on fisheries that were ignored by Ottawa.

"Among the good news, there will be someone else in government, and we hope that past mistakes in terms of ministerial choices won't recur. The other element is that the Bloc Québécois could find itself with enough clout in Parliament to be able to impose policies. We'll pick up where we were, and perhaps we'll find ourselves in a position to be heard," maintains Mr. Blanchet.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Yves-François Blanchet, accompanied by Alexis Deschênes and fishermen during his campaign stop in Rivière-au-Renard.

Screening for colorectal cancer

Cynthia Dow

Colorectal cancer screening is now offered free of charge at local service points for people aged 50 to 74 who are eligible for screening. People without a family doctor can also benefit from this free service.

You are not eligible if: you have been diagnosed with colorectal cancer during your lifetime and if you have received a result for an RSOSi test (Fit test) within the last two (2) years.

During your appointment, whether by phone or in person, a nurse will conduct a clinical assessment to confirm your eligibility for the service. This assessment typically leads to a non-invasive test that can be performed at home. In certain specific situations, other recommendations may be offered.

If you would like more information or to schedule an appointment, you can call 1-877-644-4545. You can also book an appointment online through the Clic Santé platform to receive a clinical assessment.

FEDERAL ELECTION / MONDAY, APRIL 28

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Contact Elections Canada if your voter information card

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Elections Canada

Liberal party candidate Diane Lebouthillier makes her first election promise

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - Diane Lebouthillier, the Liberal candidate for the Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine constituency, says she will raise the tonnage threshold for federal contracts open to the region's shipyards as her first electoral promise. In a way, Diane Lebouthillier is responding to a request made last December by the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC, which wants to establish a naval industrial cluster, not only for the greater Gaspé area but for the entire region.

"Given the expertise developed by Chantier Naval Forillon and Groupe Océan, we can be proud to be able to

position ourselves and participate in the region's economic development. When we look at shipyards (with a capacity of building units) weighing 750 tons or less, we have two in Canada (in fact, it is two in the Gaspé Peninsula), including Chantier Naval Forillon. It's important to position ourselves for upcoming contracts," notes the Liberal candidate and incumbent Member of Parliament, whose campaign was interrupted on March 31 due to bad weather.

The Canadian Naval Strategy provides \$2.5 billion for small vessels over the next 25 years.

"My commitment is to

continue discussions, as they have begun, to ensure that Chantier Naval Forillon is part of the region's development to have the necessary infrastructure for the construction of vessels weighing 750 to 1,000 tons," said Ms. Lebouthillier.

For now, Chantier Naval Forillon can only bid on federal contracts for the construction or repair of vessels weighing 750 tons or less, and the Gaspé shipyard is limited to vessels weighing 800 tons.

Chantier Naval Forillon is already well positioned at the federal level. The Gaspé-based company has been awarded two contracts since 2015 to build 10 Search and



Photo: N. Sergerie

Rescue boats for the Coast Guard, for a total of \$75 million.

A year ago, the shipyard secured another contract from Ottawa worth \$55.5 million to build the Coast Guard's first mid-shore diesel-electric hybrid fisheries research vessel.

Federal election: Bloc Québécois' Platform From Pension Increases to Green Initiatives

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPE - In this article and those that will follow, we aim to provide a grounded approach to exposing electoral promises as they stand now, continuing with the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc has been a steadfast advocate for Quebec's interests, culture, and sovereignty.

Economic Policies

The Bloc Québécois proposes an increase to the Old Age Security pension by \$110 per month for seniors aged 65 to 74. This promise comes at a time when retirement age is likely to be pushed to 67 years old. Economists have long condemned a retirement system

that didn't account for the aging population, reduced birth rates, and the subsequent economic impact. Additionally, the Bloc Québécois aims to support francophone businesses across Canada, reinforcing Quebec's cultural and linguistic presence.

Housing Policies

The Bloc Québécois advocates for increased federal support to expand affordable housing in Quebec, although they do not specify where the funds will come from. This initiative is crucial for addressing the housing crisis, but clarity on funding sources is necessary.

