

Return of passenger train service to the Gaspé Peninsula gains new support

GILLES GAGNÉ

MATAPEDIA – The efforts of the Coalition of Gaspesians for the return of passenger train service received a significant boost on July 26, thanks to the American Alan Freed and his 1957 Pontiac, equipped to run on rails, passing through the region.

Hundreds of people watched the journey, at the stations located between Matapedia and Port-Daniel, at numerous level crossings along the route, and often from roads and streets running parallel to the railway. At times, spectators gathered in the fields.

The Coalition's coordinator, Micheline Saint-Onge, had made sure that Mr. Freed's visit received media coverage. In addition, regular video updates and broadcasts in real time on the internet also at-



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Nina and Alan Freed, Micheline Saint-Onge, Cleo Paskal, a friend from Montreal, and Grant Newsham, an American friend of the Freeds, during a quick stop between Carleton and Saint-Omer.

tracted a large audience. The gleaming yellow Pontiac rolling along the tracks did the rest of the spontaneous publicity.

“Micheline’s work is amazing. I wanted to support her concretely,” explains Alan Freed. Before her arrival in the Gaspé Peninsula, they had

only met virtually.

The VIA Rail passenger train has been suspended between Matapedia and New Carlisle for 13 years, specifi-

cally since September 2013, and between New Carlisle and Gaspé since December 2011, due to the poor condition of the railway, mainly the bridges. The Coalition of Gaspesians for the Return of the Passenger Train has been working for over a dozen years to ensure its return. Micheline Saint-Onge, a retired nurse, has been volunteering full-time for the past three years.

A Gaspé Peninsula lover

Alan Freed was on his fourth visit to the Gaspé Peninsula with his 1957 Pontiac. He had first come in June 1998 as part of a group of railcar enthusiasts (small, boxy vehicles once used for railway maintenance and inspection).

Cont'd on Page 2

Only one gas station remains in Percé

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ – The closure of gasoline sales at the Barachois gas station has left an 84-kilometre stretch between Cap-d’Espoir and Douglastown without a gas station, a situation that is raising concerns among residents in the east part of the Town of Percé.

The property has been for sale for some time, as owner Henri Collin is looking to retire.

“The only gas station left will be the one in Cap-d’Espoir, which is quite a distance from Barachois. Otherwise, there’s the one in Douglastown. That’s still about 60 kilometres in the other direction,” says Mayor Daniel Leboeuf.

The Cap-d’Espoir gas station is 36 kilometres away, while the one in Douglastown is 48 kilometres away.

The Town has no plans to operate a gas station. The



The Barachois gas station and convenience store no longer sells gasoline.

Photo: Google Maps

mayor recalls that when he arrived in Percé in the early 2000s, there were five or six gas stations.

“In the late 1980s and 1990s, new environmental regulations came into effect, and the cost of maintaining infrastructure and decontaminating soil created significant financial obligations for owners. People think twice before investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to replace tanks and equipment in a

shrinking local market,” says the mayor, who believes it would be difficult to make such a business profitable.

The challenge is compounded by the fact that the tourist season lasts only three or four months, with customer traffic dropping significantly for the rest of the year.

The Town began exploring options in 2021 following the closure of the gas station in the heart of the village.

“The Percé Economic Development Corporation approached several fuel retailers — Harnois, Ultramar and Petro-Canada — about operating a stand-alone gas station. None of them found enough economic justification to move forward with the project. Would it be any different in Barachois? We’d have to approach them again, but I’m not very optimistic,” says the mayor.

In Cap-d’Espoir, the gas

station is combined with a grocery store.

The Quebec government offers a program to help maintain local services.

“It’s a program that could help anyone interested in taking on the challenge of making this project viable. I encourage them to look into that opportunity,” says the mayor.

On June 15, the Quebec government announced \$915,000 to help ensure the continued operation of seven convenience stores and grocery stores in the region.

Across Quebec, 90 local businesses in municipalities with fewer than 20,000 residents have received government support, representing an investment of more than \$10 million.

Component 5 of the Rural Development Fund has a budget of \$50 million over five years.

Projects can receive up to \$150,000 in funding under the program.

TRAIN:

▶ Cont'd from Cover

He returned in August 2016 with a friend, and again three months later, this time with his wife, Nina. In fact, the couple, who live in Virginia, near Washington, D.C., were in the Gaspé Peninsula on American election night in November 2016.

"I bought the car in 1988. A man from Atlanta had saved it from a scrapyard. The car had previously been used on a railway division in Wyoming, near Yellowstone National Park. It was still serviceable in Atlanta. I don't know how it ended up there. The guy drove it on the road before putting it up for sale," says Alan Freed.

"I learned about this car for sale by chance, looking at a classified ad. I called the owner. It was fall, and I didn't have much time to arrange transport. I offered to transfer the money to the guy and asked if he could keep it until the following spring. He told me I didn't need to transfer any money and that he would keep it," he adds.

Alan Freed then found a shop in Massachusetts where the 1957 Pontiac could undergo the extensive overhaul needed to keep it running smoothly over the long term, an operation that practically consumed the remainder of 1989.

"Don't ask me how much I invested in the car. I can say the guys at the shop in Massachusetts did a remarkable job. They can do everything. It would have cost a lot more elsewhere," Alan Freed assures.

Originally, the 1957 Pontiac, equipped for rail travel and often referred to as a "Hi-rail," was commissioned by the Northern Pacific Railway to serve as a railroad inspection vehicle.

"Sometimes, railway division managers used these vehicles for events. I don't know how many cars of this model were built and modified that way," says Mr. Freed.

Rail in his blood

Alan Freed comes from a long line of railway workers. After completing his university studies, he worked as a locomotive engineer for five years before developing a specialty in a completely different field: preparing seminars on strategic issues in the United States.

He has remained connected to the railway industry in his free time. Even though Washington, D.C., is a city where the weather ranges from mild to very hot, he and his wife, Nina, love coming to Eastern Canada in the winter.

"I love taking the train from Halifax during the holidays. In January 1990, during the major downsizing at VIA Rail, we came to catch the last train from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia," recalls Mr. Freed.

When he bought the Pontiac, he thought he would limit his outings mainly to abandoned railway lines. The existence of the North American Rail Cars Operators Association (NARCOA), a group of railcar owners, and the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie's (SCFG) openness to excursions like those of 2016 and July 26 have greatly expanded the opportunities to operate the vehicle.

"I have to say I hadn't used the railcar since my trip to the Gaspé Peninsula in November 2016. That's 10 years," Alan Freed points out.

Minor technical problems caused slight delays during the July 26 excursion. The horn jammed in Listuguj, about 30 minutes after leaving Matapédia, requiring a stop in Pointe-à-la-Croix. Shortly after, in Pointe-à-la-Garde, the rubber and metal belt on one of the Pontiac's steel wheels began to fray, causing another stop.

A quick phone call to the technician in Massachusetts reassured Mr. Freed and Luc Major, the driver of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie's van, who was clearing the way on the tracks along the entire route. This escort was mandatory.

Despite the blazing sun, the public invited to the gatherings at the train stations in Matapédia, Carleton, New Richmond, Bonaventure, New Carlisle, and Port-Daniel patiently awaited the arrival of the 1957 Pontiac, despite a delay of approximately an hour, attributable to technical difficulties.

Besides Alan Freed's wife and two friends who joined the journey, a few guests were invited onboard for a ride, including Clément Coulombe, a long-time CN and SCFG worker, a Télé-Gaspé cameraman and the Gaspé SPEC. In August 2016, Mr. Coulombe was driving the pickup truck accompanying Alan Freed's Pontiac along the way. The retired railroad employee received a warm welcome from Mr. Freed.

Excluding people along the railroad, nearly 400 people attended the station gatherings, including those who attended the barbecue at the Green in New Carlisle later that afternoon.

Next steps

Micheline Saint-Onge left



Photos: Gilles Gagné

At every stop, like the one in Carleton, people rushed towards the vehicle to sit inside and take photos or videos.



A few minor technical glitches spiced up the journey, as seen here in Pointe-à-la-Croix when the horn got stuck in the active position. Grant Newsham, an American friend of Alan Freed, and Alan himself are trying to silence the noise.

the July 26 event extremely satisfied.

"The mobilization continues. We will keep the public informed about the progress of the train's return. We met with VIA Rail again on August 4 to review the work plan that management committed in May to submitting by midsummer. It's a good sign that VIA is asking for our input, instead of announcing it outright," she says.

The Coalition for the Return of Passenger Rail to the Gaspé Peninsula has gathered 19,700 signatures over the past three years. A petition recently launched in the Lower St. Lawrence region demanding better services from VIA Rail has collected 3,500 additional signatures.

In May, during his visit to the Gaspé Peninsula, Mathieu Paquette, interim president of VIA Rail, the federal public carrier, indicated that his management was considering a daytime train service between Quebec City and the Gaspé Peninsula as a possible scenario for the return of passenger rail service.

Éric Dubé, president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, attended the stop of the 1957 Pontiac in New Richmond, where he is mayor.

"This gathering just confirms the public's interest in the return of passenger rail service," he says.

Alan Freed, for his part, plans to return to the Gaspé rail line this fall. He stored the Pontiac in the Baie-des-Chaleurs region and returned to the Washington area by train from Matapédia and by plane from Montreal.

Significant work remains to be done to complete the railway rehabilitation between Port-Daniel and Gaspé. Freight transport by the Société du

chemin de fer de la Gaspésie is essential to the Matapédia-Port Daniel corridor. The SCFG is a municipally controlled entity.

The Matapédia-Gaspé rail network belongs to the Quebec Ministry of Transport. The refurbishment was originally scheduled for completion in 2025, according to a commitment made in August 2019 by former premier François Legault.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, this issue will be central to the Quebec election campaign leading up to the October 5 election.

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Canada-Quebec environmental agreement not expected to affect Osisko project

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MURDOCHVILLE – A new Canada-Quebec agreement aimed at streamlining environmental assessments for major infrastructure and resource development projects is not expected to change Osisko Metals' timetable for the environmental review of the Mines Gaspé revival project in Murdochville.

The federal and Quebec governments have reached an agreement in principle to simplify the environmental assessment process for major projects, including mines, ports and pipelines. Under the proposed agreement, the Quebec government would lead the assessment process.

The announcement has been welcomed by the mining industry, which has long called for a more predictable, streamlined approval process.

“We have no indication yet



Photo: Osisko

Osisko Metals is collecting data in the field to prepare its environmental studies.

of how this might affect the timetable. The process will be less complicated, more predictable and involve less red tape. When you're working in parallel with two levels of government, each with its own terminology, even if you begin at the same time, the steps are different and don't happen simultaneously,” says Ann

Lamontagne, Vice-President of Environment and Sustainable Development at Osisko Metals.

“My understanding of the agreement is that federal analysts will review the impact assessment and may ask questions about it, but it will be prepared according to provincial requirements. We will probably still receive questions

from the federal government, but we'll be working through a single point of contact, the Quebec government,” she adds.

According to Ms. Lamontagne, the new approach should also simplify the consultation process for the public and First Nations.

“We'll be working within the current legislation. It's purely an administrative matter,” she says.

The company is currently collecting field data across the project area to establish baseline environmental conditions before development begins.

“The baseline study involves taking a snapshot of conditions before the project begins. That work is underway now. Next, we'll carry out the environmental assessment to evaluate the project's impacts. The environmental assessment, or impact assessment, will be submitted after the economic studies,” says Ms. Lamontagne.

Over the next two years, the project will continue to take shape. Once the feasibility study is well advanced, the impact assessment is expected to follow six months to a year later.

The environmental review process is expected to take three to four years.

The proposed Canada-Quebec agreement has been open for public comment since July 20, with a 21-day consultation period.

The federal and Quebec governments hope to finalize the agreement within the next month.

The Quebec Centre for Environmental Law notes that when separate federal and provincial assessments are conducted, the higher environmental standard applies to projects. The organization says that principle remains a concern following the joint announcement.

