

Families demand more childcare during brief occupation of MNA offices

● GILLES GAGNÉ
 ● NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON – Approximately 15 parents and children briefly occupied the constituency office of Family Minister Catherine Blouin on the morning of August, 25, 2026, in Carleton-sur-Mer to demand more childcare services and better pay for educators.

Parents and representatives of the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands Feminist Roundtable are also calling for Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) benefits to be extended for mothers who are unable to return to work because of a lack of childcare.

Marjorie Peyric, communications representative for the organization Ma Place au travail (My Place at Work), consequently added her voice to those of the other Gaspésian women during the occupation in Carleton-sur-Mer.

“It’s true that the number of spaces increased between 2023 and 2025. The problem is that the spaces aren’t really being filled. In 2023, there were 1,125 spaces offered in subsidized childcare services in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, and 1,027 were occupied. In 2025, there were 1,342 spaces offered, but only 760 were occupied,” explains Ms. Peyric.

According to Quebec government figures, the occupancy rate fell from 91.3% to 56.6% between 2023 and 2025.

The occupancy rate problem, according to Ms. Peyric, is that working conditions in childcare settings have led many educators, both in early childhood centres and in home-based childcare services, to leave the profession.

“The result is that educators are stopping work. It’s more lucrative in the school system, even though we recognize the usefulness of this service; the workload is lighter and the holidays are much longer,” Marjorie Peyric also notes.

The most recent figures, dating from May 2025, show



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Parents and children occupied the office of the Minister of Families for 15 minutes, reading a manifesto proposing improvements to childcare services.

361 children waiting for a subsidized childcare space in the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands. According to Ms. Peyric, that figure did not include pregnant women. Ma Place au travail expects updated figures from the Quebec government soon.

At the same time as the action at Ms. Blouin’s Bonaventure constituency office, a peaceful occupation was also held at the office of Gaspé MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix. Both inside Minister Blouin’s office and once outside, because the occupants had agreed to stay only 15 minutes, Catherine Cyr Wright of the Feminist Roundtable deplored the precarious nature of jobs in subsidized childcare services.

“We are asking that all early childhood education services be free, sufficiently numerous, high-quality, and accessible to all children, and that educators be recognized for their work and expertise, regardless of whether they wear religious symbols, given the current severe shortage,” she stated.

Ms. Cyr Wright also called for benefits under the QPIP to be at least equal to the full-time minimum wage and to be extended for mothers without childcare. “It’s possible. We saw it during the pandemic,” she suggested, adding that the pre-election period was a good

time to ensure this issue wasn’t forgotten.

A 2025 study by Ma Place au travail confirms that 63% of women had to take additional leave after their parental leave, compared to 15% of men. This resulted in a loss of \$25,535 in gross annual income for families during this period without childcare.

“When a child doesn’t have a childcare spot, it’s the mothers who most often experience financial insecurity. Because they work fewer hours in this context, they are penalized in the long term, until retirement, because they will have contributed for a shorter period and in smaller amounts than men,” notes Catherine Cyr Wright.

Minister Blouin was out of town during the brief occupation of her office, an occupation her staff attempted to prevent through first blocking the way to journalists.

A Sûreté du Québec police officer calmly entered the minister’s constituency office a few minutes after the parents and children had left.

Occupation in Gaspé as well

The Feminist Concertation Table coordinator, Nastassia Williams, who is based in Gaspé, emphasized that “early childhood educators are still demanding improved working conditions and fair recognition of their skills. It is precisely this lack of recognition that prevents many childcare centres from opening all the spaces listed on their permits,” she stated.

“We organized drop-in childcare sessions in the offices of the Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé and the

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New Richmond teen stars at Softball Nationals

Sean Greene

NEW RICHMOND - Elliot Greene, 16, of New Richmond, recently returned home after representing Team Quebec at the 2026 U17 Canadian Softball Championship in Surrey, B.C.

Elliot Greene, a pitcher, played a starring role in helping Quebec capture a silver medal. He led both his team and the tournament in innings pitched, including an incredible 19 innings on championship Sunday over three consecutive games. Elliot helped lead Quebec to back-to-back victories over two Ontario teams before the team fell short in the championship final against Brookfield, Nova Scotia.

As the only Gaspesian on the team, Elliot travelled regularly to the Bellechasse region throughout the winter for practices, while also training locally.

Elliot is the son of Ryan Greene and Genevieve Audet and the grandson of Charlie and Carmelynn Greene.

CHILDCARE:

▶ *Cont'd from Cover*

Minister of Families in Carleton to remind everyone that the issue remains unresolved. A few years ago, the government launched the construction of several childcare spaces, but we still have a major problem. The lack of spaces has a disproportionate impact on women, who often stay home. We expect all candidates to take a stand on this issue,” said Nastassia Williams.

“That’s why we consider this a doubly feminist issue. Those impacted by the lack of spaces are mothers, and childcare workers suffer from this lack of recognition. Educators are trained and understaffed. It’s a poorly paid and demanding job. Governments haven’t done their job in recognizing the work of early childhood educators. If the profession isn’t valued properly, it’s women who suffer as mothers and as workers,” argues Ms. Williams.

Parents share their experiences

Two parents shared their experiences during the surprise visit to Mr. Sainte-Croix’s office.

Marylène Savard, the mother of one-year-old twins,

said the lack of childcare is forcing her family to make difficult decisions about work and finances.

“My partner and I are planning the next few months, figuring out when I can return to work full-time. We’ll each be splitting three days a week and two days a week. It’s a financial challenge that will likely cut our family income in half, but it’s also impacting our social life and our ability to contribute to the community. Our little ones need interaction and stimulation. We’re getting some help, but we definitely need childcare,” explains Ms. Savard, a healthcare worker.

Ms. Savard is also working to develop a 12-space community childcare service at the Trachy Community Centre in Douglastown, which she hopes will open this fall.

New father Francis Paquin also spoke about the uncertainty his family is facing. “It’s stressful going back to work, especially with the start date being so soon. We’re fortunate to have two jobs that are quite flexible and accommodating in terms of operations. I’m going back to work, but my partner had career plans, but has to stay home. It’s very difficult, especially with the financial stress. The idea of an emergency benefit extension would be very welcome. We’re staying hopeful.”



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Approximately 20 people visited the office of Gaspé MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix to present their demands.

Members of the National Assembly react

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Asked to respond to the group’s demands, outgoing Gaspé MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix pointed to childcare projects that have been completed in the riding, notably in Grande-Vallée and Gaspé, while acknowledging that more remains to be done.

“I understand that it’s not enough. We’re not going to stop there. There are files that are moving through the system. There has been significant progress in the Gaspé riding. We’re proud of that. I’m very aware of your realities. There’s an upcoming election campaign. We’ll be reporting on the continuation of our actions in the coming weeks. I’m very happy to hear from you. These are concerns we all face every day. I’m a father too,” the outgoing CAQ Member of the National Assembly told them, having agreed to meet with the group for a surprise visit.

Responding in an emailed statement, minister Blouin said she understands the realities faced by families. She indicated that access to childcare remains a priority and that she is working on concrete commitments aimed at creating additional spaces and providing greater support to families in the region.

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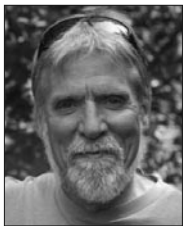
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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

Quebec possibly headed for a minority government

Four surveys were carried out in Quebec between August 23 and September 1 to assess voting intentions in the final days before the official launch of the election campaign on August 27 and shortly afterwards. The results indicate that Quebecers could choose a minority government.

A whole lot of things can happen between now and voting day on October 5. It looks as if Quebecers are very divided about which party is most likely to lead them over the next term, whose length could vary if the electors opt for a minority government.

Léger, which has been conducting surveys for decades, Pallas Data and a relatively new firm in this field, Synopsis, released their results on September 1, August 31 and August 28, respectively. For Léger, it was the second survey in 10 days, as the firm had conducted one immediately following the deadlock in trade negotiations between Canada and the United States.

Philippe J. Fournier is a survey aggregator. He is an expert in analyzing different political surveys, the methods used and drawing general conclusions based on the data available. He is the founder of Québec125 and 338Canada.

He looked at the four recent surveys and based on what he compiled, he thinks that, as of September 1, the Parti Québécois (PQ) would have won 48 National Assembly seats, compared to 32 for the Liberal Party, 29 for the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ), 11 for the Conservative Party of Quebec and nine for Québec Solidaire. Sixty-four seats are required for a majority.

The CAQ is the clear winner of the last surveys. A year ago, before the departure of former premier François Legault, the CAQ looked like a party on the verge of being wiped out of the National Assembly, just three years after winning 90 seats!

At the beginning of August, it seemed realistic to predict that the CAQ could win four to six seats. Who would have predicted such a turnaround in such a short period?

The trade talks impasse that characterized August 20 and 21 greatly helped premier Christine Fréchette's party's ranking, coupled with the proximity shown by Canada's prime minister Mark Carney, who expressed satisfaction with their dealings.

The comfort of known quantities

By and large, voters prefer staying close to the reigning party during tough times, even when that party seems worn out by a long tenure. Mark Carney took advantage of American president Donald Trump's menace in March and April 2025, and premier Fréchette is doing the same now.

In Mr. Carney's case, and again in Christine Fréchette's situation, the circumstances have also been helped by weaknesses within the opposition.

In 2025, Mark Carney faced Conservative Party leader, Pierre Poilievre, who took weeks before recognizing the threat posed by Donald Trump and attempted to adjust his platform, with neither inspiration nor success.

When Parti Québécois leader Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon takes verbal swings at Mark Carney, something he has done frequently since 2025, he tar-

gets the most appreciated politician in Quebec, no matter the level, provincial or federal.

Quebecers value his calm attitude displayed in front of the problems triggered by Donald Trump. Currently, Mark Carney's composure appears to outweigh his significant shortcomings regarding Quebec's history and environmental issues.

If we come back to survey results, the two biggest losers here, compared to similar electorate consultations conducted at the beginning of the summer, are the PQ and the Conservative Party of Quebec.

A style change that has not been beneficial

PQ leader Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon has changed his style since the October 2022 election. Then, he had been leading the party for two years and the PQ was plummeting in surveys. It only saved three seats following that poll and fought for its survival over the following year.

People might remember the leader's politeness during television debates, patiently asking the moderator to speak when he was interrupted, without raising his voice amidst the cacophony generated by the other leaders.

However, as the PQ won by-elections and increased its National Assembly presence, Mr. Saint-Pierre-Plamondon changed his tactic, becoming increasingly moody during public appearances, and, at times, arrogant, as if rising success was changing him.

The PQ, beside sticking to a separatist option that is stagnating in surveys, has also adopted a right-wing approach, including stern immigration control orientations, that brings it closer to the CAQ position.

This right-wing approach also brings the Éric Duhaime's Conservative Party to a standstill. With four parties favouring less government intervention, including Charles Milliard's Liberal Party, there is congestion on the right side of Quebec politics.

