

# The community sector makes demands to the CISSS de la Gaspésie

NELSON SERGERIE

GILLES GAGNÉ

GESGAPEGIAG – As part of the two-week community sector strike that began on March 23, members of organizations affiliated with the Regroupement des organismes communautaires Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (ROCGÎM) sought support from the CISSS de la Gaspésie regarding their demands.

The CISSS committed to conveying the message to Santé Québec in order to secure better support for their respective missions during the institutional board meeting held in Gesgapegiag on March 24.

“Our demands are related to improving working conditions in the community sector, particularly by securing mission-based funding that is stable, sufficient, and substantial. These demands are not new, as community organizations have been lamenting underfunding and its impact on their ability to do their work for many years,” explains Benjamin Pillet,



Photo: Gilles Gagné

At Family Ties in New Carlisle, March 25 was an occasion to demonstrate inside the building and hold discussions about the role of community organization in people's daily life.

ROCGIM's research and mobilization officer, to the board members.

The organizations employ about 500 workers, 80% of whom are women.

From 2021 to 2024, needs have increased by 230%, while funding has risen by only 50%. “The gap has widened since then. If the community sector has opted for a strike—even though this is not its usual

course of action—it is because the consequences of this gap are now untenable and the survival of certain organizations is at stake,” states Mr. Pillet.

These organizations work primarily in prevention and health promotion, advocating for the rights of and providing support to people in vulnerable situations, complementing services offered to the regional population.

“For too many years, the Quebec government has sought to cut costs at the expense of the community sector. There is a lack of collaboration between Santé Québec and organizations recognized at the provincial level,” he notes.

After hearing the demands, the CISSS de la Gaspésie forwarded a notice to Santé Québec.

“What we want is for these

organizations to remain active in our community. We have a model that works well. I fully understand the message you want us to convey to Santé Québec with the same attentiveness and transparency at the provincial level,” notes President and chief executive officer Martin Pelletier, who emphasizes that without the community sector, the network could not address all the determinants of health.

“We support you, and we're also conveying a message to Santé Québec about the importance of your organizations' vitality in our community,” says Mr. Pelletier.

Numerous demonstrations were held along the Coast between March 23 and April 3, notably in Paspébiac, Gaspé, Chandler and Carleton.

## Families forgotten by the Quebec government

Heather MacWhirter, spokesperson for New

Cont'd on Page 7

# New pediatric clinic planned for Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Thanks to a \$350,000 grant from Opération Enfant Soleil, the CISSS of the Gaspésie will be able to set up a new pediatric clinic and hire a second pediatrician at Gaspé Hospital, thereby expanding outpatient pediatric services for the entire region.

This is the largest investment to date, as the organization dedicated to raising funds for medical equipment for sick children has contributed \$400,000 to the Gaspé region this year.

“This was a necessity, especially since pediatric services are expected to increase in 2027 with the arrival of a new pediatrician. It was important to have a space to accommodate our young patients,” says Dr. Nathalie



Photo: Opération enfant soleil

From left to right: Steven Langlais, Dr. Georges Zmeter (pediatrician), Émile Charest, Julie Bernard, Dr. Nathalie Guilbeault, Vincent Tremblay and Marie-Eve Trudel-Vibert.

Guilbeault, Medical and Professional Services Director at the CISSS.

Currently, more than 1,100 children are cared for by a single pediatrician at Gaspé Hos-

pital.

Once the clinic is renovated, more than 3,000 children will be able to receive care.

“The clinic will remain

within the specialized outpatient clinics sector. It will be located in a more secluded area to allow pediatrics to be centralized in one place. “The grant will help create a better

environment for the children and the parents accompanying them,” the doctor notes.

In addition to the new clinic, a nursing office dedicated to preparations and assessments will expand the clinic's range of services.

“The office will aim to limit visits to the emergency room. Having two pediatricians on staff and a nurse working with them will help address more specific needs,” explains Dr. Guilbeault.

In pediatrics, the Gaspé Hospital serves the local health network of the Côte-de-Gaspé and Haute-Gaspésie regions, which do not have access to such specialists. Chandler and Maria have their own pediatric team.

Cont'd on Page 7

# Built Heritage: Patrimoine Gaspésie satisfied with Gaspé's approach

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Patrimoine Gaspésie is pleased with the general direction taken by the Town of Gaspé to better protect the built heritage within its jurisdiction.

At the March 16 council meeting, the town of Gaspé announced the upcoming implementation of a bylaw allowing the municipality to intervene with property owners and compel them to better maintain their buildings, a requirement mandated by the Government of Quebec.

"This is very good news," says Patrimoine Gaspésie spokesperson Jean-Marie Fallu right off the bat, noting that while the Ministry of Culture and Communications (MCC) has the authority to



Photo: Facebook

*Jean-Marie Fallu expresses satisfaction with the general approach to built heritage put forward by the Town of Gaspé.*

designate a building, municipalities only have the power to issue citations—a power granted to the MRCs in 2021. However, Mr. Fallu notes that

the use of these powers will still depend on political will.

"It will depend on the municipalities' willingness or leadership. The MRCs have

the power to issue citations, but not the power to take action. Mayor Daniel Côté indicates that on April 1, he will have to take the appropriate measures, without specifying what they are," Mr. Fallu continues.

A building that receives a notice may also qualify for assistance from the provincial government to carry out the required work, but the exact measures remain unclear.

"It remains a bit ambiguous at present. We're not quite sure what measures the Town plans to take if a citizen refuses to comply," the historian points out.

Several buildings in Gaspé have disappeared over the years due to lack of maintenance or abandonment, a situation that continues to

worry heritage advocates. Built heritage has always faced difficult times in the region.

"The last remaining cold storage warehouse in the Gaspé Peninsula is in Cloridorme. It's a magnificent building, but if we don't take care of it, it will disappear before long," says Mr. Fallu, who has been fighting for years to ensure these vestiges of Gaspé history remain standing.

Mr. Fallu also recalls that a few years ago, the Auditor General lamented the lack of interest in heritage buildings in Quebec.

"Unfortunately, it's only when a building is demolished or disappears that we regret it. But by then, it's too late," laments Mr. Fallu.

## Rocher-Percé MRC looks to boost its vitality ranking

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER – Considering that the Rocher-Percé MRC ranks 103rd out of 104 MRCs in Quebec in terms of its vitality index, Prefect Samuel Parisé is working to improve his region's position in the Quebec rankings.

The index evaluates nearly 1,100 municipalities across Quebec based on labour market performance, standard of living and demographic trends. It is also used to help determine the allocation of certain regional development funds.

"I believe we are on the right track. We've made a lot of efforts in recent years. We have businesses opening, services being set up, and support for small and medium-sized businesses. We're working on several aspects at the same time," says Mr. Parisé.

He notes that the working-age population remains slightly lower than elsewhere, but initiatives are underway to attract new families and workers to the region.

"It's a job that takes several years, but we're on the right track," he adds.

The prefect admits he cannot fully explain why recent local efforts are not yet reflected in the statistics.

"With the efforts being made on the ground, it's encouraging. The statistics are not encouraging, but we have people who want to settle and live



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

### Development to feature in election discussions

With an election campaign approaching, Mr. Parisé intends to raise the development needs of the MRC with candidates.

"It's really the Quebec government that has control over programs, both in terms of funding and legislation. It's a daily effort to bring the issues of the MRC and the Gaspé Peninsula to the forefront, but I will definitely be meeting with the candidates during the campaign and letting them know what would be good for the development of the Gaspé Peninsula," says Mr. Parisé.

Frequent changes to provincial programs can create chal-

lenges when existing measures work well locally, he adds.

"I don't want to make enemies in Quebec City, but when something works, we would like to see it continue. I can tell you that in the last four years, we have made major developments, but most of the time, it was to preserve certain achievements or to change certain programs that did not respond to the issues facing the Gaspé Peninsula. Can programs be adapted to each region, and can regions be sovereign?" asks the prefect, stating that this would be his greatest wish.

Mr. Parisé also believes his role on the board of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités could help amplify the region's voice.

"It could allow me to forge certain links and present a united front on certain issues," he concludes.

## Cap Adventure refocuses its activities in Cap-aux-Os

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Launched about ten years ago, Cap Adventure is selling its whale watching cruise operations from the Gaspé Marina to Croisières Baie-de-Gaspé, which intends to maintain these departures in addition to those offered from Grande Grave in Forillon National Park.

Cap Adventure has been operating since 1995 and offers sea-kayaking expeditions in Cap-aux-Os and Forillon National Park, as well as food services, accommodation and whale-watching cruises. "There was demand from Gaspé. We had a large clientele asking us for whale watching cruises based on established packages. The idea took root. I was ready to make this change. Ten years ago, I trained to become a captain and guide on a Zodiac," explains Cap Adventure president Serge Cassivi.

This adventure was a good challenge in terms of adapting to marketing and learning the mechanics of operating the boat on a daily basis. After a decade, however, the time felt right to move on.

"It's a good deal for both companies. What we had built over the past 10 years was growing. I can confirm that activities with the new owner will continue to be offered from the Gaspé marina," notes Mr. Cassivi.

The president acknowledges that discussions were held with potential buyers, but since the company is privately owned, confidentiality agreements were signed. The value of the transaction will remain confidential. Mr. Cassivi says he is gradually beginning to think about retirement.

"Personally, it will allow me to focus all my short-term energy on operations at Forillon Park and Cap-aux-Os. In the medium term, it will allow me to transition into pre-retirement. We have some ideas for diversification that I will tell you about in due course," says the recreational tourism operator.

People within the company have shown interest in taking over when Mr. Cassivi eventually withdraws completely from the business.

### Adventure tourism increasingly popular

When Cap Adventure began operations 30 years ago, the company was a pioneer in its field, along with CIME Adventure in Bonaventure. "It's been a huge evolution in 30 years. It has developed a lot in the Magdalen Islands and on the North Shore. It has been regulated by Aventure écotourisme Québec, which has set standards that must be met," says Mr. Cassivi.

Working on Gaspé Bay is very different from navigating on a lake or river, he added. "It requires more skills for supervision and guides for risk management. But it's a beautiful place. You can see whales even from a kayak, seals, seabirds north of Cap Bon-Ami, the cliffs. Yes, it's more difficult, but it opens up all kinds of possibilities," adds Mr. Cassivi.

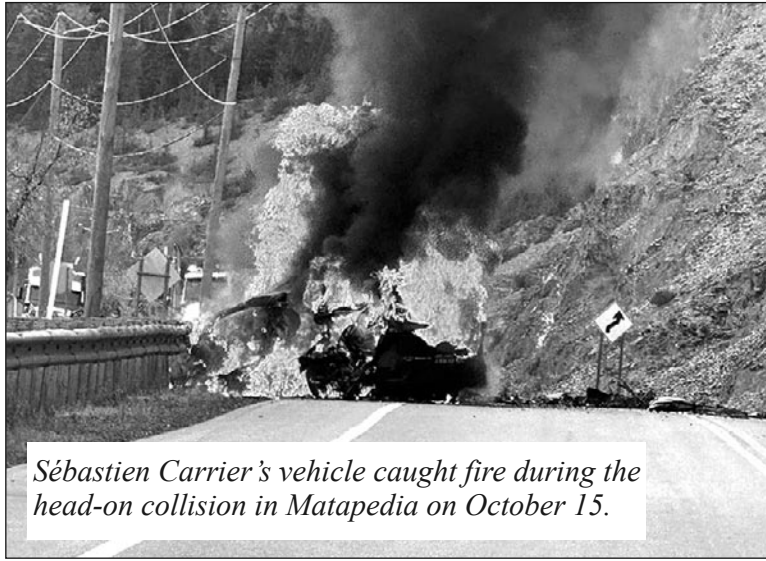
# Coroner rules two fall incidents accidental deaths

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Coroner Nicolas Lutzenkirchen has ruled that two deaths that occurred in Murdochville and Matapedia last October were accidental. The coroner's reports examined the causes and circumstances surrounding both incidents.

In the first case, the coroner was tasked with shedding light on the death of Jocelyne Bourdages, 79, who died after being struck by a gunshot on October 13 near Murdochville. Mr. Lutzenkirchen reviewed the file after the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) Major Crimes Unit opened an investigation following her death.

The victim's vital organs were struck, and she is believed to have died instantly. No evidence pointed to criminal intent, and the coroner concluded that the firearm discharge was accidental. No criminal charges were filed in this case, although police did question a man dur-



*Sébastien Carrier's vehicle caught fire during the head-on collision in Matapedia on October 15.*

Photo: Facebook

ing the investigation.

## Matapedia collision

Distraction appears to have caused the head-on collision that occurred on October 15 in Matapedia, claiming the life of Sébastien Carrier, 46, of Rimouski. He was travelling on business when his vehicle veered off course and struck a heavy vehicle travelling in the opposite direction on Route 132.

The car ended up on the shoulder and caught fire. The victim was ejected from the vehicle, even though he was wearing his seatbelt. At the time of the accident, weather conditions were favourable and the road surface was dry.

Coroner Lutzenkirchen notes that toxicological tests revealed the presence of methamphetamine in the blood, but there is no evidence to suggest that this contributed to the collision.

# Vandals cause damage in Rivière-au-Renard

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – One or more individuals caused thousands of dollars in damage to the observation tower in the Rivière-au-Renard sector of Gaspé after ripping out dozens of metres of electrical wires used to light the structure at the heart of the neighbourhood.

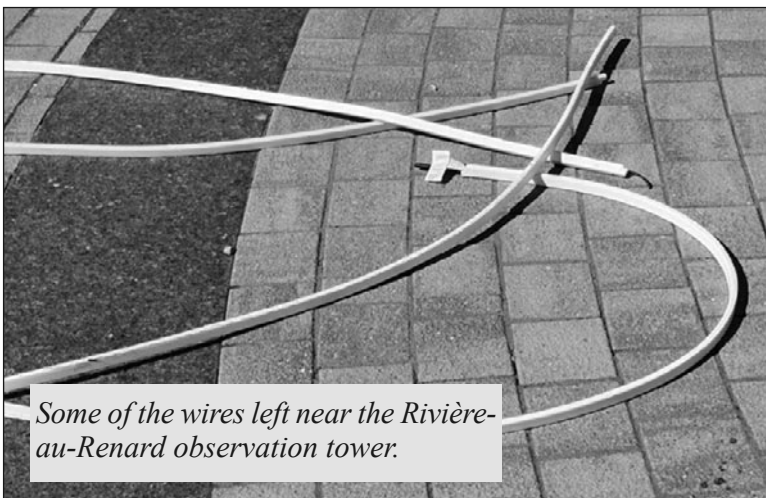
Municipal authorities were notified on the morning of April 1, and this was far from an April Fool's joke.

Mayor Daniel Côté visited the scene to assess the damage.

"There has been vandalism in the past. This time, the electrical wiring was ripped out and left on the ground. It wasn't a theft, since the copper cables were left behind. The goal was to destroy this public asset, which is the pride of the village and has won national awards," the mayor comments.

This infrastructure is part of the coastal protection improvements on Rue du Banc, which includes a children's park and a promenade, representing an investment of over \$8 million in 2022.

Repairs will take time. "Our public works teams have cleaned up the damage, but they can't repair everything that was broken. It's a lot of work to put the cables back in



*Some of the wires left near the Rivière-au-Renard observation tower.*

Photo: Daniel Côté's Facebook

place. This is specialized work, and we're looking at thousands of dollars in damage. It's really frustrating," says the mayor.

The torn wires run from the base up to the fourth floor of the building, and even hidden sections were affected.

"We've filed a complaint with the Sûreté du Québec, and they will investigate. I'm sure there are people who have information and know who did this. It doesn't hurt to come forward. My goal isn't to punish the offenders but to raise awareness that when you do something stupid like this, there's a financial cost," continues Mr. Côté, who hopes this won't happen again.

Security cameras are located in the area and may have captured footage to identify those responsible.

This is not the first time the tower has been vandalized, but it is the first time damage of this scale has been reported. In the past, incidents mostly involved graffiti.

## Wave in 2023

A wave of vandalism struck Gaspé in December 2023.

At the time, the Sûreté du Québec reported at least eight acts of vandalism and/or break-ins.

The targets included a vacation home, a private garage, commercial buildings, street furniture, and municipal structures.

Among the incidents, there was over \$5,000 in damage following a fire that started in trash bins behind Place Jacques-Cartier. The Douglas-

# Police report



Photo: Jillian O'Connell

## Burned vehicle found on March 25 on Route Marcil

The Sûreté du Québec's forensic identification service is investigating the discovery of a completely burned vehicle around 7:45 a.m. on March 25 on Route Marcil in Port-Daniel West. The vehicle was found about 200 metres from the nearest residence. The occupants of the nearby home reported hearing nothing during the night. Investigators are working to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident. The vehicle had been reported stolen in the Chandler area in the preceding hours. The Sûreté du Québec indicates that it is too early to speculate. The vehicle is undergoing forensic examination as part of the investigation.