Osisko: Murdochville to hold its own consultations

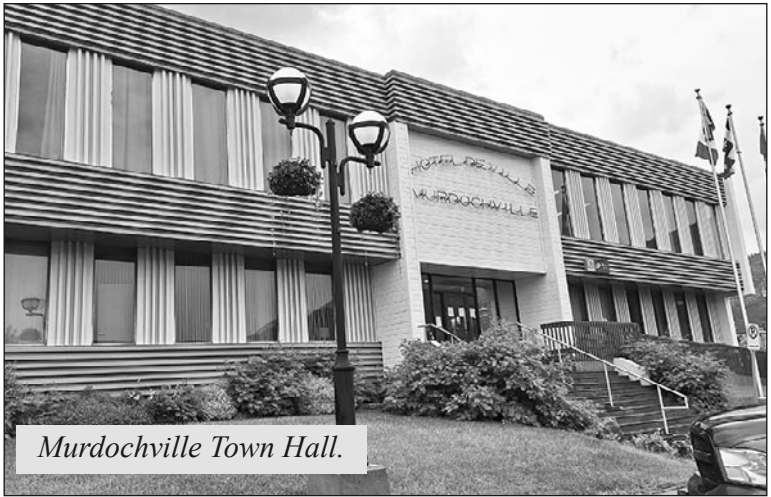
NELSON SERGERIE

MURDOCHVILLE – While Osisko Metals is raising the possibility of relocating homes—or even the entire town—the Town of Murdochville will hold its own public consultations to give residents an opportunity to express their views.

“A few weeks ago, they raised the possibility of relocating the entire town. We're considering it. We're preparing for it. That's why we want to consult the public more widely in September to find out what they think about it or whether they want more information so they can form as informed an opinion as possible,” says the mayor, Stéphane Gamache.

While Osisko Metals is conducting its own consultations, the council also wants to hear directly from residents.

“We want to carry out a separate consultation to gather opinions ourselves. People may feel more comfortable speaking openly. Some may feel less at ease speaking directly with the mining company,” says the mayor, noting that residents nevertheless welcome the company's arrival because of its potential economic benefits.



Murdochville Town Hall.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The September meeting will also provide an opportunity to report back on the council's visit to Malartic and other communities in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. According to the mayor, summer was not the best time to review what was learned during those meetings.

“We have already begun working with a consultant specializing in urban planning and mining development. We have started looking at the challenges ahead. We are doing our best with the limited resources we have,” says Mr. Gamache.

In his view, the issue extends beyond Murdochville.

MNA urges caution

Since the mining company announced its plans, the Member of the National As-

sembly (MNA) for Gaspé, Stéphane Sainte-Croix, has urged caution.

“It's a hypothesis—a realistic and feasible one, yes—but we're still at the hypothesis stage. I understand that the company is examining every possibility to ensure it doesn't overlook any issues. I'm taking it with a grain of salt, in the sense that we're still at the very beginning of the process,” says the MNA, praising Osisko Metals for its transparency.

“We're not looking at a conclusion, an action plan with a timetable or funding. We're looking at an important assessment, but it's too early to draw any conclusions.”

The MNA believes the proposal is an important first step that will lead to discussions aimed at ensuring the right decisions are made.

Increasing exploration activity around Murdochville

Nelson Sergerie

GASPE – The results achieved so far by Osisko Metals in its search for copper in the Murdochville region are attracting the interest of other exploration companies.

Cleghorn Minerals Ltd., a company based in Val-d'Or, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, has acquired, by map designation, 73 mining claims covering 4,156 hectares, approximately 100 kilometres north of Port-Daniel-Gascons and 100 kilometres southeast of Murdochville.

The company says it acquired the claims because of their geological potential, which management believes is favourable for the discovery of a porphyry-skarn copper mineralized system.

However, no value was disclosed in the news release announcing the acquisition.

Cleghorn highlights similarities to the geological setting of the Gaspé Copper Mountain porphyry copper-molybdenum deposit, which was operated by Noranda from 1955 to 1999. At the time, it was the largest copper mine in Quebec, producing 150 million tonnes grading 0.87% copper, representing more than one million tonnes of copper anodes.

Cleghorn says the inferred resources on its property total 238.8 million tonnes grading 0.41% copper, 0.016% molybdenum and 1.88 grams of silver per tonne. The company plans to complete a comprehensive compilation of historical geological, geochemical and geophysical data, followed by an initial field exploration and prospecting program this fall.

Another company, Ressources 1844, announced this spring that it would launch a drilling campaign to validate known mineralization while advancing the exploration model at its SV2 property.

The Sullipek/Vortex/Vallières property consists of 130 claims covering 68 square kilometres, 22 kilometres west of Murdochville.

In April, the company reported the property contained an estimated 2.24 million tonnes grading 1.09% copper, while a 2012 drill hole intersected 29.8 metres grading 0.94% copper.

Mainly managed by people in Quebec, the Saskatoon-based company aimed to integrate historical drilling data, geological reinterpretation and recent geophysical work to refine priority exploration targets across the property. The initial drilling program targeted the eastern extension of the Sullipek-East alteration system.

The drilling program is intended to validate geological continuity while improving the company's overall understanding of the SV2 copper system.



Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Remembering
Dennis Drainville

Dennis Drainville passed away on August 3 at the age of 72. Except for the years he served as Anglican bishop in Quebec City between 2009 and 2016, he essentially spent the period from 1994 to 2026 in the Gaspé Peninsula. It is an understatement to say that he made a difference in the region.

He notably taught at the Gaspé Cegep for 12 years. He was also a priest, a federal politician, a municipal councillor over two terms for the Town of Percé, and a social activist.

I have not used the first person in this column very often, or anywhere else in this paper, over the last 25 years. However, this time, to simplify things, I will.

The first time I met him was in 1994, amidst the eternal battle to save VIA Rail’s services and, at the time, to save the railway line between Chandler and Gaspé. He was calm, despite the frustrating context of “demarketing,” the word used to define the actions, and sometimes lack thereof, undertaken by VIA Rail and Canadian National (CN), the latter being the then-owner of the Matapedia-Gaspé line, when they wanted to abolish a regional service.

CN was still a public corporation then, but the writing was on the wall, as the federal government had started announcing its intention to privatize it.

For years, the region was able to save VIA Rail’s services and protect the railway infrastructure, thanks to the leadership of Rural Dignity’s national coordinator Cynthia Patterson, who was Mr. Drainville’s life companion at the time, and because of his leadership as well.

Dennis Drainville was mostly calm, but he was also able to show polite impatience. In 1998, when VIA Rail started frequently short-turning its Montreal-Matapedia-Gaspé train in New Carlisle, he and some friends showed up at a grade crossing and entered one of the buses used by VIA to cover the New Carlisle-Gaspé stretch. He wanted to explain directly to the passengers the subpar service Gaspesians and tourists were getting from the public transporter.

A decade later, shortly after his nomination as bishop, he and his Roman Catholic colleague in the Diocese of Gaspé, Bishop Jean Gagnon, spearheaded a demonstration at the Barachois station to protest VIA Rail’s decision to cut the dining car on what was then called the Chaleur train. The demonstration was

punctuated by a meal served on a table set up on the tracks. It was a daring move that was talked about across Quebec!

He contributed to
saving the SPEC

In 1994-1995, Dennis Drainville, as president of SeaCoast Publications, the entity publishing The Gaspé SPEC, tackled the gigantic task of solving the newspaper’s debt of \$71,000. In 2026 terms, this would be equivalent to a deficit of roughly \$200,000! Bringing such a debt to zero looked like a very, very long shot.

In 1994, the world economy had just recovered from a recession that had started in 1990 and extended until 1993. One of the first moves made by businesses in such a context was to reduce, sometimes completely cut out, advertising in newspapers.

Again, Dennis Drainville dealt with the matter calmly and methodically. In order to achieve the goal of curtailing losses, he and the staff of SeaCoast Publications reached an agreement with the federal government, which was owed an important sum of money. Together, they solicited donations and sorted out certain costly operational issues.

During the fundraising campaign, he wrote to SPEC readers several times to inform them about the way things were progressing. His confidence and transparency throughout the process was really amazing.

The newspaper erased that debt, and probably experienced, after that, the brightest period of its history, at least financially.

A return to politics

In 1997, Mr. Drainville entered the federal election race in Bonaventure-Gaspé-Magdalen-Islands-Pabok for the New Democratic Party. During a debate held in the brand-new building of New Richmond High School, he debated fiercely with then incumbent Member of Parliament, Patrick Gagnon, who had won the October 1993 election as the Liberal Party representative. The unemployment insurance issue was huge at the time and Mr. Drainville was constantly asking questions about Patrick Gagnon’s weak position on seasonal work and the necessity of improving VIA Rail’s service, among other topics.

Most candidates left quickly after the debate, carefully avoiding any significant interviews with journalists, who were not exactly numerous. When

asked about the vigorous way he had conducted the debate against Patrick Gagnon, he replied with his deep voice. “Look, I am not going to win this (electoral campaign). The least I can do is defend some social positions I believe in.”

He probably didn’t want my colleague Cynthia Dow and me, at the time the only journalists in the room, to quote him on the fact that he didn’t believe in his chances of winning the overall battle in the constituency. However, he was honest enough to tell us that the fight was worth the hassle, even if was just to remind people that social issues can’t be forgotten.

He only gathered 649 votes at the conclusion of that campaign. In June, results produced a close win by Bloc Québécois Yvan Bernier over Patrick Gagnon. However, Dennis Drainville imposed social issue discussions like no one else during the weeks leading to voting day.

At the time, the Bloc Québécois’ main platform element was the protection of seasonal workers, a weakness of Patrick Gagnon’s Liberal Party, which had heavily slashed the Unemployment Insurance program since 1993. A fair cross-section of Gaspesian voters wanted to punish Jean Chrétien’s government and consequently decided to cast their ballots in favour of the Bloc.

Dennis Drainville would have gathered many more votes otherwise, but he succeeded in making sure that the low-income population received attention.

In 2019, despite being weakened by health issues, he still took part in an August demonstration in Gaspé to request better train services and was the Green Party candidate in the region.

Mr. Dennis Drainville never quit, despite experiencing difficulties. That’s most likely how he would like to be remembered.

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Page 4, August 12, 2026 - Spec

Police Report

Charged with manslaughter, Yoan Anglehart recovers his freedom

Yoan Anglehart, 33, from Paspébiac, was released on bail following his court appearance on July 22 at the New Carlisle courthouse, but he must comply with strict release conditions. He is charged with manslaughter in connection with the death of New Carlisle's Austin Gallon, 26, whose body was found on the side of Church Street in the early morning of July 1.

Police officers were alerted after a member of the public called the Sûreté du Québec. Officers found the victim with injuries consistent with being struck by a blunt object. Yoan Anglehart was arrested nearby a short time later.

Among his release conditions, he must complete a six-month residential treatment program in Sherbrooke. If he leaves the program before completing it, he must immediately notify the authorities.

He is also prohibited from entering certain locations, including the municipal limits of New Carlisle, except when required for court appearances. He must not possess any weapons or consume or possess drugs or alcohol, and he is prohibited from contacting, directly or indirectly, several people connected to the case. That condition was imposed during his July 6 court appearance.

Disclosure of the Crown's evidence to the defence has not yet been completed. The case was adjourned until January 15. No plea has so far been entered.

Marc-Jules Chouinard sentenced to nine-year prison term

Marc-Jules Chouinard, the 51-year-old man initially charged with the non-premeditated murders of Gabriel Noël and Dylan Samuel-Francoeur in May 2023, is headed to prison for a nine-year term. He was sentenced on August 4 to that term after pleading guilty to reduced manslaughter charges, a decision that drew strong reactions from the families of the two victims.

The man also pleaded guilty to one count of dangerous driving. He admitted to causing the deaths, along with his son Simon Dufort-Chouinard, of the two victims of the fatal car crash that occurred on May 10, 2023, in the Rivière-au-Renard sector of Gaspé. The legal proceedings had been taking place at the Percé courthouse since then.

Superior Court judge Carl Thibault endorsed the sentence jointly recommended by both parties, noting that it had been negotiated at length by experienced lawyers. Taking into account the time already served in pre-trial detention, Mr. Chouinard will have to spend just over 5.5 years behind bars. He will also be prohibited from driving a motor vehicle for just over nine years following his release and from contacting the families of the two victims during his incarceration.

Judge Thibault was not lenient with the accused when delivering his decision, reminding him that the seemingly ordinary story that led to the tragedy could have had a different outcome. "This is an event that could have been avoided. This is beyond comprehension, beyond reason. Mr. Chouinard, you were the adult, and this should never have happened," said the judge.

The judge also addressed the victims' parents and friends, saying he understood their anger and distress. Five of them testified about the impact of the accused's crimes on their lives. Several insulted Marc-Jules Chouinard, while others criticized the justice system. Carl Thibault encouraged the families of Gabriel Noël and Dylan Samuel-Francoeur to look to the future, telling them he hoped the conclusion of this second and final case related to the tragedy would allow them to move on.

The accused did not speak on August 4. In a letter read by his lawyer, he nevertheless expressed remorse and apologized to the families of the two victims. "I take full responsibility. The decisions I made that day were wrong and led to irreparable actions," states the letter, read in court by defence attorney François Lévesque-Prézeau.

