

\$145,676 in fines for St. Marys Cement

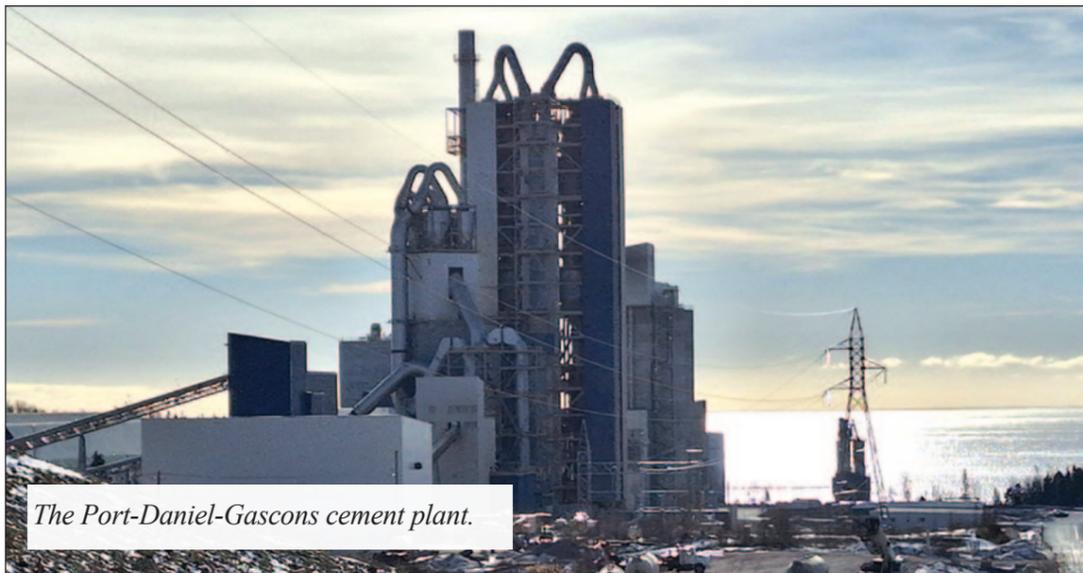
NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

SAINTE-ANNE-DESMONTS - St. Marys Cement in Port-Daniel-Gascons has been ordered to pay \$145,676 after being found guilty on 7 October of nine violations of the Environment Quality Act.

The Department of the Environment states that on October 16, 18 and 20, 2020, and August 4, 8, and 10, 2021, the company failed to comply with the air emission standards set out in its ministerial authorization at its Port-Daniel-Gascons plant. Emissions from the plant's three stacks exceeded various particle emission standards.

In addition, on November 25, 2020, March 24, 2021 and October 4, 2021, the company discharged suspended solids in its final effluent that exceeded the prescribed standard of less than 30 milligrams per litre.

St. Marys Cement was fined a total of \$90,000, in addition to applicable costs and



The Port-Daniel-Gascons cement plant.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

contributions of \$55,676, for a total of \$145,676.

Order against the cement plant in 2022

In September 2022, the Ministry issued an order to St. Marys Cement to take the necessary measures to prevent any recurrence of these violations. A notice had been issued in June of the same year. The company has since carried out the required correc-

tions.

The order was intended to stop the release of contaminants into the environment. Dust emission problems that emerged in the summer of 2020 recurred sporadically, prompting the ministry to consider all remedies available to address the situation.

The order was issued after St. Marys was served with a prior notice on June 30, 2022.

After analysing the comments submitted by the com-

pany in August of the same year, the ministry concluded that they did not alter the basis for the order. At the time, the company wrote to the ministry that investments were planned to improve its operations and environmental performance.

St. Marys Cement also mentioned that voltage fluctuations in the Hydro-Québec power line supplying the plant had led to an uncontrolled shutdown of the air purifica-

tion equipment, generating uncontrolled fugitive dust emissions and the recent end of the start-up period. In addition, the company claimed to have implemented several improvements and control measures since the summer of 2020 to reduce the risk of incidents.

These responses did not convince the Ministry, which asked the cement plant to cease, upon notification of the order, the release of dust and other air contaminants in excess of the standards established in the operating permit, in addition to requesting the opinion of an independent expert to assess the proper functioning of all air purification equipment and propose measures and operating procedures to permanently stop the emission of dust and other atmospheric contaminants beyond the standards established in the operating permit.

In its order, the Ministry noted that since 2019, several inspections had revealed various breaches relating to dust emissions into the atmosphere

A field for all in New Carlisle: \$500,000 goal set for the community share

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The Eastern Shores School Board officially launched “A field for all” funding initiative on January 22 in the gymnasium of New Carlisle’s Baie-des-Chaleurs Regional School, the new facility whose construction is nearing completion.

A Field for All aims to equip the new school with sports fields that will be used primarily by students, but will also be accessible to the community outside school hours.

“The project needs \$1.3 million and we are receiving \$805,000 from the Quebec government. It leaves \$500,000 to find in the community,” explains project development officer, Marjorie McRae on January 22.

The field will encompass a standard soccer field, which



New Carlisle's Baie-des-Chaleurs Regional School is near completion.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

can be divided into several smaller fields for younger players, a basketball court, two tennis courts that can also accommodate two pickleball courts, a softball diamond and a walking/jogging track around the soccer field.

Ms. McRae, who has been

working full-time on the fundraising campaign since early December, said nearly half of the target has already been reached.

“We have \$245,125 of secured commitments. People can donate through using a QR code. I must say that 2% of

your donations will go to administration fees,” she adds.

A good number of attendees responded immediately following the public presentation on January 22 by making donations on the spot. These contributions were not included in the \$245,125 total announced

that evening.

There are five categories of donors. The top four categories are bronze, silver, gold and platinum, the latter reserved for donations of \$25,000 or more.

Three donors have already joined the platinum category, Mouvement Desjardins, the MRC of Bonaventure and Horseshoe Hill Construction (HHC), the Canada-wide company founded by Gordon Tozer, originally from New Carlisle. The exact amounts of the platinum donations were not revealed on January 22, but simple mathematical deductions lead to believe that at least one of them is significantly higher than \$25,000.

While explaining some technical aspects of A field for all, Eastern Shores School Board project manager Trevor

Reactions in Gaspésie to François Legault's departure

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Premier François Legault's resignation has sparked reactions across Gaspésie, with several stakeholders praising his contribution to the region's development.

The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) leader made the unexpected announcement on January 14. His resignation will take effect once a successor is selected.

Despite controversies during his tenure, including the Northvolt, SAAQclie, and the reform of doctors' compensation, Mr. Legault said he was proud of his party's accomplishments over its seven years in power.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté highlighted the outgoing premier's pragmatic approach. The two men worked closely together when Mr. Côté served as president of the Union of Quebec Municipalities.

Mr. Côté cited investments in rail infrastructure, the allocation of a percentage point of the Quebec sales tax to municipalities, and Mr. Legault's shift in position on wind power.

"He starts with an idea, but he is able to adjust it based on the situation rather than following dogma. That's what I appreciated. If there's a problem, we find a solution. If I'm wrong, I adjust. That's what I appreciated about this guy in particular," says Mr. Côté.

The president of the Table des préfets de la Gaspésie, Mathieu Lapointe, adds that premier was deeply committed to the region's development.

"The railway project was a legacy he wanted to leave behind. Hundreds of millions of dollars were invested. There is still work to be done on section 3. The premier believed in it. We are losing a good supporter for our region," says Mr. Lapointe.

"It is with a heavy heart that I welcome our premier's decision," Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Catherine Blouin wrote on social media.

"Mr. Legault, it has been



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

François Legault in Gaspésie last August for an announcement on wind power development in the region.

an honour to walk alongside the great man that you are over the past few years. I would also like to thank you for the trust you have placed in me. I have always felt your attentiveness and support for the Gaspé Peninsula, and I am grateful to you for that," wrote the CAQ MNA, who was elected in 2022.

"I know how deeply you love Quebec, and it is this love in particular that has marked your hard work for the good of Quebecers throughout your career," writes the elected official.

Stéphane Sainte-Croix, the MNA for Gaspé, also reacted on January 18. "Working alongside him has been a real privilege and a constant source of inspiration for me. I have learned a lot from his approach to issues, his ability to make difficult decisions, and his commitment to the public interest," the elected official notes on social media.

"I have deep respect for his accomplishments and express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for the trust he has placed in me," he adds, wishing Mr. Legault continued determination in pursuing his convictions.

Support for Jolin-Barrette

Stéphane Sainte-Croix announces his support for Quebec Minister of Justice and Attorney General Simon

Jolin-Barrette, should he officially enter the leadership race. He has chosen him over Minister of the Economy Christine Fréchette, who is also receiving significant backing.

"Simon is a man of conviction, ideas, and action. His commitment to recognizing and defending Quebec's interests is exemplary. Think of the modernization of the courts, the reform of family law, the protection of the French language, and the establishment of secularism, for example. These are concrete actions that have a direct impact on everyday people," Mr. Sainte-Croix writes on social media.

"It is therefore without reservation and with great enthusiasm that I invite my colleague to join the upcoming race and thus demonstrate to all Quebec citizens your qualities of leadership, unity, and pragmatism," notes the Gaspé MNA

Mr. Sainte-Croix says he became involved in politics with the CAQ to help build an alternative to the political options offered by the Liberals and sovereigntists over the past 50 years.

"I support a nationalist political voice within the Canadian federation, and I am fully convinced that Simon Jolin-Barrette perfectly embodies this vision of a strong Quebec. It would be a great privilege to serve under your leadership," he concludes.



The rockslide that occurred on August 16 at Henderson Beach.

Photo: Allen Doug Shaw

Henderson Beach: Town considers its options

Nelson Sergerie

NEW RICHMOND – The Town of New Richmond will consider its options to improve safety at Henderson Beach before the end of the spring, following a rockslide on August 16 that claimed one life.

The coroner who investigated the death of Clément Ménard did not issue any recommendations regarding the future of the site.

"There is no recommendation to close the beach. The council will have to discuss the issue in the coming weeks to see how we can make the beach accessible," says Mayor Éric Dubé.

The site was closed to the public following this tragic event.

"All the signage was compliant. When you reach the bottom of the stairs on the east side, we will put up larger signs telling people to go to the west side for safety reasons," the mayor explains, outlining one possible measure.

The 86-year-old man from Pike River in the Eastern Townships was found unconscious and lying face down on the beach, with rocks on and around him, by other visitors to the site.

The coroner noted that the police investigation confirmed the presence of warning signs at the site entrance advising visitors of the risk of rockfalls along the access route to the beach.

According to the conclusion of Coroner Donald Nicole's investigation, made public before Christmas, Mr. Ménard was near the water, about eight metres from the cliff, when the rockfall occurred and a heavy rock struck the victim's head.

A geotechnical study prepared by the Department of Transportation following the event showed that the rockfall came from the lower part of the cliff and that a mass of rock approximately seven to eight metres in size had fallen toward the beach, leaving debris approximately 11 metres toward the shoreline.

The study also noted several minor rockfalls in recent years and identified cracks and signs of instability at the northwestern end of the cliff, located about 260 metres southeast of the stairway leading to the beach.

The report concluded that stabilizing the cliff face is not recommended due to the ongoing effects of erosion, the friable nature of the rock, and the site's structural geology.

However, the report stated that access could be permitted in areas where the cliff is more stable, even though rockfalls will continue to occur in the future, a recommendation the Town of New Richmond is now examining.

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Police Report

Deadly collision in Saint-Siméon

A head-on collision that occurred on the evening of January 18 in Saint-Siméon claimed the life of a 46-year-old woman from Gaspé. "The Bonaventure MRC officers were called around 7:30 p.m. to intervene at the site of a collision that took place on Route 132, near the intersection of Roussel street. Resuscitation manoeuvres were carried out and the lady was rushed to the hospital, where she was pronounced dead. The second driver, a man, was also transferred to the hospital. He sustained serious injuries that are not life-threatening," explains Sûreté du Québec communication officer Frédéric Deshaies. A technician specialized in accident reconstitution attended the accident scene. "His report is not available yet. It is true that the weather conditions were difficult at the time of the accident," concludes officer Deshaies.

Holly Stanley to remain in prison

The Parole Board has refused to grant early release to Holly Stanley after she served one-sixth of her sentence. In September, the 45-year-old woman from Gaspé was sentenced to one year in prison for forging a will and stealing \$235,000 between 2017 and 2018 from an estate she was managing. The board notes that the embezzled money was used for travel, renovations, and personal expenses over a three-year period. In its decision, the board concludes that any form of conditional release would be premature at this stage. While Ms. Stanley acknowledges some responsibility for the offences, she disputes her central role in the case. According to CHNC, the board is not convinced that her interest in participating in various programs is motivated by anything other than a desire to secure early release from detention, a period she describes as difficult.

Bruno-Pierre Godbout admits guilt on six counts

On January 20 at the Percé courthouse, Bruno-Pierre Godbout pleaded guilty to six of the 12 charges previously laid against him for acts of violence involving three women. The former Chandler councillor admitted to two counts of assault, one count of assault with a weapon, two counts of criminal harassment and one count of sexual assault. The Crown withdrew charges on similar counts and unlawful confinement due to insufficient evidence. The alleged incidents occurred over a period of approximately twelve years. A presentence report was requested for sentencing submissions, which are scheduled

for March 17 before judge Richard Côté. The case concerning fraud under \$5,000 related to false expense reimbursements at the expense of the Town of Chandler was also mentioned in court. Mr. Godbout remains in custody.

Pascal Bergeron's trial postponed until April 17

The trial of Pascal Bergeron, 44, will take place on April 21 and is expected to last approximately seven hours. The environmental activist, a well-known media figure faces charges of sexual assault, based on a complaint filed in December 2024 by a woman, for acts that allegedly occurred between September 1, 2022, and September 1, 2023, in Nouvelle or elsewhere in Quebec. Mr. Bergeron is also suspected of criminal harassment against the same victim, based on a complaint filed in May 2025. During a January 12 hearing, held in the absence of the accused, the defence requested a postponement to April 17 to review its options.

Percé's Cape Cove man charged with attempted murder in Paspébiac

A 39-year-old man from Cap Cove, near Percé, Bryan Lafontaine, is facing charges of attempted murder following a January 18 incident in an apartment building in Paspébiac. "The incident occurred around 2 p.m. The accused left the building. He was arrested hours later by the police, while driving his vehicle," says Sûreté du Québec spokesperson Frédéric Deshaies. He adds that the police rarely provide detailed information in such cases.

New Carlisle courthouse Crown prosecutor Maxime Rocheville Paradis confirms that several charges were laid against the accused on January 19. "He faces charges of attempted murder, as the victim sustained injuries to the neck following the attack, break and enter, forcible confinement, assault with a weapon, aggravated assault, breach of condition, as he was supposed to stay in the judicial district of Gaspé and refrain from communicating with the victim, and a second breach of condition as he was not supposed to be within a distance of 50 metres from her," explains prosecutor Rocheville Paradis.

As the SPEC was reaching its deadline, Bryan Lafontaine remained in custody and was expected to return to court on the afternoon of January 22 for a bail hearing. However, Mr. Rocheville Paradis anticipated a postponement. "He is still looking for a lawyer and the appearance will likely be delayed until next week (the last week of January). I will strongly oppose his release," he assures.

Coroner rules Daniel Fontaine's death accidental

NELSON SERGERIE

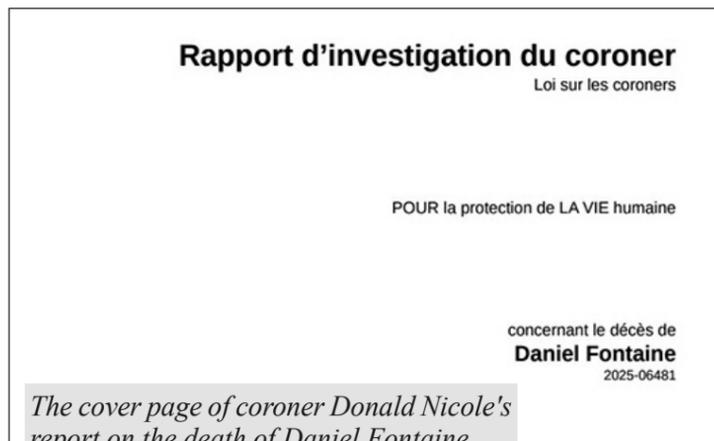
RIVIÈRE-À-CLAUDE – The coroner investigating the Rivière-à-Claude death of Daniel Fontaine, 72, of Racine in the Eastern Townships, last August, has concluded that it was an accidental death. Rivière-à-Claude is located in the Haute-Gaspésie MRC.

The victim was found dead at around 10:45 p.m. on the ground on a steep slope of his wooded property on Chemin Rioux.

Shortly before the tragedy, the man was operating an excavator when the vehicle fell several metres and rolled over several times. The victim was ejected from the machine and was pronounced dead at the hospital.

Coroner Donald Nicole states in his report, released on January 8, that in June 2025, Mr. Fontaine had begun work on a forest road on a steep slope to reach the top of a mountain.

However, on August 18, the man, who had decades of experience driving and operating



The cover page of coroner Donald Nicole's report on the death of Daniel Fontaine.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

heavy machinery, including crawler excavators, did not return to the house he was renting. A friend went to the site and located the excavator, but not the victim.

Rescue workers found him dead about 50 metres from where he had been excavating and about 75 metres from where the excavator was located.

"An examination of the site revealed that the excavator had metal tracks with very little traction on rocky surfaces, such as those found at the work site. In addition, it is also likely that the excavator was destabilized

during a maneuver on a surface that was too small or of insufficient soil thickness on the rock to support the weight of the excavator," the coroner writes in his report.

"All of the evidence gathered suggests that Mr. Fontaine died from injuries sustained when he was ejected from his tracked excavator, which became unstable on a rocky surface and/or unstable ground and overturned on a steep slope," he notes.

"The victim died of multiple injuries sustained when his excavator overturned on a steep slope," concludes the coroner,



Photo: Mont Carleton Snowmobile Club

The Mont Carleton Snowmobile Club's relay stations.

Vandalism at snowmobile shelters

Nelson Sergerie

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The Mont Carleton Snowmobile Club is deploring acts of vandalism that have occurred at its facilities in recent weeks.

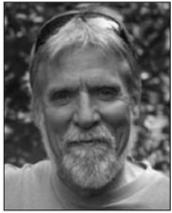
Several shelters in the Brébeuf sector have been targeted. Items stolen include firewood, solar panels and ladders.

"The disappearance of firewood began a few years ago, especially during the hunting season. The wood was donated free of charge by landowners, and again this year, wood has disappeared. A securely installed ladder was cut down," says club president Denis Henry.

Mr. Henry adds that the situation reflects a lack of civic-mindedness. "Many people go to the shelters to cool off or warm up. Rubbish is left behind. We ask snowmobilers to show a little respect for our volunteers who maintain and clean these areas," says Mr. Henry.

The shelters are equipped with stoves, firewood and matches to allow users to warm up or wait for assistance if needed. "We always ask people to behave as they would in their own homes," suggests the president.

According to Mr. Henry, similar incidents are being reported by other snowmobile clubs as well.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

François Legault's departure might save the CAQ

Quebec Premier François Legault's announcement that he will withdraw from politics as soon as the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) finds a new leader in April may well save the party he founded from the embarrassment of winning only a handful of seats, if any, in the October 5 election.

In fact, according to most surveys conducted since the spring of 2025, the CAQ was potentially in a position of losing in all of the Quebec ridings. The party had won 90 seats in October 2022.

Despite vowing to lead the party to a third general election victory until his resignation announcement on January 14, François Legault indicated then that he had been reflecting about his political future for several months. He could see that people wanted change.

Quebecers want change for many reasons. They have not elected three consecutive same-party governments since Maurice Duplessis's last victory in 1956, that's 70 years ago. Politics have changed a lot since then.

A former sovereigntist who decided to give a chance to federalism, François Legault, heavily benefited from the pandemic when he won the 2022 election, despite Quebec's relatively poor record in managing the effects of the Covid-19 crisis. He was the reassuring, fatherly image, addressing Quebecers daily for months after the coronavirus outbreak in March 2020. The little room left for opposition leaders gave him an edge when the time came to vote in October 2022.

A successful businessman who founded Air Transat in the mid-1980s before entering politics in 1998 for the Parti Québécois (PQ), François Legault wanted Quebec to reach Ontario's level of wealth, individually and collectively, before and after winning his first election in 2018.

While Quebec has made forward strides economically under his tenure, and has effectively narrowed the gap with Ontario, his two terms in power were also marred by failures. The Northvolt situation being the most conspicuous.

The bankruptcy of the Swedish firm left a \$200-million hole in the accounts of the Caisse de dépôt et

placement du Québec, which manages Quebecers' collective pension funds, and \$270 million in public funds committed by the government itself, for a total of \$470 million in potential losses. As of now, \$198 million has been recovered, and government officials still hope to recoup additional funds from the Northvolt land.

