

# Rail service finally restored between New Richmond and Port Daniel

GILLES GAGNÉ

PORT-DANIEL – It took 10 and a half years, between \$250 and \$300 million in investments, at least eight delays, and numerous political announcements, but finally, the first train since the summer of 2014 ran on January 7 between New Richmond and Port Daniel.

There have been, and will be, more spectacular trains than this one, with two locomotives and a single freight car, but this train marks the beginning of direct rail service to the Saint Mary's Cement plant in Port Daniel, which has been open since 2017.

The January 7 train served two main purposes: transporting equipment needed to load cement railcars at the Saint Mary's plant, and verifying that all the repairs and structural reconstructions carried out over the past decade meet the transportation needs between New Richmond and Port Daniel.

"We will be transporting empty cement railcars to the plant next week. The first loaded train should run on January 19," explains Luc Lévesque, director of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), the municipally controlled carrier responsible for transporting freight between Matapédia and, now, Port Daniel.

The Matapédia-Gaspé rail network, 325 kilometres (202.2 miles) long—the mile being the standard unit of measurement for railways—has been owned by Transports Québec since the spring of 2015. The ministry hesitated for two years before announcing, on May 5, 2017, the complete overhaul of the Gaspé network.

Between 2014 and now, only the section between Matapédia and New Richmond has been used for freight transport, with exceptions for Caplan in 2015 and 2016. This section covers approxi-



The train stopped at the New Carlisle VIA station in the late morning for a break.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

mately 40% of the Matapédia-Gaspé network.

In 2015, the Minister of Transport at the time, Robert Poëti, put the Caplan-Percé section, then Percé-Gaspé, into a dormant state, even though the Port Daniel cement plant was under construction. Since 2022, it has represented the first source of revenue for the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie.

### A series of delays

When the complete overhaul of the Gaspé rail network

was announced in May 2017, then-premier Philippe Couillard indicated that the railway would reopen as far as the cement plant in 2020. The pandemic thwarted this plan, but it also served as a convenient excuse, as further delays have occurred since 2023, with Transports Québec citing the complexity of the work, and the 2025 public sector engineers' strike.

From 2020, the reopening of the New Richmond-Port Daniel line was postponed to 2022, without further details, then to the end of 2022, be-

fore 2024 became the new target year. The ministry then spoke of the end of 2024, then spring 2025, then summer 2025, before finally settling on the end of 2025. The green light for the opening to Port Daniel was given on December 22, too late to organize what became the January 7 test train.

The equipment transported to the cement plant, a pumping system previously used by SCFG in Nouvelle, will only be used temporarily, as Saint Mary's Cement only began construction of a silo for load-

ing railcars in 2025. The new silo is expected to be operational sometime in 2026, pending environmental approval.

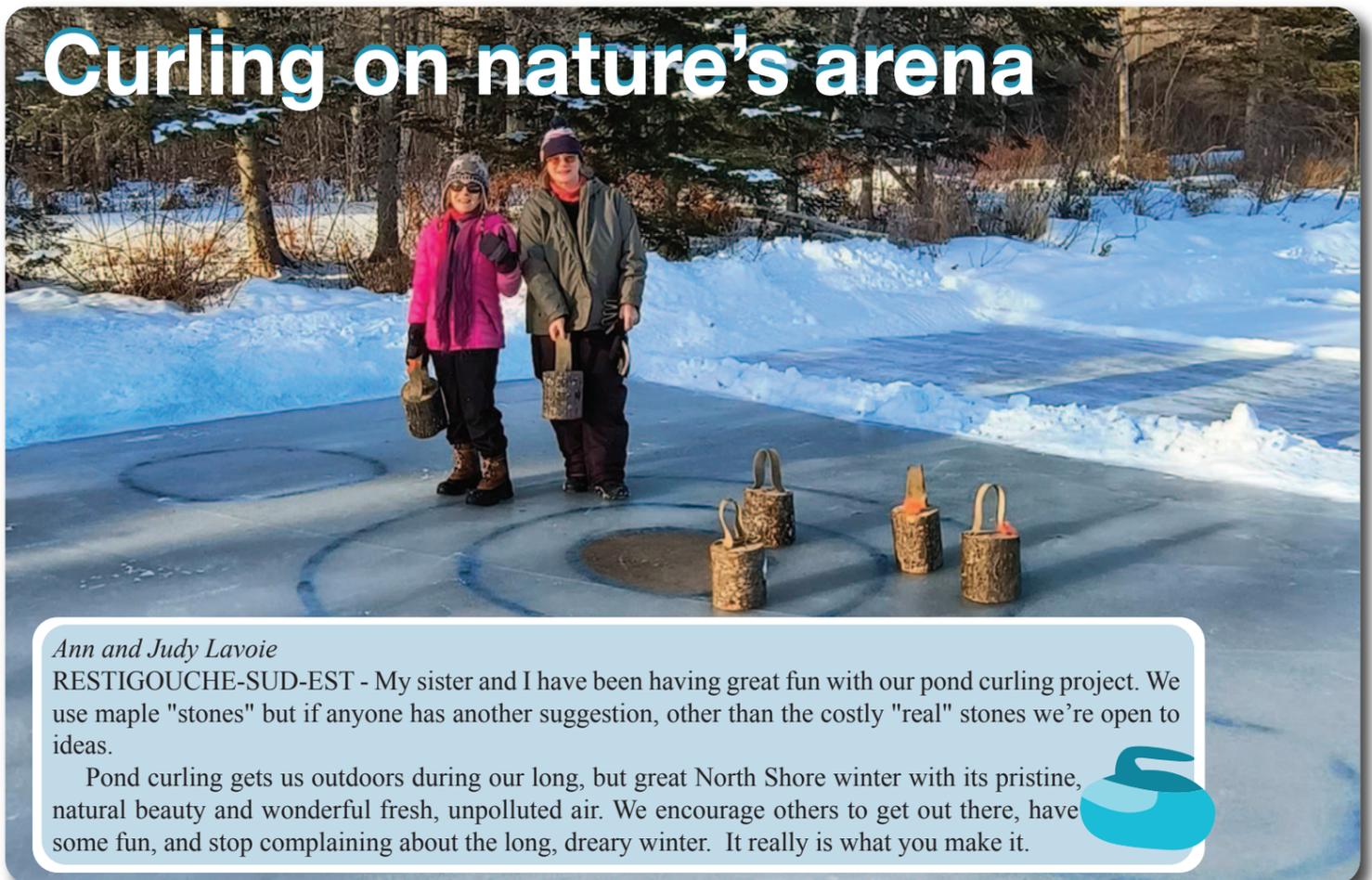
"We had to start somewhere," summarizes Luc Lévesque. By loading in Port-Daniel, the SCFG will avoid the costly transport of cement by truck between Port-Daniel and New Richmond, where the carrier had set up a railcar loading silo in 2017 while awaiting the rehabilitation of the New Richmond-Port Daniel line.

"We are also working on transporting inputs by rail to the cement plant," explains Luc Lévesque, highlighting another advantage of the railway.

### A slow train

For safety reasons, this first train between New Richmond and Port-Daniel traveled at just 10 miles per hour (16 kilometres per hour). SCFG employees even ensured the train passage at certain level crossings.

Cont'd on page 2



## Curling on nature's arena

Ann and Judy Lavoie

RESTIGOUICHE-SUD-EST - My sister and I have been having great fun with our pond curling project. We use maple "stones" but if anyone has another suggestion, other than the costly "real" stones we're open to ideas.

Pond curling gets us outdoors during our long, but great North Shore winter with its pristine, natural beauty and wonderful fresh, unpolluted air. We encourage others to get out there, have some fun, and stop complaining about the long, dreary winter. It really is what you make it.



**TRAIN:**

**▶ Cont'd from Cover**

“We are protecting certain level crossings because people have lost the habit of seeing trains. Some signal lights also still need to be put back into operation,” notes Mr. Lévesque.

Because the equipment on the flatcar was sometimes slightly wider than that of a conventional railcar, the train slowed down on all bridges with structures extending above ground level, as well as in the curved Port-Daniel tunnel, located just before the arrival at the cement plant.

“We checked the tunnel clearances and, on paper, it was within the limits, but we were planning to slow down,” said Luc Lévesque two hours before the train reached Port Daniel.

**The future**

Micheline Saint-Onge, spokesperson for the Coalition for the Return of Passenger Train Service to the Gaspé Peninsula, a movement with over a decade of activism, expresses hope in light of recent developments.

“The opening of the railway line between New Richmond and Port-Daniel has reinvigorated the Coalition. The track is now ready to receive freight and passenger cars as far as Port Daniel-Gaspé. The freight cars will be on the tracks the week of January 12, 2026, and we’re going to make some noise to be heard and listened to regarding the return of passenger train service,” she says.

The rehabilitation of the Port-Daniel-Gaspé section of the peninsula’s rail network also needs to be completed as quickly as possible. During

the March 2025 budget, the Quebec government postponed the completion of this project and brought it back to the study stage, citing cost overruns of approximately \$150 million resulting from certain calls for tenders.

Nine construction sites between Port-Daniel and Gaspé remained active after the March budget, leading opposition politicians to argue that abandoning the railway rehabilitation between these two points would be a major incongruity, considering the sums already invested.

In June 2023, the then Minister of Transport, Geneviève Guilbault, announced that the complete rehabilitation of the Matapédia-Gaspé network would cost \$871.8 million, including \$517 million allocated at that time for the Port-Daniel-Gaspé section alone.

Premier François Legault has repeatedly committed to completing this rehabilitation. Since the 2018 election though, he has frequently wavered on the timeline for completing the repaired rail network. He mentioned 2026 during a visit to New Richmond in April 2019, then 2025 in August of the same year, in response to months of criticism from Gaspé residents.

In November 2023, he reiterated his commitment to finishing the railway repairs to Gaspé before the October 2026 election, an impossible task given that the project has returned to the study phase.

From December 2016 to May 2022, 118 trains carrying wind turbine blades manufactured by LM Wind Power in Gaspé traveled between New Richmond and Matapédia, with the southern United



Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

*The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie team quickly unloaded the content of the flatcar. That content will enable loading cement cars directly at the Saint Mary’s Cement plant in Port Daniel.*



Photo: Gilles Gagné

*The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie team quickly unloaded the content of the flatcar. That content will enable loading cement cars directly at the Saint Mary’s Cement plant in Port Daniel.*

States as their final destination. The suspension of railway service between Caplan, a village just east of New

Richmond, and Gaspé forced LM to transport its blades by truck over 200 kilometres to reach the railway, a costly al-

ternative.

Today, the Gaspé plant still exports blades to the United States, but by ship.

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# First visit by Regional Minister Amélie Dionne

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – On her 100th day as Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula, Amélie Dionne took advantage of her visit to Carleton-sur-Mer on December 18 to meet with the Gaspé Peninsula Prefects' Table and make announcements regarding tourism.

The minister asked the table to prioritize projects for 2026, as time is running out before next October's election.

"It will be more effective and allow us to focus our energies on priorities. I want to take concrete action and see results in the very short term," says Amélie Dionne.

Mobility, transportation, immigration, and housing were discussed. In terms of transportation, rail was mentioned.

"The tourism industry cannot develop without transportation. I am very sensitive to transportation infrastructure. This was discussed," she notes.

The minister did not want to comment on developments in the file or commit to the rail network upgrading project's return in the next budget.

"We are currently analyzing business opportunities. We need to be able to make a case for future users. Osisko recently made a statement saying that it wants to use rail in its business model. We need to seize opportunities and put them on the table," the minister continues.

"We know that businesses and manufacturers want rail. It's a major lever for development. We will provide arguments and documentation on the potential impacts on current and future businesses. We will make a presentation to the minister, who will be able to discuss it with the Minister of Transportation," says Mathieu Lapointe, president of the Prefects' Table.

"We also need to look at developing ways of doing things that will be less costly. If there is risk sharing with the developer, it allows for better cost control," says the minister, putting forward a hypothesis to move the issue forward.

For the railway's section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, the Quebec government announced \$517 million in June 2023. Subsequent calls for tenders exceeded the planned budget by nearly \$200



Photo: Julie Plourde

Regional Minister Amélie Dionne.

million.

## Other issues

In addition to rail, the Prefects' Table also submitted a 30% cut in public transit funding, which impacts RéGÎM services.

Protected areas and the government's presence in the region were also discussed.

"In recent years, the current government made a flagship promise to create 5,000 jobs in the regions. With the cuts in the public service, we have concerns and want to ensure that these jobs in the regions are not cut," says Mr. Lapointe.

Unions have argued that jobs have disappeared in the region over the past year.

"We've seen it. We're in the process of compiling data on how many people have been cut. But we've definitely seen it happen. These same jobs that were transferred from Quebec City to the regions should not be cut," notes the president.

## An announcement that isn't really an announcement

Minister Dionne announced repayable loans totaling \$6.4 million to Groupe Riôtel for the acquisition of Hostellerie Baie Bleue in Carleton-sur-Mer, now Riôtel Carleton-sur-Mer, even though the transaction was completed in 2024.

This support contributed to the acquisition of the establishment and the Gaspésie Convention Centre by the new owner, as well as to renovations of more than half of the 109 rooms, rejuvenating the

Centre's image and adding new services.

The financing includes a \$3.4 million loan from Investissement Québec's own funds. Another \$3 million is being provided under the Ministry of Tourism's Program to Support the Development of Tourist Attractions, administered by Investissement Québec.

In addition, Québec has announced the renewal, in collaboration with Tourisme Gaspésie, of significant financial support for the development of the region's economy and tourism offerings.

The Regional Partnership and Digital Transformation Agreement for Tourism for the years 2025 to 2027 has been granted \$979,000 from the Ministry of Tourism to Tourisme Gaspésie. The organization is adding \$800,000 to this envelope, bringing the total amount available for the region to \$1,779,000.

This financial leverage aims to renew and stimulate the regional tourism offering in line with the priorities of Tourisme Gaspésie and the guidelines of the Ministry of Tourism. Targets include attractions, activities, and facilities; the structuring of the regional tourism offering; accommodation; festivals and events; studies; and consulting services.



Snowmobiling can be enjoyed in several areas of the Gaspé Peninsula this year.

Photo: Richard Marin Archives

## Mother Nature helps snowmobiling this year

Nelson Sergerie

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Several sections of snowmobile trails are already open and in good condition in the Gaspé Peninsula, thanks to the early arrival of cold weather in December.

Sufficient snow cover has allowed several clubs to groom trails and install signage, much to the delight of enthusiasts of this important winter sport in the region. "For the Mont-Carleton Snowmobile Club, the 211 kilometres of trails were opened very recently. It didn't get off to a flying start, but the season is now underway. But not everything is open yet," notes Denis Henry, president of the Carleton-sur-Mer Club, on January 5.

This is quite a contrast to previous seasons. "Last year, the season started, but it ended abruptly. We easily lost a month of snowmobiling due to rain," Mr. Henry recalls. "We're eagerly awaiting the next snowfall so we can go everywhere," he adds.

"It remains a very, very important economic activity for the region: for hoteliers, restaurateurs, gas stations, and snowmobile dealers. It's white gold," calculates Mr. Henry.

Snowmobilers from large urban centres also travelled to the region to enjoy their favourite sport during the holiday season.

"Having volunteered at the snowmobile show in Quebec City in November, I noticed that many snowmobilers were asking about the trails in Murdochville just before or during the holidays. This area often gets a lot of snow. People from large urban centres come to the Gaspé Peninsula," he says.

The reopening of the trail connecting La Cache and Murdochville after two years of closure has provided a major boost to the sport.

"We remain confident. We put rosaries and snowmobiles on the clotheslines, and Mother Nature heard us," says Mr. Henry, hoping that the momentum gained at the start of the season will continue throughout the winter.

Snowmobiling attracts approximately 35,000 enthusiasts to the Gaspé Peninsula each year, generating an estimated \$42 million in economic spinoffs.



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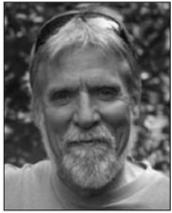
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Gilles Gagné

## Commentary

### Back to square one for the Liberal Party of Quebec

The December 18 resignation of Quebec Liberal Party leader Pablo Rodriguez, entangled in ethical controversies involving his political entourage, sent the party back to square one just nine and a half months before the October 5 election.

A former federal Liberal cabinet minister, Mr. Rodriguez stepped down following a month-long crisis within the party.

After weeks of internal turmoil, Mr. Rodriguez felt he had “become too great a distraction and that (his) presence was hurting the party.”

The crisis erupted exactly a month before he stepped down, when Liberal Party Member of the National Assembly (MNA) and parliamentary leader

Marwah Rizqy was suspended for firing Geneviève Hinse, Mr. Rodriguez’ chief of staff, without consulting him, for reasons that remain mysterious.

Everything went down from there. Days after the suspension of Ms. Rizqy, rumours had it that during the leadership race that led to Pablo Rodriguez’ victory in June 2025, some delegates were offered “brownies”, \$100 bills, to vote for him. The new leader swore ignoring everything about that practice.

Another brick was thrown at Mr. Rodriguez on December 16 when it was alleged that the host of a fundraising event handed back \$500 to about 20 people who could not afford the entry fee. The organizer covered their donations, an illegal scheme under Quebec’s election laws.

Later that day, the Liberal Party confirmed the presence of Pablo Rodriguez at the event, but maintained that neither he nor his team knew of the payouts.

A few days before those payout allegations were made public, Mr. Rodriguez had delivered a passionate speech about his decision to remain at the party’s helm. However, a number of well-known Liberal supporters called on to resign during the days that preceded December 17. That day, he announced his departure to his caucus, and held a public announcement the fol-

lowing day.

### Same old, same old

If it is hard to make direct links between Pablo Rodriguez and the slimy way his party was partially funded during the 11-month leadership race that led to his June 2025 victory, the brownies and payouts stories were painful reminders of the Liberal Party’s outdated ways of raising money.

Those ways led to the creation of the Charbonneau Commission in October 2011. It uncovered widespread collusion schemes, policies of kickbacks, links to organized crime and fraud. Back then, the Liberal Party regime of Jean Charest had been in power for eight-and-a-half years.

The final report of the Charbonneau Commission was released in 2015. By then, the Liberal Party was back in power with premier Philippe Couillard, thanks to the lack of political flair of Parti québécois premier Pauline Marois, who failed to understand that she was running a minority government from September 2012 to April 2014.

*Continued on page 8*



Cynthia Dow

## Guest Commentary

### Baby Boomer luck may be running out

If you are a Baby Boomer like me, you might feel like you were born under some lucky star. While the world order has had its ups and downs since the 1950s, we have not had to face a widespread Depression or a World War as our parents did. There has been growing prosperity, human rights and peace in our time, particularly in North America.

But given current events, I am very much afraid that our luck may be running out.

First, the COVID pandemic helped to shake some of our complacency. I remember people saying to me, “How could this happen to us?” In fact, we are here because our ancestors survived the Spanish flu of 1918. These worldwide pandemics happen on what appears to be a rhythm of about once every century. We are not immune to such cycles.

And we are sadly not immune to the spectre of another world war.

With Donald Trump’s ascension to the US “throne” a year ago, any semblance of balance in world affairs has disappeared. Megalomaniacs now control the most powerful countries, and international crimes like the Russian attack on Ukraine, the genocide visited on the Palestinian people in Gaza, and the recent attack by the US in Venezuela are likely to go unpunished because the International Criminal Court, much like the United Nations Security Council, has no teeth.

With Trump now talking about “Our Hemisphere,” about taking over Colombia, Mexico and Greenland, Canadians cannot be complacent. We are right next door to a dangerous juggernaut that is out of control, and the decrepit American political system does not seem to be able to regain any semblance of sanity.

I have no quarrel with the average American, but how that electorate could have put the mentally ill and possibly senile Trump in power defies any logic. Sadly, although he is losing support daily, the opposition Democrats and his very own party seem inca-

pable of reining him in.

So what do we do? It is my opinion that our federal government is now in the most capable hands we have at our disposal. But the average citizen has a job to do as well.

And that job is to keep our elbows WAY up. This is no time to relax our motivation to support our Canadian workers, farmers and businesses. We need to pull together more and more to reduce the impact of Trump’s tariffs on our economy.

