



SPEC celebrates 50 years

GILLES GAGNÉ

SHIGAWAKE – Over fifty people, including former and current board members, volunteers, past and present employees and community stakeholders gathered on April 25 at the Shigawake fairgrounds to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Gaspé Spec.

The evening was animated by the SPEC office team — Holly Smith, Emily Hocquard and Jillian O’Connell — who had organized the event and ensured its success.

They made sure to recognize everyone who contributed to the newspaper over the past half-century. “So, tonight we remember the vision of the founders — Lynden Bechervaise, Don Miller, and Gary Briand — who believed that the English-speaking communities of the coast deserved to see their lives, their news, and their voices in print. Because of that vision, we are all here today, still turning the pages fifty years later. We also remember the many people who carried the paper forward through the years. People like Joan Imhoff and Sharon Farrell, who kept the Spec office going for so long, through good times and difficult ones, making sure the paper never lost its place in the community. And it wasn’t only editors and staff. It was everyone. Everyone who wrote a story, took a photo, sold an ad, delivered papers, submitted a notice, or called the office to make sure something important was included,” said Holly Smith.

Invited to speak about what led to the founding of the paper, Lynden Bechervaise explained that before May 15, 1975 — the date the first issue of SPEC was published — English-speaking residents of the Gaspé Peninsula had limited access to local news in their language. People in the upper Baie-des-Chaleurs area relied on radio stations in Campbellton, while those in the New Carlisle area tuned in to Bathurst, and residents in the eastern part of the Peninsula listened to stations from Prince Edward Island (PEI). “The result was that anglophones were informed about what was going on in New Brunswick or PEI, but not informed about their region, or about Quebec,” explained Mr. Bechervaise.

A few minutes later, current board president Elaine Sexton addressed the current situation of the newspaper, noting that while the organization faced challenges following the COVID-19 pandemic, its situation has improved significantly in recent months.

Former news editor Stéphane Giroux, who worked for SPEC between 1990 and 1993, travelled from Montreal to attend the gala. He spoke about how his time in the region transformed him, saying that despite 32 years as CTV Montreal’s main courthouse reporter, he still considers his years at SPEC his most rewarding professional experience.

Cynthia Dow, who served as news editor from 1993 to 2001, reflected on the difficult 1995-1996 period, when the newspaper’s debt reached nearly \$74,000, and how the community rallied to eliminate that deficit.

Toward the end of the evening, special recognition was given to Holly Smith for her leadership during a challenging year, to Gilles Gagné for more than 30 years of dedication to the newspaper, as well as to board members and longtime volunteer Ann Hall.

“If the papers need labels put on, Ann is there. And somehow, she always shows up right when we need her most. Anyone who has worked at the SPEC knows that getting the paper ready on mailing day can be a bit stressful. But Ann has a way of coming in, sitting down at the table, and making everything feel a little more under control. Community newspapers survive because of people like Ann (...) So tonight, we want to say thank you, Ann,” said Holly Smith.

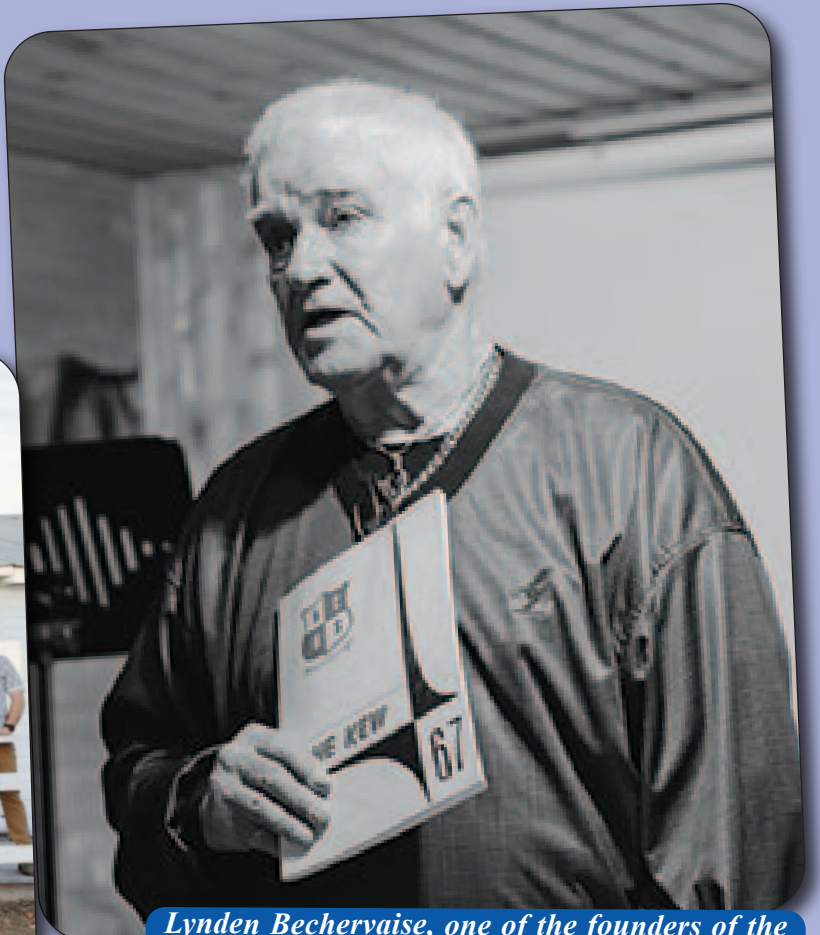
The SPEC team also thanked the sponsors who made it possible for attendees to leave with gifts: Pit Caribou, Ferme Bourdages, Vierge, Becky’s Baked Goods, Wild Willow Soapery, Esso Gaspé, Jean Coutu Gaspé, IGA Gaspé, St Hubert Gaspé and O’Dwyer. Aaron Check provided music, Shannon Day captured photos and last but not least, Lori Whalen and her team cooked a wonderful meal.



A meeting of past and present, former SPEC editor Stéphane Giroux (now with CTV Montreal), alongside former editor Cynthia Dow and current editor Gilles Gagné.



Elaine Sexton, current president of the Gaspé Spec, during the 50th anniversary celebration.



Lynden Bechervaise, one of the founders of the Gaspé Spec, reflects on the paper’s early days and its creation.



Past and present board members, volunteers, staff, and community stakeholders came together at the Shigawake fairgrounds on April 25 to mark the 50th anniversary of The Gaspé Spec.

Quebec authorizes drilling in interim caribou protection zone

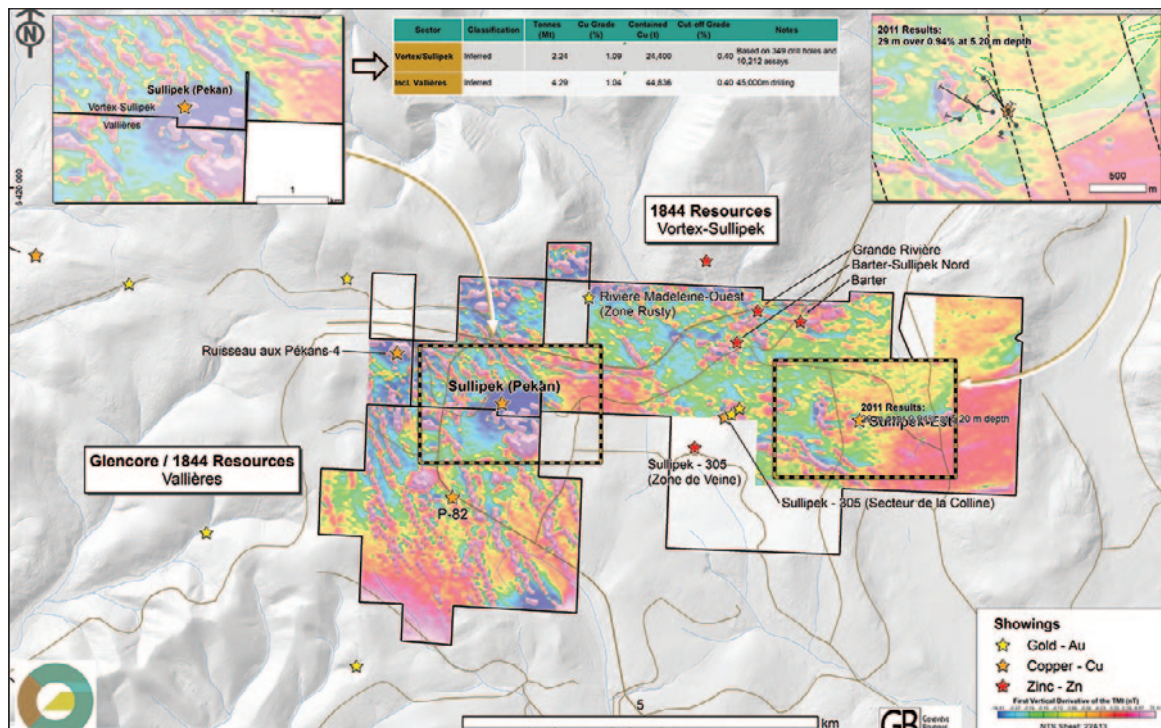
GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Quebec’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests has authorized the mining exploration firm 1844 Resources to conduct drilling operations in late summer or fall within the boundaries of the “interim protection zone” for mountain caribou, located south of the Parc de la Gaspésie.

The Ministry issued this “authorization for exploration work with impacts” on September 8, 2025. The firm 1844 Resources indicated in an April 9 press release that it had obtained this permit, which covers three neighbouring sectors: Sullipek, Vortex, and Vallières, located near the southern boundary of Parc de la Gaspésie. The firm is searching for copper.

Part of the area in question lies outside the interim caribou protection zone, which was established in 2018 to theoretically expand the territory in where the species can survive and reproduce.

The mountain caribou has been officially threatened with extinction since 2009, but its fate has been a concern for various groups and citi-



According to this map, 1844 Resources plans to drill near the southern boundary of the Parc de la Gaspésie.

zens for several decades. Approximately 36 caribou remained in the herd in 2025, 22 of which were in enclosures. Its protection was one of the main reasons for the creation of the Parc de la Gaspésie, in 1937.

This is most likely the first time drilling has been authorized in this interim protection zone. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests (MRNF) retained the

right to issue drilling permits to mining exploration companies in 2018.

The permit granted to 1844 Resources falls under category “ATI 409,” for authorization of exploration work with impacts. It is governed, as the MNRF (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests) writes to The SPEC, “by the provisions of sections 69, 69.1 and 69.2 of the Mining Act and sections

11, 12 and 13 of the Mining Regulations.”

The MNRF also specifies in writing that “other permits and authorizations are required to carry out the work, particularly for the portion located within the legal habitat of the Gaspé mountain caribou.” The ministry does not specify the nature of these other permits.

“Given the importance of wildlife, the MNRF con-

sulted the Ministry of the Environment, the Fight Against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks (...) and the latter issued recommendations to mitigate the impacts of the work related to the caribou and its habitat,” the Ministry of Natural Resources also states.

Environment ministry silent

The Ministry of the Environment, which has already planned a pilot project for a caribou protection area at the summit of Vallières, a project whose progress remains unknown, systematically referred The SPEC to the MNRF, despite its past commitment to caribou protection and the questions addressed to it.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests is making its authorization conditional on several measures, such as ensuring the safety of the drilled area after 1844 Resources leaves, removing the company's property after the work is completed, “installing a settling basin at

Cont'd on page 3

Reactions from Québec meilleure mine

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – Rodrigue Turgeon, spokesperson for Québec meilleure mine, an organization that monitors and improves mining practices in Quebec, finds it inconsistent for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests to grant exploration permits in an interim protection zone for an endangered species.

However, he is currently refusing to address the specific case of 1844 Resources before studying the file in detail.

“Generally speaking, this is an area we are monitoring closely. We had already observed that mining claims surround the Parc de la Gaspésie (...) We would be wrong to think that only mining is disturbing the (caribou) habitat. Exploration also has an impact. Even the presence of people in the area disturbs the species. The situation is critical. The 13 caribou herds in Quebec are experiencing an accelerated decline in most cases. Protection measures are insufficient. Enclosures are a



Photo: Gilles Gagné

There are about 35 caribou left in and around the Parc de la Gaspésie. Despite the precariousness of the herd, permits to explore in the caribou habitat are granted by Quebec's Department of Natural Resources and Forests.

failure,” asserts Mr. Turgeon.

The solution, he adds, “can only come from restoring their habitat and making courageous political decisions in the face of the mining companies’ appetite. It’s not a choice, it’s an obligation, enshrined in law. This is a scenario that is all too often repeated in Quebec. In the case of the caribou, the forestry and mining companies are in cahoots. The roads built by the former ben-

efit the latter. In the Gaspé Peninsula, habitat conservation and restoration measures are essential. Otherwise, we will not see a recovery worthy of our time. The facts are clear, the lessons learned are clear. We are not in a situation where the facts need to be established.”

The prefect of the Haute-Gaspésie Regional County Municipality (MRC), Sylvain Tanguay, points out that the

council of mayors has not yet taken a position regarding the 1844 Resources project. He is aware that mining projects find supporters in his MRC.

Two years after the Ministry of the Environment announced, on April 30, 2024, a \$59.5 million fund to protect caribou herds and implement projects ensuring the economic vitality of the sectors affected by this protection, Mr. Tanguay points out that the money is slow to arrive.

“We haven’t seen a penny of that money. In the MRC, we’ve already lost \$16 to \$17 million in forest management funding that was supposed to come from the federal government’s plan to plant 2 billion trees. Aside from a caribou enclosure, which is justified, we haven’t seen any of that \$59.5 million for businesses,” he says.

In fact, Sylvain Tanguay believes that the presence of 1844 Resources in the habitat restoration area, an area even larger than the interim caribou protection zone, could encourage the Quebec government to release funds from the \$59.5

million envelope.

The mountain caribou has been declining for several decades in the Gaspé Peninsula. There were between 1,000 and 1,500 caribou when Gaspésie National Park was created in 1937, with the mandate to protect the herd. However, logging and mining activities continued there until 1981, the year the Parks Act was adopted, which also reduced the park's area from 1,200 to 800 square kilometres.

The herd continues to decline, particularly because the caribou habitat extends beyond the new park boundaries. Resource exploitation in these border areas, and the resulting proliferation of roads, opens the door to predators.

In 2009, the caribou was finally declared an endangered species, but it wasn't until 2018 that interim protection measures were implemented.

These measures provided the caribou with a buffer zone, giving caribou a range similar to that which it enjoyed before 1981, but even then, a range riddled with access roads.

each drilling site to prevent drilling mud runoff (...), and using the necessary equipment to limit the risk of hydrocarbon leaks from vehicles, machinery, and all other equipment."

Moreover, 1844 Resources will have to drill "from July 20 to September 15 and/or from November 1 to December 1. The company will also have to use the necessary equipment, such as noise barriers around a drill rig, to limit the noise impact" of its operations.

The summit of Vallières de Saint-Réal is adjacent to the area targeted by 1844 Resources. The company's mining claims are located at a lower elevation. Over the past few months, the summit of Vallières has been closed to skiers because the approximately ten caribou still roaming the area spent most of the winter there.

The plans of 1844 Resources

The firm 1844 Resources intends to invest \$1.5 million in the Sullipek-Vortex-Vallières sector, designated as SV2, to validate mineral deposits discovered about fifteen years ago and to find others.

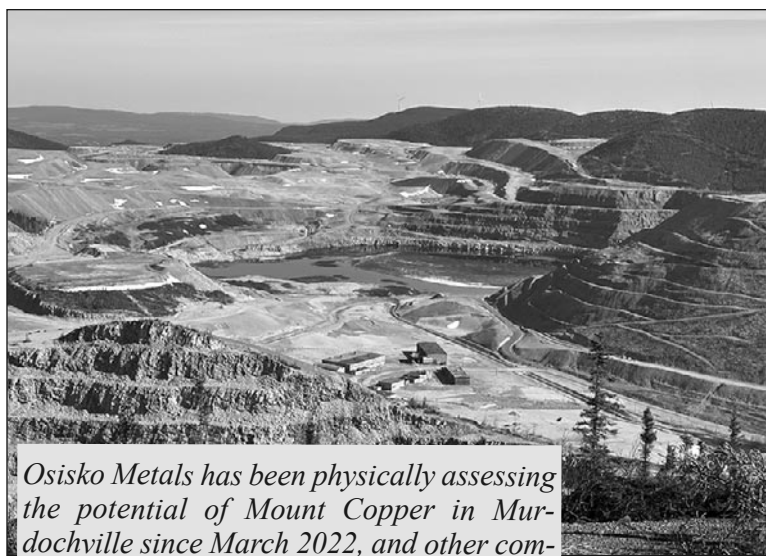
The president and chief executive officer of 1844 Resources, Sylvain Laberge, specifies that drilling carried out between 2009 and 2011 revealed the presence of copper on the Sullipek property at a grade of 1.09%, and 0.94% on the Vallières property. These deposits were found at a depth of five metres.

"We want to conduct stratigraphic analyses and verify the continuity of the indicators found, (verify) if we are in the same system. We are repeating the exercise to reanalyze the drill holes from 2009 and 2011. We want to see if all the zones were correctly interpreted," explains Sylvain Laberge.

The volumes remain to be determined and are currently only inferred, meaning they are subject to a probability calculation based on a limited sample. The three SV2 properties comprise 64 claims covering 31 square kilometres.

To date, 1844 Resources has raised some of the funding needed to achieve its 2026 objectives.

"We raised \$395,000 in February through a stock market offering to begin



Osisko Metals has been physically assessing the potential of Mount Copper in Murdochville since March 2022, and other companies like 1844 Resources would like to see a major mine reopen.

Photo: Osisko Metals

work," says Sylvain Laberge.

"The remaining funding will come from flow-through shares, with a portion in cash injections" intended to cover drilling costs.

The cost of the drilling operation? "It's simple: 3,000 metres at \$300 per metre, for a total of \$1 million," adds Mr. Laberge.

The head office of 1844 Resources is located in Saskatoon, but its management team is predominantly from Quebec.

Still a long way from a mine

The 2009-2011 drilling campaign revealed a potential volume of 2.24 million tonnes of mineralized rocks with an ore content of approximately 1%. That could mean 22,400 tonnes of copper, once it's all processed through a smelter.

"There's no such thing as a 2.24 million tonne mine. You have to prove that the mineralization is continuous. A 30 million tonne deposit (of mineralized rock) could be viable if Murdochville reopens," warns Sylvain Laberge.

The word is out: Murdochville. Another firm's project, Osisko Metals, which involves reopening the Mount Copper open-pit mine for large-scale exploitation of a low-grade copper deposit, practically single-handedly "justifies 1844 Resources' interest in the SV2 sector", notes Sylvain Laberge.

Osisko Metals has been working on the project since the fall of 2021, and the firm publicly announced it in March 2022. In this case, it's a colossal deposit, estimated at nearly 2 billion tonnes of rock containing one-third of 1% in copper. Osisko plans to build an ore concentrator to increase the copper content to 25% before shipping it to a smelter, which could be the Horne division of mining giant Glencore. Molybdenum and silver are also found in this ore.

Will Osisko's project create a wave of exploration?

When The SPEC asks Sylvain Laberge if initiatives like 1844 Resources risk multiplying and turning the Gaspé Peninsula into a mining region rather than a natural one, he replies that the probability is very slim. "We have to be careful. The euphoria of claim hunters (those acquiring claims, exploration rights in other words), the local people, that will always exist. We have no choice but to witness it, especially since we're able to claim electronically. A speculator can buy 1,000 claims in 48 hours, in areas with no potential, no access roads. It takes mineralization and good geology to reach a deposit, after acquiring virgin land rights, then analyzing the ground, taking soil samples. Before even bringing in a drill rig, it can take several years," he explains.

