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Staff cuts at Forillon Park: employees on edge

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE



A large proportion of Forillon Park employees have received notices indicating that their jobs are at risk.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Federal government downsizing has begun following the announcement of a 15% spending cut, particularly at Parks Canada, and the consequences could be severe for Forillon employees.

According to information obtained from the union by Alexis Deschênes, the Member of Parliament for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj, some 95 employees at Forillon Park and the Battle of Restigouche have received notices putting their jobs at risk.

Parks Canada's interim chief executive officer (CEO) recently stated that 2,900 of the 4,000 workers will be affected.

Alexis Deschênes notes, based on the union's tally, that 87 out of 110 workers at Forillon and eight at the Battle of Restigouche site are affected, which will have an impact on this important economic driver.

"This adds another layer to the entire history of Forillon Park, where the scars of those who were expropriated have not yet healed," comments Alexis Deschênes on the consequences experienced by families when the park was created in the early 1970s.

The employees are victims of the government's inconsistency, he adds.

"As soon as this government was elected, it said we'd invite people to visit our national parks. We'd lower the fees. The idea is interesting, but if the very next year you're slashing staff, that's short-sighted," the Member of Parliament responds.

The elected official laments that while cuts are being made to something as strategic as Forillon National Park in the Gaspé Peninsula, the same Liberal government led by Mark Carney is investing some $40 billion in the construction of an oil pipeline.

In September the prime minister has officially designated the Pacific Link

Cont'd on Page 6

Former Gaspé MNA laments Forillon's future

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Stéphane Sainte-Croix, former Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé and descendant of those whose land was expropriated in Forillon.

GASPÉ – Having worked in the tourism industry for nearly 25 years before being elected to the National Assembly in 2022, the former Gaspé Member of National Assembly (MNA) and descendant of those whose land was expropriated in Forillon sees the potential staff cuts at Forillon National Park as a strange signal sent by the federal government.

Stéphane Sainte-Croix is concerned. "It's a strange signal. We didn't really see this coming in our region. I understand that it's part of recent budget decisions. I hope that the necessary representations will be made in both Quebec City and Ottawa. We'll let our elected officials work on the issue, but it's worrisome," he says.

Over the past decade, more than $100 million has been invested in infrastructure to bring it up to standard, and visitor numbers have gradually increased.

Last year, 188,400 visitors were recorded—its best performance in 25 years.

"This is a park that has modernized, remains relevant, and is a major draw. This is not the kind of news we want to hear in the current climate."

Before leaving politics, Stéphane Sainte-Croix had floated the idea of bringing Forillon National Park back under Quebec's jurisdiction.

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

According to Article 10, the agreement has a term of 99 years and will expire on June 8, 2069.

Article 11 of the agreement is an automatic termination clause allowing the Quebec government to terminate it after 60 years, in 2030.

To invoke this clause, the Quebec government must provide the federal government with five years' written notice before June 8, 2025—a prerequisite if it subsequently wishes to take steps toward terminating the agreement in 2030.

"I think this is another reason to reconsider Forillon's relationship with its territory. We have a tool within the agreement—a clause. We did our homework, but we weren't able to move forward on this issue. But I hope we'll take the initiative on this matter and conduct the necessary analyses," says the former MNA, who was defeated on October 5.

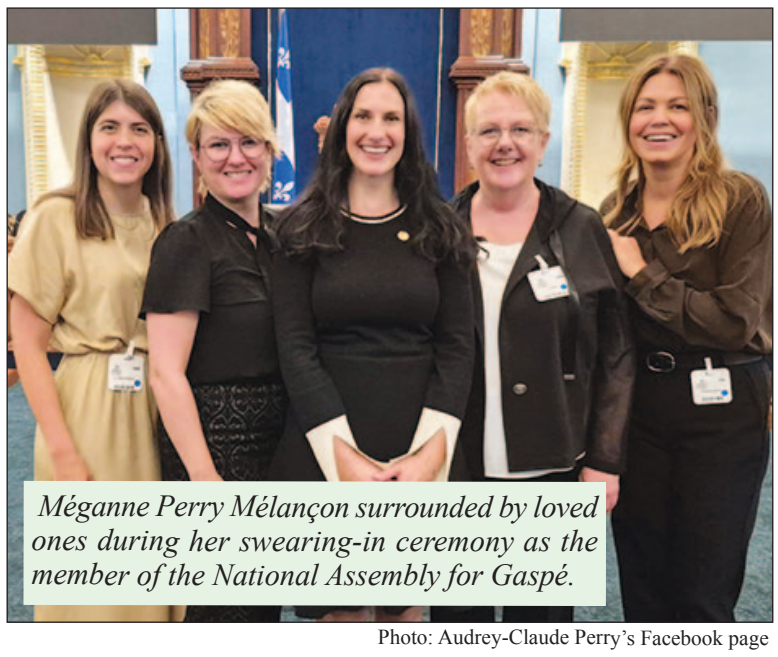
The termination clause stipulates that the Quebec government must, at the federal government's discretion, either reimburse it for "all capital expenditures incurred by the latter in connection with the park during the preceding 60 years" or compensate it "in a manner acceptable to the latter."