## Trial postponed for Pascal Bergeron

The trial of Pascal Bergeron, 44, scheduled for April 21, has been postponed. The accused, who appeared alone before Judge Janick Poirier on March 31, confirmed that he has a new lawyer, Marie-Josée Gobidon, to explain his request. Originally scheduled to last seven hours, the trial is now expected to take three days, including the subpoenaing of witnesses. A new date will be set during a hearing on May 26. The environmental activist is accused of sexual assault, based on a complaint filed in December 2024 by a woman, for acts that allegedly occurred between September 1, 2022, and September 1, 2023, in Nouvelle or elsewhere in Quebec. Mr. Bergeron is also suspected of criminal harassment against the same victim, based on a complaint filed in May 2025.

## Homeless man charged with break-ins

Jean-Philippe Leclerc, 38, who is homeless, faces 21 charges related to break-ins in Maria, Carleton, and Caplan. According to CHNC, the alleged offenses occurred on November 25, 26, and 27. Mr. Leclerc is accused of stealing gas cans, a snowmobile, a trailer, a chainsaw, and other items, including boots. He allegedly stole a vehicle and was in possession of another, knowing it was obtained through crime. He also faces two counts of breaching probation, including one related to possessing a prohibited 12-gauge shotgun, as well as a charge of impaired driving. Currently detained in Quebec City, Mr. Leclerc is scheduled to return to court on May 25.

town ice rink's chalet had a toilet and sink smashed, and there was also damage to the chalet in the York neighbourhood.

The Dougtown Café in Douglstown was also vandalized, as was the former restaurant in Corte-Real. The water inlet at the Haldimand skating rink was also damaged.

"If we want to put a stop to all this, yes, it involves a slap on the wrist, but it mainly involves raising awareness and reminding people that public property belongs to everyone. There is a collective cost that gets passed on to property and income taxes," the mayor notes.

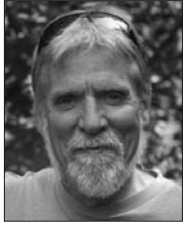


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## Commentary

### VIA Rail: we will soon know if good faith is displayed

Since the March 11 hearing of the House of Commons' Standing committee charged to scrutinize the quality of VIA Rail services, many Gaspésians are wondering when the public transporter will return east of Matapédia.

It is a valid question. Just days after a snowy end of March and beginning of April, a time when passenger trains would have greatly facilitated travel to and from New Carlisle, Port-Daniel or another destination along the south part of the region, the question bears considerable weight.

On March 11, the interim president of VIA Rail, Mathieu Paquette, committed to gradually restoring service east of Matapédia. He affirmed that the public transporter had the material to resume its service between Matapédia and a point that remains to be determined, whether it will be New Carlisle, where a train can be turned, or Port-Daniel, where tracks have been operational since early January.

This commitment raises another valid question: can Gaspésians trust VIA Rail's management?

The regional population has experienced a rough half-century, 49 years to be precise, with VIA Rail, which was created in 1977 because Canada's two main passenger carriers at the time, Canadian National (CN) and Canadian Pacific (CP), wanted no part of that type of service. They wanted to concentrate on hauling freight, where more money was to be made, despite the rising importance of road transportation.

By 1977, CN, a public corporation at the time, privatized in 1995, and CP had already made huge cuts to their passenger train network, as well as cuts to some freight lines.

VIA Rail was created in that context, inheriting mostly outdated rolling material, paying CN and CP employees according to collective agreements the "newborn" had no control over, and giving priority to freight trains, as the Canadian government was not smart enough back then, as well as now, to consider people before freight!

Barring few exceptions, VIA Rail never received the attention rail passenger services deserve.

In that context, Gaspésians were not alone to suffer, starting in the mid-1970s, from a rather uneven service, during CN's last years and during most of VIA Rail's 49-year history. Other regions had to deal with CN and CP's last years as people movers, because it became evident during the Pierre-Elliott Trudeau years that a "solution" would be implemented to satisfy them.

Other regions suffered from the ups and downs of the rail passenger service. However, Gaspésians likely experienced more severe disruptions than most.

### A look at history confirms it

It is tempting to say that since the mid-1970s, CN and VIA Rail managers, neither the stations agents nor the train crews, used the Gaspé Peninsula and its inhabitants as a test bed for human tolerance.

The implementation of automotive cars, also called Budd cars, first in the mid-1960s and again at the end of the 1970s, a waiting time of two-and-a-half hours at the Matapédia station for travellers going towards Gaspé because their train was leaving from Campbellton and had to wait for the passage of the Ocean train, which had just dropped the Gaspésians at Matapédia, are examples of poor decision-making.

That is not counting schedule changes that were far from optimal for Gaspésians, more outdated equipment, the pulling out of the dining car in the 1980s, and again 25 years later.

That is not counting station closures, and service reductions like baggage checking in a limited of an already downgraded number of stations, all that supposedly to better serve people!

That is not counting VIA Rail's refusal to run separate trains for the Gaspé Peninsula and the Maritimes during summer's peak ridership periods, which was forcing train crews to make three or four stops at each station between Montreal and Matapédia, where the two trains were separated. The consequence was accumulated delays, disgruntled passengers and a Gaspésian train that would be turned in New Carlisle instead of going all the way to Gaspé. For travellers who had paid a premium for one of the most scenic rail journeys in North America, this meant completing the trip by bus.

The list of VIA Rail's bad decisions in the Gaspé Peninsula could honestly fill a book.

### So, room for skepticism or optimism?

On November 1, 2023, Mario Pélouquin, who was running VIA Rail at the time, and not in an interim role, promised to come to the Gaspé Peninsula over the first two months of 2024 in order to assess what needed to be done to gradually resume the service.

At the time, it was permitted to think, for the first time since 2019, that there was open-mindedness for a passenger train that could serve part of the region

even if the railway was not repaired to Gaspé, which is mainly a Quebec government issue.

Can we believe Mathieu Paquette now, the replacement of Mr. Pélouquin, who never made it to the Gaspé Peninsula for reasons that remain mysterious, except if we think in terms of considerations, precisely a lack thereof?

One advantage Gaspésians currently have is the presence of Member of Parliament (MP), Alexis Deschênes, who has closely examined every aspect of the VIA Rail file over the past 11 months since his election in April 2025. Mr. Deschênes, who began defending the passenger train issue during the 2022 provincial election, has accomplished more in that time than former Gaspé MP Diane Lebouthillier did in nine and a half years as a cabinet minister.

Mr. Deschênes flatly told the truth when he affirmed that a public transporter like VIA Rail, receiving \$2.3 billion in public funds for the current budgetary year, should find a way to serve a line and a population that is part of its network, even more considering that the Gaspé Peninsula train has been suspended since September 2013.

Technically, several obstacles remain. Grade crossings must be upgraded to meet new regulations, particularly in the Paspebiac area. However, close to 57 years after men walked on the moon, and given the ability of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), the region's freight transporter, to resolve similar issues, solutions are clearly within reach.

Trains can't turn in Port Daniel? It is possible to do like in Europe, and put a locomotive leased from the SCFG for the trip back to New Carlisle, where a train can turn.

Are the stations fit for service resumption? The Matapédia, Carleton, New Richmond, Bonaventure, New Carlisle and Port Daniel stations have all been used over the last years for different purposes. Within days or weeks, they can greet passengers.

Will VIA Rail be able to recruit? If they try, of course! Competent people will apply, especially given the wage conditions offered by the public transporter.

The only major obstacle to restoring service at this point is uncertainty surrounding VIA Rail management's good faith.

It is permitted to dream a little bit. Mathieu Paquette appeared sincere during the March 11 hearings, speaking at length and addressing concerns directly. In any case, we will soon find out. VIA Rail is expected to send representatives from its head office to the region in April.

### We are in April.

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# Toward a balanced budget at the CISSS de la Gaspésie

**NELSON SERGERIE**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

**GESGAPEGIAG** – After projecting a \$30 million deficit at the start of the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the CISSS de la Gaspésie is expected to end the year with a balanced budget on March 31.

This is the most recent projection presented during the board of directors meeting held on March 24 in Gesgapegiag.

Recovering such a sum without cutting user services has been a highly complex task.

“A large part of this is linked to the significant reduction in the hourly rate for independent contractors. When you look at the large number of hours we use, there are major savings on that front,” calculates President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Martin Pelletier.

Rates have dropped from \$140 to \$70 over the past year.

Savings of \$600,000 were achieved in food services; the use of virtual meetings—at nearly the same frequency as during the pandemic—led to savings in travel expenses; and the inability to fill all vacant positions provided a boost to the facility’s finances.

The Quebec government announced in its latest budget a 4.1% increase in the health budget.

For the CISSS, this would mean an increase of about \$23 million, bringing the total to \$583 million.

“Last year, we were starting from scratch. Now, we have a one-year track record with some gains, and we’ll see how it’s adjusted. The tools are being refined, which allows us to do a better job,” notes the president, even though the budget has not yet been officially released by Santé Québec.

Since cost increases are estimated at between 6% and 7%, the CISSS will have to do more with fewer resources.

## A more detailed plan for Maria

After announcing, prior to the budget’s tabling, the return of the Maria Hospital emergency and intensive care project to the Quebec Infrastructure Plan (PQI), details are emerging regarding a potential timeline for reaching the construction phase.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Martin Pelletier, President and Chief Executive Officer of the CISSS de la Gaspésie.*

In all likelihood, it will take four years of preparation before a call for tenders is issued for the construction phase.

In the latest budget, the project was moved to the feasibility study stage within the PQI.

The CISSS de la Gaspésie estimates that it has completed a large portion of the studies and analyses.

“We’re hopeful that we’ll start moving forward with the project documentation, specifically the plans and specifications. There will be a design phase, preliminary sketches, and documents for the bidding process,” says the CEO.

The project will now fall under the jurisdiction of the Société québécoise des infrastructures.

Mr. Pelletier hopes this will happen as quickly as possible for this \$300 million project.

If everything goes smoothly, calls for tenders for construction would be issued in 2030.

“As long as the funding is in place in 2030 to issue the calls for tenders. That’s always the condition,” the manager cautiously notes.

## First Nations

The Gaspésie CISSS aims to strengthen its relationships with First Nations communities.

“What we’re realizing is that there is a certain mistrust regarding the services offered. We need to alleviate that and build trust that the services are the same for everyone and that we’re committed to providing them,” says the president and CEO.

A cancer screening initiative led by Listuguj is a first step, and the CISSS will train

its managers and employees on the realities of First Nations communities.

“The goal is to offer services to everyone, at the same level.”

The CISSS draws inspiration from approaches developed elsewhere in Quebec, but the cancer care initiative with Listuguj is unique.

The CEO acknowledges that thinking outside the box is necessary to improve care and relations with Native communities.

## Ready to serve again

Martin Pelletier’s four-year term is coming to an end, and he has expressed to Santé Québec his desire to continue in his role.

He took office on May 30, 2022.

“I’m waiting for a response from headquarters,” he says simply.

Before taking over the management of the CISSS de la Gaspésie, Mr. Pelletier worked from 2004 to 2013 at the Centre de santé et de services sociaux (CSSS) de la Baie-des-Chaleurs as director of technical services.

He then served as executive director of the CSSS de la Haute-Gaspésie from 2013 to 2015 before becoming the first director of technical services at the CISSS de la Gaspésie from 2015 to 2017.

The Gaspé native left the CISSS to take on the role of senior director of support services at the Vitalité Health Network in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Mr. Pelletier holds a bachelor’s degree in architecture and a master’s degree in organizational development from Laval University.

## Town may help cover part of Duthie’s Point debt

Gilles Gagné

**NEW RICHMOND** – Following a March 23 municipal working session, the Town of New Richmond may make an offer to Desjardins to cover part of the \$130,006 mortgage shortfall owed since June 2025 by the Gaspesian British Heritage Village.

In June 2025, the unpaid amount prompted Desjardins to initiate legal proceedings to recover the mortgage payment. The formal request was filed on September 25 in Superior Court. In a judgment rendered on March 6, Judge Laurent Koné ordered that the Village be put up for sale at a price of \$730,000 or more.

However, the land is owned by the Town of New Richmond. The Gaspesian British Heritage Village operates under a long-term lease, which grants it the right to modify buildings and make improvements.

“Desjardins received a judgement. We know that the judgement will not be executed right away. At the Town, we will meet people from Desjardins. We will probably offer a sum of money to reach an agreement. How much will we offer? I don’t know. We will negotiate with Desjardins’ enterprise financing branch, probably not even local people,” explains New Richmond mayor Éric Dubé.

The price tag referred to in the Superior Court verdict will probably never be offered, he adds.

“The judgement says \$730,000 or more. No one will pay that amount. It is located in an agricultural zone. Technically, the land remains ours because it is a long-term lease. The Ministry of Culture possesses a first right of refusal because the Gendron store is classified. You rezone it and that piece of land is worth \$1.5 million. However, it is unlikely a buyer will pay that amount and take a shot at rezoning it, considering all the constraints,” analyzes the mayor of New Richmond.

The municipal administration also plans to meet with users of the Gaspesian British Heritage Village (GBHV), including Mike Geraghty, the main organizer of the Bluegrass Festival, an annual event held around Labour Day.

“It won’t be before mid-April. There are other elements that remain to be assessed,” concludes Éric Dubé.

The long-term lease granted by the Town of New Richmond to the GBHV is valid until 2038.

Except for a few occupants, the tourist attraction was not operated in 2024 and 2025. The property was purchased in 1988 by the organization that became the GBHV. It has often been referred to as Duthie’s Point over the last years, but legally, it remained the GBHV.

## LM Wind Power workers reject tentative agreement in Gaspé

Nelson Sergerie

**GASPÉ** – Approximately 200 unionized workers attending a general assembly on March 29 rejected a tentative agreement between the CSN and LM Wind Power in Gaspé, with 52% voting against the proposal.

A source familiar with the negotiations indicated that, had it been accepted, the agreement would have increased the average wage to \$30.67 by the end of the five-year contract.

Following the vote, unionized employees may soon be called upon to adopt increased pressure tactics to push for a new agreement. Production at the plant has gradually slowed, with only a single eight-hour shift currently in operation. Until recently, the facility operated two 12-hour shifts.

About 400 workers are currently employed at the plant, manufacturing wind turbine blades for the U.S. market.

In February, union members adopted pressure tactics in an effort to renew their six-year collective agreement, which expired in December.

In January, approximately 140 experienced Filipino workers at the plant were facing the possibility of deportation in 2026 and 2027 due to increasingly restrictive federal rules governing temporary foreign workers.

New requirements imposed on employers to retain temporary foreign workers include significantly higher wage thresholds. That threshold, which determines eligibility for the high-wage category, had already increased by 20% in 2024 and was set to reach nearly \$35 per hour in June 2025. At the time, the union said it had asked LM Wind Power to raise wages and benefits to \$35 per hour in the next collective agreement.

The CSN also indicated that its members were earning approximately \$28 per hour.

# Unionized employees at Manoir Saint-Augustin in Gaspé move toward a strike

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The approximately 60 CSN-unionized employees at Manoir Saint-Augustin in Gaspé are issuing a warning: if the employer, Groupe Corev, does not meet their wage demands, a general strike could hit the facility soon.

The collective bargaining agreement expired in April 2024, and negotiations began a year ago.

“What we’re asking for is 16.5% over four years or 20% over five years. What they’re offering us is ridiculous: \$0.45 in the first year and \$0.40 for the subsequent years over four years. It doesn’t even keep up with inflation,” says union president Sophie Lapierre.

The employer’s offer stands at \$2.05 per hour for five years. For the workers earning \$25 per hour, it would mean an 8.2% hike. For the workers earning the minimum wage of \$16.60 per hour, it



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Le Manoir Saint-Augustin in Gaspé.*

would represent a 12.3% increase. On the average, the hike would be 110.25%.

What union members are asking for is similar to what has been agreed upon elsewhere in Quebec.

“The information we have is between 16.5% and 18% over four years. We have

some wiggle room. It doesn’t make sense not to have the same for the same types of jobs,” summarizes the union president.

Nothing is off the table in the effort to reach an agreement quickly.

“We’ll have to sit down with our members. This prob-

ably isn’t enough. Yes, it could lead to a strike mandate in the coming weeks. If necessary, we’ll strike,” says Ms. Lapierre.

“But they’re in no hurry. It’s as if they don’t take us seriously,” she adds.

According to the union, the Corev Group, which took over Manoir Saint-Augustin after the difficulties experienced by Groupe Sélection, does not feel responsible for the mistakes of the former administration.

“It’s not up to the employees to pay for the former owners’ mistakes. Réseau Sélection has faced a lot of difficulties lately. We know that Réseau Sélection made poor choices in the end, and (the Corev Group) is trying to make us pay for those mistakes,” Ms. Lapierre explains.

