



Fred predicts an early spring

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – The sky was cloudy at dawn on February 2 when Fred poked his nose out of his house on the steps of the Val-d'Espoir permaculture school and signaled an early spring, having not seen his shadow.

The famous groundhog forecaster boasts the best record, according to Météomédia, with a 67% success rate—well ahead of Sam in Nova Scotia (58%), Phil in the U.S. (42%), and Willie in Ontario (33%).

“It was really special this year. The sky was blue, but there were clouds below and we could see part of the sun. Fred decided – I asked him twice – Fred decided that spring would come early,” says Groundhog Day organizer Roberto Blondin.

This year, Fred, making his 17th prediction, was calmer than in previous years.

“It must be said that in other years, it was much



Roberto Blondin, founder of Groundhog Day in Val-d'Espoir, listens to Fred's prediction.

colder. It all depends on how he wakes up. It's by talking to him and coaxing him that we get him to make his prediction,” said Mr. Blondin.

Before making his appearance, Fred was resting in a room at the school where members of the organization were “taking great care” to wake him up gently.

After the prediction, he was offered corn and water before returning to hibernation until spring.

Thanks to a partnership with local Rona merchants, the groundhog enjoyed a new “residence” from which to make his forecast.

Now that Fred's fame is well established, Mr. Blondin



Photos: Nelson Sergerie

Fred's new residence as he waits to make his prediction.

plans to expand the event.

“We had an opportunity to do this, and now we need to take the concept further. We're going to work hard this summer, and I think we've come up with something wonderful. It's still for the children, the heart of the village and family,” says Mr. Blondin, who doesn't want to say any more

about what's in store for the 18th prediction on February 2, 2027.

Fred made his announcement in temperatures of minus 5°C with gusty north winds up to 50 km/h, according to the Cap-d'Espoir weather station. Spectators were sheltered from the wind chill by the school.

Finding joy in winter



Ann Lavoie

RESTIGOUCHE-SUD-EST - Winter is a beautiful season in its own right, full of activities to amuse and enjoy. When you are properly dressed, the cold can be invigorating, giving a person more energy compared to the oppressive heat of a summer day. In winter, you need to move—and that's a good thing!

A scene like the one in the photo here can inspire creativity with snow. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see more of this kind of artistry in our neighbourhood?

Saint Mary's Cement pays pollution fines, invests \$90M to improve plant operations

GILLES GAGNÉ

PORT DANIEL—Saint Mary's Cement has paid \$145,676 in fines imposed by Quebec's Ministry of the Environment for pollution infractions at its Port-Daniel plant between 2020 and 2021, spokesperson Justin Meloche confirmed. The company did not pursue legal challenges against the fines.

The Quebec Ministry of the Environment imposed nine fines totaling \$145,676 on Saint Mary's Cement for air and water pollution in the area surrounding its cement plant in Port-Daniel.

As for air pollution, the environmental audit took place in February 2022, based on data provided by the firm for the years 2020 and 2021. Polluting substance parameters exceeded the standards by six times. Regarding water pollution, the violations were also on data provided by the company and covering the same years.

Saint Mary's Cement's Vincent Meloche notes that "the incidents in question occurred either before or shortly after Saint Mary's Cement took control of the plant at the end of April 2021. We have since invested over \$90 million and enhanced our processes to



Photo: Gilles Gagné

The Port-Daniel cement plant experienced several episodes of polluting emissions between 2020 and 2022 inclusively.

improve plant operations—including processes related to the inspection and maintenance of our equipment and the implementation of corrective measures when necessary—and to make Saint Mary's Cement a model of environmental excellence," he writes.

It was the Brazilian giant Votorantim Cimentos, which already owned Saint Mary's Cement, that acquired a controlling 83% stake in what was then called McInnis Cement.

On April 30, 2021, when the transaction was announced, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ), the administrative entity managing

Quebecers' public pension plan, had been the controlling shareholder of the Port-Daniel plant since 2016. At that time, the facility was still under construction.

Environmental monitoring committee is keeping a close eye on issues

Michel Chouinard, a member of the Environmental Monitoring Committee, which was created to closely monitor the issues arising from the operation of the cement plant, and member of the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Re-

gional Environment Council's staff, is taking note of and analyzing the latest developments.

"These are issues, such as exceeding standards, that have been mentioned publicly on numerous occasions since 2020 and 2021. It was the processing time at the Ministry that took so long. It takes a court order for the company to respond, hence the recent decision," comments Mr. Chouinard, who serves as a scientific advisor to the Conseil régional de l'environnement, or Regional Environment Council (CRE).

He specifies that relations with Saint Mary's Cement were more strained in 2024 before improving in 2025.

"Statements from environmental activists, and that's their role, had led to a kind of gag order, with the company wanting things to be discussed internally. Representatives from the Environmental Monitoring Committee, who come from the Water Council, the ZIP Committee (Priority Intervention Zone), Nature Québec, and the Regional Environment Council, reminded the company that keeping discussions internal goes against the judgment that led to the creation of the Environmental Monitoring

Committee," Mr. Chouinard insists.

Saint Mary's Cement subsequently restructured its representation on the Environmental Monitoring Committee, and tensions eased.

"A bulletin will be published as needed, and depending on the frequency of issues of interest. The idea is for the plant to become more integrated into the community. We emphasized to them (the company's management) the need to focus more on public communications. There were shortcomings," recalls Michel Chouinard.

The Environmental Monitoring Committee attached to the Port-Daniel cement plant was formed following a 2015 court ruling stemming from a request by the Quebec Environmental Law Council.

The Port-Daniel cement plant has been in production since the spring of 2017. Its history has been marked by other infractions, half a dozen in total, resulting in prior fines of at least \$35,000. In addition to pollution and sticky emissions during the summer of 2020, one of the cement plant's truck loading silos seriously overflowed on May 18, 2022.

Aircraft de-icing: an agreement is signed between Quebec and Bonaventure

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

BONAVENTURE – The Quebec government and the Town of Bonaventure have reached a three-year agreement for the municipality to de-ice government aircrafts, including the ambulance aircraft, a decision welcomed by mayor Pierre Gagnon.

Quebec's Government Aerial Service had terminated the agreement with Pascan last spring because of the service's cost per de-icing operation, according to the Ministry of Transport. The Quebec Government Aerial Service had only requested de-icing six times out of 900 flights since 2022 for the ambulance aircraft, and the total cost for the period was \$527,541, at an average of \$88,000 per de-icing.

This time, the agreement with Bonaventure includes a flat fee of \$20,000 for setting up the service, a rate of \$3,750



Photo: Taken from the petition

The air ambulance will once again be de-iced at Bonaventure Airport.

for each de-icing, plus a base fee of \$350 per call.

"I am very pleased to announce that de-icing will be offered for the ambulance aircraft at the Bonaventure airport. We are talking about a 24/7 service for patients in the Baie-des-Chaleurs region," comments Catherine Blouin, Member of the National Assembly (MNA)

for the Bonaventure riding.

"It's a little more than what it costs with the neighbouring airport (Rocher-Percé Airport), but still, it's significantly less than what it cost with the private partner," adds Ms. Blouin.

In addition to the air ambulance, all other aircrafts belonging to the Government of Quebec, through the Govern-

ment Air Service, will have access to this service. The delay in finalizing this agreement is due to the fact that this is a first between the Quebec government and a municipality, and the need to verify all legal avenues in this type of situation.

"We had to establish procedural rules because we are talking about air transport. Very strict safety regulations are required. The Ministry of Transport has been there in recent weeks to support the Town during the transition with training, and we will be lending buildings," explains the elected official.

The Town of Bonaventure was forced to act to maintain the service. "Indeed. We were determined to resume it, and today we succeeded, and we are very pleased," comments mayor Pierre Gagnon, who describes the agreement as satisfactory.

The de-icing equipment is being leased from Pascan. "We

are ready to begin," he says, acknowledging that this is not a common occurrence for a municipality.

"We are forward-thinking, but we wanted to ensure we could provide the service. We'll reassess after three years, but we want to ensure the service is offered," the mayor states.

In addition to government aircrafts, private commercial planes will also be able to use the service. "We have a signed agreement with Pascan. We're committed because we lease their equipment. We'll also be de-icing the planes of workers departing from and arriving in Bonaventure," the mayor adds, by way of example.

A petition to maintain the service had garnered 13,496 signatures before the Christmas break.

Incidentally, as of mid-December, ten de-icing operations had taken place over the fall, more than during the three previous winters combined.

RÉGÎM forced to reduce its services

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – A budget cut estimated at \$300,000, retroactive to January 2025, is forcing the Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (RÉGÎM) to rethink its future service offering.

In December, the Quebec government announced a reduction in the budget for the Public Transit Development Assistance Program, which came as a complete surprise to RÉGÎM.

"We weren't given the exact figure, but we estimate it to be a little over \$300,000 retroactive to January 1, 2025. Imagine that! We provided the service all year long and were told that there would be no changes, while the services were rendered and the bills were paid. We can't go back," says President Daniel Côté.

This \$300,000 will be recorded in red ink in the 2025 financial statements. Since 2022, RÉGÎM had



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Buses will run less frequently in certain areas.

drawn some \$725,000 from its accumulated surplus to cover various costs, and to balance its 2026 budget, it had drawn \$400,000.

"The rest of the cushion must be used to balance the 2025 fiscal year. There is no cushion left. If we want to continue to offer service to the majority of our customers, we have to cut service where there is less traffic and less impact. There will be a real reduction in service starting in February," explains Mr. Côté.

Route 22 between Chandler and Gaspé will no longer

be direct; a transfer will be required in Percé.

Route 26 between Murdochville and Gaspé will no longer be offered on Fridays.

Route 31 between Chandler and Percé will see the number of departures reduced from five to three per day, and reservations will become mandatory between Grande-Rivière and Percé.

Reservations will also become mandatory on Route 44 between Carleton-sur-Mer and Matapédia.

The board of directors will have to consider the medium-

term future.

"We will have some serious decisions to make, including switching to on-demand service rather than regular routes. We have had to put our fleet electrification project on hold," adds Mr. Côté.

Electrification could be revived because RÉGÎM has federal funding in the pipeline to do so. "This would allow us to add services in more urbanized areas, but we're not there yet. We're racking our brains to balance the books, especially this year, which has been hell. This is the first time we've had to make cuts, which goes against our mission," the president continues.

It would be difficult to ask more of the users who pay \$300,000 in fares to board the buses. "If we wanted to maintain the same service, we would have to double the ticket price. And if we doubled the price of tickets, we might not have any customers left. We would be penalizing certain customers. Those who could afford it would go back

to driving alone," says Mr. Côté.

However, shuttles to ski resorts and the one to Forillon last summer are self-financed, which means they are not at risk in the short term. "All expenses are paid by the partners. It's at no cost to RÉGÎM," he said.

Paratransit, the service offered to people with reduced mobility, is spared for the moment. "We can do it for 2026, but we can't guarantee anything for 2027 if we continue to be penalized in this way. If, on top of that, gas tax revenues continue to decline, which we fear, and if transportation contracts increase, at some point we won't know where we stand," says the president.

"The last thing we're going to cut is paratransit, and we hope we never have to do so. But if Quebec makes the same calculation and cuts funding, we can't work miracles with money we don't have. However, at present, there are no cuts to paratransit," Mr. Côté reiterates.

Catherine Blouin intervenes to help RÉGÎM

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – On January 29, the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin, met with the Minister of Finance, Éric Girard, to seek a solution for the Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (RÉGÎM), which saw its government funding cut by \$300,000, retroactive to January 2025.

RÉGÎM president Daniel Côté expressed concern following the announcement made in December.

"This is not good news. I discussed it with the Minister of Finance. We reiterated the importance of this service in a region where services are often far away and where people have to travel by car," says Catherine Blouin.

The issue will be closely



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure intervened with the Minister of Finance regarding the RÉGÎM.

monitored by the MNA, who says she intends to continue advocating on RÉGÎM's behalf.

"I will continue to defend this issue and raise awareness of our needs and realities, which are not the same as elsewhere in Quebec," she adds.

The Coalition Avenir

Québec (CAQ) MNA also invited the region's MRCs to submit resolutions to the Ministry of Transport denouncing the funding cut.

Nevertheless, the elected official defended the government's broader approach.

"At the provincial level, changes had to be made to ensure the sustainability of

this program. To ensure equity between regions and greater consistency in spending. I can understand the adjustments, but when you look at the impact in the Gaspésie, it's certainly disappointing. We will continue to make representations to explain how things are going here," says Ms. Blouin.

Major impacts

This significant reduction in operating funds has forced RÉGÎM to rethink its service offering.

Since February 2, Route 22 between Chandler and Gaspé is no longer direct, with a transfer now required in Percé.

Route 26 between Murdochville and Gaspé is no longer offered on Fridays.

Route 31 between Chandler and Percé has seen its

daily departures reduced from five to three, and reservations are now mandatory between Grande-Rivière and Percé.

Reservations are also mandatory on Route 44 between Carleton-sur-Mer and Matapédia.

RÉGÎM's board of directors will now have to consider the service's medium-term future in order to maintain operations.

The \$300,000 cut will be recorded as a deficit in the organization's 2025 financial statements. Since 2022, RÉGÎM has drawn approximately \$725,000 from its accumulated surplus to cover various costs. To balance its 2026 budget, it has already used an additional \$400,000.

As a result, the organization no longer has a surplus to absorb potential future deficits.

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Penny MacWhirter

Guest Commentary

Is privacy no longer the norm?

Do you feel that your privacy is respected? Online, at the hospital, or at the bank are just a few of the places that you might be concerned about your privacy.

In 2026, privacy is a legitimate concern, considering the number of data breaches we hear about. But it seems that while we're busy worrying about our online identities being stolen, privacy in our daily lives is disappearing. That privacy is essential in maintaining relationships, dignity, a sense of

identity and of course, boundaries.

Following a recent illness which led to multiple medical appointments and hospital stays, I was left with a serious concern for my privacy. Is it really the patient's responsibility to remind medical staff that we are entitled to privacy and our dignity? That patient who is being pumped full of painkillers and experiencing the worst day of their life, must also remind the staff to shut doors and curtains? It seems to me that those working in the healthcare field should be aware of privacy concerns. Does the staff have the right to provide your full name and entire chart out loud for the dozen or so patients sharing the space to hear?

A visit to a federal government office this month also left me feeling exposed. There was a "check in" booth situated right next to the waiting room. At that booth, you are asked the purpose of your visit. A simple "online account issue" was not sufficient. They needed my full name along with the details regarding the issue I was having with my account.

I couldn't help but wonder why it wasn't a "take a number" situation like many other government agencies. To get my turn with an agent, I provided more information than I was comfortable giving, in front of five other people sitting in the waiting room only mere steps away. I was also privy to a lot of other people's situations, "I was laid off", "I'm on sick leave because..." to name a few.

And what about when you go to the post office and get asked about your shopping habits or what's in your parcel? Is that just considered being friendly nowadays?

Privacy remains a fundamental human right in Canada, recognized in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as being protected by international law. In addition, the federal government and many provincial governments have either clamped down on their privacy laws or are amid doing so. But does society really care? Perhaps we have reached a point where much of the population no longer values respecting privacy.



Cynthia Dow

Guest Commentary

Pierre Poilievre's out-dated version of Canada

I watched Pierre Poilievre's speech to the delegates at the Conservative Party convention on January 30 with great interest. I am no fan of his, but I wanted to see if he was able to change his rather negative tone.

