



VIA Rail commits to a partial and gradual return to the Gaspé Peninsula

GILLES GAGNÉ

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – For the first time in close to a decade, VIA Rail has committed to a partial return to the Gaspé Peninsula following the rehabilitation of the rail line between Matapédia and Port-Daniel-Gascons. However, several steps must be completed before the first train can run.

The interim president and chief executive officer of the public passenger rail carrier made the statement on March 11 while appearing before the Standing Committee on Transportation in Ottawa.

“We need to secure the use of the tracks with the Quebec government, the use of the stations, the platforms. We would like to have agreements with regional bus companies for passengers who wish to continue their journey to Percé and Gaspé,” comments Mathieu Paquette, who was being questioned by the Coalition for the Return of Passenger Train Service in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspé–Les-Îles-de-la-Madeleine–Listuguj, Alexis Deschênes.

Mr. Paquette is expected to visit the Gaspé Peninsula soon to meet with regional stakeholders to discuss the challenges related to a partial return.

Among the options being considered is a daily train service between the Gaspé Peninsula and Quebec City, operating during the daytime.

Reactions

“I am extremely pleased,” states the Coalition spokesperson, Micheline Saint-Onge, who obtained a commitment from VIA Rail to work with her group on the next steps.

“I really felt that with the dozen or so VIA Rail people on site, everyone was friendly and eager for the project to move forward. It feels good,” she says about the hearing of the Standing Committee on

Transportation.

“I’m very happy because we’ve achieved a major victory. For several years now, VIA Rail has been telling us that they won’t return to the Gaspé Peninsula until the rail line is repaired all the way to Gaspé,” comments Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes, who, when he was a Legal Aid lawyer in 2022, had formally notified VIA Rail to remind its obligation to provide service as the rail line was rehabilitated.

“Together, we managed to get VIA Rail to back down. We’re no longer in confrontation but in collaboration. Mr. Paquette seems sincere in his desire to return,” the MP maintains.

The public corporation already has rolling stock to resume service. The train stops will need to be determined, staff will need to be found to operate a train, and the route will need to be designated, whether VIA Rail decides to stop its train in New Carlisle or Port Daniel.

A rail line to complete

VIA Rail’s return could force the Quebec government to finally commit clearly to refurbishing the railway line to Gaspé, as candidates in the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) leadership race are demanding a business plan before investing in the Port Daniel-Gascons-Gaspé section.

“This demonstrates the importance of completing the rail refurbishment to Gaspé. Seriously, I don’t think any politician can say that \$200 million has been invested between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, but that we’re going to leave it as is and leave new bridges that won’t be connected. It’s impossible that this is the end of the story,” says Alexis Deschênes.

He added that he is prepared to submit a request for federal assistance, provided the Quebec government makes the request.



Photo: Photo supplied by Alexis Deschênes’ office

Micheline Saint-Onge following her appearance before the Standing Committee on Transportation at the Parliament of Ottawa on March 11. She is flanked by VIA Rail president Mathieu Paquette and by Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes.

“We will certainly ask people each time to get involved in the rail repairs all the way to Gaspé. This fall, we will be working with all the candidates from all the parties. We won’t give up,” Ms. Saint-Onge states.

VIA suspended its service on August 13, 2013. At the time, the use of a salted solution as a defoliant by the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie was cited as the reason for the suspension. However, VIA Rail later pointed to the deteriorated condition of the bridges and track between Matapédia and New Carlisle to justify maintaining the shutdown.

Micheline Saint-Onge’s testimony

The Standing Committee on Transportation was holding hearings pertaining to the reliability of VIA Rail’s rolling equipment, or reliability’s shortcomings, and service improvements. Micheline Saint-Onge was offered five minutes to testify on the second point, and the necessity to bring back a passenger train service in the Gaspé Peninsula, east of Matapédia. She made the most of the time she was entitled.

She noted that VIA Rail transported 80,500 passengers annually in 1984-1985, which did not prevent the public carrier from closing several stations during the same period,

including the Maria station, home to the only hospital in the Baie-des-Chaleurs region.

The reduction in train frequency in 1990, from seven to three round trips per week between Montreal and Gaspé, brought the number of passengers down to 42,000 per year for a short while, Ms. Saint-Onge also pointed out. Between 2004 and 2011, the year service was suspended between New Carlisle and Gaspé, ridership ranged between 24,000 and 30,000 passengers.

“VIA Rail had higher requirements (in Gaspé) than anywhere else in Canada,” Micheline Saint-Onge pointed out in response to the reasons given by the carrier for suspending its service at the end of the summer of 2013.

In 2013, the train stopped in Matapédia, Carleton, New Richmond, Bonaventure, and New Carlisle, with an optional stop in Caplan despite the lack of a station at the time.

In response to questions from Mr. Deschênes, Mr. Paquette said that choosing New Carlisle instead of Port-Daniel as a temporary terminus would be practical because of the presence of a wye, a Y-shaped turnaround point.

When the MP suggested Port-Daniel could serve as the terminus for the first phase, given that freight service resumed there on January 7, Mr. Paquette replied, “We’re look-

ing at everything.”

The MP also asked him what VIA Rail planned to do to reassure the people of the Gaspé Peninsula about its true intentions to return. Mathieu Paquette indicated: “We hear the people of the Gaspé Peninsula. We often say at VIA Rail that it was one of the most beautiful routes (...) We will do it in an efficient and safe way.”

The battle of a region

Following the hearings, Mr. Deschênes also paid tribute to the people of the Gaspé Peninsula, who signed several petitions and held demonstrations over the years to regain a passenger train service.

“During the last election campaign, I told the people of the Gaspé that resignation was not an option and that we had to unite to loudly and clearly demand the services to which they are entitled. VIA Rail has a duty to ensure regional rail service and will receive \$2.3 billion in public funding this year, specifically to fulfill this mandate. Our pressure has paid off. Of course, we must remain vigilant to ensure that these encouraging words translate into concrete actions and the return of passenger rail service as soon as possible. But today, all the people of the Gaspé can still be proud of having made VIA Rail back down,” he wrote in a press release.

Superior Court orders sale of former British Heritage Village in New Richmond

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – In a judgement rendered on March 6, the Superior Court ordered the sale of the former Gaspesian British Heritage Village after the organization failed to make a mortgage payment totalling \$130,006 as of June 17, 2025.

The court action was filed on September 25, 2025 by Caisses Desjardins of the Baie des Chaleurs, represented by the law firm Assels and Lepage.

The organization targeted by the legal action is still called the Gaspesian British Heritage Village, as specified by the decision rendered by Judge Laurent Koné. The organization owns, according to a long-term lease, about 20 buildings. The long-term lease was granted by the Town of New Richmond and is valid until 2038.

The Superior Court order includes a clause requiring the organization to vacate the premises and sell the property. The \$400,000 Desjardins loan was granted before the pan-



Photo: Gilles Gagné

The initial piece of land of what became the Gaspesian British Heritage Village was bought in October 1988.

demical and was part of a project to improve the site, which has been used essentially for special events like the Bluegrass Festival. As a permanent tourist attraction, Duthie's Point, or Nesue'g in Mi'gamq, has been mostly inoperative over the last two years.

As part of the project planned before the pandemic, three houses have been fully restored for Airbnb rentals, one has been three-quarters

renovated, and the roof of a fifth has been replaced.

All the grants and the loan, totaling \$400,000, have been used for these projects. Exhaustion of the active board members and a lack of successors could explain the 2024 and 2025 context.

"Officially, the land belongs to the Town of New Richmond but a long-term lease agreement allows an organization like the Gaspesian British Heritage Village to do

a lot of things, contract a mortgage, carry out repairs on buildings. The site is zoned agricultural. The court set the minimum sale price at \$730,000. We will meet over the issue on Monday (March 23, after SPEC's deadline) and see what our position will be," explains mayor Éric Dubé.

New Richmond Mayor Éric Dubé notes that the town council will consider this matter.

Pointe Duthie serves several users. The cross-country ski club maintains the trails, the Rotary Club organizes gatherings, the Bluegrass Festival takes place there, the military museum is located at the entrance to the site, and an antique dealer operates in the Gendron store.

The bailiff will set the sale price with the advice of a real estate broker, based on the market value, but, as stipulated by the Court, the base amount cannot be less than \$730,000.

He specifies that half the loan contracted by the Gaspesian British Heritage Village was guaranteed by Investisse-

ment Québec. He is also puzzled by the possibility of an investor paying the minimum amount ordered by the Superior Court to acquire a property for \$730,352.25 where the possibility of making it a profitable investment as it stands is minimal.

According to the court file, the municipal value of Duthie's Point is currently \$973,803.

The unpaid mortgage bill of \$130,006.48 will be hit by an interest fee of 8.29% applicable as of June 17, 2025. Court and bailiff fees will also be added.

Éric Dubé heard that a group could be interested in setting up activities at Duthie's Point but will likely wait until there is no debt attached to the site before making a move.

The payment of the mortgage could technically lead to the survival of Duthie's Point or, as it was known for years, the Gaspesian British Heritage Village. The first land acquisition that led to the creation of the site took place in October 1988.

Middle East conflict: Gaspé motorists feel the impact

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Motorists in the Gaspé Peninsula enjoyed a few days of relief at the gas pump, but the increases seen in major urban centres eventually reached the region with a sharp 15-cent-per-litre jump on March 16.

In Gaspé, the price of regular gasoline rose from \$1.649 to \$1.799 per litre.

The increase was slightly smaller elsewhere in the Gaspé Peninsula. According to the Régie de l'énergie, the average price in the Baie-des-Chaleurs area was about \$1.67 per litre before the increase.

According to the provincial energy board, before the hike, retailers were selling gasoline at a loss..

The minimum estimated



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

After a brief respite compared to major urban centres, gas prices in the Gaspé Peninsula finally rose on March 16, bringing them in line with prices elsewhere in the province.

margin was 3.3 cents per litre in Rocher-Percé, three cents in the Gaspé sector and 1.2 cents in Baie-des-Chaleurs.

Even at close to \$1.80 per

litre, motorists are still paying less than the average price calculated over the past year by the Régie de l'énergie, which suggests prices

should be around \$1.82 in Rocher-Percé, \$1.80 in Baie-des-Chaleurs and \$1.83 in Gaspé.

Stations operating under the Ultramar banner had already increased their pump prices before the latest adjustment reached the region.

The price at the pump had already exceeded \$1.80 in recent days.

Jennifer Jean-Clark, who operates an Ultramar-branded station in the Wakeham sector of Gaspé, addressed the situation on social media.

"I think it's time to set the record straight. I tried to stay silent, but when I see my convenience store featured in news reports and I'm personally called a thief and a crook, I can no longer remain silent. WE DON'T ALL

HAVE THE SAME PRICE! There's a difference between a small independent convenience store and corporate ones. I have to pay for maintenance and repairs to my facilities myself," she writes.

The retailer also posted the price list provided by her distributor on March 14, showing \$1.86 per litre for regular gasoline, \$1.98 for premium and \$2.49 for diesel fuel.

The retailer has simply blanked out the price on her sign in recent days.

Some observers suggested that if the conflict in the Middle East continues, the price per litre could once again exceed the \$2 mark in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, in Montreal, gasoline was selling for about \$1.899 per litre on March 16.

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Maria Hospital: CISSS CEO pleased as project reaches new milestone

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MARIA – The long-awaited project for a new emergency department and intensive care unit at Maria Hospital has reached a major milestone after being included in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan, a development welcomed by the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de la Gaspésie.

The deteriorating condition of the current facilities has long been recognized.

“This is the catalyst we needed to move forward with the expansion project for Maria Hospital. It’s the step we were missing to proceed,” says CISSS President and chief executive officer (CEO) Martin Pelletier.

The proposed project calls for expanding the space available in the emergency department and intensive care unit. Plans include redesigning the existing 1,700 square metres and adding about 4,200 square metres of new space, along with 80 additional parking spaces.

In the emergency department, several additional stretchers will be required, particularly in the trauma and



Photo: Allen Doug Shaw

Maria Hospital.

mental health units, along with more chairs in the rapid assessment area.

There are also plans to relocate the critical care unit closer to the emergency department to allow for better organization of services.

“We’ll be able to develop the plans and specifications that will give us a concept—where the facility will be located and what it will look like. It will take us a year and a half to two years to complete this preparation,” adds Mr. Pelletier.

A call for tenders will be issued for this phase, which is expected to cost several million dollars.

“We have developed functional and technical programs that provide us with all the technical parameters, constraints, and solutions to address these elements. The architects will need to submit a proposal that integrates with our existing hospital,” explains the CEO.

A comprehensive study presented last fall showed that any expansion would require a new power plant, which will now be included in the construction.

“Given the adaptation we’re making to an existing building that isn’t particularly accommodating, and the fact that we want to incorporate future phases into this design for

subsequent stages,” notes Mr. Pelletier.

The total investment is estimated at between \$250 million and \$350 million, with the new facilities expected to be completed around 2031 or 2032.

The new construction in Maria is expected to resemble the work completed at the Gaspé hospital in 2021.

“The emergency department will meet the same standards—and perhaps new, more advanced standards that have evolved since then. We’ll be seeing similar changes, particularly in terms of technology. It will be a contemporary facility,” Mr. Pelletier notes.

The CISSS will focus on this project, while not ruling out preparations for other work needed to modernize the hospital.

“This is a major project. The other initiatives will also become major projects when we eventually discuss the operating room. These are not local-level issues. In the meantime, we’ll strive to keep the facilities functional with the funds we have available and repurpose the vacant spaces to create a buffer zone for other sectors deemed non-functional: care units, oncology, and hemodialysis. We’ll handle this at

the local level, while others will tackle the major projects that will require an application to the Quebec Infrastructure Plan (PQI),” says the CEO regarding future needs.

This first step toward modernization marks the beginning of work that could extend over 15 to 20 years before the entire hospital — whose first wings date back to the 1950s — is fully renovated.

Maria Hospital is a major health-care facility in the Gaspé Peninsula, serving more than 40 per cent of the region’s population.

Demographic trends show a significant increase in the number of seniors, particularly those aged 75 and older.

In June 2018, the CISSS adopted a resolution to move forward with a construction project to replace the current facility, a plan that predates the creation of the CISSS.

In the meantime, upgrading the emergency department was identified as the priority.

In 2021, renovating the existing building was estimated to cost \$330 million and take 15 years.

Building a new hospital was estimated at \$390 million, with construction expected to take eight years.

Murdochville CLSC in poor condition, according to SIIEQ

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MARIA – The Murdochville CLSC is in poor condition, according to the Syndicat des infirmières, infirmières auxiliaires et inhalothérapeutes de l’Est du Québec (Eastern Quebec Union of Nurses, Nursing Assistants, and Respiratory Therapists), a claim disputed by the CISSS of the Gaspésie.

The Murdochville hospital was built in 1960 and has since been converted into CLSC with an emergency department.

“Very little has been invested in it. The air inside is stale. The roof leaks. There’s a smell that makes your throat tighten as soon as you walk in,” says union president Pier-Luc Bujold.

In his view, the facility has been neglected.

“There is clearly a need for investment. When we talk



Photo: Ministry of Culture

The Murdochville CLSC was built in 1960.

about a building that has reached the end of its useful life, this must be part of Santé Québec’s considerations and investments for the Murdochville CLSC,” argues the union representative.

The CISSS de la Gaspésie says it has already examined the issues raised by the union.

In an email, the regional health network states that “in May 2025, at the request of the health office, representatives from the regional public health department and the technical services department visited the Murdochville CLSC to measure humidity levels and temperatures in a

large number of rooms. The findings show that humidity levels and temperatures meet comfort zones and health standards.”

Following the union’s statement, further checks were carried out.

“There is no evidence of mold in the facility,” notes the CISSS.

A listed building

The Côte-de-Gaspé MRC included the health facility in its built heritage inventory compiled in 2020-2021.

For the record, it should be noted that the first hospital, of modest size, opened its doors in 1953 or 1954 in Murdochville, that is to say, when the town was founded.

As the population grew rapidly, it became necessary to construct a new building.

A larger, modern hospital equipped with up-to-date technology was built in

1960. The Oblates of Mary took charge of nursing services.

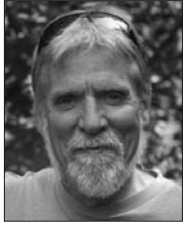
In 1980, the facility was renamed the Centre de santé des Hauts-Bois. It is now known as the Murdochville CLSC.

The heritage value of this building is based on its use, history, architectural style, state of authenticity, and its context.

The structure is representative of modern architecture, notable for its long, single-story layout, exterior cladding featuring alternating yellow bricks and blue tympanums, and its numerous double and ribbon windows.

The building is considered to be in an excellent state of authenticity.

It forms part of a group of modern institutional buildings located in the heart of Murdochville, according to the description on the Ministry of Culture’s website.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

The last Quebec budget lacks character

It is always hard to rate a budget just days after its release. The March 18 Quebec budget makes no exception. However, there are some aspects of it that can be analyzed right away.

Let's start with what this budget is not. With spendings totalling \$170 billion and a deficit of \$8.6 billion including \$2 billion for contingency, or unexpected spendings, in less technical terms, the 2026-2027 budget is not a deficit nightmare, even if the fiscal year that will end in a few days, on March 31, was marked by a \$9.9 billion deficit. It could have been worse, as a year ago, it was supposed to be close to \$13 billion.

A look at Quebec's total debt, the sum of past deficits and loans contracted by Quebec, sheds light on a broader picture.

The upcoming deficit is not nightmarish because Quebec has one of the lowest debt-to-gross-domestic-product ratios in the industrialized world. This ratio currently stands at 1.2% in Quebec. In Canada, the ratio hovers around 1.6%, and this country is one of the least indebted industrialized countries in the world, if not the least.

Quebec's ratio is way better than those of British Columbia, Alberta or Nova Scotia, to name a few, provinces that all show ratios around 2% and 3%.

In France, that ratio stands at 5.8%, although that country is extremely centralized, without provincial governments like Canada. In the United States, the debt/gross national product ratio reaches a whopping 7.4% and in Italy, it stands at 4%.