The facility has 120 residents, including about 40 in intermediate care who require special attention.

“We’re concerned. We’re

urging the employer to settle. I think we have strong arguments. We’re not asking for the moon. We’re asking for the equivalent of what’s been negotiated elsewhere in Quebec and settled. Elsewhere, there are 34 senior residences in coordinated negotiations. Some have been settled. Our workers in Gaspé deserve no less than those elsewhere in Quebec,” adds CSN union advisor Benoit Cayouette.

The union represents the facility’s maintenance staff, cooks and kitchen assistants, nursing assistants, patient care attendants and secretaries.

Workers earn between minimum wage and \$25 an hour for those with 11 years of service.

The standard provisions of the agreement have been settled.

Negotiations have stalled on the wage issue.

The Corev Group has not returned SPEC’s calls since March 23.

## Delegation heads to Ottawa to press for employment insurance reform

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Members of the Pabok Unemployment Action Movement and the Inter-provincial Employment Insurance Alliance from across Eastern Canada travelled to Ottawa on March 25 to once again demand major reforms to the employment insurance system and urgent support for those they say are “left behind,” particularly seasonal workers.

About 20 participants gathered on Parliament Hill to deliver what they described as an urgent call to action.

“We brought a bag of black pennies that we gave to Marylène Gill to pass on to Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne. This is part of the ‘black penny for the black hole’ initiative to signify that just one more penny in payroll contributions from em-



Photo: Courtesy of the Pabok Unemployment Action Movement

*About two dozen people from Eastern Canada travelled to Ottawa to demand employment insurance reform.*

ployees and employers would close the black hole,” explains Nadia Mongeon, coordinator of the Pabok Unemployment Action Movement.

The “black hole” refers to

the period when a worker’s employment insurance benefits run out before they are able to return to work.

“Receiving these ‘black pennies’ has an impact on

elected officials. It’s symbolic. It demonstrates that there is a problem,” continues Ms. Mongeon.

Alliance members argue that the current system fails to adequately serve regions in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Seasonal workers, they say, are often left without income for several weeks each year due to rules that do not reflect regional labour realities.

“Our action was meant to apply as much pressure as possible, and it will be part of other activities we’ll be carrying out. The Liberals know we’re here today. They know how important this is to us. They didn’t come to meet with us, but we found ways to send them some ‘black money’ to their offices,” says the coordinator.

The coalition is calling for a comprehensive reform of em-

ployment insurance to expand access and better address the uncertainties of seasonal work.

In the short term, it is calling for the extension and improvement of the pilot project, set to end in October 2026, which provides five additional weeks of benefits to seasonal workers.

The various groups are asking that the measure be maintained, made permanent and expanded to provide up to 15 additional weeks.

“We did meet with the policy advisor to Employment and Families Minister Patty Hajdu. He confirmed that she was aware of the situation regarding employment insurance. He told us she was fighting to bring about change, but that it was a matter of government priorities,” implying that employment insurance reform was not a priority for the Liberals.

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# Sharp rise in home prices in 2025

NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND – The appeal of the Gaspé Peninsula to out-of-town buyers has caused home values to skyrocket in 2025, according to Royal LePage’s 2026 Spring Report on Recreational Properties.

According to the report, the median price of a single-family home in the Avignon MRC rose by 28.6% compared to 2024, reaching \$270,000.

The median price of a single-family home in La Côte-de-Gaspé MRC increased by 16.1% to \$240,000, while in the Bonaventure MRC, the increase was 4.4% to \$227,500.

According to the firm, by 2026, the median price of a single-family home in Avignon is expected to rise by 5.0%, while the Bonaventure and La Côte-de-Gaspé MRCs are projected to see stable prices, with slight increases of 0.5% each.

“Whether it’s to move here permanently or for a second home, many clients from



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

major cities and suburbs are drawn to the Gaspé Peninsula. In many cases, these are young families who want to move here because it offers a safe and relaxed lifestyle compared to dealing with traffic, as well as professionals in their 40s or 50s who are buying second homes in the Gaspé Peninsula and preparing for retirement,” says Christian Cyr, a residen-

tial and commercial real estate broker at Royal LePage Village.

The market remains a seller’s market, but it is stabilizing.

“Demand still outstrips supply. Prices have risen significantly over the past six years, and since December, we’ve seen some stabilization in the market,” the broker

notes.

Often, homeowners from major urban centres sell their properties for prices approaching \$1 million.

“People are moving in and paying \$350,000, \$400,000, or \$450,000 for homes, and they’re used to prices that are often double that. For them, it’s a bargain. Also, construction costs have risen signifi-

cantly over the past six or seven years. Homes priced at \$400,000 are below current construction costs. That’s attractive to people looking for a home,” notes Mr. Cyr.

## 2026 looks promising

Buyers are still coming forward and remain interested in settling in the region.

“When we bring in good properties—houses, cottages, or commercial properties—and the terms are reasonable, there are buyers. Sale times are shorter,” he notes.

“When we talk about stabilization, prices have risen significantly. Many homes have doubled in value over the past five years. There’s a limit to how much they can go up. We’re approaching those limits.”

On the Gaspé Peninsula, bidding wars have been less common over the past two years.

## COMMUNITY STRIKE:

▶ *Cont'd from cover*

Carlisle’s Family Ties, deplores the fact that the Quebec government has missed, for the sixth consecutive year, the priority target set by the Laurent Commission, which recommended \$200,000 in funding for the mission of each family community organization.

“The 2026 budget represented the last opportunity for the current government to demonstrate that it truly places families at the heart of its priorities. In addition to abandoning families, the chronic underfunding of the family community sector is tearing apart the social fabric. Across Quebec, community organizations are at their breaking point! Family community organizations, greatly affected by this crisis, are



Photo: Gilles Gagné

On March 30, at least 100 people occupied the space in front of Bonaventure riding Member of National Catherine Blouin’s office. The demonstration was punctuated by a short period of speeches.

massively joining the community movement at its breaking point!”, she expresses.

“Our movement doesn’t stop there; on the contrary. We intend to make our demands heard by all political parties to

ensure that concrete commitments are made in line with a strong family vision,” she adds.

While demonstrating in Carleton on March 30, Anie Cayouette, of OGPAC, the

Organization of Gaspésians dealing with cancer, pointed out that the precarious situation faced by some people affected by illness is difficult to ignore.

“There is a real problem of

wealth distribution in our society. We see people affected by cancer having to make a choice between eating and travelling in order to get their cancer treatment. It shouldn’t happen”, says Ms. Cayouette.

At the same demonstration, Louise Gallien of Droits Devant, an organization defending people’s rights, expressed cautious hope regarding the Coalition Avenir Québec government’s ability to respond to community groups’ requests.

“It would go faster if we were wealthy people, or rich real estate developers. Then, we would get some attention!” states Ms. Gallien.

As the SPEC was reaching its deadline, two busloads of Gaspésians were heading to Quebec City for an April 2 province wide demonstration in front of the National Assembly.

## NEW CLINIC:

▶ *Cont'd from cover*

In addition to Opération Enfant Soleil, Santé Québec, the CISSS of the Gaspésie, and the hospital foundation could contribute to the establishment of this new clinic, which is expected to be operational by the end of 2027.

### Other funded projects

Opération Enfant Soleil took advantage of this an-

nouncement to invest in additional equipment for the region.

The Chandler CLSC will receive \$21,150 to purchase a pediatric cart, a treatment table and a bilirubinometer.

The cart is specifically designed to meet children’s needs. It features a stable, safe structure adapted to their size and includes several drawers for efficiently organizing pediatric supplies. Its addition of a cart will help speed up procedures, enhance the quality of

care, and provide tangible support for care teams.

The treatment table will facilitate blood draws and procedures for young patients, improve their comfort and safety, and optimize the work of the healthcare teams.

As for the bilirubinometer, jaundice affects 60% of full-term newborns. This tool facilitates detection of jaundice by gently and safely measuring the bilirubin level in the baby’s blood.

Chandler Hospital is also

receiving \$1,800 to purchase two pediatric wheelchairs. These wheelchairs, adapted to children’s sizes, will help them move around more freely and safely.

Maria Hospital is receiving \$22,800 to purchase two bilirubinometers.

The Centre Louise-Amélie in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts will receive \$7,600 to purchase sports equipment, including bicycles, helmets, a basketball hoop and balls.

This equipment will pro-

vide staff with a play-based intervention tool. By addressing young people’s interests, it will encourage engagement, active participation and the development of confidence and self-esteem.

This project is funded by the Sustainable Sports and Health Fund, which aims to promote and support healthy lifestyles among children through sports, physical activity and healthy eating, while also supporting emotional and mental well-being.

# Downhill ski season extended despite warm weather

NELSON SERGERIE

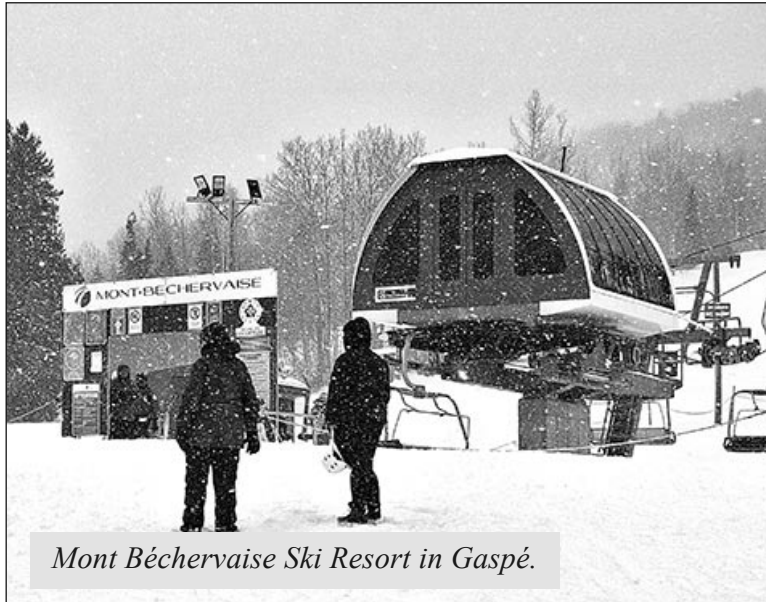
NEW RICHMOND – Despite mild weather and record-breaking temperatures on March 16, the Pin Rouge downhill ski resort in New Richmond and the Béchervaise ski resort in Gaspé managed to extend the season. However, the 30 centimetres of snow that fell during the storm on March 11 and 12 had suggested an exceptional end to the season.

Mother Nature had other plans, with temperatures hovering around 15 degrees on March 16.

“We still have great conditions. All the slopes that were covered in artificial snow are open and groomed,” says Pin Rouge director Gaëlle Gabin, a few hours after the warm weather. The slopes covered only by natural snow were no longer accessible, and the season ended on April 5.

Mont Béchervaise also had concerns following the warm weather. Night skiing scheduled for March 19 was cancelled to preserve the slopes.

“We were hoping to salvage the weekend, and with the snow forecast, we’re able to extend the season a bit further while keeping the mountain safe,” says director Michel Smith. The resort reopened on March 21 and 22 with spring skiing conditions, although the tubing area re-



Mont Béchervaise Ski Resort in Gaspé.

Photo: N. Sergerie

mained closed.

## An excellent season

Mother Nature’s generosity contributed to a strong 2026 season.

“The results we have so far show that we’ve had what you might call an exceptional increase in traffic compared to recent years. The latest ticket office figures showed a 50% increase in visitor numbers. We’re really pleased. We can say that thanks to Mother Nature, we’re making a strong comeback,” comments Pin Rouge’s manager Gaëlle Gabint.

“We had a very good season. People turned out in droves. We had practically nothing but busy days. Virtually every school came to visit us. We had a very good sea-

son,” adds Mr. Smith.

As of March 20, Gaspé had received 271 centimetres of snow since the start of winter.

## Snowmobiling on Water

Snowmobilers had to face reality after the warm weather. As early as March 17, the Mont-Carleton Snowmobile Club informed riders of the closure of the Trans-Québec 5 trail, as snow conditions had become insufficient in that area.

As the week progressed, other clubs issued notices of temporary or permanent closures of their trails. The high mountains of the Gaspé Peninsula remained passable, but even there caution was advised, as the trails were mostly icy.

# Flooding: Situation appears manageable

NELSON SERGERIE

MATAPÉDIA – Every time mild weather sets in, all eyes turn to flood-prone Matapédia, but spring 2026 looks more promising for residents.

“It doesn’t look too bad. We can’t say it looks good because we won’t know until it happens. Channels are forming in the river. The ice has started to break up. That’s a good sign,” says Mayor Serge Normandeau.

There was no thaw during the winter, which will allow the ice to drift toward Chaleur Bay.

“There hasn’t been any ice break-up. In recent years, we’ve had ice break-ups during the holidays, and that caused ice to pile up under the bridge. It caused serious problems. This year, we don’t have



Photo: N. Sergerie

The hovercraft was expected to arrive in Matapédia in early April.

that,” observes the mayor.

The ice is gradually wearing away, which weakens it.

Meetings to co-ordinate activities were held in mid-March with Civil Protection and the Coast Guard to prepare for spring.

The Coast Guard’s hover-

craft was expected in early April to break up the ice and facilitate the clearing of the Restigouche and Matapédia rivers, which converge at Matapédia.

Civil Protection is conducting remote monitoring to track the risk of flooding.



\$58,503.75 was raised at this year’s event.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

## Pin Rouge Challenge raises \$58,503.75 for palliative

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – The 121 participants in the 3rd Pin Rouge Challenge raised \$58,503.75\$ on March 21 at the New Richmond ski centre.

The challenge consisted in skiing 12 hours for most participants. The funds will go towards the Baie-des-Chaleurs Palliative Care Residence project. The initial goal was \$45,000, which was significantly exceeded.

Some teams found original ways to complete the 12-hour (or close to it) challenge. The team formed by Geneviève Bouffard, Danielle Cormier, Catherine Léveillé, Isabelle Sénéchal and Magalie Forest chose not to use the chairlift at all.

The five women climbed the 500 metres of Pin Rouge on skis using seal skins, a technique commonly used by off-trail skiers. “I think the first two climbs were the toughest. After that, you just get used to it. Doing it as a team greatly helped,” comments Danielle Cormier after the feat.

The management of the Baie-des-Chaleurs Palliative Care Residence will soon announce the location of the facility, which is likely to be in Maria.

## It’s cold... even in spring

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Even though Fred the groundhog from Val-d’Espoir predicted an early spring on February 2, mild weather is taking its time reaching the Gaspé Peninsula.

Two cold records were set overnight between March 28 and 29 in the Gaspé Peninsula.

According to Environment Canada, the mercury dropped to -20.9°C in Carleton-sur-Mer, surpassing the previous record of -18.9°C set in 1974.

Cap-d’Espoir also set a new record, with the previous low of -11.4°C broken by a temperature of -12.4°C.

The coldest spot was Gaspé at -21.6°C, but the record there was much harder to beat. It stands at -27.8°C, set more than 100 years ago in 1923.

## Baie-des-Chaleurs Regional School to open on April 13

Gilles Gagné

NEW CARLISLE – The move from New Carlisle High School to Baie-des-Chaleurs Regional School will take place in the days following Easter, allowing students to begin classes in the new building on April 13.

It is two weeks later than expected. In February, when the management of the Eastern Shores School Board (ESSB) had been targeting a move before the end of March.

On April 1, the school board informed parents and guardians that two additional pedagogical days will be added on April 9 and 10, supplementing the two already scheduled for April 7 and 8.

The four pedagogical days should “make this transition as calm and pleasant as possible,” according to the message issued by ESSB. “These days will allow our team to move the materials safely, organize classrooms and prepare the spaces for your children”, the message states. April 6, a day off following Easter, combined with the four pedagogical days, will result in a full week off for students.

The ESSB management is asking parents to monitor the Mozaik Portal, where updates will be posted if necessary.

The move required approval from the building contractor before the school could be turned over to the school board.

The first wing of New Carlisle High School was built in 1913. The decision to construct a new school was announced in September 2021.

# The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie will build a transshipment centre in Port-Daniel

GILLES GAGNÉ

PORT DANIEL – The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie will soon build a freight transshipment centre near the Port-Daniel cement plant. The goal is to increase service to the plant and also to provide a service to shippers awaiting the rehabilitation of the rail network between Port-Daniel and Gaspé.

This rehabilitation is being carried out using contracts already completed or underway, but the Quebec Ministry of Transport suspended the awarding of new repair contracts between Port-Daniel and Gaspé a year ago after certain tenders were deemed too expensive. For the second year in a row, the Quebec Infrastructure Plan, as outlined in the March 18 budget, does not include new funding for that portion of the regional rail network.