And it does seem that he has managed to do that, at least during the almost-hour long campaign-style delivery which focused a lot on hope. Not once did he say "Canada is broken" which used to be his old refrain.

However, in my opinion the Canada he is talking about has not existed for some time.

Not once did I hear the words "Indigenous" or "First Nations" or "First Peoples" leave his lips. In fact, it is obvious Mr. Poilievre would like to live in a settler-biased regime which continues to celebrate one of his heroes, Canada's first Prime Minister, John A. MacDonald.

Yes, MacDonald was a true Father of Confederation. But also the man who instituted residential schools, implemented policies to starve Indigenous

people until they agreed to move off their ancestral lands, and put in place the Chinese head tax. Statues of MacDonald have been toppled here and there across the country because of these controversial legacies.

But in Mr. Poilievre's own words: "... we will celebrate rather than tear down our heroes in history. Our museums and heritage programs will tell the unvarnished truth that Conservatives have known all along: this is the greatest country on Earth precisely because of the *goodness of those people who came here* and sacrificed before us." (The emphasis is mine).

No place for the "unvarnished truth" of the damage done to our country and all its peoples by Colonialism and white supremacist attitudes.

It gets worse: "We will also protect the freedoms of law-abiding people with a new castle law that allows you to *take whatever action necessary* to protect your family against home invaders." (The emphasis is mine).

No doubt this is an allusion to the murder of a young Cree man, Colten Boushie, on a prairie farm in 2016. I guess it's open season on any Indigenous person who strays onto settler-owned land. Honestly, it sounds like politics from the Wild West of the 1800s.

Mr. Poilievre has also taken a leaf out of the Trump playbook, by alluding to immigrants as criminals. In his own words: "We will deport criminals, end fraud, end abuse and handouts to phony

refugees. We will no longer allow foreign conflicts to spill onto our streets."

In effect, studies have shown that immigrants are much less likely to engage in criminal activities than those born in Canada. This is an irrefutable fact.

I guess the nod to Trump-style politics should not come as a surprise. As late as last December, a full year after Trump started making his "51st state" comments, an EKOS Research poll indicated that 50% of Conservatives approved of the US President. That's a shocking difference from the 2% of Liberals and 5% of NDP supporters who were willing to say the same.

Finally, not one word was said in his speech about climate change and the incredible destruction it has brought and will continue to bring to so many Canadian communities as the Earth heats up. Of course, there was lots of support for the oil business which got us into this dire situation in the first place.

Finally, either Poilievre does not know his recent history or he lied. He maintained that there had never been a separatist crisis under a Conservative government. I guess he has forgotten the Meach Lake fiasco overseen by Brian Mulroney in the late 1980s.

This man is not a leader for the 21st Century. His attitudes are based on an old white man/cowboy/drill-baby-drill image of this country that no longer exists. We cannot move forward into a healthy, promising future with such a backward-looking dinosaur.

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Police Report

Bryan Lafontaine, charged with attempted murder, will come back to court on March 11

Bryan Lafontaine, 39, from the Percé area of Cape Cove who faces charges of attempted murder following a January 18 incident in Paspébiac, will return to the New Carlisle courthouse in March for his case follow-up hearing. He last appeared in court on January 27.

“His case has been adjourned until March 11 for procedural reasons; he remains in custody for the time being. He will be able to decide at that time whether or not he wants to hold a bail hearing. Attorney Caroline Bérubé of Rimouski is now representing him. Other charges will be laid against him before then (his next court appearance),” points out criminal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville Paradis.

The murder attempt occurred on the afternoon of January 18. After leaving the building, the accused was arrested hours later by the police on a snowmobile trail, following a routine check. He faces charges of attempted murder, as the victim sustained injuries to the neck during the attack, break and enter, forcible confinement, assault with a weapon, aggravated assault, breach of condition, because he was supposed to stay in the judicial district of Gaspé and refrain from communicating with the victim, and a second breach of condition charge because he was not supposed to be within a distance of 50 metres from her.

The victim was slightly injured. Her hospital stay was short. Maxime Rocheville Paradis did not say when he will lay other accusations against Bryan Lafontaine, and the nature of the charges. The man had a substantial criminal record before the January 18 events.

Douglas Quirion case postponed until March 10

The case of Douglas Quirion, 63, of Gaspé, convicted of two counts of sexual assault against a minor, has been adjourned until March 10. Judge Célestine Almeida will rule on the defence’s request to review a neuropsychological report on that date. A pre-sentencing analysis has already been completed.

At his trial, Douglas Quirion was found guilty of sexually assaulting one of the two victims. The six charges related to the second victim were dropped. According to CHNC, the judge believed this second victim but acquitted the accused on those charges due to uncertainties in her testimony that raised reasonable doubt.

Young man gets \$1,093 fine after leaving car too close to the tracks

On Wednesday, January 29, at approximately 7:40 p.m., the Sûreté du Québec officers of the Matapédia police detachment were called to the area of Chemin de la Branche-Nord and Boulevard Perron in Saint-André-de-Restigouche following a collision between a CN freight train and a vehicle. Information gathered indicates that the vehicle was stopped near the railway tracks at the time of the incident. The train’s step made contact with the vehicle. The collision occurred at low speed. The vehicle sustained significant material damage, but no injuries were reported.

“The exact spot where the collision occurred is a parking lot that is usually cleared of snow and it wasn’t that evening,” explains Sûreté du Québec communication officer Frédéric Deshaies.

As part of the follow-up to the incident, police officers interviewed the vehicle’s owner on Saturday, January 31. He is a 20-year-old man from St-François-d’Assise. He was issued a ticket for leaving the scene of an accident, along with a fine of \$1,093 and nine demerit points. The police did not release information as to where the driver was when the train smashed his car, which was stuck in the snow. He could have been close to the scene.

The parking lot is often used by Canadian National Rail to store old railroad ties. It used to be the location of the Saint-Alexis station, which was moved a few kilometres to the east in the mid-1980s. The parking lot is situated just west of Mann Settlement. The way municipal limits were determined makes it a part of Saint-André-de-Restigouche, a back-country village located 12 kilometres away from Route 132.

That collision occurred 17 days after Ontario truckers parked their trailers too close to the tracks in Saint-Alexandre-de-Kamouraska, which caused the derailment of a VIA Rail passenger train.

Carleton’s École Bourg closed for a long time following fire

A fire on the morning of January 26 caused extensive damage to École Bourg Carleton, forcing the school to close for an undetermined period of time and sending home 172 students from kindergarten to grade 6.

Twenty firefighters from Carleton and neighbouring communities responded. The alarm was raised at 9:15 a.m., and the children were taken to the Quai des Arts concert hall, where they waited for their parents to pick them up.

The fire prompted a community-wide effort to provide winter clothing for the students, who had left their belongings at the school. Classes resumed on February 5 at Maria’s Saint-Paul School, which had sufficient space to accommodate the students.

According to Avignon–East fire chief Marc Côté, a cleaning machine in the school’s basement mechanical room caused the fire. (Photo: Gilles Gagné)



Patrice Jolicoeur’s sentence postponed until March 10

Patrice Jolicoeur, 60, of Rimouski and originally from Carleton, had his sentencing hearing postponed until March 10. He was convicted in May 2025 of seven counts of sexual assault against a minor under 16.

Mr. Jolicoeur has a new lawyer who is unavailable until March due to professional commitments. The criminal prosecutor objected, despite Judge Janick Poirier previously warning on November 25 that there would be no further postponements, with or without legal representation.

The judge granted the defence’s request, citing the importance of the right to counsel and the seriousness of the sentence. The judge also granted the request, which, moreover, may provide a more solid basis for the final decision.

On November 25, the criminal prosecutor had suggested a sentence of six to seven years. According to CHNC, the victim had read a lengthy account detailing the impact of the repeated assaults on her life. The events the suspect is accused of took place between 2003 and 2007.

Five-vehicle collision occurs on J.C. Van Horne bridge

A multi-vehicle accident occurred on the afternoon of February 3 on the J.C. Van Horne bridge between Pointe-à-la-Croix and Campbellton, five vehicles were involved. The Listuguj Police, the Campbellton RCMP, and local emergency services responded, as the accident occurred at the New Brunswick end of the bridge.

Police said the collision was caused by a driver stopping on the bridge, which is prohibited. The Listuguj Police department issued a message reminding drivers that they must not stop on the bridge for safety reasons, as indicated by clear signs at each end of the structure.



Photo: Facebook

Gaspé still lacking precipitation

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Regular snowfall in January was not enough to reach normal precipitation levels for the month, despite Gaspé receiving above average snowfall.

According to Environment Canada data, about 72 millimetres of water equivalent fell at Michel-Pouliot Airport, which is 16 millimetres below

the normal level of 88 millimetres.

However, 93 centimetres of snow were measured, which exceeds the normal level of 80 centimetres.

The 34 centimetres on January 1 and 2, and the 22 centimetres on January 11, set the tone.

Since the beginning of the cold season, 165 centimetres of snow have been measured in

Gaspé, compared with the normal total of 188 centimetres.

Since June, every month has seen a precipitation deficit, causing issues with the drinking water supply, particularly for residents who rely on artesian wells.

Temperatures were close to normal, with an average of -10.8 C, compared with the normal average of -11.1 C, despite a cold start to the month.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Snow removal crews are busy at the start of the year.

Percé councillors to receive attendance fees

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ – Percé councillors will now receive \$50 in attendance fees when they participate in various town committees.

The council presented a notice of motion at the February 3 meeting held at the Cap-d'Espoir community centre to amend the Bylaw on the remuneration of elected officials.

“As in many municipalities, each attendance is remunerated. This is to encourage councillors' participation and recognize the work they do on various committees,” explains Mayor Daniel Leboeuf.

“It's not excessive. Their remuneration is indexed annually. We encourage councillors to get involved,” the mayor continues.

There was no problem with absenteeism among the



Photo: N. Sergerie

Percé Mayor Daniel Leboeuf during the February 3 meeting at the Cap-d'Espoir community centre.

various committees on which elected officials sit. The new remuneration is expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$12,000 in the municipal budget.

The mayor will not be en-

titled to these fees, as he is automatically required to participate.

Continuation of the reorganization at municipal offices

Continuing with the implementation of the recommendations of the organizational assessment commissioned in 2025 on the management of the municipality, the town is reviewing the administrative structure of the Public Works Department.

The position of Public Works coordinator is being abolished and a position of assistant general manager responsible for Public Works, as well as a foreman position, are being created. The new structure is intended to increase flexibility.

“The assistant general manager of Public Works has

the same duties as the previous manager. It's a different title, but he has other skills that he can use, particularly in contract management,” explains the mayor.

As assistant general manager, he will have spending authority of up to \$25,000 without consulting the council.

This new position will also have another advantage.

“Why did we decide to transform this position? Because in the event of an absence in senior management, the assistant general manager of public works will be able to perform many of the duties of the general manager. The municipality will not be paralyzed,” explains the mayor, recalling that Percé has had five directors general in the last five years.

Jason Quirion was chosen by council to fill the foreman position, a management role.

He has served as service coordinator since 2024.

Work on Val-d'Espoir road

With financial support from the Quebec government, Percé plans to rebuild Val-d'Espoir road, a two-phase project totaling \$9.9 million.

The first step has been taken with the adoption of two resolutions totaling \$157,000 to prepare the calls for tenders for the reconstruction work.

“The firm Tetra Tech has been commissioned to develop a service offer. It will take samples and determine the work to be done, which can then be submitted for tender. It takes engineers to draw up a work plan, put a figure on it, and go out for bids,” says the mayor, who has not ruled out carrying out both phases in a single stage.

Chandler is working to expand its industrial park

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER – The Town of Chandler is continuing its efforts to expand its industrial park, which is currently at full capacity.

The council has mandated an environmental firm to evaluate various aspects of extending Rue du Parc.

“We had already identified several plots of land because we have received several requests from industries. In the

past, people said that the industrial park had been built for nothing. Now it is full and we have additional requests. We have already subdivided the land and are now conducting soil tests, ecological characterizations, and environmental assessments,” says Mayor Gilles Daraïche.

When the 2026 budget was tabled, the town included the extension of Rue du Parc in its plans, a project estimated at \$60,000. Eleven ad-

ditional plots of land will be available.

Meanwhile, the eight plots of land identified on the former Gaspésia site for construction are not yet available.

“There are still some technical issues to be resolved before they can be put up for sale,” says the mayor, who pointed out that there are requests for potential acquisitions.

Last summer, the town commissioned a characteriza-

tion study to determine the construction possibilities on these sites and assess the level of contamination after decades of paper mill operations in the heart of the town.

The street's appeal is growing with the recent arrival of a pastry shop, a pizzeria, and a barber shop.

Donation policy

After mentioning in January a possible tightening of its donation policy, the Town of Chandler moved from words to action to better regulate it.

“People will have to apply and meet certain criteria,” says Mr. Daraïche. An analy-

sis will be conducted once an application is received.

“At one point, it had become too broad. We were getting all kinds of unimaginable requests. Even people who weren't from here were asking for donations. We had to regulate it,” the elected official continued.

The town promises to continue giving an equivalent amount under the new policy.

“We are trying to give mainly to our local organizations, to activities that will take place in the municipality to support economic development,” says the mayor. The education sector will also be supported in its projects.

Destination Gaspé without general management

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Destination Gaspé is now without an executive director following the departure of Pascale Rémillard, who had held the position since February 2023.

In an email obtained by SPEC and sent to tourism stakeholders who are members of the organization, the board of directors wrote: “We would like to inform you that following discussions with the board of directors, Destination Gaspé and Ms. Pascale Rémillard have agreed to terminate her mandate as executive director.”

The note did not provide further details on the reasons for this decision.

“The board of directors would like to sincerely thank Ms. Pascale Rémillard for her contribution over the past few years, particularly with regard to the development of structuring projects for the destination, the promotion of Gaspé, and the visibility of our community,” the note reads.

Interim management will be provided by the Town of Gaspé's Director General, Jocelyn Villeneuve, to ensure the continuity of Destination Gaspé's activities and services. Igor Urban will remain in his position as assistant executive director. The terms and conditions of operation will be communicated in the coming weeks.


When asked to comment on this decision, Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté declined to get involved, stating that it was a human resources matter.

Pascale Rémillard succeeded Stéphane Sainte-Croix as director after he was elected Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé in October 2022. Mr. Sainte-Croix was the organization's first director in 2018, when the town decided to remove tourism responsibilities from the Gaspé Chamber of Commerce and Tourism following complaints from stakeholders in the tourism industry.



Photo: Taken from Facebook


Destination Gaspé no longer has a captain.




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Ferry service to Anticosti and the North Shore: a first concrete step

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The promoters for the Gaspé-Anticosti-Havre-Saint-Pierre ferry service estimate that the maritime link could generate \$39 million in economic spinoffs annually.

Given these results, unveiled by the firm Aviseo, and the socio-economic benefits for the three sectors, the Port of Havre-Saint-Pierre Corporation and the Côte-de-Gaspé and Minganie MRCs are asking the Quebec provincial government to move forward with implementation.

According to the study, the shuttle's anticipated average annual deficit is \$6.7 million for the first five years of operation, but tax and parafiscal revenues for Quebec would exceed \$12.5 million. The partners also note that all crossings in Quebec are operating at a deficit.