The advantage of 1844 Resources, he adds, is that the Noranda firm, which operated the Murdochville deposits and smelter from 1953 to 2002, had already done work in the Sullipek-Vortex-Vallières sector in the 1980s.

"Starting from scratch is like finding a needle in a haystack (...) Since the new mining reform, if you haven't spent money—that is, if you haven't invested 90% of the \$2,400 you spend to acquire each claim in exploration within three years—you lose it," he explains.

The fact that Robert Wares, president of Osisko Metals, sits on the advisory committee of 1844 Resources is not related to the recent developments of the two firms.

"Bob Wares has been on our advisory committee since 2013," assures Sylvain Laberge, adding that the two companies worked together to revive mineral exploration at the Murdochville sites of Noranda, acquired after 2002 by Glencore.

Police report

Éric Laflamme's bail hearing postponed again

The bail hearing for 38-year-old Éric Laflamme of Murdochville has been postponed once again, this time until May, as additional charges have been laid. The suspect has finally retained a lawyer, Rodrigue Joncas, who requested a postponement to review the case. Mr. Laflamme has been in custody since his arrest on March 2, in Rivière-au-Renard. On February 28, around 12:30 a.m., Mr. Laflamme was allegedly involved in an altercation with another person outside a bar on Queen street in Gaspé. The victim, in his thirties, sustained injuries and was threatened. Mr. Laflamme has been charged with possession of a firearm, specifically a handgun, which is prohibited. The Criminal Prosecutor's office added charges of uttering death threats, criminal harassment, assault with a weapon, pointing a weapon, and carrying a weapon for a dangerous purpose. Well known to Sûreté du Québec, Mr. Laflamme will return to court on May 14.

Five years in prison for Patrice Jolicoeur

Convicted of seven counts of sexual assault against his stepdaughter, who was under 16 years of age, Patrice Jolicoeur, 61, formerly of Carleton and now residing in Quebec City, was sentenced on April 24 to five years in prison. According to CHNC, this sentence is far from the two years requested by the defence attorney and closer to six to seven and a half years sought by the criminal prosecutor, even though the sexological and pre-trial reports were favourable to Mr. Jolicoeur. Judge Janick Poirier, of the Quebec Court, took into account the significant number of sexual contacts with the victim, who was between 12 and 15 years old at the time of the offences, and the significant impact on her mother and the victim herself, who attempted suicide and continues to be affected by Mr. Jolicoeur's actions. "A healthy society cannot tolerate the actions committed by the accused," added Judge Poirier. Mr. Jolicoeur will have to provide a DNA sample, is prohibited from possessing a firearm for life, and will be barred from being in any public place with anyone under the age of 14 without adult supervision for five years after serving his sentence. The assaults took place over a period of more than three years, between 2005 and 2008, in Carleton.

Stepfather charged with sexual assault

A 55-year-old stepfather has admitted to sexually assaulting his stepdaughter. The alleged incidents occurred in the Baie-des-Chaleurs region between 2002 and 2005, when the victim was between 14 and 16 years old. The assaults began with oral sex, escalating to approximately ten instances of sexual intercourse in the absence of his partner. The man, who has no prior criminal record, also admitted to another incident in 2014, when his stepdaughter was 26 years old. Pre-sentence and sexological reports have been requested for sentencing submissions on October 30. The complainant may be called to testify during the hearing. The location of the offenses is not being disclosed in order to protect the identity of the victim.



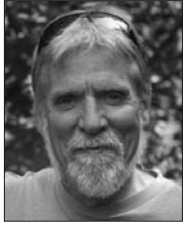
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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Will Mark Carney's honeymoon last?

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney assumed office on March 14, 2025, and went on to win the April 28 election against most expectations, securing a minority government for the Liberal Party. Just three months earlier, the Conservative Party held a 20% lead in surveys.

Back in January 2025, former Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau had reached an all-time low in popularity, which prompted him to resign. The leadership race that followed was easily won by Mark Carney.

Almost 14 months after succeeding Justin Trudeau as prime minister and just over a year after his electoral victory, what kind of record does Mark Carney have?

Politically-wise, it is positive. He has relegated Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre to the role of a second-string parliamentarian, even while leading a minority government, no small feat.

In fact, Mark Carney was practically able to run his government like a majority between April 28, 2025, and the April 13, 2026, by-elections, which gave the Liberal Party 174 seats, five seats over the April 2025 total. The goal was 172 seats to get a majority.

The Liberal Party had been able to run without stress until April 13 because of the support of the New Democratic Party (NDP), despite its mere five House of Commons seats, and sometimes with a bit of support from the Bloc Québécois.

Pragmatism

Mark Carney was able to win the April 2025 election largely by presenting himself as the person who could stand his ground against American president Donald Trump, who wanted to integrate Canada to the United States at the beginning of last year.

Meanwhile, Pierre Poilievre was essentially talking about inflation, housing affordability and security, stakes that had become secondary for a majority of Canadians looking at the threat Donald Trump represented and still represents, although to a lower extent because the latter is entangled in foreign affairs.

Mark Carney's pragmatism sets him apart from ideologues. That's what Canadians wanted to hear a year ago, and it remains true to this day. He has, however, set aside certain priorities, including environmental concerns. Human rights and foreign interference have also received less attention over the past year.

He sounds like an anti-politician, which makes a sharp contrast with the verbal battles of 2024 between Pierre Poilievre and Justin Trudeau. Over the past year, Canadians have witnessed a depolarization of the political debate. Many appear to favour a more measured tone in times of crisis.

Mark Carney remains broadly popular in Canada, a situation likely tied to his calm demeanor and ongoing economic uncertainty.

He has been able to instill a unifying spirit at the House of Commons, a capacity to attain compromise. He reaches out to people who aren't part of his team, which has convinced three Conservative Party Members of Parliament, and one New Democratic Party Member to cross the floor and become Liberals.

Mark Carney unfortunately eased up position on climate change, but politically, it allowed him to in-

crease the Liberal Party support in Alberta, something that was unthinkable 14 months ago. That's why there were defectors in places where the race was close between the two leading parties, where the population was split between them.

Canadians still don't know Mark Carney

A recent Abacus survey suggests Canadians don't know much about Mark Carney. They know that he was a banker at one point. Some political analysts, like Paul Wells, sum up that point ironically by saying that Canada is under the tutelage of an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development official that came from London, England.

This reflects Mark Carney's extensive international resume, built through work with major economic organizations in high-income countries.

In fact, he travels all over the world as if he was still running that kind of economic body. The context is favourable. Canada's economy is so dependent on that of the United States and as a consequence, desperately needs to find new business partners. Protecting the country against Donald Trump, what he has been elected for, will not take place if the prime minister stays in Ottawa, twiddling his thumbs.

Moreover, he doesn't seem very interested in the House of Commons' debates. It is hard to blame him, considering the tone and the low degree of thoroughness that marked the debates of the last few years. This was and remains far from impressive for an intellectual banker. It therefore doesn't come as a surprise to see that his degree of attendance at the House of Commons reached a mere 31% during his first year in office, compared to 44% for Justin Trudeau over his tenure. The latter was also not too keen at times for the House of Commons' debates.

Pierre Poilievre a year too late

Besides Donald Trump's threat, another factor that has helped Mark Carney since March 2025, is the strange strategy of his main rival, Pierre Poilievre. It took him forever to denounce Trump's politics following the latter's second electoral win in November 2024, and also took him forever before adopting his relatively calm tone of late. It was tempting to conclude that Pierre Poilievre was a partisan of Donald Trump, at least of his manners and some of his policies.

The fact that Pierre Poilievre was not able to retain three of his Members of Parliament since December 2025, added to the majority slowly obtained by Mark Carney, now makes him vulnerable within the Con-

servative Party caucus.

In all likelihood, the next federal election will only occur three years down the road. It gives time to potential leadership candidates like Jason Kenny to weigh the support they would get, and for Members of Parliament who no longer support Pierre Poilievre to test his grasp. Until the April 2025 poll, he was feared by his caucus members. This control is slowly eroding. When will it end? That end is currently not in sight.

Returning to Mark Carney, it is clear that, at one point, Canadians will expect results both economically and environmentally. Donald Trump may continue to dominate the landscape with controversial decisions, but he will not remain the same level of threat to Canada indefinitely.

Donald Trump helped Mark Carney the way the pandemic helped Quebec's former premier François Legault, when his reassuring, paternal image resonated with the public.

Once the crisis passed, however, Quebecers discovered that Mr. Legault's overall record was disastrous in many fields, including access to health services, education, housing and daycare.

Mark Carney now faces a similar test. His travels and economic strategies will need to deliver tangible results within the next two years, as political honeymoons rarely last three years. Otherwise, he risks facing a growing share of dissatisfied Canadians.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mrs, Ms, at SPEC, What a wonderful evening celebrating SPEC's 50th Anniversary. Congratulations on such a well-organized event, highlighted with guest speakers who spoke so passionately about their hands-on experiences with the SPEC Newspaper over the years.

It was indeed a landmark evening for us all to take stock and appreciate the perseverance and dedication of the many people who nurtured our grassroots newspaper as it continues to keep us all connected with a 'raison d'être', authentically Gaspesian.

Dear Holly, I was so proud of you and how you directed the whole evening. Great food, live music and nice local touch - a raffle and gift momentos as a finale.

Congratulations to Jillian and Emily, whose heartfelt speech reminded us all of the importance of caring and commitment. May all challenges be overcome with courage, humility and steadfastness. You got it GALS! A toast to you all! - Cheers!

*Normand Desjardins
Bonaventure, Quebec
Ex-officio of SPEC*

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Electoral map: MNA Blanchette Vézina sets condition for protecting Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Conservative Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Rimouski says protecting the Gaspé Peninsula is essential in the ongoing debate over Quebec’s electoral map.

The issue has intensified following the Supreme Court’s April 22 ruling, with the Chief Electoral Officer warning that time is running out ahead of the general election scheduled for October 5.

Late in the day on April 24, Maité Blanchette Vézina effectively laid out the course of action for her 124 colleagues in the National Assembly to ensure a unanimous position for the upcoming election.

“I want to be very clear: the Gaspé Peninsula must be protected. Period. In the current proposal, there is no guarantee. None. And we’re starting to play the electoral card between parties again,



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Maité Blanchette Vézina agrees to protect the Gaspé Peninsula, but on one condition.

when this should be an independent process. That’s not healthy. What I told the minister is simple: if we want a consensus, we need special status for the Gaspé Peninsula. Without that, there will be no agreement,” she warns in a message posted on social

media.

“The solution is well known. It has even already been unanimously supported in the National Assembly. So now, we must move from words to action. Protecting the Gaspé Peninsula is non-negotiable,” she says, referring to maintaining the current electoral map for the next election, as outlined in the law passed in May 2024.

“I consider the position of the Member for Rimouski to be simple, effective and pragmatic for achieving our goal. However, if we want to achieve the goal, we need a broad consensus among all political parties, and the path to consensus involves compromises on the means, not on the end goal. My greatest fear is that the members of the National Assembly will get lost in their debates over the means and abandon the goal of saving the two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula in favour

of partisan squabbles over how to achieve it,” says Daniel Côté, the regional representative on the issue and mayor of Gaspé.

Conservative Party of Quebec Leader Éric Duhaime recently noted that this was a legal rather than a political issue before the Supreme Court refused to hear the government of Quebec’s appeal regarding the law that halted the electoral redistricting scheduled for May 2024.

However, the Quebec Court of Appeal suggested a possible path forward: maintain the current ridings in Gaspésie and Montreal while adding two seats, bringing the total to 127 in the National Assembly.

The Chief Electoral Officer weighs in

Chief Electoral Officer Jean-François Blanchet warns that adding two ridings just

months before the election could “compromise the quality, or even the integrity, of the upcoming vote.”

He noted that the law requires a six-month period before a new electoral map can take effect.

He also warns that he is “unable to confirm whether the conditions necessary for holding the next general election can be met while complying with the legal and operational obligations currently incumbent upon the institution.”

Jean-François Blanchet is asking that his teams be heard by elected officials “in order to explain in greater detail all the issues and risks” and to help identify solutions.

The new electoral map is set to take effect on July 15 unless legislation is passed to delay it or Premier Christine Fréchette calls an election before that date. (*With The Canadian Press*)

Minister of Family Affairs: Catherine Blouin outlines priorities and first days in office

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPE – On April 21, Catherine Blouin was appointed Minister of Family Affairs, becoming the first minister from the Gaspé region to hold the position since Gaétan Lelièvre, the Parti Québécois member for Gaspé, served as Minister for Regional Affairs.

First elected in 2022 as the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure, having served with the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) since 2018 while working in communications at the CISSS de la Gaspésie, she will have three major issues to address quickly before next October’s election.

Ms. Blouin described the rapid sequence of events leading to her appointment.

“It all started on Sunday (April 19). Since I live far from Quebec City, I was strongly advised to move closer to Quebec City. On Monday (April 20), I received a call, and by late afternoon, I was meeting with the premier and attending all the other meetings where I was informed that I was going to be-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Catherine Blouin is settling into her new role as Minister of Family Affairs. Here she is photographed with Premier Christine Fréchette moments after being sworn in.

come Minister of Families. Immediately after the swearing-in, there was a first cabinet meeting, and things just kept coming one after another,” says Ms. Blouin.

She emphasized that her primary role remains serving her constituents.

“It is an honour. I am grateful for this great mark of confidence from the premier. I was touched by the welcome I received during my swearing-in from my elected colleagues and the political staff,” she adds.

During the swearing-in

ceremony at the National Assembly, she received a warm reception from those in attendance.

In her address following the cabinet swearing-in, Premier Christine Fréchette gave Ms. Blouin a clear mandate: convert 5,000 non-subsidized daycare spaces into subsidized ones.

“It came fairly early in her speech. I got the message. We have a lot of work ahead of us,” she says, expressing confidence in the current political leadership.

However, she acknowl-

edges that converting spaces does not create new ones.

“We’ll analyze that. We’ll hold briefing sessions, but certainly, we want new spots for families. We’ll have to find solutions,” says the new Minister of Families.

Multiple priorities

During her first interview as minister, the Supreme Court’s decision rejecting the Quebec government’s appeal on the electoral map was handed down. (see separate article)

“We’ve just found out we lost. This isn’t good news. I’ll get back to you with a plan as soon as possible,” she says immediately.

The electoral map and the rail system will be among her immediate priorities.

“You’ve just named my two priority issues. I’m just getting started. At the same time, I’m working on the electoral map, and right after that, it will be the train,” she says.

The Quebec government placed Section 3 of the rail line between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé back under review in March 2025

after bids exceeded estimates from the Ministry of Transport.

The financial situation of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transportation Authority is also on her agenda.

“We have a new Minister of Transportation, and as soon as possible, I’ll meet with him to discuss this,” she says.

Ethics considerations

As she assumes a senior role in government, Ms. Blouin said she will review her situation as the spouse of Mathieu Lapointe, who is also prefect of the Avignon MRC and president of the Table des préfets de la Gaspésie.

She previously sought guidance from the Ethics Commissioner following her election in 2022, with matters involving her spouse handled by another MNA.

“I will discuss the matter with my cabinet. We will analyze everything to determine whether I need a new legal opinion. For now, things are fine as they are,” says Ms. Blouin.

Electoral map: Supreme Court dismisses Quebec's appeal

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Supreme Court of Canada dismissed Quebec's appeal on April 22, upholding a previous ruling on the province's electoral map and the protection of two Gaspé Peninsula ridings.

The Attorney General of Quebec had filed the appeal last December in an effort to overturn a decision by the Quebec Court of Appeal related to legislation adopted in May 2024 to preserve the two ridings.

The hearing lasted about four hours and included representations from regions such as the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec, the Table des préfets de la Gaspésie, as well as the attorneys general of Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and several civil rights groups.

The court delivered its decision from the bench shortly after the hearing, with Justices Suzanne Côté and Malcolm Rowe dissenting. Written reasons are expected at a later date.

During the hearing, the judges notably questioned the relevance of Bill 59, which ended the electoral map review in 2024 in order to protect the two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula.

They also raised the possibility of granting the region a special status, similar to that of the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and highlighted inconsistencies between protecting ridings in Montreal and those in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The Attorney General of Quebec had stated that the law represents a moratorium for a single election to allow for effective representation for the Gaspé Peninsula, while acknowledging the impacts on the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec. However, the impact for this single election would be moderate compared to that in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The Chief Electoral Officer noted that since 2014, 350,000 voters have been added in Quebec, including 115,000 in the Laurentians, noting that the Federal Commission also proposed removing one constituency in the East and adding one in the Laurentians.

The Chief Electoral Officer stated that the aim of allowing time for reflection is not genuine and that there has been no serious timetable to that effect.

As for preserving the political weight of regions in de-

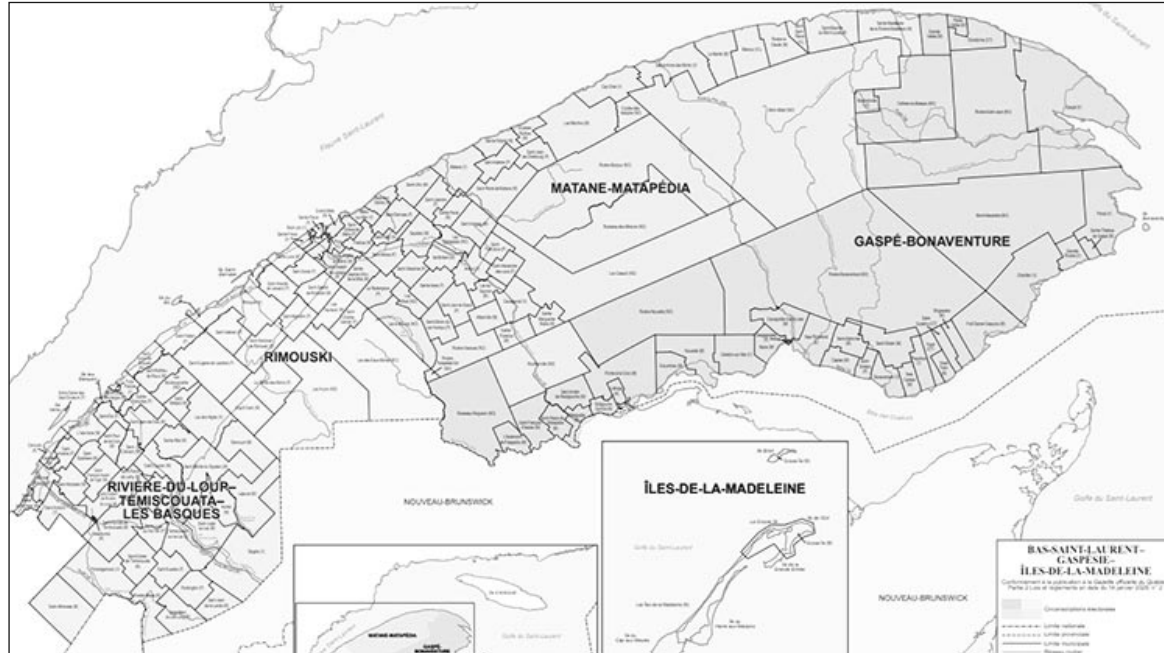


Photo: Electoral Representation Commission

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

cline, the Chief Electoral Officer directly contrasts this with the right to effective representation.