As of September 1, the PQ was collecting a 29% rate of support, followed by the CAQ with 24%, the Liberal Party with 22%, the Conservative Party with 15% and Québec solidaire with 10%.

None of the parties are gathering more than 30% of voter support, except when taking the margin of error into account.

The Conservative Party is stagnating where it is the strongest, in and around Quebec City, where it is leading by a thread.

There is apparently a movement in the capital to beat the Conservative Party, which could convince voters, who feel ashamed to be associated with Éric Duhaime to cast their ballots for whichever party is best positioned to defeat the Conservatives.

Meanwhile, as the sole left-wing party on the map, Québec Solidaire is performing better than expected in the ridings where it stands a chance to win, particularly in Montreal and in two Quebec City ridings.

Stay tuned.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A fictional candidate to present the platform feminists are waiting for!

As part of the election campaign, the Table de concertation féministe Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the TCFGÎM, is launching a campaign featuring a fictional character, Ms. Fay-Ministe, along with her feminist platform of demands, to spark public discussion about the issues faced by women in the region.

Ms. Fay-Ministe is not running in any electoral district, is not affiliated with any political party, and does not endorse any candidate. She is entirely fictional, but her platform focuses on real issues and puts forward real proposals.

Wendy Dawson, development officer at the TCFGÎM, explains that several gender inequalities affect women in Gaspésie and on the Magdalen Islands : "Women in our region are still paying the price of systemic inequalities. They earn less than men, face major barriers to accessing health care, and can wait years for a childcare space. Women and girls are also disproportionately affected by sexual and intimate partner violence. These are not abstract issues—they have very real consequences for women's lives."

Ms. Fay-Ministe, the candidate we don't have, promises to fight women's poverty, strengthen access to health care, ensure that every child has access to a childcare space, take real action against gender-based violence, including sexual and intimate partner violence, and much more.

"The feminist platform we've been waiting for isn't a fantasy," says Wendy Dawson. "The solutions already exist. Women's groups have been identifying these issues and proposing concrete solutions for years. What we need now is the political will to put those solutions into action. Madame Fée-Ministe may be fictional, but the demands behind her platform are very real."

Her platform is available at <https://feministe.femmesgim.qc.ca/en/>. The Table de concertation féministe Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine advocates collectively for women's rights through popular education, mobilization, and representation. It engages in non-partisan political action to ensure that the rights and interests of women in the region are upheld in concrete ways across various areas, including health, education, and the region's social and economic development.

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Development Officer, Table de concertation féministe Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine

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Police Report

Pickup truck driver loses life in head-on collision

A head-on collision claimed one life very early on the morning of August 29 on highway 132 in New Richmond, near the car dealerships. According to the Sûreté du Québec (SQ), the driver of a pickup truck veered into the opposite lane for an undetermined reason and collided with a tractor-trailer at approximately 2 a.m. near the intersection of Armand-Lelièvre Street. “The pickup truck, which was going east, suddenly left its lane and entered the opposite lane. The investigation is still ongoing. The Coroner’s Office will also prepare a report on the accident. We can’t say more for now,” explains SQ spokesperson Frédéric Deshaies. The pickup truck driver, who was in his thirties, died. The tractor-trailer driver was taken to the Maria hospital for treatment of minor injuries. Traffic was slowed for part of the day while the tractor-trailer was towed from the scene. An SQ collision reconstructionist attended the scene in an attempt to determine the cause of the collision. No hypothesis is being ruled out as the investigation continues.

Collision in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts claims two lives

Two people in their 70s from Cap-Chat died following a collision on Boulevard Sainte-Anne Ouest in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts on the evening of August 25. “Emergency services were called to the scene around 5:30 p.m. for a three-vehicle collision. A vehicle travelling eastbound reportedly slowed down to make a left turn onto a service road. A pickup truck following behind it collided with the first vehicle, which then veered out of its lane and was struck by another pickup truck travelling westbound,” specifies Frédéric Deshaies, spokesperson of the Sûreté du Québec. The two occupants of the first vehicle, aged 73 and 74, were transported to the hospital where they were pronounced dead. “We are still investigating that accident,” added sergeant Deshaies. One of the pickup truck drivers was taken to the hospital for treatment of minor injuries. The other driver was reportedly uninjured.

Riley Brault pleads guilty on charges tied to an April 2024 incident

A 21-year-old man from Listuguj, Riley Brault, pleaded guilty to charges stemming from an incident that occurred on April 27, 2024, in Listuguj. “He pleaded guilty on all charges, although several of which were amended since their original version, on August 21 in Carleton,” explains criminal prosecutor Florence Frappier-Routhier. He was charged with pointing a weapon, assault with a weapon causing bodily harm, using a weapon with intent to injure, and careless use of a weapon. At the time of the incident, Riley Brault and other people had arrived uninvited at a party. A verbal altercation ensued with one of the attendees. Mr. Brault then pulled out a firearm and shot the victim, piercing his leg. A pre-sentence report was requested before his next court appearance on November 27, at the Carleton courthouse.

Gabriel Lafrance’s bail hearing postponed until September 14

The bail hearing for 33-year-old Gabriel Lafrance of Carleton has been postponed again, this time until September 14. The accused's new prosecutor, who took over the case a week before a previous bail hearing date scheduled in April, has not yet completed her review of the evidence. “Gabriel Lafrance is scheduled to appear in court again on September 14, but for the pro forma bail hearing (for the record). It means that his bail hearing will not take place that day,” specifies criminal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville Paradis. The man is charged with attempted murder for shooting one of three men who had just broken into his home on July 7, 2025. Mr. Lafrance is also suspected of possession of narcotics for the purpose of trafficking and uttering death threats in this case. Following a raid by the

Tactical Intervention Group at his home on November 19, charges of possession of prohibited weapons and narcotics for the purpose of trafficking were added. The criminal prosecutor intends to submit an offer to the defense before the next court appearance. The individual has been in custody since his arrest.

Bertrand Chalmers pleads guilty on two counts of sexual crimes

Bertrand Chalmers, 83, of Cascapedia-St-Jules, pleaded guilty to two counts of sexual assault and obtaining sexual services for consideration on August 17 at the New Carlisle courthouse. The offences were committed over a two-year period. A publication ban prevents the release of information that could identify the victim. Pre-sentence and sex offender risk assessment reports have been requested in preparation for sentencing submissions scheduled for December 18. The accused's health is precarious. He remains free under various conditions.

Sûreté du Québec investigates lug nut challenge

Sûreté du Québec officers are currently investigating a case of a lug nut challenge that took place in Saint-Alphonse. The lug nut challenge is a dangerous practice involving loosening the lug nuts on a vehicle's wheels without the owner's knowledge. The municipality of Saint-Alphonse issued a public notice on its social media. Sûreté du Québec spokesperson Frédéric Deshaies says a resident noticed a problem while driving at the end of August. The police officer urges drivers to be vigilant. “This type of offence can lead to charges of criminal negligence or mischief causing bodily harm or death. In February, a driver from Saint-Alexis reported being the victim of a similar act while returning home from a meeting in Carleton.

Back to school: it is time to slow down!

As the school year begins, increased police surveillance will be in place from August 24 to September 11 across the entire road network, particularly in school zones. Road users are urged to be extra vigilant and adopt safe driving practices to contribute to a safe return to school. “We're maximizing our interventions. Citizens will see police officers following school buses. It is something we are doing during the whole school year, but we are intensifying our presence these days. It's important that motorists re-engage with their reactions when they pass in front of schools. In some schools, pupils use reflective covers with turtles in the back. The kids are small and sometimes they make quick moves. It's time to pay attention,” stresses Frédéric Deshaies, spokesperson for the Sûreté du Québec. Drivers are asked to respect posted speed limits. School hours are indicated by road signs. If there are no such signs, the school day runs from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, from September to June. Road users, including cyclists, are required to stop at least five metres away from a bus or minibus whose flashing red lights are activated or whose stop sign is deployed. When traffic is being directed by a peace officer, school crossing guard, or flagger directing traffic during roadwork, everyone must obey their orders and signals, even if traffic signs indicate otherwise. Respecting traffic signs near schools is essential, particularly in school bus zones, no-parking areas, and drop-off zones. Parents accompanying their children to school are asked to drop them off in a safe and designated area to avoid risky maneuvers such as double parking or U-turns, which can compromise the safety of students and other road users. For more information on safety in school zones, consult the page "Road Safety in School Zones: 5 Rules to Follow!" on the website of the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ)

Already in custody, Bruno-Pierre Godbout withdraws bail application on other charges

NELSON SERGERIE

PERCÉ – Former Chandler councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout has withdrawn his application for release on bail after being charged in another case involving two victims last June. Mr. Godbout faces five counts, including sexual assault, criminal harassment, unlawful confinement and assault. A publication ban prevents the identification of the victims. The alleged incidents reportedly occurred in Chandler, Saint-Damien-de-Buckland, the Chaudière-Appalaches re-

gion and Montreal. On May 1, Mr. Godbout was sentenced to 36 months in prison after pleading guilty on January 20 to six of the 12 charges against him. Mr. Godbout pleaded guilty to one count of sexual assault, one count of assault with a weapon, two counts of assault and two counts of criminal harassment. In a separate case involving fraud, proceedings will resume on September 8. Mr. Godbout faces three

charges related to expense claims submitted in 2021. The prosecution and the defence are continuing discussions in an effort to reach a resolution. Quebec’s anti-corruption unit, the Unité permanente anticorruption (UPAC), stated in January 2024 that its investigation suggested that between February 1 and July 31, 2021, Mr. Godbout, who served as acting mayor during the suspension of former mayor Louise Langlois, by the Quebec Municipal Commission, allegedly produced and used false expense reimbursement



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

claims. He faces charges of fraud, forgery, and the possession or trafficking of a forged document. The UPAQ estimates the alleged fraud at approximately \$10,000.

VIA Rail has a request for the Quebec government

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – VIA Rail is taking a more formal stance on the railway rehabilitation project between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé by clearly requesting that the provincial government carry out the work.

Interim president and chief executive officer, Mathieu Paquette did not mince words during VIA Rail’s annual general meeting, held virtually on August 25. As has become customary, a specific question was raised regarding the future of passenger rail service in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Lower St. Lawrence.

According to Mr. Paquette, the issue continues to generate considerable interest.

"For us, the question isn't whether service will resume, but rather how, when, and under what conditions," Mr. Paquette stated at the outset.

He recalled that immediately after his appointment, he travelled to the Gaspé Peninsula to meet with elected officials, regional



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

VIA Rail's interim president and chief executive officer Mathieu Paquette, during his visit to Gaspé last May.

partners, community representatives and engaged citizens to hear their perspectives and visit train stations.

"I want to be very clear: we believe that a complete return to Gaspé remains the only solution that truly meets the region’s needs. It’s the option that offers the most potential for resident transportation, tourism development, and regional economic vitality. To achieve this, it’s essential to obtain a clear

commitment and a timeline for the rehabilitation of the section between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, as this is a determining factor in ensuring the long-term viability of the service," Mr. Paquette added.