Environmental Policies

The Bloc Québécois supports Quebec's green initiatives and environmental policies, including sustainable agriculture and protecting supply management in agricultural agreements. These efforts align with Quebec's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Social Policies

The Bloc Québécois pushes for increased federal healthcare funding to Quebec and promotes policies that protect and enhance Quebec's language

and culture. They also support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), similar to the New Democratic Party's (NDP's) stance.

Impact on Anglophones in Quebec

Although these policies might seem unattractive to anglophones living in Quebec. The Bloc's focus on promoting Quebec's francophone interests may not make anglophones' lives easier, except in areas like native laws, housing, and pensions. However, it's important to remember that the Bloc

doesn't exist to win the federal election outright. Unlike the NDP, Liberals, and Conservatives, the Bloc's role is to divide power and bring Quebec's green and francophone interests to the federal stage. This is undeniably beneficial for democracy, but if you feel they do not represent your interests, it is your democratic duty to consider other options. Keeping the big picture in mind is essential.

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

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*Space is limited. Please RSVP by Monday April 14th, 2025 to Madelyn Hayes at 418-752-5583.

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Get ready to vote: How you can participate in the upcoming federal election

HOLLY SMITH
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PORT DANIEL - With the federal election set for April 28, 2025, citizens on the coast and all over Canada are gearing up to make their voices heard. Whether it's your first time voting or you've done it before, knowing your options will help ensure you're prepared when election day arrives.

How Can You Vote?

No matter how busy life gets, there's a voting option that works for you. Here's how you can cast your ballot:

On Election Day: Most people will head to their assigned polling station on April 28. If you're unsure where to go, check your voter information card or Elections Canada's website.

Advance Voting: If you know you'll be busy on election day, you can vote early at advance polling stations on selected days before April 28.

By Mail: Maybe you're travelling, or you just prefer to vote from home. You can apply for a mail-in ballot and send your vote in before the deadline.

At an Elections Canada Office: Want to get your vote in early? You can cast your ballot at any Elections Canada office across the country during the election period.

How to Register to Vote

Before you can vote, you need to be registered. If you're a Canadian citizen, at least 18 years old on election day, and can prove your identity and address, you're eligible.

Online: The quickest way to register is through Elections

Canada's Online Voter Registration Service. You can also check or update your information there.

By Mail: You can request a registration form from Elections Canada and send it back by mail, email, or fax.

In Person: If you'd rather handle it face-to-face, visit your local Elections Canada office to register.

Key Registration Deadlines

Before the Election Period: Registering early means you'll receive a voter information card with details on where and when to vote.

During the Election Period: You can still register at an Elections Canada office up until 6 p.m. on the Tuesday before election day.

At the Polls: Didn't register beforehand? No problem,

you can register at your polling station on election day before you vote.

What If You're Not Registered on Election Day?

If you arrive at your polling station and realize you're not registered, don't stress! You can still vote. Just bring proper identification, and you'll be able to register on-site before casting your ballot.

What ID Do You Need to Vote?

Elections Canada requires voters to prove their identity and address. Here are your options:

Government-Issued ID: A driver's license or any government ID that shows your name, photo, and address.

Two Pieces of ID: If you don't have one piece with all

the needed information, bring two that together show your name and address, like a health card and a utility bill.

Oath with a Guarantor: No ID? You can still vote by taking an oath and having someone from your polling station vouch for your identity.

Why Your Vote Matters

Voting isn't just a right, it's a way to shape Canada's future. Elections decide who will lead the country and make important decisions that affect your community. By casting your ballot, you help choose the people who will represent you in government.

For the most up-to-date election details and registration assistance, visit Elections Canada's website. Don't miss your chance to have a say in the future of Canada.

Festival international du journalisme *A Global Gathering of Minds*

ARTHUR POIRIER-ROY
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER - The Quai des Arts de Carleton is set to become a vibrant hub of journalistic discourse in May 2025, hosting the highly anticipated Festival international de journalisme de Carleton-sur-Mer. This unique event, as revealed in an insightful interview with Alain Bernier, a key figure in its planning and execution, promises to be a remarkable confluence of global perspectives.

