

# Kempffer House seeks funding to avoid permanent closure

● GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The board of Kempffer House is trying to save the cultural interpretation centre from closing permanently by setting up a fundraiser and increasing its efforts to secure funding from various organizations, following the Town of New Carlisle's decision to end its financial support to the site.

In fact, that decision goes back to 2023, according to board president Karine Lacroix. Before that, the Town of New Carlisle was supporting the Kempffer Cultural Interpretation Centre to the tune of \$20,000 annually.

Since then, the business model was adapted to the situation using a fragile balance.

"Every year, our bank account was at zero at the start of the season in June. We would replenish our finances with the revenues of the summer, using Summer Jobs Canada, which



Photo: Gilles Gagné

*The Kempffer Cultural Interpretation Centre will remain closed this summer without a substantial boost to its fund-raising campaign.*

was providing us with two students. The problem this year is that we didn't get a summer student grant. We understand that there is a lot of demand for students, but that is a blow. We can't start the season by asking volunteers to do all the work," explains Ms. Lacroix.

Currently, Heritage New Carlisle, the corporate name for the Kempffer Cultural Interpretation Centre, is \$18,000 deep in its credit line.

"We don't owe any of our suppliers anything. It is all on the credit line. We pay interest fees of a bit over \$200 per

month. When we open, we must add an insurance fee of \$600 per month," adds Karine Lacroix.

Since the November 2025 municipal elections, she points out that "I reached out to the municipal administration in December, January, with an

action plan, and again in April. We asked for an amount ranging between \$1,000 to \$14,000. In May, we were told a definitive no. The councillors told us though that our request for an amount between \$1,000 and \$14,000 never reached them," stresses Karine Lacroix.

## Looking for a clear reason

She points out that mayor Patrice Leclerc never provided a clear answer about the reasons justifying the municipal administration's refusal to support Kempffer House annually.

Since May, Karine Lacroix and the remaining two board members, Spencer Buttle and Tracy-Lee Pelletier, pursued other funding possibilities, seeking money from CASA, the Committee for Social Anglophone Action, the MRC of

*Cont'd on page 14*

# BCRS officially inaugurated ESSB hopes to boast enrolment

● GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE - The Eastern Shores School Board (ESSB) officially inaugurated the new Baie-des-Chaleurs Regional School (BCRS) in New Carlisle on June 15, marking the culmination of a project that had been sought for at least four decades. The original building housing New Carlisle High School dates back to 1913.

The school's 145 students were gradually transferred to the new facility following the Easter break, which ended on April 6.

The new school project was announced on September 23, 2021, and construction contractor Habitat Construction, of Matane, began work in April 2024. The school had originally



Photo: Gilles Gagné

*Students participated in the inauguration by holding the ribbon.*

been expected to open in 2024, but several factors delayed the project, including a strike by Quebec government engineers.

"The project, designed to

foster the success and development of children and teenagers, is now complete. From lighting and soundproofing to the choice of materials, everything was

carefully considered to provide a warm and welcoming environment conducive to learning," says Eastern Shores School Board director general Denise Simoneau.

Parents, teachers, community members and local elected officials attended the morning inauguration ceremony. An open house for the public followed in the afternoon.

Each classroom is equipped with collaborative spaces designed to accommodate the school's combined classes. "Students from different grade levels can be separated so they can work independently. This allows students to work alone or in groups," explains Ms. Simoneau.

School principal Shea McGuinness expresses a lot of enthusiasm when asked to comment on how the first two months have gone.

"I've never seen so much joy in the students' eyes.

*Cont'd on Page 2*

When they first came here, my heart was full because they were so proud that this place belonged to them. It was a special moment for everyone. It's a pleasure to see the children making the new facilities their own for just over two months," she says.

Catherine Blouin, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for the Bonaventure Riding and Family minister, thinks that the school will give a boost to the area's appeal.

"There are likely families who will want their children to attend a school like this. I feel like going back to school myself."

#### Enrolment goals and the importance of the gym

The new school has room for roughly 100 more students than the current enrollment of 145. Given the quality of the building and its facilities, Ms. Simoneau hopes to attract eligible students from the French sector to the English system.

"We want to see the enrolment increase; that's really our wish," admits Ms. Simoneau.

"The school board has done some research and the number of students that could legally make the switch from French to English is nearly



Photos: G. Gagné

*Shyanne Denis likes the vast space of the building.*

100 more students between Bonaventure and Gascons," she stresses.

Architects from the Rimouski firm Proulx et Savard, notably project manager David Savard, designed the building to resemble a house, as reflected in its gabled roof. The layout was also created to accommodate both younger children and teenagers while allowing them to move easily throughout the building.

Principal Shea McGuinness suggests that the students are particularly impressed by the gymnasium, which has high ceilings and is spacious enough to host provincially sanctioned competitions. The gym is particularly well attended around lunch time, she

points out.

"It's been a positive change for the young people. As we know, activity is really important in the lives of young people. It's made a really positive change," she shares.

Shyanne Denis is one of the students who likes the gym, and the school in general. "It's bigger and gives more space," she notes. "I think it's really beautiful," adds 13-year-old Maliah Bujold.

Connor Boudreau is also delighted to play his favourite sport, basketball, in the new gym, but he also likes the library. "I like the gym, a lot. There is a lot of space. I also like the library. There are lots of books and stuff," he says,

also impressed by the importance given to the light in the building.

#### Within budget

Although the project was completed later than anticipated, the budget established once the plans and specifications had been finalized was respected, says Ms. Simoneau.

"The cost of the building was \$30.3 million. The balance was used to buy equipment. So, the budget was respected," she underscores.

In addition to the gymnasium, the students will soon have access to outdoor sports facilities. Multi-sport fields will be built in the coming months. The first stage of

landscaping was in fact carried out in 2024 by the heavy machinery students trained at The Anchor, the New Carlisle Academic and Vocational Education Centre.

A fundraising campaign called "A field for all" was announced publicly on January 22. The project requires \$1.3 million and has already received \$805,000 from the Quebec government, leaving \$500,000 to be raised within the community.

The field will include a standard soccer field, a basketball court, two tennis courts that can also accommodate two pickle ball courts, a softball diamond and a walking/jogging track around the soccer field.



*Connor Boudreau particularly likes the gym and the library.*

## Health care: Another hole in the regional network's belt

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPE – Another fiscal year; another challenge for Santé Québec Gaspésie—formerly the Integrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS) of Gaspésie, as its budget will not be fully indexed for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

Santé Québec is offering a 0.5% increase, while expenditures are expected to rise by 2.6%, creating an estimated shortfall of between \$10 million and \$20 million.

"We will not jeopardize our services to the public. I want to reassure everyone. These will be financial adjustments related to certain services, and we will work through this with headquarters over the course of the year," says president and chief executive officer (CEO) Martin Pelletier.

The regional network had expected a 4.3% indexation increase on its \$583 million budget for the coming year.

However, a comparison of costs across the provincial net-

work meant that some underperforming sectors saw their allocations reduced, while sectors delivering better results did not retain their funding. It is a lose-lose situation.

The new shortfall comes after a year in which \$30 million had already been recovered.

"We're left with a shortfall of \$10 to \$20 million. That's where we have some wiggle room because there are revenue streams we're negotiating with Santé Québec," explains Mr. Pelletier.

Despite the reduction during the 2025-2026 fiscal year, Santé Québec Gaspésie is ending the year with a balanced budget.

#### A summer with little room to manoeuvre

The vacation period will present another management challenge as the network wants to ensure staff can take time off this summer.

"They deserve it," asserts Mr. Pelletier.

However, there is little room to maneuver.

Already, the emergency room and intensive care unit at Gaspé Hospital are under pressure.

"We'll ask the team to handle the emergency department, but there won't be enough staff to care for patients in intensive care. Either patients will be redirected to other intraregional facilities or transferred via medical evacuation to other external facilities," predicts Mr. Pelletier.

There are three intensive care beds in Gaspé, located in the same wing as the hospital's emergency department.

The on-call roster is limited when it comes to handling unforeseen circumstances.

As soon as an absence occurs, calls are made to independent contractors and other regions. Otherwise, services risk being understaffed.

In obstetrics, services are expected to continue this summer in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, but Maria faces staffing concerns.

"We just learned that a woman has been placed on preventive leave because she was pregnant. We managed to avoid a staffing shortfall last weekend. Since she was on the schedule, every time her shifts come up, we have to find a replacement."

#### Maria project moving forward

The emergency department and intensive care unit project at Maria Hospital is now before the Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI).

The estimated \$300 million project falls under the agency's responsibility, and construction committees will be established shortly.

"The first step is to confirm the clinical need, which has already been validated by the Ministry of Health. Santé Québec needs to validate it, which is just a formality as far as I'm concerned. We need to put together a project team. The SQI has its project managers, and we need representa-



Photo: N. Sergerie

*Martin Pelletier, president and chief executive officer of Santé Québec Gaspésie.*

tives to ensure the project meets our needs. Those are the next steps," explains Mr. Pelletier.

Preparation work is expected to take about four years.

If everything goes according to plan, construction calls for tenders would be issued in 2030.

# Police Report

Rivière-au-Renard tragedy:  
Marc-Jules Chouinard's case postponed until August 4

One of the two accused in the tragic accident that claimed two lives on May 20, 2023, in Rivière-au-Renard, has had his case postponed once again, this time until August 4. Marc-Jules Chouinard, 51, appeared by videoconference on June 17 from the detention centre. Judge Guy de Blois maintained a publication ban on the contents of that hearing. The accused must appear in person at the Percé courthouse for further proceedings. Three days have been set aside for the hearing.

Mr. Chouinard faces two counts of non-premeditated murder, two counts of manslaughter, criminal harassment, uttering threats, criminal negligence causing death and possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose in connection with the deaths of Gabriel Noël, 19, and Dylan Samuel-Francoeur, 18.

His co-accused and son, Simon Dufort-Chouinard, 21, was sentenced on June 11, to 13 years in prison after pleading guilty to reduced charges of manslaughter in connection with the deaths. A publication ban prevents details of the ruling from being disclosed so as not to influence the outcome of his father's proceedings. An out-of-court agreement could also be reached in this case.

## Claude Doiron's trial postponed until November

The trial of Claude Doiron, the former Sûreté du Québec spokesperson accused of sexual offences, did not end on June 19 as scheduled. Due to delays in the proceedings, the criminal prosecution and defence will now present their closing arguments in November.

The examination and cross-examination of the accused are now complete at the Percé courthouse. On June 18, defence lawyer Jean-François Boucher declared his case closed. The court quickly agreed that closing arguments could not be presented in a single day.

Claude Doiron is charged with sexual assault, sexual contact, and inciting sexual contact with a minor, acts that allegedly took place in 1988. The minor's identity is protected by a publication ban. Claude Doiron is well-known in the Gaspé Peninsula, the Magdalen Islands, and the Lower St. Lawrence regions, as he was the spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec for 11 years.

During the week of June 15 to 18, the colour of the vehicle driven by Mr. Doiron at the time of the alleged events played a central role in the trial. According to the complainant, some of the alleged acts occurred in a red vehicle in the summer of 1988 in Cloridorme. However, correspondence produced by the SAAQ confirms that at the time of the alleged events, Claude Doiron owned a light blue Datsun registered in his name.

According to Radio-Canada, the criminal prosecutor Louis-Philippe Desjardins requested the presentation of rebuttal evidence. He justified his request by stating that, in his view, contradictions remained in the defence's evidence.

Judge Pierre Lortie reminded the court that rebuttal evidence must include new evidence presented by the defence, as well as an unforeseeable element. The defence argued that this rebuttal evidence did not meet these admissibility criteria, which led the judge to accept it conditionally. During his deliberations, the Quebec Court judge will therefore have the discretion to consider or reject these elements. It was in this context that another witness was called to the stand. He is a 64-year-old man, a member of the complainant's family.

This witness stated that he clearly remembered Claude Doiron driving a red vehicle during the summer of 1988. He testified that the vehicle actually belonged to the accused's mother, who had travelled to the area at that time with her part-

ner and the accused. The defence asked him to describe the vehicle in more detail.

The witness was also questioned about a comment Claude Doiron allegedly made to him that summer regarding the complainant's appearance, which he described as strikingly beautiful. The witness added that this comment had deeply affected him and that he remembered it very vividly.

## Pascal Bergeron to undergo a second trial in April 2027

Environmental activist Pascal Bergeron, 45, from Bonaventure, will face a second, separate trial on April 13 and 14, 2027, at the New Carlisle courthouse for a criminal harassment charge that was laid against him in July 2025. That Quebec Court decision was rendered on June 19 at the New Carlisle courthouse.

Pascal Bergeron is well known for his role as spokesperson for Environnement vert plus in recent years. His first trial is scheduled for February, when he will face a charge of sexual assault. That charge was laid in February 2025. The trial was initially scheduled for February 2026, but the accused changed lawyers over the winter.

In both cases, the plaintiff is the same woman, whose identity is protected by a publication ban. Both trials will be held before a judge alone. Criminal prosecutor Sam Bernard points out that the accused has chosen to have the two charges against him pursue separate cases. “These are different charges that were laid at different times. Essentially, the accused has the right to a trial for each of these charges, since they are two separate cases. That’s what he did,” says prosecutor Sam Bernard.

## New child pornography charges for Yan-Éric Bélanger

Four new charges were recently laid at the New Carlisle courthouse against Saint-Elzéar's Yan-Éric Bélanger in connection with child pornography. Already charged with possessing child sexual abuse and exploitation material, he now faces additional charges of producing and accessing child pornography, as well as producing child sexual abuse and exploitation material. The 28-year-old man will return to court on September 18. According to CHNC, the suspect was arrested at his home on February 17 following the execution of a search warrant. Computer equipment was seized for analysis. Yan-Éric Bélanger remains free pending further proceedings.

## Rescue operation conducted successfully in Parc de la Gaspésie

A rescue operation on June 23 was successfully carried out in the Mount Olivine area of Parc de la Gaspésie after two female hikers reportedly sustained lower-body injuries and were unable to move.

Following the 2:15 p.m. emergency call, a search-and-rescue operation was quickly launched to locate and assist the two women. At the time of the intervention, they were no longer together on the mountain.