The Attorney for the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec considers that the Election Act takes precedence over the will of elected representatives, a view questioned by a judge, whilst one of his colleagues asked whether the decision should be made within the constraints imposed by the law. The politician did not consider the infringements on voters' rights, according to the lawyer, who notes that the legislature has not given the matter proper thought.

The Table des préfets de la Gaspésie points out that the Charter protects the right to effective representation, but does not guarantee demographic equality. Effective representation must take into account geographical characteristics, history, the interests of communities and the representation of minority groups.

During the hearing, one judge suggested the court appeared divided on the issue — a division reflected in the decision delivered a few hours later.

Region reacts

As a stakeholder in the case, the Table des MRC de la Gaspésie is naturally disappointed by the turn of events.

"We must take note of this and turn to the legislative route, then work with the National Assembly to have our status recognized and ensure that two ridings are maintained in the Gaspé Peninsula," says the president, Mathieu Lapointe.

With the parliamentary ses-

sion set to end June 12, he stresses the urgency.

"We must act now. That is why we are emphasizing today the importance of Quebec taking note and acting swiftly," continues the president.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, says the decision presents both challenges and opportunities.

"There is disappointment, but it's also a double-edged sword, as the Chief Electoral Officer was effectively calling for the suspension of virtually all the powers of the National Assembly. That risk will not materialize," notes the man, who is also a lawyer by profession.

Since the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal, the Court of Appeal's decision stands — a development the mayor of Gaspé sees as an opportunity.

"The Court of Appeal's ruling even proposed an alternative measure to the National Assembly to protect the Gaspé ridings. I assume that Quebec will move to 127 ridings and the Gaspé region will be spared," suggests Mr. Côté.

"We have long been asking the government to introduce legislation to that effect," adds Mr. Côté.

The proposal was echoed by the Premier in a statement posted on X following the decision.

"We take note of the decision handed down by the Supreme Court and will analyze the judgement. For me, it is absolutely essential that all regions of Quebec are well represented in the National Assembly. That is why Jean-François Roberge will table a bill, in conjunction with the opposition parties, to ensure

fair representation for Quebecers and to protect the constituencies of Anjou-Louis-Riel and Bonaventure," writes the Premier, Christine Fréchette.

"All the parties seemed to agree with the principle. But since then, the Conservative Party has taken its seat in the National Assembly. Maité Blanchette Vézina supported us. I would find it hard to believe that she would change her tune just because she has changed parties," notes Mr. Côté.

The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, says the decision was disappointing.

"It's a decision we're not happy with. It's a step along the way in our campaign," notes Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

He warned that the new map, set to take effect July 15 if unchanged, would reduce the region's political weight by merging Gaspé and Bonaventure and transferring Haute-Gaspésie to Matane-Matapédia.

A consensus will now be sought in the National Assembly to maintain two ridings in the region, with the parliamentary session ending June 12.

"We have time. We have the will, and we've done the groundwork over the last few years. With this rejection, we're not throwing in the towel," he says.

The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure and Minister for Family Affairs, Catherine Blouin, says the Supreme Court's decision is not good news for the Gaspé Peninsula.

"This is not good news, and we have said that we will not

let our regions down," she says, noting the issue has been a priority since she took the oath on April 21.

Background

On December 2, the Electoral Representation Commission tabled a map confirming the elimination of a riding in the Gaspé Peninsula, merging Bonaventure and Gaspé and transferring Haute-Gaspésie to Matane-Matapédia.

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

Since then, the region has mobilized to oppose the change and call for public hearings to ensure its position was heard.

Despite this, the commission maintained its position.

In May 2024, Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) unanimously passed legislation maintaining the existing electoral map for the upcoming election.

That law was later challenged by MNAs from the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec, along with several organizations. While the Superior Court upheld the legislation, the Court of Appeal overturned the decision, allowing the revised map to proceed.

The new map was formalized by decree on January 14 following publication in the Official Gazette.

Just before the Christmas holiday break, the Quebec government sought permission from the Supreme Court to appeal the Court of Appeal's decision.

Another priority for Catherine Blouin

Meanwhile, Ms. Blouin also identified another key issue: the refurbishment of the rail line to Gaspé.

"I'm going to take the time to get properly briefed on my portfolios. I have no choice: Right now, it's the electoral map, and next will be the train," she says.

She is also expected to meet with the Transport Minister to address funding issues affecting the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transportation Authority (RÉGIM).

Regarding the apparent conflict of interest with her partner, Mathieu Lapointe, Ms. Blouin will discuss the matter and the necessary measures with her cabinet.

Catherine Blouin joins cabinet

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin, has been appointed Minister for Family Affairs, marking the return of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region to cabinet after 14 years.

“I, Catherine Blouin, declare on oath that I will fulfil the duties of my office as a member of the Executive Council with honesty and justice, and that I will not disclose, without due authorization, anything that comes to my knowledge in the course of my duties. I, Catherine Blouin, declare on oath that I will perform the duties of my office as Minister for Family Affairs with honesty and justice,” the MNA swore, officially becoming a minister moments later by signing the register to that effect before the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, Manon Jeannotte.

In her speech following the swearing-in of her Cabinet, Premier Christine Fréchette stated that she was entrusting her Minister for Family Affairs with the mandate to convert 5,000 unsubsidized childcare places into subsidized places.

The new minister attended her first Cabinet meeting late on April 21 and was unavailable for an interview.

“It is with great humility that I accept the mandate entrusted to me. It is an honour to be Minister for Families. I would like to sincerely thank the Premier for her trust. Starting today, I will be familiarizing myself with my new portfolios alongside my new team, and we will continue the work for families here and across Quebec,” Ms. Blouin says in a written statement.

The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, welcomed the appointment, saying it ensures the region is represented at the cabinet table. “She will represent our interests and also defend the region’s specific concerns regarding an aging population, mobility, regional education and health care – issues our government is well aware of,” the MNA says.

Mr. Sainte-Croix acknowledges that he would have welcomed a cabinet role himself. “Of course. We’re always interested in ministerial roles. But first and foremost, we’re simply MNAs, and it’s a privilege to represent our con-

stituents. We’ll carry on!” he says.

Positive reaction from the region

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, says the appointment is good news, restoring a voice for the Gaspé Peninsula in cabinet.

He notes that Ms. Blouin will be able to represent regional interests and pay particular attention to the shortage of childcare spaces.

Mr. Côté also points to the creation of a Council of Regions as a potentially positive development.

“I find the structure interesting, though I hope it won’t be an extra layer that everyone will have to go through to reach the Cabinet. I hope it will be a council that provides the necessary support for the Minister for the Regions to make effective representations to the Cabinet, and if we give the Council of Regions and the Minister for the Regions sufficient authority, it could yield good results,” believes Daniel Côté.

The mayor of New Richmond and prefect of the Bonaventure MRC, Éric Dubé, also described the appointment as excellent news. Having more direct access to the decision-makers’ table is a plus.

“To get our issues straight to the Cabinet or sometimes to the Premier. Having a representative from the local community who understands the issues is our best asset for championing the region’s causes,” believes Éric Dubé.

Mr. Dubé adds that he is not concerned about the relationship between the new minister and Mathieu Lapointe, prefect of Avignon and mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer. Mr. Dubé noted that issues affecting Avignon were previously handled by the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for René-Lévesque, on the North Shore. “Of course there will be a watchdog, but for me, that won’t change the way I work,” says the mayor and prefect.

The region has not had a minister since 2014, when the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé, Gaétan Lelièvre, served as Minister for the Regions under Pauline Marois from 2012 to 2014.

He was also the last person to hold the title of Minister for the Regions.

Nergica to move into new building on May 8

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Nergica is expected to move into its new building on May 8, following a six-month delay to complete the interior of the complex at the Gaspé campus of the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles.

According to the CEGEP, the delay was caused by longer-than-expected structural planning and a delay in the delivery of windows. Exterior work will be completed over the summer.

Despite the delay, the CEGEP says the \$11.9 million budget remains on track. The new building is an extension of the existing polytechnic wing.

It will be one of the first energy-positive buildings in Quebec, meaning it will generate more electricity annually than it consumes, thanks to solar panels and design choices aimed at maximizing efficiency.

The project is expected to strengthen Nergica’s role in Quebec’s energy transition.

The building will include research facilities, workshops, collaborative spaces and new offices. The Government of Quebec has contributed \$10.7 million, while Nergica is investing \$1.2 million in the project. The construction contract was awarded to LFG Construction of Carleton-sur-Mer, which submitted a bid of \$9.7 million following a second call for tenders.

In April 2024, the CEGEP rejected bids received during the first call for tenders after they exceeded the project’s \$12 million budget.

At that time, the project was scaled back to bring it within budget.

CANADA
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC
District: Gaspé
Locality: Percé
File: 110-14-000023-265

SUPERIOR COURT
(Civil division)

Gilles TURGEON, residing and domiciled at 190 route 132, Chandler, district of Gaspé (Quebec) G0C 2A0;

Applicant
vs.

The estate, the legatees and the heirs collectively designated of **Pauline W. TUTTLE**,

Person concerned

-and-

Clermont CHABOT, residing and domiciled at 2400, route Carrier, Scott, (Quebec) G0S 3G0;

-and-

CONSTRUCTION D.J.L. INC., legal person of private interest constituted in accordance with the Company Act part 1A (CQLR, C.C-38), having an establishment at 100, street Armand Lelièvre, New Richmond, (Quebec) G0C 2B0;

-and-

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF QUEBEC, Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts, legal department of the Ministère de la Justice, 1200, route de l’Église, 8th floor, Québec (Quebec) G1V 4M1;

Interested persons

NOTIFICATION BY PUBLIC NOTICE

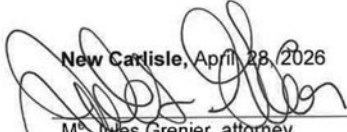
NOTICE: Notification by public notice concerning an originating application for declaration of ownership by acquisitive prescription.

Notice is hereby given to THE ESTATE OF, THE LEGATEES BY PARTICULAR AND THE HEIRS COLLECTIVELY DESIGNATED OF PAULINE W. TUTTLE, to take delivery at the office of the Superior Court in the district of Gaspé, 124, Route 132, Percé (Québec) G0C 2L0 within 30 days in order to receive the originating application left there in your name.

You must answer the application within the time specified in the summons attached to it, failing which a default judgment may be rendered against you and you may have to pay the legal costs.

Information for publication

This notice is published under an order rendered on April 27, 2026 by Me Laurent Koné, Special Clerk of the Superior Court in case #110-14-000023-265.

New Carlisle, April 28, 2026

M^r Jules Grenier, attorney
GRENIER, GRENIER & GRENIER, AVOCATS
Attorney for the applicant
Lawyer code : AU0491
Notification : grenier1@globetrotter.net

CISSS ready with emergency plan for unsafe drinking water

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The CISSS de la Gaspésie has a structured Emergency Action Plan in place to ensure services continue safely when drinking water becomes unsafe at one of its facilities.

The protocol was highlighted following a major water main break on April 13 that disrupted supply across downtown Gaspé. A precautionary boil water advisory was issued shortly after and remained in effect until April 17.

Such advisories can have significant implications for hospitals and healthcare centres.

“When a precautionary advisory against drinking tap water is issued, the CISSS de la Gaspésie activates a structured emergency response plan to ensure the safe continuity of services,” the healthcare network states in an



Photo: N. Sergerie

The CISSS de la Gaspésie has an emergency protocol in place for when the water at one of its facilities becomes undrinkable.

email when asked about the procedure to follow when such an advisory is issued by a municipality.

The plan includes a series

of coordinated measures designed to reduce risk and maintain safe conditions for patients, staff and visitors.

Information is quickly shared with staff through official notices, while “Do Not Use” signs are posted at all water access points, including fountains and ice machines, to prevent improper use. Drinking water reserves are also deployed and distributed strategically throughout facilities.

A detailed checklist is activated to ensure that all critical steps are followed.

Implementation of the plan is overseen by the civil protection and emergency response coordinator, supported by local emergency liaisons, security personnel, administrative staff, and clinical and technical teams.

“Constant monitoring is maintained with municipal authorities and relevant partners,” states the CISSS.

Bonaventure reviews progress on cultural policy

NELSON SERGERIE

BONAVENTURE – The Town of Bonaventure is assessing the implementation of its Cultural Policy, which was launched in the fall of 2024, and several initiatives have been undertaken in that sense.

The progress made was presented on March 26 during a community meeting attended by about 50 people and members of the cultural community.

This 2024 policy marks the first update in 15 years.

“The cultural policy is moving along well. Many needs have been expressed, and over the past two years, it must be acknowledged that many activities are currently taking place,” says David Roy, Director of the Recreation, Tourism, Culture and Community Life Department.

Among the initiatives highlighted were the launch of musical happy hours at the Bonaventure rest stop in the summer of 2025, featuring local artists; support for the Bonaventure Book Fair; and Bruno Mainville’s “Parlures” project, a poetry initiative displayed on sidewalk curbs using expressions typical of Bonaventure.



Photo: Town of Bonaventure

About 50 people discussed the cultural policy and its implementation in Bonaventure.

Other projects include the intergenerational Danse Trad initiative, which brought children and seniors together through traditional dance, as well as collaborations with Le Théâtre de la Petite Marée in the performing arts and La Ruche d’Art in the visual arts.

“What remains to be done is to continue developing activities and events for residents. That was a key takeaway from the consultation. People missed having a very dynamic cultural life in Bonaventure. People had key points of reference. How we can organize activities while

maintaining a connection with residents and keeping our town vibrant—that’s what we’re committed to doing,” says Mr. Roy.

Mr. Roy notes the policy will not go another 15 years without revision.

“No... The cultural landscape is changing. Culture is evolving with the advent of digital technology and various ways of consuming it. Are there ways to go virtual now? Are there other types of art that didn’t exist before and are now being highlighted? We won’t wait 15 years—that’s for sure,” says the director.

A fourth cohort of international nurses to begin training next fall

Nelson Sergerie

SAINTE-ANNE-DES-MONTS – A fourth cohort of international nurses will begin training at the CISSS de la Gaspésie this fall, following the arrival of three cohorts since November 2022.

A total of 99 individuals joined the CISSS through the first three cohorts, with 80 still working within the network.

This fourth cohort will have a unique component. “These are people who already work for the CISSS of the Gaspésie as patient care assistants, but who, in their home countries, were nurses. They will receive training to become officially licensed nurses in Quebec. They are already settled in the region,” says CISSS of the Gaspésie spokesperson, Cassandra Lévesque.

These 20 prospective candidates would provide some much-needed relief to the healthcare system. “It would certainly relieve the teams. It would be a big help,” adds the spokesperson.

More broadly, approximately 200 immigrants are currently employed across various departments within the CISSS de la Gaspésie.

Despite these efforts, the regional health network is still short about 100 nurses.

Clinic for specialized nurse practitioners to open in the Gaspésie

Nelson Sergerie

NEW RICHMOND – The CISSS de la Gaspésie will open its first clinic for specialized nurse practitioners later this year, in New Richmond, as part of the Quebec government’s effort to improve access to primary care.

“This will help the system. We agree that there is a large proportion of patients without a family doctor in the Baie-des-Chaleurs. In our view, this will help the system,” says Francis Cayouette, head of the CISSS’s specialized nurse practitioner department.

The opportunity to establish the clinic in New Richmond followed a call for tenders.

“There are still many details to work out. But the clinic is under construction. However, it’s difficult to set a date,” notes Francis Cayouette.

The clinic will require four specialized nurse practitioners to operate.

“We’re facing recruitment challenges. We have positions posted, and are making efforts to recruit specialized nurse practitioners for the front lines who will be called upon to work in this clinic. Given the allocated funding, we’d like to have four,” says Mr. Cayouette.

The CISSS does not plan to open additional standalone clinics but may develop satellite services linked to the New Richmond site.

“Gaspé is very well-served if we look at the data from the family medicine access portal. The figure is close to zero. On the other hand, Rocher-Percé and Haute-Gaspésie are areas where it would be worthwhile to expand, as the number of doctors may not currently be sufficient to meet the population’s needs,” explains Mr. Cayouette.

Specialized nurse practitioners, known as IPSs, can practise independently. They are authorized to order diagnostic tests, make diagnoses and determine treatment plans.

“Like a family doctor, when they reach the limits of their scope, they can refer patients, but they are able to manage most cases independently,” adds Mr. Cayouette.

IPSs are trained in five areas: primary care, mental health, adult care, pediatric care and neonatology.

“The training pathway involves a clinical bachelor’s degree in nursing, requiring a minimum of two years of practice in the chosen specialty. Afterward, she must apply to a university that offers a master’s degree and a graduate diploma. This program lasts two and a half years, after which she receives her diploma and must pass the exam administered by the College of Nurses to be eligible to practice,” says Mr. Cayouette.

Day camp shortage: Gaspé still searching for solutions

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Following the backlash over a shortage of day camp spaces on April 7, Gaspé council is still working to find solutions.

Camp Été Jeunesse Gaspé saw its 120 available spots filled in about two minutes, leaving many parents unable to register their children.

The Musée de la Gaspésie camp is also full, leaving dozens of families without options.

The town has launched a consultation to better assess demand.

“The preliminary analysis is underway. We have already asked our partners to look for solutions to find more places and hire additional camp leaders. It’s a work in progress between the town and our partners,” comments the mayor, Daniel Côté.

With summer approaching,



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The mayor, Daniel Côté.

concerns are growing among parents.

“I fully understand why parents are starting to worry or have to rearrange their summer schedules. It’s not easy when you’re relying on a day camp. That said, there simply aren’t enough places,” Mr. Côté points out.

Staff shortages remain a

key challenge in expanding capacity, and some camps have yet to open registrations.

No concrete plans yet for 500th anniversary

While Saint-Malo – the point from which Jacques Cartier set out on the great Atlantic crossing that took him to Gaspé – is already working on the celebrations for the 500th anniversary of his voyage, Gaspé has made no progress on plans for celebrations on this side of the Atlantic.

Saint-Malo is building a replica of one of Jacques Cartier’s ships used on that voyage, which would make a stop in Gaspé.

“We still intend to set up a working committee. Honestly, we have so much work on the drawing board that we haven’t even had time to sit down and discuss it,” says the mayor.

Several organizations have

expressed interest, but nothing has been formalized.

“It would be inaccurate to say a committee is already in place. We’re not there yet. But we really need to make significant progress by the end of the year,” he says.

The mayor would like to see a cultural, historical and perhaps sporting event, including the Quebec Games, to mark the anniversary of Cartier’s arrival in Gaspé on July 17, 1534.

As there are just over eight years to go before the celebrations, the mayor does not know if he will still be in office, but he fully intends to participate in one way or another in the preparations for this major event.

Arena project under review

On February 23, the Quebec government launched a second call for projects under

the Financial Assistance Programme for Recreational, Sports and Outdoor Infrastructure (PAFIRSPA), with \$300 million available provincewide.

“We’re not quite ready to submit yet. We’re reviewing certain plans—final revisions. We should be making an announcement soon,” says the mayor.

In the first round, Gaspé’s arena project ranked 19th among submissions, though projects ranked much lower were selected.

In 2024, the project was estimated at \$28 million, but costs are now being revised to reflect increases since its rejection in July 2024.

The program can cover up to 66% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$20 million.

The current arena also experienced ice quality issues twice this winter, including during the Innergex Cup tournament in March.

