

More than 10,000 Gaspesians likely take the Montreal-Halifax train annually

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – A recent compilation reveals that between 12,000 and 13,000 Gaspesians likely take the VIA Rail Montreal-Halifax train each year, despite considerable obstacles to getting there, including having to drive to the train station in either Matapedia or Campbellton, New Brunswick.

This compilation was made by the Coalition of Gaspesians for the Return of the VIA Rail Passenger Train, which has been campaigning for 12 years, for the national carrier to return east of the village of Matapedia as soon as possible. Some passengers reportedly drive up to four hours just to catch the train.

VIA Rail suspended the Montreal-Gaspé route in two stages, ceasing service between New Carlisle and Gaspé in December 2011 and along the Matapedia-New Carlisle stretch in September 2013, due

to the condition of the tracks and above all certain bridges.

The calculation by Coalition spokesperson Micheline Saint-Onge is based on data provided by VIA Rail, considering the postal codes of users living in the Gaspé Peninsula. In 2024, 2,471 Gaspé residents boarded or disembarked the train in Campbellton, and 172 in Matapedia, for a total of 2,643 people. These stations are two stops on the Halifax-Montreal train, which makes this route three times a week.

"VIA Rail provided us with this data on the basis that these passengers have the VIA Preference card. VIA has the postal codes of the holders of this card, except that only 21% of VIA Rail users have the card. We can therefore multiply this number of 2,643 people by five to get an idea of the total number of residents from the Gaspé taking the train to travel," explains Ms. Saint-Onge.



Photos: G. Gagné

A rule of three would accurately give a number of 12,585 passengers per year, but that's not all, she adds.

"Our calculation doesn't take into account people living

in other regions who use the train to get here. There are quite a few, given that many native Gaspé residents live outside the region. This also doesn't include tourists. Some

hotels even pick up their guests in Campbellton," explains Ms. Saint-Onge.

For years, VIA Rail management has stipulated that it will not return to the Gaspé Peninsula until the track is repaired all the way to Gaspé. Transports Québec, which acquired the Matapedia-Gaspé railroad in the spring of 2015, is working on its rehabilitation, but the work is at least three years behind schedule.

VIA Rail management also maintains that a rolling stock availability issue is preventing it from returning to the Gaspé Peninsula immediately. Micheline Saint-Onge vigorously rejects this argument.

"There are at least 12,000 or 13,000 people, and probably quite a few more, who come to or leave the Gaspé Peninsula by train. These people are already in the passenger cars. So, let's give us back

Cont'd on page 2

Chief Electoral Officer cautions against disinformation

CYNTHIA DOW

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES - Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, Stéphane Perrault, is warning Canadians to be on the lookout for fake news about the up-coming federal election, particularly on social media websites.

Mr. Perrault met with representatives of various social media platforms in late March to explore with them steps they could take to reduce the possibility of spreading misinformation and disinformation during the election campaign. At the time, he expressed confidence that they were taking the issue seriously.

According to the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security,

"Misinformation refers to false information that is not intended to cause harm. Disinformation refers to false information that is intended to manipulate, cause damage, or guide people, organizations, and countries in the wrong direction."

This federal election is the first to be held since Canadian journalism disappeared from Facebook pages, a result of Meta's reaction to a new law passed in June 2023 which requires tech giants such as Meta and Google to pay Canadian media outlets for news shared on their platforms. While Google has agreed to comply and is in the process of paying, Meta has refused, and removed all Canadian news contents from its platforms, including SPEC.

The absence of real Canadian journalism on Facebook, which is used by four out of five Canadians, and the increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), coupled with the threat of foreign interference in elections has officials worried that disinformation could impact the electoral process. An 18-month public inquiry into foreign interference which ended in January concluded that foreign interference had not yet influenced the outcome of any federal election, but Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue was quoted as saying that "...misinformation is the single biggest threat to our democracy."

There are solutions to the problem. For real-time news on the elections, voters can

consult real Canadian media sources such as SPEC for local content, CBC and CTV for national news and newspapers such as the Montreal Gazette, The Globe and Mail, and the National Post, etc. There are also newsletters available free of charge by email covering current topics of interest, such as The Conversation Canada which is produced by academics across the country.

If you come across something questionable online and want to verify it, Canadian tools like MediaSmarts.ca and the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security at www.cyber.gc.ca are reliable sources for fact-checking. For United States-based news stories you can verify the information at snopes.com.

As for information about the electoral process, the Chief Electoral Officer is urging Canadians to verify directly with Elections Canada officials, or at elections.ca. On their Election facts page you can report online disinformation that you come across.

You can also alert Facebook officials to questionable posts by using the three dots to the left at the top of each post, scroll down to "report post" and there you will see a list of choices including "Scam, fraud or false information." In particular, if you see a post which claims to be from a Canadian news outlet on Facebook, you'll know right away it's likely to be fraudulent.

the rolling stock that would allow us to get our train back as quickly as possible," she says.

When VIA Rail operated the Montreal-Gaspé train, with three round trips per week until 2011, between 23,000 and 29,000 people travelled annually, approximately 185 per trip.

A productive round of public meetings

Micheline Saint-Onge completed a tour of eight meetings held between Mata-pedia and Paspébiac at the end of March. These meetings attracted just over 150 people who strongly called for the train's return to New Carlisle as soon as possible, and to Gaspé as soon as the line was repaired.

In addition to congratulating Micheline Saint-Onge for her "Extremely solid argument on public transit in the context of climate change," Jean-Eudes Pinard, a participant in the Maria meeting, was calmly but firmly critical of VIA Rail. "I was the last attendant at



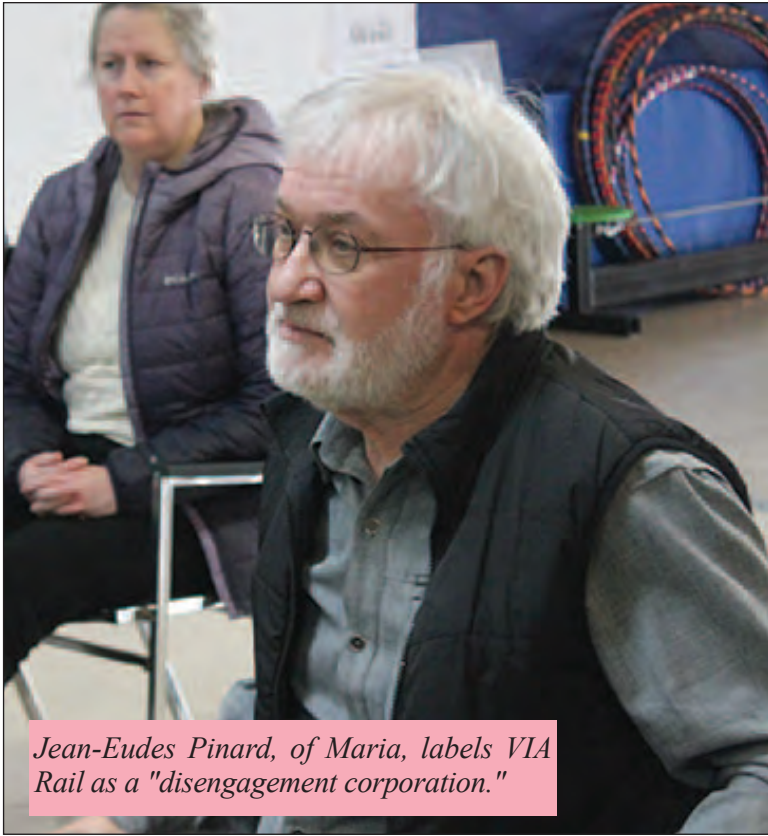
Marie-Josée Racine wonders why MNA Catherine Blouin doesn't support the Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of VIA Rail's Passenger Train.

the Maria station in 1985. VIA Rail, since its creation in 1977, has been a disengagement company. (...) It closed several stations in a single wave at the time, theoretically to improve service, hoping to shorten travel times. But the journey time didn't shorten, and ridership declined," Mr. Pinard said.

Also from Maria, Marie-Josée Racine expressed surprise at the low number of federal and provincial politi-

cians who signed letters of support for the Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of VIA Rail's Passenger Trains. Micheline Saint-Onge indicated in March, before the current electoral campaign, only the outgoing Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament, Kristina Michaud, expressed support for the movement.

"How is it that Member of the National Assembly (Catherine) Blouin doesn't officially support the return of



Jean-Eudes Pinard, of Maria, labels VIA Rail as a "disengagement corporation."

the passenger train?" asked Ms. Racine, referring to the Coalition avenir Québec elected representative for Bonaventure.

Locomotives can turn in New Carlisle. This is why the town is chosen as a first step for service resumption. The railway between New Richmond and Port Daniel is supposed to reopen in June or July, as track and bridge upgrading work will be completed.

For now, traffic resumption

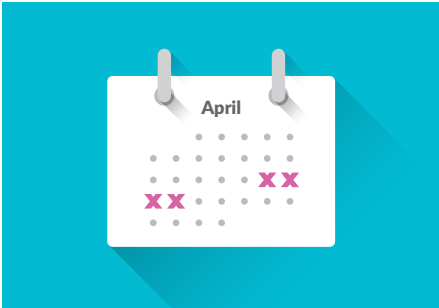
to Port Daniel is mainly motivated by cement hauling. Freight trains don't have to turn there because they are almost always pulled by two locomotives placed in a back-to-back position.

In contrast, VIA Rail's passenger train in the Gaspé Peninsula is generally pulled by a single locomotive, with a single cab at one end of it. Some European locomotives, however, are equipped with two cabs at both ends.