Daytime service also being considered

Regarding the Lower St. Lawrence, Mr. Paquette acknowledged that the current overnight schedule does not

align well with the needs of communities along the route.

He points out that the current route – the Ocean train – is designed to serve the two hubs of Montreal and Halifax. The eastbound train leaves Montreal around supper time and arrives in Halifax the following day, shortly before supper time. The westbound train leaves Halifax around lunch time and arrives in Montréal shortly after 10 a.m. the following day.

A daytime train service remains one of the scenarios being considered.

"As we consider the future of service in the Gaspé Peninsula, we are also looking at how the service could meet the needs of the communities in the Lower St. Lawrence region. If we were to reintroduce daytime service, for example, between Quebec City and the Gaspé Peninsula, it would potentially be better suited to the needs of the Lower St. Lawrence," he explains.

The current schedule of the Ocean train is ill-suited for the needs of the Rivière-du-Loup and Rimouski resi-

dents, as it passes there in the middle of the night, never earlier than midnight and never later than 3:30 a.m., no matter the direction. The two towns are the most populated municipalities between Lévis, on the south shore of Quebec City, and Gaspé.

During his visit to the region in early August, Mr. Paquette mentioned early 2028 as the latest target date for a partial return of the train between Quebec City, Matapédia and New Carlisle.

It should be noted that the Coalition for the Return of Passenger Train Service to the Gaspé Peninsula is essentially making the same request as VIA Rail: that candidates in the October 5 Quebec election make a firm commitment to complete the railway rehabilitation all the way to Gaspé.

In June 2023, Quebec announced \$871.8 million for the rehabilitation of the entire line. However, faced with higher-than-expected costs, the government returned the project to the planning phase in March 2025. (with notes from Gilles Gagné)

Coalition demands timeline for railway rehabilitation to Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON - The Coalition for the Return of Passenger Train Service to the Gaspé Peninsula is asking the main political parties, their leaders, and their candidates in Bonaventure and Gaspé to make a firm commitment to complete the rehabilitation of the railway to Gaspé during the first part of their mandate.

"We have sent our official request to all known candidates so far, to all party leaders, and to the parties themselves. As candidates are nominated, we will send the same request and will challenge them during the campaign," says Coalition spokesperson Micheline Saint-Onge.

"It's more than a promise; we want a commitment," she states firmly.

The Coalition points out that the Gaspé Peninsula, particularly the eastern part of the region, has been waiting for the return of passenger rail service since December 2011



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Coalition spokesperson Micheline Saint-Onge.

for the New Carlisle-Gaspé section of the line, and since September 2013 for the Matapédia to New Carlisle stretch.

The complete rehabilitation of the railway to Gaspé has faced a series of setbacks since Philippe Couillard’s Liberal government announced the project in New Carlisle on May 5, 2017, with an initial investment of \$100 million.

With VIA Rail's stated in-

tention to return to the Gaspé Peninsula as far as New Carlisle by early 2028 at the latest, the train service must extend to Gaspé.

Until March 2026, VIA Rail had been requesting the complete rehabilitation of the Matapédia-Gaspé line before returning. Its new interim chief executive officer, Mathieu Paquette, is open to a gradual return of service, but

requires a commitment that the entire line will eventually be rehabilitated.

"From a freight perspective, it's also important, and it's a vital line for the Gaspé Peninsula. VIA Rail also needs the rail line to Gaspé. For the past two years, we've been in discussions with both levels of government, and there were people in Quebec City saying that if we repair the line and VIA Rail doesn't come, it won't be a good deal, while VIA Rail said we can't commit to the Gaspé line if the rail isn't repaired," explains Ms. Saint-Onge.

The Coalition says conditional commitments are no longer sufficient. "We've had commitments. But they were conditional. This time, we need a firm commitment and for the work to be done," she stresses.

For VIA Rail, not knowing what will happen to the Gaspé line will have an impact.

The Coalition acknowledges that expecting the railway to be completely

rehabilitated to Gaspé by 2028 would be unrealistic.

"If everyone did their part, if Ottawa paid a portion and Quebec contributed, the work could be done fairly quickly," she believes, noting that the rehabilitation project began eight years ago.

Work is currently underway on section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

"We're not starting from scratch, but we need a decision and a work plan," she insists.

In 2023, the Quebec government announced \$871.8 million for the rehabilitation of the entire railway line. However, faced with higher-than-expected costs, the government returned the project to the planning phase in March 2025.

The Coalition is making three specific requests: that the project be returned to the implementation phase, that a firm timeline be established and that political leaders publicly defend the project.

Méganne Perry Mélançon goes on the offensive

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – On August 31, Méganne Perry Mélançon launched her third election campaign by attacking the incumbent Member of the National Assembly’s (MNA’s) record with concrete examples while outlining the key points of her platform.

“I hope to secure victory without a recount,” said the Parti Québécois (PQ) candidate, who defeated Liberal Alexandre Boulay by a narrow majority of 41 votes following a judicial recount in 2018 and lost by 710 votes to Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) candidate Stéphane Sainte-Croix in 2022.

According to her, the provincial campaign will not focus solely on the Canada-U.S. tariff war. She highlighted the PQ’s key economic priorities: ending waste in projects like Northvolt, reducing regulation and bureaucracy for businesses, and diversifying



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Méganne Perry Mélançon addressed the approximately 40 supporters who attended the opening of her campaign office in Gaspé.

export markets.

To promote her candidacy, Méganne Perry Mélançon points to her own track record during her 2018–2022 term and goes further by citing various projects that have failed in

the riding of Gaspé since 2022.

These include the arena project, which was not selected in a call for proposals for this type of infrastructure, the Espace bleue de la Gaspésie in Percé, which cost \$26 million and, according to the candidate, lacks a clear purpose; and the delay in the rail rehabilitation project under the Quebec Infrastructure Plan.

Without naming him, the PQ candidate took aim at her CAQ opponent, Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

“The facts speak for themselves. There are many things that leave us wanting more—and rightly so—because if we’d had a representative who actually made the effort, we would have seen different results,” says Ms. Perry Mélançon.

“I don’t want to judge his work because, in any case, the citizens will judge for themselves,” she says, when asked to evaluate her main opponent.

According to her, these examples are the result of the

centralization of power.

“These aren’t isolated cases. They demonstrate a government that makes decisions from Quebec City, that politicizes issues, and that doesn’t trust people in the regions. We need to restore power and trust to the people in the regions toward the government.”

Among the other issues, she intends to debate during the campaign are health care issues—notably reimbursement for travel expenses—the issue of air travel, which will involve a public consultation, and funding for community organizations following the end of food assistance at Accueil Blanche-Goulet.

While the Coalition for the Return of a passenger train to the Gaspé Peninsula and VIA Rail are seeking concrete commitments to rehabilitate the rail line to Gaspé, Méganne Perry Mélançon does not want to be boxed into a corner.

“We won’t be giving a timeline or specific amounts.

We have a lot of work to do with local partners before making any commitments. These are goals that the CAQ had and failed to meet. We’re really upset about that. We’ll start working on this from day one with partners who want more local control. That’s what we intend to do,” says Mélançon, who does not wish to conflate the needs of passenger and freight transportation.

When asked whether she might be a potential cabinet minister, having been a prominent figure over the past four years as a national spokesperson for the PQ following her four years in the National Assembly, she sidestepped the question.

“I’ll leave that up to my leader. We’re a long way from that point. What I’m asking for is the trust of people who know I’m thorough. We’ll see if we’re in government, and I’ll be happy to continue this work with a competent team from the Parti Québécois,” the candidate replies.

PQ would implement a new Gaspé region revitalization plan

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

BONAVENTURE – If the Parti Québécois (PQ) takes power on October 5, incumbent Member of the National Assembly (MNA) and candidate for Matane-Matapédia-Métis, Pascal Bérubé, says his party would implement a new revitalization plan for the Gaspé region.

Former premiers Bernard Landry and Pauline Marois introduced similar measures aimed at supporting the region’s development.

Under Bernard Landry, in the early 2000s, the regional economy diversified with the launch of the wind energy sector and efforts to preserve municipalities such as Murdochville.

However, the modernization of the former Gaspésie paper mill in Chandler was a dismal failure.

The project ran more than \$200 million over budget, derailing its revival.

The subsequent Lesage Report pointed to political pressure and described the project as a failure in terms of the management of public funds.

Under Pauline Marois, between 2012 and 2014, the Quebec government promised funding for the restoration of



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Former Premier Pauline Marois chaired the Gaspé Peninsula Recovery Plan Committee between 2012 and 2014, which was implemented by then Member of the National Assembly and Minister Gaétan Lelièvre.

the railway, studies to expand the Rocher-Percé and Sainte-Anne-des-Monts airports, a tourist train between Percé and Gaspé, as well as the creation of the Fonds d’aide aux initiatives régionales (FAIR) program, with \$6 million per year. The program continued until its abolition by the outgoing Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government.

“I’m going to advocate for this because there’s work that needs to be finished. The indicators for the Gaspé Peninsula are still cause for concern in many respects. But the potential is there. I served as a mem-

ber of the National Assembly for five years in Haute-Gaspésie. I know the strength of this region, but it requires a level of support that cannot be the same as elsewhere in Quebec,” says Pascal Bérubé.

He also criticizes CAQ Premier Christine Fréchette’s decision to eliminate the ministers responsible for the regions when she succeeded François Legault.

The PQ candidate does not know what form the plan will take, but one premise must guide the eventual document, which could become the subject of a formal commitment

during a possible visit by PQ leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon to the Gaspé Peninsula.

“Transportation. Clearly transportation. Whether it’s rail, air, or public transit. If we address transportation needs for citizens, tourists, and goods alike... Not everything can be a priority, but for me, based on my experience, it’s transportation,” he asserts.

Senior member of the National Assembly

With François Legault’s departure, Pascal Bérubé has become the senior member of the National Assembly.

The representative for Matane-Matapédia has held his seat since 2007.

After 19 years in the National Assembly, he has not yet reached half of François Gen-

dron’s historic tenure. Mr. Gendron spent 42 years as a member of the National Assembly.

“That’s not the goal. It takes shape with each term. Since Mr. Legault is leaving, I become the senior member. I started at age 32. I’m now 51, which is still very young in politics. The idea is to be useful to my team. There are three criteria: Do I still have the passion? Am I in good health? And do people want me to come back?” the candidate asks.

With all three conditions met, he is seeking another term.

“In the last election, I achieved the best result in Quebec, across all parties and all candidates. The projections look pretty good for us,” the senior member notes.



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U.S. Tariffs: Catherine Blouin assures the Quebec government will be there

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PASPÉBIAC – Outgoing Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) Member of the National Assembly and Minister, Catherine Blouin, says the Quebec government will be there for Gaspé businesses that will face headwinds following the imposition of 50% tariffs on some \$28 billion worth of Canadian products.