The amounts could be substantial. Over the past decade, the federal government has invested approximately $100 million in Forillon, not counting the funds spent since the park's creation.

To that end, in May 2025, the Quebec government submitted a request for an estimate of the expenses the provincial government would have to reimburse or compensate for if it wished to take over responsibility for Forillon National Park, but Ottawa quickly shut the door on Quebec's request.

Gaspé Peninsula's two new MNAs take their oaths

NELSON **SERGERIE**



Méganne Perry Mélançon surrounded by loved ones during her swearing-in ceremony as the member of the National Assembly for Gaspé.

Photo: Audrey-Claude Perry's Facebook page



Pier-Luc Bujold during his swearing-in ceremony in the Red Room of the National Assembly.

Photo: Courtesy

GASPÉ – The two newly elected Parti Québécois (PQ) members of the National Assembly (MNAs) from the Gaspé Peninsula took the oath on October 15 at the National Assembly in Quebec City.

Méganne Perry Mélançon and Pier-Luc Bujold are beginning their terms, which could be shorter than expected, as the Parti Québécois holds a minority government and could face a vote of non-confidence from opposition parties.

Ms. Mélançon, who previously represented Gaspé from 2018 to 2022, is particularly pleased with this victory. In 2018, her election was only confirmed after a judicial recount.

"Ten days after the election, it was stressful for me to make up for that 10-day delay and ensure everything was in place: the team, the offices, housing in Quebec City, and the swearing-in ceremony. This time, it was a convincing victory—a chance to celebrate the work we've done and to reunite with the 59 Parti Québécois members of the National Assembly and the premier at a festive ceremony," says Ms. Mélançon.

The newly elected MNA is now setting up her constituency office and hiring staff, with several issues already requiring her attention.

Meanwhile, newly elected Bonaventure MNA Pier-Luc Bujold is enthusiastic about beginning his mandate.

"We feel we have our work cut out for us. This validates the work we've done," says Pier-Luc Bujold, who emphasizes the importance of putting constituents first.

Like his colleague, Mr. Bujold is establishing his constituency offices and recruiting staff. A handover of files with outgoing Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) MNA Catherine Blouin took place on October 19.

One of his immediate priorities is Centre Accalmie, a halfway house dealing with wastewater problems.

"It's an urgent priority. We'll navigate as we go and adjust according to the priorities that arise. It will be a daily challenge," he says.

Mr. Bujold also addressed the Parti Québécois' decision not to include Quebec Lieutenant-Governor Manon Jeannotte, a member of the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation, in the swearing-in ceremony. He does not believe the decision will damage relations with the Gaspé Peninsula's three Mi'gmaq communities.

"There are other ways to reach out to communities besides the figure of the Lieutenant Governor. That's a thing of the past, according to the Parti Québécois. We'll work hand in hand with the communities. We'll listen to their needs. It's through our actions that we'll build trust with them," says Mr. Bujold.

CCGS Baie de Gaspé christened in Rivière-au-Renard

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – The last of 20 boats built for the Canadian Coast Guard's search and rescue operations was officially christened October 15 at the Rivière-au-Renard wharf.

Senior Canadian Coast Guard officials travelled to Gaspé for the ceremony, which included the traditional breaking of a champagne bottle against the boat's hull.

Built by Forillon Shipyard in Gaspé, the modern search and rescue boat was delivered to the federal agency in October 2025.

The christening marks a historic milestone for the shipyard, which has delivered 10 boats since 2018. An Ontario shipyard was contracted to build the other 10 boats under the $180-million program.