The study outlines a governance structure for a non-profit model in which strategic decisions are made locally, while day-to-day operations are entrusted to a specialized operator. Port authorities, municipalities, and First Nations must be active stakeholders in the decision-making process.

The additional tourism spending related to the ferry would be \$11.4 million for Quebec. In total, 537 jobs would be supported annually in the provincial economy with the implementation of this maritime link, not to mention the long-awaited accessibility to Anticosti Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. According to calculations, 39,200 passengers could board the ship.

For economic and political stakeholders, it's worth the effort.

"It's been worth the effort for over 30 years. At the port of Havre-Saint-Pierre, we haven't been piloting (the project) for nothing for the past four years. It's clear that a structuring project in two re-



The port of Havre-Saint-Pierre.

Photo: Port of Havre-Saint-Pierre

mote regions is the icing on the cake. Not only is it viable, but it is also economically profitable for Quebec," says port director Odessa Thériault.

"Yes, it's worth it, because the region's dynamism is representative. We are few, but we are worth a lot. There is a need to occupy the territory. It's through major projects like this that we're going to make people want to come to the North Shore or the South Shore and integrate. We have to exploit it and make it known," adds Anticosti Mayor Hélène Boulanger.

"If we've taken all these steps, it shows how important it is for our region. We're turning the question back to the government: how important is regional development to them? We're convinced that it is," points out Meggie Richard, prefect of the Minganie MRC.

The studies were presented to the Quebec government in recent weeks. The ball is now in the government's court.

"All of the next steps will depend on the government's position. The next steps depend on a yes or no. That's where we are now," explains Ms. Thériault.

Infrastructure investments will have to be made in Havre-Saint-Pierre and Anticosti to accommodate a future ferry.

"These steps cannot move forward without a commit-

ment from the government," continues Ms. Thériault, which explains why the partners do not want to set a date for the ferry to begin service.

However, once a positive signal is received from the Quebec government, the target timeframe for the first crossing is four to seven years.

With the purchase of a ship at an estimated cost of \$20 million, plus the work to be done, the project partners do not want to put an overall figure on the investment required to get it up and running.

"It's an interesting question, but if I say we need that much, the following week, no one will answer me. One study will lead to another, and they will add up, and the total amount will be impressive. We'll get approvals as we go

along. If we ask for the whole pie at once, they'll say we're crazy. We have to break it down to get a hearing," explains Ms. Boulanger.

The prefect of Côte-de-Gaspé MRC believes that Gaspé could benefit from developing trade with Anticosti and the North Shore, as it is an important commercial hub.

"We have a good pool of commercial enterprises. Think of car dealerships, hardware stores, food distribution where (Anticosti's) commercial fabric is less developed, which we can't do right now," says Daniel Côté, noting that there are only 70 kilometres between the tip of the peninsula and the island.

The daily service between Havre-Saint-Pierre, Anticosti Island, and Rivière-au-Renard

would operate for a minimum of 160 days per year, from June to November. The roll-on/roll-off vessel will be able to carry up to 350 passengers, between 55 and 65 cars, and between 10 and 15 trucks for freight transport. The ferry would depart from Havre-Saint-Pierre and take 7.5 hours to reach Anticosti, make a 4-hour stopover, and take 5 additional hours of navigation before docking at Rivière-au-Renard. The return trip would take place the following day.

This idea comes 30 years after the failure of the ferry service between Rivière-au-Renard, Anticosti and the North Shore between 1994 and 1996, inclusively. The project entered a new chapter in 2014. Philippe Couillard's Liberal government commissioned a feasibility study published in April 2019, which concluded that such a ferry service using a used vessel would have generated an operating deficit of \$7.5 million for the years 2025-2030, a bill that would have risen to \$12.9 million with a new vessel. Infrastructure costs with the use of a new ship were estimated at \$136 million, compared to \$44 million with a used ship.

Infrastructure improvements were estimated at \$5 million in Rivière-au-Renard, \$4.3 million in Havre-Saint-Pierre, and \$6 million in Port Menier, Anticosti.

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AVIS PUBLIC est, par les présentes, donné par le soussigné, David Bourdages, en sa qualité de greffier-trésorier de la Municipalité Régionale de Comté Avignon, que les immeubles ci-après désignés seront vendus à l'enchère publique, selon les dispositions du Code municipal, au bureau de la MRC, 473, boulevard Perron, Maria (Québec), G0C 1Y0, le neuvième jour du mois d'avril 2026 (**9 avril 2026**) à **10 h a.m.** pour satisfaire aux taxes municipales et scolaires impayées, avec intérêts, pénalité, et frais encours, à moins que ces taxes, intérêts, pénalité et frais ne soient payés avant la vente (selon les sommes qui seront dues au moment du paiement).

Ces immeubles seront vendus avec bâtisses dessus construites, s'il y a lieu, circonstances et dépendances, sujets à toutes servitudes actives ou passives, apparentes ou occultes pouvant les affecter.

Le prix de l'adjudication et les frais de chacun de ces immeubles seront payables au moment de l'adjudication soit en monnaie légale du Canada ou par chèque visé ou mandat poste.

Les immeubles acquis dans le cadre de la vente pour taxes sont assujettis à un droit de retrait pendant une période d'un (1) an suivant la date d'adjudication (art. 1057 et suivants du Code municipal).

Note importante – Pour éviter la vente d'un immeuble, un paiement complet (capital, intérêts, pénalité et frais) doit être fait directement à la MRC Avignon. Si le paiement est fait par voie électronique, il appartient à la personne concernée, d'une part, de s'informer auprès de la MRC du montant total dû (à la date du paiement) en capital, intérêts, pénalité et frais et, d'autre part, d'en informer la MRC (en faisant clairement la preuve du paiement) pour que le processus puisse être interrompu.

AVIS IMPORTANT POUR TOUTE PERSONNE DEVANT SE PORTER ADJUDICATAIRE D'UN IMMEUBLE

La taxe fédérale sur les produits et services (TPS) et la taxe de vente provinciale (TVQ) s'appliquent à la vente pour taxes sauf s'il s'agit d'un immeuble d'habitation. L'adjudicataire d'un immeuble taxable qui est un inscrit auprès des gouvernements eu égard à ces taxes doit fournir ses numéros d'inscription ainsi que la preuve que ceux-ci sont valides le jour de l'adjudication. Une version imprimée des sites gouvernementaux où cette validation aura été faite le jour de l'adjudication devra être remise lors du paiement du prix de vente de son adjudication. La validation doit être faite sur les sites Web suivants : <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/esrvc-srvce/tx/bsnss/gsthstrgstry/menu-fra.html> http://www.revenuquebec.ca/fr/sepf/services/sgp_validation_tvq/default.aspx

Conditions pour enchérir Personne physique : (pièce d'identité) - Nom, date de naissance, adresse résidentielle complète et postale, s'il y a lieu, mandat ou procuration si elle représente une autre personne physique. **Personne morale** : Nom, forme juridique et loi constitutive (no NEQ), adresse complète et postale du siège social, s'il y a lieu **ET Pour le représentant d'une personne morale** : (pièce d'identité) – Nom, qualité du représentant (mandataire), copie de la pièce justificative l'autorisant à agir (ex : résolution, mandat, procuration ou autre).

Mode de paiement : Argent comptant, mandat poste, traite ou mandat bancaire ou chèque visé fait à l'ordre de la MRC Avignon.

Donné à Maria, au bureau de la Municipalité Régionale de Comté d'Avignon, ce 6e jour de février 2026 (2026-02-06).

David Bourdages
Directeur général et greffier-trésorier
MRC d'Avignon
473, boulevard Perron
Maria (Québec) G0C 1Y0

SECTEUR L'ASCENSION-DE-PATAPÉDIA	TOTAL :	2,711.79 \$	SECTEUR MATAPÉDIA
HERNANDEZ ORELLANA, Salvador Isaac, & CARON BARNES, Stéphanie. 5, route du Chamberland. Matricule 2310-78-0860.	KENNY, Michel. 143, boulevard Perron. Matricule 1435-82-6783.		CHABOT, Danie. 242, chemin Riverside. Matricule 4513-70-9773.
Lot 5 463 915 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.	Lot 4 733 141 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.		Lot 5 630 485 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.
MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 842.44 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 278.10 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$ TOTAL : 1,327.33 \$	MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 2,456.79 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 243.99 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$ TOTAL : 2,907.57 \$		MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 836.51 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 26.64 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$ TOTAL : 1,069.94 \$
SECTEUR MARIA	LABRIE, Guy. Rue des Grands-Ducs. Matricule 1839-45-6786.		OLSCAMP, Guy. 17, rue du Ruisselet. Matricule 4515-35-3916.
BEAULIEU-LEFEBVRE, Vanessa. 493, rue des Sittelles. Matricule 1738-16-2958.	Lot 4 733 544 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.		Lot 5 630 608 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.
Lot 4 732 924 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.	MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 167.11 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$ TOTAL : 373.90 \$		MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 1,366.08 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$ TOTAL : 1,572.87 \$
MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 2,378.47 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 101.74 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$ TOTAL : 2,687.00 \$	PORLIER, Léopold. Boulevard Perron. Matricule 1434-45-3563.		SECTEUR NOUVELLE
BOURGOIN, Louis. 82, rue des Étourneaux. Matricule 1738-47-0849.	Lot 4 732 752 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.		BERNARD, Jonathan. Rue des Érables Est. Matricule 9133-32-7638.
Lot 4 733 128 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.	MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 450.75 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$ TOTAL : 657.54 \$		Lots 5 874 987, 5 875 626, 5 875 627, 5 875 631, 5 875 635 & 5 875 636 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.
MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 2,406.58 \$ TAXES SCOLAIRES : 98.42 \$ FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$			MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 1,897.27 \$

TAXES SCOLAIRES : 163.03 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 2,267.09 \$

SECTEUR POINTE-À-LA-CROIX

BOUDREAU, Mélanie. 568, chemin de la Petite-Rivière-du-Loup. Matricule 6228-89-1942.

Lot 6 177 876 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 2,058.43 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 116.85 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 2,382.07 \$

CAISSY, Mike, 86, boulevard Interprovincial. Matricule 6420-67-7819.

Lot 6 178 336 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 398.37 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 605.16 \$

CHAMBERLAIN, Danny. 10, rue Blais. Matricule 6421-40-6248.

Lot 6 178 176 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 241.98 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 448.77 \$

HACHÉ, Nadine. 27, rue Sarto. Matricule 6520-61-7539.

Lot 6 178 417 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 481.80 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 688.59 \$

LANDRY, Cathy. 467, boulevard Perron Est. Matricule 7425-00-9501.

Lot 6 033 743 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 1,532.27 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 75.04 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 1,814.10 \$

LANDRY, Mélanie. 488, chemin de la Petite-Rivière-du-Loup. Matricule 6327-21-7099.

Lot 6 177 856 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 2,198.77 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 122.42 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 2,527.98 \$

LEPAGE, Joël. 31, rue de la Mer. Matricule 6520-70-6158.

Lot 6 583 240 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 4,051.20 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 115.91 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 4,373.90 \$

LÉVESQUE, Lionel, OUELLETTE, Corinne & LÉVESQUE, Gaétane. 42, rue Sarto. Matricule 6520-81-5376.

Lot 6 178 443 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 615.83 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 822.62 \$

MCGRATH, Jonathan. 26, rue Berthelot. Matricule 6420-37-7563.

Lot 6 178 266 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 820.86 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 1,027.65 \$

MIOUSSE, Marcel, 517, chemin de la Petite-Rivière-du-Loup. Matricule 6327-07-0446.

Lot 6 177 866 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 983.50 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 1,190.29 \$

PHILIPPE, Éric & LÉVESQUE, Isabelle. 894, rue Principale. Matricule 6433-77-7768.

Lot 6 178 064 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 1,028.74 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 34.59 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 1,270.12 \$

SAVOIE, Jean-Roch. 291, chemin de la Petite-Rivière-du-Loup. Matricule 6324-53-2724.

Lot 6 177 812 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 3,203.82 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 6.77 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 3,417.38 \$

SAVOIE, Jean-Roch. Chemin de la Petite-Rivière-du-Loup. Matricule 6324-12-8054.

Lot 6 177 999 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 370.86 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 577.65 \$

SECTEUR ST-ALEXIS-DE-MATAPÉDIA

BOISSONNAULT, Marie-Pier. 200, rue Principale. Matricule 3814-14-7025.

Lot 5 629 789 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 2,218.50 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 62.06 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 2,487.35 \$

BOSSÉ, Mathieu. 199, rue Principale. Matricule 3814-14-4080.

Lot 5 629 767 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 2,271.64 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 54.31 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 2,532.74 \$

GALLANT, Régis. 170, route Léonard. Matricule 4012-88-6505.

Lot 5 630 028 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 0 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 113.43 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 320.22 \$

GESTION EVS INC. (ROBICHAUD, Ève). 199, route Léonard. Matricule 4113-63-6619.

Lot 5 630 062 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 1,278.55 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 38.30 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 1,523.64 \$

LÉVESQUE, Sacha. 168-168A, rang Saint-Benoit. Matricule 3417-67-8712.

Lot 5 630 903 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 719.05 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 925.84 \$

SECTEUR ST-FRANÇOIS D'ASSISE

BOSSÉ, Mathieu. 104, rue des Bouleaux. Matricule 2916-51-5824.

Lot 5 463 224 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 3,071.11 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 171.83 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 3,395.73 \$

LANDRY, Yoland. 406, chemin Central. Matricule 3016-20-1710.

Lot 5 463 430 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 1,650.04 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 33.61 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 1,890.44 \$

MICHAUD, Laurent. Rang 6. Matricule 3015-37-8246.

Lot 5 463 456 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 43.94 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 250.73 \$

ST-ONGE, Jean-Paul. 153, rang St-Jean. Matricule 2613-22-9823.

Lot 5 463 502 au cadastre du Québec, circonscription foncière de Bonaventure 2.

MONTANT TAXES MUNICIPALES : 1,083.18 \$
TAXES SCOLAIRES : 0 \$
FRAIS DE VENTE (MRC) : 206.79 \$
TOTAL : 1,289.97 \$

*Certains frais s'ajouteront à ce montant et leur paiement doit être effectué pour empêcher la vente. Il en est de même de tout montant qui deviendrait exigible après cette dernière date de même que des intérêts et pénalité qui devront être calculés au moment du paiement. L'ensemble de ces taxes, frais, intérêts et pénalité seront par ailleurs annoncés au moment de la vente.

David Bourdages
Directeur général et greffier-trésorier
MRC d'Avignon
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Teen mental health: a concern

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER – Data presented by the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Public Health Department indicates that one in two teenagers in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine has a mental health issue, which is a concern for the organization's president and chief executive officer (CEO), Martin Pelletier.

The figures were presented on January 29 during the board meeting of the CISSS de la Gaspésie in Chandler.

"It is extremely important that we address these needs. There is a red flag. It's happening all over Quebec, but here, the rate is very, very high, and we feel that there is a need to intervene, be vigilant, and take action early on," says Mr. Pelletier.

The Regional Public Health Department and the Mental Health Department will work together to improve access and focus on prevention, particularly in schools.

This will require the organization to make choices in terms of priorities, at a time when the CISSS already has to call on independent contrac-



Martin Pelletier, president and CEO of the CISSS de la Gaspésie.

Photo: N. Sergerie

tors for special education teachers and psychologists.