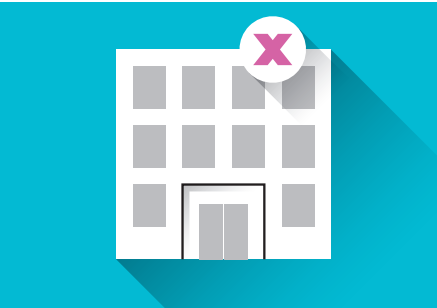
FEDERAL ELECTION / MONDAY, APRIL 28

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Police report

Man charged with assault following altercation in L’Alverne

Brandon MacDonald, 21, from Pointe-à-la-Croix faces assault, assault causing bodily harm and assault with a weapon charges. According to the investigation, the suspect allegedly used a knife during an argument that broke out between him and another man, on Robitaille Street, in the Alverne sector of Pointe-à-la-Croix on the evening of April 1. Both men were taken to the hospital after the altercation to be treated for injuries. Brandon MacDonald was charged the next day and appeared again at the New Carlisle Courthouse on April 7.

“The scene was analyzed and the investigation tends to prove that both men knew each other, that it was not an attack at a random house. We can also say that the altercation is not linked to recent assaults with weapons that recently occurred in the region. The (Alverne incident) investigation was conducted by the Avignon MRC detachment of the SQ,” explains Frédéric Deshaies, spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec.

The police investigation is completed and has been submitted to criminal prosecutor Cédric Leblanc-Falardeau, of the Bonaventure judicial district. “Brandon MacDonald was asked to find a lawyer,” points out Mr. Leblanc-Falardeau regarding the April 7 court appearance.

The other man involved in the altercation is 42 years old. He was questioned by the police and released pending further proceedings. As he has not appeared in court, his name cannot be disclosed.

Cap-Chat snowmobile accident claims life of Nova Scotia man

A man, in his fifties, from Nova Scotia died on April 9, following a snowmobile accident that occurred at 2:15 p.m. in the backcountry of Cap-Chat. The accident occurred near the Corridor panoramique Road and Trail 595 intersection. A group of snowmobilers was nearby when the accident occurred, and they called emergency services.

“For a reason that is still under investigation by the coroner, the victim deviated from the trail and hit a tree. Was he going too fast or did he suffer from an illness? That is the question the coroner is looking into. The victim was carried away from the accident location by police officers and paramedics. The accident, however, occurred several kilometres from Cap-Chat, in the woods and getting the man to the hospital was a long process. He was pronounced dead at the hospital shortly after 9 p.m.,” explains Frédéric Deshaies, Sûreté du Québec spokesperson.

Three years in prison for Michael Bourque

Quebec Court Judge Denis Paradis upheld the joint submission of the defence and the Crown and sentenced Michael Bourque, 29, from Chandler, to three years in prison. He was one of four individuals responsible for a violent break-in on Baril Street in Percé in December 2023. Michael Bourque had previously pleaded guilty to charges of breaking and entering to commit assault with a weapon, mischief, and threatening to obtain drugs from the victim, who was not seriously injured in the attack. An unpaid debt and 25,000 methamphetamine pills are believed to be at the centre of this case. Detained in Quebec City for several months, Michael Bourque had 422 days credited towards his sentence, leaving 693 days remaining. He will be required to provide a DNA sample and be placed on a probation for three years. Jonathan Racette, 30, of Port-Daniel-Gascons, was sentenced to two years less a day in prison, and André Roussy, 38, was sentenced to 33 months in prison in the same affair. Tommy-Albert Lantin, 26, will return to court soon for sentencing.

Bonaventure firefighter suspended without pay

The unauthorized action by a firefighter working for the Bonaventure Fire Department led to a suspension without pay, according to a report released by Carleton-based CIEU-FM. On March 8, around 10 a.m., Patrick Giguère, a volunteer firefighter for eight years, left the fire station with the pumper truck, carrying a young child. He drove down Grand-Pré Street toward John-Hall-Kelly Street. On the way back to the fire station, after covering a distance of about one kilometre, the firefighter attempted to back the fire truck up to safety but it got stuck in the snowbank.

A mechanical failure ensued while the truck was stuck on the street. Backup was called and the department chief had to repair the truck on-site outside. The truck returned to the fire station between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m., according to the parties' differing versions. Weather conditions were poor that Saturday, it was snowing and road conditions in the region were difficult, recalls Bonaventure Mayor Pierre Gagnon, who deplored the fact that emergency calls could have been received at the fire station.

Patrick Giguère acknowledges that he was not authorized to remove the vehicle from its location. He said he wanted to inspect the equipment. The volunteer firefighter notes that his toddler was not endangered and that a second vehicle, another pumper truck, was available if needed. But he acknowledges his wrongdoing and says that it will not happen again.

The firefighter met with his superiors on March 10 and was suspended with pay pending an investigation. The suspension was extended, this time without pay, for 15 working days. The municipal council will have to decide what happens next. "Other things can happen after that," mayor Gagnon said on April 8.

Repeat offender arrested in major drug bust

A drug trafficking repeat offender, Mathieu Element, 42, of Gaspé, was arrested again on the evening of April 9 in Gaspé with more than 1,280 grams of cocaine in his possession. At approximately 7:30 p.m., Sûreté du Québec officers searched a vehicle in the Saint-Maurice-de-l'Échouerie area and a residence on Chemin de l'Église, and made an arrest. In addition to the cocaine, officers seized approximately 1,500 methamphetamine pills, a certain quantity of psilocybin (mushrooms), various drug trafficking equipment, more than \$10,500, and a Honda CR-V. The accused who faces a total of five charges, including drug possession and drug trafficking, as well as breach of probation appeared at the Percé Courthouse on the afternoon of April 10. He is remanded in custody and will return to court on April 29 for further proceedings. The investigation began in February, thanks to information received from the public. The individual was arrested in February 2023 with 500 grams of cocaine in his possession. He was sentenced at the time to two years less a day in prison.

200 fewer jobs in the region in March

Nelson Sergerie
GASPÉ - The Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands had 200 fewer full-time jobs between February and March of this year, according to Statistics Canada.

The federal agency reported that 35,100 people were employed last month, but despite this, the unemployment rate fell by 0.4%, settling at 13.3%. This decrease is attributed to 400 people leaving the labour force.

There were 28,800 full-time jobs in the region, along with 6,300 part-time positions. In this regard, the situation remained stable.

The number of unemployed individuals also fell by 200 compared to February.

Despite these fluctuations, the region is still performing better than it was a year ago in terms of employment. According to the federal agency, 2,800 more people were employed in March 2025 compared to March 2024.

However, there were only 4,400 unemployed a year ago, compared to 5,400 this year. The unemployment rate was 12% in March 2024.

April 28 Election: 6 candidates listed

Nelson Sergerie
GASPÉ - Six candidates have been officially nominated by Elections Canada for the April 28 election in the new riding Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj. The federal agency published the official list of candidates on April 9.

In alphabetical order, Alexis Deschênes will represent the Bloc Québécois, Denise Giroux is a candidate for the New Democratic Party, Shawn Grenier is representing the Rhinoceros Party, Diane Lebouthillier is representing the Liberal Party of Canada, Jean-Pierre Pigeon is running for the Conservative party, and Christian Rioux for the People's Party of Canada.

The Green Party had expressed interest in the riding, but hasn't registered a candidate. It had mentioned the name of Gerry Howlett as a potential candidate in the riding, but it didn't pan out.

Advance polls are open from April 18 to 21. Voting by special ballot is available at any time until April 22. The general election will be held on April 28.

\$25 million to protect the shoreline of Maria's commercial sector

Nelson Sergerie
MARIA - Beach replenishment work to protect Maria's shoreline from the hazards of erosion and coastal submersion in the commercial sector will cost at least \$25 million.

The lowest bid received by the municipality was \$25.7 million from Bélugas Construction of Boisbriand. Five other contractors submitted proposals, the highest being Entreprises PEC of New Richmond at \$38.9 million.

On March 10, municipal council accepted a memorandum of understanding with the Quebec Ministry of Transportation for part of the work to protect Highway 132 between the municipal beach and the post office, and to coordinate with the beach replenishment project for the commercial sector between the IGA market and the Lady Maria residence.

The bids will be analyzed to validate compliance. After that, the final authorizations, including environmental authorizations, and authorization from the Quebec government for the borrowing bylaw will need to be obtained. The authorizations are expected before the start of work, scheduled for late May or early June through November.

The project will stretch approximately 2.4 kilometres and includes the research, characterization, transportation, and placement of the granular materials used, pipe extensions, stormwater outlet development, stormwater manhole installation, and miscellaneous work.

The Pointe Verte area still needs to be protected. \$10 million has been set aside, including \$9.3 million from the Quebec government, which was announced in 2022.

For the Rue des Tournepierres area, Civil Security believes that the work would serve no purpose in protecting residents, as the long-term effects of a construction project would be negligible.

The quotes received are as follows: Béluga Construction Inc. \$25,726,769.21, Pomerleau Inc. \$28,189,761.75, Groupe Lapalme Inc. \$28,601,374.48, LFG Construction \$30,175,414.56, Sani Sable Inc. \$33,302,508.75 and Les entreprises PEC Inc. \$38,950,283.69.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Renewable energy sector
most affected by
Trump’s poor decisions

Of all the dumb things that Donald Trump has done since his November 5 electoral victory, scrapping efforts to assure a sound energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy comes high in the overall standing of economic silliness.