Mr. Bernier, in our engaging conversation, highlighted the festival's distinctive position, noting that similar gatherings are rare, with only a few counterparts in France and Italy. This rarity underscores the festival's significance in fostering international dialogue. The event attracts a diverse array of participants, from renowned celebrities and seasoned local journalists to influencers, scientists, television personalities, and aspiring students from across the globe.

The festival serves as a vital platform for exploring



Photo: A. Poirier-Roy

Discover how the Festival international de journalisme de Carleton-sur-Mer is set to become a global hub for media discourse, attracting journalists, influencers, and thinkers from around the world. Alain Bernier shares insights on the event's unique ability to foster unexpected connections and vital conversations.

the evolving landscape of media in our society. Discussions will center on maintaining journalistic integrity, reaching new audiences, and strengthening connections in an increasingly digital world. Bertin Leblanc, the festival's director, works closely with

Alain Bernier to orchestrate this ambitious event, ensuring a rich and diverse program.

With over 80 panelists spanning three days, the festival will tackle a myriad of critical issues, from the perspectives of First Nations communities to international

politics and war. As Mr. Bernier astutely observed, "The best thing about this event is the collateral advantages." He emphasized the unexpected and enriching conversations that arise from spontaneous interactions, highlighting the value of serendipitous encounters beyond the scheduled panels.

Mr. Bernier also addressed the potential for discord, given the wide range of topics and participants. However, he stressed that the atmosphere has consistently been one of cordiality and respectful dialogue. This observation aligns with research in social psychology, which demonstrates that humans, as inherently social beings, tend to exhibit remarkably polite behavior in environments characterized by goodwill and shared purpose. Studies suggest that face-to-face interactions, particularly in well-structured social settings, foster empathy and understanding, mitigating the divisive tendencies often seen in virtual interactions. This reinforces the idea that the current rise of online hate is often a product of disconnection and the dehumanization

that can occur in digital spaces.

The festival's commitment to engaging with current and future audiences is particularly noteworthy. Organizers are keen to understand the information needs and preferences of younger consumers, aiming to expand the reach of quality journalism. This focus on audience engagement reflects a broader effort to ensure that journalistic integrity remains relevant and accessible in a rapidly changing media environment.

The Festival international de journalisme de Carleton-sur-Mer is more than just a series of panels; it is a catalyst for meaningful connections and collaborative exploration. As Alain Bernier put it, "The best thing about this event is the collateral advantages. It's not about what you intended to do going there, but about the conversations you'll have with people you didn't expect to see attending the same panel you did." For anyone interested in the future of journalism and the power of human connection, this event is not to be missed.

\$151,000 to protect temporarily protect René-Lévesque house

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

NEW CARLISLE - The Ministry of Culture has invested \$151,000 to temporarily protect the René-Lévesque House in New Carlisle while plans for its restoration are being studied and analyzed.

Work carried out last autumn was intended to maintain the building in a stable condition while various studies and expert appraisals were carried out, and while awaiting the start of the restoration and rehabilitation work on the heritage house.

The work aimed to prevent

water infiltration and strengthen certain structural elements of the house. The south wall had to be rebuilt because several structural elements were affected by rot. The work also included the removal of the east porch, which had deteriorated, and the installation of temporary white vinyl siding on the south and west facades.

Planning for the house's restoration and rehabilitation project continues. The Ministry has hired a project manager to complete the functional and technical program and to produce the necessary plans and specifications.

Through the restoration project, the Ministry aims to restore the house to its exterior appearance when it was occupied by the Lévesque family between 1925 and 1939 and to preserve the period features still present inside.

As for the future of the house once restored, discussions are ongoing with various local partners, including Espace René-Lévesque. The report prepared following the Quebec government's acquisition of the building in 2021 estimated the cost of the work at approximately \$800,000.

The René-Lévesque house was built in 1905.



Photo: G. Gagné

Haute-Gaspésie feels suffocated by caribou protection measures

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-ANNE-DES-MONTS - The Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, believes that the 5,000 square kilometre caribou protection zone contained in the pilot project submitted in April 2024 may be too large.