"We have these professions in the organization that are called upon to work in various sectors. We will prioritize young people and allocate more hours to youth services. Somewhere, someone will pay, but these are choices that have to be made," adds the president and CEO.

Several services already exist to help young people struggling with mental health issues in the region. Resources

can be found on the CISSS website. Families are also encouraged to seek help early and use local support networks to reduce the risk of crises.

A slight decrease in the suicide rate

The suicide rate was 11.8 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2024 in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, according to the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ).

The region ranks in the middle of the pack across the province, with the provincial rate at 10.7 per 100,000.

Eleven people committed suicide during the reference period.

This is an improvement over 2023, when the rate was 13.6 per 100,000 with 14 deaths. Forty-four people were hospitalized following a suicide attempt, down from 52 in 2023.

In 2025, 337 people presented to the emergency room with suicidal ideation. Men are overrepresented, with a rate of 16.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. The rate for women is 5.4 for the period of 2021-2023.

Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Gaspésie

Québec

Photo: CISSS website

Lower-than-expected deficit at CISSS de la Gaspésie

Nelson Sergerie

CHANDLER – The CISSS de la Gaspésie is now forecasting a significantly lower deficit than initially anticipated for the 2025–2026 fiscal year, which ends on March 31.

At the beginning of the year, the Gaspé health network was projecting a deficit of \$30 million. With two months remaining in the fiscal year, that figure has been revised downward to \$4 million, less than 1% of its \$560-million budget.

"A lot of effort went into getting from \$30 million to \$4 million. It's practically a balance when you look at the margins of error. I would like to thank everyone because we asked for a lot of sacrifices without cutting services," says president and chief executive officer (CEO) Martin Pelletier.

He explains where the savings were achieved. "These are administrative restrictions that were implemented. We were able to achieve this by working fewer hours. That means fewer people in the field, and some have worked harder to compensate for absences. We have continued to use independent labour, but 80% of them now work for Santé Québec, especially in large centres," says Mr. Pelletier.

With a more limited labour pool, maintaining services has become more challenging.

Addressing the ongoing situation in obstetrics, particularly in Haute-Gaspésie, the CEO reiterates the organization's commitment to maintaining services.

"We are looking at solutions that are not magical and that take time to implement, and we have the support of Santé Québec to maintain the service," says the head of the Gaspé health network.

Eastern Shores School Board appoints assistant director general to run Gaspé High School

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ – A publicly unidentified incident that took place on December 18 at Gaspé High School triggered a chain of administrative decisions made by the Eastern Shores School Board (ESSB), including the appointment of Jane Bradbury as interim principal of the school.

According to a press release issued by the School Board, the incident occurred "during a school activity" and was "related to a student's behaviour." It "required an intervention from the administration."

The press release also mentions that "since then, this event has led to a series of investigations and contributed to a deterioration of the internal working climate, as well as a loss of confidence in the institution."

Therefore, "a series of measures aimed at restoring confidence among the community, staff, students, and parents in relation to Gaspé High School" were implemented.

The measures include eight



Photo: G. Gagné

Eastern Shores School Board director general Denise Simoneau.

points, the first one being that ESSB will now assume the management of the school, hence the presence of Jane Bradbury. Ms. Bradbury will remain assistant director general while also taking on the role of principal, effective January 29.

Members of the school board staff have been present at the school on a continuous basis since January 6, adds the press release. That presence will continue until further notice.

The document also men-

tions that "these actions are guided by a clear objective: ensuring the well-being, safety, and educational success of students, within a respectful and caring environment. Taking this situation and its consequences very seriously, the School Board intends to act with determination."

The School Board has not given interviews to clarify what the December 18 incident was. It nevertheless stresses that "steps taken so far with the appropriate authorities concluded that there was no basis to pursue the investigation nor judicialize the case."

Gaspé High School, also referred to as Gaspé Polyvalente, has experienced periods of administrative instability over the past two decades.

"More fundamentally, we note that Gaspé High School is facing significant operational and organizational climate challenges that go beyond this single event. Over the past twenty years, the school has had no fewer than twelve principals, which reflects persistent instability and

structural issues that must be addressed without delay. Given that we work with a population of minors, we have a duty to ensure confidentiality regarding the events that occurred and the measures that were implemented, in order to protect the identity of the individuals concerned," reveals the press release.

"We chose to act in a vigorous, responsible, and proactive manner by deploying a comprehensive action plan aimed at restoring a safe, stable environment conducive to learning. The action plan addresses all fronts with concrete solutions," explains Denise Simoneau, director general of ESSB, in writing.

Other measures

The seven other measures implemented by the School Board are as follows:

- strengthening student support services, including the creation of an "Oasis"-type space;
- adding specialized resources (social worker, intervention technician) dedicated to students;

- installing surveillance cameras in hallways;

- providing home instruction for a student to ensure appropriate and adapted conditions and to guarantee everyone's safety. Educational and professional resources will be mobilized to support this student and help them pursue their learning during this transitional period;

- engaging external expertise to assess the organizational climate, establish a diagnosis, and propose recommendations;

- updating the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence Plan;

- following any recommendations made by the National Student Ombudsman and implementing them at the appropriate time.

"At this stage, no measure is off the table to restore calm, confidence, respect, and a healthy learning and working environment. The success of this process now depends on the constructive engagement of all members of the school community, and I call on everyone's collaboration," concluded Ms. Simoneau in the press release.

1994, a year of electoral activity and fisheries tensions

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The year 1994 was marked by two Quebec elections in the riding of Bonaventure, a rather unusual occurrence. It was also a year of major tension in commercial fisheries following the moratorium on cod catches in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

**Vol 20, No 1
January 9, 1994**

- In issue 1, dated January 9, “The year in retroSpec”, pun intended, makes the biggest headline, with “Gaspé MNA (André Beaudin) will not seek third term” following closely. “Charges in 25-year-old murder”, referring to the 1968 killing of Gaspésie teacher Norma Vaillancourt in Montreal, “Municipal budgets released” and “Winning Canadian team includes local lad”, namely Grande-Rivière’s Yannick Dubé, a member of the World Junior Hockey Championships.

**Vol 20, No 2
January 16, 1994**

- “Mines Gaspé lets 20 (employees) go”, “By-election announced for Bonaventure county” and “What a way to plough”, showing a crane pulling a road plough out of a ditch, headline issue 2, dated January 16. In “Two local heavyweights to square off in Bonaventure by-election”, readers learn that Nicole Appleby, former Finance minister chief of staff, and Marcel Landry, a UPA executive, will run in Bonaventure to replace the late Gerard D. Levesque. “Pin Rouge receives federal support” and Gaspé’s “Recycling project declared a success and will continue” also make page 1.

**Vol 20, No 3
January 23, 1994**

- In issue 3, dated January 23, led with “Confusion reigns re: linguistic policy” as Douglas-town resident James Routh was initially refused by Quebec Telephone to add the word “teenagers” for a second line he wanted installed at home. The company eventually accepted



The anglophone group of “Our region, Our Future”: from left, Melissa Lemieux, Melanie Hayes, Gregory Dow, Colette Prentice, Stepanie Guignon, Glenn Harrison, Molly Harper and Joey Harrison. Unfortunately Kim Billingsley was absent.

his request. “Okay, okay, enough already!” reports on the heavy snowfalls of January, “Winter Getaways planner”, a SPEC supplement, “Arbour: lack of bilingualism, my biggest handicap”, “Mgr. Ross finishes year with balanced budget”, and “New Carlisle (Barry Tennier) mayor may face charges for assault” against councillor Nelson Holmes, also make the front-page.

**Vol 20, No 4
January 30, 1994**

- “Cross Point committee organizes to save sawmill jobs”, as GDS moves his plainer to Matane, “CLSC scores high in user satisfaction” in the Gaspé area and “Nicole Appleby Arbour’s nomination official” in Bonaventure, headline issue 4, dated January 30. “Budds closer to finding a potential donor”, namely Taylor and Brendon, “British Heritage Centre holds AGM” and “National Assembly Hockey team to visit Grande-Rivière” also make page 1.

**Vol 20, No 5
February 6, 1994**

- Issue 5, dated February 6, headlines with Gaspesia-The Islands “School Board conducting survey on parental attitudes”, “No public debate before by-election – candidates quibble over format”, “Well-known night spot goes up in smoke”, Bonaventure’s Barlimer, “The SQ meet the RCMP” in a hockey game, “Wakeham/York Winter carnival set to go” and “Brothers’ dream comes true”, as Guy and Mark Gallibois open their gym, also make the front-page.

**Vol 20, No 6
February 13, 1994**

- “PQ orchestrate major tours, Liberals’ big guns here this week”, covering the Bonaventure by-election, headlines issue 6, dated February 13. A large photo shows the annual Robbie Burns Night held in Gaspé by Century Lodge Masonic Temple, while “Taxes down – smokers smiling”, “New links make access to Maggies easier”, aerial and maritime links, “Computer camp to open” in Escuminac by Huguette Allen and Ross Collins, and “Official opening held at Pin rouge” also make page 1.

**Vol 20, No 7
February 20, 1994**

- Electoral boundaries’ “Changes could have negative impact for anglos”, as a push to the east would reduce the percentage of anglophones in the new ridings, headlines issue 7, dated February 20. “Premier (Daniel Johnson Jr) visits Gaspé, campaigns with Arbour” also takes a big front-page space. “Recreational fishery along the coast under review” and Russell “Williams does door to door, (Marcel) Landry visits GISB”, (Gaspesia-The Islands School Board), complete the front-page. Liberal Party’s representative Russell Williams came to support Nicole Appleby.

**Vol 20, No 8
February 27, 1994**

- “Landry takes Bonaventure for the PQ – Arbour stunned by defeat” headlines issue 8, dated February 27. Then Health minister Lucienne “Robillard announces special funding for Maria”, Patrick “Gagnon to the rescue: Paspébiac parishioners won’t pay fines” for using faulty charitable receipts, and “Two English members named to Caisse Pop board in Gaspé”, Elizabeth MacGregor and Brent Simpson, complete page 1.

**Vol 20, No 9
March 6, 1994**

- “New school for NRHS students”, as pupils get in the New Richmond building for the first time, and “Quebec Games ’93 final report – financial success” headline issue 9, dated March 6. “Sûreté du Québec reorganization causing concern”, as the police plans to centralize communications to Rimouski, “Liberal considering anglo candidate in Bonaventure” for the September general election, “Official launching of Big Brothers, Big Sisters in Gaspé”, “It’s in the mail: lobster board votes to be counted soon” and “Listuguj (police department) changes not without controversy” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 20, No 10
March 13, 1994**

- “Micmac ceremonies thrill audience at Acadian Museum” headlines issue 10, dated

March 13. “Director general of Chandler hospital fired”, “Mgr. Ross hospital received Canadian accreditation” and Nicole “Arbour transferred to Montreal – new job with CSST” are also referred to on page 1.

**Vol 20, No 11
March 20, 1994**

- “Jake loves school”, a report on New Carlisle’s Jake Gallon, who has Down’s syndrome, and “Gaspésie to Anticosti ferry soon to be launched” headline issue 11, dated March 20. “Saint-Omer: council moves to keep Saint-Louis residents out in the cold” by refusing to plough their range, and “Regional Health Council aiming for more doctors” also appear on page 1. Inside, “Stone Container invests in new press” is also noteworthy. A new series, “Coming home” features Cynthia Patterson.

**Vol 20, No 12
March 27, 1994**

- Issue 12, dated March 27, shows “VIA passenger services again threatened – minister (Doug Young) proposes same cuts as Conservatives” and “St. Patrick’s celebrations turn the coast green” as headlines. “How Via and CN are intimately linked”, “15 years of Quebec AM” and “Preliminary hearing held for suspects in Chandler murder” of Fernand Lebreux in 1993, also make the front-page titles. Inside, the lobster marketing board project is rejected 111-100 by the fishermen and a court agreement allows the residents of Saint-Louis to get the road cleared. “Coming home” features Gesgapegiag chief Bernard Jerome.

**Vol 20, No 13
April 3, 1994**

- “Our region, our future finished until next year”, a pilot-project sensitizing youths to the Gaspé Peninsula’s potential, and “Train worries dominate first town hall meeting” in New Carlisle, headline issue 13, April 3. “Louis Sexton decides to run” for the Liberal Party

From Page 11

nomination in Bonaventure, “French morning show to focus on the Gaspé”, TVA’s Salut, Bonjour, and “Gaspé School to hold reunion” complete page 1 titles. “Coming home” features Valerie Gilker.

**Vol 20. No 14
April 10, 1994**

- “Gagnon, Patterson (Patrick and Cynthia) meet train employees – if it goes, we’re going with it” and “Tiny grads”, Gesgapegiag’s kindergarten pupils, headline issue 14, dated April 10. “An outline of major changes under the new civil code”, “Gaspé doctor dead at 81”, former mayor and Member of the National Assembly Guy Fortier, “Saga of Saint-Louis”, about the Saint-Omer residents who can’t have their road ploughed, and “Cruise company awaiting Magdalen (Islands) approval” also make page 1.

**Vol 20. No 15
April 17, 1994**

- “Riot in Newport” headlines issue 15, dated April 17. Tensions are mounting in the fisheries, as crab fishermen will make record revenues, while their cod colleagues and the plant workers are jobless due to the moratorium. “Troubled waters” reports on Haldimand drinkable water problems. Marcel “Landry asks Transport minister to pressure Ottawa to keep train”, “Budd family: Brendon’s transplant May 16”, “Action démocratique tours region, Dumont (Mario) preparing for election” and “Volunteer and change your world” are other page 1 titles.

**Vol 20. No 16
April 24, 1994**

- “Heavy ice on rivers causes worst flooding ever”, headlines issue 16, published on April 24, reporting on the debacle that hit several Gaspé Peninsula rivers, including the Matapédia, Restigouche and Bonaventure rivers. Matapédia leaders ask for a disaster zone status. Louis “Sexton and (Mario) Morin ready to face off” at Liberal Party convention, “Newport cod coalition leaders charged with assault – demand meeting



Heavy ice on rivers causes worst flooding ever. Matapédia hit badly, wants disaster zone status.

with federal minister” and “Anglican prayer book controversy: Society branch forms in Port Daniel”, also make page 1.

**Vol 20. No 17
May 1, 1994**

- Mario “Morin wins Liberal nomination by 5 votes” and “Flood damage estimates staggering” headline issue 17, dated May 1. In picture-caption “Dog power!”, New Richmond’s Dwayne LeGrand harnesses his dog Spike. “Rural Dignity to hold hearings on VIA’s future” and “No crab for cod fishermen”, as decided by Fisheries minister Brian Tobin, complete the front-page titles.

**Vol 20. No 18
May 8, 1994**

- Issue 18, dated May 8, headlines with Campbellton’s “National aboriginal fisheries conference begins”, with focus on “recovery of our people” and John “Carberry wins Gaspé Liberal nomination”. “Gagnon doesn’t see need for (VIA) hearings”, “CASA meets with Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission”, “Matapédia school may not reopen until September” due to the flood and “MNA (Liberal Benoit Fradet) tours region to talk about youth programs” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 20. No 19
May 15, 1994**

- “Natives aiming for exclusive jurisdiction – organizers miffed that federal ministers didn’t show” and “Minister of Education list disappoints (regional) school board officials” because Gaspesia-The Islands has classed 130 out of 150,

headline issue 19, dated May 15. “\$9 million to be spent on Gaspé roads – Haldimand citizens still waiting”, “Maine governor wants to expand Appalachian Trail into the Gaspé” and “Recent oil spill has Listuguj officials nervous”, the spill being from CN in Campbellton, also appear on page 1.