Paspébiac buys 288 bags of asphalt to tackle potholes

NELSON SERGERIE

PASPÉBIAC – Dealing with a surge in potholes following the spring thaw, the Town of Paspébiac is taking short-term action by purchasing 288 bags of cold asphalt to patch damaged roads.

The \$3,000 purchase is being made through the Bonaventure Regional County Municipality, which provides materials at a bulk rate. The temporary fix is intended to address immediate safety concerns while the municipality prepares for more extensive repairs using hot asphalt later this summer.

“Paspébiac is suffering from the thaw, but also from a deficit in road maintenance. We have several roads, particularly on the avenues, that need to be completely redone. This isn’t something we can do in the short term because it’s very expensive. It’s a temporary solution to fill the potholes,” explains Mayor Jérémy Laplante.

“When the warm weather arrives, we’ll purchase hot asphalt to make more extensive repairs,” notes the mayor.

While many municipalities face similar challenges, the scale of the problem in Paspébiac is significant.

“We have roadways that are in such a state that repairs



Photo: CAA-Québec

Potholes are a major problem for the municipality of Paspébiac.

are no longer possible. The only solution left is to repave the road. Given the amount of work needed, we have to prioritize,” admits the mayor.

Planned work for this summer includes a section of Route Day, from the railway crossing to Route 132. Looking ahead to next year, 4th Avenue West and the road leading to the municipal campground are also scheduled for repairs.

“After that, there will be more detailed planning to develop a strategy through the end of the term,” Mr. Laplante says.

The municipality does not currently have a comprehensive assessment of its 42 kilo-

metres of roadway. Based on recent experience, the mayor estimates it costs roughly \$1 million per kilometre to fully repave a street. With property taxes as its primary source of revenue, bringing all roads up to standard could cost as much as \$20 million.

“That is why municipalities are asking the Quebec government to reinvest funds in road and infrastructure repairs. In the 1990s, when local road maintenance was transferred, they forgot to transfer the funds needed to maintain the roads,” he adds.

Public Works coordinator to be hired

To strengthen operations, the Town plans to hire a Public Works coordinator. Currently, the department is overseen by a foreman at the municipal garage, under the supervision of senior management.

“We don’t have a manager for Public Works. This is something we’ve been lacking for several years. We’ve allocated the necessary budget to proceed with this strategic hire,” says Mr. Laplante.

The new coordinator will support day-to-day operations and take on responsibilities such as preparing grant applications and overseeing departmental management.

New Richmond signs agreement with CSN workers

Nelson Sergerie

NEW RICHMOND – A new collective agreement has been signed between CSN-unionized employees and the Town of New Richmond.

The agreement, which runs from 2026 to 2030, includes several gains for workers, according to Pierre-Luc Boulay, president of the CSN Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine Central Council.

“We’re talking about a total increase of 18.75% from 2026 to 2030. Evening and night shift premiums have been increased. We’re also talking about a sixth week of vacation after 18 years of service; a seventh after 35 years of service. Pay steps have been removed upon hiring. It’s an excellent collective agreement,” says Mr. Boulay.

Mr. Boulay noted that the previous agreement included a 7% wage adjustment, which he described as uncommon.

The CSN also reports that labour relations between the parties are cordial.

For its part, the Town of New Richmond says the new agreement reflects a shared commitment to maintaining favourable working conditions and a healthy, respectful workplace.

Murdochville’s Copper Interpretation Centre set to reopen

Nelson Sergerie

MURDOCHVILLE – A collaboration between the Town of Murdochville and Osisko Metals is set to revive operations at the Copper Interpretation Centre, which has been closed since 2017 following a tragic incident that claimed two lives.

The announcement was made on April 14 during a presentation outlining Osisko’s progress toward a potential restart of Mines Gaspé. “This is another project for this year. It’s going to be good. We have the Town’s support and we’re moving forward,” says Osisko chief executive officer (CEO) Robert Wares.

The Town will remain the owner of the complex, which will be leased to Osisko. “Osisko will improve the existing exhibition space and add another room to accommodate recent advances in exploration and office development. This will allow the centre to operate 12 months a year,” says Mayor Stéphane Gamache.

The Town of Murdochville obtained a court order to take possession of the centre after filing legal action in January 2022 to seize the facility due to unpaid municipal taxes. A judgment in favour of the municipality was rendered in June 2023 and amended in September of the same year. The building had previously been rebuilt in 2013 after a fire.

Odour complaints not directly linked to Pit Caribou, ministry says

NELSON SERGERIE

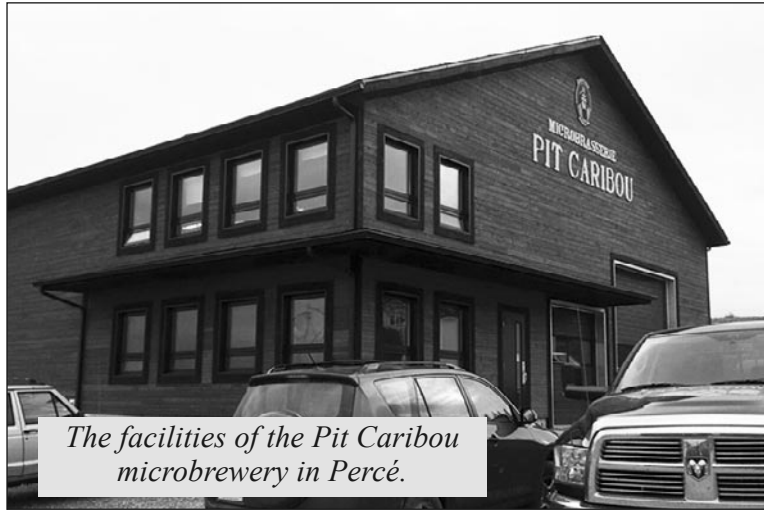
PERCÉ – The Quebec Ministry of the Environment says it has not been able to establish a direct link between odours reported in the L’Anse-à-Beaufils sector last summer and the Pit Caribou microbrewery.

During the 2025 summer season, several residents filed complaints with the ministry, alleging that odours and environmental discharges in the area were coming from the brewery.

“To date, the ministry has been unable to establish a direct link between the odours reported by residents and the microbrewery’s wastewater discharges,” the ministry writes in an email.

Some observers suggested the odours may instead have been caused by decomposing algae along the shoreline, particularly following the dry weather experienced in the Gaspé Peninsula last summer.

As for runoff observed in the area, it was also suggested that septic systems or cesspools from nearby properties could have been responsible.



The facilities of the Pit Caribou microbrewery in Percé.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The ministry did not comment on the possible origin of the odours reported by residents.

Facilities still not in compliance

Despite investments made in 2024 to bring the brewery’s installations up to environmental standards, the Quebec Ministry of the Environment issued a notice of non-compliance citing violations of the Environment Quality Act.

According to the ministry, several components of the process wastewater treatment system had not been installed

and treated wastewater was discharged into the environment.

The notice followed an inspection of the modified facilities in 2024, after earlier notices of non-compliance issued August 8, 2023, and February 21, 2024, for violations of the Environment Quality Act and the Regulation respecting activities in wetlands, water bodies and sensitive areas.

The ministry says it is now assessing the next steps required to ensure the company returns to compliance.

According to the department, the business must complete the modifications to its

wastewater treatment system as required under the ministerial authorization issued December 4, 2018, and amended July 11, 2024.

Previous penalty imposed

In October 2023, Pit Caribou received an administrative monetary penalty of \$5,000 for a violation of the Environment Quality Act.

The Ministry of the Environment alleged the company had installed an overflow pipe on its process-water retention tank, which had the actual or potential effect of releasing a contaminant into the environment — namely untreated process wastewater — that was not covered by the original authorization.

The Ministry’s intervention followed two complaints. The first was filed on June 12, 2023, by the Town of Percé after re-

ceiving complaints from its residents “since the microbrewery appeared to have a wastewater management issue,” the Ministry states in an email.

Following the complaint, the company contacted the ministry’s analysis and expertise division and environmental control division, which conducted several inspections.

Two weeks later, another complaint was filed regarding “an accumulation of suspicious and foul-smelling substances on the riverbank near the facility, and alleging that the company had carried out repairs to a rockfill without authorization.”

In the recovery plan filed last year to avoid bankruptcy, it was noted that the company needed to secure about \$1.5 million to bring the L’Anse-à-Beaufils facilities into compliance.

Creditors later accepted a proposal valued at \$250,000.

Pit Caribou will handle sales of La Voie Maltée products

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – The sales team from the Saguenay-based La Voie Maltée microbrewery will join the Pit Caribou team in Percé starting May 1.

According to the Gaspé-based microbrewery, the strategic alliance strengthens a group that already includes Micro du Lac and La Barberie, all represented by Pit Caribou.

“It’s been several months of work with La Voie Maltée to merge our sales teams. What’s great about this is that our teams complement each other. No one is left out. It will even allow us to create two new positions,” says Pit Caribou co-president Jean-François Nellis.

“We want to have more leverage in negotiations. We’re becoming the third-largest consortium of microbreweries in Quebec. There are only two other microbrewery consortia, and then the big brewers. At the negotiating table, we’re no longer the ninth or tenth player. We’re now third, and we’re becoming a one-stop shop for four breweries. We’re



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Pit Caribou will be responsible for selling products from La Voie Maltée in Saguenay.

making things easier for our customers,” says Mr. Nellis.

A natural alliance

The agreement builds on a partnership between the two breweries that began three years ago.

“They produce our non-alcoholic beer. At Pit Caribou, we’ve reached our production capacity. At La Voie Maltée, they needed to produce beer. Now, representation is being

added to the mix. It makes for a natural partnership. Our goal is to gain bargaining power with major retailers,” says Mr. Nellis.

“The collaboration of our two sales forces will allow us to offer optimal service to our customers,” says La Voie Maltée co-owner, Carl Fleury.

The merger will officially take effect on May 1, although the teams are already working together in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region.

New agreement at the Crustacés de Gaspé plant

Nelson Sergerie

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE – Unionized employees at the Crustacés de Gaspé processing plant in Grande-Rivière have accepted the newly negotiated agreement, which includes a 12% wage increase over three years in addition to improvements to several standard provisions.

The 73 members affiliated with the Unifor union voted 88% in favour in a consultation held on January 23. The three-year agreement provides a 5% increase in the first year, 4% in the second, and 3% in the third. Several improvements to working conditions were also included. These include an unlimited time bank, the addition of two authorized days off per year, evening premiums increasing by \$1.25 in 2026 and \$1.50 in the last two years of the agreement, an attendance bonus rising from \$0.50 to \$0.80, and major improvements in guaranteed hours and work weeks. “The increased guarantees of hours and work weeks obtained in this collective agreement represent an important step in promoting the retention and maintenance of this essential workforce,” says Luc Daigle, national representative for Unifor.

This new agreement was concluded without any controversy, which is in stark contrast to the situation when the union was certified in the spring of 2018.

Unipêche MDM, the plant’s owner, announced the closure of the plant on March 18, 2019, which sparked a major protest movement in Grande-Rivière. Workers even marched to Paspébiac to demonstrate at another plant owned by the group.

An agreement was finally reached and presented to the workers on August 28, 2019, allowing the plant to reopen in 2020. This first agreement granted employees an hourly rate of more than \$15 per hour starting in January 2021, the union said, in addition to various bonuses for evening and night work.

The second agreement, reached in the fall of 2022, was concluded without any fanfare on the part of the workers. At that time, the union indicated that at the end of the agreement that has just been renewed, the salary of an experienced worker would reach nearly \$22 per hour with bonuses, while ensuring that they would avoid the black hole, the period between the end of unemployment insurance benefits and the resumption of work at the processing plant in the spring.

Report highlights link between poverty, housing and violence against women

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Marking the 14th Tenants' Day, the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Feminist Roundtable released its analysis on April 24 titled "Poverty, Violence, Housing: A Mechanism That Reproduces and Reinforces Gender Inequalities."

The report paints a stark picture, showing that violence against women is closely tied to the material conditions in which they live.

"What we've seen a lot in recent years, with rent prices skyrocketing and vacancy rates being very low, is that it's difficult for women to find housing, and they face additional challenges related to poverty. They experience



Photo: Feminist Roundtable website

Catherine Beaulieu.

more domestic violence, and these issues intersect and amplify one another. It becomes

a difficult situation for many women to cope with," notes the network's development officer, Catherine Beaulieu.

The analysis is the result of several collective reflection processes and observations from various feminist groups in the region, and is based on the Feminist Argument on the Right to Housing, created by the Quebec Network of Regional Women's Groups, in which the regional group participated.

"We know that domestic violence impoverishes the women who are its victims. It can interfere with employment income; it can lead to delays and forced absences. There is also a cost to leaving one's home or residence, and this can stem, for example,

from economic violence by the abusive partner. It deprives women of their autonomy and adds an obstacle for women who wish to leave a dangerous home: the housing crisis. Women will hesitate to leave a dangerous environment," notes Ms. Beaulieu.

According to the data collected, 17.9% of women in the Gaspé and Magdalen Islands regions live in poverty, and among this percentage, single mothers and older women are overrepresented.

At the same time, rent prices in Gaspé have increased by 59% over the past five years, while the housing vacancy rate remains below a balanced market level.

While the Quebec government has introduced

measures to support women in precarious situations, the roundtable says more action is needed.

"Adequately fund community organizations working on issues of violence against women, poverty, and housing. We can take steps to improve women's incomes: raise the minimum wage, increase funding for various income security programs. These are measures that will make women safer and allow them to live with greater dignity," affirms Ms. Beaulieu.

But it will take more political will to achieve this.

The report includes several recommendations, and candidates in the upcoming October election are expected to take positions on the proposed measures.

Domestic violence book will be written in the Gaspé Peninsula

Nelson Sergerie

MARIA - The Alliance gaspésienne des maisons d'aide et d'hébergement (Gaspé Peninsula Alliance of Women's Shelters) has received \$209,346 from the Quebec government to produce an educational book aimed at improving the prevention of domestic violence.

The funding, spread over three years, will support efforts to combat domestic violence on several fronts. "This project aims to write a book, of an educational work, to compile all the information and lay the necessary groundwork to better detect, intervene, raise awareness, and prevent domestic violence and post-separation domestic violence. It will be a reference for all those working in the field and perhaps even for educational institutions training the next generation," explains Nancy Gough, advisor and project manager for the alliance.

The last book of its kind was published in 1987 by Ginette Larouche. In the past 40 years, the reality of domestic violence has changed significantly. "Forty years ago, we didn't have all the structural measures in place. The specialized court, the network of shelters and support services that has been improved, the arrival of second-stage shelters and support services, the Rebuild helpline, better support for victims in the legal process, etc.," notes Nancy Gough, who worked for 35 years at Maison l'Émergence in Baie-des-Chaleurs.

Despite the progress, much work remains to be done to combat domestic violence. "This is confirmed by the rise in femicides. We want to highlight possible solutions in the book. We want to emphasize the importance of better funding for the network of shelters, which are at the forefront of preventing femicides and providing better support to women who experience domestic violence and their children, and continuing prevention efforts," says the advocate.

In her view, the issue concerns the entire population. Sooner or later, someone close to us, or even someone we do not know, may be affected by domestic violence. Despite years of awareness campaigns, this type of violence persists in Quebec. "We need to think about new solutions. Are there any more? Thirty years ago, there were 25 femicides annually. We had reduced that number to 10. Since the health crisis, an average of 15 women have been murdered each year," notes Ms. Gough.

Despite media coverage of these cases, she believes the public still does not see the full picture. "We must continue to talk about it and ensure that this issue concerns us all. With the rise of masculinism and the younger generation, for example, who want a return to traditional values of women staying at home and taking care of the children, everything is being called into question, hence the importance of continuing upstream efforts to raise awareness and prevent domestic violence," says Ms. Gough, who retired in 2024. The book is expected to be published around 2029.

POVERTY - VIOLENCE - HOUSING
Situations that reinforce gender inequality

LIVING IN POVERTY

This is yet another **obstacle** for a woman who wants to **leave a violent home**. She needs the means to pay for housing, food, clothing, and transportation.

LIVING WITH VIOLENCE

This can affect the victim's ability to **earn an income from employment or to manage their own income freely**, in addition to jeopardizing their **safety at home**.

LIVING THROUGH A HOUSING CRISIS

Rent is expensive and housing is scarce, which **limits the options** available to a woman who has to leave her home and **find a new place to live**. This also puts women at risk of becoming **homeless**.

IT'S A VICIOUS CYCLE

When one problem arises, it often leads to others: **poverty, violence against women, and the housing crisis are interconnected**, and we cannot truly address one without taking the others into account.

DO YOU NEED HELP?

Wherever you might be, you can contact these agencies at any time:
SOS violence conjugale Tél : 1-800-364-9010 Texto : (438) 601-1211
Info-aide violences sexuelle 1-888-933-9007

You will be referred to an organization or agency closer to you. **If you are concerned about your safety or the safety of your children, please contact 911.**

TO CONSULT OUR DETAILED ANALYSIS

ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT A LOVED ONE?

Listen to her **without judgment**, believe her, share **resources** that can help her, but above all, **stay in touch with her.**

In our region, the number of women who are victims of domestic violence is **4X** higher than against men.

17,9% of women from the Gaspé peninsula and the Magdalen Islands live in poverty.

Between 2020 and 2025, the average price of rents in Gaspé have **increased** by 69% and have **increased** by 57% in the Magdalen Islands. These are the only territories for which we have data.

Table de concertation féministe
GASPÉ - ÎLES-DE-LA-MADELINE



Holly Smith, Emily Hocquard and Jillian O'Connell, the Gaspé Spec office team, animated the evening after organizing a successful 50th anniversary celebration.



Aaron Check entertained guests with live music throughout the evening.



Current Gaspé Spec board members: Greg Leblanc, Hayden Sams, Bonita Annett, Elaine Sexton and Patricia Saint-Croix Annett. Steven Parent, Marjorie Lepage and Cheryl Leggo were unable to attend.



A meeting of past and present—current board member Greg Leblanc shares a moment with former Gaspé Spec president Roger Wise during the 50th anniversary celebration.

Thank you

TO OUR GENEROUS PARTNERS WHO HELPED US MAKE THIS EVENT POSSIBLE!



2000 was another bumpy stretch, with flashes of hope

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The Gaspé Peninsula entered the year 2000 slightly groggy following the hard blows of October 1999, caused by the successive closures of the Murdochville underground copper mine and the Gaspesia newsprint mill, the latter having been closed for an undetermined period of time on June 20. Gaspésians were still fighting for the betterment of their situation as 2000 rolled out.

**Vol 26. No 1
January 9, 2000**

- Issue 1, dated January 9, headlines with “Taxes jumping 10% in Gaspé”, “Gaspesia employees may take Abitibi to court” and “New Carlisle rings in New Year in style”. Smaller titles are “Cascapedia-St. Jules – name rejected by Quebec’s toponymy commission”, as it is too long, “CASA funding hike confirmed” and “Clothing firm in Gaspé by this summer”. Inside, SPEC runs a profile of film maker Paul Almond. John Kaye Walker starts Legion Log, the new column replacing that of the late Dave Doherty.

**Vol 26. No 2
January 16, 2000**

- Issue 2, dated January 16, headlines with “History of smelt fishery goes back generations”, an interview with Ralph Edwards, and “Railway future looks positive” despite the Gaspesia mill closure. “Strike interferes with CBC service”, “Pin Rouge organizing snowboard competition”, “Businessman optimistic about oil find” and “Series: retiring in the Gaspé” complete page 1 titles. “Millenium profiles” also presents Gaspésians who have made a difference in history.