Equipped with advanced technology, the new boat offers significant advantages for crews conducting search and rescue operations off the coast of Rivière-au-Renard.

"We're very happy here in Rivière-au-Renard to be working on the Baie de Gaspé. It's longer, wider, and larger, which gives us better stability on the water. Given the sea conditions here in the Gaspé Peninsula, these features are particularly valuable to us. The boat is also more powerful," says Étienne Fleury Amann, commander of Team B at the Rivière-au-Renard Search and Rescue station.

Having previously served aboard older boats, Mr. Amann says the technological improvements will make a considerable difference during operations.

"Just in terms of the integrated navigation instrument system, it's like night and day. We're now equipped with a thermal camera. It's a great addition if we need to search for someone at night—it'll help us. The Baie de Gaspé is a major step forward," continues Mr. Amann.

However, the new boats are not ice-class certified, limiting their operating season despite the Coast Guard's interest in extending the period during which search and rescue services are available.

"These 20 newly built boats, including the latest CCGS Baie de Gaspé, have created many local jobs. They enable us to fulfill our primary search and rescue mandate with greater effectiveness thanks to the new technology," says Charlotte Girouard Ares, acting fleet director for the Central Region.

"These boats will be able to assist in the event of environmental disasters since they can travel farther than the older boats," she adds.

The 20 boats are deployed across Canada. The Rivière-au-Renard station operates with a four-person crew.

End of an era for Forillon Shipyard

The completion of the CCGS Baie de Gaspé marks the end of a major shipbuilding contract that has contributed significantly to Forillon Shipyard's growth over the past decade.

"The boat enters service today, but this was a contract spanning about ten years. It's been a wonderful project," says president and chief executive officer (CEO) Jean-David Samuel.

The contract provided an opportunity for the company to expand its expertise while overcoming the logistical challenges of building boats in series.

"It allowed us to build a team ready to take on larger-scale, more complex federal contracts. Working with the Canadian government has helped us make a name for ourselves and build a strong track record," he says.

With Ottawa's National Shipbuilding Strategy creating further opportunities, the company hopes to build on that experience and secure additional contracts.

Forillon Shipyard is currently constructing a hybrid semi-offshore fisheries research boat for the Coast Guard, as well as a multipurpose fishing boat for a Newfoundland and Labrador company.

Mr. Samuel remains optimistic about the company's future, although recruiting skilled workers continues to be a challenge.

"We're always looking for workers to help us complete our current projects and take on new ones. We're still growing and are looking for workers in all trades," he says.



Photo: N. Sergerie

Patricia Dorion, a member of the Gespeg Mi'gmaq First Nation and godmother of the CCGS Baie de Gaspé, breaks the traditional bottle of champagne against the boat's hull during its christening.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Pêches et Océans Canada

Notice of Application to Dispose of Waste or Other Matter at Sea

Notice is hereby given that Fisheries and Oceans Canada, located at 104 Dalhousie Street, Québec, Quebec, on this 4th day of November, 2026, intends to apply to Environment and Climate Change Canada, for **SIX DISPOSAL AT SEA PERMITS under the *CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999*** to load dredged material in the following harbours in the Gaspé Peninsula and then dispose of it at sea at the disposal sites listed below, using a clamshell dredge or a hydraulic shovel or hydraulic dredge and towed barges.

Harbour	Quantity in cubic metres (m^3) in-place measurement	Drop-off site	Anticipated dates of loading and disposal activities
Port-Daniel (48.18233° N and 64.96150° W NAD83)	4 000	PD-6 (48.13500° N and 64.94167° W NAD83)	From March 15, 2027 to March 14, 2028
L'Anse-à-Brillant (48.72117° N and 64.28950° W NAD83)	6 000	ABR-1 (48.73200° N and 64.28200° W NAD83)	From March 15, 2027 to March 14, 2028
L'Anse-à-Brillant 48.72117° N and 64.28950° W NAD83)	6 000	AB-5 (48.45000° N and 64.25000° W NAD83)	From March 15, 2027 to March 14, 2028
Saint-Godefroi (48.07310° N and 65.11478° W NAD83)	9 000	SG-2 (48.04500° N and 65.08333° W NAD83)	From March 15, 2027 to March 14, 2028
Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé (48.41500° N and 64.39433° W NAD83)	8 000	ST-4 (48.39000° N and 64.38670° W NAD83)	From March 15, 2027 to March 14, 2028
Gascons-Chapados (48.18933° N and 64.28950° W NAD83)	5 000	G-5 (48.18000° N and 64.83333° W NAD83)	From March 15, 2027 to March 14, 2028