The Quebec government also lost a minimum of \$145 million in Lion Électrique, another vehicle battery manufacturer that went bankrupt. The sector that was supposed to boost the province's economy turned into a nightmare.

Emphasis on secularism no longer works

During his two terms, François Legault put a lot of emphasis on secularism and identity politics. He often used these subjects to gain momentum as it is not difficult to convince a significant cross-section of Quebec francophones that their language is endangered, especially in Montreal.

That push toward secularism led to the banning of religious symbols for certain public employees, including teachers.

This strategy worked largely because the CAQ held majorities at the National Assembly after 2018. However, secularism is not a priority for most Quebecers, especially when the health and education systems are in crisis, as they currently are.

In that regard, François Legault was about to make the same mistake made by Pauline Marois in March 2014, when she launched an electoral campaign on the basis that close to 70% of Quebecers favoured a charter of values. However, the same surveys were revealing that only 6% of Quebecers considered that charter important. Ms. Marois lost big time in April of the same year.

Health and education in poor state

Also on the down side of Mr. Legault's record, there are the health and education systems, as we just mentioned. Throughout his two terms, he committed to ensuring that all Quebecers would have access to a family doctor. He also pointed out on numerous occasions that education was his priority. After all, he once served as Quebec's Minister of Education during his PQ years.

The reality is different. In the health sector, as nurses' union leader Julie Bouchard remarked on January 14, "overcrowded emergency rooms, exhausted staff and dilapidated infrastructure were not accidents, but the result of reactive management and an absence

of consistent planning."

About the same could be said in education. Mr. Legault frequently challenged unions, suggesting that nurses, doctors and teachers were at the root of many of the system's problems during his second term. He was wrong. School years start with hundreds of classrooms without qualified teachers, notably because exhausted staff leave after a few semesters in the profession, and classrooms that are part of dilapidated buildings, where mold is often the norm.

François Legault seemed to forget that while economic activities fund health and education, those two sectors also fuel the economy when people are healthy and properly trained.

Indigenous affairs and transportation

The premier's record in Indigenous affairs is close to embarrassing, although minister Yan Lafrenière is appreciated by a wide range of leaders. Mr. Legault's failure to recognize the existence of systemic racism proved him wrong. It was and remains a symbol of his stubbornness.

That same stubbornness in some issues erased the times when he recognized that he was wrong, like in February 2022 when he finally admitted that wind energy was useful and not a waste of money.

Transportation wise, the obstinacy he displayed regarding the Quebec City-Lévis third link initiative will cost his party tens of seats, come October 5. Studies have repeatedly shown that roughly 10,000 vehicles would use the infrastructure, whose cost will exceed \$10 billion—and likely double that amount. Those funds should be invested elsewhere.

Regionally, he leaves unfinished business in the Matapédia-Gaspé railroad file, a project that should have been removed from the control of Quebec's Infrastructure Society, the body managing major projects in the province. The refurbishment of the railway is a set of small and medium-sized projects that should have been handled regionally by Transports Québec, like our roads. It would be completed by now instead of being sent back to the study stage.

On the positive side, what François Legault accomplished politically, founding a party from close to scratch, as Action démocratique du Québec was going nowhere in 2011, and bringing it through two electoral defeats, in 2012 and 2014, before winning twice, will remain a notable feat in Quebec's political history.

No one doubts François Legault's love for Quebec. It is too bad that he was not a man of thoroughness. Too often, he opted for simplistic solutions, falling short of delivering durable ones.

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“Remarkable growth” in 2025 supports budget of 2026 in New Richmond

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND — On December 15, the town council of New Richmond adopted a 2026 budget of \$10,242,659. In his speech, mayor Éric Dubé pointed out that the balanced budget aims to maintain the quality of municipal services, protect citizens' ability to pay, and support the investments needed for the community's continued development.

The municipality experienced notable growth in property values in 2025, with over \$8 million in added value. This growth is largely due to the boom in the residential sector: 72 new rental units were built in recent months, in addition to the 40 social housing units currently under construction on Des Cèdres street. In total, more than 110 housing units will have been added in 24 months, bringing New Richmond's property value to just over half a billion dollars. It was \$492.7 million a year ago.

“This budget reflects our commitment to managing finances responsibly, taking into account the realities of our citizens. With the growth our town is experiencing, it is essential to plan wisely to continue developing our community at the right pace,” stressed Éric Dubé

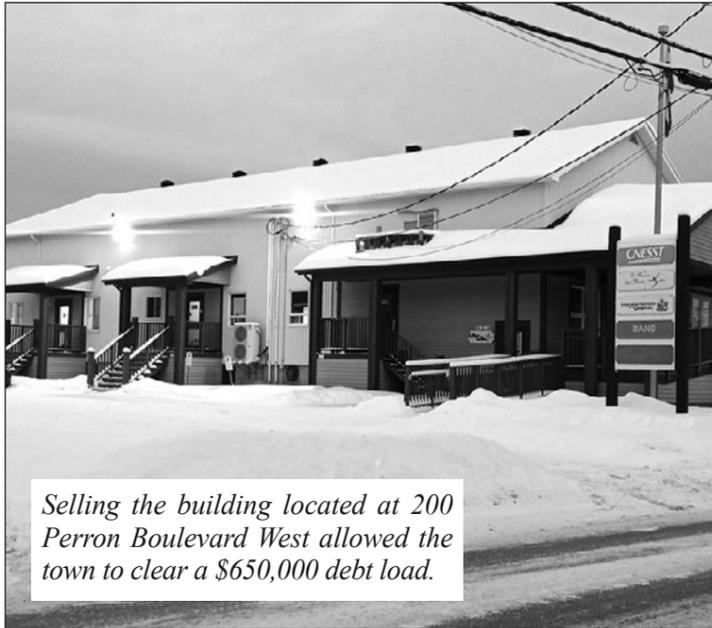
Revenues

The majority of a municipality's revenue comes from property taxes and applicable fees.

“It's the very nature of municipal taxation in Quebec! For us, this proportion is 62.73% of a total budget of \$10,242,659. The Town is benefiting from a significant increase in our property values for 2026, with over \$8,000,000 in wealth created by 2025. You are witnessing the results achieved in recent months. Following massive investments in commercial and industrial development, 2025 saw a surge in housing construction within our territory,” added the mayor.

The Town of New Richmond made a strategic decision in 2025. Following a public tender, it sold the building located at 200 Perron Boulevard West, which housed, among other things, the offices of the CNESST (Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail).

“The revenue generated by this transaction, along with the use of our accumulated surplus, allowed us to repay the entire



Selling the building located at 200 Perron Boulevard West allowed the town to clear a \$650,000 debt load.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

debt of the New Richmond Economic Development Corporation to its financial institution. Thus, nearly \$650,000 of debt guaranteed by the Town, which we had been repaying for several years, will have been repaid by 2025,” explained mayor Dubé.

Wind energy revenues

For years now, the wind energy industry has generated revenues for New Richmond's municipal administration

“Many jobs have also been created, but from a municipal perspective, the creation of the Gaspésie-Magdalen Islands Energy Board is certainly an unparalleled wealth-creation tool. By investing in wind farms through this intermunicipal board, we obtain very attractive returns. Just over \$150,000 will be collected from this organization in 2026. Add to that the royalties from the New Richmond wind farm, and we exceed a quarter of a million dollars in wind energy royalties for next year, reaching \$258,257,” underlined Mr. Dubé.

“These revenues have been growing steadily for several years, amounting to less than \$83,000 in 2017. Wind energy royalties will have more than tripled in just eight years! Moreover, these royalties should theoretically increase in the coming years with the commissioning of new wind farms in which the Energy Board will have invested. This is a valuable development tool, and these extraordinary revenues will have allowed us to invest heavily in the renovation of our sports and leisure facilities,” added the mayor.

Expenses

In his budget speech, Éric

this figure. However, as you will see, this debt is under control; we are repaying it, and it was planned. It's important to note that we have completed the reconstruction of a significant number of infrastructures in our territory over the past few years. Having a high debt without having completed these major projects would be a shame, but in our case, we can rather say mission accomplished.

The Town of New Richmond supported Pin Rouge for many years through taking care of the regional park credit line, which meant an annual contribution of \$175,000. For three years until the beginning of 2025, that amount was only paying the interest of the credit line, instead of lowering the capital owed by Pin rouge.

The debt of the facility, which stood at \$2.9 million a year ago, is now paid through a municipal loan, characterized by a significantly lower interest rate than a credit line. The current payments are now about equally shared between interest and capital.

Highlights

The total budget stands at \$10,242,659, an increase of 3.5% compared to 2025.

For an average home assessed at \$219,750, the impact represents an annual increase

of \$49.65, or 1.74%, a level lower than current inflation.

Reduction in waste collection and landfill costs of \$50,000, a first in over 15 years, resulting in savings of \$22.08 per home;

Water and sewer: the budget increases by 14% due to rising costs associated with maintaining an aging network. To maintain service quality and plan necessary work, a \$10 adjustment is being applied to the rate, increasing it from \$110 to \$120 per residence.

Three-year capital investment plan 2026-2028

The three-year capital investment program includes investments totaling \$12.25 million between 2026 and 2028. Among the major projects planned are: Reconstruction of Range Road 3 West; Development of a new residential sector to support population growth; Rehabilitation of water and sewer lines on De Lesseps Street; Construction of a permanent structure for the Public Market and the boat rental kiosk at Pointe-Taylor Park; Planned work at the Desjardins Regional Concert Hall, including improvements to ventilation and dressing rooms.

These projects will be completed if the town administration obtains the necessary funding.

Quebec government supports New Richmond in rebuilding Range 3 West

Nelson Sergerie

NEW RICHMOND – The Quebec government will pay 85% of the cost of rebuilding Range 3 West in New Richmond, a project valued at \$5.5 million.

The entire road will be rebuilt, and the provincial government is contributing \$4.2 million.

“It's part of the program for roads transferred by Quebec in 1993. Not all of these roads had been upgraded. We're very happy,” says Mayor Éric Dubé.

The road is three kilometres long but has several large culverts, which presents a significant technical challenge.

“Three years ago, we were selected for the Fourth (Range) road, where we spent nearly \$5 million. We are rebuilding all the infrastructure for the next 40-50 years. It's a major repair job,” adds the mayor.

A call for tenders is expected in the coming weeks, with construction scheduled for the summer. Paving should be completed by the end of September or early October. All work must be completed by December 31, 2026.

Purchase of firefighter uniforms

New Richmond will also need to replace firefighters' uniforms that have reached the end of their useful life.

According to standards set by the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST), firefighting gear has a lifespan of 10 years.

Eight sets of equipment will be replaced this year, with 12 more planned for next year.

“Just for the eight this year, that's \$21,000. That's about \$3,000 per set of equipment,” the mayor says.

Speed on Perron Boulevard

The speed limit on Perron Boulevard will be reduced from 70 kilometres per hour to 60 kilometres per hour.

The changes apply to sections at both the east and west ends of the town, between Chemin de Saint-Edgar and Route 132, as well as between Rue de la Plage and Route Cochrane.

Logements HAN and Chandler reach agreement

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER – After expressing dissatisfaction in December with requests made by Logements HAN, the organization and the Town of Chandler have reached an agreement.

Initially, Logements HAN requested a parcel of land whose transfer represented an investment of approximately \$100,000 for the Town, which would have required to relocate its soccer fields from the proposed site.

The organization later returned with a request for exemptions from municipal taxes and services, a move that drew sharp criticism from Mayor Gilles Daraïche.

Despite the tensions, the mayor says a compromise has now been reached.

“We were very committed to this project. It is a project that meets a great need. We are pouring the foundations. We have agreements that we will be announcing shortly. People will be able to enjoy 48 housing units in Chandler,” says the mayor.



Photo: N. Sergerie

The project to be built in Chandler.

Asked to clarify the nature of the compromise, the mayor explained that it stemmed from changes in available funding.

“It was a compromise related to subsidies that were no longer appropriate. We no longer had the same subsidies. We had to adjust, and we did,” comments the mayor.

Two of the six eight-unit buildings intended for people with disabilities are currently under construction. Work has begun on Commerciale Street and Mgr Ross Street.

“When you build 48 units,

it can inspire others. We have many meetings coming up for housing projects in Chandler,” adds the mayor.

Complaints about the cost of rent

Earlier this year, a social media post criticized the price of housing in Chandler, a situation the mayor notes is not unique to the town.

Construction costs have skyrocketed in recent years, particularly since the pandemic.

“There are also several

rules to follow now. It's not the same anymore. We will need subsidies or adapted programs for people who have a little more difficulty paying their rent. We are working on projects for low-income people,” says the mayor.

He pointed out that in Montreal, some people are now living on the streets because they can no longer afford housing.

Quebec funding for road repairs

Chandler is receiving \$2.7 million in financial support from the provincial government's Local Road Assistance Program to repair roads that were transferred to municipalities as part of the Ryan reform at the beginning of the 1990s.

The Town will contribute an additional \$400,000, bringing the total investment to \$3.1 million.

“We are very pleased to have been chosen,” notes the mayor.

A sinking culvert on Chemin du Pont will be rebuilt, with priority also given to work on Rue de la Plage

and Rue Tardif. The municipality will continue its asphalt program launched in recent years to upgrade local streets.

The Town plans to invest approximately \$2 million.

“If we let them go, it will no longer be feasible. Some streets have already been targeted, and we will ask the councillors to provide us with a list,” says Mr. Daraïche.

Review of sponsorships

Facing a growing number of sponsorship requests from organizations and individuals, the Town of Chandler will review how financial support is allocated.

While the sponsorship budget will be maintained, new criteria will be introduced.

“There will be a form with criteria. People will have to comply with it to get a positive response,” he says.

Priority will be given to organizations and tournaments. If funds remain, other projects or individual requests may also be considered.

A modernized Jean Coutu in New Richmond

NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND – The Jean Coutu pharmacy in New Richmond has undergone a major expansion, adding over 3,000 square feet at a cost of \$2.5 million.

The project, which took six months to complete, brings the pharmacy's total area to 12,500

square feet and incorporates the latest design concept from the Metro Group banner.

The laboratory has tripled in size and now offers a more efficient layout for consultations.

A new office dedicated to nursing care has also been added, with this service expected to be implemented in 2026.

State-of-the-art automation has been integrated to support the laboratory team and the pill-dispensing area. The self-service locker system has also been reinstated, allowing patients to pick up their prescriptions quickly and conveniently.

The retail space has been reconfigured, and the cosmetics department has been com-

pletely redesigned in keeping with the brand's new concept.

Two self-service checkouts have been installed, making it easier for customers to complete their purchases and reducing wait times.

“Our branch is entering a new era with this breath of fresh air brought to our facilities. The renovations consoli-

date our presence here in New Richmond and provide customers and staff with a modern and convenient environment,” says pharmacist/owner, Jean-Sébastien Laliberté-Gemme.

Mr. Laliberté-Gemme, who has owned the New Richmond pharmacy since 2019, also owns Jean Coutu Santé in Caplan.

A FIELD FOR ALL:

Cont'd from Cover

Renouf pointed out that a lot of preparatory work is already carried out.

“In 2023, the heavy machinery operators course students prepared the ground, as part of an inclusive learning opportunity. Then grass was installed. It was a dry summer and lack of water was an issue. As a temporary measure, a holding reservoir was installed. It was taking six trips of 38,000 litres to fill the reservoir,” explained Mr. Renouf.

“The estimate of that phase was \$575,000 and it was respected,” he added. The completion phase is therefore estimated at



Photo: G. Gagné

Project development officer Marjorie McRae is glad to see the pace of the fundraising campaign.

\$725,000.

For former school board

administrator Lynden Bechervaise, the use of that field for the school and sports activities brings back memories.

“Many years ago, I used this field as pasture for my racing horses,” he told SPEC.

Students to be transferred ideally by March

When asked about the timeline for transferring students to the new school, Eastern Shores School Board Director General Denise Simoneau said the move will take place before June, possibly as early as the March break.

“We have to get the okay of the contractor. We should

have the okay at the end of January. After that, we have to set a calendar for moving,” explained Ms. Simoneau.

The school board cannot take possession of the building until that approval is received. The move will begin

with younger students and progress upward, as students gradually bring their belongings into the new facility. The entire process could take up to four weeks, making the March break an ideal target, she added.



The gymnasium of the new school is vast and ready for use.

Gaspé arena: no guarantee of ice quality

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Gaspé arena had to be closed over the weekend of January 10 and 11 because the ice was melting again near one of the two nets, the same situation that abruptly ended a senior hockey game on December 27.

New tests were conducted on January 12 to try to understand what is happening with the refrigeration system. “Every day, we pray that it will hold,” says the Mayor of Gaspé Daniel Côté.

Refrigeration technicians had examined the system for the first time following the December 27 incident. “Everything was repaired the first time, but despite that, the ice thawed again for no apparent reason. The ice was broken up, and the concrete slab was drilled to look underneath. Nothing unusual was found. They refilled it with water, and the ice is holding,” explains the mayor.

If this new intervention lasts two or three weeks, it will be a sigh of relief.

But for now, the town is taking it one day at a time.

“Currently, we are telling users that activities are resuming with reservations. If it holds up for the rest of the winter, so much the better. But if it holds up and then breaks, we can't guarantee anything,” warns the mayor.

The novice-atom tournament is coming up in early February. “We're keeping our fingers crossed that it can go



Photo: N. Sergerie

ahead. If the ice doesn't melt, we'll feel safe,” he says. A decision will be announced before the tournament.

Everything in the arena has been combed through. “On December 27, a compressor broke down and we had some minor problems. Now we're investigating the height of the Zamboni blade and making sure it passes less often in the area where the thawing is most severe. We're trying everything,” says Mr. Côté.

No leaks have been found in the refrigeration system. “It's a mystery. We're going to take it day by day, and when things stabilize, we'll reconfirm with the events,” says the mayor.

Gaspé is scheduled to host the Innergex Cup in mid-March. “For now, we're not talking about a Plan B. For the moment, we're trying to finish the season with the events we have planned. I hope that recent events will make the government realize that we need a yes from the next PAFIRSPA (Programme d'aide financière aux infrastructures récréatives,

sportives et de plein air) project call,” says Mr. Côté.

Gaspé plans to submit its new arena project for a third time in February, after two previous rejections. In the three-year capital plan, the bill is now estimated at \$34 million.

Investments in Rivière-au-Renard

Gaspé has awarded CIMCO Réfrigération a contract for the maintenance of the refrigeration system at the Rosaire-Tremblay arena in Rivière-au-Renard, worth \$36,000 for the next three years.

This contract is unrelated to what is happening at the Gaspé arena. “Not at all. It's normal maintenance. The contract is a little bigger this year because we have to do a complete maintenance every three years,” says Mr. Côté.

This year, the value of the agreement is \$17,679.90 due to the increased workload, and it will be \$9,491.50 for 2027 and 2028.



Photo: Nez Rouge Gaspé

\$4,918 raised by Operation Nez rouge in Gaspé

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – The 34th Operation Nez rouge in Gaspé raised \$4,918 in donations over eight evenings of operation last December.

This represents a slight increase compared to the \$4,900 raised in 2024.

A total of 182 volunteers, divided into 52 teams, provided 277 rides on Fridays and Saturdays, November 28 and 29, as well as December 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, and 20. In 2024, during the eight days of operation, 254 rides were provided with the help of 176 volunteers. “I am really happy with this year's operation. There were a lot of rides and a lot of volunteers, and the donations will go to the two youth centres that organized the event,” says François-Pierre Ménard, director of the Rivière-au-Renard Youth Centre and organizer of the operation.

In 2019, no less than \$9,132 were raised during the 31st edition of the event, with 645 people given rides home.

Habits are changing

“In recent years, people have developed good habits with designated drivers. At the same time, the numbers show that there is interest in this type of service and not having to worry about getting home at the end of the night, especially in an environment like ours where there aren't many public transportation options for getting home at night,” says the organizer.

This year, some exceptional contributions also supported the organization.

“We have set up a partnership project where we want local partners who are not in a position to offer us services such as cars, gifts, or food for volunteers, but who can contribute financially,” explains Mr. Ménard.

Chantier naval Forillon, Transport Jacques Plourde, and Construction Cotton each donated \$2,000 to help cover some of the organization's expenses.

Over the past 34 years, nearly \$184,800 in donations have been raised through the Gaspé operation.

The Gaspé event was the only Operation Red Nose held on the Gaspé Peninsula this year.

The last operation in Bonaventure dates back to 2012, with 428 rides provided; 2015 for Chandler, with 396 rides; and 2017 for Paspébiac, where the number of rides was not recorded.

Gaspé prepares submission for PAFIRSPA

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Town of Gaspé will resubmit its arena project after the Quebec government announced on Wednesday that it will open the second call for projects under the Recreational, Sports, and Outdoor Infrastructure Financial Assistance Program (PAFIRSPA) on February 23, 2026. A budget of \$300 million has been allocated to support initiatives across Quebec.