Nowhere does this strike me as more important than in the support of our local farmers. It’s time to go back to basics. Along with air and water, food is our most precious resource. We need to make every effort to buy Canadian agricultural products and support our local farmers through buying at the summer farm markets, purchasing regular vegetable baskets, and even investing in local farms directly.

And of course, we could always produce more of our own food in our backyards.

We are fortunate that there are an increasing number of options to support our local farm businesses: Traditions Bourdages in Saint-Siméon is a good example of a local agricultural enterprise that offers a wide range of products. Initiatives such as Baie des Saveurs allow us to purchase local produce throughout the winter months when the farmers’ markets are closed.

We have a number of very successful maple syrup producers, too. We used local maple sugar to sweeten our local organic turnips for our Christmas dinner and it made a delightful change.

You might want to call up a local farmer you know and ask how you could help. Finding labour for seeding and harvesting is a major challenge for farmers.

Another tariff that Trump is apparently considering is taxing Canadian potash, used in commercial fertilizer throughout the US. If he does so, it will have a devastating impact on American food production and prices could sky-rocket. The crops we rely on in the grocery stores during the winter could soon be too costly to buy, or disappear altogether from our shelves. We will need to encourage our farmers so that they produce more, and we may need to shift our diets. Do we really need lettuce in January when we can use root crops to make tasty slaws?

In this modern economy, we consumers have a lot of “soft power” to create the world we want to

live in. Food self-sufficiency is always a good idea, but it will be an absolute necessity in the times ahead. Act accordingly.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Dear Cynthia Dow,** In the last issue of Gaspé Spec you addressed the above topic, asking for reader suggestions. Here's mine.

I noticed that all summer while my little cedar trees were turning orange in the drought for lack of water the Town of New Richmond continued running the large fountain spray in front of the town hall. I suggest that during times of drought this water feature, although attractive, be turned off. Would the town consider doing this?

*Dorothee Komangapik  
New Richmond, Quebec*

**Many thanks to Cynthia Dow** for her thoughtful, informative editorial on household water use in the December 24, 2025, SPEC. Keep up the good work!

*Margret Grenier  
Douglstown, Quebec*

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# Police Report

## No coroner recommendations following death at Henderson Beach

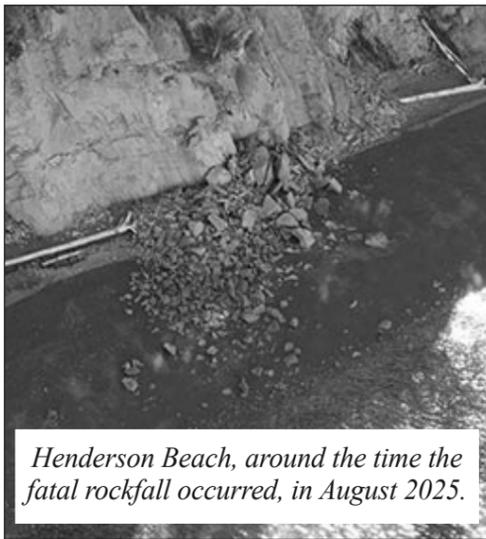
The coroner investigating the death of Clément Ménard, who died following a rockfall at Henderson Beach in New Richmond on August 16, will not be issuing any recommendations. The 86-year-old man from Pike River, in the Eastern Townships, was found unresponsive and lying face down on the beach with rocks on and around him by other visitors.

Paramedics who responded to the call found a significant head injury and no vital signs. He was pronounced dead at the hospital. The coroner noted that the police investigation mentioned the warning signs at the entrance to the site leading to the beach, which alerted visitors to the risk of rockfalls.

According to the conclusion of coroner Donald Nicole's inquiry, made public on December 19, Mr. Ménard was near the water, approximately eight metres from the cliff, when the rockfall occurred, and a heavy stone struck the victim in the head. A geotechnical study prepared by the Ministry of Transportation following the event showed that the rockfall originated from the lower part of the cliff and that a mass of rock approximately seven to eight metres high had toppled towards the beach, leaving debris extending about 11 metres out to sea.

The study also showed that there had been several small rockfalls in recent years and that the cliff exhibited cracks and signs of instability at its northwest end, extending 260 metres southeast of the stairs providing access to the beach. The report noted that stabilization work on the cliff face is not recommended due to the inexorable effects of erosion, the friable nature of the rock, and the structural geology.

However, access could be permitted in areas where the cliff is more stable, as rockfalls will continue to occur in the future. The coroner consulted with the Town of New Richmond, and a reopening plan will be developed for spring 2026, including improvements to signage and better information for users regarding the risk of rockfalls. Coroner Donald Nicole concluded that the death was accidental.



Henderson Beach, around the time the fatal rockfall occurred, in August 2025.

Photo: Allen Doug Shaw

## Bar altercation: Chandler man charged with manslaughter

A 46-year-old man from Chandler, René-Alfred Boudreau, was charged with manslaughter on December 17 at the Percé courthouse. According to CHNC, on the evening of November 14, the suspect was involved in an altercation with 72-year-old Mario Blais at a licensed establishment on Commercial Street in Chandler. The victim was seriously injured, taken to the hospital and later transferred to Quebec City, where he died on December 12.

Mr. Boudreau, arrested shortly afterward and detained since then, is also charged with mischief and breach of probation. The previous charge of assault causing bodily harm was withdrawn in light of the manslaughter charge. He faces additional charges of breach of probation and uttering death threats. He was not represented by a lawyer on December 17, and his case has been adjourned until February 9.

## Dead man found in rest area

The body of a 57-year-old man was found outside his vehicle near a rest area between Mont-Saint-Pierre and Rivière-à-Claude in Haute-Gaspésie. The victim, from the Manche-d'Épée part of Rivière-Madeleine, had been missing since the evening of December 16 around 11 p.m. Sûreté du Québec officers discovered the body shortly after 1 a.m. on December 17. At first glance, the body showed no signs of violence. The investigation has been handed over to the Coroner's Office to determine the exact cause of death.

## Chandler drug dealer gets 30 months of prison

Judge Denis Paradis, of the Quebec Court, recently sentenced Bona Anglehart, a 68-year-old man from Chandler, to 30 months in prison for drug related offences. Mr. Anglehart was arrested in April 2023 after the seizure of 2,659 methamphetamine pills, a replica firearm, and scales used to deal drugs.

The judge described Anglehart as incorrigible, noting that his criminal record dated back to 1978 with impaired driving, refusal to submit to tests, assault, drug trafficking, and numerous breaches of probation and conditions.

According to CHNC, an unfavourable pre-sentence report did not help Mr. Anglehart, who is motivated by greed and denies responsibility for his actions, claiming he did not sell drugs to children. He completed addiction therapy but quickly abandoned the program.

Judge Paradis stated that the risk of recidivism is difficult to rule out. The 68-year-old man will be prohibited from possessing a firearm for 10 years and will be subject to two years of probation. After deducting seven months in therapy and 81 days in pretrial detention, he has 609 days left to serve.

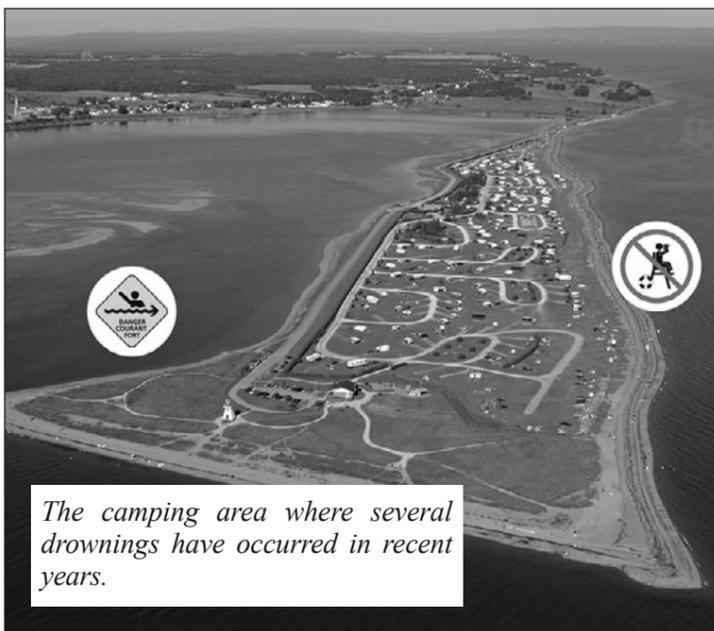
# Drowning prevention: Coroner commends Carleton-sur-Mer

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER — The coroner who investigated the drowning of a man on September 18, 2024, has commended the Town of Carleton-sur-Mer for its efforts to increase safety and warnings along the barachois near the municipal campground.

Yannick Morris, 50, from Laval, had gone to the point near the lighthouse on the campsite to fish for striped bass. He waded about 80 feet from shore, with water up to his hips, before losing his footing and drifting away.

Although a tree trunk was thrown to him and he managed to grab it, he had no energy or breath left. Two people brought him back to shore, but despite resuscitation efforts, he was pronounced dead at Maria Hospital. The coroner noted that Mr. Morris had no relevant medical history.



The camping area where several drownings have occurred in recent years.

Photo: Town of Carleton-sur-Mer

## Safety measures in place

This location has claimed four lives in the past five years. In 2022, the town implemented measures to improve safety and signage near the barachois shore.

At the time of the tragedy in September 2024, a sign next to the parking lot warned of strong currents for swimmers. Another sign indicated an "emergency-distress meeting point 011" and displayed pictograms of life jackets. Along the trail, additional signs warned fisher-

men of a steep seabed, abrupt drops, and strong currents.

"In 2023, I filed a report concerning a fisherman who drowned there on June 1, 2023, while fishing at night. I mentioned the presence of these pictograms," writes Mr. Chamberland. "All of this shows that the municipality had taken steps to inform the public of the danger of this fishing and swimming spot," continues the coroner.

## Additional safety measures

As part of his investigation, the coroner confirmed that the town had added further safety measures.

These included the installation of new signs warning of the risks, the installation

of a rescue equipment shelter including a lifebuoy, an automated external defibrillator, life jackets and a rescue rope. The shelter features a large red sign with white letters reading: "Significant risk of drowning."

"This is a serious and thoughtful action plan on the part of the Town, in collaboration with several partners, that directly addresses the safety issue at hand and aims to save lives. The Town is being proactive in this regard. I fully support these safety measures and commend their commitment to saving lives," says the coroner.

Mr. Chamberland concluded that the September 18, 2024, death was accidental and caused by drowning.

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# 86 housing units under construction in Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Gaspé’s largest social housing project in more than 50 years was officially launched on December 15 with a traditional ground-breaking ceremony for 86 social and affordable housing units by Habitations de la Montagne.

“This is a historic announcement,” says Gaspé Mayor, Daniel Côté. Two buildings, each with 43 units, will include 3½, 4½, and 5½-room apartments designed for families, single people, and workers in Gaspé. Occupancy is scheduled for the spring of 2027. Around 10% of the units will be fully adapted for people with reduced mobility.

The project, located near the MAPAQ offices on Sandy Beach Road, will feature parking, green spaces, and play areas, right in the heart of the housing complex and close to services. The total investment is just over \$41 million.



Photo: Julie Plourde

*The traditional ground-breaking ceremony to officially launch the project with dignitaries and financial partners.*

## Financing and contributions

The Quebec and federal governments are contributing more than \$20 million through the Société d'habitation du Québec's Quebec Affordable Housing Program and the Canada-Quebec Agreement on the Fund to Accelerate Housing Con-

struction. The Town of Gaspé is contributing \$450,000 in funding, as well as municipal services worth \$580,000 and a 35-year tax credit, totaling approximately \$8 million.

“This is revenue that we would not have if the housing units were not built. It is revenue that we are deferring over time,” says the mayor. He adds that the community’s share is more manage-

able in a town like Gaspé, but it is much more challenging for smaller or less affluent municipalities.

“It's an important share for a town like ours, but imagine in the case of more devitalised or less well-off towns, it's even more complicated for them,” adds the man who is also prefect of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC.

The MRC contributed to the project with various contributions totalling \$180,000.

Finalizing the financing package was not easy. “At the last minute, the contract with the contractor was signed. We were in the final stages of finalizing the financing package, and the organization decided, given that it was in a strong enough position, to inject the shortfall. In the end, the organization will not have to inject any funds, but Habitations de la montagne will still have to repay a \$15 million mortgage,” explains Charlie Brousseau-Fournier, project manager at the Groupe ressource en logement col-

lectif Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine. “It was difficult, let's be honest. But in the end, we did it. We made an exceptional contribution,” says Stéphane Sainte-Croix, Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé, who agrees that the specific characteristics of the Gaspé market will have to be taken into account going forward.

At least 30 eligible households will benefit from the Rent Supplement Program, which limits rent contributions to 25% of household income. This additional support is funded 90% by the Quebec government and 10% by the Town of Gaspé.

Over the past five years, 533 new residential units have been built in Gaspé. The housing vacancy rate now stands at 1.7%. “We are on the right track. I would remind you that four years ago, it was 0%. We are not yet at the balanced point, but with future developments, we should reach that threshold,” says Mr. Côté. The balanced point is 3% to 4%.

# Forillon: the best season in a quarter of a century

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – With 188,400 visitors in 2025, Forillon National Park recorded its best performance in 25 years, surpassing the 181,000 visitors welcomed in 2021.

This represents a 13.6% increase compared to 2024.

“Several factors explain this increase. The Government of Canada announced the Strong Canada Pass for entry to Parks Canada sites and a 25% discount on camping units between June 20 and September 2. These factors certainly contributed to the increase in visitor numbers,” explains Mathieu Côté, Director of Parks Canada's Gaspésie Management Unit.

Traffic at traditional campgrounds increased by more than 15% compared to 2024, totalling 31,242 overnight stays. This translates into an occupancy rate of 86%, compared to 77% in 2024.

“During the peak season, we are practically at full capacity,” notes Mr. Côté.

Ready-to-camp remains very popular with visitors, with the various units selling out fairly quickly when the reservation centre opens.

“These figures are the re-

sult of people coming to enjoy the outdoors, nature, culture and history. There is a wide range of activities that have taken off and allowed visitors to discover Forillon Park,” says the manager.

Various activities were held during the season, from tree planting with students from Saint-Rosaire School to documentary screenings hosted by the conservation team, meetings with members of the Regroupement de personnes expropriées de Forillon (Association of People Expropriated from Forillon) and their descendants, the Mawiomí of the Micmac Nation of Gespeg, and the sunrise show at the Festival Musique du Bout du Monde.

The varied program, combining culture, history, nature and the outdoors, provided opportunities for exchange between visitors and the local community.

## Restoration work continues

Restoration work on houses that have played a significant role in the history of Forillon in Grande-Grave is continuing.

“This year marked the start



Photo: Forillon Park

*The 2025 season is the best in 25 years at Forillon Park.*

of work on the Joseph-Gavey House. At the same time, planning work for the three other houses and the Joseph-Gavey shed is underway this winter. If all goes well, a new project will be launched on the Elias-Gavey House,” explains Mr. Côté.

“We are restoring the houses; we want to restore their character. We are working with the descendants of the families who lived in these houses to commemorate the history of the families

through the occupation of the houses for accommodation,” continues Mr. Côté.

Nearly \$10 million was announced in 2022 for the renovation and enhancement of these ancestral residences.

## Ten years of cross-country skiing

The cross-country skiing season has begun in the Anseau-Griffon portage area with the early arrival of snow, marking the tenth anniversary

of this partnership with Ski Forillon and the Le Griffon Cultural Centre.

This winter, Ski Forillon will also offer two yurts for rent along the Portage trail.

“Our active offering remains the same as that offered by Ski Forillon,” says Mr. Côté, noting that development efforts remain focused primarily on the spring and fall seasons.

The campground reservation centre for the 2026 season will open on February 4.

The Strong Canada Pass will return in 2026, from June 19 to September 7, 2026, once again offering free admission to national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas managed by Parks Canada, along with a 25% discount on camping fees.

The park is unable to assess the recent economic impact of its activities on the Gaspé region. However, in 2018, total visitor spending was estimated at \$9.7 million, contributing nearly \$4.9 million to Quebec’s gross domestic product.

Forillon National Park remains a major attraction and destination in the Gaspé Peninsula.

# A hefty bill for waste management

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE – The investments needed to continue waste treatment and collection by the Régie intermunicipale de traitement des matières résiduelles de la Gaspésie (Gaspésie Intermunicipal Waste Management Board) will cause the 2026 budget to skyrocket by 10%, reaching \$12 million.

After years of discussion, the user-pay principle is finally being introduced to encourage residents to sort their waste more effectively at the source.

“Certain issues have arisen with the changes to recycling collection and the addition of compost to ensure that materials are sorted properly,” says Samuel Parisé, president of the board and prefect of the Rocher-Percé MRC.

Gone are the days when green bins could be placed on



Photo: N. Sergerie

Citizens will have to manage their bins better if they want to see their bills frozen.

the curb for every collection.

Households that make an effort at the source will be rewarded.

“We are moving forward with incentive pricing for large residential generators. These are people who generate 20 or more waste collections per year. There will be exceptions

for large families. We invite them to call the board to see what options are available,” explains Mr. Parisé.

Households with multiple bins, for example, are being targeted. “We find this unacceptable. It’s something we want to eliminate,” says Mr. Parisé.

Households that make an effort will see their waste disposal bill frozen for the following year. Fortunately, citizens are sorting materials deposited in the blue and brown bins more effectively, and various tools are available to help them.

## Costly investments

Two factors explain the budget explosion.

Two main factors explain the budget surge. Two new cells must be built at the Gaspé technical landfill site. They have a lifespan of five years and will cost \$3.8 million. In addition, the cost of collection has skyrocketed by 26% due to contract renewals and changes in truck designs.

To avoid extra trips to the landfill, two transfer stations must also be built in Gaspé and Rocher-Percé, at a cost of \$4.1 million. The budget has

grown exponentially in recent years, prompting efforts to curb costs.

“That’s one of our goals. It’s a service we offer. We’ve never seen profitable services. We’re going to try to do it at a lower cost. But with the increase in population and consumption, small steps must be taken to keep the bill stable,” says Mr. Parisé.

Despite rising collection costs, an analysis was conducted to consider handling this service in-house. “The process has been completed. With the cost of trucks and the steps needed to manage this internally, the costs would be the same. There would be no added value in doing it in-house,” he adds.

In addition to the Gaspé landfill site, the authority owns the Grande-Rivière sorting centre and the Chandler composting site, and it also manages the eco-centres in the Rocher-Percé MRC.

# Percé loses its fire chief

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – Three years after taking charge of the Percé Fire Brigade, Chief Éric Fugère is stepping down to pursue new challenges.

Mr. Fugère arrived after the council decided to establish an independent fire brigade, as Percé firefighters had previously been under the authority of Grande-Rivière’s chief. He re-equipped the service and hired new firefighters to ensure optimal coverage of the vast territory.

“He was dedicated to his mission and helped a lot to structure the department. We acquired equipment and response capabilities that we didn’t have before,” comments Mayor Daniel Leboeuf after announcing the departure at the last municipal council meeting.

## Recruitment and challenges

Finding a new chief will be a challenge, but the mayor believes recent investments in modern equipment will make the position more attractive.

“We offer good equipment and a trained team, which is more motivating than taking over a service in decline,” he says.

Percé must also update its civil security policy, which will be a major task for the

new chief. In 2023, the town ended its partnership with Grande-Rivière to operate independently.

## Following up on CMQ recommendations

The town of Percé has adopted several notices of motion to implement the recommendations of the Municipal Commission on administrative management. These include clarifying rules for contract management, delegation of powers, budget monitoring, debt management, and vehicle use.

“There was a series of eight recommendations, and this was part of that, along with the (Municipal Commission) observer’s comments, to clarify the rules to be followed. We had a bylaw, but now it will be more comprehensive,” notes the mayor. Once completed, only issues of ethics, professional conduct, and a workplace harassment policy will remain to be finalized.

Positions for director general, clerk, and fire chief are expected to be filled at the beginning of the year.

## Tourism levy funds

Despite intentions expressed in the 2025 budget, merchants have not yet come forward to determine how to finance Percé’s tourism indus-



Photo: N. Sergerie

Percé Mayor  
Daniel Leboeuf.

try. In 2025, tourism promotion in the municipal budget was significantly reduced.

“Some individuals have come to us with suggestions. I believe there was a meeting in October 2024, but there has been no follow-up,” says the mayor.

