

# A daytime train from Quebec City to New Carlisle, not before the end of 2026

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – Reading between the lines of statements made by VIA Rail President and Chief Executive Officer Mathieu Paquette, the return of passenger rail service to the Gaspé Peninsula could connect Quebec City and the region as far as New Carlisle, even though the track is usable as far as Port-Daniel-Gascons. Moreover, the service will not return in 2026.

During a three-day visit to the Gaspé Peninsula, Mr. Paquette held numerous meetings with regional railway representatives, elected officials and Micheline Saint-Onge, spokesperson for the Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of a Passenger Train.

In an interview with SPEC, Mr. Paquette expressed reservations about the train service returning east of Matapédia before 2027. He also indicated a preference for an initial return to New Carlisle and specified that the connection could be established from Quebec City using a daytime train.

The train assigned to the Gaspé Peninsula service, which VIA Rail suspended in September 2013 due to the state of the railway infrastructure, operated overnight between Montreal and



Photos: Gilles Gagné

The VIA Rail delegation, composed of Denis Boucher, Laurence Lefrançois, Carl Delisle, and Mathieu Paquette, was welcomed by Éric Dubé, president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, and Mathieu Lapointe, president of the Gaspé Prefects' Table.

Matapédia.

There are nearly eight months left before the end of 2026, but Mathieu Paquette believes that timeframe is insufficient to resume a service suspended 13 years ago.

“No, no. I want to manage expectations properly. I’ll give you an example. First of all, we are dependent on certain factors over which we have no control; in particular, we need to secure the use of the tracks with the Quebec Ministry of Transport. If we wanted to implement a daytime service between Quebec City, regardless of the (region’s) last stop, we would also need to have dis-

cussions with Canadian National, which owns the tracks. That takes time. So, to be perfectly clear, it’s not something that’s possible before the end of 2026,” he says.

Transports Québec owns the rail network between Gaspé and Matapédia. Canadian National (CN) owns the Matapédia-Quebec City line.

Mathieu Paquette also noted that the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), a municipally controlled company that transports freight between Matapédia and Port-Daniel, needs to carry out work to improve certain stations and, especially, the passenger boarding platforms. Those stations belong to the SCFG.

“I want people to understand that we often greet customers who have disabilities or reduced mobility. They must be able to board with their wheelchairs,” he adds.

Furthermore, while waiting for the section between Port-Daniel and Gaspé to be reopened, he wants related services to be provided in conjunction with the train.

“If, for example, the train stopped in New Carlisle, we can’t just drop people off there and tell them to fend for themselves! What we’ve done, based on the discussions we just had with the Prefects’

Table, is to say, well, if the train arrives in New Carlisle, people can get off, and there could be a bus service that allows them to continue their journey to Chandler, Percé, or Gaspé. So, it goes beyond simply getting people on and off the train,” he explains.

From December 2011 to the summer of 2013, the passenger train stopped in New Carlisle because repairs were underway in Chandler, and a bus service was available to Gaspé, in collaboration with VIA Rail.

## A mid-summer plan

During the tenure of Mario Pélouquin, Mathieu Paquette’s predecessor, the availability of rolling stock was one of the obstacles cited by VIA Rail to delay its return to the Gaspé Peninsula. The need for Transports Québec to repair the network as far as Gaspé was also mentioned.

“We have rolling stock. We are certainly looking at potentially introducing the service gradually. This is likely to evolve. In the short term, what will the service be like, what type of equipment will we put into service? Everything is not finalized. So, we are starting from here, and that is precisely what we will focus on. And our goal is to return by

mid-summer, to contact regional stakeholders again and share the plan we have developed,” he further explains.

This work plan will be flexible, and the public carrier will be open to suggestions from Gaspé residents, he says. While he doesn’t set a date for the train’s return, Mathieu Paquette assures that it won’t take 10 years.

“We’re not going to wait for everything to be perfect. One message that people need to hear, and we’ll keep pushing, is that for us, the ultimate goal will always be to reach Gaspé, as it was before. We’re ready to consider a gradual return, but our fear is that the repairs on the final section will never get done. I think the Gaspé Peninsula deserves a passenger service that goes all the way to its destination,” says the president of VIA Rail.

## Port-Daniel, unlikely on the first try

Mathieu Paquette expresses his preference for a return to New Carlisle first, even though the railway line is operational as far as Port-Daniel, 30 kilometres farther east.

“In the short term, I would say we’re looking at New Carlisle because we can turn the train around. The problem is that with the type of equipment we’ll be using, there won’t be a locomotive at the front and at the rear,” he points out.

Executives of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie are offering VIA Rail the use of one of their locomotives to bring the train back from Port-Daniel to New Carlisle.

“That’s one of the things we’re going to discuss with them. What I can tell you is that, as far as we know, we haven’t had those discussions yet. So, for now, we’re looking at New Carlisle, where the necessary infrastructure for returning trains exists,” emphasizes the president of VIA Rail. See article on Page 6.



The village of Matapédia is currently the only VIA Rail stop in the Gaspé Peninsula administrative region. This train connects Montreal to Halifax.

# Electoral Map: Between hope and disappointment

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – May 7 began on a hopeful note for the Gaspé Peninsula as political parties represented in Quebec’s National Assembly expressed support for Bill 3, aimed at ensuring effective voter representation. However, optimism quickly turned to disappointment when independent Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Youri Chassin refused to consent to an accelerated review of the legislation.

The proposed bill sought to protect the two Gaspé Peninsula ridings, along with one riding on Montreal Island, while adding two new seats — one in Centre-du-Québec and another in the Laurentians — bringing the total number of seats in the National Assembly to 127.

It would have marked the first increase in the number of seats since 1989, when the legislature expanded from 122 to 125 seats.

The bill itself was only six pages long. “It stipulates that this new list (of ridings) must maintain the current boundaries of four ridings in the Gaspésie and Bas-Saint-Laurent regions, namely Matane-Matapédia-Mitis, Rimouski, Bonaventure, and Gaspé,” says Jean-François Roberge, Minister responsible for Democratic Institutions, when the bill was introduced to the National Assembly.

Eight Montreal ridings would also remain unchanged, while the other riding boundaries established by the Electoral Representation Commission in January 2026 would come into effect.

“The bill also provides for the creation of a committee to

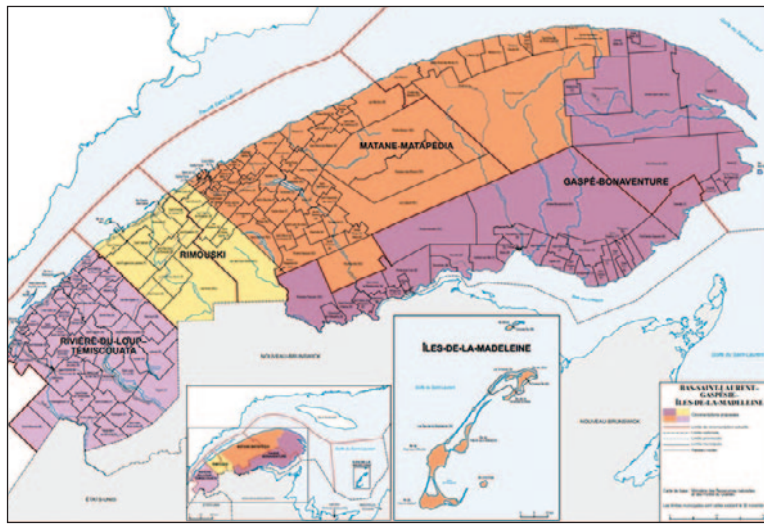


Photo: Electoral Representation Commission

*The electoral map tabled by the Commission in 2023 will come into force unless legislation is passed to overturn the decision.*

study electoral representation in Quebec, its composition and term, as well as the analyses it must conduct,” the minister adds.

The committee would include a retired judge, a former parliamentarian and an expert who would travel across Quebec to study the issue.

Mr. Roberge argued that exceptional measures such as Bill 3 should not become necessary in the future.

The minister also indicated he believed he had secured the co-operation of the Chief Electoral Officer, although the latter later distanced himself from that interpretation.

“In our view, it is important to establish a map based on objective and public criteria, such as those set forth in the Election Act. This was not done by elected officials, but we note that they intend to mandate an independent committee to reassess the criteria and the process for redrawing the map. We wish to emphasize that the independence of the electoral map review process must be preserved, regardless of the process recommended by the members of this committee. We will make our expertise available to them,” states Jean-François Blanchet, Chair of the Electoral Representation Commission, in a press release.

## Chassin explains his position

A single statement halted the process on the afternoon the bill was introduced.

“No consent, Madam Chair,” said Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Youri Chassin simply when the chair asked lawmakers whether certain rules could be suspended to allow for the bill’s passage that same day.

“I have serious reservations about a bill that bypasses the electoral map review process. The electoral map is a funda-

mental aspect of our democracy, and we do not want political parties to interfere with it,” he asserts.

The independent MNA argued that lawmakers had already granted the Chief Electoral Officer a clear mandate to establish the new electoral map, scheduled to come into effect on July 14.

“Why are the government and political parties getting involved? In the Gaspé Peninsula, there are good reasons to review the criteria. But we’ll do it at the appropriate time. It’s as if the government were saying, ‘We make the laws, but we aren’t bound by our own laws.’ We’re going to meddle in matters that don’t concern us,” argues Mr. Chassin.

According to Mr. Chassin, any reform of the criteria should have been undertaken before the review process began.

“It has to be set before the process is launched,” says Mr. Chassin.

He also pointed to previous comments by the Court of Appeal suggesting possible exceptions for regions such as the Gaspé Peninsula, similar to protections already granted to the Magdalen Islands.

“But even then, it has to be done from the start,” insists Mr. Chassin.

Mr. Chassin believes the solution now lies in the next legislative session, meaning any changes would likely only apply after the next election.

“We could do it from the start. That would be perfectly justified,” he says.

Representing the Laurentians riding of Saint-Jérôme, the MNA denied being pressured by municipal officials in his region to oppose the bill.

The Laurentians region had previously joined Centre-du-Québec and others in challenging the May 2024 legislation that halted the electoral map review process. The Court of

Appeal eventually overturned that legislation, while the Supreme Court did not hear the case.

“I can guarantee you one thing: any pressure I may face does not dictate my actions. It’s a matter of my conscience. And I thought about it right up until the last minute. I wasn’t necessarily eager to oppose it, but clearly, no one else was going to do it. Some may be more or less comfortable with the bill, but they’re in parties and they fall in line. I don’t condemn them. It will suit people in my corner. The idea was certainly not to ignore my corner, but we want a balance that respects the process,” the MNA maintains.

According to Mr. Chassin, only a snap election called before July 14 would allow Quebec to keep the current electoral map.

“That would be very unusual. In that case, I would bear the burden of calling an elec-

tion. I tell myself it’s better to have a legitimate, elected government than an illegitimate one that tries to get by with maneuvers and laws. The voters will be able to decide.”

“The bill on the table would have allowed us to move forward quickly. We need to find a solution so that MNA Chassin understands that it is the voice of Quebec’s regions that is at risk, and all the political parties represented in the National Assembly agree on this. He must show openness,” states Mathieu Lapointe.

The Conservative MNA for Rimouski, Maité Blanchette Vézina, was not present in the National Assembly, having returned to her riding the previous day for personal reasons.

However, sources indicate that the matter is not entirely closed.

Bill 3 could still be reintroduced at any time before the parliamentary session ends on June 12.



*The independent Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Saint-Jérôme threw cold water on the process by refusing to consent to fast-track Bill 3 on the electoral map.*



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# Gaspé to welcome 19 cruise ships in 2026

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Nineteen ships are expected in Gaspé in 2026, for the cruise season, bringing a potential total of 9,252 passengers and 5,277 crew members.

That represents an increase in the number of ships compared with 2025, when 16 vessels brought 9,233 passengers and 5,069 crew members.

The first ship, the Pearl Mist, is scheduled to arrive on May 14. The second vessel will not arrive until September 4, with the season continuing through November 3.

“There will be slightly smaller ships this year,” says Igor Urban, port manager at Escale Gaspésienne and assistant director of Destination Gaspé.

The 2026 season marks the end of a pandemic-related transition period, as the cruise industry typically operates on three to five-year cycles.

“We’re coming out of the trough. The numbers for 2027 are encouraging. We’re expecting 35 ships, including three for winter cruises, with a potential 20,902 passengers. We’re riding the wave again and heading back toward much more promising numbers in the Gaspé,” notes Mr. Urban.

In 2025, a winter cruise aboard the Commandant Charcot helped develop supply chains from Gaspé.

That model is expected to continue for the winter of 2027, although integrating into regular summer supply chains remains a challenge, as ships



Photo: Escale Gaspésienne

typically provision in Montreal and Quebec City.

“We won’t be able to carve out a niche for the regular season. However, we’re working to ensure that Gaspé products are included in the supplies in Quebec City and Montreal,” says Mr. Urban.

He notes that procurement systems in the cruise industry remain highly centralized.

Tourist train seen as key to growth

Founded in June 2008, Escale Gaspésienne expanded its operations in 2013 with the addition of a tourist train, the Amiral, which transported cruise passengers and tourists between Gaspé and Percé.

The train, purchased for \$1.8 million, last operated in 2014 due to deteriorating rail infrastructure.

While avoiding political commentary, Mr. Urban said a return to rail service would significantly enhance the region’s tourism offering.

“It’s going to be essential. It would be a hugely important

milestone that could allow the cruise industry to grow. Cruise lines want to move large numbers of passengers during shore excursions. The train would really address that by eliminating the need for bus transportation and offering an experience. It would allow us to move more passengers per day,” says Mr. Urban.

“It would make all the difference,” he adds.

With improved transportation capacity, Gaspé could once again accommodate ships carrying between 3,000 and 3,500 passengers.

“We could accommodate much larger ships comfortably, making it a pleasant experience for tourists,” notes Mr. Urban.

The potential return of rail service adds weight to calls for the Quebec government to complete track rehabilitation between Port-Daniel–Gascons and Gaspé, a project placed on hold in March 2025 after rising costs prompted a return to the planning phase.

## A premature announcement for the Fisheries Fund

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Quebec Fisheries Minister Donald Martel announced early on May 11 that the federal and provincial government had reached a tentative agreement on a Quebec Fisheries Fund 2.0. However, his office later tempered the announcement, stating that negotiations were still ongoing.

When asked about the progress of negotiations surrounding the continuation of the fund, the minister initially appeared optimistic. “In terms of the negotiations, it looks like there’s an agreement in principle. I’m very pleased. I think that in the end, the total budget will be increased. We are awaiting announcements from the federal government. But in principle, we have had discussions with the federal minister and we expect news very soon. But this is good news,” Minister Donald Martel initially states.

However, three hours later, the minister’s press secretary clarified that her boss may have spoken too quickly, noting that there was no formal agreement in principle because negotiations had not yet been finalized.

The federal government announced on March 11 its intention to renew the fund, which expired on March 31. The Liberal government led by Mark Carney had pledged to increase the program’s budget by 20%, bringing it to approximately \$50 million.

The federal government would continue to cover 70% of the costs, while the Quebec government would contribute the remaining 30%. “All I can tell you is that it will be higher than the last budget,” the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Nicolet-Bécancour had initially said before later clarifying his remarks.

The original Fisheries Fund was launched in 2019 for a five-year term and later extended by two additional years.

After a slow start, stakeholders in the fishing industry gradually became more familiar with the program. By the end of the initiative, 195 projects had received funding totalling \$42.7 million, excluding contributions from beneficiaries.

Over the past year, fishing industry stakeholders have repeatedly called for the program to be renewed.

In January, the Quebec Association of Fishing Industry Operators adopted resolutions urging the extension of the fund.

Last November, Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet even travelled to Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands to meet with fishermen and industry representatives in support of the sector’s demands.

Facing rapid change, industry stakeholders believe that innovation and modernization are essential to strengthening the fisheries sector’s long-term capacity and competitiveness.

### ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SADC  
DU ROCHER-PERCÉ

**LOCATION:** MRC du Rocher-Percé  
129, boul. René-Lévesque, Chandler  
Salle des Maires  
**DATE:** Tuesday, June 16, 2026  
**AGENDA:** 4:30 PM: Welcome  
5:00 PM: Annual General Assembly  
6:00 PM: End of the Assembly

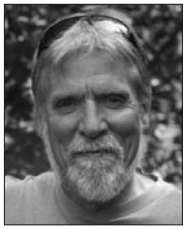
Invitation to the population of the MRC of Rocher-Percé. In anticipation of this Annual General Meeting, at which administrators of the corporation will be elected, a nomination period will open on May 5, 2026 and close on June 4, 2026, at 4:30 p.m., pursuant to By-Law 5.02 of the General By-Laws.

The positions to be filled are as follows:

- **PRIMARY:** One director representing all economic activities involved in the production of raw materials, including: agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, associations, representatives or others in this sector.
- **SECONDARY SECTOR:** Two directors representing all economic activities involving the processings of raw materials into productive goods or consumer goods, including: wood processing, fish processing, bio-food processing, non-metallic mineral products, associations, representatives or others in the sector
- **TERTIARY:** Two directors representing all socio-economic activities related to the distribution or sale of goods, products, and services, including: tourism and others.

All nominees must fill out the appropriate form within the deadlines mentioned above and send it to the corporation’s head office at: 129, boulevard René-Lévesque Ouest, bureau S-101, Chandler (Québec) G0C 1K0. The nomination form and general by-laws are available at the SADC office and on the website in the “Documents” section.

On behalf of the Board of Directors,  
Marthe Larocque  
Administrative assistant  
418 689-5699, ext. 200



Gilles Gagné

## Commentary

### Powering Canada Strong, a plan to make backward steps, environmentally speaking

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney announced on May 14 that the country plans to double the capacity of its electricity grid and that the federal government wants to participate in efforts to make power transmission lines more efficient between provinces. The plan is called Powering Canada Strong.

He is encouraging provinces to place more emphasis on electricity exchanges within Canada instead of focusing primarily on exports to the United States.

On paper, the plan sounds like a good idea, especially considering the growing unpredictability of Canada's largest trading partner, the United States.

However, most provinces don't want what could be called "interference" from the federal government in a provincial jurisdiction, energy production. In fact, provinces often pass up opportunities to increase commercial exchanges with neighbouring provinces in order to maintain greater control over their own policies.

There are numerous examples of that reality, with

the exception of the Quebec-Newfoundland-and-Labrador relationship, where electricity trade is strong, despite the discontent of the latter because of the Churchill Falls deal advantaging Hydro-Québec to a wide extent. However, this is a long story that takes a book to explain.

Consider that Quebec sells an average of 8,500 megawatts/hour (MW/hour) of electricity to the United States, while Ontario exports approximately 7,800 MW/hour. Electricity transactions between Quebec and Ontario amount to a mere, in relative terms, 2,000 MW/hour.

British Columbia exports roughly 6,000 MW/hour to the United States, but only 2,000 MW/hour to Alberta. The American "spot market" is characterized by high price fluctuations, which increase the profits of utilities such as Hydro-Quebec and British Columbia Hydro, as well as Ontario's Hydro One, although to a lesser degree because costly nuclear power dominates Ontario's energy mix.

#### The hidden reality, then the political context

In his May 14 announcement, Mark Carney declared that "the path to affordability is electrification; the path to competitiveness is electrification; the path to net zero is electrification."

Hence his next statement to the effect that "electrification underpins everything, our emissions, our environment, our economy."

In making those statements, Mark Carney made a tricky detour around the intensive use of natural gas in the quest for net zero emissions.

He declared that natural gas "has one of the lowest emissions intensities in the world", which "allows natural gas to play multiple roles, including supporting peak demand, bolstering system reliability during periods of stress or low renewable output and meeting baseload generation needs."