On March 31, Mr. Saint Croix, along with approximately forty elected officials and socioeconomic leaders from the Haute-Gaspésie called on Premier François Legault; the Minister responsible for the Gaspésie, Maïté Blanchette-Vézina; and the Minister of the Environment, the Fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks, Benoît Charette, in a heartfelt plea demanding quick action in the caribou file.

The stakeholders called for a suspension of the interim caribou protection measures that have been in place since 2019 and the non-implementation of the measures contained in the pilot project announced in April 2024, as it was never adopted.

"We have no predictability for our businesses in all our sectors: recreational tourism, wind power, or development," noted Haute Gaspésie Prefect Guy Bernatchez.

The temporary closure of the Damaboys sawmill in



Photo: Roger Roy

Prefect Guy Bernatchez, surrounded by elected officials and socioeconomic leaders from Haute-Gaspésie.

Cap-Chat triggered protests. This isn't the first time that Haute-Gaspésie has called for relaxed measures in order to maintain strong economic activity.

"We wanted to make a big impact. We have an action plan. This is an initial effort, and we know we can mobilize hundreds of people. We'll be closely monitoring the government's position on our request. If they don't want us to become a pebble in their shoes, they'll have to deliver," warns the prefect, making a connection with the situation regarding American tariffs.

"Mr. Legault's first statement in this regard was to say that it was poison for Quebec

businesses because it prevented them from having predictable business. We in the Haute-Gaspésie have been experiencing this unpredictability for six years, and we want it to end," he says.

In Haute-Gaspésie, some 5,000 square kilometres are in a protected zone. "That's ten times the size of the island of Montreal for 11 free-roaming caribou; we think that's exaggerated. We all agree on caribou protection. We agree on an area surrounding the Parc national de la Gaspésie for the caribou to take refuge there during the winter, but the protected area extends from the Capucins to Anse-

Pleureuse. It doesn't make sense," says Mr. Bernatchez.

Meanwhile, some other entrepreneurs have diversified their economies, particularly by focusing on backcountry skiing.

"It's been held back by interim measures that are unreasonable and don't serve the caribou by closing the territory near the sea. It's not their natural territory," maintains the prefect.

"We continue to insist that a balance between ecology and the economy is possible." "We have a large enough territory, and we want access to it so that we can expand to meet our aspirations, like any other MRC in the Gaspé Peninsula and

elsewhere in Quebec," Mr. Bernatchez points out.

The 18 jobs lost at the Damaboys sawmill have hurt Cap-Chat and Haute-Gaspésie.

"A socio-economic impact study indicates that we could lose hundreds of jobs in Haute-Gaspésie, which would represent some 50,000 jobs in Montreal. We agree that if tomorrow morning there is an announcement of a loss of 50,000 jobs in Montreal, will the government take action? We want to have the same attention for our territory," concludes the prefect.

"We understand a certain impatience surrounding the regulatory process for caribou protection," notes Mr. Sainte-Croix. "This recent news (the sawmill closure) adds to the urgency to act and come up with solutions that take into account local realities and the challenges of caribou protection and economic development," he notes.

The 5,000-square-kilometre zone is hampering any development in Haute-Gaspésie. "We're talking about a dozen caribou in the Haute-Gaspésie territory, which is already occupied by a national park and a wildlife reserve. The restricted habitat zone is somewhat excessive. I can understand that,

Cont'd on page 13

A temporary home for the Griffon Cultural Centre

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Griffon Cultural Centre in the Anse-au-Griffon sector of Gaspé will be housed in a temporary location until a permanent solution is found.

The organization, which promoted culture in all its forms and operated a café, has reached an agreement with Parks Canada to take possession of the building, which has been empty for several years located between Rivière-au-Renard and Anse-au-Griffon.

Since September, the organization has been working hard to revive its activities following the fire that completely destroyed the historic community cold room in the heart of the village.

"We told ourselves that we couldn't go so long without maintaining contact with the community when reconstruc-

tion could take two or three years." The idea of creating a small café in the cove arose, and we're currently making it happen," notes the organization's president, Stéphane Morissette.

A temporary kitchen will be built with a limited food offering, and the site will offer a small cultural program to complement its activities.

The partnership with Parks Canada is the same as those established with other businesses operating in Forillon.

The board of directors has just completed a strategic plan to guide the future cultural centre, which will eventually be relocated to the abandoned Manoir Lebouthillier barn.

A health assessment of the building will be done. "From this, we will develop plans for our next cultural center project," says Mr. Morissette.

The centre will rewrite history, as it did when it created the Griffon Cultural Centre,



The Griffon Cultural Centre will temporarily operate in this Parks Canada building.

Photo: Griffon Cultural Centre

which saved the historic refrigerator. The building was abandoned in the early 1990s and remained so until 1999, when villagers, aware of the historical value and great potential of the site, decided to form a provisional committee to save it from demolition.

In 2001, this group of committed citizens became what it remains today: the L'Anse-au-Griffon Warehouse Committee, also known as the Le Griffon Cultural Centre.

In 2003, restoration work began, with the first version of the centre being created in 2006.

"We're continuing our mission to some extent. Essentially, the L'Anse-au-Griffon Warehouse Committee was there to save a heritage building. We're going to do the same thing with the Manoir's barn." We're excited about this project because it will create a cultural hub in the center of the village, along with the Lebouthillier Manor and the Maison aux lilas, which is just behind it," says the president.

The temporary Café de l'Anse will operate from mid-June until around Thanksgiving, as the building is not winterized. "We're very happy to continue the mission," concludes Mr. Morissette.

30 years for Douglastown's Tapp Products

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - Gaspé's Tapp Products has come a long way over the past 30 years, particularly with its famous sauerkraut produced at its Douglastown facility. To celebrate its anniversary, the company is marking its milestone by launching a new product.

Tapp Products was founded in 1995 by Sylvain Tapp and Éline Côté. "It's a family business. At that time, Sylvain's reason for founding the company was to add a source of income. We were farmers with tomato and cucumber greenhouses, and he was looking for work to supplement the season," explains his son and general manager, Julien Tapp. The Gaspé climate allows for the cultivation of the cabbage used to create sauerkraut, even though the soil can be challenging.

Maintaining consumer trust over time is always a goal. "It's always a challenge. If we go back to the beginning of the company, there were two good challenges: making regional products and doing organic lacto-fermentation. In the mid-1990s, it wasn't something that was known. We were on the fringes of what was being done. Tenacity and resilience were the key to getting through the years," says Mr. Tapp.

Making a place on grocery store shelves was also a major challenge.

To mark its 30th anniversary, Tapp Products is unveiling Kimchi Nappa — 30th Edition. Inspired by traditional Korean kimchi and prepared in a limited edition, it features fermented organic napa cabbage and gochugaru peppers. "We're really focusing on slightly more Asian flavors with larger pieces. We'll have much more crunch and flavour in this new product," says Julien Tapp.

Developing an agri-food business in a remote region is also quite an adventure.

"Over the years, we've implemented processes that we're constantly improving. We've been working for several years—and thanks to my father—with business relationships spanning 30 years. They're easier, and we have a better track record. We certainly won't hide the fact that profitability depends on growth and volume to cover our costs," the general manager calculates. And the future is just as promising.

"We want to continue to demonstrate our expertise, our ability to adapt and innovate, to build relationships with our businesses and employees, and to remain a leader in the lacto-fermentation market," says Mr. Tapp. Julien Tapp has been at



Tapp Products' new product: Kimchi Nappa.

Photo: Roger Saint-Laurent

the helm of the company since August 2020 and has been involved with the business since 2016. The company modernized its facilities during this time and automated certain processes to maintain profitability.

"These investments are necessary, as are the financial partners, in order to achieve growth and achieve an adequate profitability threshold," he notes, given that the company's reputation is recognized by lenders.

Tapp Products is looking to expand, and the goal is to increase production capacity in the short term through factory renovations.

"We want to remain at the forefront, and in the future, there will be other major projects to allow us to establish ourselves in the market," predicts Mr. Tapp.

In addition to the launch of the new product to mark its 30th anniversary, Tapp Products will participate in various food trade shows. The company will also highlight the artisans and partners who have contributed to its history and will offer special events and promotions to thank its loyal customers.





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PERCÉ:

▶ Cont'd from page 3

in her statement. "However, there are lines that should never be crossed. Our elected officials are entitled to respect for their dignity, honour, and reputation. Unfortunately, this line has been crossed multiple times in my case over the years. This led me to resign in July 2024," the former elected official continued.

She explains the reasons for

filing her petition with the court. "I'm doing this to restore my reputation, which has been unfairly tarnished for months, to the detriment of my physical and mental health, and my quality of life. I'm doing it because the truth has its rights," she explains, adding that she is also doing it for all those who choose to engage in municipal politics and who, increasingly, are victims of personal attacks, lies, and harassment.

"I'm doing it for the future

of our municipal democracy. I'm doing it for those who will follow in Percé, where a harmful climate has prevented us from moving forward for too long. There comes a time when we must, collectively, stop tolerating the unacceptable," she adds, expressing confidence in the judicial process now underway.

"Until then, for reasons you will understand, I will make no further public comments on the matter," concludes Ms. Poirier.

CARIBOU:

▶ Cont'd from page 11

faced with a proposal of this nature—we're talking about 5,000 square kilometers—it might seem quite monumental. We're talking about 12 animals in an already protected territory, which has already been the subject of concessions from Haute-Gaspésie regarding access to the territory and resources," notes Mr. Saint-Croix.

A boundary zone around the Parc de la Gaspésie could be an option. "I think that all the solutions deserve to be analyzed in their proper measure. Dialogue is crucial. I hope that we will not reach a breaking point in the dialogue considering the plant closure and job losses. The lack of predictability throughout the regulatory process means that dialogue is not necessarily fruitful, but it must be maintained," recom-

mends the Member of the National Assembly (MNA).

"The 5,000-square kilometre zone reserved for caribou habitat will need to be reexamined, and I am confident that Minister (Charette) is attentive to the priorities of the Haute-Gaspésie, both for preservation and economic development," said Mr. Saint-Croix, noting that Quebec cannot ignore the potential for wind energy development, which could not be realized under the current proposed framework.

Given the job losses, Quebec is working with Damaboïs and the industry to find solutions.

"For recreational tourism, it is of paramount importance in the region. It is a vector of influence and attractiveness for young people. There are possible solutions. I hope that all this will evolve favorably," the MNA concluded.



Former director general, Jean-François Coderre, targeted by Cathy Poirier.



Councillor and pro-mayor at the time, Doris Rehel.





Michel Fréchette, who succeeded Jean-François Codette, is also in Cathy Poirier's sights.

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Easter

EGG HUNT







There are Easter eggs hidden throughout this issue of SPEC. You are invited to go on an Easter Egg Hunt and list how many Easter eggs are on each page.



You can submit your answers by April 16, 2025.
Email: specs@globetrotter.net
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Participants will be entered in a draw for an Easter basket with items from our generous sponsors.




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Announcements



Obituary



HOTTON: Ian Terrence

Aug 12, 1956 - March 16, 2025.

It is with great sadness that we announce Ian's passing at the age of 68, after a brief but courageous battle with throat and lung cancer.

Ian leaves behind his beloved wife, Tina Gore. He was predeceased by his father Terrence William. Left to mourn is his mother, Marion Syvret Hotton; younger brother Dean (Beverley); and two younger

sisters Ann (Donald) and Christine (William).

Also survived by Tina's sister Diane and husband Steve. Loving uncle to many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and a great-nephew.

To be cremated by Guay Funeral Home, followed by a service and burial at Milles-Isles cemetery later this summer.

Ian will always be remembered for his willingness to offer a helping hand and his friendly waves and greetings to anyone walking by.

His mother and siblings will forever miss the sound of his voice greeting them with a hearty "Good Day" each morning.

He will remain in our hearts and minds forever. Donations to the Cancer Society would be greatly appreciated.