“The plans and specifications are ready. The criteria are similar. If there are still some details to be ironed out, we will do so. We will be ready. We will resume our quest for support to ensure that there is a good consensus on the project,” says Mayor Daniel Côté.

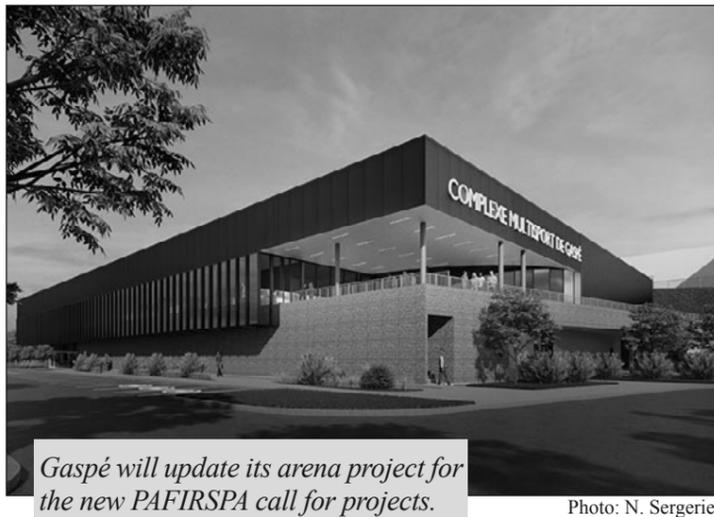


Photo: N. Sergerie

The elected official is struggling to come to terms with the rejection received during the last call for projects.

“We should have been accepted last time. I would remind you that we finished in the top 20 Quebec projects.

There are projects that were ranked 500th that were funded, and we finished 19th. I hope that the arbitration will rule in our favour,” says Mr. Côté.

The project cost calculations will be revised to reflect the increase in costs since the

July 2024 rejection. At that time, the costs were \$28 million.

The program allows municipalities, non-profit organizations, solidarity cooperatives, school and higher education institutions, as well as First Nations and Inuit authorities to submit projects for the construction, renovation, or improvement of infrastructure.

“The call for projects still allows for the submission of projects worth \$10,000, \$20,000, or \$50,000, which can be subsidized by any program. For large projects, there is only one way to obtain funding, and that is through PAFIRSPA. Allowing school projects when there are calls for school projects is normal, but in this case, we will have to

live with the result,” Mr. Côté laments.

“If the process had been completely objective, we would be talking about the Gaspé arena, we would be talking about skating indoors,” continues the mayor.

Financial assistance can cover up to 66% of eligible costs, up to \$20 million for sports and recreational infrastructure and \$500,000 for outdoor infrastructure.

“Our arena is still on life support. The need is urgent, and we hope that this time, it will be the right one,” concludes the mayor of Gaspé.

During the first call for projects, launched in September 2023 with a budget of \$300 million, 322 projects were selected.

Gaspésie loses a riding

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Despite a last-ditch attempt by elected officials during a debate at the National Assembly in December, the decree formalizing the loss of an electoral riding in Gaspésie was published on January 14 in the Quebec Government Official Gazette.

On December 2, the Electoral Representation Commission submitted a revised electoral map that confirmed the abolition of one riding in Gaspésie. Under the proposal, the ridings of Bonaventure and Gaspé would be merged, while Haute-Gaspésie would be integrated into Matane–Matapédia.

In its report, the commission indicated that it analyzed the ridings of the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine regions by grouping them within a single regional entity.

The creation of this entity facilitates understanding of the context and specific issues that led to the determination of the proposal for the delimitation of constituencies in this region.

As of April 30, 2023, the Bonaventure riding showed a negative deviation of 29.2% and Gaspé a negative deviation of 40.6%, exceeding the legal threshold of $\pm 25\%$ compared to the provincial average.

The situation worsened for Gaspé, where the negative deviation reached 41.5% on November 30, 2024. The riding is now the least populous in Quebec, after the Magdalen Islands.

Since the 2017 electoral map was adopted, the number of electors has declined by 0.3% in Bonaventure, 1.5% in Gaspé and 1.3% in Matane–Matapédia.

Between 2014 and 2023, the region's electoral weight dropped from 4.55 ridings to 4.37. According to the commission, this trend is expected to continue in the coming years.

Multiple disappointments

Although widely anticipated, the decision has sparked disappointment across the region.

Gaspé Mayor and Côte-de-Gaspé MRC Prefect Daniel Côté, spokesperson for the Gaspésie Prefects' Table on the issue, described the decision as a blow to

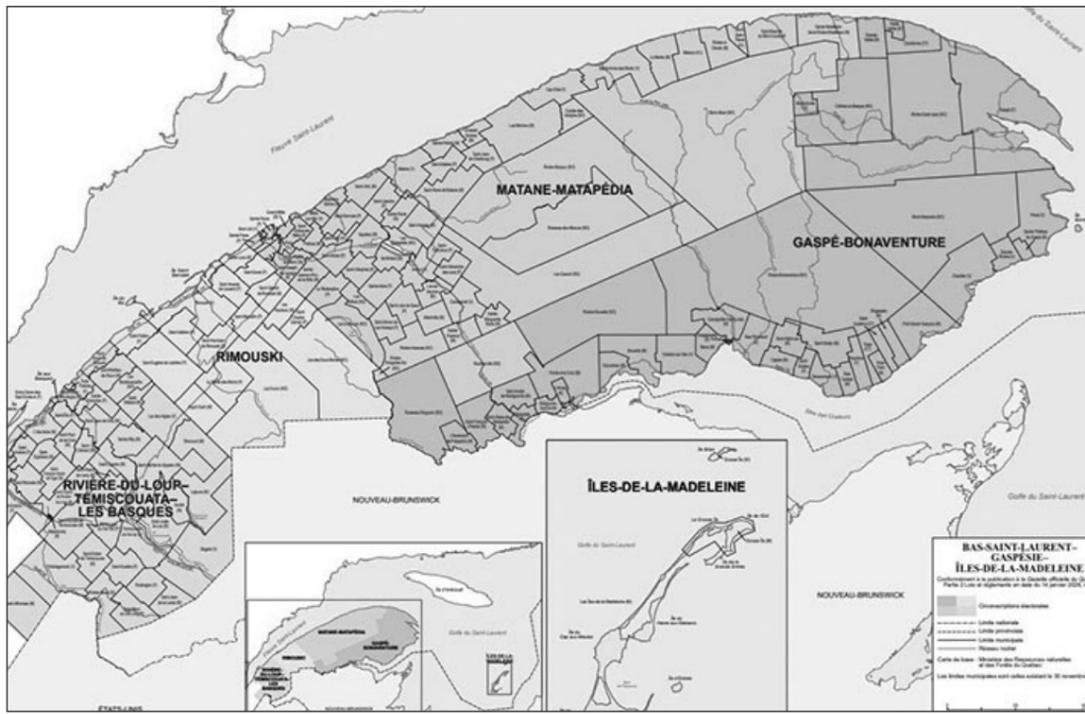


Photo: Electoral Representation Commission

The new map remains similar to the one submitted in 2023.

democracy.

"It's sad to see this. It's a big loss for democracy. It's a big loss for regional representation," said Mr. Côté.

He warned that regions such as the North Shore, Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Bas-Saint-Laurent could be reduced to a single Member of the National Assembly (MNA) within 25 years.

One remaining hope is that the Supreme Court will reinstate the law adopted in May 2024 that preserved the Bonaventure and Gaspé ridings. Before the holidays, the Quebec government sought permission to appeal to the country's highest court.

Another possibility is the adoption of an exception law by March.

"When a government wants to pass a special law, it passes it on anything," says the mayor, who is betting that most parties in the National Assembly would support such a law.

Reactions from provincial elected officials

"We are obviously disappointed with the decision published by the Chief Electoral Officer, since the changes proposed by the Electoral Representation Commission do not fully meet the needs of the Gaspé Peninsula and the wishes of the elected representatives of the National Assembly," writes Stéphane Sainte-Croix, Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) Member for Gaspé, in an email, recalling his government's action before the Supreme Court.

"The goal remains to en-

sure that citizens from all regions, and particularly those from the Gaspé Peninsula, are well represented in the National Assembly. We are continuing to analyze the various options to ensure fair representation for the region and will work constructively with all parties to determine the next steps," continues Mr. Sainte-Croix.

His CAQ colleague from Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin said she was not surprised, but still disappointed.

"This remains a negative impact for the Gaspé Peninsula," says Ms. Blouin.

Québec solidaire proposes adding two ridings to the National Assembly to meet the recommendation to create ridings in the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec, which would allow Bonaventure and Gaspé to be maintained.

"No one would lose out. The two regions that gain a seat would win it. The two regions that lost their seat would keep it. We would go from 125 to 127 MNAs. This is not a major upheaval in the political landscape. It is a fairly simple law to pass if our counterparts in the other parties agree," explains Alexandre Leduc, Québec solidaire's spokesperson on the issue.

This is a position that the CAQ representative for Bonaventure does not want to take.

"Adding members does not protect the Gaspé Peninsula. That doesn't mean that these ridings would be in the Gaspé Peninsula. I want to be very vigilant to ensure that the Gaspé Peninsula is well represented, but I don't want

to talk about the means to achieve that at this time. These are discussions that need to take place," states Catherine Blouin.

The Parti Québécois expressed openness to the proposal.

"Adding two seats seems to be the only possible avenue. In that case, the Parti Québécois would support the move. But there are still a lot of discussions going on, and things are moving quickly. Everyone is working together. No one is putting a damper on the process," said PQ national spokesperson and former Gaspé Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Méganne Perry Mélançon.

The impact of the new map

With the proposed new map, Gaspé-Bonaventure would have a positive deviation of 11.6%, while the other ridings in eastern Quebec would have a deviation within the provincial aver-

age, with the exception of the islands, which maintain their exceptional status by law with a negative deviation of 78.0%.

The commission specifies in its report that relative voting equality is not the only criterion, but that compliance with it remains an essential foundation for ensuring fair representation of the entire Quebec electorate.

Among the comments heard during the consultations was the reduction in the political weight of the Gaspé Peninsula in relation to its specific issues.

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

Furthermore, regarding the exceptional status enshrined in the electoral law, the commission is of the opinion that if such status were granted to the Gaspé and Bonaventure ridings, other ridings in Quebec should also benefit from it. Indeed, they are not the only ones with a special situation in Quebec. Nearly 20 electoral districts are distinguished by one or more specific geographical characteristics, such as their size, their extent, the number of municipalities they encompass, their distance from the National Assembly, or the size of their urban centre. Increasing the number of exceptions in the Act is not desirable, as it would diminish the exceptional nature of the ridings concerned and significantly increase inequalities in representation.

The new electoral map will take effect for the October 5 election.



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Federal map: Court of Appeal has yet to set a hearing date

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Although the parties involved expected to know the hearing date by the beginning of the year at the latest, the Federal Court of Appeal has still not scheduled a hearing to study the February 21 judicial review that upheld the abolition of the former riding of Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia.

The appellant in the case, Alexis Deschênes, has still not received any news about when the matter will be heard before the judges.

Both parties filed their briefs in the summer for Alexis Deschênes and in the fall for the Attorney General of Canada.

The latter asked the Court of Appeal to dismiss the motion.

The Attorney General wrote in his brief that "contrary to the appellant's claims, the Commission did not disregard the area factor or create an 'overly large' electoral district in the Gaspé Peninsula. Rather, it considered the arguments relating to area and weighed them against all the relevant factors set out in the Act. As the trial judge concluded, his decision is reasonable. There is no reason for this Court to intervene," the brief states.

After outlining the details of the electoral map review process, the Attorney General dissects Alexis Deschênes' arguments.

The Attorney General believes that the trial judge correctly concluded that the final report of the Commission on Electoral Representation for Quebec was reasonable, particularly with regard to the principle of electoral parity.

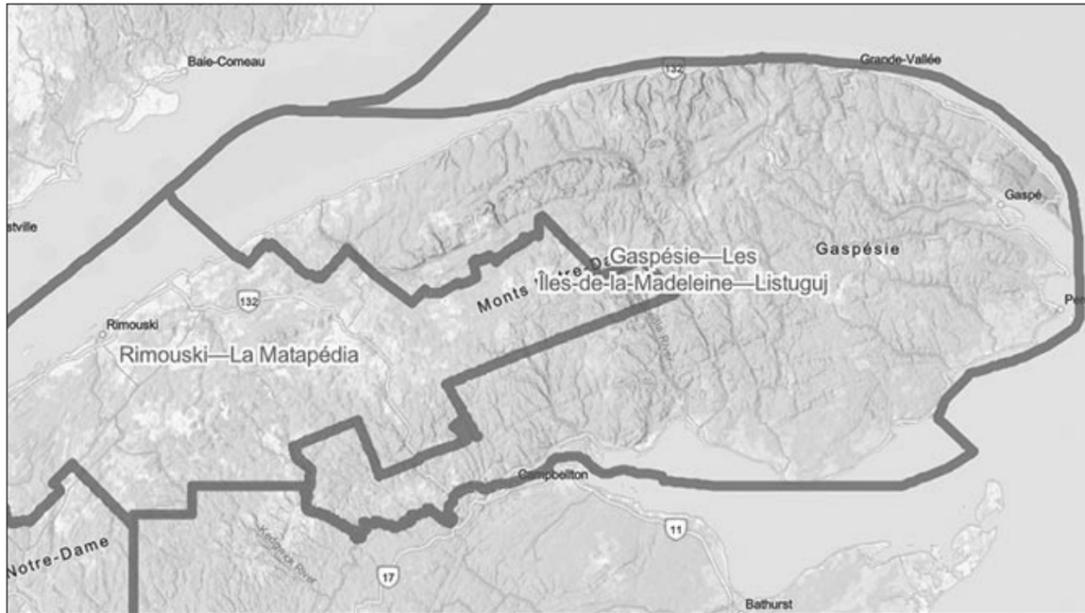


Photo: Electoral Representation Commission

Ottawa requests that the current map be maintained

"With regard to the region stretching from Montmagny to the Magdalen Islands, the Commission considered the relevant factors, in particular the size of the ridings and communities of interest. It concluded that the elimination of the riding of Avignon was necessary to ensure relative parity among voters throughout Quebec. An exemption could not be justified without weakening the vote of other Quebec citizens," the Attorney General writes in his brief.

The federal government points out that only extraordinary circumstances can justify a deviation of more than 25% of the average number of voters per riding.

"It was with these considerations in mind that it reviewed the demographic situation in the region stretching from Montmagny to the Magdalen Islands. It found that the average population of each electoral district was the lowest of all regions in Quebec, that the electoral districts of Rimouski-Neigette, Témiscouata-Les

Basques, Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and Avignon had respective deviations of -21.5%, -30.3% and -35.5%, and that all ridings had experienced a relative decline in their population," notes the Attorney General.

In his view, "in order to respect relative parity in voting and in light of these discrepancies, it was legitimate for the Commission to propose removing one district in the region. The removal of the Avignon riding was the most suitable alternative, since it was the least populated riding and its geographical location allowed the ridings of Rimouski-Neigette-Témiscouata-Les Basques and Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine to absorb its components," pointing out that the Laurentides and Lanaudière regions had seen their populations increase by 19.7%.

"In order to maintain the old ridings, the Commission would have had to demonstrate that extraordinary circumstances justified it, given

that the differences for the ridings of Avignon and Gaspésie-Les-Îles-de-la-Madeleine exceeded -25%, which would have had an impact on the entire electoral map of Quebec. It was not unreasonable for the Commission to conclude that this was not the case," explains the Attorney General.

"The Commission noted that the exception clause allowing deviations of more than 25% has only been applied in Canada a dozen times since its adoption nearly 40 years ago," he adds.

"With regard to communities of interest, at least 24 interveners noted in their written submissions for the consultations that the boundaries were problematic in that they did not respect the boundaries of the regional county municipalities in the area. As noted above, the Commission modified the boundaries of the proposed districts to address some of the concerns expressed by participants, contrary to the appellant's arguments," the Attorney General quotes.

"The trial judge correctly concluded that, apart from the regional county municipalities, the applicants had not demonstrated how the Commission had failed to take into account other communities of interest," the document adds.

Furthermore, the Attorney General notes that the appellant cannot challenge the Federal Court's decision on the basis of arguments raised for the first time on appeal, including that of area.

In conclusion, the federal government believes that "canceling the Final Report with immediate effect could create significant uncertainty, as it would call into question the validity of the Representation Orders and the Proclamation, which are not being challenged in this proceeding, as well as the validity of the ridings for which members were elected on April 28, 2025. In doing so, the only possible remedy would be to issue a declaration of invalidity of the Final Report accompanied by a suspension of the declaration for a period of time sufficient to correct the situation. This could, for example, allow Parliament to mandate a commission to redraw the electoral boundaries for the whole of Quebec," the Attorney General argues in the event that the case is heard and the Court allows the appeal and finds in favour of Mr. Deschênes.

Alexis Deschênes filed a brief in July with three main points: the law states that the riding must not be too large, that area must be a factor in the analysis, and that the electoral commission did not conduct a rational analysis in this regard.

A hearing date was expected at the end of 2025 or in 2026.

Storm leaves nearly 30 centimetres of snow on Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The winter storm that hit the Gaspé Peninsula on January 11 and 12 left nearly 30 centimetres in the Gaspé region.

According to Environment Canada data, 29.2 centimetres of snow were measured over the two days at Michel-Pouliot Airport.

New Carlisle received 11 millimetres of water equivalent. Applying the same ratio as in Gaspé, this would give approximately 21 centimetres of



Nearly 30 centimetres fell on Gaspé.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

snowfall this sector of Baie-des-Chaleurs.

A blowing snow warning

for the Rocher-Percé, Bonaventure, and Avignon MRCs was in effect on January 12, affect-

ing driving conditions.

On the road network, the Craque road between Murdochville and Grande-Vallée was closed for an extended period due to weather conditions.

RÉGIM suspended its services in Haute-Gaspésie, Estran, and the Gaspé region, but Orléans Express operated normally despite the storm.

Most schools in the Chic-Chocs School Service Centre suspended classes on January 12, while the elementary schools in Grande-Rivière, Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé, and

Cap-d'Espoir in the René-Lévesque School Service Centre suspended classes for the morning.

Several businesses and services closed their doors in the Gaspé region due to the storm.

The Sûreté du Québec reported no major incidents during this storm.

The Gaspé region has received 65 centimetres of snow since January 1, below the seasonal average. The normal amount for this period is 80 centimetres.

Escuminac taxes reduced

NELSON SERGERIE

ESCUMINAC – The tax rate will drop from 65 cents to 63 cents per \$100 of assessed value in 2026 in Escuminac.

The new mayor, former Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Sylvain Roy, says the rate had not been revised despite strong growth in the new property assessment roll filed last year.

“We decided to send a signal as a new administration and to ensure that every penny invested will be well spent. We are going to look at all of the municipality's expenditure items. We have no debt and we don't have much. We will have to develop,” he explains.

Before proceeding, however, he wants to study the municipality's finances further.

The waste collection bill will increase from \$297 to \$352. “We have no choice. This means that the bill has to be passed on to the population. It's a monopoly, and it's not over yet because the composting bill is coming,” warns the mayor.

In the three-year capital plan, the mayor wants to develop sports infrastructure.



The mayor of Escuminac, Sylvain Roy.

Photo: MRC d'Avignon

“We don't have much. We want to invest in the rest stop to modernize the infrastructure. Grant programs will be updated shortly. We're going to try to apply,” says the new mayor.

With the municipality's church closed, the mayor wants to find a new use for it.

A hunting and fishing enthusiast, Mr. Roy wants to develop ice fishing in the bay.

“Recreational fishing is important. We have people who leave Matane or Chandler to come fish here. We'll need a

little help to finance all this, to set up a kiosk and offer services on site,” says the mayor.

“Striped bass fishing is fabulous, and if the shellfish beds reopen one day, it could be interesting,” he adds.

The rest stop could be converted into an RV stop, with fees, as it has been a popular spot for recreational vehicles for years.

The mayor would also like to bring the ATV and snowmobile trails closer to the community to benefit from the spin-offs.

Sylvain Roy deplores the paperwork that Quebec imposes on municipalities.

“The bureaucratization of municipal management is a problem, and the proliferation of standards and regulations is also a problem. It means hiring people just to do accounting and access funding. Everything is complex. We have layers of bureaucrats who do nothing but this, but we need to get back to something simpler for small municipalities that don't always have all the professional resources to meet the bureaucratic demands of the Quebec government civil service,” says the new mayor.

Caplan's 150th anniversary

NELSON SERGERIE

CAPLAN – The mayor of Caplan is pleased with the festivities surrounding the municipality's 150th anniversary, which ended on December 31, 2025.