For further information regarding these activities, please contact:
Maxime Doyon, Project Technician
Small Craft Harbours Branch
Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Quebec Region
104 Dalhousie Street, Québec, Quebec G1K 7Y7
Maxime.Doyon@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

The public may raise environmental concerns about this notice or obtain information on the permit issuance process, by contacting the nearest Disposal at Sea Program regional office:
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Quebec Region Environmental Protection Operations Directorate Coordinator
Disposal at Sea Program
105 McGill Street, 4th floor,
Montréal, Quebec H2Y 2E7
Phone: 438-342-1563
immersionqc-disposalatseaqc@ec.gc.ca

Préavis de demande de permis d'immersion de déchets ou autres matières en mer

Avis est donné par les présentes que Pêches et Océans Canada, sis au 104, rue Dalhousie, Québec (Québec) en ce 4e jour de novembre 2026 a l'intention de demander à Environnement et Changement climatique Canada, **SIX PERMIS D'IMMERSION EN MER en vertu de la *LOI CANADIENNE SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT (1999)*** afin de charger des déblais de dragage dans les havres suivants en Gaspésie, pour ensuite les immerger en mer aux sites de dépôt mentionnés ci-dessous, au moyen d'une drague à benne preneuse ou d'une pelle hydraulique ou drague hydraulique et de chalands remorqués.

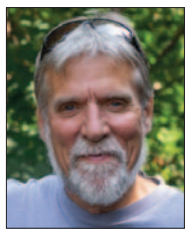
Havre	Quantité en mètres cubes (m^3) mesure en place	Site de dépôt	Dates prévues d'activités de chargement et d'immersion
Port-Daniel (48.18233° N et 64.96150° O NAD83)	4 000	PD-6 (48.13500° N et 64.94167° O NAD83)	Du 15 mars 2027 au 14 mars 2028
L'Anse-à-Brillant (48.72117° N et 64.28950° O NAD83)	6 000	ABR-1 (48.73200° N et 64.28200° O NAD83)	Du 15 mars 2027 au 14 mars 2028
L'Anse-à-Brillant 48.72117° N et 64.28950° O NAD83)	6 000	AB-5 (48.45000° N et 64.25000° O NAD83)	Du 15 mars 2027 au 14 mars 2028
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Gascons-Chapados (48.18933° N et 64.28950° O NAD83)	5 000	G-5 (48.18000° N et 64.83333° O NAD83)	Du 15 mars 2027 au 14 mars 2028

Pour de plus amples renseignements sur ces activités, veuillez communiquer avec :
Maxime Doyon, technicien de projets
Direction des ports pour petits bateaux
Pêches et Océans Canada, région du Québec
104, rue Dalhousie, Québec (Québec) G1K 7Y7
Maxime.Doyon@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Le public peut faire part de ses préoccupations environnementales suscitées par ce préavis, ou obtenir des renseignements sur la délivrance des permis, en s'adressant au bureau régional du Programme sur l'immersion en mer le plus près :
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Gilles **Gagné**

Commentary

Ottawa is so far from regional realities…

On October 23, a Friday, the federal government announced a major program of cuts at Parks Canada, affecting sites including Forillon National Park and the Battle of the Restigouche National Historic Site.

"A Friday" is noteworthy here. When a government wants to announce bad news and put the lid on reactions and potential questions from the press or stakeholders, it usually carries out that announcement on the last day of the week, when most people are already thinking about their weekend and happy hour. Friday afternoon is the favourite period of government officials, but Saturday and Sunday mornings are far from ruled out.

The upcoming Parks Canada cuts came just weeks after the same government announced its intention to provide massive funding for the Pacific Link project—a pipeline spanning Alberta and British Columbia with a price tag between $35 billion and $44 billion.

At Forillon, 87 of the 110 positions could be "affected", a term left so far without a clear definition. At the Battle of the Restigouche National Historic Site, the status of eight positions has become uncertain.

This announcement was made quite unabashedly, even though the Mark Carney-led government had, following the April 2025 election, pledged to prioritize environmental protection. Yet, Canada remains far from its target of protecting 30% of its landmass to ensure the long-term survival of its flora and fauna.