Simon Dufort-Chouinard had also pleaded guilty earlier this year and received a sentence of 13 years in prison. A love triangle involving him, one of the victims and a young woman was the source of the conflict between the two young men.

Haute-Gaspésie sports fishing accident claims two lives

Two men died following a sports fishing incident that occurred at about 8:15 a.m. on July 17 near Marsoui, Haute-Gaspésie. They were both fishing at the end of a small rocky point. "Emergency services were called to respond to reports that two people had been seen in distress on the St. Lawrence River. According to those reports, one of them lost his footing and fell into the water. The second man then attempted to assist him before also being swept away by the current," explains Sûreté du Québec communication officer Frédéric Deshaies.

The body of one of the men was recovered a few hours after the tragedy. His name is Dobel Retuta, 38. He was living in the Montreal area. The Sûreté du

Québec reported on August 2 that the body of the second man was found in the St. Lawrence River, in the Marsoui area, shortly before 10:30 a.m. Emergency services were notified after a citizen located the man's body. The victim's identity has been confirmed, to the coroner's satisfaction, as that of Pepito Jr. Labrador, 45, of Montreal, who was the subject of a missing person report issued on July 19.

Originally from the Philippines, both men were avid sports fishermen. Mr. Labrador liked the Haute-Gaspésie area to such an extent that he had bought a house in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts in order to practice his hobby regularly.

Reward offered for information following the death of Martin Dupuis

The family of Martin Dupuis, 56, the motorcyclist who was found unconscious near the Saint-Majorique bridge in Gaspé on July 3, is offering a \$3,000 reward for information that could help advance the investigation.

According to his family, they believe someone must have witnessed what happened, noting that people reportedly saw Mr. Dupuis after the incident while he was seriously injured. He was found on Boulevard de Pointe-Navarre at about 6:30 p.m., lying beside his motorcycle with serious injuries.

He later died from those injuries. On July 7, the Sûreté du Québec appealed to the public for information in an effort to advance the investigation.



Photo: Facebook

Gaspé bus accident causes injuries to a baby

Shortly after 1 a.m. on July 31, emergency services were called to Route 198, at kilometre 112, in the Rivière-Saint-Jean area, for a single-vehicle accident involving a bus carrying 23 passengers. "Following the incident, a young child was transported to a hospital. Fortunately, the child's injuries are not life-threatening," reports officer Frédéric Deshaies, of the Sûreté du Québec. A police officer trained in collision investigation went to the scene to analyze the evidence and try to determine the cause and circumstances of the accident. Highway patrol officers were also called to assist with the investigation. Traffic was completely stopped during the emergency response. Alternating traffic was in place while the bus was being towed. The bus involved in the accident was originally called to assist another bus that had experienced a mechanical failure, to the west of the point of the accident, which was relatively close to the town of Gaspé. The other bus passengers were not injured despite the force of the impact.

Cyclist seriously injured in August 1 accident on Wakeham avenue

A man in his 30s remained in critical but stable condition as the SPEC was reaching its deadline after being struck by an SUV on August 1 on Montée Wakeham in Gaspé. Emergency services were called shortly after 11:30 a.m. The accident occurred as the cyclist was attempting to cross Route 198. The section of Montée Wakeham at the Pinson intersection was closed to traffic while investigators determined the cause of the accident. According to Radio CHNC, the victim was not wearing a bicycle helmet.

Gaspé accident leave one driver injured

On July 29 at approximately 10:15 p.m., emergency services responded to a two-vehicle collision on Saint-Maurice Boulevard in Gaspé. According to information gathered so far, a vehicle travelling towards Gaspé collided with another vehicle travelling in the same direction. The vehicle that was struck contained two adults and four children. None of the occupants of that vehicle sustained injuries. Following the impact, the other vehicle, in which only the driver was present, veered off course and struck a pole and a fence. The vehicle then caught fire. The driver of the other vehicle quickly came to the aid of the other motorist and managed to pull him out before the flames could spread further. The driver of the burned-out vehicle, a man in his forties from New Richmond, was transported to a hospital for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries. Speed may have been a contributing factor in the collision. A blood test has also been ordered to determine if the driver was impaired at the time of the incident.

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Fisheries Fund finally renewed

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Following months of lobbying by the fishing industry, a campaign championed by the Bloc Québécois in Ottawa, the provincial and federal governments announced on July 17 the renewal and expansion of the Fisheries Fund. Negotiations resumed in March, leading to a new agreement with a budget of \$50 million.

The new funding represents a 17% increase over the original program launched in 2019, which had a budget of \$42.8 million and ended on March 31.

The federal government is providing 60% of the funding, while the Quebec government has increased its contribution from 30% to 40%, bringing its share to \$20 million.

“We see this commitment as a very clear indicator of our support, our confidence and the value of the fishing, processing and marketing industry,” says Stéphane Sainte-Croix, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé and Minister for Fisheries’ parliamentary assistant.

Quebec’s additional 10% contribution is part of a broader framework of federal-provincial agreements in the agri-food sector.

“There is a precedent in the agricultural sector within the Québec-Ottawa agreements. Fisheries were the last area to be harmonised. In this way, we are building on the track record of agricultural fund-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet travelled to Gaspé last November to join industry stakeholders in calling for the renewal of the Fisheries Fund.

ing,” explains Mr. Sainte-Croix.

In addition to research, development and innovation, the program’s eligibility criteria now include support for climate change adaptation and, above all, market diversification.

“The sector had shared its concerns and challenges with us. There is a genuine desire to be less dependent on our neighbours to the south. There is a genuine desire to tap into markets that we consider relevant for the future in a more strategic way,” explains Mr. Sainte-Croix.

A welcome development

Alexis Deschênes, Member of Parliament (MP) for

Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj and the Bloc Québécois’s spokesperson on fisheries has fought to persuade the federal government to reactivate the fund.

“This is a major victory. Mark Carney’s Liberal government had promised to boost it, but forgot to follow through after the election. In the November budget, there was no mention of the Fisheries Fund. We mobilized everyone to get the government to honour its commitment,” recalls Alexis Deschênes.

The campaign began last November in Gaspé, continued at the Quebec Association of Fisheries Industrialists conference in January and at the Bloc Québécois convention in the Magdalen Islands in March.

“All this pressure from fishermen, industry representatives and regional elected officials forced the federal government to keep its promise. That’s why negotiations resumed in March and today the fund has been renewed. A 20% increase had been promised. We secured 17%,” says the Bloc Québécois MP.

“We know the impact of the fishing industry in our region. The fact that it has been renewed and improved is excellent news for the region – not only for the fishermen but also for all the economic activity that revolves around it,” adds Mathieu Lapointe, chair of the Gaspésie Prefects’ Council.

Diversifying markets

Market diversification will be a key focus of the renewed program.

“Over 80% of seafood from the Gaspé Peninsula and the Islands is exported to the

United States. With the current president and the trade war, we feel a little too dependent. It is only right that we seek to diversify our markets. Efforts are already underway, but these are long-term endeavours. We need to build relationships of trust in Europe and Asia. It is right and proper that the government should support the sector,” the MP continues.

“If we don’t have diversified markets capable of appreciating the products we have, all the industry needs to do is ensure that quality is up to standard, as it has been for a long time, and from there, we’ll eventually attract the interest of people who may not be aware of what we have to offer in Eastern Canada,” comments Claudio Bernatchez, general manager of the Gaspésie Owners’ Captains’ Cooperative.

The 198 projects supported during the fund’s first phase generated more than \$85 million in investments across Quebec’s coastal regions.

“If the economic benefits were double the investment, it would be great to triple that this time around and develop collaborative projects, as I don’t know of many players in the sector who, on their own, are capable of bringing about meaningful change,” says Mr Bernatchez.

Applications will be accepted beginning in September for the renewed fund, which will remain in place until March 31, 2031.

“The industry is eagerly awaiting the fund and is ready. There are already projects in the sector waiting for the go-ahead. If we ever exhaust the fund more quickly, I believe that will be a sign of success,” says Mr Sainte-Croix.

Carleton-sur-Mer seeks permanent Orléans Express stop

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER — The mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer hopes to find a permanent solution for Orléans Express passengers, who are currently forced to board and disembark in the church parking lot.

For several years, Orléans Express stopped at the now-closed Le Héron restaurant, but the selling of the building to another restaurant operator in 2022 left the bus company without a proper stop in Carleton-sur-Mer.

The closure also prompted Orléans Express to relocate its meal stop to Pointe-à-la-Croix. Nearly five years later, the situation remains unresolved.

The current stop does little to create a positive first impression for travellers and



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Mathieu Lapointe, mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer.

tourists arriving in the community.

“It’s problematic. We’re going to look into the possibility of accommodating coaches

at the Quai des Arts, but there’s an issue with the parking or the entrance, which would require the coaches to manoeuvre, and we need to look into that. We’d like a better solution than having people wait in an outdoor car park, exposed to the elements,” comments the mayor, Mathieu Lapointe.

The mayor also expresses frustration with what he describes as a lack of flexibility from Keolis, the parent company of Orléans Express.

“I know that Keolis has approached local businesses and operators about setting up bus stops. But the terms aren’t attractive and the businesses haven’t signed up. Keolis needs to adopt a more open approach with local businesses to secure terms that benefit passengers,” says Mr. Lapointe.

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Côte-de-Gaspé launches Route of Remembrance

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The MRC de la Côte-de-Gaspé has launched the Route of Remembrance, a self-guided tour highlighting 33 sites that showcase the region's military history through podcasts and audio guides.

While many of the featured locations relate to the Second World War, the project covers a much broader period of the region's military past.

“It’s really about all the sites that tell our military history. Many of these stories are little known. When we learn Canadian history in school, we’re often left with the impression that the Second World War never really reached Canada. That does a disservice to future generations. German U-boats really did operate here, and we had coastal defence batteries. During the First World War, the entire Canadian fleet assembled in Gaspé Bay before crossing the Atlantic to Eu-



Photo: MRC de la Côte-de-Gaspé

A map highlights 33 sites linked to the Côte-de-Gaspé's military history.

rope. Many significant events in international history took place in Gaspé and along the Gaspé Coast,” says Côte-de-Gaspé prefect Daniel Côté.

The sites stretch from Grande-Vallée to Fort-Prével. “They include coastal de-

fence batteries and repurposed buildings, such as the Forillon shipyard, which served as a seaplane base for the large naval base in Gaspé during the Second World War. Many stories like these are featured,” says Mr. Côté.

The project was developed with the help of both professional and amateur historians. “There was already a solid historical foundation, but we also uncovered lesser-known stories that are highlighted through these presentations,” he says.

Mr. Côté hopes the Route of Remembrance will attract visitors from outside the region, noting that military tourism continues to grow around the world.

“It needs to be promoted beyond the region because it represents an important chapter in world history. We played a role in both the First and Second World Wars. We also have monuments from other periods, such as the Monument to the Braves in Gaspé, which honours everyone from the region who gave their lives or sacrificed their health in defence of our values of freedom and peace. How do we do that? I’m not sure. But I do know there are people who are

interested,” says Mr. Côté. He also notes that the Canadian Museum of History overlooks the contributions of Jacques Cartier and William Wakeham, in the latter case to Canada's Arctic sovereignty, as well as the pioneering aerial work of pilot Jacques de Lesseps. “Gaspé has always been an important place in North American history,” says Mr. Côté.

“When you’re not at war, you don’t necessarily realize it. But when conflict breaks out, Gaspé’s location at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River becomes strategically important. There’s a reason a naval base was established here during the Second World War and why the Canadian fleet assembled in Gaspé Bay before crossing the Atlantic during the First World War. Its location is highly strategic, and that’s what we want to highlight when we tell this military history,” says Mr. Côté.

An end to one-size-fits-all government programs

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The Quebec government says it is moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to designing government programs, a promise that has been made repeatedly by successive governments over the years.

The government is developing a directive that would require regional realities to be systematically considered when new programs are designed.

The objective is to make regional considerations a standard part of government decision-making.

“What our regional partners are telling us is that some directives, guidelines and programs are poorly adapted or do not meet the specific needs of one or more regions. We want to put an end to the one-size-fits-all approach to programs developed by Quebec and ensure they are shaped by the regions,” says Mathieu Lévesque, minister responsible for the Regions.

Regional administrative conferences will play a central role in the process.

Recommendations are expected by October, and the minister insists this initiative will be different from previous efforts.

“Ms. Fréchette (premier Christine) has clearly backed



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Minister Mathieu Lévesque.

up her words with action. First, she appointed a minister responsible for the regions. Together, we created a Regional Council made up of parliamentary assistants, with the goal of bringing decision-making closer to the regions, because that is what they have been asking for. That’s the message Ms. Fréchette wants to send,” says Mr. Lévesque.

The Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé (MNA), Stéphane Sainte-Croix, sits on the Regional Council.

One example of the type of initiative this new approach could produce is a program similar to the former FAIR program, which was designed

specifically for the Gaspé Peninsula with its own eligibility criteria and dedicated funding.

“The Gaspé Regional Administrative Conference will be able to suggest this type of program. The goal is flexible programs that reflect the reality of the territory,” says Mr. Lévesque, citing factors such as population density, demographic decline and transportation costs.

He also says the government wants to reduce administrative paperwork, another long-standing request from regional organizations.

“During my regional tours, many stakeholders tell me the administrative burden is very heavy, creating a barrier to accessing government programs. That could be one of the recommendations Regional Administrative Conferences bring forward,” he says.

Positive reaction, with a touch of skepticism

“I don’t want to be sarcastic, but every time we approach an election campaign, all the political parties suddenly become champions of the regions. That’s not surprising,” says Gaspé mayor Daniel Côté.

“That being said, it has to happen eventually. We need to regionalize programs and decentralize decision-making. That’s what we’ve been asking

for all along,” says Mr. Côté.

Mathieu Lapointe, president of the Gaspé Peninsula Prefects' Table, also welcomed the announcement.

“We’ve been asking for this for years. We want Quebec to consult the regions so programs reflect the realities on the ground. That needs to apply to all programs, including those that already exist,” he says.

He argues that even when the Quebec government has good intentions, programs are often developed without fully considering regional realities such as distance and population distribution, forcing changes later.

“All of that is counterproductive. Consult the regions first, then determine how best to implement the programs. We can point to dozens of examples of programs that simply aren’t adapted to our realities,” says Mr. Lapointe, who is also mayor of Carleton-

sur-Mer and prefect of the Avignon MRC.

He cites reimbursement for medical travel expenses as one example, noting that residents of the Haute-Gaspésie MRC are not eligible for the program despite the distances they must travel for care.

He also points to immigration programs, arguing that the challenges facing the Gaspé Peninsula differ significantly from those in major urban centres.

“These realities need to be taken into account when programs are developed,” he says.

“Another program, while not perfect, serves as an example: the TAEQ, the infrastructure program linked to the gasoline tax, which gives municipalities considerable leeway to invest in priorities identified by local authorities. This type of initiative should be supported by the various programs,” adds the mayor of Gaspé.





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Another step towards installing snow cannons at Mont Béchervaise

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Town of Gaspé has taken another step toward installing snow cannons at Mont Béchervaise, a project first discussed in 2020 with stakeholders associated with the ski hill.

Before moving forward, the impact on the groundwater supply must be assessed.

“We wouldn’t want snow cannons to compromise the drinking water supply for local residents. The area is not connected to the main water supply; residents rely on artesian wells. Before we can enjoy the snow, we need to be sure that our residents have an adequate supply of drinking water,” says mayor Daniel Côté.

The Town has awarded a \$26,000 contract to a firm to carry out a hydrogeological



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The plan to reinstall snow cannons at Mont Béchervaise has reached a new stage.

study.

One of the options being analyzed is the construction of a retention basin, similar to those built on Rue Patrice-

Quenneville, not far from the ski hill.

“Historically, when there were snow cannons at Béchervaise, people used to divert a

watercourse – something that is no longer done these days – to create a dam to hold back water from a stream and use it to power the snow cannons.

Today, with environmental regulations, that’s practically impossible,” says the mayor.

“The study will tell us whether this is the most viable option or whether we need to draw on groundwater. Even so, a retention basin involves water that would otherwise have replenished the water table. What is the impact? That is what needs to be investigated.”

Some residents argue that, once turned into snow, the water eventually returns to the groundwater supply when it melts in the spring.

Earlier in the debate, the mayor noted that the drought that affected the region in 2025 had changed how the issue was viewed.

Some residents saw their wells run dry because of the lack of rainfall, a situation that raised concerns for the mayor.

Economic ties could grow between Ireland and Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – During a visit to Gaspé on July 16, Ireland's Honorary Consul for Quebec met with the mayor to discuss economic opportunities and potential partnerships between the Town of Gaspé and Ireland.

In addition to announcing a partnership with the Festival de Musique du Bout du Monde (FMBM), Bryan O’Gallagher met with members of Douglas-town's Irish community and visited the memorial at Forillon National Park honouring the victims of the Carricks shipwreck of 1847.

“We met with several partners. We discussed economic issues and business opportunities between Canada, Quebec and Ireland, particularly under the free trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. We discussed opportunities in the Gaspé region in sectors such as the blue economy, renewable energy, shipbuilding, and things like that,” says the honorary consul.

Mr. O’Gallagher noted that one of Gaspé's first settlers in the 1700s was Irishman Felix O’Hara.

“We have been living side by side and together for a long time. We have experienced difficult times, but also happy ones. We realize that 180 years later, whilst we can commem-



Honorary consul Bryan O’Gallagher, mayor Daniel Côté and Elyna Bergeron, the Francophone Affairs Officer at the Irish Embassy in Ottawa.

Photo: Daniel Côté’s Facebook page

orate tragedies, we can also look to the future, and of course, economic exchanges form part of that,” comments Mr. O’Gallagher.

The possibility of organizing an economic mission or business forum has not been ruled out.

“It’s a real possibility. Together with the Embassy of Ireland, we’re working with partners at Quebec's Ministry of International Relations, Investissement Québec and economic development organizations. The goal is to bring together business leaders, universities and research institutions so they can share their expertise, knowledge, needs, technologies and ideas. All of this is taking place within the framework of a free trade agreement that has significantly reduced many barriers between the two

countries.”

Shipbuilding opportunities

Ireland's shipbuilding industry could present opportunities for collaboration as Gaspé works to develop its own sector.

“There is a lot of talk about defence and security. There have been many announcements in Canada. The European Union is also asking itself the same questions. Ireland is part of the European Union and is neutral by virtue of its constitution. But it is a maritime nation with an exclusive economic zone and interests in fisheries, offshore energy extraction and, yes, Ireland is looking to renew its fleet of coastal patrol vessels. Yes, there are certainly opportunities to explore,” says Mr O’Gallagher.

Copper mine strengthens case for rail funding

Nelson Sergerie

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE – The prospect of transporting important copper ore tonnage, if Osisko Metals proceeds with reopening Mines Gaspé in Murdochville, is strengthening the case for completing the rehabilitation of the railway to Gaspé.

The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, or Gaspé Railway Corporation recently completed the transportation of about 1 million tonnes of cement between Port-Daniel-Gascons and New Richmond, an operation that started in 2017 and a volume that required an estimated 25,000 truckloads.

Transporting millions of tonnes of copper ore by truck between Murdochville and the Rouyn-Noranda smelter, for example, would not be viable economically.

For Gaspé Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Stéphane Sainte-Croix, the project provides another strong argument for securing the funding needed to complete the rehabilitation of Section 3 of the railway between Port Daniel–Gascons and Gaspé.

“This is what I call a good problem to have. We need strong economic projects that are firmly rooted in our region. It’s becoming increasingly clear that we need an intermodal transportation network that includes road, rail and marine transportation. All of those options are available here,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

In June 2023, the Quebec government announced \$871 million to restore the railway to Gaspé. However, the final cost is expected to exceed that estimate.

“I’m not saying we should be talking about a billion dollars, but four years ago we were talking about \$871 million. Considering inflation and what I’m seeing in the construction industry, I don’t think the work can be completed for that amount. All the better if it can,” says the MNA.

“If we can stay within the \$871 million estimate, that would be excellent. But if the cost ends up somewhere between \$900 million and \$1 billion, I don’t think that would be unrealistic,” says the MNA.

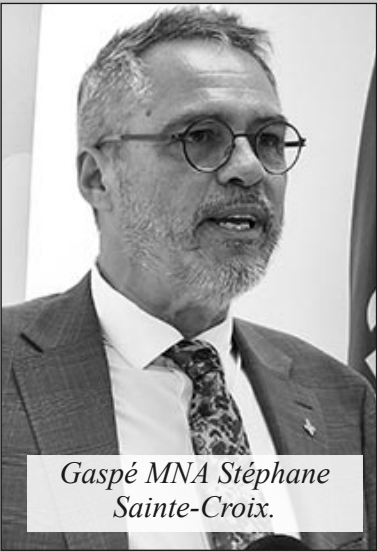


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Paspebiac's director of Culture suspended over alleged conflict of interest

GILLES GAGNÉ

PASPEBIAC – Paspebiac’s director of Culture, Dominick Briand, was suspended at the end of July by the Town of Paspebiac over alleged conflicts of interest, whether direct or indirect.

Over the course of two years, an internal review conducted by the municipal administration indicates that Mr. Briand allegedly awarded contracts to bands in which he had a direct or indirect conflict of interest.

The disciplinary measure was announced on social media by mayor Jérémy Laplante. Mr. Laplante indicated that a two-week suspension had been imposed to Mr. Briand. As the SPEC was reaching its deadline, the municipal council was days away from holding a public meeting to deal with the matter.

As a result of the suspension, the municipal administration also cancelled most activities scheduled by the



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Most activities were suspended at the Paspebiac Cultural Centre following the suspension of Dominick Briand.

Paspébiac Cultural Centre until the August 10 meeting.

Also on social media, the mayor expressed his disagreement with the decision made by the Municipality's general management. He believes the centre's activities could have been maintained.

The mayor alleges that an internal investigation revealed that, over the past two years, Dominick Briand awarded approximately \$18,000 in contracts to musical groups in which he had direct or indirect interest.

The mayor mentions the

CHNC Band, as well as Blush & Boots, the band of Mr. Briand's partner, as examples.

According to Mr. Laplante, “other contracts for upcoming events, including shows planned for Paspébiac's 150th anniversary in 2027, could be problem-

atic.” However, Mr. Laplante clarified that Dominick Briand reportedly did not receive any direct payment for his performances at the Paspébiac Cultural Centre.

Dominick Briand, has been suspended without pay for two weeks, until August 10.

Mr. Briand has declined interview requests, but he mentioned he has done nothing wrong. He added that he will not be making any further comments until further notice.

The disciplinary measure will now have to be confirmed, extended or overturned by elected officials at the next town council meeting on August 10.

Jérémy Laplante affirms that a two-week suspension without pay is an appropriate disciplinary measure for the actions he attributes to Dominick Briand. As of August 5, he did not intend to recommend dismissal to Paspebiac’s elected officials.

4th annual Glow in the Dark

HOLLY SMITH

PORT-DANIEL – The Port-Daniel waterfront was glowing on Sunday, July 26, as hundreds of participants and spectators gathered for the fourth annual Glow in the Dark event.

As darkness fell, kayaks and paddle boards decorated with glow sticks, LED lights and colourful decorations launched from the wharf, creating a spectacular display across the harbour. Large crowds could be seen on the bridge, beach and shoreline to watch one of the community’s most anticipated event.

What started as a small gathering a few years ago has grown into a popular tradition that attracts participants from many municipalities. The event continues to grow each year, bringing together people of all ages.

The festivities continued on shore with live music, food and refreshments, while fireworks lit up the night sky to cap off another successful edition to the event.

The Glow in the Dark event has quickly become a highlight of the summer season in Port-Daniel. Thanks to the efforts of organizers, volunteers, sponsors and participants.



Photo: Facebook



Photo: Facebook



Photo: Jillian O'Connell

Passenger train to return by spring 2028 at the latest

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – The Coalition of Gaspesians for the return of a passenger train reports that VIA Rail will return between Matapedia and New Carlisle during the spring of 2028 at the latest, a timeline that the coalition’s coordinator, Micheline Saint-Onge, considers too far away.

The spring of 2028 was referred to by VIA Rail representatives Denis Boucher, director of government affairs, and Florence Lefrançois, special projects advisor for the federal transporter. They met virtually with Micheline Saint-Onge, several members of the Coalition and various stakeholders on August 4.

“The spring of 2028 is the slowest scenario. We think it is very late and it can go faster,” first comments Ms. Saint-Onge, who adds that, overall, the meeting went well. It followed a first meet-



Photo: Gilles Gagné

VIA Rail says passenger service between Matapedia and New Carlisle could return by the spring of 2028 at the latest, although the Coalition of Gaspesians for the return of a passenger train believes service could resume sooner.

ing on May 6, at the end of which VIA Rail agreed to return around mid-summer to submit a preliminary work plan.

Based on the May talks, VIA Rail favours a day train between Quebec City and the Gaspé Peninsula.