One of the victims was located and evacuated by helicopter from the summit. A low cloud ceiling limited aerial access to the second victim's location.

Sûreté du Québec search-and-rescue officers, assisted by SEPAQ employees, conducted a ground operation in difficult terrain to reach the second hiker and bring her to safety.

Both women were treated for injuries that were not life-threatening. The operation ended at about 1 a.m. on June 24.

# Nice weather brings return of vandalism in Chandler

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER – What has become a sad tradition appears to be back in Chandler, as the arrival of warm weather coincides with a return of vandalism.

The Lake Vachon promenade is the latest victim of these senseless acts, which have become a recurring problem every spring.

Several poles have been knocked over. “When the town’s beautification crew returns to work, the troublemakers—let’s call them that—destroy town property, and it’s very unfortunate,”

notes mayor Gilles Daraîche.

Over the years, the town has approved budgets to install surveillance cameras.

Some have already been installed, and others will be added soon.

“We know they’re going to break them anyway. That’s not what’s going to stop them. They roam around at night and vandalize things. They’ll wear balaclavas. They’re little nighttime thugs on the loose,” the mayor says.

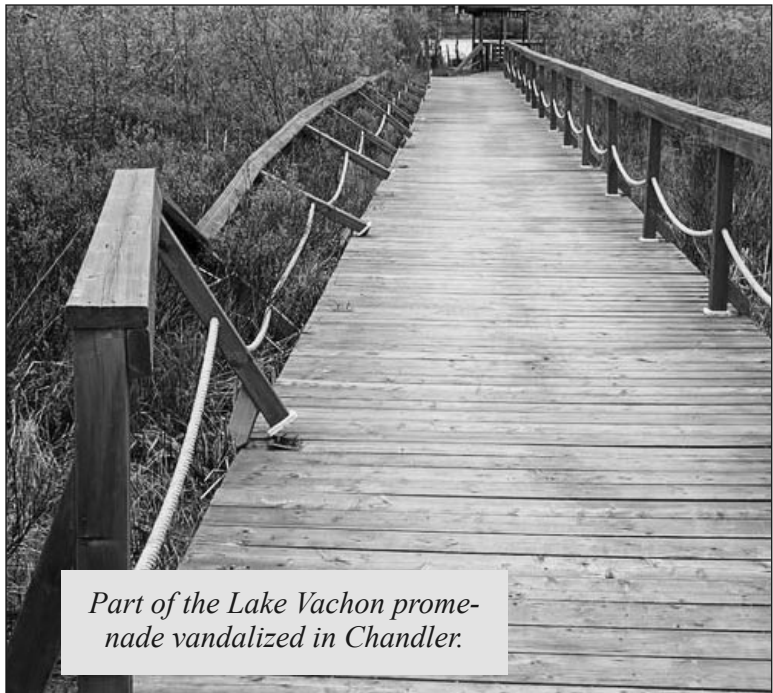
Identifying those responsible is difficult. “Residents seem upset about this. We’re doing great things for the community, and they’re the ones

who end up paying for it,” says the mayor, urging people to act responsibly.

“Whatever the cost, it’s money being thrown in the trash.”

Municipal crews will repair the promenade in the coming days. "In the same area, a beautiful new playground is on the way. There used to be one there. They've already broken things. Does that make us want to build another one? This morning, we're asking ourselves that," reflects the mayor.

Mr. Daraïche is calling on anyone who may have witnessed the acts of vandalism to come forward.



*Part of the Lake Vachon promenade vandalized in Chandler.*

Photo: Town of Chandler

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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

The impact of the road network investment deficit

As summer and vacation season are kicking off, Quebecers and visitors from outside the province will travel the road network that is in strikingly bad shape. Recent reports revealed that Quebec’s road infrastructure deficit now stands at a shocking \$31 billion.

Although the figure is striking, it is not surprising. The governments of the last 30 years have generally opted to expand the network while neglecting the maintenance of existing roads, as if Quebec’s population concentration was justifying such investments in new roads.

Moreover, commuter transportation has been largely neglected over the last two terms under the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government.

Despite claims that no previous government had invested such amounts in commuter transportation, the CAQ was misleading the public by including the amounts earmarked for the Quebec City-Lévis Third link project, an initiative that does not qualify as a commuter transportation project.

In fact, that project will probably never come to fruition, which didn’t prevent the government of former premier François Legault from recently spending \$275 million on technical studies tied to the Third link.

How did we get here?

Many factors over the last three decades have contributed to the deterioration of the Quebec’s road network and the fact that it would take at least \$31 billion to repair it. Let’s keep in mind that this amount increases every day because the money currently injected in the road network is not enough to keep it afloat.

It’s both simple and complicated. Firstly, we live in a province where there’s no integrated transportation policy. Every department operates in silos.

At Transports Québec, the road division doesn’t communicate with the rail division, and those two don’t communicate with the maritime division, let

alone the air transport division. The people running those divisions may talk to each other at times, but there is no clear communication link to tackle ways of implementing better practices. Yet the situation clearly calls for such dialogue.

The trucks travelling on Quebec’s public roads are among the heaviest in North America, along with those in New Brunswick and Ontario. Despite that reality, little consideration is given to shifting freight to rail or the St. Lawrence River, except in occasional political speeches dominated by wishful thinking.

If we compare the weight limits for our five-axle, 18-wheel trucks, Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick allow significantly heavier tractor-trailers than those permitted on American roads.

Here, the maximum weight limit, including the truck, trailer and the load, is 63,500 kilograms, or 63.5 metric tonnes. That’s 140,700 pounds.

In the United States, the limit is 36,400 kilograms, or 80,000 pounds, for the three same units. That’s 43% less, in a country where the thaw conditions aren’t the same! There are places, in fact the vast majority of that country, where the ground never thaws! No wonder the roads are better south of the border.

All this while Quebec’s weigh stations are essentially closed 90 to 95% of the time. Officials from Transports Québec will argue that there are patrol vehicles equipped with portable scales. It is true, but how many times have we seen them in action over the last decade?

The reality is that enforcement of weight limits is minimal in Quebec. Moreover, weight stations are closed at night, even though trucking operates around the clock.

The rule of thumb generally accepted by transportation experts suggests that one truck causes the same amount of damage as 40,000 cars. When a trailer is overloaded or improperly loaded, the impact can be equivalent to 1 million cars for a single truck.

Trucks are useful in our society. However, lowering their load limits would be greatly beneficial for our public finances. It can be done. The example already exists just south of the border.

Moving 300 tonnes there may require more trucks, and cost a tad more, but the savings from reduced road maintenance would benefit everyone.

That doesn’t even account for lower vehicle maintenance costs. A CAA-Québec report released days ago shows that over the last year, the number of calls linked to providing help to drivers who had blown a tire because of potholes increased by 11.4% compared to the previous year.

How do we get out of this mess?

It might take some kind of soft revolution. We’re definitely not done seeing potholes. However, it can be achieved.

Improving our road network is inseparable from an overall reflection on transportation in general, unless we’re prepared to spend twice as much money as necessary simply because we refuse to change current practices.

Quebecers need an integrated transportation policy. It exists in dozens of countries in the world. A quick example of that can be taken from Switzerland. There, a semi-trailer travelling a certain distance, let’s say 200 or 300 kilometres, has to be put on a piggyback train!

We really need to start somewhere, and fast. The road network investment gap stands at \$31 billion, yet the Quebec Infrastructure Plan allocates \$35.7 billion to roads over the next 10 years.

That means that under current regulations, roads are a bottomless pit. We’re not even catching up! Maritime and rail transport offer solutions that could ease the financial burden, but they remain largely absent from the equation.

There is a clear lack of focus on public transportation, whether for people or goods. For goods, we won’t build navigable canals or railways to reach the forest, but there are ways to transport non-perishable goods much more efficiently.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, we have one staggering example in front of our very eyes.

It took five years longer than expected to repair the 80-kilometre railway between New Richmond and the Port Daniel cement plant, a railroad largely located outside coastal erosion zones. Transports Québec could have done much better. Unfortunately, this is far from the only example.

Anyone driving between Pointe-à-la-Croix and Port Daniel has witnessed the deterioration of highway 132 since construction of the cement plant began in 2014.

What we often forget is that the condition of the road has an effect far beyond its regular users. The lack of emphasis on commuter transportation has an impact on our environmental record, public health, the tourism industry, and deprives thousands of citizens of daily activities.

There is an electoral campaign knocking at the door, it will be interesting to see if new ideas will be brought up by the candidates. It will be just as interesting to see whether voters ask them questions about these issues.

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# Decentralization tops priorities for elected officials

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Decentralizing powers from the provincial and federal government will be the top priority for members of the Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie following a strategic planning session held June 4 at the Gîte du Mont-Albert.

About 20 elected officials gathered to review the organization's current strategic plan and discuss priorities for the coming years. Decentralization emerged as one of the key issues.

“How can we ensure that decisions made in Quebec City and Ottawa reflect the realities of Gaspésie? We need to adapt and tailor programs, bring jobs back to the region, return decision-making authority to the region, and restore regional of-

fices of government departments in Gaspésie,” says President Mathieu Lapointe, who is also Mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer, prefect of the Avignon MRC and Chair of the Gaspésie Prefects' Table.

Since the creation of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine administrative region in 1987, decision-making authority has gradually shifted away from the region toward Rimouski and larger urban centres, he says.

“It’s a long-term trend. We feel we have less and less influence over decisions affecting our region. We want to bring that back. It will be part of our discussions over the coming months. We want to ensure that government departments maintain a strong and effective presence here and that regional offices stop being transferred to the Lower St. Lawrence or else-

where in Quebec. This has been happening gradually for decades,” says Mr. Lapointe.

In recent years, regional offices for Culture, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ), among others, have reduced their presence in Gaspésie.

“When people live in the region, they understand our realities and can adapt programs accordingly. When decisions are made far from here by people who don't know the territory — and it’s not because of bad intentions — it becomes difficult to respond to local needs and concerns,” he adds.

## Upcoming elections

The issue is expected to become one of the key topics raised during the next election



More than 20 elected officials gathered on June 4 at the Gîte du Mont-Albert during Gaspésie Day to define future priorities for the region.

Photo: N. Sergerie

campaign.

While elected officials worked on the broad directions they want to pursue, the group's detailed platform will be unveiled once the campaign period begins.

“We're giving ourselves a little more time to refine our requests,” says Mr. Lapointe.

In addition to decentraliza-

tion, participants discussed sustainable population growth, labour shortages, maintaining local services and addressing the region's infrastructure deficit.

The Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie brings together prefects, mayors and director generals from the region's MRCs.

# DPJ: More reports, but fewer direct interventions

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Although the number of reports is increasing in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the number accepted by the Youth Protection Branch is declining.

A total of 1,874 reports were received, an increase of 30 from the previous year.

The number of reports accepted dropped to 447, compared to 520 last year.

“We’ve seen a 14% decrease from last year in the number of in-depth assessments following a report. What this means is that many people are concerned and are reporting issues, and that’s necessary. We’re here to help. Our role when a report is filed is to see what we can offer before the DPJ (Director of Youth Protection) intervenes,” says Regional Director Michelle Frenette.

The goal remains to find alternatives.

“The Youth Protection Act is an exceptional law. It is an intrusive law. The aim is to mobilize parents, youth, and resources to prevent the DPJ from having to intervene.”

There has been a marked decrease in the Haute-Gaspésie and Rocher-Percé MRCs.

There were 63 accepted reports in Haute-Gaspésie, down from 102 last year.

The same trend was seen in Rocher-Percé, where accepted reports dropped from 104 to 55.

“There is a strong mobilization of various resources. We always put the child’s best interests first. We are there to guide and support, and likely



Photo: N. Sergerie

*Michelle Frenette, Director of Youth Protection for Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine.*

to make an initial intervention before mobilizing the community around the case. These are two MRCs that are very active,” says the director.

The work carried out over several years in the communities of Listuguj and Gesgapegiag is also yielding results.

“When we receive a report at the community level, we contact them directly. They work with us to decide whether or not to retain the child, depending on the services they can provide. There is a strong emphasis on fostering autonomy with the communities. They are very cooperative with us,” says Ms. Frenette.

## The causes remain the same

The factors leading to reports have not changed.

In approximately 60% of cases, neglect, psychological abuse, serious risks of neglect, and exposure to domestic violence are the predominant issues.

“We’re similar to the rest of Quebec. Anything related to neglect and the risk of neglect are issues we want to address. We’re in a fairly developed province. We shouldn’t be seeing children in situations of neglect. This is something we must focus on with our partners and families to prevent intervention in these types of situations,” exclaims Ms. Frenette.

The family environment remains the preferred setting for children.

“Clinical guidelines are geared toward maintaining children in the family environment. Removing a child can have a huge impact. When we can keep children close to their environment, it’s a win for them because it avoids disrupt-

ing their environment,” she explains.

Response times are also improving in assessment and referral.

There are fewer than 10 children on the waiting list, an improvement compared to two years ago, when there were 20.

“When there is a wait, we always monitor the situation. But in our region, we meet the deadlines. We have about thirty children awaiting the implementation of measures, mainly in Gaspé and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine,” says Ms. Frenette.

In the past year, 114 adolescents committed various offences under the Young Offenders Act, a figure consistent with last year.

“Mostly, they are boys. We see a certain stability. We’re similar to the rest of Quebec: assaults, failure to comply with orders or probation, thefts, and threats. We’re no different

from the rest of Quebec,” says Ms. Frenette.

## The workforce is in better shape

Recruitment has helped strengthen the teams in recent years. “Generally speaking, the teams are almost fully staffed. We’ve hired recently. We have competent people. We have competent department heads and clinical support staff. It’s a wonderful mission, difficult at times, but yes, our teams are dedicated and passionate,” says the director.

Retaining staff remains a challenge in maintaining adequate staff-to-client ratios.

The DPJ offers training to help employees develop their skills and encourage them to remain in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

The organization has reintegrated youth services to consolidate expertise.