The plan to invest approximately $40 billion in Pacific Link comes just years after the federal government took over another pipeline project, Trans Mountain, at a cost of $34 billion. The government now claims this was a sound investment, arguing that rising oil prices could allow it to recoup the funds poured into the pipeline.

However, the environmental cost of Trans Mountain is entirely overlooked. As with Pacific Link, the oil transported to the West Coast for export is highly polluting to produce, particularly in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the extraction process leaves behind "sacrificed" landscapes, areas that are effectively beyond recovery, while the pollution generated poses health risks to anyone working nearby. And that's not even counting the fact that the Canadian government heavily subsidizes the oil industry, over and above its investments in pipeline projects.

Excessive support for the oil industry

The organization Environmental Defence, which tracks government subsidies on an annual basis, estimates that support for oil companies operating in Canada reached $29.6 billion in 2024!

This figure includes support for pipelines, as well as various tax credits, research grants for oil firms, notably for carbon capture (a highly controversial process), backing for other oil-related projects, and interest-free loans.

All this assistance comes at a time when these "poor" oil companies are reporting record profits. Furthermore, none of them seem eager to step forward and invest alongside the federal government in Pacific Link. Why would they rush to show interest? Ottawa appears perfectly willing to come to their "rescue" without any private-sector contribution.

In this light, Parks Canada's attempt to save $145 million, out of a total budget of nearly $1.29 billion, looks like an effort to scrape together some pocket change.

Of course, it's clear that this mandate for budget cuts at Parks Canada is part of a broader initiative aimed at reducing the overall burden of federal spending.

But since oil companies enjoy unparalleled privileges, why shouldn't an agency dedicated to protecting ecosystems or historic sites such as Parks Canada also be granted an exemption?

Humanity completely erased

The most troubling aspect of the still-vague announcement regarding Parks Canada facilities in the Gaspé Peninsula is the complete absence of a human perspective, whether concerning current employees or those who were expropriated and forced out of their own little slice of paradise starting in 1970.

The decision-makers based in the Canadian capital, Ottawa, seem so far removed from regional realities when they apply budget cuts, or most measures, for instance.

Let's look at some background here: 600 people were forced to leave their properties during the creation of Forillon National Park, and 2,000 parcels of land were acquired, in whole or in part, through forced expropriation. The lives of those expropriated were turned completely upside down.

The federal government signed an agreement with the province of Quebec, tasking the latter with the dirty work of clearing out the area designated for the park. It is worth noting that the Quebec government was already well-practiced in this regard, having shut down dozens of villages over the preceding decade.

Part of this questionable undertaking involved hiring the very people who had been expropriated to burn down houses, including their own! The promise made by federal minister Jean Chrétien, who was responsible for parks at the time, that 2,000 to 3,000 jobs would be created, reeked of condescension. In the end, the park never employed more than 5% of that number.

Furthermore, until 1975, when lawyer Lionel Bernier finally secured a victory in court, the compensation received by those expropriated was insufficient to allow them to find decent housing elsewhere. Let us add to the scales five years of uncertainty and anguish. As for the frustrations of those who were expropriated, they began before 1970 and persisted long after 1975, continuing, one might say, to this very day, as is often the case with profound injustices.

A useless sacrifice?

It is also worth recalling that, for 35 years, these expropriated individuals had to pay an entrance fee to the park just to visit the graves of their family members, or simply to walk across their former land and remember what a good life they once had there.

In 2025 and 2026, Parks Canada introduced a 25% discount for those using its camping facilities and other forms of accommodation. Across Parks Canada's 48 national parks and reserves, admission was free from June 19 to September 7 in both 2025 and 2026.

This year, Forillon welcomed 188,000 visitors, a large proportion of whom entered for free. While it is unclear exactly how much revenue the agency lost nationwide due to these discounts, certainly tens of millions of dollars nationwide, it would have been wiser to forgo them and retain existing staff instead.

The establishment of Forillon National Park was marked by lies and the intimidation of those who were expropriated. Basic human decency would dictate that these individuals should not, either directly or indirectly, be made to bear the cost of budgetary cutbacks.

