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Pamela Rooney takes another step toward U.S. country music career

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPE – The awards continue to pile up for country music singer Pamela Rooney. The Douglastown native has added another honour to her collection following her latest appearance at the Texas Sounds Festival.

The singer received the Lifetime International Laureate and Keeper of the Texas Sounds Spirit Award on October 4 in Marshall, Texas.

"It's the biggest award you can win. It's like a combination of all the awards. I'm still crying! It's something else. You leave Quebec, end up in Texas, and win the Lifetime Achievement Award. It's a huge deal," says the artist, who has participated in the festival for the past six years.

A lifetime achievement award recognizes an individual's body of work and contributions throughout their career rather than a single accomplishment.



Photo: From Pamela Rooney's Facebook page

Pamela Rooney poses with her latest award, presented October 4 at the Texas Sounds Festival in Marshall, Texas.

Ms. Rooney will also become a member of the festival's organization and take on a mentoring role, helping other artists navigate the event.

"I'll be here every year to help the artists understand how the festival works, and I'll be the headliner. I'll be the queen of Texas Sounds! "

Major projects ahead

Pamela Rooney has been represented in the United States for nearly a year by manager Matthew Davis Lundgren, who has connections to country music legend George Strait.

"In two weeks, I'll be going to Fort Worth, Texas. I'm going to sing—it's really sad—but my new producer, who works with George Strait's band, had fallen ill. His wife asked me if I could sing at his funeral with members of George Strait's band and Sunny Sweeney," she says.

Looking ahead to 2027, Ms. Rooney plans to record with members of George Strait's band and embark on an extensive tour, with 17 performances already scheduled.

Grand Ole Opry ambitions

The Gaspé-born singer also hopes to one day perform at the Grand Ole Opry, one of country music's most prestigious venues, located in Nashville, Tennessee.

"I was nominated by 101,000 people. I didn't win an award, but it was an experience. The Grand Ole Opry—I hope that's coming up next. It's not easy to get in, but I'm not far off. "

Her powerful voice has drawn comparisons to country music stars Patty Loveless, Reba McEntire and Sara Evans.

"Reba is an idol. Reba is huge in Texas. When they say

Cont'd on Page 5

Coalition welcomes appointment of VIA Rail president

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CARLETON-SUR-MER – The Coalition for the Return of Passenger Rail Service is pleased with the October 7 appointment of Mathieu Paquette as president and chief executive officer of VIA Rail.

Mr. Paquette had been serving in an interim capacity since February and has been deeply involved in efforts to restore passenger rail service back to the Gaspé Peninsula.

"This is excellent news. We are very happy. We have been working with VIA Rail on the return of passenger rail service. It is news we had really hoped for," explains coalition spokesperson Micheline Saint-Onge, highlighting her commitment to restoring service to the region.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Mathieu Paquette during his visit to Gaspé on May 6.

"It is very important to work on a file with people who collaborate and listen to what we have to say," Ms. Saint-Onge adds.

Discussions between the coalition and VIA Rail are ongoing as preparations continue for the return of service.

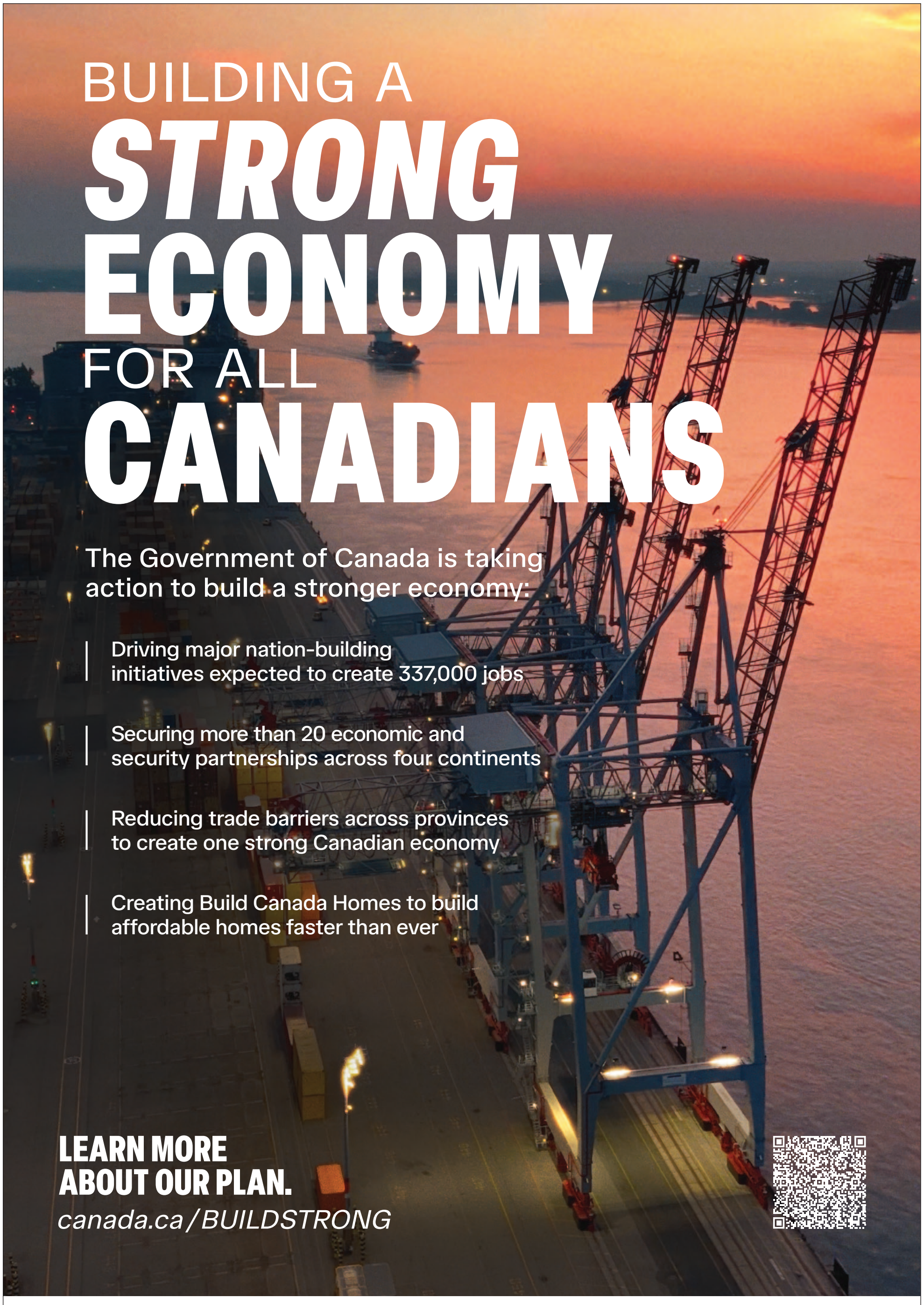
"They are working on the operational logistics for a return no later than February 2028. I spoke with a project lead, and they are exploring every possibility to make it happen as quickly as possible. Hopefully, (it will be) before the spring of 2028," the spokesperson hopes.

In the meantime, discussions are taking place with various partners on the ground, and information is being exchanged between the parties. At VIA Rail's annual public meeting in August, Mr. Paquette made his position clear. "For us, the question is not whether service will resume, but rather how, when, and under what conditions," stated the chief executive officer right from the start, reiterating his belief that a full restoration of service—extending all the way to Gaspé—remains the only solution.

"To achieve this, it is essential to secure a clear commitment and a timeline for the rehabilitation of the section between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, as this is a decisive factor in ensuring the service's long-term viability," urged Mr. Paquette, whose appointment has been confirmed for a five-year term.

The Quebec government had announced $871.8 million in 2023 for the entire Matapedia-Gaspé line. However, higher-than-expected costs prompted the government to return the project to the planning phase in March 2025.

In March 2026, the government announced a sum of 138.6 million for the next two years. However, details on how the funding will be allocated over that period remain unknown.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Port Daniel plant to supply Saint Marys Cement's new terminal in Baltimore

GILLES **GAGNÉ**

PORT DANIEL – Saint Marys Cement is currently investing $60 million in American currency to build a reception terminal in Baltimore, Maryland. The facility will be supplied by the company's Port Daniel plant.

Saint Marys Cement currently operates four terminals that are also supplied by the Port Daniel plant. They are located in Boston, New York, Sainte-Catherine, on Montreal's South Shore, and Oshawa, Ontario.

"By February, the Baltimore facilities will include a dome with a 50,000-tonne capacity, and a silo capable of holding 10,000 tonnes will be ready in a few days," explains Philippe Marceau, director general of the Port Daniel facility.

The first cement carrier will depart from Port-Daniel for Baltimore during the first half of October.

In nine-and-a-half years of operations, the Port Daniel cement plant has never reached its full production potential. The plant was supposed to produce between two million and 2.2 million tonnes of cement when the project was announced in January 2014, and that production was maintained until production started in the spring of 2017.

"The plant has already produced over 1.8 million tonnes in 2023 and 2024, (but) 2026 was projected to be a lower-output year pending the opening of the Baltimore terminal," points out Mr. Marceau, who has been managing the plant since January 2025.

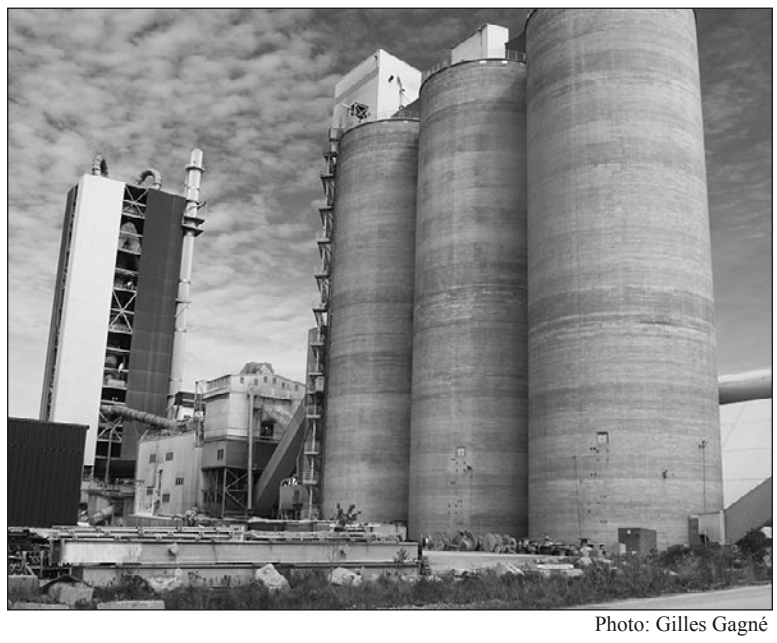


Photo: Gilles Gagné

The Port Daniel plant will soon serve another part of the American market, the Baltimore-Washington area.

A ramp-up process followed the 2017 opening of the plant, and the former owner, McInnis Cement, experienced various environmental problems in 2020 and 2021.

McInnis Cement was acquired in April 2021 by Votorantim Cimentos, a Brazilian company that already owned Saint Marys Cement, whose plants were essentially located in Ontario and on the American side of the Great Lakes. The Ontario plants are located in Bowmanville and Saint Marys.

When asked to explain why the Port Daniel plant never reached its potential of two million tonnes, Philippe Marceau admits that the question is relevant.

"Several factors can affect annual production: cements with higher limestone content require finer grinding. This reduces the mills' production rate, accounting for the difference between two million and 2.2 million tonnes per annum. Weather also plays a major role. The extreme cold in January and February negatively impacts production, though this is also a quiet period for shipments. Unplanned breakdowns can also negatively affect production; one of our cement mills was shut down for six days in August due to a motor failure," he explains.

He adds that the company's recent investments in Baltimore should help close the gap between the lower production projected for 2026 and what should follow in the coming months.

"That is why we are building a terminal in Baltimore and adding sales outlets. We want to serve the Washington market from Baltimore," notes Mr. Marceau.

"We are on track to reach maximum production capacity by 2030," he stresses.

The math behind greenhouse effect gas reduction

On September 17, Philippe Marceau and two members of his local team announced, on behalf of Saint Marys Cement, an $80 million expansion in Port Daniel to build a facility that will enable the local plant to burn wood residues and demolition debris in order to reduce its use of petroleum coke in its kilns by by 20%. The facility will dry those alternative fuels in the new building.

At full capacity, without alternative fuels, the Port Daniel plant needs 200,000 tonnes of petroleum coke to produce two million tonnes of cement.

Based on maximum production levels, 40,000 tonnes of petroleum coke would need to be eliminated to achieve a 20% reduction in the 518,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated by clinker production.

"It will take 80,000 tonnes of waste materials to replace 40,000 tonnes of petroleum coke. The combustion efficiency ratio is two-to-one," explains Philippe Marceau.

Saint Marys Cement is reasonably confident that the Quebec Ministry of the Environment will approve this GHG reduction project, based on the hypothesis that the alternative fuels the company wants to burn will generate less pollution than petroleum coke.

The initiative will create four or five additional jobs. The plant and limestone quarry currently employ 172 people.

"The government is pushing us in this direction," notes Katie McInnes, environmental monitoring manager at Saint Marys Cement.

In the long term, the company plans to reduce GHG emissions from the Port Daniel clinker production stage by 70%. Many cement plants in Europe have already achieved this level.

Saint Marys Cement generates a total of approximately two million tonnes of GHG emissions annually when all production stages are included. The company is considered one of the largest GHG emitters in Quebec—sometimes ranking first.

"We have those results because our plant has the size of two other cement plants. On a per-tonne basis, we have one of the lowest ratios of greenhouse gas emissions per tonne of cement produced in North America," remarks Philippe Marceau.

Meanwhile, he is relieved that the United States recently lifted tariffs on cement, which had been imposed amid the trade dispute with Canada.

"That's great news. We're pleased, but we just hope the negotiations lead to a positive outcome for everyone. We ship 60% of our production to the United States," he says.

$1.6 Million in tax credits for Logements HAN

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CHANDLER – Chandler municipal Council has agreed to grant Logements HAN a tax credit totalling $1.6 million over 32 years for its housing development currently under construction in the municipality.

This financial support was necessary to get the project off the ground. "It was conditional on their financing. It amounts to $50,000 now, but it will increase in the medium term. We're not losing any money," says Mayor Gilles Daraîche.

A cap of $50,000 per year was adopted through a borrowing bylaw at the municipal council meeting on October 6.

"If we exceed that, the municipality will collect the excess funds," he continues.