## 2025 - 2026 Results in the Region

| MRC              | RETAINED | NOT-RETAINED | TOTAL |
|------------------|----------|--------------|-------|
| Bonaventure      | 85       | 291          | 376   |
| Avignon          | 65       | 141          | 206   |
| Haute-Gaspésie   | 63       | 229          | 292   |
| Côte-de-Gaspé    | 83       | 313          | 396   |
| Rocher-Percé     | 55       | 265          | 320   |
| Magdalen Islands | 19       | 112          | 131   |
| Gesgapegiag      | 45       | 43           | 88    |
| Listuguj         | 32       | 43           | 75    |
| Grand total:     | 447      | 1437         | 1884  |

Source: Santé Québec Gaspésie

# Chandler: Legal saga involving former mayor cost nearly \$450,000

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER – The legal disputes involving former Chandler mayor Louise Langlois, along with the Town's subsequent attempt to recover a portion of the related expenses, generated costs totalling \$444,313.84.

That figure was provided by the Town of Chandler following a motion filed after an out-of-court settlement brought the matter to a close when the Town withdrew its lawsuit in February.

According to the document, Ms. Langlois's lawyer, Charles Caza, billed \$316,744.67, a figure that includes proceedings before the Commission municipale du Québec (CMQ).

For its part, the Town spent \$127,539.17, notably in its ef-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Louise Langlois.

orts to recover funds related to the CMQ proceedings.

The confidential settlement reached between the parties does not reveal who ultimately

paid the various legal bills or what portion of the costs was absorbed by Chandler taxpayers.

The dispute stretched over nearly eight years.

## Town lawsuit

In January 2021, the Town Council adopted a resolution leading to the filing of a lawsuit against Ms. Langlois.

The Town argued that the allegations against the former mayor involved gross or intentional misconduct, that she had prioritized her personal interests and had acted in an intentional and premeditated manner.

Those arguments were reiterated in the motion seeking reimbursement of defence costs filed in January 2022.

At the time, the Town was

seeking \$230,411.

Chandler's lawyers argued, among other things, that "the decision rendered (...) on December 21, 2020, is damning with respect to the defendant and establishes that the defendant's acts or omissions constitute gross or intentional misconduct and/or are separable from the performance of her duties."

They also alleged that the former elected official "initiated numerous proceedings, some of which were unnecessary, unfounded, and incomplete in light of the evidence presented before the CMQ."

In December 2019, Louise Langlois was charged with 21 violations of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Elected Officials of Chandler.

Following hearings held in

July 2020, the Commission municipale du Québec concluded in December 2020 that she had committed 20 violations, including conflicts of interest.

Before the sanctions hearing, Ms. Langlois attempted to have the proceedings dismissed, challenged the notice of sanction issued against her and requested that the investigation be reopened. All of those requests were rejected by Administrative Judge Sandra Bilodeau.

The former mayor appealed to the Superior Court, where her case was dismissed in July 2021. An appeal to the Quebec Court of Appeal was also dismissed in October 2021.

The Town's motion further criticized Ms. Langlois for initiating additional legal proceedings after those decisions.

# Toward a vehicle registration fee to fund RéGÎM

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – As the Quebec government cuts \$300,000 from its operating subsidy and refuses to raise the gasoline tax to fund public transit in the Gaspé Peninsula, the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transportation Board (RéGÎM) is resigned to turning to a vehicle registration fee to balance its budget.

The MRCs of Avignon, Bonaventure, and Côte-de-Gaspé have approved the principle.

The Rocher-Percé MRC, however, is adopting a different approach.

The Magdalen Islands face a unique challenge, and the Haute-Gaspésie MRC is not enthusiastic about the idea.

If the plan moves forward, vehicle owners would see an additional \$30 added to their registration bill starting next January.

"The government has been pushing us toward registration fees for at least three years with this new authority granted to the MRCs. We're not in perfect agreement on moving forward; for now, it's more theoretical than practical. We don't yet have a final decision from the board of directors. We've made progress, but we're not at the stage of a final announcement," comments president Daniel Côté.

"The three other MRCs are finalizing their deliberations. In



Photo: N. Sergerie

Daniel Côté.

the Magdalen Islands, they don't have this authority. Is there another way, such as invoking their insular status? That's why we don't yet have a final position. This is the only revenue stream we've identified," continues Mr. Côté.

According to him, if the user-pay principle were applied, a one-way ticket could cost users at least \$50, which he considers nonsensical.

"We're continuing to work on this issue to let the public know what to expect in the coming years," he says.

The \$30 fee would be the lowest in Quebec and would generate approximately \$2 million in revenue.

With the Quebec government's \$300,000 cut, inflation and the anticipated increase in transportation contracts with private companies in 2027, the additional revenue could be quickly exhausted.

What would happen if an

MRC opted not to participate in the vehicle registration fee?

"This is an existential question for the board of directors. Do we proceed as if nothing has changed, with some MRCs paying for others? Personally, I'm more of the view that those who pay will get more services. Those who don't pay will get fewer services. That's why we're having a hard time reaching a final decision within the board," says the president.

For the fee to take effect in January, RéGÎM would need to submit its request to the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) fairly soon.

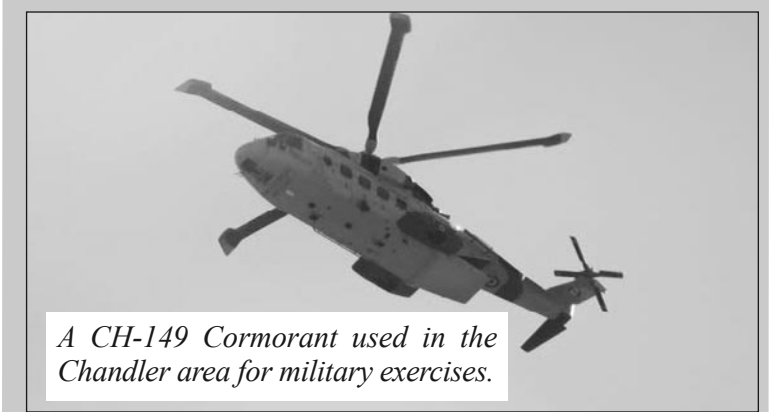
"If we don't secure this new revenue stream for fiscal year 2027, we'll have to expect drastic service cuts," warns Mr. Côté.

The Rocher-Percé MRC sees things differently and does not support the principle.

For elected officials, such a measure would not be the best option for residents, and the council of mayors would rather absorb the costs directly.

"We will support the needs. We've approved an amount of \$200,000 because, for us, paratransit is outside the authority's jurisdiction. We have Transport des Anses here, and it works well for us," says the prefect, Samuel Parisé.

For now, the MRC has no plans to transfer paratransit to RéGÎM, as the Town of Gaspé did last year.



A CH-149 Cormorant used in the Chandler area for military exercises.

Photo: Martin Desjardins' Facebook

## Military exercise off the coast of Chandler

Nelson Sergerie

CHANDLER – The Canadian Armed Forces conducted a search-and-rescue training exercise off the coast of Chandler on June 8 and 9.

The exercise was carried out by personnel from 14 Wing Greenwood in Nova Scotia and involved a variety of search-and-rescue maneuvers.

"It was a qualification exercise, a refresher, for search and rescue technicians and also for pilots to be able to perform hoist operations," explains Captain Meagan Duncan from the Greenwood base.

The training involved a CH-149 Cormorant helicopter operated by the 413 Transport and Rescue Squadron.

On June 8, the crew carried out a hoist rescue exercise with a Canadian Coast Guard vessel off the Gaspé Peninsula.

Once the training exercise was completed, the aircraft continued on to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, for additional training activities.

Captain Duncan says different locations are selected for training exercises to ensure crews are prepared to operate in a wide range of terrain and conditions during search-and-rescue missions.





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# Compensation program overlooks daycare provider

GILLES GAGNÉ

MARIA – Brigitte Bourgeois, owner of a private daycare in Maria, may have to close her business because the Department of Homeland Security’s coastal erosion compensation program does not take into account the specific requirements of her workplace, leaving her about \$100,000 short of reopening.

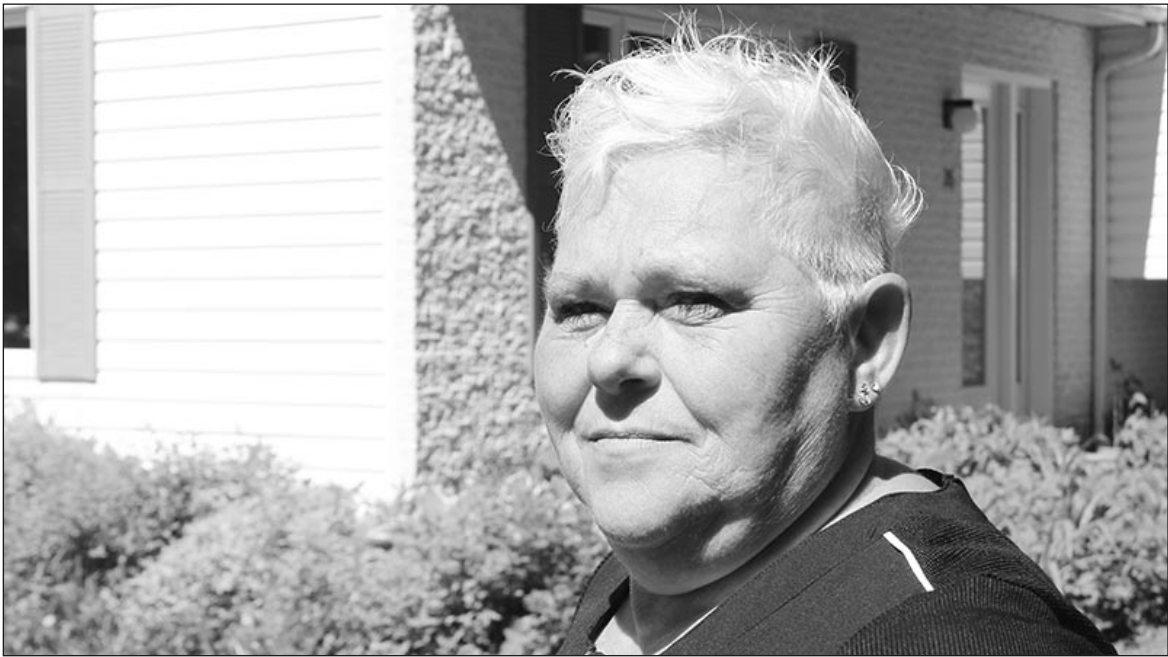
Ms. Bourgeois, a self-employed worker, and her partner have already moved to Cascapedia-St. Jules. While she had expected to receive \$485,000 from the Department of Homeland Security, she received \$385,000, the maximum amount available for homeowners who do not operate a recognized business.

This \$385,000 is the maximum established for a residence. It also applies to people who work from home, such as bookkeeping.

Brigitte Bourgeois points out, however, that her daycare is not comparable to a typical self-employed job, since virtually her entire house must be adapted for the children she cares for.

She brought her educational materials to her other home, “but I don’t have my own space. It’s not suitable. Where we bought it, it’s just a concrete basement. (...) My fight is to get compensation so I can continue my work (...) I’m supposed to be able to recreate what I had,” she argues.

The basement needs to be finished as a welcoming space, the house entrance, the backyard landscaping, a room specifically for the children, various improvements to the property, and a fenced yard



Photos: Gilles Gagné

*Brigitte Bourgeois is also mourning the loss of what she considered the ideal home for her daycare.*

are the main improvements Brigitte Bourgeois wants to make to bring her daycare back to its full potential, the one she was counting on when she lived on Pluviers street in Maria. She’s aiming to reopen on August 17.

“I had six children, but I’m down to two. I don’t dare take on any more since I don’t know where I’m going anymore. I can’t play with the lives of children and parents at work. Yes, I took you on, and now I can’t anymore. I’m waiting. I can’t afford this (the uncertainty with the parents.) I’m too professional for that,” Ms. Bourgeois insists, her voice sometimes choked with sobs.

### A lifelong dream

At 52, she returned to CEGEP to pursue her dream of opening her daycare, which she did three years ago in the house she shared with her partner and their children.

That house, although partially set back from the Bay of Chaleurs, is located in an erosion zone. Pluviers Street and an even longer street, Tournepierres Street, parallel to the bay in this case, have been flooded to varying degrees since 2005. Forty-eight properties on these two streets have been targeted for purchase, with compensation from the Ministry of Homeland Security.

Homeowners who refuse to relocate forgo compensation. Only a few have chosen that option.

Some homes cannot be moved because of their size or weight, or because local roads cannot accommodate the move. Ms. Bourgeois's residence is one of them.

"We also have to grieve the loss of our house in all of this. The garage wasn't compensated. We lost that too. Now they want to make me lose my job," she summarizes.

### Strong support in the community

In Maria, mayor Patricia Chartier wholeheartedly supports Brigitte Bourgeois, even though her daycare is planned to reopen in Cascapedia-Saint-Jules.

"We are asking for the support of other municipalities, which will have to deal with similar problems. We are also asking the legislature to play its role in this matter. There have been other changes made in other cases. It's not so much about asking for changes," Ms. Chartier points out.

She laments that the Department of Homeland Security compared Ms. Bourgeois's daycare to any

other professional service that doesn't require special arrangements, when childcare "is infinitely more complex," she says.

"These are essential services that we can't afford to lose. We already have trouble retaining 12 parents. And these are people who work in the healthcare system, too," adds Patricia Chartier.

She sees a contradiction in the treatment of healthcare workers recruited to the Gaspé Coast, whether they are Quebecers from elsewhere in the province or newcomers from abroad.

"There are many improvements to be made. They're given the opportunity to arrive, but there's a lack of commitment in helping them stay," she says.

She is asking the new Minister of Families, Catherine Blouin, whose office is located in Carleton, another municipality near Maria, to take action.

"I expect Catherine Blouin to intervene with her government, particularly in Ms. Bourgeois's case, but also for other families who have or will have similar problems. We are counting on her ability to intervene," Ms. Chartier states, reiterating that it is not a matter of adopting a new law, but of modifying a paragraph in a program.

Originally from Tunisia, Fatma Bejar, mother of Aziz, one of the two children still cared for by Brigitte Bourgeois, says that as an immigrant she was unable to obtain a place for her son in a childcare centre.