The \$155,000 collected in 2022 from the levy, which was invalidated by the court in 2023 and was to be used for the maintenance and improvement of tourism infrastructure, remains in the coffers.

“There is a limitation period that takes us to 2027, I believe, and if there are no claims, we will be able to apply it to that purpose,” the elected official calculates.

The 2026 municipal budget is scheduled for adoption on January 27.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Ministère des Transports et de la Mobilité durable

### INVITATION TO COMMENT ON THE INSTALLATION OF EROSION CONTROL MEASURES

Transport Canada’s Navigation Protection Program (NPP) administers the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*.

In accordance with requirements of the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*, Québec’s Ministère des Transports et de la Mobilité durable hereby gives notice that an application has been submitted to the Canadian Minister of Transport regarding the following project:

Common Project Registry number	NPP file number	Project description	Worksite location (geographic coordinates)
12906	2025-314831	Construction of rockfill totaling 264 metres along route 132	Latitude: 48,8490332 Longitude: -64,5070218 (Baie de Gaspé in Gaspé, Anse-aux-Cousins sector)

#### How to submit your comments:

Comments about the potential impact of this structure must be received within 30 days of this posting.

We invite you to submit comments online through the [Common Project Search](#) site. To do so, enter the registry number indicated in the search box, and follow the instructions. Alternatively, comments can be emailed to [PPNQUE-NPPQUE@tc.gc.ca](mailto:PPNQUE-NPPQUE@tc.gc.ca), or mailed to:

Navigation Protection Program – Transport Canada  
1550 avenue d’Estimauville  
Québec, QC G1J 0C8

Please include NPP file number 2025-314831 in all correspondence sent by mail or email.

#### Notes:

- Comments will only be considered if they are in writing (electronic or mail) and received by the deadline. Transport Canada’s NPP may communicate with you to obtain additional information on your comments.

- Transport Canada does not publish comments submitted (see [Common Project Search – Navigation Protection Program Registry](#)). However, comments submitted online or by mail are considered public record. As such, they are subject to the *Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act* and are accessible through access to information and privacy (ATIP) requests. This means the information you provide should not contain confidential or sensitive information since it could be disclosed (see [Make an access to information or personal information request](#)).

Posted at Gaspé on January 14, 2026.

# Another exceptional year for Quebec's lobster sector

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – It has almost become a tradition in Quebec to summarize lobster fishing seasons by talking about new highs, but 2025 was, overall, a year of new regional records, with the sole exception of the Magdalen Islands.

The lobster fishermen of the Magdalen Islands still recorded the second-best season in their history, both in terms of landings or the nominal value of catches. However, the archipelago lost its century-old status as Quebec's leading maritime area for lobster landings, a title claimed by the Gaspé Peninsula, which had previously been in a distant second place.

Quebec lobster fishermen landed 17,505 metric tonnes of crustaceans, 18.6% more than the 14,758 tonnes landed in 2024. The value of all these lobsters reached \$298 million, 29.56% more than the \$230 million landed in 2024. Data for 2025 is still preliminary.

"In 2025, lobster fishermen experienced a truly historic season. It's unprecedented: 17,505 tonnes of catch and \$298 million in revenue. These are records for both quantity and value. Lobster leads all species in terms of value for the sixth consecutive year," explains Audon Honvoh, economist with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Looking at the data from the last decade, we see that volume increases have been consistent since 2016. That year, catches reached 5,182

metric tons, and the value of landings was \$76 million, or \$98 million in current dollars, that is with the inflation adjustment.

New exploratory permits issued by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the Gaspé Peninsula and on the North Shore were the determining factor in the increase in the 2025 catch volume.

"They (the exploratory permits) account for 16% of the increase in all catches," adds Audon Honvoh, highlighting the comparison with the overall 18.6% increase in catches. Therefore, nearly 90% of the increase in catches stems from the exploratory permits.

## Gaspé Peninsula leads the maritime sectors

Audon Honvoh highlights the "exceptional season" experienced by Gaspé lobster fishermen. The same applies to the Lower St. Lawrence in recent years, but to a lesser extent, statistically.

"There was an increase of nearly 44% in catches compared to 2024 in the Gaspé Peninsula. They reached 7,724 tonnes for a value of \$132 million, an increase of 57% in this case," explains the economist.

In 2024, Gaspesian fishermen caught 5,381 metric tonnes of lobster. The increase in catches was therefore 43.54%. Revenues for Gaspé lobster fishermen had reached \$84 million in 2024.

Relatively speaking, lobster fishermen on the North Shore also had a successful

season in terms of landings.

"On the North Shore, catches increased by more than 40%, reaching 2,635 tonnes," explains Audon Honvoh, noting that these landings totaled 1,887 metric tonnes in 2024.

At 2,635 metric tonnes, the North Shore is just 69 tonnes shy of the 2,704 tonnes of lobster landings in the Magdalen Islands in 2016, when the archipelago was the undisputed leader among Quebec's maritime areas for this crustacean.

Overall, revenues did not increase at the same rate when considering data from the Upper and Middle North Shore on the one hand, and those from the Lower North Shore on the other, since Fisheries and Oceans Canada provides data for both parts of the North Shore for statistical purposes.

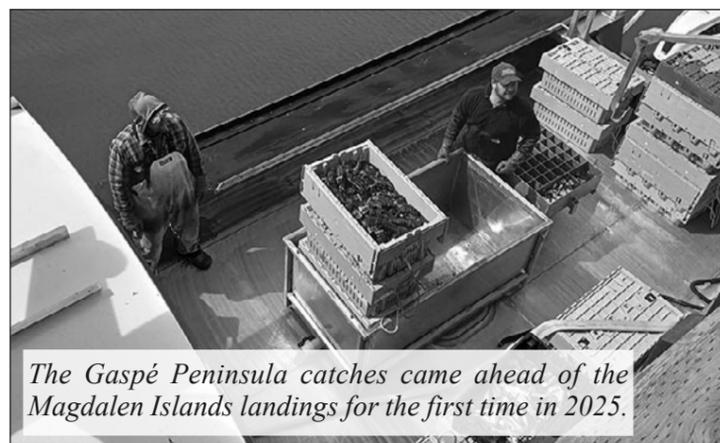
Overall, revenues for the North Shore region increased from \$30 million to \$45 million between 2024 and 2025, a 50% rise. Looking at the Upper and Middle North Shore regions, these revenues jumped from \$21 million to \$35 million, a 66.66% increase. In contrast, on the Lower North Shore, revenues rose from \$9 million to \$10 million, an 11% increase.

In 2025, catches on the Middle and Upper North Shore reached 2,016 tonnes, compared to 1,334 tonnes in 2024, representing a 51.1% increase. On the Lower North Shore, catches increased from 553 tonnes to 619 tonnes year-over-year, an 11.9% increase.

a leadership contender; he wants the people who are asking him to run to get organized and show that they will support him. It is an unusual way to demonstrate political commitment.

Other potential candidates have until February 13 to confirm that they will run. If there is a race, the winner will be known on March 14. There are a few sure things to keep in mind. By mid-March, Liberal politicians and organizers will only have six months at most to get a program and a candidacy team in place. They will also have to find a way to reach the francophone majority if they want a fair shot at running a government.

In politics, six months can be an eternity for voters to change their minds. Organizationally, however, it is little more than the blink of an eye.



The Gaspé Peninsula catches came ahead of the Magdalen Islands landings for the first time in 2025.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

Only the Magdalen Islands saw a decrease in catches in 2025, and it wasn't significant.

"In 2025, the quantity decreased slightly, to 7,145 metric tons," explains Audon Honvoh. "Catches reached 7,490 metric tons in 2024. The decline was 4.6%," notes the economist.

Despite the decrease in volume, revenues in the Magdalen Islands increased from \$117 million in 2024 to \$122 million in 2025, a rise of 4.27%. This figure is three times higher than the \$41 million recorded in 2016. In nominal terms, the revenue peak was reached in 2022, with \$124 million.

## The role of prices

While catch volumes increased by 18.6% between 2024 and 2025, revenues rose by 29.56% because prices also climbed, explains Audon Honvoh.

"Prices increased from just over \$7 in 2024 to around \$7.70. We're starting to see attractive prices, although we must say we were already attrac-

tive," the economist points out.

Ten years ago, lobster fishermen on the Upper and Middle North Shore struggled to obtain prices close to those of the Magdalen Islands and the Gaspé Peninsula. The difference was 60 cents per pound. By 2025, and for the past five years, they have caught up.

"The North Shore suffered from a gap due to relatively low volumes. Since 2021, we've seen the economies of scale the industry can achieve, thanks to the issuance of new permits and warming waters (which benefit the habitat). The North Shore is transitioning from a marginal market to an attractive one," explains Audon Honvoh.

Lobster fishermen on the Lower North Shore, however, continue to receive less than their counterparts in other areas. Nevertheless, the gap has narrowed considerably over the past 10 years, shrinking from a difference of \$1.65-\$1.70 per pound in 2016 to approximately 45 to 50 cents in 2025.

## Increase in Bonaventure

Nelson Sergerie

BONAVENTURE – Residents of Bonaventure will see their overall tax bill rise above inflation in 2026. The increase will be 4.2%, translating into an additional \$118 for an average home valued at \$244,298. The town's 2026 budget will total \$7.4 million.

"Garbage collection: we had a slightly higher bill than expected. We also need to maintain quality services for the benefit of citizens. There is also the consumer price index," notes Mayor Pierre Gagnon among the explanations for the increase.

Another factor that will have an impact on the budget is the renewal of the union collective agreement, which will increase expenses.

### Key projects in 2026

Among the main projects planned for next year is the repair of Chemin Thivierge. The town is awaiting a response from the Ministry of Transportation regarding this work.

Sidewalks within the urban perimeter will also be rebuilt, and part of the Bonaventure Centre infrastructure may see renovations. Net debt will remain at \$14 million.

"We have major projects coming up. If we want to continue maintaining our infrastructure, we will have to invest in the coming years, but we are trying as much as possible to balance the net debt," notes Mr. Gagnon.

— Continued from page 4  
Liberal Party of Quebec:

The Liberal Party of Quebec lost the 2018 election to the Coalition avenir Québec and had literally been losing ground until 2025. The party is disconnected from the Quebec regions, having only won in less than a handful of rural ridings in 2018 and 2022.

Even under Pablo Rodriguez' first months as leader, the Liberal Party seemed unable not only to reconnect with Quebecers living outside Montreal's West Island and Outaouais, but to find original economic orientations that were once its strength.

### Where does the party go from now?

Although the Liberal Party

had gained a bit of momentum since the June 2025 convention, it was far from out of the woods, electorally-speaking. Marwah Rizqy, one of the rare party's solid public speakers, has decided not to run in October 2026, and note-worthy potential replacements were few and far between, even before the November controversies.

Now, Charles Milliard, who finished second in the 2024-2025 leadership race, has officially announced that he is running again. Mario Roy, a Beauce farmer who also entered the last race, has confirmed his running again, although he still has to deal with an \$18,000 debt from the last time.

The former president of VIA Rail, Yves Desjardins Siciliano, is also interested in entering the race. He put a condition to his participation as

# The dip raises just over \$1 million in 14 years

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – On December 13, under ideal weather conditions, 300 participants and 1,000 spectators raised a preliminary total of \$231,748, bringing the total raised since the first dip in 2011 to \$1,047,163 for Operation Enfant Soleil. The dip took place near the Percé wharf.

“We still have some money left to count. We feel completely overwhelmed. We're already thrilled to have passed the \$200,000 mark. It looks like it could continue until the telethon. How far can it take us? We're super proud. I don't think we realise it,” says co-founder Marie-Ève Trudel Vibert.

The 300 brave participants set a new record, surpassing last year's 236 dippers, who raised \$181,384. The 2025 goal was \$184,585, aiming to reach the symbolic \$1 million milestone.

A quarter of a million may



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Lynn Dupuis, captain of the Grand Gaspé crinqués.*

be possible, but the co-founder hopes to raise at least \$240,000 for the telethon on June 1 and 2. Plans for the 15th edition are already underway.

“We've ridden the wave of the million dollars. Now we're going to ride the wave of the

15th anniversary. It's going to create a buzz,” says Marie-Ève Trudel Vibert. Among the ideas for next year are a weekend dip and activities for children.

“What goal do we set when we reach \$230,000? We'll be back at the drawing board pretty quickly,” she adds.

Upcoming announcements by Enfant Soleil to provide hospitals with pediatric equipment could help reach a quarter of a million dollars for the 15th edition. “The goal is to give to Enfant Soleil, to help with research and pediatric care at the four major university hospitals in Montreal, Sherbrooke and Quebec City, and to equip our hospitals to help young people's health. That's why we're proud,” says the co-founder, recalling the origins of the activity.

## A 13th dip for Lynn Dupuis

The Grand Gaspé team

raised the most donations in the 14th edition with \$33,795, led by captain Lynn Dupuis, participating for the 13th time.

“I missed the first edition because I didn't know about it. From the second year on, I've loved the experience,” he says. “The cause—sick children—I call them ‘the little sick ones.’ It's a fantastic social event, and jumping into the water is not something you do every day.”

Jumping into water around 1°C is no small feat. “It feels cold, but when you get out, you feel great. There were 20 of us this year, and there's a real team spirit,” says Mr. Dupuis. Last year, participants raised \$32,000, and two years ago, \$25,000. He was unable to calculate the total amount raised since 2012.

## Politicians get wet

The Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj

Alexis Deschênes, and the Prefect of the Rocher-Percé MRC, Samuel Parisé, did not hesitate to get wet for the cause of sick children.

“It went very well. You feel very alive when you get into the water. And it's uplifting because you're surrounded by well-intentioned people. The idea is to suffer a little in solidarity with sick children. But what you realize is that you don't suffer that much because there is a lot of human warmth,” says Mr. Deschênes, participating for the first time.

“It went very well, very cold. But it's nothing compared to learning that a child is sick. We're riding the wave,” said Prefect Samuel Parisé spontaneously, when asked a few seconds after getting out of the water.

The first dip in 2011 raised \$5,000 with just 20 participants. More than a decade later, the organizers' passion and commitment remain as strong as ever.

# December sees another precipitation deficit

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – For the seventh consecutive month, Gaspé saw a significant precipitation deficit in December.

Only 57.4 millimetres of water equivalent was measured at Michel-Pouliot Airport, which is 48% of the normal 120 millimetres.

New Carlisle received slightly more precipitation, with 62 millimetres of water equivalent.

Since June, Gaspé has received 393.7 millimetres of water equivalent, which is 63% of the normal 625 millimetres for the period.

In terms of snow, 44.7 centimetres fell on Gaspé, or 61% of the normal 72.4 centimetres.

Since the beginning of winter, Gaspé has received only 71 centimetres, compared to the normal 108 centimetres.

Although these totals are low, they are not unusual for December.

“With 57 millimetres of rainfall compared to a normal 120 millimetres, we are well below normal, but we are not at extreme levels. In 1947, we recorded 33 millimetres. We still have some way to go before reaching extreme levels. We're not even in the top 5, but we're close to the top 10,” explains Environment Canada



*Snow began falling on December 29 in Gaspé.*

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

meteorologist Julien Pellerin.

December was colder, with an average temperature of -7.7°C, compared to the normal -6.3°C.

The first -20°C temperature of the winter was recorded on January 1, when the mercury dropped to -22.4°C in Gaspé. The normal date for the season's first -20°C temperature is December 27.

## A green Christmas

With barely a trace of snow at Gaspé airport, Christmas 2025 is statistically considered a green Christmas.

A green Christmas is defined as having less than two centimetres of snow on the ground at dawn on Christmas Day.

Environment Canada data showed only a trace of snow on

the ground in Gaspé at sunrise, even though precipitation fell later in the morning.

According to December climate records for Gaspé, there was no snow on the ground on December 31, 1979.

The most recent green Christmas occurred in 2023. Christmas was also green in 2018 and 2001.

“Practically green” Christmases were recorded in 1993, 2006, and 2019.

The record for snow on the ground in December dates back to 1980, when 88 centimetres accumulated over the month.

However, winter conditions returned shortly after Christmas this year. Between December 29 and January 6, 55.7 centimetres of snow blanketed Gaspé, including 34 centimetres that fell on New Year's Day and January 2.

CABARET

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# Quebec Constitution: Anglophones and Gespeg speak out

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The English-speaking community of Gaspé and the Micmac First Nation of Gespeg are denouncing the fact that Quebec's draft constitution does not include them.

The English-speaking community and First Nations are only mentioned in the wording of the document submitted by the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government.

On December 9, Jessica Synnott, executive director of Vision Gaspé-Perce Now, travelled to Quebec City to share what she described as “significant concerns about Bill 1 and the potential impact it could have on English-speaking minority communities across Quebec.”

“We don't see ourselves there. We see the French language, the common culture of Quebec, but we don't see the English-speaking community, nor do we see Indigenous peoples,” says Ms. Synnott.



Photo: Vision Gaspé-Perce Now facebook

*Jennifer Johnson of the Community Health and Social Services Network, Jessica Synnott, executive director of Vision Gaspé-Perce Now, and Gespeg councillor Emily Roberts.*

“As an Anglophone, when I look at this document, I feel that the focus is entirely on the culture and history of Francophones, but I feel Quebecois, even though I don't necessarily share the same culture or values as a Francophone,” she explains.

She fears that the English-speaking culture and heritage of the Gaspé Peninsula will

be lost if the bill is adopted in its current form.

“I am quite satisfied with the message I conveyed. I did not sense any resistance from the parliamentarians. Nevertheless, we feel that the mention at the beginning of the document is just to ease their conscience,” continues the director of Vision Gaspé-Perce Now.

## Fears about funding

Anglophone minority organizations receive direct funding from the federal government for their operations, a situation Vision Gaspé-Perce Now fears could be jeopardized.

“It makes us very fearful for the future of federal funding because a large part of our funding comes from Ottawa. If it all goes to the province, we fear that the English-speaking community will be at the bottom of the list,” she believes. “We have made suggestions to ensure that the English-speaking community is more present in the Act if the draft constitution is adopted,” she concludes.

## Gespeg also has concerns

The Micmac First Nation of Gespeg has also expressed concerns about Bill 1.

“First Nations were not consulted in the first place. The preamble mentions First Nations, but nowhere in the

document is there any reference to our rights,” comments Gespeg Chief, Céline Cassivi.

Some members of Gespeg, who are English-speaking, fear what will happen next.

“People are concerned about their rights and their culture, and we wonder if our members' rights to receive services will be affected,” continues the chief of Gespeg.

“A few weeks ago, at the Chiefs' Assembly, we met with Minister Simon Jolin Barrette. He tried to reassure us by saying that he had appointed us. Clearly, for us, that's not enough. As First Nations chiefs, we will see what we can do in the future to make our voices heard,” says Ms. Cassivi.

While Gespeg does not intend to submit a brief or formally intervene at this stage, the chiefs remain attentive to future developments.

“By joining forces with all the other First Nations chiefs, our message will be stronger,” she explains.

# Gespeg finally has its economic reserve

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – After 50 years of waiting, the Micmac First Nation of Gespeg finally has its economic reserve.

Chief Céline Cassivi signed the documents formalizing the agreement in Quebec City on December 19, following the adoption of a ministerial decree in favour of this symbolic gesture for the Nation.

“This is a very big day, a historic day for Gespeg. For us, finally, it is an extremely important recognition,” says Céline Cassivi, reached in Quebec City after the signing of the agreement.

“For the moment, nothing has been decided. Everything is possible. We will take the time to look at everything and see how we can use our territory,” the chief continues.

Chief Cassivi had spoken with the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada, Mandy Gull-Masty, during her visit to Gaspé on November 11.



Photo: N. Sergerie

*The administrative centre of the Micmac First Nation of Gespeg.*

She indicated at the time that “the process has never been as far along as it is today. Our file is under review in Ottawa. The Minister declined to comment. All the necessary steps have been taken. We were hoping for an answer in 2025 because it has been 50 years since a reserve was granted in Quebec. It would be a good year to make an announcement,” she stated after the meeting with the

Minister.

A ceremony and symbolic signing will be held in January or February. Members will be consulted to define this economic reserve.

“Fifty years of effort, and we must not forget our ancestors. They paved the way,” says the chief, her voice filled with emotion.