The mayor notes that this initiative will add 48 housing units on Rue des Micmacs, comprising six buildings of eight apartments each. These units are designed to accommodate people with physical or intellectual disabilities, as well as autism spectrum disorder.

The mayor notes that despite this addition and others currently under construction by private developers, the need is estimated at about 100 additional units, some of which have to be affordable.

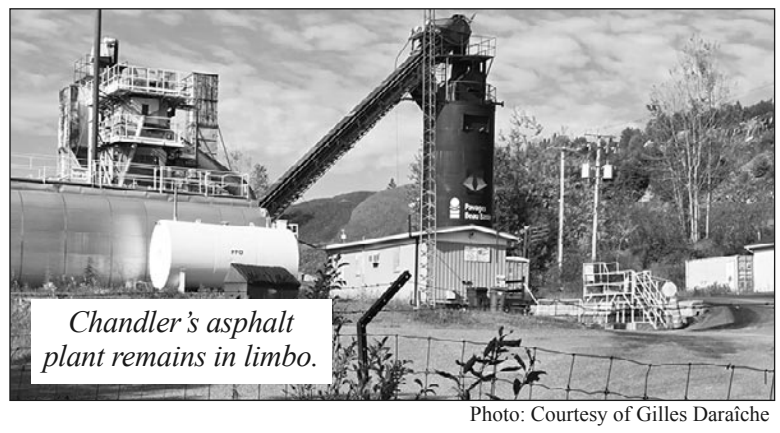
The mayor has even made this a top priority following the election of Parti Québécois Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Pier-Luc Bujold in the October 5 election. Mr. Daraîche had already raised this issue during a meeting with Mr. Bujold during the election campaign.

Paving cost

Chandler is questioning whether it is paying too much for asphalt paving compared to other municipalities in the region. The mayor wants to know whether the municipality is paying a fair price, as he believes costs are higher because of a lack of competition in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"I'd like to know how much a kilometre of road costs in Gaspé and a kilometre of road in New Richmond, and how much it costs in Chandler. I'm pretty sure it costs more in Chandler than elsewhere, and that's not normal," says Mr. Daraîche.

There used to be an asphalt plant in Chandler, but it was neglected and is no longer in use. He argues that when road-



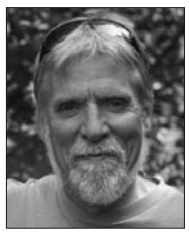
Chandler's asphalt plant remains in limbo.

Photo: Courtesy of Gilles Daraîche

work is done, a temporary asphalt plant must be installed nearby, which drives up costs. If prices were more reasonable, the municipality could carry out more work.

Former Bonaventure MNA Sylvain Roy had suggested that municipalities and the Quebec ministry of Transportation (MTQ) join forces to issue calls for tenders while he was serving in the National Assembly in the mid-2010s.

"Those who represent us should sit down with us and develop a strategy. When there's no competition, one can put whatever price he wants on the invoice, and you have to pay it. Ultimately, it's the public that ends up paying. We need to do something about this," says the mayor, without ever mentioning Eurovia, which has held a monopoly on asphalt in the Gaspé Peninsula for several years.



Gilles **Gagné**

Commentary

The obligation of getting along

Although there is no such thing as a province-wide concerted vote to elect a minority government, Quebecers nevertheless unconsciously sent a message to their new government: You will have to get along for a while.

Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon's Parti Québécois won 59 seats, five short of a majority government. Charles Milliard's Liberal Party won in 40 seats, compared with 19 for Éric Duhaime Conservative Party and nine for Ruba Ghazal's Québec solidaire. It was a tight race in many ridings. Survey aggregator Philippe J. Fournier, the founder of Québec125 and Canada338, calculated that just over 2,000 additional votes in five specific ridings, the Parti québécois (PQ) would have formed a majority government, with just 28.03 percent of the popular vote!

It is also true that the PQ would have won fewer ridings, just 54, if the party had received a few thousand fewer votes in some other constituencies. It is worth noting the relatively strong performance of Quebec's Liberal Party, which has made something of a comeback with 40 seats. That is almost double its results in the 2022 election. To complement its strong base in the West Island, where 20 ridings traditionally vote liberal, the party won constituencies in Laval, on the South Shore, also known as the Montérégie region, and north of Laval, in the Laurentides.

However, voters from Abitibi-Témiscamingue, some parts of Mauricie, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, the North Shore, the Lower Saint Lawrence, the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands snubbed the Liberal Party, and decisively. Residents of those regions have not forgotten the 2014-2018 term of former premier Philippe Couillard, who made heavy budgetary cuts in rural areas and transferred that money to Montreal and Quebec City.

Charles Milliard spent most of the summer touring some rural regions in an effort to rebuild some links, but it will take much more, as trust must be rebuilt almost from scratch in some areas.

The importance of a regional base

In 2022, the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) won 90 seats. Four years later, it was wiped off the electoral map. There are many reasons for this. The 2022 results reflected the party's relatively strong performance during the 30 months following the start of the pandemic in March 2020, along with weak leadership among the opposition parties.

This time, the CAQ entered the electoral campaign with a new leader, Christine Fréchette, but a poor track record over the previous four years in health care, education, immigration, public investment decisions and transportation, to name a few areas.

Christine Fréchette tried to distance herself from the CAQ by removing all references to its original name. Instead, the campaign was branded Équipe Christine Fréchette. This gives an indication on how little public support the party had at the beginning of the campaign.

Historically, the CAQ first appeared on ballots in 2012 and won 19 seats, before adding three seats in 2014 and securing a majority with 74 seats in 2018. However, in all those years, including its landslide victory in 2022, the party failed to develop a potent regional base anywhere in Quebec. Such a base might have emerged in the Lévis and Beauce area, but the go-no-go Third link saga prevented that from happening.

Developed over 58 years, the Parti québécois regional base saved its existence. We could in fact say "regional bases" in this case, as the PQ, despite almost being wiped out of the electoral map in 2022, was able to regain power, thanks mainly to its support in Eastern Quebec, the North Shore and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. The three seats won in 2022 were bolstered by four by-election victories and by the addition of a whopping 52 additional constituencies on October 5.

The CAQ also failed to establish a clear identity with which a fairly large number of voters could identify. Former leader François Legault opted for "autonomy," in an effort to secure greater powers for Quebec from Ottawa, but failed to achieve that goal. As a result, voters struggled to identify a distinctive political identity for the CAQ.

Smaller parties could play a big role

For a minority government to survive, it must reach agreements with other parties. Medium-term alliances, such as the Liberal-NDP agreement that supported Justin Trudeau's federal government between 2021 and 2025, are less likely in Quebec right now for strategic reasons.

There is little likelihood that the Parti québécois will secure legislative support from the Liberal Party, given that the former is considering a referendum on sovereignty while the latter presents itself as a defender of federalism.

Agreements may be more likely between the PQ and the Conservative Party on issues such as budget cuts and reductions in the number of civil servants. At the other end of the political spectrum, if the PQ wants to improve transportation services or recruit more daycare workers, it may find common ground more easily with Québec solidaire.

How long will this government last?

Minority governments at the provincial level rarely last longer than 18 to 24 months. In 2007-2008, Liberal leader Jean Charest's second term lasted 19 months. Between 2012 and 2014, PQ leader Pauline Marois's government lasted just 18 months.

Will it be different this time around? It is difficult to say. The political context has changed, with four parties represented in the National Assembly. Looking at the circumstances that triggered the 2008 and 2014 elections, one could conclude that a party blamed for forcing an unnecessary election may pay a heavy political price.

Just ask Pauline Marois or Mario Dumont. In 2008, Mr. Dumont, then leader of the Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ), made a series of mistakes, including targeting social assistance cuts and denouncing unions. His party lost 34 of the 41 seats it had won in March 2007.

Quebecers, first impressed by the ADQ results in 2007, were no longer in tune with Mario Dumont. The 2008 recession convinced them to place their trust in Jean Charest for another term, given his experience.

In March 2014, Pauline Marois failed to submit the budget prepared by Finance minister Nicolas Marceau to the National Assembly for approval and decided to launch an electoral campaign based on the secular charter.

The charter had the support of 70% of Quebecers. However, only 6% considered it an important issue.

That apparent misreading of voter's priorities, combined with a pro-sovereignty declaration during the campaign by one of her candidates, Pierre-Karl Péladeau, helped propel Phillipe Couillard to a majority government. This happened despite Quebecers' negative perception of the Liberal Party, which had been tarnished by revelations of political financing scandals examined by the Charbonneau commission.

In short, Quebecers show little patience for parties that trigger what voters perceive as unnecessary elections. Both the governing party and the opposition parties would be wise to keep that in mind.



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208-B Gérard D. Levesque
New Carlisle, Que.
G0C 1Z0

Tel: **418-752-5400**
specs@globetrotter.net
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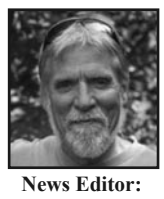
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Alexis Deschênes observes fisheries officers in action

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CARLETON-SUR-MER – After denouncing the inaction of fisheries officers before the House of Commons Fisheries Committee in Ottawa, enforcement operations have taken place this fall, particularly in the lobster sector in the Maritimes—a development that the Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj views with satisfaction.

"We shed light on a glaring problem in the enforcement of the Fisheries Act: fisheries officers who were being held back by their own superiors, who ultimately told them not to do their jobs," recalls Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Deschênes.

Numerous accounts from both Western Canada and the Maritimes have raised the government's awareness of the issue.

The MP questioned the fisheries minister. "I think we're seeing some progress. We've seen additional funding to strengthen the work of fisheries officers. We have other proposals that will soon be publicly submitted by the Fisheries Committee to strengthen enforcement of the law," the MP continues.

"The protection of the resource is at stake," Mr. Deschênes emphasizes.

On the Fisheries and Oceans Canada website, various enforcement actions carried out since August 14 in the Maritimes are listed, beginning with the seizure of lobster traps in St. Marys Bay, Nova Scotia.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Alexis Deschênes.

In September, fisheries officers across the Maritimes conducted high-visibility operations to disrupt the illegal purchase and sale of lobster caught for food, social and ceremonial purposes, notably by conducting inspections at storage and processing facilities.

For example, on September 9, fisheries officers seized approximately 3,000 pounds of New Brunswick lobster at a fish processing plant on the Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec, during an inspection.

Two people were arrested in connection with the seizure for alleged violations of the Fisheries Act. All the lobsters were released alive.

However, the Gaspé plant has not been identified.

On September 10, surveillance activities led fisheries officers to conduct a roadside stop and arrest an individual near Lake George, New Brunswick.

The officers seized the van the individual was driving, as well as 3,186 pounds of lobster. More than 2,500 lobsters were released back into the water alive.

On September 12, fisheries officers arrested an individual in Moncton, New Brunswick, following a surveillance operation that led them to a fish buyer.

During the inspection, fisheries officers seized 5,800 pounds of lobster, including 153 lobsters tagged in St. Marys Bay, Nova Scotia, as part of an ongoing tagging program for lobsters caught for food, social and ceremonial purposes. More than 4,000 lobsters were released alive. Investigations are ongoing.

PAMELA ROONEY:

Cont'd from cover

I'll be the next Reba McEntire, it really touches me. I sing like them. People ask me if I'm from Texas, and I tell them, 'I'm from Quebec, and I'm proud of it,'" she says.

Her manager has also encouraged her to embrace the comparisons to Reba McEntire, describing her voice as powerful and strong.

"Why do you think I sing like Reba McEntire? He tells me I have a powerful, strong voice. You get along well with everyone. I'm just following in everyone's footsteps. That's why they compare me to Reba. But it's an honour," continues Pamela Rooney, who dreams of meeting Ms. McEntire and perhaps one day sharing the stage with her.

New music and touring plans

A new album is in development, while a French-language single titled "La fille du Québec" is expected to be released in November. The song will feature a traditional country sound.

"After that, we'll work on a full-length album. I'll stick with traditional country. I want to see if my voice can handle other styles alongside the traditional New Country of the 1990s. It'll be a surprise!"

Her upcoming performances will take her across Quebec and Ontario, as well as back to Texas. She also hopes to bring some of her American musical colleagues to Quebec.

"We're also working on putting together a tour in Quebec with my artists from Texas," says the Douglastown native.

Ms. Rooney continues to enjoy success in Ireland, where her family has roots. Her songs regularly reach the top five on Irish music charts.

She also hopes to expand her audience in Western Canada and eventually earn recognition at the Canadian Country Music Awards.

"Next year, I want to try for the CCMA and the Grand Ole Opry."

With her career increasingly focused on the American country music scene, Ms. Rooney is also considering establishing a second home in Texas.

"I'll be a snowbird, and in the summer, I'll perform in Quebec and across Canada. I'll be closer to my producers in Texas and Nashville."

Police report

SQ still seeking clues in death of Martin Dupuis

Sûreté du Québec (SQ) communication officer Béatrice Dorsainville says police are continuing their investigation into the July incident that led to the death of Martin Dupuis, a 56-year-old Gaspé motorcyclist found near the Saint-Majorique bridge.

Mr. Dupuis was found lying on the side of Boulevard de Pointe-Navarre, near his motorcycle, on July 3. He died in hospital several days later. "We are still looking for witnesses, but there is no development at this stage," says officer Dorsainville. Meanwhile, the reward for information that could lead to the identification of the driver believed to have struck Mr. Dupuis has been increased, according to CHNC. His family and friends are now offering $5,000 to anyone who can provide information that could help advance the investigation. They believe someone must have witnessed the incident, noting that people reportedly saw Mr. Dupuis in distress afterward. On July 7, the SQ issued its first public appeal for information that could help advance the investigation.

Cap-Chat man arrested following October 2 shooting

Sûreté du Québec officers arrested a suspect early on October 8 in connection with a shooting that seriously injured a man in his 30s in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts on October 2. The incident occurred in the 4th Street West area of Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

"The 29-year-old suspect from Cap-Chat was arrested following a chase. He was arrested around 1:30 a.m. and appeared in court later that day," specifies Sûreté du Québec communication officer Béatrice Dorsainville. Samuel Barriault St-Pierre appeared at the Sainte-Anne-des-Monts courthouse. Both the accused and the victim are known to police, according to Ms. Dorsainville.

The shooting occurred around 1:30 a.m. on October 2, while the victim was outside a residence on 4th Street West. He suffered serious but non-life-threatening injuries. According to the SQ, the shooting appears to have been a targeted attack. The accused has also been investigated in connection with previous violent incidents. He remains in custody pending his bail hearing. The SQ's major crimes unit and a crime scene technician attended the scene following the shooting. Police have not disclosed a possible motive.