There is something profoundly contemptuous toward them in the announcements made at the end of October. Over the years, in addition to experiencing an avoidable uprooting, given that the park could have retained its human dimension, those who were expropriated watched as Parks Canada neglected, for 40 years, the properties that had not been destroyed by fire. These were supposed to be restored promptly, which is far from what actually happened, as such investments only occurred over the last 10 to 15 years.

A 15% cut to the operating budget of Forillon National Park will inevitably lead to further neglect in the maintenance of its facilities.

It will be tantamount to reminding those who were expropriated, and their descendants, that their sacrifice was in vain. It will serve as a reminder that the apologies offered in recent years by Parks Canada officials were not sincere.

The Gaspé Peninsula has no shortage of causes that warrant public indignation. The plight of those expropriated from Forillon is a reason to remind the federal government of past injustices and to demand that Parks Canada's budgets be maintained. It is a matter of dignity.



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Police Report

Seven people arrested in drug bust, two charged, others to appear in April

On October 28, officers from the Sûreté du Québec (SQ), supported by the tactical intervention group, the forensic identification service, the major crimes investigation team of Chandler, the major crimes investigation division of Rimouski, investigative units from the Avignon, Bonaventure, Rocher-Percé, Haute-Gaspésie and Matapedia MRCs, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Montreal-based national organized crime enforcement squad, and a K-9 unit, carried out a series of arrests and searches in the areas of New-Richmond, Cascapedia-St-Jules, Gesgapegiag, and Campbellton in connection with drug trafficking offences.

During these searches, which covered 10 residences and 19 vehicles, police seized, among other items, nearly $110,000 in Canadian currency, nearly $13,000 in U.S. currency, 20 hunting weapons, five handguns, one long gun, approximately $25,000 in suspected proceeds of crime, about 1,000 grams of dried cannabis, a dozen cell phones, various documents, nearly 530 grams of cocaine and approximately 1,500 assorted prescription pills.

Five men and two women, all between the ages of 28 and 39, were arrested as part of this operation. Two of the individuals appeared at the New Carlisle courthouse to face charges related to drug trafficking. They are Tyson Shawn Astels, 31, from New Richmond, and Corey Wiinikainen, also 31. Both remained in custody. "The other five individuals were released on a promise to appear and will return to court at a later date. It will be on April 12," points out Béatrice Dorsainville, communication officer for the Sûreté du Québec. The SQ notes that information received from the public made the successful completion of this operation possible.

Arrest of a Paspebiac man for sexual offences

François-Luc Alain, a 24-year-old Paspebiac man, was arrested on October 22 in connection with various sexual offences and appeared in court in New Carlisle three days later to face nine charges. The man allegedly used pseudonyms such as "LOUIS21113 and FLUC752" on different platforms to communicate with five victims. After engaging in sexually explicit conversations, the accused allegedly asked them to send intimate photos and videos in exchange for money. Among the charges laid against him, one is related to the storage of firearms. The suspect had previously been arrested on June 6, 2025, and released on conditions for similar offences. An arrest warrant was issued following the analysis of seized items. The alleged offences took place between 2023 and 2025.

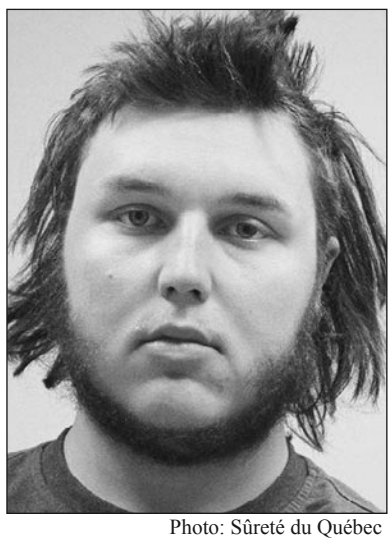


Photo: Sûreté du Québec

The investigation suggests that the suspect may have had other victims elsewhere in Quebec. Following his court appearance, François-Luc Alain was released under various conditions and will return to court on November 23 for further proceedings. Since several victims have been identified, the Integrated Major Crime Investigation Team, coordinated by the Sûreté du Québec, has been deployed. This unified command structure allows Quebec police forces to work in partnership to quickly identify crimes committed by predators and proceed with their arrests. This provincial coordination enables the pooling of police resources and aims to better protect victims.