Numbers do not always tell the whole story, and that ratio is a good example.

About two-thirds of Quebec schools are in bad or very bad shape. Consequently, they already require urgent attention, namely investments, as education is front and centre in the pursuit of economic and social balance.

The same reality applies to our hospital and our roads. They are in poor condition and need invest-

ments.

So, the March 18 budget tabled by Finance Minister Éric Girard, while not a nightmare, is not a blessing either. There is a lot of work to do on our infrastructures and the Quebec government's decision-making process is sometimes hard to follow.

So, the Blue Line of Montreal's metro network will still receive ample sums of money, \$7.6 billion between now and 2031, which amounts to about \$1.5 billion per year. This is great for Montrealers, but at the same time, Gaspésians are stuck with an unfinished refurbishment of their railway and, for the second year in a row, no money to complete it, except the sums earmarked in the 2024-2025 budget, which was announced two years ago.

The lack of vision behind this refusal to immediately complete a project that would solve many economic and social problems on the Gaspé Peninsula, notably through the return of VIA Rail's passenger train, goes beyond indifference and neglect. It will soon be the sole topic of this commentary column.

Blowing warm and cold air

While youths and parents are hampered by the lack of investment in schools, another young segment of the population sees very little hope for improvements in Quebec's last budget. Minister Girard proudly underlines that his government is announcing \$24.8 million to ensure the continuity of homelessness services, but only for this year, as federal funding for the Community Encampment Response Plan (CERP) ends on March 31, 2026.

Organizations like Auberges du cœur (Heart Shelters) cannot plan the future of their services based on one-off funding and limited-term grants. This lack of predictability is not an oversight: it is a deliberate political choice.

Meanwhile, the \$89.9 million announced to help people experiencing homelessness has no real structural impact. Even worse, this funding completely misses the point: preventing youth homelessness. This shortcoming means that thousands of youths will not get the opportunity to start their adult life with the same chances as others their age. "Losing" them because of a lack of resources will eventually cost society more than preventing them from falling into deep problems. All this takes place in a rapidly aging society, one that cannot afford to lose contributing members.

The same could be said for community groups.

The Table of Provincial Associations of Community and Volunteer Organizations and its members "express their deep disappointment with the insufficient funding increase" allocated to autonomous community organizations in the health and social services sector.

Consider this: the 2026-2027 budget allocates only \$20 million more to the annual Program for the support of community organizations. The overall mission of this program is supporting over 3,000 organizations that reach 3 million people annually, which is a third of Quebec's population. It represents a mere \$6,500 per organization! The \$20 million increase represents only about 1% of the \$1.7 billion requested in the campaign to increase funding for autonomous community health and social services. At that rate, 85 budgets would be needed to reach the sector's target.

In short, there is very little money for the poor.

A complicated task

Managing a government is complicated these days. People expect a lot from a premier, a prime minister, cabinet members and civil servants. It is normal to a certain extent, as politicians make exaggerated promises during electoral campaigns, and they have to live up to them after.

Minister Girard experienced a rather strange situation while preparing the budget. The premier is still François Legault, but by April 12, he will have to deal with a new premier, Christine Fréchette in all likelihood. She could decide to go with a cabinet shuffle a few days after, and that shuffle could mean that Mr. Girard is no longer finance minister, although it is unlikely.

Asked by a reporter if it wouldn't have been preferable to wait until the designation of the new Coalition avenir Québec leader before tabling a budget, Éric Girard wisely and diplomatically answered that the government fiscal year ending March 31 called for a budget before that date.

However, extending the conditions of the previous year's budget for a month or two, the time required to adapt to a potential cabinet shuffle, has already been seen in our parliamentary system.

Let's not rule out the fact that François Legault wanted one last kick at the can before leaving. He has been more discrete than usual since announcing his resignation on January 14. Discretion was not his way of doing things during the seven-and-a-half years of his tenure.

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Police Report

Five additional charges laid against Bryan Lafontaine

Already facing charges including attempted murder in Paspebiac on January 18, Bryan Lafontaine, 39, of the Cape Cove sector of Percé, now faces additional charges following his last court appearance on March 11 at the New Carlisle courthouse. Criminal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville Paradis filed five new charges against the accused at the New Carlisle courthouse. "This includes criminal harassment during his relationship with the victim, as well as assault, over a period of six years, assault during the month that preceded the attempted murder, and two breaches of conditions, including an attempt to communicate with the victim when prohibited, which he allegedly tried to do while incarcerated," explains prosecutor Rocheville Paradis.

Since January, Bryan Lafontaine was already facing eight other offences: four breaches of conditions, assault, assault with a weapon, unlawful confinement, and breaking and entering, all related to the Paspebiac case. On January 18, the accused allegedly stabbed a woman in the neck. Fortunately, the victim was not seriously injured. Mr. Lafontaine was arrested the same day while riding his snowmobile during a routine Sûreté du Québec check. "The accused will return to court on May 29. His lawyer, Caroline Bérubé, of Rimouski, must get familiar with the case and the new accusations. His bail hearing could be discussed for the record. It is now up to him to give a direction to the case. He remains incarcerated in the meantime," concludes Maxime Rocheville Paradis.

Maria's Nicolas Morin pleads guilty of arson

At the New Carlisle courthouse on March 13, Nicolas Morin, 42, of Maria, pleaded guilty to three of the four charges against him after setting fire to his own residence on September 9, 2025. "He admitted to charges of arson, possession of incendiary material (a can of gasoline and a lighter), and criminal harassment for the period between July 1 and September 4, 2025," explains criminal prosecutor Alice Lemieux. The charge of fraud against Desjardins Insurance was withdrawn by the Director of criminal and penal prosecutions. According to documents signed by Nicolas Morin before he entered his plea of guilty, he and his partner, who were the owners of the residence, were separating, a situation the suspect did not accept. After an offer to purchase the property was finalized, Mr. Morin tried to cancel the sale, believing he was not getting enough money. The relationship with his ex-partner and the arrival of her new partner deteriorated the context so drastically that he set the house on fire. Nicolas Morin's drug use was also a contributing factor leading to the September 9 event. "A pre-sentence report was requested by the court for sentencing submissions on August 18. The individual remains in custody until then," adds criminal prosecutor Lemieux. Nicolas Morin is defended by attorney Ariane Cayer.

Drug seizure in Port-Daniel-Gascons

A 59-year-old man and a 60-year-old woman were arrested on March 13 following a search related to drug trafficking in Port-Daniel-Gascons. Sûreté du Québec officers seized approximately 1,500 methamphetamine tablets, cocaine, illicit cannabis and cannabis concentrate, more than 1,900 contraband cigarettes, about \$1,500 in cash, and drug trafficking tools at a residence on Chemin à Pierre. The two suspects could face drug charges, as well as violations of the Tobacco Tax

Act. They were questioned and then released pending further legal proceedings. At the scene, officers also seized various items reported stolen in connection with a case in the same area. The investigation is ongoing. Additional charges of possession of stolen property could also be laid against the man and the woman.

Father sentenced to prison for assaults on children

A 61-year-old man from the Baie-des-Chaleurs region was sentenced in February 2025 to 18 months in prison after being found guilty of repeatedly assaulting his three children over an 18-year period.

According to CHNC, the man will also be subject to three years of probation and is prohibited from contacting the victims.

Before imposing the sentence, Court of Québec Judge Janick Poirier referred to a negative pre-sentence report, noting the accused showed little remorse and often portrayed himself as the victim.

The assaults involved the use of a belt, slaps and a stick to discipline the children. One of the victims was assaulted as an adult.

Kevin Plante could face a lengthy prison term

The Criminal Prosecution Directorate is seeking a four-year sentence for Kevin Plante, 44, of Rimouski, for paying for sex with a minor under the age of 16. Plante was found guilty in June 2025, after a nine-day trial, of sexual assault and obtaining sexual services for payment in connection with an incident that took place in September 2021 in Gaspé. According to CHNC, the victim testified at the beginning of the hearing about the impact of the assault on her life, including nightmares and difficulty making friends. Mr. Plante also testified that he has no recollection of paying or engaging in any sexual act with the minor after two days of sexual activity. The defence, which is challenging the constitutionality of the 12-month minimum sentence, is seeking a conditional sentence in the community and 90 days of intermittent imprisonment. Mr. Plante has made efforts toward rehabilitation through therapy, including a seven-month program and another ongoing one, preparing him to return to his studies, according to his lawyer. Judge Richard Côté reserved judgment on the sentence and the constitutionality of the minimum sentence until May 1. Josiane Dufresne, charged in the same case with pimping and other offences, received a 30-month sentence in December 2023.

Dimitri Hughes pleads guilty to drug-related charges

Dimitri Hughes, a 29-year-old man from Gaspé, recently pleaded guilty to several charges related to a major drug seizure. Arrested in his vehicle after it went off the road in June 2024, police officers discovered 2,345 methamphetamine pills and 181 crystals, \$11,580 in cash, and two cellphones. He was also charged with impaired driving. On May 21 of the same year, Mr. Hughes was arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) at sea on an arrest warrant. He was offered the opportunity to contact a lawyer and attempted to do so three times. Police later discovered the person he contacted was known to the justice system but was not a lawyer. He also admitted to breaching his conditions. A pre-sentencing report was requested on June 26. The impaired driving case is also expected to be addressed at that time.

Former Chandler councillor to be sentenced May 1

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – Former Chandler municipal councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout will learn his sentence on May 1 after pleading guilty on January 20 to six of the 12 charges filed against him.

Sentencing arguments were heard March 17 at the Percé courthouse before Court of Québec Judge Richard Côté.

The Crown is seeking a six-year prison sentence, while the defence is requesting a sentence of 30 months. Mr. Godbout pleaded guilty to one count of sexual assault, one count of assault with a weapon, two counts of assault and two counts of criminal harassment.

Before presenting its sentencing recommendation, the Crown read a statement from one of the victims, who cannot be identified because of a pub-



Bruno-Pierre Godbout.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

lication ban.

She said it was during her third pregnancy, in another relationship, that she fully realized the extent of the violence she experienced during her first two pregnancies with the accused.

The judge acknowledged the victim's courage following her testimony.

A second victim also ad-

ressed the court. Beginning her statement by saying, "Bruno," she noted that his blows did not kill her and that she no longer keeps her head down. She told the court she can now speak openly about what she endured after eight years of fear, delivering an emotional testimony at times.

It was during her third pregnancy in another relationship that she realized the full extent of the horror she had endured during her first two pregnancies with the accused.

The judge highlighted the victim's courage following her testimony.

Crown seeks six years

The Crown is asking for a six-year sentence, citing the intrusive nature of the sexual acts, the psychological consequences for the victims, the repeated offences and the

violence committed in a context of abuse of trust.

The prosecution also noted what it described as a moderate risk of reoffending and argued that the accused's need for control has not yet been fully addressed.

The defence is requesting a sentence of 30 months in custody, followed by 18 months of supervision and a probation order of up to three years with several conditions, including a prohibition on contacting the victims.

As mitigating factors, the defence pointed to treatment received by Mr. Godbout while in custody, including programs aimed at social reintegration and support for impulsivity and alcohol addiction, which were described as contributing factors to his behaviour.

The defence also noted that the guilty plea spared the vic-

tims from having to testify, that the accused has taken steps toward rehabilitation since the charges were laid, that he has the support of relatives — including his partner of the past five years — and that he has no prior criminal record.

The defence also referred to the media coverage surrounding the case as an additional consequence already faced by the accused.

Mr. Godbout has been in custody since his arrest on April 15, 2025.

Both parties agreed that 17 months of pretrial detention should be credited toward his sentence.

Judge Côté will deliver his decision on May 1.

A separate fraud charge involving less than \$5,000 in expense claims submitted to the Town of Chandler in 2021 has been postponed to the same date.

17 new Gaspé Peninsula licences in phase 2 of exploratory lobster permits

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – On February 27, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) confirmed the launch of the second phase of exploratory lobster fishing permits. This phase covers Zone 19 in the Gaspé Peninsula, where a total of 17 new permits will be issued.

In this zone, which covers the coastline from Cacouna to Cape Gaspé, 12 exploratory permits of 100 traps each will be granted to non-Indigenous fishermen, along with five community permits of 250 traps each for Indigenous fishermen.

Between 2023 and 2025, 26 exploratory permits were issued during Phase 1 of the program. In 2025, 22 permits were granted between Cape Gaspé and Rimouski, 14 exploratory permits to non-Indigenous fishermen and 8 community permits to Indigenous fishermen in Zone 19. These were added to four exploratory permits previously issued in 2022 between the Tartigou River, in Baie-des-Sables west of Matane, and Rivière-à-Claude, east of Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. Between 2018 and 2021, those



Photo: G. Gagné

After being heavily depleted between 2020 and 2024, the shrimp stock has slowly increased, but most shrimp fishermen still need lobster permits in order to remain financially viable.

four permits were considered experimental.

As in 2025, the 2026 permits for non-Indigenous fishermen are being granted to shrimp and turbot vessels experiencing financial difficulties. The North Shore, where exploratory permits were first granted in 2024, and Anticosti Island, where it started in 2025, will not receive new permits in 2026.

During her announcement, Joanne Thompson, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, reiterated that this Phase 2 of the exploratory fishery “is part of a

regional plan for knowledge acquisition and lobster fishery development. The objective is to determine whether an increase in fishing activity in these areas is commercially viable.”

Fisheries and Oceans Canada based its decision to proceed with Phase 2 in 2026 on 2025 landings and catch per unit effort data, two indicators used to monitor the status of lobster stocks. The department indicates that feedback from industry and First Nations was also considered.

In 2025, catches from the

new exploratory and Indigenous permits represented 16% of all Quebec catches of 17,505 metric tonnes, for a subtotal of 2,801 tonnes, with a value slightly exceeding \$47 million. Zone 19, associated with northern Gaspé, also covers a significant portion of the eastern Lower St. Lawrence. Including the North Shore and Anticosti Island, there are 1700 kilometres of coastline along which exploratory and community permit holders operate.

Relief for shrimp, cod, and turbot fishermen

Claudio Bernatchez, executive director of the Gaspé Peninsula Captains-Owners Association (Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie, or ACPG), expresses relief that an even greater number of his group's members—12 in this case—will receive exploratory permits in 2026.

Twenty ACPG members, 14 in Zone 19 and 6 in Zone 17, the latter covering Anticosti Island, received exploratory permits a year ago.

“The fishermen who will benefit are very relieved. It allows them to continue to grow in this industry. The degree of difficulty varies among the

fishermen, but the impact on the regional economy is considerable,” Mr. Bernatchez explains.

“In Zone 19 alone, 2,700,000 pounds of shellfish were landed last year at an average price of \$7.83 per pound. That represents \$21.1 million, easily doubled when you add processing. It's a major economic impact. It's reasonable to think we could bring \$50 million back to the Gaspé Peninsula this year. After the second phase, we could approach \$100 million in total impact. I don't see any other tangible project with such a significant economic impact. The intention is for it to be a long-term one,” adds Claudio Bernatchez.

The president of the Tourelle Coastal Fishermen's Association, Sébastien Dupuis, as well as the Northern Gaspé Professional Fishermen's Association, express views in solidarity with the ACPG.

An abundance that inspires envy

Exploratory permits are the envy of fishermen in other

Cont'd on Page 7

Exploratory permits: Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen's Group concerned

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The management of the Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen's Group is concerned about the consequences of granting 17 additional lobster fishing permits in Zone 19, between Cap Gaspé and Rimouski. Twelve of these permits were granted to non-Indigenous people and five to Indigenous people.

The Group's spokesperson on this issue, Claine Canet, points out that the criteria used by Joanne Thompson, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, to make her decision remain unclear.

“The reaction of commercial lobster fishermen is one of concern regarding the sustainability of the stock and the approach. We don't know what scientific advice the Minister relied on for this decision,” notes Ms. Canet.

She adds that several as-

pects related to the composition and protection of the lobster stock in Zone 19 have been overlooked, or at least have not been communicated to the Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen's Group, she says.

“There are significant blind spots: there are questions about recruitment, about the sources of recruitment in Zone 19, that haven't been clarified. The biomass structure is poorly understood, or very poorly understood. We wonder why it's large lobsters that are being caught. We know that recruitment is difficult in certain parts of the zone. We even wonder if we're fishing all of the stock (in certain areas). We believe there needs to be much more scientific research,” continues Claire Canet.

She points out that prior to the summer of 2024, the Fisheries and Oceans Canada



Photo: Gilles Gagné

The Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen's Group management fears that exploratory permits were granted without due consideration of the stock.

(DFO) strategy for implementing exploratory fishing permits was supposed to be much slower, the three stages extending beyond 2028. In the current context, the three

stages will be implemented before 2028.

“Usually, three years of data must be collected before moving to the next stage. Here, we only have one year

of data. DFO stated before launching its plan that one year would not be sufficient. DFO also hasn't conducted any post-season analysis. This seems very superficial from a scientific standpoint. We are concerned by the lack of scientific advice to determine whether it is appropriate to proceed to stage 2 of this fishing effort,” says Ms. Canet.

She notes that the only available data from scientific monitoring in Zone 19, available to Fisheries and Oceans Canada, is limited to a very specific area: the corridor between Rivière-à-Claude, east of Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, and the Tartigou River, near Baie-des-Sables, west of Matane, where an exploratory fishery has been underway since 2022.

“The only complete data

Cont'd on Page 7

17 NEW LICENCES:

▶ *Cont'd from Page 6*

fishing sectors in Eastern Canada.

"I'm fortunate to participate in committees with counterparts from the Maritime Provinces. They have a hard time believing me. They never would have imagined seeing this kind of economic impact on a fishing sector," adds Claudio Bernatchez.

"Twenty exploratory permits mean 20 times four crew members at sea. And that's not all: processing plants have built lobster tanks, and the number of lobster processing permits on the MAPAQ's desk is five or six. This means jobs in fishing boats maintenance, spending at hardware stores and grocery stores, and people renting accommodations to crews from out of town. It's boosting the economy in several communities," explains Mr. Bernatchez.