Yet the use of hydrocarbons continues to conceal their long-term impacts of public health, as demonstrated for years by a growing number of doctors. The search for oil and gas, the use of hydrocarbons and the leaking wells cause multiple health problems in Canada. It is true that hydrocarbons are still useful in today's world. However, we must tend towards reducing their consumption for environmental reasons. The hidden cost of health-related problems deriving from that use financially counteracts the advantages.

The plan is expected to reduce electricity costs for seven out of 10 Canadian households by expanding the role of natural gas in the energy mix.

Mark Carney made the Powering Canada Strong announcement one day before meeting Alberta premier Danielle Smith. Their meeting was scheduled for midday on May 15, just hours before SPEC's deadline.

It was already understood at that point that the federal government intended to soften Canada's greenhouse gas reduction targets in an effort to satisfy Ms. Smith. The country is notably expected to move certain targets back by 10 years, from 2030 to 2040.

Mark Carney is clearly worried about the growing separatist movement in Alberta. By supporting the construction of new pipelines, he hopes to ease those tensions. Will it work?



Wendy Dawson

## Guest Commentary

### En anglais, s.v.p.

New Richmond's story began long before modern debates over language laws. The Town's development was shaped heavily by Scottish families and English-speaking pioneers. Logging, farming, shipbuilding, and, later, the linerboard mill all helped build New Richmond into an important regional centre along the Baie-des-Chaleurs.

Originally known as Cascapédia — from the Mi'gmaq word Gaskapédiak, the area became home to Acadian settlers, Scottish immigrants, and Loyalists fleeing the aftermath of the American Revolution. The arrival of English-speaking settlers in 1784 helped establish the foundations of the community that would later become the Township of New Richmond in 1842 and officially a municipality in 1855.

Today, approximately 14% of New Richmond's population, some 600 to 700 individuals, remains English-speaking. Many of those residents are seniors over the age of 65 — people who have spent their entire lives contributing to the community, paying taxes, raising families, volunteering and helping sustain local institutions.

At a public information session held for the general population on May 5, the Town of New Richmond announced an ambitious initiative. The Town, together in a hopeful collaboration with its citizens, will prepare a 10 year strategic plan. It is an unusually forward-looking vision for a municipal government, but one that could prove incredibly valuable for the community.

A long-range strategic plan allows a small town to proactively define its future rather than simply react in crisis. It helps focus limited resources (money, time,

staff) on agreed-upon priorities, while providing future councils a roadmap for sustainable development that reflects the wishes of the community.

Unless you are an Anglophone citizen. So far, the process has not included meaningful accommodations for New Richmond's English-speaking residents. The survey being distributed to citizens is available only in French, and the (many) information sessions scheduled for June are planned exclusively in French. The Town's position is that it is bound by provincial language legislation, Bill 96.

Due to language policies strengthened by the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government, municipalities across Quebec face increasing restrictions on the use of English in public communications, even in communities with long-established anglophone populations.

In New Richmond, this issue is not abstract politics. It is personal, historical and deeply connected to the identity of the town itself.

For elderly residents especially, language accessibility is not merely symbolic. Municipal surveys, public notices, emergency information, taxation documents and community updates directly affect people's ability to participate fully in civic life. Removing English communication from a historically bilingual town does not create unity. It creates isolation.

The Gaspésie is overwhelmingly francophone, and French remains the common public language of the region. Most anglophones in New Richmond are bilingual and have lived peacefully alongside francophone neighbours for generations. This coexistence is not a weakness of the community; it is one of its greatest strengths.

The danger is not that French will disappear from New Richmond. The danger is that a historic English-speaking minority — one that helped build the town itself — will slowly be pushed to the margins of public life.

Communities survive not only through economic development, but through memory, inclusion, and mutual respect. A town that forgets part of its own story risks weakening the very social fabric that allowed it to endure for more than two centuries.

New Richmond should not have to choose between protecting French and respecting its English-speaking citizens. It has successfully done both for generations. The Town also has a responsibility to advocate for, and represent, its English-speaking citizens in the execution of their civil liberties.

### Correction

In the article published on May 6 regarding the response from the Association of Expropriated Persons of Forillon and Their Descendants, it was incorrectly stated that the association had never been involved in the projects. It should have read that the association had always been kept informed of developments regarding the projects. There were only two instances in which the association was not involved in joint projects between the Mi'gmaq Nations of Gaspésie and Forillon National Park. We apologize for this error.

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# Police Report

## Sex crimes: Bruno-Pierre Godbout sentenced to 36 months in prison

Bruno-Pierre Godbout, 37, a former town councillor for the Newport district of Chandler, was sentenced on May 1 to 36 months in prison after pleading guilty on January 20 to six of the 12 charges against him. He pleaded guilty to one count of sexual assault, one count of assault with a weapon, two counts of assault and two counts of criminal harassment.

Considering that Bruno-Pierre Godbout has been in custody since his arrest on April 15, 2025, he has 17 months remaining to serve. Among the aggravating factors, Quebec Court judge Richard Côté noted that the offences against the three victims constituted intimate partner violence and had significant psychological impacts. The nature of certain sexual assaults was taken into account.

Mitigating factors included the guilty plea, which spared the victims from testifying, as well as the accused's acknowledgement of responsibility, expression of remorse, previous record as a productive member of society and efforts toward rehabilitation since his arrest. The criminal prosecution sought a six-year prison sentence, while the defence recommended 30 months. Following his release, Mr. Godbout will be prohibited from possessing firearms for 10 years and will face a lifetime prohibition on restricted or prohibited weapons.

The judge also ordered him to provide a DNA sample and undergo therapy related to his actions. Bruno-Pierre Godbout will be prohibited from contacting the victims and must register under the Sex offender information registration Act for 20 years. Upon release, he will be subject to a 24-month probation period and must not contact the victims or be present at locations where they live, study or work. Their identities are protected by a publication ban.

The offences occurred between 2010 and 2025 in Bonaventure, Gaspé, Newport, Saint-Nérée-de-Bellechasse and Montreal. Mr. Godbout declined to make a statement before sentencing.

The fraud case involving less than \$5,000 in alleged false expense claims filed in 2021 with the Town of Chandler was adjourned until May 26.

## Sexual assault: 23-month sentence for Kevin Plante

Kevin Plante, a 44-year-old man from Gaspé, was sentenced on May 1 to 23 months in prison after being found guilty of sexual assault and obtaining sexual services for consideration from a person under the age of 18, stemming from an incident that occurred on September 13, 2021, in Gaspé.

Judge Richard Côté noted that the defendant is making efforts toward rehabilitation and appears to feel remorse for his actions. The judge also pointed out that Mr. Plante had maintained employment until his arrest despite longstanding substance abuse issues.

However, the abuse inflicted on the 14-year-old victim, the degree of responsibility, and the psychological impact on the teenager are aggravating factors. Since Kevin Plante completed court-ordered therapy as a condition of his release, his sentence was reduced by three months. Taking into account the 17 days already served in pretrial detention, he has 19 months and four days remaining to serve. Following his release, Mr. Plante will be prohibited from possessing firearms for 10 years and from possessing restricted or prohibited weapons for life.

He must also provide a DNA sample and will be registered under the Sex offender information registration Act for a period of 20 years. Upon release, Kevin Plante will be subject to a 24-month probation order. He is prohibited from contacting the victim or being in her presence. Before sentencing, he briefly addressed



Bruno-Pierre Godbout.

Photo: N. Sergerie



Kevin Plante.

Photo: Archives

the court, stating he had no memory of the events. He expressed hope that the victim may one day forgive him, adding that he cannot forgive himself. He also stated that he has turned his life around, secured employment and overcome a 22-year drug addiction problem. He said he no longer considers himself a danger to society or to himself.

## Drug bust in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts

On May 6, Sûreté du Québec police officers from the Haute-Gaspésie MRC detachment conducted a drug search at a residence located on 4th Street West in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. This operation stemmed from an investigation launched following information received from the public regarding activities related to drug trafficking and the sale of contraband tobacco.

During the operation, police seized, among other things, a quantity of cannabis, cocaine, and unidentified pills, more than 4,500 contraband cigarettes, more than \$8,000 in cash and three illegally possessed firearms. A 71-year-old man was arrested at the scene and interviewed by investigators. He was released pending further legal proceedings. He could face charges related to drug trafficking, firearms offences, and violations of the Tobacco Tax Act. The Sûreté du Québec reminds the public that any information concerning drug trafficking activities can be reported confidentially to the Sûreté du Québec's Criminal Information Centre at 1-800-659-4264.

## Marc-Jules Chouinard's trial postponed one last time

The trial of Marc-Jules Chouinard, accused of the non-premeditated murder of Gabriel Noël and Dylan Samuel-Francœur in May 2023 in Gaspé, has been postponed once again. The jury trial, which is expected to last up to six weeks, was initially scheduled to begin in March. It was postponed on April 30 during a hearing at the Percé courthouse.

Superior Court Justice Guy de Blois has not yet set a new trial date, but he confirmed that the postponement is not due to the administration of justice. The judge delayed proceedings after the accused requested a change of lawyer. Marc-Jules Chouinard, who was represented by Pierre Gagnon, is now represented by François Létourneau-Prézeau.

Despite the postponement, the judge emphasized that he wants the Superior Court to be ready to act swiftly when the trial is held.

In a written statement, the office of the Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions declared that "we understand that this may disappoint the victims' families and we are sensitive to the repercussions of this decision for them". The sister of Dylan Samuel-Francœur, Jessica, has frequently voiced her family's frustration over the numerous delays in the case.

Marc-Jules Chouinard faces 11 charges following a collision that allegedly led to the deaths of Gabriel Noël (18) and Dylan Samuel-Francœur (19). Marc-Jules Chouinard's son, Simon Dufort-Chouinard, is also charged with premeditated murder in this case. Both accused remain in custody.

## Charged with attempted murder, Gabriel Lafrance changes lawyer

The bail hearing of Gabriel Lafrance, a 33-year-old man from Carleton-sur-Mer charged with attempted murder, was postponed after the accused changed lawyers.

"The bail hearing did not proceed. Lafrance remains in custody. He has changed lawyers, firing Pierre Gagnon and retaining the services of Vicky Powell. The case was adjourned to the pro forma stage on May 25. His new lawyer had not yet seen the evidence," explains criminal and penal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville-Paradis.

The April 24 bail hearing was expected to last five hours and include several witnesses. The Carleton man is charged with attempted murder for allegedly shooting one of three men who had just broken into his home on July 7. He also faces charges of possession of narcotics for the purpose of trafficking and uttering death threats in connection with the same case.

Following a raid by the Tactical Intervention Group at his residence on November 19, additional charges of possession of prohibited weapons and narcotics for the purpose of trafficking were laid. The accused has remained in custody since his arrest.

## Employment grows in April

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Some 600 jobs were created in the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region in April, all of them part-time positions, according to Statistics Canada.

The number of jobs rose from 35,700 in March to 36,300 in April in the region. Of that total, 29,100 are full-time positions, a figure that remained unchanged, while part-time employment increased from 6,600 to 7,200 from one month to the next.

The number of unemployed people decreased by 100 to 4,500. Meanwhile, the labour force—those either working or actively looking for work—grew by 400 to 40,700.

The unemployment rate fell from 11.4% in March to 11.1% in April.

### Higher than April 2025

Year-over-year, the labour market grew by 300 workers, even though the labour force declined by 400 people.

The region had 36,000 workers in April 2025.

There were 100 fewer full-time jobs compared to a year earlier, but 300 more part-time jobs. However, the number of unemployed people stood at 5,100 in April 2025, bringing the unemployment rate at that time to 12.4%.

# Stakeholders appreciate the respect of a promise

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – Micheline Saint-Onge, spokesperson for the Coalition of Gaspésians for the Return of a Passenger Train for the past three years, and a member of the organization during its 12 years of activism, left her meeting with the VIA Rail delegation satisfied. Until March, VIA Rail had limited itself to promising a return to the Gaspé Peninsula only once the rail network was repaired all the way to Gaspé.

“I’m very, very happy. You wouldn’t believe it! It’s so much better to work collaboratively, rather than constantly

dealing with rejections, as if we didn’t exist. They (VIA Rail people) are asking us to keep hope alive in the Gaspé Peninsula. You have to pinch yourself. Even in my wildest dreams, I never thought I’d see this,” says Ms. Saint-Onge.

She assures that the Coalition will try to bring the train back before the end of 2026.

“We’re going to do what we have to do on our end to reduce the wait. Furthermore, we’re prioritizing a daytime train. It will also meet the needs of the Lower St. Lawrence region, where the Ocean train (Montreal-Halifax) passes through in the

middle of the night. For seniors, traveling at night isn’t easy,” adds Ms. Saint-Onge.

Member of Parliament (MP) Alexis Deschênes, representing the riding of Gaspésie–Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine–Listuguj, also expressed relief at the presence of VIA Rail executives, in connection with the objective of bringing passenger rail service back east of Matapédia, a goal identified during the April 2025 election campaign.

“I think their presence demonstrates VIA Rail’s commitment to returning to the Gaspé Peninsula. They kept their promise. They said they

would come (to the Standing Committee on Transport on March 11) and they came (...) I wanted a change of attitude. We got it,” states Mr. Deschênes, who was also encouraged by the carrier’s openness to suggestions from the region.

As for Éric Dubé, president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, he also confirms that his organization will collaborate with VIA Rail, particularly through repairs to stations and their boarding platforms. However, there is more.

“One of VIA Rail’s major challenges is that passenger trains almost never run on its

tracks. They’re always behind waiting freight trains. We will be able to adapt freight transport so as not to cause problems for VIA Rail. Our objective will always be the development of our region, and the return of VIA Rail is part of that,” assures Mr. Dubé, who is also the prefect of the Bonaventure MRC and mayor of New Richmond.

In the last two budgets, the Quebec government froze the publication of new calls for tenders for the rehabilitation of the Port-Daniel-Gaspé rail line. However on May 6, funding of nearly \$138.7 million was announced (*see other article blow*).

## Quebec releases funding for Gaspé railway after 14-month freeze

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – After a year-long freeze without new investments, the Quebec Ministry of Transport announces that \$138,666,000 will be allocated to continue the rehabilitation of the Gaspé railway network over the next two years.

The pause included in the 2025 budget, and the reclassification of this rehabilitation project as a “study” item in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan, had generated strong criticism from peninsula leaders.

This “study” phase confirmed that there would be no new calls for tenders in 2025 or early 2026, and that the completion of the rail network rehabilitation between Port-Daniel and Gaspé, promised for 2026 by former Premier François Legault, would not be completed on time.

This postponement primarily raised doubts about whether the Coalition Avenir Québec government would abandon the rehabilitation of the network between Port-Daniel and Gaspé, despite significant sums already invested in this route. Since 2017, at least \$135.5 million has been invested between those two points (*see other article on cover*).

Éric Dubé, president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, remains cautious about the press release issued by Transports Québec because it lacks details. It only mentions that “\$138,666,000 (will be used) to complete rail projects” in the Gaspé Peninsula.

“It was wishful thinking to



Photo: Gilles Gagné

*The last VIA Rail train served Gaspé in December 2011. The Amiral tourist train was the last to travel there, in 2014. The SCFG has also been eagerly awaiting a return to Gaspé for freight purposes since at least 2016.*

believe they would release the remaining \$400 million needed to complete the work all the way to Gaspé. I was afraid the government would put everything on hold and let the project between Port-Daniel and Gaspé sink,” says Mr. Dubé.

He points out that this sum of almost \$138.7 million was not mentioned in the March 18, 2026 budget or in the Quebec Infrastructure Program.

“We’re getting some surprises! Are these electoral campaign tactics? I’d be glad if the rail issue became part of the campaign. Is there a connection with the visit of VIA Rail executives to the Gaspé Peninsula this week? They want to return to the Gaspé Peninsula, but they also reiterated that the goal is to reach Gaspé. I think everything is aligned to complete this project in the

medium term. We must also consider Osisko’s clear message, which is to reopen the Murdochville mine; the company will need the rail,” explains Éric Dubé.

### Reactions from the Gaspé town area

Gaspé mayor Daniel Côté was informed by The SPEC that the Quebec Ministry of Transport was reinvesting in the Gaspé rail network.

“I had heard rumours that there might be good news. What we learned, after sifting through the limited information we received, is that there would be funds for maintenance elsewhere (between Matapédia and Port-Daniel, the operational section of the network) and money to complete work that had been started but not fin-

ished,” he says.

“I’m eager to see the details on the scope of the work. Is it just to fulfill contracts that were awarded but suspended? We’ve heard there will be other announcements, with the upcoming review of the funding. In any case, it’s much better than the zeros we’ve been hearing since last year,” adds Mr. Côté.

On April 11, 2025, as part of its “thorough reassessment of planned interventions and the overall strategy” for the Gaspé railway, Transports Québec partially suspended contracts awarded to two construction contractors. The value of the “suspensions” amounted to \$21.2 million, including \$13.9 million for Groupe SEMA of Sainte-Flavie and \$7.3 million for Construction Stellaire of Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures. Regional development consultant Gaétan Lelièvre, who served as former Minister of Regional Development from 2012 to 2014, welcomes the release of funds announced by Transports Québec, but also points out the time lost over the past 14 months, since the 2025 budget.

“At first glance, this is good news. Is it too little, too late for this CAQ government? Will it have time to issue calls for tenders this year? With the election just months away, it seems very electioneering. It leaves a lot of room for uncertainty. Will the next government take a break? Details are missing,” he analyzes.

Mr. Lelièvre points out that in May, it can be too late to prepare calls for tenders, publish them, analyze the bids, choose the contractor, and start the

work.

“In the last two budgets, there was no funding for new projects. We can’t help but think that it’s likely to be two years without a call for tenders. They’re pulling a rabbit out of a hat just months before the election. We lack information on the amount needed to complete the repairs. We want to know what amount is needed and what the timeline is. In my opinion, we’ve lost two years and we risk losing more following the elections, even though most parties support the railway,” thinks Gaétan Lelièvre.

“We’re talking about a three to four-year delay compared to premier François Legault’s initial timeline. He promised the work would be completed by 2026. Then, the deputy premier at the time (Geneviève Guilbault) pushed the deadline to 2027, then 2028. I don’t know whether to be insulted or pleased,” he concludes.

On June 27, 2023, while serving as Minister of Transport, Geneviève Guilbault stated that the entire Matapédia-Gaspé railway rehabilitation project would cost \$871.8 million. The work was projected to cost approximately \$355 million between Matapédia and Port-Daniel and \$517 million between Port-Daniel and Gaspé.

The 325-kilometre Gaspé railway has always been operational between Matapédia and New Richmond. Service was restored on January 7 on the New Richmond-Port-Daniel line. The refurbishment work was announced on May 5, 2017.

# New site for Gaspé arena

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Because the Chic-Chocs School Service Centre (CSSCC) needs the space originally set aside for the new multisport complex planned behind C.-E. Pouliot School, the town of Gaspé has decided to relocate the project to the former Ministry of Transportation (MTQ) site in downtown Gaspé, a decision that has sparked criticism.

The CSSCC has expanded its vocational training offerings since 2023 and now requires additional space behind the school.

“Currently, due to a lack of space, we have to rely on our partners. If we want to be able to offer future training programs, we must not limit development opportunities. We are analyzing the possibility of an expansion or adding other structures. But with the construction of an arena, we had just limited ourselves because the lot is landlocked,” notes CSSCC Director Josée Synnott.

The multisport complex, initially planned in two phases, has now been replaced by a more traditional arena project that would include offices for organizations, a multipurpose room and a running track around the stands, with seating for roughly 1,000 people.

“We’re going to remove the development of the annex. Other multisport facilities may be built at a different location. We are still planning for multisport development. We are removing it to save money, based on an initial preliminary analysis,” says Mayor Daniel Côté.