Sectors in the region that may be affected include dairy products, seaweed, cement and forestry.

“This creates a lot of uncertainty. There’s nothing worse—even in the Gaspé Peninsula—than economic uncertainty. Until these tariffs are actually implemented, we can’t know what the impacts will be. Will our suppliers be affected? What about our exports? I’ve had discussions with people in the business community and reached out to the sectors likely to be most affected,” says Ms. Blouin, who hopes measures put in place by the Quebec government will help businesses.

The first program is aimed at small and medium-sized businesses with annual revenue between \$1 million and \$2 million.

The second program is for businesses with annual revenue exceeding \$2 million whose income has been significantly reduced by U.S. tariffs of 25% or more on Canadian exports.

No news on the train

The outgoing Member of



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Catherine Blouin, outgoing CAQ Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure and Minister of Families.

National Assembly (MNA) is not taking a position, for now, on the Coalition’s demand for the return of passenger train service in the Gaspé Peninsula. The organization is seeking a firm commitment from candidates to complete the restoration of the railway to Gaspé.

Ms. Blouin says she will present her proposals once the election campaign is underway. However, she points to the progress already made on the railway.

“We’ve invested over \$500 million. Sections One and Two are now operational, extending to Port-Daniel-Gascons. That’s a significant improvement. Work is currently underway on Section Three between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé,” she notes.

VIA Rail service is expected to return to the Gaspé Peninsula, as far as New Carlisle, by early 2028 at the

latest. “I don’t think we’ll be the ones to delay the train’s return. That’s all I can tell you,” Ms. Blouin states.

Maria Hospital project moving forward

Transferred to the Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI) in June by Santé Québec Gaspésie, the project involving the emergency room and intensive care unit at the Maria Hospital has made little apparent progress.

When asked about the next steps, the SQI indicated that the project is included in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan at the study phase, which will include the development of a feasibility study.

According to the SQI, this stage will identify and document needs, analyze options and define project parameters, including the budget and timeline.

In June, Santé Québec Gaspésie Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Martin Pelletier indicated that the functional and technical program had already been completed.

“The project is moving forward,” Catherine Blouin affirms.

The announcement of another feasibility study phase, despite the project already being well documented, has raised questions.

“A feasibility study had already been started. Now, this is Phase One, officially set out in writing, which is the feasibility study phase. It can be confusing, but this is the normal process,” she says.

The phase is expected to

take between 18 and 24 months.

Ms. Blouin, who will seek re-election in 2026, acknowledged that she had hoped the project would have advanced further during her current mandate.

“When I arrived in 2022 promising to move the project forward, I would have liked to do so, but it didn’t exist. I took it on at the very

beginning, when it was still in its infancy,” says the MNA.

The project represents an estimated investment of between \$250 million and \$350 million and is expected to be completed around 2031-2032.

The new facilities in Maria are expected to be similar to those completed at the Gaspé hospital in 2021.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Gaétan Lelièvre hopes to hear about the decentralization of powers during this election campaign.

Decentralization should be the theme of the campaign, according to Gaétan Lelièvre

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – As a staunch advocate for the regionalization of powers, it comes as no surprise that former Minister of Regions Gaétan Lelièvre, who served under Pauline Marois’s Parti Québécois government between 2012 and 2014, speaks unequivocally about decentralization when asked about the central issue of the election campaign.

“It’s a word that’s almost become embarrassing to say because, unfortunately, people don’t really believe in it anymore, but it’s so important because it can have an impact on a whole host of major issues—it’s about bringing local issues closer to local decision-making; that’s what decentralization is,” Gaétan Lelièvre states bluntly.

The regional development consultant believes many issues could move forward through such an approach.

“If we embark on this process, we’ll resolve many problems in health care, education, housing, daycare, and regional development. It’s a central element, in my opinion.”

All parties are including regional decentralization in their election platforms.

The outgoing government had even made an announcement in Gaspé in July on the issue, suggesting an end to a one-size-fits-all approach in the design of government programs. A government directive would aim to systematically integrate regional realities into program development.

At the same time minister Mathieu Lévesque was making this announcement, it was revealed that communications management for Santé Québec Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie would fall under Rimouski’s jurisdiction.

“Political parties’ actions don’t match their words. It’s become a profitable strategy to claim they’re the party of the regions. People aren’t fooled. We can see who is genuinely committed to supporting the regions and who is using the phrase in a hollow and baseless way. Unfortunately, there are others like that. We’ll let the people be the judge,” comments Mr. Lelièvre.

Actions, rather than promises, will speak for themselves.

“Let’s hope we can move on to the second phase: fulfilling those commitments,” concludes the former minister.

Two kayakers rescued at Petit-Cap

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The Canadian Coast Guard responded to a call involving two teenage kayakers in distress off Petit-Cap in Gaspé on Aug. 12.

One of the kayakers capsized at around 9:30 a.m. The second attempted to help but was unable to return to shore because the kayak had filled with water.

The Coast Guard vessel CCGS Baie de Gaspé was dispatched to the scene, but



Photo: Facebook

a good samaritan was able to rescue the two teenagers and bring them to shore, where they were taken into the care of ambulance personnel.

The Coast Guard crew recovered the two kayaks, which had been left adrift. The teenagers were showing early signs of hypothermia.

Bonaventure: Five major parties announce candidates

GILLES GAGNÉ

BONAVENTURE – The five candidates in the Bonaventure riding representing parties with a reasonable chance of being represented in the National Assembly following the October 5 election were nominated before the official start of the campaign on August 27.

Only one nomination meeting required a vote. On August 25 in Bonaventure, Pier-Luc Bujold received 64.43% of the ballots cast by approximately 150 Parti Québécois (PQ) members, defeating Paspébiac's Nancy Angleshart and Chandler's Sébastien Pagé.

A few days earlier, The Liberal Party of Quebec had announced that Christian Cyr, a real estate agent, would be the 2026 candidate. He also represented the same party in the last electoral campaign, in 2022.

Québec solidaire is represented by Yv Bonnier Viger, the region's former director of Public Health, who ran for the same party in the Gaspé riding in 2022. He is well-known for his leadership in the management of the pandemic between March 2020 and the summer of 2022.

Incumbent Catherine Blouin, who was first elected in October 2022, had not publicly launched her campaign this year, as the SPEC was reaching its deadline. Ms. Blouin has also served as Minister of Families since the leadership race won by Christine Fréchette in April.

On August 26, the Conservative Party of Quebec announced on its website that Dominique Côté, a graduate of the National School of Aeronautics in aircraft maintenance, will be the candidate in Bonaventure. The party mentioned that "his training in a field where rigor, safety, and a commitment to quality work are essential has allowed him to develop a methodical, pragmatic, and results-oriented approach that he now wishes to put to use for his community."

The candidate's profile added "that he wants to represent the citizens of Bonaventure with a focus on accessibility, attentiveness, and determination." The party maintains that he advocates for concrete solutions to restore purchasing power to families, facilitate access to homeownership, reduce red



Parti Québécois candidate Pier-Luc Bujold.



Quebec Liberal Party candidate Christian Cyr.



Québec solidaire candidate Yv Bonnier Viger.



Coalition avenir Québec candidate Catherine Blouin.

Photos: Gilles Gagné

tape and improve access to healthcare. No photo is included in the profile. Details about his origins, place of residence and availability during the campaign are also discreet so far.

A relatively slow campaign start

As of September 2, the largest rally in the riding had taken place in Bonaventure, on the night of Pier-Luc Bujold's nomination for the Parti Québécois.

Pier-Luc Bujold is a nurse that was active at the Maria hospital for years. While there, he became involved in the SIIÉQ, the acronym defining the Union of Nurses, Auxiliary Nurse and Respiratory Therapists of Eastern Quebec. He was, until recently, the president of this union. He has been living in Bonaventure since 2014.

"I want to use the negotiation expertise acquired over the years, my advocacy for rights in public services, rights that are often not respected. For 10 years, I have defended the realities of remote populations. I am used to covering a large territory," he said on August 25.

"The cornerstone of my strategy is decentralization. I have seen many decisions disconnected from the realities on the ground. One-size-fits-all policies don't work, they never have! My proposal: in decentralization, I propose to be a factor. For 10 years I have been saying that we are not second-class citizens," he added.

Pier-Luc Bujold wants to improve the reimbursement of medical expenses. "We see people who don't get treatment

because they can't afford to go to Quebec City or Montreal," he says.

Not surprisingly, he is very critical of the Coalition avenir Québec government's (CAQ) overall record, notably in early childhood development, "because of the failure of establishing the conditions for improving services."

Despite polls giving the PQ approximately 50% support in Bonaventure, give or take eight percentage points, followed at a considerable distance by the CAQ, Mr. Bujold cautioned that "survey results should not be taken at face value."

"The CAQ's disastrous record must be denounced, including the "SAAQclac" scandal, the deteriorating files, like the railway, the MNA's limited presence in the riding, and the conflict of interest with the MRC prefect," he concluded, targeting Mathieu Lapointe, prefect of Avignon, and also Catherine Blouin's spouse.

Québec solidaire first to present part of its platform

Yv Bonnier Viger held the first press conference on the morning of August 25, two days before the official launch of the electoral campaign. He defends the principle of establishing a democracy of participation instead of the current democracy of representation.

"Over the last election, the CAQ won 72% of the seats with 40% of the votes. We must get rid of these aberrations, and opt for a pondered democracy of participation that would protect a minimum of seats for regions," he explained.

Increasing the number of

affordable housing units ranks high on his list of priorities.

"The exorbitant prices of repairing houses, added to the fact that the pension of seniors is not adjusted to their expenses, highly complicates their life. Supposedly 'affordable housing' costing a rent of \$1,700 or more increases the cases of homelessness. There are people sleeping under a bridge not far from here," he said.

Quebec independence, a

position supported by Québec solidaire, must be explained at length, added Mr. Bonnier Viger, who wants minorities and Indigenous people to be included in the project.

"We could build together a society that resembles us. It would start with a wide popular consultation, including a consultation with the Natives," he emphasizes.

The current 39-day long campaign is legally the longest accepted by Élections Québec.

Orléans Express: A victim of its own success

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – On several occasions during the summer season, passengers hoping to take an Orléans Express bus from major centres to the Gaspé Peninsula—or vice versa—were unable to do so because all seats were booked when they tried to reserve online.

The company, owned by Keolis, has traditionally added buses to accommodate additional passengers, but doing so proved more difficult this summer.

As a result, passengers took to social media to complain about the difficulty of travelling.

In an email, Keolis states that "adding extra departures, commonly referred to as 'doubles,' is always among the measures Orléans Express can implement depending on available operational capacity. The summer season is currently experiencing particularly high ridership, notably due to a very busy tourist season and the current economic climate, which encourages travel within Quebec. We are delighted to see that interest in regional tourism remains so strong, and we recommend that travelers book their tickets in advance to facilitate trip planning," the company writes.