**Vol 26. No 3
January 23, 2000**

- “Special group set up for anglo employment, development”, namely CEDEC, the Community Economic Development and Employability



When Chico came into Vincent Hall's life, little did the senior citizen from Grand Cascapedia know that the dog would one day save his life.

Committee, “Health care: Gaspésians disadvantaged in receiving treatment” due to poor travel compensation, and “Is the crisis in the fisheries over?” since the overall revenues increased in 1999, headline issue 3, dated January 23. Inside, “Gaspesia managers join common front” as they set up to find a calling for the Chandler mill.

**Vol 26. No 4
January 30, 2000**

- “Patriots will sue gov’t, go to Geneva – taking cue from natives” and “Birders flock from afar to see rare fieldfare” headline issue 4, dated January 30. The Patriots in Action launched a movement claiming that government policies have disadvantaged Gaspésians over the last decades. As for birders, they come from the other end of Quebec to see a bird fed by Nature Corner columnist, Art Campbell. Gaspesia mill “Common front satisfied with gov’t action”, “Roman Catholic Diocese launching appeal for financial aid” and “New Richmond: Legion branch plans to honour World War I dead” make smaller front-page titles.

**Vol 26. No 5
February 6, 2000**

- Issue 5, dated February 6, headlines with “Patriots advocate Gaspé separation”, textile firm “Double Impact may choose Mont-Joli, Chandler over Gaspé” and “With the greatest of ease”, a report on Pin Rouge’s snowboard meet.

Inside, readers see “TV review does not result in resolution in (Linda) Condo case”, a murder that occurred in 1988 in Miguasha.

**Vol 26. No 6
February 13, 2000**

- Issue 6, dated February 13, features “Working group to assess EI (employment insurance) impact” and “Youth suicide attempts tripled over the last 10 years” as headlines. The suicide statistic comes from a report issue by the Public Health Department of the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands. Inside, “Listuguj shocked at loss of Joe Gray”, the founder of the tourist attraction, Fort Listuguj.

**Vol 26. No 7
February 20, 2000**

- Issue 7, dated February 20 headlines with “911 switch could threaten quality of service” and “Hairy hero saves

senior”. The 911 switch means that the New Richmond emergency call centre is moved to Rimouski by CAUREQ, which causes 13 layoffs. The hairy hero is Chico, Vincent Hall’s dog who woke up his owners sister after Mr. Hall collapsed following a diabetes coma. Chico saved his life.

**Vol 26. No 8
February 27, 2000**

- Eastern Shores “School board funding decision again on hold” and “Douglstown: St. Valentine’s fire inspires help – Already \$8,700 gathered for greenhouses” headline issue 8, dated February 27. The ESSB extra funding is expected to make up for the travel cost of teachers and their salaries, given the territorial constraints. The greenhouses belong to Serres Bio-sol, a producer of organic tomatoes and cucumbers.

**Vol 26. No 9
March 5, 2000**

- Issue 9, dated March 5, headlines with “Health care costs: Gaspé family struggles with impact of cancer”, and “Suicide prevention line can’t serve anglos”. In Gaspé, Wanda Miller spends a lot of time in Montreal for the treatment of bone marrow cancer, which incurs major travelling costs. “EI changes: Lower St. Lawrence fears losses”, “New Richmond: Owners frustrated by new evaluation” and “Breuvages Gaspé may lose more products” make smaller page 1 titles. Inside, readers see “Booklet on Micmac life launched”.



About 50 people attended the open house to celebrate SPEC newspaper’s 25th anniversary on May 12.

**Vol 26. No 10
March 12, 2000**

- Dated March 12, issue 10 features “Rocher Percé: Mayors refuse to pay their share of Quebec’s debt”, because of the slump created by the Gaspesia mill closure, and “Escuminac: Woodlot owners protest new bylaw”. The bylaw restricts the surface that can be cut on a lot to 30% over five years, and the owners denounce the revenue loss coming with it.

**Vol 26. No 11
March 19, 2000**

- Issue 11, dated March 19, headlines with “French school boards ask for change in financing – Budget cuts, dropping enrollments cause shortfalls” and “Dépanneur owners (Betty Day and Art McPherson) recall terror of theft” that occurred in March 1999. Former Gaspé mayor “Amédée Dumaresq dies from stroke”, “Gaspesian women speak about crisis” during Télé-Québec show, and “Premier will meet with MRC reps” make smaller titles.

**Vol 26. No 12
March 26, 2000**

- Dated March 26, issue 12 headlines (although presented as issue 15) with Finance minister Bernard “Landry doesn’t rule out tax breaks” to help Gaspésians’ efforts to bring in businesses, and Lucien “Bouchard meeting satisfies (Rocher Percé MRC prefect Claude) Cyr”. The meeting pertained to the eventual sale of Gaspesia mill. “Children star at St. Pat’s celebration!” also make page 1. Inside, readers see “Private camp take-over delayed.”

**Vol 26. No 14
April 9, 2000**

Dated April 9, Issue 14 (issue 13 is missing from our archives) headlines with “Passenger service: Régionair an-

From Page 13

nounces schedule” for Gaspé and Bonaventure airports, “Former Abitibi-Price manager (Fernand Pitre) interested in Gaspesia plant” and “GBHC (Gaspesian British Heritage Centre) to raise money off the Coast”.

**Vol 26. No 15
April 16, 2000**

- Dated April 16, issue 15 headlines with “Family Ties wins second provincial prize”, the prestigious volunteer award, and “Health care: Transportation decisions hard on seniors”. The latter topic deals with seniors sent home by Rimouski and Quebec City doctors, using means ill-adapted to their state. “Patriots host first English meeting”, “RCMP building a new detachment in Gaspé” and “Gaspesia workers off to Abitibi AGM” complete page 1.

**Vol 26. No 16
April 23, 2000**

- Dated April 23, issue 16 headlines with “Chandler doctors struggle to keep up – blame government inaction”, because of workload, Grand Cascadia’s “Wellness clinic offers seniors security” and “Caisse federation assets down for the first time in 40 years” due to the economic slump. “Cegep forestry students visiting BC”, “SPEC up for three provincial awards” and “Morue questioned FRCC aim” complete page 1 titles. Morue is a movement advocating for employment whilst FRCC is the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council. Inside, New Richmond’s Paul Willett is named the West Coast Hockey League’s most valuable player.

**Vol 26. No 17
April 30, 2000**

- Issue 17, dated April 30, headlines with “Chandler: demonstration over after just one day”, as well as with singer and filmmaker Richard “Desjardins pressing for public inquiry on forests”, convinced that wood harvests are too high in Quebec. “Patriots hold largest rallies so far”, “Coast may lose provincial county”, “Catholic church brings in

\$430,000” and “Cablo G bought by Cogeco Cable” round up page 1 titles. Inside, readers see “Captain Leroy (Leggo) to offer deep-sea fishing excursions”.

**Vol 26. No 18
May 7, 2000**

- “HRD Minister (Jane Stewart) announces new EI calculations – Gaspesians will get \$23 million more in benefits per year” and “Rural mayors disappointed with municipal reforms” headline issue 18, dated May 7. “Cegep’s signs deal for continuing ed”, “New Carlisle: Mayor proud of new water system” and “Health care: Region receives \$18 million more” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 26. No 19
May 14, 2000**

- Dated May 14, issue 19 headlines with “School board officials ‘discouraged’ by MEQ”, “Cegep hosts largest graduation ever” and “Gaspé, Chandler, working on call centres”. A special insert celebrating SPEC’s 25th anniversary is found inside.

**Vol 26. No 20
May 21, 2000**

- Dated May 21, issue 20 features “Mohawks invest in Chandler call centre” and “Gov’t call centre announced for Gaspé. The Chandler call centre is spearheaded by Tinett RaiBeau and is supposed to create 378 jobs. The Gaspé call centre is created by Quebec’s Department of Revenue Security. Both announcements were made in the presence of Finance minister Bernard Landry. Inside, readers see “\$2 million for railway maintenance”.

**Vol 26. No 21
May 28, 2000**

- Dated May 28, issue 21 features “Cegep cuts mean two programs closing” and “Health care: Family pays \$8,000 to bring father home”, as taking a chartered flight was the only safe way for Weston Hackett to go back to Gaspé. “Fishermen fighting to save Shigawake wharf”, “Think Tank 2000 aims at helping anglophone community get back on track”, “Listuguj election declared invalid – band goes back to the



Listuguj shocked at loss of Joe Gray. Happier days: Joe and his partner, Phyllis Berthelot, at the opening of Fort Listuguj

polls June 3” and “Gaspé wants free port status” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 26. No 22
June 4, 2000**

- Dated June 4, issue 22 headlines with “Mum gives daughter a very special birthday present!” and “Two borders leave Cross Point in desperate shape”.

**Vol 26. No 23
June 11, 2000**

- Issue 23, dated June 11, headlines with “SPEC founders recognized by QCNA”, “Gaspé airport loses over airline bankruptcies” and “Abitibi sets deadline for offers for Gaspesia”. QCNA is the Quebec Community Newspapers Association. Lynden Bechervaise, Gary Briand and Don Miller receive the Lindsay Crysler award. “Natalie Price elected as CASA president”, Jean “Charest at Liberal forum this weekend” and “Listuguj swept by (Allison) Metallic landslide” make other page 1 titles.

**Vol 26. No 24
June 18, 2000**

- “Liberals promise priority to regions”, “Study confirms impact of Family Ties”, and Brent Jones, a “Former Gaspesian invests, believes in region” headline issue 24, dated June 18. Brent Jones invests in Wreaths Plus with his brother Bruce.

**Vol 26. No 25
June 25, 2000**

- “Premier announces \$2.6 million in grants”, “Alleged Alliance Party members hard to find” and “Beachcombers dis-

cover porcelain” near Marciel wharf headline issue 25, dated June 25. “Caisse to close New Carlisle counter”, “Local teams gear up for a shot at (fast pitch) provincial titles”, “SPEC finances ‘growing stronger’” and “Glass Tiger at Gaspé’s Canada Day” also make the cover.

**Vol 26. No 26
July 2, 2000**

- “School board will submit deficit budget – Eastern Shores expects to be more than \$500,000 short” and “New honour handed out at NCHS” headline issue 26, dated July 2. New Carlisle High School awarded the Dave Doherty Memorial Award to Christopher Hottot. Mr. Doherty was a long-time Legion affairs writer for SPEC.

**Vol 26. No 27
July 9, 2000**

- Issue 27, dated July 9, headlines with “Gespapegiag: Chevrette signs Baldwin deal”, an agreement related to the territory’s resource management. SPEC also runs photos of the Escuminac and Bonaventure Polyvalent School graduates on page 1. Inside, Cynthia Dow pays a tribute to Syd Maloney, Corner-of-the-Beach inn owner, war veteran and one of the last three people expropriated from Bonaventure Island.

**Vol 26. No 28
July 16, 2000**

- “Lack of logs brings sawmills to a halt as truckers apply pressure” and “Cascapedia River museum opened” headline issue 28, dated July 16. The truckers want better pay. Inside, an article covers

some parts of Sydney Maloney’s life.

**Vol 26. No 29
July 23, 2000**

- “Trains back on track after repairs at Gascons” and “Drinking water: Only half of region’s wells are tested regularly” fill the front-page of issue 29, released on July 23. The Gascons repairs were caused by a small landslide under the tracks.

**Vol 26. No 30
July 30, 2000**

- Issue 30, dated July 30, headlines with “Chandler ‘euphoric’ about Gaspesia sale”, “CLSC Chaleurs: Home assistance cuts hurt” and “Hundreds flock to New Carlisle Homecoming”. The Gaspesia mill is sold to a consortium formed by Quebec Federation of Labour’s Fonds de solidarité, SNC-Lavalin and the former Uniforêt president Clermont Levasseur. Abitibi-Consolidated received \$35 million for the mill.

**Vol 26. No 31
August 6, 2000**

- “Scotiabank sells Quebec branches – Laurentian Bank to take over 43 branches Nov. 1” and Gaspé “Sailing school celebrates 20 years” headline issue 31, dated August 6. Inside, readers see “Listuguj gets \$16.6 million (from) Marshall deal – Natives will fish lobster, crab, shrimp, turbot”. The Marshall decision was made in 1999 and confirmed the Natives’ integration to commercial fisheries.

**Vol 26. No 32
August 13, 2000**

- Issue 32, released on August 13, headlines with “Micmac chiefs sign historic accord”, “Coroner recommends defibrillators for ambulances” and “Visitors swarm to Maximum Blues again this year”. The Micmac accord aims at pooling resources for issues of common interest. The Coroner’s report follows a Gaspesian case of

Page 15

cardiac arrest. Inside, readers see “DFO wants to abandon Shigawake wharf”.

**Vol 26. No 33
August 20, 2000**

- Issue 33, dated August 20, features “Gaspé: Three councillors criticize the Sûreté du Québec” for poor crime resolution rate, “Town of Percé and Placements Gilles Jean will go back to court” over a zoning conflict and “Young girl saves two from drowning” as headlines. The young girl is Jessica Bélanger.

**Vol 26. No 34
August 27, 2000**

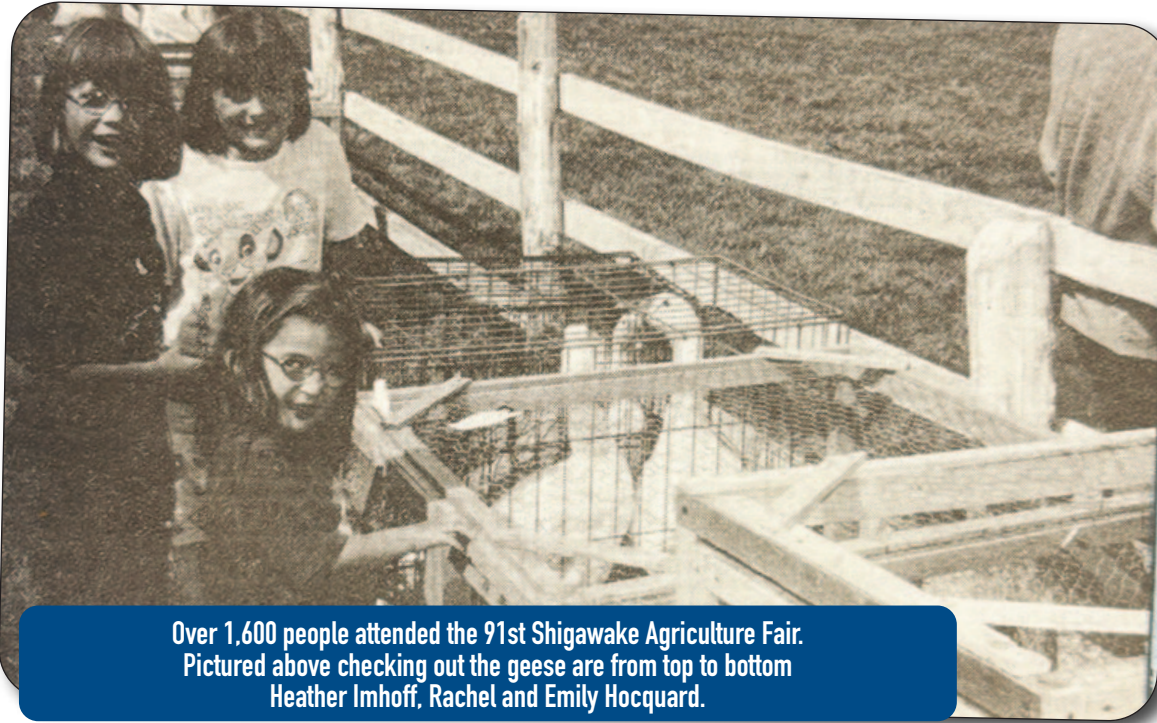
- “Rail contract renewed in Gaspé” and “Gaspé partnership wants wood to create 360 jobs” headline issue 34, dated August 27. The rail contract pertains to hauling copper anodes to Montreal for Mines Gaspé in Murdochville. The wood would be processed in Gaspé, and the Gespeg Micmacs would be a partner in the venture that needs supply from the Gaspesia mill public land. A cover picture sends readers inside for Shigawake Fair coverage. Also in this issue, “Public forest capacity greatly reduced” explains the Quebec Department of Natural Resources’ decision to cope with a re-evaluation of public land’s capacity.

**Vol 26. No 35
September 3, 2000**

- Issue 35, dated September 3, headlines with “Quebec condemns seven water systems – Shigawake-Port Daniel and Entry Island Schools on list” and “CASA celebrates 25 years”. The CASA celebrations recognized the contribution of many Gaspésians.

**Vol 26. No 36
September 10, 2000**

- Issue 36, released on September 10 headlines with Nathalie “Normandeu pledges support to ESSB”, namely better funding because of its large territory, and “Sawmills up in arms about CAAF reductions”, a follow up of the previous week article about the public



Over 1,600 people attended the 91st Shigawake Agriculture Fair. Pictured above checking out the geese are from top to bottom Heather Imhoff, Rachel and Emily Hocquard.

forest capacity. “What’s Annetta (Grant) up to now” reports on the Douglstown young lady’s trip to Italy.

**Vol 26. No 37
September 17, 2000**

- “Decision on recycling leaves Rocher Percé, Gaspé fuming” and Quebec’s Health minister Pauline “Marois confirms extension project for Chandler hospital” headline issue 37, dated September 17. The recycling news pertains to the Avignon and Bonaventure MRCs’ decision to send their recycling to Matane instead of Grand River’s sorting centre, which would have provided 10-12 jobs to that area which was hit hard by the Gaspesia mill closure.

**Vol 26. No 38
September 24, 2000**

- Issue 38, dated September 24, headlines with “Montreal donates used defibrillators to (Gaspé Peninsula) ambulances”, “Four PQ ministers announce measures for diversification”, for \$10 million, and “Our man Downunder”. That man is Port Daniel native Brian Dea, now living in Australia, who is reporting for SPEC on the Sydney Olympic Games.

**Vol 26. No 39
October 1, 2000**

- Issue 39, dated October 1, features “Health care panel hears list of woes - Workers adamantly opposed to privation” and “Murdochville: Foundry expects to meet (production) targets” as head-

lines. Now that the name is accepted, Cascapedia-St. Jules’ “Emblem winner announced at Fall Fest”, “Lis-tuguj fishery ‘pioneers’ support Burnt Church”, “Union pans second-hand defibrillators for region” and Gordon “Duthie wants more involvement in GBHC” also appear on page 1.

**Vol 26. No 40
October 8, 2000**

- Issue 40, dated October 8, headlines with Natural Resources minister Jacques “Brassard announces 19% reduction in logging on public lands”, “Cullen’s Brook: Final service held in Gospel Chapel” and “Health Day organizers optimistic about turn-out”. What Jacques Brassard announced was a detailed plan, species by species. The regional reductions amount to 452,700 cubic metres.

**Vol 26. No 41
October 15, 2000**

- Issue 41, dated October 15, headlines with “Federal government proposes easier EI”, especially for seasonal workers, “Increased funding for education in the Gaspé? Minister promises to ‘listen’” and “Gaspé Cegep predicting a deficit”. The minister of Education at the time was François Legault and he met the New Carlisle High School students.

**Vol 26. No 42
October 22, 2000**

- Issue 42, released on October 22, headlines with

“3,000 Gaspésians participate in Women’s March” and “Health Day for seniors attracts 300”. The Women’s March was part of a worldwide movement to counteract poverty and violence towards children and women. Fishing guide Richard “Adams does his 90th up in style”, former Member of Parliament Patrick “Gagnon will not run in federal election” and “Gaspé prof could win Governor General’s award”, namely history teacher Mario Mimeault, make the other page 1 titles.