This reserve is non-residential, but it opens doors that were previously closed:

opportunities for economic development and diversification, as well as access to funds for education, health, and other community projects.

Currently, the Nation has access to seven programs, and the conclusion of this file will open the door to more than 25 programs.

Three lots were targeted in Gespeg's request in the area surrounding the Nation's ad-

ministrative centre.

The Town of Gaspé had given its support, continuing the collaboration established in 2017 between the municipal council and the Nation Council. The Côte-de-Gaspé MRC also submitted a favourable opinion to the federal government.

During his visit to Gaspé in August, Quebec Minister responsible for Relations with First Nations Ian Lafrenière indicated that he was partnering with Gespeg and working with the federal government to bring the project to fruition.

Gespeg is focusing on socioeconomic development, particularly the construction of social infrastructure and diversifying economic development.

Recognized since 1972, the Nation's economic reserve request was initially rejected in the mid-1970s. After efforts in the 1990s, the process resumed in 2020. A new application was submitted in 2024, a matter that was a priority for the current Council.

# Electoral map in Supreme Court: Daniel Côté supports the Quebec government

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The mayor of Gaspé is pleased to see the Quebec government seek permission to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada in an attempt to overturn the Court of Appeal's decision invalidating the lower court's ruling that upheld the law passed in May 2024 maintaining two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Daniel Côté is, in a sense, the spokesperson for the Gaspé Prefects' Table.

"From a legal standpoint, this is good news, and we support the Attorney General of Quebec in his appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada," says Mr. Côté.

However, an even more important step is coming very soon, as the second report of the Chief Electoral Officer was tabled before the holidays and the members of the National Assembly (MNAs) have since made their comments.



Photo: archives

*Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté with his fellow prefects in Quebec City in December to raise awareness among elected officials about maintaining two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula.*

This report upheld the merger of the ridings of Gaspé and Bonaventure to create Gaspé-Bonaventure and sent Haute-Gaspésie to the Bas-Saint-Laurent riding of Matane-Matapédia.

Before the Quebec National Assembly's holiday recess, the prefects of the Gaspé Peninsula met with several

MNAs and ministers from all parties to reiterate their desire to maintain two Gaspé Peninsula ridings.

"Now is the time for parliamentarians to unite in favour of the two Gaspé constituencies," says the mayor of Gaspé.

Time is running out, as the decree formalizing the new

map could be tabled very soon.

"The deadlines are extremely short on the political side. On the legal side, it could take a long time. The Chief Electoral Officer must organize an election in October and needs six months to get organized. If we want an election this fall, the deadline is February or March. Politicians have decisions to make," says the mayor.

The election is scheduled for October 5, 2026, according to the Fixed Election Date Act.

The Supreme Court will be asked to rule on a single issue.

"What the Supreme Court must rule on is the validity of the law that suspended the electoral reform process. Did the Quebec National Assembly have the power to pass this law? We are dealing with a subsidiary dispute, while the main issue remains unresolved," says Mr. Côté.

On December 23, Quebec

filed an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada regarding the December 1 ruling by the Quebec Court of Appeal.

"Citizens from all regions and their realities must be well represented. It should be noted that the Act to interrupt the electoral district delimitation process was unanimously adopted in the National Assembly by members of all political parties. We will present our arguments before the Court and will not comment further," says Simon Jolin-Barrette, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Quebec.

"The determination of electoral representation rules is a matter for the unanimous will of the National Assembly. The government will appeal the Court of Appeal's ruling to uphold this fundamental principle," says Jean-François Roberge, Minister responsible for Democratic Institutions.

## Average increase of 3.3% in tax bills in Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Although the base rate remains unchanged, bills for various services are increasing, resulting in an average tax bill increase of 3.28% in Gaspé in 2026.

For a property valued at \$241,700, the increase will amount to \$80.91. Rates are rising by \$15 for water and sewer services, \$20 for waste management, and \$17.50 for septic tank sludge. The tax rate related to general distribution—debt servicing—will increase slightly from \$0.2609 to \$0.2795 per \$100 of assessed value.

"We are satisfied with the fiscal year. While the budget is increasing, we are managing to curb certain expenses and ambitions. We are increasingly aligning the budget with strategic planning," says Mayor Daniel Côté.

The 2026 budget totals \$38.7 million and is therefore increasing by 1.45%.

"It's been quite a year. Some revenues and expenditures are down. For example, we may have over budgeted fuel sales at the airport. Debt service repayments are in-



Photo: N. Sergerie

*The mayor of Gaspé presents the 2026 budget.*

creasing at a slower rate than inflation. Overall, our expenditures are keeping pace with inflation," says the mayor.

The town drew \$1.6 million from its surplus to balance its budget.

"It was a choice we made. We had to raise service rates to reflect the actual cost. By doing so, we ended up with an overall increase. We chose to freeze property taxes and draw on the surplus. Our reserves are sufficient, and we are confident that by the end of the 2025 fiscal year, in May 2026, we will be able to free up some leeway to replenish this

part of the budget," says the mayor.

Even with frozen property taxes, construction is generating new revenue.

### Increase in housing

The number of housing units continues to rise in Gaspé. Since 2020, 668 new housing units (rentals and single-family homes) have been built. The occupancy rate has risen from 0% in 2017 to 1.7% in October, a sign that the incentives are paying off, according to the municipal

administration.

The town has purchased \$2 million worth of land in the new Faubourg du ruisseau neighbourhood.

"It's quite unusual to use \$2 million of the surplus to buy land. We need all the leverage we can get to stimulate housing construction, which is why we partnered with the developer of Faubourg du ruisseau. We acquired it for \$2 million. We want to make at least \$2 million by reselling it, including perhaps donations to build social housing," calculates Mr. Côté.

The allocated surplus will decrease from \$4.8 million to \$3.6 million in 2025. The unallocated surplus follows the same trend, from \$10.9 million to \$3.6 million, for a total net surplus of \$7.3 million. \$172 million in projects

The three-year capital plan (PTI) for 2026-2028 accounts for \$172.6 million in projects. Phase 1 of the multisport complex, the arena component, is now estimated at \$34 million.

"We indexed it without knowing the actual cost. The PTI is a plan. When the plans are up to date, the figure will be accurate. We put it at \$34

million because we have to index the costs before submitting, but we expect the estimated cost of \$32 million to be around \$34 million," says the mayor.

Another major project is the rehabilitation of the Rivière-au-Renard water and sewer system, a \$59 million project. A treatment plant may need to be built at Lac d'Amour, as well as aerated ponds for wastewater.

"We are getting closer and closer. Several steps have been taken. We have acquired properties, cleared trees, conducted soil tests, and made progress on the wastewater system. For drinking water, several drinking water treatment techniques are being analyzed," explains Mr. Côté. The net debt will be set at \$50.7 million.

"The debt is under control. The relative share of the debt is decreasing in relation to property wealth. The debt in absolute terms is increasing by 4%, but compared to property wealth, it is down 20 cents per \$100 of assessment. We don't want to lose control, which is why we are being judicious in our investments," he says.

# A woman from Gaspé was on the bus that overturned on January 2 in Mont-Joli

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – A woman from Gaspé had a frightening experience when an Orléans Express bus veered off the road in the middle of a storm on January 2 in Mont-Joli.

Sylviane Pipon was aboard the bus, which had left Rimouski and stopped in Mont-Joli to pick up passengers before continuing on to the north side of the peninsula toward Gaspé.

“It was on Perreault Road, which is narrower and has fields on both sides. It was very windy, visibility was completely zero, and there were a lot of snow drifts on the road. We couldn't see anything. The bus slowed down and slowed down and tipped over into the ditch on the passenger side,” says Ms. Pipon.

The bus rolled slowly into the soft snow at a 45-degree angle.



The Orléans Express bus left the road on January 2 on Chemin Perreault in Mont-Joli during a violent storm.

Photo: Jacques D'Anjou Provincial Towing

“There wasn't too much major impact. That's why no one was seriously injured. We were lucky, though, because it could have been quite tragic,” says the coordinator of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Seniors' Table.

The bus driver remained calm and professional with the 32 passengers.

“He made us feel safe. He called a rescue team in Rimouski. He asked us if anyone was in pain, and since no one was injured, we were reassured. We could see that everyone was fine on the bus. We were warm,” she says.

Rescue workers arrived fairly quickly to help the passengers.

A firefighter had to climb

through a hatch in the ceiling of the bus to open the emergency windows and set up ladders so the passengers could get out.

“There were a lot of snow flurries. It was a blizzard. It took half an hour to evacuate everyone. Snow was coming into the bus,” states Ms. Pipon.

Another bus came to pick

up the passengers.

Orléans Express tried to take them to hotels in Rimouski, but the terrible conditions forced management to take them to the emergency shelter set up at the Mont-Joli arena.

“There were almost 150 of us. Everyone had a mattress in the players' room, on the upstairs floor, in a community room. We were taken care of. There was food and coffee, and there was even a nurse for people who were in pain. We were well taken care of,” says Ms. Pipon.

It was difficult to foresee such an ordeal.

“If I had to do it again, I wouldn't have departed. When we left, the weather was so nice. We told ourselves that if the Orléans Express was running, it was because they had done their research. But knowing the conditions, I wouldn't have boarded,” she says.

## New protest against the black hole

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER – Nearly 60 people marched through the streets of Chandler on December 17 to keep pressure on the federal government to address the “black hole” faced by seasonal workers at the end of winter.

The black hole is the period between the end of employment insurance benefits and the resumption of work in the spring.

Participants gathered at the Place du Havre shopping centre before marching to the Service Canada office on René-Lévesque Boulevard.

“As part of our campaign, ‘A penny to fill the black hole,’ we are calling for immediate action. If there is no reform, the five-week pilot project must be changed to 15 weeks,” explains movement coordinator Nadia Mongeon.



Around sixty people marched through the streets of Chandler on December 17.

Photo: Mouvement action chômage Pabok

According to the group, increasing employee and employer contributions by one cent per \$100 of income would be sufficient to address the problem.

“That would generate enough revenue to add 10 weeks of benefits, bringing the total to 15 weeks,” says Ms. Mongeon.

While the solution appears simple, she says the federal government is failing to act.

“It's a measure that would be easy to implement, but the political will doesn't seem to be there,” she says.

Comprehensive reform of the employment insurance system remains the movement's ultimate goal.

“We won't give up,” says the coordinator.

The group is calling for a system that would provide access after 420 hours of work, with 35 weeks of benefits paid at 70% of income. Currently, it takes 630 hours of work, the equivalent of 18 weeks, to qualify for 17 weeks of benefits.

### Politicians in attendance

The mayors of Percé, Daniel Leboeuf, and Grande-Rivière, Gino Cyr, marched alongside protesters. The federal MP (Member of Parliament) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, Alexis Deschênes, was also present.

“They said that the Liberal government doesn't want to understand or doesn't care at all about what people are going through. My job is to talk about the stories of the

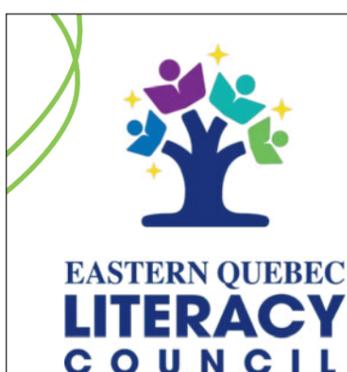
people I walked with today so that it gets into the heads of Liberal decision-makers to tell them that the way they are being treated is unacceptable,” says Mr. Deschênes.

Hearing their experiences, he adds, reinforces his determination to raise the issue in the House of Commons.

The MP notes that Canada's employment insurance system is the least generous among G7 countries.

“Seasonal workers support our economic pillars such as fishing, tourism and forestry. Without them, fish and lobster would not make it onto people's plates in the city, and without them, we would not be able to welcome tourists. They deserve decent treatment,” the MP proclaims.

In November, about 40 people gathered in Grande-Rivière to share how the black hole has affected their lives.



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## 1992, a year of transition (another one)

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The year 1991 was marked by a recession. So how can we perceive 1992? During the spring, economists began stating that the recession was over. However, it took a while before the effects of the slump ebbed away, as people working in the pulp and paper industry saw. So, let's call 1992 a transition year.

Vol 18. No 1  
January 7, 1992

- In SPEC's first issue of the year, dated January 7, "The Gaspé's 1992 babies" is the only major title of the front-page, featuring photos of Sébastien Trudel-Synnott with his mother Lucie Trudel, the first baby born in Gaspé in 1992, and Maria-born Karl Miousse, pictured with his parents Karl Miousse and Nathelie Cormier. The other title, "1991, the year in review", refers to inside photos. "Kega owner retires" covers the retirement of James Keays, the hardware store owner until 1989. In New Richmond, the Ford dealership reopens.

Vol 18. No 2  
January 14, 1992

- In the following issue, dated January 14, "Fire destroys St-Alphonse sawmill" covers most of page 1. The blaze occurred on January 6. The mill belonged to the public firm Rexfor. The board will decide about reconstruction in February. "Murdochville school may close in June", "January brings wet ski conditions" and "Tax bills are going up" in New Richmond and New Carlisle also make the cover.

Vol 18. No 3  
January 21, 1992

- "Opposition growing against marina" project in Percé fills most of the front-page of issue number 3, dated January 21. "Council seat open for candidates" in New Carlisle to replace John Legresley, "Soup kitchen

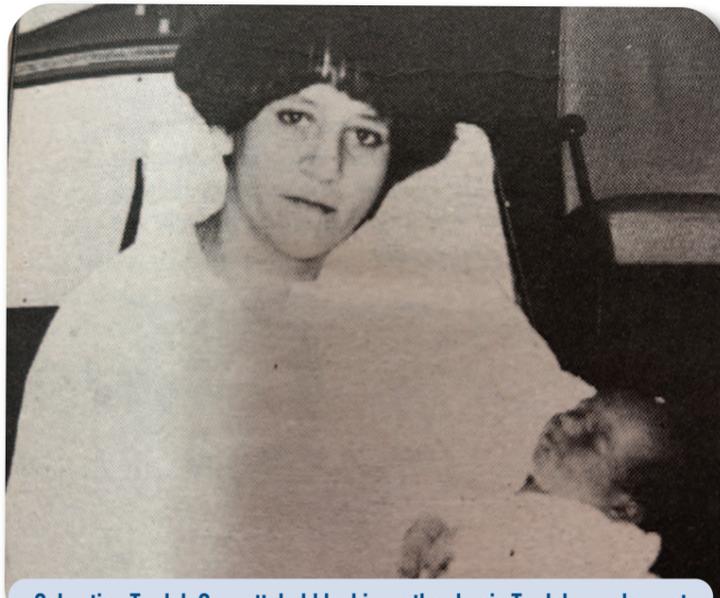
helps those in needs" in Gaspé and "Flu, meningitis fear closes school", referring to Gaspé Elementary, also make page 1.

Vol 18. No 4  
January 28, 1992

- "RSBG, Gaspé, Bonaventure (English) boards to merge July 1st" headlines issue 4, dated January 28. The Education Ministry wants to reduce the number of Quebec school boards. "Fire destroys La Maison Blanche" in New Carlisle reports through a photo-caption the blaze that destroyed the inn. "Winter guide takes you though the Gaspé", a SPEC supplement, and "Evaluation roll angers taxpayers" in Percé also make the cover.

Vol 18. No 5  
February 4, 1992

- In issue 5, released on February 4, "York residents are still waiting for their water", after requests that started between 1969 and 1972, and "Hard times for smelt fishermen", like Fleurant's Point Steven Edwards, who faces competition from Chilean smelt, make the headlines. "VIA upgrades its trains in the Gaspé", a true service improvement, "MP (Darryl Gray) goes to the Middle East" on a diplomatic trip, and "Hydro-Québec comes under fire during Gaspé meeting" also make page 1. The opposition expressed at Hydro-Québec deals with fear of chemical spraying. Inside, "Pin rouge up for sale" reports



Sébastien Trudel-Synnott, held by his mother Lucie Trudel, was born at 3:05 a.m. of New Year's day in Gaspé, thus becoming the 1992's first baby in the region.

on first owner Raymond Malenfant's financial woes, and the trustee decision to sell the ski centre.

Vol 18. No 6  
February 11, 1992

- In issue 6, dated February 11, "Gaspé gearing up for Quebec Games", planned for August 1993, and "Heritage plan under study" in New Carlisle are the headlines. The New Carlisle project would preserve the heritage buildings and significant sites. Deputy mayor Valerie Gilker is spearheading the file. "Gaspé workers demonstrate outside town hall", "Wakeham-York Carnival set to go" and "New Richmond dumps Salle de spectacles manager" also appear on page 1.

Vol 18. No 7  
February 18, 1992

- "Fishermen want to buy



Karl Miousse, pictured with parents Alain Miousse and Nathalie Cormier, was born on January 2nd at the Maria hospital.

Malbay plant", with Gaspé associate Gaston Langlais, from salted cod producer Gaspé Cured, makes 80% of the issue 7 (wrongly presented as issue 6), dated February 18, front-page. Up to 26 lobster fishermen are interested in the acquisition, but Gaspé Cured has promised to sell the plant to former owner Gaétan Denis. Murdochville's "School set to close in June", as the English school only has 16 enrollments, "Candidates sign-in for March 9th" in health and social services elections and "Proposed senior housing under study" in Gaspé also make page 1.

Vol 18. No 8  
February 25, 1992

- "Task force pushes for major changes to English schools" and "A new record for Bonaventure MNA" Gerard D. Levesque make issue 8 headlines, dated February 25. A lack of professionals specialized in education, limited vocational courses, school closings, long distances, administrative costs and the need to renew teachers are among the major challenges facing the Gaspé's English schools, writes Quebec's Task Force on English education. Gerard D. Levesque has served at the National Assembly for 35 years. "Canada is getting ready for (125th) birthday bash", "PQ leader selling sovereignty" and "More housing sought for seniors" in New Richmond also make the front page.

Vol 18. No 9  
March 3, 1992

- In issue 9, dated March 3, "Harricana raid stops in Cross Point" fills most of page 1. The now-defunct snowmobile event was 20 pitting teams from Canada, France and Belgium over 2,000 kilometres, from Ottawa to Lac-Saint-Jean, the North Shore, the Gaspé Peninsula, New Brunswick and Maine. "School board integration now complete", "Tax bills still not out" in Gaspé, "Candidates prepare for March 9th elections" in the health sector and "Gaspé bids goodbye to two of its clergy", the Spackmans, complete page 1 titles.

Vol 18. No 10  
March 10, 1992

- In issue 10, dated March 10, "Break granted re: police force" reports on an exemption obtained by Gaspé regarding the creation of its own police force, despite (minister Claude) Ryan's municipal reform requesting such police force for all the towns counting over 10,000 people. In "Gaspesian gas comes with a price", readers learn that New Carlisle shows the highest fuel cost in Quebec. "Don't touch our flag, councillor says" features the position of Charlie O'Brien, who wants to make sure that the Canadian flag will never be removed without the consent of the Gaspé council. Inside, the Crustacés de Gaspé plant won't reopen over the spring and the president of Abitibi-Price, Ron Oberlander, says that the "Gaspesia mill's future (is) still uncertain", as newsprint prices fall.

Vol 18. No 11  
March 17, 1992

- "Anglos get out and vote in health boards elections" makes the headline of issue 11, released on March 17. Patsy MacDonald, Albert Patterson and Howard Miller

From Page 13

benefitted from the anglophone turnout and were elected. A page 1 photo shows happy St. Patrick School students in Chandler, after a week of learning about the negative effects of drugs, courtesy of the Optimist Club and the Sûreté du Québec. "Citizens' association created" a group wanting to keep an eye on Gaspé's municipal council, "New business will recycle old paper" in New Carlisle, and "Town won't take wharf, even for a dollar" in New Richmond, also make the front-page.

**Vol 18. No 12  
March 24, 1992**

- Issue 12, dated March 24, shows "St. Pat's students celebrate their special day" in Chandler, and "VIA will team with tourism industry" as headlines. The VIA article explains how Rural Dignity shared ideas with transport marketing representatives to attract new travellers. Rural Dignity's Cynthia Patterson reminds VIA that the Gaspé train must remain affordable for the locals. Inside, "Pilot error caused (Carleton) 1989 crash" on Mont Saint-Joseph.