Since 2023, project costs have likely increased and are expected to remain between \$30 million and \$32 million despite the revised design.

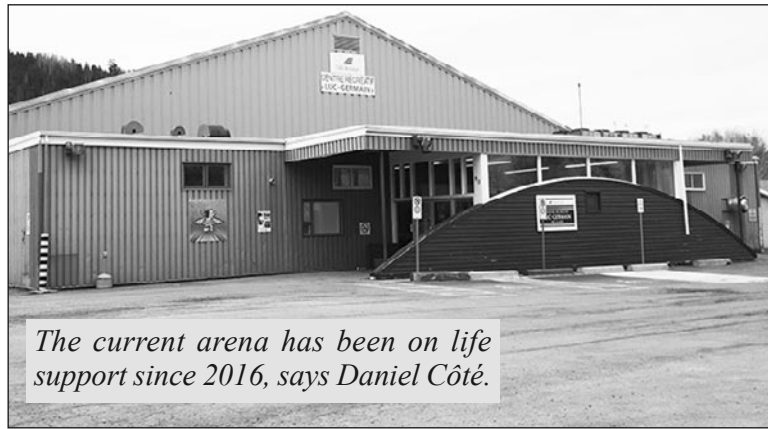
The CSSCC supports the Town’s plan to build the arena on MTQ-owned land.

The arena will occupy one-third of the site with approximately 125 parking spaces.

“We may be able to use the parking lot at Pavillon de la découverte school during peak times for tournaments and allow buses to access the arena. We are commissioning professionals to optimize the spaces,” says the mayor.

“The top priority is the safety of our students, since the children at Découverte are very young. We’re open to exploring what could be done to optimize this space so our young people can enjoy it,” adds Ms. Synnott.

“Working together is a win-



The current arena has been on life support since 2016, says Daniel Côté.

Photo: N. Sergerie

win for everyone,” adds the mayor, who discusses possible uses for the remaining two-thirds of the site.

“The results of the consultations that have already taken place mentioned green spaces behind the arena quite a bit. That’s what we’re considering, and we’ll continue to co-develop it,” the mayor emphasizes.

“We already have an initial phase for La Découverte in the school projects, and by partnering with the Town of Gaspé, we’ll be able to maximize the project. But we haven’t done the analysis yet. There will be several issues regarding school transportation and staff parking,” says Ms. Synnott.

## Hard to swallow for some

The Town unveiled the new plan on the morning of May 4. That evening, criticism was voiced during the municipal council meeting.

Downtown councillor James Keays openly disagreed with the proposal.

“I’m not on board with this approach. To say otherwise would be lying to you and to myself. We must be careful about how we present things. It has been said that the consultation project remains consistent with the sports complex project. Let me be clear: I do not share that interpretation. Yes, a sports hub was among the uses mentioned, but I do not believe the public consultation directly or indirectly supported the construction of an arena on the MTQ grounds,” he says.

“You speak of this project as being unifying. I have a very hard time describing this project as unifying. First, because it will be built on land where the public has spoken out in favour of other projects. Second, because it will have a significant impact on school routes, and third, because it affects only a fraction of the sports-loving population. We’ve seen more unifying projects before,” says Gabrielle Leduc.

“When we held the strategic consultation, I asked where the

MTQ and the arena project stood. We were told it was on hold. We’re just one month away from the project being submitted, so there’s no possibility for public consultation, contrary to what was said. We need to take a step back and come talk to us. We have ideas. The arena isn’t just a matter for users; it’s a public issue,” emphasizes Jean-Yves Dupuis.

In response to the criticism, the mayor reiterated the Town’s position.

“The CSSCC’s change in position meant we had to find another site. I understand that there is public concern, and that’s normal. There were two phases of consultation. Nothing specific came out of it, but the word ‘arena’ came up quite often, even though our consultants told us not to mention it—the site is a no-go elsewhere. We have no choice,” says Mr. Côté.

“When we look at the key themes that emerged from the consultations, green spaces and parks scored 3.8, and the sports hub scored 3.5—which included an arena and a mixed-use hub. I don’t think we’re that out of step with the consultations that were conducted. As I’ve said before, the project affects only one-third of the site,” responding indirectly to Councillor Keays.

The mayor also noted that the call for projects under the Financial Assistance Program for Recreational, Sports and Outdoor Infrastructure (PAFIRSPA) closes on June 22.

“We must be united and stand together; otherwise, we give the government an excuse to say no to us. I followed the majority of the council,” he says. “We moved forward with this plan without consultation.”

“We have to submit a project with a site. If other site ideas emerge or if traffic studies tell us not to do this at this location, we’ll look at our options,” adds Mr. Côté.

The plans and specifications already prepared will be slightly adapted to the new site.

The project represents an estimated \$32 million investment, with a maximum possible grant of \$20 million.

# Many new housing units coming to Chandler

Nelson Sergerie

CHANDLER – Housing construction is booming in Chandler, with Mayor Gilles Daraïche stating that as many as 120 housing units could be built this year.

One of the major projects is the continuation of the Logements HAN development launched last fall, which includes 48 housing units on Rue des Micmacs.

Several other projects are either underway or in the planning stages. “There are private developers already building 16 units. There’s also a project on the plateau that would allow for between 12 and 20 units. We have another project with the potential for 80 housing units. With 120 housing units, we would make a significant dent in Chandler’s housing problem,” explains Mr Daraïche.

In addition, a project involving 15 tourist cottages will be built near the Newport hatchery.

## Additional land made available

The eight reclaimable lots from the former Gaspésia mill site on Commerciale Street in Chandler could be put up for sale by the end of the summer.

The Town has received the results of supplementary studies on the condition of the site, and a notary is now finalizing the paperwork. “This is very good news. We want to fill Commerciale Street with small businesses. I would prefer small businesses. Back in the day, there were plenty of small businesses, just like there were in the 1970s and 1980s,” hopes the mayor. Several neighbourhood businesses have opened in the area in recent months.

## A hefty bill

The heavy rain on May 1 and 2, which washed away a culvert leading to Lac Sept-Îles, cost the Town approximately \$50,000. Emergency repairs were required to restore traffic after roughly 16 feet of roadway was washed away. The mayor praised the efforts of workers who responded to the emergency. “This culvert was built about 35 years ago by the Gaspésia company. We’re looking for a longer-term solution,” he says. Building a bridge would cost more than \$500,000. An alternative solution is now being considered. “We would add another pipe of the same size as the one currently in place. We think that could solve the problem,” explains Mr. Daraïche.

## Tourist information kiosk

Like several other municipalities in the region, Chandler will also receive an interactive tourist information kiosk.

The Town will contribute approximately \$5,000 toward a \$50,000 installation project. “We had several potential locations in mind. We chose a busy spot on Commerciale Street near Mich Café. When people leave Montreal, they stop there. It’s near our market stalls where we’ll be holding our farmers markets this summer. It will allow tourists to see what’s happening in our area,” says Mr. Daraïche.

The Town is participating in Phase 2 of a project developed by Tourisme Gaspésie and Tourisme Québec aimed at improving access to tourism information. Matane, Cap-Chat, Gaspé, Percé, New Richmond and Mont-Joli received similar kiosks last year. Carleton-sur-Mer and Grande-Vallée will also join the network this year.





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# Alexis Deschênes reflects on his first year in Ottawa

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER — One year after being elected to the House of Commons on April 28, 2025, the Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj sums up his first year by saying he has represented a fantastic community.

That's what Alexis Deschênes says right off the bat when asked about his first-year review.

"Citizens who care deeply about their quality of life, environmental protection, and a strong economy. It's truly a privilege for me. It involved a lot of travel but also countless meetings. I've come away with an even deeper love for the region," says the MP.

His approach, he explains, has been based on listening to citizens, improving situations where possible and solving problems collaboratively.

"An opposition Member of Parliament (MP) has additional resources that a government member does not. We have greater freedom, and I've used a collaborative approach



Photo: N. Sergerie

*Alexis Deschênes with his leader, Yves-François Blanchet, during the election campaign on April 1, 2025, in Rivière-au-Renard.*

to build relationships with Liberal ministers. The results are still quite good," Mr. Deschênes explains.

Among the accomplishments he highlights are the extension of the runway at the Îles-de-la-Madeleine airport — a file dating back to 1973 — the federal government's \$3.1 million investment in Exploramer in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts and the renewal of the

Quebec Fisheries Fund.

He also points to progress regarding passenger rail service. "And VIA Rail. It's fabulous. Since 2019, VIA Rail had been telling us there was no way they'd return to the Gaspé Peninsula until the track was repaired all the way to Gaspé. We managed to get the Crown corporation to change its mind by mobilizing together—at train stations,

through petitions, and using the parliamentary tools at our disposal," Mr. Deschênes notes.

"What people tell me is that there is hope. And if we keep working hard and everyone works together, we'll be able to move forward and, instead of facing setbacks, actually achieve results," says the MP.

He says those victories demonstrate the importance of public mobilization.

"When I lead a fight supported by a large number of people from the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, and it's just and legitimate—for example, bringing back the train or extending the runway—and it doesn't conflict with government priorities, the chances of success are pretty good. We have to use the power we have to occupy the public space. It makes me want to keep going," says Mr. Deschênes.

Since the federal government now holds a majority, Mr. Deschênes says his daily work will not fundamentally change.

"There's a bit of a perver-

sion of the popular mandate. People voted for a minority government, and the government has a majority thanks to five defectors who reneged on their commitment to their constituents. There's a lack of respect, and it results in a government that's starting to display a hint of indecency. We're going to keep raising the alarm about this," says Mr. Deschênes.

On the Fisheries Committee, however, he notes that members from all parties remain focused on finding practical solutions.

"I hope the collaboration continues, but if the Liberals want to block any opposition initiative, they can do so now—they'll be depriving themselves of the contribution we make. What I'm proposing to Ottawa is based on the reality on the ground. If the government chooses to ignore that, it will end up with ill-suited policies," he believes.

Alexis Deschênes was elected with 45.8% of the vote, defeating incumbent Liberal MP and minister Diane LeBouthillier, who received 38.3%.

## The PQ's youth wing visits the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER — The youth wing of the Parti Québécois (PQ) visited the Gaspé Peninsula from May 1 to 4, and three major themes emerged during discussions held in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Gaspé and Carleton-sur-Mer.

The return of passenger rail service to the region, access to higher education and the possibility of building a career in the region topped the list of concerns.

"What we're hearing on the ground is the call for the return of passenger rail service to extend all the way to Gaspé. There has been some progress recently, but we'll stay vigilant moving forward because no timeline has been provided. People are also asking us, regarding higher education, for more programs and the ability to start their careers in the regions to prevent young people from leaving," says Édouard Fournier, vice-president of the youth wing.

The electoral map was also a topic of discussion.

"The merger of the ridings



*Young PQ members meeting during the Gaspé tour.*

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

of Gaspé and Bonaventure is not universally supported. The Parti Québécois is certainly opposed to it. The realities of Baie-des-Chaleurs and Gaspé are different, and we want the regions to have a strong voice in the National Assembly. Citizens must also be represented with dignity, and elected officials must be accessible. Otherwise, it becomes a problem," says Mr. Fournier.

The youth wing plays a major role within the party.

"At national conventions and councils, we hold half the delegate seats. That's really important. We have a seat on the elected officials' caucus

and a seat on the national executive council, which is the Parti Québécois's most strategic body," continues Mr. Fournier.

This strong presence ensures that regional issues are kept in mind when it comes time to draft the election platform.

The tour of the Gaspé Peninsula was part of a broader tour of Quebec.

"It's part of a long series of regional tours aimed at developing an election platform that resonates with young people across Quebec, and the Gaspé Peninsula was missing from our list," he concludes.

## Clam fishing: Not happening anytime soon

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ — Those hoping to see an expansion of clam fishing will have to be patient, as a review by the House of Commons fisheries committee failed to move the issue forward.

"That's the impression we get. A sense of disrespect toward the requests of the people of the Gaspé Peninsula. We see that we have well-paid senior officials coming to discuss the reopening of sites who aren't even informed about what they're supposed to say. It's a somewhat frustrating exercise," laments Alexis Deschênes, the Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj.

Some information did emerge during the committee hearings.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has been testing shellfish meat and has not detected any toxins in the past five years.

"Environment Canada is conducting water tests, and when we ask where, they don't know. That's a bit shocking. Water tests are being conducted and they don't show any problems either," says Mr. Deschênes, noting that there is oyster farming in Saint-Siméon.

Federal officials also indicated that extended testing would be required before authorizing new harvesting sites.

"It would cost \$50,000 a year for three years. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency already has \$1.6 million a year for testing. The question is why they aren't using that money to conduct tests in Baie-des-Chaleurs," asks Mr. Deschênes.

"The three federal agencies managing the clam fishery are standing in the way of what we want as residents of the Gaspé Peninsula. We will continue to apply pressure to bring about change," says Mr. Deschênes.

According to an analysis obtained by Mr. Deschênes from a researcher he commissioned, it would take about 18 months for a site to reopen once studies begin.

"It's been over 20 years since everything was shut down. That's no reason not to apply as much pressure as possible," he says.

# BAPE unveils its consultation process

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – After the Ministry of Transport presented its comprehensive infrastructure protection project addressing coastal hazards and climate change in March, the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) will begin hearings on the project on May 20.

Chair, Antoine Morissette, accompanied by commissioners Stéphanie Dufresne and Linda Saint-Michel, will examine the Ministry's ten-year action plan for infrastructure protection in the Bas-Saint-Laurent, Gaspésie, and Îles-de-la-Madeleine regions.

The public hearing is divided into two parts: the first phase will allow participants and commission members to ask questions and obtain additional information about the project.

It will be held in the presence of the project sponsor and specialists from various ministries or agencies.

The meetings will take place on May 20 at 6:30 p.m. and on May 21 at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

However, given the vast territory covered by the project, the public may follow the proceedings by visiting one of the three other participation sites located in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

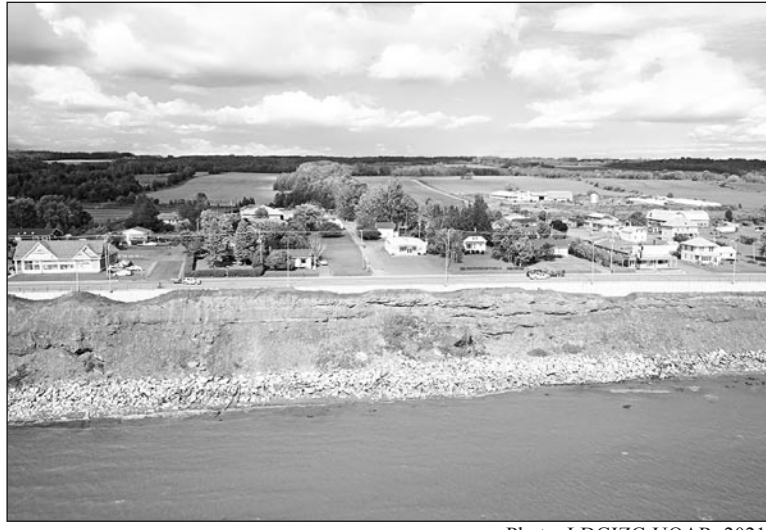


Photo: LDGIZC-UQAR, 2021

*A section of Route 132 in Baie-des-Chaleurs targeted in the Ministry of Transport's protection plan.*

A BAPE staff member will be on site to welcome participants, who will be able to follow the proceedings and interact with the commission.

In Rimouski, the session will be held in person at the Empress Golf Club. In the Gaspé Peninsula, the Mathurin-Bourg Hall at Saint-Joseph Church in Carleton-sur-Mer and the Petite-Vallée Town Hall have been selected as participation sites.

"It's important to share your questions and your perspectives. It can help us reassess our view of the project. We hope that many people will participate," says Mr. Morissette.

"Citizens are, in a way, the experts in their own communities. They are the ones living near coastal hazards. They

are the ones experiencing the impacts. They are the ones who use Route 132, among other things. This is truly valuable input," notes BAPE spokesperson, Patrick Fournier.

The BAPE did not wish to specify at this stage how many individuals or organizations requested that the agency examine the project, with the deadline for requests having passed on April 7.

However, this information will be disclosed during the first phase of the commission.

The second phase, scheduled for June, will provide an opportunity for individuals, municipalities, organizations and groups to comment on the project either verbally or in writing. Details regarding participation will be announced shortly.

The BAPE website already provides instructions, including information on how to submit a brief by June 11.

Three major public concerns emerged from the four information sessions held in March in Rimouski, the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Carleton-sur-Mer, and virtually for the session scheduled in Grande-Vallée.

Participants wanted more information about coordination between municipalities and the Ministry of Transport, the sites targeted by the project and the type of work that would be carried out.

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

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

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

Since the Ministry cannot intervene at all sites, it plans to prioritize work on 97 locations. However, those priorities may change depending

on future developments.

The sites are distributed as follows: 23 in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, 37 in the northern Gaspé Peninsula, 15 in the southern Gaspé Peninsula and 22 in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine region over a 10-year period.

The program focuses primarily on coastal protection work.

Whenever relocating the road is considered, the project will be removed from the program.

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

The ministry has not yet estimated the total cost of implementing the entire program.

The BAPE report will be submitted to the Minister of the Environment no later than September 19 and will be made public within 15 days of its submission.

## Work planned on Route 132 in L'Anse-aux-Cousins

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – With traffic diverted since 2020, the Ministry of Transport will carry out work to protect Route 132 in the L'Anse-aux-Cousins sector, near the Fort Ramsay Motel in Gaspé.

The ministry has been monitoring the site since 2013 to document erosion affecting the embankments along the roadway.

Studies identified inadequate drainage along a section of approximately 305 metres, leading to sediment loss near the guardrail. Monitoring also revealed coastal erosion at the base of the cliff, as well as issues related to its geological structure.

Following a minor landslide in 2020 — caused by runoff



Photo: Ministry of Transport

*The section of Route 132 that will be reinforced in the L'Anse-aux-Cousins area of Gaspé.*

water at the outlet of a drainage channel — the road was relocated, and concrete guardrails were installed as a temporary safety measure.

A study completed in 2021

classified the site as highly vulnerable.

According to the ministry, the combination of these factors has resulted in instability across the entire cliff, a situa-

tion worsened by climate change.

The report states that "given the vulnerability of this section of Route 132 to coastal hazards, another storm could result in the loss of a portion of the road and jeopardize the safety of users traveling in the area."

Furthermore, Route 132 in the northern part of the town of Gaspé is the only link to the town's public health infrastructure (hospital, long-term care facility, etc.); no other secondary road provides an alternative route for emergency services in the event of a closure of Route 132. Therefore, the ministry believes that urgent work is required to address the situation."

A call for tenders has been issued for the first phase of the project, which is expected to take place in the coming

months.

A rockfill protection structure will be built over approximately 305 metres at the base of the slope to stabilize the cliff and protect against coastal erosion.

The work is expected to take about four months and is estimated to cost between \$1 million and \$10 million, according to documents accompanying the tender call.

In a second phase, potentially in 2027, the road will be relocated approximately 3.3 metres to the south. The final distance will depend on the installation of the rockfill structure.

Improvements will also be made to the road's drainage system to reduce erosion at the top of the cliff caused by runoff water.

THEGASPESPEC.COM

# Quebec has committed about half of \$871M rail budget

NELSON SERGERIE

**GASPÉ** – After numerous attempts to obtain the amounts committed to the Gaspé rail project since the announcement of the start of construction in 2017, the Ministry of Transport has finally indicated that \$433 million has been allocated so far for this extensive project between Matapédia and Gaspé.

After refusing in March to disclose the amounts invested in the three railway sections, SPEC filed a request under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain this information.

As a result, we now know that the total amount committed as of April 24 was \$433 million.