Throughout the year, activities were held to mark this historic event.

“It was a real success throughout the year. We had a fairly active 150th anniversary from January to December and we had really good citizen participation,” says Mayor Lise Castilloux.

A 150th anniversary platform was created, and podcasts were posted on it to create a “living” archive.

“The goal was to digitize everything, take a new approach, keep everything in the municipal archives, and add value to the event,” notes the mayor.

The highlight was possibly the festival held during the summer, but in the mayor's eyes, it was the opening night. A call to the public was issued



Photo: Caplan BANQ website

Caplan in 1927.

to help enhance the history of Caplan.

“We had a good turnout. We had a book on Caplan's 100th anniversary, and we didn't want to redo the book, but to take a different angle with the contribution of women in the history of Caplan. We're also going to add the last 50 years,” explains the mayor.

Work is now underway to update this historical document.

Municipal authorities cannot estimate the number of people who visited Caplan during the 150th anniversary celebrations. “But we know from seeing the visitors and the people we met who told us they came for the week of the festival. People from neighbouring towns came to participate in our activities,” estimates the mayor.

“It was a success and the community embraced it,” she believes.

The flu wreaked havoc during the holidays

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Like elsewhere in Quebec, the Gaspé Peninsula has been hit hard by the flu.

“Provincially, we are seeing very high influenza activity. As for other respiratory viruses that are being closely monitored, COVID-19 activity is fairly low and respiratory syncytial virus activity is very low,” explains Dr. Christine Dufour Turbis, Director of Public Health for Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Projections indicated that the flu would peak during the holiday season. “When we look at the data, that's exactly what happened. People who came to the emergency room with fever and cough, what we see is that the peak was during Christmas week. All of that has gone down, but we're still seeing very high activity. It's still circulating a lot,” notes the specialist.

It is difficult to predict what will happen in the coming weeks. “Everyone was with their families during the holidays, and the virus spread. With the start of the school year, will there be another peak? It's a little hard to say. Do we expect it to decrease? We hope so,” she says.

If people experience symptoms, they should stay home, or else wearing a mask is strongly recommended.

The hygiene practices developed during the pandemic also remain in place. “It's still time for people to get vaccinated against COVID-19 or influenza,” suggests the Director of Public Health.

It is difficult to determine whether the vaccine is effective this year, as the formulas are based on strains that have circulated in the Southern Hemisphere. “The influenza vaccine is designed to reduce complications, hospitalizations, and deaths. You may still get sick, but the vaccine will lessen the severity of the illness,” she says. The vaccine's success rate should be known by the end of the season.

Influenza type B, which is not yet circulating. This variant of the flu is expected to arrive in the coming weeks. Even if people have already had the flu, it is still possible to catch it again. “We must not let our guard down. This year's flu is intense,” suggests the specialist.

So far, almost all categories of people have been affected by the flu.

Quebec contributes \$400,000 to two projects in Avignon

Nelson Sergerie

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The Quebec government is funding two projects submitted by the Avignon MRC targeting fire protection and housing.

The Avignon-Est Fire Department is receiving \$173,000 to hire a technical resource. When the service was pooled with Carleton-sur-Mer, Maria, Nouvelle, and Escuminac in January 2024, the Town of Carleton-sur-Mer, which manages the group, requested \$250,000 in financial support from the Quebec government as part of a municipal partnership incentive program. However, the program's budget had been exhausted at the time.

The town reapplied, and the Quebec government has now released the funds.

The funding will allow the town to hire a firefighter-mechanic responsible for vehicle mechanics and equipment maintenance.

“The goal is to save money. With a single person taking care of all maintenance, we will save on costs that we used to send out. This means we have a full-time firefighter in the area who can also respond to calls,” notes Carleton-sur-Mer Mayor Mathieu Lapointe.

Previously, each municipality was responsible for maintaining its own equipment.

Housing

In addition, the Avignon MRC will receive \$226,000 to support housing development in the region. “This is an initiative to pool services between several municipalities. The goal is to continue the work to facilitate social and affordable housing projects. It's a resource that will be there full-time to set up projects and support communities to ensure that the projects come to fruition,” notes Mr. Lapointe, who is also the prefect of Avignon.

While housing needs remain difficult to quantify, the prefect notes that a recent study shows there is room for all of the projects currently under consideration.

The funding is being granted in connection with the merger of housing authorities in Avignon, which took effect in January 2025.

Obstetrics: a distressing misadventure for a woman

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

RIVIÈRE-À-CLAUDE — Service disruptions and closures in obstetrics across the Gaspé Peninsula continue to cause serious difficulties for pregnant women about to give birth. However, what Marie-Anne Lépine experienced on January 2 raises troubling questions about how care is organized during such interruptions.

At 36 weeks pregnant, the Rivière-à-Claude resident was informed that she would give birth in Matane due to a service disruption at the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts hospital.

"On January 1, the hospital in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts closed at midnight. We left in the morning because a huge storm was forecast. On January 2, labour started, and we went to the hospital in Matane, but when we got there, my file wasn't there. They didn't know we existed, and I was 41 weeks pregnant," says Ms. Lépine.

The situation caused significant stress and insecurity at a time when a mother should be able to focus entirely on giving birth and on her baby's health.

"Sainte-Anne-des-Monts (the hospital staff) called us every week to tell us to go to Matane if there was anything wrong, that they would forward our file, but that wasn't the case. I had to deal with the



Photo: Courtesy

Marie-Anne Lépine poses with her 15-day-old baby.

fact that they didn't have my file and give them my doctor's contact information while I was in labour," says the young mother.

As a result, obstetricians were forced to rely on information provided by the patient herself—information that could have been incomplete or forgotten during labour.

"Matane told us that it was common for the file not to follow the patient," she adds.

No service for her baby

The ordeal did not end with the birth of her daughter.

Upon discharge from the Matane hospital, Ms. Lépine was told that if her baby experienced any problems before the age of four weeks, she should go directly to the obstetrics department at the

Sainte-Anne-des-Monts hospital.

When her newborn later developed an eye infection, she contacted 811 and was advised that the baby needed to see a doctor immediately.

"We called on Saturday evening because 811 told us we needed to see a doctor immediately, and they told us it was impossible to see a doctor because they were closed until Thursday and that we had to go to the emergency room with our 15-day-old baby," says Ms. Lépine.

Concerned about exposing her infant to flu and gastro viruses circulating at the time, Ms. Lépine refused to go to the emergency department.

"We're waiting for a doctor in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. Otherwise we'll have to go to Matane. This isn't normal," she says.

A call for solutions

The new mother says she is speaking out to urge authorities to restore normal obstetrics services.

"So that there are enough nurses and doctors to keep it open at all times. Otherwise, at least let the files be followed up in Matane," asks Ms. Lépine, who says the added stress was unnecessary.

"Just because we live in a rural area doesn't mean we should have to deal with this

kind of situation," she adds, noting that she has yet to receive a response from the local family medicine group.

Whenever obstetrics services are interrupted in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, the CISSS de la Gaspésie says a service corridor is established with Matane and that accommodation costs for expectant mothers can be reimbursed.

"We were supposed to be reimbursed for the hotel and food while we were in Matane. That's what we were told. I'm trying to get it, but no one knows how to go about it. That's another problem," she continues.

She has since taken political action in the hope that concrete solutions will finally be implemented.

The former prefect gets involved

Former Haute-Gaspésie MRC prefect and current Cap-Chat municipal councillor Allen Cormier has decided to support Ms. Lépine and bring the issue forward.

He recalls that when he was first elected prefect in 2009, obstetrics was a key priority.

"When I saw what the young woman from Rivière-à-Claude was going through, I offered her my help and asked my colleagues in Cap-Chat to adopt a resolution calling on the government and the Minis-

ter of Health to implement dynamic measures to restore obstetrics services as soon as possible. We want a firm commitment," says Mr. Cormier.

Given that the CISSS de la Gaspésie cannot guarantee a full return to normal services in all four regional hospitals by 2026, the former prefect is urging decisive political intervention.

"In 2009, the situation was not rosy, but I was fortunate to have a clear and precise commitment from the then Minister of Health, Yves Bolduc. That's what we expect in Haute-Gaspésie: a firm commitment from the Minister of Health and even the Prime Minister's office to take action to restore service as soon as possible," he says.

While the CISSS currently reports a shortage of 47 nurses across the network, Mr. Cormier is calling for the use of agency nurses to maintain obstetrics services.

"We must not think in terms of cutbacks, but in terms of action and development. I do not want the lives of women or children to be put at risk at any time for budgetary or recruitment reasons," he insists.

At the time of writing, neither the CISSS de la Gaspésie nor the Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé had responded to the situation faced by the Rivière-à-Claude mother.

Obstetrics: little hope for improvement

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ — Shortages and service disruptions in obstetrics in Gaspésie are not expected to be resolved in the near future.

During the holiday period, Maria and Gaspé hospitals experienced failures due to a shortage of nurses, a situation that has been repeating itself almost every month in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

For nearly a year, the CISSS de la Gaspésie has set up local and regional committees to try to find solutions, but progress has been difficult.

"The solutions are not simple. The common denominator is the shortage of nurses. We are considering integrating midwives and expanding the professional scope of nursing assistants, but the fact remains that we need nurses in the Gaspé Peninsula," says CISSS Director of Nursing, Maxime Bernatchez.

Currently, there is a short-



Photo: Archives

The obstetrics situation in Gaspésie will remain precarious in 2026, according to the CISSS.

age of 47 caregivers across the Gaspé health network.

Whenever there is a shortage or disruption in obstetric services, residents often suggest transferring nurses from other hospital departments to fill the gap. However, this is not a viable option, Bernatchez explains.

"These are specialized nurses who require specialized training and sometimes expo-

sure in an environment such as Quebec City to ensure they have the skills to care for the needs of the mother giving birth and the newborn. At this time, we cannot take a nurse from the emergency room or another care unit and transfer them to obstetrics without this specialized training," explains the manager.

The tightening of rules governing the use of inde-

pendent labour, already in effect in several regions and scheduled to take effect in the Gaspé Peninsula next October, has further complicated staffing challenges.

"These gaps were generally filled by independent labour. Some workers choose to rejoin the public network in their region. This puts additional pressure on obstetrics, but also on overall needs," Mr. Bernatchez adds.

No real solution in sight

Although discussions are underway to find solutions, it would be unrealistic to expect the situation to be resolved by 2026.

"The challenge is great. We are working in collaboration with Laval University and the headquarters of Santé Québec, as well as with our internal and external partners. We still foresee challenges. We need nurses in the Gaspé Peninsula. We are working hard to bring

them on board. We hope for better days in 2026," says Mr. Bernatchez.

The situation is not unique to the Gaspé Peninsula. "There is a national discussion with the organizations I mentioned, drawing inspiration from practices in other regions that have better coverage."

The CISSS says it remains committed to maintaining the four obstetrics centres in the Gaspé Peninsula, located in Chandler, Gaspé, Maria, and Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

"We're not throwing in the towel. We absolutely want to maintain local services in our local health networks," says Mr. Bernatchez.

In 2019, the CISSS reorganized obstetric services in the four hospitals. At the time, it stated that it wanted to "find innovative short-term solutions" by involving staff and physicians amid limited resources.

Seven years later, the situation has yet to improve.

Train: Gaspé mayor dreams of its return

NELSON SERGERIE

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ – After seeing the first train arrive in Port-Daniel-Gascons on the rehabilitated track between New Richmond and the cement plant on January 7, the mayor of Gaspé remains hopeful that rail service will return to his town in the coming years.

"I am absolutely hopeful. It has to happen. We've had two premiers (Liberal Philippe Couillard in 2017 and CAQ's François Legault several times) who have promised it, and a third party is pushing for it. Everyone is pulling in the same direction. I can't believe we won't get it," says Daniel Côté.

The mayor learned before the holidays of a request from the mining company Osisko, which is working on reopening the Gaspé Mines in Murdochville, stating that rail service would be needed to transport copper ore.

"I welcome this move. Until now, they had never really dared to take a strong stance. Now, they are stating it clearly," comments the mayor.

He now hopes that the Quebec government will not miss this opportunity, as was the case when LM Wind Power had blades to transport by rail to the United States be-

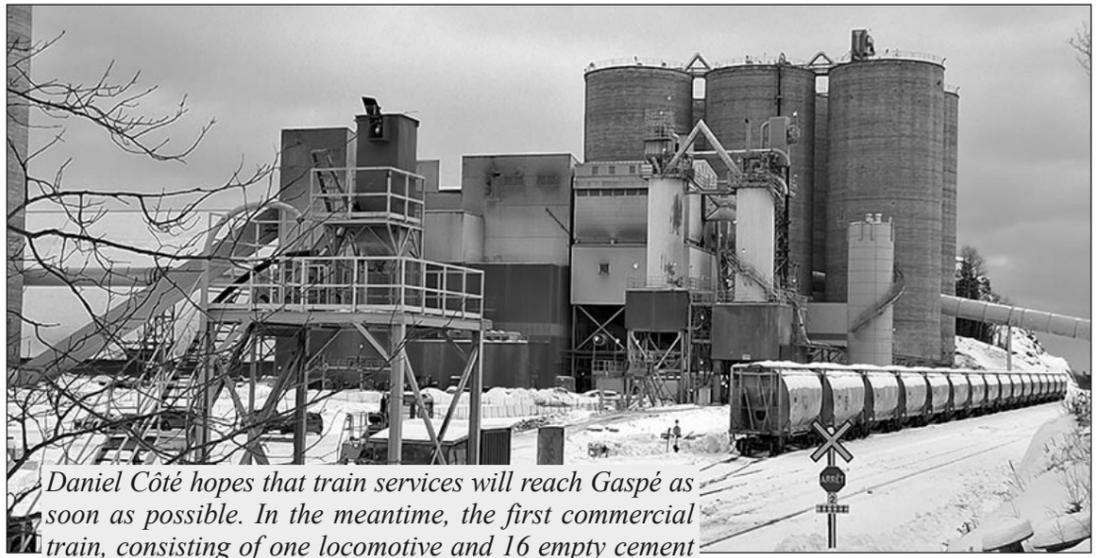
tween 2016 and 2022.

"Let's not wait until the contracts are awarded and everything is running smoothly before starting to work on the refurbishment. We know that sometime between 2030 and 2032, a mine will open in Murdochville and they will need the train to operate. Let's not wait until 2030 to get our act together and move forward. We know it's coming and we know the deadlines for the repairs. Let's start in 2026 to be ready by 2030!" the elected official clearly states.

The Quebec government sent the repairs planned for section 3 back for further analysis last March due to a significant cost overrun.

Even LM Wind Power might need the rail, mentions Daniel Côté. "The company is still winning contracts in the United States and soon, Quebec contracts – I hope – will be awarded. We'll need the railway to avoid clogging the road network. Currently, the blades are shipped by ship to markets with a seaport. In Quebec, (new wind farms) won't always necessarily be near a port on the St. Lawrence River. Sometimes, it will be easier by train. Let's think about the future," he says.

He also adds that the passenger rail service could give a boost to transportation op-



Daniel Côté hopes that train services will reach Gaspé as soon as possible. In the meantime, the first commercial train, consisting of one locomotive and 16 empty cement cars, reached Port Daniel on January 19.

Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

tions, particularly for seniors.

"We know we need it. Our businesses have been losing competitiveness for years. We need it now," the mayor reiterates.

Commercial service up and running to the cement plant

Following the January 7 test run between New Richmond and Port-Daniel, which brought cement loading equipment, additional trains have since travelled east.

On January 19, a locomotive pulling 16 empty cement cars went to the cement plant, where the cars were left to be loaded. On January 21, a second train pulling 30 empty cement cars traveled between New Richmond and New Carlisle, where the cars were

left in the yard.

On January 23, the cement cars, now loaded, were supposed to be brought back to New Richmond, for their eventual delivery to the customers located between Halifax and Southern Ontario. Cement transportation is gradually transferred from New Richmond to Port Daniel.

Maritime link

Economic studies on the potential maritime link between Gaspé, Anticosti Island and Havre-Saint-Pierre are reportedly conclusive.

The Quebec government has reviewed the documents, but Daniel Côté does not want to reveal details yet, as the results will be presented publicly soon.

"There's very good poten-

tial. We'll release the figures soon. Overall, it's conclusive. There's potential to open up Anticosti Island, create a tourist loop, and even attract more tourists," the mayor cautiously states. The island's recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site offers immense potential, but it needs to be addressed.

"We're not going to see a ferry service in 2026 or 2027. It's a longer-term project. We've believed in it for a long time, and we're rowing in the right direction," he says.

A governance study conducted concurrently reveals several options for operation: private, a public-private partnership, or management by the Société des traversiers du Québec (Quebec Ferry Corporation). The municipalities would like to be involved.

Carleton-sur-Mer campground remains busy

Nelson Sergerie

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The Carleton-sur-Mer campground had a good season in 2025. Some 28,500 overnight stays were recorded, a slight decrease of 200 compared to 2024.

"We increased our rates, which meant our revenues went up. We're talking about \$1.76 million compared to \$1.617 million in 2024. That's an 8.9% increase in our revenues. Things are going very well at the campground," says the Mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer, Mathieu Lapointe.

The peak season runs from Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day to Labour Day. "It's really in May, June, September, and October that we can make a big difference in terms of numbers," says the mayor.

The town is working to extend the tourist season. New activities have been added in recent years. "All our merchants are asking us to extend the tourist season. We're doing that with Bleu-Bleu, which takes place before Saint-Jean. Now we have the International Journalism Festival a little earlier. The marathon is there. A series of events that take place before Saint-Jean. It shows in the campground's numbers, it shows for our merchants, our hoteliers tell us about it. It's profitable for everyone," says Mr. Lapointe.

The campground's sanitary complex needs to be renovated. However, before investing, studies are being commissioned to determine the impact of coastal flooding, as the site is vulnerable to high tides. "What will be the impact of flooding? We are waiting for the results before making any improvements. We want to see what the campground site will look like in 20 or 30 years, and then we will determine how to proceed with our buildings," concludes the mayor.

A well-known Gaspé activist joins the Coalition for the Return of VIA Rail

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Activist Laurent Juneau of Gaspé has joined the Coalition for the Return of Passenger Train Service to the Gaspé Peninsula.

In September, Mr. Juneau participated in a mobilization for the return of passenger train service and caught the coalition's attention, which invited him to join the movement.

Mr. Juneau, who was active in environmental issues for years, wants to work with everyone to continue the fight to bring about the gradual return of passenger train service with the completion of work on the rail line to Port-Daniel-Gascons.

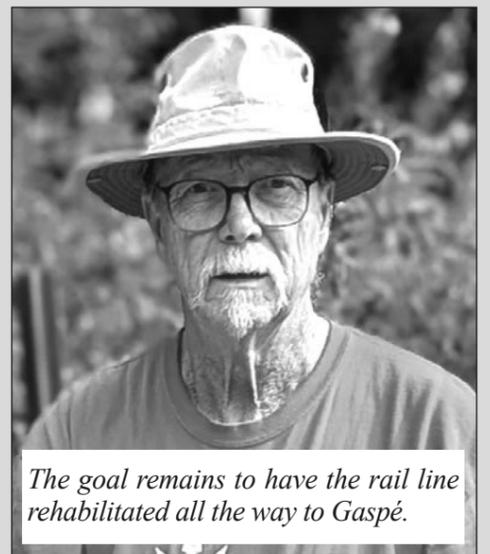
"I accepted because, in any case, I was wondering why we weren't there. For me, it's important that we be there, that we be together, and that our sector be represented," says Mr. Juneau. The Gaspé town citizens represent the "we" he is referring to.

On December 15, the citizen questioned the municipal council about the actions taken so far in support of the restoration and return of VIA Rail. The mayor reiterated that the town had adopted a resolution based on the principle of "no track, no train," as Daniel Côté puts it.

"The first thing is that if we don't restore the railway, there will be no VIA Rail, no freight, nothing. Right now, that's the heart of the problem," says the mayor.

"I need solidarity from one end of the Gaspé Peninsula to the other. Solidarity must not be one-sided. I want us to remain united on the ultimate goal of rebuilding the rail line to Gaspé, and that's where I'm hearing less. And that's where I'm getting tired," notes the elected official.

Mr. Juneau, who was a regular user until the service ended in Gaspé 14 years ago, assures that he will convey the message to the coalition.



The goal remains to have the rail line rehabilitated all the way to Gaspé.

Photo: N. Sergerie

1993, a slow start before an intense finish

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – Year 1993 was marked by varying currents. The beginning of the year was rather even, news-wise, but the last three months were incredibly busy, with federal elections followed by municipal elections and the passing of Gerard D. Levesque at the provincial level. That is not counting dark police reports.