Gaspé man charged with drug trafficking could lose his home

A 45-year-old Gaspé man, Frédéric Denis-Collin, who faces drug trafficking and other charges, could lose his home as the prosecution seeks to have the property forfeited. He faces charges of possession of stolen property valued at less than $5,000, possession of various substances for the purpose of trafficking, possession of a prohibited weapon and impaired driving. The defence has confirmed that an agreement has been reached with the criminal prosecutor's office to resolve the case, with a joint sentencing recommendation expected to be presented on October 22. However, discussions continue over the fate of his home, which authorities seized during an April 2 search as alleged proceeds of crime. Crown prosecutor Isabelle Gavioli told CHNC in writing that forfeiture requires a sufficiently direct connection between the property and the commission of drug-related offences. She maintains that such a connection exists in this case.

According to Ms. Gavioli, the residence was used, facilitated or was potentially intended to be used in the commission of the alleged offences, prompting the prosecution to seek its forfeiture. The accused remains in custody.

Leo Joe Bernard to return to court October 30

Leo Joe Bernard, 36, of Listuguj, is scheduled to return to court on October 30, when a possible resolution of his drug-related charges may be discussed. He was arrested on September 25 after allegedly offering to sell controlled substances to undercover police officers. Police subsequently seized a quantity of controlled substances. The following day, he was charged with possession of controlled substances, possession for the purpose of trafficking, trafficking, possession of break-in instruments, possession of a weapon contrary to a prohibition order, carrying a concealed weapon, unauthorized possession of a firearm, possession of a firearm knowing its possession was unauthorized and breach of an undertaking. He has remained in custody since his arrest after the criminal prosecutor opposed his release. He appeared in court in Carleton on September 28, October 1 and October 2.

Following his September 28 appearance, Mr. Bernard sought legal representation and subsequently retained lawyer Jessica Allard, who has appeared on his behalf. "The cases are returning on October 30 for orientation/disclosure and a pro forma bail hearing. The matter remains at the same stage as the initial appearance. The defence informed the Court that a resolution might be possible," specifies criminal prosecutor Florence Frappier Routhier.

2026 Herring: Better catches in a season that was barely longer

GILLES **GAGNÉ**

SHIGAWAKE – The quota for the so-called "autumn" herring fishery was met relatively quickly in 2026; despite a 54.4% year-over-year increase in the allocation, the limit was reached within a season of similar duration.

Fisherman Jeffrey Vautier, from Shigawake, notes that he caught approximately 150,000 pounds of herring over 17 fishing days between August 16 and September 8, compared to 100,000 pounds in 2025. Fishermen are restricted to five days of fishing per week.

"Compared to the last three or four years, it's very good. Compared to 15 years ago, it's not good," he summarizes.

He fished at only two of the three prime locations favoured by herring fishermen in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence during the season.

"I fished off Miscou and at what we call Chandler, more precisely Pabos. We didn't go to Cap-d'Espoir. During the first week, we fished off Miscou, 'inshore,' in 11 fathoms, or 66 feet, not far out. Then, in the final weeks, we fished at 17 fathoms, or 102 feet, when we went to Miscou. The fish stay where the temperature suits them. We're finding that the temperature herring prefer is found in deeper water," explains Jeffrey Vautier.



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Jeffrey Vautier points out that herring catches were good in 2026, considering the average of the last years.

From the second week of the fishery onwards, he generally alternated his trips to sea, heading to Miscou Island one evening and Chandler the next.

"There were nights when we hit both spots. It's a two-hour trip between the two," he notes.

Jeffrey Vautier and his crew delivered their catch to the Lelièvre, Lelièvre et Lemoignan plant in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé.

"As for the price, we received 50 cents a pound throughout the season, and we'll get a post-season adjustment bringing it to 60 cents a pound. With the adjustment, the price will be the same as last year's," he explains.

A slow stock recovery

Jeffrey Vautier believes the herring biomass is gradually recovering, though there is still room for improvement before quotas return to the levels seen a few decades ago. The quota was set at 2,982 metric tonnes for 2025, compared to 4,724 metric tonnes for 2026.

"The fish are bigger than they were a few years ago, but they're scattered. They don't bunch up the way they used to. There's a lot of predation. The herring we catch are more mature than in previous years. When there are lots of predators, the fish reach maturity later. Our net mesh sizes are larger, yet the fish are smaller on average than during the good years," he observes.

He believes that the increase in mesh size mandated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada works against fishermen because it prolongs the season. "By doing this, Fisheries and Oceans is working against the fishermen. It has a mandate to protect the habitat, and they haven't done so. The fishermen have made an effort to protect it. We observe a daily limit of 22,500 pounds and have a five-day fishing week," states Mr. Vautier.

"The ecosystem is out of balance. There are still plenty of grey seals and striped bass. We've noticed that since white sharks started appearing more frequently, the seals have scattered. They spend less time chasing herring near our nets. There is an enormous amount of tuna, but tuna fishing is quite restricted in terms of volume," he observes.

Tuna joins the list of predators

Tuna concentrations are high along the southern Gaspé coast, around the Magdalen Islands, and off the Acadian Peninsula. However, stock levels are calculated based on the entire Northwest Atlantic, extending all the way to Europe, where tuna are scarce. Catch limits are determined based on this vast area, which restricts the harvest on this side of the ocean.

This winter, Jeffrey Vautier will call for the reopening of the spring herring fishery.

"DFO claims that spring herring make up 5% of the autumn stock. If that's the case, they could have opened the spring fishery. There is more spring herring than autumn herring. Spring herring are found further offshore in the autumn. A spring fishery would cut down on bait costs during that season," he points out.

He also deplores the fact that mackerel fishing remains severely restricted in Eastern Canada. It was under a moratorium for three years until this year.

"In the United States, they fish wide open. When we fish for Atlantic halibut, we use mackerel for bait because it stays on the hook better. There are now three mackerel fishing seasons: in June, during the lobster fishery, in August, alongside the herring fishery and since October 3, though the latter comes with restrictions of just 32 hooks and a 1,000-pound daily limit per outing. That doesn't help the fisherman. On top of that, fish markets can't sell it for human consumption. It makes no sense. People can buy tuna, but not mackerel," he concludes in disbelief.



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Under a moratorium over the last three years, spring herring fishing should be reinstated, according to Jeffrey Vautier.

No apologies for pelagic fishermen

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Federal Fisheries Minister Joanne Thompson has refused to send a letter of apology to Gaspé pelagic fishermen who have not received any exploratory lobster licences, even though they have been under a moratorium since 2022.

Alexis Deschênes, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj and the Bloc Québécois' spokesperson on fisheries, points out that the situation facing the 11 fishermen is tragic.

Just a few hours before the start of their 2022 fishing season—after they had invested in preparing their equipment—the axe fell on their livelihood.

"Since then, they've been sidelined. The federal government has never shown any consideration for them. The Fisheries (Standing) Committee in Ottawa had requested a letter of apology because they had been excluded from the process for allocating exploratory lobster licences. The process was intended to help fleets in difficulty," Mr. Deschênes notes.



Ghislain Collin.

Photo: Courtesy of Alexis Deschênes

Some of the affected fishermen have never been able to return to sea.

"The minister's response is disappointing. I'd say it shows a lack of sensitivity toward these fishermen. The least she could have done was say, 'We apologize; you were excluded. We'll be more sensitive to your cause in the future. We'll continue to support you,'"says Mr. Deschênes.

The Bloc Québécois MP plans to meet with them soon to explore possible solutions to their situation.

"There are many avenues for the future in the fishing industry, and that's what we'll be evaluating with them," Mr. Deschênes says.

"Despite the unanimous decision by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans—composed of members from the Bloc Québécois, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party—the minister simply ignored the request. This shows total contempt for us. Even though we've been under a moratorium since 2022 and have nothing left to fish, we're not even being offered an apology," laments Ghislain Collin, president of the Gaspé Pelagic Fishermen's Association.

Processing: volume on the rise

Gilles Gagné

SHIGAWAKE - Roch Lelièvre, president of the processing plant Lelièvre, Lelièvre et Lemoignan, purchased herring catches totaling 1.3 million pounds this year, compared to 1.1 million pounds last year. Processing these catches required a workforce of between 15 and 24 people at the plant.

"It's increasing; that's a positive sign. We bought catches from 10 fishermen, which is two more than last year. Just like last year, the first two weeks were good; there was a dip, but then it finished strong," he comments.

The herring was primarily kept for use as bait. "The goal is to keep the price affordable for fishermen next spring. We set aside enough for a 200,000-pound processing line, including some salted herring, and a shipment to the smokehouses in Cap-Pelé. We also processed some roe this year, both for Japan and the local market," notes Mr. Lelièvre.

At 1.3 million pounds, the volume wasn't sufficient to reopen the Gaspé Cured smokehouse in Cap-d'Espoir. "It would take 2 million pounds to reopen it," he concludes.

Chandler's mayor reflects on missed opportunity to become an MNA

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CHANDLER – Chandler mayor Gilles Daraîche admits to having some regrets about not seeking the Parti Québécois (PQ) nomination in Bonaventure after being approached by the party late this summer, particularly following its victory in the riding.

Pier-Luc Bujold, who won the party's nomination on August 25, went on to win a decisive victory in the October 5 election.

"The party had approached me. It was still a nice compliment for what I've done in Chandler. When Mr. Bujold was elected, I thought to myself that it could have been me. It would have been a great way to end my political career—representing the people of Bonaventure in the Quebec government," says Gilles Daraîche.

Asked whether he regrets his decision, the mayor acknowledges having mixed feelings.

"There are always two sides to every story. I've weighed both sides. Sure, there might be a little regret, but you can't let that hold you back. Of course, I would have been proud to be the member for Bonaventure," says Mr. Daraîche, who was re-elected mayor of Chandler in November 2025.

Only one candidate visited

The mayor of Chandler points out that only Pier-Luc Bujold met with him during the election campaign.

"We're the second-largest town in the Gaspé Peninsula. I'm not saying we're more important than the other smaller towns. But we should be given more consideration than that. The fact that only one out of five candidates came to visit us—I didn't think that was very impressive," Mr. Daraîche says.

The municipality's priorities include wastewater treatment for the Newport neighbourhood and addressing the housing shortage in Chandler.

Easily elected, Pier-Luc Bujold wants expertise to solve riding problems

GILLES **GAGNÉ**

PASPEBIAC – Elected in Bonaventure with a clear majority of 5,297 votes on October 5, Pier-Luc Bujold, of the Parti Québécois, wants to address the region's problems with the help of experts in various fields, notably health care, forestry and transportation.

With 9,893 votes, Mr. Bujold defeated incumbent Member of the National Assembly Catherine Blouin, who received 4,596 votes. She had also been minister responsible for families since April.

Liberal Party candidate Christian Cyr finished third with 2,928 votes, ahead of Conservative Party candidate Dominique Côté, who received 2,026 votes, and Québec solidaire candidate Yv Bonnier Viger, with 1,812 votes. Dominique Côté neither made public appearances nor gave interviews during the campaign.

Pier-Luc Bujold's victory rally took place at the Paspebiac Cultural Centre, where about 50 people gathered. He arrived shortly after being declared elected. During his speech, he first thanked his family, the campaign team, the volunteers, the activists, the voters and "all the candidates who ran in Bonaventure and contributed to our democracy."

He spoke briefly about his campaign. "I met with entrepreneurs, municipalities, organizations, workers, civil society groups, and people of all ages. From all these encounters, one conclusion was clear: the people of Bonaventure want change," he says.

He then quickly switched to the work lying ahead. "The systematic stripping away of our services is over! I will ensure my crew consists of experts capable of staying the course with rigor and determination. At the provincial level, headwinds may slow us down, but we will work tirelessly in the best interests of the riding's residents, the people of the Gaspé, the regions, and all Quebecers," he declares.



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Pier-Luc Bujold was greeted warmly by his partisans in Paspebiac, on election night.

Pier-Luc Bujold asked Gaspesians of various walks of life to work together.

"I call upon all citizens, regardless of political affiliation, to unite and rally for the sake of our Gaspésie. Now that the votes have been counted, we must set partisanship aside to move our region forward, rolling up our sleeves, getting down to business, firing up the engine, and working hard. Let us draw inspiration from our diverse forebears, Mi'gmaq, Acadians, Jersey Islanders, Basques, Loyalists, Irish, and others, who built this county through a lot of sweat," he underscored.

During a brief question period with journalists following his speech, the new Member of the National Assembly (MNA) promised to work hard to resolve the most urgent issues facing his constituency.

"There are some emergencies, the dwindling level of health services, the financing of community organizations, the food banks, the exaggerated amount of red tape required by the government, the necessity to come up with a deal to assure the modernization of the Rosario Poirier sawmill in Saint-Alphonse and the betterment of our transportation services," he stated.

A trained nurse who headed the Eastern Quebec union of nurses and respiratory therapists over the last years, he wants to accelerate the refurbishment and reconstruction of Maria hospital's sections. "That file seems stalled and there is no reason for that," he declared.

Regarding the completion of the railway upgrades between Port Daniel and Gaspé, Mr. Bujold emphasized the importance of local expertise.

"We want to leave more wiggle room to the people of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, where there are lots of competent people. We think they will deliver the work at a lower cost. It is their field and they know it well," he said.

Meanwhile, in the Magdalen Islands, incumbent MNA Joël Arseneau, of the Parti Québécois, received 66.54% of the vote, more precisely 5,061 ballots, finishing well ahead of Liberal Party candidate Gil Thériault, who received 1,560 votes, or 20.51% of the vote. The other candidates shared the remaining 985 votes.

In Bonaventure, the participation rate was 60.08%, compared to 60.21% in Gaspé and 69.32% in the Magdalen Islands. In Quebec, it reached 66.92%.