Luc Lévesque, director general of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), the freight carrier between Matapédia and Port Daniel, specifies that a 22-



Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

*The railway line was reopened from New Richmond to Port Daniel on January 7 and cement traffic started on January 19.*

hectare piece of land has been acquired near the cement plant, which has been a rail customer from that location since January. It was during that month that the railway line between New Richmond and Port-Daniel was reopened, after several delays announced by Transports Québec, the railway's owner.

"The purchase price is \$300,000. We anticipate that once the tracks and access road are installed, the investment could exceed \$1 million.

This will be allocated according to the needs of the coming months and years," explains Mr. Lévesque.

"For the moment, nothing is attached, but it's our neighbour, Saint Mary's Cement. We already transport cement for them. We think there might be a need for raw materials arriving at the cement plant. We're in discussions. We had to make a move. It's one of the only places where we could set up a transshipment centre near the cement plant. The

zoning change was made by the previous owner," he adds.

Recently, the Minister of Transport, Jonatan Julien, indicated that he was waiting for a "business plan" from the Gaspé Railway Corporation to justify the railway's rehabilitation to Gaspé.

He was sharply criticized by regional development consultant Gaétan Lelièvre, who reminded him that Quebec's Ministry of Transport had failed to fulfill its commitment to repair the rail network to Gaspé by 2025 or 2026, as promised by premier François Legault starting in 2019 and several times since. Mr. Lelièvre denounced the fact that the minister was trying to shift the burden of this commitment onto the people of Gaspé.

## Getting closer to Gaspé, and eventually servicing it

Luc Lévesque is reluctant to engage in political debates, but he clarified that the Port-Daniel transshipment centre aims, in particular, to attract companies that want to reduce

their transportation costs while awaiting the real solution: the reopening of the railway between Port-Daniel and Gaspé. These companies include LM Wind Power, a manufacturer of wind turbine blades.

"We are in discussions with clients. We have received requests for information. Regarding the transport of the blades, the dimensions are compatible with rail transport. The client will decide on the best method. The door is not closed, far from it," says Mr. Lévesque.

The SCFG transported blades for five and a half years, from December 2016 to May 2022, between New Richmond and Matapédia, where CN took delivery for their final destination, Texas or neighbouring states. The transport of the blades between the LM plant in Gaspé and New Richmond was done by truck, at great expense to the American wind farm developers.

"In 2016, I didn't know

**Cont'd on page 10**

# The SCFG tripled its traffic in 2025, thanks to Maria's aggregates trains

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – Freight traffic increased threefold in 2025 for the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) compared to 2024. The municipally controlled entity hauled 6,395 railcars last year instead of 2,066 the year before, including 4,700 generated by the transport of construction aggregates between Nouvelle and Maria for the latter town's beach replenishment work.

The director general of the transporter, Luc Lévesque, is satisfied with the results, even if for now the aggregates traffic is not expected to be repeated elsewhere along the coast. However, he notes that he did not know about that contract before June 2025, so surprises can happen.

"It was a good year. Our transportation revenues increased from \$4 million to \$6 million between 2024 and 2025. However, we lost some wood chip traffic starting in April due to the closure of the White Birch paper mill in Riv-



Photo: Gilles Gagné

*SCFG aggregate train, fall 2025: Aggregate trains alone have tripled SCFG's traffic by 2025.*

ière-du-Loup. Our diversification is saving us. We're demonstrating opportunism. You have to reach out to clients from the outset, when they're organizing themselves. That's what we did when Béluga (a contractor) called us for aggregates," explains Luc Lévesque.

Despite losing the woodchip traffic coming from the Groupe Lebel sawmill in Nouvelle, the SCFG also benefited

from revenues generated by the acquisition of 256 woodchip cars from Canadian National Railway (CN). Some of these cars, as well as the 32 cars already owned by the SCFG, are circulating elsewhere in Quebec and in Ontario. Some of them also hauled woodchips in New Brunswick in 2025.

"The closure of the Rivière-du-Loup paper mill, temporary at first and permanent in De-

cember, made us lose some woodchip traffic. The lumber industry is also going through a difficult period. However, the sawmills are looking for other paper mills to sell their woodchips and at one point, that traffic will pick up. When sawmills have to sell their woodchips far away, railways are at an advantage," analyzes Mr. Lévesque.

He is also confident that more traffic will be generated by the Saint Mary's Cement plant in Port-Daniel now that some of the production is loaded directly into railcars at the facility. It is too early to assess the situation because the first loaded cement train circulated towards New Richmond and Matapédia at the end of January.

"We are still using our temporary loading system while waiting for Saint Mary's Cement's system to be ready," says Mr. Lévesque. Certain cement cars, functioning by gravity, are still loaded in New Richmond, with trucks shuttling from the Port-Daniel fa-

cility.

There was a small increase in the lumber traffic generated by Groupe Lebel in Nouvelle. However, the SCFG does not reveal per-client traffic details, at the request of its customers.

Since the SCFG began providing freight services along the coast in 2007, its best year for operations had been 2021, with 4,636 carloads, which coincided with the peak of windmill blade transportation.

Luc Lévesque is favourably welcoming VIA Rail's stated intention, announced on March 11, to resume service in the Gaspé Peninsula, either between Matapédia and New Carlisle or between Matapédia and Port-Daniel. Between 2019 and March 2026, the management of this public rail carrier maintained that it would only return east of Matapédia once the network was repaired all the way to Gaspé.

"This is good news. No one was expecting VIA Rail," notes Mr. Lévesque, aware that it will still take a few months before the service resumes.

three months before the blade shipment that we would have this contract. The fire keeps burning. We can't wait for the contract to come in before organizing. Once the agreement is signed, we can finalize the arrangements in Port-Daniel within two months. If we had to buy land and rezone it, it would take at least a year. The idea is to be ready in a matter of weeks, based on a client's expressed need, and that includes transporting blades. In New Richmond, we had very little space. Now, we have plenty," explains Luc Lévesque.

A transshipment centre for blades in Port-Daniel is not the ultimate goal, however.

"The objective is to load them in Gaspé. That's where we can offer the best trans-

portation costs to our clients," insists Mr. Lévesque.

#### Daniel Côté wonders how ministers get their information

Frustrated by what he sees as shifting political narratives around a commitment made by Premier François Legault seven years ago, Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté is questioning how Quebec's transport ministers and other cabinet members are being informed about the Gaspé railway file.

"I don't understand how they can believe that LM is supplying offshore wind farms with 107-metre blades, when that hasn't been the case since the end of 2023! I have the impression that the system (the civil servants) is negatively influencing the politicians. I had a conversation with Geneviève Guilbault, whom I know relatively well,



Photo: Gilles Gagné

*Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté questions how Quebec ministers are informed about the potential of the Gaspé railway.*

when she was Minister of Transport, and I got the impression that she had been brainwashed by her system,"

## MTQ refuses to provide figures on rail investments

NELSON SERGERIE

**GASPÉ** – When asked about the specific amounts invested by the Quebec government since the start of the rail rehabilitation between Matapédia and Gaspé, the Ministry of Transport has no precise figures to provide at this stage.

With trains now operating on Sections 1 and 2 between Matapédia and Port-Daniel-Gascons, SPEC sought to determine the total investment required to restore service along that portion of the line.

"For Sections 1 and 2, the final amounts invested will be known upon the completion of all contracts awarded for each project. The Ministry must wait until that time to finalize the costs due to factors that could increase or decrease them," the ministry replies in an email.

Questions also remain regarding Section 3, between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

Elected officials have frequently cited cost overruns of between \$150 million and \$200 million compared with the budget initially allocated for that segment. In June 2023, then-transport minister Geneviève Guilbault announced a budget of \$517 million for the work.

"Regarding Section 3, two major calls for bids related to the work were cancelled in



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*The Ministry of Transport declines to provide figures on the amounts invested to date in the Gaspé railway between Matapédia and Gaspé.*

2025 because the costs presented in the bids represented a significant deviation from the ministry's estimates," the ministry simply states, even though the question was about obtaining a precise figure for the cost overruns in question.

In its email, the ministry reiterates the budgets authorized by the Government of Quebec: \$54.5 million for the section between Matapédia and Caplan; \$299.7 million for the section between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons; and for the section between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, "the authorized budget will be specified upon completion of planning," despite announcements made by Quebec in 2023.

It should be noted that no

specific amount is mentioned in the 2026–2036 Quebec Infrastructure Plan for the rail rehabilitation to Gaspé.

Based on the estimate presented in June 2023 by then-minister Geneviève Guilbault and the cost overruns cited by provincial elected officials, the rehabilitation of the Port-Daniel-Gascons to Gaspé section could reach approximately \$700 million.

Furthermore, various stakeholders note that nearly \$200 million has been invested in Section 3 to date, with the most visible projects being the Grande-Rivière and Douglstown bridges.

The total project budget announced in 2023 was \$817.8 million. Taking cost overruns into account, the final cost could approach \$1 billion.

says Mr. Côté.

"Minister Julien indicated that LM is now shipping its blades by ship. It's clear they're using ships. There's no train (in Gaspé)! Are they going to store blades until 2075? Osisko is coming to re-open the Murdochville mine in 2032. Robert Wares (president of Osisko) announced in the media that he will need the rail; 2032 is six years away. The work should start immediately, at the current pace, so that everything is ready. They want a business plan. We're going to make one. We're going to demonstrate it again," the mayor of Gaspé reiterates.

He notes that the delays are increasing the repair costs, already impacted by the numerous delays that have occurred since 2019.

"Nine of the 15 structures located between Port-Daniel and Gaspé are currently under

construction. How can we justify repairing nine of the 15 structures on a railway that won't be used? Does it cost money? Yes, but why so much? Because (the Transport ministry) is stumbling! The longer it takes, the more development opportunities we lose, the more economic competitiveness we lose, and the more it will cost," concludes Daniel Côté.

When Geneviève Guilbault announced that the railroad refurbishment bill would cost \$871.8 million for the whole Matapédia-Gaspé stretch on June 27, 2023, the transport of turbine blades was no longer part of the picture, since at that time, LM was only exporting 107-metre blades for offshore wind farms.

The railway rehabilitation project officially began in 2017, with an initial budget of \$100 million.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*No fewer than 26,000 Hydro-Québec customers were without power between Bonaventure and Grande-Vallée.*

## Half of the Gaspé Peninsula without power

Nelson Sergerie

**SAINTE-MADELEINE-DE-LA-RIVIERE-MADELEINE** – A violent fire that completely destroyed a home in the Manche-d'Épée sector of Sainte-Madeleine-de-la-Rivière-Madeleine on March 24 forced authorities to cut power, and the impact was felt across the eastern part of the Gaspé Peninsula. Even TELUS customers were affected by the outage, which began shortly before 6 p.m.

As a precaution, Hydro-Québec was forced to de-energize several substations between Bonaventure and Manche-d'Épée because the fire had damaged telecommunications equipment.

"It's quite rare for a house fire to spread to power lines and affect the telecommunications lines that supply the substations. This isn't something that happens often," Hydro-Québec spokesperson Émily-Ann Bacon tells CHNC.

Areas between Bonaventure and Gaspé had their power restored around 8 p.m., while those between Rivière-au-Renard and Manche-d'Épée had power restored around 9:40 p.m.

#### Telus also affected

The fire affected TELUS equipment, and the power outage caused by the fire had an intermittent and partial impact on services, according to the Canadian telecommunications company. Internet and cellphone services experienced disruptions for some customers.

A fiber-optic cable break required splicing work, which was completed on March 25, allowing all services to be restored for affected customers.

## 1998 was a violent year

GILLES GAGNÉ

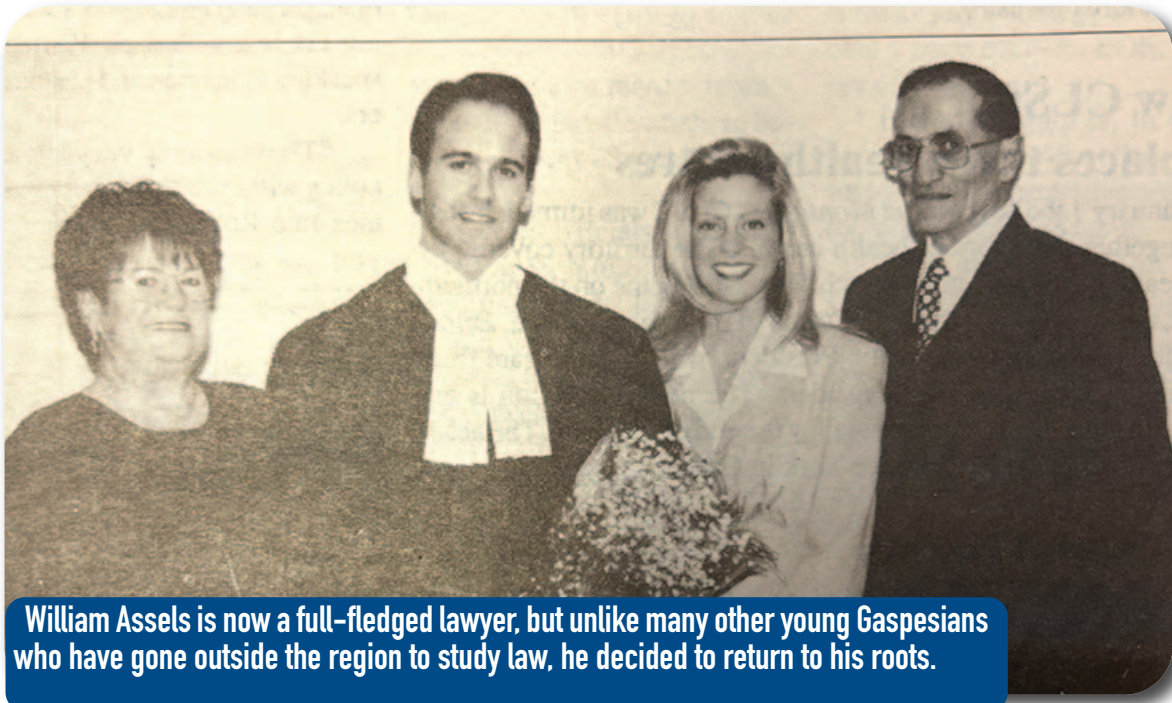
NEW CARLISLE – 1998 was violent, taking into account that three murders were committed, and the trial related to a fourth murder that had occurred on Christmas night of 1996, only took place in November 1998. Other events were violent in other ways, they were nerve-racking, like the Gaspesia mill strike and the reaction of the plant owner to ponder the possible closure of one of the facility's two paper machines. The forestry crisis, triggered by a number of Listuguj leaders, was also nerve-racking, for the organizers and for the citizens of the surrounding area, but it led to some progress in the Mi'gmaq land claims and access to resources.

**Vol 24. No 1  
January 11, 1998**

- In issue 1, dated January 11, "Former employee accuses Chief of union busting" following a massive layoff at Listuguj, and "Linguistic school board: English speakers must register for voting, taxation rights", make the headlines. "Gaspé airport turned over to municipality", "Dry weather causes water problems – weather patterns on the Coast have changed" and "Contract for construction of (the Port Daniel) cement plant to be awarded in May" make smaller front-page titles.

**Vol 24. No 2  
January 18, 1998**

- "Gaspesians answer the call – wood, food sent to Montreal area" headlines issue 2, dated January 18. The call came following the massive ice storm on January 6 that ravaged the southwest part of Quebec and the neighbouring part of Ontario. "Citizens congratulate mayor for keeping taxes down" in New Richmond, Rodrigue "Boudreau to stand trial in (Port Daniel's Denis) Langlois murder", a crime that occurred on December 25, 1996, Rodrigue Boudreau, 28, was arrested on September 30, 1997, and "Cable, changes



William Assels is now a full-fledged lawyer, but unlike many other young Gaspesians who have gone outside the region to study law, he decided to return to his roots.

confuse, anger subscribers" in Gaspé, also make page 1.

**Vol 24. No 3  
January 25, 1998**

- "Gaspesia agrees to take pulp already cut", "New lawyer chooses region over city" and "VIA Rail: number of passengers up 45% since 1993" headline issue 3, dated January 25. "Municipal budget round-up", "Channel Islands Society unhappy with film set in Forillon" and "Atlantic salmon: Camp Bonaventure booming on new catch and release program" complete page 1 titles. VIA's ridership went from 32,750 people in 1996 to 34,895 in 1997. Its cost recovery reaches 50% in the Gaspésie. Inside, Donald J. Flowers writes a long article about Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion Journeaux.

**Vol 24. No 4  
February 1, 1998**

- "Poor ice causes headaches for smelt fishermen" and "Linguistic School Board: Board asks for 2 more commissioners" headline issue 4, dated February 1. "Pollution regulations: farmers threatened by new rules", "Chaleur Bay Dairy: products on sale as of Feb. 9" and "Gaspesians to be interviewed about health concerns, lifestyle" are the other page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 5  
February 8, 1998**

- "Escuminac: RCMP make their biggest grass bust ever", "Decline of New Carlisle: Anglo leadership missing in action, says community worker" and "St. Elzéar Co-op invests in the future" headline issue 5, dated February 8. "Insect control sparks controversy" in Gaspé, Louis-Philippe "Ste-Croix, D-G of new mega-hospital" in Gaspé and "Name of French board angers Liberal organizers" make smaller page 1 titles. The school board was, and remains named after the late René Lévesque.