Since the adoption of the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022 by previous president Joe Biden, the United States had embarked on an ambitious plan to make the switch from coal, oil and gas burning facilities to solar and wind energy “farms”, thus stimulating investments worth tens of billions of dollars yearly. The legislation adopted by the Democratic Party’s government had earmarked \$369 billion over ten years to support renewable energy, pollution reduction, and environmental justice. It was rightfully called the greatest energy transition in the history of the country.

While some projects that were approved by the authorities as part of that strategy are already up and running or on the verge of reaching that stage, others are still on the drawing table, and their promoters wonder if they will ever reach fruition.

The energy sector is in a blind spot of the trade

war triggered by Donald Trump, and not only renewable energies. Fossil fuels are also hit hard by the president’s regressive decisions.

Trump wants to gut renewable energies and stimulate coal, oil and gas. He might achieve his first goal to a certain point, but the “success” of his strategy will hit a wall in certain states since that level of government can positively influence the realization of environmentally-friendly ventures.

However, the fight he has instilled against solar and wind power has already had a negative effect on investments, because of the uncertainty climate currently prevailing in the United States. Investors dread uncertainty.

Donald Trump’s initiative to kill renewable energies faces two forms of opposition though, that of nullifying the legislation adopted by Joe Biden’s regime, and that of Republican representatives who hate to see major investment projects being cancelled by the leader of their party!

The steel used for windmill towers mostly comes from Canada and Asia. It has been hit by a 25% tariff since March 13. So, the cost of windmills has increased. So have the blades, such as the ones produced in Gaspé by LM Windpower.

Solar panels are essentially made in China, like many turbines installed at the top of windmills. Currently, tariffs imposed to Chinese products entering the United States reach 145% of their value at customs.

So, the cost of solar panels has become close to prohibitive south of the border. Moreover, since the major power outage in Texas in 2021, which also hit parts of the neighbouring states, huge batteries the size of 40-foot ship containers have been installed here and there to supply communities when there is a

power failure or to complement renewable energies after sunset or when there is no wind. Up to 69% of those big power packs are made in China.

All the energy transition drives developed under free trade or advantageous agreements that assured a reasonable price of input. The trade war is jeopardizing those advantages.

Drill, baby drill?

Naively, Donald Trump thought that his electoral victory would spell the rejuvenation of fossil fuels exploitation. He promised affordable fossil fuels and a drilling frenzy that would stimulate investments way sturdier than putting up solar energy fields and windmills.

So far, the price of oil and gas has plummeted since Trump’s inauguration, and the degree of uncertainty has left exploration ventures few and far between. There is no drilling spree and the economic uncertainty stemming from Donald Trump’s erratic decisions will keep oil companies from investing.

Who is going to invest billions of dollars in exploration for a commodity hit by a falling price, considering that profitable hydrocarbons are increasingly hard to find?

Moreover, the American president, who promised to stimulate pipeline construction, imposed trade tariffs varying between 25% and 145% to the major suppliers of the steel needed for that!

While fossil fuels might become more affordable because the price of crude oil is negatively affected by the economic slump Donald Trump is feeding, a possible recession will reduce consumption, period.

The reduction of oil consumption might however

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Mel Simoneau

Guest
Commentary

The 51st State?
Not Even if we Get to Keep
the Acute Accent in “Gaspé.”

American president, Donald Trump, now knows “reciprocal.” When he brings up tariffs in speech or conversation, he often needlessly repeats the word. He sometimes defines it. It appears he learned “reciprocal” not long ago, and his verbal repetition of the definition is for self-affirmation.

Clearly, Mr. Trump isn’t a reader despite his white-collar life experiences. Imagine the president sitting with a book like “The Handmaid’s Tale.” In my mind, Mr. Trump reads the “CliffsNotes” (the US version of “Coles Notes”) of the classic, and only glances on occasion at the original. He doesn't have the focus or intellectual grasp to read books of any length, or any significance.

Take his “Truth Social” posts. Often, they are muddled. He uses a curious jumble of uppercase and lowercase letters to project emotion much like a young boy would do. Mr. Trump, like that boy, doesn’t understand how to effectively get across a message with tight, focused writing. In public, he’s confident and at ease verbally, but his delivery is often a scuffle of words unfettered by the spatial restraints of his posts.

Now, under normal circumstances it’s rude, vain, and supercilious to belittle another person (as I’ve just done) for his or her challenged abilities. It’s condescending to make light of a person for shortcomings

such as, let’s say, a want of basic carpentry skills, or an inability to understand rudimentary English or French as a second language. In this instance, however, with this president’s imperialism towards Canada, etiquette falls away.

Canada – sovereign and democratic
with its own constitution

Mr. Trump maintains Canada couldn’t survive without the US, yet our primary trading partner for roughly the first 75 years was the United Kingdom. However, around the Second World War, Canada moved away from its traditional trading relations to access the larger and closer US market. Today, Canada has many international trading partners (224 countries and territories), and it will continue to thrive owing to

sound practices and global recognition as a respected democracy.

In Mr. Trump’s worldview, and with his unique, fatuous logic, Canada can seamlessly merge with the US as a state. Does he see the US and Canada as two multinational companies, which, with some paperwork, can seamlessly unite? When the president spoke by phone to former Prime Minister Trudeau prior to the deadline for the first threatened set of tariffs, he outlandishly asked Mr. Trudeau (again) to have Canada join the US.

Mr. Trump sees Canada as less than the United States, and not as a long-established democracy with a constitution and its own culture and people. He implies Canada is fake and sees the Canada-US boundary as “an artificially drawn line,” one that can be

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Renewable energy: Continued from page 4

be the only positive point for human beings getting increasingly affected by the devastating effects of pollution and climate change.

China to confirm its leadership

However, Trump, who manages the country with the world’s highest volume of greenhouse effect gases, is on the one hand handicapping the United States’ capacity to improve their overall ecological record, and that of the planet and, on the other hand, confirming that China will lead the world in renewable energies.

The next four years will be vital if humanity is to adopt sane environmental practices. China remains a huge producer of greenhouse effect gases, sharing the lead with the United States.

However, the deterioration of the environmental situation in the States will give China an outstanding edge in supplying Europe, South America, Canada and Africa with steel, windmill towers, solar panels and huge battery packs. Until November 2024, the United States had a chance to fight in an attempt to be a leader in renewable energy equipment.

Now, Unless there is a sudden turn south of the border, which appears unlikely as of now, the decline of the American empire will take place.

51st state: Continued from page 4

easily erased. Does Mr. Trump’s haphazard boundary rationale apply to the US, too, given we share the same “artificial line”? That is, per his logic, is the US, like Canada, “fake”?

Cod tongues, please, with a full heaping of sovereignty

Is the president right about Canada taking advantage of the US economy (in his “They’re eating the dogs” reality and manipulation, he believes so)? Pundits figure the US trade deficit to be about \$40 billion; Mr. Trump usually quotes \$200 billion. However, Canada significantly discounts crude oil exports to the US. If the cheaper prices were calculated, experts tag the US with a small trade surplus over Canada. Yet, Mr. Trump maintains the US “subsidizes” Canada (in spite of Mr. Trump’s re-

peated insistence about trade “abuse,” globally Canada is on the lower end of tariff applications).

Mr. Trump’s complaint about the US paying Canada exorbitant tariff rates for exported dairy is also misleading. American (and Canadian) authorities note that tariffs are never applied by Canada because they take effect only when an agreed-upon import quota is reached. In spite of a 55% increase in dairy exports from 2020 to 2024, the ceiling has never been reached. As such, no tariffs are applied.

The ultimate goal, flummoxing and absurd, is to annex Canada. This isn’t viable without the political and legal backing of Ottawa (by the House of Commons and the Senate), and all 10 premiers. No prime minister or premier would relinquish Canada’s sovereignty. Furthermore, there undoubtedly would be a national referendum for such an existential moment. Polls indicate about 10 percent of Canadians favour annexation. Ninety percent still covet cod tongues and poutine with their citizenry.

Mr. Trump’s next priority (or concurrent with his annexation aspirations) is to get tariff-burdened Canadian businesses to relocate to the US. As many as 50 percent of businesses say they’ll consider a move. However, businesses don’t just pack up and leave. Costs, transnational regulations, and trained, skilled staff are just some factors to be weighed. As are attachment to family and one’s roots.

“Unpresidented”

Militarily, allied democratic countries don’t invade each other. Sure, the US has historically attempted to conquer pre-Confederation Canada with the Invasion of Québec during the American Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Fenian Raids, and other scattered empire-building aggression. But today, the two countries are bound by integrated trade, tourism, and friendship (Gaspesians welcome and befriend American fishers who try their salmon luck at the York, Cascapédia, and other peninsula rivers).

President Trump is driven by capitalism and power. He isn’t a leader who knows diplomacy or understands world history, economics, and passion for place and identity. Mr. Trump’s actions are (as he once wrote) “unpresidented.” Again, I don’t feel bad for belittling his diminished language skills just now. After all, the man wants our country.

Mel Simoneau’s work has appeared in the Literary Review of Canada, the Catholic Register, and the Montreal Gazette.

Letter to the Editor

The Liberals want to restructure the Canadian Fisheries, but on what basis and for what purpose?

Since 2020, independent fishers in Quebec and the Atlantic have been demanding clear answers from the various fisheries ministers on the disastrous consequences of the fishing decisions of recent years. "Our coastal communities are at risk because of the decisions made by the eight Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans since 2015. If nothing changes, the economic and social viability of our region will disappear!" explains O'Neil Cloutier, Executive Director of the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie (RPPSG).