**Vol 19, No 1
January 10, 1993**

- In issue 1, dated January 10, “First baby born on the 2nd (of January) in Maria, and on the 3rd in Gaspé” reports on babies Valerie Loubert, in Maria, and Cecile Joncas, in Gaspé. “Sex shows cause furor in Cascapedia”, the shows being held at Cascapedia Bar, and “Fire forces evacuation in New Carlisle”, as the blaze destroyed the Lucky Dollar store on Vimy street, also make the front-page.

**Vol 19, No 2
January 17, 1993**

- “Don’t count on Sunday shopping” headlines issue 2, dated January 17. Most Gaspé Peninsula stores will remain closed on Sunday despite new regulations opening that door. “Fire at Gaspé airport”, “Taxes going down in New Carlisle”, Orléans Express “Bus routes won’t be cut”, “Young Gaspé artist (Tara Kelly) displays work at Carleton gallery” and Quebec Games’ “Torch bearers wanted in Gaspé” complete page 1.

**Vol 19, No 3
January 24, 1993**

- In issue 3, dated January 24, “Fort Prevel gets \$3 million facelift” and “Roch ‘Moïse’ Thériault gets life term in murder case” make the headlines. Moïse, a former cult leader near Saint-Jogues, is guilty of the 1988 murder of Solange Boilard, in Ontario. “Vandalism forces York rink to close for two days”, “New Carlisle defends hiring practices” because an employee lives in Bonaventure and



Gaspesian awarded the Order of Canada
Wilfred Carter, (pictured on the right) a former Gaspesian who headed the Atlantic Salmon Federation for 21 years, will receive the Order of Canada.

“Percé businessman (Gilles Jean) gets four months for assault” also make page 1. A new chronicle reports on Jersey and Guernsey’s presence in Quebec.

**Vol 19, No 4
January 31, 1993**

- “Community honours Albert Patterson”, executive director of CASA and president of Wakeham/York Festival, for his work, headlines issue 4, dated January 31. “200 fishermen set to lose their (cod) licences”, “Percé TD bank shuts down”, “YNN (Youth News Network) may find its way into Gaspé schools” and “Community holds its breath for 10-year-old boy”, that young boy is Shigawake’s Ryan Sullivan, also make page 1 titles. Inside, conductor Warren MacKenzie recently made his last trip for VIA Rail.

**Vol 19, No 5
February 7, 1993**

- “Councillor will seek Gaspé’s break-up”, as resigning councillor Conrad Cloutier commits to the separation of Rivière-au-Renard, headlines issue 5, dated February 7. “Hall river dam could reopen”, “Hydro Québec decision eagerly awaited” about its Bonaventure office closure, “Quebec Games could be in danger” because of the archery site debate, and “Douglstown (French) school faces uncertain future” because of low enrolment, also make page 1.

**Vol 19, No 6
February 14, 1993**

- “New Richmond: talks break up”, between the Town and its employees, and “Gaspé loses 5 jobs, Bonaventure untouched” in Hydro Québec’s reorganization, lead issue 6, dated February 14. A photo shows the remains of the old Route 6 bridge in Bonaventure. “Former employee (Howard Martin) wants an inquiry at Mawiomi”, after his dismissal, “Ice fishing on the river”, “Gaspé gets an ultimatum” in the archery site controversy and “Students plan 30-hour famine” to raise money for Third World countries also make page 1 titles. Inside, readers see “The Budds (Burns and Billy) run a ‘loose housing’ farm”.

**Vol 19, No 7
February 21, 1993**



William Sams, Joe Patterson and Fred Sams discussing their times following their attempt at earning a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records.

- “It’s official: Royal Theatre will reopen” in New Carlisle and “Stone Consolidated shuts down for one month” due to low orders, headline issue 7, dated February 21. “Abuse survivor, a big mystery” in St. Jules, “Recruitment in health institutions still elusive”, “Quebec Games’ last obstacles are now cleared”, “Belle Anse School opens its facilities for polyvalent students” and “Gaspé forced to pay \$70,000” to La Peninsule School Board which contested its buildings’ evaluation also make page 1.

**Vol 19, No 8
February 28, 1993**

- “Recruitment problems won’t be solved overnight, MD warns” and “Teenager killed in ski accident at Pin Rouge, Station not at fault, coroner says” headline issue 8, dated February 28. Marie-Ève Cyr, 14, died of her injuries after deviating from the run and hitting a stump. “Markets dictate shut-down” at Stone-Consolidated, “Delton Sams may run again for Liberals in Gaspé”, “The Maison Blanche Hotel will be rebuilt” in New Carlisle and “Ice and snow delay VIA trains” also make page 1.

**Vol 19, No 9
March 7, 1993**

- In issue 9, dated March 7, readers see “15 injured in New Carlisle bus crash”, as an Orléans coach smashed a school bus, and “Fire destroys NRHS”, New Richmond High

School on March 4, as headlines. Inside, friends, family members and relatives pay tribute to Ryan Sullivan, 10, who sadly passed away.

**Vol 19, No 10
March 14, 1993**

- “Community rallies together after fire” headlines issue 10, released on March 14. Students are dispatched to four locations. The school will be rebuilt. “CN cuts may affect the Gaspé in more than one way”, as CN considers selling its Gaspé Peninsula line, Gaspé’s “Hospital can’t request bilingual staff, language office rules”, “Matapedia man killed in (Campbellton) train crash” and “Two men arrested in Matapedia – wanted for murder in Ontario” also make page 1.

**Vol 19, No 11
March 21, 1993**

- “Arson suspected at NRHS”, according to the Sûreté du Québec, “Gruesome twosome?”, a follow up on the arrest of two men near Matapedia who are suspected of murder in Ontario and “Police investigate possible fraud” of about \$578,000 make the cover the front-page of issue 11, dated March 21. The fraud has not led to charges, but the suspect is a broker. The victim is deceased. Inside, the Gaspesia-the Islands School Board placed seventh out of 36 Quebec school boards offering English education. Readers also see a report featuring New Richmond children Taylor and Brendon Budd, affected by immune deficiencies.

**Vol 19, No 12
March 28, 1993**

- In issue 12, dated March 28, readers see “Seniors bid for spot in Guinness Book of World Records”, as Gaspé’s William Sams, Joe Patterson and Fred Sams think they are the oldest men to have finished a winter triathlon.

From Page 13

“Maltby and Gaunt ready for their trial”, New Carlisle “Jail director (Guy Coulombe) retires after 34 years” and “Darryl Gray names top (riding’s) Canadians for commemorative medals” also make page 1.

Vol 19, No 13
April 4, 1993

- “CCQ office will close June 30” in Gaspé, “And now... the uniforms” of the Quebec Games cover most of the front-page of issue 13, dated April 4. “Low-cost housing sought” in New Carlisle and New Richmond High “Students settle into new routine” also appear on page 1.

Vol 19, No 14
April 11, 1993

- Port Daniel’s “Legrand Hotel still standing... but for how long?” presents the state of the former inn, as local citizen Suzanne Langlois says it is salvageable despite being abandoned since 1977. “Pin Rouge: the beginning of the end”, as debtors remove equipment, Martin “Cauvier seeking Liberal nomination”, and “Fish plants will have to import cod” also make page 1 of issue number 14, released on April 11.

Vol 19, No 15
April 18, 1993

- “Only 500 deer left in the Gaspé” and “Micmacs block bridge” in support to other New Brunswick Natives who blocked roads, make most of the front-page of issue 15, dated April 18. “Delton Sams announces he will run for the Liberals” and “Back from war-torn Somalia”, an article about seaman Bobby Prentice, also make page 1.

Vol 19, No 16
April 25, 1993

- Issue 16, dated April 25, shows “The Nutcracker: A classy performance by Les Petits ballets” in New Carlisle. “Sign law changes get cautious welcome”, an amendment to Bill 178 to allow English commercial signs if French is bigger, makes the other headline. Charles-Eugène “Marin will back Jean Charest, (Darryl)



Shigawake-Port Daniel school hosts annual public speaking contest.

Gray remains uncommitted”, “Volunteers are wanted for the Quebec Games”, “New Richmond will hold a summer festival in June” and “René versus the nasty man”, by Gérard Poirier, also make page 1 titles.

Vol 19, No 17
May 2, 1993

- “Bell rings for the last time!” at Douglstown school, “Symposium on drug addiction will be held in Carleton” and “Think globally, act locally”, a photo and caption showing youths Andrew and Ian Gilker and Paul Meanwell with bags full of garbage picked up over only two blocks, headline issue 17, dated May 2.

Vol 19, No 18
May 9, 1993

- “Drug bust at Gaspé CEGEP nets 5 arrests” and “Beluga whale found on Port Daniel beach” by James Almond, fill most of the cover of issue 18, dated May 9. “Gaspé director general (Henri Bernier) hit with \$100,000 suit”, “Father charged with baby’s death in Chandler”, “New Brunswick rumbling (from Belledune) has echoes this side of the Bay” and “Gaspé PC secures Charest slate, vote split in Bonaventure” also make page 1.

Vol 19, No 19
May 16, 1993

- “Our children don’t do drugs... or do they?” and “Shigawake-Port Daniel school holds annual public speaking contest” headline issue 19, dated May 16. “Robert Levesque named judge in New Carlisle”, and Embert Whittom in Percé, “Fundraising for two

children”, namely Brendon and Taylor Budd, “CASA holds AGM” and “Don’t bother calling this New Richmond man” because of problems with Hydro Québec, also make page 1.

Vol 19, No 20
May 23, 1993

- Escuminac “Students welcome French penpals” from St. Marcel, and “Patrick Gagnon gets Liberal nomination” en route to federal elections, headline issue 20, dated May 23. New Carlisle’s “Doug Smollett retires from town hall”, “Gaspé Cegep holds award night” and “Plants won’t import cod after all” also make the front page.

Vol 19, No 21
May 30, 1993

- “Doctors reject midwife project” at Maria hospital, “Angry fishermen occupy (Fisheries and Oceans Canada) office” in Gaspé and three Gaspesian ladies who attended a Down’s Syndrome conference in Moncton headline issue 21, dated May 30. Other page 1 titles include “Cauvier pulls out in Gaspé” (Liberal convention), “Darlene Johnstone becomes new CASA president”, “Truckers block St. Edgar road in protest” and “CASA, School board won’t support GTA president’s twinning idea”, GTA being the Gaspesia Teachers’ Association, whose president, Howard Miller, favours student exchanges in the same neighbourhood.

Vol 19, No 22
June 6, 1993

- “Route 132 blocked in Les Méchins, Newport and New

Richmond” by angry fish plant workers and truckers dominates the front page of issue 22, dated June 6. “Darryl Gray runs again in Bonaventure”, “New Richmond High ready next year” and “Daycare workers hit picket lines” appear as smaller titles.

Vol 19, No 23
June 13, 1993

- “New Carlisle threatens to close St-Elzéar road, repairs would cost taxpayers 1 million dollars”, “Stanley Cup fever hits Gaspé”, about the last victory of the Montreal Canadiens latest victory, and “Going... gone!” headline issue 23, dated June 13. The “Going” title deals with a Caplan fishing boat being sunk for scuba divers. “Vimy Street sewerage work begins this summer”, “Shigawake Port Daniel school gets major face-lift” and “Countdown to the Quebec Games in Gaspé” make other front-page titles. Inside, Stéphane Giroux signs his final articles after accepting a position with Radio-Canada.

Vol 19, No 24
June 20, 1993

- “Gaspé: Fires still a big problem” and “Loyalist Village opened for 4th season” headline issue 24, dated June 20. “Art exhibit at Thompson House” and former councillor Charlie “O’Brien honoured by Town of Gaspé” also appear on page 1.

Vol 19, No 25
June 27, 1993

- “New Carlisle: Spooktacular new feature at Hamilton Museum” headlines issue 25,

dated June 27. The smaller page 1 titles include “Local minister bids farewell”, namely New Richmond-based Bev Brazier, “Adams Motel major sponsor of Jeux du Québec Games” and “St. Pat’s School closes its doors forever” in Douglstown. Inside, Gesgapegiag’s Allister Martin releases his album “The trail of tears”.

Vol 19, No 26
July 4, 1993

- Issue 26, dated July 4 headlines with “New Carlisle – final resting place of John Hall Kelly”, as the former lawyer and businessman, who died in Ireland while serving as Canada’s High Commissioner, was buried in his hometown 50 years after his passing. Irene Dallain reports that his ashes were returned from overseas. New Richmond’s “Race track – new and improved”, Japan’s “Iwaki mayor receives official greeting”, “Opening evening a success for (Normand) Desjardins exhibit”, “Local man (Fred Kraenzel) off to China”, “Gaspé Poly holds graduation” and “BPS grads of ’93 start their journey” also make page 1.

Vol 19, No 27
July 11, 1993

- “Great Day for the country”, “Well known politician and historian dies”, namely former minister Bona Arsenaault, and “Outlook dismal for summer jobs” headline issue 27, dated July 11. “Centennial of St. James Anglican celebrated” in Hope Town, “Canteen craze hits Gaspé” and Heritage walk starting soon” in New Carlisle also appear on page 1.

Vol 19, No 28
July 18, 1993

- “Inquiry held into NRHS fire”, as Quebec Fire Commissioner Cyrille Delage recommends charges against a 14-year-old student, headlines issue 28, dated July 18. Bonnie Schofield’s “Doll Heaven” in New Richmond and “New bowling alley to open in September” in Gaspé also make

big titles. “The adventure begins for François Roy”, a Port Daniel car racer, “The Campbell reunion set to start”, “More people visiting the region”, “Local racers drive to win” at the Baie des Chaleur Rally, and New Carlisle “Royals strike out” in exhibition game against 4 Aces make smaller titles.

**Vol 19, No 29
July 25, 1993**

- “Man drowns saving nephew” in St. Jules, the man being Peter Labrecque, and “New church for Sandy Beach” as Murdochville’s St. Phillip’s church is moved successfully, headline issue 29, dated July 25. “Elections slated for July 27” in Gesgapegiag, “16th Homecoming off to a soggy start” and Gaspé “Polyvalent holds reunion” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 30
August 1, 1993**

- “Cross-country cyclist due to arrive in Gaspé in September”, is 74-year-old Kelowna resident Charlotte Hamlin, and “Record breaking crowds” at Malbay Festival headline issue 30, dated August 1. A picture-caption shows a torch bearer for Gaspé’s Quebec Games. “Over 300 register for the Campbell reunion” and “New chief (Bernard Jerome) and council elected” in Gesgapegiag also make the front-page.

**Vol 19, No 31
August 8, 1993**

- “Quebec Games: Rain doesn’t dampen spirits at opening ceremonies” and “Dr. Marin confident of re-election”, an article signed by newly appointed news editor Cynthia Dow, headline issue 31, dated August 8. Hockey player “Paul Willett: dreams can come true”, “Local (Budd) children still waiting for transplant”, “Channel Islands Society hears about German occupation” and “Mayor tours Canada from coast to coast”, New Richmond’s Jean-Marie Jobin, appear on page 1 as well.

**Vol 19, No 32
August 15, 1993**

- “Quebec Games officially end”, “New Richmond/Chandler: mills face tough times” and “Let the music begin!” at the Irish Days Festivities, headline issue 32, dated August 15. “Equality (Keith Henderson) leader visits the coast”, Quebec Games’s “Lucky Loto winners”, the Waldon Gaul’s family, and “Gaspé Deanery holds bicentennial family gathering” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 33
August 22, 1993**

- “Enlargement approved for Maria Hospital” and “Agriculture Fair held” in New Richmond make the headlines of issue 33, dated August 22. “Local (Gaspé) group opposes toxic spraying”, “Chandler mill and union come to terms”, Bloc québécois leader Lucien “Bouchard visits Bonaventure County” and “MP Gray optimistic about County’s future” also make page 1 titles.

**Vol 19, No 34
August 29, 1993**

- Issue 34, dated August 29, shows “They came to remember” and “911 service being arranged” as headlines. The remembrance refers to the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the St. Lawrence, during which 26 ships were sunk off the Gaspé Peninsula coast. “Lobster Plan being developed”, notably to profit from the Free Trade agreement, “Vandals hit Gaspé Elementary School”, “Hydro talks to English customers in Gaspé”, “Gaspé: woodcutters block roads” because the Gaspesia mill reduces its volumes and “Virus alert for beef cattle” also make page 1.

**Vol 19, No 35
September 5, 1993**

- “Levesque’s future uncertain” and “Local fishermen affected by cuts in quota” headline issue 35, dated September 5. Gerard D. Levesque admits that he is battling a “serious illness”, cancer. In fisheries, the “cuts in quota” pertain to cod, whose fall has been visible since 1989. “From Shanghai to Shigawake”, a Chinese couple settling to work at Port



Think globally, act locally...

They’re called the Green Team, and they’re out to send a message about the environment... “We filled this whole thing up just by walking down two blocks, there’s no more room,” says ten-year-old Andrew Gilker, who knocked at SPEC’s door last week with the Green team mates Ian Gilker, 7, and Paul Meanwell, 11. “We want more people, not just us, to do this,” added Paul.

Daniel’s Laboratoire Pélagique, “Lobster marketing plan draws heavy criticism” and “New Richmond man (Troy Mann) to play hockey in Sweden” professionally, also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 36
September 12, 1993**

- Issue 36, dated September 12, headlines with “And they’re off!”, as the federal election date is set for October 25, and “The Budd family return temporarily” to New Richmond while waiting for bone marrow transplant for Brendon and Taylor. “Lobster vote still undecided” about marketing plan, “Increase in tourist numbers across the region”, “Special education advisory committee set to go” and “Cod fishermen looking for work” complete the front-page. Inside, a report shows the good results of the salmon fishery, thanks to the sound management of the Cascapedia Society, a Native-non-Native joint administration.

**Vol 19, No 37
September 19, 1993**

- “VIA service once again threatened”, as the conservative government imposes a \$100 million cut to VIA for the 1995-1997 stretch, and “Regional Health and Social Services office opens” as a separate entity for the Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands, headline issue 37, dated September 19. Federal “Campaign officially launched” in Bonaventure, “Gaspeian heads new Régie”, namely doctor Denis Loiselle, “Gaspé woodcutters back to work”

and “3.2 million dollars for Gaspé municipalities” also make page 1 titles.

**Vol 19, No 38
September 26, 1993**

- Issue 38, dated September 26, headlines with “Cod fishermen seeking answers” and “Lobster marketing plan will come to a vote”. “Bloc Québécois launches campaign in Bonaventure”, “TV episode to be filmed in Chaleur Bay area”, the show being Sketches of our Town, and “Campaign organized to save VIA service” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 39
October 3, 1993**

- “Stone Consolidated workers approve new agreement” and “Campaigners on the move” headline issue 39, released on October 3. “Jersey tour group visits the Gaspé Coast”, “Small is beautiful – Getting started: dreams and risks”, a series about small businesses, “Gaspé MNA backs Daniel Johnson” as leader of Quebec’s Liberal Party, and “Three new exhibits at the Gaspé Museum” also make page 1.

**Vol 19, No 40
October 10, 1993**

- Issue 40, dated October 10, headlines with Jean “Charest comes to the aid of (Darryl) Gray” and “Poll results: Bloc ahead in 5 eastern Quebec counties”, including Bonaventure and Gaspé. “Book, TV put “Moïse” (Therriault) back in the spotlight”, the show being CBC’s Man Alive and

“Levesque and Ryan visit Bonaventure County” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 41
October 17, 1993**

- “Pin Rouge to be run by co-op” and “New mill manager unveils survival strategy”, the manager being Alain Dubuc and the mill being New Richmond’s, make the only front-page titles of issue 41, released on October 17. Part of Mr. Dubuc’s plan rests on investing in a new press.

**Vol 19, No 42
October 24, 1993**

- “Election countdown: Advance polls show great interest”, as candidates organize to get the vote out, and a picture-caption combo showing Halloween décor, make the bulk of the front-page of issue 42, dated October 24. “Levesque replaced by Monique Gagnon-Tremblay” as minister of Finance, “Policeman apologizes to local driver (Bernard Campbell) for inappropriate behaviour” and “Municipal elections on the way” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 43
October 31, 1993**

- Federal election results dominate issue 43, dated October 31, with full results inside: “Bonaventure goes red, the Bloc takes Gaspé”. Patrick Gagnon therefore won in Bonaventure-Magdalen Islands while Yvan Bernier won

From Page 15

in Gaspé. “Three in New Carlisle mayoralty race”, namely Bob Cormier, Barry Tennier and Lynden Bechevaise, “New town hall in Paspebiac officially opened”, “René Lévesque’s boyhood home for sale” and “Step up the search for donor” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 44
November 7, 1993**

- “Interested in autonomy from the grassroots, up!”, a profile of Gaspé Member of Parliament Yvan Bernier, and “Spiny crab may be an alternative for cod fishermen” headline issue 44, dated November 7. “Memories never fade – a tribute to veterans”, a four-page photo supplement, “Regional health board oks committee on English services”, “Brighter outlook for Pin Rouge” and “Japanese film crew will bring Miguasha to Asian TV viewers” also make the front-page.