**Vol 24. No 6  
February 15, 1998**

- GBHC, Gaspesian British "Heritage Centre aims to raise \$25,000 – accumulated debt a 'cause of concern'" at \$45,000, "Are lobster now following the cod into oblivion", after a 30% catch decrease in 1997, and "SPEC launches market study" to increase readership, headline issue 6, dated February 15. "Widow, 3 children thrown out of home", Miguasha's mother Sandra Lynch, "The Gaspé needs to spend \$1.5 million per year on tourism" and "Towns struggle with water shortage" complete the front-page titles. In Listuguj, an agreement is reached with the band administration employees.

**Vol 24. No 7  
February 22, 1998**

- "Gaspé voters turn down insect control program", "An-

other \$23 million to be invested by Stone" in its New Richmond mill, and "Valentine's Tea helps relaunch Handicapped Association" make the big titles of issue 7, released on February 22. "Suicide: Gaspé boast the lowest rate in Quebec", "Towns fear losing local development agencies" and "Gaspesia (mill) wins case against wood producers' injunction" also make the front-page titles. In the Gaspesia case, the two parties are still negotiating.

**Vol 24. No 8  
March 1, 1998**

- "Pabok fusion: councillor (Dennis Drainville) angered over lack of English", "Gaspé student (Jeremy Hackett) wins W.I. bursary" and "School board: name rejected by toponymy commission", the proposed name being Gaspesia – North Shore – the Islands, headline issue 8, dated March 1. "Percé: company will process sealskins", "New Carlisle: business to make chains, cables", namely Industries MPS, and "Federal budget: income tax cuts welcome - no regional dev't measures" make smaller page 1 titles. Pabok was the first name of the Rocher Percé MRC.

**Vol 24. No 9  
March 8, 1998**

- "Record rains lash coast, cause flooding" leaving 190 millimetres in the Gaspé town area, and "New school board:

provisional council chooses 'Eastern Shores' – parents with kids in both systems can vote in both" headline issue 9, dated March 8. "Constitutional expert takes pre-election tour around province" and "New Richmond: town falls out with firm digging new wells" also make the cover.

**Vol 24. No 10  
March 15, 1998**

- "Wayne Adams wins top tourism award", "New school board: 'Eastern Shores' OK'd by toponymy commission – staffing plan going to union next week" and Wakeham-York "Carnival survives weird winter" headline issue 10, dated March 15. "Employment & welfare services: new centres opening in April", "Financial campaign: GBHC nears 10% of its target" and "Pabok amalgamation: Cyr submits plan for 7-town merger to Municipal Affairs" also make page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 11  
March 22, 1998**

- Issue 11, dated March 22 headlines with "Gaspesia Teachers' Association: union concerned about Gaspé surplus problem", "St. Pat's celebrated in style" and "Gas wars: Independents fear 60 stations will fold". "Breuvages Gaspé: bottling ends after half a century" and "Union being formed by support staff" also appear on the cover.

**Vol 24. No 12  
March 29, 1998**

- House of Commons' "Fisheries committee accuses DFO of gross mismanagement" for the groundfish stocks' decline and "Sex study: Average age at first intercourse is less than 14 years – Anglos, francos differ little, says researcher" headline issue 12, dated March 29. "Teenager (Annetta Grant) links Gaspesians near and far" makes another headline.

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“Carleton: young farmers plan easier transfers” and “Gaspé: hospital cuts 42 positions” make other page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 14**  
**April 12, 1998**

- “Organic compost headed for US”, namely Shigawake’s Seagro, and “CLEs: no clear policy on service in English” makes the headlines of issue 14, (issue 13 is missing in our archives) dated April 12. “Newport: Americans abandon fish plant”, “New Carlisle: forum on the future” and “Sawmills: GDS will invest \$3 million” complete page 1. makes the headlines of issue 14, (issue 13 is missing in our archives) dated April 12. “Newport: Americans abandon fish plant”, “New Carlisle: forum on the future” and “Sawmills: GDS will invest \$3 million” complete page 1.

**Vol 24. No 15**  
**April 19, 1998**

- “Chandler wharf: RCMP seize \$1.2 million in cocaine”, three kilos to be exact, seized on cargo liner “Happiness II” which was loading newsprint, and “The Charest effect: Liberal memberships selling like hotcakes” headline issue 15, dated April 19. “Schoolboard: no students shuffled this year”, “La Péninsule extends coverage to all of Percé” and Guy “Chevrette named new minister of regions portfolio” make the other page 1 titles. Inside, Many Metallic, the Listuguj techno-linguist, needs funding to continue his Micmac dictionary.

**Vol 24. No 16**  
**April 26, 1998**

- “Dairy way beyond market objective”, “Employment centres: director promises English services” and “Gaspé: Cegep’s English registration up 30%” fill the headline of issue 16, released on April 26. “Micmacs sued for opening quarry on Busted land”, as William Busted is asking for \$123,837 compensation, and “NR native (Paul Willett) honoured by United Hockey



On Thursday, May 7, students of the English section of C.E. Pouliot Polyvalent assembled in the school auditorium for the Annual Public Speaking Competition. Above, in the front from left: Amy Chicoine, Annetta Grant, Mila Foley, Shanna Syvret, Melissa Gaul and Angelina Leggo. Back row: Kristy Roberts, Kerri-Lee Drohan and Caroline Mullin.

League”, also make page 1.

**Vol 24. No 18**  
**May 10, 1998**

- “Grand River: fisherman’s death considered murder”, “Diane Sawyer wins NR award” and “AQ leadership race: CASA may bow out of AQ (Alliance Quebec) if (William) Johnson wins” headline issue 18, dated May 10 (issue 17 is missing). “Bonaventure murder: teenagers sent for psychological evaluations”, the latter referring to retiree Herméline Bourdages-Leblanc being killed, and “Schoolboard elections: Anglos have until June 9 to choose – May 31 deadline for nominations” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 24. No 19**  
**May 17, 1998**

- “Health care: Murdochville dropped from English plan”, “Chaleur Bay Anglos meet to discuss economy, info, education” and “CEGEP honours English-speaking grads” in Gaspé headline issue 19, dated May 17. “Election primer: to register for the English School Board – taxes are the same at every board” and “Eastern Shores School Board: only 987 names on electoral list so far” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 24. No 20**  
**May 24, 1998**

- “St. Jules: deal soon to be signed on salmon fishery – gov’t to negotiate on nets at the mouth” and “Cross Point: demo against Revenue Quebec – merchants want same treatment as natives” headline

issue 20, dated May 24. “Public speaking competition held May 15” at Shigawake Port-Daniel School”, another headline, “Gaspé: firemen receive fully equipped truck from generous Montrealer” and “Gaspésians have faith in health system” complete page 1.

**Vol 24. No 21**  
**May 31, 1998**

- Issue 21, dated May 31 shows “Gaspé: vandals sack Fort Haldimand”, “Charest: no candidates yet for Bonaventure County” and “BPS grads enjoy Prom” as headlines. “Grand River: Dubé murder remains a mystery” and “Tourism: new plan to highlight Percé to Forillon route” also make the cover.

**Vol 24. No 22**  
**June 7, 1998**

- Issue 22, released on June 7, features “School board: no consensus on direct costs to parents – notices being sent to former taxpayers” as the main headline. A picture-caption shows New Carlisle High School children undertaking a water protection activity. “Gaspé: crucial meeting for Surgicure future” and “Close call at Alliance Quebec convention – (William) Johnson takes control” also make page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 23**  
**June 14, 1998**

- “CASA: Anglo group asks for input about new leadership style at AQ”, “Freight traffic begins again on Gaspé to Chandler rail line” and “CBC personalities visit

Gaspé” headline issue 23, dated June 14. “Anglos show interest in new boards” and “Cloridorme: suspect arrested for setting fires” complete page 1 content.

**Vol 24. No 24**  
**June 21, 1998**

- “Chandler: Fishplant workers kicked out of EI office – waiting for word on renewal of TAGS” (The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy) and “Eastern Shores has highest turnout” headline issue 24, dated June 21. “Strike at Gaspesia costly for region” and “Gaspé: Olympian Miriam Bédard participates in triathlon” make smaller page 1 titles. Inside, SPEC turns an \$8,000 profit in 1997-1998.

**Vol 24. No 25**  
**June 28, 1998**

- Issue 25, dated June 28 features “Johnson responds to CASA’s concerns” and “Special train visits the Coast” as headlines. The special train regroups managers of North America’s class 1 railways, where passenger trains circulate. “Little support for marriage of Maria, Carleton” and “CASA today: another successful season on air” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 26**  
**July 5, 1998**

- “Gaspé may have new cultural facilities”, “VIA prepares for summer months – dome car has returned” and “Scotiabank celebrates 90th anniversary” in New Carlisle headline issue 26, dated July 5. Page 1 also features “Gaspé Poly salutes graduates” and

“Local teens to gun for provincial championships” in fastball.

**Vol 24. No 27**  
**July 12, 1998**

- “Eastern Shores: administrative structure largely in place – Acteson will chair new council of commissioners” and “Multicultural festivities a smash hit in New Richmond” headline issue 27, dated July 12. “VIA says good-bye to conductors” and “Percé: Groupe Riotel to invest \$2 million” make the other front-page titles. Inside, “SPEC wins three QCNA awards”, for best front-page, best series (on salmon) and best editorial.

**Vol 24. No 28**  
**July 19, 1998**

- Issue 28, dated July 19 features “Port-Daniel: contract signed for construction of cement plant” and “Gaspé: Clark’s Greenhouses close on July 10” as headlines. “Rosebridge: golf course plans scuttled” and “Pin Rouge: Co-op gives board ok to sell” complete page 1 content.

**Vol 24. No 29**  
**July 26, 1998**

- “Town stunned by missing priest”, namely Laurent Leblanc, last seen on July 17, “Micmacs prepare for massive land claim – loggers want to be arrested, take matter to court” and “Youth charms at fiddle fest” headline issue 29, released on July 26. “Chandler strike (at paper mill): Chamber of Commerce asks strikers to reflect” and “Feathers returned after hunger strike”, the feathers belonging to a Native New Carlisle jail inmate, also appear on page 1.

**Vol 24. No 30**  
**August 2, 1998**

- Issue 30, dated August 2, features “Cross Point: Book-binding business is booming” and “Tourism is up, way up in the town of Gaspé” as headlines. Terry Fox’s mother,

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“Betty Fox to tour the Coast” and “Gespeg Micmac Interpretation Centre – 40% increase in visitors make other page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 31  
August 9, 1998**

- Listuguj “Micmacs increase pressure” to get cutting rights, “Pesticides: New code threatens municipal powers” and “Vet’s visitor off to peaceful park”, the visitor being a fawn, headline issue 31, released on August 9. “Father Leblanc: intensive search proves fruitless” and “VIA Rail: No more baggage check at five stations along coast” make the other front-page titles.

**Vol 24. No 32  
August 16, 1998**

- “Compensation deal relieves pressure in Cross Point – Micmac contingent off to National Assembly” and “Barachois: citizens demonstrate against checked baggage abolition” for fear of seeing their station close, headline issue 32, dated August 16. “Cross Point: tourists fear impact of dispute” and “Pesticides: MRC officials unhappy with code” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 33  
August 23, 1998**

- “Suspect charged in priest’s murder”, Sydney MacAlpine, and “Listuguj signs deal” to end the forestry crisis make striking headlines in issue 33, dated August 23. “Mixed emotions as Father Leblanc’s body found” and “Gaspé: Huge Canadian Tire store coming” complete page 1 titles. Sydney MacAlpine, 18, was arrested in North Bay, Ontario. It was not known as of August 17 if his fingerprints helped solve the murder. Inside, Gary Metallic, the leader of the Listuguj demonstrators, runs a letter explaining their cause.

**Vol 24. No 34  
August 30, 1998**

- Issue 34, dated August 30, notably features “Cod fishermen want meeting with minister” David Anderson, of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, to denounce the unfairness of the “index fishery”, and the distribution of a small quota of 3,000 tonnes. “Best buddies”, a picture-caption combo related to the Shigawake Fair, “Father Leblanc laid to rest in Bonaventure”, “Police services: Unilingual dispatchers make proper response problematic” and “Port Daniel: Demo angers VIA tourist operators” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 35  
September 6, 1998**

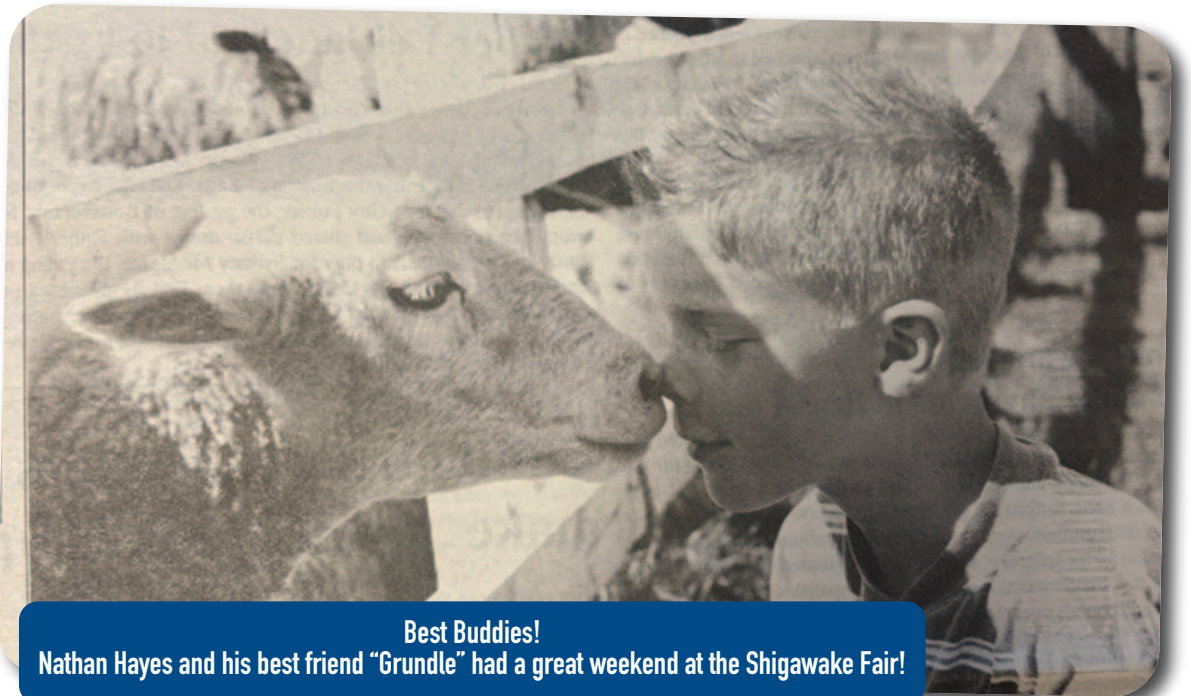
- “New Carlisle: Gérard D. (Levesque) honoured with street name”, “Bonaventure murder: Adult court decision out October 5” and “Cod crisis: Blanchette (the former bishop) mediates between DFO and fishermen” headline issue 35, dated September 6. “Betty Fox tour: Terry’s mother boosts local runs”, “Atlantic salmon: gov’t moves to protect some stocks” and “Gaspé: some fear loss of local post office” complete the front-page titles.

**Vol 24. No 36  
September 13, 1998**

- “School board: over 1,600 registered with Eastern Shores” and “Escuminac: Smelt fishermen a whole year without income” for smelt fishermen Byron and Lee Court, due to poor weather, headline issue 36, dated September 13. “VIA Rail: Tauck Tours sold out next summer”, “Non-native depanneur owners form merchants association” and “Cod crisis: dispute draws to a peaceful end” complete the front-page titles.

**Vol 24. No 37  
September 20, 1998**

- Issue 37, released on September 20, headlines with “CASA: Gaspé members give organization ‘one last chance’” because of power concentration in Bonaventure county, Georges “Farrah visits to encourage Liberals” and “Fall Fest provides plenty of entertainment” at Corner-of-the-Beach. “RECIF: (Gérard) Jean



**Best Buddies!**  
Nathan Hayes and his best friend “Grundle” had a great weekend at the Shigawake Fair!

resigns, still no jobs” in commercial smelt fisheries and “St. Jules: amalgamation meeting small, quiet” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 38  
September 27, 1998**

- Issue 38, dated September 27, headlines with “Carleton: Dairy files for protection from creditors”, “Gaspesia: Deal with union on local working conditions” three months after the strike starts, and “Governor general visits Percé and Gaspé”. “Amalgamation: Cascapedia residents sceptical” and “Truck accidents on the rise” also make the front-page.