Furthermore, the bus carrier also declined to comment on the return of passenger rail competition, as VIA Rail plans to resume service in the region in early 2028, initially as far as New Carlisle.

Behind the scenes, sources familiar with Orléans Express suggest the company could partially or entirely withdraw from the region if passenger rail service returns.

"The project is still evolving, and several details remain to be clarified. It is therefore too early to assess the potential impacts this return could have on the various modes of transportation in the region. To date, no changes to our operations are planned, and Orléans Express remains fully committed to serving the communities of the Gaspé Peninsula. We are closely monitoring developments," Keolis adds in an email.

Request for recognition of Mi'gmaq descendants

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – For the past two years, approximately 30 people have been fighting to have their membership in the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation recognized. They are appealing to Member of Parliament (MP) Alexis Deschênes in an effort to resolve the issue.

Several of those affected attended a press conference on August 26 at the Berceau du Canada in Gaspé to support the MP in his efforts to have Indigenous Services Canada take action.

Many have been waiting since 2024 for a decision, while one person has been waiting for 32 years.

“What they’re telling us is that they’re conducting a review of a common ancestor that could affect the pending applications. We say: fine. Conduct your review—thoroughly, seriously, without overlooking any details. But do it more quickly,” demands the Bloc Québécois MP for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Alexis Deschênes, Member of Parliament for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, flanked by Jean-Marc Thibault and Léa Thibault.

Madeleine-Listuguj.

Jean-Marc Thibault is among those waiting for a response. “I submitted my application in 2024. My brother applied a week after me and received his benefits in 2024. As for me, in November 2024, I was told my card was in the mail. I sent evidence regarding Pierre Jacques back in 2017. Today, we’re still waiting. In

June, my brother’s daughter is starting middle school. It took 24 hours, and everything went smoothly. If I’m eligible, give it to me. If I’m not eligible, just tell me,” says Mr. Thibault.

His niece, Léa Thibault, is facing a similar situation.

“We sent 250 pages of documentation, we’ve been calling. It’s not fair. My cousin is fine. My uncle has his cards,

but we don’t have the right,” she adds.

“You have to admit it’s quite a Kafkaesque situation. Mr. Thibault’s account is telling. We can understand how they feel. There’s uncertainty, and time is passing. Some people have died without ever receiving a response. This isn’t befitting of a G7 country,” says the MP, who has spoken with

the minister responsible.

A letter requesting information was sent, and a response was received from the Office of the Indian Registrar.

“In essence, the only response we’ve received is a single sentence stating that an investigation into a common ancestor is underway and that it could have an impact. The letter does not provide a timeline. We are not talking about building a hydroelectric dam. We’re talking about creating a family tree, even though several hundred pages of documentation have been submitted. At some point, people need to do the work that’s expected of them,” the MP insists.

“There’s an investigation into a common ancestor scheduled for 2024, and we’re already approaching 2027. Let them issue a decision. If there are people who are dissatisfied, they’ll take the matter to court. But we’ll be resolving this uncertainty. Indecision cannot be the public policy of Indigenous Services Canada,” says Mr. Deschênes.

Quebec government finally pays what it owes to RéGÎM

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – After months of operating on a line of credit that ultimately affected its day-to-day operations, the Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (RéGÎM) has finally received the operating subsidies owed by the Quebec government for 2025.

The provincial government has also paid an interim subsidy for the 2026 fiscal year.

“Almost all the funds owed for 2025 have been received for public transit, and even the first payments for 2026 have arrived,” says RéGÎM President, Daniel Côté.

In June, an initial \$760,000 of the \$1.1 million owed for 2025 was disbursed, with the balance paid in recent days.

The \$800,000 subsidy for the first half of 2026 has also been deposited for the public transit component.

“The line of credit is back to zero. All suppliers have been paid. All accounts are up to date, and we’re able to keep the system running,” continues Mr. Côté.

All that remains is for certain funds earmarked for paratransit to be deposited into the



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

RéGÎM has finally received the operating grants owed by the provincial government after numerous appeals and heartfelt pleas. However, the funding cut puts an end to additional services. Pictured here: RéGÎM President Daniel Côté and various partners at the inauguration of the Forillon shuttle in July 2025.

transit authority’s coffers.

However, with \$300,000 in government cuts for fiscal year 2026, the situation is far from rosy.

“This cut continues to hurt, and revenue from the gas tax continues to decline. Vehicles are becoming increasingly fuel-efficient. We expect a decrease in tax revenue on top of the subsidy cut,” adds Mr. Côté.

Toward a vehicle registration tax

The authority says it has little choice but to propose a

vehicle registration tax to secure the revenue needed to maintain services at current levels.

Discussions are ongoing with the Société de l’assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ).

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

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

The Rocher-Percé MRC, however, is taking a different approach since it manages its

own paratransit service.

Prefect Samuel Parisé advocates issuing a cheque for an amount equivalent to the registration tax, which would total approximately \$200,000.

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

“We have a board meeting in September, and we may be able to provide a clear picture regarding registration fees or alternative measures by the MRCs. Quebec has helped us get back on our feet, but it will be difficult to replenish the coffers in the coming years,”

says Mr. Côté, noting that reserves are depleted.

Rising operating costs

Revenues are stagnating while costs continue to rise.

“There are new transit contracts coming up starting next year. One was renewed this year, and we’re seeing the preliminary figures come in—they haven’t gone before the board yet—but what I’ve seen suggests a fairly significant increase. As for the others that are coming up, I assume there will be a fairly significant increase,” estimates Mr. Côté.

Fuel costs have risen sharply, along with the costs of labour, buses and parts.

“There will be choices to make,” says the president.

Public transit already felt the initial impact of budget cuts in February when routes were reorganized.

The loss of public funding prevented the launch of special shuttle services this summer, except for those that were self-funded, and marked the end of free summer rides for seniors and youth.

For the first time in its history, the transit authority served more than 100,000 passengers in 2025.

Strong turnout of horse riders at New Richmond Fair

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – The message delivered by emcee Nancy Robertson in August 2025, that the community needed to rally around the event in order to save it, appears to have been heard at this year’s New Richmond Agricultural Fair. Participants and attendance increased at this year’s events, with the exception of Sunday, August 23, when heavy rain affected activities.

“We had to find room for 62 horses. We had to build new boxes and bring some from outside. We had 19 juniors registered for our events this year. I have never seen that,” pointed out New Richmond Fair president, Kaley Court, on Saturday, August 22, the second day of gymkhana events.

Her mother Nancy Robertson, who serves as emcee of the fair agreed: “I have never seen that many horses on the site and I have been involved in the fair for 22 years.”

The Junior Gymkhana was held on the afternoon of August 22 under perfect weather. It showed the progress made by young riders over the years. Among the riders who stood out were Coralie Johnson in the barrel race, Shyann Fitzgerald in the slalom, Emily Bérubé in the “aller-retour” sprint, Laurie Aubut-Larocque in the keyhole event, the team of Emily Bérubé and Léa Maltais in the relay, Laurie Aubut-Larocque in the flag race, and Léa Maltais in the ring lap. Leighton Gedeon also earned silver and bronze medals.

Jaëlle Savoie received this year’s sportsmanship award, recognizing the way she competes while showing respect to the other competitors and her horse, among other criteria considered by the organizing committee.

The 2D and 3D Gymkhana were held on the evenings of August 21 and August 22, respectively, featuring high-quality competitions in front of large crowds

“We were not expecting such large crowds. On Saturday night, for the 3D Gymkhana, the stands were full, with people all around the paddock. At one point, I decided to go to the saloon and get some water for our helpers and the place was packed solid. During the Gymkhana, we ran out of some liquor brands before midnight. Brian Haché and his girlfriend, after performing the first music set, helped us at the bar!” says president Kaley Court.

The organizing committee will meet soon to begin planning for the 2027 New Richmond Agricultural Fair.



Flora Bujold, age 5, was the youngest contestant in the junior Gymkhana. She was accompanied by her father Marc-Antoine.

Photo: Gilles Gagné



Emily Bérubé won the “aller retour” sprint in a spectacular time of 9.281 seconds.

Photo: Gilles Gagné



Nancy Robertson proudly displays the award she received from the Town of New Richmond for Best Announcer.

Photo: Darlene Dimock



Stephanie Meredith rounds the arena during the gymkhana competition.

Photo: Darlene Dimock



Face painting was among the many activities enjoyed by children.

Photo: Darlene Dimock



Emcee Nancy Robertson invited kids to come and choose a gift in the middle of the paddock.

Photo: Darlene Dimock

Anticosti withdraws from the Gaspé Peninsula–North Shore Maritime Link Project

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – The municipality of Anticosti has decided to withdraw from the project to establish a ferry service between the Gaspé Peninsula and Havre-Saint-Pierre, following a public consultation held on the island on August 4.

The decision by elected officials does not halt the project.

“Anticosti has taken a stance. However, the project must continue to move forward. This is the official position agreed upon by Havre-Saint-Pierre, Minganie, and our municipality. The initial goal has always been to connect the two shores to create a new tourist loop in eastern Quebec. The central objective remains,” says Gaspé mayor Daniel Côté.

Anticosti’s status as a major attraction, thanks to its recognition as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, and improved accessibility to the island were key selling points for the project. However, the lack of resources to protect the island and inadequate infrastructure to accommodate “mass tourism” tipped the scales for the island’s elected officials.

“This changes the game plan. We’re not going to bury



The Port of Havre-Saint-Pierre, project developer.

Photo: Port of Havre-Saint-Pierre

our heads in the sand. However, the studies that have been conducted will need to be updated. Creating a tourist loop is still on the table. That said, if people who responded wanted to go exclusively to Anticosti, that’s what needs to be updated,” says Daniel Côté.

The Quebec government may have a say in the matter.

“The 200 residents of Anticosti have a say regarding their territory, but there is also public land to which Anticostians have access. Will the government have a say through SÉPAQ (Société des établissements de plein air du Québec), which manages half the island? We have the views of about 40 Anticostians, about 15 of whom expressed their opinions

in a consultation. We have the municipality’s official position, which was received on August 19. Both sides intend to move forward with the project,” explains the mayor.

Mr. Côté points out that Anticosti had always been open to the project.

“The final position expressed by the mayor of Anticosti is the exact opposite of what she has expressed over the past five years. The will of the people seems to have prevailed over the municipality’s long-standing position. We’ve held the same position for 12 years—even though the municipality funded part of the studies. I can understand the position of some residents, but I’m now trying to understand

the municipality’s position. If we think about the future, perhaps Anticosti will have missed a great opportunity to democratize access to the island and foster greater economic exchange with the mainland. It’s their decision. I will respect it.”

Eliminating the stop on Anticosti would allow the ferry to save six hours of travel time between the two shores.

Significant work would have been required on Anticosti.

Havre-Saint-Pierre is better equipped, while Rivière-au-Renard—which was designed to accommodate a ferry—needs to be upgraded.

This withdrawal will not affect the timeline, as the project is still in the preliminary design phase and does not yet have a ferry operator.