**Vol 18. No 13  
March 31, 1992**

- In issue 13, dated March 31, "Higher taxes, but no cuts" covers Gaspé's budget. In Port Daniel, "Fish plant going bankrupt" reports on the Journeaux plant which, with unpaid bills of \$1.4 million, can no longer operate, given an asset valued \$600,000. "Bylaw outrages journalists" in Gaspé because it forbids recordings. Inside, "Pin rouge sale could have strings attached", as buyers could be forced to pay back a Quebec grant.

**Vol 18. No 14  
April 7, 1992**

- In issue 14, released on April 7, "Roadwork will change the face of Port Daniel", a three-year project worth \$16 million including drinkable water and sewer, as well as "Chandler anglo students on top" in provincial exams, cover most of the front-page. "Bay Senior Home opens



The 1992 Adult Education Graduating Class  
Back: Edward Savidant, Tony Leduc; front - Elaine Alexander, Rose Baird, Linda Briand, Patsy Baird. Absent - Julie Sinnett, Holly Hackett and Ann Boulet.

on April 11" in New Richmond, "Gaspé's Chamber of Commerce voices discontent against city hall", "Murdochville access blocked by spring thaw" and "Quebec will rebuild St-Alphonse sawmill" also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 15  
April 14, 1992**

- "Doctors denounce budget cuts, new restrictions" at Maria hospital covers most of the front-page of issue 15, dated April 14. Local doctors fear that blocking outside help from Montreal and Quebec City doctors will convince Gaspesian physicians to leave the area. "SPEC's spring car care guide", "The Hopetown adult ed centre opens its doors for a day", "Bonaventure will retain vocational programs", "Chandler hospital gets high-tech nuclear medicine", "Wakeham-York festival books popular Quebec comedian" André-Philippe Gagnon and "Gaspesians of Jersey descent, part 4", by Ken Annett, also appear on page 1.

**Vol 18. No 16  
April 21, 1992**

- "Show of support for government workers" in New Carlisle and "Spy catchers in New Carlisle" headline issue 16, dated April 21. The spy catchers article tells the story of German officer Werner von Janowski's capture in November 1942. "Quebec games dates now set" in Gaspé, "Fish plants reopen days before season" in Grande Rivière and Newport, "Plans are now underway for the 1992 Gaspé Triathlon", "Low enrolment threatens only anglo-machinist program" and

"Bonaventure Equality Party names new executive" also appear on page 1.

**Vol 18. No 17  
April 28, 1992**

- "Flood forces evacuation in Matapedia" and "Gaspé hospitals fighting, losing battles to get doctors" make the front-page of issue 17, dated April 28. Nobody was injured during the April 23 flood. As for the doctors, a quota set by hospitals prevents them from recruiting general practitioners who would be interested in moving here.

**Vol 18. No 18  
May 5, 1992**

- In issue 18, dated May 5, Gaspé "Director general disputes call for tenders" explains that Henri Bernier dissociates from a town council decision rejecting 16 tenders. Mr. Bernier argues that at least three of the tenders were respecting the conditions set by the town. "At least, it's a start" informs readers that the lobster fishing season is underway. "Foul smelling water safe to drink in New Carlisle", "Workers vote in favour of strike after contract talks fail" in Gaspé and "Transport minister wasn't a welcome guest" in New Richmond because of road maintenance transfer to the municipalities" make other page 1 titles.

**Vol 18. No 19  
May 12, 1992**

- "Mass resignation at Maria hospital" headlines issue 19, dated May 12, as six of 25 general practitioners have quit due to doctor shortages. "Shi-

gawake seeks tenders for possible garbage collection", a picture-caption showing New Carlisle and Shigawake schools' teachers demonstrating, "Gaspé workers set strike date", "Gaspé split over tenders issue" and "Gerard D. Levesque gets huge party, hints at retirement", also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 20  
May 19, 1992**

- "Stowaways get refugee hearing" and Maria "Doctors resume talks" fill most of the cover of issue 20, dated May 19. The stowaways are three young Africans found in a cargo ship docking in Gaspé. Meanwhile, 14 doctors are now ready to leave Maria hospital. "Gaspé vs Rivière-du-Loup" covers an upcoming meet between citizens of both towns to determine the fittest, and "Vimy street will get sewer line" complete page 1.

**Vol 18. No 21  
May 26, 1992**

- Issue 21, dated May 26, runs three titles on page 1, "Meningitis case surfaces in Paspebiac", "Here to stay, theme of CASA's 17th AGM" and "Tree nursery forced to scale down operation". The CASA meeting shows that young anglophones want to stay in the area, but a lack of jobs forces them to leave. The nursery is New Richmond's SARGIM, forced to cut 10 of its 37 workers as the Quebec government cuts orders.

**Vol 18. No 22  
June 2, 1992**

- "Former Bert Dimock

garage owner will face trial" and "Blame it on the firemen" make the headlines of issue 22, dated June 2. The former Ford dealer is Alain Mercier, charged with the 1990 attempted bombing of his business. "The Ralliement gaspésien et madelinot turns a year-old" and "Gaspé: council puts flawed pipeline bid up for legal review" also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 23  
June 9, 1992**

- "St. Jules, Grand Cascape-dia plan to amalgamate" makes the headline of issue 23, dated June 9. The project starts with a study. A picture-caption showing two gentle dogs, in relation to a New Richmond project to adopt a bylaw banning pit bulls. "Snowbird involved in crash-landing" at Bonaventure airport, "Mayor, councillors resign seats" in Pointe-à-la-Croix over a building inspector's hiring and "Curadeau gets pipeline contract" in York also make page 1. Inside, "Reporters kicked out of (Gaspé) town meeting" covers the problem triggered by a new rule.

**Vol 18. No 24  
June 16, 1992**

- In "Anglophones leaving Gaspé", Yvette Mullin reports on a new trend, leaving the area temporarily, while waiting for better local opportunities. Also in issue 24, dated June 16, readers see "Mayor and Chamber of Commerce president lock horns once again", as Amédée Dumaresq and Évangéliste Bourdages express their conflicting views on Gaspé's interests. "Cellular photo service will reach the Gaspé", "Gaspé: more tape recorder controversy" and "New Carlisle: increasing interest in development" also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 25  
June 23, 1992**

- "World scientists gather for symposium" on mass spectrometry, a method of identifying molecules, headlines issue

Page 15

25 dated June 23, as 60 scientists meet in Gaspé. Local organizer Steven Tribble was presented with a plaque and a Texas flag, the state spearheading that topic's symposiums. "Deadlock at the (Maria) hospital" and "Investigation report eagerly awaited" regarding Mgr. Ross Hospital's management also make the cover.

**Vol 18. No 26  
June 30, 1992**

- "Farewell to high school", two photos and an article about the Bonaventure Polyvalent graduation, covers the front-page of issue 26, dated June 30. "Why doctors are quitting their jobs", an open letter signed by 20 Maria hospital resigning doctors, "Hydro Québec sets site for sub-station" in Gaspé and "Mediator named in (Maria) hospital dispute" additionally make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 27  
July 7, 1992**

- "Hey, happy birthday Canada!", and "Maria hospital loses 13 doctors despite negotiations" headline issue 27, dated July 7. The resigning doctors made their move over two months, which leaves wiggle room to talks. "Gaspé accuses the CN of driving investors out of town" through imposing exaggerated rates, and "It's graduation time for Gaspé Polyvalent's class of 1992!" are also mentioned on page 1.

**Vol 18. No 28  
July 14, 1992**

- Maria hospital "Doctors postpone departure", until the end of August, makes the headline of issue 28, dated July 14. Director general Jacques Plante's resignation influenced the doctors' decision. "July 1st baby is the country's second" presents New Carlisle's Joshua Patrick Flowers, second in Canada, which celebrates its 125th anniversary. "Murdochville: busing (students) set to start in September", "New constitutional agreement better than Meech: Gray", "Sanatorium Ross director cleared of wrong doing at the hospital" and

"Gaspé lifts its ban on tape recorders" also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 29  
July 21, 1992**

- "Carnival in New Carlisle", as Kavanagh Amusements deploys their rides and games at the Green, and "Sanatorium Ross cleared", as the regional board gets most of the blame, make the headlines of issue 29, dated July 21. "Gaspesian fishermen alliance pushes for (cod) moratorium", "Volunteer centre moving to Paspébiac West", from New Carlisle, and "Percé wants to regulate commercial signs" also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 30  
July 28, 1992**

- In issue 30, dated July 28, "Weather blamed for keeping away travellers" reports on a slow tourist season in June and early July. The situation has been improving sharply ever since. "6 youth captured after (Gaspé) rehab escape", "The life of the party", reporting on comedian André-Philippe Gagnon's show at the Wakeham-York Festival, Maria hospital "Crisis could be solved soon" and "Nine busted for drugs in Gaspé bars" also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 31  
August 4, 1992**

- "A dog-day morning", reports on Gino Poirier, a New Richmond student charged to carry out a dog survey in the town. "Competition for boat operators" in Percé, "Christmas in July at the Heritage Centre", in New Richmond, "15th Wakeham-York Festival: another success", "Malbay Festival: bigger than ever" and "An up-and-coming hockey star?", Sunny Bank's Dale Patterson, complete page 1 of issue 31, dated August 4.

**Vol 18. No 32  
August 11, 1992**

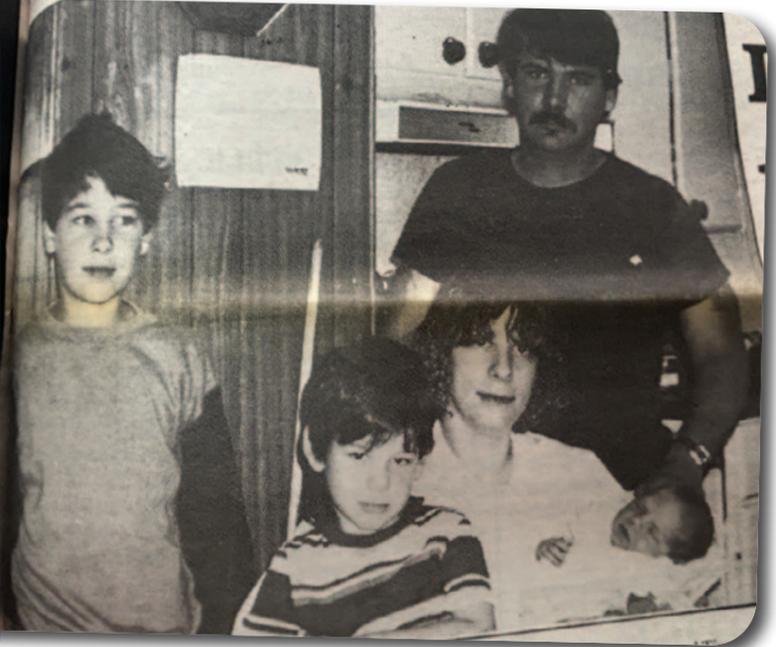
- "McWhirters reunited at last" in New Richmond, a gathering attended by 375 descendants of Gilbert and Jock McWhirter, and Gaspé "Mayor vindicates his director general", headline issue 32, dated August 11. "Gaspé manpower office reports a success-

**July 1st baby is the country's second**

Joshua Patrick Flowers is the Gaspé Coast's first baby born on Canada's 125th birthday and the second born in the country.

Timothy and April Flowers not only celebrated Canada's Birthday but also celebrated the birth of their new baby boy who was born at 12:07 on July 1st at Maria Hospital weighing a healthy 8 lbs, 5 oz.

Pictured here are Chris, T.J., April holding Joshua and Timothy. Absent from the photo is Jennifer.



ful summer", "Port Daniel's W.I. celebrates 70 years of dedication", "Candidates face-off in Hopetown's upcoming elections", Gary McRae and Lucien Paquette, and "Gaspé student wins prestigious (international) scholarship", namely Suzy MacDonald, enrolled at Stanstead College, complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 18. No 33  
August 18, 1992**

- In issue 33, dated August 18, "This train is bound for Gaspé" covers the whole front-page, to mark the August 11 introduction by VIA Rail of recently and thoroughly refurbished stainless-steel cars. The title was improvised by passengers inspired by Woody Guthrie's This train is bound for glory. Inside, "Homeless man (New Carlisle's Grancil Huntington) receives help" from citizens who are building a little home for him.

**Vol 18. No 34  
August 25, 1992**

- "First woman elected as Restigouche chief", namely Brenda Gedeon Miller, "Flower Power", featuring Guy Lafleur's August 25 visit to Gaspé, and "Students are heading back to school", make the headlines of issue 34, dated August 25. The English section of the Gaspé CEGEP registers a 20% enrollment hike.

**Vol 18. No 35  
September 1, 1992**

- "New bridge paves way for unification", reporting on the inauguration of the St. Jules and Grand Cascapedia bridge,

built in less than a year, makes the headline of issue 35, dated September 1. Citizen Elwin Carroll drives a 1921 Ford model T across the bridge, with minister Gerard-D. Levesque beside him. "SBG tackles bus safety issue", "Stowaways are sent back home", two of the three Africans found on the cargo ship in Gaspé earlier, and Gérard Poirier's "Farming during the depression" are the smaller page 1 titles.

**Vol 18. No 36  
September 8, 1992**

- "Roadwork begins soon in Escuminac", precisely in Pointe-à-la-Garde, a \$7.2 million contract excluding \$2 million to expropriate 16 premises, "Looking up at the summer that never was", showing students flying a kite, "5-year ban for deer hunting in the Gaspé", "Milk program halted in schools" due to Quebec government cuts, and "Future of Caisse Populaire uncertain" in Percé make the front-page of issue 36, dated September 8.

**Vol 18. No 37  
September 15, 1992**

- "Safe to drink, but other than that..." reports again on the colour and taste of New Carlisle's water, in issue 37, dated September 15. "Work disrupted at the Newport fish plant" due to management-triggered tensions, New Richmond's "Salle de spectacles unveils fall programming", "Gerard D. nominates new cabinet chief", "Preserving Gaspé's history" and "Gaspé: savings add up to \$4,500" are

also mentioned on page 1.

**Vol 18. No 38  
September 22, 1992**

- "Friendship from the Prairies", as Alberta students visit Bonaventure Polyvalent, "Doctors won't be quitting after all" at Maria hospital, and "Percé horrified by helicopter landing on the Rock" make diversified front-page titles in issue 38, dated September 22. Local businessman Donald Cahill photographed the Canadian Armed Forces aircraft and noted that the birds were very disturbed by the landing, as the rock is a protected bird colony. "No promises on tax allowance: Mazankowski", Gaspé "Council can't agree on taxation for Quebec Games" and "Beaudin heads Yes committee in Gaspé" make other page 1 titles.

**Vol 18. No 39  
September 29, 1992**

- "No set times for council meetings" in Gaspé, "Bonaventure airport will be upgraded to federal standards" and a picture-caption combo showing the Bay Senior Residence inauguration in New Richmond make most of the front page of issue 39, dated September 29. "Exhibition of young Gesgapegiag artists", "No committee reveals their view" (about the Charlottetown constitution referendum) and "Gaspé, Percé challenge road transfer" from Quebec government fill the cover.

From Page 15

**Vol 18. No 40  
October 6, 1992**

- “PM pitches YES in Bonaventure”, featuring Brian Mulroney’s stop to promote the Charlottetown referendum, covers most of the first page of issue 40, dated October 6. “Parents group together for quality education” in Gaspé, “Provincial affairs briefs” and “David Roy heads NO forces” in Bonaventure, also appear on page 1.

**Vol 18. No 41  
October 10, 1992**

- Gaspé’s municipal scene remains controversial, as proven by “No majority – no quorum – no meeting”, as mayor Amédée Dumaresq and the council couldn’t agree on agenda. “Look Ma, I’m using my hands” shows New Carlisle kindergarten pupils walking while holding a rope for safety purposes. “Bomb threat causes evacuation at Gaspé Cegep”, “New Richmond awaits go-ahead on streetlights, and “Louis Sexton elected president of the YES campaign” in Bonaventure make page 1 of issue 41, published on October 10.

**Vol 18. No 42  
October 17, 1992**

- “Anglophones rally behind yes” regarding the Charlottetown referendum, and “New company set to go” in Gaspé, a firm called Les Bois dormants, fill most of the front page of issue 42, dated October 17. A picture-caption shows Richard Holden, Member of the National Assembly for Westmount, who roots for the No. “York hall destroyed by fire”, Jean “Al-laire visits Gaspé to say No”

and “Getting out the Yes message” also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 43  
October 24, 1992**

- The chief of the Assembly of First Nations, “Ovide Mercredi pitches Yes to Micmacs”, and “Heads or tails: Percé flips over quarter”, as a quarter representing the Rock for Canada’s 125th anniversary is released, headline issue 43, dated October 24. “Ken McColm’s incredible journey”, about New Richmond’s blind athlete who walked across Canada, and “Hydro workers concerned about plan” that could mean job cuts in Gaspé, also make page 1. Inside, Restigouche “Family wants answer following suicide” of Joey Condo in a Montreal prison.

**Vol 18. No 44  
November 1, 1992**

- In issue 44, dated November 1, the Charlottetown referendum coverage fills the front page through five titles: “Anglophone vote tips scale in favour of Yes (in Bonaventure); Gaspé rejects Accord”, “No Committee wants judicial recount” in Bonaventure, “Real choices still ahead, No supporters warn”, “The complete results and more on the referendum” and “The rejection of a fair proposal: Darryl Gray”.

**Vol 18. No 45  
November 8, 1992**

- “Pin rouge: construction of the family train begins, but only 25 seasonal tickets sold” makes the headline of issue 45, dated November 8. A photo and caption shows a fire that destroyed Gordon Assels’ shed in New Carlisle. “TD bank will shut down” in Chandler, “Tough negotiations predicted” in New Richmond, and Gaspé “Mayor roughed-up after town meeting” also make page 1.



**Douglastown’s Stephanie Element is on her way to Pakistan.**

**Vol 18. No 46  
November 15, 1992**

- “Legion remembers fallen comrades”, a Remembrance Day report, and “Is Chandler sitting at the bottom of a volcano?”, a feature about the geological origins of the town, occupy the front-page of issue 46, dated November 15. “Council won’t budge on archery competition”, a Quebec Games controversy in Gaspé, “Groups offer plenty of support” in Gaspé, and “St. Jules/Cascapedia merger on hold” because of potential loss of grant, also make the page 1 cut.

**Vol 18. No 47  
November 22, 1992**

- “Tax increase projected” in New Richmond and “Gaspé bids farewell to Norbert Kennedy”, taxi and restaurant owner, headline

issue 47, dated November 22. “Some bright ideas”, a report on a Gaspé invention fair, “Judy Gallan resigns from school board” and “Provincial affairs make smaller front-page titles.

**Vol 18. No 48  
November 29, 1992**

- “Father, sons convicted of incest” an Avignon West case, and “Hey kids – Look who’s back”, Santa Claus’ helicopter arrival in Gaspé, headline issue 48, dated November 29. “Sandy Beach church destroyed by fire”, “Pin rouge: QPF (police) an investigation on the owner’s business practices”, “Gerard D. Levesque lends his name to a foundation” and “Taxes likely to go up in Gaspé, Percé”, complete page 1.

**Vol 18. No 49  
December 6, 1992**

- “Record drug bust had Gaspesian connection”, reports on pilot Raymond Boulanger, arrested near La Tuque in November with Columbia imported cocaine valued \$2.7 billion in his aircraft. He owned a house in Bonaventure and had worked at the local airport. “Centenarian (Ida Lecoq) honored in Percé” also headlines the front-page of issue 49, dated December 6. “Prosecutors may appeal acquittal in fatal crash trial” and “Teacher launches a lone fight against condom machines” also make page 1.

**Vol 18. No 50  
December 13, 1992**

- “I’ll see you on the dark side of the moon” is a montage made from Stéphane Giroux’ photos showing a lunar eclipse, in issue 50, dated December 13. “Father Peter Kingston says goodbye to his (Port Daniel) parishioners” and “Meningitis vaccination program targets 30,000” complete the main titles of page 1.

**Vol 18. No 51  
December 20, 1992**

- The front-page of issue 51, dated December 20, is influenced by Christmas topics. “Christmas dinner with a twist” at the New Richmond Legion, as men served the meal to the Ladies Auxiliary, and “An interview with the man in the red suit”.