Federal Elections and the Inshore Fishery

The Liberal Party announced in its election platform that it wanted to restructure the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Unless there is an independent inquiry into the federal government's management of the fishery as suggested by the Bloc Québécois, independent fishermen and our coastal communities are still left in the dark as to how the Liberal Party wants to restructure the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and on what basis.

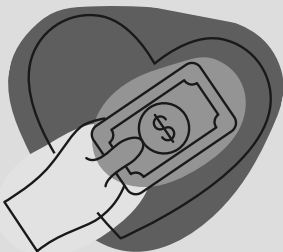
"Coastal fishermen are worried. The Government of Canada has decided to put a large part of the reconciliation efforts with First Nations on our industry. The government has sidelined individual fishers in fisheries management, prioritized access to First Nations, does not apply the principle of a law for all, and has put in place a system of co-management and co-governance of fisheries with First Nations by excluding independent fishers. " says Jimmy Lepage, President of the RPPSG.

The members of the RPPSG want to ensure that their concerns about the survival of their fishery and by extension, the future of their communities are heard. Reconciliation, a term meant to evoke healing and justice, has become a smokescreen for economic and political restructuring in Canada by leaving coastal communities behind.

"We can't get the government to understand that the rules surrounding our industry must apply to ALL fishermen! We have worked incredibly hard for years to renew the resource. What will happen when the independent inshore fishery no longer exists? And we must not tell stories, the threat is real. Enough is enough," concluded O'Neil Cloutier.

Claire Canet, Regroupement des Pêcheurs Professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie

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Managing the Town of Percé with so few staff is a challenge

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ - Percé is struggling to fill positions within the municipal administration, causing delays in processing applications.

The positions of municipal inspector, clerk, and cultural and community events coordinator are all currently unfilled. However, the town has found an interim director general who will begin after Easter, which should help accelerate the hiring process.

The organizational assessment, suggested by the Quebec Municipal Commission, will be launched in May.

"The delays in recruiting mean that the firm would have difficulty arriving immediately to conduct interviews in empty offices. Our interim director is arriving soon. We have received applications for the open positions. We will accelerate everything in May,"

notes the Mayor of Percé Daniel Leboeuf.

"There are a lot of files that are backlogged. There are requests from citizens that we can't respond to quickly. Building permit and zoning applications are also delayed. There's a shortage of people," explains the mayor.

Faced with the absence of an urban planning officer, the town has hired the firm APUR to provide temporary assistance.

Due to the delays, the Town of Percé expanded the agreement to add more hours to the mandate to try to resolve the pending requests, while some files are nearly 90 days behind schedule.

Villa Frederick-James

The Round Table on the Future of the Villa Frederick-James hopes that the historic building will be transformed into a visual arts venue.

"Vaste et Vague, Courant culturel, all these organizations want to meet with the Minister of Culture to create an organization dedicated to the dissemination of visual arts, whether photography, film, painting, or engraving. According to their convictions, all the artists we saw in Percé helped to make Percé known in the visual arts. It would be an obvious vocation," suggests the mayor, recalling that an American has set up a photography and painting studio there. "It would be a return to the building's original purpose," recalls Mr. Leboeuf.

Calls for help from community centres

Percé has five community centres on its territory, and each one is experiencing problems. For example, the Oasis gymnasium roof in the heart of the village leaked in March and requires urgent repairs.

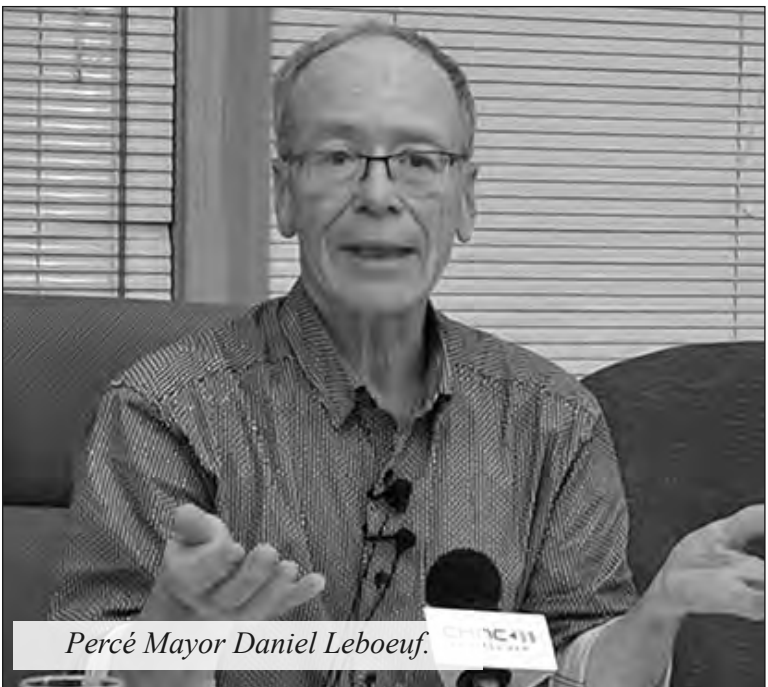


Photo: N. Sergerie

The furnace at the Val-d'Espoir school exploded, causing water damage.

"It shouldn't be surprising. These are former elementary schools built in the 1960s and 1970s, and they are reaching the end of their useful life at

the same time. Percé has five of them on its properties." "It's a big project. We're exploring grant programs that could help us with municipal infrastructure. For now, I don't have any solutions yet," the mayor commented.

Diane Lebouthillier promises to end interprovincial trade barriers

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The Liberal candidate for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj is proposing the idea of ending interprovincial trade barriers in light of the tariff measures implemented by the American administration.

"It is much more difficult to conduct interprovincial trade than international trade," notes the elected official. She discussed the issue with GIMXPORT, which works to develop export markets. The organization does not receive government assistance for domestic trade.

Outgoing Premier Mark Carney is pushing to abolish all federal trade barriers as of July 1. "There were certain preserves to keep their market captive. What we're seeing now with the United States is that they really want to open the door to interprovincial trade." Whether it's spirits or beer... We're told it's easier to ship lobster to China than to British Columbia or Toronto. This will help consolidate our market," says Ms. Lebouthillier.

Each province has its own



Ending interprovincial trade barriers proposed by Diane Lebouthillier.

Photo: Courtesy of Diane Lebouthillier

set of rules, making it difficult to navigate trade across provincial boundaries. "I think that moving forward, the

provinces can work to harmonize the rules," says the candidate, once Ottawa has made its move.





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The VIA Rail issue hits the electoral campaign

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – On April 7, the Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of VIA Rail’s Passenger Trains received a second political endorsement, and it came again from the Bloc Québécois, as candidate Alexis Deschênes seeks election in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj riding.

"The people of the Gaspésie are being cheated by VIA Rail. In fact, VIA Rail is insulting the people of the Gaspésie, and it's normal for them to feel cheated. They pay taxes to Ottawa for a service they don't receive," said Mr. Deschênes, alluding to the fact that the federal government has funded VIA's rolling stock and train operations to the tune of \$812.5 million in 2023.

When the Montreal-Gaspé train was still running three round trips weekly, its annual grant hovered around \$5 million to \$6 million. Since 2013, the public transporter has used the money on other routes.

Mr. Deschênes also noted that the Quebec government has so far injected \$355 million to repair the railway to Port-Daniel, which will soon ensure the network's availabil-

ity to New Carlisle.

The Bloc Québécois candidate deplored the role played so far by his Liberal rival Diane Lebouthillier. "In 2023, when the section was to be completed, she said 'good luck' sarcastically. She tried to belittle the people fighting to get it (the train) back by saying 'I won't get on it.'" She's an obstacle. (...) She's fighting with VIA against us instead of fighting with us against VIA."

He believes that by constantly putting pressure on VIA Rail once elected in Ottawa, he will be able to reverse the transporter's decision.

The Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of VIA Rail’s Passenger Train has so far collected 19,500 signatures from people demanding VIA Rail's cooperation in returning to New Carlisle and Gaspé in phases. It also invites the public to become a member of the organization.

Its spokesperson, Micheline Saint-Onge, insists that the Coalition is not taking a political stand.

"It is not us adopting the Bloc’s position. It is the Bloc that is adopting the Coalition’s position. If Diane Lebouthillier invites us to at-



Photo: G. Gagné

If elected, Alexis Deschênes of the Bloc Québécois intends to negotiate with VIA Rail for an early return of the train between Matapédia and New Carlisle.

tend a meeting, we will go, if it is not in Gaspé, but I doubt that she will," says Ms. Saint-Onge, who believes the outgoing Member of Parliament has had many opportunities to support the Coalition.

Micheline Saint-Onge is asking VIA Rail to resume the service to New Carlisle as soon as the line is functional

there. For seven years now, the management of the transporter has affirmed that it will only come back, east of Matapédia, when the line is fully repaired as far as Gaspé.

On March 25, the Quebec government published a Quebec Infrastructure Plan that put back the Port Daniel-Gaspé section of the line in a planning stage, instead of a full refurbishment stage. The reason was a cost overrun of \$150 million.

However, the two Members of the National Assembly representing the Gaspé Peninsula, Catherine Blouin and Stéphane Saint-Croix, affirmed a week later that the setback will lead to a better cost-control, without putting the Port Daniel-Gaspé project in jeopardy. The reopening date remains unknown for now but the 2027 goal seems out of reach.

Tourists anxious to take the train

Meanwhile, tourists familiar with the Gaspé Peninsula follow the train issue closely. Yolande Lemieux, a resident of Montreal, wrote to the SPEC to express her desire to

come back to the region.