Bonaventure Results

Candidate	Party	Votes	Rate of Support
Pier-Luc Bujold	Parti Québécois	9,893	46.54%
Catherine Blouin	CAQ	4,596	21.62%
Christian Cyr	Liberal Party	2,928	13.77%
Dominique Côté	Conservative Party	2,026	9.53%
Yv Bonnier-Vigier	Québec Solidaire	1,812	8.53%

Gaspé Results

Candidate	Party	Votes	Rate of Support
Méganne Perry-Mélançon	Parti Québécois	10,525	58.81%
Stéphane Sainte-Croix	CAQ	2,404	13.49%
Michel Marin	Liberal Party	2,278	12.73%
Christian Pierry	Conservative Party	1,358	7.59%
Emmanuelle Babin	Québec Solidaire	1,322	7.39%

A clear victory for Méganne Perry Mélançon

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – In what was effectively a rematch, Parti Québécois (PQ) candidate in Gaspé, Méganne Perry Mélançon won a decisive victory over her main opponent, incumbent Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) member of the National Assembly (MNA) Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

Perry Mélançon, who represented the riding from 2018 to 2022 before being defeated by Stéphane Sainte-Croix, received 58.8% of the vote, compared to 13.5% for Mr. Sainte-Croix, giving her a lead of 8,111 votes.

Michel Marin of the Liberal Party garnered 12.7%, Conservative Party candidate Christian Pierry received 7.5%, and Québec solidaire candidate Emmanuelle Babin received 7.3%. Voter turnout was 60.21%.

In 2022, Mr. Sainte-Croix defeated Ms. Perry Mélançon by a margin of 710 votes.

During her victory speech, Ms. Perry Mélançon noted that this was her first victory speech.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Méganne Perry Mélançon.

"It's something you have to experience. I didn't experience this the first time I was elected because there had been a judicial recount," she recalled, noting that in 2018, Liberal candidate Alexandre Boulay had initially been declared the winner before a recount was requested due to an irregularity involving a ballot box.

The court ultimately declared her the winner by a margin of just 41 votes. This time, the victory was decisive.

"We could feel a great energy on the ground. It's work I've been doing for eight years. I believe we're reaping the rewards of a long-term effort," she says, reflecting on her continued involvement with the party following the 2022 election.

Party leader Paul Saint-Pierre Plamondon appointed her as the party's national spokesperson in 2022.

"We have several commitments that will benefit the Gaspé Peninsula: health care, the economy, seniors… I hope the other parties will collaborate because what we want is the well-being of Quebecers and public services that need some love," says the newly elected MNA.

The planned closure of a seniors' care facility in Murdochville in the coming months will be one of her first priorities as a newly elected representative. More broadly, health and social services will be her focus.

"Organizations are struggling; their missions are under threat. I'm thinking of Accueil Blanche-Goulet. Adapted transportation, too. I want to work on these issues," says Ms. Perry Mélançon.

Stéphane Sainte-Croix accepts defeat

A good sport, the outgoing member of the National Assembly congratulates the new member for Gaspé.

"Disappointment. Proud of our campaign, our team, and our volunteers. It was 39 intense days during which we fought a good fight. We highlighted our record and our commitments. We understand that Quebecers wanted change," Stéphane Sainte-Croix said in his initial reaction.

When asked whether Gaspé voters had voted against the CAQ or against Stéphane Sainte-Croix, the candidate reflected.

"Honestly, the grassroots campaign led to some great discussions, and people appreciated our work over the past four years. But the term was anything but easy. Mr. Legault's departure, Ms. Fréchette's arrival. In short, it's been a roller coaster ride over the past year, and a wave of change has been very much present across Quebec—and the Gaspé Peninsula is no exception," Mr. Saint-Croix says.

At one point during the evening, Mr. Sainte-Croix was trailing Liberal candidate Michel Marin, who was in second place behind Méganne Perry Mélançon. He nevertheless noted that the Liberals had made significant gains across Quebec.

"We accept the result and we're proud of what we've done."

For now, Stéphane Sainte-Croix has no short-term plans. He intends to take a break, recharge his batteries and give himself time to chart a new course.

Daniel Côté calls for a minister from the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – The mayor of Gaspé hopes that the new Parti Québécois (PQ) premier will appoint one of his two newly elected Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) from the Gaspé Peninsula to cabinet.

Méganne Perry Mélançon won the Gaspé riding, while Pier-Luc Bujold was elected in Bonaventure on October 5.

"I want the regions to have a say in the National Assembly and the cabinet, and above all, I hope that the Gaspé Peninsula will have one of its representatives in the cabinet, given all the efforts made in recent years, as well as the talent and expertise on these issues. I would be disappointed if we weren't represented," says Daniel Côté following the victories of the two Parti Québécois candidates.

He wouldn't be upset if the Saint-Pierre-Plamondon government didn't appoint a minister responsible to the regions, a concept the new premier had set aside during his campaign stop in Gaspé on September 30.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The mayor of Gaspé hopes to see a minister from the Gaspé Peninsula among the Parti Québécois's cabinet ministers.

"Not necessarily. Perhaps he'll want to revive the idea of the Council of Regions that was put forward in recent months," adds the mayor of the Gaspé, the largest municipality on the Gaspé Peninsula.

Priorities

The president of the Gaspé Prefects' Council had raised the issue of demographics in a broader context before the election.

"Eastern Quebec is swinging toward the Parti Québécois. We'll have several representatives to advocate for our issues. Demographics are a major issue for us. We expect solutions to be found and for the needs of Gaspé residents to be met," says Mathieu Lapointe.

Housing, daycare spaces and related issues are all encompassed within the prefects' association's broader definition of demographic challenges.

"We'll need a strong communication channel to advocate and demand that the region's issues be brought to Quebec City and that programs and approaches be tailored to the regions of Quebec and the Gaspé Peninsula," he adds.

The mayor of Gaspé hopes that the many proposed projects, including water and sewer systems and, particularly, the arena, will be taken into account, along with the decentralization of decision-making to the regions.

Public transit, rail services and regional air transportation will also be among the issues Daniel Côté plans to bring to Méganne Perry Mélançon's attention.

"We worked very well together (between 2018 and 2022.) During the electoral campaign, our meeting went well. There was great openness and understanding regarding our issues," says the mayor, who praises the dedication of outgoing MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix over the past four years.

The Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) MNA had defeated Méganne Perry Mélançon in 2022.

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Change of leadership at Tourisme Gaspésie

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – It's time for a change at Tourisme Gaspésie, as Joëlle Ross, who has served as the organization's director since 2009, steps down to retire.

She will be replaced by Stéphanie Thibault, who served as marketing director until September 30 and has been with the organization for 11 years.

Before becoming executive director, Joëlle Ross had served as deputy director.

"I had just come from the Union des producteurs agricoles in Rimouski. I figured it would work much like it does in agriculture. I didn't think I'd stay this long. It's an interesting career, and the tourism industry is generally fascinating," says Ms. Ross, who became an advisor to the executive director on October 1, after 29 years with the organization.



Photo: Tourisme Gaspésie

Stéphanie Thibault.

Among the highlights of her tenure in senior management were the implementation of the lodging tax, the relocation of the Sainte-Flavie Tourism Office to Mont-Joli following the completion of Highway 20, and the pandemic.

"Our businesses had to be resilient. It wasn't easy to promote the area and tell people to come visit us. Our local residents didn't want to see visitors, but our businesses wanted to survive. There have been tougher times over the years, but this is an industry of happiness," recalls Ms. Ross.

She takes pride in building closer ties with local businesses and in having diversified the offerings over the years.

The new director Is familiar with the organization

Stéphanie Thibault, who took office on October 1, is continuing the organization's momentum.

"I've been the director of marketing and communications for 11 years now," she notes.

She aims to strengthen Tourisme Gaspésie.

"We conducted a strategic planning exercise. We took stock of the past few years and looked at where we want to focus in the coming years. We want to continue promoting all four seasons and restructure our offerings with our various partners to remain attractive," the new director continues.

"We want a clear vision and to define where we want to position ourselves. We represent more than 500 businesses and many partners. How do we all work together? That's why the strategic planning exercise is so important. There will be consultations in 2027, and that's when we'll establish our shared vision together," says Ms. Thibault.

Data for the 2026 summer season is not yet complete, as the August data has not yet been received.

"July was good for lodging establishments. It's a mixed bag: some people said it was a very good season. Others said it was more challenging. It's not easy to interpret. We're going to conduct a large survey to get the full picture of the summer season. There were a lot of people. Were they at attractions or restaurants? It's hard to tell. But I think it was a good season," Ms. Thibault says.

Last year, the summer season saw a record 711,000 visitors, up 5 percent, with economic impact growing 10 percent to reach $468 million.

Gespeg wants to be included on territorial signage

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – The Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation would like to see its presence recognized on local signage, noting that in the Maritimes, road signs indicate the presence and identity of communities—a situation the Municipality of Gaspé would like to address.

"There's a difference in visibility. When you drive through the Maritimes, you can clearly see the presence of First Nations," notes Céline Cassivi, chief of the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation.

Gaspé and Gespeg had been working in 2023 on signage along the main entry roads to highlight the First Nation's presence. "It fell through due to a lack of funding. But the presence of First Nations isn't generally recognized in Quebec," laments the Mi'gmaq leader.



Photo: Tourisme Gaspésie

The sign for Gaspé at the municipality's entrances could feature the name "Gespeg," a request from the Mi'gmaq First Nation supported by the Town of Gaspé. Here, the sign on Route 198.

The new signs would have featured trilingual text: French, English, and Mi'gmaq. "That's what Gespeg wants. It's a collaboration with Gaspé that I find important. It's still in the works—someday," she says.

This commitment is shared by the Municipality of Gaspé, which provides context for what happened in 2023.

"It's absolutely necessary. Initially, we aimed to replace all public signage in the Municipality of Gaspé, which included the three municipal entrance signs. We had an ambitious plan costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, but the bid was too expensive. At the same time, there was Bill 96, which restricted signage in English and other languages. There were also legal issues," explains mayor Daniel Côté.

He wanted to ensure that Quebec wouldn't require the signs to be removed once they were installed. Legally, the provincial government could still require unilingual French signage.

"I would find it very hard to imagine a government coming to have our signs removed, fining us, or denying us grants because we posted signs in a First Nations language. Legally, it could do so, but I find it very hard to imagine it actually doing that. We need to protect ourselves," the mayor explains.

"It would be wonderful to make this happen. It's an issue we need to revisit," Mr. Côté concludes.

The Gespeg chief hopes to see signage entirely in Mi'gmaq at Forillon National Park.

"We do have some signage on certain trails, but we'd like signage that highlights Gespeg's presence and history," says Ms. Cassivi, who notes the openness of park managers to this idea—a position shared by Parks Canada.

A Mi'gmaq name for the former Pavilion Z

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – The former Pavilion Z at the student residences on the Gaspé campus of the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles will now be known as Sipu, meaning "river" in Mi'gmaq.

A ceremony was held on September 28 at the Gaspé campus to mark the renaming, which aligns with the names of the other three residence halls—Saint-Jean, York and Dartmouth—all named after rivers in Gaspé.

"We wanted to stick with the theme. We wanted to build closer ties with the community. The suggestion was put forward by the residence manager. Our board of directors felt this was a way to mark an initiative that would stand the test of time. It's a natural choice and will reaffirm our ties with the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation," explains CEGEP director Yolaine Arseneau.

"For us, this is another milestone. It's a wonderful recognition of Gespeg's culture. It acknowledges that Gespeg is on this land. It's very important to Gespeg, and we truly appreciate it," comments Céline Cassivi, chief of the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation.

The former Pavilion Z previously housed the offices of community organizations, but due to space requirements, the CEGEP reclaimed the space for its students.

The fully renovated building has approximately 24 units, while the residence halls contain a total of 357 rooms.

The project was launched in 2018. The entire exterior envelope and roof were renovated at a cost of $12 million. The interior renovations to the residence halls cost $5 million.

"We have modern residence halls that are safe, welcoming, and promote success because students are right on campus," adds Yolaine Arseneau.

Student enrolment continues to grow

According to the official count on September 20, the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles had 1,295 students across its four campuses, an increase of approximately 150 from last year.

"The last time we reached the number we've reached this year was in 1999. That was 27 years ago," the Cégep director says proudly.

"We're making significant recruitment efforts outside the region, despite a decline in the number of international students. Yes, we have one additional program in Police Technology, but beyond that program, there's an increase in several other programs, and our residence spaces are essential," the director notes.

Gesgapegiag student involved in cardiology project

CYNTHIA **DOW**



Photo: Cynthia Dow

Raven Larocque Laliberté, a biomedical research student from Gesgapegiag, is working with the Laval University Institute of Cardiology and Pneumology to enhance health care in First Nations communities.

GESGAPEGIAG - "I have been away (from Gesgapegiag) for eight years now and have felt guilty about leaving the community. It has meant so much to help in bringing this clinic to Gesgapegiag," Raven Larocque Laliberté told SPEC.

Ms. Larocque Laliberté is a 28-year-old Master's student in biomedical research at Laval University in Quebec City. She spent the summer in her home community helping prepare the groundwork for the clinic, organized and funded by the Institut universitaire de cardiology et de pneumoologie de Québec.

"We even did some house calls, responding to people's needs," she explained.

About 50 community members met with the clinical team in a special van parked by the Gesgapegiag Health and Community Resources building during the week of September 28 to October 2.

Participants in the project, who must be between 35 and 65 years of age, are tested for diabetes, cholesterol levels, circulation, arrhythmias and other indicators of vascular age. They not only receive information about their current state of health but also learn throughout the process how to take care of themselves.

"Auto-determination is a very important part of how the clinic works with people," Ms. Larocque Laliberté told SPEC.

The clinical team provides test results and assessments and can initiate treatment and issue prescriptions to those who need medication.

Ms. Larocque Laliberté noted that probably the biggest factor for good health is having information and understanding the risk factors for cardiovascular disease. "For example," the student explained, "Few people realize that good muscle mass is protective of cardiovascular health."

The clinicians try to find a balance between women and men, but Ms. Larocque Laliberté noted that "…women tend to be under-represented in such studies. In fact, it is mostly white males who are involved in studies of this nature in our society."

The student said that improving cardiology services in remote communities, in particular Indigenous communities, is vital since they are more vulnerable to risk factors for heart disease. Indigenous Canadians, on average, develop cardiovascular disease at a younger age than other Canadians.

"The goal of the project is to provide data to each Indigenous community, and to give training and equipment to the community health resources," Ms. Larocque-Laliberté explained. "Whatever they need we will try to provide. Data like this we are gathering can raise red flags that we can then work on."

The visit to Gesgapegiag this fall is the first of a two-part initiative. The clinical team will be back next year to provide follow-up assessments. These follow-up visits will also help assess changes in participants' cardiovascular health and identify areas where additional support may be needed. The clinic is also visiting Wendake, Meliotenam, Essipit and Natashquan, to name a few of the Indigenous communities being targeted.