## Links between 1992 and 2025–2026

● GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – As mentioned before, 1992 was a transitional year between the 1991 recession and brighter periods. Any transition year nevertheless brings uncertainty, because a fragile context could send the society back to precarity. It was the case in 1992, as the Robert Bourassa Liberal Party regime was becoming worn out, much as the Coalition Avenir Québec regime looks today.

At the federal level, the Brian Mulroney government’s armour was also showing strong signs of decay in 1992. The Charlottetown constitutional proposal, an attempt to include Quebec in the deal, unlike in 1982 under Pierre Trudeau, was defeated. Mr. Mulroney was trying to find a more popular stake than the 1988-1989 free trade agreement, for which he received flak for years, again due to uncertainty.

The current Liberal Party Mark Carney regime is for now more popular than the Progressive Conservative government of 1992, but uncertainty remains the name of the game, considering American president Donald Trump’s constant rule-breaking decisions.

There is also constitutional uncertainty at the provincial level, with a possible referendum looming if the Parti québécois is elected in October 2026. 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.

# Anti-poverty movements sing modified Christmas songs to raise awareness

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Representatives from at least half-a-dozen community groups gathered on December 16 in front of the office of Bonaventure riding Member of the National Assembly Catherine Blouin to express concern over what they describe as the limited political will to address poverty in the Gaspé Peninsula.

In addition to reading an anti-poverty manifesto, demonstrators sang modified Christmas carols to draw attention to a time of year that, for many living in poverty, rarely rhymes with happiness.

Catherine Cyr Wright, of the Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands Feminist Consultation Table, explained that the context for the poor has not improved over recent years in Quebec and in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands.

"We tried demonstrations, meetings, petitions, but we had never tried Christmas carols to shout our outrage, our indignation and our requests. We feel that the other means are never taken seriously," says Ms. Cyr Wright.

"We are really fed up. We want everybody to benefit



Photo: G. Gagné

Several anti-poverty groups were represented at the December 16 demonstration in front of Member of National Assembly Catherine Blouin's office in Carleton.

from affordable housing, to eat until they are no longer hungry, to have enough clothes to be warm during the winter and live in dignity. It is so basic that we don't know how to express it anymore. We are tired of repeating ourselves," she adds.

"The premier (François Legault of Coalition avenir Québec) really likes saying that the weekly revenue increased by 30% since 2018, but social assistance only increased by 7.7%. This is far from 30%. The consumption price index increased by 30%

and rents also increased by 30%. So, we haven't made progress in seven years," affirms Catherine Cyr Wright.

The carols were sung in front of Catherine Blouin's office, the former opponent of Québec solidaire's Catherine Cyr Wright during the 2022 electoral campaign. "We want the MNA to do her work," Ms. Cyr Wright stresses.

When asked to suggest a way to fight poverty, Ms. Cyr Wright quickly suggested to "redistribute wealth! Through increasing the income tax of rich people. Mr. Legault de-

creased the income tax of people selling a second residence, for example. He copied in that regard Mr. Carney (Canada's prime minister Mark), who took the luxurious goods' tax off, or diminished it (...) Do we find that this makes sense, when some people don't eat enough?", she concludes.

## A manifest

The manifest, presented by Camille Chiasson, of Bonaventure MRC women's group Femmes en mouvement, reads like this:

"We're here today because we're tired of not being heard. Tired of speaking, writing, demonstrating, signing petitions... and feeling like nothing changes. Tired of repeating the same demands, year after year, as if poverty, food insecurity, and the difficulty of finding housing have become normal in the Gaspé Peninsula.

It's not normal to have to constantly fight for the essentials. It's not normal to have to remind people again and again that having enough income to afford housing, food, transportation, and clothing is the bare minimum. These are rights, not privileges.

The Gaspé Peninsula is one of the most disadvantaged regions in Quebec, and yet, we feel like our realities remain invisible in Quebec City (provincial government). Decisions are made far from where we live, far from our lives, far from the very real consequences that people experience here.

If we're here today, on the eve of Christmas, it's also because this time of year highlights inequalities. While some talk about abundance, too many people have to choose between paying their rent, eating properly, or heating their homes.

We've tried every approach. Today, we've chosen songs. Not because it's festive, but because it's another way of saying we won't give up. That we refuse to be silenced. And that we will continue to mobilize until our demands are taken seriously. We're here to make ourselves heard. And we'll say it again clearly: we won't give up", points out Ms. Chiasson.

The staff of Catherine Blouin greeted the anti-poverty representatives one by one, instead of as a group, when they presented her with petitions.

## Bilingual shipbuilding training in the Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Following the construction equipment training program, the Chic-Chocs School Service Centre and the Eastern Shores School Board are joining forces once again to offer a bilingual vocational training certificate in shipbuilding starting next February.

The program aims to meet the high demand for skilled labour in the maritime sector, which is booming, thanks to the National Shipbuilding Strategy and major investments.

"We have a maritime history, particularly in Gaspé and Rivière-au-Renard. There was a need, and we wanted to help meet that need by training qualified people," says Josée Synnott, director of the Chic-Chocs School Service Centre.

Training will take place both in the classroom and on-site at various companies through partnerships with Chantier Naval Forillon in Gaspé, Rivière-au-Renard's Atelier de soudure Gilles Aspirault, and Groupe Océan via Chantier Maritime Verreault in Les Méchins. On-the-job

training will account for 20% of the program. "This will be a way for students to prepare for the job market," notes Ms. Synnott.

The certificate program will be 570 hours long and paid at a rate of up to \$25 per hour for 12 participants — six Anglophones and six Francophones. The teaching will be bilingual to allow Francophones to learn the terminology in English, and Anglophones to practise French. This is intentional and is truly a first, not only in the Gaspé Peninsula and Quebec, but also in Canada," says

Denise Simoneau, director of Eastern Shores School Board.

Students will become versatile workers capable of metalwork, painting, mechanics, plumbing, assembling finishing elements, installing electrical cables, and participating in the dry docking or relaunching of ships as needed. By the end of the training, they will have acquired 12 specific skills.

"It will train people in the shipbuilding trade. The basis of shipbuilding is versatility, and that's what this program will provide, rather than relying solely on on-the-job

training as we do now," explains Jean-David Samuel, CEO of Chantier Naval Forillon.

The training program has received \$344,000 in funding for its launch. Administrators hope it will continue beyond this initial cohort. The expected placement rate is 100% for graduates in well-paid positions.

The Navigateurs, Charlevoix, Rives-du-Saguenay and Sorel-Tracy school service centres also contributed to the development of this new vocational training certificate.

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GASPÉ CAMPUS

# Stéphane Sainte-Croix: a record marked by major challenges

NELSON SERGERIE

**GASPÉ** – The future of the Gaspé and Bonaventure ridings, which are set to disappear under the proposed new electoral map, remains a top concern for Stéphane Sainte-Croix as he reviews the fall session of the National Assembly. The Electoral Representation Commission is expected to table its final report shortly.

"If the merger proposal remains on the table, our government will have a decision to make on how to proceed," notes Mr. Sainte-Croix.

Two options are under consideration: appeal to the Supreme Court to overturn the Court of Appeal's decision striking down Bill 59, or pass a law to protect Gaspé and Bonaventure. If the latter option is chosen, the law could be passed in February to maintain at least the two ridings.

"When Bill 59 was tabled, the government and the opposition agreed to create a working committee to consider future provisions of the law to resolve the Gaspé Peninsula issue. Today, we are talking about the Gaspé Peninsula. Tomorrow, we will be talking about the Bas-Saint-Laurent, Abitibi and Côte-Nord regions, which are clearly being harmed by democracy and the one-voter-one-vote system," says



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Stéphane Sainte-Croix, Member of National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé.*

Mr. Sainte-Croix.

The issue remains that of the criteria for finding common ground in the committee formed to debate the matter.

## The rail line

The Quebec government resumed review of the repair of section 3 of the Gaspé rail line last March. Mr. Sainte-Croix is awaiting the committee's recommendations to see what options will allow the third section to be completed.

"Considering how far we've come on this issue, it would be irresponsible not to finish it," he says. Work is ongoing on nine construction sites, with

\$112 million already spent.

"It will be a legacy in the Gaspé Peninsula, and the future will prove us right. We will make wise decisions. I sincerely hope that we will receive bids within the parameters of our assessments," he says.

## Wind power

He pointed out that since the end of summer, the Quebec government has been moving forward with a potential 8,500-megawatt wind power development in eastern Quebec as part of a province-wide energy development project.

"We have colossal investments to be made in energy development in Quebec. We're talking about \$200 billion over the next 10 years. This will certainly happen across the entire territory that is potentially interesting for wind energy. In the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie regions, with the historic agreement that the Premier announced in August, it's something I'm very proud of," says the MNA.

Local content remains a challenge, as the Gaspé blade factory has not offered its products on the domestic market.

"It's not a simple matter. Players choose partners with whom they have affinities. Here in Gaspé, we have a blade factory that has its partners, its

projects, and has not submitted a bid. The reasons are theirs to keep," he says.

"Will LM be interested in positioning itself in the renewal of the industry in Quebec? We hope so. Will LM make the necessary efforts to adapt its products to the needs of turbine manufacturers? That's up to LM to decide. We won't blame LM, which has its own plans," he adds.

"It would be an interesting asset for both Quebec and the Gaspé region, with the potential for jobs that come with it," Mr. Sainte-Croix continues.

## Other issues

Innovation in fisheries, the Grande-Rivière Innovation Hub, Nergica's new building in Gaspé, housing with the December 15 announcements in Gaspé and progress in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, and the largest daycare centre in Quebec under construction in Gaspé with a capacity of 100 places are other issues noted by the MNA.

Additionally, the completion of the water supply network in La Martre, which has been without safe drinking water for 25 years, is now underway with a \$12 million budget.

"I am very happy for the people of La Martre, who de-

serve drinking water. It has not always been an easy issue because La Martre has a particular context in terms of its Indigenous archaeological search. But now it's behind us," he says.

## Last session coming up

The finalization of the electoral map will be a major focus during the 2026 winter session, the last before the October election.

"We want to resolve this issue for the benefit of the people of Gaspé. I won't hide the fact that we are heading towards a referendum election. We are starting to sharpen our skates," he says, referring to the Parti Québécois' plan to hold a referendum if it comes to power.

Mr. Sainte-Croix expressed confidence in Premier François Legault to lead the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) into the next election. Regarding his own candidacy in Gaspé or Gaspé-Bonaventure, he says he will wait to see how things develop, though he is eager to run again.

"I have a colleague in Bonaventure who wants to remain in office. We'll take it step by step, sort things out, and then make an informed decision about the future," he concludes.

# Maria Hospital marks the end of Bonaventure MNA's term

NELSON SERGERIE

**CARLETON-SUR-MER** – The Maria hospital, the electoral map, and rail rehabilitation are the main items on the agenda for Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Catherine Blouin during her last parliamentary session.

The process of building the hospital's new emergency room and intensive care unit will continue over the coming months. The change in the Minister of Health is not expected to delay the process.

The CISSS de la Gaspésie has submitted a technical study calling for the construction of a power plant valued at a minimum of \$50 million for any new expansion.

"The next step is to review the study with a budget enve-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Bonaventure MNA  
Catherine Blouin.*

lope set aside. There is an analysis by Santé Québec. It's the usual rigmarole, and then the file will be sent to the Cabinet for approval and then to the study committee, and that's

the stage that will determine everything. The timelines, budgets, and plans will all be decided there," says Catherine Blouin.

The study is expected to be launched before the next budget.

The departure of Christian Dubé, who resigned from his position as minister and from the CAQ (Coalition Avenir Québec) to sit as an independent on December 18 following an agreement with general practitioners, is respected by the MNA, who served as his parliamentary assistant for health.

"After all these years at the head of this ministry, after going through the pandemic and a multitude of crises, I can understand why he wants to step down. Christian has done a tremendous amount for Que-

bec and for health care. I can only respect his decision and feel privileged to have worked with him," said the elected official.

## Rail

There is no light at the end of the tunnel regarding an announcement on the continuation of repairs to Section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

The minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula, Amélie Dionne, and the Minister of Transport, Jonatan Julien, were made aware of the issue during their recent visit to the region.

"The Minister of Transport met with the president and director of the railway company, and I wanted this to happen so that we could talk without an

intermediary and explain the railway's situation. We discussed the commissioning of section 2 and the strategic importance of section 3 in a difficult economic context and local expertise," says the MNA.

Osisko is considering using rail to transport copper ore from Mines Gaspé in Murdochville to Rouyn-Noranda's Horne smelter.

"This is a very compelling argument, and if an entrepreneur wants to raise their hand to identify this type of need, we will of course listen and report it to the people who will make these decisions. It can only be positive," she said.

The MNA also mentioned that LM Wind Power and the Port-Daniel-Gascons cement

Cont'd on page 19

# Two major themes in Alexis Deschênes' report

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Two major issues marked the fall session report of Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes in the Ottawa Parliament.

Without a doubt, the revelations made to the Fisheries Committee about the inaction of fisheries officers have prompted serious reflection on the effectiveness of their work.

“Fundamental issues have been revealed,” notes the Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj. Several people who testified show that the officers' hands are tied.

“Several testimonies show that there is a serious problem. We have noticed that the new head of fisheries officers at the Canadian level, I think he is well-intentioned, but he is not always informed of what is going on. Upon further investigation, there seem to be guidelines that are ill-founded on a desire for simplicity or a refusal to face problems,”

notes the elected official.

“What I take away from this is that fisheries officers do not have the necessary latitude to enforce the law in a uniform and fair manner. Ultimately, DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) manages fisheries officers in the same way that the police were managed in the 1940s and 1950s during the Duplessis era. I would like to see more seriousness,” says the MP, hoping for an end to illegal fishing.

The committee will release a report with findings and recommendations. “I want recommendations to improve things, and these will be submitted to the Minister of Fisheries, and the government will have to respond. We will probably have to keep up the pressure, otherwise they will try to shelve the whole thing,” says Mr. Deschênes. The information came from both British Columbia and the Maritime provinces.

## VIA Rail

The other key issue high-

lighted was the return of passenger trains, now that the rail line has been rehabilitated to Port-Daniel-Gascons.

First, on the rail line, the MP took note of the comments made by the Member of National Assembly for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, to complete the repairs to Gaspé, given the scale of the investments made to date.

“I agree with him 100%. Approximately \$200 million have been invested between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé. There are currently nine construction sites in progress. It would be a huge scandal in terms of mismanagement of public funds not to continue the repairs,” the MP strongly emphasizes.

He hopes that the Quebec government will pick up the pace of work in 2026.

According to him, people talk about the passenger service a lot in his constituency meetings. “We hope that in 2026, we will be able to put enough pressure on VIA Rail to bring it back,” says the MP.

VIA Rail is a federal corporation.

Mr. Deschênes believes that VIA is not giving the Gaspé Peninsula enough consideration. “It's a lack of will. We need to get the attention of VIA's decision-makers, who are refusing to do what they are funded to do, which is to provide regional connections,” he adds.

VIA Rail's president and CEO Mario Péloquin was scheduled to appear before the House of Commons Transportation Committee in February but he resigned on December 16.

The goal is to bring VIA back to the Gaspé Peninsula.

“My realistic hope is to get a commitment as soon as possible and for them to take action to bring service back to Port-Daniel in 2026. Will the service return? We can always dream, and it would be worth a bottle of champagne. But what is realistic is to force VIA Rail to face its responsibilities, commit to a return, and take action to make it happen,” he

dreams.

## National perspective

Alexis Deschênes denounces Mark Carney's Liberals, who have revealed “their hypocrisy” on issues such as the tariff, trade, and climate crises, and respect for the fundamental values and differences of Quebecers.

“The failures and concessions in trade negotiations with the United States show that Mark Carney is not the saviour promised to Quebecers and our industries in the face of Donald Trump during last April's elections,” says the elected official, who also cited the abandonment of the fight against climate change in favour of oil companies and his suspension of laws in favour of an agreement with Alberta, also involving oil.

Among regional gains, Deschênes highlights the extension of the runway at Îles-de-la-Madeleine airport and additional funding for Exploramer in Haute-Gaspésie.

BLOUIN:

Cont'd from 18

plant will require rail service.

## Electoral map

Catherine Blouin remains confident that the Gaspé Peninsula will retain the ridings of Bonaventure and Gaspé.

The issue had been taken to court when elected officials from the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec challenged Bill 59, which was passed in May 2024. The court rejected their

challenge in the first instance, a decision that was overturned by the Court of Appeal, which declared its adoption by the National Assembly unconstitutional. The Quebec government is asking the Supreme Court to hear a final appeal.

“I still find it remarkable that we had a favourable first ruling and that on appeal, the decision went against 125 members of the National Assembly who speak with one voice, legitimately elected to represent all Quebecers. I find that remarkable,” says Ms. Blouin.

The MNA even discussed the issue with the premier and remains confident that both ridings will be retained.

For the moment, the exception status is only an option.

“Nothing is ruled out. We have to reach an agreement with the other political parties. That's all I can say for now,” says Ms. Blouin.

“I never comment on hypotheticals,” she added when asked if she would run in Bonaventure or Gaspé-Bonaventure if the proposed map is adopted and parliamentarians cannot agree to protect

both ridings.

## Ongoing achievements

When asked to name the three major issues affecting her riding, the MNA spontaneously mentioned the Maria beach replenishment project, a \$26 million undertaking that went smoothly.

She also highlights the start of construction on the new drinking water and sewer system in the Gascons sector of Port-Daniel-Gascons, a \$42 million project.

Cell coverage has finally

been achieved in Saint-Alphonse and Saint-Elzéar, and work is continuing for Hope and Pointe-à-la-Croix.

For the last session before the next election, the CAQ member wants to remain close to the concerns of Bonaventure voters.

In her view, the premier and CAQ leader remains the right man for the job, even though polls indicate that the government could finish behind the Parti Québécois and the Liberals, without a leader, at the next election in October 2026.

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# Experts assess the condition of the ice at the Gaspé arena

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The abrupt end of a senior hockey game on December 27 between the Corsaires de Forillon and the Vikings du Rocher due to the quality of the ice at the Gaspé arena, has brought renewed attention to the need for modern infrastructure in Gaspé.

On January 4, the Corsaires announced that they would not play any games at the Gaspé arena “either for the upcoming series or for the next few years, unless it is a last resort.”

The ice melted in two places at the end of the second period of the game, bringing the match to an end.

“In the short term, the arena is functional, but the quality of the ice is poor. This is an unusual breakdown, one that our teams are unfamiliar with. Our teams have investigated and need to bring in specialists to investigate further to find the problem and possible solutions, and if a solution exists, at what cost,” says Mayor Daniel Côté.

“We’ve known about this problem for years, we’ve been looking for a solution for years, and we’ve been turned



Photo: N. Sergerie

*According to Mayor Daniel Côté, the Gaspé arena has been hanging by a thread for several years.*

down for government funding for years. It is absolutely necessary that the incidents we experienced during the holiday season translate into public support from the organizations that are experiencing the problems. The government must consider the current situation as an obligation on its part to respond,” says Mr. Côté.

Gaspé is ready to submit its arena project—phase 1 of the multisport complex—during the next call for sports and recreation infrastructure proj-

ects scheduled for February.

In the 2026 budget tabled in December, the town allocated \$34 million in its three-year capital plan for the arena component.

The mayor bases this estimate on the new \$30 million arena that has just been inaugurated in Caraquet and the \$78 million project for two ice rinks in Sept-Îles.

“A simple arena now costs between \$30 million and \$35 million,” says the mayor.

Some critics are speaking

out, calling instead for the renovation of the current arena.

“We’re not living in a dictatorship. But we’ve studied the issue and we have overwhelming support from the public. Some people have been misinformed and think we’re still working on the multi-sport complex submitted in 2020. We are no longer working with that model,” replies Mr. Côté.

The fact remains, according to him, that an arena is essential to offer the basic sports that have long been central to the region.

“The arena is hanging by a thread, which is about to snap completely. Can a town like Gaspé survive without an arena? The answer is no,” he replied categorically.

If experts conclude that the refrigeration system is difficult or impossible to repair, a decision will have to be made.

“If the work costs \$10 million or \$15 million, yes, we’ll close the arena. I want to be clear about that,” says Mr. Côté.

In such a scenario, activities will have to be optimized with Rivière-au-Renard, but it is impossible to operate with only one arena.