"It's a great sadness. It's thanks to her that we are here, my family and I. It was a stroke of luck for us to see

Brigitte agree to take in Aziz," notes Ms. Bejar, now a trainee nurse working at Maria Hospital.

Mathieu Jacques and his partner, both healthcare workers, left Montreal's South Shore to the Gaspé Peninsula in search of a better work-life balance, tired of transferring their daughter at the hospital, shift by shift.

"We're not the only ones in this situation. We all have to find daycare spots. Saying that she (Brigitte Bourgeois) isn't recognized creates a huge headache for families," Mr. Jacques explains.

Minister Catherine Blouin's office referred The SPEC to the office of the Minister of Internal Security, Ian Lafrenière. That office then referred the newspaper's questions to the media relations department of the same ministry. (see side article)

The Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Feminist Roundtable believes that "this situation deprives childcare providers of the necessary support to relocate their workplaces, despite the significant investments required to meet safety and accessibility standards for young children. Typically, childcare spaces occupy a substantial portion of the home and property. The current approach renders the work of educators invisible and minimizes the considerable investments they make to provide safe, stimulating environments that meet current standards."

This situation "also contributes to perpetuating the undervaluation of caregiving professions, which are essential to the functioning of our society. A business that provides services that were long provided free of charge by women is still a business."

The coordinator of the Roundtable, Nastassia Williams, notes that a home-based childcare provider, when "forced to leave her residence, loses both her home and her income. Yet, government programs only recognize the former. This situation demonstrates the lack of recognition given to a profession practiced almost exclusively by women and contributes to their impoverishment. It is also a perfect example for understanding the issues related to climate justice. Adaptation mechanisms to climate change must be fair, especially for women."



*Mathieu Jacques and Fatma Bejar support Brigitte Bourgeois in her request for more flexible programs.*

# Gaspé welcomes demise of Bill 8 on English-language vocational training

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The Gaspé Town Council wants the Quebec government to show greater consideration for the Gaspé Peninsula's English-speaking community, which continues to decline, while Bill 8 — which died on the order paper — would have applied the Charter of the French Language to vocational and adult education for those without acquired rights.

The council nonetheless adopted a resolution in support of the English-speaking community.

The bill would have prevented Francophones who had not completed their elementary and secondary education in English from pursuing studies in English at the vocational and adult education levels.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) and Vi-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*The tree-cutting training program has infuriated the mayor of Gaspé.*

sion Gaspé-Percé Now joined forces with other organizations across Quebec to denounce the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government.

Mayor Daniel Côté points out that while French is gaining ground in the Gaspé Peninsula, the English-speak-

ing community is gradually disappearing.

“Maybe they need to fire machine guns on the Island of Montreal to keep things in French, but that’s not the issue here. Here, it’s the English-speaking community that’s disappearing,” the mayor

says.

Echoing the concerns raised by local organizations, the mayor argues that the impact would have been significant, especially given the region's labour shortage.

“If we combine the two languages, we have the critical mass needed to offer training. Do we have the luxury of losing these training programs? Do we have the luxury of losing workers in the midst of a labour shortage? The answer is no,” Mr. Côté states bluntly.

## Training program draws criticism

Daniel Côté also sharply criticized the provincial government's decision to require blue-collar workers to complete 1,000 hours of training to cut and prune trees.

During the town council meeting, he reacted sarcastically to the directive from

Quebec City, noting that blue-collar workers are already accustomed to operating chainsaws.

“It doesn’t take 1,000 hours of training to know how to start a chainsaw, cut a branch, and stop the chainsaw. If it takes 1,000 hours for someone somewhere in Quebec City, they’re not exactly quick on the draw. I think these are people who—perhaps not being quick on the draw themselves—came up with a rule thinking that everyone else wasn’t quick on the draw either. I urge the ‘not so quick’ people to do away with the rules for the ‘not so quick’ and to trust people,” comments the mayor.

According to him, at least 80% of the Town's blue-collar workers know how to operate a chainsaw.

Municipal officials across the region are joining forces to denounce what they see as a nonsensical situation.

# Gaspé council weighs in on road reconstruction, electoral boundaries and provincial politics

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – In addition to adopting its 2025 financial statements at the June 1 meeting, the Gaspé Town Council addressed several other issues.

The Town is supporting residents of the Sunny Bank neighbourhood in their effort to have York Boulevard West rebuilt following the devastating floods of 2010.

A class-action lawsuit won by residents in 2022 required reconstruction of the road within six years. However, the Quebec Ministry of Transportation (MTQ) later requested an additional seven years because of environmental approval requirements. The project is no longer subject to those procedures as of the end of 2025.

Lawyers representing the residents are now awaiting a new reconstruction deadline.

“I hate it when a political promise isn’t kept. But in this case, there’s a court ruling. That’s stronger than a political promise. It’s really something,” says Mayor Daniel Côté.

The mayor notes that the issue had been stalled for four years before recent developments were brought to light by

Le Pharillon.

“Honestly, it doesn’t make sense. It’s a court ruling. I’m asking the MTQ to respect it. I’m joining my voice with the citizens of the area,” he says.

## Residents urged to write to MNAs

As time is running out to decide the fate of the two ridings in the Gaspé Peninsula, Mr. Côté is encouraging residents to contact the Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) for Rimouski and Saint-Jérôme and urge them to support Bill 3.

The mayor says he understands the principles underlying the opposition expressed by Rimouski MNA Maïté Blanchette Vézina and Saint-Jérôme MNA Youri Chassin.

“It would be simpler to come together. I understand that there are principles you disagree with, coming from people who want to lecture us on democracy. 123 out of 125 members of the National Assembly voting one way... Let the vote go through. Stop throwing a wrench in the works,” the mayor says.

He adds that the debate over the loss of a Montreal riding, which appears to be at the heart

of the dispute, does not concern him.

“What I’m telling the people is: your representatives have done their part. Your MNAs have done their part. Help us make them see reason,” he proclaims.

## Approached about provincial politics

As was the case during the 2025 federal election campaign, when both the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois attempted to recruit him, Mr. Côté says he has also been approached about running in the next provincial election.

However, he refuses to identify which parties contacted him.

“I’ll say yes, I was approached. Am I going to run? No,” he says.

When pressed for details, the mayor remains cautious.

“It’s more than one party. Sometimes it’s very direct, sometimes it’s more indirect. I can’t predict my entire future. I just signed a four-year contract with the citizens of Gaspé. It’s flattering. People want you on their team. I intend to honour my contract,” the mayor explains.

The mayor adds that the current provincial political climate is not particularly appealing to him, especially now that he is a new father.

At present, the Parti Québécois, Québec solidaire and the Coalition Avenir Québec have either nominated candidates or expressed intentions to do so in Gaspé.

That would appear to leave only the Quebec Liberal Party and the Conservative Party of Quebec.

“Some of the assumptions in your question don’t necessarily apply. There are elements that might not be accurate. It could be any of the parties. I can’t confirm or deny anything,” says Mr. Côté.

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

# Snow crab in the southern Gulf: 2026 results are far from a record year

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – A late start to the season on April 14, a very limited quota, sparse crab stocks in Zone 12, and the Coast Guard's failure to ensure the de-icing of the Shippagan channel are some of the factors that made 2026 far from a record year for snow crab in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Daniel Desbois, president of the Gaspé Crab Fishermen's Association, remains calm in his description of the factors that caused problems for fishers, even those that could have been avoided, although his tone is a bit more scathing in those instances.

"We could have started the season a few days earlier, and not just because of the hovercraft. The Paspébiac tugboat was supposed to keep the Shippagan channel open during the winter. It broke down, and the Coast Guard had no backup plan. They didn't inform us. The hovercraft also arrived later than needed," explains Mr. Desbois.

When the Shippagan channel is cleared of ice early in the spring, or when it is prevented from becoming blocked in the winter, most New Brunswick crab fishermen can head out early. Since the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans will not open the crab fishery in the Gaspé Peninsula before the New Brunswick fishery, Gaspé crab fishermen appreciate that every precaution is being taken for an early start.

This helps avoid interactions with North Atlantic right whales, which can lead to the closure of fishing areas in the Gulf. Those precautions were not maximized during the winter of 2026.

## Low resource concentration

Daniel Desbois expected a low concentration of snow crab in the Gulf in 2026, considering that the biomass was going through the down phase in its cycle.

"It's normal, with quota reductions, but there are areas, like the Bay of Chaleurs, that were more disappointing than



Photo: Robert Nicolas

*Because the quotas were low this year, some crab fishermen were able to complete their season in slightly less than a month.*

others. There should have been biomass, but there was nothing. In the eastern Gulf, it was better, as it was the same in the west part. The resource concentration maps showed quantities in the channel (the Bay of Chaleurs), but there were no crab there. They may have moved," Mr. Desbois explains, while acknowledging that the crustacean only moves relatively short distances.

His son, Yan, now captains the crab boat he skippered for decades. "He didn't start strong, but he recovered. He finished his fishing trip after four weeks, around mid-May. We have the equivalent of one-and-a-half permits," explains Daniel Desbois.

On June 1, six-and-a-half weeks after the April 14 start, 97% of the quota for the southern Gulf had been caught. May was nonetheless complicated by the presence of North Atlantic right whales, the first of which appeared in the Gulf on April 28.

"It was disruptive because the first closed areas corresponded exactly to the areas where the fishermen were located. In the Shediac Valley area, there were no crab, but no whales either."

The month of June was a rather complicated obstacle for the fishermen tasked with catching the remaining 3% of the quota. "Practically everything was closed in the Gulf," sums up Daniel Desbois.

## A comparable price

The price paid to crab fishermen since the beginning of the season has generally been \$7 per pound for boats equipped with an ice hold, and \$7.25 for boats equipped with a water hold. This is quite similar to what was paid in 2025. A slight adjustment at the close of sales could occur later in the year.

"It's a strange year, not typical. We received a little more than that (\$7-\$7.25). It depends on the processing plants. It's lower than last year, for both the quota and the price, in our case," summarizes Daniel Desbois.

The total quota for zones 12, the dominant one, 12E, 12F, and 19 was set at 14,493.01 metric tonnes in 2026.

When asked by SPEC if profitability could be achieved, Mr. Desbois answered "Not really. It's difficult for everyone. The (federal) Department of Fisheries and Oceans has put a lot of effort into using acoustics to identify the areas where North Atlantic right whales are arriving. They (department employees) close off areas based on acoustics, but they don't always hear them (the whales). Some areas remain closed even when the whales have left the area for several days. We wonder if they've reduced the budget for

observation aircraft. We haven't seen any areas reopened, except last week, when the fishery was almost over."

## Processing also started slowly

The low snow crab stock led to an equally slow start to processing, explains Bill Sheehan, vice-president of E. Gagnon et Fils, based in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé.

The small volumes, partly a consequence of some trial and error by crab fishermen before finding the resource, reduced the pace of work in the plants.

"Fortunately, the start of the lobster season has balanced the workload in the plants," says Bill Sheehan, whose company hired 350 production workers, including 145 Mexicans, a record high in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé.

"It wasn't just the start that was slow. It was slow the whole time (...) It's a small quota. Last year, it was also a small quota, but it came into the processing plant as if it were a bumper year. The fishermen aren't worried about the future, though," adds Mr. Sheehan, referring to the small crabs seen at sea.

The Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé plant processed only five million pounds of crab in 2026, far from the record of almost 13 million pounds, but almost twice the 2.8 million

pounds of 2010, a historic low that occurred the year the Sheehan family acquired the company.

"Sales were slow at the beginning of the season, but they've stabilized. Newfoundland has a large quota. We still have a small surplus of inventory, but it's not like 2022. When prices drop, wholesalers are strategic. They won't buy enough for nine months as long as they're confident they won't run out of crab. There wasn't much inventory back then (in April), unlike in 2022, when the war in Ukraine and high fuel prices caused a lot of uncertainty. 2022 was such a bad year that in 2023, we still had 2022 stock to sell," explains Bill Sheehan.

"I'm not worried about having stock to sell next year, even though Newfoundland still has a large quota. They're heading into the fall with their fishery. They don't have the North Atlantic right whales," he adds.

The exchange rate is still favourable, at 1.37-1.38 Canadian dollars to the US dollar, and transactions are taking place in the currency of our southern neighbours.

"Our sales are almost entirely in the United States. Sales to Japan don't even reach 5%. We should be at 30% if we had the same market conditions as before. It's been a long time since we've reached 30%. We were at between 10% and 15% last year. It's minimal now; it's a niche market, for those looking for Gulf crab. At the Boston show (Seafood Expo North American) in March, rice was expensive, and the yen had lost value against the US dollar. They (the Japanese buyers) didn't make many commitments, but they like to maintain business relationships. They still come here during the season, but for shorter periods," reports Bill Sheehan.

E. Gagnon et Fils paid \$7 per pound to crab boats equipped with ice holds and \$7.25 for those equipped with water holds.

"In years with low quotas, factories fight to secure supplies. This drives up prices," notes Bill Sheehan, adding that it is too early to decide on an end-of-season adjustment.

**Please be advised that the SPEC office will be closed from July 23 to August 2, inclusively. Issues will continue to be mailed as usual.**

# The adoption of Bill 3 prompts positive reactions

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – A huge sigh of relief swept the region following the passage of Bill 3 on June 12, which, among other things, preserves the Gaspé Peninsula's two ridings.

“Finally! Bill 3 has been passed, and our two ridings—Bonaventure and Gaspé—are saved. Our region will continue to be well represented. We’re maintaining our political clout. After three years of fighting on the front lines, I’m so happy and relieved for the people of the Gaspé Peninsula,” says Catherine Blouin, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure and Minister of Family, who acknowledges there have been numerous obstacles since the electoral map was first presented in 2022, which would have eliminated the Bonaventure riding.

In 2024, legislation was passed to protect the two Gaspé Peninsula ridings.

A legal challenge filed by elected officials from the Laurentians and Centre-du-Québec, among others, had been dismissed by the Superior Court, but the Court of Appeal overturned the law, and the Supreme Court subsequently rejected the Québec government’s appeal.