“The VIA people showed the same openness as in May. For example, in May, they were saying that it would take three years to train staff. Now, they say that it wouldn’t take three years but six months,” explains Micheline Saint-Onge.

She adds that it was agreed on in May that the mid-summer meeting would not be a decisive one.

“We mainly agreed on a return in October. They are very open to the exchange of information,” she points out.

The biggest hurdle expressed by VIA Rail is the necessary right of way agreement that must be reached with railroad owners in order to reach the return of the passenger train. Those two owners are Transports Québec, between Matapedia and Gaspé, and Canadian National (CN), between Quebec City and Matapedia.

“They think it will be long. With the Quebec government, nothing will be decided before a new cabinet meeting, which means no talks before at least two-and-a-half months, since we are near the beginning of an electoral campaign. That campaign will also be important in determining the progress

of the line upgrading between Port Daniel and Gaspé,” explains Ms. Saint-Onge.

The status of talks with CN is unknown, as the freight transporter is not renowned for making things easy for passenger trains.

Micheline Saint-Onge appreciates the collaboration of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) in the current context. The SCFG operates freight trains between Matapedia and Port Daniel.

“Its president, Mr. (Éric) Dubé is expressing full readiness to collaborate, as he would be ready to make locomotive engineers available to VIA Rail, although there might be a union problem in that regard,” she stresses.

VIA Rail’s service in the Gaspé Peninsula has been suspended since 2013, with the exception of the stops in Matapedia for the Montreal-Halifax train.

The New Richmond Agricultural Fair will be back, starting August 20

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The 181st New Richmond Agricultural Fair will take place from August 20 to 23, 2026, at the fairgrounds on Route Cochrane. Gymkhana events, gardening competitions and music will notably be at the forefront of the program.

There has been new blood on the fair’s organizing committee since August 2025. Last year’s attendees might remember master of ceremony Nancy Robertson’s message to the effect that people had to express more interest in order to make sure that there would be a fair in 2026. Within 24 hours, some new volunteers had come forward to express their desire to contribute.

The evening of Thursday, August 20, will be marked by the opening of the paddock at 6 p.m., while the saloon will open an hour later. Admission is free. Musicians will be invited to play in a jam session. It will also be pizza night.

On Friday, the paddock and the saloon will open at 4 p.m. The open Gymkhana will take place at 7 p.m. Music will be featured in the saloon through jam sessions and a



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Gymkhana events, live music and more will be featured during the 181st New Richmond Agricultural Fair, taking place from August 20 to 23.

performance by Brian Haché. The Women’s Institute building will open at 7 p.m. for Saturday’s exhibits.

The site will open at 8 a.m. on Saturday, the busiest day of the fair. Activities will continue throughout the day, with much of the program centred around the paddock, saloon and Women’s Institute building. Various judging sessions are scheduled, notably for costumed animals and gardening. Some of the day’s highlights will certainly be the Cowboy Extreme event, the

junior Gymkhana and the adult 3D Gymkhana, all three held between 10 a.m. and the evening. At the saloon, brunch will be served at 8 a.m. In the evening, Brian Haché will play again, followed by the Garage Band at 9 p.m. Jam sessions are also scheduled.

On Sunday, after brunch, awards for the previous day’s competitions will be handed out at 11 a.m. In the paddock, a race and horse games will be held. The gardening displays will take place at the Women’s Institute building.

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181st Édition
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Eight Gaspesian municipalities to receive new affordable housing under Canada-Quebec agreement

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – A new Canada-Quebec agreement on affordable and intermediate housing will bring dozens of new housing units to the Gaspé Peninsula.

The Quebec government is providing \$13.6 million to the Société de développement de l’Est, or Eastern Development Corporation. Funding from the federal government through the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, along with contributions from the corporation and participating municipalities, has yet to be finalized.

Of the 478 housing units announced for the Lower St. Lawrence, North Shore, Outaouais and Gaspé regions, projects are planned in eight Gaspesian municipalities: Paspébiac, Grande-Rivière, Murdochville, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Carleton-sur-Mer, New Carlisle, Saint-Maxime-du-Mont-Louis and Pointe-à-la-Croix.

“This is the Canada-Quebec agreement. For us, it’s our portfolio, but also the announcement of the end of negotiations between the federal and provincial governments. 2,000 units have been announced for Quebec: Canada Housing is providing the largest initial contribution, the Quebec Housing Corporation



Photo: Eastern Development Corporation

The announcement was made on July 17 in Métis-sur-Mer. Pictured are, among others, Gaspé MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix and Paspébiac Mayor Jérémy Laplante.

(Société québécoise de l’habitation), CMHC guaranteeing the mortgage loans for the recipient non-profit organization, and the municipalities are participating with land donations and tax credits,” says Philippe Dufort, president and chief executive officer of the Eastern Development Corporation.

CMHC stands for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Mr. Dufort says he cannot yet provide a detailed financial breakdown.

“We were clearly told by the governments that those details still need to be discussed. I can’t provide any additional information at this point,” he says.

Based on information released so far, 56 units are planned for Pointe-à-la-Croix, while 24 units each are planned for Grande-Rivière and Paspébiac. Details for the other municipalities have not yet been announced.

“Paspébiac can officially count on funding for a new affordable housing project in collaboration with the Eastern Development Corporation (SDE). This means we’re getting money for a second project in our territory. The details will be worked out with the SDE in the coming months. We’re discussing a 24-unit project with the non-profit developer,” mayor Jérémy Laplante wrote on social media.

“The J.A.F. Gagnon resi-

dential development has been announced for the construction of 24 units in the Town of Grande-Rivière,” mayor Gino Cyr said in a brief statement.

“These announcements belong to the municipalities. They will be made soon,” says Mr. Dufort, declining to provide further details.

The projects are expected to be completed over the next 18 months, with the Eastern Development Corporation retaining ownership of the six-unit buildings.

“There is a significant need for housing for seniors. Between 25 and 33 per cent of the units will be one-bedroom apartments reserved for seniors. About half will be two-bedroom units aimed at young families, young professionals and teleworkers. The remaining quarter will be three-bedroom units intended for families in need of affordable housing,” explains Mr. Dufort.

“This is excellent news. It’s encouraging to see the federal government investing in housing projects in the regions. I worked hard to raise awareness of these needs at the federal level. This represents a significant number of housing units that will be built across the region,” says Mathieu Lapointe, president of the Gaspé Peninsula Prefects’ Council.

“It’s huge. It will provide a real boost. It will allow the

Eastern Development Corporation to continue expanding its housing developments in the coming years. It’s the first time we’ve seen affordable, non-market housing projects of this scale built throughout the Gaspé Peninsula,” he adds.

Standardized approach

To keep construction costs as low as possible, the Eastern Development Corporation builds standardized six-unit apartment buildings.

“We continue to improve the model, but it generally resembles the housing we’ve already built in Métis-sur-Mer. That’s the approach we want to maintain because it integrates well into the villages of Eastern Quebec,” says Mr. Dufort.

“We work with two partners, Maisons Laprise and 8Module, which creates healthy competition and allows us to adopt best practices. They are excellent partners and can offer competitive prices because we’re now building in larger volumes,” says Mr. Dufort.

Of the 478 housing units, 240 will be rented at affordable rates under the Québec Affordable Housing Program, while the remaining 238 will be offered at below-market rents.

HAN Housing launches second phase in Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Following the launch of the first phase of its affordable housing project in August 2024, Logements HAN is preparing to begin Phase 2 in Gaspé.

The first phase, built on Rue Forest, included 32 social and affordable housing units for people living with physical or intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorder, at a cost of \$10.3 million. The second phase will add 24 more units at a cost of \$7.5 million.

Chief executive officer Anik Roy Trudel had previously indicated that a second phase could be built adjacent to the existing development.

All of the apartments will be one-bedroom units.

“We’ve made some great progress with the Town. We’ve had the land since Phase 1. That really helped us



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Anik Roy Trudel at the announcement of Phase 1 in August 2024.

put our proposal together. We’re still aiming to get started shortly, at least with the pre-development work and construction as soon as possible. But it will probably be in 2026. That’s our target,” says the chief executive officer.

In May, the Town of Gaspé

approved a 20-year tax credit, representing a larger contribution than it made to the first phase, when it provided the land and limited financial assistance.

The organization continues to work with general contractor CB4S on the construction of its buildings in the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie regions.

“This is one of the ways we manage to keep costs very competitive despite rising construction costs,” says Ms. Roy Trudel.

Utility connections

Last fall, residents of Phase 1 experienced delays obtaining services from Telus and Cogeco.

“We’d done our homework, but there were delays on the part of the service providers. We’d submitted a request three months in ad-

vance. We’ll make sure that doesn’t happen again. Yes, we’ve taken note and will do whatever it takes,” says Ms. Roy Trudel with a smile.

Logements HAN says it learned from the experience and appreciated the feedback from tenants who were not afraid to speak up.

“It highlighted the project, the impact it has on them, and that they’re not just a number.”

Following the success of the first phase, the organization is moving ahead with Phase 2 in Gaspé.

Another 48-unit project is also in the planning stages in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. Only a few details remain to be finalized.

“We’re close to our goal. It’s a bit like Gaspé 2. We’re in the final stages. We’re on the same timetable and should be able to get everything underway this fall. Ideally, we’d

start both construction sites at the same time,” explains the chief executive officer.

Projects involving 48 units in Chandler and 40 units in New Richmond are currently under construction.

Further requests

Demand for this type of housing remains strong.

Discussions are underway with other municipalities in the Gaspé region about potential projects.

“But I have nothing confirmed at the moment. We’re seeing success in certain towns. We’re being contacted by other municipalities. Our goal is to go wherever there’s a need and find ways to build suitable, affordable housing. We see from our tenants how this can change lives. That’s what drives us and encourages us to carry on,” concludes Anik Roy Trudel.

Released caribou being closely monitored

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The Ministry of Wildlife is able to continuously monitor the seven caribou released in June, thanks in particular to telemetry collars that transmit valuable data on their movements during this phase of re-acclimatization to the wild.

Several factors led the Ministry to release certain caribou rather than others.

“These are health-related criteria: they must be in good physical condition and must not have any specific conditions that would limit their chances of survival. Very young animals, under one and a half years old, are not targeted, nor are individuals at the age when their reproductive capacity is at its peak,” explains biologist Mathieu Morin.



Photo: Screenshot from the Ministry of Wildlife

A female and her calf.

Another criterion – and an important one – is their experience in the wild.

“Most of the animals from the first cohort were born in the wild, and we are relying on their knowledge of the natural environment to pass this on to caribou born in captivity,” adds Mr. Morin.

Operational criteria such as

enclosure capacity, are also taken into account in the assessment.

The big question that remains to be answered is whether those born in the wild will be able to find their way back to their original site.

“That’s the unknown part of the equation. We’re banking on the group effect and the

more experienced animals to guide those who aren’t familiar with the terrain. But it’s all hypothetical, as we have no guarantee that the group will stay together or how quickly they will rejoin the wild population—or indeed whether they will at all. They might decide to colonize other types of habitat. That’s what we’re seeking to document using the telemetry tracking system, which has been upgraded to monitor them more closely,” says the biologist.

The caribou were captured by helicopter and brought to their enclosure for survival and breeding purposes in the winter of 2023.

This helicopter-assisted return to their natural habitat has been analyzed.

“These factors were taken into account. However, it was decided to release them di-

rectly from the enclosure, given that they are close to known summer habitats such as the summit of Mont Jacques-Cartier, which the rest of the population usually uses during the summer. As the crow flies, it is nearby. We must give them the opportunity to explore the surrounding area. However, we cannot be certain whether they will rejoin the herd.”

In early June, the Ministry released seven caribou: one female and six males.

One of the males and the adult female released were born in the wild.

All seven have been fitted with telemetry collars to track their movements.

This release aims to support the wild population and maintain an optimal captive population for breeding purposes.

Yv Bonnier Viger to represent Québec solidaire

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Yv Bonnier Viger will represent Québec solidaire in Bonaventure after being the only candidate to submit nomination papers by the July 22 deadline.

The former director of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Public Health Department was officially confirmed as the party's candidate during a nomination meeting held in Bonaventure on July 26.

His candidacy also ensured the party would have a candidate in the riding for the October 5 provincial election after efforts to recruit another nominee were unsuccessful.

Initially, Québec solidaire held a nomination meeting for the newly created Gaspé-Bonaventure riding under the former electoral map. Emmanuelle Babin won that nomination.

However, legislation passed on June 12 maintaining separate ridings in Gaspé and Bonaventure changed those plans. Ms. Babin opted to run in Gaspé, leaving Bonaventure without a candidate.