“We should have been given the green light in 2023. We were 19th in the national rankings. There was enough money to cover the first 19 projects. Everything has been demonstrated. We should have been among the government’s priorities, but a different choice was made for obscure reasons,” recalls the elected official.

The mayor does not want to comment on a price cap for investing in artificially extending the current arena. “I hope the current arena can be salvaged. We don’t have a specific amount in mind. We have the time factor. We know there’s a chance we’ll get the green light this time and be able to move forward quickly, in which case the amount needed for a temporary repair will be lower. If it takes 10 years for the government to provide us with funding, the amount to be invested in repairs could be higher. \$500,000 over two years may be manageable. \$5 million over 10 or 15 years may be manageable. It all depends on the timeframe. There will be a calculation to be made,” says the mayor.

# Administrative regions in the Quebec constitution

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ — A think tank that includes former Minister for Regional Affairs Gaétan Lelièvre, is proposing that Quebec’s future constitution, being developed by the Legault government, include protections for administrative regions.

A brief to this effect has been submitted as part of public hearings on the Quebec Constitutional Act.

“This is an opportunity for my colleagues and I to bring back the issue of regional challenges and the importance of considering the regions in governance. There needs to be a place for the regions to make their voices heard by national decision-makers,” explains Mr. Lelièvre.

While municipalities and regional county municipalities (MRCs) handle some responsibilities, they cannot



Photo: N. Sergerie

*Gaétan Lelièvre announcing his departure from politics in 2018.*

address all issues.

“We abolished the Regional Conference of Elected Officials. Who is equipped to defend the regions effectively? Unfortunately, everyone wants to do their part, but without this ultimate repre-

sentation, all those in favour of centralization win at the expense of the regions,” adds the former Member of the National Assembly.

Including the principle in the constitution would establish formal recognition of the

regions without necessarily taking a position on other governance issues.

At the same time, enshrining the principle could make future changes difficult, given the challenges of amending the Canadian constitution since its 1982 repatriation. “We have evaluated this issue, but I think there is a gap. We talk about the importance of the metropolis, the capital, but we ignore the regions. There is a gap and a reality that reflects the approach of many previous governments, which is to underestimate the regions in decision-making. Decisions are made with the needs of large centres in mind,” notes the regional development consultant.

“If we look at the decisions made by the current government, no, this is not a government that meets the expectations of the regions,

without political partisanship. Creating a single regional office for three administrative regions is unheard of,” says Mr. Lelièvre, referring to the 2020 merger of the Ministry of Economy, which brought together the regions of Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Bas-Saint-Laurent, and Chaudière-Appalaches with headquarters in Rimouski.

The document was co-authored by Gaétan Lelièvre; Jean-Sébastien Barriault, former mayor of Les Méchins and former political advisor; Normand Chouinard, former senior vice-president of investments at the Fonds de Solidarité FTQ; Yvon Leclerc, former president of the Association des Centres locaux de développement (CLD) du Québec; and Pierre B. Berthelot, historian, author, and senior writer at the Fondation Lionel-Groulx.

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# 1.04% tax increase in Carleton-sur-Mer

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Carleton-sur-Mer has managed to limit the tax burden on its taxpayers to a 1.04% increase in 2026.

For an average home valued at \$252,815, the increase will amount to approximately \$30 this year.

The budget adopted on December 15 totals \$11,970,000, representing an increase of 3.44%.

Most tax rates will rise by 1%, while water and sewer rates will each increase by \$5.

The waste collection and treatment fees remain unchanged at \$270 per door. Water and wastewater treatment rates will be set at \$290 and \$330, respectively.

“We have managed to limit the increase without having to make cuts. There has been an increase in the value of buildings, which has allowed us to increase our revenues, and we have been less conservative in our projections for campground revenues. The QST (Quebec sales tax) point sharing agreement will generate an additional \$82,000,” explains Mathieu Lapointe.

Agreements reached to



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Mayor Mathieu Lapointe.

share the arena's deficit will also add \$95,000 in revenue.

The budget includes investments in the development of Mont-Saint-Joseph Regional Park, universal accessibility of municipal buildings, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, repairing bridges in Saint-Omer's Arpents Verts sector, and enhancing working environments for field teams.

Two major issues, the repair of Route 132 in the downtown area and climate change, are prompting elected

officials to rethink their approach.

“We know that the repair of Route 132 is a major project, which is why we have created a dedicated financial reserve. We have allocated \$100,000 in 2026 to help us when the work begins. We have also created a reserve for climate change. It is difficult to predict and can be very expensive. If we have an incredible expense one year, we will be able to use these funds rather than impacting the budget,” explains Mr. Lapointe.

The Town's three-year capital program calls for investments totaling \$27.3 million, including \$3.7 million in 2026.

In its 2019-2026 strategic plan, Carleton-sur-Mer set financial objectives that include limiting debt and debt servicing, increasing the surplus and working capital, and keeping tax increases to a minimum.

“In the strategic plan, we wanted to create a surplus. That has been achieved. Debt will remain stable in 2026. Property wealth is increasing. Proportionally speaking, even if the debt does not decrease, its weight will,” notes Mr. Lapointe.



Photo: Parks Canada

## An almost record-breaking season at the Battle of the Restigouche

Nelson Sergerie

POINTE-À-LA-CROIX – Nearly 11,000 visitors came to the Battle of the Restigouche National Historic Site in 2025, near Pointe-à-la-Croix.

This represents a 40% increase in attendance compared to 2024, when the site celebrated its 40th anniversary.

“For several reasons, we had great media coverage, but we also prepared a great season of activities,” says Cindy Larouche, the site's visitor experience manager, explaining the increase in attendance.

“Excluding 2017, when we celebrated Canada's 150th anniversary, this is a record,” adds Ms. Larouche.

Among the activities offered, Family Day and the conference on shipwrecks in Baie-des-Chaleurs, presented in collaboration with the Machault Historical Society, were particularly popular.

Guided tours led by staff in period costume were a great success. This interactive and immersive format continues to attract a growing number of visitors, with a 23% increase in guided tour participation compared to 2024.

During the summer, 8,531 visitors took advantage of the Strong Canada Pass to explore the Battle of the Restigouche National Historic Site for free between June 20 and September 2. The pass will return in 2026.

“This is an event that we hear too little about. We always hear about the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. The Battle of the Restigouche is one of the major events of the Seven Years' War,” says Ms. Larouche, pointing to the lack of public awareness surrounding this chapter of Canadian history.

The Seven Years' War pitted France against England. The naval Battle of the Restigouche, fought in 1760, was the last confrontation between the two powers in North America.

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# Cascapedia St Jules book room, a new chapter begins

MARY ROBERTSON

CASCAPEDIA-ST. JULES - The new Cascapedia-St. Jules Book Room was officially opened on Saturday, December 6. The project, almost a year in the making, represents not only the restoration of a local landmark but also the continuation of 35 years of sharing books, supporting literacy, and bringing the community together.

Helen McWhirter Campbell started the first Book Room in the basement of the Grand Cascapedia United Church in 1990. Helen and her husband Art Campbell, a historian, writer, notably a SPEC's Nature Corner columnist and birdwatcher, were well-known and respected members of the community. When Art retired as a professor from Bishop's University in 1983, he and Helen returned to their home in Cascapedia-St. Jules. They brought with them their love of reading and a desire to share it with the community. Helen was able to secure funding to start a small Book Room in the basement of the church, but within a few years, she realized that she needed more space. So, the library was moved to an upstairs room in the 50 Plus Building in Cascapedia-St. Jules. The concept of the Book Room was based on goodwill and the sharing of books. People donated books to share with those who were looking for a good book to read.

As the collection of books grew, there were concerns by the members of the 50 Plus Club about the weight placed on the upper floor of the building. The steep staircase leading to the room also proved challenging for many, especially seniors, and fire safety concerns added to the urgency of finding a safer, more accessible home for the community library.

The 50 Plus Club began searching for a solution, turning their attention to the abandoned Grand Cascapedia Fire Hall, a small building constructed in 1965 and located on the adjoining property. Once an essential part of the Municipality, the building had been abandoned after the Cascapedia-St. Jules' Fire Department built a new building on the St-Jules side of the river. The restoration of the old Fire Hall would not only create a new book room but also preserve a historic building in the community.



Photo: Cynthia Dow

*Darlene Sexton, Kathleen Paquet, Dorothy MacWhirter Campbell and Kim Barter chatted on December 6, the day the Book Room officially reopened.*

With this vision in mind, a project proposal was submitted to the New Horizons for Seniors Program, which is a Canadian federal grant program providing funding to organizations for projects that enhance seniors' quality of life and social inclusion. When the \$25,000 grant was approved, work began on the old building.

The renovation project was also financially supported with contributions from the Municipality of Cascapedia-St-Jules, the local 50 Plus Club, the Eagles Club, the Fall Festival, Mutual Aid, and members of the community. Russell Campbell and his wife Dorothy MacWhirter Campbell, owners of A & R Decorations and River Lodge in Cascapedia-St. Jules also supported the project with workers from their business, financial assistance, and a new computer for the book room. The local employees and volunteers spent almost a year working together to repair, renovate and transform the old hall that had been built to house the Municipality's 1960s firetruck.

On December 6, the community was invited to the new Book Room. Visitors were surprised by the beautifully furnished interior and the quality of the hardwood bookshelves that were built by Rickey Barter and now filled with hundreds of books in many different categories. Angela MacWhirter, President of the Board of Directors of the 50 Plus Club, and Kim Barter, Secretary of the Club, greeted visitors and encouraged them to join the Club's activities. They also reminded people that everyone is welcome to join the Club or attend its many activities and that they did not have to be 50 years old to be-

come a member.

Much of the success of the Book Room for the past 15 years is because of Kathleen Paquet, who is a well-known and dedicated community volunteer. She took on the unpaid role of managing the Book Room when Helen McWhirter Campbell asked for help due to health reasons. Kathleen grew up in a home that had a family library filled with books donated by her many relatives. Therefore, she developed a respect for books and became a valuable source of local and historical information. For many, the Book Room was not only a place to donate and borrow books. For most, it was also a reason to have a social visit with other readers and with Kathleen, who shared her stories and knowledge of books, and always made sure that everyone left with a good book to read.

Financial management of the new Book Room will remain under the 50 Plus Club, which is already planning future activities and events for the space. A new handcrafted wooden donation box, also made by Rickey Barter, was placed on the front desk to encourage readers to contribute to the ongoing maintenance and operation of the community library.

The new Book Room stands as a tribute to Cascapedia-St. Jules' community spirit, cooperation, and a shared commitment to keeping the Book Room open. Thanks to the vision of Helen McWhirter Campbell, the dedication of Kathleen Paquet, the financial support of many, and the work of countless volunteers, the Cascapedia-St-Jules Book Room will continue to be a gathering place for readers and book lovers of all ages.

## Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



### New beginnings: Intentions

*"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."*

C.S. Lewis

The calendars have been changed, and 2026 has begun. For many of us January 1 denotes a fresh new beginning. We reflect on the past year and look ahead for what the next 12 months will bring us. Many are optimistic about this and what lies ahead. Some may even set new goals, and along with that, we acquire a sense of hope. Hope that we can do better. Hope is good.

Some make resolutions which may involve healthier habits, particularly diets and exercise. Nothing wrong with that. Some may set new guidelines for managing money. But the truth is that not many of us follow those resolutions for the long haul.

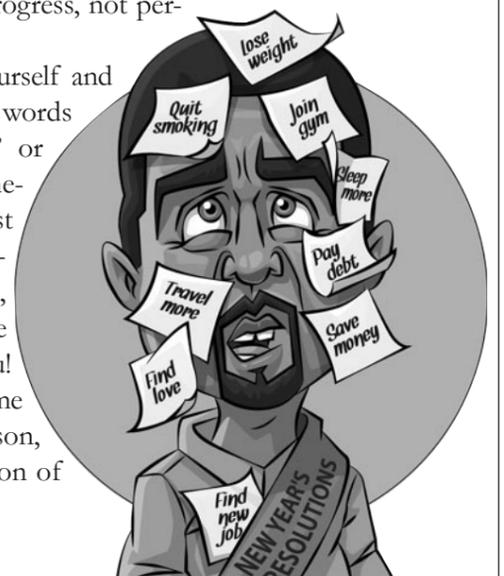
The word resolution is defined as a firm decision to accomplish something. That's difficult to achieve successfully. However, embracing a fresh start would benefit us. It gives us a new, optimistic and hopeful outlook.

Ask yourself, "What do I want this year to be and how can it be different?" Will the new year see you walking 10,000 steps a day? Embracing positivity? Cutting back on daily trips to Tim's? Reading more? Keeping in touch with friends and family? Time goes quickly so choose different habits that will make you feel happy. But, avoid resolutions because we may be setting ourselves up for failure, something that makes us feel discouraged. Perhaps we could call these new habits our intentions?

After all, intentions refer to aims or plans. This allows us to try to make some changes, but it is not as black and white as resolutions. Intentions allow us to be human. Some days we will achieve our intentions, but not every day. And that is acceptable. If we fail to accomplish some intention one day we can dust ourselves off and get back in the parade the very next day.

Another small way to make your intentions more doable is to not share your new habits with others. Keep it to yourself, particularly in the beginning. You may not have everything figured out yet, because we are, after all, a work in progress. We are looking for progress, not perfection.

Be good to yourself and avoid negative words such as "failure" or "giving up." Sometimes the biggest changes begin quietly. After all, those changes are for you, by you! You will not become a brand-new person, just a better version of you.



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# Celebrating Family Literacy Day: Why reading matters and how to make it fun

EMILY HOCQUARD

PORT-DANIEL – Family Literacy Day is more than a celebration of books; it is a reminder of the powerful role reading plays in a child’s life and the lasting impact it has on families and communities. Reading is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children, opening doors to learning, imagination, and connection that will serve them well throughout their lives.

From an early age, reading helps children develop language skills, expand their vocabulary, and improve their ability to communicate. However, literacy goes far beyond academics. Reading together builds confidence, encourages curiosity, and helps children understand the world around them. Stories allow children to explore emotions, solve problems, and see life through different perspectives. When we make time to read with our children, they are not only learning words, we are nurturing a love of learning.

One of the most important messages of Literacy Day is that reading does not need to feel like a chore. The more fun reading is, the more likely children are to embrace it and continue doing it. Creating positive experiences around books can turn even reluctant readers into eager ones. A great place to start is by letting children

choose what they read. Allowing them to follow their interests makes reading feel personal and exciting. Whether it is a picture book, comic, magazine, recipe, or even a sports article, what matters most is engagement, not perfection.

Using different voices for characters, asking questions about the story, or encouraging children to predict what might happen next are great ways to make story time interactive. Acting out scenes or drawing favourite characters afterward can also deepen their engagement and understanding.

Routine plays a key role as well. Setting aside a regular time for reading, such as before bed or after supper, helps children see reading as a natural part of everyday life. Even just five or ten minutes a day can make a meaningful difference.

Short, consistent reading moments often have a greater impact than longer, less frequent sessions.

Schools, libraries, and community organizations also play an important role in promoting literacy. Literacy Day activities help remind families that support and resources are available and that reading is something to be shared and celebrated together. Libraries offer free access to books, programs, and activities for all ages, including story hours, literacy events, and family-friendly programs that

encourage a love of reading in a welcoming environment.

Literacy also helps children succeed beyond the classroom.

Strong reading skills support learning in all subjects, from math and science to social studies and the arts. Children who read regularly are better able to follow instructions, express their ideas clearly, and think critically. These skills help them build independence and confidence as learners, which can have a lasting impact on their academic journey.

In today’s world, literacy extends beyond traditional books. Children are constantly exposed to information through screens, signs, and digital media. Helping them develop strong reading skills allows them to better understand and evaluate what they see and hear every day. Talking about what they read, whether online or in print, teaches children to ask questions, recognize reliable information, and develop healthy curiosity.

Parents and caregivers play a powerful role by simply being reading role models. When children see adults reading, whether it is a newspaper, novel, or recipe, they learn that reading is useful and enjoyable. Talking about what you are reading, sharing interesting facts, or laughing over a story sends a clear message that reading is part of everyday life.

Every child develops at

their own pace, and some may need extra support. Encouragement, patience, and praise help children feel safe and motivated, reminding us that progress matters more than speed and that every small step forward deserves recognition.

Reading together also strengthens emotional bonds. Sharing a book creates quiet moments of connection in busy lives, giving families time to slow down, laugh together, and talk about important topics in a safe and comfortable way. These shared experiences often become cherished memories. Community-wide efforts make a difference as well. Schools, volunteers, and local organizations working together can help create a culture where literacy is valued and supported. Book drives, reading challenges, and family literacy nights are just a few examples of how communities can promote reading in positive and inclusive ways.

On Literacy Day, we are reminded that reading should never be about pressure. It should spark curiosity, joy, and opportunity. By making reading fun and accessible, we help children use their imagination and build skills that will support them in school and beyond. Ultimately, Literacy Day is about planting seeds. A single story, a shared moment, or a positive experience with a book can spark a lifelong love of reading. By supporting children today, we are helping shape confident, curious, and capable adults for the future. Reading is not just a skill, it is a foundation for opportunity, understanding, and connection that benefits everyone.

As we celebrate Literacy Day, let us take time to open a book with a child, explore a new story together, and remember that every page turned is a step toward a brighter future.



**FAMILY LITERACY DAY**

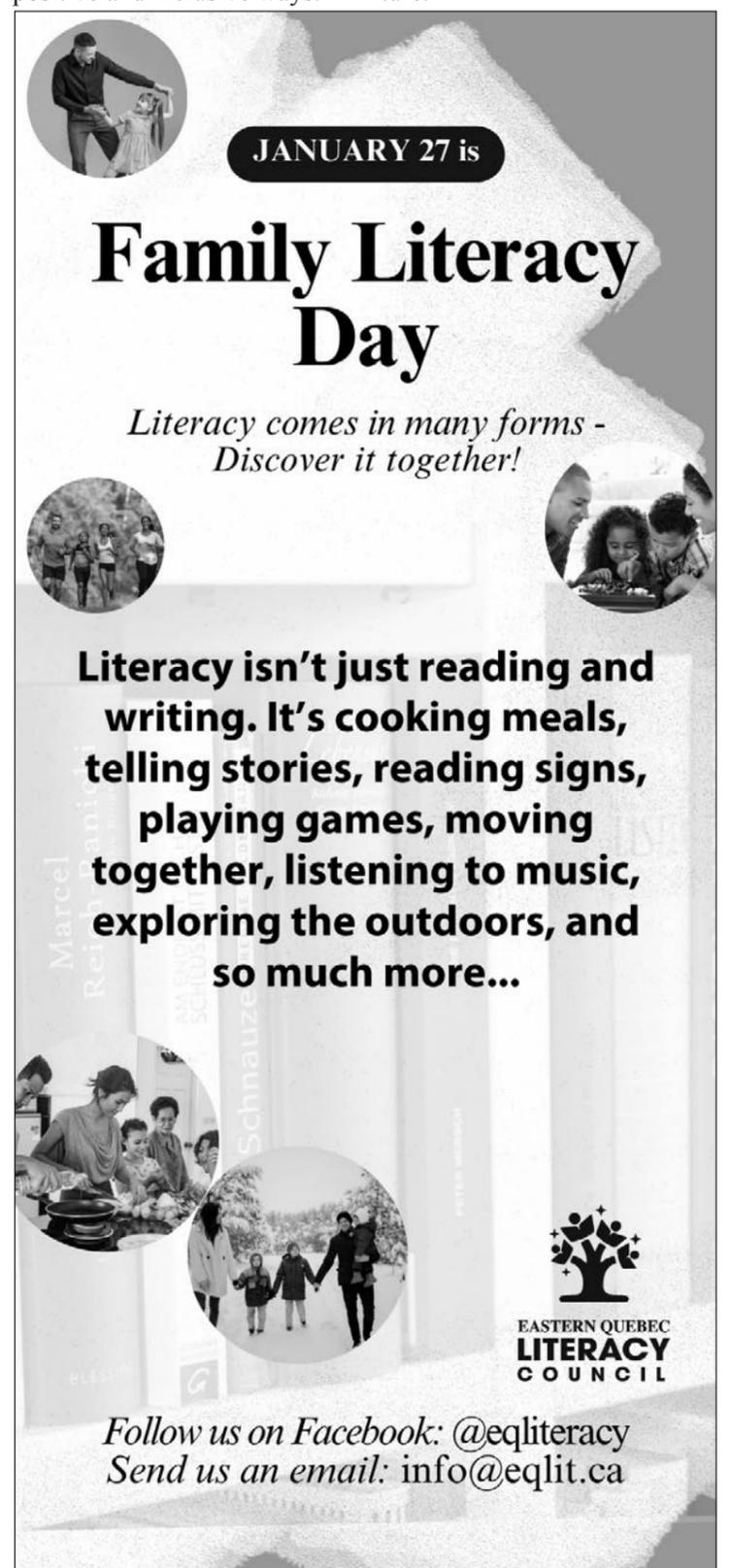
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# Announcements



## Obituaries



**HARRISON: Marion Lorene (McNair)**

November 16, 1932 – December 19, 2025

Marion Lorene (McNair) Harrison, of Cobourg, Ontario, departed this life in her 93rd year at Extendicare, Cobourg, Ontario. Marion was predeceased by her spouse of almost 63 years, Alister (Al) Gyles Harrison, March 5, 2019. Marion was also predeceased by her parents, Norman and Dorothy (Jonah) McNair of Black Cape, Quebec and her siblings, Norma Jean McNeill 2017, Helen Marilyn Webster 2023, and George Beverly McNair 2025. She is survived by brothers Gerald Milne McNair and Robert (Bob) McNair. She was a devoted mother who will be remembered and missed by her two children, Dann David Harrison (Jian Wu), Courtice, Ontario and Sharyn Lorene Harrison Wood (John Wood), Brighton, Ontario. Having been a loving “Nan” to granddaughter Stephanie Lynn Harrison (Anthony Fischer), Teeswater, Ontario, grandson Drew Daniel Harrison (Gillian Hood), Bowmanville, Ontario, and great-grandmother to Savannah Lyla Mary Fischer, and Skyler Constance Pauline Fischer, Teeswater, Ontario. She will be greatly missed by them.