"It humbles me to be part of this important project," Ms. Larocque Laliberté said, "If there are not enough resources in Indigenous communities, they won't know the issues they face."

Ms. Larocque Laliberté is the daughter of Denise Larocque, a traditional healer at Mawiomi Treatment Services, and Éli Laliberté, a local film producer.

Surveillance for chronic wasting disease in the Gaspé Peninsula

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE



Photo: Michel Couture

Hunters are asked to cooperate to prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease in deer.

GASPÉ – After the disease was detected in a captive white-tailed deer in the Laurentians in 2018, the Ministry of Wildlife is expanding its surveillance for chronic wasting disease to the Gaspé Peninsula this year.

The abundance of white-tailed deer in Hunting Zone 1 South has led the ministry to implement monitoring measures to reduce the risk of the disease being introduced and becoming established. In the Laurentians, the ministry reduced the deer population to minimize the risks following the 2018 discovery.

The disease is present in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta, as well as in U.S. states such as New York, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, near Quebec. Special attention is therefore being paid to the Gaspé Peninsula due to the high deer population in the region.

"The risk of the disease increases with deer population density, and it has risen particularly in Zone 1 South, as well as due to the presence of captive deer. We have several in the Gaspé Peninsula: there are elk, red deer, and fallow deer farms, and the Bioparc de la Gaspésie, which houses all three species of wild deer found in Quebec. This increases the risks in the region," explains biologist Marie-Claude Richer of the Wildlife Management Division for the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands.

For hunters, it is difficult to identify a potentially sick animal because symptoms—such as emaciation, excessive salivation and excessive urination—typically appear only in the terminal stage.

"These symptoms can resemble those of other diseases. But it's not always obvious. It's a good idea to notify a wildlife officer when there are signs of illness," suggests the biologist.

"The only way to detect the disease is in the brain and certain lymph nodes. We need the head. We ask hunters to bring in the animal's head."

Since 2007, the ministry has been conducting surveillance activities aimed at quickly detecting the presence of the disease in Quebec's wildlife. Hunters are encouraged to have their deer tested by dropping off the head at participating butcher shops or at the offices of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Regional Wildlife Management Directorate.

Deer must be over 12 months old, the transport tag must remain attached to the animal and the animal must be properly registered. The antlers of male deer may be removed before the head is submitted without issue.

Participating locations on the Gaspé Coast include Mimi Bourg Butcher Shop in Carleton-sur-Mer, Labrecque Butcher Shop in Cascapédia-Saint-Jules, Paquet et Fils Farm in Saint-Siméon, Le Havre Butcher Shop and Deli in Caplan, Denis Bond Butcher Shop in Percé, Chez Mathieu Butcher Shop in Rivière-au-Renard and Gilles Parent Slaughterhouse in Cap-Chat. The ministry's offices in Caplan, Gaspé and Sainte-Anne-des-Monts are also participating.

Percé adopts resolution in support of local CLSC

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

PERCÉ – Following a demonstration that drew approximately 100 people on September 24, Percé municipal council has added its voice to calls for improved services at the local CLSC.

A resolution supporting the initiative was adopted during the October 6 council meeting. The demonstration followed the departure of the CLSC's only doctor.

"We want to maintain primary care services at the Percé CLSC, find ways to rebuild the team of social workers, nurses, specialized nurses and doctors—everything that makes a CLSC a gateway to the healthcare system," summarizes Mayor Daniel Leboeuf.

Ideally, the municipality would like to see at least two doctors and additional support for specialized nurses to reduce the need for elderly residents to travel to hospitals in Chandler and Gaspé.

Mr. Leboeuf, a former pharmacist in Percé, points out that political parties have promised to improve CLSC services.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The mayor of Percé at the September 24 rally in support of the local CLSC.

"This will be their first test," he says firmly.

Gaspé Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Méganne Perry Mélançon has made the Percé CLSC one of her priorities.

Tourist accommodations

Percé wants to strengthen regulations governing tourist accommodations following changes to Quebec legislation in 2023.

Owners who rent out their primary residence through online platforms will be exempt. The new measures will instead target owners who rent out secondary residences.

"One of the two zoning bylaw amendments we've passed is that we will no longer allow second homes to be used for tourist lodging, in the hope that many of these units will return to the rental market," says the mayor.

Property owners who wish to continue offering tourist accommodations will have to obtain a provincial permit and pay the applicable municipal taxes.

Mayor Leboeuf adds that "there will be no more special favours!"

Under provincial law, renting accommodation for 31 days or less in exchange for payment is considered short-term tourist accommodation and requires provincial registration.

Future of Villa Frederick-James

Percé remains hopeful that a new purpose can be found for Villa Frederick-James.

Following a $26-million investment by the Quebec government, a roundtable was established to discuss the site's future and explore ways to revitalize it. However, the province rejected proposals to transform the property into a cultural venue.

"We're asking the next minister of culture to reopen discussions with the roundtable," says the mayor.

Mr. Leboeuf does not want the site to become a "blue elephant," a reference to the Espace Bleu project abandoned by the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government.

"Many artists need a place to exhibit. You can put this in your portfolio: 'I exhibited at the Villa Frederick-James.' Wow! That really boosts their recognition," he explains.

Roof repairs

The roofs of two community centres – L'Oasis, located in the heart of Percé's historic district, and the Val-d'Espoir community centre – are scheduled to be replaced.

These projects have been discussed for several months, and the municipality is now preparing to issue a public call for tenders.

"We're a little behind schedule on these projects, which we thought we'd be able to start this fall, but after drawing up the plans and estimates, the costs of the work exceeded the limit for a restricted tendering process. We have to issue a public call for tenders. We expect that by spring, we'll be able to protect these buildings."

The mayor emphasizes that both facilities play an essential role in maintaining the vitality of their respective communities.

Preparing Gaspé's 2027 budget will be a challenge

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Sharp increases in gasoline and diesel prices, along with rising costs for other supplies needed to operate the municipality of Gaspé, are expected to complicate preparations for the 2027 municipal budget.

The municipal council and the administration are beginning the budget process, with soaring costs for fuel, parts, equipment and supplies, often sourced from the United States, expected to have an impact.

"It's clear that this will be a challenging process. Fuel costs have risen much more sharply than inflation alone. The same goes for auto parts and other suppliers whose prices are tied to fuel costs," says mayor Daniel Côté.

Despite these pressures, the mayor intends to keep tax increases in line with inflation over the municipality's four-year term rather than on a year-by-year basis.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Mayor Daniel Côté.

"I have never promised, and I will never promise, a tax freeze. What I'm aiming for is an increase in line with the CPI (consumers' price index) over a four-year horizon, provided that the municipal council supports me, since I don't have full authority at the council table," the mayor explains.

Action plans developed to implement the municipality's strategic plan will also be included in the 2027 budget.

Tourism booming

Gaspé has enjoyed a strong tourism season, potentially setting records, with accommodation capacity already reaching its limit.

Although the season got off to a slower start, tourism activity has been booming since late June.

"Since late August and early September—when there's normally a slowdown—we might be looking at a record-breaking September. We'll need to compile the statistics and make meaningful comparisons. Overall, we're talking about an extraordinary September," exclaims the mayor.

The number of Canadian visitors has increased, possibly as a result of U.S. tariffs. However, inflation has also led tourists to spend less.

"Tourism revenue is certainly greater than what Gaspé residents spend elsewhere. Overall, in terms of regional GDP (Gross Domestic Product), this is very positive for the industry," Mr. Côté notes.

Recreational vehicle travellers were still visiting the area over Thanksgiving weekend. While this is not unusual, they appear to be more visible this year, particularly European tourists travelling in their own vehicles.

Hopes for downtown arena

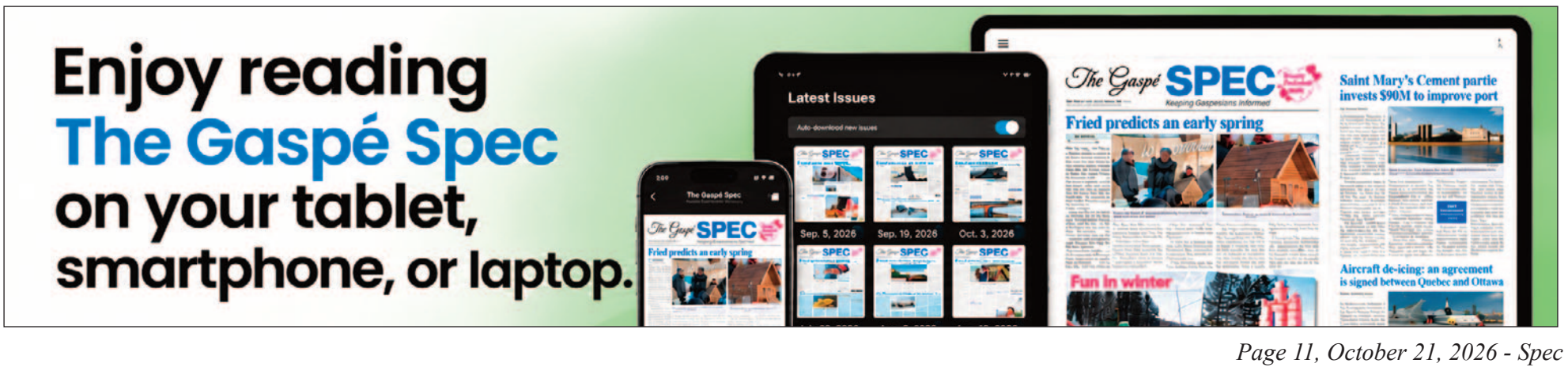
Following problems with ice quality last season, the mayor is hoping the refrigeration system at Gaspé's downtown arena will operate properly and allow the rink to open as planned.

"It's off to a good start. The crews have started the compressors for the first time to make the ice over the next few days. The compressors are running. That's all I can say at this point. That's already good news," says the mayor.

"We just have to hope it runs well enough for the ice to freeze, that it doesn't break down along the way, and that the ice holds up all winter. I don't know how many lanterns we'll have to light or how many saints we'll have to pray to," he adds jokingly.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed that it works!"

The Gaspé arena had to be closed over the weekend of January 10–11 because the ice was melting again near one of the two nets. A similar problem had abruptly ended a senior hockey game on December 27.



Rocher-Percé prefect resigns

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CHANDLER – The elected prefect of the Rocher-Percé MRC is resigning after nearly five years in office, having first been elected in November 2021 at just 24 years of age.

Samuel Parisé announced his resignation on October 14, citing personal and family reasons.

"It wasn't an easy decision to make. I've recently been living in Gaspé with my girlfriend. The distance from my MRC also played a role in this decision. I also want to focus on building a family and return to the field of health and social services," says Samuel Parisé, shortly after making the announcement.

Before entering politics, Mr. Parisé worked as a social worker at the CISSS de la Gaspésie for two years, taking an unpaid leave of absence to pursue his political career. He is also a partner in La Buvette Thérèse restaurant in Percé.

Although he is stepping away from municipal politics, Mr. Parisé is not ruling out a return to public office in the future.

"I haven't given it much thought yet. I love politics. I love what I do. I'm passionate about what I do. The well-being of the community is important to me. I'm not even 30 yet. It's hard to say what the future holds. The door isn't closed, but it's not open in the short term," says the outgoing prefect.



Photo: Rocher-Percé MRC

Samuel Parisé will step down as prefect of the Rocher-Percé MRC on October 22.

Mr. Parisé describes his time in office as a valuable learning experience, particularly because he entered the position without previous municipal experience. He credits the support of local mayors and the MRC's management team, as well as opportunities to work with provincial political representatives.

"I hope the next prefect settles in well. With the change in government, what will the impacts be for the MRCs? What projects will be on the table moving forward—housing, economic development…? What can we do to make things easier? We also face challenges with the United States that are affecting our industries," says Mr. Parisé, who has pledged to cooperate with his successor.

The Rocher-Percé and Haute-Gaspésie MRCs are among the sectors with the lowest economic vitality rankings in Quebec. However, Mr. Parisé says he does not want to dictate his successor's priorities for improving the region's economic situation.

Among his achievements, he points to the renovation of the terminal at the Rocher-Percé MRC airport, completed in the fall of 2024 as part of a major infrastructure modernization project. "The implementation of housing programs and, on a more personal note, making politics more accessible to a young person involved in community work. Bringing politics closer to the people would be one of the legacies I will leave behind," says Mr. Parisé.

Although he could return to his position at the CISSS de la Gaspésie, he says he has no immediate plans.

In 2021, Samuel Parisé won his first election with 35.01% of the vote, ahead of Mario Grenier at 27.24%, Maurice Anglehart at 20.43% and Luc Legresley at 17.32%.

He succeeded Nadia Minassian, who did not seek re-election, and was re-elected by acclamation in November 2025.

Cellphone service issues concern regional MRC association

Nelson Sergerie

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Since the rollout of 5G technology to replace LTE in the Gaspé Peninsula, residents have been reporting recurring problems with cellphone service.

For example, calls may be interrupted when the signal drops for a few moments, while some areas that previously had coverage now have no signal at all.

The Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie has been observing these problems firsthand for several months.

"There are areas where there used to be a cell signal… but there isn't one anymore. These are limited areas, but it's very difficult to have uninterrupted conversations. There are many residents in these areas who no longer have a cell signal. It's really problematic," notes the president, Mathieu Lapointe.

The mayor of Carleton-sur-Mer says discussions have already taken place with Telus to explain the situation.

The ongoing communication problems have prompted elected officials to consider switching to satellite phone service. "Regardless of the time of year or the technology being used, what we want is a reliable cellphone signal at all times," says Mr. Lapointe.

Asked again about the recurring problems, Telus says it continuously monitors its network and is working to improve capacity and performance, particularly by increasing capacity at existing sites.

Four new cell towers are being installed this fall in Hope, Val-d'Espoir, Gaspé and Pointe-à-la-Croix as part of the Quebec government's cellular coverage program.

Telus notes that a period of testing and adjustments is always required after capacity is added or a new wireless site is activated. In August, the company acknowledged that some customers could experience temporary service disruptions. It attributed the deterioration in service during the busy summer months to increased network congestion.

Customers are encouraged to report problems through the Telus website, providing details about the affected location and their experience.

High-speed 5G technology can use high-frequency millimetre waves, which have a very short range and can be blocked by obstacles such as thick walls, tinted windows, trees and even rain.

A similar interruption occurred on October 8 when this reporter was speaking with someone travelling toward Quebec City. As the person passed beneath an overpass on Highway 20 near Rimouski, the cellphone signal was lost for several seconds.