“The challenge is figuring out how to position the project during this fall’s election campaign. It would be helpful to have an update—or at least some figures from the studies—to gauge the political parties’ positions, both in the Gaspé and Duplessis ridings,” notes the mayor.

Since discussions began in 2014, Mr. Côté says the project has always received political support, whether under Parti Québécois, Liberal or Coalition Avenir Québec governments.

The ministers responsible for transportation and tourism have shown openness to the project.

“Did they really put their weight behind it? No. They asked us for more conclusive studies or additional research. There was never a complete halt to the project,” says Mr. Côté, noting that there have been four mayors in Anticosti and five in Havre-Saint-Pierre during that time.

“As long as the project isn’t completed, there will be interest,” believes the mayor of Gaspé.

In January, project developers estimated that the ferry service could generate \$39 million in economic spinoffs.

The anticipated average annual deficit for the ferry was \$6.7 million during the first five years of operation, while tax and quasi-tax revenues for Quebec were projected to exceed \$12.5 million.

Additional tourism spending associated with the ferry service was estimated at \$11.4 million for Quebec.

In total, the implementation of the ferry service was projected to support 537 jobs annually in the Quebec economy.

According to estimates, 39,200 passengers could use the service. These figures must now be revised in light of Anticosti’s withdrawal.

Phil Shaw ensures he is seen, and recognized!

Gilles Gagné
CARLETON – Until August 23, Gaspésians and tourists may have spotted a man roller-skiing through numerous communities along the Gaspé Coast, raising money to help fund the competition circuit he hopes to attend in Europe next winter.

Phil Shaw, 60, uses roller skiing as a training method for the winter season. He is hard to miss, with multicoloured balloons attached to his gear. He waves at people he passes and regularly stops to explain the reason behind his presence in communities throughout Quebec.

Shaw lives in Val-Morin, in the Laurentians. During the summer, he covers long distances on roller skis, travelling the roads of his region and elsewhere, as Gaspésians have now witnessed.

“I race international cross-country marathons every winter, essentially in Europe. The circuit is called Worldloppet. There are usually half-a-dozen races every winter that cover long distances. During my summer training, the balloons make me visible to drivers, and that’s a safe way to train,” shares Phil Shaw.

The roller skis are mounted on real, albeit tiny, air-inflated tires. Since most winter competitions take place according to a classic cross-country style instead of skating style, his training sessions are quite demanding for his arms. “This is the only way to propel myself in classic style races, so I train accordingly. It is also demanding on my legs because the most efficient way to go fast is bending my knees after pushing with my arms,” he explains.

Phil Shaw was only a child when he met Herman “Jack Rabbit” Johannsen, a Norwegian born in 1875 who moved to the Laurentians in his forties. He went on to live 111 years and he is credited with having brought cross country skiing to Canada. He was still a skier months before his passing in 1987. Impressed by this legendary man, Phil Shaw decided to follow in his footsteps by skiing every day.

Mr. Shaw is also a distributor and reseller of rough road roller skis and accessories. His clientele is located throughout Canada and the United States. He can easily be found online.



Phil Shaw extended his funding drive to the Carleton campground over the evening of August 22. Earlier in the day, he made appearances near the public beach.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

Discussing the future of the Anse-au-Griffon Harbour

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – About 25 people accepted an invitation from the Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes, for Gaspésie–Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine–Listuguj to help shape the future of the Anse-au-Griffon harbour and wharf in Gaspé, which was transferred from the federal government to the municipality 10 years ago.

The site has significant potential, according to Mr. Deschênes.

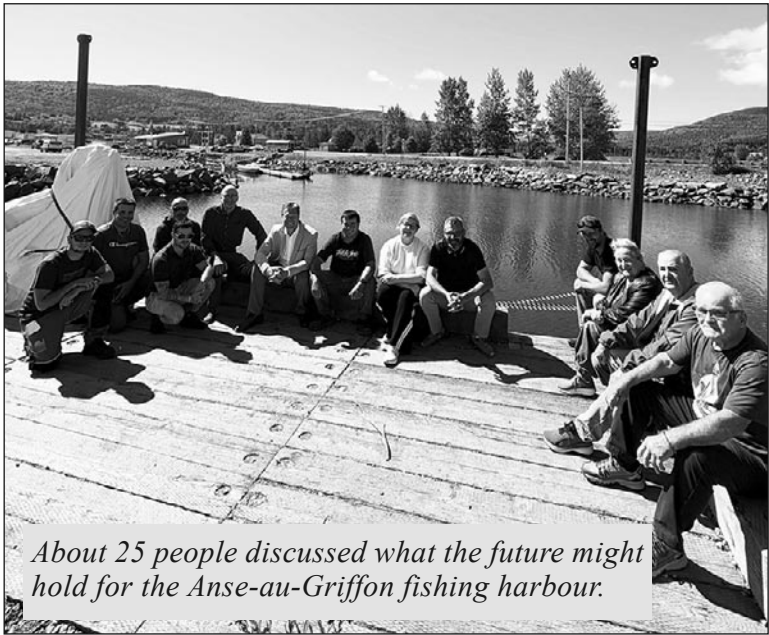
“The people of Anse-au-Griffon have been reaching out to me ever since I was elected. What we wanted to do was envision the future of the pier,” comments the Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament (MP).

The pier is currently used by a commercial fisherman, recreational fishermen, and boaters.

“What we’re seeing is that there’s a lot of potential and a desire among residents to restore it to its former glory. There’s an opportunity to develop the site without any conflict of uses,” he explains.

The wharf could serve other fishermen, as lobster fishing is expanding along the northern coast of the Gaspé Peninsula with the ongoing exploratory fishery.

Located halfway between the docks at Rivière-au-Renard and Cap-des-Rosiers, the facil-



About 25 people discussed what the future might hold for the Anse-au-Griffon fishing harbour.

Photo: Facebook

ity could also serve as a refuge harbour.

“There’s a case to be made for commercial fishing. As a marina, it’s a magnificent location that has already hosted many boats. From a recreational and tourism perspective, there’s truly fascinating potential. It was a very positive meeting,” notes the MP.

The discussion also focused on ways to achieve this goal, since the required investment exceeds the Municipality of Gaspé’s financial capacity.

“We can’t do anything without dredging. That’s the first step, and we think it will cost about \$2.5 million based on the latest estimates from three years ago. That’s a large sum. That’s the first thing. Next, we’d need a boat launch

ramp, and the wharf needs to be rebuilt. There’s a lot of love to be poured into this. It’s a pier that’s part of our identity, our past, and, I believe, our future.”

Fisheries and Oceans Canada could be approached to help fund the ideas discussed.

In December 2016, the federal government announced it would transfer the pier to the Municipality of Gaspé, along with a \$1.9 million budget to restore it.

However, bids to rebuild the infrastructure came in \$1 million higher than expected.

The project was revised, and the federal government provided additional funding to cover certain work, bringing the cost to approximately \$2.4 million.

Operation Nez Rouge returns to Gaspé in December

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Operation Nez Rouge will once again be held in Gaspé in December.

This year marks the 35th campaign in Gaspé and the only one taking place in the Gaspé Peninsula.

“For now, it’s a carbon copy of last year. Gaspé will be the only location offering an operation,” says Marilyn Vigneault, executive director of Operation Nez Rouge.

The difficulty in finding organizers explains why the service is so rare on the Gaspé Peninsula.

“Operation Nez Rouge always partners with local organizations that have ties to youth or amateur sports. For example, across the province, we have youth centres, sports clubs, Scouts, and other groups that run the campaign, and in exchange, 100% of the

donations collected go back to their organization. This helps fund their missions and make the roads safer,” explains Ms. Vigneault.

Over the past few years, the number of people using the service has been declining, which Ms. Vigneault sees as positive.

“We hope that the prevention message we’re conveying is paying off—namely, to always plan your trips in advance. Yes, with Operation Nez Rouge, but more generally, people can consider designating a driver or staying overnight. But beyond that, Operation Nez Rouge remains important during the holiday season. During the 2025 holiday season, more than 18,000 rides were provided in a single month,” concludes Ms. Vigneault.

Operations will begin on November 27. The Rivière-au-

Renard Youth Centre has served as the lead organizer since 2023 and will collaborate with the Gaspé Youth Centre to organize the 35th operation.

Details are still being finalized ahead of an official announcement. Over the past 34 years, roughly \$184,800 has been raised for Gaspé Peninsula youth organizations.

During the 34th operation, \$4,918 in donations were collected over eight evenings. A total of 182 volunteers, organized into 52 teams, provided 277 rides in 2025.

The last Operation Nez Rouge campaigns in Bonaventure, Chandler and Paspébiac were held in 2012, 2015 and 2017, respectively.

Elsewhere in Eastern Quebec, Operation Nez Rouge will be held in Matane, Rimouski, Trois-Pistoles, and the Magdalen Islands.

St. Marys Cement unable to estimate impact of U.S. tariffs

Nelson Sergerie

PORT-DANIEL-GASCONS – St. Marys Cement is currently unable to predict the impact that 50% U.S. tariffs could have on its operations.

The threat, first raised on July 20, has now become a reality. Against a backdrop of increased protectionism in the U.S. economy, U.S. president Donald Trump has imposed 50% tariffs on hundreds of Canadian products, including cement.

The measure took effect following Canada’s withdrawal from trade negotiations with the United States on August 21.

“We are still assessing the potential implications of the tariffs and their impact on our operations. We will provide more information, if necessary, once our assessment is complete,” St. Marys Cement stated in a message released through the public relations firm National.

When the possibility of tariffs was first raised on July 20, the owners of the Port-Daniel-Gascons cement plant indicated that the impact would depend on several factors.

“Their impact will depend in particular on their scope, duration, and terms of application,” the cement producer stated at the time.

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

Cement produced at the facility is destined for various markets in Canada and internationally.

Twelve new housing units coming to New Carlisle

Nelson Sergerie

NEW CARLISLE – Twelve new housing units will be built in New Carlisle as part of a partnership announced earlier this summer between various levels of government and the Société de développement de l’Est.

The municipality had one condition for moving forward with the project: it must come at no cost to residents.

“That was the basic premise. I don’t want to burden residents or put more on their shoulders,” says New Carlisle mayor Patrice Leclerc.

Funding is already available following an agreement reached between the municipality and the corporation.

“We just need to move forward and get things done. We want to ensure that if New Carlisle residents have housing needs, they are given priority. We have a lot of land where we could potentially build 24 units. The first phase will consist of 12 units. We’ll see if there’s a way to expand,” the mayor continues.

The municipality already owns the property targeted for the development, which will help facilitate the project.

“Water isn’t too far away. It will involve work by municipal employees and the purchase of some equipment. The tax exemption will apply to property taxes, not utility taxes,” the mayor notes.

The prefabricated housing complexes are expected to be delivered in 2027, although no specific timeline has been established.

“There’s a real need for housing in New Carlisle. There are people all over the place who are moving elsewhere. I know someone who has a place in Bonaventure because there’s nothing left here,” says Mr. Leclerc.