**Vol 26. No 43
October 29, 2000**

- “Federal Liberals call early election - Parties scrambling to organize”, “Former MNA (Georges) Farrah going for federal nomination” and “Once a sailor, always a sailor”, headline issue 43, dated October 29. The federal election was called after three-and-a-half years instead of four. Bougainville artist Tennyson Johnson is the sailor, and he just built another boat.

**Vol 26. No 44
November 5, 2000**

- Dated November 5, issue 44 headlines with “Eastern Shores looking for long-term solutions” for its budgetary problems, “And they’re off” and “Still no Conservative candidates – (Gaston) Langlais will not run this fall” regarding the federal electoral race.

**Vol 26. No 45
November 12, 2000**

- “Accident victims disappointed with Orleans Express”, two of the 14 victims being Gaspé’s Darlene Williams and Mathilda Adams, and “First storm takes woodsman by surprise” headline issue 45, dated November 12. Ms. Williams is disappointed that nobody from the bus firm inquired about the Cap-Chat accident victims in following days, despite their hospitalization. “Gaspé Literacy Council offers ‘surfing’ for seniors!”, “‘Swamp Eagle’ has landed – Florida man ends journey at Forillon”, “Recycling likely to start Nov. 20” and “Liberals target of EI debate” complete page 1 titles.

**Vol 26. No 46
November 19, 2000**

- “Rocher Percé MRC wants special status for Gaspé Coast”, due to the economic slump, and “Gaspé: Mayor promises to try to avoid tax hike in next budget” make the headlines of issue 46, dated November 19. SPEC also runs two big photos of Remembrance Day ceremonies on page 1, with additional coverage inside, where readers can also read about the 2000 Jersey and Guernsey visits by Gaspésians.

**Vol 26. No 47
November 26, 2000**

- “Language hearings draw small audience” in Gaspé, as part of Quebec’s Estates General on Language, and “Gaspé Sec. I students may stay at Elementary school”, headline issue 47, dated November 26. Inside, Mario “Mimeault wins G-G’s Canadian history teaching award” follows up on a previous article.

**Vol 26. No 48
December 3, 2000**

- “Farrah takes Gaspé, Roy barely wins in Matapédia – Bélanger may ask for recount with only 284-vote difference” takes the whole page of issue 48, dated December 3, about the November 27

From Page 15

federal poll. Liberal Georges Farrah won in Bonaventure-Gaspé-Magdalen Islands-Pabok by 3,599 votes over Bloc Québécois' Raynald Blais. Bloc's Jean-Yves Roy's margin over Liberal Marc Bélanger was much smaller, as the title says. Inside, readers see "Wind power industry on the coast a step closer".

Vol 26. No 49
December 10, 2000

- Issue 49, dated December 10, headlines with "Anglican parish pleads for support from all denominations" to erase arrears of \$12,000, or the Bay of Chaleurs minister will be withdrawn from service. Two Christmas-related pictures and a big caption round up page 1. Readers see a profile of Cascapedia

Smokehouse inside.

Vol 26. No 50
December 17, 2000

- Issue 50, released on December 17, headlines with "Liberals 'share concerns' with anglos: Charest", as in leader Jean Charest, and "Parents awaiting more details on ESSB plan" to repatriate high school students to Gaspé Elementary. Most parents do not favour that option.

Vol 26. No 51
December 24, 2000

- Issue 51, released on December 24, headlines with "Audit shows school board surplus \$463,000 – bailed out by MEQ this fall, but 'no future guarantees'", as well as "SPDS brings in season in style", with its Christmas concert. Inside, "Region's MNAs unite to save threatened county", no matter their allegiance, can be read on page 5.

The SPEC News Editor in 2000 was Cynthia Dow.

The SPEC Publisher in 2000 was Sharon Renouf Farrell.

The SPEC Office Manager in 2000 was Joan Sawyer Imhoff.

The SPEC Sales Manager in 2000 was Kevin O'Connor.



CASA celebrates 25 years
Above from the top: Stephen Tribble, Tom Duncan, Sharon Smith, Myrna McCormick, Michael Clarke, Shirley Duncan, Joan Dow, Betty Ann-Anez, Kay Walker, Diane Sawyer and Sharon Farrell.



Jersey Island Vautier Reunion

Links between 2000 and 2026:

A quarter of a century made a big difference in wind energy

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The article didn't even make the front-page. At the time, which was the December 3 paper, the issue following a federal election, it was totally justifiable to put it on page 2. The founder of Gaspé's Groupe Ohmega, Évangéliste Bourdages, presented a project that had the potential of creating a windmill component manufacturing industry in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Groupe Ohmega, Fabri-

cation Delta, both based in the region, and Industrie Jeumont, a firm based in France, were spearheading a test farm with three windmills to determine whether the French equipment could be adapted to Quebec's weather conditions.

The test farm was installed in Rivière-au-Renard in 2001 and that partnership, called REQ, for Regroupement d'entreprises québécoises, never went further. However, Mr. Bourdages' belief that the Gaspé Peninsula, and Quebec in general, had what it takes to create a wind energy manu-

facturing cluster, was gradually accepted by the Quebec government's Finance Minister Bernard Landry, who introduced fiscal incentives in a number of regional sectors, including wind energy.

Today, wind energy provides close to 1,000 jobs in the Gaspé Peninsula, jobs that are spread between manufacturing, wind farm maintenance, operations and ownership. Quebec-wide, about 4,500 jobs are tied to wind energy. Every year, at the annual wind energy convention, stakeholders from

that cluster thank Gaspésians for the efforts they made 25 years ago to assure the takeoff of this economic sector.

In 2000, however, that development was more of a dream than anything else, albeit a promising one. Gaspésians knew the strength of the winds that sweep the region, and they had already shown a willingness to look beyond their borders, to places where wind energy leaders were established. They understood it was at least worth taking a risk.

In 2000, Gaspésians still had to deal with a paper mill

that was up for sale in Chandler, and a revision of the public lands' capacity to generate wood supplies that had taken a 19% annual cut, from 2,350,000 to 1,900,000 cubic metres, a necessary drop of about 450,000 cubic metres, enough to provide work to at least 300 people. It was necessary because the public domain could no longer generate 2,350,000 cubic metres of wood yearly in a sustainable way, thanks to a demonstration shown in L'erreur boréale, a documentary produced by singer Richard Desjardins.

Mobilization to keep the Chandler wildlife office

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER – Just over a hundred protesters gathered on April 29 in Chandler to demand the long-term preservation of the Rocher-Percé MRC wildlife office.

The Quebec government had announced its closure in the spring, but the new Member of the National Assembly (MNA) and Minister for Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin, announced the previous evening that the office “had been saved.”

“Today (April 28), I had a constructive discussion with my colleague, Environment Minister Pascale Déry, regarding the announced closure of the Chandler wildlife office. I shared with her the concerns expressed by the community and the very real impacts this decision would have on the region. A solution has been identified to extend the lease term and thus maintain the office’s operations. I remain fully committed to my region to ensure the continuity of services and to implement the best long-term solution for the community,” comments Ms. Blouin in a statement sent to CHNC and subsequently shared on social media.

The lease has been extended by one year, a measure that local elected officials say is insufficient.

“We are fighting, demonstrating the strength of the Gaspé. People who don’t want to lose an essential service. If we don’t fight, we’ll lose it. It’s disappointing to receive approval the day before the event. It’s insufficient. We need a lease valid for at least five years to allow people to work,” says Chandler Mayor Gilles Daraïche.

The prefect of the Rocher-

Percé MRC, Samuel Parisé, agrees.

“With fishing and hunting, there are a lot of people in the forest. It’s important that we ensure safety and control poaching. A one-year extension is good news for now, but we’ll continue our efforts to secure it for the long term,” he adds.

Provincial MNAs in attendance

Pascal Bérubé, Parti Québécois (PQ) MNA for Matane-Matapédia, and his Liberal colleague, Monsef Derraji, travelled to Chandler for the demonstration.

“We must protect and preserve this resource. To do so, we need wildlife officers. The Quebec government announced that the tradition in Chandler, Causapsal, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, and Matane is coming to an end. As if by coincidence, we’re told it’s been resolved. It’s the same announcement as last year. We’re extending it by one year. We’re calling for a lease of at least five years and, above all, resources on the ground,” declares Assembly Member Bérubé.

In the 1990s, the Chandler office had 26 officers. Today, there are only two. “For a government that pledged to bring 5,000 civil servants back to the regions, what they’re doing now makes no sense. These are broken promises. Since when does a government try to protect poachers rather than the forest? That is what I am denouncing today. It is time to protect jobs in the regions and protect a resource that is extremely important to the Gaspé Peninsula,” says MNA Derraji, who supports the request for a five-year lease and the necessary resources.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Just over a hundred people gathered to urge the Quebec government to keep the Chandler wildlife office open.

The importance of the Chandler office

The Chandler office has been integrated into the vast district known as the Southeast, which covers the regions of Chaudière-Appalaches, Bas-Saint-Laurent, and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine—from Thetford Mines to the islands.

According to statistics compiled by the Quebec Wildlife Officers’ Union, the Chandler office plays a key role. “Chandler ranks fourth in the Southeast district and first in the Gaspé Peninsula. Chandler is a very specific location. In the past, we had 26 officers in the 1990s. Hunting hasn’t declined, fishing hasn’t declined. Why did we go from 26 to eight and now two, and why do they want to close the office? It’s a central hub in the Gaspé Penin-

sula,” says union president Martin Perreault.

The union is calling, like local elected officials, for the office to remain open for at least five years and for additional officers to be assigned.

Mr. Perreault noted that discussions about closing the station took place in February 2025, but it was kept open for another year following political pressure.

“The two officers have held the fort, and now we need resources. Several offices are in the same situation as Chandler, and we fear centralization—that they’ll be stripped of staff and shut down,” continues Mr. Perreault.

The Southeast District has about fifty officers, according to Mr. Perreault.

“To the public, that seems like a lot, but 50 officers for the entire territory is nothing.

They’re trying to lull the public into complacency,” he continues, noting that successive governments have reduced wildlife protection resources.

According to the Quebec Ministry of Transportation, the distance between Thetford Mines and Gaspé is 761 kilometres.

“We’ve reached such a critical point that we can see a problem is starting to emerge. If we let wildlife protection slide, we’re going to have a problem, and we shouldn’t wait until it’s too late,” argues Mr. Parreault, adding that the issue is likely to become an election topic.

The Ministry responds

When asked about the concrete impacts of the announcement made on April 28 by the Minister for Family Affairs, the Ministry of Wildlife remains cautious.

It does not wish to confirm the one-year lease extension.

“The ministry is currently taking steps to maintain its operations in this community. The lease term will be discussed as part of these efforts,” the ministry says in an email.

The ministry indicates that two officers are assigned to Chandler for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 fiscal years.

“Employees have been informed that the ministry is taking steps to maintain its operations in this community,” the email states.

On the ground, however, that message does not appear to have reassured those involved.

Gaspé swings from record cold to near-summer heat

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – The Gaspé Peninsula experienced a sharp contrast in weather over the past week, shifting from record cold to near-summer warmth.

On April 22, several record-low temperatures were set across the region. In New Carlisle, the temperature dropped to -6.9°C , breaking the previous record of -6.7°C set in 1975. Records were also set in Cap-d’Espoir at -5.5°C and in Grande-Vallée at -6.7°C . Although colder conditions were recorded in Gaspé, the long-standing record of -11.1°C set in 1969 held, with a low of -10.1°C .

Just days later, on April 28, a record high was reached. The temperature climbed to 19.8°C at Michel-Pouliot Airport, surpassing the previous record of 17.2°C set in 1937.

Elsewhere, temperatures remained cooler, with the Baie-des-Chaleurs area reaching 12°C , compared to 6°C in Cap-d’Espoir and 7°C along the northern coast.

April has averaged below normal so far, reflecting an unusually cold month overall.



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Quebec wants to take over Forillon park

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The Quebec government is exploring the possibility of taking over the management of Forillon National Park, based on a clause in the agreement that led to the park’s creation in the early 1970s.

In 1970, the Quebec government entered into an agreement with the federal government regarding the creation of Forillon Park to transfer the administration and control of a 244-square-kilometre area on the Forillon Peninsula to establish a federal park.

“Quebec wants to assess the feasibility of taking back management of the territory leased to the federal government and is requesting the parameters needed to conduct analyses and make a decision on whether or not to proceed,” notes Stéphane Sainte-Croix, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé.

According to Article 10, the agreement has a 99-year term and is set to expire on June 8, 2069.

“There is a clause in the agreement signed by the parties in 1970—Article 11—which is defined as an automatic termination clause allowing the Government of Quebec to terminate the agreement after 60 years, that is, in 2030,” explains Mr. Sainte-Croix.

To invoke the clause, the Government of Quebec was required to provide the federal government with five years’ written notice, prior to June 8, 2025, which constitutes a prerequisite if it subsequently wishes to take steps toward terminating the agreement in 2030.

“Given the federal government’s failure to respond to our request in accordance with the agreement, we have sent further correspondence to the new minister in charge, and we hope to receive a response to our request in light of Article 11 of

the agreement between Quebec and Ottawa,” notes the MNA.

The termination clause stipulates that the Quebec government must, at federal government’s discretion, either reimburse Ottawa for “all capital expenditures incurred by the latter in connection with the park during the preceding 60 years” or compensate the federal government “in a manner acceptable to the latter.”

The amounts involved could be significant. Over the past decade, the federal government has invested approximately \$100 million in Forillon, not including expenditures made since the park’s creation.

“That’s the gist of the discussion we want to have with the federal government. What is the cost associated with taking over management of the territory? It’s a factor that’s part of the agreement. Knowing the cost is one of the elements we need to make an informed decision,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

To achieve this, in May 2025, the Quebec government submitted a request for an estimate of the expenses the provincial government would have to reimburse or offset if it wished to take over management of Forillon National Park.

Despite that request and a subsequent follow-up, the federal government has yet to respond.

“We hope the federal government will honour the clause in its agreement. The deadline has passed; time is running out. We have done our part as the Quebec government. We strongly hope to engage in this dialogue with our federal partner and assess the feasibility of taking over the territory, in accordance with its mission,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

The MNA assures that the conservation mission would be maintained should the Quebec government take over the territory. He adds that the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SEPAQ) would be the ideal organization to man-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

age the park if an agreement were reached between the two levels of government.

“All of this remains to be negotiated. We are at the beginning of the process. The first step is to get a response from the government of Canada,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

If the federal government does not respond, the Quebec government will have to evaluate its options, including taking the matter to court.

“It is not my place to answer this hypothetical question, but I imagine that our government is not ruling out any means of obtaining a response, given the agreement signed between Quebec and Ottawa,” he adds.

Partners not consulted

The Association of Expropriated Persons of Forillon and Their Descendants and the Gespeg Mi’gmaq Nation were not consulted beforehand regarding the process undertaken by the Quebec government.

“I’ve spoken with some people who are closely or distantly connected to the history of Forillon. I’m about to have a discussion with the group’s representative,” he notes, recalling that he was born and raised in Cap-des-Rosiers and experienced the reality of the expropriation, which left its mark on his family and neighbourhood.

with Parks Canada in 2024.

“I’m not the one to answer that. But there is no question of us failing to honour the agreements currently in place. There is no question of us undoing what has been built up over the past few years. Our intention is to honour the clause signed between the parties and assess the possibility of resuming management of the territory, and we will sit down with the stakeholders. We look forward to having these discussions and collaborating on the way forward,” the MNA assures.

The year 2030 will come quickly. “The deadline set in the agreement is the time limit. I see nothing preventing things from extending beyond that. We have made our intentions clear. We have respected the terms of the agreement. We expect a similar gesture from the federal government. As for what comes next, I imagine everything will take shape through negotiation,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

Ottawa shuts the door on Quebec

Nelson Sergerie

GASPE – The federal government appears to be rejecting the Quebec governments request to discuss the terms of a potential transfer of Forillon National Park from the federal government to the provincial government.

When asked about the issue, the office of Environment Minister and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, Julie Dabrusin, confirmed that the Government of Canada had received a letter from the Government of Quebec requesting exploratory information.

“Parks Canada remains fully committed to ensuring the long-term management of the park, in accordance with its mandate of conservation, presentation, and public benefit. Parks Canada maintains close relationships with its partners, notably the Association of Expropriated Persons of Forillon and their Descendants and the Gespeg Mi’gmaq Nation, with whom a reconciliation and rights recognition agreement regarding Forillon National Park was signed in 2024. Parks Canada is fulfilling all its commitments to these partners through projects currently underway,” a spokesperson for the minister’s office wrote in an email.

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Descendants of the expropriated and Gaspé react

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – It came as a complete surprise to the Association of Expropriated Persons of Forillon and their Descendants to learn that the Quebec government is considering the possibility of bringing the park back under its jurisdiction.

The SPEC broke the news to the association's spokesperson.

"We knew it was a possibility. No one ever informed us," says Hermeline Smith, who will bring this matter to her next board meeting.

"We'll definitely discuss it and decide on actions we can take in the coming weeks to address this possibility," she says.

This development risks reopening old wounds, even though the park was created nearly 60 years ago.

"Whenever there are changes to the park—whether regarding the buildings or management—it's often an unpleasant surprise. When this hits the media, it will come as a shock," she believes.

Despite what is unfolding, the group has never been directly involved in the park's management; even when the co-management agreement with the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation was negotiated, every-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Members of the Forillon Expropriated Persons Association and their descendants during a federal announcement regarding the restoration of homes in Grande-Grave, in July 2023.

thing took place at a higher level.

However, she noted that local park managers maintain a positive working relationship with the association.

The group also believes the Quebec government would face significant costs if it were to take over management of the park.

Gaspé remains cautious

As a key component of Gaspé's economic and tourism landscape, the Town intends to monitor the situation closely.

For the mayor, it will be important to involve the Association of Expropriated Persons of

Forillon and their Descendants, as well as the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation, from the very beginning.

Daniel Côté notes that both groups appear to have been sidelined in the provincial government's approach.

"That's how we're reading it. But at first glance, in an issue as sensitive as this one—which reopens wounds spanning several generations and where we still see strong emotions at gatherings—we must involve them before discussing land transfers or business deals. Before entering into discussions with the federal government, let's go see the First Nations and the expropriated

individuals to find out what they think. We seem to be skipping a crucial step. Let's go see those most directly affected, and then we'll weigh the pros and cons and arrive at a final position," comments the mayor.

The mayor also weighed the potential role of the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SÉPAQ) as a possible manager of the park.

"We've seen Sépaq abandon Fort-Prével. Is that good management? I don't think so. On the other hand, there's something interesting happening Parc de la Gaspésie. At the federal level, there has been underinvestment in Forillon for decades. In contrast, there have been massive investments in recent years. It depends on the era and the parks in question. I can't take a clear position at this moment," comments the mayor.

In the current context, prioritizing this issue over others

raises questions.

The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) seems to be paving the way for economic nationalism with this move.

"Is this a priority for action? If Quebec (government) has to spend \$200 million in the Gaspé Peninsula, should we put it in a cheque to Ottawa to buy back a park that has no real consequence on the local community, or should we invest it in the railway, which will have a real impact on the local community? For me, the answer is obvious," he says.

Gespeg Mi'gmaq Nation cautious

The Gespeg Mi'gmaq Nation learned from the SPEC of the Quebec government's attempt to take control of Forillon Park.

Chief Céline Cassivi stated that she must first discuss the matter with her council before taking a position in this debate.