Electoral map must be a priority, says Daniel Côté

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – The ridings of Bonaventure and Gaspé were preserved at the last minute by the previous National Assembly, following the adoption of legislation just before proceedings were suspended for the October 5 provincial election.

Now that the election is over, Gaspé mayor Daniel Côté believes the issue must be revisited quickly, particularly with a minority government in place.

"We had a temporary law to get us through this election. Reaching a complete consensus will be extremely difficult. Increasing the number of representatives doesn't bother me that much. Some will fight for proportional representation. It's not my preferred approach, but I'll live with it if that's the choice," says the mayor.

Mr. Côté believes the principle of effective electoral representation needs to be clarified in provincial legislation.



Mayor Daniel Côté.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

"The concept exists in the law. It's hard to implement. Simply clarifying that in the law would plug the gap for the next election. It wouldn't be too complicated. I think, in general, the parties are likely to agree. Will they want to push for the 'one voter, one vote' principle? If we want proportional representation, I'd propose a chamber of regions instead," he says.

With the possibility of another election being called sooner than expected, the mayor believes clarifying the principle of effective representation would be sufficient to address the issue.

On June 12, the National Assembly unanimously adopted Bill 3, the Act to Ensure Effective Representation of Voters, without requiring a recorded vote, at the end of the legislative session.

The six-page bill was introduced on May 7, but its expedited adoption was initially blocked by former independent Saint-Jérôme Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Youri Chassin. As a result, it was referred to a parliamentary committee before receiving final approval on June 12.

The legislation also provided for the establishment of a committee to examine electoral representation in Quebec, outlining its composition, mandate and the analyses it would be required to conduct.

The committee, consisting of a retired judge, a former MNA and an expert, is expected to travel across Quebec once the new National Assembly is in place following the election.

With a minority government now in power, questions remain about whether the legislation will be maintained and whether the process can proceed without interruption, given the possibility of another election being called at any time.

Approached by political parties

Following the election, Mr. Côté revealed that three political parties had approached him about running in the October 5 election, although he declined to identify them.

"I won't go there. Sometimes these are subtle approaches. I'll let you guess which ones. Speculate. I won't say because it could backfire on me or have an impact on the municipality or the MRC," he says.

Despite the interest from provincial parties, Mr. Côté maintains that he remains committed to municipal politics, which he finds more appealing than politics at other levels of government.

He explains that political approaches can be as informal as a text message or a message through Messenger, intended to gauge someone's interest in running for office in an upcoming election.

"It's subtle. Yves-François Blanchet has done it before. François Legault did it twice. It was very direct. For the last election, all three approaches were subtle, just to test the waters."

"No party fully meets my aspirations or fully addresses the needs of the regions," concludes the mayor.

CEGEP funds plans for multipurpose boat

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – Following Quebec's allocation of $406,100, the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles is contributing 20% to enable the Grande-Rivière Economic Development Corporation to begin work on the plans and specifications for the preliminary stages of constructing a new-generation multipurpose boat and related facilities.

"Quebec had funded 60% of the cost; the corporation was prepared to contribute 20% and approached us to partner on the project, up to $135,000 for a multipurpose boat. We're pleased to be able to collaborate," says the Cégep's director, Yolaine Arseneau.

This initial phase will pave the way for the eventual construction of the boat.

"We see value in this both for applied research and for contributing to the training of our students at the École des pêches et de l'aquaculture du Québec. If we proceed with construction, this boat will be available for use by other partners. That is our goal with this project in collaboration with the economic development corporation," continues the director.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

CEGEP Director Yolaine Arseneau.

Quebec announced its support in July.

At that time, the mayor of Grande-Rivière, Gino Cyr, indicated that the overall business plan ultimately calls for two phases.

To carry out phase 1, it was necessary to have all the documents, including the plans and specifications—that is, the design of the future boat and the upgrade of its winter storage facility.

The multi-species, hybrid boat—which is more energy-efficient, designed to train students, and tailored to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's industries—could cost approximately $10 million.

This boat will be used for research and to train apprentice fishermen and owner-captains, with the goal of helping them discover and adopt innovative and sustainable practices in the fishing industry.

Local companies could contribute to its construction if the project reaches this stage.

New leadership at Espace NAPAGA

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CHANDLER – After serving as executive director of Espace NAPAGA since 2018, Elsa Pépin is handing over the position to Caroline Nantel, an archaeologist with extensive experience managing cultural sites.

"I'm taking on this role with great enthusiasm and excitement. I'm an archaeologist by training. I've been involved with Espace NAPAGA for a long time. It's a magnificent archaeological site, and I've had the opportunity to manage cultural sites. For me, this is a natural next step," explains Ms. Nantel, who moved from the Greater Montreal area to Chandler, drawn by the larger-than-life marine landscapes.

The coming weeks will be spent familiarizing herself with her new responsibilities. "The main challenge will be to raise awareness of the site and foster appreciation for it both locally and from outside the area, focusing on helping people discover the place and make it their own. It's a site whose significance—spanning time and centuries and involving all kinds of people—is not widely recognized," says the new executive director.



Caroline Nantel.

Photo: Facebook

The site has been occupied by First Nations people, the French, the English and, more recently, the forestry industry.

"This site has been occupied for several millennia. We all know a little about it. The challenge is to place it within a historical context. That's what caught my attention when I saw the job posting. I want to establish the site's foundation and work on its scientific aspect, which has enabled the development of activities," says Ms. Nantel.

For the past few years, the permanent exhibition has been undergoing revisions, while work has also continued on the development of Beauséjour Island. About 40% of the permanent exhibition has been unveiled, and the entire exhibition will be available starting next season.

"So that we can protect and share it even better," says Ms. Nantel, who considers the site one of the three most significant archaeological sites in Quebec, and possibly even North America.

"Sites teach us about the unknown. This is one of the major sites that allows us to trace human settlement and its transformation over a very long period of time. There are sites that tell us about a specific moment in history: the founding of Montreal, Champlain's arrival. Here at NAPAGA, it's everyday life that's being recounted, which has undeniable value," the executive director explains.

During her tenure, Elsa Pépin actively contributed to the development and growth of Espace NAPAGA.

Under her leadership, the organization underwent significant changes, including a rebranding, the launch of unique activities such as the Fantöm experience and the treasure hunt, and the creation of a new permanent exhibition dedicated to archaeology and the work of archaeologists.

A budget of nearly $100 million for the Chic-Chocs School Service Centre

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – The budget for the Chic-Chocs School Service Centre will approach $100 million for the 2026–2027 fiscal year.

It falls just short of that mark by $250,000, as the organization will have $99,750,000 at its disposal.

"We are presenting a balanced budget. Compared to last year, this represents an increase of more than four percent, but throughout the year, we will manage the budget with caution and discipline," explains director Josée Synnott.

Adjustments to system-wide costs and collective bargaining agreements account for this budget increase.

It is a tight budget with no wiggle room. "The priority is to protect services for students. This budget will offer more flexibility and greater accountability, as there are new ministry guidelines to address various local needs, but that comes with greater responsibility, says Ms. Synnott.

Fiscal discipline continues. "It's an ongoing process. We're continuing our efforts in this direction and trying to optimize what we can do," notes the director.

For the 2025–2026 fiscal year, Ms. Synnott cannot make any predictions at this time, as all the data has not yet been compiled.

René-Lévesque School Service Centre balances $122M budget

Nelson Sergerie

BONAVENTURE — The René-Lévesque School Service Centre has seen its 2026–2027 budget increase by $7 million, reaching $122 million for the fiscal year.

The centre did not draw on its accumulated surplus, as it was not permitted to do so to balance the budget.

"Ministry grants increased from $102 million to $106 million. There are items we've included in the budget that we didn't include before. The arts and extracurricular activities were not included because they involve cash inflows and outflows. However, when it came time to file financial reports, we still had to account for them," explains Sandra Nicol, director of the school services centre.

The operating budget includes salary adjustments mandated by collective bargaining agreements.

Unforeseen expenses could affect the budget, such as bids for snow removal, given that the price of diesel fuel for the machinery has skyrocketed in recent months.

The director notes that there is still limited room to manoeuver.

No cuts have been requested, but efforts to optimize spending continue.

Still no to a gym

The gym project for Cap Beau Soleil School in Caplan was rejected for the seventh time by the Ministry of Education at the end of the last school year.

The application will be resubmitted to the ministry for an eighth time.

"We've decided to resubmit it once again this year. We're telling ourselves that eventually, it will be our turn. We know our project meets the eligibility criteria. It was important to resubmit it so that one day, we can see this gym built," says Sandra Nicol.

The latest assessment put the project's cost at $7.5 million.

It is the only project being resubmitted this year, demonstrating the need to provide the school with a gym for its students.



Too little? Never too little to learn in the kitchen

AMBER **MCGUIRE-CURTIS**

CHANDLER - Children are often told they are simply "too little" when they show an interest in the kitchen. But at St. Patrick's Elementary, we believe that children are never too little to learn.

We love getting our students involved in the kitchen and giving them opportunities to learn real-life skills such as cracking eggs, mixing ingredients, reading a recipe and chopping vegetables, among many others. These experiences allow children to build confidence, independence, vocabulary and a sense of accomplishment, all while having fun.

During the first few weeks of preschool, my students quickly showed an interest in getting involved in the kitchen. I decided it was time to change up our dramatic play centre and create a pretend soup kitchen. The children could pretend to chop vegetables, mix ingredients, create their own recipes and practise their English vocabulary as they communicated and worked together.

Once they had some time to explore and practise through pretend play, I thought it was the perfect opportunity to take what we had been learning in theory and apply it to real-life situations. So, we put on our shoes, got ourselves ready and took a little trip to IGA to gather the vegetables we would need for our soup. Each student was so excited to choose a vegetable and bring it back to school. They were not simply shopping for ingredients; they were taking an active role in planning the meal they were about to create. When we arrived back in our classroom, it was time to get to work!



Young chefs carefully add chopped vegetables to the pot as they put their new kitchen skills into practice.



Preschool students gather around the pot to watch their homemade vegetable soup come together, learning about cooking through hands-on experience.

We used child-friendly kitchen knives that were appropriate for their age and skill level, giving them the opportunity to safely practise an authentic kitchen skill. Rather than being told they were "too little," they were given the tools, guidance and support they needed to experience success. We chopped, opened, mixed and cooked until our soup was ready.

One of the most exciting parts for the children was being able to watch the soup cook right there in our classroom. They experienced the cooking process first-hand, at their own eye level. They watched as the ingredients changed, smelled the delicious soup as it cooked and practised patience as they waited for their meal to be ready. And the smell in our classroom was amazing!

Finally, it was time to taste our creation. Each child was so excited to try their masterpiece. As we sat together and enjoyed our delicious lunch, there was something much bigger happening than simply eating a bowl of soup. The children had experienced an entire process from beginning to end and created something they could be proud of. Most importantly, they discovered that they were capable.

Through this hands-on project, my students were able to develop practical life skills while also building language, confidence, independence, cooperation and a love of learning.

They were not "too little." They were just the right size to learn something new.



Photos: Amber McGuire Curtis

Preschool students at St. Patrick's Elementary enjoy a bowl of homemade vegetable soup after helping prepare it themselves.





Photo: Cynthia Dow

Fresh produce from La cigale et le fourmi is provided weekly by the Gesgapegiag health and human resources departments. From the left, GHRDC staff member Spencer Jerome, Nicolas Audet and Sarah Jane Parent from the farm, and customer Charlie Bernard.

Putting our money where our mouth is

During the COVID-19 pandemic, nothing shocked me quite as much as my first foray into the local grocery stores. I had run out of fresh food, but when I finally got up the courage to go shopping, the sight of so many empty shelves sent a chill down my spine.

"What if we run out of food?" I wondered. We were fortunate that so many of our brave truckers kept showing up, pandemic or not. But it could have been otherwise.

Ever since, I have made it an objective to support local farmers as much as possible. Local agricultural production is an absolute necessity for sustainability in these days of environmental and political instability.

And we are so very blessed here on the Coast to have a good climate and healthy soil for food production, and a lot of very dedicated family businesses involved in farming and food transformation. We can now find almost every kind of food product made on the Coast from jam, pickles and honey to fruit wines and distilled products, sweet and savoury pies, and more exotic things like kimchi and sushi… you name it, it's available.

The recent political upheaval with the US has also impressed upon me the increasing amount of fresh produce grown throughout Quebec. Cucumbers, peppers, spinach and a variety of greens are now available year-round thanks to investments in greenhouses and hydroponic operations. To my knowledge, I have not bought American produce for almost two years now.

One challenge for Gaspesians who want to focus on local food is the price. In many cases, local products cost more. However, I have found that fresh, local produce lasts much longer than food transported over great distances. As someone living alone I am constantly struggling with the issue of food waste, but with local produce in the fridge, I am wasting less and therefore probably spending about the same amount on groceries. And frankly, the difference in taste is unbelievable!

There are now summer farmers' markets in almost every town on the Coast. And the Gesgapegiag Band has come up with a brilliant initiative for their community: they have a contract with the Carleton farm La cigale et le fourmi to bring some of their harvest to the church's parking lot once a week, where Gesgapegiag Band members can pick up what they want free of charge. Then there are the co-operative providers such as Baie des Saveurs, which make local produce available at pickup points throughout the winter months. I love it!

Producers and grocery stores respond to what people buy. The more we choose local foods, the more our money remains on the Coast, supporting our neighbours and friends in the food business. And this makes me hopeful that when the next pandemic, or political challenge, or climate emergency hits, here on the Coast we will have local alternatives to turn to when access to outside resources becomes problematic.

So let's put our money where our mouth is!

Construction begins on 24 housing units in Grande-Rivière

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE – A groundbreaking ceremony was held on September 29 to mark the start of construction of 24 new off-market housing units in Grande-Rivière, in partnership with the Société de développement de l'Est (SDE).

The first tenants are expected to move in during 2027. The development will include six 3.5-room units, 12 4.5-room units and six 5.5-room units.

The prefabricated structures will be erected on the former site of the BMR hardware store. The town had purchased the land and buildings. The fire station is located on part of the former site.

Grande-Rivière was one of the first municipalities to reach out to the Société de développement de l'Est.

"Initially, we had taken steps with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to establish financial incentives. We knew we wanted to build housing on this site because it's close to several services. We were on board right away because the corporation is a nonprofit organization. We raised our hand, and we weren't starting from scratch," explains Mayor Gino Cyr.