The ACPG is unique in that it represents several sectors of the Gaspé Peninsula, including crab fishermen in Zones 12A and 12B (currently under a moratorium), several shrimp trawlers, and an even greater number of turbot boats than shrimp trawlers.

Its members range from Carleton to Rimouski, although the majority live between Cloridorme and Gaspé. Some fishermen are also members of the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du nord de la Gaspésie (Northern Gaspé Professional Fishermen's Association), which represents many turbot boats.

The impact of the exploratory permits could significantly reduce the number of fishermen in difficulty after phase 3, which could be scheduled for 2027 or later.

"At the end of the three planned phases, if it takes place next year, there will still be two crab fishermen from zone 12A and several turbot boats in difficulty, including some from the southern part of the peninsula," notes Claudio Bernatchez.

He is fully aware that the economic benefits cannot always be characterized by increases like those seen in 2025.

"It will eventually stabilize after a few years of plateauing. Exploratory permits are for 100 traps. By the end of the third phase, we will have only benefited from the equivalent of 14 commercial permits. The seabed is steeper here. Crab fishermen have caught lobsters at considerable depths. A turbot fisherman fishing at 100 fathoms—that's 600 feet—hailed in his nets with lobsters



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Lobster catches were quite abundant in 2025 everywhere in the Gaspé Peninsula, including on the north side of the region.

in them. There's plenty," reports Mr. Bernatchez.

He believes that the commercial portion of Zone 19, from Rivière-Madeleine to Cap Gaspé, can integrate exploratory permits with sustained yields.

"There will be two 100-trap permits this year in commercial zone 19, and three next year," he says.

Like others, Claudio Bernatchez hopes for reassuring answers regarding the potential scientific survey to be conducted in 2026 by Fisheries and Oceans Canada on the northern side of the Gaspé Peninsula. He is not overly concerned about the zone's capacity to absorb the exploratory permits.

"No one can claim to have the answer. I'm just saying that lobsters have been observed rolling onto the beach during some storms. The lobsters couldn't find shelter because there weren't any left. The landing data is phenomenal, beyond expectations. Those who fish see that the traps are full; the lobsters can't get back in. Will this last? I don't think so, but a balance will be established," says Mr. Bernatchez.

"Overabundance is not good because the balance is disrupted. There are still many questions about the biomass on the northern side, but for the moment, there is no cause for concern. We are seeking knowledge. We are not here to create other problems," he concludes.

A strict protocol

Since 2024, new licenses have been issued based primarily on habitat and available information on lobster, according to Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

However, this information is contested by the Southern Gaspé Professional Fishermen Group. (see other article)

"License holders must follow a strict data collection pro-

TOCOL to document their catches. Licenses are issued annually, and decisions regarding their renewal are based on an analysis of fishing data year after year. The department is utilizing several resources to closely monitor this new fishery and analyze the data quickly," the department also states in writing.

To date, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has not conducted a comprehensive assessment of the lobster resource in Zone 19. The department is expected to conduct a scientific survey in 2026, after the commercial season.

"Data from the exploratory fishery complement data from other ongoing or planned work to document the status of lobster populations," also mentions the DFO media division. The ministry will also conduct "scientific research on the effects of temperature on lobster development."

GROUP REACTION:

▶ *Cont'd from Page 6*

available comes from the work of the Wolastoqiyik, who are continuing an exploratory fishery in this sub-area. In the four other sub-areas, there is no data, and we have not received any scientific information from DFO. The decision (to grant exploratory permits in 2026) was based on the quantity of lobster landed," explains Claire Canet.

"We know that there has been no post-season work in 2025 and no sampling of catches. In fact, we don't know if DFO has any precise data whatsoever from the 2025 fishery. They haven't shared the information if they do (possess data). We asked DFO to share it. This leads us to believe that the only reason behind this decision is based on the abundance of the 2025 catch. This isn't data that allows us to determine the sustainability of the fishing effort," insists Claire Canet.

The post-season monitoring could have taken the form of a scientific survey like the one conducted in 2024 south of the Gaspé Peninsula, using a skid dredge. This monitoring was scheduled to take place in 2025 in Zone 19. It was cancelled by the Fisheries and Oceans Department without explanation.

Each of the 12 exploratory permits allows the

use of 100 traps, while each of the five permits granted to Indigenous communities allows 250 traps. The 2025 permits resulted in the addition of 7,750 traps in Zone 19, and the 2026 permits represent an additional 2,450 traps.

"Existing commercial fishermen don't seem to have been affected in 2025. Nevertheless, 250 traps are being added to sub-zone 19a3, 250 to 19b, and 200 to 19c. These are narrow and dangerous areas. Fishermen are concerned about safety and the concentration of fish in these difficult-to-fish zones," emphasizes Claire Canet.

"It seems like DFO flipped a coin to decide on exploratory permits. If the coin lands on heads, the fishermen who benefit from them risk finding themselves in a precarious situation. They will have invested heavily, while the resource doesn't allow for sustainable fishing. We don't want that," she concludes.

The ministry clarifies that in Quebec, "the assessment of the state of the lobster is not based solely on scientific surveys. DFO uses a set of recognized indicators — landings, biological indicators, fishing pressure and stock productivity — which support decision-making and carefully guide initiatives such as exploratory fishing," writes the communication division of the ministry.



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Gaspé Railway: doubts sown by Jonatan Julien displease rail transport advocates

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – Doubts raised on February 25 by Quebec Transport minister Jonatan Julien regarding the feasibility of pursuing the complete overhaul of the Gaspé railway have ruffled feathers, to varying degrees, among the main advocates of this project, which has been plagued by numerous delays over the past 10 years.

In response to a question from Liberal Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Enrico Ciccone, his party's spokesperson for Gaspé Peninsula issues, asking what the MNA for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, thought of the unfulfilled promises, minister Julien answered on his behalf. Mr. Julien mentioned that "the last section," specifically the Port-Daniel-Gaspé line, whose refurbishment remains to be completed, "had a business plan closely linked to LM Power (sic), with the wind turbines. Once this structure (passes) through maritime transport, we will reconsider the third section."

It is reasonable to assume that Jonatan Julien meant that the wind-turbine blade manufacturer LM Wind Power, based in Gaspé, now exports its production by ship to the United States. Theoretically, this could reduce potential rail traffic between Gaspé and the rest of North America.

However, this is not the case, notes regional development consultant Gaétan Lelièvre, who was astonished by minister Julien's remarks and his lack of familiarity with the Gaspé rail file.

"I think minister Julien hasn't familiarized himself with the files since he arrived at the Ministry of Transport. The LM plant no longer manufactures 107-metre blades, which were too large to be transported on railway cars. The plant has shifted its focus to blades under 75 metres, which can be transported by rail," explains Mr. Lelièvre.

Gaétan Lelièvre, former Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé from 2012 to 2018 and minister of Regional Development from 2012 to 2014, finds it troubling that Jonatan Julien, who was minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula in 2021, is "either acting in bad faith or is simply uninformed about this issue," he says.



Photo: G. Gagné

From December 2016 to May 2022, blade trains operated in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"The question posed in the National Assembly wasn't about a secondary road project. The railway is crucial in the Gaspé Peninsula, and it deserves special attention, especially considering that minister Julien recently (in December) visited the Gaspé Peninsula to meet with stakeholders concerned about the railway," adds Mr. Lelièvre.

"We're talking about freight trains, but any delay also affects passenger transport, given the situation with VIA Rail, which doesn't want to return to the Gaspé Peninsula until the railway is repaired all the way to Gaspé. That, too, is crucial," he emphasizes.

The delays

In April 2019, Premier François Legault indicated that the complete refurbishment of the Gaspé railway would be completed in seven years, by 2026. Faced with criticism over the long delay, Mr. Legault moved the deadline forward to 2025 in August 2019.

While the Matapédia-New Richmond section has remained operational despite undergoing refurbishment work, the New Richmond-Port-Daniel line has been hampered by half a dozen reopening delays. These postponements were staggered from 2020 to December 2025.

In June 2023, Geneviève Guilbaut, then Minister of Transport, came to Gaspé to announce that the total cost of

refurbishing the 325 kilometres of track between Matapédia and Gaspé would amount to \$871.8 million, including \$517 million for the 132 kilometres between Port-Daniel and Gaspé. She reiterated the target date of 2026 for its reopening.

However, in the March 2025 budget, the Legault government removed the refurbishment of the Port-Daniel-Gaspé line section from the Quebec Infrastructure Program (PQI), returning it to the "study" stage, specifically the business plan.

The government justified this decision by citing calls for tenders for this line that exceeded the preliminary estimates of the Ministry of Transport, the railway's owner, by approximately \$150 million.

Although not related, this sum of \$150 million also corresponds to the amount already invested between Port-Daniel and Gaspé since 2020 to repair major bridges and improve the railway bed.

Costly delays

Gaétan Lelièvre asserts that these numerous delays, often attributed to the pandemic or the need to reassess the business plan, are costing the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) dearly in lost transportation opportunities, not to mention the inflation attributable to construction projects. The SCFG is a municipally con-

trolled entity that provides freight transportation.

"By not offering LM Wind Power rail access from Gaspé, we are reducing its competitiveness in a global market, even though it is the only blade manufacturing plant in Canada. Blades were transported to reach the railway in New Richmond (between 2016 and 2022), but the land-based portion was very expensive. The minister knows, or should know, that there is a project to reopen the Murdochville copper mine. The developer, Osisko, could make other arrangements if the railway is not ready when it opens. And that doesn't even take into account other unknown transportation projects. It also doesn't take into account that \$150 million has already been invested between Port-Daniel and Gaspé," explains the former Member of the National Assembly.

He suggests that Premier François Legault, or whoever replaces him after the Coalition Avenir Québec leadership race, should bring minister Julien to heel.

"He should do his job properly, or the premier should replace him. He's not very diligent and he makes cavalier statements. It's unacceptable to hear that (what he said to Enrico Ciccone). It's already difficult for the region to move our files forward when there's good faith on the part of the government. Imagine when a minister is poorly informed, even if he came to the Gaspé Peninsula to learn about the railway. It's zero tolerance," Mr. Lelièvre states firmly.

He fears that Jonatan Julien's comments are setting the stage for bad news in the next Quebec government budget. At press time, the Quebec budget had not been announced yet.

"We're wasting time and losing momentum. The gov-

ernment is preparing its budget. The Quebec Infrastructure Plan (PQI) is being developed for the coming years. Will we see a second year of delays on a project announced with great fanfare in 2023? I fear we're heading for a second year without calls for tenders. Meanwhile, costs are rising, and gloom is setting in. People will organize themselves in ways other than around the railway, with the risk of losing businesses and transportation opportunities," laments Gaétan Lelièvre.

The president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), Éric Dubé, cautiously admits to having been surprised by Jonatan Julien's comments on February 25.

"The potential of LM Wind Power and the return to blades that can be transported by rail were explained. Furthermore, it's not about 'draining' the region of its production. There are many inputs that can reach the Gaspé Peninsula by rail, for the wind energy sector, for the Port-Daniel cement plant, and for other businesses," Mr. Dubé points out.

"The issue remains political," notes the president of the SCFG, thinking of the election campaign scheduled to begin this summer.

Gaétan Lelièvre regrets that the railway is likely to become, once again, part of an election campaign.

"This could have been resolved before the election campaign. I can't help but think about the boomerang effect that Jonatan Julien's comments could have on the MNAs for Bonaventure and Gaspé, Catherine Blouin and Stéphane Sainte-Croix, who have been advocating for the railway's restoration since entering politics. They are also from the same party as the minister," Mr. Lelièvre concludes.





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Budget: The rail line to Gaspé is still not in the plans

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The absence of funding to complete the rail line extension to Gaspé has coloured reactions following the Quebec government's budget tabled on March 18 at the National Assembly.

Although the project remains listed in the 2026–2036 Quebec Infrastructure Plan (PQI), it is still in the planning stage, with no funding allocated in the document.

"We're going to pick up where Pellerin left off. We're going to re-document the case once again, and we'll eventually convince them that this is a much wiser investment than many others," comments Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté, who recently expressed frustration at having to convince the Quebec government for several years of the need to complete the rail line to Gaspé.

The president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) is not surprised by the status quo. Éric Dubé said there had been concern the project might disappear entirely from the infrastructure plan.

"Last year, it was a big surprise to see the funding disappear. We feared the project would vanish completely from the Quebec Infrastructure Plan. That would have been a complete rejection by the Quebec government," he says.



Photo: Facebook

Finance Minister Éric Girard tabled the budget on March 18 at the National Assembly.

Mr. Dubé noted that at least the project has not been pushed back further. The organization will now prepare a new business plan.

"We're going to conduct a market study. That's pretty much what the minister wanted: to have the facts before investing any funds," continues Mr. Dubé, who is also mayor of New Richmond.

With a new premier expected to take office soon and an election scheduled for the fall, Mr. Dubé fears the region could lose another year. If work does not begin in 2027, the rail line will not reach Gaspé by 2030.

The October election will be used to question candidates on their intentions regarding completion of the project.

The Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and

Industry also notes the lack of funds set aside for the rehabilitation of the railway line between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

Maria Hospital

Another major element of the budget is the official inclusion of a new emergency and intensive care unit at Maria Hospital in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan.

The feasibility study is the only health-care project added to the PQI, along with a project at Sainte-Croix Hospital in Drummondville.

The Quebec government recently authorized the CISSS de la Gaspésie to begin the design and specifications phase, which could take up to two years and cost several million dollars.

Other Issues

While the federal government has just confirmed the proposed renewal of the Fisheries Fund, the mayor of Gaspé notes that the Quebec government has not set aside any funds for the program.

Negotiations must take place between the two levels of government to establish the terms and funding.

The current program expires on March 31 and had a budget of \$42 million, 70% of which was funded by the federal government and 30% by the province.

Daniel Côté does, however, note some progress in the Girard budget.

"Quebec is correcting some of the mistakes of the past by putting a little money back into Réno Région, housing, air travel, tourism infrastructure, local investment funds, and the Départ program. These are small amounts, but they help 'patch up' the gaps," comments the mayor of Gaspé.

Nothing is allocated for public transit, which impacts the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transit Authority—a fact that comes as no surprise to the mayor, who also serves as the organization's president.

Funding has been added to PAFIRSPA—the sports and recreation infrastructure program—and funds are allo-

cated for forestry without specifics; no measures are included for the PEQ program.

The Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry also raised concerns.

"There was a section confirming that the planned reduction in immigration would cause and even exacerbate the labour shortage," notes director general Valentine Palma in an interview with CHNC.

However, the two candidates for the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) leadership race indicated that the program would be extended, without specifying the terms that Bernard Drainville and Christine Fréchette would implement.

Among the positive measures noted by the Chamber is the renewal of the Gaspé Peninsula tax credit for five years, as well as funding for tourism, the bio-food sector and forestry.

The investment tax credit is also welcomed, but businesses remain concerned about labour shortages.

"We want businesses to modernize and invest, but they're asking us, 'How are we supposed to grow when we're short on labour?'" says Ms. Palma.

Mixed Reactions from Museums

Regional museums are

Cont'd on page 12

Jonatan Julien's comments on the rail project: Daniel Côté not surprised

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The mayor of Gaspé says he is not surprised by Quebec Transport Minister Jonatan Julien questioning the feasibility of completing the regional railroad's section 3, between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

On February 25, the minister stated in the National Assembly that he had travelled to Gaspé to meet with various stakeholders.

He mentioned that the final section had a business plan closely linked to LM Wind Power with wind turbines. Since the blades are shipped using vessels, he questioned the relevance of repairing the third section between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

"I don't know what it takes



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Work is underway on section 3, particularly on the Grande-Rivière bridge. Not completing the repairs would be a waste of money, according to Gaspé mayor, Daniel Côté.

to reassure him. The minister keeps saying that LM ships its blades with vessels. No Wonder! There's no train. LM needs the train to ship its blades to Texas. Right now, it's

expensive transportation logistics that make the company less competitive. How many times do we have to say it? Repeat it? Demonstrate it? I have the impression we're talking to

people who are turning a deaf ear," says Daniel Côté.

The mayor agrees that when LM Wind Power was producing 107-metre blades, they could not be transported by rail, but the plant is now manufacturing smaller blades that could travel by train.

"It's a chicken-and-egg situation, the train from Gaspé! (There is) no need to travel a long distance with a police escort that costs an exorbitant amount just to catch the train a little further away. Beyond that, there are other industrial projects on hold because the train isn't there. These are private developers who aren't committed. I can't tell you how many development opportunities we're losing because we don't have the train. There's also the passenger train that

people are demanding," argues the mayor.

Daniel Côté pointed out that work is currently underway on section three between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

"The most visible work is on the Grande Rivière (bridge) in Grande-Rivière and Douglstown. Tens of millions of dollars are being invested between Port-Daniel and Gaspé. If you drive along Route 132, you'll see plenty of excavators and cranes. Are they putting tens of millions of dollars into the water only to throw it away? If so, they are very, very bad managers. I'm starting to get seriously tired of hearing these questions," the elected official says, recalling premier François Legault's promise to rehabilitate the railway to Gaspé.

Christine Fréchette visits Bonaventure

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) leadership candidate Christine Fréchette is relying on her economic experience to convince party activists to vote for her on April 12 to become leader of the political party and, indirectly, premier of Quebec.

"I have an economic background. I was Minister of Economy and Immigration, and in my previous jobs, I worked in economic development and international relations, which are important areas of expertise in the current context. I can put forward a vision that Quebecers will appreciate and embody renewal," says the Sanguinet Member of National Assembly (MNA) to convince party members to support her.

"I have been very involved in social causes throughout my career, in areas such as health and education. I can bring a wealth of experience to Quebecers," she continues.

Her vision of the regions focuses on what lies outside the metropolis and the national capital.

"They are the beating heart of a large part of our economy because our SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) are mainly based in the regions, and it is important for the gov-



Photo: Christine Fréchette's team

CAQ leadership candidate Christine Fréchette with Bonaventure MNA Catherine Blouin, who has endorsed the Sanguinet MNA. They toured the riding on March 10.

ernment to support them. The regions are not all defined in the same way. We can't take a one-size-fits-all approach. We have to be aware of the characteristics of each region," she explains.