“We used every last second

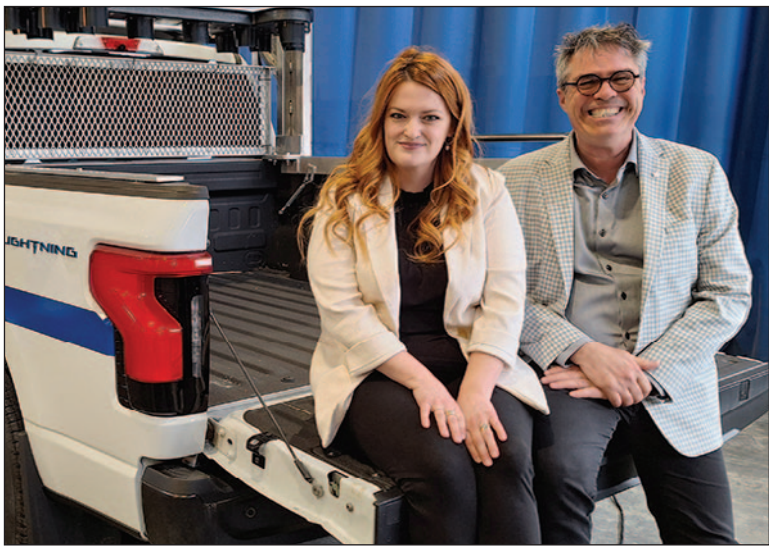


Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Gaspé-region Members of the National Assembly Catherine Blouin and Stéphane Sainte-Croix are delighted to see Bill 3 finally adopted.*

remaining in this session of the 43rd Legislature’s term—it was a close call, but we succeeded,” she says, noting that Youri Chassin, the independent MNA for Saint-Jérôme delayed the process right up until the very end.

The Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé expressed similar relief.

“Relieved, on the one hand, by the positive outcome of Bill 3. At the end of the day, we achieved our goal. The Gaspé region retains its two ridings, while Eastern Montreal, Centre-du-Québec, and the Laurentians have received significant and favourable responses given the current context,” notes Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

“The bill also provides for the establishment of a committee to determine the criteria for redrawing electoral boundaries and to improve the overall process to ensure effective representation of Quebec’s regions,” he continues.

The two Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) members also confirmed they will seek re-election in their respective ridings in October.

## Prefects' Table satisfied

The Gaspésie Prefects' Table intervened at various stages of the legal proceedings to preserve the region's two electoral districts.

“It’s excellent news for the

Gaspésie to have two voices in the National Assembly for the next legislative term, and what’s more, the lawmakers are committed to reviewing the entire electoral district boundary-drawing system so that, in the long run, we won’t find ourselves in this situation again,” says president, Mathieu Lapointe.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, who represented the region in the legal battle, expressed the same satisfaction.

“This is good news for democracy, very good news for Quebec’s regions. In the short term, the Gaspé Peninsula retains its two ridings. We’ve just paved the way to protect the electoral districts of Quebec’s rural regions. If the Gaspé Peninsula hadn’t been able to protect its districts, next it would have been the North Shore or Abitibi-Témiscamingue,” notes Daniel Côté.

Mr. Côté, who is a lawyer by training, notes that the committee will have several aspects to examine to protect regional representation.

“This is a temporary victory. The victory forces elected officials to reevaluate the criteria and how to protect the regions’ influence. Will it be a cap with a minimum number of representatives per rural region? Is it a regional chamber to serve as a counterweight to

the National Assembly? Should we include more specific criteria in the election law regarding effective representation, rather than just ‘one person, one vote’? There will be a great deal of deep reflection,” suggests the mayor of Gaspé.

The Baie-des-Chaleurs Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which joined forces with the East Montreal Chamber of Commerce and Industry on June 3 in Quebec City in an effort to convince elected officials to adopt Bill 3, is satisfied.

“We can say that the regional mobilization has borne fruit. Businesses, municipal elected officials, organizations, and citizens spoke with one voice to emphasize the importance of strong political representation for our region. The Chamber is proud to have participated in this collective effort, which helped preserve the riding of Bonaventure,” says executive director Valentine Palma.

The Chamber highlights the bipartisan effort that made this outcome possible.

“This decision demonstrates that it is possible to set aside partisan differences when the interests of a region are at stake. We thank all the legislators who worked constructively to protect the Gaspé Peninsula’s voice in the National Assembly,” adds Ms. Palma.

# Federal map: Federal Court of Appeal to hear case in late November

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The Federal Court of Appeal has asked the Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj to set aside November 26 and 27 for a hearing on the review of the February 21, 2025, judicial review decision that upheld the abolition of the former Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia riding.

Nearly a year will have passed between the filing of the parties’ briefs and the hearing.

The Attorney General of Canada has asked the Federal Court of Appeal to dismiss the appeal.

In his brief, the Attorney General argues that “contrary to the appellant’s claims, the Commission did not disregard the factor of area nor did it create a ‘too large’ electoral district in the Gaspé Peninsula. Rather, it considered the arguments regarding area and weighed them against all the

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Photo: CPAC screenshot

*Alexis Deschênes is calling on the federal government to adopt legislation similar to Quebec’s to protect electoral districts.*

relevant factors set forth in the Act. As the trial judge concluded, its decision is reasonable. There is no basis for this Court to intervene,” the brief states.

Alexis Deschênes filed his brief in July, relying on three main arguments: that the legislation stipulates an electoral district must not be too large, that geographic area must be

considered in the analysis and that the Electoral Boundaries Commission failed to conduct a rational analysis in that regard.

On February 21, 2025, Federal Court Judge Sébastien Grammond wrote in his 32-page decision that “the reasons given by the Commission to justify the elimination of the Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia riding were reasonable and consistent with the principle of effective representation established by the Supreme Court. Indeed, relative parity of electoral power is its essential component. The Commission was aware of the issues related to the size of electoral districts in rural or remote areas, but it was reasonable to conclude that these issues no longer justified the existence of a district whose population was nearly 36% below the average population of Quebec’s electoral districts.”

He added that “the Commission fully understood the legal principles governing its

mandate. It took into consideration the arguments presented to it during the public hearings. It adopted certain suggestions made to it and modified the boundary between the proposed electoral districts of Rimouski-La Matapédia and Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj to align with the boundaries of the MRCs. However, it maintained its recommendation to abolish the electoral district of Avignon-La Mitis Matane-Matapédia. Although the petitioners disagree, this is a reasonable decision. I was not convinced that the Commission made the errors the petitioners allege.”

## Amending the law

Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes is also suggesting that the Liberal government follow the example of Quebec, which passed legislation on June 12 to protect two ridings, including Bonaventure.

“What we’re seeing is that

there’s a tension when redrawing electoral boundaries between, on the one hand, population growth and, on the other, the need to give each vote similar relative weight and ensure that the districts aren’t too large,” notes the MP.

He points out that his riding is as large as a country.

He is calling on the federal government to show the vision needed to strike a better balance between those competing considerations.

The Liberals are not closing the door to the idea.

“In the last Parliament, we voted to maintain the number of seats in Quebec at 78. The law includes a formula stipulating that a redistribution must take place after every census. We’ll need to have a debate if we’ve simply reached a high number of Members of Parliament. It’s certainly a valid question and a debate worth having,” responds Steven MacKinnon, the Liberal government’s House Leader and Minister of Transportation.

# Another award for Rivière-au-Renard, Fishing Capital

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – After winning the 2026 Wege Award for Best practices in sustainability for small towns in May, Gaspé has now received the urban planning award at the 2026 Les Arts et la Ville Forum for the Rivière-au-Renard, Fishing Capital project.

The Les Arts et la Ville network presented the award in the category for municipalities with fewer than 20,000 residents on June 11.

“Conceived with and for the community in the wake of the severe flooding that struck Rivière-au-Renard in 2007, this project transforms a collective ordeal into an opportunity to reaffirm the community’s maritime identity. Blending heritage, creativity, and landscape, it demonstrates the community’s resilience while highlighting a history rooted in the Gaspé region,” the network stated in explaining its decision.

“This is excellent news. It’s a land-use planning and recreational tourism project with historical resonance that showcases our identity. This project keeps winning award after award. It’s the cherry on top of an already well-loaded



Photo: Facebook

*The cost of restoring power to the observation tower will total \$18,400.*

sundae. It’s a pat on the back for the people who worked on this project from the start and convinced the Town’s elected officials to believe in it,” says Mayor Daniel Côté.

Some 20 projects were nominated in various categories.

### The awards keep coming

Gaspé won two awards in 2024 for the project.

The Town received the

Union des municipalités du Québec’s Ovation municipale award in the Urban Planning, Development, Transportation and Mobility category, presented during the organization’s annual conference.

The criteria included innovation, resource optimization, benefits, and impact on the fight against climate change.

Gaspé also won the Public Space Development Award from the Rues principales network, which highlighted

how the project showcased local identity while demonstrating resilience in the face of climate change.

The municipality had previously received two other distinctions for projects involving TCiTe and the Landscape Charter.

### No second phase for now

At the time the project was unveiled, it included two phases: Rue du Banc and the marsh.

“It’s a pat on the back and can provide momentum to continue on this path. For now, we’re not in that mode. We have a strategic plan to present to the Town. We have a lot of work ahead of us,” says the mayor.

### Costly vandalism

In April, one or more individuals caused significant damage to the observation tower after tearing out dozens of metres of electrical wire used to illuminate the structure overlooking the neighbourhood.

The repair bill will total \$18,400. “A whopping

\$18,000 that could have been used for anything else constructive rather than rebuilding something that was already there. We deplore this act, which is completely pointless and counterproductive and costs taxpayers money. We’re covering the cost and have installed much more effective surveillance systems to prevent this from happening again. If anyone ever has the bright idea to destroy public property, you’ll be caught on camera,” laments the mayor.

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

The observation tower is part of the coastal protection improvements carried out on Rue du Banc, which also include a children’s park and a promenade. The project represented an investment of more than \$8 million in 2022, following the floods of 2007 and 2010.

The damaged wiring ran from the base to the fourth floor of the structure, and even concealed sections had been torn out.

The Town filed a complaint with the Sûreté du Québec.

## Nearly \$1 million for local businesses in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON SERGERIE  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Approximately \$915,000 will be invested in local businesses across the Gaspé Peninsula to help keep these establishments open and prevent residents from having to travel long distances for groceries.

Mathieu Lévesque, Minister Delegate for the Regions, travelled to Gaspé on June 15 to announce funding for seven projects in the region under Component 5 of the Regional Rurality Fund.

“The goal is to support the vitality of each village. Selections are made by the ministry through the Regional Rurality Fund. We invite communities that feel the need, or businesses that wish to continue operating to submit an application, which is evaluated on its merits. This is a grant provided to enable local businesses to continue

their operations,” said the minister.

“There are specific challenges in our village communities: demographics and distance. That said, there is a strong entrepreneurial spirit in our communities. It’s important to support them. This vitality helps retain residents and encourage young people to return. We need to provide targeted assistance, and we’re confident,” noted Stéphane Sainte-Croix, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé, noting that 10% of the \$10.4 million envelope had been allocated to the Gaspé Peninsula.

“We want to ensure the vitality of our regions so they continue to prosper and contribute to Québec’s growth. It’s important to support them,” added Mr. Lévesque.

Across Quebec, 90 local businesses in municipalities with fewer than 20,000 resi-

dents have received government support.

Component 5 of the fund has a budget of \$50 million over five years.

### Projects supported in the Gaspé Peninsula

In the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC, three businesses are receiving assistance.

The P.A.M. market in Murdochville is receiving \$150,000 to modernize its refrigeration equipment to reduce electricity and water consumption, lower operating costs and reduce the business’ environmental footprint while ensuring its long-term viability.

Both grocery stores in Grande-Vallée are receiving support. Épicerie Lemieux will receive \$150,000 to modernize its infrastructure, secure the cold chain and rebuild its warehouse, while Marché La-fontaine is receiving \$60,000

to improve its financial situation and ensure the sustainability of its operations and access to food for the community.

In the Rocher-Percé MRC, Stéphane Briand is receiving \$150,000 to acquire Épicerie Gaétan Meunier in the Newport sector of Chandler as part of a business succession plan.

The same amount is being awarded in Avignon, where Gestion JFSD Incorporated will use the funds to acquire the Matapédia grocery store, thereby maintaining a grocery store within a 20-kilometre radius.

In the Haute-Gaspésie MRC, Dépanneur Marsoui is receiving \$150,000 to renovate its facilities, particularly to improve accessibility. Plans include expanding its ready-to-eat food offerings and upgrading equipment to strengthen food security, community self-sufficiency and the socioeconomic vitality of the



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*Mathieu Lévesque, Minister Delegate for the Regions, during a visit to Gaspé.*

village and surrounding area.

The Denis Francoeur convenience store in Cap-Chat will receive \$105,000 to improve its cold chain in an effort to reduce food waste and improve access to quality food.

# Gesgapegiag celebrates in style, with substance

CYNTHIA DOW

GESGAPEGIAG - National Indigenous Peoples Day was celebrated over several days in Gesgapegiag, starting with several culture days at the Apoqonmatultinej cultural centre on Wednesday and Thursday, June 17 and 18, followed then the annual maw- iomi at Wejgwapniag School on Friday, June 19, and finally a history display and kayak races at the Mawiommi grounds on the summer solstice, June 21.

At Wejgwapniag several hundred people crowded into the gymnasium to enjoy the drumming and dancing and visit a dozen booths with art- work for sale, or highlighting aspects of Mi'gmaq culture. Roger Lee Martin was MC, and the official activities



Princess Condo, 15, is all ready to dance with her jingle regalia at Wejgwapniag School.



Greysen Martin, 9, gets his head-dress adjusted by father Jonathan Labrecque at the Wejgwapniag mawiommi.



Wejgwapniag School Principal Celine Martin welcomes the visitors while MC Roger Lee Martin looks on.

started with a prayer by Ramona Jerome before Cultural Educator William Jerome welcomed everyone. “We are honoured that you have come to see our culture,” he told the crowd. “To see my grand- daughter dancing gives me

strength,” he added. Director of Education, Kateri Martin, noted how wonderful it was to see so many community members out for the event, and school principal Celine Martin welcomed the crowd in French. As usual,

teachers and students from both New Richmond High and École Bois Vivant attended. “This is my favourite activity every year,” Isabelle Naud, a teacher at Bois-Vivant, told SPEC. “This is al-

ways fun. We have quite a few native students so it’s important to be here. I have been coming for 12 years at least.” For more about Mi’gmaq culture, you can follow the Apoqonmatultinej cultural centre on Facebook.