Financial crisis at RéGÎM

NELSON SERGERIE

SAINTE-ANNE-DES-MONTS – The Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transportation Authority (RéGÎM) could run out of funds in the coming weeks, forcing the Gaspésie MRCs Association to step in with a \$50,000 interest-free emergency loan to keep operations running in the short term.

The organization has yet to receive its \$1 million operating grant for 2025 from the Quebec Ministry of Transport.

"We had to dip into the \$1 million line of credit. We've reached the limit of that line. The association will lend money interest-free to keep operations running on the ground. But it becomes concerning when regional organizations have to lend money to one another," says Mathieu Lapointe, president of the MRC association.

"We're effectively funding the Quebec Ministry of Transport," add for his part Daniel Côté, president of RéGÎM.

"We've reached \$1 million on the line of credit, which is exactly the amount of the grant we were supposed to receive for 2025. The year 2026 has begun. We have no specific confirmation of the amount we'll receive or when we'll receive it. They'll soon be 17 months behind. How are we supposed to run a system without the money?" asks Mr. Côté.

If the funding does not arrive within six weeks, the agency says it will no longer have sufficient funds to operate.

"We won't make it through the summer if the money doesn't come in quickly. We won't be able to honour our contracts unless we increase our line of credit, but at some point, there's a limit to how much we can finance the Ministry of Transportation. It's nonsense. A government with even a modicum of pride pays its debts," says Mr. Côté, who is also mayor of Gaspé and prefect of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC.

When RéGÎM officials have sought explanations for the delay, answers have remained unclear.

"We're told there have been changes to the standards and parameters. They've been adjusting them for quite some time now. I expressed my impatience to the cabinet last week. We're told we'll get a cheque soon. But I was told that all last year, too. I hope this time it'll be for real," says Mr. Côté.

RéGÎM had already been forced to revise its services in February following a \$300,000 cut in financial assistance, applied retroactively to 2025.

The agency's 2026 budget stands at \$5.8 million.

The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure, Catherine Blouin, now a cabinet member, has made securing funding for RéGÎM one of her priorities.

She had previously raised the public transit agency's situation with Finance Minister Éric Girard in January.

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Tugboat and barges under construction at Forillon Shipyard

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Chantier Naval Forillon is building a specialized tugboat and two self-unloading barges for Valhalla, a sister company of Centurion Foundation based in the Quebec City region.

Construction began in March, and on April 24, the shipyard marked the project with a traditional coin-laying ceremony for the tugboat.

The symbolic gesture is meant to bring good luck to the vessel and its crew while highlighting the expertise and dedication of those involved in its construction.

The tugboat itself features a unique design. “It’s a tugboat that can be transported by road. It fits onto a trailer. We can remove the wheelhouse and place it in front of the boat. We can lift it with a crane, launch it, and then retrieve it to transport it between operational sites,” explains the shipyard’s president and chief executive officer Jean-David Samuel.

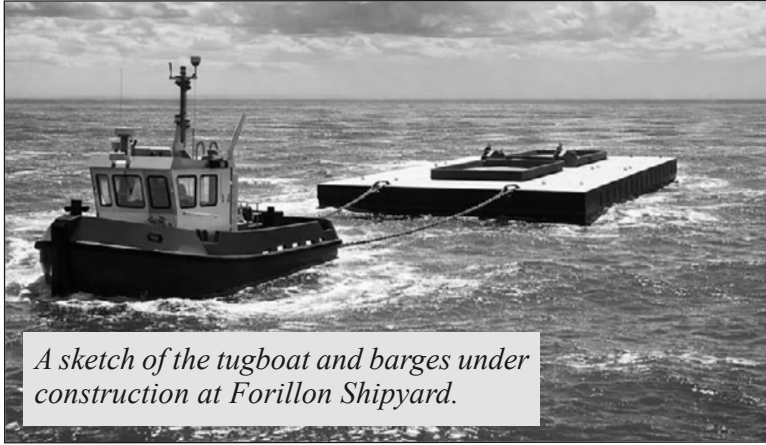
Being able to transport the boat by road reduces travel time compared to moving it by sea.

The tugboat will be powered by Cummins engines, offering a high-performance combination of thrust, manoeuvrability and durability.

Its design, developed by naval architecture firm Navanex, will allow it to support a wide range of operations, including towing, dredging or construction barges and performing specialized maritime work.

Delivery of the tugboat is scheduled for late June 2026.

The shipyard has been building tugboats since 2006



A sketch of the tugboat and barges under construction at Forillon Shipyard.

Photo: Forillon Shipyard

and has delivered about 15 to date, including one last summer.

At the same time, Chantier Naval Forillon is constructing two self-unloading barges for the same client.

“It’s a new system. These are sections of self-unloading barges that can be combined with standardized barges. The company will be able to dredge, load sediment into the barges, and transport them a bit further,” explains Mr. Samuel.

Busy shipyards

Operations at the company’s sites in Gaspé and Rivière-au-Renard remain busy.

In Gaspé, construction continues on a semi-offshore fisheries research vessel for the federal government. A new dry dock has recently been completed, and the Ivan-Quinn, the Entry Island ferry operated by the Société des traversiers du Québec, is currently undergoing repairs there.

In Rivière-au-Renard, work is ongoing on the tugboat and barges, while construction of a new fishing vessel is set to begin in May.

The company’s order book remains strong. “We’re looking at the end of 2027. We have some availability, but

we’re able to keep everyone busy until the end of 2027. We’re looking at which projects will come in during the fall of 2027. We may have some repair capacity available over the next few months,” says Mr. Samuel.

The situation is positive for the company’s approximately 100 employees.

Chantier Naval Forillon is also positioning itself to secure additional federal contracts under Canada’s National Shipbuilding Strategy.

“We want to expand in that area, both with the Coast Guard and National Defence. Things are going well. We’re in a strong position, and the team in place is working to secure additional contracts. We’re confident,” he says.

Work to modernize the Gaspé loading ramp is expected to begin shortly.

“We’re starting with the initial work, and as soon as the Ivan-Quinn leaves, the crews will arrive for the major work. The project is progressing well. We always have growth and infrastructure plans for the coming years,” adds Mr. Samuel.

The ramp project represents an investment of \$1.5 million, including \$1.1 million in federal funding.



The Galgosiet Centre was packed for the screening of the first two episodes of Bon Cop, Bad Cop: The Series on April 17.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

Bon cop, bad cop, the series partly filmed in Gesgapegiag, now available on Crave

Gilles Gagné

GESGAPEGIAG – Bon cop, bad cop, the television series filmed in parts in Gesgapegiag in June 2025, is now available on Crave. It premieres on May 7. The population of Gesgapegiag was invited to see the first two episodes on April 17 at the Galgosiet Centre. The invite drew a big crowd, mostly people from the community.

The series follows two movies carrying the same title. The first Bon cop, bad cop movie came out in 2006. It notably featured two of the best actors in Canada, Ontario’s Colm Feore and Quebec’s Patrick Huard, a Montrealer with strong Gaspesian roots since his father was from Paspebiac.

In addition to the participation of many Gesgapegiag residents during filming in June 2025, another Gaspesian played a key role in bringing the project to the region. Anik Jean, originally from Bonaventure, wrote the series’ soundtrack and also served as producer of the six-episode series.

Bon cop, bad cop, the series, received a very enthusiastic reception in Gesgapegiag on April 17. Not only did people recognize neighbours, friends or themselves on the screen, but the pace of the episodes was enough to keep most people on their toes.

After the two feature films released in 2006 and 2017, police officers David Bouchard, played by Patrick Huard, and Martin Ward, this time played by Henry Czerny, are back together on television. Colm Feore was unavailable for filming.

The duo tackles a new case set in Gesgapegiag, Wendake, Quebec City and Montreal, joined by a new generation of police officers.

In the next issue of SPEC, Patrick Huard will explain his decision to integrate First Nations perspectives into the series. Anik Jean will also discuss her dual role. On April 17, both were introduced to the audience by Quentin Condo, who was instrumental in the idea of incorporating First Nations elements into the series.



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Eastern Energy Alliance sidelined from new wind power tender

NESLON SERGERIE

SAINTE-ANNE-DESMONTS – A new call for tenders launched by Hydro-Québec for between 1,500 and 3,000 megawatts of wind energy will move forward without participation from the Eastern Energy Alliance.

The alliance says it is unable to submit a project due to ongoing limitations in transmitting electricity from Eastern Quebec to major urban centres. The lack of transmission capacity east of Rivière-du-Loup remains a significant barrier.

“The first phase does not involve the Alliance de l’énergie de l’Est’s territory, but we still welcome the continued development of the wind energy sector in Quebec. It’s clear that we don’t have the opportunity to bid, particularly due to the problem of connecting to the existing grid,” says the alliance’s vice president, Simon Deschênes.

Efforts are ongoing to bring a high-voltage transmission line to Eastern Quebec, a project the alliance has been advocating for in recent years.

“We have played our leadership role in recent years to secure the development of this new transmission line. We must commend Hydro-Québec’s ef-



Photo: Hydro-Québec

Hydro-Québec has submitted a map, and the selected projects must be located within these zones.

forts in western Bas-Saint-Laurent to establish a route for the new transmission line,” notes Mr. Deschênes.

However, with construction capacity already stretched, progress remains gradual.

“Our workload is full, but we want to continue development to tap into the significant reserves still available in the Gaspé Peninsula,” he continues.

The alliance currently operates the Le Plateau 2 wind farm (21.15 megawatts (MW), in operation since 2014; Roncevaux (74.8 MW), in operation since 2016; Nicolas-Riou (224.25 MW), in operation since 2018; and Dune-du-Nord (6.4 MW), in operation since

2020, for a total of 326 megawatts.

Five wind farms are under construction: Canton MacNider (122 MW); Madawaska (270 MW); Forêt Domaniale (180 MW); Saint-Paul-de-Montminy (196 MW); and PPAW (349.8 MW), for a total of 1,118 megawatts.

The Grosse-Île project (16.8 MW) is before the Bureau d’audience publique en environnement, and PPAW 2 (291.4 MW) is in the development phase.

Stricter criteria for new projects

Under the proposed framework, Hydro-Québec will put

stronger emphasis on Quebec content, giving priority to projects that generate local economic benefits, include investment within the province and rely on expertise from Quebec’s wind energy sector.

Social acceptability remains central to the evaluation process. The utility is seeking projects that are well integrated into their host communities, particularly those developed in partnership with municipalities and Indigenous communities, with the goal of ensuring meaningful participation and long-term local benefits.

Projects must have clear municipal support and demonstrate that they have been responsibly integrated into their environment. This includes conducting public consultations prior to submission and showing how concerns raised by residents have been addressed. In addition to agreements with landowners, developers will be required to provide annual financial contributions to the communities where projects are located. Protection of agricultural land is also a key consideration.

Selected projects are expected to be commissioned between 2031 and 2038. For the initial round, proposals must fall within designated technical

zones that allow for grid connection between 2031 and 2035. Only projects backed by a formal resolution from the municipalities concerned will be eligible. The submission deadline for this first round is February 26, 2027.

No solar projects from Gaspé

No proposals from the Gaspé Peninsula were submitted under the solar energy call for tenders launched by Hydro-Québec in May 2025, which aimed to secure 300 megawatts of capacity.

In total, the utility received 60 bids from 14 administrative regions, representing 481 megawatts. Individual solar projects are limited to a maximum installed capacity of 25 megawatts and must be connected to the grid by 2029.

As with wind energy proposals, solar projects must maximize economic benefits for Quebec, avoid agricultural land and meet responsible procurement standards. Approximately 40% of the submissions include participation from a local or Indigenous community.

The results of the solar tender are expected to be announced in the first quarter of 2027.

Spring 2026 off to a calm start for rivers

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Cool temperatures and scattered rainfall have allowed for a gradual snowmelt, helping prevent spring flooding so far in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Approximately 20 millimetres of rain fell on April 19 and 20 without causing any issues.

“Our rivers are generally behaving very well. The 20 millimetres of rain, combined with the slow snowmelt, haven’t raised river levels,” says Félix Caron, regional director of Civil Protection.

“Everything is going very well for the 2026 flood season,” he notes.

Significant flooding would require a combination of heavy rainfall and warm temperatures — conditions.

Even Matapédia has been spared this year. “The ice breakup occurred on April 18. The hovercraft was on site,”



The Ristigouche River on April 17.

Photo: Randy Falle

notes Mr. Caron.

The hovercraft arrived too late to intervene in 2026. The ice floe went down the Ristigouche river the evening of the hovercraft arrival. The hovercraft at that point had spent many days de-icing crab fishermen harbours in New Brunswick.

No major flooding since 2019

The Gaspé Peninsula has not experienced major flooding since 2019, marking a relatively long period of stability.

“Since 2019, we haven’t

had the combination of rain and heat that can lead to consequences. When the two combine, sometimes the situation becomes more complex in terms of river flooding and flow rates. This is excellent news for our region,” says Mr. Caron.

Snow accumulation in mountainous areas is also below average this year.

“We’re below average for snow cover on the Gaspé Peninsula. That means less snow is melting into water that flows into the river watersheds,” notes the regional director of Civil Protection.

Lobster season start postponed twice

Gilles Gagné

SAINT-GODEFROI – The start of the lobster season along much of the Gaspé Peninsula was postponed several times before finally getting underway on May 3, due to cold water temperatures and poor weather conditions.

The season had initially been scheduled to begin on April 25. It was first delayed to April 28, and later pushed back again as conditions failed to improve. Rough weather on May 1 and 2 ultimately convinced fishermen Fisheries and Oceans Canada to settle on May 3 as the opening date.

Gaspé Peninsula lobster is typically among the first to reach markets each spring. This year, however, fishermen from Newfoundland and Labrador were able to head out earlier, with lobsters from the province already available in Montreal and Quebec City as of April 29.

Meanwhile, snow crab fishermen in the Gaspé Peninsula, the Magdalen Islands and New Brunswick were informed on April 29 of the first sighting this year of a North American right whale in the eastern part of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

Fishermen operating in the area were required to remove their traps from the water within five days. This measure is intended to reduce the risk of entanglement for the endangered species.

Love

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Earth Day event held in New Richmond

CYNTHIA DOW

On Saturday, April 18 Environnement Vert Plus (EVP) organized an event in recognition of Earth Day, celebrated annually on April 22.

This year the international theme was Our Power, Our Planet, emphasized the role individuals play in supporting a healthy environment.

Held at the Adrian Gauvreau Community Centre behind the Town Hall, the EVP event featured a variety of kiosks and 13 presentations. EVP volunteer Robert Lapointe told SPEC that sponsors covered the entire cost of the event.

The Mayor of New Richmond, Éric Dubé, attended the event as did Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes. Magician David Philippe was on hand to entertain the crowd.

The first presentation, delivered by Luc Potvin and Éric Giguère, focused on the social land trust established to ensure the long-term maintenance of



Photo: Cynthia Dow

Marie-Claude Ricard's presentation on year-round gardening drew significant interest.

Les Jardins Viridis in Maria.

Other presentations covered topics such as fruit tree pruning and gathering public input for the Gaspésie climate plan.

One of the most popular talks was given by Bonaventure's Marie-Claude Ricard, who explained different methods of producing food at home year-round, along with which plants are best suited to each

technique. "With only three inches of soil you can grow most greens year-round in the house," she told the audience.

Michel Chouinard of the Conseil régional de l'environnement de la Gaspésie (CREG) said he was impressed by the quality of the presentations and hopes to find ways to make the information more accessible to Gaspésians.

Local survey about access to midwives

Cynthia Dow

A local organization, Accès Sage-Femmes, has launched a survey — available in both English and French — to gather feedback on access to midwifery services in the Baie des Chaleurs area.

While the practice of midwifery dates back thousands of years, today's midwives are trained professionals who provide primary care to pregnant women and their babies during pregnancy, labour, birth and the postpartum period.

Accès Sage-Femmes is seeking input on "your choices and your perception of the pregnancy services available here," according to a flyer distributed by the group.

Responses to the survey will be confidential and anonymous. The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete and is available online at <https://s.som.ca/7iafU>. The deadline to participate is May 9.

CISSS de la Gaspésie repurposes modular housing units

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ — Modular housing units installed in 2024 in Maria and Gaspé—originally intended to accommodate internationally recruited nurses—are now being reassigned for new use.

The CISSS de la Gaspésie confirmed the shift in response to questions about the units, noting that international recruitment efforts are currently on hold. As a result, the organization is looking to maximize the use of the existing infrastructure.

In Maria, where the units have been in place since February 2025, the occupancy rate currently sits at 45%. Plans are underway to dedicate seven units to interns and members of the provincial mobile team. The remaining unit will be converted to support employees, managers and professionals—such as doctors and pharmacists—travelling for work.

Usage is somewhat higher at the Gaspé site, where occupancy has reached 68% over the same period. Since June 2025, three units have been housing Family Medicine Group (GMF) trainees and professionals.

Looking ahead, three units will continue to serve GMF trainees and professionals, while four others will be reassigned to interns and provincial mobile team members. The final unit will be used to accommodate employees and professionals on business travel.

"The goal is to continue increasing the utilization of the units," the CISSS states in an email. The construction contract was awarded to Habitations Mont-Carleton, which submitted the lowest bid at \$170,561 per unit, for a total of approximately \$3 million. The overall project budget reached \$5 million, including two additional units already in service in Charlevoix.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



Who Can We Trust?

Not so long ago, spotting fake news felt like an easy thing to do. If a headline claimed something unbelievable, most of us knew it was just that, fake news. The National Enquirer has printed photos of Bigfoot that we were assured were real and that he and Yeti the Abominable Snowman were getting married! But today, things are far less obvious. With the rise of artificial intelligence and deepfakes (images, videos or audio that have been generated using artificial intelligence), the line between what is real and what is not has become harder to see.

How do we know what to trust?

The first step is knowing that no single source is completely free of bias, or the way they view the world. Every news organization, whether it leans politically left or right, sees information through its own lens. That does not make it fake or untrustworthy, but it does mean readers should be aware. The facts may overlap, but how the story is told can shape its viewpoint.

Instead of relying on one source, it is wise to read or listen to several. If a number of reputable outlets are reporting the same basic facts, there is a stronger chance the information is accurate. If a story appears only in one place, be skeptical. It may be incomplete, misleading or outright false.

Artificial intelligence (AI) adds another challenge to understanding what is true and accurate. AI tools can now create images, videos, and entire articles. Some of this technology is extremely impressive, but it also opens the door to lies. A video may be 100% false. An article that seems believable may not have been written by a human at all.

That does not mean we have to question absolutely everything we read or see. It does mean we should slow down. Ask questions: Where did this come from? Who wrote it? Can I find other reliable sources reporting the same thing? Trustworthy articles still exist.

Many people are realizing that news from closer to home is possibly less biased. Community newspapers, such as the Gaspé Spec, whose staff lives in the same geographical area as their readers, report with a certain point of view. When Gilles Gagné writes an editorial, he often relates the issue to how it may affect Gaspésians, directly or indirectly.

When reporting to your neighbours, there's less room for exaggeration and more motivation to get the facts just right. The Spec may not have the huge resources or speed of larger papers, but often provides something very real: familiarity, and a direct connection to the community. While no outlet is entirely free from bias, local journalism often feels more grounded because the people telling the stories are "us."

Now let's consider social media, where information spreads faster than ever, without verification. Over time, we tend to see a lack of opposing viewpoints. At times, we may even be reading conspiracy theories, and there are certainly plenty of those around. How accurate is social media, where anyone can post about anything? Be skeptical.