However, the CAQ government has centralized decision-making, particularly at the Ministry of the Economy, by creating a regional office in Rimouski for the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Bas-Saint-Laurent, and Chaudière-Appalaches regions.

The candidate partly avoided the question. "It's important to have political representation. I believe that the ridings in Gaspésie should remain as they are. When our government came to power, the

Liberals had closed offices throughout the regions. We reopened them. We want the regions to have the tools they need. Sometimes, certain regions may be grouped together, but the voice of the regions is still heard," says Ms. Fréchette.

For her, both ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula must be maintained because of the vast territory they cover.

Energy, rail and regional development

The development of wind energy remains a priority, she adds, since Quebec needs electricity.

"The Gaspé Peninsula has paved the way for Quebecers with the Eastern Energy Al-

liance, a promising model that should be developed elsewhere in Quebec," she says.

The development of a transmission line to carry wind energy from eastern Quebec to major centres remains a key issue.

"The thousands of megawatts available in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Lower St. Lawrence will be important economic levers that will generate benefits for communities," continues Ms. Fréchette.

On the railway, the candidate notes that there has been a significant cost overrun for section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

"We have already done a lot with sections 1 and 2. Section 3 has been put on hold because there has been a significant cost overrun. It is important that we respect Quebecers' ability to pay. We will look at different models that will allow us to save on skyrocketing costs. That is the approach I would like to take," she explains.

Labour, tourism and infrastructure

The recreational tourism sector is also in her sights, but to do so, a way must be found to retain foreign labourers who work in the hotel and restaurant sectors and, more broadly, in the manufacturing sector.

"Work permit renewals are handled in Ottawa. I have been lobbying for months to have temporary worker permits renewed because I know how vital this is for many businesses. The PEQ (Programme de l'expérience québécoise) program was shut down in November. It was done too quickly. There was no transition period for the shutdown to take effect. If I am elected, I will reactivate the program for two years so that these people can apply. It will be important to provide predictability," she says.

The candidate also raised the possibility of public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects.

The formula could be used for the construction of a school, and possibly for the Maria hospital.

"I am considering applying this formula in other sectors. The hospital sector is being considered. It remains to be seen what form it will take, but I want to open up the discussion on this," she says, acknowledging that the hospital is aging and needs modernization.

"I am confident that there will be interesting announcements related to this central hospital to ensure that it is brought up to standard," she concludes.

Bernard Drainville courts

CAQ supporters in the riding of Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Like his opponent in the race for the leadership of the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), Bernard Drainville visited the Gaspé Peninsula on March 10 and says he wants to make major changes for Quebec if he becomes leader and premier on April 12.

During a visit to the Forillon shipyard in Gaspé, the candidate concluded that Quebec's model needs to be changed, that the rules of the game need to be changed to create a less bureaucratic state.

"What I call the lasagna state, where layers of bureaucracy have been piled up over time, and the time has come to review all that. We must not hesitate to create competition, to call on the private sector if necessary," notes Mr. Drainville.

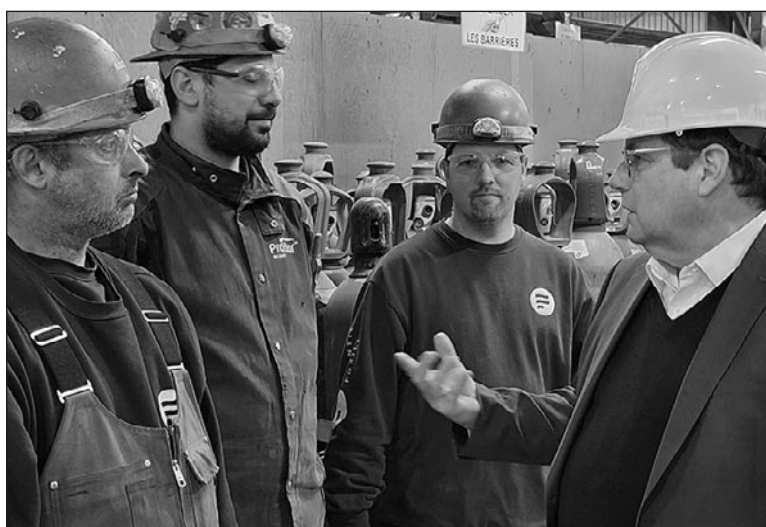


Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Bernard Drainville met with workers at the Forillon shipyard during his visit to Gaspé.

During his visit to Gaspé, he proposed opening public transportation and ferry services to competition in order to obtain better prices.

"The same goes for health care. If you've been waiting too long for an operation, you've paid your taxes, you shouldn't have to suffer. You should be sent to the private

sector and the government should pay," suggests the Lévis MNA.

He also raised the possibility of ending job security in the public service.

"All these proposals are the result of my experience, what I have observed from the inside in my ministerial responsibilities," he says.

He also proposes putting the family back at the forefront of government priorities and creating acquired rights for certain sectors, such as manufacturing, to retain foreign workers, while limiting the range of services offered to asylum seekers.

He defends himself against accusations of making populist proposals.

"Populist... That makes me laugh. In the usual political analysis, this word has a pejorative connotation. But being populist also means being close to the concerns of the people, understanding what they are going through and fighting for them. I'm not afraid to say it. I don't come from a wealthy background. Nothing came to me for free, and I come from a rural background," says Mr. Drainville. "I think I have a good understanding of what the average Quebecer is going through. If

that makes me a populist, then I am one. Labels that are used to discredit someone... I don't pay too much attention to them," the politician continues.

When it comes to his definition of the word "region," the candidate believes there are several categories.

"But generally speaking, a region is often a region focused on resource development. These can be energy resources, strategic minerals, natural resources such as fisheries, or copper, as in the case of Osisko in Murdochville. A region is a geographical area that provides large centres with all kinds of resources. Sometimes, regions feel that they give a lot and don't receive their fair share of public investment in return," says the former Parti Québécois minister under

Cont'd on page 11

DRAINVILLE TOUR:

▶ *Cont'd from Page 10*

Pauline Marois and, until recently, minister in the Legault government.

Bernard Drainville says he has a long-term vision for the regions and believes land use planning is essential.

"We can't just build Quebec out of cities and urban centres. At some point, we have to occupy our territory. Our ancestors cleared land that we have greatly benefited from since then, and we must not compromise everything that previous generations have done for us," says the leadership candidate.

He gives as an example the decisions made to build schools in villages, going against the recommendations of his officials when he was Minister of Education.

Regional services and balance

Asked about the regionalization of services through regional directorates at a time when the Gaspé Peninsula lost several, including the Economy directorate to Rimouski, which now covers the Gaspé Peninsula-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the Lower St. Lawrence and Chaudière-Appalaches, the candidate believes that the pandemic has made it clear that physical locations are not necessarily required.

"At the same time, I think it's important to have people on the ground who understand the reality of the region and are sensitive to its needs. We need to find a balance. New technologies allow us to do things we couldn't do before. As with

many other issues, we need to find the right balance," says Mr. Drainville.

"To make the right decisions, you need the right information. And to get the right information, you need people on the ground, in the region. This is true for government offices, and it's true for members of National Assembly. It's all about balance."

Two ridings in the Gaspé

For Mr. Drainville, maintaining two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula is essential.

"This is not a belief that started today, not just for the Gaspé Peninsula, but in general, I am opposed to reducing the demographic weight of the regions. We have to look at other variables. Members of

the National Assembly (MNAs) from the regions have to travel many miles to meet with their constituents. It is inconceivable to put the safety of our MNAs at risk," says the candidate, who does not want to see an elected official have an accident after traveling long distances in the middle of the night.

"If you force a Member of the National Assembly to drive 12 or 14 hours to cover his or her riding, it no longer makes sense. Population cannot be the only criterion," says the candidate, suggesting that a maximum area to be covered be established.

Railway and infrastructure

On the railway file, the candidate notes that two out of

three sections have been rehabilitated with an investment of about \$400 million.

"In the third section, nine of the 14 projects that have been completed or are in the process of being completed. It's true that we've slowed down the pace. Will GE (the owner of LM Wind Power) need the rail? We also want to see Osisko, but eventually we'll need a detailed business plan for their economic and transportation needs. Before investing several hundred million dollars in the third section, we want to be sure we have a definitive idea of the needs of the companies," Mr. Drainville calculates.

During the press briefing, a figure of about \$400 million was mentioned to complete the rehabilitation of the third section between Port-Daniel-Gaspé and Gaspé.

Table of Prefects will appear before the Supreme Court

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER — The Table of Prefects of the Gaspé Peninsula will appear before the Supreme Court to defend the retention of two electoral ridings in the region, as the Electoral Representation Commission has ruled that only one riding will remain after the final map is submitted in January.

The Table of Prefects has participated in every stage of the legal challenge to the Act passed in 2024 to maintain the two ridings, appearing in Superior Court and the Court of Appeal. The legal proceedings have cost \$81,813 to date.

"The Table has been part of the litigation from the start and wants to continue its involvement. It will be a more modest involvement. We want to keep the pressure on. But the financial and time-related impact will be less," comments the chair, Mathieu Lapointe.

"This will be a matter of the principle of the law, but what concerns us is that the members of the National Assembly table a bill to secure the two Gaspé ridings," the committee continues to demand.

Despite the time it will take for the Supreme Court to render its decision, Mr. Lapointe has been told by the Quebec government that action could be taken quickly through the passage of a law.

"We won't let up the pressure. We believe this must be done by introducing legislation



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Mathieu Lapointe, president of the Table of Prefects of the Gaspé Peninsula Council.

that will guarantee two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula with special status, as is the case in the Magdalen Islands," the chair states.

The coalition will file a brief with the Supreme Court and plans to be present at the hearing scheduled for April 22. On December 2, the Electoral Representation Commission submitted a map that maintained the abolition of one riding in the Gaspé Peninsula, merging Bonaventure and Gaspé and transferring Haute-Gaspésie to Matane-Matapédia.

The first proposal outlining this scenario had been submitted in September 2023.

Since then, the region has repeatedly spoken out against the loss and has demanded public hearings in the Gaspésie to ensure the region's perspective is heard.

Despite these requests, the commission maintained its position.

Meanwhile, in May 2024, Members of the National Assembly unanimously passed a law maintaining the current electoral district boundaries for the upcoming October election.

Elected officials from the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec—each of which gained a riding in the new redistribution, thanks in part to the elimination of a riding in Montreal—along with various organizations, challenged this law in Superior Court, without success.

However, the Court of Appeal later overturned that decision, allowing the commission to submit its revised map in December. The map was formalized by decree on January 14 with its publication in the Official Gazette.

Just before the Christmas holiday break, the Quebec government asked the Supreme Court for permission to appeal the Court of Appeal's ruling.

Ninth month of water shortage in the Gaspé Peninsula

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ — Gaspé received only 35 millimetres of water equivalent in February, well below the normal 73 millimetres usually recorded for the month.

This marks the ninth consecutive month of precipitation deficit in the Gaspé Peninsula since last June, raising concerns about water supply for residents who rely on artesian wells for daily use.

Gaspé was not alone in experiencing dry conditions. Several areas, including Quebec City, Beauce, Charlevoix, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and the Magdalen Islands, received total precipitation of only 10 to 15 millimetres in February, with the Magdalen Islands recording just one-twelfth of the normal amount.

According to Environment Canada data, Michel-Pouliot Airport has recorded 488 millimetres of precipitation since June 2025, barely more than half of the normal total of 877 millimetres.

The dry summer experienced in the region caused concern among some residents of Gaspé, New Richmond and Percé, who saw their water sources dry up.

Snowfall close to normal

Snowfall totals, however, were closer to seasonal averages. Environment Canada measured 63 centimetres of snow in February, or 85% of the normal 74 centimetres. Snow contains more or less water at times, which explains why there are "water equivalent" measures.

Since the beginning of the cold season, 228 centimetres have fallen in Gaspé, compared to a normal accumulation of 262 centimetres, or 87% of the seasonal average.

The federal agency notes that three days with accumulations of nearly 10 centimetres were recorded in the Gaspé Peninsula, while most other regions experienced only one such snowfall, if any.

In Gaspé, 10.5 centimetres fell on February 15, 17.6 centimetres on February 18, and 14 centimetres on February 24.

There were 44 centimetres of snow on the ground on February 28.

Very warm temperatures

The average temperature for the month was -6.8°C , which is 4 degrees above the normal monthly average of -10.8°C .

In meteorology, a difference of more than two degrees is considered significant.

Nights were particularly mild, with temperatures dropping below -20°C only once, reaching -20.7°C on the night of February 28.

The average nighttime temperature was -11.8°C .

BUDGET:

▶ Cont'd from Page 9

only partially satisfied with the Girard budget tabled on March 18.

The Quebec government confirms the increase in funding for the Museum Operating Assistance Program announced following a plea for help in December. The additional \$9.5 million will be shared among 120 museums, representing about \$79,000 per museum.

However, no measures were included to help cover rising operating costs for the 43 regional museums.

"We'll likely be gearing up for the next election," says Martin Roussy, director of the

Musée de la Gaspésie and spokesperson for regional museums.

Maintaining funding for school visits is seen as positive. "That's truly extraordinary. We were worried we'd receive money in one area only to have it taken away in another," he says.

Quebec Infrastructure Plan

Among the other regional projects included in the PQI is the repair of the Matapedia Bridge, currently in the planning stage, at a cost of more than \$20 million.

Projects exceeding \$20 million scheduled to begin this year include the new

\$30.3-million English-language elementary and secondary school in New Carlisle and the \$27.3-million bridge over the Petit Pabos River on Route 132 in Chandler.

Projects currently under construction include 86 housing units in the Quartier du Havre in Gaspé, costing \$41.1 million, and 36 units at Villa Mgr Bourdages in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, costing \$18 million with partner funding. The water and sewer project in the Gascons sector of Port-Daniel-Gascons is also included, at a cost of \$44.5 million.

The \$75.6-million expansion of Villa Pabos in Chandler remains in the plan and is expected to be completed



Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

There is still no indication of a willingness to complete the rail line to Gaspé. The train is currently limited to stopping at Port-Daniel-Gascons.

within the next year.

In total, the Quebec government plans to invest \$2.3

billion in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine between 2026 and 2036.

Federal government wants to renew Fisheries Fund

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – On March 11, the federal government announced its intention to renew the Quebec Fisheries Fund, which was set to expire on March 31.

The fund has enabled 195 projects to be carried out with the \$42.7 million invested since 2019.

"We finally won our case, and it's a victory for the entire Quebec fishing industry. It's a victory for all the stakeholders who worked together. We formed a united front in November in Gaspé. At the Bloc Québécois fisheries conference earlier this month in the Magdalen Islands, there was again a unanimous call to renew the Fisheries Fund. The AQIP (Quebec Fishing Industry Association) threw its full



Photo: N. Sergerie

Claudio Bernatchez, director of the Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie.

weight behind the cause. Finally, the Liberal government is keeping its promise," says Alexis Deschênes, Member

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

What the federal government announced is the resumption of negotiations with the Quebec government to establish a 2.0 version of the fund.

"It's an important tool for innovation, for modernizing our fleets and our plants. It's good news," he says.

The federal government financed 70% of the fund, while the Quebec government contributed the remaining 30%.

The government of Prime Minister Mark Carney had made this an election promise. "The promise was to renew the fund by increasing it by 20%," notes the Bloc Québécois MP.

If the promise holds true, the fund would then have a

budget of about \$51 million.

Satisfaction with the announcement

The Association des capitaines propriétaires de la Gaspésie (Gaspé Peninsula Boat Owners Association) is satisfied with the federal government's announcement.

"It's a great relief for us. It will allow us to continue the work we've started. It will also allow us to launch other projects. We're really happy," notes its director, Claudio Bernatchez.

The Quebec government has always shown a willingness to do its part in the fund.

"The MAPAQ (Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec) has been telling us for months that it will be there when the DFO

(Department of Fisheries and Oceans) makes its announcement. We hope that it will happen quickly enough so that we don't have to wait too long after April 1 to submit new projects," he says.

The owner-operators hope that the fund will be at least \$42.7 million.

"Like everything else, operating and equipment acquisition costs have increased over the past seven years. We can at least hope that \$42.7 million will be the minimum. We think it could be a little more," says Mr. Bernatchez.

When asked to comment, the government assistant to the Quebec Minister of Fisheries, Gaspé Member of National Assembly (MNA) Stéphane Sainte-Croix, was unable to react immediately, as the announcement was still very recent.

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1997, the confirmation that a transition is underway

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – It might sound like a broken record, but 1997 was one heck of a busy year. It was not only busy; it also offered strong clues that the region was about to change. Among other things, the pulp and paper industry was experiencing major constraints, and the Port Daniel cement plant project was making headlines regularly, even though it would open only 20 years later.

**Vol 23, No 1
January 12, 1997**

- In issue 1, dated January 12, “Port Daniel: Caisse de dépôt will invest in cement plant”, “Record winds, rain wreak havoc – two killed in Gaspé”, including high school student Timothy Smith, and “Health council says don’t panic about repatriation” of patients treated in Campbellton, make the main headlines. “Flagman only a temporary measure” to ensure safety at Escuminac Intermediate School, “Gaspesia workers fear shutdowns” and “New French paper out January 31” in Gaspé, La Péninsule, make smaller titles.

**Vol 23, No 2
January 19, 1997**

- “Native lobster fishery: charges being laid against N.B. Native”, and “CN closure: ‘This is the end of our life on the Coast’”, as the Starnes family moves to Ontario in order to keep working for CN, which has sold the Matapedia to Chandler line, headline issue 2, dated January 19. Another railway article, “Group asks CN delay for purchase offer” explains how the line between Chandler and Gaspé will find a buyer. “Carleton: ferry company quits: ‘we tried everything’” to save the Magdalen Islands link, and “Chandler: Bloc (leadership) candidates confident of easy negotiations with Canada” make smaller titles.

**Vol 23, No 3
January 26, 1997**

- Wade “Gifford steps down as school board’s director gen-



Even the Irish do the "macarena"!