**Vol 24. No 39  
October 4, 1998**

- Issue 39, dated October 4, features “Premier makes no promises for the Coast - \$500,000 for Maria’s scanner is only contribution” and “Gaspé county: with (Claude, prefect of the Pabok MRC) Cyr win, Liberals declare war to (Guy) Lelièvre” as headlines. Those titles set the pace for the November 30 election. Inside, Nathalie Normandeau will run for the Liberals in Bonaventure.

**Vol 24. No 40  
October 11, 1998**

- Issue 40, dated October 11, headlines with “Increase in new cancer cases means patients must go to Montreal”, “Bonaventure murder: Youth will be judged in adult court” and “Pet blessing popular with puppies” in Port Daniel. “Pin

Rouge: coop has one week to find buyer” and “Grand Cascapedia & St. Jules vote overwhelmingly to merge” complete front-page titles. Inside, “Gesgapegiag: new school wing celebrated” is covered on page 3.

**Vol 24. No 41  
October 18, 1998**

- “Newport: Charest promises ‘honesty’” about fish plant, “CASA sticks with AQ despite signs controversy” and “Young family wins playhouse” headline issue 41, dated October 18. “RCMP search ship for cocaine”, the J.A. Sunrise, and “Long distance calls will cost less” make the other page 1 titles. Alliance Quebec president William Johnson pushes for more signs in English amidst a Quebec electoral campaign. Inside, the defence appeals the transfer to adult court of the two youths charged with Herméline Bourdages-Leblanc’s murder.

**Vol 24. No 42  
October 25, 1998**

- Issue 42, released on October 25 headlines with “Health care: (minister Jean) Rochon: Anglo access plans ‘almost there’ – documents first sent for approval in 1995”, “Poverty increasing on Coast” and “Unwind with some good books”. “CASA: Board ‘re-organization’ session to be held November 7” and “Cocaine worth \$192 million seized” in a vehicle passing in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, likely coming from the ship J.A. Sunrise, are other front-page titles.

**Vol 24. No 43  
November 1, 1998**

- Issue 43, dated November 1 headlines with “New Richmond: Election campaign turns nasty, dirty”, between incumbent Jean-Marie Jobin and outgoing councillor Bobby Caissy, and “Chris Kennedy: Help from family, friends, strangers eased his last days”, as the Douglstown adolescent died of cancer. “Wilbert Coffin: amateur sleuths want review” and “Liberals, PQ’ists gearing up” also make other front-page titles. The amateur sleuths are Alton Price and Ottawa resident Larry Butlin, who affirm that the Gaspesian prospector was not guilty of three American hunters’ murders in 1953.

**Vol 24. No 44  
November 8, 1998**

- Issue 44, dated November 8, headlines with “Port Daniel: Big change - (Denis) Langlois takes over” as mayor, “New Richmond: Mayor Jobin wins with 72% support, Caissy concedes” and “Local students off to leadership conference”, the students being from New Carlisle High School. Inside, readers see “Pin Rouge: Campbellton group buys ski hill” for a tad over \$125,000.

**Vol 24. No 45  
November 15, 1998**

- Liberal Party leader Jean “Charest unveils development

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policy – commits to cash for cement plant” and “Quebec announces \$2.5M for victims” in Gaspé, headline issue 45, dated November 15. “Election ’98: Liberals want to take on challenge”, “Revision period ends November 17” and “Gaspé: more tourists stayed longer in ‘98” complete the page 1 titles. Inside, at the trial held to shed light on the 1996 murder of Port-Daniel’s Daniel Langlois, readers see “Police lose photos of alleged crime scene”.

**Vol 24. No 46  
November 22, 1998**

- Issue 46, dated November 22, headlines with “English teachers close Bonaventure poly” and “Election ’98: (premier Lucien) Bouchard promises more money for aquaculture”. The English teachers were part of a province-wide movement requesting pay equity. Inside, Rodrigue “Boudreau pleads guilty” of Daniel Langlois’ murder. Remembrance Day coverage also appears in this issue.

**Vol 24. No 47  
November 29, 1998**

- “Port Daniel: Quebec announces \$15M for cement plant”, “Cap d’Espoir: Fish-plant turning out - wreaths!” and “Nez Rouge: volunteers ready to go” headline issue 47, dated November 29.

**Vol 24. No 48  
December 6, 1998**

- Issue 48, released on December 6, headlines with November 30 election results: “Normandeu takes Bonaventure back for Libs”, “Gaspé’s got the ‘blues’ again”, following another victory by PQ candidate Guy Lelièvre, and “Escuminac couple deprived of vote – PQ supporter had their name struck from list”. Smaller page 1 titles are: “Port Daniel: six months more before (cement plant) financing completed”, “Chandler (mill): strike over, but jobs threatened by press shut-down” and “Poll by poll election results”.

**Vol 24. No 49  
December 13, 1998**

- Issue 49, dated December 13, features “Coalition of EI beneficiaries unites Quebec, NB” and “Poor Kashmir! Rest in peace”, the story of a young Barachois moose that died after being moved to Bonaventure’s Bioparc. “Wakeham: three groups oppose plan for



**Family Ties up for yet another award**  
New Carlisle’s Family Ties, an organization dedicated to helping young anglophone families in the area, is up for yet another prestigious award, the Prix Emmanuel Lachapelle.

dump” and “Chandler: Gaspesia’s future looks bleak”, after five-month strike and upcoming shutdowns, complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 24. No 50  
December 20, 1998**

- “Groupe Forillon: DFO charges fishermen for illegal cod catch”, “Gaspé: Christmas gift of reduced taxes from council” and “Gaspé poly in the mood for Christmas” headline issue 50, dated December 20, the year’s last paper. So, 41 fishermen are facing 293 charges of illegal cod fishing

off Miscou island in August. “Listuguj protest leader feared violence at barricades”, “Canada Post delivery service in tatters after massive

changes” and “VIA Rail: Franchising plan could threaten year-around service” complete the front-page topics of a content-heavy issue.

Picking up a copy of SPEC at your local store cost \$1.

Placing a Classified in the 1998 issue cost \$6.

A subscription to The Gaspé Spec was \$36 per year.

Placing an obituary in the 1998 issue cost \$20.

## A violent year it was

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The press spent considerable time in courthouses in 1998. Here is why.

Wilfrid “Will” Langlois disappeared on February 5. He was last seen coming off the bus in Chandler that day. In the fall of 1997, he had testified at Rodrigue Boudreau’s preliminary hearing, saying that he and Boudreau were the last two men to have seen Daniel Langlois alive, a 37-year-old Port-Daniel man who died in a fire that destroyed his home. “Will” described a party that had taken place earlier and testified that Rodrigue Boudreau had unsuccessfully tried to set fire to the victim’s shoelaces and clothing while he slept in a chair. He then set a fire in a wardrobe before both men left the residence.

By the November 1998 trial, Will was still missing. The criminal prosecutor asked the judge to admit as evidence the recording of Will’s testimony at the preliminary hearing. The judge granted it. Rodrigue Boudreau’s lawyer asked for a recess and came back a few hours later with a plea of guilty on a reduced charge of manslaughter. The judge accepted and imposed a prison sentence of seven years to Boudreau. Twenty-eight years later, the body of Will Langlois is still missing.

In the early hours of April 25, 1998, Herméline Bourdages-Leblanc, a woman in her 70s living alone, was stabbed 50 times and hit with a round object. Two adolescents were charged in the case after leaving a party. As of the end of December 1998, their case was still before the courts, with proceedings expected to continue into 1999.

A tad over five days later, on April 30, lobster fisherman James Dubé was shot in the head after lunchtime. It took 16 years before his wife, Johanne Johnson, who had been a victim of domestic violence, was charged with murder, after a “Mr. Big” operation involving undercover police officers. On December 21, 2021, after two trials, Johanne Johnson was acquitted of the charges laid against her for technical reasons.

On July 17, Laurent Leblanc, the Bonaventure priest, disappeared. His body was found a month later, in Ristigouche South East. He had been hit to the head. As of the end of December 1998, the suspect, Sydney McAlpine, aged 18, was still waiting for his trial.

SPEC readers will see the outcomes of the Herméline Bourdages-Leblanc and Laurent Leblanc murders in the 1999 supplement.



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

# The mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer in Ottawa to discuss immigration and infrastructure

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer, Mathieu Lapointe, was part of a delegation from the Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ) that travelled to Ottawa to meet with political parties and ministers and discuss immigration and infrastructure.

He attended in his capacity as chair of the UMQ's Central Towns Caucus, as he noted in a summary upon his return on March 24.

Regarding foreign workers, the recent announcement to extend work permits by one year is a step in the right direction, but more is needed.

"This measure applies outside metropolitan areas. But 75% of Quebec's population lives in metropolitan areas. It's a positive step for the Gaspé Peninsula, but the majority of Quebec will be excluded from this measure. Essentially, we are asking for a grandfather clause so that temporary foreign workers who are here, who have set-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Mayor Mathieu Lapointe joined other UMQ elected officials in meetings in Ottawa to discuss temporary workers and infrastructure.*

led in our community, who mostly speak French, and who want to live here can gain permanent residency. As for the future, we will let the government set the direction," explains the mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer.

On infrastructure, Mr. Lapointe points to the infrastructure deficit estimated at \$42

billion in Quebec.

A \$7 billion allocation is currently blocked at the federal level due to a dispute with the provincial government.

"We want that money to come down. It's always the same old battle when it comes time to secure the funds. Elsewhere in Canada, the federal government signs agreements directly with municipalities. In Quebec, that's not possible. It has to go through a federal-provincial agreement. That means it can take a year, two years, sometimes three years before the money comes down. It's hurting us," says Mr. Lapointe.

Elected officials want a framework agreement to establish overall parameters when a new program is launched by Ottawa.

"We call ourselves local governments. But often, we run into the Quebec government telling us what to do and what not to do. What we're telling both levels of government is: come to an agreement so the money comes down quickly," continues Mr. Lapointe.

This issue will be part of the election debate.

## The Gaspé rail line addressed

Mr. Lapointe, who also serves as president of the Gaspé Prefects' Table, took advantage of his visit to Ottawa to discuss with Transport Minister Steven MacKinnon regarding the rehabilitation of rail section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

Mathieu Lapointe notes that the federal government has created the Trade Corridor Diversification Fund (NTCF), which contains \$5.7 billion.

"This is a new funding package in Ottawa that could address the needs of the third section of the railway. The minister has shown openness to this possibility. Now, since the railway belongs to the Government of Quebec, it is up to the Government of Que-

bec to submit a request to Ottawa. We will work toward that end," says Mr. Lapointe, who sees this as a promising avenue for financing the work.

The federal government has already allocated \$45.8 million in 2019 to combat coastal flooding and \$10 million in 2023 for a retaining wall in Port-Daniel-Gascons.

"The program's objective is for Canada to export more and be less dependent on the United States. Connecting factories and industries to ports, and the third section would be ideal for that. It would allow us to source inputs from LM and connect Osisko. It's a good angle. Quebec has long said it wants to see Ottawa get more involved. We have a golden opportunity to resolve the rail issue in the Gaspé Peninsula once and for all," comments Mr. Lapointe.

## Foreign workers UMQ priority

NELSON SERGERIE

SAINTE-ANNE-DES-MONTS – Whether in the Gaspé Peninsula or elsewhere in Quebec, the situation of foreign workers is at the top of the priority list for municipal officials

The president of the Union of Municipalities of Quebec (UMQ) and mayor of Mascouche, Guillaume Tremblay, stopped in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts on March 25 as part of his regional tour.

"The UMQ had launched an initiative for regions facing labour shortages. Immigrant workers remain the priority here, just as they do elsewhere in Quebec," Mr. Tremblay states right off the bat.

To accommodate population growth, housing construction is essential. However, Mr. Tremblay noted that building in the Gaspé Peninsula comes at a higher cost than in major urban centres.

"I've met people who say they have land available for development, but construction costs are jeopardizing their projects. Rest assured that the UMQ will stand by them to



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*UMQ President Guillaume Tremblay.*

find solutions together," the president promises.

Transportation challenges were also raised during the visit.

"I've heard about the successes. The Gaspésie MRCs are mobilizing and developing solutions to provide services to the entire population," he notes.

Municipalities estimate the infrastructure maintenance deficit at \$42 billion.

"It's no coincidence that we've launched an initiative on municipal taxation. For years, homeowners have been paying taxes to municipalities. In the past, we paid taxes to cover road maintenance, fire trucks, and basic services. With new responsibilities—whether it's providing land for schools or addressing housing and homelessness—we're expected to handle them with the same tax revenue. It's no longer working. If this continues, we're heading for a wall," says the mayor of Mascouche. Regarding municipal infrastructure, the UMQ president argues that the Quebec government has reduced its contribution over the years, from 8% of the total Quebec Infrastructure Plan to 4% today.

"The government has cut municipal budgets by about 50%. The municipal sector owns more than 60% of public infrastructure. On one hand, we're the overwhelming owners, and on the other, they're cutting our funding. It can't work like that," adds Mr. Tremblay.

This issue will be among the key issues in the upcoming election campaign.

## Protesters call for expansion of clam fishery

Nelson Sergerie

BONAVENTURE – More than 150 protesters gathered March 28 in Bonaventure to urge the federal government to expand the clam fishery to additional areas of the Gaspé Peninsula.

The demonstrators wanted to convey to the authorities their desire for the federal government to quickly open new sites.

"You are showing that this demand is rooted in who we are, and when we ask Ottawa for things, we are connected to something deep. We're going to take a photo together and send it to the Fisheries Committee," says Alexis Deschênes, the Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, who addressed the crowd from the bed of a pickup truck.

The mobilization was initiated by Bonaventure resident Jean-François Henry.

On March 25, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans began studying the potential opening of new shellfish harvesting areas in Chaleur Bay.

Representatives from the fishing industry, as well as organizations such as Merinov, CIRADD, and the Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqey Indigenous Fisheries Management Association, presented their perspectives on managing the fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Chaleur Bay.

The opening of new shellfish harvesting areas, the operation of the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program to identify solutions for increasing the number of sites, ensuring food safety and the sustainability of the resource, and promoting reinvestment in testing programs will be examined, while the MP has already confirmed that a second session on the subject will be held by the committee.

The study follows a citizen's request submitted to the MP in February. Fishing remains restricted in the western sector of Baïdes-Chaleurs.

## Not the first request

In May 2023, the Bloc Québécois had already called for a reassessment of the suspension of shellfish harvesting in Escuminac and Pointe-à-la-Garde.

After receiving repeated questions on the issue, then-MP for Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia, Kristina Michaud, indicated that she had approached Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and the response was that budget constraints meant that water analyses were only conducted in areas where cockle fishing is open, despite an improvement in water quality in this other sector.

# Protecting Route 132: three major public concerns

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GRANDE-VALLÉE – Three major public concerns have emerged from the four information sessions held over the past month in Rimouski, the Magdalen Islands, Carleton-sur-Mer, and virtually for the session scheduled in Grande-Vallée by the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE).

Studies have been underway since 2021 to protect Route 132 in the Gaspé Peninsula against erosion and coastal flooding, as well as road corridors in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region and on the Magdalen Islands.

In the project notice filed in July 2021, the ministry noted that events in recent years demonstrated the importance of ensuring mobility for road users and carrying out preventive measures.

The Ministry of Transportation's intervention program would cover 228 sites, equivalent to approximately 266 kilometres of road, spread across 45 municipalities.

Since the ministry cannot intervene at all of these sites, it plans to carry out work at 97 sites that are considered priority. However, these may change depending on future events.

They are distributed as follows: 23 sites in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, 37 sites in the northern Gaspé Peninsula, 15 sites in the southern Gaspé Peninsula, and 22 sites in the



Photo: Ministry of Transport

Magdalen Islands region.

"We have sections of road that are vulnerable to coastal hazards. This is nothing new. Large sections of Route 132 are built right along the coast, almost in the marine environment. Yes, events have affected the road, but in many places, it's built so close to the sea that even without climate change, it would be affected as well," says Julie Marcoux, spokesperson for the Ministry of Transportation.

"The program really focuses on coastal protection structures. As soon as we say we're going to move the road at that location, we'll be out of the program. We'll revert to the standard procedures in the environmental process. The program is really designed to prevent the department from having to carry out emergency interventions. For people, it's a term that captures the imagination. At the Ministry of the Environment, projects are

managed according to various scenarios. If it's significant, it goes through a BAPE review. In 2010 or 2016, that required an emergency response. At this point, the Ministry of the Environment no longer has the same framework and can take faster action without meeting environmental requirements," she continues.