In detail, \$27.5 million has been committed for section 1 between Matapédia and Caplan, \$269.8 million for the Caplan-Port-Daniel-Gascons section, and \$135.5 million for the Port-Daniel-Gascons to Gaspé section, often referred as section 3.

The ministry specifies in its response that these amounts represent contractual commitments, including investments made and not just amounts spent.

Furthermore, the ministry also refused to disclose estimates prepared for tenders cancelled in 2024, citing confidentiality.

“The documents identified as meeting the terms of your request cannot be provided to you. Indeed, these documents cannot be disclosed because they constitute confidential financial information whose disclosure would likely hinder negotiations, cause a loss to the Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility, or provide a significant advantage to another person, as they constitute confidential financial information whose disclosure would likely hinder negotiations,” states Marie-Lou Anctil, the Access to Information Officer, in the response.

The ministry justified the cancellation due to a significant discrepancy with the estimates without specifying the amount.



Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

*The renovated tunnel approaches in Port-Daniel-Gascons.*

The three cancelled bids totalled \$430 million.

Local Members of National Assembly (MNAs) have suggested cost overruns of nearly \$200 million, while former transport minister Geneviève Guilbault had announced \$517 million in June 2023 for section 3 alone.

Combining committed amounts and cancelled bids would place section 3 costs at approximately \$565 million, which is \$47 million more than what former minister Guilbault had announced. The total budget allocated in 2023 stood at \$871.8 million for the three sections.

## Reactions

The mayor of Gaspé notes that there is a shortfall of \$440 million ahead of the provincial government’s announcements regarding road investments for 2026–2028.

“Where did the missing \$440 million go between the announcement and the actual investment? I hope they’ll go toward the Gaspé railway and not elsewhere in Quebec,” says Daniel Côté.

“Where did the rest of the money go? Following the \$872 million announcement, if those funds had remained available for the rail upgrade, we might not be far from completion,” says Éric Dubé, president of the Société du

chemin de fer de la Gaspésie.

“Seeing actual figures confirmed by official government bodies, seeing the \$433 million, really strikes me because the public narrative is that \$871 million was allocated to the railway. That really strikes me,” continues the mayor of Gaspé.

The mayor says he wants a clear and realistic picture from government authorities.

“We’ll have to sit down and get the real picture. There is a duty of transparency. We’ve had firm commitments from political parties and two premiers, Philippe Couillard and François Legault, who promised a complete overhaul of the rail. If all the money that was announced and promised had been spent, perhaps there would be less of a shortfall. If we stopped tripping over our own feet by multiplying the processes, perhaps we would have managed to complete the work at a lower cost,” Mr. Côté continues, noting that the imposed standards are driving up construction costs.

“At least we’ll have a clear picture if the figures are accurate and complete. This seems to contradict the political talking points we were given, which suggested a \$200 million overrun during the last round of bidding. If we look at the ministry’s figures, we’re perhaps talking

about \$50 to \$60 million on a project of nearly a billion; if my math is correct, that’s a 5% or 6% cost overrun. Did we put the brakes on all infrastructure projects in Quebec that exceeded the budget by less than 10%? The answer is no. We were used as a scapegoat in this matter,” believes Gaéтан Lelièvre, the former Minister for the Gaspé Peninsula.

## A bill to settle

Last fall, the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie was asked to redo a business plan to justify the investments needed to complete work on the Port-Daniel-Gascons-Gaspé section.

“We were asked to invest \$180,000 that we didn’t have to conduct this study, which

was originally paid for by the Ministry of Transportation. We had questions and decided to wait for the appointment of a new premier and transportation minister before proceeding,” says Mr. Dubé.

“We find it frustrating at the regional level that we’re once again forced to justify this project we’ve been working on for 10 years,” continues Mr. Dubé.

“It’s unacceptable. It’s unusual. We really haven’t seen this very often. It seems to be a fairly common reflex of the CAQ government over the past year. Take this example of asking the Railway Corporation—composed of four MRCs in the Gaspé Peninsula, which has already saved the railway, carried out work in place of the government that generated tens of millions of dollars in savings because the work was done intelligently—and then asking them to pay for a study? This is an attempt to derail the project, to look for excuses to find scapegoats in the region. It’s unacceptable,” thunders Gaéтан Lelièvre.

With major potential clients like Osisko, LM Wind Power, Dellner, or a tourist train for cruise passengers via Escale Gaspésienne, this support doesn’t seem to be taken seriously by the Quebec government.

“That’s what we realize, but with the new premier taking office, that’s where we have hope of bringing this back to the forefront,” believes Mr. Dubé.

## Fair Haven Bible Camp New Carlisle, Quebec

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Girls Camp	10 - 12 yrs	July 12 - 17
Little Campers (B)	7 - 9 yrs	July 19 - 24
Boys Camp	10 - 12 yrs	July 26 - 31
Teen Camp	13 - 17 yrs	August 2 - 7

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**Include camper's name and which camp they are attending.**

## Rainfall record on May 1

Nelson Sergerie

**GASPÉ** – Rainfall records were set across the Gaspé Peninsula following heavy rains on May 1. In Gaspé, Environment Canada recorded 46.7 millimetres, breaking the previous record of 35.4 millimetres set in 2008. With rain continuing into May 2, a total of 49.1 millimetres was recorded at Michel-Pouliot Airport. Even heavier rainfall was recorded in New Carlisle, where 64.3 millimetres fell. The previous record there was 29.9 millimetres, set in 2023.

# No “new projects” with the \$138 million for the railway

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Quebec government has allocated \$138.6 million to continue rehabilitation work on the Gaspé Peninsula railway, but the funding applies only to projects for which contracts had already been awarded.

The funding forms part of the \$301 million in transportation investments announced by the provincial government on May 6.

No new projects have been launched to complete the rail upgrade to Gaspé.

In 2024, the Quebec government issued calls for tenders for 15 projects linked to the rehabilitation of the rail line.

However, in March 2025, the government suspended part of the project for reassessment due to major cost overruns.



Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

*One of the repaired bridges between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, precisely in Grande-Rivière.*

At the time, nine of the 15 projects already underway continued, while six projects that had not yet begun were placed on hold.

The newly announced funding will allow those six suspended projects to proceed.

“As you may recall, during the analysis of Section 3, (be-

tween Port Daniel and Gaspé) we encountered challenges related to the budget and service providers. We had to put six of the 15 projects on hold. We are announcing that we are moving forward with the remaining six projects. We are maintaining the pace of investment and the progress of these major

works. As for the rest, the committee is continuing its work to obtain the best analyses in order to make the best possible decisions,” comments Stéphane Sainte-Croix, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé.

With this latest funding announcement, combined with the \$133.5 million already committed and disclosed by Quebec’s Ministry of Transport through access-to-information requests, the total investment for the Port-Daniel-Gascons-to-Gaspé section now reaches approximately \$272 million.

That leaves roughly \$300 million remaining from the budget announced by former transportation minister Geneviève Guilbault during a visit to Gaspé in June 2023.

“We’re on track in terms of the budget. We’re in that range. We hope to be able to stay

within the budget. That said, there are always surprises and changes in major contracts. We’re confident and we’re working on it,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

Three tenders launched in 2024 were cancelled after bids came in at a total of at least \$430 million to complete the majority of the remaining rail work.

Given that the available budget currently stands at only \$301 million for the year 2026-2027, a shortfall of roughly \$130 million remains if the line is to reach Gaspé — unless the Quebec government finds a way to complete the remaining work within the existing budget envelope.

The total budget announced in 2023 for the entire rail rehabilitation project between Matapédia and Gaspé stood at \$871.8 million.

## Strike appears inevitable at Manoir Saint-Augustin

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – About 50 people held a noisy demonstration on May 13 outside Manoir Saint-Augustin in Gaspé to make their voices heard as negotiations for the renewal of the collective bargaining agreement appear to be heading toward an impasse.

The approximately 60 unionized employees already hold a strike mandate, approved by 95% of members in April.

The collective agreement expired in April 2024.

“It’s been two years since we’ve had a collective bargaining agreement. The employer seems to be negotiating in bad faith. They’ve added a few dollars, but we’re talking about a few cents. When we consider that we’re still below inflation projections and that people are



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*CSN members demonstrated outside Manoir Saint-Augustin in Gaspé on May 13 as labour negotiations continue.*

already underpaid, we’re struggling to retain our staff,” comments Pierre-Luc Boulay, president of the CSN Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Central Council.

The CSN is meeting in Gaspé as part of its regional

council meeting.

For the occasion, the president of the union federation, Caroline Senneville, travelled to the nursing home to show support for the workers.

The union representative points out that the Gaspésie In-

tegrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS), located nearby, offers better working conditions, particularly for nursing assistants.

Negotiations do not appear to be progressing smoothly.

“The facility director received the request for essential services. The advisor from the Health and Social Services Federation came to deliver documents to him. There was a form of intimidation, with shouting insults and ranting about the unions. This is not something we condone,” says Mr. Boulay.

Given the turn of events, requests have been filed with the Administrative Labour Tribunal to determine which services will be considered essential in the event of a strike.

“We expect a strike to take place later in the fall. Maybe

this summer if we’re lucky. It’s not as simple as going on strike at an IGA. We have to ensure a minimum level of service for the residents,” explains the regional president.

Initially, the union was asking for a 16.5% increase over four years, while the employer was offering an average of 10.25%.

The facility houses 120 residents, including about 40 in intermediate care who require specialized services.

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

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

The Corev Group did not respond to requests for comment.

## Rally in Maria on International Workers’ Day

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – CSN union members marked International Workers’ Day on May 1 in front of Maria hospital despite heavy rain and poor weather conditions.

CSN’s spokesperson Pierre-Luc Boulay stressed that workers continue to face challenges, even when unionized, particularly those employed in retail jobs earning minimum wage, despite the increase to \$16.60 per hour that took effect on May 1.

“We’re not opposed to raising the minimum wage, but it’s still not enough today, given the current economic situation. It’s really difficult for everyone. We have many single-parent families, healthcare workers earning \$30 or \$40 an hour in the health system who are struggling to make ends meet. It’s simply not right, it’s absurd, and of course, the cost of living has unfortunately increased dramatically. I think everyone is doing this, and those earning minimum wage even more so,” says Mr.

Boulay.

Pier-Luc Bujold, président of Union of Nurses, Auxiliary Nurses and Respiratory Therapists of Eastern Quebec, added that other concerns are also affecting workers in the health-care system.

“In the health sector, it’s really the anti-union laws that have been passed by the government, particularly the health and safety law, that poses a problem. There’s a direct impact because health and safety standards are lower in the health and education law than



*Tens of workers, including this group, gathered in front of Maria hospital on International Workers’ Day, despite the pouring rain.*

Photo: Gilles Gagné

they are in the private sector. We’re also seeing an increase in violence in public institutions, so it’s very, very worrying. We’ve also seen, with the creation of Santé Québec, a single employer, an employer com-

pletely disconnected and inaccessible to unions. They’re also taking a very blanket approach, which doesn’t take into account the realities of remote regions, like the Gaspé Peninsula,” deplores Mr. Bujold.

Page 11, May 20, 2026 - Spec



# Family Ties

WE ARE PLEASED TO INVITE YOU TO OUR

## Annual General Meeting

ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2026

FROM 4:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

AT THE NEW CARLISLE TOWN HALL

*Help us to launch our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations as we report on activities which took place over the past year and enjoy a light meal together.*

**Please note that Membership cards will be on sale for \$5 per family.**

**RSVP by June 3rd by sending a private message on our Facebook page or by calling 418-752-7265.**

**30**

## 2001, another roller coaster year

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – This is our final centre-spread supplement marking the 50th anniversary. The history of the Gaspé Peninsula did not end in 2001. Many significant events have shaped the region in the years since, and we will revisit them soon in another format. This series was created to highlight the years leading up to and surrounding the newspaper's 50th anniversary, celebrated on May 15, 2025. Now that the paper has turned another year older, it is time to move toward a new approach. Don't worry, local history remains one of our greatest interests, and there are still many stories left to tell.

**Vol 27. No 1  
January 14, 2001**

- “Hong Kong trip ‘changed my life’”, a trip made by veteran Phil Doddridge, who spent four years as a prisoner of war there, along with his daughter Nancy Doddridge, “Canadian Tire: Mayor and councillors short-circuit referendum – Anti-democratic, opponents say” regarding the controversy about the possibility of Canadian Tire moving out of Carrefour Gaspé into its own building, and “Our region, Our future still looking for students” headline issue 1, dated January 14.

**Vol 27. No 2  
January 21, 2001**

- Issue 2, dated January 21, leads with “Loss of Bouchard will have huge impact”, regarding premier Lucien Bouchard, who resigned the previous week, and “Doctor shortage due to mismanagement, Liberals charge”. Smaller page 1 titles are “Historical TV series begins this week”, “Government report confirms Cross Point concerns about NB”, “Gaspé: Hospital foundation looking for \$75,000” and “Mirage 2001 includes new rally”.

**Vol 27. No 3  
January 28, 2001**

- Dated January 28, issue 3 headlines with “Sun shines on



Hong Kong trip changed my life. Phil Doddridge and his daughter Nancy Doddridge.

Family Day”, a large picture-caption combo, and “Jobs priority for Gaspé anglos: Mississquoi Institute”, the latter having carried out a study. Inside, “Posthumous gift benefits Cegep” on page 3 and SPEC honours Kevin O’Connor, advertising representative, who leaves for a job in Gaspé that will cut his travel time.

**Vol 27. No 4  
February 3, 2001**

- “Boycott brings struggling dairy to an end” and “Generosity of donations overwhelms Milligan family” headline issue 4, dated February 3. Dunbar Milligan is battling cancer in Cascapedia-St. Jules. Inside, Cynthia Dow’s commentary, entitled “Collective suicide”, denounces the context that led to the dairy closure.

**Vol 27. No 5  
February 11, 2001**

- “Maria hospital aims to improve service to anglophones” and “Smelt fisherman continues traditional fishery”, namely Dale Court, cover the front-page of issue 5, dated February 11. Inside, “Canadian Tire cancels Gaspé project, a ‘business decision’ company says.

**Vol 27. No 6  
February 18, 2001**

- “ESSB struggling with impact of budget cuts, Planning committee report to be discussed by Council on Febru-

ary 21”, although the amount is not determined yet, “Electoral commission recommends cutting county” and “Hydro employees donate over \$72,000 to Centraide” make the front-page titles of issue 6, dated February 18. Inside, readers see “Five workers at Fonderie Gaspé diagnosed with rare respiratory illness”, namely berylliosis. On page 5, closed since 1992, “Deer hunt likely on again next fall.”

**Vol 27. No 7  
February 25, 2001**

- Herméline “Bourdages-Leblanc murderers plead guilty”, almost three years after the death of the Bonaventure woman, “95 people participate in skidoo rally” in Shigawake and new premier Bernard “Landry promises to head-up rejuvenation plan” for the Gaspé Peninsula headline issue 7, dated February 25. “Mirage sur la banque kicked off Monday”, “Chandler: Landry (Bernard)



95 people participate in skidoo rally. In the above photo are Suzanne Landry, Polly Sweetman, Nathan Hayes and organizer Robert Wylie.

harps on sovereignty during visit”, “Gaspé: natural gas soon to be pumped” and “Gaspé: White wants more signatures on Minville petition” round up page 1 titles. Weston White wants anglophones to sign Mauril Minville’s petition to get an orthopaedic surgeon in Gaspé. Inside, readers learn that the Kahnawake Mohawk government has pulled out of Tinett Rainbeau’s call centre project in Chandler.

**Vol 27. No 8  
March 4, 2001**

- Issue 8, dated March 4 features “CLSC association pushing for regionalized budget for doctors”, “Mirage (sur la banque) organizers happy with first rally” and “Status quo at Gaspé schools” as headlines. “Fish farming, a mixed blessing, Scientists concerned about long-term impact of new industry”, “Environmental concerns not discussed at aquaculture conference”, “Employment insurance: Amendments fall far short of wish list” and former Murdochville resident Serge “Lapointe tours for cycling, solidarity” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 9  
March 11, 2001**

- Issue 9, released on March 11, headlines with “Rocher Percé MRC: One-quarter of businesses closed since ‘97”, “CEDEC aiming to use Wakeham house” and “Wakeham-York carnival a smashing success”. The house belongs to William Wakeham, a his-

toric building. Inside, “Local activist to receive honour” reports on Cynthia Patterson, who will receive an honorary doctorate of divinity from the Montreal Diocesan Theological College.

**Vol 27. No 10  
March 18, 2001**

- “Cross Point: Three-year-old bitten by boxer”, and Maxime “Arseneau takes on new ministry”, namely Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, lead issue 10, dated March 18. “Tourism workers studying English”, “VIA train racks up substantial delay” and Gaétan “Lelièvre is Gaspé’s new director general” make smaller page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 11  
March 25, 2001**

- Issue 11, dated March 25, leads with “New SQ squad satisfies victims’ families”, “Gaspé: Hospital wants to reinstate orthopedics” and “Cascapedia-St Jules concert one of best ever”. The new squad is trying to solve old murder cases. The investigators work primarily on the cases of Gesgapegiag’s Linda Condo, Causapsca’s Sonia Raymond and a Sainte-Anne-des-Monts couple, Claudette Servant and Victorien Vallée.

**Vol 27. No 12  
April 1, 2001**

- “Social worker hired as (Maria) hospital liaison” to improve services in English, “Committee reviewing EI bill wants changes” and “Masquerade party caps off the winter season” in New Carlisle headline the front-page of issue 12, dated April 1. “Gaspesia mill will be world leader: Levasseur”, Clermont, a partner in the plant’s re-launching, “Work proceeding on wind power centre”, “New Carlisle: Heritage group names executive” and “CRCD wants a \$50,000 PR plan” complete page 1 titles.

From Page 13

**Vol 27. No 13  
April 8, 2001**

- Issue 13, dated April 8, features “Matapedia: Corporation will negotiate with camps” and “Lynx on the lam returned to Bioparc” as headlines. “Local leaders pan new electoral map”, “Ambulance technicians may sue Régie”, “Council hesitates to set up suicide” and “Reaction to budget mostly positive” make the other page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 14  
April 15, 2001**

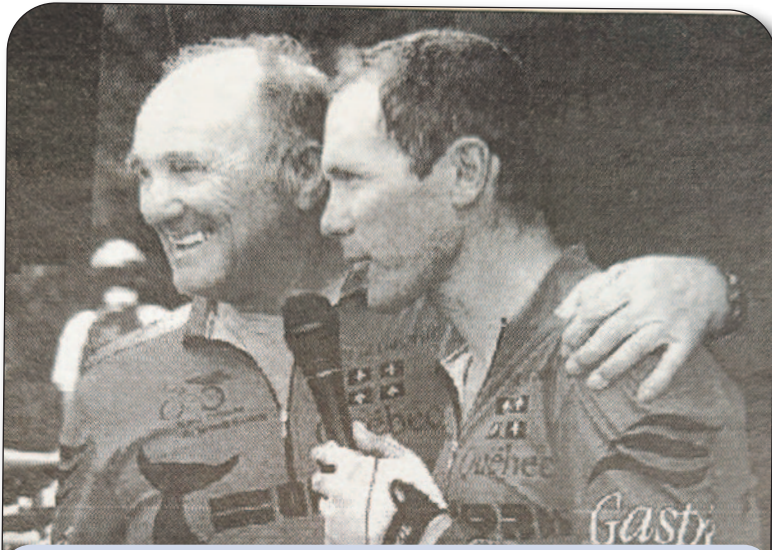
- “Forestry companies after Gaspesia wood” and “Pilot from Bridgeville visits Mum” lead issue 14, dated April 15. The pilot is Dan Chicoyne. “Gaspé wants to embellish main streets”, Kidd “Cloutier on trial May 14”, for non-premeditated murder, and “Bonaventure Bioparc aiming for long-term funding” fill the other page 1 titles. Inside, readers see “DFO creating Micmac lobster zone”.