# 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion

DIANE SKINNER

NEW CARLISLE - Take a look at the walkway in front of the cenotaph in New Carlisle. You will see a unique painted walkway created to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion in Canada. Branch 64 New Carlisle President, Tammy Chatterton saw that communities across Canada had completed similar projects. The value of these initiatives include bringing people together, fostering community pride and encouraging meaningful conversations about remembrance and the sacrifices made by our veterans.

The painting of the walkway was completed by David Grenier of Bimutech Gaspésie. He generously contributed his



The painted walkway in front of the cenotaph in New Carlisle.

expertise and craftsmanship to the project, helping to bring the vision to life. There is a meaningful message there in both English and French. The central message “Lest We Forget” “N’oublions jamais” is a powerful reminder of remembrance, gratitude and respect.

The transformation of the

walkway is a meaningful tribute that residents and visitors can appreciate for years to come.

On July 17, Branch 64 New Carlisle will be celebrating this historic milestone with a special gathering at the cenotaph. The Centennial Flag will be raised, proudly marking the

100 years of the Royal Canadian Legion in Canada. There will be opening remarks, followed by a wine and cheese reception, accompanied by live music at the branch. This provides an opportunity for the community to come together to reflect on its history, celebrate its accomplishments and look forward to the future.

Tammy Chatterton has been President of the New Carlisle Legion since March 2022. It has been a very busy and productive tenure. The main focus has been to revitalize both the building and branch activities. A major renovation of the Legion building creating a more welcoming space for members and the community. Sunday Socials were initiated and the growth of social clubs and activities

such as shuffleboard, line dancing and darts helped bring people together.

Tammy comments, “While I am not a veteran myself, I have family members who have served, which has given me a deep appreciation for the sacrifices made by our military personnel. Our branch is proud to have veterans among our membership whose service and experiences continue to inspire us.”

President Tammy Chatterton proudly recognizes the hard work and dedication of her executive committee and volunteers. It takes the efforts of many to transform a branch into a vibrant community gathering place. The hope is that the Legion will continue to serve that role for generations to come.

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9 A.M. – 12 P.M.

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SATURDAY, JULY 18<sup>TH</sup>  
9 A.M. – 12 P.M.

# New Richmond reports a surplus of \$357,000

NELSON SERGERIE

NEW RICHMOND – New Richmond posted a budget surplus of \$357,310 for the 2025 fiscal year, based on a budget of approximately \$10 million.

“Rising revenues. We had a good year for property transfer taxes and saw significant wealth creation through new homes, housing, and new businesses. This is good news,” says mayor Éric Dubé.

The accumulated surplus now stands at \$1,139,307.

“In recent years, we’ve cleared up the debts we were carrying. We had a debt of nearly \$600,000 from the Economic Development Corporation following the sale of the industrial motel. We were able to settle that. The financial picture is improving year

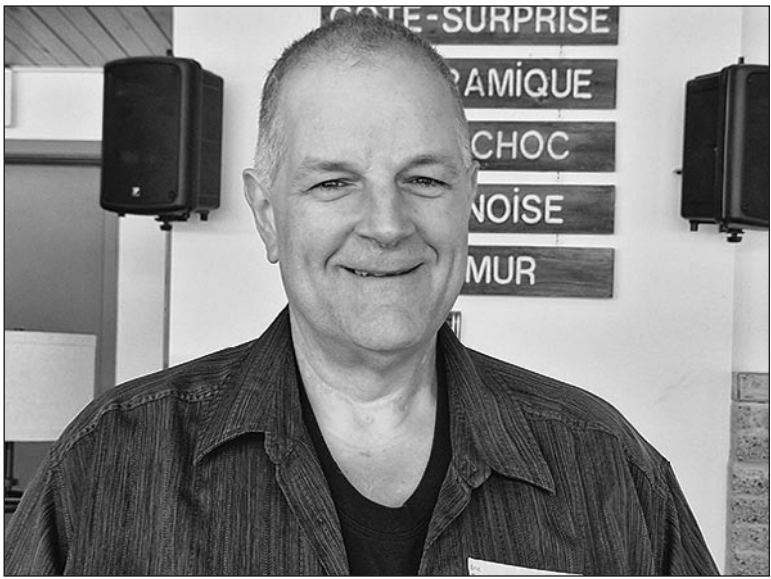


Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*New Richmond Mayor Éric Dubé.*

after year,” he continues.

Net long-term debt continues its downward trend.

As of December 31, 2025, it stood at \$22,518,047, a decrease of \$624,122 compared

to 2024.

Compared to December 31, 2023, municipal debt has decreased by \$3,103,242 over the past two years.

“We’re lucky. We had

loans that were coming to term. It’s like a home mortgage. The closer you get to the end, the faster you pay down the principal, and the debt goes down,” the mayor explains.

The Town has carried out several renovations on municipal buildings over the past decade, including the swimming pool, community centre, the Camp à Jos, arena, municipal garage and 10 kilometres of rural roads.

“We’ve pretty much covered everything. Only Town Hall remains, but it’s not a major project. We’ll wait,” he says. The basement will be the priority.

“In the coming years, we’ll focus more on the underground infrastructure—the parts people won’t see as much. Everything related to water and sewer systems. Since last year, we’ve been developing a wastewater

management plan. Our pumping stations, built in the early 1990s, were poorly designed. Some 40 years later, we have to rebuild a significant portion of them. We’ve completed two so far. We have another project underway covering a few hundred metres. In the coming years, while we continue to develop the town to make it more attractive, this will be our focus,” the mayor suggests.

Government support will be necessary, and the Town remains ready to seize opportunities.

The mayor notes that rebuilding one kilometre of street, including water mains and sewer lines, costs about \$4 million.

Municipalities are seeking greater assistance from the Quebec government while also calling for less red tape to speed up construction projects.

## Gasoline: Minister for the Regions hides behind analyses

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Minister Responsible for the Regions says the issue of high gasoline prices was raised at the Council of the Regions, following concerns expressed by his colleagues, but he has no solution to offer at this time to help ensure fair prices.

Various reports over the years have shown that the Gaspé Peninsula consistently posts profit margins well above the Quebec average.

“This discussion took place with the Minister of Energy, Bernard Drainville, who is analyzing the situation. An investigation in the Beauce region had been launched by the Minister of Municipal Affairs,” notes Mathieu Lévesque.

The Energy Board is continuing its analyses.

Since the last report two years ago, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé notes that the price floor has been abolished and the price at the pump is updated in real time on a dedicated website, [regieessencequebec.ca](http://regieessencequebec.ca).

While profit margins reached 25 cents per litre at the beginning of the conflict involving Iran, elected officials did not provide a direct answer.

“Analyses are underway,”

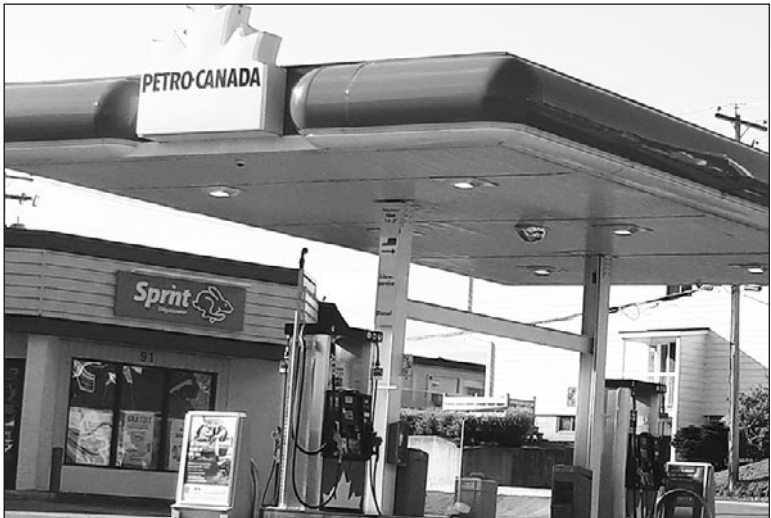


Photo: Nelson Sergerie

*The Quebec government has not yet managed to get gas prices to decrease in the Gaspé Peninsula, despite measures put in place.*

is all the minister would say.

“It is indeed surprising to see such discrepancies in the market,” adds MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

On June 16, the profit margin estimated by the Régie de l’énergie was once again five cents per litre higher than last year’s average in the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Gaspé and Chandler regions.

The margin stood at three cents in Baie-des-Chaleurs.

In its 2025 report, the Régie de l’énergie once again pointed to excessive profit margins among gasoline retailers in the Gaspé Peninsula.

According to the report, the average posted price was \$1.58 per litre. The Quebec

average stood at \$1.53.

That placed the region second among Quebec regions with the highest prices at the pump.

Part of the explanation lay in the retailers’ profit margins.

Motorists in the Gaspé Peninsula did not appear to benefit from the abolition of the price floor, as the average profit margin was 13 cents in 2025 — down two cents from 2024, but still well above the Quebec average of nine cents.

A closer look at the regulatory body’s data showed that the highest margin in the region remained in Gaspé, at 13.6 cents last year.

It stood at 12.3 cents in Rocher-Percé and 11.4 cents in Baie-des-Chaleurs.



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# SPDS will likely not reopen until at least November

**GILLES GAGNÉ**

PORT DANIEL – Damaged by a flood caused by a May 1 rainstorm, Shigawake-Port Daniel School will likely not reopen until at least November, according to a June 23 notice sent to the parents and guardians by the Eastern Shores School Board.

The notice specifies that three phases will be required to restore the school. The third phase, construction work, cannot begin until October. The notice does not specify how long that phase will take.

The notice informs parents and guardians that “since the closure of the school, our team has been working closely with engineers, architects and the Ministry of Education to plan the work

required to restore the building safely.”

The message also specifies that the first phase is underway. That phase involves planning and preparing the restoration, including "assessments, reports and the preparation of all documents required for the project."

Phase 2 will take the form of a call for tenders. “Once the planning documents are complete, the project must be publicly tendered. Ministry guidelines require that the call for tenders remain open for four weeks. This phase is expected to take place during September 2026.”

As for phase 3, the school board indicates that “after a contractor is selected, restoration work can begin. At this time, we expect work to start in October 2026.”

As a result, “classes will continue to operate at New Carlisle High School. School schedules, transportation arrangements and locations will remain the same as they were at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.”

The notice also states that the school board administration “understands that many families would like to see this process move more quickly. We share that wish. However, the steps required by the Ministry are in place to ensure that all work is completed properly and that the school is safe for students and staff before reopening.”

The school board administration thanks the staff for “their positive attitude, flexibility and continued support of our students throughout this process. Their commit-



Photo: Jillian O’Connell

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

ment has helped maintain a caring and welcoming learning environment during a challenging time.”

The school board also commits to keeping families informed and will continue to provide updates as the project progresses. Parents and guardians who have any questions or concerns are invited to contact the school board.

## KEMPFFER HOUSE: ▶ Cont'd from cover

Bonaventure and the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN).

"The MRC has always supported us. In fact, all our partners are wondering why the Town of New Carlisle no longer supports us," says Ms. Lacroix.

She also explains that since 2023, the Municipality of New Carlisle allowed a sum of \$30,000 over three years for the development of a historical path in conjunction with Hamilton Manor and Espace René-Lévesque. The total cost of the project amounts to \$73,000, including taxes, and other grants covered the balance.

"Most of the tax return from the project is still missing. We have recouped \$1,000 and we are waiting for \$2,000," she remarks.

Karine Lacroix entertains the slim hope that the GoFundMe campaign launched on June 10 might solve the problem.

"We raised \$2,000 in a week. If that pace could be maintained for the summer, we would make it," she says.

She wonders if the municipal administration wants to acquire the building for a very low amount, if the current board cannot find a way to bolster its funding elsewhere. "I heard a rumor about that possibility."



Photo: Courtesy of Karine Lacroix

*Karine Lacroix hopes a community fund-raising campaign and support from other organizations will help save the Kempffer Cultural Interpretation Centre.*

Karine Lacroix also remarks that since the funding support refusals received by Kempffer House in January, certain municipal councillors are asking questions about the fact that the Municipality of New Carlisle pays \$6,000 or so for the use of the Town of Bonaventure swimming pool.

"They argue that if the Town of New Carlisle can give \$6,000 to the neighbouring municipality, we should be able to give \$6,000 to an organization in our community, like the Kempffer Cultural Centre," she says.

**Mayor Leclerc is looking for more involvement**

New Carlisle mayor Patrice Leclerc assures that the municipal administration

does not want to acquire the Kempffer Cultural Interpretation Centre, despite a condition in the decree adopted when the house was opened to the public in 2009 after being moved and restored.

"It is not our first goal. I am confident that more things can be tried to make it an organization able to recover its operating costs. Right now, Karine seems alone in this initiative. There are only two board members still sitting, out of five (beside Karine Lacroix). The other ones have left. We have made suggestions to the old board and they were not implemented. If it comes to taking over, we will address the problem once it shows up," explains Patrice Leclerc.

He sees the GoFundMe campaign as a test of the community’s interest in the Kempffer House.

"They are going with a GoFundMe. It remains the citizens who are paying. It is a test for the interest in Kempffer. The organization must be autonomous. Once we see more involvement from the citizens, the Municipality might get more involved as well," stresses Mr. Leclerc.

For example, he adds, the Tea Room was only open once a week. "We suggested that it is not enough to bring in more money. Our suggestion was not implemented. That is one example," he concludes.

## June 18 earthquake felt in at least three Quebec regions

*Gilles Gagné*

CARLETON – A magnitude 4.4 earthquake was recorded in the Gaspé Peninsula on the morning of June 18 at 10:21 a.m. The epicentre was located in the St. Lawrence Estuary, approximately 24 kilometres north-northeast of Mont-Joli.

The seismic shock lasted approximately 10 seconds, with the strongest shaking occurring midway through the event.