Looking ahead, things are only going to get more difficult. AI will continue to grow, and telling real from fake may become even more difficult. Hopefully, tools will be developed to help people better identify false information. In the meantime, we can continue to ask basic questions: Who wrote this? Where did it come from? Why was it created?

We know that we cannot trust everything we read and hear. Sometimes, trust begins right at our own doorstep. A local paper still values getting the story right. Trust me, the Gaspé Spec gives you, to the very best of our ability, real news.

Announcements

Peter Garvin Almond

October 7, 1935 - February 24, 2026

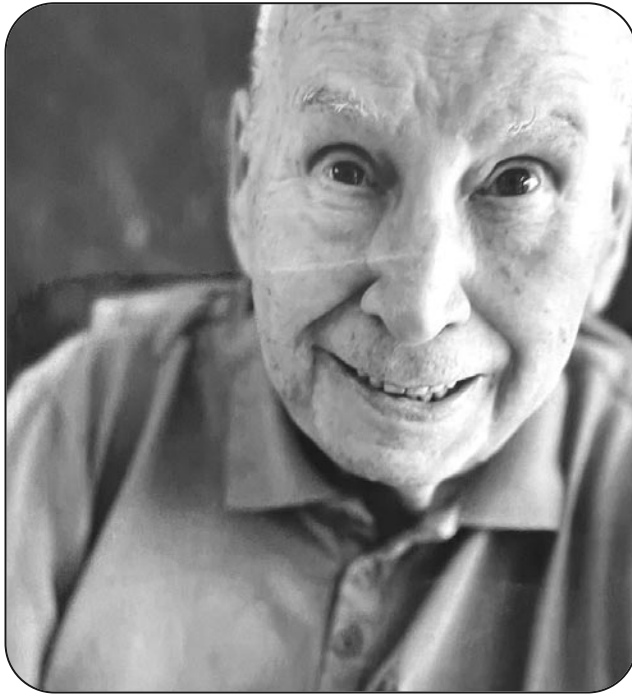
A life well lived, deeply loved.

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of Peter Garvin Almond, at the age of 90, on February 24, 2026, at the CHSLD in New Carlisle.

Born on October 7, 1935, in Montreal, Peter lived a full and vibrant life marked by laughter, love and deep devotion to his family.

He was the beloved husband of Emily Almond (née Gray) for 66 years, who sadly predeceased him in 2023. Emily was the centre of his world, and together they built a family grounded in warmth, loyalty and enduring affection.

Peter was a proud and loving father to Debbie Blakeman (Barry); Judy Tutkaluk (Peter); Sandra Denison (Rob); David Almond (Gina); and Tanya Almond (Charlie), eight grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. He cherished his family deeply, and though they were spread across Canada and the United States, he took great joy in the times they were able to get together.



his childhood roots, settling in the beloved historic Almond home in Shigawake - built by his grandmother in 1912. They were happiest there.

Peter was known for his sociability - his wonderful sense of humour, love of telling jokes and sharing old stories, and his ability to make those around him laugh. Peter had a sharp mind and a natural gift for math and numbers. He followed current events, always staying up to date on news. He loved books - especially mysteries and history. He enjoyed his Netflix shows, movies and documentaries. Above all this, he loved his family. His playful spirit and warm heart will be sadly deeply missed by all who knew him.

The family would like to thank and acknowledge the many cherished caregivers at the CHSLD, especially those whom Peter came to consider friends, for their dedication, care and kindness over the last four years.

Burial will be held June 13, at 1 p.m. at St Paul's in Shigawake.

Peter worked at Northern Telecom for more than 35 years, where he built a career in various skilled trades while also forming lifelong friendships. After retiring, he and Emily returned to



His memory will live on in the hearts of all those who loved him.

Announcements



Obituaries

LEGGO: Frances Eileen (née Harrison)

It is with quiet sadness that the family announces the passing of Frances Eileen Leggo (née Harrison), who died peacefully on March 15, 2026, at the age of 102, at Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville, Ontario.

Born in the Gaspé region, Frances later moved to Montreal, where she met and married her husband, Paul Leo Leggo. Together they raised their four children, Jack, Robert, Joan and Allen, building a life rooted in family and hard work.

After many years in Montreal, Frances and Paul relocated to Ontario. Upon retirement, they returned to their beloved Gaspé, where they spent many cherished summers, while continuing to winter in Ontario. Their time back home held a special place in their hearts.

Frances was predeceased by her husband, Paul Leo Leggo, and by three of her children: Robert, Joan, and Allen. She is survived by her son, Jack, as well as four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, who will remember her warmth, strength, and long life well lived.

A funeral mass will be held at 4 p.m. on June 6, 2026, at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Douglstown, 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.



PAUL: Neva Grace Harbour

November 12, 1926 – March 20, 2026

With a heavy heart we would like to an-

nounce the passing of our dear mother on March 20, 2026, at the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta, at the age of 99 years and 4 months.

Mom was predeceased by her husband, George Paul; son, Gary Paul; grandsons, Rocky Maloney and Robert Jr. Paul; daughter-in-law, Bernadette Paul; son-in-law, Ron Levesque; parents, Elvena Gallichan and Lewis Harbour; stepfather, Wyndham Langlois; sisters, Greta Cyr and Ann Mullin; brothers, Emery Harbour and Ross Harbour.

Left to mourn is her son, Robert; daughters, Merina (Wayne), Geraldine, and Elizabeth (Dallas); 15 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren; 6 great-great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Mom lived a long healthy life in Haldimand until her health prohibited her from living on her own. Mom enjoyed the outdoors, picking blueberries, walking in the woods to her pond, attending to her flowers, making puzzles and sightseeing tours on her beloved Gaspé coast with her faithful companion Max. Mom was a kind loving mother, grandmother, and friend. She will be greatly missed by all of us, R.I.P. mom, we pray you are healthy, happy and enjoying reuniting with all your loved ones in heaven.

Our thoughts are always with you,

Our memories never fade.

We treasure all the years we shared,

And all the love you gave.

We'll always love and miss you,

With every passing day.

The longing just to see you,

Will never go away.

The funeral will be held in Sandy Beach, Gaspé, this summer. The date is not known at this time and will be announced when arrangements are final.

We would like to send out a big thank you from the family to John Cyr, Lewis and Dora Harbour, and Marcelle and Paul Poirier for being so kind and helpful to mom, especially when we were not able to be there. Your kindness will not be forgotten.

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In Memory

CARON: Velda Renouf

In memory of a loving sister who left us too soon on May 4, 2024.

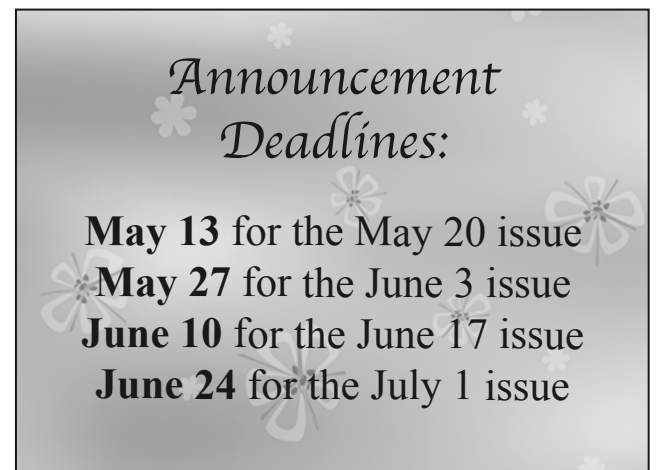
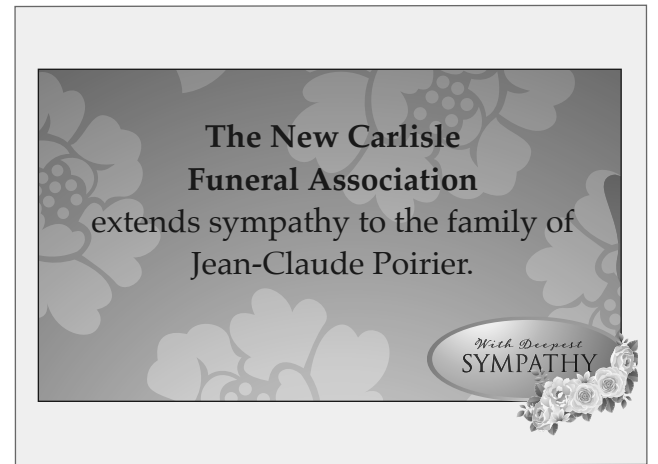
It still seems unbelievable,


That you're gone.

No words will ever say,


How much we love and miss you.

Lovingly remembered by her sister, Donna; brother, Vaughan; and husband, Claude.





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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
May 16: Mother's Day breakfast from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost: adults \$12, children \$6.
June 1: Summer gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m., canteen available.

SHIGAWAKE:
Shigawake Music Festival and Agricultural Fair
May 10: Mother's Day brunch. Doors open at 8 a.m. Cost: adults \$15, children \$8.
May 23: Country Decades Show featuring The Nash Stanley Band. Doors open at 7 p.m., \$10 entry. Dress code is Country Dance.

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, May 10
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, May 17
10 a.m. Service

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

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN
Sunday, May 10
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, May 17
10 a.m. Service

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.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES:
50 plus club
May 10: The Mother's Day/Father's Day brunch will take place from 9 a.m. - noon. Cost: 13+ \$18, 7-12 \$12 and 0-6 \$5.
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

PARISH OF GASPÉ
Sunday, May 10
St. James, Wakeham
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Holy Baptisms
Sunday, May 17
St. Philip - St. James, Sandy Beach
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

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

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
Sunday, May 10
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Hope Town
3 p.m. Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Thursday, May 14
New Carlisle
5 p.m. Holy Eucharist
Sunday, May 17
New Carlisle
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

HOROSCOPES - May 4 to May 10

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20
Aries, a professional door you thought was locked is actually just heavy. Push a little harder. Your honesty is exactly what a stalled project needs to move forward.
TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21
Financial clarity is coming your way, Taurus. You might discover a subscription you don't need or a better way to save for that big-ticket item. Your future self will thank you.
GEMINI - May 22/June 21
Your words have extra weight this week, Gemini. Use them to bridge a gap between friends or to draft that important email. A sibling or close neighbor has some surprising news for you.
CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22
Don't ignore your dreams right now, Cancer. Your subconscious is trying to solve a puzzle while you sleep. Keep a notepad by the bed; a "Eureka!" moment arrives soon.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23
You're the glue holding your team together this week, Leo. While you're busy leading, don't forget to delegate. You'll find that people are more than willing to help if you seek assistance.
VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22
A change in your daily routine brings a massive boost to your mood, Virgo. Try a morning workout or a different lunch spot. Breaking the cycle opens the door for a fresh perspective.
LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23
Romance is leaning toward the intellectual this week, Libra. A deep conversation about your values or goals will bring you closer to a partner or a new interest.
SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, whether it's your home life or a long-term project, pay attention to the small details and you will prevent a headache later. A family member offers some sage advice.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21
Your curiosity is your best asset this week, Sagittarius. Take a deep dive into a topic that usually bores you—you'll find a hidden connection that benefits your career.
CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20
Patience is your mantra, Capricorn. You're waiting for an answer, and while the silence is frustrating, the result will be worth it. Use the downtime to refine your current strategy.
AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18
You are a magnet for eccentric people this week, Aquarius. Embrace the weirdness. A chance encounter with someone outside your usual circle sparks a very profitable idea.
PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20
Quiet reflection is more productive than busy work right now, Pisces. Slip away for some solitude. You'll soon have the clarity you need to make a big decision about your living situation.

HOROSCOPES - May 11 to May 17

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20
Slow down to smell the roses, Aries. You've been running at full speed, and your body is asking for a break. A evening at home will recharge your batteries for a big weekend.
TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21
Creativity hits you in an unexpected place, Taurus. It might even come while you're doing chores. Explore a new idea thoroughly, as it might be the creative spark you've been looking for.
GEMINI - May 22/June 21
A misunderstanding is cleared up by a simple phone call, Gemini. Don't let a text message stew in your mind. Direct communication is the only way to keep your peace of mind this week.
CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22
Focus on your workspace, Cancer. A little reorganization and some new decor will shift the energy and help you focus. You'll be surprised how much

your environment affects your output.
LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23
Your generosity is noted, Leo. Helping a colleague or friend with a thankless task will earn you major karma points. Expect a small, pleasant surprise to come back to you.
VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, steer clear of over-analyzing a recent social interaction. You did fine, and people enjoyed your company. Focus on the future instead of replaying the past on a loop.
LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23
A financial risk might be tempting, but the stars suggest sticking to the plan for now, Libra. Focus on "slow and steady" gains rather than "get rich quick" schemes this week.
SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22
You're feeling extra protective of your time, Scorpio, and that's okay. Saying "no" to an invitation isn't a rejection of the person; it's an investment in

your own mental health.
SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21
Laughter is your best medicine this week, Sagittarius. Seek a person who always makes you giggle. A lighthearted approach to a serious problem will reveal the simplest solution.
CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20
Your reputation is preceding you in a good way, Capricorn. Someone in a position of power has their eye on your work. Keep your standards high; the payoff is closer than you think.
AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, an old hobby is calling your name. Dust off those tools or that camera. Reconnecting with a past passion will give you the emotional boost you've been looking for.
PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20
Trust the timing of your life, Pisces. Something you wanted didn't work out, but that's because something better is currently in the works.

SPDS Journalism Club celebrate their Moms

You celebrate your mother on the tenth of May,
But you should celebrate yours every day.

You could get her flowers,
To show her infinite powers.
You could make a card,
And it will hit her heart hard.
But the best present of all,
You might find small.
But it's what your mother dreams of,
The best present of all is your love.

By Alexandra Evans



Mom you are the best,
love you,
talks to me when I need to,
helps me when ever I need her,
every day your love is more than a mother loves,
overall you are the best mom ever!

By Leony Cormier

Mother days poem

Roses are red, violets are blue, you make me bloom like a
tulip, beautiful and colourful, you're the white rose in my
field of red, making you different is the best of you,
having you in my life is like a miracle can come in a blue
moon but will still bloom.

By Juliana Gallant

This year Mothers Day is on May 10th, 1 day before my birthday.
Here is a little poem for my mother.

She kisses my boobos, she kisses my head, she makes me giggle,
lalalala.

My mom Ashley is the greatest one.

Love you mommy, **Love Liam Hottot**



Mom you are hard working,
Love you,
Talks to me when i'm feeling down,
Helps me when I need help,
Every day,
Over all you're the best mom ever

McKenna Flowers

Dear Mothers
I want to say a big thank you for all the wonderful things
you do. Like cook supper, take us places, play games with
us and you are there whenever we need you. You may not
get all the thank-yous or the pleases that you deserve.
Take this letter as a big thank you for all the times that
you weren't thanked. In the end I think that you should be
celebrated every day.

Sincerely, Tori Skene

May 10 is Mother's Day,
but you should celebrate them everyday!
You hug me when I am sad,
You cheer me when I am glad.
You're the best Mom ever,
and I love you forever.
I love you more than words can say.
To Mommy, **Love Lucy Couture**

Dear mom
I like when you cook food, thanks for getting my
clothes in the morning and she puts me to bed.

Gage Hottot



WISHING YOU A DAY FILLED
WITH LOVE, APPRECIATION,
AND ALL THE HAPPINESS
YOU GIVE TO OTHERS
EVERY DAY!

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!



Where spring awakens along Chaleur Bay

With dreary, damp days and April showers behind us, Gaspésiens are beginning to feel a renewed sense of energy and the promise of summer ahead.

In each small town along our rugged, winding Chaleur Bay, there is a quiet awareness that warmer temperatures are on their way, as yards and flower beds are carefully brought back to life.

The gateway to longer summer days lies before us, filling our hearts with the simple pleasure of lighter clothing and the familiar scent of salty Chaleur Bay air drifting in on soft evening breezes.

Let us be thankful to live in a place of fresh air and natural beauty, and always remember that each of us is fortunate to call one of these small towns home.

*Ken Ross
New Carlisle, Quebec.*



A Mother's Day Reflection

EMILY HOCQUARD

Mother's Day has a funny way of sneaking up on us every year. One minute, we're convincing ourselves that we have tons of time and then the next we're standing in a store aisle staring at greeting cards, slightly panicked, wondering why we waited so long as the good cards are all picked over.

It's a day filled with flowers, breakfast-in-bed attempts of questionable success, and heartfelt messages that somehow never feel quite big enough.

At its core, Mother's



Sticky fingers and big hearts—homemade cards that all moms are sure to treasure most!

Day isn't about perfect gifts or elaborate plans. It's about those small, everyday moments that usually go un-

noticed—like the way moms can find lost things in seconds, turn random ingredi-

ents into a full meal, or somehow know you're upset before you've said a word. It's about celebrating those quiet superpowers.

Of course, traditions vary, some people go all out with brunch reservations and carefully chosen presents. Others keep it simple: a phone call, a hug, maybe a handwritten note that says more than any store-bought card ever could.

Then there are the classic kid-made gifts—slightly lopsided crafts and drawings that proudly declare “I love you” in glitter and glue. Imperfect, but unbeatable in any mom's eyes and heart.

There's also something universally amusing about

how determined moms can be to not make a big deal out of this special day—while secretly appreciating every little effort.

In the end, Mother's Day is less about grand gestures and more about recognition. It's a pause button. It's a chance to say,

“I see everything you do, even the stuff I forget to mention.” Whether it's with laughter, gratitude, or a slightly burnt piece of toast served on a tray, the message lands all the same.

And if nothing else, it's the one day of the year when “Thanks, Mom” gets the spotlight it deserves.

Step-by-step breakfast in bed for Mommy!

STEP 1

Ask a grown up for help (NOT MOMMY) and choose a simple menu to start!

Here are some ideas:

- Toast with jam
- Yogurt with fruit
- Cereal
- Scrambled Eggs (with help)

STEP 2

Wash hands & prepare ingredients!

Always clean hands first, then gather everything you need so you're not running back and forth.

STEP 3

Prepare the food!

Toast the bread, cut up the fruit safely, cook the eggs with your helper and pour drinks carefully! Make sure to make the presentation beautiful! Bonus points for adding a flower and a napkin to the tray!

STEP 4

Surprise Mommy! Carry the tray slowly and wake her up gently! Make sure you wish her a Happy Mother's Day with a smile! To top off this gift, make sure to clean up any messes to start her day off right!

SPRING HAS SPRUNG WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

APRIL
 AWAKENING
 BLOOMS
 BREEZE
 BUDDING
 BUNNY
 CHIRPING
 EGGS
 FLOWERS
 GARDEN
 GREEN
 GROWS
 INSECTS
 NEST
 POLLEN
 REBIRTH
 SAPLING
 SHOWERS
 SPRING
 SUNNY
 SUNSHINE
 TREES

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

Mother's Day by the Bay

May is a month when many Gaspesians look forward to warmer temperatures. Yet one day in May carries a special meaning — Mother's Day.

Mothers carry burdens that often go unnoticed. Their sacrifices are endless, without boundaries. Their strength is fueled by love and compassion — qualities many strive to achieve.

In the small towns along our Chaleur Bay, mothers are the rock of families. Friendships may falter and youth may fade, but a mother's hope remains strong through it all.

The art of being a mother is rooted in a life lived with respect, honesty, care and unconditional love — even when the days are hazy or a little dull.

Let us all enjoy May 10 with that Gaspesian way of saying, “Love you, Mom.”

Ken Ross
 New Carlisle, Quebec

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