"I'm older and I love the Gaspé Peninsula. Three years ago, I decided to take the train to get there, to Percé specifically, because I no longer wanted to drive all the way from Montreal. At that time, there was a paid bus service, VIA Rail, that would pick us up and take us back to Campbellton. Two years ago, I wanted to do the same thing, but there were no more buses serving VIA Rail and no buses from the Baie des Chaleurs either. So, I had to cancel my trip and I was no longer able to go to the Gaspé Peninsula," explains Ms. Lemieux.

While waiting for the train to come back east of Matapédia, she hopes her letter will convince the public transporter and regional authorities of the relevance of resuming the RéGIM bus link between Gaspé and New Carlisle, for example.

"When I used them (the buses), they were full, round trip. On the way, there were, among others, two Tunisians who were arriving to study at the CEGEP in Gaspé. Now, what are they doing to get there?" wonders Ms. Lemieux.

Significant price hike for snow crab fishermen

Free from US tariffs - for now

GILLES GAGNÉ

SAINTE-THÉRÈSE-DE-GASPÉ – The Gaspé Peninsula snow crab fishermen were offered \$7 per pound as a starting price for the first week of catches in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence. This price is between \$2.50 and \$2.75 per pound higher than last year’s.

The boats were out over the early hours of April 5, and the first deliveries of crab were made at the end of the afternoon on April 7. The quotas of zones 12, 12E, 12F and 19 total 18,334.49 metric tonnes, a sharp decline of 33% compared to 2024.

Gaspésians and Magdalen Islanders receive about 30% of that total contingent.

"It looks like last year in terms of landing pace. Not all the boats came back from their first trip 100% loaded but we don't feel the effects of the 33% quota reduction, or certainly not during the first fishing days," explains Bill Sheehan, vice-president of E. Gagnon et Fils, Quebec’s largest shellfish



Photo: G. Gagné

Abundance marked the first week of catches in the Southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

processing plant, located in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé.

The \$7 per pound price compares with \$4.25 to \$4.50 in 2024, with prices varying according to the type of hull crab boats are equipped with. Hulls full of seawater warrant the higher price.

"The starting price of \$7 is a floor price that will be re-adjusted. Newfoundland’s crab industry is still in negotiation, and it could take some time before an agreement is reached. In the Southern Gulf, the plants

are quite aggressive. Where will the price settle? We have talked about the impact of American tariffs for a while, and they haven't hit us so far. We were expecting 10%. It was a false alarm. Prices could reach a level I reluctantly mention, \$8, because that was the price in 2022 and the buyers walked out. I played in that movie and the end was not nice. It took us two years before recovering from it. Meanwhile, in snow crab, the price rarely goes down once the season is

underway," analyzes Mr. Sheehan.

The price situation could change quickly if American tariffs are imposed. It is still a possibility, considering the unpredictable decision-making of president Donald Trump.

"If we wake up one morning with a tariff of 10% or 15%, or 25%, or if a quick supply-management settlement takes place in Newfoundland at \$5 or so per pound, we will have to readjust. That's why I prefer starting low and increasing the price after. Newfoundland's volume of catches will total four times ours this year. That's why we might have to adjust. However, our season is short this year. Most of it might be over by the end of April, so two or three weeks down the road for most fishermen, By the time the Newfoundland crab sector has solved its problems, we might have caught most of our crab," Mr. Sheehan explains.

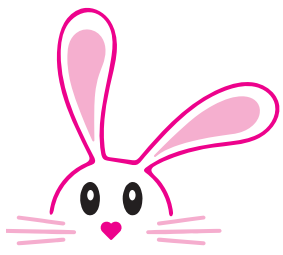
The absence, so far, of tariffs on exports sent to the United States has kept the Canadian dollar higher than ex-

pected, compared to the American currency.

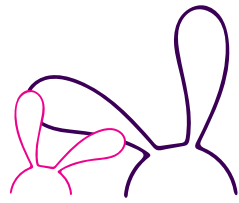
"Our dollar is at \$1.3968 today (April 10). It was between \$1.34 and \$1.37 (Canadian dollar for one American dollar) during the 2024 season. It was between \$1.42 and \$1.48 a few weeks ago when we thought we were going to be hit by tariffs. We were even considering an exchange rate of \$1.52 or \$1.53 at one point over the winter. All things considered, for now, it is more advantageous than last year at this point," adds Mr. Sheehan.

The price is high this year because American inventories of snow crab were non-existent over the winter.

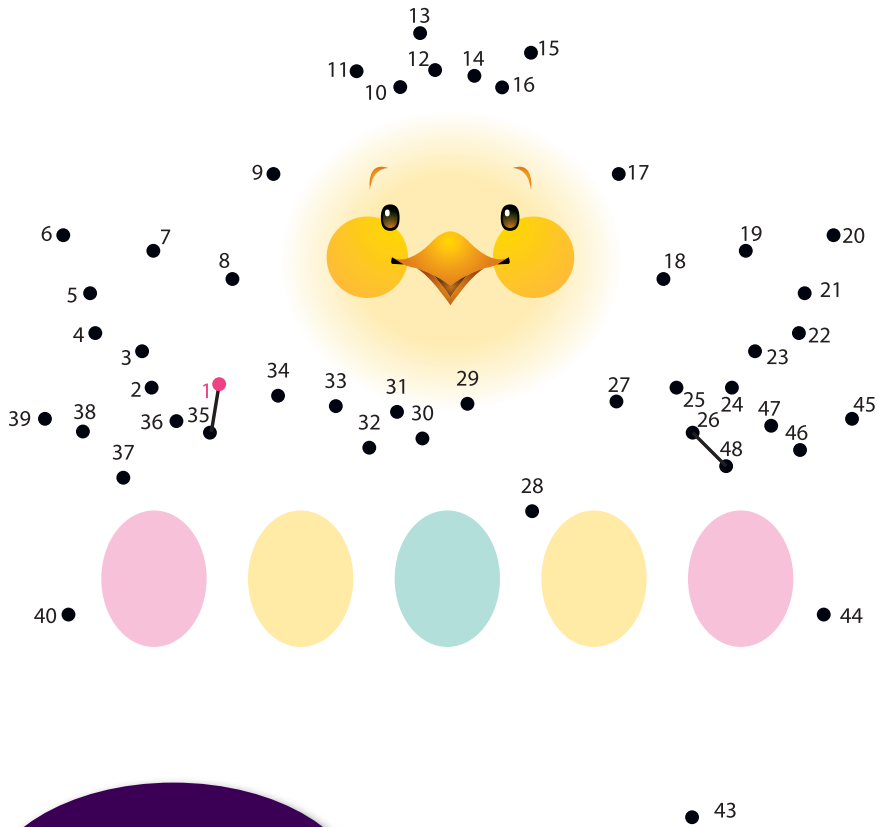
The E. Gagnon et Fils plant currently hires just over 500 people. About 350 of them are processing snow crab, including slightly more than 100 Mexicans. Bill Sheehan expects to process 5.5 million pounds of snow crab this year, compared to 8 million pounds in 2024. Lobster processing will follow at the beginning of May.



Easter FUN for Everyone



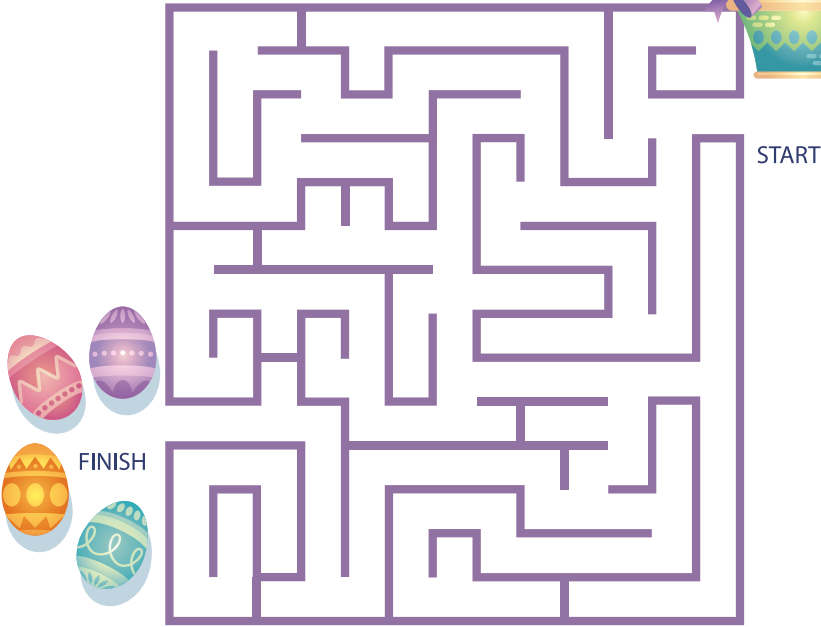
CONNECT THE DOTS



HOLIDAY MAZE



Please help me find eggs for my basket.