Even the Irish do the “Macarena”!
Students on the Coast celebrate
St. Patrick’s Day with a performance of the Macarena.

eral” and “CN refuses to grant delay for offer of purchase – price to be settled next week” headline issue 3, dated January 26. “Maria Hospital ‘making great efforts’ to offer service in English”, “Wakeham-York: festival’s future precarious” and Patrick “Gagnon wants to establish a telephone service centre here” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 23, No 4
February 2, 1997**

- “Pin Rouge enjoying wintry delights” and “English health care: PQ council votes unanimously to review access plans – ‘We are practicing preventive bilingualism’” fill the headlines of issue 3, dated February 2. “Stone’s secret process reduces need for chips”, “Listuguj: decision on debt situation to be made shortly”, “Fox River: fishermen’s helpers now have association” and “Newport: fish plant to open with Iceland cod” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23, No 5
February 9, 1997**

- “Campbellton health care: Regional council aims to save 6 million dollars – no money for improved service in English”, and New Richmond councillor Bobby “Caissy doubts new water project a necessity – inspections show inadequate chlorination” headline issue 5, dated February 9. “Gaspé: Anglicans meeting to plan future of parish”, “SQ services: MRCs to be involved in management” and

“Chandler-Gaspé railway: the hour of truth is approaching” complete page 1 titles. New York journalist John Henry writes the commentary about the preservation of Lévis station railway.

**Vol 23, No 6
February 16, 1997**

- “Gaspé wins Surgi-Cure jobs – facility should be operational by 1998” and “Gaspé: Anglicans chart course for future of parish, churches” fill most of the front-page of issue 3, dated February 16. “Health care: council not concerned about OLF review of plans”, “Mayors unite to deplore changes to SQ services” and “Money for English services ‘already in place’, (Denis) Loïselle”, head of region’s health services, complete page 1.

**Vol 23, No 7
February 23, 1997**

- “School board still considering Gaspé reorganization”,

mainly the buildings’ use, and “New mega-merger described as ‘optimistic’ for Chandler’s future”, the merger of Abitibi-Price and Stone Consolidated, headline issue 7, dated February 23. “St. Patrick’s Day TV special filmed in Douglas-town”, “Linguistic boards: Alliance Quebec and CASA want guarantees”, “Wakeham-York: deficit must be covered or Homecoming Festival will die”, and “VIA Rail: train beds booked for summer” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23, No 8
March 2, 1997**

- “Douglasstown: town’s only business accused of ‘sign pollution’”, namely Jean-Guy Thibault’s service station having 11 signs in snowmobile trails, and “Winter expedition warms the heart”, as Roger Bourdages cross-country skis 540 kilometres to support cardiology services at the Rimouski Hospital, headline issue 8, dated March 2. “Quebec grants \$1.1 million for Murdochville mines”, “New Richmond committee set up to fight poverty”, “CN Rail: Quebec may buy Chandler to Gaspé portion”, “VIA Rail: Internet reservation service now available”, “Bouchard: AQ (Alliance Quebec) is radical”, “Sessions held to explain ‘inhabited forest’ concept” and “Listuguj: debt ‘under control’ so far” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23, No 9
March 9, 1997**

- “CN Rail: offer made for Chandler to Gaspé” and Pierre “Provost will run for BQ nomination” headline issue 9, dated

March 9. “Patrick Gagnon acclaimed to Liberal nomination”, “Teacher’s Association: ‘government has no credibility’” and “CLSC Chaleur and Centre d’accueil decide to amalgamate” make other front-page titles.

**Vol 23, No 10
March 16, 1997**

- “Feds cough up \$3 million to save rail line – ‘emergency’ repairs required, says CRCDC” and “VIA Rail: good news, then bad news for VIA crews – conductors jobs disappearing in 1998” cover the front-page of issue 10, dated March 16.

**Vol 23, No 11
March 23, 1997**

- “Provincial budget cuts: teachers vote against illegal strike – they may be asked for ‘rally’ vote” and “Even the Irish do the ‘macarena’” headline issue 11, dated March 23. “Bonaventure: grant to tamarack processing company creates 12 new jobs”, “Dogsled races a great success for second year in a row”, “Four towns sign up for 911 service from Rimouski group” and “Bloc Québécois: (MP Yvan) Bernier’s support for Duceppe ‘unequivocal’” make the other page 1 titles. The tamarack firm was founded by Gordon Tozer, Bryan Powers and Richard Flowers.

**Vol 23, No 12
March 30, 1997**

- “Linguistic boards: Gaspesia School Board will disappear in 1998 – new board to cover all of east”, and “Municipal mergers: language problems to be reviewed by Office” headline the front-page of issue 12, dated March 30. “I love you, Mr. Beaver!”, which announces inside coverage of the Gesgapegiag Carnival, “Federal election: young Quinton to run for PCs”, “Quebec budget: ‘not much for regions’” and “Teachers unhappy with settlement”, forced by government, complete page 1.



Sheldon Dubé and Heather Imhoff of New Carlisle enjoyed sugaring off at La Cabane à Stan in St-Pie-X.

From Page 13

Vol 23. No 13
April 6, 1997

- “Gifford postpones retirement indefinitely – GISB officials to meet with other boards” to discuss the amalgamation, and “Barachois, Bridgeville schools sold by board, Douglastown to be next” headline issue 13, dated April 6. “Ewe OK, Wren!?” as Wren Woodman’s ewe gave birth to four lambs, “CASA won’t wait for constitutional guarantees for linguistic boards”, “Municipal Union against gov’t transfers” of responsibilities and “Cerebral Palsy Association leaves provincial group” complete page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 14
April 13, 1997

- “St. Jules: entrepreneur hopes to create permanent jobs” and “Brilliant Cove prepares ‘model ocean’ management plan” headline issue 14, dated April 13. Kenny Gilker founded Quality Wreaths in St. Jules, while Leroy Leggo is proposing the federal government enter a co-management partnership with fishermen. “Cement plant promoter cautious in face of lobbying by competitors”, “Linguistic school boards – still at the stage of confusion” and “CASA granted \$10,000 to review mandate, structure” also make page 1.

Vol 23. No 15
April 20, 1997

- New Richmond’s “Bank celebrates 90 years”, namely Scotiabank, and “SQ annual report: crimes and accidents down in 1996 – record year for drug seizures” headline issue 15, dated April 20. “Linguistic school boards: officials unhappy with plan for mega-board”, “School board meeting: some decisions on hold – ‘budget not as bad as we thought’”, “Board, Cegep adopt training plan to try to prevent exodus”, New Richmond goalie Trent “Mann named Mount Allison’s hockey MVP” and “Will the Sunday’s ‘unplugged’ sessions be unplugged?” for budgetary



Brenda Starnes will be closing the Gaspé’s only English bookstore, the Cozy Corner, after CN Closure.

reasons, at Gesgapegiag CHRG, complete page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 16
April 27, 1997

- “Population still falling on the coast – but decline less rapid than before”, (105,174 people compared to 105,968 in 1991), “Cod moratorium: opinions divided about reopening fishery” and “Spring’s in the air - sap’s in the bucket” headline issue 16, dated April 27. “Bloc nomination: Bernier wins ‘very tight’ race provost says he’ll do it again” against Pierre Provost, “Cross Point: solution found for tourist information centre” and “Hopetown: two families rejoice with 6/49 winnings”, as Terry McRae and Wayne Major each collect \$417,000, complete the front-page.

Vol 23. No 17
May 4, 1997

- “Boy, 14, killed in (Nouvelle) hit and run – suspect arrested twice for drunk driving”, “Gaspé: Harbour post office will continue service in English – supervisor denies he wanted to make change” and lobster “Traps, traps and more traps” headline issue 17, dated May 4. “Paspebiac: Gagnon pledges DFO office move”, “Matapedia-Matane: Gray to run for Conservatives” and “Health & social services: \$12 million in further cuts” complete page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 18
May 11, 1997

- “Study says Anglo community needs help to survive – its vitality important to economic

development”, “Hit and run: second boy dies in Quebec City hospital” and “Still forging ahead after all these years”, a feature about blacksmith Warren Gilker, headline issue 18, dated May 11. “Anglos concentrated in lower paying sectors, seasonal work”, “Malbay Festival will run this summer” and “Bonaventure-Gaspé: Bernier lashes out at Liberals for unkept promises” complete page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 19
May 18, 1997

- “Health cuts: more than 400 to lose jobs”, “CASA: economic development chosen as #1 priority” and “Treasures from the sea – and the soul” headline another diversified front-page, that of issue 19, dated May 18. “New Richmond: meet the candidates meeting draws few listeners”, “\$1 million for snowmobile trails” and “Delay in access plans, a ‘nightmare’ for English services” also make page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 20
May 25, 1997

- “Professor predicts Liberal win in both Gaspé ridings”, “New Carlisle chosen for CASA’s Fall Fest 1997” and “Speak up loud and clear”, about the annual speaking contest at Shigawake-Port Daniel School, headline issue 20, dated May 25. “School board changes: GISB presents its recommendation May 23”, “Record rainfall causes road closures, some flooding at rivers” and “Federal election: candidates’ platforms” complete page 1.

Vol 23. No 21
June 1, 1997

“School board changes: CASA fears for small schools”, “Health care: access to home care services varies too much: council” and “Bonaventure Prom a great success” headline issue 21, dated June 1. “Dairy gets final nod – local milk by October”, “Gaspé: over 600 sign register against loans” and “Second all-candidates’ meeting draws over 100” complete the front-page.

Vol 23. No 22
June 8, 1997

- “Gagnon blames loss on UI issue” in Bonaventure-Gaspé-Magdalen Islands-Pabok, where Yvan Bernier won by 179 votes, and René “Canuel wins by 5,000, (Darryl) Gray ‘very disappointed’” in Matapedia-Matane, headline issue 22, dated June 8. “New Carlisle: crowd claims mayor is ‘scared of Vimy street’”, “Poll by poll analysis of election results” and “Bluenose II sails into Gaspé” complete the front-page titles.

Vol 23. No 23
June 15, 1997

- “SQ boss quashes 911 plans”, a decision made in Montreal, and “Gesgapegiag: Walgwan Centre officially opened June 5” headline issue 23, dated June 15. “Review confirms Bernier win – participation rates low”, “Bonfires

out as Gaspé fire index extreme” and “New Carlisle: special meeting on the agenda for Vimy residents” make other page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 24
June 22, 1997

- “Local corporation now owns Gaspé to Chandler railway line”, “Chief wants public inquiry into the 1988 murder of Linda Condo” and “Shigawake: tragic accident kills two youth from Port Daniel”, namely Tammy-Anne Sweetman and Stephen Sullivan, headline issue 24, dated June 22. “Newport: fish plant re-opens June 16, creating 400 year-around jobs”, “Gaspé Elementary: cuts in teaching staff cause ruckus” and “Gifford steps down due to health” complete page 1.

Vol 23. No 25
June 29, 1997

- “‘Irish Summer’ salutes Quebec’s role in welcoming Irish” and “Coalition formed to fight health cuts – services are affected” take a major part of the front-page of issue 25, dated June 29. “Local artist (Enid Legros) off ‘to sea to see the sea’”, “Carleton: lots new at 5th Maximum Blues”, “Gaspé: Legion welcomes French officers” and “Lobster fishermen explore poor catch with biologist” complete page 1 titles.

Page 15

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**Vol 23. No 26
July 6, 1997**

- “Celebrating Canada’s 130th”, “School board: Gaspé Anglos to merge with Seven Islands, Baie-Comeau, Métis” and “Mr. Cegep’ steps down after 35 years” headline issue 26, dated July 6. Mr. Cegep is Gary Briand. “Cegep will maintain strong English sector”, according to Mr. Briand, “Tempest in a B-cup”, “Towns have to cut \$6.5 million” and “SPEC AGM: financial picture outright rosy”, with a debt of \$12,000 but \$31,000 in the bank, complete page 1 titles.

Inside, Sarto Kenny gets six years of prison for the death of two Nouvelle youths.

**Vol 23. No 27
July 13, 1997**

- Issue 27, dated July 13 features “Gaspé: vicious murder has police perplexed”, “Gaspesia and the Islands: record number of teachers retiring this year” and “Miniature farm promises kids fun” as headlines. “New Carlisle: (Oscar) Smith, council still wrangling over (water and sewage special tax) by-law”, “Barachois: a new festival for the area” and “Disappointing lobster season ends: catch down 50% from last year” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23. No 28
July 20, 1997**

- “Suspect confesses to (Edward) Côté killing”, as Gilles Gauthier admits to it, “Gaspé: parents warned about youth injecting beer” and “Listuguj: Fort to cement native, Acadian ties”, the fort being that founded by Joe Gray, headline issue 28, released on July 20. “Housework for elderly to be changed – prices to go up this fall to create jobs”, “St. Jules: Native outfitter (Guy Condo) gets two rods on Cascapedia” and “Malbay Festival starts July 24” complete the front-page titles.

**Vol 23. No 30
August 3 1997**

- Issue 30, dated August 3 (issue 29 is missing from our archives) features “Cod stocks: FRCC recommends even stricter measures”, FRCC



The Grand Cascapedia Women's Institute held a tea in honour of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the first Women's Institute.

being the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, as the main headline. “Fiddlin around at the Malbay Festival” and Guy “Lelièvre will support English access plan” also make headlines. “Salmon numbers greater than predicted”, “Gaspé: parking meters on Queen Street by Sept.”, “John Martin wins landslide - New chief garners 70% of the vote in Gesgapgiag election”, Caplan’s Jacques “Lamoureux drowned, says autopsy - Police still uncertain how it happened” and “Annual strawberry festival draws 150” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23. No 31
August 10, 1997**

- Issue 31, dated August 10, features Paspebiac “Chantier maritime goes up in flames”, “Local officials want cities to pay their fare share Municipal taxes may rise: mayors” and “Mystery surrounds body found on tracks” as headlines. The third headline reports on a Carleton event, as a 20-year-old Rimouski man was found by the freight train crew. “St. Omer water craft death 4th in Quebec this summer”, “Carleton: Bluenose II visits coast a second time” and “Gaspé: over 650 try out for (300 L’ombre de l’épervier) movie roles” complete page 1 topics.

**Vol 23. No 32
August 17, 1997**

- “St. Jules: Sexton reunion continues though marred by a tragic start”, the death of Burns Sexton, and “Gaspé tourism needs more publicity to be promoted” headline issue 32, released on August 17. “New

Richmond to have a military museum”, “Wakeham/York: this year’s ‘Homecoming’ disappointing” and “Gaspé: New MicMac interpretation site opens” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23. No 33
August 24, 1997**

- Issue 33, dated August 24, presents “Our own dairy for our own milk” and “Gaspé: Commander Wakeham honoured” as headlines. “Port Daniel: Cement plant gets go-ahead”, “Bonaventure: Three million for Bioparc” and “Gaspé: Cegep enrollment up in English sector” complete the front-page subjects.

**Vol 23. No 34
August 31, 1997**

- In issue 34, released on August 31, “Channel Islands exhibit unveiled” at Gaspesian British Heritage Centre, and “The BQ will spend more time defending sovereignty” fill the headlines. “Shigawake hosts 88th annual Agricultural Fair”, “New school boards ask for more money” and “Despite public disapproval, construction has begun” for the bay of Gaspé sidewalk, make the other front-page titles.

**Vol 23. No 36
September 14, 1997**

- Issue 36, dated September 14 (issue 35 is missing from our archives) features “School board will ask MEQ (Education Ministry) to approve deficit” and Transport minister Jacques “Brassard: \$36 million for roads” in Bonaventure County, including the Cross Point to Nouvelle stretch, as

headlines. “CASA celebrates Fall Fest with a splash”, “Gesgapegiag: band will not pay for students in Secondary 1 at NRHS”, (New Richmond High School), “New Richmond: concession bridges must all be saved, citizens tell council” and “CASA prepares book for Diana’s family”, Diana being Lady Diana, killed in a car crash, also make page 1.

**Vol 23. No 37
September 21, 1997**

- Issue 37, released on September 21, shows “Health care: English coalition asks to meet with Rochon over access”, “St. Jules: amalgamation study made public – citizens want talks with Cascapedia” and “The Littlest Cowgirl”, Sammy Jo Meredith, as headlines. “Chandler may get freight car plant”, “Miguasha ferry seized for debt” and “Gaspé: taxes may rise by 25 cents” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23. No 38
September 28, 1997**

- Issue 38, dated September 28, features “Gaspé Coast gets seven of 13 commissioners” in the new school board, “Gesgapegiag firemen earn national prize”, the best showing by a Quebec fire brigade ever, and “Municipal cuts: New proposal fairer for small towns” as headlines. “Listuguj Micmacs refuse commercial lobster permits”, Lorne “Hayes wins regional gardening prize” and “ATR (regional tourism association) wants region to sponsor TV mini-series”, namely upcoming “L’ombre de l’épervier”, make the other page 1 topics.

**Vol 23. No 39
October 5, 1997**

- “Second grader off to Disney World”, Gaspé’s Sean Lemieux, and “Petition against closing of Pavillon (Benoit-Martin) presented to board of directors”, the Pavillon being located at Maria hospital, headline issue 39, dated October 5. The regional development organization “CRCD announces management scheme for \$2 million for job creation”, “Cascapedia St. Jules fall festival attracts hundreds”, “Tribble named to academic advisor position” and “Cegep offers first work-study program in industrial maintenance – bilingual sessions meet special Anglo needs” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 23. No 40
October 12, 1997**

- “New school board: Actesson (Audrey) heads up provisional council – Journeau named D-G” and “Home and School officials warn parents to get more involved” headline education-oriented titles of issue 40, released on October 12. “36 municipalities gearing up for vote”, “Conference to encourage new ideas in wood processing Oct. 29” and “William Wakeham: exhibit celebrates accomplishment of a century ago” complete page 1 topics.