**Vol 19, No 45
November 14, 1993**

- “Cancer centre in Rimouski gets nod from provincial government” and “Locals shocked by death of hunter”, the hunter being

Carleton’s Yves Deslauriers, 27, who was shot and passed away on the land of Martin Kromberg, headline issue 45, dated November 14. “Municipal elections: some results very close”, In New Carlisle, Barry Tennier won the election, “Fisheries manager (Bernie Brackett) faces big challenges”, and “Historical Society wants Lévesque house protected” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 46
November 21, 1993**

- “Gerard D. 1926-1993”, a headline featuring six photos of the Bonaventure Member of National Assembly, who died on November 17, takes most of the cover of issue 46, dated November 21. He was at the time the longest standing MNA in history, with a 37-year tenure. “Murder in Chandler: family members suspected”, “NR (New Richmond) financial statements show healthy surplus”, “The Legrand hotel to stay in Port Daniel”, “The early Robertsons”, “Cegep program goes co-op” and “School board finishes last year with huge surplus”, complete the main titles.

**Vol 19, No 47
November 28, 1993**

- Issue 47, dated November 28, covers the burial of Gerard D. Levesque at the Paspe-



Gaspésians bid farewell to Gérard D. Levesque.

biac cemetery. Six additional pictures are featured inside. “New Richmond Heritage Centre wants professional administrator”, “Lobster marketing board – Part 1”, “Levesque’s office to be closed” and “New Civil Code brings sweeping changes to every facet of life” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 48
December 5, 1993**

- “Marcel Bujold named Personality of the Year at 6th Gala of Excellence” in Gaspé and “Local impact of health cuts still uncertain” headline issue 48, dated December 5. “New program aims to stem youth exodus”, “Fisheries minister to err on the side of caution” in determining 1994

quotas and “Local construction workers take beef to Québec” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 19, No 49
December 12, 1993**

- “Construction blues strike school sites”, as workers’ demonstrations paralyze New Richmond High School’s reconstruction project, and “Alarming problem of violence against women largely hidden” make the bulk of the front-page of issue 49, dated December 12. Patrick “Gagnon named Parliamentary secretary to (Herb) Gray”, “World-renowned carver and conservationist dies”, namely New Carlisle’s Jean-Paul Dubé, “Atlantic Fisheries Task

Force sets out recommendations”, including quota cuts and plant closures, and “René Lévesque’s home bought by local heritage member” Denis Cloutier also make page 1.

**Vol 19, No 50
December 19, 1993**

- Issue 50, dated December 19, headlines with “Construction sites booming again” and “Carleton to host forum on international economy” on May 27, 1994. “Tis the season for Christmas concerts”, with a photo showing Cascapedia’s Donald Duncan playing mouth organ at 91, also make the front-page. To end the year, SPEC runs a 52-page paper filled with ads for holiday best wishes.

Similarities between 1993 and 2026 include intense news period

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – As mentioned in the first title of this supplement, 1993 started rather routinely, news-wise, only to explode towards the last three months. Of course, the Gaspé-based Quebec Games triggered a peak of activities in the middle of the summer. However, Gaspesian journalists, and their readers, were in for quite a ride in October, November and December.

Think of it: then Member of the National Assembly Gerard D. Levesque, né Joseph Edmond Gerard Dea, adopted by an aunt after the passing of his mother, hence the name change, made farewell appearances that fall, in Pointe-à-la-Croix, Pointe-à-la-Garde and Paspebiac to name a few. His condition was declining steadily, week after week. Citizens and journalists never knew if it would be his last appearance.

Asking him questions became a delicate matter. He made his final public appearance towards the end of October, for the official opening of his hometown Paspebiac’s town hall. He looked at a young CHAU journalist, Christian Thivierge, and told him: “You are arriving and I am leaving”. The passing of Mr. Levesque, who had first been elected in 1956, was covered nationally.

A few days before his November 17 death, two murders occurred in the region, one on November 7 in Carleton and another on November 13 in Chandler. The first slaying was following a much-heralded federal election, during which the Bloc Québécois, a party favouring Quebec’s sovereignty, became the official opposition in Ottawa.

Add to this a set of massive reductions in cod quotas, which were announcing a moratorium, municipal elections and demonstrations that often occur when people are disgruntled, and you have the picture of the fall of 1993.

Journalists and readers are also in for a rough ride in January 2026. Donald Trump’s power trip and its regional implications, the possible amalgamation of the Gaspé Peninsula ridings, the resignation of premier François Legault, the constant fight to get normal interregional transport and the challenges surrounding the delivery of fair health services represent issues that trigger stress more often than not.



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The fishing industry calls for the return of the Fisheries Fund

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ— Leaders in the fishing industry are urging the federal government to relaunch the Fisheries Fund, a \$42.8-million program launched in 2019 in partnership with the Quebec government that is set to expire in March.

The fund is used to stimulate innovation in Quebec's fish and seafood sector and support its development. It is financed 70% by the federal government and 30% by the provincial government.

Members of the Quebec Fishing Industry Association (AQIP) adopted a resolution calling for the continuation of the fund at their annual general meeting in Quebec City in early January.

The Bloc Québécois had hoped for an extension in the fall economic update presented by Finance Minister Mark Carney last November, but the program was not renewed.

"AQIP members unanimously supported a resolution calling on governments to bail out the Quebec Fisheries Fund. I support them in their request," says Alexis Deschênes, Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Lis-



Photo: Courtesy of Alexis Deschênes

AQIP Executive Director Serge Fortin, President Olivier Dupuis, and Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes.

tuguj, who says he will take the issue to Ottawa.

The funding envelope is now empty, and industry representatives say the program must continue for several reasons.

"We are in a context of global uncertainty. There are still tariffs from China. Will there be tariffs on seafood products from the United States? We don't know. In the current changing environment, we need to strengthen our ca-

pabilities, and that means innovating and modernizing our fisheries sector. Now is definitely not the time for the federal government to pull back on innovation," says the MP, recalling Mark Carney's campaign promise to increase the fund's budget by 20%.

According to Mr. Deschênes, several projects are set ready to be submitted by the industry.

Although the fund was not renewed through the budget

process, the federal government has suggested it could be extended administratively.

"There are certainly ways to find funds within the huge government apparatus. We need to see the political will. Why did Mr. Carney promise during the campaign to increase funding by 20% and there is nothing in the budget? That raises questions for us. There will be no budget in the spring. It was a bad signal not to include it in the budget," he adds.

The Atlantic provinces also benefit from a separate fisheries fund, which had a much larger budget of \$400 million.

That program is also set to expire on March 31.

The MP notes that Atlantic Canada has been able to move faster than Quebec thanks to that larger funding envelope.

"Indeed, the Maritimes are ahead in terms of modernization and innovation. We must ensure that Quebec gets its fair share and that the Quebec fishing industry is not the poor relation of federal investments," Mr. Deschênes says.

Previous statements

This is not the first time the Bloc Québécois has raised the

issue with the federal government.

Last November, Quebec's fishing community used a visit by Bloc leader Yves-François Blanchet to the Magdalen Islands and Gaspé to reiterate its call for the program's continuation.

Mr. Blanchet met with stakeholders to hear firsthand how crucial the fund has been to the industry.

At that time, the Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie (Gaspé Peninsula Captains and Owners Association) pointed out that the fund had enabled innovation in the industry, both in terms of harvesting and processing. These are things that have been useful for many fleets.

The association also stressed that the industry's current priority is to ensure access to competitive markets in order to maximize landing and export values.

The mayor of Gaspé had also indicated then that Quebec was prepared to do its share following discussions with the province's ministers responsible for fisheries and regional economic development, provided the federal government also committed.

Higher prices more than offset snow crab quota cuts

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEWPORT — Quebec crab fishermen had an acceptable season in 2025, despite concerns stemming from the significant quota cuts announced in late winter and early spring.

The overall 21.9% decrease in landings was more than offset by higher prices, resulting in consolidated revenues up 36.64% compared to 2024.

The Gaspé Peninsula retained the province-wide lead in revenues, but not in volume.

The quota cuts varied across fishing areas, but were widespread, affecting the Upper and Middle North Shore, the Lower North Shore, the Gaspé Peninsula, the Lower St. Lawrence, and the Magdalen Islands.

Meanwhile, crab fishermen in all these sectors benefited from increased revenue, with the exception of those dependent on catches made outside Quebec by local fishermen.

This category represented approximately 523 metric tons and around \$8 million of all



Photo: G. Gagné

Just days before the official beginning of the winter, crab boats like the Poisson Lune, were carried out of the water by the Newport travel lift and parked in the local fishing boat wintering area.

landings of the species in Quebec processing plants in 2025. In 2024, these figures reached 1,368 metric tons and \$12 million.

Overall, snow crab catches by Quebec crab fishermen reached \$155 million in 2025, a significant increase com-

pared to the \$111 million of 2024. This occurred even though catches fell from 14,736 to 11,505 metric tons year-over-year, a decrease of 3,231 metric tons.

Some areas were more affected than others, notes economist Simon Desrochers of the

federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

"For example, the quota was down 34% in Zone 12 (...) A total value of \$155 million is better than the 2024 results, but less than the average of the last 10 years. Before the season, there were many concerns because of the American tariffs. The worst was avoided," he says.

Several factors contributed to stronger prices for fishermen in 2025, despite the significant reduction in quotas.

"There was a lack of frozen crab inventories at the beginning of the season. The fishery was open in Alaska, but there was no impact on the price here. Exchange rates helped, remaining at between \$1.45 and \$1.38 (Canadian dollar per US dollar). There was a significant price difference (for fishermen, from one area to another). There was a difference of \$2 per pound between the North Shore (on the one hand), and then the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands (on the other). For the

Gaspé Peninsula and the Islands, crab fishermen started fishing at the beginning of April, when the exchange rate was more favourable," explains Mr. Desrochers.

Quebec's overall catch of 11,505 metric tons was by far the smallest of the last decade, far from the record-breaking 21,794 tons of 2017. That same year, revenues climbed to \$234 million, a figure that would translate to \$296 million in real terms, i.e., in 2025 dollars, adjusted for inflation.

The very difficult year of 2023 generated consolidated revenues of only \$89 million for Quebec crab fishermen, the lowest of the last decade, even though the very generous quotas resulted in the second-highest landings of the 2016-2025 period, at 16,820 metric tons.

By Sector

In the Gaspé Peninsula, the catch decreased by 29.7%,

Cont'd on page 18

with the volume dropping from 6,547 to 4,598 metric tons. Revenues nevertheless increased by a substantial 46.8%, jumping from \$47 million in 2024 to \$69 million in 2025. Data from the most recent season remain provisional.

It was on the North Shore that the quota reductions had the least impact. On the Upper and Middle North Shore, the decrease in catches was limited to 2.5%, with catches falling from 3,469 to 3,382 metric tons between 2024 and 2025. On the Lower North Shore, the impact was 7.2%, with catches dropping

from 1,472 to 1,366 metric tons. When these figures are combined to cover the area from Tadoussac to Blanc-Sablon, the decrease in catches reached 4%.

In terms of North Shore revenues, those of the Upper and Middle North Shore increased from \$26 million to \$37 million between 2024 and 2025, while those of the Lower North Shore rose from \$11 million to \$15 million.

Combined, the value of snow crab catches from Tadoussac to Blanc-Sablon increased from \$37 million to \$52 million, a rise of 40.5%.

The amalgamated volume of catches from the whole North Shore region reached 4,748 metric tons, slightly

more than in the Gaspé Peninsula.

In the Magdalen Islands, quota reductions were greater than on the North Shore, at 15%, from 1,880 to 1,636 metric tons, but revenue growth was also more pronounced, from \$16 million to \$26 million, a jump of 62.5%.

Prices balanced the situation

For years, snow crab prices have been far more volatile than those of lobster, for example, primarily due to significant fluctuations in quotas and the influence of the global market. The period from 2023 to 2025 clearly illustrates this trend.

Lighthouse transfers from DFO to National Defence

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Cap-des-Rosiers lighthouse has “changed owners” following the transfer of the Canadian Coast Guard from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to National Defence, however, in terms of day-to-day management, the move has no impact on the historic infrastructure.

“I don't think it really has any impact,” says Alexis Deschênes, Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj.

This transfer simply brings about a change in the parties involved in the file.

“I have new contacts in Ottawa, but there is a member of the Minister of Defence's cabinet who is from Chandler. That has helped a little,” says the elected official.

The ultimate goal is to better showcase the lighthouse.

“The ideal scenario would be to transfer it to Parks Canada because that would be in line with their natural vocation and it's right next to Forillon Park. The lighthouse is not considered surplus. It is still considered operational. The Coast Guard has an interest in keeping it,” explains the MP.

The lighthouse is classified at the same level as the Parliament of Canada for its heritage value.

However, volunteers are struggling to maintain the site and receive only a small amount of funding to organize activities.

After the work done over the past two years, the lighthouse does not require any additional major repairs.

“There are still things to be

done to seal cracks in the foundation, but we're not talking about millions of dollars. The idea is to keep up the pressure and make the federal government understand that this is a heritage monument and that it can be better promoted. Integrating it into Parks Canada would make sense. Otherwise, we need to find ways to give more latitude and more financial resources to promote it,” says Mr. Deschênes.

The Department of Defence states that “the established inspection cycle does not require a thorough inspection of the structure every year, so no inspection was completed in 2025. Major work to waterproof the lighthouse was completed in 2025, in accordance with the specifications,” it writes.

The mayor repeats the same request

The mayor of Gaspé, who has been calling for the transfer of ownership to Parks Canada for years, is renewing

his request.

“Is it the Department of Defence's priority to maintain heritage monuments? I don't think it's any more of a priority than it was at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The real federal owner whose mission it is to do so is Parks Canada. We are making the same request that the lighthouse be transferred from the Coast Guard to Parks Canada, whose mission is to ensure the maintenance, management, and preservation of heritage,” comments Daniel Côté.

The elected official intends to quickly discuss the issue with the stakeholders involved, including the lighthouse management committee, and to speak again with MP Alexis Deschênes to ensure that the message gets through to the department.

“This will ensure that we can continue to operate and perform minimum maintenance on the lighthouse. It is certainly not a priority for the Department of Defence, but as the owner, it has a duty to maintain it,” says the mayor.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The Cap-des-Rosiers lighthouse is in good condition, according to the Coast Guard.

Sharp rise in unemployment in December

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – An increase in the labour force combined with a decrease in the number of jobs filled has led to a sharp rise in the unemployment rate, which stood at 9.3% in December in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It was 7.4% in November.

The labour force—that is, people who are working or looking for work—increased by 600 in December to reach 39,800.

The loss of 300 jobs and an increase of 800 unemployed people explain this 1.9% month-over-month increase in the rate.

As a result, 36,000 people were working last month: 29,700 full-time (-300) and 6,400 part-time (+700). The number of unemployed reached 3,700.

Better than in December 2024

Despite this month-over-month increase, the employment picture is better than in December 2024.

The region has 200 more people working and 800 fewer unemployed, with 35,800 people employed.

However, there were more full-time jobs but fewer part-time workers. The unemployment rate was 11.2% a year ago.

Percé requests another flight ban this summer

Nelson Sergerie

PERCÉ – The town of Percé is once again asking Transport Canada to ban aircraft flights over the municipality's natural borough next summer.

Last year, federal authorities did not respond to a similar request.

“We are resubmitting the request. Last summer, there were no crashes like there were in 2024. But there were several helicopter landings and flights by all kinds of small aircraft, including motorized hang gliders and single-seat mini-helicopters. It's not safe when the village is packed with tourists and these aircraft are flying over campsites and houses,” says Mayor Daniel Leboeuf.

The Town is requesting a 2.5-nautical-mile protection zone centred on Percé rock.

Such a ban would force aircrafts to fly over Bonaventure Island, the Geopark, and the historic centre at an altitude of 3,000 feet.

“If there is ever a plane, helicopter, or other aircraft above the village, they will be able to glide and land in the old fields to the east or west. They would not be forced to land on the village,” the mayor explains.

The mayor hopes that things will move forward this year, as the resolution has been sent to Alexis Deschênes, the federal Member of Parliament for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj.

He is counting on him to finally win the case. “When he has an issue, he doesn't hesitate to speak up,” says the mayor.

Despite positive net migration, the population of the Gaspé Peninsula is declining

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Even though the Gaspé Peninsula has had positive net migration for the ninth consecutive year, the demographic challenge remains, as there are more deaths than births in the region.

Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, interregional net migration showed a gain of 387 people from other regions of Quebec, according to an analysis by Stratégie Vivre en Gaspésie based on data released on January 14 by the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

All MRCs recorded net gains. “We had just under 2,000 newcomers and just over 1,500 people left the region, which brings us to a positive balance again this year,” says Strategy Director Danik O’Connor.

Quality of life, employment opportunities, and targeted promotional campaigns continue to attract



Photo: Stratégie Vivre en Gaspésie

There is still a long way to go to ensure population stability in the Gaspé Peninsula.

people to the region.

“Each MRC offers personalized support to help newcomers settle in, and that makes all the difference,” believes Mr. O’Connor.

The strategy has also been refined to target specific labour shortages, particularly in health and social services, education, and public administration.

“We are putting a lot of effort into filling these positions because residents want to take advantage of these services,” he adds.

On the ground, the housing crisis has eased somewhat, with most newcomers able to find accommodations, even if, as Mr. O’Connor notes, “it’s not their dream home.”

Efforts to stimulate housing construction and availability are beginning to yield results.

Nothing is guaranteed

Despite the positive migration balance, the Gaspé Peninsula recorded approximately 1,100 deaths compared with only 500 births during the same period, resulting in a natural population decline of about 600 people.

To simply maintain the current population, the region would need at least the same level of interregional or international migration year after year.

This long-standing reality in the Gaspé Peninsula is now emerging at the provincial level as well.

“This year is the first time there have been more deaths than births. Quebec as a whole is in natural decline, like many industrialized countries. To achieve popula-

tion growth, immigrants are becoming a major solution, along with increasing the fertility of the population,” Mr. O’Connor explains.

Government policies aimed at reducing immigration are therefore expected to have a noticeable impact on Quebec’s demographic outlook in the coming years.

The strategy will survive

Provincial funding to the Table des préfets de la Gaspésie has been reduced, affecting the budgets allocated to organizations such as Stratégie Vivre en Gaspésie.

“We have proven ourselves and we feel that local stakeholders and elected officials are with us in finding solutions, despite the economic situation. Demographics will remain a major issue for the next few years. The region continues to experience natural decline,” says Mr. O’Connor.

Chandler: average tax bill increase of \$114

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER – The Town of Chandler has adopted a 2026 budget totalling \$14.9 million, an increase of \$900,000 that will translate into an average tax bill increase of \$114 per property.

This increase is based on an average assessment of \$277,088. The base rate remains unchanged at 59.5 cents per \$100 of assessment, but bills for various services will increase in 2026.

“The MRC’s share is increasing by \$217,000, and waste management by \$112,000. We have to pay for that. It amounts to a \$15 increase for waste management, \$2 for the water system, and \$20 for sewers,” explains Mayor Gilles Daraïche.

To limit the tax increase, efforts have been made to review expenditure items.

“I always ask the finance people to do an exercise to avoid a big increase for people.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Chandler residents will see an average impact of \$114 on their tax bills in 2026, according to Mayor Gilles Daraïche.

We know that the town is very expensive and we want to spare taxpayers,” says Mr. Daraïche.

Three-year capital plan

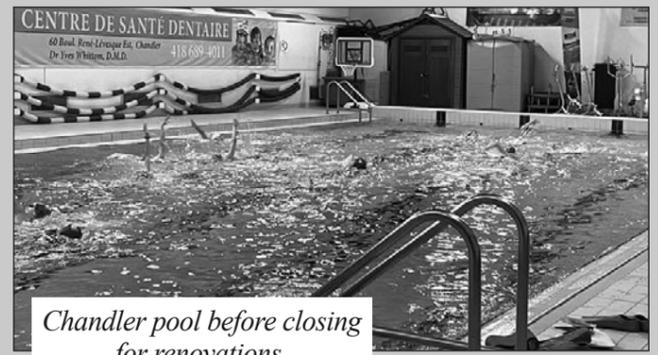
Planned projects for this year include repairs to the roof

and heating system at the Newport arena, the purchase of equipment for the performance hall recently taken over by the municipality, and improvements to municipal facilities. The \$60,000 extension of Rue du Parc in the industrial park is also included.

“We have targeted 11 new lots in the industrial park to attract other businesses that will generate tax revenue. We will recoup our investment fairly quickly,” believes the mayor.

The Newport neighbourhood water and sewer system project, which was removed from the plan last year, has been put back into the program.

“This is an issue that has been discussed for several years, but it is a necessary and even mandatory intervention. It is an intervention that was estimated at \$12 million, and with the increase we are seeing, it may be \$15 million. And if we wait, it will continue to increase,” says Mr. Daraïche.



Chandler pool before closing for renovations.

Photo: Archives

Another delay for Chandler's swimming pool

Nelson Sergerie

CHANDLER – Chandler’s swimming pool, which has been closed since January 2025 for major renovations, is now scheduled to open at the end of February.

The complex, located in Mgr Sévigny High School and also serving as the municipal swimming pool, was originally expected to reopen in the fall of 2025, at the start of the school year.

The René-Lévesque School Service Centre says it has encountered several unforeseen construction issues, including modifications and adjustments to the structure, plumbing, and electrical systems, challenges that are not unusual for major work on a 50-year-old building.

According to the school service centre, the contractor also reported labour issues within his team and among subcontractors.

Despite the delays, officials say the initial \$5.2-million budget will be respected. “The project is in the finalization and cleanup phase. Everything indicates that delivery will take place as mentioned,” the centre’s communications department writes in an email.

In addition to the renovation of the pool itself, work was also carried out in the locker rooms and on certain mechanical equipment. The nearest swimming pools are located in Gaspé or Bonaventure, more than 90 kilometres from Chandler.

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Hydrocarbons to be removed from the former MTQ site

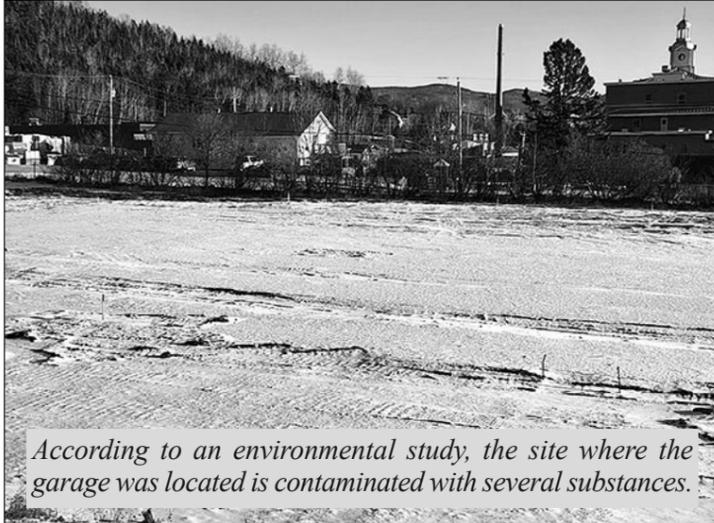
NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Hydrocarbons have been found on the site of the former Quebec Ministry of Transportation service centre in downtown Gaspé.

A study was conducted this fall to assess the presence of pollutants prior to beginning the site's decontamination project. An environmental characterization study was commissioned from the firm Englobe.

Unsurprisingly, the study confirmed the presence of contaminants directly linked to the site's historical use by the Ministry of Transportation (MTQ), particularly for mechanical and storage activities. The areas most affected are located at the rear of the property, where the former mechanical garage, gas pump, and old signage warehouse were located.

Hydrocarbons, i.e., oil and fuel residues, volatile organic compounds, i.e., substances from solvents or fuels, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons—compounds linked to petroleum products and com-



According to an environmental study, the site where the garage was located is contaminated with several substances.

Photo: N. Sergerie

bustion—were detected.

According to the Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI), which manages the site,

"these contaminants are well known and managed as part of environmental interventions. Before any reuse, a comprehensive decontamination plan will be implemented to eliminate these substances and ensure environmental compliance," the organization writes in an email. Despite three requests, it did not provide the report assessing the level of contamination.

In addition to hydrocarbons, a copper concentration above the threshold was also found in a trench near the former garage.

In the groundwater, copper was detected in a single observation well located near the former abrasives warehouse, while the other five wells meet the applicable criteria. The SQI mentions that this groundwater does not reach the municipal water supply system.

"Rigorous monitoring of groundwater quality will be carried out to ensure that the

situation remains under control," writes the SQI.

The SQI assures that the contamination is concentrated in the areas identified by the study and will be fully treated. These measures ensure that the site will be safe and compliant before any reuse.

A remediation plan is being developed and will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks for approval. The scope and costs will be specified at a later date. Work is expected to begin in late spring 2026 and take several months to complete.

The contaminants discovered during the study are in addition to the presence of asbestos on the site, which had already delayed demolition. In October 2024, the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) intervened and asked the project manager to

modify the demolition procedure to take into account all the risks associated with this type of work in relation to the existing buildings and the materials found on site.

The centre, built in the 1950s, contained lead and asbestos.

The SQI expects to be able to begin the process of returning the land once decontamination work is completed.

The town of Gaspé conducted public consultations on the redevelopment of the 31,700-square-metre site, with several ideas but no clear consensus. Proposals included a community hub, a knowledge hub, sports facilities, green spaces, housing and commercial development.

Zoning in the town centre allows for many things, including housing, green space, commercial development, or even a knowledge hub for the area near the CEGEP.

Paspébiac: room for another grocery store

NELSON SERGERIE

PASPÉBIAC – A study commissioned by the Town of Paspébiac concludes that there is sufficient demand to support a second grocery store in the municipality.

In November, the town hired Demarcom to analyze the local market's economic capacity to accommodate an additional grocery retailer.

Paspébiac is currently served by a 26,000-square-foot IGA grocery store. A some of approximately \$4 million was invested in 2012 to expand the building by 9,000 square feet.

"We received the findings of the research report in early January. There is potential for a second grocery supermarket in Paspébiac of a similar size. Demand exceeds supply, which would justify the opening of a new grocery store," says Mayor Jérémy Laplante, based on the document.

According to the study, the proposed store could range between 20,000 and 30,000 square feet.

"The town will send letters and copies of the report to po-



Photo: N. Sergerie

There is potential for a second grocery store in Paspébiac.

tential developers in the coming weeks to attract them to our area," the mayor adds.

One developer showed interest shortly after the study was launched. A piece of land was targeted and the developer attempted to acquire it, but negotiations failed and the project was put on hold.

"There is interest from the private sector, and now we need to facilitate access to land. Personally, I am prioritizing attracting a developer to another location, and I am looking into the possibility of submitting a proposal to the council for the town to acquire buildings, by

mutual agreement or expropriation, in order to resell them to developers," says the mayor.

Now that the initial developer appears to be stepping back, the town is issuing a public call to other developers and even grocery chains in hopes of attracting new interest.

For the time being, the municipality is not setting a deadline for the arrival of a new food retailer.

The mayor declined to identify specific potential locations to avoid triggering bidding wars, but notes that Route 132 remains the most suitable corridor for such an establishment.

Inauguration of Social housing in Saint-François-d'Assise

Nelson Sergerie

SAINT-FRANÇOIS-D'ASSISE – The expansion of Villa Rayon de Soleil in Saint-François-d'Assise was inaugurated on November 28, with 12 rooms and two studios added to the nine existing social and affordable housing units.

The work carried out on the complex, which is reserved for independent seniors and those with a slight loss of autonomy, cost \$4.3 million.

The Federal government contributed \$2.1 million through the Second Canada-Quebec Agreement on the Rapid Housing Initiative, while the provincial government contributed just over \$2 million, through the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ), which also guarantees the mortgage taken out by the Office municipal d'habitation, which is managed by the Municipality of Saint-François-d'Assise.

The Municipality donated the land, which includes the Saint-François-d'Assise parish factory, and is granting a 35-year tax rebate.

"This project responds to a real need in our community and illustrates the importance of working together to support our seniors and provide them with suitable and accessible housing. By adding new accommodation spaces, we are enabling more seniors to remain rooted in the community they cherish," says Bonaventure Member of National Assembly (MNA) Catherine Blouin in a press release.

"The completion of this project is the result of remarkable collective effort. For more than 40 years, municipal councils and members of the former Office municipal d'habitation de Saint-François-d'Assise have believed in the development of social housing as a driving force for vitality in our community," notes Mayor Rémi Lagacé.

The expanded space is named Pavillon Ghislain-Michaud, in honour of Mr. Michaud, who was mayor of Saint-François-d'Assise from 2005 to 2023.

At least 11 of the 14 eligible households qualify for the SHQ's Québec Rent Supplement Program, which will allow them to limit their rent contribution to 25% of their income.

The Avignon MRC has allocated \$100,000 to this project, and the Caisse Desjardins Vallée de la Matapédia has contributed an additional \$40,000.

UPAC raises awareness

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPE – Taking advantage of the release of his 2024-2025 annual management report, Anti-Corruption Commissioner Vincent Richer announced new awareness-raising efforts in the Gaspésie region.

The activity report of the Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) notes that the organization has carried out various operations in the Gaspé Peninsula.

“We now want to raise awareness among newly elected municipal officials and civil servants about the dangers of corruption and increase vigilance in the sound management of public funds,” says Commissioner Richer.

The commissioner notes that in recent years, several operations have been carried out in the Gaspé Peninsula and charges have been laid against three individuals.

The former director of urban planning for the Town of Percé, Ghislain Pitre, is scheduled to appear in court in February 2026 to face charges of fraud and breach of trust.

Bruno-Pierre Godbout, a former town councillor for the Newport district of Chandler, faces charges of fraud, forgery, and the use of forged documents, laid in April 2024. Godbout also faces separate



Commissioner Vincent Richer.

Photo: Anti-Corruption Commissioner website

charges of sexual assault, armed assault, forcible confinement, assault, and criminal harassment. His trial is set to begin on January 19, 2026, in Percé.

Finally, Daniel Samuel pleaded guilty to breach of trust, theft, and producing false documents while he was director of the Office municipal d'habitation de Gaspé in December 2021.

“These specific cases, combined with other similar investigations in other regions of Quebec, enable us to raise awareness among public officials about fraud and attempted corruption. Our goal is to prevent the misappropriation of public funds at the source by encouraging vigilance in the public sector. That is why we are reaching out to

elected officials and civil servants in the region to meet with them and raise awareness,” adds Chief Inspector Jean-François Pelletier, Director of Prevention, Standards, and Citizen Relations.

Across the province, the UPAC received 575 reports of wrongdoing in the last year, a 28% increase over the previous fiscal year.

The latest Annual Management Report from the Anti-Corruption Commissioner reveals that nearly a quarter of the reports came from the public sector.

Criminal and penal investigations led to charges against 134 individuals and legal entities, resulting in 138 convictions and more than \$760,000 in fines. (With The Canadian Press)



The mayor of Pointe-à-la-Croix, Pascal Bujold.

Photo: Taken from Facebook

Respite for taxpayers in Pointe-à-la-Croix

Nelson Sergerie

POINTE-À-LA-CROIX - Pointe-à-la-Croix residents will not see any major changes to their municipal tax bills, but commercial taxpayers will feel the pinch.

The residential tax rate will decrease by 13.98%, dropping from 93 cents to 80 cents per \$100 of assessed value. However, special taxes will be added to help finance the town hall, the fire station, and part of the work on Chaleur Street.

“It's not a big savings in the end, but citizens will still be happy,” says Mayor Pascal Bujold.

For businesses, the tax rate will increase by 12.41%, rising from \$1.45 to \$1.63 per \$100 of assessed value.

“In recent years, citizens have footed the bill, but this year, we're giving them a break and turning to businesses,” the mayor explains.

“It will be more frustrating for businesses, but sometimes you have to make tough choices,” he adds.

Water and sewer rates will remain unchanged, while waste collection will increase by 10%.

In addition, the municipality is planning work on several streets in its three-year capital plan. “The condition of the municipality's streets leaves much to be desired, and we are hoping for good news from the provincial government. We have been turned down for two years in a row. I hope for a positive outcome. We cannot pave the roads without government assistance,” says the mayor.

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Flashes of 2025: the show Arctic Tall Tales

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND –Sometimes, the SPEC team and its readers produce more material than can fit into a single issue. Pages cannot always be added at the last minute, which means some write-ups, photos, and captions get postponed. That was the case with the Arctic Tall Tales show, presented on November 24 at New Richmond’s concert hall.

Up to 200 students from the Eastern Shores School Board attended the morning performance. They came from Escuminac Intermediate School, New Richmond High School, New Carlisle High School, and Shigawake Port-Daniel School. Twenty-six teachers also attended the show.

“It was a first concert hall outing for many students and schools. We also had about 100 Grade 10 students from Antoine-Bernard School in Carleton join us as part of their English classes. So, over 300 young people participated in an English-language performance combining theatre, storytelling, music, sound effects, and puppetry. It was fantastic!”, sums up New Richmond concert hall spokesperson Éric Normandin.

The show occasionally touched on adult themes, with one actor performing as if under the influence of alcohol.

“It was done intelligently



Photo: Louis-Martin Leblanc

Anne Lalancette, Alexandre Harvey and Jérémie Desbiens are three of the artists spearheading the Arctic Tall Tales.

and the actors trusted the maturity of the students,” adds Éric Normandin.

The synopsis of Arctic Tales brings attendees at the dawn of the 1950s, as a handful of intrepid hunters is scattered across the north-east coast of Greenland. Confinement, solitude, rationing and harsh weather don’t always make it easy to keep a cool head under such conditions. And yet, the vast wilderness, the majestic snow-covered expanse and the unlikely tales of the trusty comrades leave the crowd longing for adventure and freedom. Are they truths, lies or myths? Who knows?

Written by Denmark’s Jorn Riel, who spent the first 18 years of his adult life in Greenland, Arctic Tall Tales are originally a collection of short stories filled with humour and humanity, as well as a series of delightfully ad-

dictive comics.

La Ruée vers l’or is an artistic collective that was born from the collaboration of two old friends. Alexandre Harvey is a composer and multi-instrumentalist. He also uses sound effects and sampling techniques to enhance his compositions. Anne Lalancette has been a puppeteer for more than 15 years. She is working in theatre, television and film productions. Together, they share a wild sense of humour and a particularly sharp sense of rhythm.

They are mainly inspired by the universe of graphic novels and repertory films.

The collective specializes in the production of table puppets and live music/sound shows for adult and teen audiences. Their performances are dynamic, contagious, with a great aesthetic sensibility and in collusion with the audience.



Photo: Éric Normandin

Up to 300 students, including 200 from the Eastern Shores School Board, attended the Arctic Tall Tales show on November 24.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



January, Oh why art thou so long?

30 days hath September, April, June, and November.

All the rest have 31...

except for January which has about 973.

January seems like an eternally long month, with cold mornings, dark nights and the overwhelming desire to stay in bed for just five more minutes. Every patch of sunlight is appreciated like a rare gift. January promised us fresh, new beginnings but at this point in the month we have likely settled into our old, familiar ways, but that’s on us.

Chances are we were enthusiastic about New Years’ intentions including eating healthier, saving money and exercising more. By the end of January, exercise plans may be postponed, the choice to eat all of the leftovers a sensible cost-saving measure. Though January is known as “the longest month” it has 31 days that may feel longer. Perhaps you blew the budget in December so in January you may have to pay closer attention to what you buy. Perhaps checking price tags and planning more home-cooked meals and forgetting about take-out.

Despite the down sides, January has some positive aspects as well. No more rushing around and shopping, fewer social commitments, life becomes simpler, even though the weather may still be a challenge. For those who are sticking to some January 1 intentions, that gives a feeling of accomplishment. Perhaps cross-country skiing is bringing you joy, fresh air and social connection, well bravo! January has positive feelings for you! You did that!

Ode to January

*January arrives with frost and flair,
New year! New you! You can do it, I swear!
Gyms are full, salads abound,
But by week two the chocolate’s still around.
Wallets are thin, bank balance says no,
Look out the window, darn more snow.
Coffee is therapy, tea a best friend,
Will January ever end?
December’s chaos has begun to cease,
But wait! January offers quiet and peace.
Quiet evenings, Netflix and a bit of chocolate tonight,
Tomorrow more snow, but at least that is bright.
So, here’s to January’s cold and windy blast,
We have almost made it... here’s February at last.*



Former Gaspé Member of Legislative Assembly recognized as historical figure

NELSON SERGERIE

QUEBEC CITY – A former Gaspé Member of Legislative Assembly from the late 19th century has been designated a historical figure by the Quebec government.

Pierre Fortin is an iconic figure in Quebec's maritime and political history, and an exhibition dedicated to him is on display at the Quebec National Assembly.

Although little known to the general public, Pierre Fortin was an extraordinary figure who played an active role in several significant events in Quebec's history.

Born on December 14, 1823, in Verchères, this trained physician volunteered to treat Irish immigrants suffering from typhus at the Grosse Île quarantine station in 1847 and 1848.

The following year, he commanded a mounted police force to restore order in Montreal after rioters set fire to the Parliament Building.

In 1855, he had the honour of welcoming the captain of La Capricieuse, the first French ship to sail up the St. Lawrence River since the Conquest, onto



Pierre Fortin.

Photo: Ministry of Culture and Communications

his boat in Quebec City.

But it was in the maritime fisheries field that he would leave his mark.

In 1852, he became the first magistrate appointed by the government to protect the fisheries of the Gulf of St. Lawrence at a time when smugglers and foreign vessels were threatening local fishermen and coastal communities.

As commander of an armed vessel, including the schooner La Canadienne, he ensured that public order was maintained, but also provided medical care and documented marine species, becoming an

authority in the field.

"He was, in a way, Quebec's very first fisheries officer. He was able to assert his authority to protect the resources and interests of the population," said Stéphane Sainte-Croix, the current Member of National Assembly for Gaspé.

From 1867 onwards, he continued his commitment as the political representative for Gaspé in the Legislative Assembly of Quebec (1867-1878) and the House of Commons (1867-1874 and 1878-1887), holding key positions, including Minister and President of the Legislative Assembly.

He defended fishermen and supported the construction of lighthouses, navigation schools, and infrastructure projects, some of which still mark Quebec's maritime landscape.

He was appointed to the Senate in 1887.

A visionary in environmental matters, Pierre Fortin, advocated for the sustainable management of natural resources.

His career embodied a model of public service combining justice, science, ecology, and regional development.

Through his actions, he also supported projects to improve the lives of the people of the Gaspé Peninsula, such as the Baie des Chaleurs railway and the telegraph.

In 1879, he helped found the Société de géographie de Québec (Quebec City Geographical Society), of which he was the first president.

He died on June 15, 1888, in La Prairie. He is buried in the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in La Prairie.

"Pierre Fortin's commitment had a profound impact on Quebec's maritime history in the 19th century. As a commander, Member of the Legislative Assembly, minister, and president, Fortin embodied essential values that still resonate today," said Christian Blais, historian of the National Assembly.

"Nicknamed the 'King of the Gulf,' Pierre Fortin was a devoted servant of the state and an expert on fisheries issues. It is an honour for me to designate him here as a historical figure, in this institution that welcomed him for part of his parliamentary life. By taking this significant step on the

150th anniversary of his accession to the office of President of the National Assembly, I am formally recognizing the important place he occupies in the history of Quebec," explains Mathieu Lacombe, Minister of Culture and Communications.

Mr. Fortin's descendants were present at the ceremony to enshrine this figure in history.

Pierre Fortin Exhibition: Mission Saint-Laurent

Through a rich selection of artifacts, historical documents, and immersive narratives, the Mission Saint-Laurent exhibition traces Pierre Fortin's journey while highlighting the history of a region shaped by its inhabitants and the sea.

This production is the result of a collaboration between the Musée de la Gaspésie, the National Assembly of Quebec, the Musée de la Côte-Nord, and the Musée de la mer.

It is currently on display at the National Assembly until December. The exhibition will be presented at the Musée de la Gaspésie in 2026.

A book about the man has also been published.

Cogeco returns to certain areas of Baie des Chaleurs

NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND – After abandoning certain areas of the Bonaventure MRC on March 31, Cogeco has reversed its decision and is investing in the deployment of fiber optic technology in several of these communities.

Earlier this spring, Cogeco had disconnected the towns of Caplan, Saint-Alphonse, Saint-Elzéar, Saint-Jogues, Saint-Siméon, and the Black Cape sector in New Richmond. At the time, the company stated that the network could not be modernized and that the low volume of business did not justify the investment.

However, the company has revised its plans for Saint-Siméon, Caplan, and New Richmond, introducing fiber optics to these areas. "We are pleased to fulfill this commitment. Providing fiber optic access to nearly 1,400 additional households in the Gaspé Peninsula is our mission: to bring healthy competition and high-quality services to the commu-



After cutting the cable, Cogeco changes its mind in certain areas of Baie des Chaleurs.

Photo: Courtesy of Cogeco

nities where we are deeply rooted," said Marie-Claude Lévesque, Director of Marketing and Network Strategy.

The cable operator emphasizes that Internet access is now an essential service. The new fiber optic infrastructure guarantees a stable, high-performance connection for all daily needs of local families and businesses.

"Cogeco's teams have built a new network that provides Internet, IP television (Epico), and telephone service over fiber optics, whereas previously

residents had access to analog television services," explains communications advisor Laurise Roy-Tremblay.

As a private company, Cogeco does not disclose the amount of its investment but notes that no public funds are involved. The company also withdrew from the area between Saint-Maxime-du-Mont-Louis and Saint-Yvon, on the northern coast of the Gaspé Peninsula, last spring. Cogeco continues to operate in Chandler, Gaspé, and Sainte-Annes-Monts.



Emergency repairs were carried out to restore service.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Fibre optic break between Escuminac and Matapédia

Nelson Sergerie

MATAPÉDIA – A fibre optic break on the afternoon of January 7 left Telus customers in the area between Escuminac and Matapédia without service.

According to Telus, the fibre break was caused by a third party and occurred around 3 p.m.

The outage affected telephone, cell phone, television, and Internet services.

Telus technicians were quickly deployed to the site to repair the break, which, according to the information received by SPEC, occurred in Matapédia.

They urgently replaced the damaged section of fibre and carried out the necessary splicing work. Services were gradually restored starting at 4:30 p.m.

Some businesses had to close their doors because the Interac network was unable to function during the outage.

The CSN advocates for foreign workers at LM Wind Power

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Some 140 experienced Filipino workers at the LM Wind Power windmill blade manufacturing plant in Gaspé are facing deportation in 2026 and 2027 due to new, stricter federal rules that are becoming increasingly restrictive.

The new requirement imposed on companies to retain their temporary foreign workers involves high wage thresholds.

This threshold, which allows companies to comply with the high-wage category, had already been raised by 20% in 2024 and was set at nearly \$35 per hour in June 2025.

"The tightening of immigration rules should not harm the Canadian and Quebec economies, or the Gaspé Peninsula. These workers have been with us for several years and play an essential role in the factory. We are asking Ottawa to be careful with these rules," says Pierre-



Photo: N. Sergerie

Workers at the LM Wind Power plant in Gaspé.

Luc Boulay, president of the CSN Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Central Council.

The federal government remains strict despite the representations made in recent months. "These workers are indispensable, not only for LM but for Quebec," adds Mr. Boulay.

"We agree with the principle of a wage threshold. We are asking LM Wind Power

to increase our wages and benefits to \$35 an hour in the next collective agreement, but we fear that this will not be enough to retain our employees. This scale has been increased in recent years. Even if we reach the current threshold, we may only be buying time, as it could be raised significantly again during the agreement," explains Jean-Éric Cloutier, president

of the LM Wind Power Workers' Union.

He notes that many workers have been integrated for several years and their children are attending school in the region.

"The problem we have is that the Liberals have left the doors wide open. According to economists, this has exacerbated the housing shortage, put pressure on public services, and increased the unemployment rate in urban areas. The situation in the Gaspé Peninsula is not the same," notes Alexis Deschênes, Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj.

"We need to find a way to allow these people to stay permanently. The federal government must not be inflexible and should give itself more time to allow people who are here as temporary workers and who want to stay to go through the procedures to obtain permanent residence," adds the elected

official.

Despite everything, the future of the plant would not be in jeopardy if the Filipino workers were to leave, according to Mr. Cloutier.

He believes that the local labour pool would be able to compensate for the gradual loss of Filipino workers over two years if the federal government insists on restricting their access to the Canadian labour market.

The union is also attacking General Electric, a large American multinational corporation active in the renewable energy sector, among others.

The CSN says it is unacceptable for a company like GE to underpay its workers, who earn \$28 an hour in a cutting-edge sector.

Pierre-Luc Boulay fears that the possibility of hiring foreign workers in the Gaspé Peninsula will be too radically restricted and that the local workforce will not be sufficient to ensure economic development in the region.

A spectacular move

NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND – A spectacular move took place on November 26 in New Richmond when municipal employees relocated the osprey nest located on the ball field.

This delicate operation, given the size of the nest, was carried out with all the necessary authorisations and in accordance with current environmental guidelines, according to the Town.

The transfer occurred during a period when the birds were not occupying the nest, as required by protocol, and it was relocated to a specially constructed artificial platform.

The Town had to proceed with the transfer because the old lighting fixtures were defective and needed to be removed, but the presence of the nest made dismantling impossible. Municipal authorities had to obtain specific authorizations for the operation, a process that takes time.

The operation was carried out with full respect for wildlife. Last year, the Town replaced the lighting system with LED lights, which now illuminate the field until 11



Photo: Town of New Richmond

The delicate operation took place on November 26 at great heights.

p.m. offering more opportunities for evening play.

A large bird

The osprey is a bird of prey belonging to the Pandioninae subfamily. It can weigh up to 1.6 kilograms, measure up to 65 centimetres in length, and have a wingspan of up to 163 centimetres. Its narrow wings are distinctly bent when spread, and legs and talons have a unique structure that sets it apart from other birds of prey.

This species is one of the most widespread birds in the world, found on nearly all coastlines as well as on the shores of large lakes, rivers and streams on every continent.

Unlike other birds of prey, the osprey has four equal toes. The outer toe is reversible, allowing it to grasp its prey with two toes pointing forward and two pointing backward. Each toe ends in a long, sharp, curved claw, and the soles of its feet are covered with short, rigid spines, which give it a good grip on slippery prey.

Most of the time, ospreys build their nests in large trees, but it is not unusual for them to choose a man-made structure instead. In both cases, the nest is typically located high and an osprey chooses an open area near water.

The female then lays two to four eggs per year, which take an average of 38 days to hatch. Once hatched, young ospreys learn to fly after about 51 to 54 days. Their average lifespan is 15 to 25 years, and their population in Canada is estimated at between 50,000 and 500,000, according to the Nature Canada website.

The mentoring network survives in Gaspésie

Nelson Sergerie

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Despite the announced closure of the provincial mentoring network on December 19 due to a lack of government funding, the Gaspésie branch will continue to operate.

The Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands mentoring network relies on the expertise of approximately 30 people to support young entrepreneurs, and organizers were eager to ensure their message reached the group.

"There is a desire among the supporting organizations in Gaspésie and Îles-de-la-Madeleine to maintain the service," explains Isabelle Bourque, director of economic development at the Bonaventure MRC and head of the mentoring program.

She explains that a movement is underway across Quebec to try to preserve the network. "In Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, we were already well organized with a website and a regional committee chaired by Nathalie Sirois. We already had a regional conference and a website, and now we just need to work out the details so that liability insurance for our mentors can continue, as well as recognition and more technical aspects, but we're well on our way," says Ms. Bourque. The current actions will translate into complete autonomy in the future.

The goal of the mentoring program is to support the next generation of entrepreneurs. "To accompany human beings who are entrepreneurs. At the SADC and MRC service points, there is technical support and support as an entrepreneur. We offer them the opportunity to chat and ask questions to mentors who are there to listen, ask questions, break the isolation, and take a step back from difficult decisions," says Ms. Bourque.

This sharing of experience enriches the beneficiaries as they advance their projects.

THEGASPESPEC.COM
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Announcements



Obituary



PALMER: Dennis

March 10, 1930 – January 16, 2026

The family of Dennis Palmer sadly announces his passing on Friday, January 16, ten days after he had a serious fall at home. He was fortunate to live a long and healthy life, reaching the age of 95.

Dennis is survived by his loving wife of 73 years, Marguerite Palmer (Patterson), two sons, Tony (Agnes), Steven; and his two grandsons, Brian (Kate), Jonathan (Sonia). He also leaves to mourn his three surviving sisters, in-laws, nieces, nephews, their families and his many cherished friends.

Predeceased by his parents Charles and Audrey Palmer and four siblings.

Dennis' life was centred around his family, friends and community. He had a fulfilling and varied career, culminating in twenty years at Gaspé Copper Mines. Dennis was a man that possessed a strong moral compass. He applied his high energy level to the community and his many projects on the go at his property in Wakeham.

Dennis was truly a man of Wakeham, it was deeply ingrained in his being. It was where he and Marg were born, raised their sons, and enjoyed an active retire-

ment for 33 years. They were always ready to welcome family and visitors from far and wide for friendly conversation, to share stories, and even "occasionally" to debate differing opinions on local and global political and social developments.

Dennis will be deeply missed. Rest easy Dad, we love you!

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Parish of Gaspé.

On behalf of the family, we would like to thank the staff at Gaspé Hospital for taking great care of our father during his last days.

Funeral services and interment will be held in Wakeham in the summer 2026.



In Memory



GOYETTE: Eric

June 1982 - January 2012

In loving memory of our son, brother and uncle.

*Your presence we miss,
Your memory we treasure.*

*Loving you always,
Forgetting you never.*

Love: Mom, Jean, Patrick, Emilie, Noemie and Nelly.

SIMON: Elson (Sonny)

In loving memory of dear husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather who passed away on January 16, 1983.

No matter how our lives may change,

Or whatever we may do.

We will never forget those precious times,

The ones we spent with you.

We hold you close to our hearts,

And there you shall remain.

To walk with us throughout our lives,

Until we meet again.

Loved and sadly missed by wife Merle and family.

WYLIE: Arnold

In loving memory Dad.

These words are just for you,

And come with love to say.

We think about you constantly,

And miss you more and more each day.

To lose you left us devastated,

But when we feel the pain,

We only have to close our eyes,

And you're with us once again.

A special smile, a special face,

A special Dad we can't replace.

Memories are a gift to treasure,

And ours of you dad,

Will last forever.

Gone but never forgotten.



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HOPE:

Hope Baptist Church

Sundays: Sunday School starting at 10 a.m. Worship service beginning at 11 a.m.

NEW CARLISLE:

St. Andrews Anglican Church

February 17: St. Andrew's Church will have a pancake supper (Shrove Tuesday) from 4:30 - 6 p.m. in the basement of St. Andrew's Anglican Church. Cost \$10 per adult and \$6 per child. Please note there will be regular and gluten free pancakes. Take-out is available but not delivery. All proceeds will help support the com-

pletion of the outside lighting of the church.

NEW CARLISLE:

New Carlisle Legion

February 3: Branch voting meeting will begin at 6 p.m., held at the Legion Branch 64. All members are encouraged to attend.

NEW CARLISLE: Bible Chapel Meetings

Sundays: Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School - 2 p.m.

Thursdays: Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES Book Room

Wednesdays: The book room will be open from 1 - 4 p.m. For more information please contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND

Sunday, February 1
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, February 8
10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN

Sunday, February 1
10.m. Service
Sunday, February 8
10 a.m. Service



PARISH OF GASPÉ

**Sunday,
February 1**
St. Paul's, Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

**Sunday,
February 8**
St. Andrew's, York
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, February 1
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, February 8
New Carlise
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
11 a.m. Online Service

On the Lighter Side...

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



Winter on the Gaspé

On the Gaspé, where the winds hum low,
And drifts of winter snow shimmer in rows,
We remember skating, tobogganing long ago,
Down hills that felt endless in the soft moon-glow.

Windows fogged, and shadows appear,
Where mitts steamed dry and stories drew us near.
The woodstove crackled like it knew every name,
Warming boots, warming hearts, with its crackling flame.

A real tree stood proudly, pine-sharp and bright,
Strung with memories that glimmered like ancient starlight.
And the room filled with laughter, old songs begun,
Simple moments, shared moments, Christmas fun.

On that peninsula kissed by the cold blue sea,
Winter still embodies the child in me.

Diane Skinner

SUDOKU

	4			9			8	1
		1	2	8		4	3	7
8	3		1	4				5
		6						9
	7		5	6	2	8	1	
1	2					5		
		8			7	9	5	
			4			3		
6	5		8	3				

Level: Beginner

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

6	5	4	8	3	9	1	7	2
7	9	2	4	5	1	3	6	8
3	1	8	6	2	7	9	5	4
1	2	3	9	7	8	5	4	6
4	7	9	5	6	2	8	1	3
5	8	6	3	1	4	7	2	9
8	3	7	1	4	6	2	9	5
9	6	1	2	8	5	4	3	7
2	4	5	7	9	3	6	8	1

ANSWER:

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to a cozy cabin.

T C L H E A

--	--	--	--	--	--

Answer: Chalet



Hobbies have many benefits, including reducing stress, improving mood, fostering social connections, and encouraging community involvement.



HOROSCOPES - January 26 to February 1

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

You are unstoppable this week, Aries. Your famous pioneering spirit is magnified, giving you the green light for major breakthroughs. Take the lead in situations that excite you.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Prepare for a week of unexpected results, Taurus. A significant financial opportunity may appear out of the blue, or you might find yourself feeling extra secure at work.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Gemini, your social life is booming right now. You are a magnet for excellent ideas and exciting connections this week. Expect conversations that lead to professional opportunities.

CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

Right now you are hitting a major professional high point, Cancer. All eyes are on you, and your efforts may lead to some well-deserved recognition and re-

wards.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Prepare for adventure this week, Leo. The cosmos is urging you to expand your horizons and seek new inspiration. Your optimism is contagious as you make your plans.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

This week brings a powerful sense of personal transformation and empowerment to you, Virgo. You have the energy to tackle complex matters and emerge feeling stronger and wiser.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, your relationships are very strong this week. You'll find mutual respect and exciting shared goals through these alliances. If you're single, expect an unforgettable encounter.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

This week is perfect for optimizing your work-life flow and implementing small changes that will yield huge, positive results, Scorpio. You may need help

mapping out goals.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, your sector of creativity, fun and romance are illuminated this week. Plan a date, unleash your artistic side or simply dedicate time to pure play. Delightful experiences await.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Home is the launchpad for success this week, Capricorn. Focus on developing your domestic environment. A refresh or redecoration can work wonders, especially to banish cabin fever.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Prepare for several days of remarkable connections, Aquarius. Your ideas and innovative concepts are sharp, which will compel others to aspire to be in your orbit.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Your personal finances are set for an upward trajectory, Pisces. A new income stream may surface, or you might discover a hidden talent that you can monetize.

HOROSCOPES - February 2 to February 8

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

This week brings a refreshing burst of motivation, Aries. You'll feel clarity around something that's been lingering on your mind. Small victories stack quickly — celebrate them.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Comfort and progress go hand-in-hand this week, Taurus. You're finding your rhythm and it shows. A financial or practical matter becomes easier than expected.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Gemini, your natural curiosity lights up your week. Inspiration flows easily, especially through conversations or creative brainstorming. Seek inspiration through collaboration.

CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

Warmth surrounds you, Cancer. Emotional clarity and a renewed sense of balance help you move forward

with plans. Home-related tasks go smoothly.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Your charm is magnetic right now. This week favors communication, leadership, and bold self-expression, Leo. You may receive recognition for something you've been quietly working on.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, your practical brilliance shines. You'll make great progress on tasks that once felt overwhelming. Health and self-care rituals feel especially rewarding.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Harmony and connection take center stage this week, Libra. Expect positive interactions, pleasant exchanges and a sense of mutual understanding.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Momentum builds, Scorpio. You're stepping into your power with calm confidence. A project or plan gains traction, and your intuition is especially sharp. Trust your instincts.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Adventure — big or small — calls your name, Sagittarius. You may feel a spark of optimism that carries you through the week. Opportunities abound to learn, explore or connect.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, steady progress and thoughtful planning bring satisfying results. You're setting foundations that support long-term success. Expect a moment of validation.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Fresh ideas flow effortlessly, Aquarius. This is a strong week for innovation, problem-solving and collaboration. A new perspective may lead to a resolution.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Gentle energy lifts your spirits this week, Pisces. Creativity, intuition and emotional ease all run strong. This is an excellent week for dreams or creative pursuits.

A first agroecological social trust takes root in the Gaspé Peninsula

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – Two experienced Gaspé market gardeners, Luc Potvin and Éric Giguère, have chosen to sell their 13.5 hectares of land in Maria by creating an agroecological social trust, a concept that aims to protect this land from speculation and ensure its future for the benefit of the community, in perpetuity.

Mr. Potvin and Mr. Giguère completed in October their 28th harvest season on their land through their company, Jardins Viridis. Since 2008, they have grown carrots, garlic, onions, cabbage, potatoes, beets, parsnips, and rutabagas—in short, “winter vegetables” that can be stored for months.

They feel the need to slow down and, above all, to preserve the future of their land in terms of sustainable development. The agroecological social utility trust (FUSA, for Fiducie d'utilité sociale agroécologique) model meets their expectations.

“The FUSA concept immediately resonated with us, and we quickly understood that the principle perfectly aligns with what we wanted for Viridis: first and foremost, to maintain its agricultural and ecological focus,” explains Luc Potvin.

“It also allows future generations who want to get their hands dirty in the land to do so without having to take on excessive debt,” adds Éric Giguère.

This FUSA creation is a first in the Gaspé Peninsula. The concept dates back to 2010 in Quebec. It remains relatively rare, although its popularity is growing. Today, nine FUSAs cover 300 hectares in the province, and ten additional projects, covering 2,500 hectares, are in the planning stages.

This current sale will be the last in the history of this land, specifies Luc Potvin.

“The principle is that the land belongs to itself; there is no possibility of selling it.



Luc Potvin and Éric Giguère often receive help from relatives and friends during chores, as seen here during the garlic harvest in early August.

Photo: G. Gagné

There will be a trust board to manage it. The trustees will manage this ‘container,’ a piece of land with small buildings. This board could decide to add other ‘buildings,’ one or more other plots of land, if proposals are made to that effect to the trustees,” he says.

Luc Potvin and Éric Giguère, the latter being the original holders of the land title, set the sale price at \$35,500, half of the municipal assessed value.

“We considered giving it all away. But we made progress by lowering the price. We set a price based on the principle that we don’t place a high value on something we receive for free,” says Luc Potvin.

Launched in October on the ZEFFY platform, the fundraising campaign is progressing smoothly, he says. All donations are being processed through the Protec-terre organization.

“It’s going very, very well. We’re almost at \$15,000. Things are falling into place. Two more donations totaling \$10,000 are expected, one from a woman in Rimouski and the other from a businessperson in Maria. The deadline has been set for December 15. After that date, the holiday frenzy takes over and people have other things on their minds. We

might consider a second phase of funding afterward if we haven’t reached our goal, but for now, we think we’ll make it,” explains Mr. Potvin.

Any amount exceeding \$35,500 could be used to improve the facilities. One of the two fields will eventually need an irrigation system, which the main field already has, and the service building will require maintenance and possibly improvements, he adds.

The “paperwork” isn’t free

The two farmers benefited from substantial support for the paperwork, which is far from free.

“There are costs, what I call the ‘container budget.’ It requires the involvement of a whole host of professionals, including a tax specialist, certified appraisers, and a notary. Initially, it was supposed to cost \$60,000. Now, we’ve reduced that to \$55,000. For this part, we received help from Services secours [an ambulance company], Desjardins, the Avignon MRC, and the Municipality of Maria. I see it as a sign of confidence. It’s invaluable,” emphasizes Luc Potvin.

The selection of the five members of the trust board is more or less finalized, but it

hasn’t been announced.

“The trust board will have to appear before the community at a public meeting once a year to report on the year’s activities. Trustees are appointed for three-year terms, with the possibility of renewal. There’s a democratic dimension that I really like. It’s not an exclusive club (...) I’ll be part of it. I see it as a way to ensure continuity. On a piece of land, there are a lot of little details that make a difference. There are mistakes that shouldn’t be repeated, even though there will still be mistakes. Ideally, they (the farmers) should use this as a starting point to go further,” Mr. Potvin assures.

For the trust, the use of the land at Jardins Viridis must generate sufficient revenue from its uses to cover municipal and school taxes, as well as liability insurance.

“The trust board will ensure, without policing, that the designated uses are respected. The land could and should be used for multiple purposes. The board will be responsible for fostering harmony among the users. The trust will not be the operator, but it will be responsible for receiving offers from individuals wishing to use the land in accordance with the given conditions,” explains Mr. Potvin.

Signs of interest

He and his partner have received two informal expressions of interest from individuals hoping to use part of the land, seeing it as a way to contribute to its long-term sustainability.

“There may be several users. There will be a probationary period, a mutual trial period between the user and the trustees, and a contract to protect both the user and the trust,” notes Luc Potvin.

In the presentation documents for FUSA Viridis, there is mention of selecting projects that “will contribute to the common good,” he emphasizes.

“What we’re saying is to respect the land. The property doesn’t have organic certification, because that’s a protected designation of origin, linked to specific codes. We simply ask that synthetic inputs and GMOs (genetically modified organisms) not be used. Therefore, there’s no obligation to be certified organic, but rather to cultivate the land in a way that respects the environment around us. It’s not meant to be restrictive, but rather a minimum set of practices to be respected,” explains Mr. Potvin.

Six of the 13.5 hectares of the Viridis Gardens are wooded. This aspect of the property will also have to be used in a certain way.

“The wooded area must be managed in a way that respects the dynamics of the ecosystems. We can lose the dynamics of a forest if we cut down too many trees. The wooded area is bordered by the Mius stream and the Green River. We want to ensure the protection of these waterways, so no clear-cutting. I was cutting down conifers recently for lumber, and Éric told me, ‘When only a third of the tree remains green at the top, the tree is senile.’ So it’s possible to cut them down, because it frees up space for young trees,” Mr. Potvin assures.

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