**Vol 20. No 20
May 22, 1994**

- “Hearings on VIA service attract many groups – VIA’s marketing strategies considered poor” and “Regional Council proposes health cuts” headline issue 20, dated May 22. “CASA seeks more visibility”, “Six women honoured at Salon de la femme”, Georges “Farrah announces regional job creation projects” and “Nomad scientists visit Gaspé” also appear on page 1. Cynthia Dow starts a series on forestry.

**Vol 20. No 21
May 29, 1994**

- “Social integration of the handicapped: challenging but benefits undeniable” and “Ordination of Mgr. Raymond Dumais” headline issue 21, dated May 29. “Stone to invest \$25 million” to treat New Richmond mill’s effluents and “Gaspé to host ’95 Provincial Archery Competition” also make page 1.

**Vol 20. No 22
June 5, 1994**

- Sharon Farrell, SPEC’s “Managing editor wins new journalism award”, the Lindsay Chrysler award, for her outstanding contribution to the community newspaper, and “Copper mine workers on

strike”, headline issue 22, dated June 5. “Brendon Budd receives bone marrow transplant”, “Ordination of Lynda Harrison to the Order of Ministry”, “Fine dining festival planned for Percé” and “Gerard D. (Levesque) Foundation book launched” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 20. No 23
June 12, 1994**

- “D-Day 50th Anniversary – New Richmond Legion members” and Gaspé’s “ZEC employees may strike” take most of the front-page of issue 23, dated June 12. “25 years for Gaspé Cegep”, “Cruise line on hold” between Carleton and the Maggies and “Ralliement wants to be rallying point” also make page 1.

**Vol 20. No 24
June 19, 1994**

- “Aftermath of June 9 attack – Listuguj reps meet SQ officials” headlines issue 24, dated June 19, reporting on a June 12 attack by young adults that led to the destruction of an SQ car. “75% of objective already met in campaign for (Rimouski) Cancer Centre” also makes a big title. “Judge finds minor innocent of NRHS (New Richmond High School) fire”, “Chaleur Bay very fragile”, “Mines Gaspé employees back to work” and “Natural law party prepares for Quebec election” also make page 1.

**Vol 20. No 25
June 26, 1994**

- “SPDS and NRHS officially opened” takes an important part of the cover of issue 25, dated June 26, as the Shi-

gawake-Port Daniel School underwent major renovations. “Douglastown rocked by two fires”, “VIA and CN contracts on the line”, “Report on VIA hearings released” and “Roch Voisine in concert in Chandler” complete the front-page titles.

**Vol 20. No 26
July 3, 1994**

- Gaspé “Councillor Charles O’Brien dies at age 69” and legendary singer “Mary Travers honoured in Newport” headline issue 26, dated July 3. “Nurses in an uproar” at Maria hospital, “Fishing guide drowns” namely Charles-Eugène Lebrun on the Bonaventure river, and “American Travel Writers check out in Percé – The train is THE way to get here”, according to them, make the other front-page titles.

**Vol 20. No 27
July 10, 1994**

- In issue 27, dated July 10, readers see director of nursing services at Maria hospital “Lucille Leblanc contests conditions to be imposed for her return to work”, after being placed on stand-by, and “Eastern Quebec PQ candidates ready!” as headlines. Quebec elections are expected in the summer. “Budd children: Brendon going stronger, Taylor treated for infection”, “N.R./Maria: two youth co-ops provide summer jobs” and “18th annual Wakeham/York Homecoming Festival set to go” make other page 1 titles.

**Vol 20. No 28
July 17, 1994**

- “Seafood Festival a great success in Percé”, an event held for the first time, headlines issue 28, dated July 17. “Carey Jones to run in Gaspé Town council”, “CN Quebec lines for sale”, namely some regional lines, and “Three killed in Cross Point accident”, as one driver was chased by police, complete the front-page titles. There is Canada Day coverage for the second consecutive week.

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From Page 12

Vol 20, No 29
July 24, 1994

- “SQ cruiser incident: five charged”, related to the June 9 destruction of a police car in Listuguj, and “Almond Art Centre opens with a flourish” headline issue 29, dated July 24. “Police investigation begins, victims buried” following the Cross Point tragedy, “12 new doctors recruited in 1 year” at Chandler hospital, New Carlisle’s “St. Andrew’s Anglican Church celebrates a century” and “Local airports affected by federal policy change”, which could mean privatization, also make page 1. Inside, the Listuguj Education Complex opens.

Vol 20, No 30
July 31, 1994

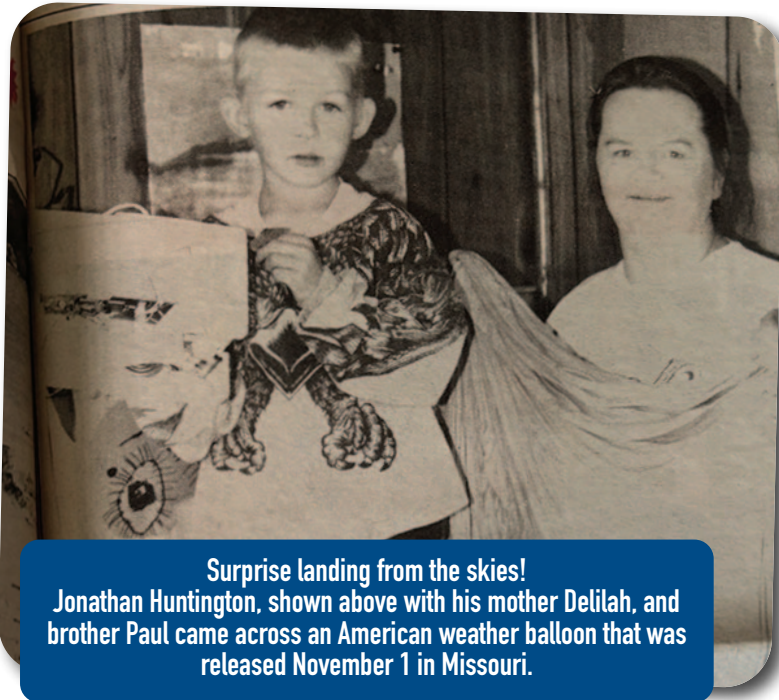
- “Fastball spirit hitting all ages”, “Alliance Quebec says it will fight election like a referendum” and New Carlisle’s summer “Pilot project – 100% employment” headline issue 30, dated July 31. “Jean-Roch Landry named to the Superior Court”, “Gaspé (cod) fishermen deliver ultimatum to federal government” and “Setbacks hampers Brendon (Budd) recovery” complete the front-page titles.

Vol 20, No 31
August 7, 1994

- “Roch Voisine performs to enthusiastic crowd” and “Reunion held to celebrate 80th anniversary” of Gaspé Intermediate School, headline issue 31, dated August 7. “Robertson clan gathers for reunion”, minister Sam “Elkas calls it quits but wants anglo presence in next Quebec government”, “Another successful Wakeham/York Festival despite small problems” and “Percé Rock Legion celebrates 20th anniversary” are other page 1 titles.

Vol 20, No 32
August 14, 1994

- In issue 32, dated August 14, readers see on the cover “\$1 million investment in



Surprise landing from the skies!
Jonathan Huntington, shown above with his mother Delilah, and brother Paul came across an American weather balloon that was released November 1 in Missouri.

Gaspé fisheries” by the federal government, Mario “Morin’s campaign opened: Premier Johnson visits” as headlines. “PQ leader Parizeau visits Bonaventure”, “John Carberry, Liberal candidate for Gaspé”, Escuminac’s computer “Summer camp with a twist” and New Richmond’s “St. Andrew’s Church restoration underway” also make page 1.

Vol 20, No 33
August 21, 1994

- Montreal Member of National Assembly Russell “Williams tours Gaspé Coast” to support Liberal Party, and “Family and friends join in the fun at the 149th Agricultural Fair” in New Richmond headline issue 33, dated August 21. “Chamber of Commerce asks politicians for help – Gaspé cured markets threatened” also appears on page 1.

Vol 20, No 34
August 28, 1994

- “Poll puts PQ firmly in the lead” in Eastern Quebec enroute to the September 12 elections and a photo of the Shigawake Fair parade headline issue 34, dated August 28. Lebreux “Brothers sentenced to life in Chandler murder” (they killed their father Fernand), “Listuguj fishing trials: court asks for more information”, “Director hired for British Heritage Centre”, namely Christina Delguste, and “Budd children update: growing stronger” also make page 1.

Vol 20, No 35
September 4, 1994

- Dated September 4, issue 35 headlines with Bloc québécois “Lucien Bouchard tours the Coast” to support the Parti Québécois as the September 12 election nears, and “Gesgapegiag Pow-Wow attracts Natives from afar”. “Public Security minister tours the Coast” to help Liberal Party, Brenda “Gedeon-Miller, (Ronald) Jacques face off in Listuguj election”, Gaspé’s “Accueil Blanche Goulet may soon be forced to close” due to budget woes and “Interview with Marcel Landry” also appear on page 1.

Vol 20, No 36
September 11, 1994

- “Liberal candidates divulge platform anchored in reality”, the candidates being Mario Morin and John Carberry, and “Cascapedia salmon caught for breeding program”, headline issue 36, dated September 11. “Debate focusses on jobs and economy”, “Tour leader complains of reception at Chandler hospital – DG will make issue a priority” and “Farrah campaigns on the Coast – sovereignty will scare off investors” make the front-page as well. Inside, “Brenda Gedeon Miller wins second term in Listuguj”.

Vol 20, No 37
September 18, 1994

- “Bonaventure victory: Landry ready for separation” and “Gaspé goes to Lelièvre: a majority of 3,377 votes” headline issue 37, dated September 18, thus covering the Parti Québécois’ wins in the region’s two ridings. Mont Bechervaise “Ski hill might

fold”, “Woodlot owners vote for marketing agency”, “Snowbirds unable to fly” due to weather, and “Bonaventure and Gaspé Election results” complete page 1 titles.

Vol 20, No 38
September 25, 1994

- “Project may see Newport fish plant reopen” and “Six candidates for ward 6” headline issue 38, dated September 25. Smaller page 1 titles cover “No crisis at Hôtel-Dieu” in Gaspé, “\$35.8 million for pollution control” at New Richmond’s Stone Container mill, and “Mont Bechervaise declares bankruptcy” in Gaspé, as unpaid bills reach \$550,000.

Vol 20, No 39
October 2, 1994

- Marcel “Landry named to Parizeau’s cabinet”, as minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, makes the only big headline of issue 39, dated October 2. “Calls for seal hunt, better monitoring” identified at Carleton Fisheries Council hearings, “Jobin may have competition” in New Richmond mayoral race, “Labour dispute costly, divisive” at Regional Tourist Association and “Tourism up by as much as 30%” make smaller page 1 titles.

Vol 20, No 40
October 9, 1994

- “New digs for Gesgapegiag Band Council”, as the new administrative building opens,

and “Chaleur (train) to be linked with Ocean” to have VIA save money between Matapedia and Halifax, headline issue 40, dated October 9. “Eastern caucus to decide on regional MNA”, “School board preparing for elections”, “U.I. overpayments in our region” and “Gaspé fire chief (Carl Sinnett) honored for heroic effort” during an airport fire, also make page 1.

Vol 20, No 41
October 16, 1994

- “Axworthy social reform proposals: Gagnon wants more details” headlines issue 41, dated October 16. Member of Parliament Patrick Gagnon admits that the reform’s goal is saving money. There are other headlines, “Confusion reigns about regional MNA” for the Gaspé Peninsula, as Mathias Rioux seems to also fill that spot for the Lower St. Lawrence, and Tennyson “Johnson retrospective draws appreciative crowd” at Manoir de la Malbaie. “New Quebec government working on referendum credibility”, “New Richmond Rotary Club launches new projects”, including one for Barachois, and “CBC’s (show host Wayne) Rostad visits coast” also appear on the front-page.

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From Page 13

Vol 20. No 42
October 23, 1994

- Issue 42, dated October 23 shows Gaspé Peninsula “Natives ‘reject and dismiss territorial integrity of Québec’” as the main headline, as well as “Some emergency services suspended” at Paspebiac CLSC due to doctor shortage. “It’s official: (Jean-Marie) Jobin to have competition” in New Richmond, from Guy Cavanagh, “The Blais report: released by GISB”, about school-home relations, “New owners for Mont Bechervaise” and “Bad experience for Gaspé Polyvalent students”, as they were called names in a Chandler restaurant, also make the front-page titles.

Vol 20. No 43
October 30, 1994

- “Adien, Captain Ti-Lou”, about the passing of a Percé legend, Séverin Langlois, a former fishermen and boat excursion promoter, headlines issue 43, released on October 30. “Ghouls Galore in Gesgapegiag”, about a bright Halloween display, “Haldimand water woes take two nights to air”, “Yvon Caron new councillor for (Gaspé’s) ward 6”, Marcel “Landry’s staff finalized” and “CHNC employees may strike” complete page 1 titles.

Vol 20. No 44
November 6, 1994

- “Cement plant project: Meeting with civil servants has mayor excited”, since the venture has a real promoter in Guy Rousseau, and “Fire chiefs for a day”, as grade 3 kids filled that role in Gaspé, headline issue 44, dated November 6. “Ferne Howatson may bow out” of the school board, “Candidates for council eager to serve” in municipalities, Marcel “Landry asking for exclusive (fisheries) jurisdiction” and “Anglos vote could make a difference” in Port Daniel complete page 1 titles. Inside, a photo report shows many veterans, with Remembrance Day approaching.



Mawiomi celebrates re-opening
After extensive renovations, Mawiomi Treatment on the Gesgapegiag reserve was officially re-opened Friday, November 1. Above, chief Bernard Jerome (far left) Director Elaine Vicaire, and Brenda Gideon-Miller (far right) participate in the ribbon-cutting with other directors.

Vol 20. No 45
November 13, 1994

- Jean-Marie “Jobin wins two-thirds of votes” in New Richmond, “Howatson decides to step down” from school board elections, and Robert “McInnis disappointed that Anglos didn’t support him” in Port Daniel, makes the headlines of issue 45, dated November 13. In New Carlisle, “Surprise landing from the skies” when Jonathan and Paul Huntington found an American weather balloon in their backyard, also makes page 1.

Vol 20. No 46
November 20, 1994

- Issue 46, dated November 20, headlines with the school board “Voter turnout heavy in advance polls”. Laurent “Gough found not guilty in near-death of cop”, “Remembrance ceremonies draw large crowds”, minister Guy “Chevette visits: 49 programs may be decentralized”, “Arson fire in York” and “12 Port Daniel residents win class action suit” to rescind an agreement with former cement plant promoter Réjean Aucoin, also appear on page 1.

Vol 20. No 47
November 27, 1994

- “Hong Kong veterans return”, namely Phil Doddridge and Arnold Ross, who went to Hong Kong for Remembrance Day, and school board elections’ “Unprecedented turnout, some results may be contested” headline issue 47,

dated November 27. Martin “Kromberg gets 12 years” for manslaughter, a year after shooting Yves Deslauriers in Carleton, “Tourism minister to attend local symposium”, “Hearings on social reform: too important to be partisan” and “Cod moratorium: no young fish in sight” complete page 1.