Obituary - 150 words - \$50
150-250 words - \$55
250+ words - quote will be provided
In memory: 150 words - \$35
150-250 words - \$45
Funeral, Celebration of Life,
Card of Thanks, Engagement,
Birth, Prayer, Birthday - \$35
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HOROSCOPES

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
This week you are going to take action on a project that has been on your mind for awhile, Aries. Trust your instincts, but make sure you are not moving too fast.
TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
This week brings an opportunity for intellectual pursuits, Taurus. You might think to enroll in a higher education class or a take a course on a specific hobby that has been on your mind.
GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

Partnerships are key right now, Gemini. You might want to pursue new professional relationships. Embrace your ability and willingness to adapt and facilitate change.
CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
You need to take care of your body and mind, Cancer. Now is as good a time as any to begin this pursuit. Even small adjustments can lead to long-term health benefits.
LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, this is your week to look into matters of self-expression and creativity. Pour your energy into anything that gets

you excited. Your enthusiasm may draw others in as well.
VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, home life takes center stage this week, and you might feel a strong desire to nurture your space. Decluttering and organizing could bring more harmony to your home.
LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, you are able to express your thoughts with clarity and charm, which is why personal relationships often come easy to you. This week you may use this superpower to make friends.
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

You may soon find yourself reevaluating how you spend your money or what you value most in life, Scorpio. This is a good time to check financial goals and adjust them.
SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
There is a sense of fresh energy surrounding you this week, Sagittarius. If you have been putting off something, now is the time to take the leap.
CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Capricorn, focus on rest and relaxation in the days ahead.

You have been putting in a lot of work lately and now is a time to focus on your inner self and recharge.
AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Collaborations with others could prove fruitful this week, Aquarius. Don’t hesitate to lean on your social network when you need to get something done.
PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
You might be presented with a way to take your professional life to the next level, Pisces. Strategize about how to move forward in this regard, and think through all decisions.

COAST ROUND-UP

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

HOPE:
Hope Baptist Church
Sundays: Sunday School starting at 10 a.m. Worship service beginning at 11 a.m.
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:
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.
May 6: General meeting at 6 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.
NEW CARLISLE:
Bible Chapel
Meetings
Sundays: Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School - 2 p.m.
Thursdays: Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.
CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:
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
Book Room
Please be advised that the book room is open. Anyone who needs assistance can contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.
ROTARY CLUB
WINNERS:
The winner for March 1 is: Marie-Ève Verreault.
The winners for the week of March 2 are: Sylvie Duranleau, Marie-Claude Allard, Gilles Pelletier, Lucien Dickie, Catherine Coderre,

Huguette Arsenault and Samuel Binette.
The winners for the week of March 9 are: Alice Marsh, Suzanne Willett, Jean-Paul St-Onge, Sylvie Leblanc, Marleene Robertson, Hélène Poirier and Jim McDonald.
The winners for the week of March 16 are: Linda Després, Dominique Cyr, Paul-Égide Cyr, Éric Bonneau, Claude Trépanier, Laurene St-Onge and Josée Poirier.
The winners for the week of March 23 are: Dawn-Marie Bujold, Diane Bujold, Pneus, Jean-François Leblanc, Jean-Claude Boudreau, Chantal Landry and Maude Goselin.
The winners for the week of March 30 and 31 are: Michelle Cayouette, Jean-Paul St-Onge.

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, April 13
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Thursday, April 17
New Carlisle
7 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service
Friday, April 18
New Carlisle
10 a.m. Stations of the cross
Hope Town
3 p.m. Good Friday
Saturday, April 19
Shigawake
7 p.m. Service
Sunday, April 20
New Carlisle
6 a.m. Sunrise Service
9 a.m. Easter Sunday Service
Port Daniel
11 a.m. Easter Sunday Service

EASTER
Worship & Celebrations

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, April 13
St. Pauls - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Thursday, April 17
St. Andrews - York
7 p.m. Maundy Thursday
Friday, April 18
St. Andrews - York
11 a.m. Service of the word
Saturday, April 19
St. Pauls - Gaspé
8 p.m. Holy Eucharist
Sunday, April 20
St. Andrews - York
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

UNITED CHURCH

New Richmond
10 a.m. Service
Hope Town
Sunday, April 13
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, April 20
10 a.m. Easter Sunday Service with communion



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