**Vol 27. No 15  
April 22, 2001**

- “Acadian tackles GBHC’s top job” and “Quebec and Gaspé dispute Sandy Beach deal – province wants to take over regional ports” lead issue 15, dated April 22. The Acadian is Réal Cyr. As for ports, the Quebec government is opposed to the ownership transfer of the Gaspé harbour to a private entity, the Corporation du port de Gaspé. “Federal fisheries policy to be changed”, while fishermen want more decision-making power, minister Jacques “Brassard will not allocate Gaspesia wood” and “Marinard to be divided up to solve financial woes” complete page 1.

**Vol 27. No 16  
April 29, 2001**

- “Group wants to start community radio”, “Poverty making leaps in MRC Rocher Percé” and “Hovercraft visit prevents flooding” headline issue 16, released on April 29.



At the ripe old age of 74, William Sams of Haldimand is ready to take on the Defi des 2 Tours. The 1,200 kilometre bicycle trip between Gaspé and Montreal takes eight days.

**Vol 27. No 17  
May 6, 2001**

- Issue 17, dated May 6, features “\$28.3 million to be pumped into economy” and “Students feted at Mérite scolaire CEGEP gala” as headlines. The \$28.3 million, from the Quebec government, will notably be used to implement a maritime link between Chandler and the Magdalen Islands. “Liberals criticize PQ’s lack of vision in transportation, forestry”, “Suspects nabbed in theft at Haldimand store” and “No mad cow disease at Maria hospital” make smaller page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 18  
May 13, 2001**

- “Ceremony held to remember Battle of the Atlantic” and “Delay in ambulance solution has people worried” lead issue 18, released on May 13, “Forillon lawyer publishes novel about expropriation”, the lawyer being Lionel Bernier, “River Museum committee has big dreams for more visitors, jobs”, “A failing Gaspé economy claims another victim”, the Murdochville Legion, and “Chimo Farm to triple its production” make smaller titles.

**Vol 27. No 19  
May 20, 2001**

- “CASA makes significant changes – Most board members to be appointed”, “Couple returns after four-year adventure” the couple was Enid Legros and Roger Wise, who sailed around the world, and “Liberals want doctors salaries decentralized” occupy the

front-page of issue 19, dated May 20.

**Vol 27. No 20  
May 27, 2001**

- “Patriots furious with priority given to Montreal”, “Gaspé hospital foundation repeats capital campaign” and “Gaspé Guiding movement still going strong” headline issue 20, dated May 27. The Gaspesian Patriots in Action denounced a Quebec government cabinet direction stating that a project originating from a region must show that it has no negative impact for the development of Montreal.

**Vol 27. No 21  
June 3, 2001**

- “Port Daniel-Gascons: Three candidates run for mayoralty”, “Gaspesia project to be unveiled by June 30” and “Budding actor meets local students”, headline issue 21, dated June 3. The budding actor is Ricky Mabe, who has roots in Corner of the Beach. He met Bonaventure Polyvalent students. Inside, Stan Vibert, “Principal of Local High School Retires” at Gaspé Polyvalent.

**Vol 27. No 22  
June 10, 2001**

- “Environmental group worried about clear-cutting” in Miguasha, and Nathalie “Normandeu ready for a fall election” headline issue 22, dated June 10. “Gov’t passes EI changes”, “Port Daniel-Gascons: (Maurice) Anglehart wins landslide”, “Bishop dismisses Archdeacon (Lynn) Ross” and “Taizé monk offers youth ecumenical retreat”

complete the front-page titles.

**Vol 27. No 23  
June 17, 2001**

- Issue 23, dated June 17 headlines with Gérald “Larose recommends ‘radical’ changes to language approach” at Estates General on Language, and “Listuguj Salmon raids, 20 years on: local photographer couldn’t believe his eyes”. The photographer is Sterling Keays. During the first salmon raid by game wardens in Listuguj on June 11, 1981, he witnessed scenes of violence against Mi’gmaq residents. His photos were so striking that a judge, Yvon Mercier, thought they were fake.

**Vol 27. No 24  
June 24, 2001**

- “Gaspé continues to top unemployment” and “New bank branches swamped with work”, namely the Laurentian Bank which bought branches of the Scotia Bank, headline issue 24, dated June 24. The slow account transfer from one network to the other leaves many customers disgruntled. “SPEC shows best financial picture ever”, a \$17,000 surplus, “‘Spy’ plane checking on fisheries”, “Three candidates for the main job in Gesgapegiag” and “GBHC posts banner year in 2000” make smaller page 1 titles. Inside, “Kidd” Cloutier is acquitted of the murder of Renaud Langlois in Gaspé. The Gaspesian British Heritage Centre was able to reduce its accumulated deficit to \$19,000, from \$59,000.

**Vol 27. No 25  
July 1, 2001**

- “Ash Inn committee will go forward with plans” to buy the building, and minister David “Cliche says no unemployment in Gaspé (Peninsula) if Laval citizens replaced Gaspesians” lead issue 25, dated July 1. Cliche, then Quebec minister responsible for Research, Science and Technology, apologized hours after his blunder. “Chandler holds graduation ceremonies”, “Gaspé salmon rivers wants to attract young anglers” and “Local teens off to Canada Games” make smaller page 1

titles. Ryan Greene and David Dow are members of Quebec’s fastball team.

**Vol 27. No 26  
July 8, 2001**

- “Ottawa still stalling on Gaspesia decision”, “New investigation for (Linda) Condo murder case” and photos of BPS and Gaspé grads of 2001 almost completely fill the front-page of issue 26, dated July 8. The 1988 slaying of Linda Condo in Miguasha heads the list of the new Sûreté du Québec squad charged to resolve old murder cases. Smaller titles are “Bobby Cyr to serve six years in teenager’s death” and David “Cliche invited to region”. Bobby Cyr was drunk when his car struck Andrée-Anne Cyr in Saint-François-de-Pabos in December 2000. Inside, readers see Almond “Art Centre opens with a flourish”.

**Vol 27. No 27  
July 15, 2001**

- “It’s life for murderers of Leblanc-Bourdages” (seven years before parole), “Pabaced GDS guilty in worker’s death: CSST”, and “McGeer and Williams triumph at rally for second year” headline issue 27, dated July 15. “Quebec helps pay to test private wells”, “Newport plant to process blueberries”, “‘Public was heard’ by electoral commission” and “Second container of seafood off to Singapore” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 28  
July 22, 2001**

- “Hong Kong Vets winding up association” through participating in a documentary, and “Jardins Nature and Smurfit-Stone invest \$3.7 million in organic tomato greenhouse” headline issue 28, released on July 22. “Close to 800 expected at St. Jules bash”, “Association supports military museum” and “Gaspé citizens committee wants an orthopedist” round up the page 1 titles.

Page 15

**Vol 27. No 29  
July 29, 2001**

- “Dispute over a Hydro bill leads to murder” regarding a case between Keith Marcoux and his cousin Benoit Marcoux, who was shot, and “Gaspé’s Roman Catholic Bishop resigns” headline issue 29, dated July 29. The Bishop was Raymond Dumais, who resigned for health reasons. Jacques “Brassard denies (Gaspé) sawmill deal dead”, “Anglican minister may testify” in an affair outside the region, “Inexperienced pilot cause of crash” at Gaspé airport in 1999 and “New Richmond Fire Dept. to get rescue boat” round up page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 30  
August 5, 2001**

- Issue 30, released on August 5, features “Friends of Ash Inn set up steering group”, Dwight “Sinnott declared fastest firefighter in the world” and “Twelve hours later, and Dany Joseph would have died” as headlines. Gaspé’s Dwight Sinnott broke a world record at the Firefighter Combat Challenge with a one minute and 25 second time in the Go hard or Go home event. Dany Joseph, age 4, was saved, after a bee sting caused an anaphylactic shock, because there was a doctor on duty at the Paspebiac CLSC that evening, which would not have been the case the following day. Inside, John Martin wins third straight term in Gessapegiag.

**Vol 27. No 31  
August 12, 2001**

- “Ottawa promises \$80 million loan to Papiers Gaspésia”, “Pig farming potential has many worried” and “St Jules bash attracts hundreds” headline issue 31, released on August 12. The federal loan represents an important part of the Gaspesia mill \$450 million relaunching plan. As for pig farming, the concern comes from Saint-Elzéar’s municipal council, which expressed interest in it. Inside, “Deer hunting to reopen this year” confirms a rumour.

**Vol 27. No 32  
August 19, 2001**



Japanese teacher brings special touch to NRHS.

- “Chandler mill: Quebec will not be able to unveil its plan before Sept.” and “About 60 million in equity still missing for Chandler mill, says Massé” dominate the titles of issue 32, dated August 19. “Gaspé-Jersey-Guernsey Assoc. celebrates 13 yrs.” also makes a big title.

**Vol 27. No 33  
August 26, 2001**

- Issue 33, dated August 26 features “Moose pays unexpected visit to local farm!”, Alain Willett’s in New Richmond, “Unemployment rate in the region reaches 20.5%” and “Québec citizenship might be tough sell, admits Commissioner Gary Richards”, who sits on the Gérald Larose Commission on French Language. “Three years after the cod industry has re-started, it is still weak”, “New Carlisle to receive statue of René Lévesque”, “Shrimp fishermen return to work” and “Essential oils company (Gaspé Sens) begins to reap benefits”, complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 34  
September 2, 2001**

- Issue 34, dated September 2, headlines with “First step taken to protect the Malbay River Barachois” and “Close to 60% of trucks checked last week had mechanical problems or excess weight”. Gaspé chef Michel “Morin represents Canada at cooking exposition” in Norway, “Tennyson Johnson’s boat stolen at Brillant Cove” and “New Richmond: Exhibition – something for young & old” also make page 1.

**Vol 27. No 35  
September 9, 2001**

- “New Carlisle: Statue of René Lévesque unveiled in a respectful ceremony”, “New mid-day flight for Montreal out of Bonaventure”, by Pascan, and “Murdochville: Fonderie director reassures citizens smelter not to close” take the whole front-page of issue 35, released on September 9. Until August 31, the statue had been on display in Quebec City, beside the National Assembly, where it looked too small.

**Vol 27. No 36  
September 16, 2001**

- Gaspesian “Patriots before UN (United Nations) rights committee September 12”, in Geneva, Switzerland, to prove that the governments have undertaken an economic genocide in the region, makes the main headline of issue 36, dated September 16. “Party of regions being formed” and “New Richmond filly wins Breeders’ Cup”, regarding Raymond Arsenaault’s filly named Ailenderay, also make headlines. “Coast Guard pumps out Cap aux Os wreck” and “Gaspé hatchery group wants Quebec to invest” make smaller titles. The oil was pumped out of the Carabobo, formerly called Lady Amherst, which sank off Gaspé in 1945.

**Vol 27. No 37  
September 23, 2001**

- “Geneva: Five-hour hearing for Gaspé Patriots” and “Terry Fox runs net almost \$12,000” lead the front-page of issue 37,

dated September 23. The Patriots’ hearing in Geneva took place a day after the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. “Wanted: broccoli farmers to share expenses!”, “Patient unhappy with Gaspé emergency service” and “Laurentian Bank: Leaders visit local branches” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 38  
September 30, 2001**

- “Gaspé firefighters pray for New York colleagues” killed in 9/11 attacks, “Port corporation worried about Quebec’s plan” to acquire the harbour from the federal government, and “Lt-Governor’s visit, ‘an act of love’” headline issue 38, dated September 30. “Future of Port Daniel station uncertain” after a September 11 fire caused heavy damage to the VIA Rail building.

**Vol 27. No 39  
October 7, 2001**

- Issue 39, released on October 7, features “New partners reach important deal for Gaspesia reopening” and “Second Health Day for anglos to be held October 10” as headlines. “Sheehan still breeding winners at 92!” invites readers to discover George Sheehan, of Cape Cove.

**Vol 27. No 40  
October 14, 2001**

- Released on October 14, issue 40 headlines with Claude “Cyr sweeps Chandler by large margin” and “Enthusiasm for Guide Competition guarantees its return” at the Cascapedia-

St. Jules Fall Fest.

**Vol 27. No 41  
October 21, 2001**

- “Grand Cascapedia W.I.: 50 years ‘For Home and Country!’”, “Forum to be held on integrated forest management” and “Gaspesian women tired of being poorest in Quebec” headline issue 41, dated October 21. “Municipal elections to be held November 4”, “Another great health day for seniors” and “Air Canada cuts will not affect Gaspé” round up page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 42  
October 28, 2001**

- Issue 42, released on October 28, headlines with “School board far ahead with (education) reform”, with Escuminac Intermediate way ahead of the provincial average, and “SQ finds hope in Linda Condo (murder) case” as headlines. A picture-caption combo entitled “Inspectors target problem trucks” also makes a major title. “Teachers decide on actions this week”, “72-year-old hunter found alive”, “Three up for New Carlisle Mayoralty” and “AFOGIM offers support to woodlot owners” make smaller page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 43  
November 4, 2001**

- “ATR to make few (tourism) changes in light of terrorism”, “Poppy campaign kicked off in Gaspé” and “CRCD wants increased VIA service” lead issue 43, dated November 4.

**Vol 27. No 44  
November 11, 2001**

- “Workers with EI problems asked to visit their MP”, New Carlisle’s new mayor Cyrus “Journeau to focus on New Carlisle economy” and “Gaspé teachers decide on pressure tactics” apart from striking, headline issue 44, dated November 11. The workers are asked by the Coalition Action-Chômage to explain their problems to their Members of Parliament. Inside, Tembec

From Page 15

president Frank “Dottori promises to follow modernization plan” for the Gaspesia mill.

**Vol 27. No 45  
November 18, 2001**

- “Sandy Beach: Harbour contaminated with copper”, “350 attend showing of controversial film” and “We remembered them!” fill the front-page of issue 45, dated November 18. The film is Bacon, an opinion movie explaining the dangers of huge hog farms. Half of page 1 shows pictures of Remembrance Day ceremonies. Inside, “Murdochville foundry may close for six months” reports on a reflection undertaken by Mines Gaspé.

**Vol 27. No 46  
November 25, 2001**

- “SPEC volunteers motivated by timely news” and “Gaspé DG fears environment costs will eat up tax cuts” headline issue 46, released on November 25. The SPEC volunteers are David Baird’s group, who make sure that Canada Post changes in sorting out mail won’t affect the arrival time of the paper at the region’s east end. Inside, read-

ers learn that Cynthia Dow leaves her news editor position.

**Vol 27. No 47  
December 2, 2001**

- Issue 47, released on December 2, leads with “Gaspesia: Collective agreement until 2012 for mill workers”, tied to a deal with Tembec, the new leader of the modernization project. A big front-page photo shows three Gaspesians, former MP Patrick Gagnon, Mississauga mayor Hazel MacCallion, and Urban Joseph, vice-chairman of TD Bank, with prime minister Jean Chrétien. “Saint-Majorique: Meningitis kills three-month-old baby”, “Bonaventure MRC: MRC concerned about agricultural zoning” and “GASPÉ: Musée de la Gaspésie wants to double its size” make other page 1 titles.

**Vol 27. No 48  
December 9, 2001**

- “Murdochville: Temporary closure of smelter in May 2002” informing the public about a scheduled six month shutdown, and “Regional Convention Centre to be built in Carleton for \$8.7 million” lead the front-page of issue 48, released on December 9. Gaspesian British Heritage “Village promotes tourism on the Coast”, a picture-caption combo, reports on the presence



Family Ties hosts first local women’s retreat. Participants in the Port Daniel weekend workshop.

of that organization in Quebec City at the Bienvenue Québec fair.

**Vol 27. No 49  
December 16, 2001**

- “Murdochville: Québec Government must react quickly”, “Gaspesia: Partners to announce the details of project on Dec. 17th” and “Shigawake firm sells trees to Singapore” make economy-oriented news headlines of issue 49, dated December 16. The firm is Shigawake Organics, owned at the time by four Hayes brothers, led by Joey and Garry. The firm mainly

sells compost to Singapore gardening centres.

**Vol 27. No 50  
December 23, 2001**

- Issue 50, dated December 23, brings good news to Gaspesians before the Christmas break: “Gaspé: Desjardins student loan centre to create 100 jobs” and “\$153 million

for Gaspesia mill”, the two announcements having been made on December 17 in Chandler by Desjardins and the Quebec government, whose contribution to the modernization mill project was higher than expected. Inside, “The three Micmac communities of the Gaspé share a secretariat, called Mi’gmawei Mawiomi.

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

Placing an obituary in the 2001 issue cost \$20.

## Ties between 2001 and 2026:

# There is one constant in the region – Gaspesians are always fighting

GILLES GAGNÉ

**NEW CARLISLE** –In 2001, Gaspesians were fighting to preserve two of their three major industries. The Gaspesia mill in Chandler had been permanently closed in October 1999, four months after an indefinite shutdown. However, a promising modernization project based on producing coated paper instead of newsprint had been developing since mid-2000, when the plant was acquired by the Quebec Federation of Labour’s Solidarity Fund.

At the end of the year, a

\$465 million investment for the Gaspesia mill was announced, with the participation of the federal government, to the tune of an \$80 million loan, and a \$153 million contribution from the Quebec government, two-thirds of it under the form of a loan. The original private promoter of the modernization project, Clermont Levasseur, who had a vast experience in the forestry industry, was pushed aside in the second part of the year because the Quebec government and SGF-Rexfor, a public body, wanted a major operator for the mill, and Tem-

bec was chosen, despite a minimal investment of \$35 million in the venture. Relations between Tembec and the Solidarity Fund were far from cordial, to put it mildly. Nevertheless, there was still room for optimism at the end of the year regarding the future of the plant.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the copper smelter in Murdochville faced a completely different reality. Noranda Mines had chosen the Murdochville facility for a six-month “temporary” closure scheduled for late April or early May 2002. At the time,

Noranda Mines operated three copper smelters, and the other two had already been modernized. With copper prices depressed, selecting the Murdochville operation for a lengthy closure became an easy business decision.

Roughly 300 workers still remained employed by the company in the Gaspé Peninsula, compared to approximately 650 before the mine closure in October 1999.

In 2026, Gaspesians are engaged in another battle as they fight to preserve one of their two provincial ridings — and the limited political influence

they still hold within an increasingly centralized province.

It is a different kind of struggle, and as of mid-May, the outcome remains uncertain.

As mentioned in the introduction to this supplement, this is the final four-page section retracing the recent history of the region through the pages of The Gaspé SPEC. Over the coming months, however, when time permits, we will revisit other major events that shaped the decade following 2001.

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# SPDS damaged by May 1 flood

GILLES GAGNÉ

**SHIGAWAKE - PORT-DANIEL** – The Eastern Shores School Board has announced the temporary closure of Shigawake Port-Daniel School (SPDS) following flooding that occurred on May 1, 2026. The flooding occurred as a result of weather conditions beyond the board's control, as very heavy rain fell across the eastern part of the Gaspé Peninsula that day.

In a statement written on May 7, the Eastern Shores School Board (ESSB) specified that the rainfall "resulted in significant damage to the building, making its closure necessary for an undetermined period. In order to ensure continuity of learning as quickly as possible, SPDS students were temporarily relocated to New Carlisle High School (NCHS)."

The information had been communicated to staff and par-

ents on the morning of May 4. At that time, the full extent of the damage and the scope of repairs required at SPDS were still being assessed in collaboration with experts and insurers.

"However, given the circumstances and the fact that it is unlikely the repairs will be completed before the end of the school year, the Eastern Shores School Board has decided to avoid another change for students and confirms that they will complete their school year at NCHS," the statement adds.