Eggcellent Trivia

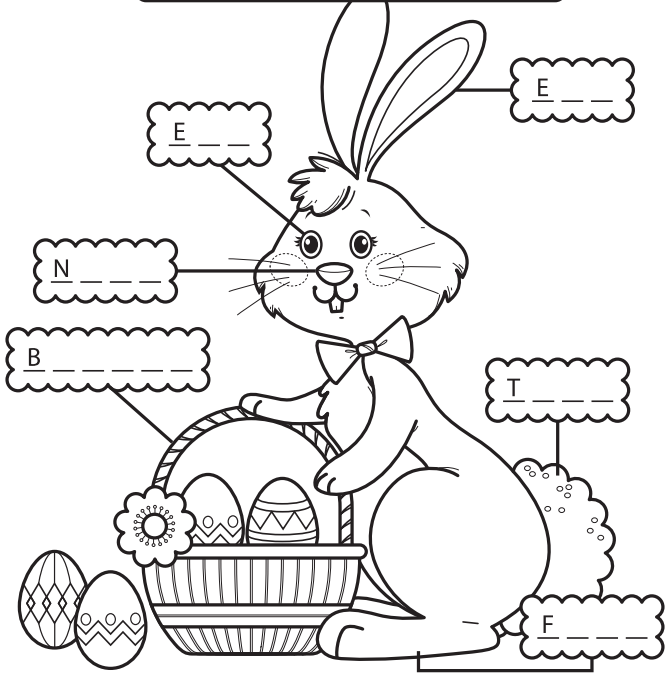
One hen can lay up to 300 eggs per year.

The tradition of decorating eggs for Easter originated in Ukraine.

An egg's shell colour usually corresponds to the earlobe colour of the hen that produced it.

Ostriches lay the largest eggs of any living bird. One ostrich egg can serve about 24 people for breakfast.

FINISH THE EASTER WORDS



COMMUNITY EASTER EGG HUNT!

THE EASTER BUNNY WILL BE HIDING CLUES ALL OVER NEW CARLISLE FOR A FUN SCAVENGER HUNT. CAN YOU CRACK THE CLUES AND FIND THEM ALL?

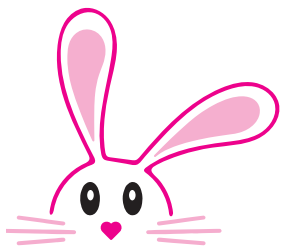
TO JOIN THE FUN, SIMPLY SNAP A PICTURE OF ALL 5 HIDDEN EASTER EGGS AND SEND THEM TO US!

THE HUNT STARTS ON APRIL 18TH AND ENDS ON APRIL 21ST

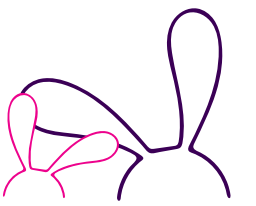
MULTIPLE PRIZES TO BE DRAWN FROM THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE!

CLUES WILL BE DROPPED ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE ON THE EVENING OF THURSDAY, APRIL 17TH. GET READY!

Bright Beginnings GMI



Easter FUN for Everyone



Sweet Potato Mash

Easter is a day spiritual reflection and celebration, and also an opportunity to gather with family members for a delicious dinner. Traditional main courses for Easter include lamb and ham, so home cooks may want to select side dishes that can work with both. Sweet potatoes are a healthy option that also are tasty and nutritious. While some people associate sweet potatoes with the marshmallow-covered dish common around Thanksgiving, they can be sweet or savory, depending on preference. This recipe for "Savory Sweet Potato Mash" makes a delicious side dish worth enjoying. Try it, courtesy of "Danielle Walker's Eat What You Love" (Ten Speed Press).

Savory Sweet Potato Mash
Serves 4 to 6

3 pounds of sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
1/2 cup almond milk
1 1/2 teaspoons fine sea salt
3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup melted ghee
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh thyme, plus whole leaves for garnish

Place the sweet potatoes in a large saucepan and add enough water to cover by 2 inches. Bring the potatoes to a boil over high heat, then turn the heat to medium-low and simmer until tender, about 18 minutes. Remove the potatoes from the heat, drain the water from the pan, then return the potatoes to the pan. Add the almond milk, salt and pepper to the potatoes and use a potato masher to mash to your desired consistency. Drizzle with the ghee, sprinkle in the chopped thyme, and stir gently until just combined. Garnish with thyme leaves and serve warm. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 3 days. Reheat in a dry skillet over medium-low heat until heated through, stirring frequently, about 5 minutes.



Happy Easter

No matter how long it feels like the winter has lasted, Easter brings a sense of warmth in the air. The buds emerging on the tree branches, represent the possibilities of fresh beginnings. So, as Easter approaches fill your hearts with hope, new faith and a belief in the impossible.

Easter is more than a basket of chocolates or candy; it's a celebration of peace, love and the resurrection of Jesus. Let this time be one of rejoicing, gratitude and an openness to others. Kindness and love will continue to grow in the world.

This Easter, let not your hearts be troubled nor your souls lost, for Easter symbolizes the renewal of life, love and happiness.

Remember, beauty shines from above, inviting us to embrace love, strength and joy, not only now, but throughout the entire year.

Ken Ross, New Carlisle



Eggcellent Word Scramble

NYBNU
KEBTSA
RETASE GEG

TBENON
OHAEOTCLC
LYLJE NSEAB

ANSWERS: bunny, basket, Easter egg, bonnet, chocolate, jelly beans

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Happy Easter!

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Easter around the world

HOLLY SMITH

PORT DANIEL – Easter is a holiday many of us know well, filled with chocolate bunnies, colourful eggs, and family dinners. But did you know Easter is celebrated in many different ways all over the world? And that some of our most common Easter traditions go back thousands of years?

Let’s hop into the history and see how Easter brings people together across cultures.

Easter is mainly known as a Christian holiday that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But some Easter traditions actually go back to earlier, non-religious celebrations of spring.

In fact, the word “Easter” may come from the name Eostre, a spring goddess worshipped in ancient England. People would celebrate her

during the spring equinox, a time when days and nights are equal, and new life begins to bloom.

The egg, now a big part of Easter, is one of the oldest symbols of new life and rebirth. Early Christians adopted the egg as a way to celebrate the resurrection, and people began decorating them as far back as the 13th century!

Even the Easter Bunny has roots in folklore. The idea of a rabbit delivering eggs likely began in Germany, where the Osterhase (Easter hare) would lay colourful eggs for children to find. German immigrants later brought this tradition to North America, where it eventually became the beloved Easter Bunny we



know today.

Celebrations Around the World

While we might think of the Easter Bunny as the star of the show, not everyone has the same traditions. Here are some fun and surprising ways Easter is celebrated in other countries:

France: In many parts of France, kids don’t wait for a bunny, they wait for flying bells! According to legend, church bells fly to Rome on Good Friday and return on Easter morning, dropping chocolate and treats as they go.

Italy: In Florence, they celebrate with a huge event called Scoppio del Carro, or “Explosion of the Cart.” A cart packed with fireworks is lit in front of the cathedral for good luck and a joyful celebration.

Philippines: After a week of

serious Holy Week traditions, Filipinos celebrate Easter morning with Salubong, a reenactment of the meeting between Jesus and his mother, Mary. It takes place at sunrise and includes singing, dancing, and community prayer.

Finland: Easter looks a bit like Halloween here! Children dress up as Easter witches, wearing old clothes and colourful scarves, and go door-to-door for sweets.

Australia: Instead of the Easter Bunny, many Aussies celebrate the Easter Bilby, a small, rabbit-like animal that’s native to the country. It’s a way to bring attention to endangered wildlife.

Argentina: In some towns, people gather to cook a massive omelet made with thousands of eggs! It’s a fun and tasty way to bring the community together. No matter where or how

Easter is celebrated, the heart of the holiday is the same: it’s about hope, new life, and being with the people you love. Whether you’re hunting for eggs in your backyard, lighting fireworks in Italy, or cooking up an omelet in Argentina, Easter is a reminder that spring is a fresh start.

And let’s be honest, chocolate always helps, too.



Easter FUN for Everyone

The Journalism Club at Shigawake Port Daniel School (SPDS) has put together a fun and festive Easter quiz to share with readers along the coast!

Whether you're a trivia whiz or just love the Easter season, this quiz is a light-hearted way to test your knowledge and enjoy some springtime cheer. So grab a pencil (or a chocolate egg), gather your peeps, and see how many answers you can crack!

- 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.
- 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15.

1. In what century was Easter invented?

2. When did the tradition of the Easter bunny start appearing?

3. Why does the Easter bunny deliver eggs?

4. Which one of these are a Easter flower?
(A) Daisies (B) Daffodils (C) Roses

5. What food do we traditionally make on Shrove Tuesday?
(A) Bread (B) Pancakes (C) Cupcakes

6. Easter takes place on the same day every year, true or false?
(A) True (B) False

7. What name is given to the Sunday before Easter?
(A) Rest Sunday (B) Easter Sunday (C) Palm Sunday

8. What is the name of the 40 days leading up to Easter?
(A) Christmas (B) Advent (C) Lent

9. Easter Island is a real place in the world, true or false?
(A) True (B) False

10. Which country started the tradition of the Easter bunny?
(A) Canada (B) Switzerland (C) Germany

11. The first Easter eggs were dyed in what colour ?
(A) Red (B) Blue (C) Green

12. Besides bunnies, what animal is considered an Easter symbol?
(A) Mouse (B) Lamb (C) Squirrel

13. What meat is traditionally consumed on Easter Sunday?
(A) Turkey (B) Ham (C) Lamb

14. When did Cadbury make their first Easter egg?
(A) 1875 (B) 1920 (C) 1785

15. Children in Finland dress as what on Easter?
(A) Bunnies (B) Witches (C) Eggs

Answers: (1. 2nd century) (2. 18th century) (3. Eggs are a symbols of fertility and rebirth) (4. B) (5. B) (6. B) (7. C) (8. C) (9. A) (10. C) (11. A) (12. B) (13. B) (14. A) (15. B)

Gaspé tables first Strategic Development Plan

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - A historic first occurred in Gaspé on April 3, with the presentation of the 2024-2034 Strategic Development Plan, a first in the town's nearly 500-year history, which will guide development over the next decade.