"People were curious to know how the municipalities would coordinate with the Ministry of Transportation. Forty-seven municipalities are involved. Citizens sometimes mentioned that the municipality might have a land-use plan or a plan to prevent coastal hazards in their municipality. What will the coordination be between the municipalities, the MRCs, and the Ministry of Transport? People were happy to know which sites would be affected and the type of action to be taken," explains BAPE spokesperson Patrick Fournier.

The program presented is

of a general nature, meaning that the specific interventions have not yet been defined.

For the Northern sector, interventions are being planned in Cloridorme, Gaspé, Grande-Vallée, Petite-Vallée, Rivière-Saint-Jean, Cap-Chat, La Martre, Marsoui, Mont-Saint-Pierre, Rivière-à-Claude, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Sainte-Madeleine-de-la-Rivière-Madeleine, and Saint-Maxime-du-Mont-Louis.

For the southern sector, the targets are Maria, Carleton-sur-Mer, Escuminac, Pointe-à-la-Croix, Bonaventure, Caplan, Saint-Godefroi, Saint-Siméon, Shigawake, Chandler, Percé, and Port-Daniel-Gascons.

"The 97 sites could change depending on capacity and priorities. It's a 10-year program that could shift slightly," notes Mr. Fournier.

"The department hasn't gone out into the field to conduct inventories and assess

needs for each site. But when we arrive at each site, we'll need to conduct inventories to determine the appropriate intervention. We'll assess whether it's possible to relocate the road, raise it, or, if not, we'll move toward a protective structure. The program also covers the maintenance of existing structures," says Ms. Marcoux.

The ministry has not estimated the costs for implementing the entire program.

Based on the BAPE spokesperson's experience, it is difficult to determine whether the project will be subject to a public hearing.

The deadline for submitting requests for public consultation or mediation is April 7.

If the Minister of the Environment receives only one request, he will have to consider whether there is a need to hold such a hearing.

If there is no request from the BAPE, the agency will submit a report to the minister.

"Subsequently, the project will proceed through the environmental assessment process, and the Ministry of the Environment will conduct an environmental assessment and submit its report to the minister, who will then review the Ministry of the Environment's report. If the BAPE had submitted a report, it would be included. The minister would have both reports to make his recommendation to the Cabinet," explains Mr. Fournier.

The timeline for the next steps has yet to be determined.

# Stability benefits Gaspé residents

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – After seeing prices at the pump rise sharply by 15 cents per litre on March 15, regular gasoline remains particularly stable in the Gaspé Peninsula despite global market volatility caused by the war in the Middle East.

While on March 23 gas prices had surpassed the \$1.90 mark in the city, gas retailers in the Gaspé Peninsula remained stable, with a price of \$1.799 per litre for regular gasoline.

The same litre sold for \$1.72 two years ago.

In a rather rare move, the downtown Gaspé Petro-Canada station, operated by Groupe F. Dufresne, even lowered its price by two cents to \$1.779 on March 19 for a



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Despite price hikes elsewhere in Quebec, gas prices in the Gaspé Peninsula have remained largely unchanged since the 15-cent increase on March 16.*

few hours.

However, even though the price remained unchanged, oil companies still saw their profit margins increase

slightly compared to March 16 in certain areas.

According to the Régie de l'énergie, the margin remained stable at 3.3 cents per

litre in Rocher-Percé between March 16 and 23.

It rose from three cents to 4.5 cents in the Gaspé region and from 1.2 cents to 6.2 cents in the Baie-des-Chaleurs area.

Nevertheless, at nearly \$1.80, motorists are getting a "bargain," whereas based on the average margin for the past year calculated by the Régie, the price should be around \$1.84 in Baie-des-Chaleurs, \$1.85 in Rocher-Percé, and \$1.86 in Gaspé.

The Ultramar station in the Wakeham sector of Gaspé, for its part, was priced at \$1.92 on March 23.

At an average of about \$1.80 in Gaspésie, the price is comparable to several other regions in Quebec.

However, it remained at

\$1.70 on the North Shore and \$1.73 in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, according to the Régie de l'énergie.

Motorists in the Montreal area were paying about \$1.84 per litre, and \$1.92 on the Island of Montreal and in Laval.

Some observers suggested that if the conflict in the Middle East continues, the price per litre could once again cross the \$2 mark in the coming weeks. On May 9, 2022, the price of gasoline hit \$2.07 in Gaspé, due to the Ukraine conflict.

Another point to note: the price of diesel fuel exceeded \$2.60 in the Gaspé Peninsula on March 23, which will have an impact on all consumer goods delivered to the region in the short and medium term.

# Clues in the snow: the snowshoe hare

DIANE SKINNER

**NEW CARLISLE** - If you spend any time outdoors on the Gaspé Peninsula, especially in late winter or early spring, there's a good chance you'll notice small tracks in the snow. The tracks often appear in pairs. You may see two larger prints ahead and two smaller ones behind, zigzagging through the woods like a tiny trail of punctuation marks.

Those tracks usually belong to one of the region's most common, yet seldom spotted animals: the snowshoe hare. And that's perfectly normal, because nature has designed them to stay out of sight.

Despite the urge to call them rabbits, snowshoe hares are actually a bit different from rabbits. Hares are slightly larger, have longer back legs and are perfectly adapted to life in Gaspesian forests. Their large hind feet act like natural snowshoes, allowing them to glide across deep snow without sinking.

Nature also gave them clever camouflage. In summer and fall, snowshoe hares are a soft brown colour that

blends with forest soil, tree bark and fallen leaves. But as winter approaches, their fur gradually turns white. This camouflage helps them disappear into the snowy landscape, making life a little harder for hungry predators such as foxes, coyotes and owls. Their large ears help them detect even the faintest sounds, while their powerful hind legs allow them to leap quickly away from danger, often confusing predators with sudden changes in direction.

Another predator is man. Many years back hares were caught in homemade traps. If a number of hares were snared, a local store often bought them and they would be prepared and sold for food.

The forests of the Gaspé Peninsula provide excellent homes for these animals. Thick spruce and fir trees offer shelter, while shrubs and young trees supply food. During winter, hares survive by nibbling on twigs, bark and buds. This is just enough to get them through the colder months.

Although they are around, actually spotting one can feel like a bit of luck. Snowshoe

hares tend to be most active at dawn and dusk. During the day they often remain hidden in the snow where their white fur makes them nearly invisible.

Many people walking in the woods notice tracks long before they ever see the animal itself. Those crisscrossing trails tell a story about where the hare has travelled overnight, pausing, changing direction or searching for food while quietly avoiding predators. For those who look closely, the winter landscape becomes a quiet record of survival and movement.

In a way, it's fitting that these quiet creatures appear in the same season when Easter arrives. While the chocolate Easter Bunny may get most of the attention, snowshoe hares have been part of our landscapes for centuries, hopping through forests long before chocolate companies got involved.

On the Gaspé Peninsula, they remain one of the small but fascinating signs of life in the woods. They are a reminder that even in the coldest months, nature is alive, quietly moving and leaving little signs of life in the snow.



Photo: Metro

*A snowshoe hare pauses in early spring, its coat changing from white to brown as it adjusts to the new season.*



Photo: Wanda Hottot

*Fresh tracks in the snow reveal the path of a snowshoe hare, its large hind feet leaving a clear pattern as it moves through the changing spring landscape.*



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# Local film nominated for Canadian Screen Award

CYNTHIA DOW

CASCAPEDIA – Lucas: An Endangered Human Species has been nominated for a Canadian Screen Award in the Best Documentary Program category. The film by Gaspesian film-maker Éli Laliberté focuses on the meaningful life of his son, Lucas Larocque-Laliberté, who has Down Syndrome. The film explores questions surrounding the value placed on human life and features meetings with experts, researchers, advocates and people with Down syndrome in Canada and Europe.

A 52-minute French version of the documentary first aired on Radio-Canada's program Dochumanité in November 2023 and won both a Géméaux and the Prix Humaniste award at the Festival Vue sur mer that celebrates documentaries produced in the Gaspésie. Last March, the 88-minute English version premiered on British Columbia's



Photo: Courtesy of Éli Laliberté

*Lucas: An Endangered Human Species has been nominated for a Canadian Screen Award in the Best Documentary Program category.*

Knowledge Network where you can watch it for free after creating an account at knowledge.ca.

CBC's North of North, a comedy filmed in Iqaluit, Nunavut is leading the pack for the 2026 Awards with 20 nominations. The Oscar winner for Animated Short, The Girl Who Cried Pearls, created

in Montreal, is nominated, as well as Crave's viral sensation, Heated Rivalry, a love story about two male hockey players.

The Awards will be broadcast on May 31, 2026, at 8 p.m. on CBC, CTV, Global, and will also be available on Crave, CBC Gem and STACKTV.

# Snow helps strawberries

NELSON SERGERIE

SAINT-SIMÉON – The heavier snowfall received so far this year in the Baie des Chaleurs is helping to protect the strawberry plants.

In recent years, the lack of snow, combined with frost and periods of drought, has made it difficult to preserve plants for the growing season.

"So far, there is still a good amount of snow cover. We're hoping for a little more. We're keeping our fingers crossed for a nice end to winter because less snow in the spring means faster thawing, and the last spring frosts caused damage. So far, so good," notes Pierre Bourdages, co-owner of Ferme Bourdages Tradition in Saint-Siméon.

Snow acts as an important insulating blanket that helps plants survive the winter. Straw mulch also helps protect the crop.

Last year, the lack of snow created challenges, followed by an exceptionally wet spring. Then, in mid-June, drought conditions set in.

"Climate change is taking hold. This is becoming the norm," says the producer of strawberries and other consumer products.

The drought caused an estimated 20-25% loss in production in 2025, according to



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

the farm's estimates.

"Agriculture being what it is, it's a risk factor. In 2023, we had excess water. Every year brings its own variations. We try to adapt. There are temperatures that cause damage to the fields," adds Mr. Bourdages.

To adapt, the farm has begun experimenting with tunnel production for raspberries. The umbrella-shaped structures protect crops from rain and use drip irrigation to manage watering.

"The goal is to increase productivity before thinking about greenhouses. One more month in the spring, one more month in the fall. A little more production to sell locally in stores and nearby. We're going to install it this year for strawberries and raspberries and analyze this type of production," says Mr. Bourdages.

Given the weather condi-

tions in recent years, the farm will adjust its field production strategy. Exports to large centres will be put on hold.

"We're going to adapt our production because it represents a cost. We're going to adapt production to reduce the impact on the farm. These are additional transportation costs and often lower prices. It's less advantageous than it used to be," he says.

As for winter strawberry production, a project mentioned three years ago, it is no longer being considered.

"We want to make sure that the methods are good in the province, that they are profitable, because we are seeing births, declines, and closures in established businesses. We are going to experiment with tunnel production and see how it performs," explains Pierre Bourdages.

## Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



### Why Vimy Ridge Still Matters

The Battle of Vimy Ridge was a famous World War I battle that took place from April 9 to 12, 1917, in Northern France. It was the first time that all four Canadian divisions fought together. British and French troops had tried to capture it but failed. The ridge was a heavily defended high hill, which gave German soldiers the advantage of seeing, and therefore controlling, the area around it. Why was this battle significant for Canada? Read on.

The winds that roll across northern France still pass over the ground where the Battle of Vimy Ridge was fought. If you stop and think about it for a second, it's hard not to feel something. In April 1917, right in the middle of World War I, thousands of young Canadians climbed out of trenches and walked straight into chaos. Not because they wanted to, but because it was their duty.

Vimy Ridge wasn't just another hill. It was heavily defended, and other armies had already tried and failed to take it. The Canadians, led by General Byng, did something very innovative. They planned carefully, practiced ahead of time, and made sure the soldiers understood exactly what they were facing. It worked. In just a few days, they captured the ridge.

Saying that they captured the ridge does not come close to telling the whole story. More than 3,500 Canadians were killed. That's not just a number. That's thousands of empty chairs at dinner tables. It's mothers and fathers who never saw their sons again. A high price to pay. The ultimate price. So why should we still remember Vimy Ridge?

It reminds us that the people who fought weren't all that different from us. They were us. They were farm kids, shop clerks, students, ordinary Canadians who probably worried about the same everyday things we do. But they found the courage to do something extraordinary in the worst possible conditions.

This battle is significant because it's also one of those moments where Canada really started to feel like its own country. Until then, we were still closely tied to Britain. But after Vimy, there was a growing sense that Canadians could stand on their own, that we weren't just following. We could be leaders.

Remembering Vimy isn't about glorifying war. If anything, it does the opposite. It forces us to think about the cost. The mud, the fear, the loss it's not something you ever wish to repeat. That's part of why it matters so much. It reminds us what's at stake. War comes at a great cost.

Today, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial stands where the battle happened. If you ever see photos of it or better yet, visit you'll notice how quiet it feels. It's not flashy or loud. It stands as a proud memorial for all those young Canadian lives lost.

It is good to remember these soldiers, and not just on November 11. The names on our local cenotaphs, the poppies in November, they're all connected to real places like Vimy and to real Canadians. Whether we think about it every day or not, it happened. Let us never forget.

Remembering on April 9, Vimy Ridge Day, isn't about living in the past. It's about not forgetting what it took to get here. It was real. And this is an important lesson in today's troubled world. It's about understanding that the freedoms we enjoy came at a cost, and it is our responsibility to make certain that those sacrifices still mean something, even all these years later.



# Important messages delivered at community forum

CYNTHIA DOW

CAPLAN — “Anyone can request service in English,” Jennifer Johnson, executive director of the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), told the approximately 40 people gathered for an anglophone community forum held March 19.

As keynote speaker, she clarified some of the confusion surrounding the use of English in the health care system following the implementation of Law 14 (previously known as Bill 96). The new rules have left many health care workers concerned about violating the law if they speak English on the job.

Clarifications sent to CHSSN by the government indicate that anyone who would prefer service in English can request it, and institutions “...must make reasonable efforts” to respond. Ms. Johnson went on to explain that institutions have access plans to deliver service in English on their territories, and that translation services are more available than in the past but remain underused.

The community forum organized by CASA, Vision Gaspé-Percé Now and the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI), was held in Caplan and included community members as well as representatives from MRCs, Emploi Québec, women’s organizations and the CISSS (regional health authority).



Photo: Cynthia Dow

About 40 people attended the forum in person, with others joining online from CAMI and other locations.

Ms. Johnson also shared concerns about the Legault government’s Bill 1, a new constitution for Quebec which she said “...doesn’t affirm anglophone rights. There are no protections for us, this is really a problem.” “There is a fundamental risk that we could lose our rights.” Both Ms. Johnson and Jessica Synnott of Vision Gaspé-Percé Now appeared before the National Assembly hearings on the new constitution earlier in the year.

At the end of her presentation, Ms. Johnson spoke of the CHSSN vision, which included collaborating closely with the health care system to improve access to services in English. She urged community members to use the official complaint system when problems are encountered, as those complaints can help hospitals

and clinics identify and solve systemic issues.

Angelina Leggo then spoke remotely about the work of the Eastern Quebec Literacy Council (EQLC), one of 11 such councils across the province. The organization celebrated its 45th anniversary by launching a new website and rejuvenating its work throughout the east. “Last year for the first time an employee (of the Council) went to every one of the five regions we serve,” Ms. Leggo told forum attendees.

She noted the EQLC offers support for five types of literacy: digital, media, physical, financial and health literacy. The council also works to improve access to English-language books and to encourage writing.

There was time on the agenda for community spot-

lights, during which the audience heard from Greg Leblanc about a Community of Practice he has developed at the CISSS, where health care teams come together to share information about client needs. Matthew Munro, also from the CISSS, expressed a “dire need” of English-speaking foster families, arguing that English-speaking children may have to be sent outside the region if the number of foster families is not increased. “This would be terrible for their families and for the children,” he noted.

There was also a brief presentation on Turas well-being workshops, which can be offered through various organizations across the region. Ann Kelly described the nature outings she and her husband, Guy Gallibois, have been offering to high school students.

Jessica Synnott then shared some data from a recent survey of anglophone youth which includes some startling facts about mental health challenges experienced by English-speaking school children. SPEC will publish an in-depth article on this study in a future issue.

After lunch, two more speakers were on hand. Derek Barnaby, a Knowledge Keeper from Listuguj, spoke about the evolution of relationships among the Mi’gmaq, French and English communities in the area. He touched on issues of cultural appropriation and racism, a talk that was found to be very informative by many members of the audience.

The final speaker of the day was Walter Willett who is now the Cultural and Tourism Agent with the Regional Development Network. Mr. Willett presented the En Route Stories app project, an online platform where users can upload and share stories about English-speaking Quebec. The app can be found at <https://regdevnet.ca/programs/digital-stories-app/>. As a tourism tool, he noted it can also be used to create personalized guided tours of the Coast.

The day concluded with a Curiosity Café and Community Connection, offering time for sharing and reflection.