On May 8, ESSB Director General Denise Simoneau mentioned to the SPEC that "the entire operation went smoothly, and everyone is satisfied. It was a major undertaking, but thanks to an exceptional team, it turned into a real success."

The May 7 statement also noted that "sustained efforts will be made to provide stu-



Photo: Jillian O'Connell

*The basement of Shigawake-Port Daniel School was flooded following heavy rainfall on May 1.*

dents, in these temporary facilities, with a welcoming, stable environment conducive to their well-being and learning. Although the NCHS building, constructed in 1914, is older, it is safe and able to accommodate students under appropriate conditions. The facility is well maintained and subject to ongoing monitoring."

In addition, a full cleaning was carried out to ensure a clean, healthy and welcoming environment for students and staff.

NCHS had been idle for just four weeks when the SPDS students moved in, following the opening of Baïdes-Chaleurs Regional School on April 13. The final day of

classes for NCHS students had been held 11 days earlier.

"The School Board's teams are fully mobilized to ensure students' well-being and to maintain reassuring routines despite this change," indicated ESSB's written statement, which praised "the commitment, agility, and resilience demonstrated by its teams, who were able to implement concrete solutions in record time, in the best interests of students."

This relocation also required adjustments to school transportation routes. "The Eastern Shores School Board thanks parents, students, and staff for their cooperation and understanding in this exceptional situation," the statement concluded.

On May 13, Denise Simoneau indicated that there had been no new developments regarding the condition of the school or the assessment of the damage.

## Electoral map:

# Bill 3 will have to follow regular channels

NELSON SERGERIE

**GASPE** - The independent Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for the riding of Saint-Jérôme, Youri Chassin, maintains his opposition to the rapid adoption of Bill 3 on electoral representation, forcing the government to seek another way to protect the two Gaspé Peninsula ridings.

Bill 3 proposed a hybrid approach to the two electoral maps by protecting the two ridings slated for elimination in the Gaspé Peninsula and Montreal while adding two seats planned in the January 14 electoral map for the Laurentians and Central Quebec regions.

Mr. Chassin caused a stir before the May 14 meeting with the Gaspé Peninsula Prefects' Table at the Quebec National Assembly.

The independent MNA was accompanied by Xavier-Antoine Lalande, the mayor of Saint-Colomban in the Laurentians, who launched legal proceedings in Superior Court and the Court of Appeal challenging the law adopted in May 2024 that protected the ridings of Bonaventure and Gaspé.

"My thinking, my convictions, and my fundamental principles must be defended. We must stand up to defend



Photo: Screenshot Parliamentary Channel

*Youri Chassin held a press conference at the National Assembly following his meeting with elected officials from the Gaspé Peninsula.*

the rule of law, and that is a fundamental pillar. It surprises me that no one took any action when unanimous consent was required. I explained my position and showed my openness to a possible solution," commented Mr. Chassin at a press conference following the meeting.

"The elected officials from the Gaspé Peninsula have very good points regarding effective representation and access to their provincial representatives. But does that mean we should maintain or adopt a hybrid electoral map while we review the criteria? I'm sorry, but no. Not only is it a prob-

lem for elected officials to determine their own electoral map, but it would be unprecedented in over 50 years," the independent MNA explained.

"We must stay focused on fundamental principles. I want everyone to understand the reality, and I want the parties to understand: it's enough to just find loopholes," he said.

### Surreal meeting

Mathieu Lapointe, chair of the Prefects' Table, described the meeting as surreal because of the presence of the Saint-Colomban mayor.

"It was the one who initiated all the legal challenges against the electoral map review process who was sitting at the table. This was not what the elected officials from the Gaspé Peninsula wanted. We wanted to meet with Mr. Chassin. From the outset, Mr. Lalande's presence sent a particular message," says Mathieu Lapointe.

"We left feeling somewhat insulted and angry about this dogmatic stance taken by MNA Chassin. When you have an MNA holding the Gaspé Peninsula hostage, and it's almost dictatorial for someone who defends democracy, it's very peculiar. We're leaving here deeply insulted, but I think more united than ever, and I'm betting we'll win this

fight," adds Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté, becoming more incisive.

"124 out of 125 MNAs agree with this approach. This approach is recommended by judges of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Court of First Instance, who said: you can revise the criteria, but the law adopted in recent years was not the right approach. Now, the parliamentarians are using the correct approach, but MNA Chassin believes it breaks basic democratic principles," further comments Mathieu Lapointe.

Faced with the position reiterated by his independent colleague from Saint-Jérôme, the MNA for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, believes the bill must follow the regular channels in the National Assembly. But time is of the essence, as the parliamentary session ends on June 12.

"We are disappointed by

our colleague's position. The expedited procedure we were aiming for is not the one that will be prioritized going forward," announces Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

"I will be having concrete discussions soon with the minister responsible for this file to determine the priorities on the legislative agenda, and I sincerely hope that we will be among them," states the MNA for Gaspé.

He admits that there are many bills currently in progress and that his government will have to make some choices. A gag could be the last resort.




"It's too early to talk about a gag, but it's a tool in the legislator's toolbox," the MNA suggests.


The ridings of Gaspé and Bonaventure could be merged if the National Assembly fails to adopt a solution protecting them.

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# Quentin Condo releases sixth album, Thunder Child

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – After launches in Montreal and Quebec City, Gesgapegiag rapper Quentin Condo, also known as Q052, launched his new album, Thunder Child, in the region at the Naufrageur microbrewery in Carleton on April 18.

The venue was jammed as Q052 performed all the songs from Thunder Child in front of many friends from Gesgapegiag and elsewhere in the Baie-des-Chaleurs area. Some rap music enthusiasts also discovered his music that night.

To top it all off, the event also coincided with Quentin Condo's 47th birthday. One of his sons, Chamber, now 20, led the crowd in singing Happy Birthday, Weliajipuna in Mi'g-



Photo: Gilles Gagné

maq. Guitarist Raphaëlle Chouinard, Marie-Neiges Harvey on bass keyboard, Marc "Pete" Patelle on drums and DJ Olivier Brien, also known as Monsieur Nokturn, accompanied Q052 at the Naufrageur.

Thunder Child is Q052's sixth album, following Rez Life in 2018, Qama'si in 2019,

ImagiNation and Storm, both released in 2021, and The Calm in 2022. He also released singles in 2020 and 2021.

ImagiNation received a nomination for Best Rap/Hip Hop album at the 2022 GAMIQ awards. Q052 was also nominated for a Félix Award as Indigenous Artist of the Year in 2021.

# Two shows featuring local musicians and AC/DC tribute

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The New Richmond Salle de spectacles will soon present two shows featuring strong English-language content, the Che-nous Show 5, showcasing movie soundtracks, on Saturday, May 23, at 8 p.m., and High Voltage, a tribute to AC/DC, on Saturday, June 6, also at 8 p.m.

Concert hall communication co-ordinator Éric Normandin is enthusiastic about both shows, which will be presented in an open-venue format.

"Our Gaspé talents are back for the fifth time since 2019 to offer together the greatest musical hits from movies such as Back to the Future, Grease, Flashdance, Armageddon, 8 Mile, the world of Tarantino, and more. It features Jonny Arsenaault, Stéphanie Gauthier, MLou, Marie-Josée Cyr, Jam Martel and Martin Hogan. They are accompanied, under the musical direction of Dominic Potvin, by François-Pierre Poirier, Christian Leblanc, Pat Dugas, and Mathieu Joncas," explains Éric Normandin.

The Salle de spectacles Desjardins team is producing the show in collaboration with Quebec's Ministry of Culture as part of the cultural agreement with the Town of New Richmond.

Éric Normandin is equally enthusiastic about the AC/DC



Photo: Courtesy of the New Richmond concert hall

AC/DC tribute band High Voltage is recognized as Canada's top AC/DC tribute act.

tribute show, which features a new production titled The AC/DC Story.

"We are talking about two eras here, and one legendary career built on over half a century of exceptional music and performances. It is a vibrant and energetic performance with extraordinary attention to detail! With their fiery energy and passion on stage, High Voltage will take attendees on a journey through the discography of the legendary Australian band, from their early days with Bon Scott to their current global success with Brian Johnson," he says.

Bursting rhythms, blistering guitars, authentic costumes and instruments, including six full-size cannons and the thunderous vocals of AC/DC. High Voltage is generally recognized as Canada's number one AC/DC tribute band.

"The accuracy of the vocal and stage performances, the quality of the costumes and instruments, and the presence of iconic elements like the bell and cannons make this a must-see show for everyone! The band retraces AC/DC's career, from their promising beginnings with Bon Scott to their global success with Brian Johnson. High Voltage was even selected to perform with the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, a show that was presented at the Grand Théâtre de Québec with 55 musicians," underlines Éric Normandin.

"The singer is described as a "clone" of Brian Johnson, capable of incredibly mimicking his voice, while the guitarists are known for their talent and energy on stage, notably Angus Young, with Félix Robitaille being a near-perfect replica of the famous guitarist," he adds.

# Nancy Robertson named host of the year among New Richmond volunteers

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – The Town of New Richmond annually acknowledges the contribution of volunteers in various sectors. One of the award recipients during the April 26 ceremony was Nancy Robertson, who received honours in the "host of the year" category. She was nominated by the New Richmond Agricultural Society.

The award presentation included the following tribute: "For over 20 years, Nancy has been the voice that is recognized and heard at several events, including the Shigawake Agricultural Exhibition, the New Richmond Agricultural Exhibition, and of course, the New Richmond Bluegrass Festival, which is highly regarded in the bluegrass world, both locally and internationally. Knowing how to handle various critical situations, such as missing children or parents, vehicles that need to be moved quickly, and reassuring an audience in an emergency, Nancy does all this with tact, professionalism, and charisma, in English and French! When the microphone is off, she makes decisions quickly, supports other volunteers, and helps keep the morale of the volunteers high," said Sébastien Gallant, reading from a written statement provided by the New Richmond Agricultural Society.

In August 2025, during the New Richmond Fair, she took a few minutes during the afternoon to inform the attendees that the well-loved event needed additional volunteers and board members to survive. The message was delivered calmly and clearly and it worked. An hour later, people were already giving their names to help lighten the load carried by the small team that made the 2025 event possible.



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# Percé wants to manage permit applications in the heritage district

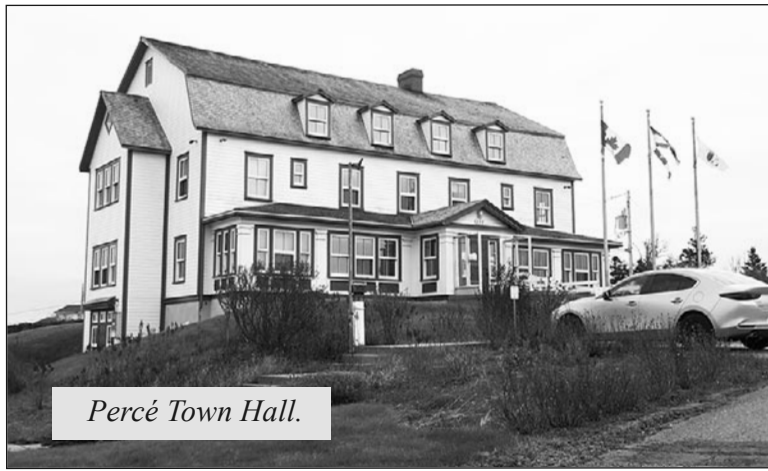
NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – Concerned about delays and complications faced by homeowners wishing to carry out maintenance work in the heritage district, the Town of Percé is asking the Quebec government to return management of building and renovation permits in the protected area to the municipality.

Mayor Daniel Leboeuf notes that prior to 2024, the provincial government provided funding to hire staff to assist homeowners in complying with heritage-related requirements, while financial assistance programs were also available.

A new program was later introduced, but placed under the responsibility of the MRCs.

“We’d like to regain control. This will reduce the time



Percé Town Hall.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

it takes to get permits to proceed with the work, but also ensure compliance with heritage standards. We’ll also be able to apply for grant programs to help property owners,” explains the mayor.

Currently, the Town cannot issue renovation or construction permits without prior authorization from the Quebec government within the protected heritage area, which

covers approximately 40 square kilometres.

At the same time, Percé is commissioning an inspection report to assess the condition of town hall.

The municipality had earmarked \$100,000 this year and an additional \$1.1 million next year in its three-year capital investment plan.

“We want to carry out repairs to the roof, window

frames and exterior cladding, which is losing its waterproofing. A professional firm will be hired to determine the scope of the work to be done,” says Mr. Leboeuf.

Since town hall is a heritage building, strict conditions apply to any renovation work in order to obtain authorization from Quebec’s Ministry of Culture.

## Help for septic tanks

Percé has received 33 applications from homeowners interested in qualifying for the Individual Wastewater Treatment Unit Program (PUI), designed to help residents modernize their septic systems.

The municipality needed at least 25 owners of primary residences willing to undertake the major work in order

to move forward with the application.

“We’ll be able to start filling out the project application. As soon as the program reopens, we’ll be ready to submit our application. If we can help 50 or 60 homes comply with regulations and improve their quality of life, that will be a plus,” notes the mayor.

The Town still intends to offer a \$5,000 interest-free loan, repayable through municipal taxes over a five-year period, provided council continues to support the initiative.

The support program was discussed during the April council meeting.

The mayor says it is in the municipality’s best interest to help residents comply with environmental regulations while protecting local ecosystems.

# A green shift begins in Paspébiac

NELSON SERGERIE

PASPEBIAC – The Town of Paspébiac is taking steps toward a greener future, with plans to convert the heating system in its municipal garage and begin electrifying part of its Public Works fleet.

Electric vehicle charging stations will also be installed at the sports complex. “We took advantage of Earth Day to adopt several measures related to environmental protection and the fight against climate change,” explains Mayor Jérémy Laplante, whose council adopted a series of resolutions on April 22.

The municipal garage currently relies on heating oil, with annual costs reaching \$23,000. “That’s a lot of greenhouse



Jérémy Laplante.

Photo: Courtesy

gas emissions. In the Bonaventure MRC, we are the municipality with the municipal garage that pollutes the most due to its heating system. Action is needed, and we have committed to replacing it by 2028. We’ve started by applying for a grant, and we’ll see where that takes us,” says Mr. Laplante.

He notes that heating a municipal garage presents challenges due to large doors that require powerful systems compatible with existing infrastructure.

The town also plans to begin electrifying its fleet of light-duty Public Works vehicles. “The plan is to start the gradual electrification of our fleet by 2029. We’re talking about light-duty vehicles. We know that heavy-duty vehicles, particularly for snow removal, aren’t feasible with current technology. By the end of this term, it’s clear to me that the technology and the pickup truck market will be ready for this venture,” the mayor believes.

Despite recent setbacks in the electric pickup market, the

mayor remains optimistic.

“The market in general is moving toward electrification. I’m hopeful that by 2029, the selection will have improved and that our dear friend across the border in the United States will have retired,” the mayor says with a slight chuckle, noting that Donald Trump has shown very little enthusiasm for pursuing this path.

While some charging infrastructure already exists — including Tesla and other eco-charging stations — public Level 2 charging stations remain limited in the municipality. The town plans to address that gap by installing new stations at the sports complex through an upcoming government program.

Paspébiac will also con-

tribute to a province-wide regulatory initiative in partnership with the Maison de l’innovation sociale. “I want to build a Quebec-wide catalog of municipal regulations that municipalities can draw upon to promote the ecological and energy transition of buildings and their decarbonization. The idea is to participate as a rural municipality so that we can have regulations tailored to the realities of the regions,” explains the mayor.

The mayor acknowledged that the town has taken a few steps in the past to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. “This is the first time a structured and ambitious environmental initiative has been implemented,” says Mr. Laplante.

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# Maria hospital: CAQ has lost face, say Liberals

● NESLON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER — The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) has lost face in the handling of the Maria hospital modernization file, according to Quebec Liberal health critic, Monsef Derraji.

The Liberal Member of the National Assembly (MNA) met on April 30 in Maria with Martin Pelletier, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the CISSS de la Gaspésie.

The regional health authority has been calling for a new hospital for years. In the meantime, it has requested modernization of the emergency department and intensive care unit, a project estimated at about \$300 million.

“In my view, the CAQ has lost face on this issue. I can’t see how CAQ members of the National Assembly from the region will continue to defend their government by claiming they’ve made progress. We



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*MNA Monsef Derraji during his visit to the rally on April 29 in Chandler.*

won’t see this hospital until 2035. It’s a massive waste of time. There are still no plans; nothing has moved forward despite the promises. I hope that at least before they leave office, the CAQ members will do everything they can to launch the studies,” says Mr.

Derraji.

Mr. Derraji also raised concerns about seniors occupying hospital beds.

He noted that about 400 seniors remain hospitalized when they should be in other types of care facilities, a situation he says is particularly troubling given the region’s aging population.

“I think the short-term priority is to have a real plan for senior housing in the Gaspé Peninsula. 400 people is a huge number for a region, but the more hospital beds we occupy, the less space there will be for ordinary people who need surgery. If these seniors don’t receive care in residential facilities, their condition will deteriorate because access to home care is limited,” the Liberal analyst notes.

## Transportation concerns

The Liberal, who also serves as spokesperson for transportation and sustainable

mobility, laments the situation facing the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transportation Authority, which has still not received financial support from the Ministry of Transportation for the year 2025.

This situation could lead to a service disruption in the short term if the Quebec government does not finally release the allocated funds.

The RÉGÎM has been waiting 16 months for its 2025 operating subsidy.

“The government of Quebec is the one failing to pay, and this risks compromising public and paratransit services. This delay is putting pressure on RÉGÎM’s finances, and the other issue is the gas tax, which is straining finances due to reduced revenue from the electrification of transportation,” states Mr. Derraji.

The Member of the National Assembly for Nelligan linked transportation chal-

lenges to access to health care.

“In the region, there is a direct correlation between improving access to care and the availability of transportation. We cannot have equitable access to care today if we do not provide transportation to people who want it and who have no other way to get to the hospital,” notes the MNA.

According to Mr. Derraji, a range of transportation options is needed to support both patients and the workforce.

“Public transit, paratransit, rail, and interregional transit. I’ve heard about people with cancer who have to travel to Rimouski, and there’s no assistance or follow-up. Put yourself in the shoes of a patient who has to travel—it’s stressful. We shouldn’t limit ourselves to a single option. But if we’re saying today that we need to pursue economic development and take care of the population, we have to put all transportation solutions on the table,” suggests the MNA.

# Quebec demands \$30,000 from RÉGÎM

● NESLON SERGERIE

GASPÉ — While Quebec’s Ministry of Transport has been withholding a \$1.9 million subsidy since January 2025 to fund operations at Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (RÉGÎM), the Ministry of the Environment is now demanding repayment of \$30,000 related to a Green Fund accountability report.

RÉGÎM president Daniel Côté says he finds the request difficult to accept.

“I received an email from a woman at the Ministry of the Environment—right next door to the MTQ—demanding that RÉGÎM pay back \$30,000 from the Green Fund for Project X, as if they had overpaid a grant, when the same government owes us nearly \$2 million. What an insult,” thunders the president, who is also mayor of Gaspé.

“I can’t tell you the response I gave to the civil servant...” he says.

RÉGÎM’s accounts payable are now stretched to the limit.

“The Ministry of the Environment’s ‘green’ has turned into a barrage of criticism. I feel sorry for that official who

didn’t have to act that way. As for her \$30,000 claim, she’ll have to wait until we get paid,” he fumes.

“I’m starting to get fed up with this,” he adds.

However, following the president’s comments on CHNC radio, the Ministry of the Environment later indicated it would show flexibility.