Approximately 40 people attended the presentation, and the feedback was very positive. "I imagine Gaspé even bigger and more vibrant, always focused on the outdoors and nature. I imagine a town with more citizen participation. Valuing volunteer efforts will ensure greater involvement. That's how we'll succeed in making this town grow," Mayor Daniel Côté said at the end of the process in 2034.

In the comments heard from citizens present at the presentation, public engagement seems a given for the town.

"We're going to adopt it with the town council. We co-constructed it with the population. It's the result of the



The Mayor of Gaspé presented the strategic plan to the public on April 3.

Photo: N. Sergerie

collaboration of 1,000 citizens, either online or through participation in consultations. I think people recognize that," added the mayor.

The planning focuses its actions on five core values: communication, collaboration, engagement, efficiency, and innovation, grouped into four themes: territory and environment, community, economy, and improving the municipal public service. In total, 14 major priorities were identified

across 65 projects.

Since funding is the key, senior levels of government will need to be involved.

"It will take a helping hand. We're not getting by. We don't have the means to do everything. However, several things require a bit of hard work. There are 15,000 residents and several hundred active volunteers. Encouraging volunteer

work will help us deliver many of these projects," says the mayor.

He acknowledged that property taxes alone will never be able to cover all the town's needs.

"We have a three-year capital plan, and we never manage to implement it year after year. Why? Because we need government support for financial assistance. The arena is one example. The modernization of the water and sewer systems is another. But when a program comes along, our job is to position ourselves. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't," comments Mr. Côté.

Innovation also plays a major role in the plan. Gaspé is already active in the energy and maritime sectors, and the mayor sees potential for expansion. "We have the naval niche that we want to develop. What if we succeed in developing a true industrial cluster around the naval economy? Wow!

That means additional revenue. That's why it's important to create the economy and develop businesses. And what's more, it creates jobs and generates other benefits, such as the creation of housing, which also generates other revenues. The knowledge economy will be another promising area," said the enthusiastic mayor, noting that developing Gaspé's university network is an element the elected official cherishes.

When the mayor is told that this is a historic first in Gaspé, Daniel Côté notes that the town has always had a vision. "But to state it this way is a first. This isn't a town council document; it's a document that comes from the population," he says.

As for whether this strategic plan will serve as a springboard for the next election campaign, Mr. Côté responds that he will make his intentions known in May for the November election.

Quite a storm!

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – The Gaspé Peninsula Integrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS) is offering a different version of the situation unfolding at Maria Hospital, following the demonstration on April 3 by the Eastern Quebec Nurses, Nursing Assistants, and Respiratory Therapists Union (SHIEQ).

During the protest, the union once again denounced staff cuts in the surgical department of the Maria hospital, claiming that one nurse and one nursing assistant were cut from each shift, representing a third of the team.

The union noted that it is not uncommon, at certain times of the day, to find one nurse or nursing assistant alone for 12 patients during breaks or meals.

"There is construction work going on in the medical unit. There was an addition of beds and temporary staff in surgery, and now the work is finished, and we've moved staff to return to normal. We removed four inpatient beds and returned them to the medical unit, and adjusted staffing accordingly. No one lost their position as a result of the changes," explains Andrew O'Reilly, Associate Director of Nursing.

In response to the union claims of over 100 reported incidents, the CISSS says its incident tracking software recorded only 35 cases between February 14 and March 14. Of these, "Fifteen were inadmissible because there was no harm to users and it was rather a pressure tactic by the care teams related to the changes in the unit since February 25," notes Mr. O'Reilly.

The union disputes these figures, asserting that an additional 65 incidents have occurred since March 14.

Moreover, Mr. O'Reilly notes that there are three nurses, two nursing assistants, and two orderlies for 20 patients during the day and evening, and two nurses and two nursing assistants at night.

"There is a disagreement between the parties. The important thing to remember is that we must not question the quality of care at Maria Hospital. We have no desire to debate in the public arena. We invite the representatives to sit down with us," urges the Associate Director of Nursing, maintaining that there has been no discussion with union representatives since their initial statement three weeks ago.

"We have no desire to have this debate in the public arena," concludes Mr. O'Reilly.

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2025-2026

McGill and CASA are collaborating to provide financial support to students in health and social services programs that wish to work in their home regions to better serve their communities.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Are Canadian citizens (or permanent residents) who have resided in their Quebec home region for at least 24 months.
- Have the appropriate English and French language skills to provide health and social services in a health and social services institution in Quebec.
- Are pursuing studies in a government recognized educational institution located INSIDE or OUTSIDE their home region.
- Are accepted into or currently pursuing full-time studies in an eligible health and social service program that permit the students to work professionally in Quebec upon completion of studies.
- Are registered full-time for the 2025-2026 academic year.
- Are committed, following completion of studies, to working in their home region.
- Agree to participate in any follow-up, monitoring or evaluation of the Program conducted by Dialogue McGill and / or the community network.



DEADLINE May 7, 2025

Please visit [Dialogue McGill Website](http://DialogueMcGill.ca) for more information and Application forms:

www.dialoguemcgill.ca

Completed Application Forms can be emailed to Ashley Renouf

ashley@casa-gaspe.com

or can be dropped off at the CASA Office:

168 Gerard D. Levesque
New Carlisle

Cap-des-Rosiers lighthouse becomes an electoral issue

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ: - Heritage Gaspésie wants the Cap-des-Rosiers lighthouse repairs to be a topic of the electoral campaign. The organization is asking candidates running in the federal election to get involved once again to protect Canada's tallest lighthouse.

The organization's president points out that tourism stakeholders on the tip of the Gaspé and the mayor of Gaspé have repeatedly requested for work to be done to restore the lighthouse, constructed between 1853 and 1858, to its former glory.

"Nothing ever came of it. Ms. Lebouthillier (Diane, until recently Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and responsible for the Coast Guard) held two ministerial positions in ten years and she never wanted to prioritize this issue, and we never knew why, because the issue is unanimously supported by a complete restoration and its integration into Forillon Park," notes Heritage Gaspésie President Jean-Marie Fallu.

With her exclusion from Mark Carney's cabinet, Patrimoine Gaspésie believes it could be more difficult now to convince a government to invest in infrastructure.

"When she was appointed Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in 2023, we said to ourselves, that's it, she has the power because previously, she said she was at the Ministry of Revenue. It's clear that senior officials saw that when it was necessary to secure the lighthouse, they invested

\$500,000, but it was temporary work. But the complete restoration has still not been done," emphasizes Mr. Fallu. He says that in 1970, when Forillon Park was created, there was talk of incorporating the lighthouse, but it was still a navigational beacon.

"Forillon Park is the only natural park in the country with a cultural component, along with Grande Grave and others. We don't understand why Ms. Lebouthillier never wanted to move," he says.

Mr. Fallu points out that the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois made this an election issue in 2021, and Heritage Gaspésie is asking for a renewed commitment.

"We're also asking Ms. Lebouthillier, but since she did nothing while she was a minister, if she takes over the Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj seat, if we're to judge by the last Carney government, she's lost her position and risks becoming simply a Member of Parliament." If she hasn't done anything as a minister, we can expect her to remain silent as an MP or to lack the power to do so," the historian said.

Ms. Lebouthillier responded by immediately mentioning that the Cap-des-Rosiers lighthouse is a cultural and heritage icon of the region. "That's why our government has invested more than half a million dollars since 2023 to quickly carry out repairs to enable its reopening in time for the 2024 tourist season, in addition to ensuring funding for its student jobs every summer. To be perfectly clear: had it not been for my intervention

when I was Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, the lighthouse would still be barricaded behind iron fences and inaccessible to the public since July 2023," the Liberal candidate stated.

For his part, Bloc Québécois candidate Alexis Deschênes is committed to doing everything possible to ensure the lighthouse is restored and integrated into Forillon Park, and that it receives adequate support from the federal government for its development and operation.

"Out of respect for who we are and to better reflect our history to visitors, we must restore and enhance it," says Mr. Deschênes, recalling that before losing her position as minister (Fisheries and Oceans Canada), she (Diane Lebouthillier) hadn't even considered allocating summer jobs for students in the summer of 2024.

"This national historic site deserves a federal MP (Mem-



Photo: N. Sergerie

ber of Parliament) who acts as an ally, which hasn't been the case since 2015," says the Bloc Québécois candidate, who met with members of the Cap-des-Rosiers Lighthouse Committee and Mr. Fallu on April 5. The site receives some 8,000 visitors every year who pay to enter the lighthouse. It is a major draw for Cap-des-Rosiers and a significant source of revenue for

the committee responsible for ensuring the site's condition. In 2017, emergency work was carried out to ensure visitor safety following an inspection in September 2016. At that time, restoration was estimated at \$6.5 million.

The Cap-des-Rosiers Lighthouse was designated a National Historic Site on June 11, 1973, and a heritage building on March 31, 1994.

CALL FOR TENDERS

The St. Andrews United Church Cemetery Committee is currently accepting bids on a contract to cut and trim grass on church properties.


Duties and responsibilities of the lawn maintenance contract include mowing/trimming the grass at the New Richmond and Black Cape cemeteries, and mowing/trimming the grass at the United Church Manse (210 Blvd Perron Ouest, New Richmond, QC).

Other responsibilities include removing debris and garbage from the cemetery grounds, to be done in the spring as early as possible, and levelling gravesites and grounds, as needed. Topsoil and grass seed will be provided. Both clean up and grounds maintenance are to be billed separately from the lawn care contract.

Please submit your bid in writing/email to:

Kim Fessenden
432 Carey Hill
New Richmond, QC, G0C 2B0
Email: skfincook@yahoo.com

Deadline for submission: Friday, May 2, 2025



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Thursday, May 15, Escuminac Municipal Hall, Pte à la Garde
Thursday, May 22, Douglastown Community Centre
Thursday, May 29, Hopetown Municipal Hall

For more information and to register
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Announcements



In Memory

ASSELIN: Anthony
January 28, 1926 to April 10, 2002
ASSELIN: Kevin
January 28, 1953 to April 19, 1983
*I don't need a special day,
To bring you to my mind.
The days I don't think of you,
Are very hard to find.
Each morning when I awake,
I know that you are gone.
And no one knows the heartache,
As I try to carry on.
My heart still aches with sadness,
And secret tears still flow.
What it meant to lose you,
No one will ever know.
My thoughts are always with you,
Your place no one can fill.
In life I loved you dearly,
In death I love you still.*
Sadly missed by Marlee and Boyd.

YOUNG: Clarke
November 10, 1943 to April 27, 2022
*As hard as I am looking,
I'll Never find the why.
So maybe it's better just better,
If I won't even try.
Why cannot change what happened,
I can't undo what's done.
It will not bring me comfort,
Or bring back anyone.
I accept that God has reasons,
His timing's never wrong.
And at any given moment,
We're right we belong.
He knows my heart is hurting,
He sees my falling tears.
He knows that every second,
Feels like a thousand years.
The fact that you're no longer here,
Will always bring me pain.
But you're forever in my heart.
Until we meet again, Barb.*

Send your announcements to:

holly.smith@globetrotter.net

Deadline: Wednesdays at 4 p.m. for the following week's paper.

Obituary - 150 words - \$50
150-250 words - \$55
250+ words - quote will be provided
In memory: 150 words - \$35
150-250 words - \$45
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Birth, Prayer, Birthday - \$35**
Wedding - \$55
Photo: \$10 extra.



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HOROSCOPES

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
Expect some valuable insight regarding your future to emerge in the next few days, Aries. It won't be difficult to set plans in motion when you have the right people on your side.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, take a breather and give some careful thought to your recent experiences and your expectations going forward. You will benefit from this in the long run.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21

You are focused on your work, Gemini. However, distractions are beyond your control right now and will pull your attention away from what matters to higher-ups.

CANCER – June 22/July 22
Romantic endeavors are a little hard to plan and consider right now, Cancer. Just stick to what your intuition is telling you and you will come out just fine in the end.

LEO – July 23/Aug 23
Leo, you might be called upon to be a mediator for friends or loved ones who need a fresh set of eyes. Keep a cool de-

meanor and a level head and you can lead them to a resolution.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, you are drawn to creative projects, but avoid using them to put off other endeavors. These distractions will only delay the inevitable and then you'll be pressed for time.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, carefully schedule your time this week, as you cannot afford to get behind on your assignments at work or in school. You also have many important appointments on the

calendar.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, someone comes to you for advice this week and wants you to keep their situation private. You need to help them without betraying their request for confidentiality.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
It is possible your mind will wander this week, Sagittarius. You might not be able to focus on the tasks at hand, and will need to focus extra hard to limit distractions.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, pay attention to detail in all things that you do. Be mindful of this when tending to professional and personal matters.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, the simplest resolution is often the best one. Keep this mind when tackling a perplexing problem in the days ahead.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, you are eager to sail through your to-do list, and certain tasks need to be postponed to address those that are high-priority. Rearrange things accordingly.

COAST ROUND-UP

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

YORK:

FADOQ
May 10: FADOQ York River Senior Citizens Club will be holding their Annual General Meeting beginning at 4 p.m. at the Gaspé Royal Canadian Legion Branch 59, 197 Jacques Cartier St. The AGM will be followed by a buffet supper and live entertainment with Coco and Dodo. The price of tickets are \$25 with a \$15 rebate for members who attend the AGM. For more information and to purchase tickets contact Ron Mundle 418-355-4732, Tony Patterson 418-368-3276, Debbie Sams 418-868-2977, Clothilda Adams 418-361-5619. Deadline for purchase of tickets is May 8.

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

service beginning at 11 a.m.

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.

NEW CARLISLE:
New Carlisle Legion
Mondays: Mini bingo beginning at 7 p.m. for the months of April and May.
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.

April 19: Tammy Adams starting at 8 p.m. Cost: \$15 per ticket contact Agnes 418-752-4042 or Kathy 418-752-0854 to purchase your tickets.

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.

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.

April 21: Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

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.

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.

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.



ANGELICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

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
Sunday, April 27
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Hope Town
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
10 a.m. Morning Prayer

EASTER

Worship & Celebrations

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Friday, April 18
St. Andrew's - York
11 a.m. Service of the word

Saturday, April 19
St. Paul's - Gaspe
8 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, April 20
St. Andrew's - York
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Saturday, April 27
St. Paul's - Gaspe
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

UNITED CHURCH

New Richmond
Sunday, April 20
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, April 27
10 a.m. Service

Hope Town
Sunday, April 20
2 p.m. Easter Sunday Service with communion
Sunday, April 27
10 a.m. Service

Percé loses its Desjardins service counter

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ: - The Town of Percé has been dealt a hard blow, as the Caisse Desjardins du littoral Gaspésien will close its service point in the tourist capital of the Gaspé Peninsula on May 2.

The board of directors claims a decline in customer traffic led to the decision. "The decision was made following a study on the decline in traffic at the service counter and the ATM, taking into account the changes in members' transaction and travel habits. This is what led to this decision, which we recognize is difficult," explains Robert Nicolas, chairman of the board of directors. The tourist traffic in the heart of Percé in the summer, with its approximately 400,000 to 500,000 visitors, has no impact on the site's use.

"Like us, people travel with their credit cards, ATM



The Percé Caisse Desjardins service point will close on May 2.

Photo: Ministry of Culture

cards, cards with which tourists can pay their bills at the establishments they frequent," notes the president.

"We are aware that for a certain category of members, this will require an adjustment period, and for people who are not independent in

their financial transactions, with the digital component. We will offer personalized service to ensure that people achieve independence in their financial transactions, and if that is not possible, we will provide adapted transportation," continues Mr.

Nicolas. Members were already travelling to the service counters in Cap-d'Espoir-Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé or Grande-Rivière. The Cap-d'Espoir-Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé counter will see its total opening hours increased by 7.5 hours per week.

No job losses are associated with this decision. "This decision was made in the best interest of the Caisse's members and to ensure its long-term sustainability," stated Mr. Nicolas.

Besides the financial aspect, the regulatory security framework requires that there be at least three employees per counter.

"Member use of both the counter and the ATM no longer justified the work of a single employee," stated the president.

The mayor of Percé is obviously disappointed with the decision of the financial institution's management.

Daniel Leboeuf pointed out that the Cap-d'Espoir-Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé counter is located about twenty kilometres from the historic heart of Percé. "We could set up a space at the Town Hall or at the Pavillon des Grandes Marées to install at least one ATM," the mayor suggested to the board of directors.

"ATM cards and credit cards can't compensate for everything. I hope we can at least find a solution to keep the ATM," the mayor noted.

With local services becoming increasingly scarce in the heart of Percé, this is another loss of a legacy.

"This new development certainly won't encourage businesses in conducting their activities. It will add logistical problems and costs. This isn't good news," Mr. Leboeuf mentioned.

The town adopted a resolution on April 8 to present its proposal to Desjardins.



Pin rouge Challenge raises \$30,000 for Palliative Care House

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – A dozen teams, with a total of slightly over 60 participants, raised a total of \$30,022 for the Baie-des-Chaleurs Palliative Care Home during Pin rouge's 12-hour Challenge, held on March 29 at and around the ski centre. Most participants skied, a few ran or walked up the runs, and one man, James Tozer, cycled along Saint-Edgar road. "James cycled about 200 kilometres during the challenge. He was amazing. He used a gravel bike. He is a true cyclist," comments doctor Simon Prévost, who presides over the Baie-des-Chaleurs Palliative Care Home and is an avid cyclist himself, having travelled across Canada in 2023 to raise funds for the same cause. The next fundraiser is already underway. Camp Bonaventure is giving an all-inclusive three-day stay. "It is a five-year agreement. There are 200 tickets available at a cost of \$100 per ticket. The draw will take place on April 25," adds Dr. Prévost. So far, the Baie-des-Chaleurs Palliative Care Home has raised \$3.6 million of its \$5 million goal. Its board is targeting the end of 2026 or early 2027 to open the home. Some members of the team led by New Richmond's Fabrice Bourque appear in the picture. They took turns skiing run after run over 12 hours to raise money for the home.

Hovercraft finished de-icing job on April 10

Gilles Gagné

POINTE-À-LA-CROIX – The Canadian Coast Guard hovercraft Sipu Muin completed its de-icing job on the afternoon of April 10, between Pointe-à-la-Croix and Matapedia's Interprovincial bridge and the railway bridge crossing the Restigouche River. The hovercraft arrived in the area on April 1 but was idle for a few days before moving to the Acadian Peninsula on April 3 in order to de-ice fishing harbours. Those chores went faster than expected and de-icing in the Pointe-à-la-Croix area started over the weekend of April 5. The Sipu Muin left the area on the morning of April 11 and looked to be headed for the Acadian Peninsula. The Restigouche River's ice floe upstream had not yet gone down stream but all the ice located between Matapedia and Pointe-à-la-Croix was broken, leaving large patches of open water and plenty of room for the eventual debacle.

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