Photo: Courtesy of the Town of Grande-Rivière

Pictured are Mayor Gino Cyr, Philippe Dufort, director of the Société de développement de l'Est (SDE), and Samuel Parisé, prefect of the Rocher-Percé MRC.

A study revealed that Grande-Rivière needed 232 housing units of various types, five of which were to be reserved for vulnerable residents.

"That's one of the reasons why the council prioritized this developer and its project, and since the developer works with several municipalities on a single lot, that's what attracted modular developers to build in rural areas," the mayor continues.

A 24-unit student housing project is also underway nearby.

The Rocher-Percé Housing Authority (OMH) could add 12 more units, bringing the total to 60 housing units by early 2028.

"We've put incentives in place for rental housing and residential development, and the Economic Development Corporation is working to meet these needs, along with the Innovation Hub and the 'fishing boat of the future' project. To drive development, you need supporting infrastructure. We hope that people who currently live alone in their homes might be interested in these units," says the mayor.

"We had a vision, and it's important for the development of our town," Mr. Cyr concludes.

This project is part of the Canada-Quebec agreement on affordable and intermediate housing, which allocates 478 housing units to the Société de développement de l'Est across the Bas-Saint-Laurent, Côte-Nord, Outaouais and Gaspésie regions.

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

Of these 478 housing units, 240 will be offered at affordable rents under the Quebec Affordable Housing Program, while 238 units will be offered at intermediate affordable rents, set at no more than 150 per cent of the program's rent levels.

The municipalities hosting the projects are collectively providing construction grants totalling $3,084,746, in addition to a tax credit over 20 years.

Grande-Rivière: Housing in high demand

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GRANDE-RIVIÈRE – Since construction began on 24 housing units in Grande-Rivière on September 29, inquires from residents hoping to secure one of the new apartments have been pouring in to the mayor and town hall.

"I've been flooded with messages asking about the application process. My message to the public is this: the developer will let us know the details, and we'll keep everyone informed," says Mayor Gino Cyr.

The mayor isn't surprised by the high level of interest. "I have retirees from out of town who are interested in moving back. We have a need for 236 units. I'm sending this message to developers: we have an economic development corporation and financial incentives. I believe the need is there. This project will meet a demand. The Town of Grande-Rivière is doing well, and there are projects underway," says the mayor.

Over the next few weeks, the Société de développement de l'Est will announce the eligibility requirements for renting one of the 24 apartments. The first tenants are expected to move in during 2027. The development will include six three-and-a-half-room units, 12 four-and-a-half-room units and six five-and-a-half-room units.

The prefabricated buildings will be erected on the former site of the BMR hardware store. A 24-unit student housing project is also underway nearby, while the Rocher-Percé Housing Office (OMH) could add 12 more units, bringing the total to 60 units by early 2028.

The project with the Société de développement de l'Est is part of the Canada-Quebec Agreement on Affordable and Intermediate Housing, which allocates 478 housing units to the Société de développement de l'Est for the Bas-Saint-Laurent, Côte-Nord, Outaouais and Gaspésie regions.

Of the 478 housing units, 240 will be offered at affordable rents under the guidelines of the Quebec Affordable Housing Program, while 238 units will be offered at intermediate affordable rents, set at no more than 150% of the program's rent levels.



Mayor Gino Cyr.

Photo: Facebook

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Century Lodge 100 continues its legacy of giving

RONALD **MUNDLE**



Photo: Courtesy of Ronald Mundle

Members of Century Lodge 100 present a $25,000 cheque to the Gaspé Cancer Foundation as part of the lodge's $134,500 in charitable donations following the sale of its building. From left: Beatrice Coffin, vice-president of the Gaspé Cancer Foundation; Tony Patterson, president of the foundation; and Century Lodge members Francis Mainville, Johnny Cotton and Ronald Mundle.

GASPÉ – More than two years after closing its doors, Century Lodge No. 100, A.F. & A.M., is leaving a lasting mark on the community by distributing $134,500 to seven charitable organizations.

The donations are being funded through the sale of the lodge's building, following its closure on August 30, 2024, after more than a century of service.

On October 2, members of Century Lodge presented a $25,000 cheque to the Gaspé Cancer Foundation to support its work with cancer patients and their families.

The foundation is one of seven organizations benefiting from the initiative. Maison de la famille Parenfant de Gaspé received the largest contribution, at $40,000, while the Centre de pédiatrie sociale L'Équipage Gaspé and C.A.L.A.C. de Gaspé were each allocated $25,000.

Additional donations include $12,000 to Good Samaritan Lodge No. 68, $5,000 to the Association des personnes handicapées de Gaspé and $2,500 to Shriners Hospitals for Children – Canada.

Throughout its history, Century Lodge 100 was guided by the Masonic principles of brotherly love, relief and truth. Its members wanted the proceeds from the building's sale to benefit the region that had supported the lodge for generations.

The contributions also honour the many members who dedicated their time and efforts to the organization over the past century.

Although the lodge is no longer active, its final charitable initiative will continue to support local families, individuals and community services.

Much less rain in September in Gaspé

NELSON **SERGERIE**

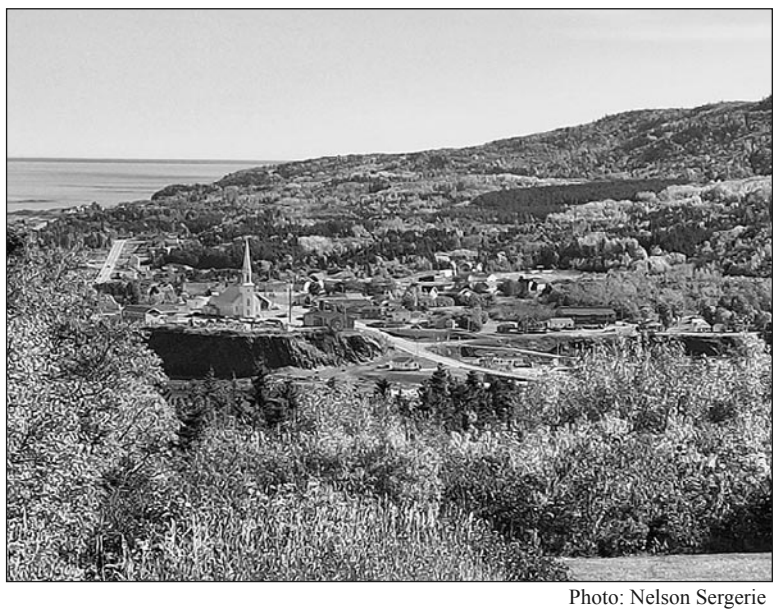

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Grande-Vallée received only 56 millimetres of rain in September.

GASPÉ — September was very dry in Gaspé, with only 38 millimetres of rain falling at Michel-Pouliot Airport, which is 42% of the normal 91 millimetres. According to Environment Canada data, more than half of the rainfall occurred on September 4, with 22 millimetres falling on that single day.

Rainfall varied widely across the region, with New Carlisle receiving 108 millimetres and Carleton-sur-Mer receiving 41 millimetres. Grande-Vallée received 56 millimetres and Cap-Chat received 38 millimetres.

This is far from being the driest September on record. Last year, barely 28 millimetres of rain fell in Gaspé. The driest September on record was in 1996, with only 12.2 millimetres of rain.

Cooler

The average temperature was 11.6 degrees, which is 0.3 degree below the normal of 11.9 degrees in Gaspé. The first frost occurred on September 19, when the temperature dropped to -1.4 degrees. The normal date is September 18.

A forest fire

Despite the arrival of fall, only one forest fire was reported in September. The human-caused fire was reported southeast of Cap-Chat, in Haute-Gaspésie, in the Marcel-Vallée Creek brook. The area burned was zero hectares.

This was the fifteenth fire of the season, with only 3.2 hectares burned, one fire fewer than the average over the past 10 years. However, the area affected is much smaller: the 10-year average is 23.6 hectares.

It should be noted that a sixteenth fire was reported on October 2, which burned 0 hectares in the Butler brook area, north of Pointe-à-la-Croix. According to SOPFEU, the fire was deliberately set. This fire does not affect the seasonal statistics.

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



When Did We Get Old?

It's early morning, and you turn on the bathroom light, only to be shocked when you look in the mirror and see your mother (or father) looking back at you. Is the mirror lying? You can't have changed that much! But face the truth, because it is definitely you looking back from that mirror.

You aren't the only one who is aging. It happens to all of us. When looking at photos of your own children or even grandchildren, you can see that they are getting older, too. Perhaps they are raising children of their own. How did that happen? Time. Blame it on time.

Looking back, there was a time when you could run up the stairs, jump out of bed and lean over without grunting. Sorry to be so blunt, but face the truth. It may take you more than one attempt to get off the couch. Do you ever go into the next room and cannot remember why? And those reading glasses that are necessary for reading small print? Don't leave home without them.

We might be a tad judgmental about today's purple hair, and fake lashes and lip fillers. However, those styles are not for us. We had our turn to express ourselves through style. Remember that back in the day, boys with long hair were considered part of the counterculture. Recall miniskirts and when girls yearned for straight hair to look like English models? Maybe we didn't look like the English models we copied, but we had fun trying.

We used to stay out until two in the morning. Now we are relieved if we don't get invited to the party. Want platform boots? Nope. We want comfort and slip-on Skechers. Sensible clothing only.

So, to go back to the question, "When did we get old? I feel much younger than I look in photos. In fact, I really dislike having my picture taken. But we have to face the truth. We got old when we weren't expecting it. It happens. Looking through obituaries, I scan the dates to see if the person was younger than me. It's happening more often lately.

Maybe we should stop obsessing about getting old and be grateful for all those young years we had and truly enjoyed. Perhaps, no matter our age, we need to be grateful for what we still have. We can still laugh and find things to look forward to. I'm certain that we all, from time to time, think of those in our lives who did not have the privilege of growing old. Enjoy it.



In closing, dear reader, we may be getting older, but there is absolutely no reason we have to behave ourselves while doing it.



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Announcements

In Memory

FRASER: Alfred Sr.

In loving memory of a very dear father, father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather who passed away on October 30, 1991.

He left us quietly,
His thoughts unknown.
But left us a memory,
We are proud to own.
So treasure him Lord,
In your garden of rest.
For when he was on earth,
He was one of the best.

Always remembered and sadly missed by your son, JR; daughter-in-law, Cheryl; great-grandchildren, Briceson and Colby; and great-great-grandchildren, Demi, Maycee and Nolan. We miss you, Dad. xxxx

thegaspespec.com
418-752-5400
holly.smith@globetrotter.net



SULLIVAN: William (Bill)

In loving memory of a dear husband, father, grandfather, brother, brother-in-law and uncle.

May you celebrate,
The life he lived.
Honour the memories,
He left behind.
And know that the love he shared,
Will stay in our hearts forever.

Wife Marcelle, son George, daughter Lynn and their families.

Announcement Deadlines

October 28 for the November 4 issue
November 11 for the November 18 issue
November 25 for the December 2 issue
December 9 for the December 16 issue



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COAST ROUND-UP

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

YORK:
FADOQ
October 25: The FADOQ York River Senior Citizens Club, will be hosting a Harvest Supper at the York River Community Hall. Takeout will be available from 4 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. The first seating will be at 5 p.m., with a second seating at 6 p.m. Cost: $15 per person. Diners over the age of 18 are permitted to bring their own wine, as the Club has obtained a liquor licence. Everyone welcome!

YORK:
Parish of Gaspé
November 1: The York ACW will be hosting its Christmas Sale and Afternoon Tea at the York Hall. There will be baked goods, handicrafts and a white elephant table. Afternoon tea will be served at 2 p.m. Cost: $7 per person.
December 13: The Parish of Gaspé will be hosting an afternoon of Christmas songs and carols, as well as a cookie exchange. Join us at the York Hall at 1 p.m. for an afternoon of your favourite Christmas carols and songs. Hot beverages and cookies will be served. Admission is $10 per person or $5 if you bring cookies (a minimum of one dozen) to share.

HALDIMAND:
Camp Fort Haldimand
November 14: Camp Fort Haldimand will be hosting its Christmas Market from 9 a.m. to noon at the Gaspé Elementary School. Tables are available to rent for $15 by contactingforthaldimand @gmail.com. There will be a bake sale, with proceeds going to Camp Fort Haldimand. Donations of baked goods are greatly appreciated.

HOPE TOWN:
Hope Town Sports Club
November 28: Christmas Gift bingo will begin at 7 p.m. at the Hope Town Community Centre.

HOPE:
Hope Baptist Church
Sundays: Sunday school begins at 10 a.m. Worship service begins at 11 a.m.

NEW CARLISLE:
Bible Chapel Meetings
Sundays: Breaking of-Bread for believers at 9:30 a.m., Gospel meeting and Sunday School at 2 p.m.
Thursdays: Prayer meeting and Bible study at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome! For more information, contact 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES
50 plus Club
November 7: A spaghetti supper will be held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Cost: $15 for adults and $10 for children under 12. Garlic bread, Caesar salad, spaghetti and dessert will be served. Everyone welcome.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES
Book Room
Wednesdays: The book room will be open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, contact Kathleen at 418-392-4896.

UNITED CHURCH HOPE TOWN
Sunday, October 25
Sunday, November 1
10 a.m. Service
both streaming from New Richmond.

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, October 25
St. Matthews - Peninsula
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, November 1
St. Pauls - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, October 25
10 a.m. Service followed by social time
Sunday, November 1
10 a.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, October 25
New Carlisle
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Hope Town
3 p.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, November 1
New Carlisle
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Port Daniel
2 p.m. Gospel music and sing-a-long



The bench that remembered

In a spot by the bay stood an old wooden bench. The silvery-grey bones of the bench shone in the rays of the brilliant sun. Most people passed it without a glance, thinking it was just another relic of the past. But the bench knew better.

It listened to footsteps, felt the weight of those who sat on it and shared their thoughts about flowers, the sound of the waves and the shining light from the lighthouse.

Over the years, it had heard confessions whispered into the dusk, laughter spilled like sunlight and sobs that trembled through its wooden frame. It remembered the laughter of children, the man who read poetry to no one in particular and the woman who came every morning to talk to her late husband as if he were still there.

One by one, the familiar voices might stop coming. But the bench knew better: families and new visitors would come, along with those who remembered the old bench and enjoyed visiting the lighthouse.

Until then, the bench would remain, surrounded by the love of families and the beautiful memories of the past.