According to numerous reports on social media and checks with various contacts, the earthquake was felt across the Gaspé Peninsula, the Lower St. Lawrence and the North Shore, notably in Carleton, Nouvelle, New Carlisle, Cap-Chat, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Marsoui, Baie-Comeau, Sept-Îles and Rivière-du-Loup, as well as in northern New Brunswick, as far east as Bathurst.

People travelling in vehicles or boats generally did not feel the earthquake, as the shock was absorbed by the tires or the water.

The Sûreté du Québec reported no damage within its territory.

Minor earthquakes occur fairly frequently in the St. Lawrence Estuary, most often originating in the Charlevoix area.



COMMISSION SCOLAIRE  
Eastern Shores  
SCHOOL BOARD

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE** is hereby given that the Eastern Shores School Board adopted the following amendments to By-Law 8: To Set the Day, Time and Location of the Council of Commissioners and Executive Committee Meetings for the 2026-2027 school year.

| Dates              | Executive | Council   | Location     |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| September 15, 2026 | 8:15 a.m. |           | Hybrid       |
| September 22, 2026 |           | 6:30 p.m. | Hybrid       |
| October 20, 2026   | 8:15 a.m. |           | Hybrid       |
| October 27, 2026   |           | 6:30 p.m. | Hybrid       |
| December 1, 2026   | 8:15 a.m. |           | Hybrid       |
| December 7, 2026   |           | 9:00 a.m. | New Carlisle |
| January 19, 2027   | 8:15 a.m. |           | Hybrid       |
| January 26, 2027   |           | 6:30 p.m. | Hybrid       |
| March 9, 2027      | 8:15 a.m. |           | Hybrid       |
| March 16, 2027     |           | 6:30 p.m. | Hybrid       |
| April 13, 2027     | 8:15 a.m. |           | Hybrid       |
| April 20, 2027     |           | 6:30 p.m. | Hybrid       |
| June 8, 2027       | 8:15 a.m. |           | Hybrid       |
| June 14, 2027      |           | 9:00 a.m. | New Carlisle |

Given at New Carlisle, Quebec on this 16th day of June 2026.

Denis Gauthier  
Secretary General

# Le Petit Café de l'Anse returns for second season

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Le Petit Café de l'Anse, established as a temporary home while Café de l'Anse awaits a permanent relocation, reopened on June 13 for a second season in the former Forillon Park premises between Rivière-au-Renard and L'Anse-au-Griffon.

The biggest novelty this year is an expanded arts and culture program.

“We have an official program available on our website. It's a great lineup. We'll have a show every Saturday,” says president Stéphane Morissette.

The community continued to support the initiative throughout its first year of operation.

“We're really happy. We broke even. The goal was to stay open, and we achieved that. We made a little money to pay for the facilities in these new premises,” he says.

Barring any unexpected developments, the café is expected to remain at its temporary location through 2027.

Meanwhile, efforts continue to relocate the organization to the barn located behind Manoir LeBoutillier.

“We're still in the process. It's taking a while. There's been surveying, zoning issues with the Town. We had a meeting with the Town. Things are moving along well. We're working on plans for what we can do with the barn. There might be a bit of an expansion, given all the constraints of the land and the manor,” says Mr. Morissette.



Photo: Café de l'Anse

The interior of Le Petit Café de l'Anse.

A key challenge will be preserving the heritage character of the property.

“We want to create a beautiful space that respects all of that. That's what we did with the Cultural Centre. It will be the same with the barn. We did some interpretation focused on the fishing industry. We'll do something related to the agricultural sector. We'll be in a barn!” he explains.

Once the plans are finalized, a project budget can be established.

“We have a range, but we're waiting for the final plans. That's where we are. We're working on a business plan in parallel and waiting for the figures,” explains Mr. Morissette.

Discussions are also underway with neighbouring property owners to ensure social acceptability for the project.

Construction Cotton of Rivière-au-Renard is provid-

ing significant support in developing the plans.

On September 1, 2024, Café de l'Anse, located in the former cold-storage building in L'Anse-au-Griffon, was completely destroyed by fire.

Before becoming a cultural venue, the building served as a cold-storage warehouse constructed in 1942, likely for the Pêcheurs-Unis cooperative, which was founded in 1939, according to information from the Ministry of Culture.

The facility was used to store fresh fish and fishing bait. At a time when household refrigerators were uncommon, residents of L'Anse-au-Griffon could also store food there.

The building was abandoned in the early 1990s before being restored and renovated in the 2000s by a group of volunteers and the Gaspé firm Vachon Roy, eventually becoming the community's cultural centre.

# Hunter found dead in river drowned, coroner concludes

Nelson Sergerie

GASPE – Drug and alcohol use may have contributed to the death of Philippe Arsenault, 48, of Cascapedia-Saint-Jules, who was found in the Petite Cascapedia Est River near New Richmond on October 27, according to a coroner's report.

Coroner Jean-Pierre Chamberland concluded that Mr. Arsenault died of drowning after falling into the river while under the influence of cocaine and alcohol.

According to the report, Mr. Arsenault had gone hunting with friends and relatives on October 24. He decided to remain at the hunting camp for an additional night to monitor the area, as he reportedly did every year.

The coroner noted that Mr. Arsenault had several health conditions and had previously experienced a psychotic episode following cocaine use.

When his father arrived at the hunting site on October 26, he found the trailer unlocked. Mr. Arsenault's cellphone and wallet were still inside, along with his firearms. His hospital identification card had been left out in plain view.

Concerned by the situation, family members contacted authorities, who launched a search operation.

During the search, police discovered Mr. Arsenault's coat on a trail. Investigators also found a white substance later identified through laboratory analysis as cocaine.

Mr. Arsenault was found the following day in the river, face down in the water, not far from where the coat had been located.

He was wearing only a sweater. One pant leg had been removed, while the other pant leg and his underwear were partially removed.

Based on the evidence gathered, the coroner concluded that Mr. Arsenault had thawed and eaten his dinner before consuming cocaine and alcohol.

Mr. Chamberland believes he subsequently left the trailer while impaired and walked a considerable distance.

“A recurrence of psychosis while under the influence is likely. The fact that Mr. Arsenault had partially undressed certainly hindered his movements. He fell into the water. He was likely aware of his fall, as it appears he had a protective reflex,” writes the coroner.

“In my opinion, this was an accidental fall into the river while under the influence of cocaine, which does not rule out the possibility that he suffered a medical emergency. The autopsy does not rule out drowning, hypothermia, or both,” he adds.

“Philippe Arsenault died of asphyxiation by drowning after falling into a river in a context of cocaine and alcohol use,” the coroner concludes.



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# Railway-themed performance at Matapedia Station art centre

GILLES GAGNÉ

MATAPEDIA – Since the Matapedia train station was turned into an art creation centre in September 2021, between 40 and 50 artists have spent time there in order to make their work progress. At times, their stay at the station was just a step toward a finished exhibition or performance.

Such was the case for Bonaventure’s Rachel Thibault, who presented a performance on June 13, centred around the theme My dad, station agent. Her father held that position for decades in many places, ending his career in Matapedia, where he settled his family in 1959, until his retirement in 1975.

During his 35 years for Canadian National (CN), Raoul Thibault worked in many regions, including Dupuy, in Abitibi, Clova, in Mauricie and previously at another Gaspesian station, Saint-Siméon. Considering that his wife was from Saint-Omer, the move to Matapedia was a welcomed one.

"We were living in a house supplied by CN, located just next to the station. The station’s area was our playground. There were many trains passing everyday. I have fond memories of that time," recalls Rachel Thibault.

She presented a written version of her memories during the June 13 event, including a kasàlà, a form of African poetry that was presented inside the station as a tribute to her father.

Part of her performance was presented outside. It included her recollection of her childhood, notably under the form of a theatre play involving a young comedian from Bonaventure, Marie-Ève Bégin, playing the young Rachel Thibault.

Ms. Thibault also asked friends to drive a railroad spike into the ground. She drove one herself, and asked Caroline Andrieux, the Matapedia Station Artistic Pole director, Micheline Saint-Onge, coordinator of the Coalition of Gaspesians for the return of a passenger train, and William (Billy) Court, a re-



Retired CN and VIA Rail employee William (Billy) Court drove a spike in the ground during Rachel Thibault’s performance.



Photos: Gilles Gagné

Rachel Thibault asked Mona Hayes Court to read the English part of a summary of her life as the daughter of the Matapedia station agent.

tired CN and VIA Rail train employee, to each drive one as well.

"It was a symbolic move to underscore the contribution of people who contribute to the betterment of files tied to the railway and society’s progress," explains Rachel Thibault.

On June 13, she also asked Mona Hayes Court to read the English version of the text she presented in French to describe her journey in the railway world.

When met a few days after the event, Rachel Thibault explained that she was also touched deeply by another symbolic part of her perform-

ance, when two "trains" formed by attendees joined the way they used to do before the Gaspesian portion of VIA Rail’s train was suspended in 2013.

"The Gaspé section of that train was longer than the Halifax one," she remarked, the result of attendees joining the Gaspesian train in an impromptu way, in addition to the people who had been assigned at the onset of the performance.

Rachel Thibault started working on that project during the spring of 2025.

Ocean train bound for Montreal or disembarking on the return trip toward Halifax.

## Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



### Making days that matter

Life is busy. Things to do, places to go, shopping, cleaning. These are all the everyday chores that take up most of our days. "Special days," seem to creep up all the time. Birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, New Year’s Day, Groundhog Day, Family Day, Earth Day, Easter, Mother’s Day, Indigenous Peoples Day, Father’s Day, Canada Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, these days all arrive whether we are ready or not. The question is, are we ready and should we celebrate some or all of them?

Special days serve a purpose. Some will matter more than others, of course. My friend, who is 98 years old this July, has said repeatedly, "No more birthdays!" I probably won’t celebrate Canadian History week (November 20 – 26), but to those who enjoy reading and learning about history, it might be a special time for them. So we likely all pick and choose which special days we will mark.

Special days are memory keepers. On your birthday, you likely reminisce about childhood birthday celebrations. Your friends and family may create a celebration just for you. Besides, who does not enjoy cake? Give in and have some lovely moments of connecting with your significant others. Besides, it reminds us that people care about us.

Our lives are taken up with the routines and things we must do. Special days help to break up the sameness of life. They are just exactly what they are called, special! Those days can be about food in a bigger way. Christmas definitely is one of those days. Not only do we enjoy the food we eat that day, but we also think about and remember special foods from our past. I always think about my grandmother’s ginger snaps, gumdrop cake, and, of course, creamy mashed potatoes and stuffing with lots of Gaspesian savoury! And I like lots of it!

In Quebec, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day can be more of a day off, with stores closed. It celebrates culture and language. Whether or not it is our culture, we certainly live with it or alongside it. Might as well enjoy some of those traditions.

Canada Day matters to many of us. Until 1982, July 1 was called Dominion Day! That just does not have the same ring to it now. Flags, parades, parties and fireworks remind us that we are Canadian and darn proud of it! It is a special day to show that pride.

Celebrations do not have to be about money. What is more delicious than a homemade cake? People are busy but stopping to celebrate the special days can mean a lot. A time to pause, rest, be with people and even share memories of days gone by. That is what it means to be human.

The calendar says it is a special day, but it is us that make the specialness happen. We get to make it unique and suited to who we are and what we value. Life is ours to live. Special days are just that. They are as special as we make them!



Photo: D. Skinner

It is up to us to make the Special Days...special!

Please be advised that the SPEC office will be closed from July 23 to August 2, inclusively. Issues will continue to be mailed as usual.

Our summer publication dates are: July 1, 15 and 29. August 12 and 26.

# Announcements



## Obituaries



### AUBERT-SIMONEAU: Carmelita

Born in Percé, Quebec, Carmelita Aubert passed away in Gatineau on May 29, 2026, at the age of 94 years and 11 months, after a long and healthy life. Wife of the late Albert Simoneau.

She is lovingly remembered by her children: Kevin (Karen) of Fergus, Ontario; Mel of Gatineau, Quebec; and Sonia (Tim) of Ottawa, Ontario. Adored by her grandchildren, Rachelle (Alex) of Paris, France; Eric (Catalina) of Montreal, Quebec; and Graham of Ottawa, Ontario. She also leaves behind her great-grandsons, Eliot and Tomas.

Carmelita was the dear sister of Erin (Doris) of Percé, Quebec. She will be deeply missed by her many nieces, nephews and friends.

Predeceased by her sister and four brothers, as well as Albert's nine sisters and their spouses.

Her funeral will be held in Gaspé this fall.

Special thanks to Erin and Doris, Marcel and Francine, Trudy, Dawn, France, Jackie, Sheila, and numerous neighbours and friends for the incredible care and support they provided to enable our mum to stay in her home until she was 94 years old.

We will miss her dearly.



### REHEL: Macrena Coward

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved Aunt Mickey Coward (Rehel) on Sunday, June 7, 2026, at the age of 101 years and 6 months. Grieving her loss are many nieces and nephews, including great and great-great nieces and nephews, as well as her dearest friend, Bridget.

Mickey (Macrena) was the last surviving child

out of 11 children born in Barachois, Quebec, to Elias and Adora Rehel. She is predeceased by her parents, her husband Jimmy, and all her siblings: Omer, Leo, Della, George, Evelyn, Wilbert, Sarah, Lionel, May and Oril.

A private family service will be held at a later date, as well as a private burial in Montreal, Quebec.

When someone you love becomes a memory, that memory becomes a treasure.



## In Memory



### FOURNIER: Flora Mullin

In memory of Flora Mullin Fournier who passed away July 5, 2017.

*May the winds of love blow softly,  
And whisper for you to hear.  
That we still love you dearly,  
And wish that you were here.  
We hold you close within our hearts,  
And there you will remain.  
To walk beside us all our lives,  
Until we meet again.  
In life we loved you dearly,  
In death we do the same.  
It broke our hearts to lose you,  
But you did not go alone.  
For part of us went with you the day,  
God called you home.  
Our family chain is broken,  
And nothing seems the same.  
But as God calls us one by one,  
The chain will link again.*

### SIMON: Vera Roberts

In loving memory of a dear mother, mother-in-law, grandmother and great-grandmother who passed away on June 26, 2020.