**Vol 23. No 41
October 19, 1997**

- Issue 41, released on October 19, presents “Health Care: CASA chides (minister Jean) Rochon over access plan delays” and Gary “Briand ‘roasted’ by friends” as headlines. Louis “Sexton acclaimed in St. Jules, (Tom) Duncan in Grand Cascapedia”, “American (Dick Allen, with roots on the coast) finds Gaspesian friendly folks” and “\$1.2 million in renovations for Gaspé Cegep” make other front-page titles.

**Vol 23. No 42
October 26, 1997**

- “Will the Atlantic salmon survive? Dire warnings from those in the know” and “Local

From Page 15

school (Escuminac) tests distance education – showing the way to other small schools” headline issue 42, dated October 26. “Anti-poverty group wants action”, “Escuminac: GISB explains waffling over principal’s position” and “Church restoration fund receives \$3.5 million in requests” complete page 1 topics.

Vol 23. No 43
November 2, 1997

- “Stone Container restructures to fight debt” and Quebec-wide “MNAs asking towns to bite the bullet”, a \$500 million budget cut, headline issue 43, dated November 2. A picture-caption combo shows Marc Loisel’s Paspébiac house ready for Halloween, while “Digital recording studio opened”, “Will Atlantic salmon survive – unique management deal faces special challenges” and “Gaspé boy makes it to NHL”, namely Stéphane Trépanier, complete page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 44
November 9, 1997

- “People in regions can’t give blood – ‘You’d think there was no shortage!’” and “New Carlisle: (Barry) Tennier

defeated in a squeaker – mayor Coulombe wants to create jobs” covers most of the front-page of issue 44, dated November 9. “Quebec Railway Corporation buys Mont-Joli to Moncton line”, “Over 200 gather to hear about wood potential” and “Municipal elections: Gascons lukewarm to Port Daniel merger” also appear on page 1.

Vol 23. No 45
November 16, 1997

- “New Carlisle: mayor questioned on hiring practices”, as an employee was laid off with a week’s notice, and “We will remember them”, ample Remembrance Day coverage, fill the whole front-page of issue 45, dated November 16.

Vol 23. No 46
November 23, 1997

- “Gaspé: Surgical instruments firm installed at Cegep – Gaspé chosen for many reasons, says (promoter, doctor Irfan) Jameel” and “Dump could threaten new water source – councillor upbraided for publicizing issue” make most of the front-page of issue 46, dated November 23. “Will the Atlantic salmon survive? St. John river experiences two poor years in a row”, “Orleans boss wants more business”, Chester McRae, a “Hopetown born man did much for vets” and “Three Gaspésians (in-

cluding Paspébiac’s Emerance Martin) take part in women’s trade mission” also make page 1 titles. Inside, Ronald Jacques comes back to power in Listuguj, defeating Brenda Gedeon Miller.

Vol 23. No 47
November 30, 1997

- “Gaspesia: No more four-foot pulp – Union (UPA) says \$5 million in losses for cutters” and “Gaspé: (municipal) employees irate over managers’ salary increases” headline issue 47, dated November 30. “Why up so early on a Saturday?”, an article about CASA’s new Economic Development Centre, minister Guy “Chevette announces new local development structure”, the CLDs, “Snowmobile conference says volunteers need support” and “Statistical study Gaspé Anglos community younger than expected” also appear on page 1.

Vol 23. No 48
December 7, 1997

- “Health care: PQ resolution on access ‘sets us back ten years’, according to CASA, “911 service now available along Coast” and “Tots enjoy first-class playground” at New Carlisle’s Munchkin Mansion day care, headline issue 48, dated December 7. “New anti-drinking measures may drive more to use free service”, “18% increase this year in



Two young gentlemen in 1945 who were even then working for a living. Lynden Bechervaise on the left and Roy Almond on the right.

Gaspésians seeking aids test”, “Gaspé seniors’ residence still possible” and “Family violence program offered for abusive men” also make page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 49
December 14, 1997

- “Chandler: Gaspesia aims to cut production costs – modernization project on hold indefinitely”, New Richmond “Legion raises over \$3,000 for scanner” and “Gaspé council manages to hold the line on taxes – water and sewage rates to go up slightly in some sectors” headline issue 39, dated December 14. “Role of private enterprise debated – Ralliement warns of closing its doors”, “911 to be called only

in emergencies” and “Fishermen argue that cod is there” also make page 1 titles.

Vol 23. No 50
December 21, 1997

- “Two girls survive plunge down cliff”, in Belle Anse, and “The Christmas story retold at SPDS” headline issue 50, dated December 21, the last paper of 1997. “Pulpwood decision hard on Anglos Extra \$ \$ ‘help keep wolf from the door’”, the decision announced at Gaspesia mill, “Sunnybank: local businessmen open tree farm”, namely Blake Patterson and Bruce Jones, and “Atholville: mill set to reopen in April 1998”, make the other front-page titles.

Links between 1997 and 2026:

Lobster fisheries and a murder that remains unresolved

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – We often say that history repeats itself, but it also evolves. In lobster fisheries, the context evolved immensely between 1997 and today. Gaspesian lobster fishermen had more than an off-year in 1997, as their catches went down 50%. Although the tonnage was not specified in SPEC’s pages, it is prudent to assume that they went way under 1,000 metric tonnes, which was the yearly average at the time.

So, in 1997, the fishermen asked biologist Louise Gendron, of the Maurice-Lamontagne Institute in Mont-Joli, a Fisheries and Oceans Canada research centre, to assist them in finding a plan to restore the region’s lobster stock.

A book could honestly be written on what gradually followed. The legal measure of lobsters that could be kept by the fishermen increased to improve the number of spawners, two fishing days out of 70 were cut, the number of traps were reduced from 250 to 235, an incubator was set up to disseminate juvenile species along the south shore of the Gaspé Peninsula and a maximum size of lobsters that could be sold to plants was implemented, to keep spawners likely to generate big specimens. More importantly, a permit buyout program was also implemented. The number of licence holders went from 227 in the mid-1990s to 150 today. The volume went from around 500 tons in 1997 to 5,381 tons in 2025. The landings value increased from a handful of millions in 1997 to \$132 million last year.

All this took place with the integration of the Indigenous communities into commercial fisheries, starting symbolically in September 1997 with New Brunswick Mi’gmaq Cyril Polchies fishing for Listuguj in Miguasha.

Meanwhile, in June 1997, the then-chief of Gesgapegiag, Douglas Martin, asked for a public inquiry into the 1988 murder of Linda Condo, who was shot in the face on a wooded road in Miguasha. The public inquiry was never granted. The slaying of Ms. Condo remains unresolved to this day.

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Gaspé wants to protect its historic buildings

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Gaspé is preparing to implement a bylaw aimed at protecting the built heritage within its jurisdiction, a requirement imposed by the Quebec government to prevent the loss of historically significant buildings.

In the past, several buildings recognized for their heritage value have been demolished after being left to deteriorate.

“What the government is asking us to do is adopt provisions to protect built heritage. Essentially, it’s about ensuring that owners of buildings classified, listed, or mentioned in the MRC heritage registry are protected and preserved to prevent demolitions due to buildings being poorly maintained,” explains Mayor Daniel Côté.

This type of bylaw will have to be adopted by all municipalities in the province.

Had such a regulation existed earlier, the Kruse House might have been preserved.

“We would have had the authority to intervene with the owner and force him to better maintain his building. Perhaps to evict squatters who were discovered on several occasions and who had been damaging the building. That’s one example,” suggests the mayor. The Town has already identi-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

If a program to protect historic buildings had existed, the Kruse House might have met a different fate.

fied possible measures.

“The idea isn’t to make life difficult for property owners. Our goal is to comply with the rules set by the province and, secondly, to protect our built heritage,” continues the mayor, who estimates that several hundred buildings would be subject to these new provisions.

Rue de la Reine in the downtown sector is one example. “People often think that heritage means buildings from the 1700s and 1800s. We have those in the area, but structures dating as recently as the 1940s, 1950s, or 1960s can also be considered part of the built heritage. For example, Gaspé Cathedral isn’t that old, but it’s at the top of the list of built heritage,” he explains.

The cathedral was built in

1968 and 1969.

School Corridor under study

An advisory committee has been formed to examine the possibility of creating school corridors in the downtown area.

“There haven’t been any incidents. In the heart of downtown, the streets aren’t wide. Traffic has become denser over the years. For a few years now, we’ve had a committee of parents and school administrators asking us for a school corridor. Where do we put it? How do we do it?” asks the mayor.

Several measures would have to be considered, including lighting, crosswalks and signage.

“We’ll need to work with professionals to identify the best measures to enhance student safety,” he explains.

Speed limits are already set at 30 or 40 kilometres per hour in the urban area.

“We’re going to try to find areas with less traffic.”

The downtown sector was designed at a time when cars were almost nonexistent.

Paving plan adopted

Gaspé is adopting a \$2.8 million borrowing bylaw for street paving over the next four years, compared with \$3.4 million over the previous four years, although the total investment is expected to be higher.

“That’s the amount of the borrowing resolution. We have a reserve from quarries and sand pits. In recent years, we’ve sometimes reached \$1 million per year. The reserve is a bit larger now. We’re planning on a \$600,000 loan and another \$600,000 from the fund. For 2026, we’re already projecting \$1.2 million, compared to \$1 million last year and \$800,000 the year before,” explains Mr. Côté.

Dellner looking to expand in Gaspé

The company that acquired the bankrupt Kuma Brakes

plant last year has major plans for Gaspé.

Mr. Côté recently met with senior executives from the firm, who confirmed their long-term commitment to the region.

Dellner is a Swedish company founded in the early 1940s. In addition to brakes, the company manufactures complete wind-turbine braking systems and is also active in rail transport.

The mayor again used the opportunity to call for the return of rail service to Gaspé.

“That’s part of our additional arguments. For their braking systems, Dellner is going to need the train. They can ship them by vessel or by truck. They can ship braking systems from Gaspé to anywhere,” he said, issuing a challenge to Transport Minister Jonatan Julien.

“I challenge him to figure out how to ship wind turbine components to Alberta by vessel. I’m bringing this up because when I recently mentioned that we have new players interested in setting up shop here on the condition that we have the train, Dellner is a prime example,” says the mayor.

According to the mayor, the railway is an essential development tool, and without it, future investments could be lost in Gaspé.

Closure of wildlife offices: The Table of Prefects’ concerned

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The Table of Prefects’ fears the impact of the closure of wildlife protection offices in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Grande-Vallée lost its office in the fall of 2024, and the ministère de la Faune will close the Chandler office in July.

“This is a major concern for elected officials. We are also seeing potential office closures announced in Causapsca. Wildlife officers from the Matapédia Valley will cover the neighbouring territories used by our hunters. There is a lot of talk about protected areas and promoting public land, but now they are cutting back on



Photo: Courtesy

The Prefects' Table is concerned about the fate of wildlife officer offices in the Gaspé Peninsula.

the people who ensure that hunting practices are respected in these areas,” says Table of

Prefects president Mathieu Lapointe.

He notes that in recent

years, there has been a “marked decrease” in the number of wildlife officers in the area.

“We are outraged. We want to ensure that the territory is well protected for the safety of everyone: people, of course, but also the flora and fauna of the entire Gaspé Peninsula. It is important to maintain these jobs related to wildlife protection,” continues the president, who fears an increase in poaching.

“It sends a strange message. What we’re saying is that we need to protect and secure the territory. We need wildlife protection officers. We know how big the territory is. We need them everywhere, and we need to send a positive signal.

That’s not what we’re seeing right now,” says Mr. Lapointe.

According to Radio-Canada, the dispute stems from an impasse between the building’s owner and the ministère de la Faune over the renewal of the lease.

The owner is seeking a longer-term lease in order to carry out maintenance work on the building, while the ministry wants an agreement on a yearly basis.

The territory will now be covered by the Southeast district of the ministère de la Faune. This district’s game wardens cover all the territory located east of La Pocatière. How the Wildlife Ministry will rearrange its coverage remains unknown for now.

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The first round of applications at Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles is similar to last year's

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Despite the uncertainty surrounding international student enrolment, the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles managed to maintain stability in admission applications during the first round, which ended on March 1.

In total, 705 applications were submitted to the institution, a slight decrease of 15 compared to the 720 recorded as of March 1, 2025.

“This really is great news. We had concerns about all the restrictions on applications coming from abroad. We’ve seen a significant increase in students from the region and other parts of Quebec,” notes director of studies Serge Rochon.

Among high school graduates from the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, 82% chose the regional CEGEP, compared with 80% in 2025.

The number of students from other regions of Quebec rose from 235 to 303.

“The only downside is with international students. We’ve seen a 36% drop, with 64 fewer applications than last year. But the increase in students from Quebec offsets this decline. We end up with roughly the same number of admissions,” calculates Mr. Rochon.

The number of English-speaking students also in-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles, Carleton-sur-Mer campus.

creased, rising from 17 to 30. Mr. Rochon attributes the CEGEP’s appeal to its reputation and the size of its campuses.

“I think the CEGEP has strong credibility, a good reputation, and is known for the efforts we make to ensure student success. We’re on smaller campuses than in the major urban centres,” he notes.

Programs such as Adventure Technology—exclusive to Quebec—Police Technology, and distance learning are attracting students to the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

If all applications are confirmed, the CEGEP could welcome more than 1,200 students when the school year begins in August.

“It’s been a very long time since we’ve welcomed such a

large number of students,” Mr. Rochon says, noting that a decade ago, only 900 students were admitted.

The Early Childhood Education Technology program, which received only two ap-

plications, will once again be suspended.

“We’re very disappointed because we know there’s a need in the region,” notes Mr. Rochon.

The revamped Aquatic Bio-Food Technology program, which replaces the Aquatic Product Processing program, will also be suspended.

“We renewed this program last year, but we ran out of time to promote it. It’s a very interesting new version of the program,” he believes.

In a previous strategic plan, the CEGEP hoped to enroll 1,500 students.

The CEGEP has the capacity to accommodate up to 1,600.

“At 1,200, we’re getting close. But in most programs, there’s still room. This is a message we’re sending to all

students who were turned away by other CEGEPs. Students who want to study in another region can also benefit from the Parcours scholarship,” says the director of academic affairs.

At the Gaspé campus, 350 residence spaces will be available this fall.

A private partner is offering 20 additional spaces, and the CEGEP is calling on residents with apartments or rooms to rent to come forward.

In Carleton-sur-Mer, a student residence developed in partnership with the René-Lévesque School Service Centre now offers 24 units.

The project to build a residence for the École des pêches et de l’aquaculture du Québec in Grande-Rivière remains at the preliminary planning stage, and the number of units has not yet been determined.

Year	2026	2025
Gaspé French campus	414	426
Gaspé English campus	30	17
Carleton-Sur-Mer Campus	140	145
Magdalen Islands	55	56
School of Fisheries and Aquaculture	66	76
Total	705	720

Spring’s short appearance

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – A taste of spring was felt March 17 as three temperature records were broken in the Gaspé Peninsula.

According to Environment Canada, the warmest reading was recorded in Grande-Vallée at 17.8 °C, breaking the previous record of 14.2 °C set in 2025.

Cap-Chat followed closely with 17.7 °C, surpassing the previous record of 7.4 °C set in 2007.

In Haute-Gaspésie, temperatures dropped sharply after the record high, falling to 3 °C within an hour following the passage of a cold front.

In Carleton-sur-Mer, the temperature reached 17.3 °C, breaking the previous record of 13 °C set in 2012.

No records were broken in



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Power outages were reported due to high winds in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Gaspé, but strong winds were recorded, including a gust of 107 kilometres per hour at Michel-Pouliot Gaspé Airport. Wind gusts reached 95 kilometres per hour in Grande-

Vallée and 91 kilometres per hour in Cap-Chat.

At the height of the storm, Hydro-Québec reported six power outages across the Gaspé Peninsula.

The largest outage occurred in Murdochville and affected 332 customers.

These records were set only four days after one of the most severe winter storms of the season in the region.

On March 11 and 12, about 30 centimetres of snow fell in the Baie-des-Chaleurs and Gaspé sectors.

In the northern part of the peninsula, snowfall totals ranged between 15 and 25 centimetres, accompanied by strong winds that caused blowing snow.

Spring officially began on March 20 at 10:45 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

600 Jobs Created in February

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – No fewer than 600 jobs were created in February in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, while the province lost 57,000, according to Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey.

The region had 36,300 people employed last month, compared to 35,700 in January.

That is 1,000 more than at the same time last year.

Of the 36,300 workers, 29,600 were employed full-time, an increase of 400.

A total of 6,700 people were working part time, up 200 from January.

The number of unemployed people decreased by 100 from one month to the next, settling at 4,500. At the same time last year, the figure stood at 5,600.

According to data from the federal agency, 500 people re-entered the labour market in February, bringing the labour force, meaning those working and looking for work, to 40,800.

The unemployment rate fell from 11.4% in January to 11% in February.

It stood at 13.7% in February 2025.

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RÉGÎM faces a time of decision

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Faced with an estimated \$300,000 cut retroactive to 2025 and expected to continue over the next few years, the Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (RÉGÎM) is seriously reconsidering the future of its services.

President Daniel Côté says there are only two possible options for the organization's survival: implement the vehicle registration tax strongly suggested by the Quebec government, or significantly reduce services.

Already dealing with the \$300,000 reduction, RÉGÎM reviewed part of its network on February 2, reducing certain routes, introducing reservations for some trips, and adding connections to reach specific locations.

"The big existential question we've put on the table, and on which we're giving ourselves another month or two, is whether to increase our revenues or cut our services. Which would be less detrimental to the population?" says the president.

Revenue from the gas tax has dropped by about \$100,000 per year over the past five years due to the electrification of transporta-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

RÉGÎM is at a crossroads, according to its president, Daniel Côté.

tion.

"There aren't a million potential sources. Every time we talk to the government, they tell us that we've been given the power to tax vehicle registration. Go there," says Mr. Côté.

Cutting services would have a greater impact.

"When we have the actual figures, we will have many more cuts if we don't collect new revenue," notes the president.

However, taxing licence plates is far from a unanimous decision.

"When we first discussed it, the board of directors was

unanimous. But when we brought it down to the MRCs, the unanimity crumbled. I don't know if people understand how much of a deadlock we're in," says Mr. Côté.