“Bonaventure was left somewhat without a candidate. We tried to find someone, but at the last minute, it wasn't possible. I decided to dive back in to ensure we would have a Québec solidaire presence in Bonaventure,” explains Dr. Bonnier Viger, who also serves as the party's regional coordinator in Gaspé.

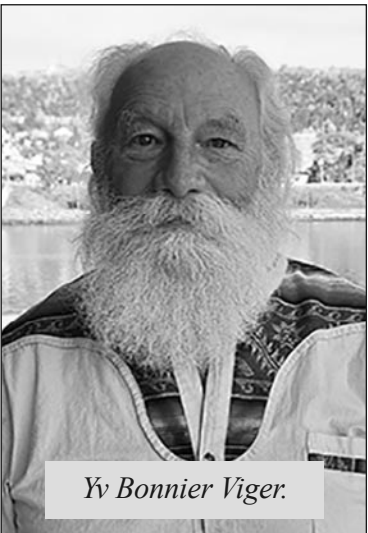


Photo: Nelson Sergerie

He says his candidacy is also intended to ensure progressive voices remain represented in Quebec politics.

“Apart from Québec solidaire, the other parties have shifted to the right. Even the Parti Québécois has taken positions against immigration. Québec solidaire remains the only progressive party,” he says, adding that many voters continue to identify with the party's platform.

Although the election campaign is only beginning and the party has yet to unveil its full platform, Dr. Bonnier Viger says several priorities are already clear.

“The main themes we discuss at Québec solidaire are restoring people's ability to live without constantly having to tighten their belts, improving purchasing power and ensuring housing becomes affordable again by developing housing solutions for everyone who needs them,” he says.

He also believes the current international context highlights the importance of greater regional self-sufficiency, particularly in food production, while addressing the impacts of climate change.

“That means rebuilding social solidarity, and I hope to contribute to that if I'm elected. If I'm not, we'll continue promoting those ideas after the election,” he says.

Dr. Bonnier Viger is no stranger to provincial politics.

He was the Québec solidaire candidate in Gaspé in 2022, ran twice in Lévis in 2014, and was the party's candidate in Beauce in 2012.

Last fall, he also sought the party's male co-spokesperson position following the departure of Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois. Party members ultimately chose Jean-Lesage Member of National the Assembly (MNA), Sol Zanetti.

“For me, not much has changed. In my first campaign in 2012, we were a small group. We went door to door, and we even made our own campaign signs because the party was so small. What has changed is the party's ability to run campaigns comparable to those of the other parties. Otherwise, the issues haven't changed much. Unfortunately, the situation in the world has deteriorated significantly,” says Dr. Bonnier Viger.

“We simply have to keep thinking about how we're going to turn things around,” he adds.

Competition Bureau keeping watch on prices

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – The Competition Bureau is reminding motorists that it continued to monitor gasoline prices during Quebec's construction holiday period.

In a social media post, the Bureau referred to the construction holidays, noting that gasoline prices have a direct impact on travel costs.

“Whether you’re enjoying a long weekend in British Columbia or the construction holidays in Quebec, gasoline prices have a significant impact on the total cost of your trip. Gasoline prices can vary for a number of reasons. Although we do not regulate them, we closely monitor the petrol retail sector to detect any anti-competition behaviour that could drive up prices,” writes the federal agency.

In Quebec, oversight of gasoline pricing falls under the Régie de l'énergie.

The Bureau points out that, under the Competition Act, practices such as price-fixing — when competitors agree to set prices — are illegal.

To secure a conviction for price-fixing, investigators must gather evidence showing that competitors agreed to fix prices.

Bureau's role

The Bureau's role is to investigate and take action if it finds evidence of illegal practices in the gasoline market, such as price-fixing, market allocation, supply restrictions or other anti-competition behaviour.

In May, the Bureau visited Rimouski to remind retailers that price-fixing between competitors is illegal.

The Bureau also visited the Gaspé Peninsula in 2024, but that visit did not uncover any evidence of anti-competitive activity.

Rising prices
On July 21, the price of regular gasoline increased by five cents per litre across much of the Gaspé Peninsula, with most stations charging \$1.899 per litre.

Renewed tensions between the United States and Iran were then affecting the global oil market, and the impact was being felt at the pumps.

Before the increase, motorists had benefited from lower prices, as retail margins had fallen to between four and five cents per litre, according to data from the Régie de l'énergie.

That adjustment brought retail margins back to the average seen over the past year in the Gaspé Peninsula, between 10 and 12 cents per litre, depending on the area.

Too early to predict impact of U.S. tariffs on Canadian cement

● NELSON SERGERIE

PORT-DANIEL-GASCONS – In another move driven by protectionist trade policies, United States’ president, Donald Trump, signed executive orders on July 20 imposing tariffs of 50% on hundreds of Canadian products, including cement.

The president said the measures “are in response to Canada’s discriminatory treatment of U.S. products.”

Asked about the potential impact on the Port-Daniel-Gascons cement plant, St. Marys Cement issued a statement through the public relations firm National.

“At present, no tariffs are being applied to cement exported from Canada to the United States. Consequently, our operations are continuing as normal, and no changes are



Photo: Gilles Gagné

It is too early to assess the impact of the U.S. tariffs on cement produced by St. Marys Cement in Port-Daniel-Gascons.

planned,” the statement says.

“Should the announced measures come into force, it is still too early to assess their precise impact. Their effect will depend, in particular, on

their scope, duration and the terms of their implementation. We are closely monitoring developments and analyzing various scenarios to assess the potential conse-

quences,” the company states.

The Port-Daniel-Gascons plant has an annual production capacity of approximately 2.2 million tonnes.

Its cement is shipped to markets across Canada and internationally.

The product is transported by sea, rail and road, depending on customer needs and the markets being served.

“We remain fully committed to providing our customers with high-quality products while continuing to operate responsibly and efficiently,” concludes St. Marys Cement.

President Trump is invoking Section 338 of the Tariff Act of 1930, which applies when a foreign country discriminates against U.S. trade.

The Act authorizes the imposition of tariffs of up to 50%.

No investigation is required, and there is no time limit on how long the tariffs may remain in effect. *(With The Canadian Press)*

Coroner unable to determine cause of fatal collision

● NELSON SERGERIE

GASPE – Coroner Jean-Pierre Chamberland was unable to determine the exact circumstances that led to the death of 46-year-old Afiwa Sena Anthony of Quebec City in a head-on collision on Route 132 in Saint-Siméon on January 18.

Ms. Anthony was travel-

ling westbound alone when her vehicle crossed the centre line and collided head-on with an oncoming vehicle near the intersection of Roussel Road.

She became trapped inside her vehicle.

When paramedics arrived, she had no pulse and was not breathing. She was pronounced dead about an hour later.

In his report, the coroner notes that Ms. Anthony had left Gaspé and was travelling to Maria Hospital, where she was scheduled to begin her shift. At the time of the collision, the roadway was snow-covered after 2.2 centimetres of snowfall earlier that day.

During the trip, she had been exchanging text messages with her partner to keep

him informed of her progress.

Following the collision, investigators with the Sûreté du Québec found a cellphone in the vehicle that was open to a messaging application.

“It is not possible to determine why the victim’s Ford Edge crossed into the opposite lane. It may have been caused by the slippery road surface or by a moment of

inattention or distraction on the part of the driver,” Mr. Chamberland wrote in his report.

The winter tires on both vehicles were found to be in good condition.

Ms. Anthony died from a cervical spine injury sustained in the collision.

The death was ruled accidental.

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Shigawake Seaside Market continues to grow

HEATHER IMHOFF

SHIGAWAKE – What began as an effort to fill a gap in local services has grown into a popular weekly gathering for residents and visitors alike.

The Municipality of Shigawake launched the Shigawake Seaside Market after recognizing there was no community market serving the area between New Carlisle and Chandler. Since its introduction, the market has attracted a growing number of vendors and shoppers looking to support local businesses and connect with their community.

Held at the Log Cabin in Ken Duguay Park (187 Route 132), the market features a wide variety of local products and services. Visitors can browse handmade crafts, fresh baked goods, locally grown fruits and vegetables, home-made products, artwork and other specialty items. In addition to shopping, attendees can also take advantage of services such as haircuts from a certified barber and even have their fortunes read.

Municipal organizers say



Photo: Google Maps

The Log Cabin at Ken Duguay Park, located at 187 Route 132 in Shigawake, is home to the Shigawake Seaside Market, where local vendors, artisans and producers gather throughout the summer to showcase their products and services.

the market was created to provide local artisans, producers and entrepreneurs with an opportunity to showcase their work while giving residents a convenient place to shop locally.

The market is scheduled to take place on Thursday, August 13, as well as Sundays, August 23 and August 30, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. It will continue into September, with additional dates to be announced.

The municipality is also en-

couraging new vendors to participate. There is no fee to set up a booth, although participants are asked to bring their own table. Organizers welcome anyone offering handmade crafts, baked goods, produce, plants, artwork or other products and services.

Beyond providing a place to shop, the Shigawake Seaside Market has become a community meeting place where residents and visitors can socialize, discover local talent and support small businesses.

Green weevils making a noticeable appearance

HOLLY SMITH

PORT DANIEL – If it seems like tiny bright green bugs are suddenly everywhere this summer, you’re not alone. Many residents have been noticing large numbers of small metallic-green beetles landing on vehicles, outdoor furniture, clothing and even people.

The insects are green weevils, most likely the Green Immigrant Leaf Weevil (*Polydrusus sericeus*), an introduced species that has become established in parts of eastern Canada.

Although residents say they only began noticing the insects over the past few years, that doesn’t necessarily mean the species is new to the region. Populations can remain relatively unnoticed for years before weather conditions allow them to increase dramatically. Milder winters can improve the survival of larvae, while warm, favourable growing conditions can lead to a surge in adult beetles during the summer. Once populations reach a certain level, the insects become difficult to ignore.



Photo: Holly Smith

Green weevils, now a familiar summer visitor on the Gaspé Coast, have become much more noticeable over the past few years.

Despite their abundance, green weevils are considered harmless to people. They do not bite, sting or transmit diseases. Adults feed primarily on the leaves of trees and shrubs, including birch, maple, willow and various fruit trees. While they may leave small notches along leaf edges, they rarely cause significant damage to healthy, mature trees.

The beetles are easily recognized by their bright green colour, hard wing covers and elongated snout, a characteristic feature of all weevils.

Adults typically measure between five and eight mil-

limetres in length and are capable of flying, which explains why they often land on people and vehicles.

Like many insects, green weevil populations naturally fluctuate from year to year. Birds, spiders and other predators help keep their numbers in check, and the seasonal emergence usually subsides after several weeks.

For now, residents may simply have to tolerate an unusually large number of tiny green hitchhikers during outdoor activities. Have you noticed more green weevils in your community this summer?

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



The simple happiness of a Gaspesian summer evening

Is there anything as beautiful as a Gaspesian summer evening when the day begins to give up its light? The sun moves lower in the sky and the wind settles down, and everything becomes quiet. It is the best time of the day.

By then, the chores have been done, the dishes washed and put away. This is not the time to start a new household chore. It is time to sit, relax and enjoy the beautiful moments before the sun sets.

Some find this time perfect for a walk, with or without the dog, while others settle onto the front porch with a cup of tea or a cold beverage. Cars drive by, and a fun pastime might be to wave and make a comment about those passing by. Sometimes, while out on a stroll, a couple might stop for a little chat. “Nice day today. Yes, but we need some rain.” Sometimes those chats are longer and may be about the price of gas or the grandchildren, but try to avoid talking about the news. That’s just downright depressing.

For those who enjoy a walk by the shore, watching the tide that comes and goes, as it has for thousands of years provides a soothing backdrop for conversations about the day. Seagulls patrol overhead, looking for a wee snack before bedtime.

Summer has room for all. Late diners might be making hamburgers and hotdogs on the barbecue, and the smell is pure summer. Somewhere, a family is eating lobster with potato salad, crusty bread and melted garlic butter.

Children know that soon they will be summoned inside to prepare for bedtime. The lucky kids who are not glued to a screen are still enjoying the summer’s day outside. Remember when you were young? You might have begged for a few more minutes on your bike or to play kick the can with neighbours.

As darkness arrives, the woods become a different world. Birds return to their trees to sleep so that they are ready early the next morning to greet the day and begin the hunt for food. A sure sign of the summer nights is the sound of crickets. This lets you know that day is done and night has arrived. Nocturnal animals come out to begin their roaming and hunting. Porcupines, raccoons, skunks, coyotes, foxes and perhaps an owl hooting its eternal question may encroach into your summer night. That’s to be expected on the Gaspé. Wildlife is always close to us and is a part of the Gaspesian world.