“They told us they’d be patient, and as soon as there are changes in RÉGÎM’s financial situation, we’ll be able to meet our obligations. There is finally some understanding from the ministry. They’ll be patient, after the little outburst we had to make. I would have liked them to go after the Ministry of Transportation—that would have put extra pressure on them—but they’ll be patient,” Mr. Côté reported.

## Still no cheque in the mail

RÉGÎM has obtained more details regarding the money owed by the Quebec government.

For the year 2025, financial assistance totals \$1.1 million, and for the current year,

another sum of \$800,000 has accumulated since the beginning of 2026.

“We’re looking at nearly \$2 million in past-due accounts from the Ministry of Transportation, including a \$1.1 million account dating back 17 months owed to RÉGÎM. Our line of credit is down to about \$1.2 million out of \$1.5 million. We’re at the limit of our liquidity,” calculates the president.

Before any payment can be issued, a memorandum of understanding must be signed.

“It hasn’t come in yet. We have to return a memorandum. How long is it going to take to analyze our signature on the memorandum they wrote? Is it going to take them six months to analyze my signature? A handwriting analysis of my signature just to waste our time? If that’s the case, we’re going to shut down the service. We’re stretching it, but it’s becoming increasingly unsustainable. If we don’t get the agreement soon, things are going to get tough,” Mr. Côté remarks sarcastically.

If no funding arrives by the end of May, service disruptions are considered likely.

# Dellner to stay in Gaspé for the long haul

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ — The Swedish company Dellner Wind Solution, which acquired the bankrupt Kuma Brakes last year, is committing to staying in Gaspé for at least 10 years.

The Town and the company, founded in the early 1940s, have signed this long-term lease for the former GDS premises in Sandy Beach.

The agreement also includes an option for an additional 10 years.

“It was their request to have a secure, long-term location. We agreed on a 10-year lease renewable for another 10 years. These were the premises occupied by Kuma Brakes until the holidays,” says Mayor Daniel Côté.

According to the mayor, the company intends to do more than simply manufacture brake pads in Gaspé.

“They want to produce complete, integrated wind turbine braking systems, taking brake pads and integrating them into a complete system. They have plans for hydraulic systems for wind turbines but also for other types of applications. Their target market is Quebec, but also Canada as a whole, operating from a single facility in Gaspé. They wanted a long-term agreement, and we agreed to commit to a long-term partnership,” the mayor continues.

In a way, the agreement formalizes the company’s previous verbal commitments.

Daniel Côté had met with the company’s senior executives, who assured him the company intended to maintain a long-term presence in the region.

Dellner Wind Solutions, which positions itself as a global leader in the design and manufacture of braking and hydraulic systems for the wind energy sector, acquired the assets of Kuma Brakes following the company’s bankruptcy on November 3.

At the time, the buyer had entered into a short-term lease agreement with the Town of Gaspé in order to continue operations.

Dellner operates facilities in the United States, Brazil, Europe and Asia.

# Gesgapegiag celebrates Mental Health Week with forum

CYNTHIA DOW

GESGAPEGIAG – On May 5, Gesgapegiag Health and Community Services (GHCS) held a public forum at the Galgoasiet Community Centre to inform residents about mental health services and support available in the community.

More than a dozen information booths were set up, featuring community resources such as Mawiomni Treatment Services, the Walgwan Centre, the Healing Lodge and the Gesgapegiag Police Department. Non-profit and government organizations, including La Passerelle, Nouveau Regard, the regional health agency and Service Canada, also attended the event.

Following lunch, a panel discussion was led by Dylan Hayes of GHCS and featured Melissa Bryan of Mawiomni Treatment Services (MTS), Lucy Casey-Campbell of the Walgwan Centre, Officer Kevin Debigaré of the Gesgapegiag Police Department, Marie-Pier Arsenault of the Healing Lodge and Dr. Sarah Marcoux, who oversees medical services for individuals with substance use challenges at the Maria Hospital Family Medicine Unit (UMF).

The panelists discussed the services available to people struggling with substance use, as well as support available to their families. The discussion emphasized the importance of collaboration among organizations to better meet the needs of community members.

For example, Officer Debi-



Photo: Cynthia Dow

*Dylan Hayes, left, led the panel discussion with, from the left, Melissa Bryan, Lucy Casey-Campbell, Officer Kevin Debigaré and Marie-Pier Arsenault. Dr. Sarah Marcoux joined the panel later.*

garé noted that the police department, in partnership with MTS and Walgwan, will soon host boxing lessons for youth in the community to help build positive relationships with young people. Ms. Casey-Campbell explained that some youth receiving services at Walgwan are fearful of police officers, which is why officers visit the treatment centre to explain their supportive role within the community.

Melissa Bryan, executive director of MTS, told attendees that the organization offers naloxone training and provides overdose prevention kits. MTS and Walgwan are also collaborating on the development of a future family support program. She added that working through interdisciplinary committees allows organizations to collaborate more effectively and provide a stronger continuum of care.

Ms. Arsenault explained the services and support available through the Healing Lodge, while Dr. Marcoux answered questions about harm-reduction services for individuals struggling with substance use. “The goal is to be where the person is. This helps save lives and reduce the impact of substance use on the patient and their family. We offer naloxone kits, as well as clean needle exchanges to help reduce infections. Every step is a move forward for the individual, and we offer a safe place to talk,” says Dr. Marcoux.

All of the panel participants stressed the importance of clear communication with families and community members regarding the harmful effects of substance use and the support services available to help individuals access the care they need.

## Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



### The Beauty in the Cracks

Not long ago, I saw a play about a woman who has a total psychotic breakdown. She gradually builds herself back up with the help of professionals, friends, family and her own inner strength. The play demonstrated that a person can feel completely broken and still recover — perhaps even becoming stronger and wiser than before.

There is a Japanese art form called Kintsugi that reflects this idea beautifully. In Kintsugi, broken pottery is repaired using lacquer mixed with gold powder. The object is never the same as it once was, but it becomes unique and beautiful in a different way.

The lesson is simple: don't throw away the pieces. Take those broken bits and slowly, carefully, put them back together. Sometimes the repaired object becomes even more beautiful because of its cracks, not despite them. Could we perhaps apply this same thinking to ourselves and to others who appear to be broken?

Most of us have had times in our lives when we feel as though we are beyond repair. That we will never feel like ourselves again. Some people pretend the difficult chapters of their lives never happened. “Fake it until you make it,” they say. Others convince themselves that appearing fine is enough, hoping nobody notices the hidden cracks beneath the surface.

But pain has a way of leaving marks. So, what can we do? When we are hit by betrayal, death, divorce, loneliness, failure, or simply exhaustion from carrying too much for too long, it might help to pause and ask what we need in order to feel whole again.

Let's consider Kintsugi. Though something may be smashed to pieces, the beauty of that item still exists. If something is broken, it does not mean it is worthless. It teaches that damage does not erase worth. In fact, the repairs themselves could even become part of its beauty.

Now let's consider people who have been through a lot. Let's be honest, who has not? The magic is to come out the other side feeling better but not harder. After a loved one's passing, can we still laugh and look forward to better days? Some people become more empathetic to others after they have suffered.

But look closely, and you may notice a little gold peeking through the cracks. That does not mean suffering is a good thing. Nobody asks to be broken. But life happens, and sometimes it leaves marks.

Kintsugi also reminds us that repair or recovery takes patience. A shattered bowl should not be repaired in haste or carelessly. Neither should a wounded heart. Recovery is delicate work. It takes time, support and care. With the help of family, friends, professionals and our own determination, life can slowly become manageable again.

Do not be ashamed of your broken pieces, because we all carry them. The important thing is that you survived. Life touches everyone with hardship sooner or later. Perhaps we are all repaired in some invisible way with gold. And maybe those repaired places make us stronger, wiser and more compassionate.

By the way, the play I mentioned at the beginning was based on a true story and performed by the very woman who lived through it. She recovered stronger and kinder, both to herself and to others. Her cracks did not diminish her beauty. They revealed it.



## The Avignon MRC is seeking public input on its Climate Plan

Nelson Sergerie

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The Avignon MRC is seeking input from residents to develop its first Climate Plan.

Residents have until June 30 to share their views on regional priorities regarding climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction.

“This is a major undertaking spanning approximately three years. We consulted all the municipalities to identify the major priority issues in the region, and now we're at the stage of consulting the public to set broad objectives and consider the next steps,” comments the prefect, Mathieu Lapointe.

The prefect notes that several municipalities are already working on coastal erosion, but the plan will detail the specific actions to be taken. “We will also have access to funding to carry out these actions,” notes the elected official.

People can participate in three ways: online at [atonavis.ca](http://atonavis.ca), by phone at 418-364-2000, or in person with project manager Marie-Édith Turcotte Maltais.



Carleton-sur-Mer at night.

Photo: Allen Doug Shaw

# Plans advance to renovate the René-Lévesque House

● NESLON SERGERIE

NEW CARLISLE – A new milestone has been reached in the restoration of former Quebec premier René Lévesque’s childhood home in New Carlisle, as a firm has been commissioned to prepare the plans and specifications.

The functional and technical program (FTP) was completed in December 2025 to determine the scope of work, and following a call for tenders that closed on March 3, the consortium formed by STGM Architecture and Atelier Balsa Architectes was selected to design the project.

That work will lead to a call for tenders in the late fall of 2026 for the execution phase.

According to the Quebec government’s electronic bidding system, the contract is valued at approximately \$569,000, within the ministry’s estimated price range.

In addition, the ministry



Photo: Archives

*A consortium has been selected to prepare the plans and specifications for the René-Lévesque House in New Carlisle.*

has awarded a \$127,525 private contract to museologist Maude Payette to develop an interpretive plan for the house and its surrounding grounds.

A separate \$45,000 contract for geotechnical and hydrological studies was awarded to the Laboratoire d'

expertises de Rivière-du-Loup.

The goal is to restore the classified heritage building to its condition between 1925 and 1939, when the Lévesque family lived there.

Since discussions began on restoring the René-Lévesque

House, the Quebec government has invested \$151,000 in temporary protection measures while studies and analyses are completed.

In the fall of 2024, stabilization work was carried out to prevent water infiltration and reinforce structural elements. The south wall was rebuilt due to rot affecting several components.

The work also included removing the deteriorated east porch and installing temporary white vinyl siding on the south and west façades.

Since then, no further intervention has been required to maintain the building’s structural integrity.

## Future use

Various regional partners were consulted on the site’s future use, in line with its heritage value.

Participants included Espace René-Lévesque, the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des

Îles, Radio CHNC, the Carleton-sur-Mer International Journalism Festival, the Municipality of New Carlisle, and the Bonaventure MRC.

The committee determined that the house should host activities related to journalism and media, reflecting an important aspect of Mr. Lévesque’s career.

The space will serve a multifunctional and collaborative purpose, with an interpretive area on the ground floor and offices and a recording studio upstairs.

The project’s inauguration is scheduled for early summer 2028.

A public information session will be held in the coming weeks to present the project and answer questions.

A condition assessment conducted after the Quebec government acquired the property in 2021 estimated the cost of restoration work at approximately \$800,000. The house was built in 1905.

# Marcel Landry recounts his memoirs

● NESLON SERGERIE

MARIA – The man who ended the Liberals’ 37-year reign in Bonaventure in 1994 is sharing his memories on the program Mémoires, airing on the parliamentary channel.

Marcel Landry, the former Parti Québécois (PQ) member for Bonaventure from 1994 to 1998, recounts his political journey in this production, which premiered on March 22.

“I was approached last summer to participate in this series. There was a local contact, Christian Blais, who works at the National Assembly and is the son of my former neighbours in Carleton in the 1970s. Christian had seen an interview I gave to Paul Lemieux during the Heritage Evenings,” says Mr. Landry, recounting the initial contacts regarding his participation in the program, which he later accepted.

“It focuses on my political career. The rest took quite a bit longer because I’ve worked in several fields. In education, in educational television, in agricultural unionism, and I was involved in the Gaspé Peninsula Recovery Plan as an assistant deputy minister, and I ended my career at the Ministry of the Environment for the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspé regions. It’s an overview,” says Mr. Landry.



Photo: Archives

## Marcel Landry.

When he entered politics in 1994, a poll indicated that the prospective PQ candidate was already known for his involvement, particularly through a television program related to his work at the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) on agriculture and forestry.

He was also involved in the Ralliement Gaspésien et Madelinot, the establishment of the first economic development council in Baie-des-Chaleurs, and the first economic summit in 1980 in Bonaventure County.

“I can’t predict what people will take away from this series. But given that I was often asked to write my memoirs, I felt this series was a quicker

way to leave a legacy,” recalls the former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ) under Jacques Parizeau.

Mr. Landry had been prompted to consider an active political career during the by-election necessitated by the death of Gérard D. Lévesque.

“When Daniel Johnson, who had just replaced Robert Bourassa, announced the by-election, I was working at the UPA in Longueuil. My wife had been following the news, and Gilles Lesage, who was a veteran political columnist at the time, was making his predictions about the by-elections. Serge Ménard won the by-election in Laval. Mr. Lesage said that in Shefford, it was obvious the PQ would win with Roger Nicolet, and he said that in Bonaventure, it would take an earthquake because it had been Liberal for 37 years,” recalls Mr. Landry, noting that journalist Alain Lavoie had made similar prediction in Baie-des-Chaleurs.

“He had said two weeks before the election that he wouldn’t be surprised by a change in allegiance in Bonaventure. And Mr. Parizeau sensed that too,” recounts the former minister.

After the victory in the February 21 by-election, the general election arrived on

September 12, 1994.

“During my seven or eight months in the opposition, I was sent all over Quebec to consult on regional development and build the election platform with other fellow MNAs. That helped drive change.”

Holding onto the riding in the 1994 general election did not guarantee him a seat in the Cabinet.

“It wasn’t automatic because other ridings had been won back by the Parti Québécois. When people like Dr.

Camille Laurin or Dr. Denis Lazure are in the running, you don’t assume you’ll be in the Cabinet. But it was Mr. Parizeau’s choice. I was sent to MAPAQ. It was a field I’d been working in for eight or nine years,” Mr. Landry continues.

“There was also the whole issue of rural development, in which I was involved. But above all, it was the fact that I was a pro-independence activist,” the former politician concludes.

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# Announcements



## Obituary



### RÉHEL: Cinthea

In loving memory of Cinthea Réhel, 66, a beloved mother and grandmother who passed away on April 30, 2026, in Marathon, Ontario surrounded by her loving family.

Born on November 4, 1959, in Montréal and grew up in Gaspé, Québec, Cindy's life was a testament to love, laughter, family and friends.

Family meant everything to Cindy. She was a proud and devoted mother and absolutely loved being a grandmother, always talking about the special times that she spent with each of her grandchildren. She loved to stay connected, always trying to keep in contact with family and friends who lived far away. Whether it was a quick phone call or a long chat, Cindy always made the effort to stay close to the people she loved no matter the distance. She had a gift for bringing people together and loved organizing meals and barbecues that brought friends and family closer. One of Cindy's favourite meals was fondue. Every year she would organize a fondue party for all her friends using the many fondue pots she owned to put together a beautiful evening for everyone that was there.

Cindy is survived by her daughter, Natasha; son, Joshua; and four beautiful grandchildren: Victoria, Jesse, Madalyn and Mackenzie. She will be deeply missed by her mother, Hilda Annett Réhel; brothers, Randy, Trevor (Molly), and Timmy (Wendy); and all her nieces, nephews,

cousins, and friends. She is predeceased by her father, Camille Réhel; brothers, Roger (Denise) and Bob.

Cindy's memory will live on through her family, whose lives have been enriched by her unwavering love and support. Her wonderful sense of humour will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

A Celebration of Life for Cindy will take place in Gaspé, Québec, in the summer of 2027.



## In Memory



### BRAMER: Anne Marie Frances Mullin

1964 - 2016

June 3, marks 10 years since you left us for heaven. You continue to be in our thoughts and in our hearts. We speak your name with love and hold many good memories of our years together.

Our four daughters have all married and begun their own families. They miss you all of the time. You would be so proud of how they are handling motherhood. Your example did not go unnoticed! Thank you for being a faithful wife, a loving mother, a special sister and a wonderful daughter. We miss you, but are grateful for the promise of eternal life. One day we will see you again.

John 14:6 Jesus said; "I am the way, the truth and the life."

Always loved and never forgotten by husband, Mark; daughters: Starr (Matt), Heidi (Eric), Jewel (Tyler), and Faith (Dan); eight grandchildren; mom, Carol and dad, Francis; sisters Cyndi (Andy) and Mary (Dave).



## Funeral Announcements

### LEGGO: Frances Eileen

A mass in memory of Frances Eileen Leggo will be held at 9:15 a.m. on June 7, 2026, at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Douglastown, followed by burial at the cemetery.

The family invites all who knew Frances to join them in celebrating her life and her deep connection to the Gaspé region.


### SWEETMAN: Winston

On July 4, 2026, a service for Winston Sweetman will be held at 11 a.m. at the Port Daniel Anglican Church, 230 Route 132. Following the service, the inurnment of ashes will take place at Port Daniel United Church Cemetery, 340, Rue Bellevue.


All are invited to attend a reception at the 3 Star Golden Age Club, 177 Route 132, Port Daniel West.

Please note that, at the same time as the inurnment above in Port Daniel St. Andrews United church cemetery, the ashes for Carol Sweetman Almond will be inurned.

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**GASPÉ:**  
**FORILLON**  
**June 17:** The association of the expropriated people of Forillon and their descendants are inviting you to the Annual General Meeting beginning at 7 p.m. At the Auberge de La petite école de Cap-aux-os. Please pass this invitation to family and friends.

**YORK:**  
**FADOQ**  
**May 30:** The FADOQ York River Senior Citizens Club will be holding their Annual General Meeting beginning at 4 p.m. at the Gaspé Royal Canadian Legion, 197 Jacques Cartier. All members are encouraged to attend. The meeting will be followed by a hot and cold buffet supper and live entertainment with Coco and Dodo. The cost of the supper and dance is \$25 with a \$10 refund for YRSC club members who attend the AGM. Draws for door prizes during the event.

**SHIGAWAKE:**  
**Shigawake Community Centre**  
**June 1:** Summer gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m., canteen available.

**SHIGAWAKE:**  
**Shigawake Music Festival and Agricultural Fair**  
**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.

**NEW CARLISLE:**  
**Bible Chapel Meetings**  
**Sundays:** Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School - 2 p.m.  
**Thursdays:** Prayer Meeting and Bible Study - 7 p.m.

Everyone welcome! For more information 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

**NEW CARLISLE:**  
**St. Andrews Anglican Church**  
**June 13:** A spring pot-luck supper from 4:30 p.m. - 6 p.m. in the basement of the church. Cost: adults \$15, children \$7. Take out available from 4 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., no delivery available.

**NEW RICHMOND:**  
**La Boutique Artisan**  
**May 29-30:** Garage sale and bake sale from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at St. Andrews United Church, 215 Perron Ouest, New Richmond. For more information, call Deb at 418-392-4508 or Sharon at 418-392-5771.

**June 2-5:** La Boutique will receive artisan items by appointment at 210 Perron Ouest, New Richmond. Those interested, or new to the service, may call one of the numbers above.

**June 8:** La Boutique will open for the season.

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:**  
**50 plus club**  
**May 23:** A afternoon of music with John Gedeon from 2 - 4 p.m., \$10 entry fee at the door.  
**May 30:** Spring bingo, doors open at 12 p.m. until 3 p.m. \$15 for 4 cards and \$1 for each additional card.