The most vulnerable users would be the ones most affected by service reductions.

"I am one of those who believe that this transportation system meets a major need, with long distances and an aging population, and I don't think this is the time to cut services. It's time for the board of directors and the MRCs to reflect, and we're giving ourselves a maximum of two months to see what we'll do in 2027," says the president.

According to him, public transportation is not a priority for the CAQ government.

"Our political hope lies in the election. Until then, we must keep services alive and find new sources of revenue. We have many requests for increased service and, paradoxically, we may have to cut services."

Regarding the \$300,000 cut retroactive to 2025, RÉGÎM still has no feedback following comments by Minister Jonatan Julien, who stated that the budget envelope for the public transit program had not been fully used.

Regional Environmental Council returns to its core mission

Nelson Sergerie

LA MARTRE – After several months of internal review, the Gaspésie Regional Environmental Council (CRE) says it is refocusing its activities to better reflect its mandate.

"For several months, the board of directors had been analyzing the alignment between the organization's mission and the implementation of projects. We needed to bring in other types of expertise to better fulfill the mission. We've implemented these changes. It was a deliberate decision, and we had to do it right," explains new president Julie Reid Forget, who has extensive experience in the field, having notably worked at the Bureau d'audience publique en environnement (BAPE).

In recent years, the organization has faced criticism for what some described as a more activist approach. "In our actions, we strive to contribute to the harmonization of economic, ecological, and social development. It was at this level that changes needed to be made. As for the activist aspect, I don't know all the details, but we're looking toward the future," notes the new president, who points out that the board is responsible for governance, not day-to-day operations.

She says the recent statement issued by the Table of Prefects on the consultation process for protected areas was not the reason for the changes. "That didn't contribute to this recent action. It had been part of an overall discussion for several months. The consultation process designed by the Quebec government is roughly the same for each region. Protected areas are a provincial responsibility, and this year, it was a call to citizens. The goal is 30% of the territory, and in some MRCs, we're currently at just over 8%. This innovative process can lead to dissatisfaction. The withdrawal of the Prefects' Table reflects that," says the president, who is taking over from Maxime Lambert, who served as president on an interim basis.

The organization is now looking for a new executive director following the restructuring. Michel Chouinard is currently serving as interim director. The board says its goal is to ensure governance that is fully aligned with the organization's mandate. "The fundamental mission is to advocate for the protection and improvement of the environment and to integrate environmental considerations into decision-making through collaboration and consultation, as well as to raise awareness and provide education. Regional environmental councils are regional bodies that have been in existence for 50 years," concludes Ms. Reid Forget.

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Cascapedia-St-Jules honours volunteers at annual banquet

ELAINE SEXTON

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES — A volunteer recognition banquet was recently held in Cascapedia-St-Jules to honour the many residents who give their time to community activities throughout the year.

The event was organized by town coordinator Miranda Willett and her colleagues. A delicious meal was prepared by Brenda Snow, and everything looked so nice. The evening also included the presentation of several awards recognizing volunteers of different ages and levels of involvement.

The Mayor of Cascapedia-St-Jules, Ashley Milligan and members of council were present to present the awards, with councillor Tammy Burton serving as emcee for the evening.

Special recognition was given to the Cascapedia-St-Jules Women's Institute for its decades of involvement and service in the community. A more detailed article on the organization is expected at a later date.

The final award of the evening, Volunteer of the Year, was presented to Bonnie Bu-



Ashley Milligan, Mayor of Cascapédia-Saint-Jules, presented Bonnie Bujold with the Volunteer of the Year award.

Photo: Elaine Sexton

jold. In her remarks, Ms. Milligan, described the recipient as someone whose contribution goes beyond the number of hours volunteered. "The honoree tonight isn't just recognized for the events she attends or the hours she gives, it's her spirit," says Ms. Milligan.

"She's always smiling, laughing and joking with everyone in sight. She brings warmth into every room she enters. She serves not only with her hands but with her heart. In a world that often celebrates loud achievements and grand gestures, she reminds us that true greatness comes from con-

sistency, showing up, doing the work, and caring deeply. On behalf of the entire community, thank you. Thank you for decades of dedication, your energy, your humour and your heart," continues the Mayor.

Bonnie is involved in many local activities, including volunteering with the church, the Legion, Canada Day celebrations, Terry Fox Day, Family Day and the Fall Festival.

The banquet highlighted the important role volunteers play in the many events, celebrations and community activities held throughout the year in Cascapedia-St-Jules.

Six Gaspé students receive bursaries

Ronald Mundle

The Memorial Trust Fund bursaries were recently presented to six Gaspé-area university and CEGEP students. This year's recipients are:

- Michael Drohan - Cégep de La Pocatière
- River Hunt - Cégep de la Gaspésie
- Lennon Reinders - Cégep de la Gaspésie
- Kayla Drohan - Concordia University
- Hannah Patterson - Cégep de la Gaspésie
- Madison Touzel - Cégep de la Gaspésie

The Memorial Trust Fund was established in 1969 to commemorate the contributions made to the local education system made by the late Mr. George Richmond. In later years, the names of Commissioner Douglas Philips and Ms. Cecilia Sennett were added in recognition of their service.

Since its inception, the fund has awarded \$55,435 in financial assistance to 255 students. The fund is administered under the auspices of St. James Anglican Church, Wakeham, by a Trust Fund committee composed of church representatives and school commissioners.

Donations to the fund generate income, with the primary goal of assisting students who have graduated from the English Section of the C.E. Pouliot Polyvalent and who have completed a two-year D.E.C. at the Collège de la Gaspésie. Income Tax Receipts for donations are available.

Anyone wishing to contribute to the Memorial Trust Fund may do so by sending a cheque to:

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Music at the Richmond Manor

ELAINE SEXTON

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES - Residents at the Chaleur Bay Seniors Residence in New Richmond enjoyed two weeks of entertainment provided by local musicians.

On March 7, Allister Campbell, Fortuna Bourque, Danny Coull and Mario and Richard Boudreau performed a variety of English and French songs. Danny Coull also pleased the audience with his harmonica, a fun musical addition to the guitars and piano. The afternoon even included some dancing.

For St-Patrick's Day, residents were entertained by Jim Cahill, who sang traditional Irish songs. Requests followed using singalong books, and many residents joined in. Mrs. Joan Dow, a long-time resident, had a special request for "You Are my Sunshine," her favourite song, which Jim hap-



Photo: Elaine Sexton

From the left, Allister Campbell, Richard Boudreau, Mario Boudreau, Danny Coull and Fortuna Bourque; the dedicated musicians bringing smiles to the residents and attendees.

pily performed. Jenn Bujold joined in on several songs and added to the fun by playing the spoons.

St. Patrick's Day treats were prepared by directors Stephanie Gilker and Sheila Firlotte Campbell. The Manor was dec-

orated by Sheila and Annie, adding some Irish cheer to the occasion. Linda Cahill, staff, residents, and guests also attended the gathering. The musical performances provided an enjoyable afternoon for those in attendance.

Paspébiac cultural centre echoes with Irish sounds

CYNTHIA DOW

PASPABIAC - It was a packed house at the Centre culturel de Paspébiac on Saturday, March 14, as more than 220 people gathered to celebrate St Patrick's Day with two performances.

First up, Quimoru cru, a local French-language trad band that describes itself as a mix of "Cajun, Acadian and Irish." Their song "Party Gaspésien" was a crowd favourite and set the tone for the evening.

Later in the night, Emerald Shores took the stage and performed in English with tunes that delighted the hometown folks. Among the highlights were The Night that Paddy Murphy Died, No Nay Never and Farewell to Erin.

Emerald Shores consists of Nathan Hayes on lead guitar



Photo: Cynthia Dow

Emerald Shores' performance inspired some to dance in the cramped quarters along the walls!

and vocals, Ben Nesrallah on fiddle, Bethany Fehr Paetkau on flute, Kevin Jones on bass guitar, Aaron Check on background vocals and Dave Felker on drums.

"I got the most comments about the flute and fiddle fly-

ing away in Farewell to Erin, an Irish reel that gets faster and faster," Bethany told SPEC.

Judging by the audience reaction as people were filing out at the end of the show, it was clear that a good time was had by all!

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



From Pews to Egg Hunts

Every spring, just as Canadians begin putting away their winter boots (while still keeping them within reach) Easter arrives, this year on April 5. It comes with pastel colours, chocolate bunnies, cellophane grass that ends up everywhere, and children racing through the house or backyard on egg hunts.

If you grew up a few decades (or more) ago, Easter looked different. The day often began with church, new shoes and hair slicked back, and perhaps a new dress and hat if you were particularly fashionable. The religious story at the heart of Easter was front and centre, and the chocolate came later, usually after a respectful amount of waiting. My childhood church always gave each child a bag of chocolate eggs after the morning services.

Today, things have shifted a little, actually, quite a lot.

For many families, Easter morning now begins with great anticipation as children discover that the Easter Bunny has apparently been busy hiding eggs in the living room, under the couch and occasionally in places so clever that the chocolate won't be discovered until July. Grandparents arrive armed with candy, and parents spend the morning trying to remember where they hid those last few eggs.

Some people worry that this change means Easter has somehow become less meaningful. But perhaps the story is a little more hopeful than that.

Holidays evolve. They always have. Even Christmas, which now features inflatable lawn decorations the size of small vehicles, once looked very different. Traditions grow, bend and adapt as society changes. Easter is no exception.

While fewer people may attend church regularly than in generations past, the deeper themes of Easter which include renewal, hope and new beginnings are still present. You can see them in the excitement of children searching for eggs, in families gathering around a table for a meal and in the simple joy that arrives with the first real signs of spring.

After a long East Coast winter, that sense of renewal feels very welcome.

There is also something rather lovely about a holiday that brings children so actively into the celebration. Egg hunts are not solemn events, but they are full of laughter, teamwork and the occasional sibling negotiation over who actually spotted the purple egg first.

Those moments matter. They are what memories are made of.

Traditions centred around children create memories that last far longer than the chocolate itself (which rarely survives the afternoon). Years later, people remember racing across damp grass, peeking behind tree trunks and comparing candy collections like tiny economists evaluating their fortunes.

For families who do observe the religious side of Easter, the newer traditions don't necessarily replace the older ones; they simply sit alongside them. A morning church service can easily be followed by an afternoon egg hunt and a dinner with family. There's room for both.

In many ways, Easter today reflects what many communities value most: togetherness, celebration and the simple pleasure of watching children experience excitement over a foil-wrapped chocolate egg. That's hardly something to complain about.

Whether your Easter involves a church pew, a backyard egg hunt, or a slightly chaotic family meal, it still carries the same spirit that holidays always have. It is a chance to pause, gather together, and welcome the season ahead.

And if a few chocolate bunnies help the process along, that seems like a perfectly lovely tradition to keep.

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55th annual Wakeham-York Winter Carnival

ANDREW PATTERSON

WAKEHAM-YORK - Early last fall the anticipation started mounting for the approaching 55th edition of the Wakeham-York Winter Carnival. T-shirts and decals were ordered to commemorate the milestone, and Tammy Adams was booked to provide the music on the final night. Once again, the carnival proved to be a fantastic success.

The schedule featured events for nine straight nights and, as usual, the festivities were well attended. The carnival opened on Friday, February 13, with a bonfire and a superb display of fireworks. Afterwards, the crowd moved inside the community hall to enjoy music by the country duo Coco and Dodo. Dancing and partying continued beyond midnight.

On Saturday, February 14, it was the Pal Airlines Family Day, featuring a variety of well-attended events and a free lunch for everyone in attendance. A Vintage Snowmobile Show was added this year and drew a good turnout, with sleds ranging from 29 to 48 years old, most of them in amazing condition. The afternoon included the usual masquerade, tea boiling contest, ice bowling and nail driving. In the evening about 20 people battled it out to determine a winner in Texas Hold'em.

The Bingo on the afternoon of February 15, was another chance for young and old alike to get involved. More than 80 participants dotted their cards for a wide variety of prizes donated by local businesses. In the evening, several tables of card players competed until after midnight for the top prize at the annual Tock tournament.

Each evening during the week featured a different activity. On Monday, February 16, the Royal Canadian Legion in Gaspé hosted a dart tournament for the carnival, attended by a few dozen experienced players and beginners alike.

On the evening of February 17 a pleasant amateur hour, with a variety of songs and music provided by Elizabeth Baird, Debbie Sams and Ann Reid. On February 18 the Gaspé Hawks basketball team hosted a spaghetti supper to raise funds for travel. Thursday, February 19, was the ever-popular evening of line dancing, while Vision Gaspé-Perce organized an evening children's activity on February 20.

Finally, on February 21, the big day arrived. The morning began with a huge turnout for breakfast. Around 10 a.m., about 78 riders climbed onto their snowmobiles and headed into the Gaspé wilderness. Despite a cold start, the weather was ideal for the ride. After everyone returned to the York Hall, poker hands were opened while participants enjoyed refreshments and canteen treats. To the delight of those in attendance, Tammy Adams began performing around 7 p.m. and, as usual, kept the dance floor hopping until the wee hours of the morning.

Profits from the annual carnival go exclusively toward maintaining the outdoor skating rink. The well-kept ice surface gives children and adults alike a place to enjoy their favourite winter sports in the fresh air.

The carnival committee thanked the many local businesses who donated prizes, gift certificates, and money to help make the event another success. Committee members also



Photos: Andy Patterson

Seventy-eight snowmobile enthusiasts enjoying the Gaspé wilderness during the 55th annual Wakeham-York Winter Carnival.

recognized the many volunteers who devoted countless hours to planning, preparing

and coordinating the annual event. Plans for next year's carnival

are already underway, and the tentative schedule will soon be available on GoGaspé.com.



Just a sample of the many amazing costumes during the Pal Airlines Family Day.

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Announcements



In Memory

DAWSON: Emma

November 3, 1919 - April 3, 2017.

*You were the most wonderful mom,
A treasure that can never be replaced.
You nurtured me with your tender love,
And supported me in every way.
One in a million I will never forget,
The precious times we shared.
Memories of you I will always cherish,
Knowing how deeply you cared.
Mom, our special bond was priceless,
You were my dearest friend.
I never doubted your companion,
Until the very end.
Your love meant the world to me,
I miss your warmth so gentle and kind.
Your spirit will live on forever,
In my heart and in my mind.
We don't go around grieving all the time,
But the grief is still there and always will be.*

Forgetting you never, love Barbara Ann.

DUNN: Ron

In loving memory of a dear husband who passed away March 4, 2025.

*A silent thought, a secret tear,
Keeps his memory ever dear.
Time takes away the edge of grief,
But memory turns back every leaf.*

Always remembered and sadly missed by wife Dora.

FLOWERS: Alma (MacWhirter)

In loving memory of a precious grandmother who passed away March 2, 1983.

*We had a Grannie with a heart of gold,
Who was more to us than wealth unfold.*

*Without farewell she fell asleep,
With only memories for us to keep.
Treasured thoughts of one so dear,
Often bring a silent tear.
Thoughts of scenes long past,
Years roll on but memories last.
Unseen, unheard but always near,
Still loved, still missed, still very dear.*

Lovingly remembered and cherished forever
by Carol and Richard Smollett.

FLOWERS: Doris Eveline (Gallon)

In loving memory of a precious mother who passed away January 5, 2023.

*Sad are the hearts that love you,
Silent are the tears that fall.
Living here without you,
Is the hardest part of all.
You did so many things for us,
Your heart was kind and true.
And when we needed someone,
We could always count on you.
Those special years will not return,
When we were all together.
But with the love in our hearts,
You will walk with us forever.*

With all our love, daughter Carol and son-in-law Richard.

SMOLLETT: Robert Milton

In loving memory of a very dear brother who passed away March 2, 2014.


*As time unfolds another year,
Memories keep you ever near.
Silent thoughts of times together,
Hold memories that will last forever.*

*Your presence we miss,
Your memory we treasure.
Loving you always,
Forgetting you never.*

Lovingly remembered by brother Richard and sister-in-law Carol.



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SHIGAWAKE:
Shigawake Music Festival and Agricultural Fair
April 11: Ladies Night: Maui in Shiggy at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 presale and \$20 at the door. Doors open at 7 p.m. Dress code: Island vibes with musical performance by C'est Ma Toune with Mary-Lou and Jam.

SHIGAWAKE:
Shigawake Community Centre
April 4: Kids Easter gift bingo will take place from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
April 6: Easter gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. Canteen available.
May 9: Mother's Day breakfast from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Cost: adults \$12, children \$6.
June 1: Summer gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. Canteen available.

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

HOPE TOWN:
Hope Town Sports Club
May 2: A bingo will be held at the Hope Town Community Centre starting at 7 p.m.

NEW CARLISLE:
Bible Chapel Meetings
Sundays: Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School - 2 p.m.
Thursdays: Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information 418-752-

3372 or 418-752-6011.
NEW RICHMOND:
St. Andrews United Church
March 29: We will be holding our annual chili luncheon from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Chili with all the trimmings, rolls and a dessert. Cost: adults \$10 and children under 12 \$6. Take-outs are available by calling

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, March 29
 10 a.m. Service
Sunday, April 5
 10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN
Sunday, March 29
 10 a.m. Service
Sunday, April 5
 2 p.m. Service
 With Communion

Kathleen at 418-392-4896, no later than March 27.
CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES Book Room
Wednesdays: The book room will be open from 1 - 4 p.m. For information please contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

PARISH OF GASPÉ
Sunday, March 29
St. Pauls, Gaspe
 10 a.m. Palm Sunday
Thursday, April 2
St. Pauls, Gaspe
 7 p.m. Maundy Thursday
Friday, April 3
St. Pauls, Gaspe
 11 a.m. Good Friday
Saturday, April 4
St. Andrews, York
 7 p.m. Easter Vigil
Sunday, April 5
St. Pauls, Gaspe
 10 a.m. Easter Sunday

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
Sunday, March 29
New Carlisle
 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
 7 p.m. Holy Eucharist
Thursday, April 2
Port Daniel
 7 p.m. Maundy Thursday
Friday, April 3
New Carlisle
 10 a.m. Stations of the cross
Hope Town
 3 p.m. Good Friday
Saturday, April 4
New Carlisle
 7 p.m. Easter Vigil
Sunday, April 5
New Carlisle
 6 a.m. Sunrise Service
New Carlisle
 9 a.m. Easter Morning
Shigawake
 11 a.m. Easter Morning

On the Lighter Side...