*(Full disclosure: the author participated in the forum as a member of the community and a partner in Turas.)*

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# Announcements



## Obituaries



### ASSELS: Evelyne

It is with great sadness and broken hearts that we announce the passing of Evelyne Assels, which occurred at Chandler Hospital on Friday, February 13, 2026, at the age of 84.

Evelyne was predeceased by her father, Leslie Garrett; mother, Leitha Dow; and brother, Kenny Garrett.

She was born on June 19, 1941. She lived in Port Daniel with her family and was married for 61 years.

She leaves behind her beloved husband, Kenny; daughter, Kelly (Mark); and grandchildren, Nicholas (Bianca) and Brennan (Lyndsay).

She is loved and will be truly missed each and every day.



### GALLON: Vincent Aubrey

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Vincent Aubrey Gallon, which occurred on March 11, 2026, at his home, surrounded by his family. He was born January 16, 1931, in New Carlisle, Québec. He was 95 years old when he passed.

He is survived by his loving wife, Doreen Flowers Gallon; his beloved daughters, Darlene (Paul), Debbie (Robert), and Amanda (Jerome); grandchildren, Phillip, Tyler, Laura and Heidi; great-grandchildren, Lilly, Angelina and Ella. He leaves to mourn his brother,

Grenvil, and sister-in-law, Marj, sister Gertrude; as well as many nieces, nephews and friends.

The family would like to Dr. Basinet and nurses Karine and Isabel for their excellent care and compassion for our family. Thank you to everyone who reached out with messages, cards and phone calls during this difficult time, also those who gave a helping hand during the day of the service. Your support, compassion, and thoughtfulness have meant so much to our family.

The family received condolences at the Henri Thibodeau Funeral Home in New Carlisle on Tuesday, March 17, 2026. Visitations was from 6 to 8 p.m.

The funeral was held at the Saint Andrews Anglican Church in New Carlisle on Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 3 p.m.



### MCCOLM: Norma Anne

On March 1, 2026, our beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Norma Anne McColm of Smoky Lake, Alberta, passed away peacefully at the age of 87. She was formerly of Hanna, Alberta and New Richmond, Quebec.

Left to cherish her memory are her children, Shirley Zdebliak (Dan) of Smoky Lake, Alberta; Glenda Miller (Bill) of Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta; Keith (Lorna) of Cranbrook, British Columbia; Jim of Fort McMurray, Alberta; and Pam McColm of Edson, Alberta; Ten grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren; sister-in-law Connie Fairservice of New Richmond; along with numerous nieces, nephews, extended relatives and friends.

Norma was predeceased by her loving husband, Eric McColm; granddaughter, Angela Zdebliak; parents, Blair and Grace Fairservice; and brothers, Lester and Everett.

The family wishes to extend their gratitude to the staff of Smoky Lake Healthcare Centre for their care and compassion.

A funeral service was held on Saturday, March 7, 2026, at the First Baptist Church in Smoky Lake, officiated by Pastor Keith Axford. The graveside service took place on Monday, March 9, 2026 at the Hanna Municipal Cemetery, officiated by Pastor Walter Willford.



### MILLER: Jimmy

It is with great sadness that we announce the peaceful passing of Jimmy Miller on March 11, 2026, at the age of 90.

Predeceased by his loving wife, Brigid (née Drody) and son Richard, he will be forever missed and lovingly remembered by his daughters, Pearl (Denis) and Maureen; his grandchildren Jamie (François), Emma (Calvin), Joe (Méliane), Nolan (Brianna), and Brigid; his sister Bobbi; along with many other relatives and friends.

Jimmy was born on December 19, 1935, in Wakeham (Gaspé), Quebec, to Richard and Lulu (née Lawrence) Miller. He and his younger sister Bobbi grew up surrounded by many special Boyle, Miller, and Patterson cousins, many who would remain close friends throughout Jimmy's life.

He and Brigid married in Douglstown (Gaspé) in 1960 and moved their young family to Howick, Quebec, in 1967. Like many of their Gaspesian relatives and friends, they always kept their "down home" ties, but made their home in Howick, where they made many close friends on Fertile Creek, at the Howick Curling Club, and at the Lanterne, a local bar which Jimmy and Brigid owned from 1982 until 1997. As Brigid's "roadie", they both enjoyed lots of time at musical events and gatherings in the Châteauguay Valley, in Gaspé, and at Pembroke Fiddle Contests. Jimmy would have several careers throughout his life: from an underground miner in Murdochville, scheduler for Dominion Bridge, shop manager at Howick's Brospec, owner of Aqua Val, selling and installing in-ground swimming pools, theatre rigging design at GC Stage Equipment, and bar owner of La Lanterne.

He was very involved in community service, he was active in the Howick Legion and served as president for some years, he was one of the founding members of SAABEC. He was also one of the founding members of the Howick Christmas Basket group, he served as president while also be an active volunteer for the École Modèle (Pink School) community committee in Howick for many years. Jimmy connected with and touched the lives of many people. He was genuinely interested in everyone he met and was generous with his time.

# Announcements

He was intelligent and well-read, and he could talk to almost anyone about almost anything. He had a wonderful sense of humour, he loved to tell jokes and repeat his funny stories, all the while laughing with his very distinct and infectious "Jimmy laugh." He was extremely kind and very loved, and he will be deeply missed.

Our family would like to extend their most heartfelt thanks to the kind staff of Residence Chez Karen in Huntington, who went above and beyond in their care of Jimmy during his final years. In celebration of Jimmy's life, visitation will be held at the Saint-Malachie Catholic Church, located on Roy St. in Ormstown, Quebec, at 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, followed by a funeral service at 2 p.m. Refreshments will be served following the funeral at the Ormstown Legion, 33 Prince-Albert St. in Ormstown. A cemetery burial will take place in Douglastown (Gaspé), Québec, at a later date.



**TAYLOR: Linda Ann**

November 26, 1948 - January 28, 2026

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Linda Taylor, at the age of 77 in Brockville, Ontario. Linda was predeceased by her parents, John (Jackie) and Dorothy (Doddridge) Taylor. She will be sadly missed by several cousins, including Jeannie McDonald, and Dawn and Nancy Doddridge; as well as lifetime friends Virginia Robertson and Geri Bisson; and special Brockville friends Tom Burns and Dorothy Riopelle.

Linda grew up in Black Cape, Quebec, and attended schools there and in New Richmond, where she graduated from High School in June 1966. She went on to attend Macdonald College (McGill University's Faculty of Education), Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, where she graduated in May 1968 with a Teaching Diploma. From there, she went on to receive her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Windsor. Linda became a teacher and taught in Quebec City, Bonaventure and Brockville for over 30 years, before retiring in Brockville.

Linda was an animal lover, and made a home for several dogs and cats over the years. When she passed away, she left behind her beloved bichon frisé, Abbey (Abigail), who is now in the care of Tracy, her groomer. She was also an avid and longtime hockey fan, originally of Gordie Howe and the Detroit Red Wings, and after his retirement, of Martin Brodeur of the New Jersey Devils. She had a love of music and her all time favourite musician was Kris Kristofferson.

Linda's remains have been cremated, and the burial of her ashes will take place at Black Cape Cemetery in mid-July. Rest in Peace, Linda.



## In Memory

**BUTTLE: Jean**

March 23, 1945 - March 22, 2005

*The depths of sorrow we cannot tell,  
Of the loss of one we loved so well,  
And while she sleeps a peaceful sleep,  
Her memory we shall always keep.*

Always yours. Your loving husband Fred and family.

**BUTTLE: Jean**

March 23, 1945 - March 22, 2005

*We had a wonderful mother,  
One who never grew old.  
Her smile was made of sunshine,  
And her heart was made of gold.  
Her eyes were as bright as shining stars,  
And in her cheeks fair roses you see.  
We had a wonderful mother,  
And that's the way it will always be.*

You are forever in our hearts and thoughts. Your loving boys: Sean, Dwayne, Freddy and Dean.

**WARD: Wilma Beatrice Huntington**

In loving memory of our mother, mother-in-law, grandmother and great-grandmother, who passed away on April 8, 1990.

*God blessed us with a wonderful Mother,  
One who sacrificed for us.  
She was someone we could turn to,  
She was made of love and trust.  
She walks with us now silently,  
Our thoughts we can't restrain.  
For the magic power of memory,  
Gives her back to us again.  
So rest in peace, dear Mother,  
For your work down here is done.  
We pray that God has given you,  
The crown you've truly won.  
You never failed to do your best,  
Your heart was warm and tender.  
You lived your life for those you loved,  
And those you loved remember.*

Always loved, always remembered, never forgotten by your loving daughter Frances (Bernie) and grandsons Mark (Erin) and great-grandsons Reid, Cole and Benn; Kevin (Courtney) and great-granddaughters Avery and Carys; sons Ken (Chris), Everette and Wayne (Monique) and grandson Dave (Josiane) and great-granddaughter Julia, great-grandsons Elliott and James; and grandson Brian.




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## Announcement Deadlines:

**April 15** for April 22 issue

**April 29** for the May 6 issue

**May 13** for the May 20 issue

**May 27** for the June 3 issue

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**GASPE:**  
**Gaspé County W.I.**  
**September 12:** It's time to register with the Gaspé W.I. for the W.I. craft fair competition. The fair will take place at the York Hall. The registration fee is \$15, and participants may enter as many craft, cooking and/or garden items as they wish. To register contact Bonita Annett at 418-368-3453 or gaspe22@gmail.com. She will provide a copy of the 2026 fair list. The deadline to register is July 31.

**GASPE:**  
**Gaspé Cancer Foundation**  
**April 12:** The Gaspé Cancer Foundation will hold its AGM at the Gaspé legion at 1:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served following the meeting. Thank you for your continued support for his valuable asset to our communities.

**SHIGAWAKE:**  
**Shigawake Community Centre**  
**May 9:** Mother's Day

breakfast from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost: adults \$12, children \$6.  
**June 1:** Summer gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m., Canteen available.

**SHIGAWAKE:**  
**Shigawake Music Festival and Agricultural Fair**  
**April 11:** Ladies' night beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Dress code is Island Vibes, with musical performance by C'est ma Toune with MLou and Jam.  
**May 2:** Gaspesian Musician Night. A variety of musicians performing all evening. Doors open at 7 p.m. Donations at the door.  
**May 10:** Mother's Day brunch. Door opens at 8 a.m. Cost: adults \$15, children \$8.

**UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN**  
**Sunday, April 12**  
10 a.m. Service  
**Sunday, April 19**  
2 p.m. Service

**May 23:** Country Decades Show featuring The Nash Stanley Band. Doors open at 7 p.m., \$10 entry. Dress code is Country Dance.

**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

**UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND**  
**Sunday, April 12**  
10 a.m. Service  
**Sunday, April 19**  
10 a.m. Service

Sunday School - 2 p.m.  
**Thursdays:** Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:**  
**Royal Canadian Legion**  
**April 12:** The Royal Canadian Legion invites you to a hot dog and chili lunch from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Community Centre in Cascapedia -St-Jules. The cost will be \$10.

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES 50 plus club**  
**April 25:** A turkey supper will take place from 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. The cost is \$20 for

**PARISH OF GASPÉ**  
**Sunday, April 12**  
**St. Andrews, York**  
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Sunday, April 19**  
**St. Pauls, Gaspé**  
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

adults and \$12 for children under 12. Takeout is available. For additional information, please contact 418-392-4338.

**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.

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA**  
**Sunday, April 12**  
**New Carlisle**  
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Hope Town**  
3 p.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Port Daniel**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Sunday, April 19**  
**New Carlisle**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Shigawake**  
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

### HOROSCOPES - April 6 to April 12

**ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20**  
Aries, you are catching a second wind this week that could rival a hurricane. No one can slow you down right now. Channel this energy into a passion project.  
**TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21**  
Taurus, your eye for recognizing the beauty in things or items that are fashionable is unmatched. This week is the perfect time to curate your space or your wardrobe.  
**GEMINI - May 22/June 21**  
Gemini, the connections in your brain are firing at a rapid pace this week. It is only a matter of time before you solve a problem that has been plaguing you and everyone for weeks.  
**CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22**  
You are feeling more secure in your skin this week, Cancer. People are flocking to you for comfort and

advice because you give off a warm energy.  
**LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23**  
Leo, accept recognition for your hard work when it comes your way in the coming days. Don't be humble; take the bow that you have earned over these last few months.  
**VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22**  
Everything is falling into place for you now, Virgo. Your routine feels like something you can do with your eyes closed. Find the perfect shortcut this week.  
**LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23**  
A friend of a friend is about to become a very important person in your life, Libra. It's important to keep your heart open to all possibilities. An unexpected invitation pops up.  
**SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22**  
Scorpio, you don't have to try to impress. People are mesmerized by you. You can use this charm to ne-

gotiate for something you want this week. A welcome surprise pops up midweek.  
**SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21**  
Your thirst for knowledge leads you to a new obsession, Sagittarius. Diving into a new hobby, career path or volunteer experience could be the way to go.  
**CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20**  
Capricorn, you are making the impossible look easy right now. Take a moment to see how far you have come and review your accomplishments.  
**AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18**  
Your innovative ideas are officially trending around the office or workplace, Aquarius. Don't be afraid to lead the pack, as everyone is just trying to keep up.  
**PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20**  
Pisces, you are walking on sunshine this week. Your creative output is at an all-time high. Paint, write, sing, or engage in anything else you enjoy.

### HOROSCOPES - April 13 to April 19

**ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20**  
Aries, you have a certain energy that is building this week. Momentum increases the second you stop overthinking, so jump into whatever you were planning to do with two feet.  
**TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21**  
Something cozy, such as a hobby, recipe or routine could turn into something surprisingly productive, Taurus. Don't dismiss passion projects this week when comfort meets opportunity.  
**GEMINI - May 22/June 21**  
Gemini, your words equal magic this week. Conversations open doors and can help clear up confusion about important topics, even about budding relationships.  
**CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22**  
Peace will look good on you this week, Cancer. You will be exuding quiet confidence. It is a good time to organize your space or schedule a spa session.

Relax as stress levels drop.  
**LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23**  
The spotlight is yours, Leo, even when you are not trying to be in it. This is a great week to share ideas, pitch something creative or post fun content on social media.  
**VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22**  
A small, healthy habit or tweak to your lifestyle can change your whole week, Virgo. Tiny improvements will produce a huge payoff that you will enjoy.  
**LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23**  
A random invite or chat leads to a helpful connection, Libra. Say yes to invitations to go out, as it is time to be a social butterfly for the foreseeable future.  
**SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22**  
Scorpio, you are giving off quiet power vibes this week. Your focus and follow-through is all based on trusting your instincts. Someone in your circle

is noticing your efforts.  
**SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21**  
Sagittarius, going on an adventure doesn't have to necessarily mean traveling. This is a good time to try a new class, go to a show or experiment with new cuisine.  
**CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20**  
Capricorn, you are building something solid behind the scenes. It may take a lot of time, but steady effort now will likely lead to bragging rights.  
**AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18**  
Collaborations sparkle for you this week, Aquarius. All of those ideas that you think are unusual will turn out to be genius. It's all about perspective and looking at things the right way.  
**PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20**  
Your inner world could intersect with the outside world this week, Pisces. Expect a few days of creative, dreamy and intuitive moments where you daydream on purpose.

# SPEC scavenger hunt a hit in New Carlisle

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – After Matapedia, Gaspé, Escuminac and Port Daniel, the SPEC team visited a group of New Carlisle residents all women, interested in taking part in a scavenger hunt marking the newspaper’s 50th anniversary.

The activity involves searching through old issues of the paper to answer a series of history-related questions.

The New Carlisle hunt was held at the Family Ties library. Nine women took part and later told the SPEC team they had a great time.

Participants’ reactions are always great to see. Sharon Murray Guignon spent many years away from the Gaspé Coast, as she and her husband, who was in the military overseas, didn’t always have access to the SPEC. “I missed so many events while being away”, she summed up, before inquiring if she could drop by the office and consult old editions. The answer is yes, provided arrangements are made in advance to ensure someone is at the New Carlisle office, located next to Family Ties.

Another participant, Susan Beebe, discovered a photo of herself during one of her first searches while answering the questions prepared by Jillian O’Connell, who has been heavily involved in organizing SPEC’s 50th anniversary activities.

For Yvonne James, who was not born in the Gaspé Peninsula and moved to the Coast a few years ago, the scavenger hunt offered a way to learn more about the region’s history. She approached the activity with enthusiasm and determination.

The newspaper team, as in previous stops, also greatly enjoyed the experience. It provides a meaningful opportunity to connect with both long-time and new readers.

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



Participants gather at Family Ties in New Carlisle for the SPEC’s 50th anniversary scavenger hunt, sharing memories and stories while exploring past issues of the newspaper.



Participants search through past editions of The Gaspé Spec during the 50th anniversary scavenger hunt at Family Ties in New Carlisle.

Photos: Gilles Gagné

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