Ann Hall
New Carlisle, Quebec

Halloween night on the Gaspé Coast

Halloween night is not only spooky, with whispers of magic and imagination in the air, but the Chaleur Bay breeze will not stop little scamperers dressed in scary costumes from searching for treats, not tricks.

It may seem as though something is haunting the night when the moon races in and out of the clouds above, but the tough little Gaspesians are having just as much fun scaring others as they are being scared themselves.

Spooky dangers may lurk around trees, bushes and corners, and there may even be ghosts or goblins in the distance.

But those little trick-or-treaters, with sticky hands and mouths full of gum, will keep searching for brightly lit front porches and more sweet surprises.

Have fun treating, not tricking!

Ken Ross
New Carlisle, Quebec



WORD SEARCH

FRIGHT NIGHT

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

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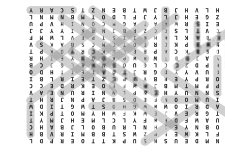
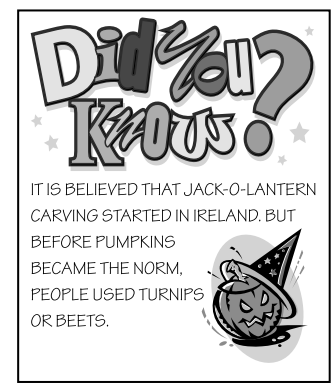
O	D	R	B	K	C	A	P	B	E	L	U	K	C	R	Y	O	K	P	T
U	M	W	B	P	K	C	R	E	O	T	C	M	C	S	B	A	K	S	V
L	E	B	A	K	L	K	H	K	I	I	S	T	P	E	V	L	W	M	F
B	C	V	T	L	S	C	C	Z	R	B	J	N	R	K	I	Y	Y	J	J
T	E	I	S	R	W	A	A	T	A	G	M	C	O	N	I	H	V	P	U
L	Z	G	E	H	J	L	Y	J	F	L	D	O	T	M	B	N	M	N	L
M	H	L	V	H	J	B	J	W	T	B	E	N	Z	T	S	C	A	R	Y

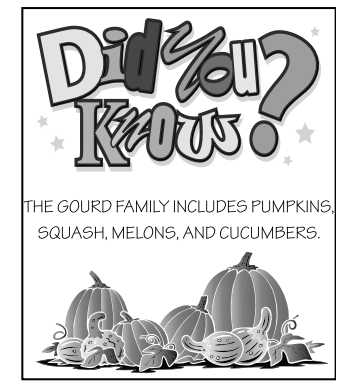
WORDS

BATS
BLACK CAT
CANDY
COBWEB
COSTUME
GHOST
GHOUL
HAUNTED
JACK-O'-LANTERN
MONSTER
MOON
OCTOBER
PUMPKIN
SCARY
SKELETON
SPIDER
SPOOKY
TRICK OR TREAT
VAMPIRE
WEREWOLF
WITCH
ZOMBIE













Weekly HOROSCOPES

HOROSCOPES - October 18 to October 24

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
This is a great week for you, Aries. You are empathetic and tuned into your surroundings. You might feel warm and friendly to everyone.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, this is a feel-good week for you. Enjoy spending some private moments during which you reflect on the things you want to accomplish.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
Gemini, sympathy toward a cause or a friend may prompt you to become involved in a charitable organization. You also are interested in learning more from others.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Use the fact that others are noticing you to your advantage, Cancer. You can set good examples by being compassionate and generous to others.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, your desire to expand your world is strong this week. You may renew an interest in travel and begin making progress on some big ideas.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
You are happy to be working behind the scenes, Virgo. However, you might take on a prominent fundraising role or engage in other activities that benefit others.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
This is a popular time for you to converse with others and interact with members of the general public, Libra. You might develop a strong connection to someone new.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, you might make a fabulous impression on someone this week. This might compel this person and others to get involved with a cause dear to your heart.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Do something different this week, Sagittarius. You are open for an adventure. Accept invitations to socialize, and use your free time to the fullest.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Capricorn, you are sensitive to the needs of family members right now. You might be on a mission to help someone who needs assistance by researching programs or funding.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, you may have to be especially patient with a loved one who is still trying to process the news you gave them. Everyone deals with things in their own time.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, if you can do something to help others, especially within your professional arena, do not hesitate to do it. Your willingness to assist others will not go unnoticed.

Good season for shrimp fishermen

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – The 13 shrimp fishermen operating out of Rivière-au-Renard managed to catch nearly their entire allocated quotas this season.

The shrimp fishing industry was allocated a total quota of 5,419 tonnes for the season, including allocations to fishermen from the Maritime provinces. This represented a 42% increase over 2025.

"In terms of catches, the outlook is positive overall. Last year, catches were good in the Anticosti and Estuary zones but highly variable in the Sept-Îles zone. In Esquiman, there are few Quebec fishermen. This year, in the three zones where we fish extensively, catch rates have been encouraging," notes Patrice Element, director of the Quebec Shrimp Fishermen's Office.

"Some fishermen have reported that shrimp appear to be expanding their range. In terms of size, we've observed shrimp of all sizes in our catches, which is promising for the future. It's encouraging."

Despite the positive results, the organization is not ready to predict whether quotas will increase next year.

"We can hope for quotas to remain stable or increase slightly. However, that will depend on scientific surveys," says Mr. Element, who acknowledges that shrimp stocks remain well below the levels recorded before their collapse.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Patrice Element, director of the Quebec Shrimp Fishermen's Office.

He does not expect catch rates to return to the levels seen between 2010 and 2015.

In Quebec, the fleet has shrunk from approximately 40 boats to 13 this year. Two years ago, only eight were operating.

"There aren't enough shrimp left to support that many boats. But with fuel prices somewhat more under control, the dozen or so boats could survive," believes Mr. Element.

Rising fuel costs remain a major concern, as shrimp fishing boats are among the largest fuel consumers in Eastern Canada's fishing fleets.

"It's hurting us tremendously. Fortunately, we've managed to negotiate a higher purchase price from processors, which partially offsets the increase. The cost of diesel is a major challenge to achieving profitability," the director explains.

The average price paid to fishermen has increased by 15 cents, helping to offset some of the additional fuel costs. "That will cover part of the increase."

Fishermen who have held their quotas for many years are in a better financial position than those who purchased them more recently.

"It's extremely difficult to turn a profit. We're more in a situation where we lose less money by fishing than by staying in port," says Mr. Element.

Those who choose not to fish are leasing their quotas to active fishermen, allowing the remaining fleet to continue operating.

This co-operation among fishermen is helping the industry navigate the ongoing challenges.

Maxi reportedly interested in Paspébiac

Nelson Sergerie

PASPÉBIAC – Rumours of a Maxi grocery store opening in Paspébiac circulated over Thanksgiving weekend, but both Loblaw and the municipality's mayor have downplayed the speculation.

The possibility generated considerable discussion on social media. "This is a matter the municipality cannot comment on, as all discussions with developers are confidential until the project is finalized, regardless of what it entails," says mayor Jérémy Laplante.

In January, a market study commissioned by the municipality revealed that there was room for a second supermarket in Paspébiac, potentially ranging from 20,000 to 30,000 square feet.

The municipality is currently served by a 26,000-square-foot IGA supermarket. "Steps have been taken to move a project forward, and that process is ongoing," the mayor says.

Efforts to attract another grocery store have been underway for approximately a year. "When the study was published, it created momentum, raised awareness, and generated interest. There's the non-compete clause that was recently lifted by Sobeys at the former Robin store. But I'm not in a position to comment on specific projects. Efforts have been underway for a year to attract a grocery store, but there's no announcement on the horizon," says Mr. Laplante.

Loblaw has also declined to confirm whether it is considering opening a Maxi discount grocery store in Paspébiac. "We're always on the lookout for new development opportunities, but we don't have anything concrete to announce at this time. We therefore won't comment further on the rumours at this stage," says Geneviève Poirier, senior manager of communications at Loblaw, in an email.

The most recent Maxi location to open on the Gaspé Coast was in Pointe-à-la-Croix, where the former Provigo was converted in the winter of 2024.

In December 2023, Loblaw invested $4 million to transform the 20,000-square-foot Provigo store in Gaspé into a Maxi.

The chain also renovated its New Richmond location around the same time, investing several hundred thousand dollars in the project.

Residents have taken to social media to express their preference for a Super C rather than a Maxi.

Metro Group, which owns the Super C banner, is not prepared to comment on the possibility of opening a store at the location. In response to our questions, Metro stated that it continuously evaluates growth opportunities throughout Quebec and actively works to identify the most suitable locations to meet the needs of the communities it serves. However, the company added that it has no announcements to make at this time.

Super C currently has stores in Gaspé and Chandler, while Metro operates a store in Carleton-sur-Mer.

Unemployment rate rises sharply in September

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – For the second consecutive month, employment declined sharply in the Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine region, pushing the unemployment rate to 9.1% in September.

According to Statistics Canada, the region lost 1,800 jobs in September, following the loss of 1,000 part-time positions in August.

A total of 37,900 people were employed in the region in September.

Full-time employment fell by 1,500 positions, dropping from 34,000 in August to 32,500 in September.

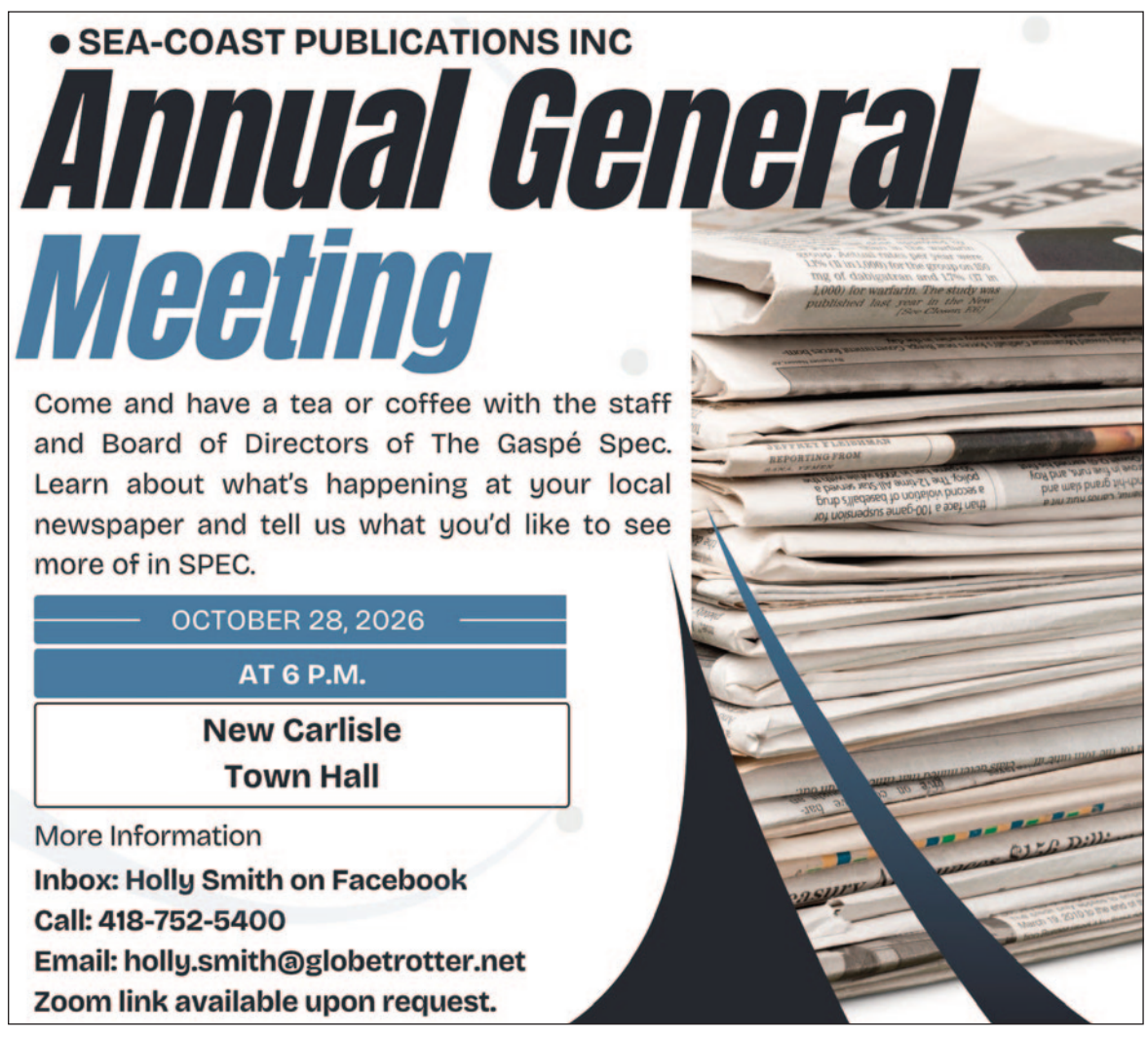
Part-time employment also declined, although to a lesser extent, falling from 5,700 to 5,400—a decrease of 300.

Meanwhile, the number of unemployed people increased by 600 to 3,800.

The labour force, which includes people who are employed or actively looking for work, also decreased by 1,100 to 41,800.

As a result, the unemployment rate rose by 1.6 percentage points to 9.1%.

By comparison, the unemployment rate stood at 5% in September 2025, when 39,600 people were employed in the region. Year over year, the region lost 1,700 jobs, while the number of unemployed people increased from 2,100 to 3,800.



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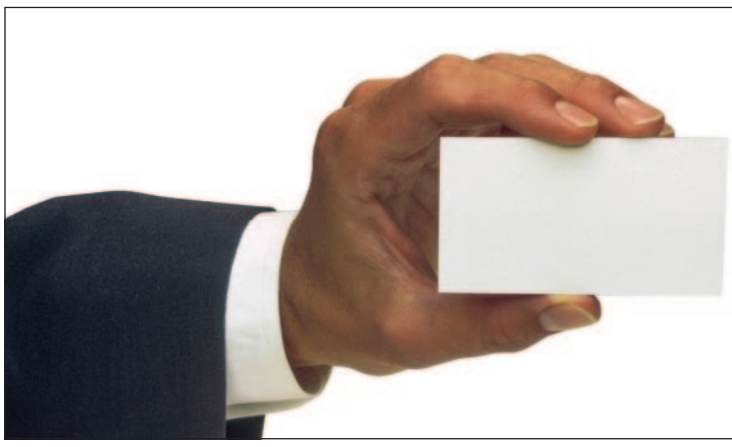

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