Bryan Lafontaine still in discussion about an out-of-court agreement

The case of Bryan Lafontaine, a 40-year-old man from the Cape Cove sector of Percé charged with attempted murder, returned to court again on September 30. "The case was adjourned to January 15, 2027, for the pro forma trial stage. The parties are still in discussions. We may reach an agreement to be presented on January 15. There is a strong likelihood of a settlement," explains criminal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville.

Bryan Lafontaine faces 14 charges, the most serious of which stems from incidents that occurred on the afternoon of January 18 in Paspebiac. He allegedly stabbed a woman in the neck, although she was not seriously injured. He is also charged with breaking and entering, forcible confinement, assault with a weapon, aggravated assault, attempting to contact the victim in violation of a prohibition order, criminal harassment, and assault. In January, he was required to remain in the judicial district of Gaspé and refrain from communicating with the victim, and he was prohibited from coming within 50 metres of her. He remains in custody pending further proceedings.

Fraud: Bruno-Pierre Godbout sentenced to jail and ordered to repay

Former Chandler municipal councillor Bruno-Pierre Godbout has been sentenced to 90 days in jail after pleading guilty to a fraud charge at the Percé courthouse. In addition to the sentence, he must repay $3,348 to the Municipality of Chandler and donate $2,000 to Maison Blanche-Morin, a shelter for women experiencing domestic violence and their children.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

He was also sentenced to two years of probation. On September 8, Mr. Godbout's lawyer, Arianne Cayer, told the court that an agreement had been reached in the case involving fraud, forgery and the use of forged documents by the former councillor while he was serving as acting mayor in 2021. The Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) had estimated the fraud at approximately $10,000.

In January 2024, UPAC indicated that its investigation suggested that between February 1 and July 31, 2021, Mr. Godbout allegedly produced and used false expense reimbursement claims while serving as acting mayor during the suspension of former mayor Louisette Langlois by the Commission municipale du Québec (Quebec Municipal Commission).

On May 1, Mr. Godbout was sentenced to 36 months in prison after pleading guilty on January 20 to six of the 12 charges against him. Mr. Godbout pleaded guilty to one count of sexual assault, one count of assault with a weapon, two counts of assault and two counts of criminal harassment.

The additional 90-day sentence will be served after his current prison term. Meanwhile, Bruno-Pierre Godbout faces charges in another case involving alleged violent offences against two victims last June. Mr. Godbout faces five charges involving sexual assault, criminal harassment, forcible confinement and assault.

Families of Rivière-au-Renard tragedy victims prepare for parole hearings

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – Still grieving the deaths of Dylan Samuel Francoeur and Gabriel Noël, who were killed on May 10, 2023, in Rivière-au-Renard, their families are preparing to address the Parole Board of Canada to request strict conditions if the two men convicted in connection with their deaths seek parole.

"We oppose their parole. It hasn't been requested yet, but it could be soon. We are asking that both defendants be relocated for the entire duration of their sentences so that they cannot be present in the Gaspé judicial district," says Jessica Samuel Francoeur, Dylan's sister.

Simon Dufort-Chouinard was sentenced to 13 years in prison after pleading guilty in June to two reduced charges of manslaughter, while his father, Marc-Jules Chouinard, received a nine-year sentence in August after being convicted of two counts of manslaughter and one count of dangerous driving.

Marc-Jules Chouinard could be eligible to apply for full parole as early as June 13, 2028. He could also become eligible for certain privileges next July and for day parole at a halfway house beginning September 25, 2028.

His son could become eligible for full parole on March 25, 2029, with certain privileges possible as early as July and day parole at a halfway house beginning December 13, 2027.

"That's short! We agree that it's not long enough for the crimes committed, right? I've been speaking out loud and clear from the very beginning," says Jessica Samuel Francoeur.

The families have enlisted the support of lawyer and former Quebec justice minister Marc Bellemare.

"He's a heavyweight in the justice system. We reached out to him to represent us before the Parole Board and assist us with our efforts," she says.

The families also consulted Mr. Bellemare about the possibility of appealing the court decisions but were told the verdicts were final.

"Even though the families were against all of that," says Ms. Samuel Francoeur, who has criticized the length of the legal proceedings and the plea agreements that resulted in convictions on reduced charges.

Simon Dufort-Chouinard was initially charged with premeditated murder and non-premeditated murder, while Marc-Jules Chouinard faced several charges, including two counts of non-premeditated murder, criminal harassment, uttering threats, criminal negligence causing death and possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose.