Vol 20. No 48
December 4, 1994

- “English ‘completely for-

gotten” in official opening of extended care facility” at Matapedia’s CLSC Malauze, headlines issue 48, dated December 4. Audrey “Acteson named chairperson of school board” also makes a headline. “Gaspé VIA men laid off” because the train leaves the same day as arrival, “NR Legion votes to allow religious headgear”, “Gaspé fish hatchery given reprieve” and Patrick “Gagnon consults on response to social reforms” complete page 1.

Vol 20. No 49
December 11, 1994

- Lucien “Bouchard’s illness: a family drama”, as the Bloc Québécois leader had a leg amputated at the beginning of December, makes the big headline of issue 49, dated December 11. The other headline reads: “Budd children update: Brendon may be out for Christmas”. “Future of CN Rail: task force to meet in Campbellton”, “Former Gaspesian honoured in Medical Hall of Fame”, namely John Browne, and “Tourism symposium attracts more than 200” also make the front-page.

Vol 20. No 50
December 18, 1994

- Issue 50, dated December 18, headlines with “Hong Kong, 1941: What a way to spend Christmas...”. Cynthia Dow tells the story of prisoner of war Lance Ross’ internment in Hong Kong and Japan. Inside, Sandra Willett Dugas says: “I want to do my best”, as she will perform at New Richmond’s concert hall during the Christmas break, on December 28.

Similarities between 1994 and 2026: Anticosti ferry makes headlines

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The links between 1994 and 2026 are easy to find. Let’s focus on one of them. Thirty-two years ago, Groupe Desgagnés, already a well-established navigation company, started in June a service between Havre-Saint-Pierre, on the North Shore, Port-Menier, the only village on Anticosti Island, and Rivière-au-Renard. The Nordik Passeur was comfortable when the sea was quiet, but the situation changed when high winds arose.

As readers will see in the 1996 press review of SPEC, the year the service was phased out, Anticosti at the time was not ready for extensive tourism. Both levels of government gave too little support to the project between 1994 and 1996, notably to improve the island’s general infrastructure and make them convenient for a larger cross-section of the population, not only sports fishermen and hunters.

In 2026, there is renewed discussion of a ferry service between the same points. Decision-making is very slow though. The initiative will ideally require tens of millions of dollars in public funding to materialize. However, the fiscal revenue would more than make up for the public money injected in the service itself, would it be offered by the Société des traversiers du Québec, a public corporation.

Quebec is rich in maritime communities and attractions, but the long evaluation process of projects submitted to take advantage of the St. Lawrence river, estuary, and gulf gives an edge to other destinations. The fact that Anticosti is a UNESCO World Heritage Site is not convincing the public-decision makers to act faster.

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

Traffic ramps up with adjustments made to cement plant system

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) is now regularly bringing loaded cement cars from the Port Daniel cement plant to the New Carlisle yard.

The first loaded train was sent west on January 27 with six cars, followed by a second train that reached New Carlisle on February 3 carrying 12 loaded cars. On February 5, eight additional cars were sent to New Carlisle for later delivery to customers.

Luc Lévesque, director general of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, says adjustments were required during the first loading days following the arrival of the first train carrying empty cars to the cement plant on January 19. Since then, the loading operation has ramped up over the following weeks.

“It’s going well. We’re loading at a better pace now. There were some things to adjust. One factor for now is that we are limited in our operating hours. The ramp we use was based in Nouvelle and in the original (environment certificate) request for Nouvelle, we were only operating during the day. We didn’t notice that our authorization was valid from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. We have asked for a change regarding operating hours and we should get it at one point,” explains Mr.



Photo: Gilles Gagné

The first train hauling loaded cement cars between Port-Daniel and New Carlisle circulated on January 27.

Lévesque.

That ramp was used in Nouvelle when the owner of the line, Quebec’s ministry of Transport, imposed a cap of 10 loaded cars per week for the old Cascapedia-St. Jules bridges before they were replaced in December 2020. There was no limit if the cars were loaded at two-thirds of their capacity, with a top-off load added in Nouvelle using the temporary system now installed in Port Daniel.

That system will no longer be needed once Saint Mary’s Cement’s new silo is up and running later in 2026.

In the meantime, the SCFG continues to use its own silo in

New Richmond as a back up for Port Daniel during the transition, and for a specific type of cement car, gravity cars, for which the negative-pressure system poses a challenge.

“Nevertheless, we can now load 10 cars a day in Port Daniel under the current temporary system,” adds Luc Lévesque, who is glad to be able to count on the reopening of the New Carlisle yard.

“It’s a real rail yard. It’s a big plus for us in terms of space and capacity,” he stresses.

Mr. Lévesque expressed concern about reports that Glencore, the owner of the Rouyn-Noranda copper

smelter and potential buyer of copper concentrate of Osisko Metals, the firm working for the reopening of the Murdochville mine, has issued ultimatums to the Quebec government that could lead to the closure of its Abitibi facility due to environmental constraints. Rail transport would be used to ship the copper ore between the Gaspé Peninsula and Rouyn-Noranda.

“It is not good news but it will be okay, I think. Besides, we have other potential customers for the Gaspé town area,” comments Mr. Lévesque.

Meanwhile, the SCFG is asking drone operators to stay outside the rail corridor and respect the regulation in place for such flying devices.

“Some of our train crews have seen drones 20 feet from them. They don’t need this distraction,” sums up Mr. Lévesque.

Freight trains currently circulate at 10 miles per hour between New Richmond and Port Daniel for safety reasons, as work remains to be completed at many grade crossing signals. When grade crossing signals are not functional, trains have to stop, while the crossings are protected by an SCFG employee.

Alexis Deschênes tables a petition of 3,437 names

On February 4, Alexis De-

schênes, Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie–Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine–Listuguj and deputy leader of the Bloc Québécois, tabled an e-petition e-6922 in the House of Commons

Signed by 3,437 citizens, the petition calls on the federal government to contact VIA Rail to immediately reinstate passenger rail service between Matapédia and Port Daniel–Gascons, and to gradually restore passenger rail service to Gaspé as soon as possible.

“The government must respond and take a position within 45 days. In the meantime, we will question a senior VIA Rail executive at the Standing Committee on Transport on February 11. It is time for VIA Rail to be held accountable. Above all, it is time for them to commit to resuming passenger train service in the Gaspé Peninsula as soon as possible,” states Alexis Deschênes.

Federal Transport Minister Steven Mackinnon and Micheline St-Onge of the Coalition for the Return of Passenger Train Service to the Gaspé Peninsula will also testify before the transport committee.

Residents of the Gaspé Peninsula have been without this essential service for over 12 years, a service that would boost the regional economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve mobility.

A busy return to Parliament for Alexis Deschênes

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) returned to Ottawa on January 26 to sit in Parliament, and the MP for Gaspésie–Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine–Listuguj brought two major issues with him after spending the last month talking to constituents.

Alexis Deschênes spoke about international news, particularly what is happening in the United States, as well as purchasing power and the cost of living.

He also added that there is a lot of work to be done in terms of infrastructure in a broad sense, from housing to federal wharves.

On January 26, the federal government announced a 25% increase in the GST credit for the next five years, a positive measure for low income tax-



Photo: N. Sergerie

MP Alexis Deschênes.

payers.

The Bloc Québécois MP thinks this is a good thing, but that more is needed.

“We have to put this into context. We’re talking about

maybe \$10.80 a month. That’s not nothing, but it’s not going to make the huge difference that people need. The Bloc Québécois will return with our request to increase the old age pension. Some seniors are victims of injustice, as they did not receive the 10% increase for those aged 65 to 74. There is also an employment insurance reform that would improve the income of seasonal workers, who often live on low incomes. There are several ideas, and as long as the government moves in this direction, we will work with it,” says the MP.

Among his other priorities for the riding are the return of the Fisheries Fund, port infrastructure in Matane, and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine airport, which has been announced but is still awaiting construction.

The redrawing of the fed-

eral electoral map and the challenge before the Federal Court of Appeal are expected to take place in the first half of the year.

A fisheries conference will be held, an annual event that will take place this year in the Magdalen Islands.

Via Rail on the hot seat

“A senior VIA Rail executive will appear before the Transportation Committee on February 11. We will be able to ask questions and find out why they have not committed to a return to Port-Daniel,” says the MP.

With the gradual resumption of rail traffic between New Richmond and Port Daniel, pressure will mount on VIA Rail.

“The strategy is to keep up the pressure. The next few

months will allow us to do that. Once a new chief executive officer is appointed, we will be able to summon him. We want to make sure that senior executives are aware of the demands of Gaspésians. We will force them to explain their decision. All we are asking for is justice,” says Mr. Deschênes.

The theme of the session is “For the Love of Quebec.”

“Our priorities as a party are the economy and the (trade) fare crisis. We will put pressure on Mr. Carney to deliver the goods. Quebec identity, language, secularism, the environment. In the House of Commons, we are the only party pushing for global warming not to be forgotten and for work to be done on the transition rather than on oil,” concludes the elected representative.

Catherine Blouin supports Christine Fréchette

NELSON SERGERIE

TROIS-RIVIÈRES – The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure has made her choice and is supporting the Minister of Economy and Innovation, Christine Fréchette, in the race for the leadership of the (CAQ) to replace François Legault, who has resigned and will step down as soon as a new leader is chosen.

Catherine Blouin announced her support alongside Amélie Dionne, Minister of Tourism and responsible for the Gaspésie region, and Pascale Déry, Minister of Higher Education, during the party caucus in Trois-Rivières on January 28.

"I asked my people to make sure that my choice was in line with the wishes of the people in my riding, and the answer was clear," says Ms. Blouin moments after officially endorsing Ms. Fréchette.

"I have had the opportunity to work on various issues with Christine, and she is an ally on a number of important issues in the Gaspésie region. She recognizes the region's expertise in wind energy, which is essential to Quebec's energy development. She often cites the Al-



The CAQ member for Bonaventure supports Minister of the Economy Christine Fréchette.

Photo: Courtesy of Catherine Blouin's office

liance de l'énergie de l'Est as an example," Ms. Blouin continues.

According to Ms. Blouin, Christine Fréchette is also an important ally in the electoral map issue. "She knows that it is important to preserve our two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula in order to preserve our political weight," she says, referring to her accessibility.

"She is someone who brings people together. She is calm. I think in these uncertain times, she is a reassuring presence," believes the CAQ MNA.

During her press briefing with Catherine Blouin and Ministers Dionne and Déry, Christine Fréchette emphasized the importance of this recent

support, especially from women. "I thank them. I am very touched. We have very strong female leadership, and that's something we're going to promote," comments the leadership candidate.

Ms. Fréchette now has 21 supporters within the caucus. Her rival in the race, Bernard Drainville, has nine, including MNA Louis Lemieux, a former journalist and TV host, who joined on January 28.

Gaspé MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix, who had given his support to Justice Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette, who subsequently chose to sit out the race, has not yet expressed support for either candidate. (With *The Canadian Press*)



Stéphane Sainte-Croix has still not made a new choice for the Coalition Avenir Québec leadership race.

Photo: N. Sergerie

CAQ leadership: Stéphane Sainte-Croix has not made a choice

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Stéphane Sainte-Croix, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé, has not yet decided which candidate to endorse in the party's leadership race.

Mr. Sainte-Croix initially supported Justice Minister Simon Jolin Barrette, but the minister opted not to enter the race, citing personal and family reasons.

The MNA for Gaspé is now weighing his options between Economy and Innovation Minister Christine Fréchette and Environment Minister Bernard Drainville. "I spoke privately with both candidates about their vision for the leadership, the role of the regions within the party, and government priorities," says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

He is consulting with colleagues and advisers as he frames the election as a kind of referendum, carefully considering the interests of the region and the position he will adopt going forward.

CAQ colleague Catherine Blouin, the MNA for Bonaventure, has already declared her support for Minister Fréchette in the leadership race.

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Second-hand thrift stores: A community resource built on generosity

MARY ROBERTSON

CASCPEDIA-ST-JULES - Across the Gaspé Coast, non-profit centres that sell second-hand clothing, kitchen items, household goods and toys are playing a vital role in supporting local communities. These thrift shops help families, seniors and individuals on fixed incomes have access to clothing and household necessities at affordable prices. They also provide security and sustainability for residents facing economic challenges, while strengthening the social fabric of the region.

In many communities, where distances are great and access to affordable retail centres is limited, inexpensive thrift shops have become an essential alternative. By offering a welcoming, shop-style environment, these centres allow people to choose what they need with dignity and independence.

Thrift stores also serve as an important safety net. Unexpected life-changing events such as job loss, illness, family separation, or the rising costs of living expenses can affect everyone. When such situations arise, these types of clothing centres can offer practical support to those in need. Beyond their social impact, second-hand centres contribute significantly to environmental sustainability. When community members donate their used items, they reduce waste and limit the amount of usable goods that are sent to landfills. This approach aligns closely with the values of Gaspesian resourcefulness and respect for the environment.

One of the first thrift stores on the Coast was opened in 1987 in Maria. Le Baluchon Comptoir d'entraide was started by Le Centre d'action bénévole (CAB), whose mission was, at the time and still is, to support the local communities.

Over the years, Le Baluchon clothing counter has grown from a small community support service friperie into a well-known and much-needed second-hand clothing centre in the region. The store, located in the same building as the Le Centre d'action bénévole, provides an effective way to sell the donations of clothing, toys and household necessities that it receives, to people who are looking for affordable



Photos: Mary Robertson

Thrift stores along the Gaspé Coast provide affordable clothing and household items while fostering community and sustainability.

necessities. It is both an economic and ecological choice and has become an example of an environmentally conscious economy. It also creates opportunities for volunteers to work together and make a meaningful difference for a variety of social, community, and humanitarian issues affecting our region.

According to Nancy Valois, the Director General for Le Centre d'action bénévole, she considers Le Baluchon to be the primary point of entry for all the community services that the organization offers. Because of the aid that the CAB provides, they work closely with a network of regional community support organizations. Therefore, they are on the front lines, providing emergency services and assistance to those facing hardship.

Boxes of essential household needs and bags of clothing are provided to families who are struggling with different types of social issues. They also support newcomers arriving on the Coast from other countries, offering warm clothing and the necessary items they need to begin life in their new community. Near the front entrance, the centre offers a box of free clothing and there is a selection of books available at no charge. Le Baluchon also sends bags of clothing to other centres. Mrs. Valois stated that it is in us to give and support those in need.

Michèle Leblanc has served as the thrift shop's manager for many years, and with the support of assistant manager Sophie Stürzer, they work

with more than 40 volunteers who are responsible for all aspects of the friperie. Michèle stated that what she most enjoys about her work is that the volunteers willingly give their time because they know that they are doing something good for the community. Most of the volunteers for the many thrift stores around the Coast are retired women who enjoy the social connection of working together as a family for the benefit of others.

Le Chiffonnier de Nouvelle, is another sales counter for recycled clothing, toys, and household items. It was started in 2000 by a volunteer women's group who realized there was a need for it in the community. Within a few years, the demand for its services grew, and today it provides essential items to many

people in the large basement of the Catholic Church in Nouvelle.

Mildred McBrearty and a dedicated team of hardworking volunteers show up every week to sort through donations, assist customers, and keep one of the largest thrift centres on the Coast running smoothly. Operating a friperie of this size requires countless volunteer hours, much of it happening behind the scenes. Every donated item must be carefully inspected for damage, sorted into categories, priced, and placed on display throughout the various sections of the large basement shop. Some of the damaged clothing is cut into rags and sold to local garages for their needs.