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



EASTER WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

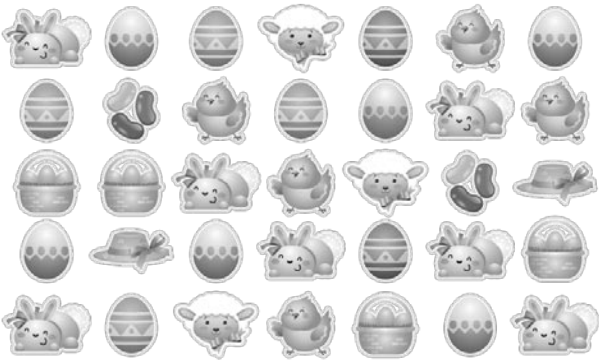
APOSTLES
BASKET
BONNET
BUNNY
CANDY
CARROT
CELEBRATE
CHICK
CHOCOLATE
CHRISTIAN
CHURCH
CROSS
DAFFODILS
DUCKLINGS
EASTER
EGGS
FAITH
FAMILY
HIDDEN
JELLYBEANS
JESUS
LAMB
LENT
MARSHMALLOW
MIRACLE
PEEP
PRAYER
RABBIT
RESURRECTION
RISEN
SAVIOR
SPRING
SUNDAY
TOMB
TREATS
WORSHIP

Maze Craze

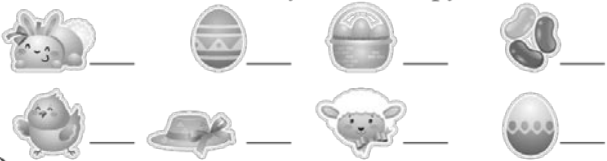
Can you find your way through the maze?



EASTER ISPY



How many do YOU spy?



Ingredients

Dough

3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 packet active dry yeast
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp nutmeg
1/2 tsp salt
3/4 cup warm milk
1/4 cup melted butter
2 eggs
3/4 cup raisins or currants

Cross paste

1/2 cup flour
5-6 tbsp water

Glaze

2 tbsp apricot jam or honey
1 tbsp water

Hot Cross Buns

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, mix flour, sugar, yeast, spices, and salt. Add warm milk, melted butter, and eggs. Mix into a soft dough.
2. Knead for about 8-10 minutes until smooth and elastic. Work in raisins.
3. Place in a greased bowl, cover, and let rise in a warm place for 1-1.5 hours until doubled.
4. Divide into 12 equal pieces and shape into balls. Place on a lined baking tray, slightly touching. Cover and let rise again for 30-45 minutes.
5. Mix flour and water into a thick paste. Pipe a cross on each bun.
6. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 18-22 minutes until golden brown.
7. Warm jam with water and brush over hot buns for a shiny finish.

HOROSCOPES - March 23 to March 29

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

A project you have been working on some time finally reaches a successful conclusion, Aries. Enjoy the benefits that comes from it and take a well-earned bow.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, sensory delights might fill your week. Good food, music and company are your rewards. Enjoy everything and savor each moment.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

A long-awaited response brings a smile to your face, Gemini. It is just the news you were hoping for, and maybe even better than you expected. Now you can move forward with confidence.

CANCER - June 22/July 22

Cancer, when you meet a new group of people in the days to come, you might feel a profound sense of belonging. Your heart will be full and you'll be encour-

HOROSCOPES - March 30 to April 5

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Your confidence is at an all-time high, Aries. This is the week to pitch an idea or finally send that text you've been mulling over. The universe is backing your bold moves.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, this week you're entering a cycle of "treat yourself." You deserve it right now, so enjoy. Whether it's a brunch out with friends or a mental health day, lean into the experience.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Expect a random invitation to create a new connection, Gemini. Your wit is extra sharp this week, so use it to charm the room. Your social calendar is likely to fill up.

CANCER - June 22/July 22

Cancer, the things you have been visualizing are about to materialize. You might feel an urge to organize your space or redecorate. Jump on that oppor-

aged to socialize more.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, the spotlight may find you this week. Enjoy the praise that is bestowed on you. You have earned it through your consistent effort. Someone with influence may come into your circle.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Clarity about your life's direction brings a sense of calm, Virgo. While you once were floundering, now you know exactly where you are going and the steps necessary to get there.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, your social life may be buzzing right now. It will prove to be a week of laughter, reunions and shared memories if this social energy manifests fully.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

A personal mystery that has been bugging you may be solved this week, Scorpio. The truth might bring you freedom and a sense of empowerment. It also will tunity this week.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, you have been feeling underappreciated lately, but that ends soon. Expect a moment when your unique talents become the star of the show. It's a great week for travel.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, a puzzle that you have been trying to solve finally clicks into place. You are moving among different social circles and it can be tricky to balance it all. Trust your intuition over logic.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, harmony is an ideal to aspire to this week. If there has been any tension in your circle, you are able to help dissolve it quickly. This is prime time for a date night or friends' dinner.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, people are drawn to you this week, and you have that certain something that is impossible to ignore. Use this influence wisely.

free up your mind.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

You don't have to travel too far from home to satisfy your wanderlust, Sagittarius. A weekend getaway or midweek escape might be all that's needed to bring refreshment.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

This week you likely will meet a professional or personal milestone that you've been working toward for some time, Capricorn. Celebrate the steady climb you have made.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Authenticity is the key to driving more people into your social circle, Aquarius. It also will attract new opportunities. Don't be afraid to be "you."

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, this week you will settle a debt of some kind, freeing you up for new opportunities. It will leave you feeling lighter and ready for any new chapters ahead.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

This week you're in the mood to see what happens and let fate take the lead. Letting go of control might put you in a very fun situation, Sagittarius. Agree to a spontaneous plan.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

This week you are ticking off your to-do list with amazing efficiency, Capricorn. The real magic happens when you sign off of work and head home to great news.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, you are thinking light years ahead of everyone else right now. Share your ideas, however unusual they may be and see who is along for the ride.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

The universe is making you choose whether to enjoy financial riches or riches of the heart this week, Pisces. It can be a tough choice to make, so give it some time.

CASA Women's Day celebration draws a full house in Paspébiac

HOLLY SMITH

PASPEBIAC — CASA's annual International Women's Day celebration filled the Paspébiac Cultural Centre on March 7, with 150 women from across the region attending the popular event, which sold out in just over a minute.

Organizer Kathy Gallon said the evening continues to grow every year and has become one of the most anticipated events for women in the community. "CASA feels the event was a tremendous success. Each year we try to create an evening where the women of our community can come together to feel valued, celebrated and truly appreciated," she says.

"It is always a pleasure to see so many ladies enjoying a special night dedicated just to them," she adds.

Tickets for this year's event sold out in record time. "We had 150 women from the region in attendance, and all the seats were reserved in just one and a half minutes. At first, we thought it might be a glitch in the system, but it really shows how much this event means to people," Ms. Gallon says.

Guest speakers share personal stories

The evening featured several keynote speakers who shared their personal experiences and encouraged those in attendance to follow their passions and not be afraid of change.

Cindy Almond, who joined the celebration by Zoom from Ottawa, spoke about how growing up on the coast helped shape her resilience and independence. She told the audience



CASA staff opened the evening with a skit, giving the audience a preview of what was in store for this year's event.

that she left a secure federal government job to pursue her passion for travel and food, eventually building a business that now employs others who share the same interests.

Another keynote speaker, Rebecca Renouf, spoke openly about the challenges she faced when starting her own baking business. She said taking that step was frightening, but she knew it was something she truly wanted to do.

Ms. Renouf also spoke about the pressure many women feel trying to balance family, work and personal struggles while dealing with anxiety. She told the audience that it is important to talk about those struggles and to remember that no one has to face them alone, adding that mental health should never be something people feel ashamed of.

Shine your light award

One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation of the Shine Your Light Award, which was given to Mary Woods in recognition of more than 50 years of volunteering in the community.

Ms. Woods has been involved with the New Carlisle

Funeral Association, the New Carlisle Legion and the Linda Lemore Brown Foundation, and was honoured for her many years of dedication and service.

Several women in attendance said the evening continues to be one of their favourite events of the year. "What a great night it was — laughter, words of inspiration, music and honouring Mary Woods for Volunteer of the Year," said Brenda Buttle. "Thank you CASA for an amazing evening with great food and entertainment. You outdid yourselves

again," added Susan Beebe.

Music, recognition and celebration

Entertainment for the evening was provided by the all-female band Anything Goes, who kept the crowd engaged throughout the night.

CASA staff also presented a special recognition award to Fay Gallon, Programs Manager at CASA, thanking her for her constant support and for being a strong leader within the organization.

Ms. Gallon said the atmos-

phere in the room is what makes the event special every year. "We believe it is the whole experience that makes the evening so popular — a chance to dress up, enjoy a night out, listen to inspiring speakers and feel appreciated," she says. "The smiles, the laughter and the energy the women bring to the evening are always the highlight for us," she adds.

Event may continue to grow

Planning for the event begins months in advance, with staff starting preparations in the fall and working together to build on the success of previous years.

Because of the strong response, organizers say a larger venue may be considered in the future if funding allows. "It would be CASA's dream to one day host every woman who wishes to attend," Kathy Gallon says. "Our goal is to keep providing a meaningful evening where women can come together, connect and celebrate for many years to come," she adds.



Although the doors opened at 4 p.m., people gathered early to make sure they had the perfect seat for this year's event.



Agnes Blais was seated with keynote speaker Rebecca Renouf (right) who shared her story during this year's Women's Day celebration.



Anything Goes, an all-women band, entertained the audience with an energetic performance during the Women's Day event, adding music and fun to the celebration.

Photos: Holly Smith



Bright colours and tiny details make every pysanky one of a kind.

Ukrainian traditions live on

DIANE SKINNER

Around Easter time, brightly coloured eggs begin appearing in Ukrainian homes and churches. While many people simply dye eggs in a rainbow of colours, in Ukraine the tradition goes much deeper. There, Easter eggs, which are called pysanky, are beautifully decorated and unique pieces of art.

The word pysanky comes from a Ukrainian word meaning “to write.” Rather than painting or colouring eggs in one step, the designs are carefully written onto the shell using melted wax. It’s a slow process that has been practiced for generations.

The decorating begins with a simple egg and a small tool called a kistka, which holds hot wax. The artist carefully draws lines on the egg with the wax. The egg is then dipped into coloured dye. More wax is added, followed by more dye, gradually and patiently building the design. When the wax is finally melted away, the pattern underneath is revealed.

Some pysanky feature geometric patterns, while others may include flowers, animals, or other symbols of nature. Many eggs are decorated in rich colours such as red, gold, black, and yellow, creating a beautiful egg.

But pysanky are more than just decorations. Traditionally, the designs carry meaning. Certain symbols represent prosperity, protection, or good

luck. Others symbolize the return of spring or the renewal of life.

In Ukrainian culture, the making of pysanky often becomes a family activity in the weeks leading up to Easter. Grandparents teach children how to hold the tools and how to be careful and patient as the designs slowly take shape. Each egg becomes a small connection between generations.

Many Ukrainian families prepare baskets of traditional foods to take to church to be blessed before Easter. Alongside bread, meats and other foods, the beautifully decorated pysanky are often included in the basket as a symbol of life and renewal. A truly meaningful Easter theme.

In many places within Canada, especially in communities with Ukrainian heritage, pysanky workshops are held. People gather to learn the technique and practice the skills involved in creating these lovely designs. Each egg is unique, carefully made and filled with symbolism. What begins as a simple egg becomes something much more. A small, colourful reminder of history, culture, and the hopeful spirit of Easter and the Ukrainian people.

The pysanky tells a story that has been passed down for centuries. That story continues every spring, one carefully decorated egg at a time. More importantly these eggs are an example of the continued endurance of Ukrainian culture.

How different countries celebrate Easter

DIANE SKINNER

Easter is celebrated across much of the world, but the traditions surrounding it can look surprisingly different depending on where you happen to be. While Canadians are familiar with chocolate bunnies and eggs, church services and family dinners, other countries have developed their own colourful ways of celebrating the day. Together, these traditions show how one celebration can look very different, while keeping the spirit of renewal and hope.

In Canada, Easter has gradually become a mix of religious observance and family fun. Many people attend church services on Easter Sunday morning. Chocolate bunnies and baskets filled with treats are now as much a part of Easter as the spring flowers (hopefully) beginning to appear. Is there anything as sweet as a crocus poking its head out of the ground?

In Germany, some of the traditions familiar to Canadians are believed to have originated there. The Easter Bunny itself is often traced back to German folklore. In many German homes, families decorate small trees or branches with brightly

coloured eggs, creating what is known as an Easter tree. The tradition is meant to represent new life and the arrival of spring.

In Poland, Easter traditions are strongly tied to religion and family. On Holy Saturday, families prepare baskets filled with food and bring them to church to be blessed in a ceremony called Świąconka. The baskets often contain bread, eggs, sausage and sometimes a small lamb made from butter or sugar. These foods are then shared as part of the Easter meal the next day.

In Ukraine, Easter traditions are especially detailed and meaningful. One of the most famous customs is the decoration of pysanky, carefully designed eggs created using wax and dye. Each pattern and colour has a special meaning, often connected to protection, hope or good fortune. Like in Poland, many Ukrainian families also bring baskets of traditional foods to church to be blessed before sharing them at home.

In Greece, Easter celebrations are filled with strong symbols and joyful gatherings.

Eggs are dyed a deep red to represent life and renewal. After the midnight church service, families say the phrase “Christos Anesti,” meaning “Christ has risen,” before cracking their red eggs together to see whose egg remains unbroken, a game that is meant to bring good luck.

In Australia, the traditional Easter animal has taken a slightly different form. Because rabbits have caused damage to local ecosystems, many Australians promote the Easter bilby instead of the Easter bunny. Chocolate bilbies have become popular treats, while also helping raise awareness about protecting native wildlife.

Despite these differences, the heart of Easter remains much the same everywhere. Whether it’s chocolate bunnies in Canada, beautifully decorated eggs in Ukraine or red eggs in Greece, the holiday brings people together. It’s a time to celebrate hope, renewal and welcome the arrival of spring.



HAPPY easter



BMR

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Dre Rosalie Dunn
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 GASPÉ, QUÉBEC



HAPPY Easter!

Easter marks a fresh start after a long winter

HOLLY SMITH

PORT DANIEL - With Easter just around the corner, many people are looking forward to the return of spring traditions, family gatherings and, of course, a visit from the Easter Bunny. After a long winter, the holiday is often seen as a welcome sign that warmer days are finally on the way. For many fami-

lies, Easter weekend is a time to slow down and enjoy simple moments together. Children look forward to decorating colourful eggs, searching for hidden treats and waking up to find baskets filled with chocolate, candy and small surprises. The excitement of an Easter egg hunt remains a favourite tradition for young and old alike. Easter is also a time when

homes are filled with the bright colours of the season. Pastel decorations, spring flowers and chocolate bunnies begin to appear in stores and kitchens, reminding everyone that winter is nearly behind us.

The Easter lily, often seen during this time of year, has long been a symbol of renewal and new beginnings.


Many families continue the tradition of gathering for a spe-

cial Easter meal, with favourites such as ham, potatoes, homemade desserts and plenty of sweets for the children. While the menu may change from one household to another, the spirit of spending time together remains the same.

Beyond the candy and decorations, Easter holds different meanings for different people. For some, it is a religious cel-

ebration, while for others it is simply a chance to enjoy the arrival of spring and the sense of a fresh start that comes with it.

Whether it is through church services, family dinners, community events or a backyard egg hunt, Easter continues to be a holiday that brings people together and reminds us to look forward to the brighter days ahead.



APRIL FOOLS' DAY
APRIL 1 DAY
WHOOPEE CUSHION

A day for laughs

Many of us look forward to April Fool's Day. Bay of Chaleur residents have a good sense of humour, and that is often a sign of intelligence, so why not enjoy a prank or two, wisely, of course. Gaspesians may do foolish things from time to time, but we do them with enthusiasm, laughter and good cheer.

As the saying goes, you can fool some people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. And around the Chaleur Bay, people are usually sharp enough to catch on pretty quickly.

I thought about coming up with a truly hilarious April Fool's joke, but then I wondered whether anyone would believe it anyway. That may be the real charm of the day.

So remember: on April Fool's Day, believe nothing, trust no one, and keep your sense of humour close at hand. Let's have a little fun this April Fool's Day.

*Ken Ross
New Carlisle, Quebec*

The spirit of Easter lives in the hearts of Gaspesians

Easter is not just about Easter Eggs; it's the spirit of God's gift through the resurrection, so that our soul may be uplifted. Gaspesians' hearts are renewed at Easter, as many reflect on God's love and what he sacrificed for all of us on the cross.

People in the Bay of Chaleur are patiently waiting for the beauty of spring, and in their hearts Easter means the symbol of hope, renewal, new life and a time to rejoice.

Easter baskets may be filled with a few chocolates, but happiness, love and joy remind us that this is the perfect time to be thankful for family and friends. Let Easter be simple, filled with unique moments of new joy and warmth in our hearts, so that Gaspesians, both near and far, may bring Easter blessings to every home.

*Ken Ross
New Carlisle, Quebec*

Easter Colouring Contest

Happy Easter!



To enter you must be 10 years old or under!

How to submit your colouring page:

- Mail:** Send it to [mailing address below]
- Email:** Send a photo of your colouring page to kayla@casa-gaspe.com

Bright Beginnings A shining start for children ages 0-8

CASA

Name: _____

Age: _____

Address: _____

Mail to:
CASA
c/o colouring contest
168 Boul Gerard D Levesque
New Carlisle, QC G0C 1Z0

Deadline: April 6, 2026