These 12 units are part of the 478 housing units announced for the Bas-Saint-Laurent, the Côte-Nord, the Outaouais and Gaspé Peninsula.

Eight municipalities in the Gaspé Peninsula will receive them: Paspébiac, Grande-Rivière, Murdochville, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Carleton-sur-Mer, New Carlisle, Saint-Maxime-du-Mont-Louis and Pointe-à-la-Croix.

The Quebec government is providing \$13.6 million to the Société de développement de l’Est. The amount being contributed by the federal government has not been specified.

The Société de développement de l’Est and the municipalities receiving the housing units will cover the remainder of the financing package.

To reduce construction costs, the corporation is working exclusively with six-unit buildings.

Of the 478 units, 240 will be offered at affordable rents based on the parameters of the Québec Affordable Housing Program.

The remaining 238 will be offered at intermediate affordable rents, set at no more than 150% of the program’s rent levels.

The municipalities hosting the projects will collectively provide the corporation with construction grants totalling \$3,084,746, in addition to tax credits over a 20-year period.

After threatening to leave office, Paspébiac mayor Jérémy Laplante remains... for now

GILLES GAGNÉ

CARLETON — Paspébiac Mayor Jérémy Laplante will remain in office for the time being, a decision he made public during the August 31 public meeting. The meeting came four days after a special meeting during which he postponed his decision to resign, something that had appeared likely following a social media post published on August 20.

Two additional meetings, held on August 24 and 27, a second unanimous vote of non-confidence on August 24, a petition asking him to stay and the upcoming intervention of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs also punctuated the second half of August.

"I'm staying at the town

hall. Over the past few days, I've realized that the citizens' support for me is simply too strong for me to leave. In the street, at my home, at town hall, on the phone, or by text message... you've flooded me with messages telling me you appreciate my work and, above all, that I shouldn't give up," he wrote following the August 31 meeting.

He added that he intends to stay for what could be a fairly long period. "You seem to be giving me good advice, so I'm going to listen and stay in office as mayor for as long as possible."

Jérémy Laplante doesn't define what "as long as possible" might mean "because being a minority mayor isn't easy."

During the August 27 meeting, he insisted that "the councillors sent some strange signals again during the meeting. Radio-Canada summed up the situation like this: the councillors are turning their backs on me."

The Paspébiac mayor deplores the fact that some of his recent work, unrelated to the controversy that arose from the July suspension of the municipality's director of culture, Dominick Briand, was rejected by the six councillors.

"First, the general policy statement I presented was unanimously rejected. Secondly, the council is criticizing me for fostering a culture of public debate at the town hall. My six colleagues would prefer not to be placed in situa-



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Paspébiac Mayor Jérémy Laplante announced he will remain in office for the time being.

tions where they have to justify their positions to the citizens who elected them," he wrote on social media.

He completes a long message about the relevance of debating in public about points

discussed in plenary meetings, something he favours by writing: "Speaking of democracy, it was the citizens who elected me, not the councillors. I am therefore the voice of the citizens."

Passenger transport remains airport priority

NELSON SERGERIE

CHANDLER — Residents of the Rocher-Percé MRC are prioritizing the development of passenger air transportation following a consultation conducted to guide the future development of the airport, which has undergone significant upgrades in recent years.

"Through the study, we were able to identify the potential for passenger air travel, pinpoint operational gaps to address, and explore development opportunities to make it more profitable. What are the economic, commercial, and tourism opportunities?" says prefect Samuel Parisé.

Tourism remains an important factor to consider.

"We're fortunate to have a beautiful MRC with tourism



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

potential. There are opportunities in gastronomy, hunting, and fishing. How can we assess all of this? Several avenues have been proposed. Some are more expensive than

others. For our part, we need to evaluate the opportunities within our means."

Direct flights to Quebec City and Montreal, allowing travellers to connect to other destinations, were among the most frequently requested services by residents who responded to the consultation.

Businesspeople would also like to have this option to reduce travel time to major urban centres and avoid productivity losses due to transportation.

Cargo

In the past, the transport of seafood from the Rocher-Percé MRC to major urban centres has often been discussed.

"There are things to look

into: what are the possibilities? What aircrafts are available? What size aircraft? It's one of the possibilities," he says.

This initiative is part of the strategic planning for the airport's development.

"We'll have to make certain choices. We want to make it profitable and find services that won't cost citizens too much and that will be economically viable for our region. Our primary need is for people to have access to transportation for medical services. We must do whatever it takes to maintain this service. But it's not in danger," the prefect carefully points out.

Since the airport's upgrade, the effects have been noticeable.

"We're seeing more and

more traffic and new customers. The day we have a regular airline, it will have a significant impact. But we're not there yet. There's still work to be done to be 100% operational," notes Mr. Parisé.

The terminal was renovated in 2024 at a cost of \$2.5 million.

In 2020, the airport's runway was extended, and the weather station and runway lighting were also upgraded, at a cost of \$10.4 million.

The airport was built in 1986. In the early 2010s, discussions took place regarding the possibility of maintaining service at the airport.

At that time, \$1 million was invested to develop the facility following extensive discussions aimed at ensuring its survival.




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Family Ties community garden grows food, skills and connections

HOLLY SMITH

NEW CARLISLE – Tucked behind the Family Ties building in New Carlisle, a thriving community garden is doing much more than producing fresh vegetables. It is giving local residents a place to learn, socialize and develop skills that can help families become more self-sufficient, food wise.

According to Heather MacWhirter, executive director of Family Ties, the community garden was established in 2012-2013 with the goals of developing food security and autonomy, and increasing the community’s access to fresh, local produce.

The garden also provides something equally important: a place for people to connect.

“It’s a place to grow your own food,” Ms. MacWhirter explains, but also a place for “members connecting with each other” and learning from both a gardening expert and fellow participants.

Located at 208A Gérard-D.-Levesque in New Carlisle, behind the Family Ties building and beside the playground, the garden includes 20 individual plots, a greenhouse, tool shed, shelter and patio area used for socials and information sessions. The plots are currently all assigned and there is a waiting list. Participants include young families, individuals, couples, seniors and preschoolers.

Each gardener is responsible for watering, weeding and harvesting their own plot, while Family Ties provides supplies including compost, seeds and plants. Ms. MacWhirter says participants grow food for themselves and their families, while also sharing with one another and with Family Ties.

This year, gardeners are growing carrots, yellow and green beans, peas, beets, rutabagas, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, kale, summer and winter squash, melons, herbs and garlic, along with flowers that bring colour to the garden and attract pollinators.

The property also features cherry, apple and plum trees, as well as grapes, rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, currants, blackberries, gooseberries and aronias.

A weekly Garden Social, held from June through September, is another important part of the project. Participants



Family Ties members gather for a weekly Garden Social, where participants can socialize, share healthy snacks and learn more about gardening.



Photos: Courtesy of Family Ties

The Family Ties community garden in New Carlisle features 20 individual plots where participants grow a wide variety of fresh vegetables, herbs and flowers.

gather to socialize, share healthy snacks and receive guidance from a gardening expert.

According to Ms. MacWhirter, participants can learn about everything from pruning and proper watering to protecting and improving soil and controlling pests.

The garden is also introducing younger children to growing their own food. The Family Ties preschool program has its own plot this year, allowing children to participate in planting and watering their garden before eventually enjoying the produce they helped grow.

Family Ties also offers preserving workshops and online instructional videos so the information is accessible even to those who cannot travel to the centre. Members can also participate in community fruit picking and organized foraging activities, initiatives aimed at improving access to local food, encouraging social inclusion and promoting healthy eating.

For Ms. MacWhirter, one of the garden’s most important goals is helping participants develop knowledge they can take home with them.

Family Ties hopes participants develop skills they can replicate in their own gardens, leading to greater food autonomy and less dependence on grocery stores and dépanneurs. But the benefits are not limited to what ends up on the dinner table.

The garden is also intended to be a place where people can make new friends, reconnect with old ones, experiment with different foods and experience the pride and accomplishment of watching something they have nurtured grow.

Above all, Ms. MacWhirter says the goal is to create “a place where everyone feels that they belong.”

While there is currently a waiting list for individual garden plots, volunteers are always welcome. The weekly Garden Socials are open to Family Ties members whether or not they have a garden plot.

Those interested in learning more can watch the Family Ties Facebook page for weekly Garden Social announcements or contact Michelle Eagle at Family Ties through Facebook Messenger or by calling 418-752-7265.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



The last perfect day of summer

We all know that the calendar says the last “official” day of summer is September 20, but the calendar does not always get it right. Nobody knows when the last perfect day of summer is going to happen. It’s about how the day feels. You know when it still feels like summer. You can sense it.

If we did know, we would plan ahead to fully enjoy that last perfect day of summer. We might even skip work for the day and walk along the beach, or you might sit on a comfy outdoor chair with a cool drink, simply observing the world around us.

One morning this September, you will wake up and discover that the air has changed. There is a chill coming through the screen door. You may even think about starting a small wood fire in the stove. The trees have begun their descent into autumn. The apples are falling off the trees, and the wasps are loving it. Which trees will be bare first?

And then, a big, but welcome surprise. The sun begins to warm the day and you can take off your sweater. Enjoy the gift of one more summer day. Forget about the chores because it may be a long time before you experience this weather again!

Get outside. Clean up the garden. Walk. Sit and bask in the sun. Enjoy the warmth. Eat lunch at a canteen. Have ice cream.

Don’t waste this day. The last perfect day of summer may offer you a last perfect summer evening. Kids are still playing outside. The beautiful smell of a barbecue fills the air.

When the sun sets, the temperature falls quickly. The summer visitors have all returned home, so the roads are quieter.

It provides a feeling of peace. A feeling that despite the huge problems in the world right now, here in our beautiful Gaspé, all is well.

This last summer evening might provide the perfect opportunity to reminisce about the summer gone by. There are stories to share and experiences to think back on.

As the evening overtakes the day, it cools down. You might grab a sweater or wrap a blanket around yourself. Squeeze as much enjoyment out of the day as you can. September is a month of changes. You just may find that tomorrow gives you another perfect summer day.

But if this was the last perfect day of summer, you did not ignore it. You recognized it. You enjoyed it. You appreciated it. It was perfect.



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Demographics top Gaspé prefects' election priorities

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Demographics, a regional priority for the past 15 years, remain at the centre of the Gaspé Prefects' Table's platform ahead of the October 5 election.

The prefects met with mayors from across the region to develop the platform.

“What emerged as the top priority—and this comes as no surprise—is the challenge we've faced in the region for the past fifteen years: sustainable population growth. We need to attract people to come live here, address our labour shortages, and breathe new life into our communities,” says the group's president, Mathieu Lapointe.

Achieving that goal will require additional child-care spaces and workers, as well as more housing throughout the peninsula.

Despite the construction of more than 400 housing units in the region over the past two years, additional housing will be needed.