When asked why the volunteers do this work, Mrs. McBrearty, who has volunteered at Le Chiffonnier for more than 20 years and is now manager, explained that they enjoy helping others. She added that the thrift store has become a welcoming community space, bringing together 34 volunteers while inviting people from surrounding communities to stop by, say hello, and find what they need. The funds raised help maintain the church.

Like other thrift shops on the Coast, Hidden Treasures Friperie in New Carlisle, provides donors with a place to donate their used items, knowing they will be used by those who need them. The thrift shop had operated in the basement of the Catholic Church for 30 years. But because many of the volunteers were getting older, there was a risk

that the store would close. People from the local community realized that it was an essential service for many, so they worked together to find solutions to keep it open. With the help of CASA and other organizations, it was decided that the friperie would remain open and be operated as a social enterprise. The members of Hidden Treasures then had the opportunity to buy a smaller church on the main street of New Carlisle that had closed. It was here they opened their new friperie in August of 2025.

According to Tammy Chatterton, coordinator for Hidden Treasures, relocating into the new building enabled them to continue to operate the thrift store, and it also meant that a heritage building was saved and used for a good purpose. The centre works in partnership with other community support organizations for emergency service needs. Tammy, a well-known volunteer in her community, says the New Carlisle friperie works because of the generous donation by the surrounding communities.

There are many other second-hand thrift stores on the Coast, which provide Gaspesians with clothing, toys and household essentials at affordable prices. Together, they also play an important role in reducing waste by giving used items a second life. The commitment of the many volunteers for all these centres not only ensures the success of the friperies but also fosters social connection, community pride, and the understanding that kindness matters and can change lives for the better.



Le Chiffonnier de Nouvelle, is another sales counter for recycled clothing, toys, and household items.

Learning beyond borders

SPDS JOURNALIST

PORT DANIEL –Students in Grades 3 to 6 at Shigawake Port-Daniel School (SPDS) are taking part in an international letter-writing project this year with the support of their English Language Arts teacher. The initiative connects students with classrooms around the world and gives them the opportunity to learn about different cultures, climates, and ways of life.

The Grade 3/4 class is writing a group letter to a Grade 4 class in Australia and to a Grade 5 class in Belgium. Their first group letter to Australia was sent in January, however they have not yet received a response, as the Australian school year has just begun and the seasons there are opposite to those in Quebec. Letters from students in Belgium have recently arrived, and the class is preparing a reply by email.

Students in Grades 5 and 6 are corresponding with schools in South Africa, Belgium, Australia, and Eng-

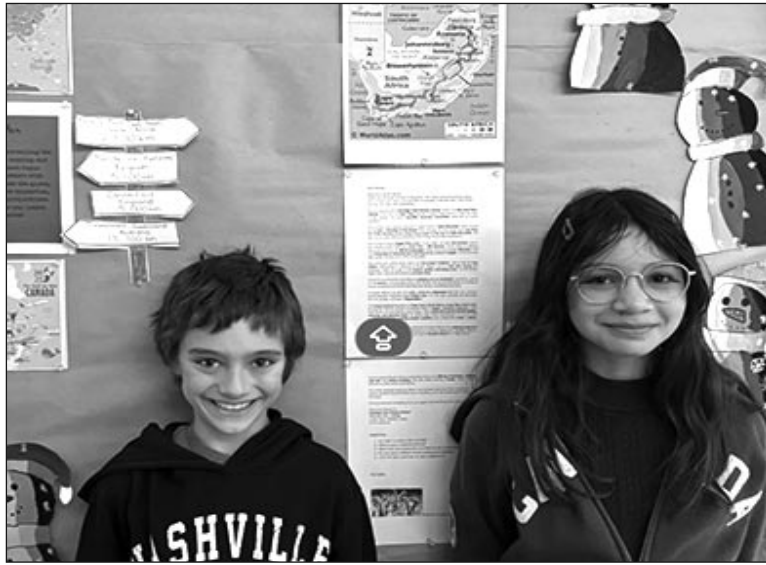


Photo: Courtesy of the SPDS Journalism Club

Benjamin Renouf and Julianna Gallant showcase their classroom billboard tracking the countries their letters have reached.

land. Letters were sent to all four countries, and responses were received over the last week of January. The students in South Africa had some very interesting questions, such as “is it safe to walk in the woods?” and “what is your national animal?” They also requested that students send a photo of their classroom. Students have responded to their questions and told them some

more interesting facts about their community and school.

To reduce delays, future letters will be sent through email instead of mail. Some exchanges may also be conducted in French.

The project aims to broaden students’ global awareness while strengthening writing, reading, and communication skills through real-world connections.

Do you know your Plant Hardiness Zone?

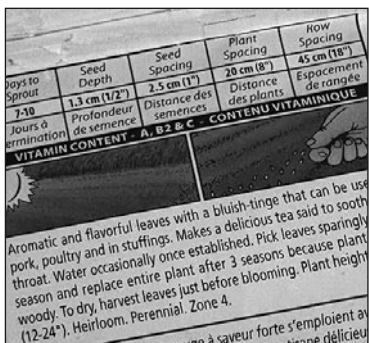
PENNY MACWHIRTER

HOPE TOWN - In July of 2025, for the first time in over a decade, changes were made to Canada’s Plant Hardiness Zone. That map classifies parts of the country based on climate conditions and is traditionally used by growers to determine which plants and seeds are best suited to their area.

The classification system takes into account seven climate variables: coldest winter temperatures, span of frost-free period, summer precipitation, high temperatures, snow cover, winter precipitation and wind gusts. The coldest areas, with the shortest growing season, are classified as Zone 0, while the warmest areas, with the longest growing seasons, fall into Zone 9.

A lot has changed environmentally since Canada’s Plant Hardiness Zone map came into existence in the 1960s. Climate conditions have shifted, new plant varieties have been introduced, and advances in science have improved yields while helping to combat pests and disease.

According to Natural Resources Canada website on the subject, the new map shows a “small yet significant warming



On this seed pack you can clearly see the seeds are recommended for Zone 4 and higher.

shift in many areas, shifting by half a zone or more and some by as much as two full zones.” These numbers are significant for home gardeners, agro-producers and businesses such as greenhouses. Changes to an area’s hardiness zone means that growers in that area can safely introduce new species to their line-up that previously couldn’t have withstood the climate for that area.

The previous classification was based on climate data from 1961 to 1990, while the new map uses data collected between 1991 and 2020.

Many gardeners in the Gaspé Peninsula have noticed changes in their gardens, such as plants that previously grew as perennial are now surviving the winter and seeds that they were always told would never

grow here, are producing bountiful harvests. These are clear indicators that the hardiness zones have changed.

The following are examples of changes in the Gaspé Peninsula: **New Carlisle:** Zone 4b to 5a. **Gaspé:** Zone 4a to 4b. **Matapedia:** Zone 3b to 4a. **Murdochville:** Zone 2b to 3a.

What does this mean for the average home gardener?

Home gardeners can visit Canada’s Plant Hardiness website (<https://www.planthardiness.gc.ca/>) to determine their exact zone. Once you know your zone, it’s important to check plant hardiness ratings before making new purchases.

For gardeners in New Carlisle, this shift means the opportunity to experiment with a wider variety of plants. For example, instead of growing only Munstead lavender, gardeners can now confidently try varieties such as white lavender.

Peonies and hostas are known to struggle in Zone 2, often failing to survive long, cold winters. They thrive best in Zones 3 to 8. As a result, gardeners in Murdochville may have noticed that their hostas and peonies are now overwintering more successfully.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



The Beautiful Confusion of Love

There are moments when love does not feel comforting or happy, but confusing and downright heartbreaking. Loving someone can sometimes bring more questions than answers, especially when the relationship is uncertain or no longer possible. In those moments, it is not unusual to feel confused, greatly unhappy and wishing the feelings were easier to bear.

This experience does not mean the love is wrong. Often, it means the love is real, but complicated by circumstances. People can find themselves holding on to affection and love even when they know, logically, that something has changed. The heart rarely moves at the same pace as the mind. How true.

Love becomes difficult when it places us in conflict with ourselves. One part of us seeks closeness and connection; another seeks peace. Sometimes we cannot have both. This inner tension can be tiring, making love feel less like a gift and more like a responsibility or even a curse.

Part of what makes love so confusing is the lack of control. Feelings do not respond neatly to decisions or deadlines. We cannot simply stop loving someone because it would be more convenient to do so. Accepting this can be uncomfortable, but it can also allow us to be free. Conversely, we cannot make someone love us. Being okay if it happens, and being okay if it doesn’t, is a very powerful place to be.

Unbalanced or unresolved love can profoundly affect confidence. When love is not returned in the way we hope, it is easy to question our worth or desirability. But love’s outcome should not determine our value. Being in love even when it does not lead where we hoped, still speaks to our needs, our dreams. We are always worthy. We should remember that.

Days dedicated to romance, such as Valentine’s Day, can amplify these emotions. They remind us of what we want or what we are still searching for or what we have lost.

In time, love often softens. It changes shape, loosening its grip and we find we have to make room in our hearts for acceptance of the changes. What once felt powerful can disappear.

Love does not have to last forever to matter. Sometimes its greatest gift is what it teaches us. About life and resilience, boundaries and the courage to open our hearts again. We should know that anything is possible. There is always the possibility of new beginnings. I have a friend and when a relationship breaks down, he has a habit of saying, “Next!”

Maybe the happy ending is falling in love with yourself. Enjoy your favourites! Favourite food, favourite book, favourite movie. Buy yourself flowers, and remind yourself about all that you are grateful for.

The poem 10 Things I Hate About You from the 1999 movie 10 Things I Hate About You illustrates the beautiful confusion of love.

*I hate the way you talk to me,
and the way you cut your hair.
I hate the way you drive my car,
I hate it when you stare.
I hate your big dumb combat boots
and the way you read my mind.
I hate you so much it makes me sick,
it even makes me rhyme.
I hate the way you’re always right,
I hate it when you lie.
I hate it when you make me laugh,
even worse when you make me cry.
I hate it when you’re not around,
and the fact that you didn’t call.
But mostly I hate the way I don’t hate you,
not even close
not even a little bit
not even at all.*

Announcements



Obituaries

ALEXANDER: Dean Leslie
March 2, 1951 - November 20, 2025.

Dean, son of the late Cecil and Ellen Alexander, passed away at Sunnybrook Hospital after a battle with cancer. He leaves to mourn his partner, Linda; stepson, Chi; son, Darcy; daughter, Seana; and his grandchildren. Also left to mourn are his brother Keven and sisters Nancy, Nita, Deneen and Tracy, along with many nieces and nephews. Rest in peace, we love you and we'll see you amongst the stars.



SKENE: George Clifton

With broken hearts we announce the passing of our amazing father, George Clifton Skene, which occurred at the CHSLD in New Carlisle, Quebec, on Monday, January 19, 2026.

Clifton was born on April 16, 1931, and lived a life defined by hard work, volunteering and a deep, abiding love for his family.

Clifton was a devoted father to his son, Stephen and his daughter, Eva (Wayne Smith), and never missed a chance to speak about them with pride.

Clifton is also survived by his brothers, Joseph (Gaby) and Winston (Mildred), along with many extended family members and dear friends. He was predeceased by his parents, Arthur Skene and Claudia Grenier; and the love of his life, his wife of 65 years, Melba MacWhirter, who passed in 2020; brothers Leo and John; and sisters Audree and Jane.

At the heart of Clifton's life was his family. He is lovingly remembered for his sense of humour, reading magazines and newspapers from cover to cover, playing military whisk, gardening, keeping the property in pristine condition and his love for food (except scallops).

Clifton was very proud of his 43 year career on the Canadian National Railway working on the

passenger and freight trains on the Gaspé Coast as a conductor, brakeman and baggageman. In retirement, he volunteered at the Golden Age and drove seniors in the community to doctor's appointments and grocery stores when needed, while continuing his passion of gardening and the upkeep of his home and property.

Above all, Clifton was very loyal, generous, meticulous and good-hearted man that would help anyone. He enjoyed taking the travel trailer out in the summer and visiting family out of province or going for a vacation in the States. Later, he and Melba would just travel by car to New Brunswick to visit his son and daughter a couple times a year. He loved to share stories about the past and also his experiences he had on the train and those who knew him will carry these memories forward.

We would like to thank Dr. Basque and everyone in Post 3 that provided such great care and compassion with Daddy, there is just too many to name individually.

A Celebration of Life will be held at St. Pauls Anglican Church in Shigawake on Friday, May 29, 2026. Condolences will be from 1 to 2 p.m., with service at 2 p.m. Burial will follow. Refreshments will be served at the Cultural Centre.

Donations can be made in Memory of Clifton Skene to the St Paul's Anglican Church General Fund.



In Memory



BRENNAN: Carmelle (Brideau)

In fond and loving memory of my wife, who passed away February 14, 2007.

*I have lost my soul's companion,
A life linked with my own;
And day by day I miss her more,
As I walk this life alone.*

Always loved and remembered by husband, Frank and family.



FLOWERS: Alberta

July 25, 1926 - February 11, 2025.

In loving memory of a dear mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and a great-great-grandmother who passed away one year ago on February 11, 2025.

*How much we miss you can never be told,
We shared our troubles to help us along.*

*If we follow in your footsteps,
We will never go wrong.*

*We miss you in your rocking chair,
Your loving smile and gentle air.*

*Your vacant place no one can fill,
We miss you Mum and always will.*

*She was a mother so very rare,
And content to always have us there.*

*We do not need a special day,
To bring you to our minds.*

*The days we don't think of you,
Are very hard to find.*

*Each morning when we wake,
We know that you are gone.*

*And no one knows the heartache,
As we try to carry on.*

*Our hearts still ache with sadness,
And secret tears still flow.*

*What it meant to lose you,
No one will ever know.*

*Each day recalls the memories,
Of you gone to rest.*

*And those who think of you,
Today are those who loved you best.*

*The flowers we lay upon your grave,
May wither and decay.*

*But our love for you will never fade away,
You left us with beautiful memories.*

*Your love is still our guide,
And though we cannot see you,*

You are always by our side.

Always loved and remembered by the family.

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Announcements



LEGGO: Gladys Ellement
1926 - 2001.

Homage to a hard working, caring Mom who will never be forgotten.

*Twenty-five years have come and gone,
Yet you're still so vivid in our memories.
We still see your twinkling eyes when you smile,
We still feel the touch of your soft hands,
The safety and warmth of your embrace.
We still hear your gentle voice,
When we're sick or lonely.
We still smell and taste,
The goodness of your cooking.
You showed us the magic and wonder of life,
You taught us everything you knew.
Rest assured that you will live in our hearts Mom.
Until we meet again, your loving family!*

Happy Birthday



"80 is the new 60"

To our family's heart and soul. May your 80th birthday be filled with the same light and love you've shared with us including laughter, and lots of sweet moments. Happy birthday from your whole family! Xoxo

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COAST ROUND-UP: \$8 per week
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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 \$12 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: 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 15
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, February 22
10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN

Sunday, February 15
2 p.m. Service
Sunday, February 22
2 p.m. Service with communion

Email your announcements to
holly.smith@globetrotter.net

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, February 15
New Carlisle
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, February 18

New Carlisle
7 p.m. Service with Imposition of Ashes
Shigawake
11 a.m. Service with Imposition of Ashes

Sunday, February 22

New Carlisle
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Service broadcast online for Chaleur Bay

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, February 15
St. Paul's, Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, February 18

St. Paul's, Gaspé
7 p.m. Ash Wednesday

Sunday, February 15
St. Andrew's, York
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist



Announcement Deadlines:

February 18 for the February 25 issue
March 4 for March 11 issue - **March 18** for the March 25 issue
April 1 for the April 8 issue - **April 15** for the April 22 issue
April 29 for the May 6 issue - **May 13** for the May 20 issue
May 27 for the June 3 issue - **June 10** for the June 17 issue

On the Lighter Side...