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:**  
**Book Room**  
**Wednesdays:** The book room will be open from 1 -

**UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND**  
**Sunday, May 24**  
2 p.m. Service  
**Sunday, May 31**  
10 a.m. Service

**UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN**  
**Sunday, May 24**  
10 a.m. Service  
**Sunday, May 31**  
10 a.m. Service

4 p.m. For information please contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

**PARISH OF GASPÉ**  
**Sunday, May 24**  
**St. Matthews, Peninsula**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Sunday, May 17**  
**St. Pauls, Gaspé**  
9 a.m. Morning Prayer

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA**  
**Sunday, May 24**  
**New Carlisle**  
9 a.m. Morning Prayer  
**Hope Town**  
3 p.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Port Daniel**  
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Sunday, May 31**  
**New Carlisle**  
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
**Shigawake**  
7 p.m. Evening prayer

**HOROSCOPES - May 18 to May 24**

**ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20**  
Your curiosity is in overdrive, Aries. Conversations bring exciting ideas, and you might stumble across information that opens a new door.

**TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21**  
This week brings a spark of fresh motivation. You're feeling bold and ready to take action, Taurus. Plans could pop up unexpectedly and lead to a surprising connection.

**GEMINI - May 22/June 21**  
Gemini, you may find yourself craving cozy vibes, delicious food, and meaningful conversations. A small financial or professional opportunity may be presented midweek.

**CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22**  
A heartfelt conversation may strengthen a relationship that means a lot to you, Cancer. Projects flow smoothly when you follow your intuition. Treat your-

self to a little self-care.

**LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23**  
You're shining brighter than usual this week, Leo. Your natural charisma draws people in, making this a great time to share ideas, pitch a plan, or take the lead on something exciting.

**VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22**  
Organization is your superpower right now. Tasks that once felt overwhelming suddenly become manageable when you tackle them step by step, Virgo. A helpful tip or piece of advice could simplify your routine.

**LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23**  
You may find yourself bringing people together, Libra. A creative hobby or artistic endeavor may inspire you midweek. Trust your sense of balance.

**SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22**  
Scorpio, this is a great week to dig into something meaningful — whether it's a personal goal or a long-

term project. Your insight is sharp, and others may seek your advice.

**SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21**  
Adventure calls — even if it's just trying something new and local, Sagittarius. A fresh experience could inspire future plans.

**CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20**  
Capricorn, your steady determination pays off this week. Progress might feel subtle at first, but by the end of the week, you'll see clear results.

**AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18**  
Innovative ideas are flowing, Aquarius. You might find creative solutions where others see problems. Collaboration works in your favor now.

**PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20**  
Pisces, a creative project, music, or art may prove especially inspiring. Spend time near water or in a peaceful environment if possible — it helps you recharge and dream bigger.

**HOROSCOPES - May 25 to May 31**

**ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20**  
You approach a task with wisdom and insight this week, Aries. Your measured approach paves the way to finding a solution that will benefit all involved.

**TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21**  
It is key to treat yourself this week, Taurus. A purchase or experience could bring you long-term joy. Just be careful about spending too much.

**GEMINI - May 22/June 21**  
Gemini, you are full of clever solutions more often than not. If there is a problem, you're often the one who can crack it. This will be the case this week as well; your knack is put to the test.

**CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22**  
Cancer, let others in and reap the rewards of a welcoming attitude. Your social circle expands and others embrace opportunities to spend time with you.

**LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23**

Leo, start a project you have been thinking about as soon as possible, especially when the creative spark ignites. If you wait too long, the inspiration may vanish.

**VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22**  
Virgo, you are surprisingly relaxed about something that used to stress you out a lot. Growth looks good on you, so remain committed to any positive changes you have implemented.

**LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23**  
Romantic feelings or friendships seem to flow easily right now, Libra. Any connections you make will feel balanced and purposeful. Prioritize those who bring you the most joy.

**SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22**  
Scorpio, you are engaging every bit of energy you have to go into deep work mode. You will be focused and unstoppable for the next several days. Others may not see you for a while.

**SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21**  
Sagittarius, good news or good timing show up just when you need it. It might provide the inspiration needed to start a project you're excited about.

**CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20**  
Family life is going very smoothly right now, Capricorn. Stability will prevail in the days ahead. Embrace the peaceful atmosphere and encourage others to follow suit.

**AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18**  
Share your perspective with all who are ready to listen to your story, Aquarius. Keep in mind that your voice carries weight and you have the ability to spur change.

**PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20**  
Your financial confidence grows, Pisces. You might see a salary increase at work, so now is the time to consider implementing some notable financial changes.

Congratulations to our  
Mother's Day Contest Winner :  
Madeleine Anglehart



# Mental health study: Anglophone teens report higher distress, less support from family and friends

CYNTHIA DOW

**CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES** - Just over 2,900 students in 18 high schools were surveyed by the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ) in 2022-23 to determine the state of their mental health. Such surveys are carried out every 6 years by the ISQ on behalf of the Ministère de la Santé.

Jessica Synnott of Vision Gaspé-Percé Now presented a summary of the findings prepared by the regional public health department to the community forum held in March.

The data shows that a large percentage of the female respondents reported high levels of psychological distress. "It could be that the level of psychological distress is also high amongst the boys, but they tend not to talk about it," Ms. Synnott told forum participants.

She noted that high levels of screen time on social media "has an impact" on the mental health of our youth.

There was some good news coming out of the report. For example, the level of violence in Eastern Shores School Board (ESSB) schools has dropped substantially. "There is more awareness and there has been considerable teaching about it," Ms. Synnott explained.

For people over 18 years of age the survey results show a steep decline in social life satisfaction between 2014-15 and 2020-21. The notes show that 67% of both anglophones and francophones described this impact of the pandemic on their social life. Anglophone adults are also shown to have a lower rate of social life satisfaction than their francophone counterparts, in particular amongst those aged 65 and over.

There was also some good news for anglophones in the Gaspésie: levels of psychological distress increased from 2014-15 to 23%, but that rate is about half that of English-speaking Quebecers overall, at 40%. Questions related to psychological distress included "feeling nervous, feeling discouraged, feeling agitated, so depressed that nothing could make you smile anymore, so tired that everything is an effort, good for nothing."

The study then looked at diagnosed mental health disorders among high school students, which appear to have peaked for the overall population in 2016-17, with the ex-



*A regional survey found high levels of psychological distress among teenagers, with anglophone youth reporting lower family and peer support.*

ception of eating disorders, which continue to show a steady increase. Depression dropped considerably between 2016-17 and 2022-23, while ADHD increased and anxiety remained at a steady high of 25%.

Among anglophone youth, rates of diagnosed depression (13%) and eating disorders (9%) are higher than among their francophone peers. The rate of ADHD diagnosis (21%) is lower among anglophone youth, but that may be due to lack of resources.

Greg Leblanc, community organizer for the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS), commented that "It is hard for anglophone youth to get a proper diagnosis, so the situation is probably worse than the statistics portray."

An overall view of both anglophone and francophone teenage populations indicates that the rate of psychological distress is high (53%), low self-esteem is high (47%) and a high percentage do not perceive themselves as having social support from their family (39%).

Psychological distress has climbed significantly from 2010-11 through 2016-17 to 2022-23, and is higher among anglophone youth at 38% versus 36% among francophones. Again, girls reported much higher distress rates (59%) than boys 16%. This is also positively correlated with grade level, with increased distress reported in the higher grades.

Low self-esteem has also been on the rise over the study period and is much higher among anglophone youth at 45% in 2022-23 versus 33% among francophones. This is also felt more keenly among girls.

While there is good news about a drop in violence such as threats, physical violence

and cyberbullying among anglophone youth, they are still much more likely to be victims than francophones (51% compared to 33%). In this case, boys are feeling the impact of violence more than girls.

When it comes to reporting high levels of social support, again the anglophone youth are trailing their francophone counterparts, with 69% reporting good support in the family compared to 79% amongst Francophones. Anglophones also trail in reporting good support from friends (40% versus 68%). The percentages are closer when it comes to com-

munity support (51% and 52%).

The study also looked at alcohol and drug consumption. Here, anglophones reported much lower levels of substance use than their francophone counterparts across the board. In both communities, the vast majority of teenagers do not use drugs (79%) with the highest proportion of users, 16%, using only cannabis.

Asked how they are responding to the needs as reflected in the data, Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) Executive Director Allen Richards indicated to SPEC, "...the results from the survey are directly guiding our youth mental health work. We currently have two mental health projects at CASA: the Youth Mental Health Initiative and Rural Roots. The YMHI activities are mental health related activities and information sharing. Rural Roots is about outreach and finding youth who are having mental health challenges, those at risk and to all youth to increase awareness about mental health, remove stigma and connect young people with existing resources across the region."

Ms. Synnott outlined how Vision has youth mental health programming "...where we offer various workshops and activities that support youth mental wellbeing. Our youth space in Barachois (the SeaScape Hangout) will hopefully be opening in June! It will be a place for youth to come and hangout, relax and socialize. Partners like Aire Ouverte will also have a presence to offer services on site."

She added that Vision represents the community on many committees "...where we ensure the realities of our youth are shared."

For their part, the regional health authority (CISSS) told SPEC that they have resources available in English and are working in collaboration with the schools and the school board through such programs as École en santé, Hors Piste (program to help prevent anxiety), DevelopAction (to prevent addictions) SPARX (to encourage healthy relationships) and Équilibre (encouraging positive body image).

Meanwhile, school nurses offer a variety of clinical supports to students in schools across the region.

## Confidence

By: Destanee Kruse

You call it shyness, but it makes us feel like we shine less. You say it's not a big deal, that it's all in our heads. "Just stop caring what people say." "Just be more confident."

But if you really stop and think, it's really not that way. Struggling with the way I am, criticizing every risk I take, because it's one I shouldn't have decided to make.

Taking risks feels like your life is on the line. One wrong move and it's not going to be fine. What looks like silence to people, may be a mind that won't sit still. The constant static noise drowns out every choice. So much we want to say, but not knowing where to start, fearing that you'll be judged for thinking in a different way.

The constant reminder of trying new things, isn't like riding a bike, nor is it learning how to walk. It's more like stepping foot into a new place. When you can't seem to find your way around.

Worry begins to feed the ground. That's where the seed is planted to grow. When it blooms, it'll be doomed. Because people can't seem to understand it. It's not easy, because it's a part of me. It's not going to go away in the snap of your fingers.

It'll take time. Maybe it won't linger. They all see the lack of effort, the quietness, and the hesitation. But they label it as "Indifferent."

But it's not that we don't try, or don't care. We're just fighting bigger battles, that you might not see there. The battle against the lack of self belief, the battle against judgment and failure.

In the end, it's not about relief, or searching for a saviour. We just want a day, one day, where we feel like we can say. We don't feel judged.

So no, it's not something to push aside, to say "It's not a big deal." Because it is. Its built from this. People can't comprehend the thoughts they can't see, nor can they comprehend what it's like to be me.



# Seniors' Fair returns to Chandler sports centre on June 4 with information, activities and community services

GILLES GAGNÉ

CHANDLER – The third annual Seniors' Fair will take place Thursday, June 4, at the Clément-Tremblay sports centre in Chandler, a venue organizers say is ideal for welcoming a growing number of participants.

Marie-Claude Prévost, coordinator of leisure services for the Town of Chandler, explains that the fair was created in 2024 following requests expressed by seniors during consultations held as part of the MADA initiative.

“With the emergence of MADA fairs, MADA meaning Municipalities that are friends with seniors, the Town of Chandler, like other towns, had to develop an action plan for that age group. We saw that a specialized fair was among the requests sug-

gested during a consultation period,” explains Ms. Prévost.

The first edition was held at Camp Bellefeuille in Pabos Mills before moving to the Clément-Tremblay arena, which offers more space and flexibility in case of poor weather conditions.

“The floor is divided into sectors, one for activities and one for kiosks based on five themes, namely we move, we eat, we have fun, we show kindness and thanks to MADA. Thanks to MADA, we transport furniture and sofas so that attendees are comfortable. There are also people who will knit. There will also be kiosks from private companies offering different services,” she further explains.

Attendance has continued to increase since the fair



Photo: Courtesy of Marie-Claude Prévost

*The 2025 Seniors' Fair was well attended.*

began, growing from about 400 participants in 2024 to approximately 500 last year.

“We hope to greet 600

people this year,” stresses Ms. Prévost.

Refreshments will be available throughout the day

and a free lunch will be served to attendees.

The “get active” section will allow people to do all-day exercise, and there will be a spot where a basic CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) course is offered. The “have fun” section will offer art classes, digital workshops, puzzles, information on available bicycles, and psychomotor games. The “positive care”, or kindness section will bring together more than 25 regional organizations offering services to seniors and caregivers.

A tribute to regional centenarians is scheduled for 11 a.m., followed by a tribute show for seniors around 12:30 p.m. Before the closing cocktail reception, historian Jean-Marie Thibault will present a lecture at 4 p.m. entitled Gaspé's multiethnicity:



Photo: Holly Smith

## Lobster season off to a slow start, price is encouraging

Gilles Gagné

PORT DANIEL – Gaspesian lobster fishermen experienced a relatively slow start after the May 3 opening day, according to Roch Lelièvre, president of Lelièvre, Lelièvre et Lemoignan, one of the two seafood processing firms based in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé.

Weather conditions following the setting of traps on May 3 played a major role in the slow start, explains Mr. Lelièvre.

“The water was cold, the currents were strong and the water was dirty, blurry,” he says, after speaking with fishermen delivering their lobster to his plant.

The price paid to the fishermen is nevertheless higher than in 2025, reaching \$8 per pound for the first week of the season. The price is determined using a formula based on prices changed by a number of fish markets and supermarket chains.

During the first week of 2025 season, the same lobster fishermen had received \$7 per pound, a base price that was poorly received by many harvesters. As was the case this year, the price had not yet aligned with the Magdalen Islands price because fishermen in the archipelago began fishing on May 9, six days later than those in the Gaspé Peninsula. The final price is determined after a full day of sales.

Roch Lelièvre notes that catches landed by the Gaspesian fishermen were not abundant enough to satisfy the strong demand associated with Mother's Day weekend.

“I had to buy some quantities of lobster in New Brunswick, something I was already doing over past years, but I also bought lobster in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in order to fill the needs of my customers. We have to send it to the big urban markets by Friday before Mothers' Day in order to make it for that occasion,” he explains.

Despite the slow beginning, Mr. Lelièvre stops short of describing the opening of the season as poor. “It is just so-so, a tad under average, but it has been picking up over the last two days,” he underlines on May 14.

# SALON 2026 DES AÎNÉS Rocher-Percé

« Taking care of ourselves »

**WHEN?**  
June 4th 2026  
10 to 4 pm

**WHERE?**  
Centre  
Clément-  
Tremblay in  
Chandler

**WHO?**  
Seniors,  
caregivers and  
family members

**LET'S MOVE**

- 10:30 Workout session with Valérie Castilloux, kinesiologist
- 11:15 CPR course from Impact Vital
- 13:15 Introduction to Pilates with Thaly-Ann Roussy
- 14:45 Chair exercises with Lizajade Simoneau

**All day in the senior's zone:**

- Cornhole game
- Bean Bag game
- Washer toss game

**A TRIBUTE TO OUR CENTENARIANS**

- 11:00 Guard of honour for our centenarians
- 11:15 Let's talk about our centenarians
- 12:30 A performance honoring our elders by M'sieur Bujold

**WELL-TREATMENT**

Meet more than 20 organisations who take the wellness of the elderly to heart!

**LET'S PLAY!**

- 10, 11, 13, 14 Art workshops with Mireille Dupuis
- All day Digital workshop with Monique Doucet

Accessible bike kiosk and electric bikes

Puzzles

**LET'S EAT!**

- 11:00 to 13:00 A tasting of the «petits plats givrés» frozen meals

And Lunch served to all

**GRAND SALON MADA**

Art, games and relaxation

Private company kiosks

**16h00** Conference in French on the multiethnic nature of the Gaspé Peninsula "D'oussé tu viens?" With Jean-Marie Thibeault

Cocktail

Country Line Dance

Event closure

# Looking for a career? Hiring employees? Considering a change—or just need part-time work?

CASA Employability Assisted Services supports English-speaking residents across the Gaspé region in overcoming employment barriers through personalized guidance, job readiness support, and access to training, tools, and local opportunities. Whether you need help with your CV, interview preparation, or finding the right training, our team is ready to assist.

Our services also help connect job seekers with employers and collaborate with local partners to strengthen employment opportunities throughout the region.



## MRC AVIGNON: Tammy Chatterton



With over 20 years of leadership and community engagement along the coast, I bring extensive local knowledge and trusted partnerships to the employability sector. I can bring strong connections with organizations that provide meaningful support during transitional employment changes. My work is rooted in collaboration, practical solutions, and community-based support. I am committed to helping individuals build confidence, access opportunities, and successfully re-enter the workforce.

### LOCATIONS AND SCHEDULE

Second / Fourth Monday - 10AM - 2PM - Matapedia - 3 rue du Carillon (CAB)

Wednesdays and Thursdays - 9AM - 2PM  
Pointe-à-la-Croix - 139 boulevard Inter-Provincial (Former town hall)

418-752-5995 ext. 104

[tammy@casa-gaspe.com](mailto:tammy@casa-gaspe.com)

CASA has three employability agents serving different areas, ensuring support is accessible across the region.

## MRC BONAVENTURE: Cindy Carney



I have been actively involved in my community since I was a young child, volunteering at various events and contributing in any way I could. My experiences helping others have fostered a deep sense of pride and connection to my community. This passion for supporting those around me has naturally translated into my professional life, where I focus on creating employment opportunities and strengthening local networks. My work is driven by a commitment to community empowerment and ensuring that everyone has the chance to thrive.

### LOCATIONS AND SCHEDULE

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays - 8 AM to 4PM - New Carlisle  
168 boul Gerard D Levesque (CASA office)

Tuesdays - 8AM to 4PM - Shigawake - 91 Route 132 (Fairgrounds office)

Thursdays - 9AM - 3PM - Cascapedia-St. Jules - 55 route Gallagher (Legion)

418-752-5995 ext. 116

[cindy@casa-gaspe.com](mailto:cindy@casa-gaspe.com)



## Connection Café Series

Designed to bridge the gap between employers and job seekers, this initiative offers a neutral platform for open dialogue, networking, and collaboration. By fostering direct connections, we're helping businesses find the right talent and individuals find the right fit. Strengthening our local economy in the process.

Building confidence, connections, and community

Theme, When & Where

Hospitality, service and summer jobs

Supporting growth on both sides of the table

Thursday, May 28, 9AM - 11AM

Bringing local business owners and job seekers face-to-face

Cascapedia River Museum

### Contact

418-751-4102 - Cindy Carney

[cindy@casa-gaspe.com](mailto:cindy@casa-gaspe.com)

168 Boul. Gerard D. Levesque  
New Carlisle, Qc

## MRC ROCHER PERCE: Vanessa Walker - Plusquellec



Growing up in New Carlisle and now living in Port-Daniel, I've always had a strong connection to the communities along the coast. For the past four years at CASA, I have worked in employability through programs such as CELI, JEME, and NEEF, supporting individuals as they build skills, confidence, and explore pathways toward meaningful employment. I'm passionate about empowering people and helping them recognize their strengths and potential. I value being approachable and supportive, and I strive to create inclusive spaces where individuals feel heard, motivated, and equipped to take the next steps toward their personal and career goals.

### LOCATIONS AND SCHEDULE

Mondays - 8 AM to 4PM - Chandler - 129 Boul Rene Levesque Ouest

Wednesdays - 8AM to 4PM - Shigawake - 91 Route 132 (Fairgrounds office)

Fridays - 9AM to 2PM - Barachois - 1062 route 132 (Rec Centre)

418-752-5995 ext. 110

[vanessa@casa-gaspe.com](mailto:vanessa@casa-gaspe.com)

This project is part of The Community Opportunity Fund, an initiative of YES Employment • Entrepreneurship, funded by the Government of Canada's Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities.