

Electoral map: same as in 2023

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The Electoral Representation Commission is maintaining the abolition of one riding in the Gaspé Peninsula, merging Bonaventure and Gaspé and transferring the Haute-Gaspésie MRC to Matane-Matapédia.

This is outlined in the report and revised map tabled on December 2, which is essentially a carbon copy of the plan submitted in September 2023 for the region, a plan that sparked significant outcry at the time.

The map was published the day after the Court of Appeal's decision invalidating Bill 59, which had suspended the 2023 map in order to maintain the current boundaries for the October 2026 election.

In its report, the commission states that it analyzed the electoral districts of the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine regions by grouping them into a single regional

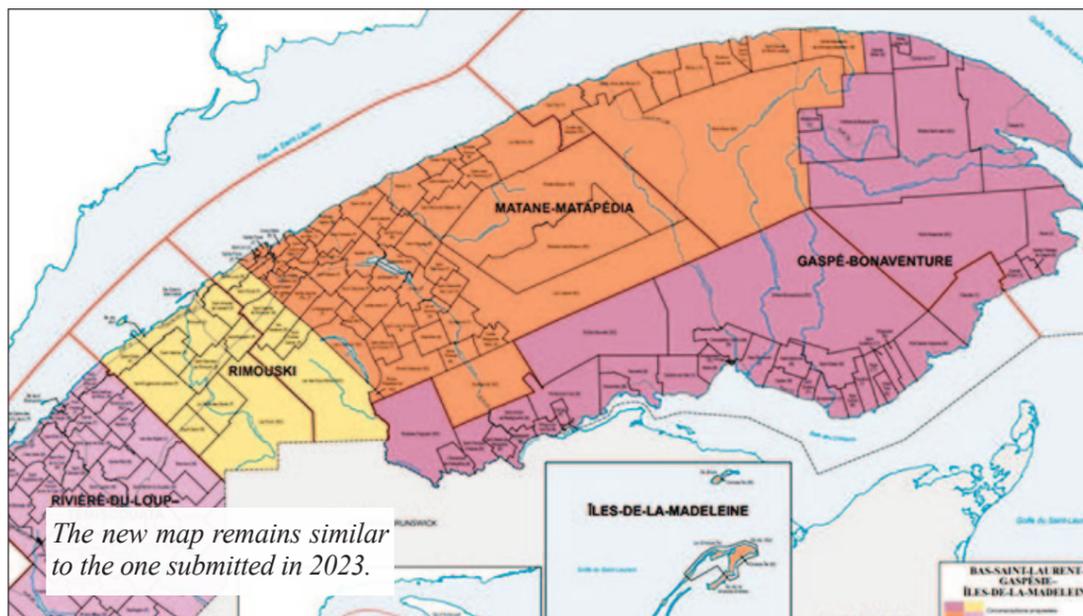


Photo: Electoral Representation Commission

entity. The creation of this entity facilitates understanding of the context and specific issues that led to the determination of the Commission's proposal for the delimitation of electoral districts in this region.

On April 30, 2023, the Bonaventure electoral district had a negative deviation of 29.2%, and Gaspé had a negative deviation of 40.6%, both

exceeding the legal limit of $\pm 25\%$ compared to the provincial average.

For Gaspé, the situation has deteriorated further, with the negative deviation reaching 41.5% as of November 30, 2024.

The riding of Gaspé is now the least populous in Quebec, after the riding of Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Since the 2017 electoral map was established, the ridings of Bonaventure, Gaspé and Matane-Matapédia have seen decreases in the number of electors of -0.3%, -1.5% and -1.3% respectively.

Between 2014 and 2023, the two region's (Bas-Saint-Laurent, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine) electoral weight has fallen from 4.55 con-

stituencies in November 2014 to 4.37.

According to the commission, this trend is set to continue in the coming years.

In 2017, the commission renewed the negative exception status of the Gaspé constituency, whose deviation from the average was -38.6%, and granted the same status to the Bonaventure constituency, which had a deviation of -27.2%.

Due to the extent of the representation inequalities created by very high and widening gaps, the commission is no longer renewing these statuses.

With the proposed new map, Gaspé-Bonaventure would have a positive deviation of 11.6%, while the other ridings in Eastern Quebec would fall within the provincial average, except for Îles-de-la-Madeleine, which retains its exceptional status under the law with a negative deviation

Cont'd on page 10

A manager for Pamela Rooney in the United States

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Douglstown country singer Pamela Rooney has reached a new milestone, securing a manager to help develop her career in the United States.

"I just signed a contract with my manager in Texas. I've been an independent artist my whole life. I've had offers, but there are a lot of sharks out there. I was just waiting for the right manager with a good network of contacts. I've got my foot in the door," Ms. Rooney said in an interview.

Among Matthew Davis Lundgren's achievements are his ties to one of the greats of country music, George Strait.

"I can't say too much because there are some big surprises coming. My manager and I are going to do a lot of shows in the United States, Canada and around the world. My guitarist from Ontario is



New manager Matthew Davis Lundgren will represent Pamela Rooney in the United States.

Photo: Courtesy of Pamela Rooney

coming with me to Texas. I'm on cloud nine. I've made it. I hope people will be proud of me. I'm going to the top," says the Gaspé native enthusiastically.

The search is underway for venues for next winter's tour in the United States, but first she will finish her tour in Quebec and Canada next summer.

"I'm glad I found someone because it's a lot to do on my own. It's a big deal," she says.

Having already performed in Texas has given her a head start.

"I already have a contract to sing in Texas, and other promoters are asking if I'm ready to sing. I'm moving to Texas next year," says Ms. Rooney.

The fact that she has already won awards for her Texan-style performances has helped her make a name for herself.

"I'm going to be opening for some big names and also doing solo shows. When I'm ready to announce the names, we'll talk again. But it's very big," she says.

"We're working very hard to open for George Strait. He's the king of country music. But I'm going to be opening for other big names too. It feels good!" states Ms. Rooney

Her manager will take care of all the logistics: finding shows, arranging accommodation and contacting studios.

"Having a manager with me is like taking 1,000 pounds off my back. When he told me everything he could do... I have contacts with my manager that I could never have imagined," she says.

There are still several steps to take before she knocks on

the doors of the big recording studios. The artist has also created two companies, Pamela Rooney Records and Pamela Rooney Entertainment, to eventually support emerging artists.

"My career is my life, and if I can help other people, I will," she says.

She is planning to move next autumn, a decision that is not easy despite her excitement.

"I'm going all the way!" Pamela Rooney has just released a Christmas song, Wrap You Up, a first for her. This melody could become her trump card.

Singing at the Grand Ole Opry is my biggest dream. It's been my goal since I was four years old. With my contacts in Nashville and this song, my Nashville producer told me that this is the song that will get me into the Grand Ole Opry," says Ms. Rooney.



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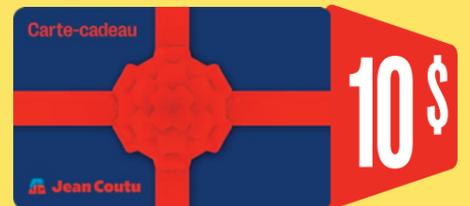


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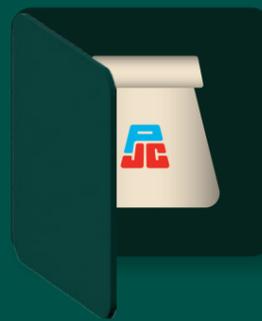
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Logements HAN launches construction in New Richmond

NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND – Construction by Logements Han has begun on 40 affordable and accessible housing units for people with disabilities in New Richmond.

Preparatory work began on November 24 in order to be ready to erect the five eight-unit buildings as soon as winter is over.

“We are starting by foundations so that some of the work can be done before the snow arrives, to avoid too much of a delay. Things are progressing well. We want tenants by the spring of 2027,” said Anik Roy-Trudel, president and chief executive officer of Logements HAN.

The construction cost will be approximately \$12.5 million, with the same design as the Gaspé complexes.

“100% of the units in New Richmond will be affordable housing. We are applying for the rent supplement program. Eligible people will be able to pay 25% of their income. The balance will be paid by the Quebec government and the town in a 90%-10% ratio,” notes Ms. Roy-Trudel, who cannot provide all the details on the financing of the project at this time.

A fundraising campaign will still need to be conducted in the community, with a tar-

get of \$450,000 to \$500,000.

“Things are progressing well. We are in an interesting position. That's why we are moving forward with preliminary work,” she says.

The buildings will be constructed as an extension of Rue des Cèdres, and the town administration will invest \$200,000 to provide services such as water and sewer connections.

Next step: Chandler

Logements HAN has been preparing a project in Chandler, following a community fundraising campaign last spring to cover the local share.

“This is the next project we are evaluating. We are currently looking into whether we can do preliminary work in Chandler. We are in the last few weeks where this is possible. But there are still a few small validation steps to complete,” notes Ms. Roy-Trudel.

Four complexes of eight units will be built on Micmacs Street for a total of 32 affordable apartments, a \$10 million project.

In Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, funding is still being sought and work is expected to begin next spring. “Ideally, I would have liked to start this project this year. It looks promising for next year. We are working on finding the

funding,” she says. Logements HAN is planning 48 units for a project valued at \$15 million.

Once these projects are completed, only the Avignon regional county municipality (MRC) would remain uncovered in the Gaspé Peninsula.

“Nothing has been decided yet. A few opportunities have been discussed. We are open to continuing if there is demand,” says the president and CEO.

Gaspé has also discussed a potential phase two to add 32 more apartments on Forest

Street at a cost of \$10.3 million.

“There could be a phase 2. We still have two four-and-a-half units left to rent. If there are people who need adapted and affordable housing, they can contact us,” Ms. Roy-Trudel shares.



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Paratransit in Gaspé to join regional transport authority

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Two years after discussing the integration of Transport adapté et collectif de la Côte-de-Gaspé into the Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madelaine, the merger will become a reality in January 2026.

An extraordinary general meeting of members held on November 25 ratified the transfer. The organization has been responsible for paratransit services in the Town of Gaspé and parts of the Town of Percé.

“The benefit of this optimization is that with the same bus and the same driver, we can do more than one trip. We will also have a backup for staff. For example, one employee handles dispatching. If he is sick or on vacation, we are at risk of a service disruption,” notes RéGÎM president and Gaspé mayor, Daniel Côté.

“We saw this as a positive development. We will have employees who will be able to take over to ensure a minimum level of service. This was a directive from the municipal council,” adds Mr. Côté.

While economies of scale will not be substantial, they will allow the organization to offer more with the same budget.

In September, the Gaspé municipal council commissioned a \$35,000 study to facilitate the merger of the two organizations.

Ultimately, the merger will ensure continuity of service and improved accessibility throughout the region on an expanded network. Haute-Gaspésie and Baie-des-Chaleurs transferred their paratransit services to the board several years ago.

Transport adapté et collectif de la Côte-de-Gaspé has been in operation since 1991.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

The deal we could do without

On November 27, Canada's prime minister, Mark Carney, and Alberta premier, Danielle Smith signed one of the most infamous agreements in the history of the country, ecologically speaking, health-wise, and, over the medium to long term, economy-wise.

The content of the agreement is the equivalent of a hazardous trip to 1975, when most people hardly cared about tomorrow and the future of humanity. Money was the deciding factor in industrialized countries, and the dubious means used to achieve higher revenues were of little concern.

The Carney-Smith agreement calls for the production of at least 1.4 million additional barrels of oil per day, along with the natural gas that comes with such an increase. That oil would be exported through a new pipeline for a count of 1 million barrels, maybe more, and the balance of 400,000 barrels would go through the existing Trans Mountain pipeline, following a second expansion.

Canadians might remember that the Trans Mountain pipeline was acquired by the Canadian government and expanded for a "mere" \$34 billion, as no private company wanted to invest in it. It was done to satisfy Alberta, but it didn't prevent premier Danielle Smith from expressing that it was just not enough.

A second expansion to Trans Mountain is now required. It will likely be paid by Canadian taxpayers if the pipeline is not sold between now and then. Although the exploitation of the pipeline generated some funds over the first year of its exploitation, it is far from proven that such operation will be profitable in the future and allow Canadians to recoup their "investment." Chances are that Canadians will have to dig into their pockets once again to dig into their pockets to cover the tab.

How about explaining "would" and "likely"

Two words, "would" and "likely", are important here. Would as in "that oil would be exported" and likely as in "it (a second expansion) will likely be paid by Canadians."

The agreement was reached without the consent of the most important partners beside oil companies, the Natives of British Columbia and the government of that province. "By the way, we forgot to tell you that the pipeline will pass on your land but don't be worried, we offer you a piece of ownership in this other project that will potentially ruin your habitat, your water sources, the sea along the coast and your health. You might almost be rich though". Natives all over the country have heard

that tune.

No wonder the Assembly of First Nations greeted Mark Carney quite coldly when he met Aboriginal leaders on December 3 in Ottawa. It was the rehearsal of a bad theatre play they have seen way too often over the last five centuries. And no wonder, too, that David Eby, the premier of British Columbia, is furious about the Carney-Smith agreement and considers sending the case to courtrooms, with a fair chance of winning. That's for "would."

"Likely" deals with the possibility of Canadians paying again for a pipeline, and maybe the expansion of one they have already paid for, namely Trans Mountain.

The price of oil is slowly going down worldwide, a trend that will likely persist for years, maybe forever. A growing number of other industrialized countries, witnessing the problem of greenhouse effect gas emissions, are moving away from hydrocarbons.

They use studies to understand that a higher presence of emissions in the atmosphere not only trigger droughts, unbearable heat waves, rising sea levels and stronger storms, to name a few, but they also affect people's health, a way closer impact, geography-wise, because its proximity allows it to be measured. Babies are born at a lower weight when their births take place near an oil refinery, an oil field or in an area characterised by carbon-filled emissions. Respiratory and cardio-vascular problems also abound in such places. Health costs related to the vast use of hydrocarbons are never included in such "development" equations, well not in Canada.

For all those reasons, the price of oil will gradually keep plummeting in the coming years. Adding a large volume of 1.4 million barrels per day will do nothing but contribute to the growing worldwide oversupply, a factor that will likely contribute to a downward price trend.

No wonder the new pipeline is struggling to find a "parent." Who is willing to invest tens of billions of dollars to carry a commodity that will be characterized by a downward price over the coming years? Unless two governments pour extraordinary amounts of money into it, no private investor will touch the project.

Disregard for past ecological gains

One of the most striking aspects of the agreement is, pipeline or no pipeline, is its total disre-

gard for the fair ecological gains Canada has made over the last decades, despite Alberta's poor record in the matter. Everything will be erased and over-compensated, pollution-wise, by an increment in hydrocarbons production.

The Carney-Smith deal goes way beyond the pipeline issue. In fact, the pipeline is the tree hiding the forest.

The agreement will lead to lowering regulatory barriers for both oil production and the pipeline. Because it qualifies as a Project of National interest, the acceleration of the approval process will be applied. The abolition of Alberta's carbon emissions cap will also apply.

The clean electricity regulations in Alberta are being put on hold just to allow that province to increase its oil production capacity as it sees fit.

How will Alberta make up for such gas emission increases? By relying on a technique that is still embryonic, carbon capture.

Alberta's tar sands oil requires between three and ten times more energy in order to produce a single barrel. Various technologies are used but they all generate huge carbon emissions.

So, in order to respect the carbon capture standards enacted in the Carney-Smith agreement, it would be necessary to capture 37 megatons of carbon annually. Currently, all the countries in the world together capture between 50 and 55 megatons of carbon, a megaton being one million tons.

Is Alberta's goal feasible? It is a fictional scenario, nothing more.

Now, if there is no pipeline, all the carbon capture part of the agreement falls. Guess what will happen then? Oil companies might be tempted to wave the pipeline and live with less constraints regarding gas emissions, another part of the agreement. They will be allowed to do so, as the deal opens the door to Alberta's standards instead of Canadian ones.

Politically, besides losing a senior minister, Steven Guilbault, who could not cope with the agreement, Mark Carney opened a Pandora box by agreeing to waive the clean electricity regulations in Alberta. Other provinces relying heavily on oil and gas to produce their electricity, like Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, will demand the same loosening of federal regulations. Presently, Mark Carney is asking them, like he is asking Canadians with an ecological sensitivity, to swallow a pill the size of a soda can.

There is a lot more to say about the Carney-Smith agreement. Time will no doubt reveal additional troubling details about this "deal."

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Dangerous intersection: Mayor Bujold continues to campaign

NELSON SERGERIE

POINTE-À-LA-CROIX – The mayor of Pointe-à-la-Croix continues his campaign for the installation of a roundabout at the intersection of highway 132 and Interprovincial Boulevard leading to New Brunswick.

On November 3, another collision occurred between a tractor-trailer and a pickup truck making a left turn onto Interprovincial Boulevard. Fortunately, the pickup truck driver suffered only minor injuries, but may have been driving under the influence of alcohol, according to the Sûreté du Québec (SQ).

Mayor Pascal Bujold had spoken with Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Catherine Blouin before the municipal elections. The MNA had offered the mayor a meeting with the Ministry of Transport.

“Now that the municipal elections are over, we will request this meeting as soon as possible to discuss the issue and explore the possibilities. Even if we have another meeting, something really needs to happen,” commented Mr. Bujold.



Photo: Google Maps

The intersection the mayor of Pointe-à-la-Croix wants changed.

Accidents are on the rise despite intervention by the Ministry at the intersection in May 2023.

At that time, road markings were modified on all three approaches to the intersection to better define the traffic and turning lanes. The work completed resulted in a dedicated left-turn lane on Route 132 for drivers wishing to turn onto the Interprovincial Boulevard. Additionally, the speed limit on highway 132 was reduced from 90 to 70 km/h on the approaches to the intersection.

Even back then, the mayor stated that it wouldn't change much since the geometry of the intersection remained the same.

“We can see that reducing the speed limit hasn't solved anything. The lines on the asphalt haven't changed anything. We need this meeting to explore the possibilities,” noted Mr. Bujold. The elected official has a preference between a roundabout and a traffic light.

“We will certainly ask for the safest option, and the safest is the roundabout. In short, we will have these discussions. We always ask for the full package, and we hope that this time, we will be heard,” the mayor declared.

In the summer season, the Interprovincial Boulevard is the most heavily used artery in the Gaspé Peninsula, as it is the gateway to New Brunswick.

Police report

Isaac Moffat Swasson to return to court on January 19

Isaac Moffat Swasson, 35, from Listuguj found guilty of several criminal acts in October 2024, will return to court on January 19 before Quebec Court judge Annie Trudel, who will pronounce his sentence.

On October 3, 2024, he was found guilty of uttering death threats, forcible confinement, aggravated assault and assault with a weapon. On February 21, 2019, two Listuguj men were seriously injured during an altercation with him, and he later threatened to harm one victim's family members.

While imprisoned, he caused extensive damage to the New Carlisle prison on April 30, 2019, forcing its temporary closure due to a police intervention that required the use of pepper spray to arrest him. Electronic devices and plumbing were damaged, and one section housing eight inmates required years of repairs. He was therefore charged with mischief of over \$5,000 and intimidation tied to that incident.

His sentencing, initially set for November 27 at the Quebec City courthouse, was postponed, says criminal prosecutor Fabien Villemaire.

“There is a new lawyer in the file since the week before the court appearance, working to defend Mr. Moffat Swasson. So, judge Trudel postponed the case in order to give the defence attorney some time to get familiar with the file. He might ask for a counter expertise, but it is not sure that he will do,” explains Fabien Villemaire.

Over the years, several defence attorneys represented Isaac Moffat Swasson, but none of them lasted long enough to conduct the case over the long term. He had been representing himself until late November, when Louis Belliard became his lawyer.

Fabien Villemaire will ask judge Trudel to declare Isaac Moffat Swasson a dangerous offender under section 753(1) of the Criminal code and impose an indeterminate penitentiary sentence. He used an assessment carried out by experts of Montreal's Louis-Philippe-Pinel Institute to sustain his request.

Mr. Villemaire based his arguments on the February assault in Listuguj to formulate his detention request.

Carleton man charged with murder attempt, linked to July 7 events

Gabriel Lafrance, 32, from Carleton, now faces seven additional charges related to drug possession, possession of a prohibited firearm and drug possession for the purpose of trafficking following a November 26 court appearance, seven days after his November 19 arrest. That arrest resulted from an operation conducted by the Sûreté du Québec's tactical intervention group.

On November 20, he also faced charges of attempted murder, using a prohibited firearm with intent to injure, uttering death threats against three individuals, possession of narcotics for the purpose of trafficking and possession of a prohibited firearm.

Most of the initial charges stem from a July 7 incident that occurred near Gabriel Lafrance's home. Three individuals from Quebec City had been involved in an early-morning accident in eastern Carleton. The circumstances linking Lafrance and the three individuals have not yet been released by criminal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville Paradis. Although they did not know each other, a factor led them into contact.

A first police intervention took place at Gabriel Lafrance's place on July 11, but no charges were laid as a result.

Police cars travel to New Richmond on a trailer

Three police cars passed in New Richmond, near the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) police station on November 19, the same day officers carried out an intervention at Gabriel Lafrance's home. When questioned about the vehicles transported on a trailer, SQ spokesperson Frédéric Deshaies declined to comment, noting that he does not provide details on potential police operations.



Photo: G. Gagné



The truck ended up in the IGA grocery store in Grande-Rivière.

Photo: Gino Cyr

Tragic in Grande-Rivière

Nelson Sergerie

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE – A tragic accident occurred on November 21 at around 7 a.m. when a pickup truck crashed into the IGA market in Grande-Rivière.

According to the Sûreté du Québec, the first collision occurred near the Café de la chèvre dansante on Grande-Allée when the driver of the pickup truck hit a car in front of him. The impact caused the car to roll over.

The driver of that vehicle was taken to the hospital for minor injuries and shock.

The pickup truck continued for a few hundred metres before crashing into a wall and ending up completely inside of the IGA grocery store. Firefighters helped extricate the driver, who was also taken to hospital to treat injuries. He died a few days later.

Police believe the driver may have suffered a medical emergency, triggering the chain of events. No criminal act appears to have been involved.

Gaspé takes Mont Béchervaise under its wing

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Due to the poor governance of the organization that managed Mont Béchervaise and the absence of senior management, the Town of Gaspé is taking over the administration of the ski centre, which it owns. The board of directors no longer had a quorum to manage the site. The Town will do so with three members of its management team to ensure day-to-day operations.

“We are in the middle of season ticket pre-sales and hiring staff. We had to reassure our customers as a matter of urgency. Currently, the municipal team has secured everything and the centre can be operational for the next season,” says Mayor Daniel Côté.

If the snow is there, the season will start on December 19. “We’re ready to go. Could the situation last all winter? Possibly, because it’s not easy to reorganize everything,” he says.

In the long term, all scenarios are on the table, with the mayor even mentioning a possible full takeover.

“All options will be reanalyzed based on the future governance of the ski centre,” says the mayor.

The lack of snow, particu-



The Town of Gaspé takes over management of Mont Béchervaise.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

larly last year, had an impact on the organization. The 2024-2025 season did not start until February 14. This observation may have discouraged some stakeholders.

“It has an impact because no snow means fewer opening hours and financial challenges. Last winter, the municipal council agreed to cover the ski centre’s deficit. We are seeing this more and more often in winters with little snow. It certainly does not motivate the troops,” notes Mr. Côté.

In the longer term, discussions are underway about the possible installation of snow cannons. The studies currently underway will be brought back to the municipality and super-

vised by the municipal team.

However, a major issue is looming, given the lack of precipitation since the end of spring.

“To make snow, you need water, and we’re in the midst of a drinking water shortage this year. It’s a huge issue. We’ll have to ask ourselves some serious questions. We need it for sports, but we also have to be careful about the water supply,” says the mayor, reminding us that water is vital.

This kind of question had never been raised until this year. Even the municipality’s water reserves have fallen to unprecedented levels.

“We are aware of the available drinking water and what

we need to prioritize. We are more conscious of these issues. Can we draw water without affecting the water table? Or simply by collecting runoff water in basins? It’s an issue,” continues the mayor, illustrating that this is a medium-term issue.

Reclaimed land

The town is exercising its right of first refusal on land that was for sale in the area between the Gaspé hospital and the Hydro-Québec and Parc des Augustines facilities.

“The town already owned a semi-enclosed piece of land behind this land, more in a forest area. We are expanding the large municipal land parcel in this area. Some of the land could be resold to private developers with projects that fit our guidelines, and some could be used for municipal purposes or to expand the industrial park,” says the mayor.

As the area is close to Riverin and Patterson street, residential development could also be a priority.

The land was acquired at market value, or half a million dollars.

“We are very open to discussions with the private sector, which has an interest, to

meet other needs in the community,” says the mayor.

The land of the former Ministry of Transportation service centre in the town centre will not be ready anytime soon.

The Société québécoise des infrastructures indicates that the environmental characterization study confirms the presence of contaminants in certain areas of the site.

A rehabilitation plan is being developed and will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks for approval. Despite the SPEC request, the report itself had not been forwarded at the time of writing.

The scope and costs will be specified at a later date. Work is expected to begin in late spring 2026 and take several months.

Despite the delay, the Town is not overly concerned. “We were back in consultation mode with a specific urban plan for the entire downtown area. This gives us time to finish the exercises to develop the downtown area in a harmonious way. We also like to receive the land properly decontaminated. It’s a blessing in disguise,” comments the mayor.

The Fisheries Fund must remain in place

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The Gaspé fishing community is asking the federal government to renew the Fisheries Fund in order to continue developing and adapting the industry, a request that will be supported by the Bloc Québécois.

Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet traveled to the Magdalen Islands and Gaspé on November 15 to hear about the importance to the industry of getting the program back on track.

“For five years, the Fisheries Fund has enabled high-level innovation in a sector that wants to modernize and transition, and now the federal budget—which we thought was going to be increased—has ultimately been abolished (regarding the Fisheries Fund), and that’s very bad for the region,” says Mr. Blanchet.

“Civil society in the fishing sector has mobilized around the need for the program to tell the government, the Minister of Fi-



The fishing community met with Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet and Alexis Deschênes, MP for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, on November 15, in Gaspé. Here they are at a press briefing at the end of the meeting.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

nance, and perhaps through the Minister of Fisheries, that it is important for this program to be extended,” he continues.

That call for mobilization was central to the meeting in Gaspé, where Mr. Blanchet took time to hear concerns from industry representatives after doing the same earlier in the day in the Magdalen Islands.

“In recent years, the Fisheries Fund has enabled innovation in the industry, both in terms of harvesting and processing. These are things that have been useful for many fleets. The main need is to ensure that we have available and competitive markets to maximize landing and export value. Then the industry will be able to organize itself,” says Claudio

Bernatchez, director of the Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie (Gaspé Peninsula Captains and Owners Association).

Diversifying exports is not just about breaking away from dependence on the U.S. market, he adds.

“It’s never good when your production is directed toward a single market. It’s fine as long as things are going well, but as soon as there is uncertainty, it compromises the entire industry,” says Mr. Bernatchez, without directly mentioning the disruptions linked to the tariff war being waged by current United States President Donald Trump.

“The Fisheries Fund has proven its worth. It has delivered the goods. There is a certain transition: we are seeing more lobster, we have export issues. We are also seeing redfish replacing shrimp on some lines. To adapt and continue to reduce the ecological footprint of the fishing industry, we must reinvest in the fund,” says the Mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

According to him, Quebec is ready to do its part. “I have heard from certain ministers that Quebec is ready to contribute its 30%, but Ottawa must contribute its 70%. We did not see this in the last budget. I hope it will be there soon,” adds the mayor, who recently met with Quebec Fisheries Minister Donald Martel and, last week, with Minister for Regional Economic Development Éric Girard.

“I have been told that some ministers I have spoken to are open to the idea, but I will not disclose the details of my private discussions with certain ministers, as you can understand,” reacts mayor Côté when asked for details on those conversations.

The \$42 million fund, financed 70% by the federal government and 30% by the Quebec government, was created in 2019 for five years, and later extended for two years because some funds remained.

The program is set to expire next March, and its budget envelope is reportedly exhausted.

Regional Development Minister visits the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE

BONAVENTURE – Éric Girard, the Minister for Regional Economic Development visited the Gaspé Peninsula on November 19 and 20 and took advantage of an announcement in Cap-Chat to meet with representatives from various industries in the region as well as elected officials.

Mr. Girard made his first stop in Cap-Chat, in the Haute-Gaspésie region. The Quebec government has granted \$7 million and is providing 10 megawatts of electricity to Groupe AEM Canada to increase the production of high-purity alumina at its Cap-Chat plant.

The funding will be used to upgrade equipment, diversify markets, and create more than 50 jobs in this project, which totals nearly \$28 million. The company is expected to double its production capacity and market its product on a larger scale, increasing its interna-



Photo: CCIBDC Facebook page

The minister met with the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry during his visit to the Gaspé Peninsula.

tional competitiveness.

The high-purity alumina market is expected to grow at an annual rate of 18% between now and 2028, according to CRU Consulting. With trade tensions with the United States, Quebec is banking on Quebec

metallurgy companies.

The minister then travelled to the Gaspé Peninsula on the afternoon of November 19. MRC prefect, Daniel Côté, discussed the main economic drivers in the region with the minister and outlined the chal-

lenges facing the fishing industry, both in terms of harvesting and processing. Economic development programs must also be renewed, noted Mr. Girard

On the morning of November 20, the minister met with MRC elected officials to discuss issues related to housing, public safety, revitalization, and the pooling of services. In the afternoon, the minister met with the Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The issues of business succession and entrepreneurial succession, economic vitality, prospects and challenges related to the current economic context, and rail transportation were discussed. The minister noted that the issues differ from one sector to another in the region.

"The challenges are to have programs adapted to the realities of the regions and to im-

prove the process of obtaining permits. I was also told about forestry," he says about his meeting on the Gaspé Peninsula.

However, programs tailored to the regions are requests that have been submitted for several years in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"In Mr. Legault's inaugural speech for the fall session, he talks about the straitjacket. We are working to adapt programs and reduce delays. These are things that help the regions," says Mr. Girard.

At the end of the tour, the minister concluded that it is necessary to continue supporting the regions. "We must also maintain the DÉPART program (Développement Économique pour les Régions et les Territoires), take care of local development organizations, and work on transportation infrastructure," notes Mr. Girard, who is also minister of Finance.

The FMBM embarks on strategic planning

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – One of the most important festivals in the Gaspé Peninsula, the Festival Musique du Bout du Monde (FMBM) is launching a two-year strategic planning process to prepare for two major upcoming milestones: the 500th anniversary of Gaspé and the festival's 30th anniversary, both of which will take place in 2034.

"We wanted to give ourselves the means to reflect, and with the board of directors, we established a framework for reflection for the next two editions. We are going to build a strategic plan with a vision until 2034," notes the director of the festival, Novy Marin-Gagné.

"These two events are coming together, and it is essential to start thinking about them now," he adds.

Part of the planning process will involve identifying the organization's strengths and weaknesses.

"We will survey both festival-goers and the people who work with us, and once that period is over, we will have a better idea of what to focus on, but one of the important things for



Photo: N. Sergerie

Rue de la Reine is one of the FMBM's flagship locations.

the festival is to continue to be meaningful to the community and remain rooted in Gaspé," says Mr. Marin-Gagné.

One notable trend when looking at the festival's programming is the strong reputation the festival has developed over the years.

The festival recently joined the Canadian delegation at the Worldwide Music Expo (WOMEX), one of the world's largest international gatherings dedicated to world, ethnic, traditional and fusion music. The event attracts some 2,000 professionals from more than 100 countries, including 281 artists.

"We did a good job in communications, but there, in Finland, there was a line of people waiting to talk to our programming director about being part of the FMBM. That's how much the FMBM has grown," says Mr. Marin-Gagné.

The festival has also been highlighting videos of past performances, particularly those staged at Mont Béchervaise.

"Our artistic director is inundated with emails from people asking to be part of the festival," says the director.

A blind-sale promotion will be held in December for the popular sunrise show at Cap Bon-Ami.

Paspébiac studies the potential for second grocery store

Nelson Sergerie

PASPÉBIAC – After several months of unsuccessful attempts while he was a councillor, the new mayor of Paspébiac has finally obtained the support of the new municipal council to commission a study on the possibility of attracting a second grocery retailer to the town.

"I managed to convince the council, and unanimously at that. A \$5,700 contract will be awarded to study the market potential for a second grocery store in Paspébiac. If the study is positive, the resolution calls for approaching developers to try to attract them," Jérémy Laplante proudly announces.

Although the mayor had been discussing the idea for months, he has not yet approached any chains about a potential location.

"The idea behind the study is to obtain data before meeting with them, rather than arriving empty-handed. If the study is positive, we will begin the process," explains the mayor.

Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, which serves an MRC of roughly 12,000 inhabitants, is not considered large enough to attract a second chain.

"According to the firm conducting the study, there is a lack of commercial space for food stores in Paspébiac and the surrounding area. The question is how significant this lack is and whether we will be able to attract a large chain to fill the gap. If not, we will have to analyze alternative options," says Mr. Laplante.

Paspébiac could thus find itself caught between a rock and a hard place.

"We can take advantage of the current economic climate, where more and more chains are opening smaller stores. If I take Maxi as an example, the company used to open 30,000-square-foot stores. Now we are seeing 10,000-square-foot stores to get closer to customers, and we need to determine whether we can take advantage of this opportunity we are seeing in the market," says the mayor.

The small Maxi in Pointe-à-la-Croix could be an excellent alternative if the study confirms the demand. "Absolutely. It would most likely be one of the options on the table if the study is conclusive," notes Mr. Laplante.

Paspébiac is currently served by a 26,000-square-foot IGA market. Its last expansion, completed in 2012, added 9,000 square feet at a cost of about \$4 million.

In 2016, Sobeys estimated that a \$4 million investment would have been needed to maintain its IGA in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, an expense the company said at the time would not have been profitable.

National Children's Day celebrated in Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – More than 500 students from Saint-Rosaire and Découverte schools in Gaspé celebrated UNICEF's World Children's Day on November 20 by marching through the streets of downtown Gaspé. UNICEF stands for United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

The march was organized by Espace Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine and the Centre de pédiatrie sociale l'Équipage de la Côte-de-Gaspé.

"For us, this is an important day. We really make the connection between violence prevention and the recognition

of rights. Children are vulnerable, and recognizing their rights is the basis for combating violence," explains Alexandre Gaudreault, coordinator at Espace Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

The convention recognizing the day dates back to 1989. In the past 15 years, physical punishment such as spanking has decreased by 75 percent.

Raising awareness of the concept of violence among young people could further reduce violence in society.

"That's what I hope. I fundamentally believe so. In the last 50 years in Quebec, violence has decreased, but it still exists. We really need to start

early because if we start after the acts of violence, we are intervening rather than preventing. We need to talk to children from an early age about violence, consent, and rights," says Mr. Gaudreault.

"Social pediatrics is based on seven principles of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is part of our daily work to ensure that young people and children have their rights respected and that society respects the rights to which they are entitled," adds Mona Sirois, director of the social pediatrics centre.

The students, ranging from four-year-old kindergarteners to sixth graders, enthusiastically



The young people made posters with messages to deliver as part of the day's activities.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

cally participated under police supervision to ensure the march proceeded safely.

Older students gave speeches, while younger students decorated white flags once they returned to school.

Posters displayed messages such as: "Our rights, our freedom," "Every person has rights, so let's protect our rights together," and "Let's protect our rights, safety, and freedom."

Doctors in Gaspé riding want Bill 2 suspended

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Some 120 doctors based in the Gaspé riding are asking the constituency's Member of the National Assembly to pressure the government to suspend the application of Bill 2 on their remuneration due to "significant risks to access and quality of care."

The doctors sent the document on November 24 to Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

The document states that "while we recognize the objectives of improving the health-care system that motivate this reform, we see significant risks to the quality and continuity of care in the field, particularly in remote areas."

"We are extremely concerned about this law. We are in an environment where health-care works quite well. Everyone in Gaspé has a family doctor and can see their doctor fairly quickly. Bill 2 risks undermining a system that works," says the doctors' spokesperson, psychiatrist Malika Cossette-Lavallée, who practices at the Gaspé hospital.

"We don't want to practice volume medicine. It doesn't make sense," says Ms. Cossette-Lavallée.

In addition to the volume aspect, the main issues identified are government targets to speed up hospital discharges, which may jeopardize patient safety; the risk of medical clinics closing due to increased administrative burdens and insufficient financial viability; a medical exodus and early retirements; less attractive working conditions, a potential reduction in the supply of care



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Gaspé Hospital.

in rural areas, exacerbating inequalities in access, an increased risk of gaps in coverage, as several specialized services rely on only one or two physicians. The loss of one of them would have a major impact on the population.

In addition, they cite the demobilization and demotivation of medical staff caused by administrative overload and loss of professional autonomy, the increased difficulty of attracting and retaining new doctors due to less flexible conditions, and the weakening of sectors requiring clinical time, such as palliative care, home care, pediatric and pregnancy follow-ups, the breach of confidentiality, diagnoses having to be sent to the RAMQ and inspectors having access to medical records, the climate of surveillance undermining medical-administrative collaboration and eroding confidence in the system, and the threat to human rights and freedoms, as supported by the Barreau du Québec.

About 20 doctors had already held a demonstration on November 1 in Gaspé in front of the offices of the Member of National Assembly (MNA), who had met with them.

"Our request is that members of the national assembly listen to us and understand the real impacts on the population. The law cannot remain as it is. It must be rolled back. It will be devastating. That is what I am

asking the National Assembly," says the psychiatrist.

Quebec has suspended certain sections of the law.

"I have lost confidence in the premier and the minister of health. At this point, the law has not changed. Should I rely on a law or the volatile words of the minister of health? Let him put it in writing," demands Ms. Cossette-Lavallée.

"We have read the doctors' letter and we hear the concerns expressed. The current period is bringing about many changes, and it is important that all information be communicated clearly. The ministry and Santé Québec are continuing their discussions with the network, notably through a regional tour of GMFs and webi-

nars offered to medical federations," Stéphane Sainte-Croix says in a written statement after reading the letter.

"The measures provided for in Bill 2 continue to be explained and clarified, particularly with regard to remuneration, office expenses—the application of which has been postponed—and the upcoming enhancement of the GMF program," he continues, inviting physicians to submit their questions to the teams concerned so that the real implications are clearly understood.

"For my part, I remain attentive to the situation in the region and am following developments closely," Mr. Sainte-Croix concludes.

Bill 2: Gaspé fears for its GMF

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Daniel Côté, the mayor of Gaspé is expressing concern about the potential negative effects of Bill 2 on physician remuneration at the Family Medicine Group (GMF) located at the Pavillon Cantin of the Gaspé hospital.

Daniel Côté is not commenting on the legislation itself, noting that it falls outside municipal jurisdiction, but he says the consequences could be harmful locally.

"We have a local organization that has developed a model that is very well suited to our local reality. It is a model based on complementarity and mutual assistance between the various health services in the sector," says the mayor.

He believes the province's broad, uniform approach could undermine what is working in Gaspé and urges government authorities to pay attention to what is happening on the ground.

"In Gaspé, there is no waiting list for a family doctor. It's not because there are more family doctors per capita than elsewhere in Quebec. We are organized differently. No, there are no waiting lists. No, there are virtually never any service disruptions at the hospital. It's because we have a model that is adapted to our reality," says Mr. Côté, inviting the Quebec government to draw inspiration from this model and implement it elsewhere in Quebec.

"Above all, when we decentralize decision-making, it means we invest our public money more wisely. That's what we're saying too. Before ultra-centralizing the system, let's look at the compelling examples in the field," he adds.

"The model exists. We could draw inspiration from it instead of crushing it with broad national parameters," the mayor concludes.

The Gaspé University Family Medicine Group (GMFU) celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2024. Since its creation, it has trained roughly 100 physicians and provided 400 internships.

One of its founders, Dr. Michel Desjardins, said it was a bold move to create such a group four decades ago.

The president and chief executive officer of the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Gaspésie (CISSS), Martin Pelletier, noted that GMFUs like the one in Gaspé are essential tools for recruitment.

Vivre en Gaspésie is recruiting childcare workers

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Vivre en Gaspésie, an organization that focuses on recruiting newcomers and facilitating the return of Gaspé residents living elsewhere, has launched a specific campaign to attract childcare workers to the region. The campaign was launched over the third week of November with two virtual meetings attended by 125 people.

Vivre en Gaspésie has been successful in its recruitment efforts for several years, to the point that the peninsula has become the first region in Quebec to achieve a sustained positive inter-regional migration balance. The Magdalen Islands are following the same trend, completing the picture of the administrative region.

“This is the first time in the year and a half that we’ve been conducting targeted recruitment efforts, that we are focusing on childcare services. Before, we carried out recruitment efforts for everyone. For the past year and a half or two years, we’ve started developing more targeted initiatives focused on priority workforce needs. We’ve done this in healthcare, education, and dentistry,” explains Catherine Landry, spokesperson for Vivre en Gaspésie on this issue.

“This is also a first for us to hold this initiative virtually. We’re giving ourselves a chance to reach more people, and we hope to connect with more people, including those



Photo: Gilles Gagné

The need for early childhood educators has been steadily increasing since the pandemic.

in the Gaspé Peninsula, regarding support for the early childhood sector. We’re still committed to supporting employers in the region,” Ms. Landry also notes.

The immediate need for childcare workers may seem modest, but she emphasizes that it will grow rapidly in the coming weeks and months.

“The current need is for 15 educators, but that number will climb to 45 in six months, and to more than 60 in a year,” explains Catherine Landry, noting that childcare services, along with affordable housing, are a key factor in efforts to encourage new residents to move to the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

What is Vivre en Gaspésie’s recruitment goal, based on the participants who attended the virtual sessions held in the evenings of No-

vember 19 and 20?

Catherine Landry mentions that the evaluation process extends over a longer period than just a week or two. “We had 125 registrations for the two evenings. That clearly exceeds our expectations. The interest in the region is there. Will we be able to meet the needs of childcare services? We’ll be able to assess this in the medium and long term. It takes a few months, sometimes a year or two, to know for sure,” she says.

A multi-partner effort

Vivre en Gaspésie is not the sole driver of recruitment efforts for childcare services in the region, assures Catherine Landry.

“We mobilized early childhood centres to post their positions. For the past few weeks, it’s been circulating on every imaginable network: the web, radio stations, and the Quebec CEGEPs that offer training in the field. We have a page that we want to keep active. We publish profiles of people who work specifically in this field, people who work in the Gaspé Peninsula. Other communication initiatives are planned,” she explains.

Catherine Landry confirms that the need for early childhood educators is constantly increasing in the Gaspé Peninsula, a trend that has been observable for several years, even though the last study on this topic dates back some time.

thirty family daycare services. Many of these services have closed since the pandemic, and there is a shortage, both in childcare centres and family daycare settings,” she emphasizes.

Vivre en Gaspésie will regularly check in with the intentions of the 125 people who attended the two sessions held on November 19 and 20.

“We are staying in touch with all of these people. We’re going to contact them individually,” she concluded.

Vivre en Gaspésie has maintained a positive net migration of several hundred people for several years. The aging population, which results in a higher number of deaths than births, is the only major factor preventing the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands from increasing their population at a similar rate.



The 21 spaces announced in 2022 in Grande-Vallée should be ready in 2026.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Funding for Grande-Vallée daycare secured

Nelson Sergerie

GRANDE-VALLÉE – Funding for the 21-space daycare centre in Grande-Vallée has finally been secured, with \$100,000 in financial support from the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC.

Mayor of Grande-Vallée Noël Richard says there was a cost overrun between the time the then Minister of Families, Mathieu Lacombe, made the announcement in 2022 and the upcoming construction.

“We worked with the MRC. We had \$50,000 in structural funds, and last week, we secured the last \$100,000 that was missing,” says Mr. Richard.

The MRC also provided a grant to hire a project manager for the development.

The construction contract was awarded to a contractor, and the mayor believes that the facility could be up and running as early as 2026.

“This has been eagerly awaited for several years in the Estran sector. It will finally be up and running,” adds the mayor.

The project will cost \$2 million and will be located in the former Dixie Lee restaurant at the western exit of the municipality.

“It was a necessity and it will be completed fairly quickly. Those who follow at the political level may have to work on the need for additional spaces,” the mayor stresses.



Photo: Provided by Catherine Landry

Catherine Landry, of Vivre en Gaspésie, notes that it will take a few months to assess the results of the current recruitment campaign.

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ELECTORAL MAP:

▶ *Cont'd from cover*

of 78%.

The commission notes that while relative voting equality is not the only criterion, compliance with it remains an essential foundation for ensuring fair representation of all Quebec voters.

Among the concerns raised during consultations was the reduction of the Gaspé Peninsula's political weight in relation to its specific issues. "The commission's mandate is first

and foremost to ensure the effective representation of voters. It is not its role to guarantee the representation of regions in the National Assembly or to provide for a minimum number of seats per region," it states in its report.

Regarding exceptional status within the electoral law, the commission is of the opinion that "if such status were granted to the Gaspé and Bonaventure ridings, other ridings in Quebec should also benefit from it. Indeed, they are not the only ones with a

special situation in Quebec.

Nearly 20 electoral districts are distinguished by one or more specific geographical characteristics, such as their size, their extent, the number of municipalities they encompass, their distance from the National Assembly, or the size of their urban centre. Increasing the number of exceptional statuses in the Act is undesirable, as it would diminish the exceptional nature of the constituencies concerned and significantly increase inequalities in representation."

Next steps

Members of the National Assembly must hold a debate to discuss the revised proposal within five days of its tabling. After this debate, the Electoral Representation Commission will have ten days to finalize Quebec's new electoral map.

This map is expected to be used for the next two provincial general elections.

Citizens may still submit comments through the commission's website.

The commission notes that this revised proposal comes more than a year and a half after the adoption of the Act to interrupt the electoral district delimitation process, an Act now declared unconstitutional and inoperative by the Court of Appeal.

The commissioners welcome the court's decision. In a press release issued in March 2024, they stated that halting the work would compromise the fair and equitable representation of voters in the next elections.

Revised electoral map: no surprises in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The mayor of Gaspé is not surprised to see the Electoral Representation Commission remove a riding in the Gaspé Peninsula from its revised proposal tabled on December 2.

Daniel Côté notes, however, the speed with which the document was presented.

"The conclusion is not a surprise. The speed of execution is. The body was still warm when they opened the will. It's quite unusual," said the elected official, referring to the Court of Appeal's December 1 decision invalidating Bill 59, which had protected the two Gaspésie ridings for the 2026 election pending a more comprehensive review of the Electoral Act.

"The work must be done by parliamentarians, who must now provide for special constituencies and quickly pass a bill amending the Election Act to provide for special status for Bonaventure and Gaspé, right next to the paragraph on the Magdalen Islands, while we review the Act in greater depth," says Mr. Côté.

In the longer term, a mechanism will have to be put in place to ensure that each region of Quebec has a minimum number of votes in the National Assembly.

"Otherwise, in 50 years' time, we will find ourselves in a situation where, of the 125 members of the National Assembly, there will be about 100 in the Quebec City-Montreal axis and the rest in the regions. We will end up with one member for the Gaspé Peninsula and eastern Lower St. Lawrence. I don't think that's what parliamentarians



Photo: Screenshot from the National Assembly

The Parti Québécois (PQ) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Matane-Matapédia, PQ leader Paul Saint-Pierre Plamondon, and national spokesperson Méganne Perry Mélançon will be fighting for two ridings in Gaspésie.

want," Mr. Côté believes.

The commission's report notes that granting special status to Gaspé and Bonaventure would be somewhat unfair, given that some 20 ridings could have this right.

"Keeping our minimum number of votes is the bare minimum required to influence decisions in Quebec City," says Mr. Côté, noting that after the Gaspé Peninsula, it could be the turn of the North Shore and Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

"Just because our populations are growing more slowly doesn't mean we're less important in Quebec. Why are our populations growing more slowly? Often, it's because government decisions are less in tune with our needs than those of other regions that have greater representation," the elected official explains.

Daniel Côté is counting on the unanimity shown by parliamentarians in May 2024 to protect the Gaspé Peninsula.

"For the 2026 election, the key to success is the excep-

tional constituencies. I wouldn't be surprised if there were unanimity in the National Assembly, because the law that the Court of Appeal overturned, which suspended the commission's work, was intended to protect the Gaspé Peninsula. Why wouldn't they be as unanimous? That's what they did last year," the mayor continues.

The elected official points out that the Court of Appeal says it would be more constitutional to include an exception clause in the law.

The mayor of Chandler is also concerned

The mayor of Chandler describes the situation as catastrophic when asked about the merger of Bonaventure and Gaspé, as recommended once again by the Electoral Commission.

Gilles Daraïche believes the decision makes no sense. "It's already difficult to meet with our representative in Bonaventure. Imagine if we

only had one. The workload for that person would be enormous," comments the mayor.

Mr. Daraïche wants the two ridings to remain separate, given that Bonaventure already stretches from the Matapédia plateaus to Chandler.

"It's already a large territory. And now they want to double it? For us, it's catastrophic to see that," he laments.

The PQ in favour of exceptional status

The Parti Québécois notes that the Electoral Representation Commission does not take into account the realities of the Gaspé Peninsula in its revised report.

The leader, Paul Saint-Pierre Plamondon, made this observation on Wednesday morning at a press briefing at the National Assembly.

"The riding will be one of the most populous in Quebec in terms of the number of people to serve, but for a Member

of the National Assembly who is in Grande-Vallée and wants to go to the other side of the riding, it's a five-and-a-half-hour drive," notes the PQ leader.

The PQ leader says that the parties must resume cross-party dialogue to find a solution that does not threaten the Gaspé Peninsula. For him, the exception status remains the solution.

"If we can't reach an agreement, then it starts to get complicated. You have the legal system imposing constraints on us. We're running out of time. I can assure you that if the Gaspé Peninsula is not protected, that's where we're going," continues the PQ leader.

The Court of Appeal had already mentioned such an alternative while awaiting a comprehensive solution.

"As was the case with the map freeze, it was a unanimous decision by the parties. This is a region with special needs. That is what was mentioned during the consultations. We feel that no work has been done based on the arguments put forward by the region's elected officials," comments Méganne Perry Mélançon, former MNA for Gaspé and national spokesperson for the party.

"We are adding more service points, but the voice of elected officials is important in the National Assembly. They are taking away a voice. We already have a neglected region," she notes.

The PQ leader adds that the situation could also occur in Abitibi and on the North Shore.

"We are potentially facing a very serious political weakening of the regions' influence," says Mr. Saint-Pierre Plamondon.

Prefects Côté and Dubé re-elected

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The prefects of the Bonaventure and Côte-de-Gaspé MRCs were re-elected on November 26 by the mayors, without opposition.

In Bonaventure, Éric Dubé is beginning his ninth year as prefect and will serve a four-year term following changes requested by the Department of Municipal Affairs. Previously, prefects were appointed for two-year terms.

“We work well together. We’re all too small to compete. This vision was instilled in the MRC by my predecessor to develop the region. We’re all interconnected, whether in terms of economic, social or territorial development. As mayor and prefect, it’s in my interest that everyone does well,” says Mr. Dubé, who is



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

also mayor of New Richmond.

The demographic challenge will be significant, with 30% of the population over the age of 60.

“How are we going to replace them, whether through immigration or people return-

ing? How do we maintain our vitality? It comes through economic development and that comes with housing and child-care services. From there, how do we maintain our vitality?” asks Mr. Dubé.

Referring to his predecessor

Jean-Guy Poirier, who served as prefect for 37 years, Éric Dubé says he is not aiming for a longevity record.

“I’m taking it one term at a time. I started later than he did. I don’t think I’ll beat him, and that’s not my goal. I like it, we have a good team. I’m hopeful about the future,” he says.

Côte-de-Gaspé

Unsurprisingly, Daniel Côté has been re-elected in the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC, where he has been in office since 2017.

For this fifth term, the economy will be at the top of the agenda.

“We are trying to diversify the economy by taking full advantage of the shipbuilding industry. There are major is-

ssues in forestry in the Grande-Vallée sector. We also have mining development in Murdochville, where we need to focus on ensuring harmonious development with the community,” says the prefect, who is also mayor of Gaspé.

The consolidation of municipal services is also on the table in some municipalities in the Estran sector.

“This is part of what we will have to facilitate in order to optimize services and reduce the cost to taxpayers,” says Mr. Côté.

After serving as his right-hand man since his early days at the prefecture, the mayor of Grande-Vallée, Noël Richard, is handing over his position to the mayor of Petite-Vallée, Monika Tait, who will serve as deputy prefect for the next four years.

Electoral map: not a decision we wanted, says Mathieu Lapointe

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The Gaspésie region has taken note of the December 1 Court of Appeal decision declaring unconstitutional Bill 59, passed by the Quebec National Assembly, which halted the revision of the electoral map, a map that would have deprived the region of one of its two ridings.

“We take note of the decision. What the ruling says is that the government should have done a job that it has not done in the last year and a half to show its seriousness,” says Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté, who was one of the parties in the case.

Bill 59, passed in May 2024, froze the revision process and maintained the current map for the 2026 election, allowing time to update the electoral law for 2030.

“The National Assembly unanimously passed a law that was supposed to have a temporary effect, but what the court is saying is that the effect is not so temporary because no steps have been taken to thoroughly review the law. If the National Assembly wanted to be serious, it should have taken action. The judge concludes that the



Photo: N. Sergerie

Daniel Côté is one of the respondents in the decision to challenge the abolition of a county in the Gaspé Peninsula.

work of the commission, which must be independent, is being distorted,” says Mr. Côté, who is a trained lawyer.

Two options are on the table: thoroughly review the electoral law, which is impossible to do before 2026, to give more weight to the regions, or quickly open up the electoral law.

“The judge practically suggests this to the National Assembly: amend the electoral law and provide for two exceptional constituencies for Gaspé and Bonaventure, just

like the Magdalen Islands. We will hold the 2026 election, hoping to thoroughly review the electoral law later. That is our request to the National Assembly now,” demands Mr. Côté.

Otherwise, the Gaspé Peninsula will see Gaspé and Bonaventure merge, and Haute-Gaspésie will be transferred to the neighbouring riding of Matane-Matapédia.

“This is the only solution that remains at present, and I hope that the National Assembly will have the political courage to do so in order to spare the Gaspé Peninsula from further democratic gerrymandering,” says Mr. Côté.

The work must be done quickly, as the parliamentary session ends on December 12.

“It’s not a complicated job. They are capable of passing laws under gag order when they want to. To save a minimum of democracy in Gaspésie, they are capable of doing so if they have the will to do so,” says Mr. Côté.

The same sentiment is shared by the Table des préfets

“This is not the ruling we wanted,” says Mathieu Lapointe, president of the Table des préfets de la Gaspésie,

right from the outset.

“The solution that should have been put forward is not to freeze the process throughout Quebec. They are proposing to freeze these two ridings in the law, as in the Magdalen Islands. We will work at the political level to ensure that the National Assembly protects the Gaspé Peninsula. We believe it is still possible to do so,” says Mr. Lapointe.

The preliminary proposal was to remove one riding in the Gaspé Peninsula and another in Montreal to create a riding in the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec, two regions that challenged Bill 59 because the freeze disadvantaged them due to population growth.

The Gaspé MNA is cautious

At this stage, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé cannot foresee with certainty the government and National Assembly will follow the Court of Appeal’s suggestion to create an exception for Bonaventure and Gaspé.

“We have taken note of the ruling. We note that maintaining the status quo is not an option. Various scenarios will be presented and will be part

of the analysis,” says Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

“We have very little time to act. We are in dialogue with all National Assembly members. We will see how the minister plays his cards to find a solution. We will have to roll up our sleeves very quickly to maintain the ridings of Gaspé and Bonaventure in anticipation of the 2026 elections,” says the MNA.

The elected representative rejects the criticism that MNAs have done nothing since Bill 59 was passed in May 2024.

“A working committee was set up involving all parties in opposition. Reaching a final solution is no easy task: the issues differ on both sides. We are talking about population growth in one case and loss in the other. With the ruling, it is clear that we will have to speed up the process,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

He argues that new criteria will have to be established to revise the map, taking into account of land use, natural communities and the coverage of the territory, while considering the specific issues facing each region.

“We will give the minister time to find sustainable solutions,” says the MNA for Gaspé.

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1990, a year of shocks

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The year 1990 was, without question, a year of shocks. We could see it coming in 1989 because of the looming cod crisis, but other crises also emerged. Many Gaspésians needed a solid stomach to make it through 1990 unscathed. What do you think?

**Vol 16, No 1
January 9, 1990**

- In issue 1, dated January 9, “1989, “The year in review” title and ensuing article covers more than 50% of the front page and three more inside. “Local storekeeper finds creative way to keep language cops at bay”, “Percy Lequesne honored for 60 years of service to Baker Hotel”, “Two Gaspé councillors vote against 1990 budget”, “Fish quotas cut in northern gulf” and “Paper mills study recycling projects” also make page 1 titles. The storekeeper is Bruce Patterson, who covered the bilingual signage of his Sunny Bank general store with Canada and Quebec flags. Percy Lequesne says that a hotel room cost \$1.50 to \$2 when he started work in 1929. Inside, Gérard Poirier keeps delivering his “Railroading on the Gaspé” articles.

**Vol 16, No 2
January 16, 1990**

- “Major changes in store for electoral map”, about the possible abolishment of a riding in Eastern Quebec, makes the headline of issue 2, dated January 16. A picture of Brilliant Cove, and a column of four titles, “Education ministry says no to Bonaventure move” (the closure of Bonaventure Polyvalent School), “Forest industry lobbies for chemical spraying”, “Cuts of cod quotas change little for Gaspé fisheries and “14 transformation plants, 1000 jobs in critical condition, AQIP” (fisheries) complete page 1. Inside, “Via Gaspesia Committee calls for NTA (National Transportation Agency) hearings”, following CN’s attempt to abandon the Chandler and Gaspé line, which would reduce VIA



1990 dukes and princesses of Shigawake Winter Carnival: left to right Johnny Benwell, Tammy Hottot, Rodney Benwell, Jennifer Benwell, Jo-Ann Fitzgerald (later crowned queen) and Wayne Hottot. In the background is the 1990 “Bonhomme: rumored to be Bert Hayes. Organizers were pleased with the enthusiasm and support shown at the carnival events.

Rail’s service from seven trips a week to three.

**Vol 16, No 3
January 23, 1990**

- “Gaspé gives golf club go ahead”, and “Extra Terrestrials skip Gaspé Coast” make the titles of issue 3, dated January 23. Two photos show three CN employees who retired, Leonard Main, Sydney Scott and Clifton Skene. The UFO was a ship destined to dock in Dalhousie.

**Vol 16, No 4
January 30, 1990**

- In issue 4, released on January 30, “On the road again”, a CBC television program, makes a stop at Auberge Coin du Banc, in Corner of the Beach, to film a feature on innkeeper Sydney Maloney, the last resident of Bonaventure Island. “Plight of inshore fishermen continues”, “CLSC makes house calls: pass it on” and “1989, worst year for traffic deaths in a decade” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 16, No 5
February 6, 1990**

- “Fatal car accidents up 30 percent” adds details to the region’s poor road safety record in issue 5, dated February 6. “Untapped treasure off Magdalen Islands”, silicon that is, and “Man battles to overcome illiteracy”, namely Elston Adams of Gaspé, also make the front-page.

**Vol 16, No 6
February 13, 1990**

- “Forillon Park starts moose, deer study” headlines issue 6, dated February 13. Another photo shows people enjoying the Shigawake Carnival. “Grande-Rivière mayor charged with breach of trust” for accepting a fishing trip paid by an engineering firm (he was later dismissed), “No Malbay Festival this year”, “Freight train makes rare Gaspé appearance”, on a portion of the line that CN wants to abandon, “53 Quebec municipalities will prepare their electoral map” and “Special ministers committee set to tackle fishing crisis” also make page 1.

**Vol 16, No 7
February 20, 1990**

- “A look at Douglstown”, a report by Mike Foster, features the decline of its anglophone community, in issue 7, dated February 20. “No chemical spraying: Côte”, (Albert, Energy and Natural Resources minister then), “Beaudin reviews Liberal record”, “Government buys out York river club”, “Welfare in the Gaspé three times provincial rate” and “Basketball champs can’t go to provincials” because of school board’s lack of funds are the other front-page titles.

**Vol 16, No 8
February 27, 1990**

- “Gaspé PQ confident in the future” and “Would you be-

lieve – Snow”, showing the winter’s heavy accumulation so far, headline issue 8, dated February 27. “No Voyageur cuts despite up-coming sale”, “Gaspé teacher places second in International Computer Competition” and “Caplan & New Richmond get ultramodern telephone service” round out the front page.

**Vol 16, No 9
March 6, 1990**

- Canada’s Liberal Party leadership candidate Jean Chrétien “Says Canada has never been so divided as it is today”, makes most of the front page for issue 9, dated March 6. “Msgr. Ross Hospital deficit eliminated for 1990”, “Gaspé may go to referendum on golf course question” and “The state of salmon: 1989” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 16, No 10
March 13, 1990**

- A photo and caption showing New Carlisle High School children holding their “Teddy Bear picnic” makes issue 10’s front-page, dated March 13. “Recycling project down but not out”, “Referendum over Gaspé golf club loan”, “RSBG may close Hopetown School for primary students” and “New Richmond to get \$6.5 million ski hill project” all make page 1.

**Vol 16, No 11
March 20, 1990**

- Pictures and captions oc-

cupy a big space of issue 11, dated March 20, one showing the quantity of snow in front of Nancy Douglass’ New Carlisle home, and another of “Aero modelists buzz Gaspé bay”. “Equality, Unity Party to merge March 23”, “Development forum calls for mega-projects” in Gaspé riding, “Bad roads, inadequate primary care factors in rural highway fatalities”, “Two men free after conspiracy to import narcotics charges dropped” and “Tourism centre receives hate letter” (in Sainte-Flavie) complete page 1.

**Vol 16, No 12
March 27, 1990**

- “Linguistic audit performed on coast” by the Official Languages Commission, is the only title appearing on page 1 of issue 12, dated March 27. The front-page also shows a nice winter photo of Percé, by Sharon Farrell. Inside, we see “Gaspé Golf Club withdraws demand”.

**Vol 16, No 13
April 3, 1990**

- “GST will increase tourism costs by 5 percent”, say stakeholders, filling most of the page 1 space, in issue 13, dated April 3. “DSC (Community Health Department) report for Bonaventure shows youth exodus phenomenon”, “Religious groups get political: denounce system” of budget cuts, “Supreme Court decision protects minority schools” and “National scholarship awarded to local youth”, are also mentioned on page 1. Inside, Gérard Poirier writes “My friend René Lévesque”, his childhood neighbour.

**Vol 16, No 14
April 10, 1990**

- “Shrimp fishermen begin season on strike”, because of low prices, and “Rumors of more VIA cuts, Chartrand”, headline issue 14, released on April 10. Guy Chartrand is president of Transport 2000, a commuter transport advocate.

From Page 13

“Taxing powers revert to school boards leaving municipalities with less clout” is another page 1 title. A picture shows a Gaspé car that caught fire.

**Vol 16. No 15
April 17, 1990**

- “Douglastown woman celebrates 100th birthday” headlines issue 15, April 17. Mary-Ann Cunning doesn’t have “one peck of rheumatism” at 100. “School Board should think twice before adopting coercive language restrictions: Alliance Québec President”, minister Michel “Pagé announces first moves in fishing industry plan”, “Gaspésie region victim of government non-strategy, says union leader” Gérald Larose, “Striking shrimp fishermen make final offer to Purdel” and “Miramichi Presbytery opposes tax on reading material” also make page 1.

**Vol 16. No 16
April 24, 1990**

- “Man blocks road to Loyalist Village, wants paycheque”, “Port Daniel East and West officially fused, taxes will go down says McInnis” (mayor Robert) and “Stewart found not guilty” of Gaspé-born Robert Williams’ murder in Montreal, make the front-page titles of issue 16, April 24. The Loyalist Village, waiting for major grant installments, paid the man after five days. Robert Stewart, who killed Robert Williams, was judged mentally incompetent at the time of slaying. A photo featuring some of SPEC’s volunteers also make page 1.

**Vol 16. No 17
May 1, 1990**

- Issue 17, dated May 1, shows photos of 7-year-old Andrew Gilker doing more than his Earth Day share by picking up neighbourhood garbage and taking it home. “Lobster fishermen call for closure of Gaspésie zone”, Michel “Pagé announces \$3.3 million rationalization plan for salted dried cod”, “Report of economic activity in MRC Côte de Gaspé leaves much to be desired”, “Linguistic boards may be good for English rural schools” and “Quebec tourism minister looks for ways to market peninsula” are the other page 1 titles.

**Vol 16. No 18
May 8, 1990**

- “Gaspésie lobster fishermen back to the water” after receiving help to lower their operation cost, and Gaspé Liberals choose Chrétien slate”, en route to the party leadership convention, headline issue 18, dated May 8. “Gerard D. Levesque nominates attaché” (Valerie Gilker), “CLSC Chaleurs gets money for extension”, “Stand-off on St. Majorique bridge”, Graeme “Decarie guest speaker at CASA’s AGM” and “First town meeting of unified Port Daniel peaceful” also make page 1. Stéphane Giroux is hired by SPEC, replacing Paul Zaleski.

**Vol 16. No 19
May 15, 1990**

- SPEC’s number 19 issue, dated May 15, is the paper’s 15th anniversary edition. “School Board to study parents’ complaints about NRHS” regarding French, English and mathematic programs, “The Stadacona Band” will play at BPS, “Bottom-fish fishermen rally to keep accidental crab catches”, “Gaspé (Boulay) family feels pushed around by Government, again” near Forillon Park, “Provisioning for plants from public forest re-



BPS has its own newspaper, meet the staff!
From left, Editor, Linda Burton, Stacey Renouf, Shelly Gallon.
Back left, Joel Cyr, Shawn D. Walker, Cindy Boucher and Stephanie Guignon.

leased”, “Cultural complex back on the drawing board” in New Richmond and “BPS hosts public speaking contest” also make page 1.

**Vol 16. No 20
May 22, 1990**

- “RCMP Bison Band to perform in New Carlisle” headlines issue 20, dated May 22. “Lawyers stay out of New Carlisle courthouse” because of poor Legal Aid rates, “Escuminac residents to get improved phone service”, “Private forest owners, workers crowd Côte”, “Gaspésie Forests less susceptible to acid rain, says expert”, “Situation of seniors and youth concerns at (minister Christos) Sirros meeting” and “\$20,700 in scholarships awarded to Gaspesia Cegep English grads” also make page 1.

**Vol 16. No 21
May 29, 1990**

- “Storm smashes lobster traps” is the only major title of issue 21, dated May 29. Most of the Gaspésie’s 232 lobster fishermen sustained several thousand dollars in damages each. “Fishermen burn Valcourt effigy” over ban on accidental crab catches, “At last! New bridges will link St. Jules and

Grand Cascapedia” and “\$50 million plan for Provincial fisheries revealed” appear as smaller titles on page 1.

**Vol 16. No 22
June 25, 1990**

- The title “Pop goes the road” comes with two photos of highway 132 works in New Carlisle in issue 22, dated June 5. “Sirros delivers goods for Health and Social Services in English”, “Progress of Socio-Economic Conference examined”, “Renovations will make New Carlisle High safer” and “Book Voyage project tours Gaspé Coast” are the other main titles.

**Vol 16. No 23
June 12, 1990**

- “Expropriations pave way for Nouvelle-Oak Bay stretch” and “Hopetown school closes for the last time” are featured in issue 23, dated June 12. “Salmon sport fishing means cash for Gaspé economy” is the other page 1 title.

**Vol 16. No 24
June 19, 1990**

- “Monster pretty boy lobster caught”, with a photo of a 14-pound lobster, dominates the front page of issue 24, dated

June 19. “Lead levels reassuring, DSC” in Murdochville, “New taxation system for school board will mean higher taxes”, “Pit bull, attack dogs banned in Gaspé”, “RSBG appoints principals in regional schools” and “St-Maurice fish plant project almost dead” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 16. No 25
June 26, 1990**

- “We didn’t step out for lunch”, about road work in New Carlisle, and “25-foot fin whale beached in Chandler” headline issue 25, dated June 26. “Victims of violence need accessible shelter”, “Feds to finance catamaran, motel expansions with latest grants”, “Fate of Gaspé-Chandler CN line to be announced any day”, “The wonderful world of Tennyson Johnson” and “Stone-Consolidated celebrates 25th anniversary” round out a solid news edition.

**Vol 16. No 26
July 3, 1990**

- “Gaspé woos Japanese delegates”, 31 of them from Iwaki, headlines issue 26, dated July 3. The idea is to set up a cultural and industrial exchange with that city. “Family of victim walks out of coroner’s inquest”, “Marin rejects cuts to tax exemptions”, “Artist (Gabrielle Messier) finds peace in the Gaspé”, “Global warming may affect fisheries”, “Paving of 132 in New Carlisle” and “Oak Bay /Nouvelle road finally a reality” also make page 1. The family of Restigouche’s Henry Mitchell Sr, killed when his vehicle was struck by a police car, believes the inquest is biased.

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**Vol 16, No 27
July 10, 1990**

- “Malenfant wants ski resort completed for Christmas” headlines issue 27, dated July 10. The resort is Pin rouge. “Life after Meech”, a follow up on the failed constitutional accord, “Quebec sovereignty must come soon, Gaspé PQ”, “Up from down under” (Diana Leblanc, from Tasmania, the daughter of a Gaspesian), “Unemployment rate climbs from last year” and “Tourism season looks promising despite soft start” also make the front-page.

**Vol 16, No 28
July 17, 1990**

- “Demonstrators block road to Percé” to protest against new unemployment insurance rules requiring 14 weeks of work instead of 10 before receiving benefits, “VIA’s ridership dropping faster than predicted” and “Failed kidnap attempt in Pabos” headline issue 28, dated July 17. VIA carried 16,480 people from January to May, compared to 26,000 for the same period in 1989, when the train was daily. Irene Dallain reports on CBC’s Quebec AM’s presence at the Loyalist Village.

**Vol 16, No 29
July 24, 1990**

- “Collision derails Mtl.-Gaspé train” near Rivière-du-Loup, fills the cover of issue 29, dated July 24. A truck hit the train at a crossing. “BPS student (Aaron Court) goes to Switzerland”, “Federal and provincial governments to help fishermen”, “Côte-de-Gaspé leaders won’t support road blockades” and “Bonaventure beach open, but others remain closed” because of pollution, also make page 1.

**Vol 16, No 30
July 31, 1990**

- “Micmac delegation returns from Kahnawake”, after supporting the Mohawk community in crisis at Oka, headlines issue 30, released on July 31. “Gespapegiag Queens” reports on the community’s contests. Wanda Jerome and Tracy Condo are the queens. “Gaspesian (Leroy Leggo) named



Hostesses for the W.I dinner in Wakeham, Quebec.

head of EFF’s environmental committee” (Eastern Fishermen Federation), “New store hours leave merchants indifferent” and “Man does the impossible” complete page 1 titles. The man is Conrad Dubé, who stopped in the region after cycling around the world nine times, despite having had polio at age two.

**Vol 16, No 31
August 7, 1990**

- “2000 cuts in welfare expected in the Gaspé”, meaning reductions in payments to recipients, headlines issue 31, dated August 7. “RCMP Musical Ride comes to the British Heritage Centre”, “Doctors desert CLSCs, Bonaventure clinic” mainly to study, and “CN wants deal with VIA Rail over Chandler-Gaspé” line are the other page 1 titles.

**Vol 16, No 32
August 14, 1990**

- Issue 32, dated August 14, features “Oak Bay collision kills four”, “Anglophone advisory committee holds meeting” to improve public services in English in Gaspé, “Signs of the times”, showing a stop sign carrying only ‘arrêt’ and “Spirit of St-Louis, a model in Hope”, make the front page. A photo also shows Robert Libman, Equality Party leader, during a Gaspé visit. Hope modelist Eugène Chapados built a replica of the Spirit of St-Louis, Charles Lindberg’s plane.

**Vol 16, No 33
August 21, 1990**

- Issue 33, dated August 21, shows “Acadians celebrate hol-

iday, Museum” in Bonaventure and “\$53 million announced for fisheries” for Quebec development over five years. “Bonaventure, Carleton beaches get poor ratings”, “Green (postal) boxes make Gaspé residents see red” and “Caisse Populaire coming to New Carlisle?” also make page 1.

**Vol 16, No 34
August 28, 1990**

- “Gaspé welcomes Prime Minister” Brian Mulroney’s meeting with his Quebec caucus is the main topic of the 34th issue, dated August 28. Two related articles also appear: “First lady meets women’s groups” and “Gaspesian Agency could supervise region, PM says”. The agency remains to be founded. “Mining project could threaten the Restigouche, environmentalist says” feature’s Marshall Minerals’ open pit venture on the New Brunswick side to exploit lead, gold, silver and copper. “Three fishermen stand trial in Percé” for having allegedly fished crab in the Griffon Cove area.

**Vol 16, No 35
September 4, 1990**

- Issue 35, released on September 4, headlines with “Senior Citizen’s home gets green light” in New Richmond and “Micmacs lift barricades following Mohawk settlement” in Restigouche, as the Oka crisis is over, points out Brenda (Gedeon) Miller, spokesperson of the community. “Déplacement indeed” shows a copper monument inaugurated at Bonaventure’s Acadian Museum.

**Vol 16, No 36
September 11, 1990**

- “Symposium on the future of Eastern Quebec to be held in Rimouski”, “Loyalist Village eyeing Stanley House”, “Port Daniel VIA station will house town hall”, “Fisheries hearing held” over groundfish, Farewell Cove Reg Annett’s “Trout farm a going concern” and “Local grocers opt for Sunday openings” make the front-page of issue 36, dated September 11.

**Vol 16, No 37
September 18, 1990**

- Issue 37, released on September 18, shows as a headline “Confusion plagues back-to-school at NCHS” as renovations leave little room for students and teachers. “650 Chandler mill workers out on

strike”, (a national strike), “School board defends (\$20 material) fee-charging”, New Carlisle “Municipal council holds back taxation roll”, “Hunting season underway on the coast” and “Phase 2 of NC’s community centre put on hold” also make page 1.

**Vol 16, No 38
September 25, 1990**

- “NCHS-in-Paspebiac finally rolling”, thanks to a move to St. Jean-Baptiste school, and “Work program supporters block road” in Port Daniel to get federal funding for 100 jobs, fill most of the front page of issue 38, dated September 25. The Port Daniel workers could pick and process yew branches for local firm Biolyse Pharmacopé, which produces medication against cancer. “Court asked to put seafood plant in receivership” reports on a Carleton businessman’s attempt to be paid by the Saint-Omer Baie Bleue mussel farm.

**Vol 16, No 39
October 2, 1990**

- “Proposed electoral map divides Gaspé in 3 instead of 4 ridings”, “Gaspé declared new Health and Social Services Centre” and “No end in sight for (Gaspesia) Mill strike” cover the front-page of issue 39, dated October 2. The Gaspé Peninsula will now manage its

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From Page 15

health and social service centres, instead of depending on Bas-Saint-Laurent decision-makers. In Chandler, union president Melvin Wall voices support to nine other Eastern Canada mills.

**Vol 16. No 40
October 9, 1990**

- In issue 40, dated October 9, readers see “Suspected poachers, hunting dogs busted in Port Daniel” as the front-page major title. Nearly 40 people were arrested. “Inauguration of new subsidized housing units in Douglstown”, “Proposed linguistic school boards get mixed reactions”, “Salute to the pioneers of Gaspé planned”, “Report shows that Quebec children hospitalized least” and “Awards presented to Rural Schools Education Conference”, to Lally MacKenzie and Bertha Hayes, also make page 1.

**Vol 16. No 41
October 16, 1990**

- New Carlisle’s “Young house turned over to municipality?” dominates the first page of the 41st issue, dated October 16. The house was given to Judy and Normand Desjardins by the Ross family, pending a promise to enhance it. There is interest in making it accessible to tourists. “Magdalen Islands paper (First Informer) goes weekly”, “Chandler mill strike over”, “Artisan Malbay craftworks launched”, “Petty crime wave hits New Carlisle”, “Jeunesses musicales releases new program” and “CRSSS worried about medical staff turnover” also make page 1.

**Vol 16. No 42
October 23, 1990**

- With municipal elections looming, “New Richmond mayor (Jean-Marie Jobin) faces opposition” from Robert “Bob” Caissy, and “5 candidates run-



Three cubs were recently received as full members of the 1st Perce Rock Wolf Cub Pack. Lee Syvret, Dale Comeau, and Isaac Chicoine.

ning for mayor in Port Daniel” make most of the front page of issue 42, dated October 23. A photo of a leafless tree shows that summer is over.

**Vol 16. No 43
October 30, 1990**

- “CASA to present brief on Quebec’s future” at the Bélanger-Campeau Commission on constitution, “Play it safe Hallowe’en night”, “Gaspé Coast racks up 50 fires in 1900”, “Greenpeace to become involved in the fisheries”, “Maria hospital to get bigger, better” and “Forum held on New Carlisle’s development” make page 1 topics of issue 43, dated October 30.

**Vol 16. No 44
November 6, 1990**

- In issue 44, dated November 6, “New enterprise for Cascapedia”, as Russell Campbell starts producing Christmas wreaths, and Robert “McInnis wins hot mayoralty race, loses referendum” on choice of MRC, fill most of page 1. Russell Campbell expects to sell 20,000 wreaths to American customers. Page 1 also features “St-Siméon clergyman (Paul-Hubert Poirier) joins Royal Canadian Society”, “\$24 million invested in salmon fishing” by federal and provincial governments, “Rural concerns voiced during transport commission hearing”, regarding VIA cuts, and “Bill C-21 should bring relief for Gaspé

unemployed” as the number of weeks to qualify for unemployment insurance can be reduced.

**Vol 16. No 45
November 13, 1990**

- Issue 45, dated November 13, shows the headline “Film crew packs in after eight memorable weeks” of shooting in Shigawake, courtesy of Paul Almond and his team. The movie “The dance goes on” will come out in 1991. Other front page stories include “Coroner’s report on the death of Restigouche man (Henry Mitchell Sr.) inconclusive, says family”, “New Richmond holds the only school board election”, “New ministerial delegate for Quebec fisheries visits Gaspé” and “Bonaventure Zoo closes for good”.

**Vol 16. No 46
November 20, 1990**

- Issue 46, dated November 20, is filled almost entirely with

“Caisse Populaire project well received despite sovereignty stand” and Ferne “Howatson re-elected” following Regional School Board of Gaspesia’s elections. “Deficit a serious burden, RSBG (school board) audit warns” also appears on page 1. Inside, Dave Doherty reports on Remembrance Day in New Carlisle.

**Vol 16. No 47
November 27, 1990**

- Issue 47, dated November 27, features “CASA submits names of two community leaders” for Quebec’s Cultural Community Awards for 1991, Joan Dow, for her role in the foundation of the Gaspesian British Heritage Village, and Albert Patterson, a prime mover of the Wakeham/York Homecoming Festival. “Gas increases hit Gaspesians hard” also makes page 1.

**Vol 16. No 48
December 4, 1990**

- Issue 48, dated December 4, headlines with “CASA presented brief to B&C Commission”. Howard Miller told the Bélanger Campeau Commission that the Gaspé Peninsula anglophone community notably wants better access to education. Other front page stories include “Books go!!! Newspapers stay with provincial GST”, as a new tax will be imposed in 1991, “Low-rental housing for seniors under construction in Bonaventure”, “Study launched into inshore fisheries problems”, “500 wood producers meet in Port

Daniel” to discuss equity, and “Unemployed fish plant workers occupy MNA’s office”.

**Vol 16. No 49
December 11, 1990**

- Issue 49, dated December 11, shows one main headline, “Gaspé office goes with CBC cuts”, a report by Leroy Leggo, that features the main aspects of a vast downsizing of the public broadcaster, with 40 of the 60 employees in Matane, Carleton and Gaspé laid off. Other front page stories include “Caisse Populaire distributes its surplus to its members”, region’s anglophone “Students above norm in Provincial exams”, “Over 80’s treated to dinner” by Wakeham Women’s Institute and “Wood room to close – 10 jobs to go at Stone Consolidated” in New Richmond.

**Vol 16. No 50
December 18, 1990**

- Finally, issue 50, dated December 18, raise the pressing question, “More cuts to VIA Rail???” After failing to reach an agreement with VIA over the sale of the Gaspé-Chandler line, CN returned to the National Transportation Agency with a request to abandon that railway portion. “Northern tax benefits to be phased out over three years”, “Radio-Canada cuts deployed by area groups”, “RSBG literacy program receives \$6,000 donation” from the Masonic Foundation of Quebec and “CLSC Chaleurs cuts back on services” also make the front-page.

Uncertainty links 1990 and 2025

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – Good news was few and far between in 1990 in the Gaspé Peninsula, and that reality, to some extent, still applies to the region in 2025. Gaspesians who were starting a fight to keep their electoral ridings 35 years ago, are now facing the same challenge in 2025, striving to ensure that the limited parliamentary weight they have to get their words across, is not diminished once more.

In fisheries, the situation is mixed. While the crab, lobster, and halibut sectors are relatively favorable, most other species are struggling, either with stagnant or dwindling stocks, and low prices for abundant species like redfish.

In 1990, the Progressive Conservative Party was heavily cutting Unemployment Insurance. Even today, the Liberal Party has yet to fully deliver on its 2015 promise to improve the system, a program harshly criticized by Stephen Harper’s Conservatives between 2006 and 2015. Meanwhile Donald Trump’s trade tariffs and the instability they create continue to cast uncertainty over the lumber industry and other products sold to the United States.

Despite these recurring challenges, Gaspesians appear better equipped today to face adversity than they were 35 years ago. If the region can secure improvements in transportation and fair electoral representation, it will be even stronger in confronting future difficulties.

This project has been made possible by the Community Media Strategic Support Fund offered jointly by the Official Language Minority Community Media Consortium and the Government of Canada.

Former employee backs thesis on Pit Caribou odours

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – A former Pit Caribou employee claims that the frequent odours in L'Anse-à-Beaufils are caused by certain past practices at the micro-brewery, a claim the owners deny.

Martin Beauchamp worked at Pit Caribou from 2021 to 2023 as operations manager, mainly in the warehouse, he tells SPEC.

"Production at Pit Caribou doubled compared to the previous owner. We went from 6,000 hectolitres to between 10,000 and 12,000 hectolitres. It's clear that the facilities can't keep up. There are procedures to follow for disposing of caustic soda and hot water in a septic tank. The caustic soda should have been neutralised before disposal, which was not done," says the former employee.

"A canning machine was installed that uses a lot of liquid to put the beer in cans rather than bottles. All of this puts a strain on the existing facilities," he continues.

According to Mr. Beauchamp, the hot water and caustic soda damaged the pipes under the slab, causing the



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Pit Caribou's facilities in Anse-à-Beaufils.

odour problem.

"From then on, we installed temporary drains and sent it straight outside with pumps until the problem was fixed, and that's when the complaints started," says Mr. Beauchamp. Some of the waste ended up in the sea, he adds. Specialized companies were brought in to repair the pipes.

"My contract ended in June 2023, and we were shut down due to environmental complaints," says the former worker. "They doubled production, didn't respect the capacity of the existing facilities, and added new machines. They

did whatever they wanted, and we now see the results in terms of the environment. That's my personal assessment," he says.

The company has since made investments and worked with the Ministry of the Environment to address the problem, but the former employee

doubts that the work will solve the odour issues.

"Not at all. In my opinion, they need to change the facilities, neutralize the products, and change the way they dispose of waste. A septic tank works by cultivating bacteria. If you kill the bacteria with hot water and caustic soda, the bacteria won't do their job and you won't get a satisfactory result," he says, adding that he left the company on good terms.

Pit Caribou denies everything

Pit Caribou categorically rejects the former employee's claims. President Vincent Coderre explains that Beauchamp was only responsible for shipping.

The company maintains that it complies with its environmental authorization certifi-

cate for production, which is limited to 1 million litres and has not been reached.

"When we bought Pit Caribou, it (the production) was 700,000 litres. It's impossible that we've doubled production," says Mr. Coderre.

"Since 2023, we have been in contact with the Ministry of the Environment. We are making the changes they are asking us to make. We have added a centrifuge that greatly reduces our solid waste. We have a canner that rinses cans with ionised air instead of a bottling machine that rinses bottles with water. For the past year, we have been taking a large portion of the semi-liquid materials, putting them in a truck and sending them for composting," explains Mr. Coderre.

Pit Caribou regrets that a former employee is weighing in on the ongoing environmental debate.

Buy local: Avignon continues its campaign

Nelson Sergerie

MARIA – The Avignon MRC is continuing its campaign to encourage residents to buy locally, especially during the festive season.

Building on the support gained during its summer campaign, 'Chaque plein compte' (Every fill-up counts), this new campaign aims to make buying local the first choice for consumers.

"December is a time when people generally make a large volume of purchases, making it a crucial moment to reinforce the message," says Mathieu Lapointe, Prefect of the Avignon MRC.

"With this new advertising concept, we are encouraging consumers to make it a habit to check with our local merchants first before turning to the convenience of ordering from outside the region," he adds.

The campaign is multifaceted and includes video, audio and written profiles highlighting the commitment of local personalities and entrepreneurs. With a budget of \$26,000 for this second wave of messages, the local purchasing agent has returned with a new partner, Maria's magician David Philippe, to engage the people of Avignon and encourage them to shop at local businesses.

Success of the first phase

The first phase of the campaign, which ran from August 5 to September 14, referred to filling up with gas and aimed primarily to reinforce the idea that purchasing all products, goods and services from local businesses is essential for the regional economy.

This was particularly important given that the abolition of the carbon tax on gas prices outside Quebec made travelling to Campbellton attractive. At that time, the difference at the pump could be as much as 15 cents per litre. The campaign aimed to keep consumers within the MRC.

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GASPÉ CAMPUS

VIA Rail to receive \$2.3 billion in subsidies

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The federal budget presented on November 4 granted an additional \$944 million in subsidies to VIA Rail, bringing its support from the Canadian government to \$2.3 billion in 2025-2026.

However, this amount appears insufficient to encourage the public rail carrier to return to its Gaspé Peninsula route east of Matapédia.

This situation is being strongly denounced by Alexis Deschênes, Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie–Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine–Listuguj, who deplores VIA Rail's inflexibility and its "denial of responsibility towards Gaspé Peninsula users," he says.

Mr. Deschênes also deplores VIA Rail management's refusal to answer questions detailed questions about the return of train service between Montreal and New Carlisle, or Montreal and Port-Daniel. New Carlisle and Port-Daniel will once again be accessible to passenger and freight trains in early December.

"It's their strategy, VIA Rail's management, not to answer, to make as few waves as possible, and to be as unaccountable as possible. Earlier this year, I met with an executive, Denis Boucher, who told us he was back to the drawing board [...] Since then, I've understood that we're not being taken seriously and that VIA Rail has no interest in the Gaspé Peninsula," explains Alexis Deschênes, who remains undeterred by the public carrier's management.

"We'll come back with a better strategy, put pressure on the politicians, and highlight their denial of responsibility. I met with the federal Minister of Transport, Steven McKinnon, a few weeks ago. He told me he



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Since September 2013, Gaspé residents wishing to take the passenger train have had to travel to Campbellton, New Brunswick, or to Matapédia.

will speak with VIA Rail and raise the issue of service in the Gaspé Peninsula," adds the Bloc Québécois MP.

The additional \$944 million, which brings VIA Rail's annual subsidy to \$2.282 billion precisely, will be put to a vote by MPs on or before December 10. Of this amount, \$63 million will be allocated to the operational needs fund and \$568 million to the fund for services outside the Quebec City - Windsor corridor.

"So, 60% of the additional funds will go to the fund for services outside the Quebec City - Windsor corridor. That works out well since the Gaspé Peninsula is located right outside that corridor! When you see this additional \$944 million and realize that the Matapédia-Gaspé train cost taxpayers between \$4 and \$4.5 million per year in the 2000s, you can clearly see that VIA Rail easily has the financial means to resume its essential service in Gaspésie!" says Mr. Deschênes.

Since the end of former VIA Rail president Yves Desjardins Siciliano's term in May 2019, the company's management has maintained a "Gaspé or noth-

ing" stance, refusing to resume service in stages between Matapédia and Gaspé, that is just when the railway line between New Richmond and Gaspé will be repaired.

Mr. Desjardins Siciliano had expressed openness to a phased resumption of service in 2017 and 2018. VIA Rail had suspended its service in phases between 2011 and 2013, first between New Carlisle and Gaspé due to bridge repairs in Chandler, and then between Matapédia and New Carlisle in September 2013, primarily due to the condition of other bridges.

Freight rail service has never been suspended between Matapédia and New Richmond. The distance between Matapédia and Port-Daniel represents roughly 62% of the Matapédia-Gaspé route.

At the beginning of the 2000s, VIA Rail's annual operating cost for the Montreal - Gaspé train was close to \$7 million, with revenues ranging between \$2 million and \$3 million. Hence Mr. Deschênes' assessment that the taxpayers' contribution to the Gaspé Peninsula service was between \$4 million and \$4.5 million. It was VIA Rail's regional train with the highest cost recovery ratio.

"It's getting ridiculous"

Alexis Deschênes concludes that the attitude of VIA Rail's management is "getting ridiculous! They have the right to be transparent. If they have details to provide, they should. The response given at the annual public meeting proves that we are not in a relationship of openness and honesty. They are not respecting our demands by providing falsehoods."

The Bloc Québécois MP is referring to comments made by VIA Rail president Mario Pélo-

quin, who stated on August 21, at the carrier's annual public meeting, that a phased return to the Gaspé Peninsula "is impossible because of train logistics, reversing, and things like that, simply because we don't want to do it and we can't do it."

However, at least two VIA Rail trains in Canada—the Ocean train between Montreal and Halifax and the Winnipeg - Churchill train—simply place the locomotives at the other end of the passenger cars for the return trip. It is precisely these erroneous statements that are fueling MP Deschênes' determination to redouble his efforts.

During a meeting with members of the Coalition of Gaspésians for the return of passenger trains, Mario Péloquin committed in November 2023 to come to the Gaspé Peninsula in early 2024 to meet with representatives of the region and inspect the facilities firsthand. He never came.

"Regional services are part

of VIA Rail's mission, but they (managers) show no attention, no respect for the people of the Gaspé Peninsula [...] People are frustrated to be dealing with a public corporation, flush with cash, funded by our public money, to see it accept this injustice, to see it consider us so unimportant that even though we pay taxes, we are ignored; we are far from being a priority," explains Alexis Deschênes.

Even though more and more people are considering a solution "outside of VIA Rail" to bring passenger train service back to the Gaspé Peninsula, the Bloc Québécois MP still favours applying pressure to force this public corporation to do its homework.

"Why accept having fewer services? The answer is political. All it takes is for a Minister of Transport to force VIA Rail to fulfill its mandate. Minister MacKinnon is supposed to address this issue," concludes Mr. Deschênes.

VIA Rail passes the buck to Quebec's Ministry of Transport

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND - In an unsigned written response, VIA Rail makes no mention of the additional \$944 million it will likely receive shortly, nor does it suggest a phased return to service, despite its technical feasibility.

"VIA Rail has always affirmed its commitment to resuming service in the Gaspé Peninsula when the tracks are safe and allow for competitive travel times to Gaspé, and that remains our intention. VIA Rail had begun significant preparatory work based on the announced timeline for the complete rehabilitation of the tracks to Gaspé by 2027," states the carrier's media relations department.

"An internal committee had been established to coordinate all aspects of an operational plan for resuming service, including the availability of rolling stock and personnel, as well as the modernization of stations in the region. Furthermore, a joint governance structure with the Quebec Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility was established to ensure close coordination at each stage of the project. However, upon the tabling of the provincial budget on March 25, 2025, VIA Rail learned, along with the residents of the Gaspé Peninsula, that the rehabilitation work on the section between Port-Daniel-Gaspé had been sent back to the planning phase, without a new timeline," the statement adds.

"Faced with this major change, and still firmly committed to restoring full service for the people of the Gaspé Peninsula, VIA Rail must now go back to the drawing board to assess the next steps," the message concludes.

The Quebec Ministry of Transport, which has owned the Matapédia-Gaspé railway line since spring 2015, has still not commented on the resumption of calls for tenders for the Port-Daniel-Gaspé rail line since the March 2025 budget.

Nine projects have been or are still underway between Port-Daniel and Gaspé, but several other areas requiring improvements are awaiting calls for tenders. The Quebec government cited a \$150 million cost overrun on this section of the network as the reason for suspending these calls for tenders. Begun in 2017, the complete overhaul of the Matapédia-Gaspé network has been granted a budget of \$871.8 million since June 2023.



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Deschênes finds it absurd that VIA Rail, which will receive \$2.282 billion in subsidies for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, refuses to reinstate service between Matapédia and Port-Daniel.

Wind power: confrontation between Hydro-Québec and Gaspé mayor

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ — The mayor of Gaspé has defended the LM Wind Power wind turbine blade factory by correcting statements made by the president and chief executive officer of Hydro-Québec about certain aspects of the manufacturing plant's production.

Daniel Côté first addressed the issue on social media, responding to Claudine Bouchard's public statement that the Gaspé factory, owned by GE Vernova, only manufactures blades for offshore wind turbines and that they are not equipped with de-icing systems.

"The plant has manufactured offshore blades in the past and can still do so, but it mainly manufactures onshore blades. The same goes for the de-icing system. Since 2015, the system has been installed on blades in Gaspé, which is



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

LM Wind Power in Gaspé finds itself at the centre of a debate over Quebec content in wind farms.

featured on many blades in Quebec," said the mayor.

The mayor estimates that the factory has produced onshore blades for 19 of the

past 20 years.

He also spoke with Hydro-Québec's first vice-president on November 25 to clarify facts and correct certain points.

The mayor stresses that when the latest Quebec wind farms' calls for tenders were issued, LM Wind Power's Gaspé plant was strictly supplying blades for offshore windfarms.

"The plant could not guarantee the production of onshore blades, including for the Quebec market, which is no longer the case," says the mayor.

Another key point is that GE Vernova's Gaspé plant only equips wind farms equipped with GE-made blades. The plant doesn't sell blades to competitors.

"Perhaps we need to break down barriers within the industry as a whole and ensure that we have an integrated

manufacturing sector for future wind farms in Quebec. Hydro-Québec has a role to play in facilitating communication between turbine manufacturers and manufacturers to maximize the chances of local benefits," says the mayor.

When LM Wind Power operated independently from GE, the company sold blades within Quebec. GE bought LM Wind Power in 2016.

"There are technological issues between rivals, and they don't want to share their technologies," says Mr. Côté.

The mayor hopes blades for all types of turbines can be manufactured in Gaspé.

"And I hope that General Electric will participate in the call for proposals for Hydro-Québec's next 10,000 megawatts, which would guarantee that blades from Gaspé will be used on Quebec wind turbines," he says.

Daniel Côté feels that Hydro-Québec is sensitive to the issue of supply, but turbine manufacturers globally want to protect their own markets.

The mayor's statement was intended as a correction to the speech by Hydro's president and CEO, Claudine Bouchard.

"I wanted to correct factual errors because her lines of communication had been repeated several times, and I wanted to put a stop to that. Not only will they no longer repeat those lines, but they have also corrected them. For the rest, I want to work with Hydro-Québec to ensure that the local supply chain is taken into account in future calls for tenders, and Hydro-Québec is in complete agreement with us on this," he says, noting that the public utility management was not pleased with his statement.

Jonatan Julien meets with elected officials

NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND — During his visit to the Gaspé Peninsula on December 1, Quebec Transport Minister Jonatan Julien met with executives from the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) to discuss the rail rehabilitation project.

On March 27, the Quebec government announced a re-

turn to the planning phase due to cost overruns of between \$150 million and \$200 million on section 3, between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

"This was my first meeting with the new minister. It's always valuable to have the opportunity to share our concerns for the region and the importance of the project. It was a very cordial and constructive

meeting," commented Éric Dubé, president of the railway corporation.

No firm commitments were made during this initial discussions, but Quebec's commitment remains, despite the obstacles. "The objective is very clear for us. The ministry is working towards that goal. The challenges of rehabilitating the third section, whether

technical or financial, are significant, but we are focused on finding solutions," Mr. Dubé maintains.

The rationale needs to be redeveloped. "And at the same time, we need to find solutions," the president adds.

In the past, the company has been called upon to carry out work for the ministry to help expedite work on section

2. No financial figures were discussed during the exchange.

"We're really not at the stage of putting figures on the costs to complete the project," Éric Dubé says.

Another challenge will be ensuring the project is included in the next provincial budget and the Quebec Infrastructure Plan.



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Maria beach replenishment could be delivered by mid-December

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – Maria’s beach replenishment, which started in June, will likely be completed around December if the last phase goes as planned. Quebec’s minister of Transport, Jonatan Julien, visited the construction site on December 1 to have a look at the progress of the work.

The project involves protecting Highway 132 and a retaining wall that prevents waves from eroding both infrastructures. Transports Québec invested \$17.5 million, and the Ministry of Public Security contributed \$9.3 million, totaling \$26.8 million from the Quebec government. The Municipality of Maria added \$700,000 to the initiative. The 1.4-kilometre stretch being protected extends from the rest area to des Colibris



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly Catherine Blouin, Quebec’s Transport minister Jonatan Julien and Maria mayor Patricia Chartier were on hand on December 1 to have a look at the beach replenishment project’s progress.

Street.

The replenishment is expected to extend the lifespan of a concrete retaining wall

along Highway 132, the IGA supermarket, and nearby homes by 30 years. The dyke is designed to counteract

coastal erosion and flooding along Maria’s shoreline.

“I’ve been told it went well. It’s great to be able to come and say that it’s concrete and that we’re here to protect the shoreline from erosion,” pointed out minister Julien before further visiting the construction site.

“We see the erosion challenges. We can’t do everything, but we must preserve the most important elements in the risk analysis, with the help of the municipalities. Yes, I’m in favour of adapting to changes, but we also need to take measures to protect more strategic locations,” he added, noting that Maria contributed \$700,000 to the fund to protect this area.

Maria Mayor Patricia Chartier praised residents for their patience: “They had to cope with truck traffic, heavy

machinery generating noise and dust disrupting a usually quiet place.”

About 500,000 tonnes of material were transported by rail from a Nouvelle quarry to Maria’s unloading site, with trucks handling the final link to the shoreline. Thousands of truckloads also transported material from the quarry to the shore.

A fair part of the Public Security money will be used to relocate some of the houses located on Des Tournepierres street.

“We won’t be able to protect that area to the east. We’ll help residents who want to relocate to do so. We still have funding to help these people, to build a new street. We’ll assess the situation to the west. For the moment, there’s no problem,” added Patricia Chartier.

De-icing at Bonaventure: Transports Québec is weighing proposal made by Town and MRC

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – The Town of Bonaventure and the Bonaventure MRC recently made a proposal to Quebec’s ministry of Transport in an attempt to restore the de-icing service for ambulance aircrafts at Bonaventure airport.

That service was cut by the ministry in April, following the end of a three-year de-icing agreement with Pascan Aviation, valued at \$527,541, which covered the end of 2022 to early 2025 stretch. During that period, de-icing was required only six times out of 872 ambulance flights operating from Bonaventure.

In the meantime, Transports Québec opted for the Grande-Rivière airport for the transfer of Baie des Chaleurs patients from the Maria hospital to Quebec City using the ambulance aircraft service.

Bonaventure mayor Pierre Gagnon told SPEC that following the November 10 Bonaventure MRC monthly meeting, a proposal for funding support from Transports Québec was tabled.

“We sent the ministry a resolution asking it to take care of an \$80,000 tab for the



Photo: G. Gagné

Quebec Transport minister Jonatan Julien expresses confidence in the possibility of reaching an agreement soon regarding de-icing ambulance aircrafts at Bonaventure airport.

2025-2026 year for renting the equipment, pay the manpower and the glycol (the substance used to de-ice aircrafts). We are waiting for an answer from Transports Québec. If needed, the Bonaventure MRC, the Avignon MRC and the Town (of Bonaventure) will pay part of the bill,” explains Mr. Gagnon.

This agreement proposal, if it works, will ideally be followed by a long-term pro-

posal for the coming years, he says. “Buying new equipment would cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000 for a truck and a nacelle,” he adds.

During a December 1 visit in Maria to have a look at the beach replenishment work, Transport minister Jonatan Julien refused to give details about discussions with local authorities. However, he put emphasis on the word “we”, as he repeated several times that “we are working on a so-

lution,” referring to the collaboration between the ministry, MRCs and the Town of Bonaventure.

Using the fact that on paper, each of the six de-icing operations carried out by Pascan Aviation of Quebec’s Aerial Service planes between 2022 and 2025 cost \$87,923,50, minister Julien also repeated several times that “paying close to \$100,000 per de-icing operation doesn’t make sense.”

The three-year agreement was nevertheless signed by his government, following a call for tenders. Pascan still de-ices its own aircrafts.

During an exchange with the local press, minister Julien kept using the “\$500 to \$700” cost interval and called it a reasonable tab, without explaining further.

The Bonaventure airport belongs to Transports Québec while the Grande Rivière airport is owned by the Rocher-Percé MRC. In Grande-Rivière, a de-icing operation costs between \$300 and \$500 and is handled by on-call airport employees.

Mayor Pierre Gagnon mentions that his town, as well as the Bonaventure and

Avignon MRCs, also have on-call employees that could be trained and made available to de-ice aircrafts when it is needed.

He also stresses that sending patients requiring aerial medical transfers on the road for close to two hours, the time required to cover the distance between the Maria hospital and the Grande-Rivière airport, “is taking unnecessary risks when there is another airport 30 minutes away. Moreover, when de-icing an aircraft is necessary, it is permitted to think that roads are not in good condition.”

During his December 1 visit, Jonatan Julien met with local authorities and the Bonaventure airport file was discussed. No deal was announced during the ensuing week.

On November 27, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government refused to debate a motion from the Parti Québécois concerning the return of de-icing services to the Bonaventure airport. The motion stated that the Gaspé Peninsula needs safe and operational emergency air services at all times.

Naval industry: Côte-de-Gaspé MRC takes a stand

NELSON SERGERIE

LÉVIS – The prefect of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC is pleased to have reached an agreement with the cities of Lévis, Saguenay and Sorel-Tracy to develop Quebec's naval industry.

The agreement was sealed on the sidelines of the Naval Québec forum held in Lévis on December 1.

Daniel Côté points out that Gaspé and Lévis already have shipyards. Sorel-Tracy has a long naval history and Saguenay is a major supplier.

"We are coming together to speak with one voice and ensure that there is consistency in our positioning in the shipbuilding industry. A great deal of money will be invested in shipbuilding, particularly by the federal government through the renewal and upgrading of the military fleet and the evolving Coast Guard vessels," says Mr Côté.

According to him, Quebec can position itself advantageously against Halifax and



Photo: Daniel Côté's Facebook page

Stakeholders from the Côte-de-Gaspé region at Monday's Naval Québec forum in Lévis.

Vancouver.

"If Quebec believes in the naval industry, we'll raise our hands and we're in," he says.

During the forum, the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC proudly showcased its presence, which aroused some envy.

"We were extremely visible. Why did we do that? Because

we have many related industries that could grow alongside the shipbuilding industry," says the prefect, pointing out that Rivière-au-Renard is very strong in fishing boats.

"If we are strong in fishing boats, we can be strong in boats in general. That's the position we've taken. I've spoken at sev-

eral forums to the industry as a whole, and our message is resonating. The shipbuilding industry has often been associated with Davie, but now we have Chantier Naval Forillon in Gaspé, which is in the top five in Canada and is possibly the leader in vessels under 1,000 tonnes," notes Mr. Côté.

Submarines

Developing an underwater industry in Gaspé seems within reach.

"Halifax is practically saturated. This is where Gaspé could regain its place on the Canadian scene," believes Mr. Côté.

Daniel Côté recalls a historical aspect of Gaspé, which in the 1860s was the free port of the East Coast, before the development of the port of Halifax. A lot of maritime traffic passed through Gaspé, as it was a duty-free harbour.

"If Halifax is practically saturated, Gaspé will regain its place. We have the second largest deep-water port (basin) in the world. Without changing the character of Gaspé, we can take advantage of this asset, and submarine maintenance is realistic in this context," he says.

Mr. Côté sees this development happening within a decade.



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Literacy Council celebrates 45 years with a new name

CYNTHIA DOW

DOUGLASTOWN - The former Gaspésie Literacy Council (GLC) is celebrating 45 years of service, and a major element of the anniversary has been the adoption of a new name: The Eastern Quebec Literacy Council (EQLC).

Executive Director Angelina Leggo told SPEC, “We have been talking about the name change for quite a while. At the 2023 strategic planning session, it was identified as a major thing to tackle, because our territory is not just the Gaspésie, but also the Lower Saint Lawrence, the Magdalen Islands, and the North Shore.” They also serve the Lower North Shore to the best of their ability, although it is not technically included in the territory, which mirrors the area served by the Eastern Shores School Board.

The Eastern Quebec Literacy Council is one of 11 such organizations serving English speakers across the province. It is run by a volunteer board of six members representing the four areas served and operates on an annual budget averaging \$150,000 from both federal and provincial sources.

The council celebrated its 45th anniversary at its AGM held in Douglastown on October 27 with 15 in attendance. They also unveiled a new website at www.eqlit.ca where their activities, upcoming events, and tips for enhanced literacy are highlighted.

“And we are already thinking about the 50th anniversary, which we would like to be a bigger celebration,” Ms. Leggo added.

With such a large territory to serve, Ms. Leggo admits it’s a stretch with the budget the organization has. “Financially, we do the best we can,



Photo: Courtesy of the EQLC

EQLC Executive Director Angelina Leggo explains by-law changes at the 45th AGM.

but going in person to a lot of places is very difficult. Last year we had an employee in each of the four areas. Now we are doing more online workshops and presentations, a very cost-effective way to meet the needs of people across our entire range.”

She noted that the EQLC has been able to “...grow our presence by relying heavily on partners such as organizations serving the ESC in each area.” This includes CASA, Vision, Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence and the North Shore Community Association. “We really want to thank these partners, as well as the schools and community learning centres, for helping us increase our presence in the communities, in the high schools, and in offering family literacy programs,” Ms. Leggo said.

The target audience for the council is English-speaking and First Nations people aged 16 years of age and older.

“But with the family literacy support, it’s not only adults we serve.” For example, they offer tips to parents to help them encourage their

kids to read for entertainment. “One of our best tips is to get the books, and put them out: Take them off the shelves, and have books in every room,” the Executive Director noted.

The council offers one-on-one programs to help individuals develop the literacy and basic math skills they need for their everyday lives, as well as digital literacy support for those looking to improve their online skills. Activities are promoted online through their website and a Facebook page to make sure people find out about activities in a timely manner. They also put out a seasonal newsletter which you can register to receive by email. Contact info@eqlit.ca or fill out the convenient form available on the website.

As SPEC was going to press they were preparing a Christmas Book Wrap activity on the evening of December 17 at the EQLC office in the basement of the Douglastown Community Centre. Participants can select a book from the EQLC library, wrap it, and prepare a card for the recipient, all free of charge.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



Christmas is Like a Patchwork Quilt

My grandmother made many, many quilts during her lifetime. She used leftover material from sewing projects or recycled clothing. One type she made she called a “crazy quilt.” She would cut random shapes and use a variety of colours and even fabric types. Whatever she used, we found every quilt beautiful because it was unique and made by the hands of our grandmother.

Christmas is like a patchwork quilt, stitched together from scraps of memories, mismatched moments, and whatever traditions we’ve managed to keep over the years. Some squares are soft and comforting, worn from years of use. Traditions like the recipes your grandmother never actually wrote down and now that she is gone, we regret so much. What I would give to have her recipe for ginger snaps or Christmas gum drop cake! I recall the delicate glass ornaments on the real tree that were there each Christmas since before colour TV. I can picture my grandmother and mother knitting mitts and hats to be ready for Christmas giving.

Other pieces of the quilt of Christmas are newer, brighter, maybe even a little stiff around the edges. New babies. New faces. New routines forged because life has a way of rearranging the pattern whether we ask it to or not. And yes, new holiday foods, though many of us still have a soft spot for the traditional cooking and recipes of many, many years ago. Of course, roasted, stuffed turkey, creamy mashed potatoes, buttered Brussels Sprouts and Christmas pudding with sweet, rich brandy sauce. It’s not Christmas without a stuffed turkey with loads of stuffing, lovingly made with Gaspesian-grown savory.

But like any quilt worth keeping, the beauty isn’t in perfection. It’s in the combination, the chaos of colours, textures, and the years that somehow warm us more together than they ever could on their own.

Around the holidays, we feel that warmth the most. We pull out memories of people who are no longer at the table, smoothing the fabric as if we could keep them from fading away. We laugh at the stories we’ve retold a hundred times because retelling them keeps those squares bright. We add new pieces, too. Little ones we don’t realize are important until years later, when someone says, “Remember the year we all wore matching pajamas?” or “Remember when the dog ate the gingerbread house?” and suddenly that moment becomes part of the quilt forever.

And yes, sometimes Christmas feels a little frayed, with the stitching coming loose. The season can be busy, messy, overwhelming, and occasionally fuelled by an unhealthy amount of shortbread. (Is there such a thing!?) But even the worn edges are proof that we’ve lived, loved, and made it through another year.

So, as the holidays arrive, wrap yourself in your own patchwork quilt. Every memory, every tradition, every imperfect piece. It may not match, but it’s yours. And that, in the end, is what makes it so beautiful.

A little history of the Gaspésie Literacy Council

Cynthia Dow

DOUGLASTOWN - “The original founder of the Gaspésie Literacy Council (GLC) was Jim Routh,” past Secretary-Director Gary Briand told SPEC. When Mr. Routh left Gaspé to live in Ontario some 25 years ago or more, Mr. Briand took over the reins.

Mr. Briand fondly remembers many tutoring projects on the North Shore and Lower North Shore, as well as services rendered to the Indigenous population.

“I remember a number of book displays in Listuguj,” he told SPEC. “I think we took about 4,000 books down there. We displayed them in a huge tent,” he said.

When Mr. Briand left Gaspé about half a dozen years ago, he passed on the responsibility for the organization to Cheryl Henry-Leggo, with whom the current Executive Director worked for about five years. Ms. Henry-Leggo retired about two years ago.



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Bilingual Addictions Counsellor at Mi-Chemin

JEANIE LELACHEUR
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPE - Mi-Chemin de Gaspé Inc. is an independent community organization working within the Gaspésian community to provide addiction-assistance services to people on the Gaspé Peninsula.

A resource for people with addiction problems or for those who may be at risk of developing them, they also provide assistance to family members or anyone impacted by addiction.

Its mission is to support, accompany and refer individuals at risk of or those who have experienced addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling. Services are offered to clients 18 years of age and older.

Up until recently, their services in Gaspé were available only to the French-speaking community, but the recent hiring of Brittany Adams, who is fully bilingual, means that services are now accessible to English speakers as well.

Brittany attended high school at Gaspé Polyvalent, completed college at the Gaspé Cegep, and went on to study at Bishops University.

She wasn't always certain what work she wanted to pursue after graduation, but she



Photo: Brittany Adams

always knew she would be "coming back home to her roots." She loves the coast, the slower pace of the countryside, and, of course, having a boyfriend from the area was an added incentive.

Brittany completed a bachelor's degree in sociology with a concentration in criminology and a minor in psychology. She has always been fascinated by why people do what they do, especially in situations involving

the law, addiction or social pressure. Sociology gave her the necessary tools to examine the social systems and the inequalities, criminology taught her how those factors relate to crime and justice and studying psychology allows her to better understand the individual side and what happens internally that influences a person's choices. Combined, these fields give her a bigger picture of human behaviour and the social issues

she hopes to address. She actually began her career at Mi-Chemin before graduating.

In her position at Mi-Chemin, and also at her second job with the CISSS de la Gaspésie her role is known as an intervenante, addictions counsellor, or a substance-use worker. She is responsible for individual follow-up with clients, and also visits schools and partners with other organizations such as L'aide Elle to offer prevention and awareness workshops. Brittany admits that it can be challenging at times, but says, "being able to support people, see their progress and sometimes just be that person who listens or believes in them makes it all worthwhile."

One of those challenges she encounters is working with clients who are not attending sessions voluntarily but are required to do so as part of a court order or probation condition. It is difficult to know whether they are truly benefiting from the service or simply attending out of obligation; interventions are generally more successful when clients genuinely want to work on themselves and move toward change.

"Awareness is key," she says. This means we need to

continue to be present in the community and collaborate with local organizations, because being visible in a community tends to normalize the idea of seeking help and reminds people that addiction affects everyone directly or indirectly and we all have a role to play in supporting those who struggle. Brittany says she sees the need to work with individuals under the age of 18 and would like to see a more targeted approach for this group.

On a personal note, she considers "making a difference" is about planting seeds that grow over time and supporting people along the way. She doesn't always witness the results firsthand, but believes that she, and her work, have a real impact on people's lives.

It should be noted that the services offered by Mi-Chemin are both free and confidential. Intervention begins with an intake assessment, then a plan is put into place. It is not an "all or nothing" service; clients are not asked to quit or stop anything immediately, but instead to examine what is working, what is causing difficulties and how they can move toward positive change.

For more information call 418-368-6676

Remembrance Day in Barachois

HOLLY SMITH

BARACHOIS – Residents gathered at the cenotaph on Remembrance Day to pay tribute to those who served in the Canadian Armed Forces and those who continue to serve today. The ceremony included the laying of wreaths by community members, followed by a moment of silence to honour the fallen.

Local children were also present, participating alongside adults and showing their respects during the ceremony. Their presence added a meaningful reminder of the importance of teaching younger generations about remembrance.

After the formal ceremony ended, attendees were invited back to the local Legion, where community members continued to reflect and share stories in a warm and welcoming setting.



Photos: Ronald Dane

Announcements



Obituaries

COULL: Bogue

For my husband, Bogue Coull, who died peacefully at home on Friday, October 3, 2025.

Bogue was laid to rest in Black Cape cemetery on the beautiful Gaspé Coast.

Soar high, my darling, far above the clouds where only the angels fly, for I know you are one of them now.

You will always be loved and remembered. Your wife, Dorothy

BRIAND: Julia (née Whalen)

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Julia Briand, who left us peacefully on November 21, 2025, in Laval, Quebec, at the age of 86.

Julia is now reunited with her beloved husband, Richard "Dick" Briand, of Douglstown, Quebec. She leaves to mourn her sons Terrance (Nathalie), Allan, and Kevin (Birute), as well as her cherished grandsons Richard, William, and Faolain. Born in Wakeham, Quebec, into a large and loving family of 14 children, she is also survived by her dear brother Orley of Edmonton, Alberta. She will be fondly remembered by her sisters-in-law and brother-in-law, by her many nieces and nephews, and by an extraordinary circle of lifelong friends.

From her humble Gaspesian roots to her move to Montréal as a teenager, through her many years on Montréal's South Shore, and finally her months in Laval, Julia carried with her an unwavering optimism and a gentle warmth. Whether at family gatherings, at the card table with friends, serving customers with care at the restaurant where she worked, or simply greeting someone she met by chance, Julia had a remarkable way of making every person feel seen and appreciated.

A celebration of Julia's life was held on Saturday, December 6, 2025, at the Yves Légaré Funeral Complex, 1350 Autoroute Chomedey (A-13 South), Laval, Quebec, H7X 3W9.

Visitation in the presence of her urn took place from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., followed by a chapel service from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Her ashes will be laid to rest at a later date in Saint-Patrick's Cemetery in Douglstown, beside her beloved husband.

In honour of Julia's kindness and generosity, the family invites you to make a donation to a cancer research foundation or a palliative care organization of your choice



LEMIEUX: Sarah Rehel

With broken hearts we announce the passing of our precious and beloved Mother, G'ma, Sister and Aunt.

Sarah Lemieux (Rehel) passed away at 98 years and 10 months. Left to mourn her loss are her children Wayne (Kaye), Gloria and Linda; grandchildren Jason

(Karen), Laura (James) and Nikki; and her sister Mickey along with many nieces and nephews.

Sarah was born in Barachois, Quebec to Elias and Adora Rehel. She was predeceased by her parents; husband Sydney; brothers Omer, Leo, George, Wilbert and Lionel; and sisters Della Evelyn, May and Oril.

A private burial in Barachois, Quebec, will take place at a future date.

Your memory is a blessing. We love you so much and will miss you always.



PATTERSON: Paul

It is with a heavy heart that we announce that Paul Patterson has lost his battle with ALS and COPD on November 18, 2025, surrounded by family in St Catharines, Ontario.

Growing up in Gaspé, Paul enjoyed playing hockey, swimming in the river and messing with the animals at nearby farms. As an adult he played softball, entered several canoe races, enjoyed hunting, fishing and camping. He spent many years grooming the local snowmobile trails, during which time many people referred to him as "Packer Paul."

He spent the later years of his life living in Ontario enjoying time with his brothers and sisters. Paul is survived by his partner Debbie Douglas, who brought much-deserved love, joy, happiness and adventure to his life. The family is eternally grateful for the love and care she provided our dear father, brother and uncle.

Paul leaves behind his sons Kent (Angi) and Derek; grandchildren Abby, Logan and Bella; brothers Stanton (Karen) Sam (Bev) and Clark; and sisters Shirley (Peter), Rose-Marie (Ted), Molly (Larry) and Alma (Adrian). He was predeceased by his brother Woodrow (survived by Lolene) and parents David and Margaret, as well as many beloved nieces and nephew's.

Paul had infectious laugh and a smile that lit up a room and will be missed by all of us left behind. The family will cherish all the memories from the many canoe, camping and hunting trips. Sons Kent and Derek are honoured to have had a father who taught them how to work hard, take pride in your work and play hard.

A celebration of life will be held for family and friends residing in Gaspé during the summer of 2026.



In Memory

CLARK: Ralph, Della, Morris and Jessie

*When I come to the end of the road,
And the sun has set for me.*

*I want no rites in a gloom filled room,
Why cry for a soul set free.*

Miss me a little, but not for long,

And not with your head bowed low.

Remember the love that once we shared,

Miss me, but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take,

And each must go alone.

It's all part of the master plan,

A step on the road to home.

When you are lonely and sick at heart,

Go to the friends we know.

Laugh at all the things we used to do,

Miss me, love me,

But know that I am home.

Loved and missed always. The Clark Family.

Prière infaillible à la Vierge Marie

Fleur toute belle du Mont-Carmel, vigne fructueuse, splendeur du ciel, mère bénie du fils de Dieu assistez-moi et montrez-moi, ici même, que vous êtes ma mère de Dieu, reine du ciel et de la terre, je vous supplie du fond du cœur de m'appuyer dans cette demande. Personne ne peut résister à votre puissance.

Ô Marie conçue sans péché priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous (trois fois). Saint Marie, je remets cette cause entre vos mains (trois fois). Faites cette prière trois jours de suite et vous devez publier. La faveur demandée vous sera accordée.

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On the Lighter Side...

POEMS CREATIVE WRITING PUZZLES WHAT'S THIS CHALLENGE SPEC GETS AROUND RECIPES



COAST ROUND-UP

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

BARACHOIS:

Mountain View Golden Age

Tuesdays: Weekly indoor curling beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Wednesdays: Weekly evening card games at 7 p.m. starting October 22.

SHIGAWAKE:

Bonaventure Agricultural Society

January 26: The Bonaventure Agricultural Society will be hosting their Annual General Meeting at 7 p.m. at the Shigawake Fair grounds. Storm Date: January 27.

HOPE TOWN:

Sports club

December 13: Christmas gift bingo at 7 p.m. at the Hope Town Community Centre. Organized by the Hope Town Sports club.

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

December 13: Christmas dance with Tammy Adams.

December 14: Santa will be visiting the legion.

December 31: New Years eve dance, details to follow.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:

50+ Club

December 21: Annual General Meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN

Sunday, December 14

2 p.m. Service

Sunday, December 21

10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND

Sunday, December 14

10 a.m. Service

Sunday, December 21

10 a.m. Service

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Wednesday, December 10

St. Paul's, Gaspé
7 p.m. Healing Service

**Sunday,
December 14**
St. Paul's, Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Sunday,
December 21**
St. Paul's, Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, December 14

New Carlisle

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, December 21

New Carlisle

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

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2026 Announcement Deadlines

January 7 for the January 14 issue
January 21 for the January 28 issue
February 4 for the February 11 issue
February 18 for the February 25 issue

HOROSCOPES - December 8 to December 14

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, this week is all about momentum. Your boldness helps you break through obstacles like a professional. A surprise opportunity might crop up. Embrace this chance.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

The week starts off slow and steady, but then a sprinkle of excitement is added to your routine. A sweet surprise from a loved one could make your week even better.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Your social butterfly wings are flapping, Gemini. Engage in fun conversations with all of the people who come your way. Who knows, even a spontaneous adventure might present itself.

CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, your nurturing side shines through this week. You might find yourself acting as the go-to person for support or advice. Just be sure to tend to your own

needs as well.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, you are ready for action even if everyone else isn't. They will look to you as a leader, but you probably won't mind having a few chances to lead over the next several days.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Clarity and calm are the words of the week for you, Virgo. Those little details that you've been puzzling over for a bit finally click into place, leaving you feeling amazing.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, this week is all about harmony and how you can organize things to achieve it. You may be in the mood to connect and collaborate, helping to bring people together.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

People may be drawn to your playful and magnetic side this week, Scorpio. Make time for socialization, but don't hesitate to book some alone time if you think

you need it.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, your adventurous side is unstoppable right now. You are still being fueled by discovery and others want to join in the fun. Remember to slow down and recharge.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Hard work pays off in little victories this week, Capricorn. While you love being productive, remember to celebrate every success, even if it is a small one.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

A change of scenery could be good for you, Aquarius. If work had you feeling tired and worn out, book a short trip somewhere to enjoy some much-needed rest and relaxation.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Don't brush aside the creative sparks that seem to be popping into your brain one after another, Pisces. Trust your intuition, as it's guiding you toward fun things ahead.

HOROSCOPES - December 15 to December 21

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, you have been looking for some new ways to make some extra money, and now might be the time to start putting your plan in motion. Good fortune awaits.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Passion is on your mind this week, Taurus. Get together with a spouse or romantic partner and enjoy an evening with just the two of you. Embrace this chance to let the sparks fly.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

A gift would be a wonderful surprise for a loved one or friend this week, Gemini. Perhaps there is something that this person has had an eye on for some time now?

CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

A group activity may bring new information and people into your life, Cancer. You might meet people from different backgrounds. Keep your eyes and ears

open.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, you might be interested in expanding your horizons. You could think about attending a lecture or seeing a documentary on a particular subject. The education will enlighten.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, a long-awaited phone call or text from a person who has been out of touch for some time could come through this week. This may reopen the lines of communication between you both.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, if finances have been on your mind, now is a good time to read the financial pages or study the stock reports. You also may want to sit down with a financial planner.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, keep communication with business partners warm, open and honest. This will help you see your ideas come to fruition. It's always easier to catch flies

with honey than vinegar.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, your tasks should go smoothly and quickly this week, particularly any paperwork you may have. Others are willing to help out if you need it.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, newfound communication heightens the relationship you have with a romantic partner this week. Feelings and memories are shared willingly, and you may learn something new.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

A number of interesting visitors may come to your home this week, Aquarius. At least one may present some fascinating facts on a subject that is new to you. Enjoy the interaction.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, expect some interesting new neighbors to move in shortly. A friend will likely introduce you to these people, and a relationship could bloom.

Archive scavenger hunt: SPEC joins CASA wellness event in Matapedia

GILLES GAGNÉ

MATAPEDIA – The SPEC team, consisting of Jillian O’Connell, Emily Hocquard, Holly Smith and Gilles Gagné, took part in a CASA activity for seniors on November 27, a Scavenger Hunt through old issues of the newspaper, which has been celebrating its 50th anniversary between May 2025 and May 2026.

Twenty questions were prepared by Jillian O’Connell and distributed to the 17 citizens who joined for CASA’s senior wellness activities. Questions covered the 1975-2002 period and focused primarily on topics related to the villages of Matapedia, Ristigouche South East and Pointe-à-la-Croix, occasionally stretching as far as Escuminac. The topics were diverse, mostly news related events, but also included the price of certain commodities, a true trip back in time.

It was “serious business” for a lot of participants. The questionnaire provided clues about where to find the answers, such as the specific issue in which they were published. However, it didn’t go so far as to give the page number; participants had to use their brains to track down the information.

The “seriousness of the business” didn’t prevent participants from laughing and chatting during the exercise. A draw concluded the activity, and participants thanked the SPEC and CASA teams for organizing the Scavenger Hunt. Truth be told, the SPEC team thoroughly enjoyed the activity.

Looking ahead, the SPEC team also has future dates planned with CASA in Escuminac and Port Daniel, as well as activities with Family Ties in New Carlisle and the Eastern Quebec Literacy Council in Douglstown.



Seventeen explorers listen as SPEC staff unveil the long-awaited answers to the scavenger hunt quest.



Participants journey through time as they scan old newspapers for the hidden scavenger hunt answers.



Participants navigate the archives like treasure hunters, searching for the next discovery.



Archive adventurers flip through old editions, following the trail of clues left in SPEC’s past.



Scavenger hunt adventurers dig into the archives, hunting for hints among long-forgotten headlines.



Participants sift through decades of history, uncovering clues hidden deep within the SPEC archives.

Photos: G. Gagné

A Musical evening – Homegrown 4

NORMAND DESJARDINS

PASPEBIAC – Music once again proved to be a powerful expression of cultural identity during CASA’s HOMEGROWN 4 showcase, held on Saturday, November 22, at the Centre Culturel de Paspébiac.

Music remains the “international language” that reunites people of all walks of life anywhere on the planet. The event highlighted a wide range of Gaspesian musical talent, drawing a large and enthusiastic audience.

The three-hour performances featured artists of all ages and covered a broad mix of musical styles, the audience was coddled and rocked by varietal genres of music to please every age group. The “youth component” added zest to a growing interest in the performing arts and provided a glimpse of emerging talent in the region.

Professional collaboration among the musicians and singers ensured a polished presentation throughout the show. The evening concluded with a high-energy finale led by international performer Pamela Rooney, a Douglstown native who has twice received the “Female Artist of the Year” award at the Texas Sounds International Country Music Awards. Ms. Rooney rallied all in a handclapping, foot stomping, hearty group vocal finale, the “human touch” always prevailing. Like... Wow! She reinforced that “homegrown” philosophy during the youth pep talk earlier in the day as she lovingly and proudly addressed the younger performers, encouraging them to pursue with their musical talents as she did in her career.

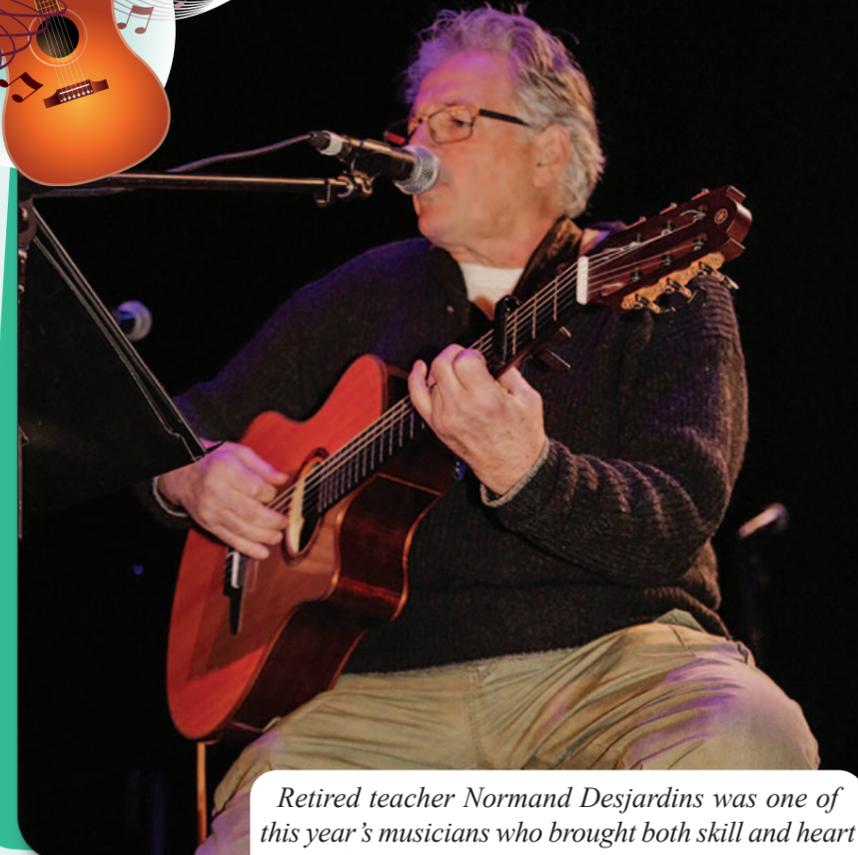
Dave Felker served as master of ceremonies and performed as part of the program. CASA’s organization of the event contributed to a successful celebration of Gaspesian expression at its finest.



Aaron Check was joined on stage this year by his daughter Éva and Geneviève L. Blais, creating a warm, memorable moment for the audience.



International performer Pamela Rooney, a native of Douglstown, was also among this year’s featured artists at the Homegrown 4 event.



Retired teacher Normand Desjardins was one of this year’s musicians who brought both skill and heart to the Homegrown 4 stage.



Performers from the 2025 Homegrown 4 showcase gather onstage at the Paspébiac Cultural Centre after delivering a vibrant evening of Gaspesian music.

Photos: S.D Captures



Photo Credit: Sara Gagnon



SOCIÉTÉ
DU CHEMIN DE FER
DE LA GASPÉSIE

The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie would like to inform residents of the Baie-des-Chaleurs region that rail traffic will soon be active 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, between New Richmond and Port-Daniel.

Trains will also continue to operate between Matapédia and New Richmond.

Please stay alert at railway level crossings, obey all signage, and avoid trespassing railway property at all times.

**These precautions are essential for your safety and the safety of your loved ones.
Thank you and be careful.**