“The good news is that the



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Mathieu Lapointe, president of the Gaspé Prefects' Roundtable.

region is attractive. Affordable housing will be built as part of the Société de développement de l'Est project. We need to keep up this momentum,” says Mr. Lapointe.

Attracting new residents will also help address workforce shortages created as more workers retire.

“We have an aging popula-

tion. Faced with this challenge, we need young families and people to fill our jobs.”

Other priorities identified by the roundtable include the decentralization of powers, infrastructure development with increased funding, maintaining local services, funding for public transit and opening up the region to allow electricity to be exported to major urban centres.

The railway is also among the roundtable's priorities, following statements from the Coalition for the Return of Passenger Rail to the Gaspé Peninsula and VIA Rail calling for a firm commitment to complete the rail line to Gaspé.

“It has always been a priority to complete the rail line to Gaspé as quickly as possible. There is no set date, but we want clear commitments. Major infrastructure projects are under construction. We need to connect it all. This is essential for our region's economic development and for enabling VIA Rail to establish a sustainable presence in the area,” says Mr. Lapointe.

Fire-damaged section of L'École Bourg to be rebuilt

NELSON SERGERIE

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The section of the L'École Bourg in Carleton-sur-Mer that was devastated by an electrical fire on January 26 will be completely demolished and rebuilt.

The decision, based on recommendations from experts, means approximately 175 students will spend the entire school year at Saint-Paul School in Maria, where they have been attending classes since January.

“The central section will be completely demolished. That was the affected section. It will be demolished and completely rebuilt. Experts conducted analyses, and this was their recommendation,” says Sandra Nicol, executive director of the school service centre.

Several steps have been taken since the fire, including securing the building, completing an inventory and removing asbestos.

Plans and specifications were submitted to the Ministry of Education, which authorized the school service centre to issue calls for tenders for the work. The results are expected around mid-October, with con-



Photo: CHNC

struction to begin afterward. The work is expected to be completed by the summer of 2027.

“In the adjacent sections, the paint and floors have already been redone. We're taking this opportunity to make improvements such as adding an elevator for universal access and mechanical ventilation,” explains Ms. Nicol.

While she did not provide a specific figure for the reconstruction, the cost is expected to easily exceed \$1 million.

Students attending school in Maria will follow the same schedule as they did during the second half of the last school year. There will be no midday transportation, and students will eat lunch at school.

The partnership with the municipality of Maria has also

been renewed to provide access to facilities for physical education and cultural activities.

An electrical problem with a floor-cleaning machine caused the January fire.

The January fire led to a review of emergency response protocols. “We're looking into all of this. Here, it worked out well because we had a school with space nearby. We were able to reorganize. It's not the same everywhere in our district. Our district spans 300 kilometres. We need to review the plan for each specific situation,” says Ms. Nicol.

She notes that an unforeseen event in a community such as Matapédia would be much more difficult to manage, particularly when it comes to finding another location for students.

Voter information to be mailed in French only

Gilles Gagné

GASPÉ – On September 2, Vision Gaspé-Percé Now issued a notice informing residents that Élections Québec will mail voter information in French only for the first time in a provincial election.

However, people who are eligible to receive instruction in English in Quebec can request election information and certain documents in English from Élections Québec.

To request documents in English, eligible voters must call 1-888-353-2846 and indicate that they are eligible to receive services in English. The provincial election is set for October 5.

Douglstown resident Nancy Wright-Clapson indicated on social media that she called Élections Québec and will receive her election notification by mail in English. She added that callers can also take part in a short survey afterward if they wish.

PQ leads in Gaspé Peninsula

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Poll aggregator Québec125.com shows the Parti Québécois (PQ) with a strong lead in voting intentions in the Gaspé Peninsula, according to the most recent projections posted online on August 31.

The PQ's lead remains solid, even though the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) appears to have regained some momentum during the first few days of the campaign.

In Bonaventure, PQ candidate Pier-Luc Bujold is in first place with 48% support, with a margin of eight percentage points.

Incumbent Member of the National Assembly (MNA) and CAQ candidate Catherine Blouin is projected to receive 23%, with a margin of six percentage points.

The Liberals are projected to receive 17%, while Québec Solidaire and the Conservatives are each projected to receive 6%.

In Gaspé, PQ candidate Méganne Perry Mélançon is projected at 49%, with a margin of eight percentage points, compared with 24% for incumbent CAQ candidate Stéphane Sainte-Croix, with a margin of seven percentage points.

The Liberals are projected at 15%, while Québec solidaire and the Conservatives are each at 6%.

Michel Marin makes second run for Liberals in Gaspé

Nelson Sergerie

SAINTE-ANNE-DES-MONTS – After being defeated in the 2022 election, Liberal candidate Michel Marin will try his luck again in 2026, following in the footsteps of Christian Cyr in Bonaventure.

There is a reason his candidacy was announced relatively late in the campaign. “Right up until the last few days, I was serving as regional coordinator for Eastern and Northern Quebec (for the Liberal Party). I devoted all the time I had to fulfilling the duties of that position. It's no surprise that I'm running today,” says Mr. Marin. The “today” he refers to was August 29, two days after the official start of the campaign.

In the 2022 election, Mr. Marin received 6.89% of the vote, while incumbent Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Stéphane Sainte-Croix of the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ), who is seeking re-election in 2026, won with 41.4%.

Mr. Marin finished fourth, behind Parti Québécois (PQ) candidate Méganne Perry Mélançon and Québec solidaire candidate Yv Bonnier Viger.

“The circumstances are completely different. In 2022, we saw a wave that was largely driven by the government's handling of the pandemic. People had a lot of sympathy for the incumbent government. In 2026, it's completely different. This government has lost a great deal of its credibility for all sorts of reasons that I'll discuss later, and the U.S. and global context is much more volatile compared to 2022,” says Mr. Marin.

The economy will be the main focus of his campaign. He counts his “experience over the past few years in regions like Ungava, Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean, and the North Shore—regions like the Gaspé Peninsula, which are rich in natural resources and offer all kinds of potential for energy, recreation and tourism. Elsewhere, there's significantly more wealth generated by natural resources. That's where I'll focus the bulk of my campaign promises. The Gaspé Peninsula deserves better. The people of the Gaspé deserve a higher standard of living and a stronger, more diversified economy,” says Mr. Marin.

Announcements



Obituary



WATSON: Helen Doddridge

Born on October 31, 1925, Helen Watson of New Richmond West, died peacefully on August 22, 2026, in her 101st year. She was predeceased by all members of her immediate family: her father Hugh Cameron (Cam) Watson, mother Wanda Jane McLellan, and sister Lorraine. She spent the last nine years of her life at the CHSLD in Maria, Quebec. We are very grateful for the compassionate care she received there.

Helen completed her high school education at Quebec Protestant High School in 1942 and had a long career as a teacher, obtaining her degree at McGill University. She took additional courses from the University of New Brunswick and taught in that province for most of her life. She retired from Moncton High School in 1985 and returned to the family home in New Richmond West.

Having developed a great interest in genealogy, Helen completed at least two lengthy works: "Descendants of Samuel Watson of New Richmond, Quebec" as well as "James and Agnes Willett's Descendants."

An adventurous traveller, Helen spent her early retirement years on boats, planes and

trains, criss-crossing the world from Antarctica to Norway and throughout Asia, Melanesia, Australia and New Zealand. She loved Africa and visited a good number of the countries from South Africa and Somalia to Botswana, Nigeria, and Swaziland. She cruised the world's great rivers: the Nile, the Amazon, and the Danube. She visited South America twice, going to Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Her favourite voyage was to the Holy Land with friends and neighbours in 1988.

Helen was a member of the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church in New Richmond.

A graveside ceremony will be held at the churchyard on Thursday, September 24, at 1:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Fondation sant  Baie des Chaleurs would be appreciated.

"To the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure." J.K. Rowling



In Memory

FLOWERS: Elmer Clyde

In memory of a precious father who passed away September 5, 2018. Dad, the day I was born I filled your heart; the day you died you emptied mine.

Dad's life is a beautiful memory,
His death is a silent grief.
He sleeps in God's beautiful garden,
In sunshine of perfect peace.
We miss him oh how much,
But realize God knew best.
He let us have him many years,
Then gently bade him rest.
Our Dad was the best,
He is our guardian angel.
He may be gone from our sight,
But he is always in our hearts.

With all our love, daughter Carol and son-in-law Richard.

FLOWERS: Lloyd Elmer

In loving memory of a dear brother who left us suddenly September 5, 1979, as the result of a car accident.

Forty-seven years ago you went away,
So many times we've lived that day.
It's been forty-seven years of hurt and grief,
Our hearts are still in disbelief.
Time heals all wounds is so untrue,
Nothing is harder than life without you.
There is a bridge of memories,
From here to Heaven above.
It keeps you very close to us,
It's called the bridge of love.
You gave us so many things,
Gifts both great and small.
But most of all you gave us love,
The greatest gift of all.
You had a nature we could not help loving,
And a heart that was purer than gold.
And to those who knew you and loved you,
Your memory will never grow old.

Lovingly remembered by sister Carol and brother-in-law Richard.

The New Carlisle Funeral Association extends sympathy to the family of Yvette McInnis Smith.

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HOPE TOWN: Hope Town Sports Club

September 23: Hope Town will be hosting their annual Terry Fox walk at the Hope Town Community Centre. Registration starts at 12:30 p.m., and the walk will begin at 1 p.m. Please join us to raise funds for this worthy cause.

NEW CARLISLE: St. Andrews Anglican Church

September 26: A fall yard sale will be held at the old New Carlisle High School from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Donations of quality items are being accepted, including kitchenware, tools, furni-

ture, art, clothing, toys, etc. To arrange pickup, contact Jean at 581-233-2234. Proceeds will go toward a new heating system.

NEW CARLISLE: New Carlisle Legion

October 3: A harvest supper will take place in the basement of St. Andrew's Anglican Church from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Cost: adults, \$15; children, \$10.

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, September 13
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, September 20
10 a.m. Service

Takeout is available. Delivery is available between 3 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Reserve your delivery by contacting Carol Flowers Smollett at 905-987-3294. All proceeds will go toward the New Carlisle Legion.

NEW CARLISLE: Bible Chapel Meetings

Sundays: Breaking of Bread for believers - 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN
Sunday, September 13
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, September 20
10 a.m. Service

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

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES Book Room
Wednesdays: The book

PARISH OF GASP 

Sunday, September 13
St. James - Wakeham
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, September 20
St. Philip - St. John - Sandy Beach
7 p.m. Evensong

room will be open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.



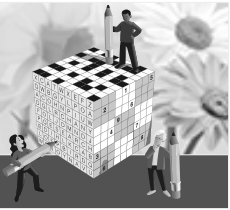
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, September 13
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, September 20
New Carlisle
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

On the Lighter Side...
 POEMS CREATIVE WRITING PUZZLES WHAT'S THIS CHALLENGE SPEC GETS AROUND RECIPES

RECIPES



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

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Local Business Directory

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