Wait! Hope you didn’t miss the sunset! The colours are gorgeous, and defining them is difficult. Just try to do so on one Gaspesian summer evening. This would be a fun challenge. Pink? Lavender? Tangerine? Sky blue? There is almost an infinite number of shades to see.

Remember the smell of salt air, the sound of children laughing, neighbours chatting and the knowledge that you have enjoyed a Gaspesian summer evening, and that another summer will roll around next year.

Announcements



Obituaries



BRENNAN: John Francis

It is with both sadness and gratitude for his long life that the family of John Francis Brennan (Frank) announce his passing on March 27, 2026, at the age of 88 years and 7 months.

Frank was born in the hamlet of Semiwagan Ridge, New Brunswick, and grew up in another small hamlet called Russellville. He came to New Carlisle with his young family in late 1964 having been transferred by Sobeys to Paspébiac. Over the years he had several jobs between Bonaventure and Paspébiac before retiring in 1992.

Dad was a very social person, and he enjoyed visiting with family and friends, he always had a joke or a funny story to tell. He especially enjoyed driving around to see what was going on. He put a lot of mileage on his car driving between Bonaventure and Paspébiac over the years. He loved to play cards, his favourite games were Cribbage, Deuces and Auction 45. When he was home, you would find him watching hockey or, in later years, The Price is Right and Family Feud, which became part of his daily routine. He was a longtime member of the Royal Canadian Legion and held the post of Poppy Chairman for many years, he also volunteered with the New Carlisle Fire Department.

He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Carmelle, as well as his parents, Jack and Kathleen, and his sister, Liz.

Dad leaves behind his brother, Joe, and children: Debbie (Doug), Donna, John (Sherry), and Gloria (Steven). His grandchildren Alicia (Andrew) and Colin (Rachel), as well as great-granddaughter, Madelyn.

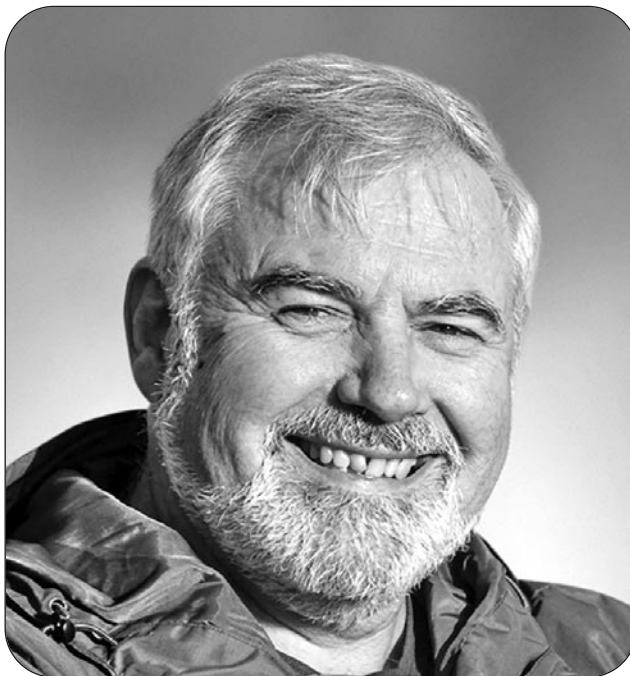
The family would like to thank Dr. Basque and the staff at the CHSLD New Carlisle for the care Dad received while he was a resident.

As well, we would like to thank his neighbours and friends who looked out for him and were there whenever he needed a helping hand, especially Etienne and Magella Blais.

thegaspespec.com

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DRAINVILLE: Dennis Paul

Dennis Paul died August 3, 2026. He was married to Jeanie LeLacheur and lived at Koke's Chalet in Rosebridge until his death.

He is predeceased by his parents and brother Brian, and is lovingly remembered by his wife, Jeanie; his daughter, Aurora; his stepson, Jeremy; his stepdaughter, Jessie; and his four grandchildren, Teo, Alyson, Jack and Gabby.

He was raised and educated in Joliette, Quebec, and in Toronto at East York Collegiate and Trinity College at the U of T, earning B.A. and M.Div. degrees. He was the recipient of two honorary degrees: Doctor of Sacred Theology, from the Montreal Diocesan Theological College; and Doctor of Divinity, from Trinity College.

Dennis was ordained deacon and priest by the Rt. Rev. Allan Read. Over the years Dennis served in Land O' Lakes Parish in the Diocese of Ontario and as Associate Priest at Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal. He also served in Fenelon Falls and Coboconk in the Diocese of Toronto and was appointed Archdeacon and Priest in Charge of the Greater Parish of Gaspé in the Diocese of Quebec.

Dennis served as Executive Director of STOP 103, a multi-service agency working with the poor and marginalized in Toronto. Financially supported by Archbishop Ted Scott, of the Anglican Church, he travelled across the country and wrote a report that analyzed the problems of poverty and homelessness and suggested solutions. The publication of "Poverty in Canada" was an indictment of the actions of the governments of the time and received a great deal of media attention.

In 1989, Dennis responded to Chief Gary Potts' request to help blockade the Red Squirrel Road in Temagami. He was arrested and charged and his trial was held in 1990, and he was sentenced to jail for a week and fined \$750. He served his time in March of 1991.

Dennis served three years as an elected member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. He challenged the members of the various parties at Queen's Park to consider significant parliamentary and electoral reforms. Despite being Government Caucus Chair, he found that such reforms were not popular, even in his own caucus.

In 1992 Dennis was invested with the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal for significant contributions to his fellow

citizens and to Canada.

In 1991-1992 Dennis chaired the Legislature's Select Committee on Ontario in Confederation. The Final Report was a response to the federal government's Charlottetown Accord referendum to be held on October 26, 1992. The meetings of the committee included travelling to 24 communities in Ontario to seek direct citizen engagement in the process.

The end of Dennis' time at Queen's Park was spent in major disagreements between himself and the Premier on two major issues: casino gambling and the so-called "Social Contract." He believed that it was wrong for any government to promote an activity which it knew would destroy the lives of thousands of people. He was so successful in his repudiation of this policy that the government tried to destroy his reputation. But the attempt was foiled by three journalists who outed the machinations of the government. He resigned his seat in the Assembly on September 22, 1993.

Dennis moved to the Gaspésie on January 4, 1994, and became a teacher of English, History and Humanities at the Cegep de la Gaspésie et des Îles. He loved teaching. He served as teacher at the Cegep for twelve years. Only leaving when he was asked to take a leadership position as Missioner in the Diocese of Quebec.

Over the course of twelve years, Dennis ran for office and was elected twice to represent Sector 7 on the Perce Town Council. He also ran for a seat in Parliament, and served as President of Seacoast Publications, which printed the English paper in the Gaspésie. He was asked to help out in the local Anglican churches, and in 2004 he founded and became a trustee of the Gaspé Ecumenical Chaplaincy Foundation, established to respond to the social, health and spiritual needs of seniors on the Gaspé Coast. He also served as the Minister of the United Church in the Gaspé area.

By far the most important event during this period was the adoption of Aurora Dorothea Catherina Victoria, who became Dennis' pride and joy. She was one month and one day old when he and Cynthia Patterson received her officially at the Court in El Paso, Texas.

In the fall of 2007, Dennis, who was then Missioner, was elected Bishop Coadjutor with right of succession as Bishop of Quebec when Archbishop Bruce Stavert retired.

In 2008, a very significant event happened at the mid point of Dennis' first year as bishop. He travelled to Canterbury to meet with over 650 other Anglican bishops attending the Lambeth Conference to discuss the state of the global church.

In 2009, Dennis became Bishop of Quebec. He and his family moved to Quebec. His years as bishop were challenging as the diocese entered a period of financial and administrative turmoil as the English communities were depopulating at an alarming rate. Despite these challenges, the Diocesan team increased investments, decreased expenditures, renewed some parishes and diminished the deficit budgets significantly.

On Sunday July 3, 2011, Dennis worshipped with William and Catherine the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, onboard the HMCS

Announcements

Montreal, docked in Quebec. He was asked by the Chaplain General to pronounce the benediction at the end of the service.

In May of 2012, after the Charest government passed Bill 78, which effectively tried to close down the student strike that had been going on for many weeks, Dennis was invited by some of the student leaders to address them in front of the National Assembly.

As Co-chair of the Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue for five years, Dennis had the honour of travelling to London, Canterbury, Paris and Rome for meetings regarding ecumenical relations. At that time he met Archbishops Williams and Welby, and Popes Benedict and Francis. In 2017, Dennis retired from active ministry partly because of health concerns and partly because the time had come for new leadership.

Retirement was also a time of change. Dennis ran for Parliament as a Green Party candidate in 2019. On March 2, 2024, Dennis married Jeanie LeLacheur, a biologist, teacher, and a lover and protector of wildlife, who committed herself to sharing his life wonderfully and fully. To that end, she was definitely successful.

In the years, 2021-2022 Dennis published the first three books in the series "From Death to Destiny". The first is entitled: "The Rise of the Boy King."

So who was this Dennis Drainville? He was a man who believed in Canada, the parliamentary system and the democratic ideals that undergird it all. So much so that he would run in two municipal, two provincial and three federal elections. He taught his students and the public, that democracy is both a responsibility and a precious gift that we must never give up.

He was a teacher who believed in the liberal tradition of teaching students how to think. He abhorred the idea of education as the preparation of people for the workforce. He used to say, "Teach people how to think and they will find their appropriate job and their place in the world."

He was a bishop, who believed the Church was at its best when it stood with the people, particularly the poor and marginalized. Ultimately, his ministry was focused on strengthening the administrative and financial elements of the church, but, more importantly, on advocating for the poor, the Indigenous, the LGBTQ+ community, and others who felt there was no place for them, either in society or, often within the church itself.



In Memory

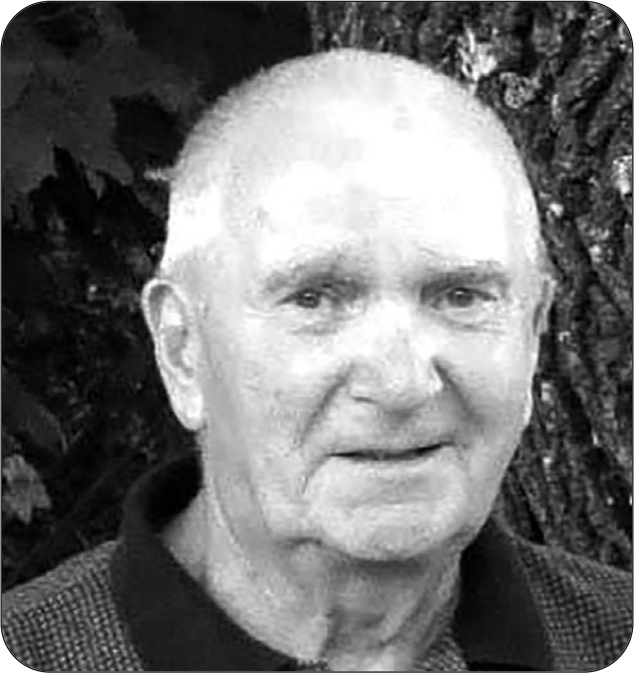
WARD: Elliott Clarence

In loving memory of a dear father, father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather, who passed away on August 13, 2003.

*A face we love is missing,
A voice we love is still.
A place is vacant in our hearts,
That no one will ever fill.
Many things have happened,
Many things have changed.
But how much we love and miss you,
Will always stay the same.*

Sadly missed and forever loved by daugh-

ter, Frances (Bernie); grandsons, Mark (Erin) and great-grandsons, Reid, Cole and Benn; Kevin (Courtney) and great-granddaughters Avery and Carys; sons, Ken (Chris); Everette; Wayne (Monique) and grandson, Dave (Josiane) and great-granddaughter, Julia, great-grandsons, Elliott and James; and grandson, Brian.



WILLETT: Archie

August 17, 1929 - July 31, 2020

*Remembering you is easy,
I do it every day.
But missing you is a heartache,
That never goes away.
I hold you tightly within my heart,
And there you will remain.
As my life goes on without you,
But will never be the same.*

Missing you always, Elsie, Mike, Wendy and family.



Funeral Announcement

AUBERT-SIMONEAU: Carmelita

Family and friends are invited to attend the prayer service for our mother, Carmelita Aubert-Simoneau, on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 2 p.m. at the Complexe funéraire Valère Fortin de Gaspé, 86 rue Jacques Cartier, Gaspé, Quebec.