*She was someone very special,  
Who can never be replaced.*

*Her memory in our daily lives,  
Can never be erased.*

*Time cannot seal the memories,  
That we carry in our hearts.*

*Nor take away the happy years,  
Of which she was a part.*

Forever in our hearts and deeply missed by Eleanor (Clayton), Garfield (Sandra), Donald (Frank), and families.



## Funeral Announcements

### CAMPBELL: Irvin Kenneth

We wish to inform family and friends of the upcoming Graveside Memorial Service for the late Irvin Kenneth Campbell, which will be held on Saturday, July 4, 2026, at 11 a.m. at the St Jules Cemetery, located on Gallagher Road in Cascapedia-St. Jules.

Following the service, a lunch will be served at the St. Jules Community Centre.

### TAYLOR: Linda Ann

Family and friends are invited to join us for the graveside service and interment of the ashes of Linda Ann Taylor, formerly of Black Cape.

The farewell ceremony will take place on Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at 2 p.m., at Black Cape Cemetery.

*Please be advised the  
Announcement Deadlines  
for July and August have  
been modified:*

**July 8** for the July 15 issue  
**July 15** for the July 29 issue  
**August 5** for the  
August 12 issue  
**August 19** for the  
August 26 issue



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# Announcements



## Happy Birthday



*Pearl Renouf celebrates  
a milestone 90th birthday... four times over!*

On June 4, 2026, our wonderful mother, Pearl Renouf, officially hit a spectacular milestone: her 90th birthday. While June 4 was her true birthdate,

a milestone this big simply couldn't be contained to just one day. Instead, Pearl's birthday extravaganza kicked off on May 17, and didn't wrap up until June 13!

When we first sat down to plan how to celebrate her 90th year, our initial thought was to host a traditional open house. However, as we talked about it more, we realized that what Pearl wanted most wasn't a crowded room of acquaintances—it was quality time with the people who mean the world to her. For Pearl, that meant her beloved family and her cherished church community, who have always been so wonderfully supportive.

Of course, when you have a loving family with members living out of town, picking just one date that worked for everyone is next to impossible. So, we leaned into the chaos and made an executive decision: why have one party when you can have four?

Over the course of nearly a month, Pearl was showered with love across four distinct celebrations: The church family gathering: Honouring the community that has walked alongside her and brought so much joy to her life. The traveling clan reunions: Multiple gatherings spread out to accommodate out-of-town family members who traveled in to ensure they didn't miss this momentous occasion. The big day itself: A special intimate focus on

her actual birthdate, June 4. By stretching the festivities across four weeks, Pearl got the best gift of all: meaningful, unhurried time with every single person she loves.

*A heartfelt  
thank you*

The Renouf family would like to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who made this month so unforgettable. We would like to thank our extended family, neighbours and friends who took the time to call, send cards, gifts or to visit Pearl during this special occasion. She was truly overwhelmed by the incredible outpouring of love and well-wishes.

Here's to a woman who is so wonderful, it took four parties—and a whole community—just to celebrate her properly.

Pearl's celebrations were lovingly organized by her family, who took so much joy in making her birthday wishes come true. Sharing in the historic milestone were her daughters, Joan (Darin) and Brenda (Donald); her grandchildren, Adam (Melody), Christopher (Bethany), Steven (Jessica), and Gregory (Jenny); and her great-grandchildren, Gideon, Sybil, Nathaniel, Caleb, Benjamin, Claire, Payton, Logan, Jayden, Alexis and Jeremy.

## COAST ROUND-UP

COAST ROUND-UP: \$8 per week  
CLASSIFIED: \$8 per week

### Classifieds

**YORK:** A home contents sale will take place on Saturday, July 11 and Sunday July 12, beginning at 9 a.m. Located at 702 York Blvd. W. Gaspé (The York River Community Centre.) Many different items such as household, garden tools, Christmas decorations and tools.

### Coast Round-up

#### GASPÉ:

##### Gaspé County W.I

**September 12:** Gaspé County W.I. Fair. Do you want to enter the W.I. Craft Fair competition? It's time to register with the Gaspé W.I. Here's what you need to know: the fair will be held at the York Hall, the registration fee is \$15, you can enter as many craft, cooking, and/or garden items as you wish. You can register with Bonita Annett at 418-368-3453 or gaspe22@gmail.com, and

she will give you a copy of the Fair List for 2026. The last day to register is July 31. Everyone is welcome!

#### YORK:

##### The York ACW

**July 18:** The York ACW will be holding its summer sale and afternoon tea at the York Hall. There will be baked goods, handicrafts, a white elephant table, mystery parcels and raffle tickets. Afternoon tea will be served at 2 p.m. at a cost of \$7. All are welcome.

#### PORT DANIEL:

##### 3 Star

##### Golden age Club

**July 10:** Money and gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m.  
**July 25-26:** Garage sale from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Tables may be rented for \$10.  
**August 8:** Spaghetti or lasagna supper. More information to follow.

#### SHIGAWAKE:

##### Shigawake Music Festival and Agricultural Fair

**July 4:** Four-wheeler rally.

Breakfast begins at 8 a.m., and the rally starts at 10:30 a.m. Registration is \$10. Bar and canteen service available. For more information, contact Bobby Wylie at 418-752-4514.

**July 18:** Lawn tractor races beginning at 1 p.m. Registration is \$20. Admission is \$5. Canteen and bar available.

#### HOPE TOWN:

##### Hope Town Sports Club

**August 22:** A gift bingo will begin at 7 p.m., held at the Community Centre.

#### NEW CARLISLE:

##### Bible Chapel Meetings

**Sundays:** Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School - 2 p.m.

#### UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND

##### Sunday, July 5

10 a.m. Service

##### Sunday, July 12

10 a.m. Service

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

#### NEW CARLISLE:

##### St. Andrew's Anglican Church

**July 11:** A strawberry social lunch will take place in the church basement from 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Cost: \$10 per person. For more information, please contact Carol Smollett at 905-987-3294 or Norma Chedore at 418-752-8132.

**August 1:** A gift bingo will be held at the Royal Canadian Legion. Doors open at 6 p.m., bingo begins at 7 p.m. One series for \$10 or three series for \$20.

#### PARISH OF GASPÉ

##### Sunday, July 5

**St. Philip - St. John,  
Sandy Beach**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

##### Sunday, July 12

**St. James - Wakeham**  
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

#### CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: Book Room

The book room will be open on July 8 and August 5. For any other dates, please contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896 to make an appointment.

#### UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN

##### Sunday, July 5

2 p.m. Service

##### Sunday, July 12

10 a.m. Service

#### ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

##### Sunday, July 5

##### New Carlisle

11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

##### Hope Town

3 p.m. Holy Eucharist

##### Port Daniel

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

##### Sunday, July 12

##### New Carlisle

11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

##### Shigawake

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

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SCAN ME

# The anglophone community was well represented at BleuBleu festival

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON – The weather could have been much better during Carleton’s BleuBleu festival, held from June 18 to 21, as rain marred the first two days and remained a distinct possibility throughout the final stretch. However, while attendance did not match the 7,500 people who participated in the 2025 event, festival-goers still converged on the approximately 40 shows featured on the program.

As in previous years, BleuBleu artistic director Myriam Sophie Deslauriers and director general, Anne-Julie



Nash Stanley's band, made up of Nathan Hayes, Kevin Jones, Tom Lymburner and Terry Wall.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

Saint-Laurent, reserved a place for Anglo-Gaspesian musicians.

On the evening of Saturday, June 20, Nash Stanley’s band,

made up of Nathan Hayes, Kevin Jones, Tom Lymburner and Terry Wall, energized the Marina stage with a couple of much-appreciated sets that had

people dancing.

The following afternoon, Tom Lymburner, Dave Felker and Gesgapegiag’s John Gedeon Jr. entertained festival-

goers under the municipal beach tent. Their performances highlighted the region’s three main cultures, Mi’gmaq, English and French, something the BleuBleu organizers have always showed interest in doing.

Another artist who attracted considerable attention was tenor Jeremy Dutcher, a Wolastoqey musician from New Brunswick who now lives in Montreal and who leads an international career. He sang in Wolastoqey, Mi’gmaq, English and French. His work researching and reviving traditional songs from his community has earned him praise in Canada’s musical circles.

## La Boutique celebrates 55 years of community, creativity and tradition

MARY ROBERTSON

NEW RICHMOND – For 55 years, La Boutique has provided a place where local artisans can share their talents, visitors can discover unique handmade treasures and volunteers can come together in support of a common goal.

Located in a rustic log cabin in New Richmond, the community-run craft shop is the last surviving member of a network of six craft shops established across the Gaspé Coast in 1971 known as the Gaspesian Cultural Association. While similar shops once operated in Gaspé, Shigawake, New Carlisle, Escuminac and Mata-pedia, only the New Richmond location remains open today. For more than five decades, La Boutique has operated entirely through the efforts of volunteers dedicated to the success of their shop and determined to preserve an important part of local history.

“La Boutique is a treasure trove for artisans, volunteers and the visitors who come in every year to buy local products or reminisce about the days when perhaps a member of their family was involved in the craft shop,” says president Myrna McCormack.

“For myself, La Boutique represents the strength of a community holding hands and offering a welcome to all,” she says. “We have artisans from the French-speaking communities, products from the nearby First Nations community and, of course, all of our faithful artisans who provide the shop with their crafts every year.”



Photo: Mary Robertson

The Boutique members who participated in the garage sale in May were Cynthia Dow, Sharon Leggo, Carmelynn Parker Green, Debbie Mackenzie, Elaine Bujold, Myrna McCormack, Nadine Eden Cassidy, Sheila Starrak, Debbie McInnis and Kathleen Paquet.

Like many volunteers, Myrna became involved with the organization after retiring from the workforce. She joined La Boutique when longtime volunteer Blanche Fallow was serving as president and eventually assumed the leadership role following Mrs. Fallow’s passing. “However, I can truthfully say that this is a title only,” she says. “La Boutique functions because of the faithful volunteers who show up every year to help.”

Among those volunteers is Treasurer Debbie McInnis, whose connection to La Boutique began as a customer. “I was so amazed by the beautiful handmade items,” she recalls. “When Marion Pritchard asked me to volunteer, I knew it was where I would love to spend my free time.”

Debbie became treasurer in 2012 and has remained dedicated to the organization ever since. “I do it because I would

hate to see it close,” she says. “I love it when we find new artisans, and I am always happy when they have a successful season. Our volunteers are the best, and they are so anxious to return year after year.”

Secretary Sharon Leggo discovered that volunteering at La Boutique involved much more than she initially expected. “When I was nominated for secretary, I was assured it would be a simple role, taking minutes for perhaps one or two meetings a year. Shortly afterward, I found myself managing the La Boutique’s Facebook page, even though I didn’t have a Facebook account myself,” she states.

Today, Sharon helps coordinate volunteers, contact artisans, manage communications and promote the organization online. Much of the behind-the-scenes work required to keep La Boutique operating each

season falls to a small team of dedicated volunteers who handle everything from scheduling and bookkeeping to marketing and maintenance. “I enjoy this job because it challenges me and keeps me active within the community. I’ve made many new friends, our volunteers are incredible, and I love the fact that our association, established in 1971, continues to thrive and grow,” says Sharon.

The work of volunteers extends far beyond operating the gift shop. This year alone, volunteers undertook major maintenance projects, including lifting and levelling the building after years of settling. A new four-foot-by-four-foot sign was also constructed and painted, with materials generously donated by Mr. Cormier of BMR, New Richmond.

The organization’s annual garage sale remains one of its most important fundraisers. Volunteers spend countless hours collecting donations, sorting merchandise, pricing items and preparing baked goods, with proceeds helping to cover operating expenses. This year, the event raised \$2,600.

For the past 10 years, the Bluegrass Festival in New Richmond has provided space for a sales table, helping La Boutique volunteers raise more than \$1,000 annually.

What makes La Boutique especially remarkable is that it operates as an independent, volunteer-run organization. The shop receives no regular operating funding and relies largely on the sale of artisans’ products during the summer season, along with proceeds from the

annual garage sale, to cover expenses such as insurance, utilities, maintenance and the upkeep of their building.

Every purchase made in the shop and every item donated to the garage sale helps ensure that the doors remain open for another season. La Boutique’s continued success is a testament to the generosity of community members, visitors, artisans and volunteers who support its mission year after year.

Inside the Boutique, visitors will find an impressive collection of locally crafted items, including knitting, quilting, woodworking, carvings, paintings, jewellery, preserves, photography, books and many other handmade products.

In many ways, La Boutique represents a living link to the Gaspé Coast’s long tradition of craftsmanship. Over the years, especially during the long, cold winters, Gaspesians developed skills such as knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting, painting, woodworking and carving. These traditional skills were then passed down from one generation to the next.

Today, by providing local artisans with a place to showcase and sell their work, La Boutique helps ensure that these traditional skills continue to thrive. As the organization celebrates its 55th anniversary, volunteers remain committed to preserving a unique part of the region’s heritage while welcoming artisans, residents and visitors through its doors.

La Boutique is open for the summer at 210 Boul. Perron Ouest in New Richmond.

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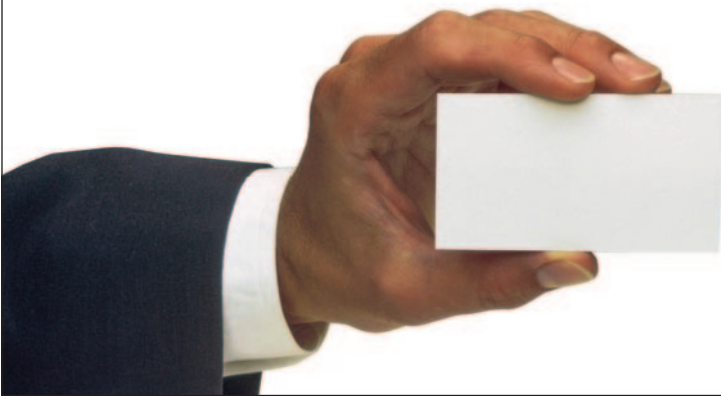
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