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



VALENTINE'S DAY WORD SEARCH

D V L O A V B L V P U M C A Y V O Y F Y
 E C O H U E R G V F V B E V Y G P S H C H
 V L K D E R O I C L W C U H N D U K L A
 O R S T I O E I R T E N I T N E L A V O
 L D O C L D P Y T L E K T O U N U U H O
 E W Y A E A I T F H F W Y I W A D A T E
 B U K E A N D B C T E R Y R O M A N C E A
 B K V D E M G P L B B A I E H W O R F S
 S O L U U A F A C D O S R E R O P O C S
 L I Y Y M M C R P W F Y N T N C L K I I
 I T H O R K K V H M L F Y S D N B B K K
 I L A L L K U R M U A M O R B Y H W B M
 L N P Y P O E O S S G H M W I L R Y F T
 K A E H N O V S B P I B C E E E A N C Y
 P L A S D I S E L H B W A L O R N L D F D N
 H D D G E O C S V N C U B P W P S D P Y
 G O S W E E T H E A R T R V I S V E I D
 P U A H A F F E C T I O N E N L D F D N
 W L N O E T A L O C O H C A H Y S Y C A
 G B S T F I G S A U P W V O D C K H W C

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

ADORE
 AFFECTION
 BELOVED
 BOYFRIEND
 CANDY
 CHAMPAGNE
 CHERUB
 CHOCOLATE
 CUPID
 DATE
 FLOWERS
 GIFTS
 GIRLFRIEND
 HEARTS
 HUG
 KISS
 LOVE
 MOVIE
 POEM
 RED
 ROMANCE
 ROSES
 SWEETHEART
 VALENTINE

We Gaspesians are loved unconditionally throughout the year, and perhaps even more on Valentine's Day. February 14 can be emotional for some, but we can fill this day with hugs and surprises, or bring refreshment into someone's life with a card, phone call or a visit.

The more we love ourselves, the more love we can give to others. This is the path that can open the gates to happiness and lasting memories. Our strength, kindness, and love can make every day a little better and easier.

As we brave February's cold temperatures and snow, we Gaspesians can love one another with true purpose and intention. This Valentine's Day can strengthen each of us by kindling our warm hearts with love and by cherishing the people who bring it into our lives without expecting anything in return.

*Ken Ross
 New Carlisle, Quebec.*



HOROSCOPES - February 9 to February 15

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

A spark of excitement brightens your week, Aries. You may rediscover enthusiasm for a goal you set aside. Take one confident step and watch momentum gather.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

This week brings steady comfort and satisfying progress, Taurus. Something you've been nurturing starts to show real signs of growth. You're building something meaningful.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Your mind is in full brilliance mode, Gemini. New insights, clever connections and energizing conversations fill your days. A fun invitation or unexpected message may lift your spirits.

CANCER - June 22/July 22

Your emotional intuition is your superpower this week, Cancer. You may find a simple solution to a situation that once felt complex. Supportive people drift

into your orbit.

LEO - July 23/Aug 23

Leo, your confidence is glowing, and others notice. This week favors bold creativity and joyful self-expression. A moment of recognition or praise may remind you of your natural leadership.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Organization comes naturally, and your clarity is on point, Virgo. You'll wrap up tasks with surprising ease. A shift in priorities may free up space for something you genuinely enjoy.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Balance returns in a way that feels refreshing, Libra. Your relationships flow smoothly, and you'll find harmony even in busy moments. An inspiring experience may uplift you.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Determination meets opportunity this week, Scorpio. You're sharper, more focused and ready to move for-

ward with confidence.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Optimism fuels everything you touch, Sagittarius. You may stumble upon a new interest, adventure or opportunity that fills you with excitement.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Your efforts align perfectly with your goals, Capricorn. This week rewards patience and consistency. You may receive encouragement from someone who truly understands you.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Innovation thrives in your world right now, Aquarius. You'll devise unique solutions, unexpected shortcuts or refreshing ideas with ease. Stay open to teamwork.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

A creative wave washes over you, Pisces. Inspiration feels effortless, and small moments carry extra meaning. A heartwarming interaction or sweet surprise brightens your week.

HOROSCOPES - February 16 to February 22

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

You have the cosmic green light to start that major project you've been planning or to take a leap in your career, Aries. Trust your intuition, it's sharper than ever.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Abundance is knocking, Taurus. Your hard work is translating into tangible rewards, and you may receive unexpected good news regarding finances or resources.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Your mind is sparkling, Gemini, making you the most magnetic person in the room. Use this vibrant energy to connect, share ideas and lead discussions.

CANCER - June 22/July 22

Cancer, a feeling of emotional security empowers you to tackle any professional challenge with grace and confidence. You are totally centered right now.

LEO - July 23/Aug 23

Leo, you are radiating charisma this week and attracting positive attention wherever you go. Use this incredible visibility to network or showcase your talents.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

You'll find great satisfaction in clean, organized work that earns sincere praise this week, Virgo. Your dedication is about to unlock a significant reward. Surprises are in store.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Relationships are the key to your happiness this week, Libra. Expect delightful interactions, smooth negotiations and the forging of beneficial alliances.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

This week is all about your own transformation, Scorpio. You feel a surge of internal power and clarity that allows you to confidently pursue deep, personal goals.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Your sense of optimism and love for exploration is fully charged, Sagittarius. Even if you can't take a trip, your mind is open to exciting new philosophies or ideas.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Your professional reputation is soaring, Capricorn. Key figures at your job are recognizing your dedication and leadership. Expect exciting opportunities for advancement.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Your network is buzzing with opportunities, Aquarius. Collaborative efforts are highly favored, and you'll find incredible support for your most innovative ideas.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, your intuition is a superpower that guides you toward fulfillment and emotional satisfaction this week. Embrace your artistic side and allow your imagination to lead the way.

Small Business: Great people

CYNTHIA PATTERSON

GASPE - On January 29, 2026, Heather Maloney Patterson marked 61 years of hairdressing.

Heather was born in Douglastown in 1946, the third child and first girl of 13 children. Not long before her 16th birthday, Heather put her clothes in a box and left home, a practical decision not uncommon at the time. She moved up to the "big town" of Gaspé, getting room and board in Wakeham for \$1/day.

She had heard that Joyce Patterson, already in business at her salon in Baker's Hotel, needed a shampoo girl. Each day, Joyce's dad picked her up and drove her and Joyce to Gaspé. Heather really enjoyed that summer. She liked the work, the tips and her first birthday party, her 16th, a bonfire at Haldimand Beach organized by new friends. By then, she was boarding in Gaspé.

Realizing she and this type of work were a good match, Heather decided in the fall of 1964 to become professionally qualified. She applied for a \$500 loan from the TD bank to cover the cost of the course and, on January 3, 1965, travelled to Montreal where she stayed with family, learning more than hairdressing. This was the 18-yr old's first trip to Montreal.

On her first and second day, the city bus trips between Sherbrooke and her sibling's apartment were daunting. Returning one dark, cold January afternoon, Heather noticed that she was the last person on the bus. She asked the driver, "Have you passed Church Street and Verdun yet?" "Yes, I have," he replied, kindly adding, "But I'll take you back."

Encouragement came not only from strangers, but more solidly from the daily letters she received from her boyfriend, Dean Patterson. A foursome had gone out the evening of May 23, 1963, the first night after the tragedy at Beaver Dam Bridge, on the



Photo: Courtesy of Heather Maloney

Heather Maloney marks 60 years in hairdressing with a cake during a celebration last year.

road between Gaspé and Murdochville. Dean was one of four survivors, six of his co-workers at Gaspé Copper Mines drowned. Dean remembers, "A great calm came over me during it all." When you almost die, especially at a young age, you do not let the grass grow under your feet. Dean and Heather began dating the following day. His letters helped shorten the sense of distance between Montreal and home.

On January 29, 1965, Heather received her certification as a hairdresser. The on the job experience she had already acquired meant that Mary Hue determined only the one-month refresher course was needed.

Back home, Heather returned to work with Joyce Patterson, now as a full hair dresser. Her first client, Marguerite Palmer, stayed with her for 58 years, until getting out became a problem.

In the spring of 1966, Heather went to work with Gerald Gagnon, who had just opened a salon on rue de la Reine. One of three hairdressers, this was her first time in a French-speaking workplace. Gerald spoke no English and Heather no French, but his wife, Doris Pye, was bilingual, worked next store and helped Heather integrate.

Other changes were afoot. In June 1966, Heather and

Dean married. Two years later, Heather, now pregnant with her first child, decided it was time to take the big step and, on June 6, 1968, opened her own, independent salon. She moved into what had been Johnny Stewart's barbershop, next to Ascah's radio and record shop, across from the Ash Inn. She hired her first employees, four young women. One shampoo assistant would stay on for 18 years.

Now responsible for staff, ordering, etc., Heather had to learn a lot to learn. She meticulously kept daily records, paying for the financial services of payroll and year-end accounts. Taking off only ten days in August that first summer for the birth of Stephanie, her first child, Heather steadily grew her business.

In the spring of 1971, Heather's second child, Craig, was born. Ten days later she was back to her Saturday to Tuesday, workweek, bringing home bags of towels to wash at night. Always quick to recognize opportunity, Heather strategically applied in advance for space in the large, new building being constructed downtown. Heather planned the financing, decorating and equipment for her new salon and in 1972, was among the earliest occupants in Gaspé's first shopping centre.

By 1983, the once-new

building was showing its age and would require renovations. Heather decided it was time to sell. Working for two years with incoming owner Yvette Couture as part of their transaction, Heather remained open to change, possibilities and new challenges. Finishing at the Salon at 2:30 p.m., she began her second job at 3 p.m. as the instructor of a new Adult Education certified hairdressing program offered through Manpower at the Polyvalente. Over two years, she taught 22 students, with 14 graduating.

On February 1, 1985, Heather officially opened her salon in Sunnybank, where 40 years later it is still located. The new salon represented a significant financial investment, in terms of adding a separate section to the family home, with its own entrance. But this time the investment was in her own building, not someone else's.

Heather's first assistant shampoo girl was her daughter, Stephanie. Years later, Stephanie's daughter, Chelsea, worked with her grandmother. Over all her years of work, Heather has employed a total of 37 women as shampoo assistants or hairdressers. Whatever the number of hours, this work was important to the women who did it, whether as a top up on part-time work, a pension or some income instead of none.

Requests came from aging, long time and new clients now resident at the Pavillon Ross to receive her hair dressing services there. Between 1985 and 1990, Heather provided the shut-ins with cuts, sets and perms. In 1998, she opened a salon at the Manoir des Augustins where she worked each Wednesday for 10 years, appreciating the experience with different clients while maintaining her busy operation in Sunnybank.

Her commitment to people included giving a perm to someone who was hospitalized, providing services for a

year and a half to someone terminally ill at home, and, having promised, doing a long-loyal client's hair in her casket.

Family and community were always part of Heather's full schedule. Inviting people in and going out, celebrating birthdays, anniversaries and simply getting together, she somehow found time also to sew or knit over the years, 58 quilts and afghans, all as gifts, to those experiencing challenges and those marking special moments in their lives.

She volunteered for 10 years as Spec's community correspondent for the area, spoke at a Women's Day event in Chandler and often put on a Santa Claus costume to play the role for children's parties and adults.

In March 2020, Heather had to shut down her business, as did millions of people world over, because of the Covid 19. Thinking about how to respond to an important need when no government-issued masks were yet available, Heather applied her sewing skills to fabrics on hand, turning out lined masks instead of quilts. She and Dean, her husband, made 1,378 masks, mailing them to Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and even to France, postage at their own cost.

These details of the life of a rural woman still owning and operating her own business in Sunnybank (Gaspé) are available because, years ago, a client gave Heather a blank book with a flowered cover. The book soon began to fill up as Heather was inspired to write. She tried to write daily, at the same dining table where we now sit, catching up when she fell behind.

Heather says that one summer evening, guided by an inner feeling, she went outside to stand alone and look at the stars. Brilliant points of light against a velvety black sky. A celestial quilt of sorts? Heather said that was one of the best experiences of her life. "I don't want to run out of time," she concludes.



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Gaspé seniors enjoy newspaper scavenger hunt to celebrate SPEC's 50th anniversary

GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPE – On January 28, the SPEC team repeated an activity that had been a success in Matapédia on November 27, a scavenger hunt through old issues of the newspaper, spanning nine selected years between its first year of publication, 1975 and 2004.

Like in Matapédia, the activity was organized to celebrate SPEC's 50th anniversary. The newspaper began marking the milestone in May 2025 and will continue holding community events under the anniversary theme until May 2026.

To welcome 27 seniors at the Gaspé Legion on January 28, SPEC staff members Jillian O'Connell, Emily Hocquard and Holly Smith received the much-appreciated collaboration of Vision Gaspé-Percé Now and of the Eastern Quebec Literacy Council.

Twenty questions were prepared by Jillian O'Connell, covering a variety of Gaspé-related topics. These included hockey Hall of Famer Guy Lafleur's visit to Gaspé in August 1993, following the Montreal Canadiens' last Stanley Cup win. Lafleur was no longer playing at the time but was still representing the team's public relations division and remained immensely popular.

Other questions highlighted local businesses, supermarket food prices, and the achievements of regional athletes, such as Joe Patterson. For most participants, the scavenger hunt was "serious business," though it sparked plenty of laughter and anecdotes about the times when the events had occurred.

A draw concluded the activity, with winning seniors receiving SPEC subscriptions and a t-shirt. Some attendees took the opportunity to purchase SPEC merchandise, including hoodies, t-shirts and caps. Conversations continued after the scavenger hunt, with local issues, such as the potential return of the train service between Port Daniel and Gaspé, being discussed.

As in Matapédia, participants expressed their gratitude to the SPEC staff. In truth, the employees also enjoyed the gathering, and it is hard to say who had more fun.

The SPEC team held a similar scavenger hunt activity in Port-Daniel on February 10. Another is planned in Escuminac on February 17, in collaboration with CASA.



All 27 participants gathered for a memorable day of discovery, exploring the pages of SPEC archives in a fun scavenger hunt.



Julie Syvret, project coordinator for Vision Gaspé-Percé Now, guides seniors through the scavenger hunt, making history come alive.



Angelina Leggo, executive director of the Eastern Quebec Literacy Council, lends a hand during the scavenger hunt.



Seniors immerse themselves in the pages of SPEC archives, piecing together the clues of the scavenger hunt, with Rebecca MacDonald of the Eastern Quebec Literacy Council, digital coordinator and safety officer, helping them along the way.



A group of seniors search through SPEC archives, uncovering stories and memories from the past.



The group waves excitedly at the start of their scavenger hunt through the SPEC archives, ready for a day of discovery.

Photos: G. Gagné

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