Following the service, everyone is warmly invited to join together for refreshments and to share memories of Carmelita in the reception room.



Celebration of life

DRAINVILLE: Dennis Paul

Dennis Paul, died August 3, 2026, at Koke's Chalet, the home he shared in Rosebridge with his wife, Jeanie.

He is predeceased by his parents, and brother Brian, and lovingly remembered by his wife, Jeanie; his daughter, Aurora; his stepson, Jeremy; stepdaughter, Jessie; and his four grandchildren, Teo, Alyson, Jack and Gabby.

Celebration of Life for Dennis Paul Drainville: Family and friends are invited to gather in celebration of the life of Dennis Paul Drainville on Saturday, August 15, 2026, at Saint Matthew's United Church of Canada, 437 blvd. Forillon, Gaspé (Rosebridge), Quebec G4X 6T7.

Visitation will be from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m., followed by the Celebration of Life at 11 a.m.

All who knew and loved Dennis are warmly welcome to join the family as they gather to remember his life and share in a celebration of his legacy.

PATTERSON: Paul

There will be a celebration of life for Paul Patterson at the Gaspé Legion on Thursday, August 27, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Please come and honour a great man's life. There will be refreshments and beverages. Also a book to write stories or memories you have of Paul.

Thank you



Neva Harbour Paul

November 12, 1926 – March 20, 2026

The family of the late Neva Harbour Paul wishes to extend our heartfelt gratitude to family, friends and neighbours for their expressions of sympathy with flowers, cards, phone calls and messages.

We would also like to thank Mother Melissa for her kind words; the choir for the excellent singing of Mom's favourite hymns; granddaughters Laura and Nicole for their eulogy, expressing their favourite memories of their grandmother; and Laura and Mom's great-niece, Nancy Cyr, for the readings.

Thank you to Vivian Rooney for the wonderful lunch, and to Carol and Standley Suddard for their help preparing for the funeral.

We are all very grateful to Mom's grandson, Stephen Maloney, for the hours he spent putting the video together, and to Elizabeth Baird for setting up the video. A big thank you to Heather and Dean Patterson for the delicious meals they provided for our family. It was very much appreciated.

In our mother's declining years, coping with dementia, we all did our best to make life easier for her, but Elizabeth, Dallas, their family and Bob went the extra mile. They made sure that Mom was not alone and was getting good care. Elizabeth spent long days at the seniors' home caring for Mom, rarely missing a day. It was a long drive in hectic traffic and on icy roads. Their thoughtfulness, sacrifice and unconditional love will never be forgotten.

We will be forever grateful for the kindness and love they showed our mother in her most difficult time.

The Paul Family

GASPÉ
Camp Fort Haldimand
August 15: Camp Fort Haldimand will be having a yard sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Rec Hall. A wide selection of items, from clothing, to household items to decorations , something for everyone. Donations of used items for the yard sale can be dropped off at the Camp on Thursday afternoon (August 13) from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and Friday morning (August 14) from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

GASPÉ:
Gaspé County W.I
September 12: Gaspe

County W.I. will be hosting the annual W.I. fair, at York River Community Hall, 702 York Boulevard West. The hall will open at 3 p.m. for public viewing of all the exhibits. A delicious salad supper will begin at 4:45 p.m. with takeouts also available. Cost : adults \$15, children \$10 (12 and younger.) We look forward to seeing lots of people participate in our local W.I. craft fair and supper again this year.

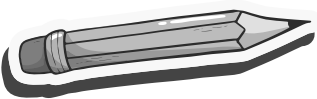
UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN
Sunday, August 16
No Service
Sunday, August 23
10 a.m. Service

HOPE TOWN:
Hope Town Sports club
August 22: A gift bingo will begin at 7 p.m., 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.
Thursdays: Prayer Meet-

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, August 16
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, August 23
10 a.m. Service

ing and Bible Study - 7 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.



PARISH OF GASPÉ
Sunday, August 16
St. Philip - St. John, Sandy Beach
7 p.m. Evening Prayer
Sunday, August 23
St. Matthews - Peninsula
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
Sunday, August 16
Shigawake
10 a.m. Gospel Service at the Shigawake Fairgrounds
Sunday, August 23
New Carlisle
10 a.m. Morning Prayer
Port Daniel
10 a.m. Morning Prayer

On the Lighter Side...

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

SCHOOL YEAR WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

ASSIGNMENT
BACKPACK
BLACKBOARD
CALCULATOR
CHAIR
CHALK
CLASSROOM
DESK
EXAM
GRADE
HIGHLIGHTER
HOMEWORK
LESSON
LIBRARY
MARKER
NOTEBOOK
PRINCIPAL
RECESS
RULER
SCHEDULE
STUDENT
TEACHER
TEXTBOOK
WHITEBOARD

Maze Craze

Can you find your way through the maze?

Start

Finish

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to humor.

I L S E S M

Answer: Smiles

GUESS WHO ?

I am a country singer born in Texas on May 21, 1987. I started playing music at age 12 and worked for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. I was named a New Male Vocalist of the Year in 2011, and by 2014, my breakthrough album cracked the Top 10 on Billboard's chart.

Answer: Cody Johnson

IT'S BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIME

HOROSCOPES - August 16 to August 22
ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
Make the most of every opportunity that comes your way this week, Aries. You may not get many chances to test your mettle in the weeks to come, so it's important to act now.
TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, something that started out as a part-time venture could turn into much more. Figure out if this is the path you see yourself going and then make your move.
GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
Let loose and have fun for a change, Gemini. Don't delay when others want to invite you out for a night on the town or even a brunch.
CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
There's a lot going on right now and it may have your head spinning, Cancer. Delegate some of your

workload if you can. Don't be too hard on yourself.
LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, it is important to remember that your online presence never goes away. Watch what you post and be mindful of what you support in social media groups.
VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Family matters require your undivided attention this week, Virgo. You must dig in deep to address them. There are two sides to every story.
LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, just when you started to lose hope, the new horizon you were seeking comes into view. It is well-deserved.
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, if you find yourself with too much extra time on your hands, why not volunteer with the community to pass the time?

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
When plans change on a dime, you are ready to roll with the new situation, Sagittarius. Higher-ups may get a peek at your quick thinking.
CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
It's time to make amends with someone who did you wrong, Capricorn. Life is too short to hold grudges, and this person has mended their ways.
AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Unless you take swift action, you could be heading for a financial free-fall, Aquarius. Start to pull back spending for a while and see if the situation will right itself.
PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, you are on fire lately. There's seemingly nothing you touch that isn't turning to gold. This trend will continue, but try not to let it go to your head.

Help us share your school stories and achievements

HOLLY SMITH

NEW CARLISLE - As another school year begins, The Gaspé Spec would like to invite students, teachers, school staff, parent committees and school organizations from across the Gaspé Coast to help us share the many positive things happening in our schools.

Every school has a story to tell, and we'd love to help tell it.

Whether you're organizing a fundraiser, hosting a community event, celebrating student achievements, preparing for a concert or play, participating in a sports tournament, launching a new project, recognizing volunteers, or planning a special activity, we'd be happy to hear from you.

Schools are at the heart of our communities, and many of our readers enjoy keeping up with what local students are accomplishing. Sharing your activities is a wonderful way to recognize the hard work of students, teachers and volunteers while keeping families and the community

informed.

Some of the stories we'd love to receive

- Fundraisers and charity events.
- School concerts, plays and performances.
- Sports tournaments and team achievements.
- Student awards and academic accomplishments.
- Special guest speakers and educational programs.
- Community service projects.
- Open houses and school celebrations.
- Clubs, field trips and unique classroom projects.
- Graduation and milestone events.
- Photos of school activities. (with appropriate permission)

We also encourage student councils, parent committees, school clubs and volunteer groups to let us know about upcoming initiatives and successful projects. Whether it's a science fair, environmental project, literacy program, cultural celebration or a sim-

ple act of kindness that deserves recognition, every story helps showcase the positive impact our schools have on students and the communities they serve.

You don't need to be a professional writer. Simply send us the basic details, who, what, when, where and why, along with any photos, and we'll work with you to prepare a story whenever possible. If you're unsure whether something is newsworthy, send it anyway. We'd much rather receive your

story than miss an opportunity to highlight the achievements and dedication of our local schools.

Our goal is to celebrate the accomplishments of students and showcase the many positive things happening in schools throughout the Gaspé Coast. By sharing your news, you'll not only recognize the efforts of those involved but also inspire others across the region.

If you have an event coming up, are planning a fundraiser, or would like to

share news from your school, we'd love to hear from you.

Together, we can keep our communities connected and celebrate the next generation of leaders, artists, athletes and volunteers.

Send your school news to The Gaspé Spec email: specs@globetrotter.net.

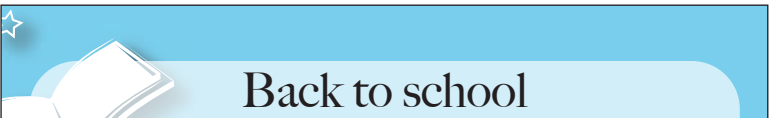
Please include your contact information, event details, dates and photos whenever possible. We look forward to sharing your stories throughout the 2026–2027 school year.



As a new school year begins, we are excited to welcome our students and families back to a place where curiosity is encouraged, dreams are nurtured, and potential is discovered.

Every new school year brings fresh opportunities to learn, grow, and make a difference.

Together, let's make it a year of growth and achievement to remember. Bring your school spirit and a big smile as we kick off another great year of growth and success.



Back to school

With summer vacation now behind us, students are eager to begin a new school year filled with new friendships, new acquaintances, new challenges and, most importantly, a willingness to learn from the very first day. Students begin each school year with dreams, and their future depends on the knowledge and skills they gain, as well as the choices they make along the way.

In every school, whether large or small, across the beautiful Gaspé Peninsula, we are taught lessons before we are tested. Life, however, often works the other way around: it gives us tests first, and those experiences become our greatest lessons.

For all students, work hard, believe in yourselves and never give up on your dreams. May the 2026–2027 school year be filled with positivity, success, determination and opportunities to grow. With effort your dreams will come true.

Ken Ross, New Carlisle



GET READY FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL WITH EASE!

Your pharmacy has everything you need to start the year off right!
Pencils, notebooks, backpacks and so much more!

Take advantage of our low-priced school essentials.
Come see us and check off your supply list in no time!



Mélissa Loisel - Pharmacist Owner

112, boul. Gérard D. Lévesque O. Paspébiac (418) 752 3807 4-A, Route du Havre, L'anse-aux-Gascons (418) 396-2025



CASA's Bright Beginnings

would like to wish all new and returning students
a year of fun, learning, and new experiences.

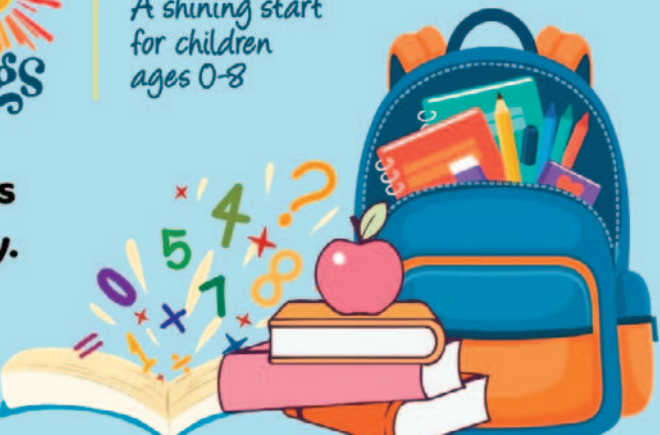


A shining start
for children
ages 0-8

Stay informed about activities
and events in your community.
Follow us at



BRIGHT BEGINNINGS GMI





Preparing for Back-to-School... One Step at a Time!

After several weeks of summer vacation, it's perfectly normal for daily routines to change. As the new school year approaches, gradually re-establishing familiar habits can help children and teens regain their bearings and approach this transition with greater confidence.

A few simple adjustments can make a big difference: moving bedtime earlier, little by little, returning to regular mealtimes, re-establishing the morning routine, and setting aside quiet moments to read or enjoy family conversations.

These habits provide a sense of security, reduce back-to-school stress, and help make the transition into a new school year smoother.

Wishing everyone a wonderful back-to-school season!



Complice
persévérance scolaire
Gaspésie-Les Îles




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WISHING ALL STUDENTS AND STAFF A HAPPY
RETURN TO SCHOOL!

DON'T FORGET TO SEND US YOUR PICTURES AND ANY EXCITING
EVENTS GOING ON IN YOUR SCHOOL SO WE CAN SHARE WITH
OUR READERS! WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

specs@globetrotter.net