Marion, the second eldest of six, was born in Black Cape (Gaspé Peninsula), Quebec, Canada, at the McNair farm owned by parents Norman and Dorothy McNair.

Marion was a graduate of Macdonald College School for Teachers (McGill University, 1951) and Trent University (1986). Having taught in Montreal and Arvida, Quebec, and in several Oshawa schools for thirty years, her last twenty-five were in Kindergarten. Marion was a member of FWTAO, the Oshawa Kindergarten Teachers' Association, and a unit president of the Durham Women's Teachers' Association. Until 2005, she enjoyed retirement years at the family's summer lakefront home on Little Lake, Brighton, Ontario, and winters at their condo in St. Petersburg, Florida since 1992. Here Marion volunteered by serving on her FL condominium's Board of Directors for many years, including two years as Board President. She was also active in many clubs in the complex organizing and participating in concerts, skits and choral groups. She was a member of St. Paul's United Church, Ajax, Ontario, and a faithful adherent of Church by the Sea, Madeira Beach, Florida and Pasadena United Methodist Church Florida.

Marion will be remembered as a caring sister, wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, great-grandmother and aunt to a few dozen nieces and nephews.

Marion will also be remembered for her willingness to help others and her ability to appreciate humour. She was a good listener, expressive at story telling and always the activist for a good cause. Generous, gracious, poised and thoughtful, she had great

leadership qualities, organizational skills and enjoyed conversations with everyone. She had a gift for writing, dancing and singing and enjoyed “fiddle music.”

Marion loved life, family, friends and children. She was such a large personality with a smile and a laugh that would fill a room. She will be very much missed. She was an amazing woman!

Friends are welcome to join the family for Memorial Visitation on Saturday, June 6, 2026 from 1:30 - 2 p.m. at Mount Lawn Funeral Home & Cemetery, 21 Garrard Road (North of Dundas Street), Whitby. A Memorial Service will follow in the Chapel at 2 p.m. Interment at Mount Lawn Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to a church or charity of your choice.



**SMOLLETT: Philip**

Mr. Philip Smollett of Campbellton, husband of the late Pauline (Dickie) Smollett, passed away peacefully at the Campbellton Regional Hospital on Friday, December 12, 2025, at the age of 100. Philip was born on May 15, 1925, in New Carlisle, Quebec, the third son of the late Dewey Smollett and the late Hilda (Ray) Smollett.

Philip proudly served overseas in the Second World War with the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. Upon his return to Canada after the war, he worked for CN Rail, first in New Carlisle and later moved to Campbellton in 1963. He retired in 1981 with 38 years of service. He was a long-time member of the Presbyterian Church, the Campbellton Curling Club, the Caledonian Society of Restigouche, the Masons, the Shriners and the Legion.

He will be sadly missed by his three children: Heather Lynn Cortes, June F. Smollett and David L. Smollett, two grandchildren: Phil Cortes (Valerie) and Eve-Lynn Smollett, two great-grandchildren: Lionel and Paul Cortes, as well as extended family members and friends.

In addition to his wife and parents, he was predeceased by his siblings and their spouses; Ray (Marian O'Meara), Gerald (Doreen Watt and Ruth Day) and Lloyd, an infant daughter, six nephews, three nieces, eight sisters-in-law and eleven brothers-in-law.

A funeral service for Mr. Smollett was held at Maher's Funeral Chapel, 64 Lansdowne Street, Campbellton on Monday, December 22, 2025 at 3 p.m. Visitation was held at the chapel from 1 p.m. until time of service. For those who wish, a donation in Philip's memory can be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

*Announcement Deadlines:*

- January 21** for the January 28 issue
- February 4** for the February 11 issue
- February 18** for February 25 issue
- March 4** for the March 11 issue
- March 18** for the March 25 issue

The family extends heartfelt thanks to the nurses from E.M.H.(Extra Mural Hospital) and to caregivers: Joyce, Meghan, Wendy, Emma, Shelby and Marie for making it possible to fulfill Phil's wish to stay at home for the past several years. Special thanks to Dr. F. Anine and the staff on Med-Surg and on Palliative for the compassionate care provided during Phil's final nine days in hospital. Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at mahercampbellton.com for the Smollett family.

Funeral arrangements were entrusted in the care of Maher's Funeral Home, Campbellton (506) 789-1699 email: maher.fh@nb.aibn.com.



## In Memory



**ASSELS: Frank**

December 17 1915 - January 9, 1999

*What I'd give if I could say,  
Hello Dad in the same old way.  
To hear his voice, and see his smile,  
To sit with him and chat for awhile.  
So if your father is still here,  
Cherish him with care.  
For you'll never know,  
The heartache until you see his empty chair.  
Love always, William Frank Assels.*

**MANN: Sheila Sullivan**

In loving memory of a loving wife, mother, grandmother and sister.

*Your memory lives forever on,  
And though our hearts still ache.  
We cherish every thought of you,  
Each moment we're awake.  
Though absent, you are ever present.*

Lovingly remembered and cherished forever in our hearts. Ken, Lori, Tanya, Chris, Mackenzie, Kaitlin and family.



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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

### 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:

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

### NEW CARLISLE:

**Bible Chapel Meetings**  
**January 14 - 18:** End Times Conference with Brian Taylor and Serge

Legère from PEI. **New Carlisle Bible Chapel** - January 15 and 17 at 7 p.m. January 18 at 2 p.m. **Bethel Bible Chapel (New Richmond)** - January 14 and 16 at 7 p.m. January 18 at 11:15 a.m. **Hope Baptist Church (Hope Town)** - January 18 at 11 a.m. All are invited to our Revelation conference! Hosted by New Carlisle Bible Chapel, for information contact Mark Gallibois at 581-233-9450. **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.

### UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN

**Sunday, January 18**  
10.m. Service  
**Sunday, January 25**  
2 p.m. Service

### UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND

**Sunday, January 18**  
10 a.m. Service  
**Sunday, January 25**  
10 a.m. Service

### PARISH OF GASPÉ

**Sunday, January 18**  
**St. Paul's, Gaspé**  
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Sunday, January 25**  
**St. Andrew's, York**  
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

### ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

**Sunday, January 18**  
**New Carlisle**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Shigawake**  
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Sunday, January 25**  
**New Carlise**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Port Daniel**  
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

thegaspespec.com

(418) 752-5400

holly.smith@globetrotter.net

## 2026 Announcement Deadlines

January 21 for the January 28 issue  
February 4 for the February 11 issue  
February 18 for the February 25 issue  
March 4 for the March 11 issue  
March 18 for the March 25 issue

### HOROSCOPES - January 11 to January 17

#### ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Minor obstacles are in your path, Aries. It's easy to get frustrated right now. Once you clear the hurdles it will be smoother sailing before long. Remain patient.

#### TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

You treasure family and friends, Taurus. This week calls for an important decision that could affect them all. It may be challenging, but you will make the right call.

#### GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Gemini, you may have to reset your priorities, as new information has come to the surface. Prioritize responsibilities so major issues are taken care of first.

#### CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

Unavoidable situations may cross your path this week, Cancer. It is important that you stay the course. Committing to tackling things head-on is the

most productive approach.

#### LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

It may be tempting to shirk your responsibilities right now, Leo. Resist that temptation. Keep your head down and keep on working. It will soon prove worth it.

#### VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, be confident and listen to your instincts, Libra. Do so before taking on any important tasks that might turn up in the days or weeks to come. A surprise might be around the corner.

#### LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Your energy will remain high this week, Libra, enabling you to come up with some innovative ideas that have true staying power. Pursue your options.

#### SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

The conditions are right for finishing an important task, Scorpio. You will be able to come up with wonderful ideas that have true staying power. Pursue your options.

#### SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, you have been working hard lately and this may result in an overactive and tired mind. You should factor in a break so you can recharge your body and spirit.

#### CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Focus on keeping your cool even if that proves difficult, Capricorn. Be the bigger person in all of your interactions. You have a strong ability to control of your emotions.

#### AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, you may feel uneasy or worried for unknown reasons. Trust your gut in this instance and steer clear of trouble should it try to get in your way this week.

#### PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Family tops your list of priorities right now, Pisces. You are likely to spend considerable time with loved ones in the days to come. Relish in all the opportunities to connect.

### HOROSCOPES - January 18 to January 24

#### ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Your attention is focused on finances and deeper connections, Aries. This is the week to speak honestly about budgets, debts or your investments with a partner.

#### TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, the spotlight is shining on your relationships, whether in love or business. Expect some meaningful conversations that define your approach going forward.

#### GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Your focus turns to work and wellness as part of your daily routine this week, Gemini. You may feel a strong urge to get more organized and capitalize on resolutions made.

#### CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

Your inner child is leading the way for the week, Cancer. Spend time on hobbies, connect with children or plan a memorable date night. Don't be afraid to take a creative risk.

#### LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, your energies are best spent on your home and family life right now. You may be dealing with a domestic project, a renovation or sorting out a matter with a relative.

#### VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Communication is your strongest tool this week, Virgo. With ideas flowing, you may be up to signing an agreement or running errands. You may want to reconnect with an old friend.

#### LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, review your income streams and spending habits to give you a clear picture for the new year. This isn't about cutting things out, but about understanding what you value.

#### SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

It is your time to shine and redefine yourself, Scorpio. With cosmic energy focused your way, you have the drive and the focus to launch a personal project or make a major change.

#### SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Take some necessary steps back for quiet work and rest, Sagittarius. This week favors wrapping up older projects so you can think more clearly. Don't overschedule yourself.

#### CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, social activities and future goals take center stage right now. It might be wise to start networking or join a new group that will open you up to different people.

#### AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

This is an important period for your career, Aquarius. If you've been mulling over making a move, now is the time to get a jump on it. Your professional achievements are getting noticed.

#### PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, finalize plans for a trip or a new pursuit, such as returning to school. Seek experiences that will broaden your horizons. Adventure beckons you this week.

# A refined non-alcoholic wine alternative from the Gaspé is launched

GILLES GAGNÉ

PERCÉ - In response to a rising demand for inclusive, wellness-focused alternatives to traditional wine, Vierge emerges as a refined solution.

Crafted in Quebec by Dawn Murray, a proud Gaspesian, Vierge is designed for discerning adults who appreciate the taste of wine, but prefer a conscious, alcohol-free option.

The range is developed by Ms. Murray, founder of Nation Beverages Inc. a fully women-led company. Inspired by her personal journey toward sobriety, and shaped by her experience with celiac disease and type 1 diabetes, she designed each Vierge beverage to be low in sugar and gluten-free, while retaining the depth, complexity and elegance of a traditional wine, just without the



Photo: Nation Beverages

*The current collection includes three offerings.*

alcohol.

“My goal was to craft a drink for people like me—those who love the flavour of wine yet choose to avoid the effects alcohol can have on our health and well-being,” says Dawn Murray.

Backed by more than 30

years of entrepreneurial involvement, both within her own family’s business, Les Caviars Émerance Inc., and through her long-standing collaboration with seafood processing firm E. Gagnon et Fils Ltée, based in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, she has

launched her own vision: a refined, alcohol-free wine alternative rooted in Quebec.

Vierge made its debut in the Gaspésie region last summer and is now expanding across Quebec. The products are available online via [loption.ca](http://loption.ca) and [upsidedrinks.ca](http://upsidedrinks.ca) and are entering a growing number of retail outlets, including fine restaurants and major grocery chains such as Metro and IGA.

“I recently signed a distribution agreement with Les Breuvages Gaspé for the Gaspésie region (...) The company is owned by a well-known Anglo-Gaspesian family,” stresses Ms. Murray, referring to the MacCallums.

Unlike simple dealcoholized wines, Vierge is crafted from the ground up with premium ingredients and intentional design. The current collection includes

three offerings: Vierge Rosé Pétillant, Vierge Blanc Pétillant and Vierge Rouge Classique, each presented in a stylish 250 ml can.

Honouring the timeless tradition of wine, Vierge pairs effortlessly with the same cuisine that complements classic wines—inviting consumers to rediscover the ritual of wine in a conscious, elegant, alcohol-free form.

Nation Beverages Inc. is a women-founded and women-led company based in Québec, committed to redefining adult beverage choices by blending sophistication, inclusivity and health-forward innovation.

The company’s inaugural portfolio, Vierge, responds to evolving consumer needs for mindful consumption without compromising on flavour or experience.

## Bell Let’s Talk encourages mental health conversations

HOLLY SMITH

NEW CARLISLE – Bell Let’s Talk Day is held every year in January and focuses on the importance of mental health across Canada. The day encourages conversations about feelings, stress and mental illness at school, at work and at home.

The initiative began in 2010, when Bell Canada launched the Bell Let’s Talk program to support mental health services and raise awareness. At the time, mental health was rarely discussed in public, even though many people were affected. The program aimed to bring the issue into everyday conversations and help fund needed services.

In its early years, donations were linked to texts, phone calls and social media activity. Today, Bell donates a set amount each year while continuing to support mental health programs. To date, more than \$150 million has been raised for mental health care, research and community services across the country.

Mental health challenges affect many Canadians, including residents of the Gaspé coast. Statistics Canada reports that one in five people in Canada will experience a mental health problem in a given year. Anxiety, sadness and stress can affect people of

all ages. In rural areas, access to services can be limited, making community awareness and support especially important.

Mental health concerns do not always look the same for everyone. Some people may feel overwhelmed or tired, while others may have trouble sleeping, concentrating or enjoying activities they once liked. These signs can be easy to miss, especially in busy households or classrooms. Knowing what to watch for can help adults and young people recognize when someone may need extra support. Early conversations and timely help can prevent small problems from becoming more serious over time.

Support can come in many forms. Teachers, parents, friends and neighbours all play a role by listening, checking in and encouraging people to seek help when needed. Small actions, such as asking how someone is doing or offering time to listen, can have a real impact.

Local schools and organizations on the Gaspé Peninsula often use this time of year to highlight available supports and remind families that help is available. Talking openly can reduce feelings of isolation and make it easier for people to reach out.

Mental health is an important part of overall well-

being. Open conversations, understanding and access to support services all help strengthen communities.

If you or someone you know is feeling very sad, anxious or overwhelmed, help is available.

### Emergency Services:

911

Call right away if someone

is in immediate danger.

### Canada Suicide Crisis

Helpline: 988

Call or text 988 anytime, day or night. Free and confidential.

### Quebec Suicide

Prevention Line:

1-866-APPELLE (277-3553)  
Available 24 hours a day,

7 days a week.

### Kids Help Phone (for children and teens):

1-800-668-6868

You can also text CONNECT to 686868 to chat with a counsellor anytime.

Talking to someone can help. Reaching out is a strong and brave step.



**"Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN) is dedicated to supporting the English-speaking communities of the Gaspé-Percé region by developing health and social services, preserving cultural heritage, and advocating for their rights.**

**VGPN works to foster collaboration with Francophone and Migmaq neighbors and ensure access to essential services while promoting economic development.**

**VGPN is also committed to opening up the conversation about mental health and illness, offering partnerships, workshops, and conferences to inform the community, answer questions, and help change societal perceptions of mental health issues."**

<p><b>Douglastown Office</b> 28 Ave St Patrick, Gaspé (418) 368-3212 Open for drop-ins Monday to Thursday 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. On Fridays, please call before stopping in.</p>	<p><b>Barchois Office:</b> 1062 Rte 132 E, Barchois (418) 360-3989 Open for drop-ins Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Closed for lunch (12-1 p.m.)</p>
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 [visiongaspe](http://visiongaspe)

# Winter blues felt across the Gaspé as long, dark season sets in

HOLLY SMITH

PORT DANIEL - Winter on the Gaspé Peninsula is known for its beauty, but it can also be long, cold and dark. As the days grow shorter and snowstorms limit travel, many residents find their mood and energy levels dropping. This seasonal change, often called the “winter blues,” affects a significant number of Canadians each year, including those living in rural regions like the Gaspé.

According to Statistics Canada and national mental health organizations, about 15 per cent of Canadians experience mild seasonal mood changes, commonly known as the winter blues. A smaller group, estimated at two to three per cent of the population, experiences Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a more serious form of depression that follows a seasonal pattern. In areas with long winters and fewer daylight hours, symptoms can feel even more pronounced.

The winter blues are largely linked to reduced sunlight. During winter months, daylight hours on the Gaspé Peninsula are short, and cloudy weather is common. Sunlight helps regulate the body’s internal clock and supports brain chemicals linked to mood and energy. When exposure to daylight drops, some people feel more tired, less motivated, and emotionally low.

Common signs of the win-

ter blues include low energy, sleeping more than usual, difficulty concentrating, and a loss of interest in activities that once felt enjoyable. Some people also notice increased cravings for comfort foods and a desire to stay indoors. While these symptoms are often mild, they can still affect daily life, especially when combined with isolation and limited winter activities.

Rural living can add extra challenges. Winter road conditions, cancelled events and long distances between communities can reduce social contact. For some residents, especially seniors or those living alone, this isolation can increase feelings of loneliness during the winter months.

Health experts say there are practical ways to cope. Spending time outdoors during daylight hours, even for a short walk, can help improve mood. Fresh air and natural light remain beneficial, even on cloudy days. Sitting near windows at home and keeping living spaces well lit can also make a difference.

Staying physically active is another important step. Activities such as walking, snowshoeing, shovelling snow or gentle stretching help release endorphins, which are chemicals in the brain that improve mood. Regular movement can also improve sleep, which is often disrupted during winter.

Maintaining a routine can

be especially helpful. Going to bed and waking up at consistent times, eating regular meals, and planning small daily goals can provide structure during a season that often feels slow and repetitive. Eating balanced meals instead of relying too heavily on comfort foods can help maintain steady energy levels.

Social connection remains key. Whether it is a phone call, a visit with a neighbour, or taking part in a local activ-

ity, staying connected can help reduce feelings of isolation. Community centres and local organizations often offer winter programs that provide opportunities to connect, even during colder months.

Statistics Canada reports that nearly one in five Canadians aged 15 and older experiences a mental health condition in any given year, showing that mental health challenges are common and affect people in all regions.

For those whose symptoms last several weeks, become overwhelming, or interfere with work, school or daily responsibilities, reaching out for professional help is encouraged.

Winter on the Gaspé Peninsula can feel long, but it is not endless. With awareness, support and small daily steps, many residents find ways to manage the winter blues and protect their mental well-being until brighter days return.



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**Supports Mental Health in our Community.**

**This Bell Let’s Talk Day, let’s speak openly, listen, and support one another.**

**We are here for you – for resources, guidance, and support!**



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