Former senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, a longtime advocate for victims of crime, is also supporting the families. His daughter, Julie Boisvenu, was abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered in Sherbrooke in June 2002 at the age of 27.

"It's impossible to come to terms with this loss. What I'm asking is that, at the very least, we not face another injustice. It's a loss that's impossible to come to terms with at the age Dylan was, given the life he had. We don't want to face another injustice in the justice system," says Ms. Samuel Francoeur.

An online petition has been launched in support of the families' efforts before the Parole Board of Canada. Approximately 2,000 signatures have already been collected, and the families hope to gather as many as possible before any potential hearing.

Méganne Perry Mélançon named minister responsible for the Gaspé region

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – Premier Paul Saint-Pierre Plamondon has appointed Parti Québécois (PQ) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé, Méganne Perry Mélançon, to his 22-member cabinet.

The elected official became the first Gaspé MNA since Gaétan Lelièvre in 2012–2014 to join the inner circle of decision-makers as Minister of Family, Youth, Sports, and Recreation.

The assembly woman is already aware of the colossal task ahead of her, as her leader has tasked her with expanding the network of early childhood centres, which still faces a shortage of 10,000 spots.

Just hours after her appointment, she is beginning to grasp the magnitude of the challenge.



Photo: National Assembly

The member for Gaspé joins the cabinet. Here, she is signing the register to formalize her ministerial appointment.

"I can't wait to get down to business. To meet my team at the ministry, figure out how we'll deliver on our campaign promises to help families and young people—issues that are close to my heart—and ensure that this serves as a catalyst for the Gaspé Peninsula and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, for which I am responsible," says the member for Gaspé.

With 10,000 spots still needed, the challenge is significant, particularly due to the labour shortage, as the new early childhood centre (CPE) in Gaspé cannot operate at full capacity because recruiting early childhood educators is difficult.

"I'm confident that we'll find the right ideas by going out into the field. The Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government wasn't fully committed to the '100% CPE' vision. We want to refocus. We have major challenges ahead of us. I've visited the CPE centres, met with management, and spoken with the educators. I believe I have a good understanding of these issues. I'm optimistic that we'll have the resources to make these changes," she continues, with the support of her colleagues.

She's also thinking about children with special needs.

In her role with sports and recreation, the Gaspé arena project stands out on its own.

"We'll have to take stock and see how we're managing this project, but we'll do so in collaboration with local stakeholders and municipal officials to find a way to move the project forward."

The minister agrees to provide special support to Haute-Gaspésie.

"Having special status is interesting and desirable, but it requires a vision and objectives. I've demonstrated my commitment to pursuing this and will assess whether it's necessary to address this issue given all the work that needs to be done. These projects require special attention and will need to meet various criteria. It remains one of my objectives. "

With her colleagues Joël Arseneau and Pascal Bérubé, and if we add Meggie Richard from the North Shore, Eastern Quebec is strongly represented in the cabinet, which creates a certain obligation to deliver results.

"We should see this more as a privilege—having four ministers from Eastern Quebec. I don't think this has ever happened before. We'll all work together, but this collective voice will carry weight. We're capable of handling the pressure," she says, without raising further expectations among voters.

"We've had some tough years. We need to get back into listening mode, and we'll have to deliver. We have a few years ahead of us," she says confidently, despite the reality of a minority government in which a snap election could occur at any time.

Cabinet appointments welcomed in the Gaspé

NELSON **SERGERIE**

CARLETON-SUR-MER – Both the president of the Gaspé Prefects' Council and the mayor of Gaspé welcome the appointment of Méganne Perry Mélançon as minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula and that of her colleague Joël Arseneau as Minister of National Education.

For the region, demographics have been a top priority for years.

The fact that the Gaspé Member of the National Assembly (MNA) has been appointed Minister of Families and Youth and Minister responsible for Sports and Recreation, in particular, is viewed very favourably, as are the appointments of her other colleagues from Eastern Quebec.

"It's very good news to have Ms. Perry Mélançon at the Ministry of Family, Youth, Sports, and Recreation. We're all aware of the challenges facing municipal sports and recreation infrastructure, and more broadly, having three members of the National Assembly from Eastern Quebec on the cabinet is viewed positively. The region will have a strong voice in the cabinet," says the council president, Mathieu Lapointe.

The Parti Québécois has made commitments regarding childcare and housing.

"We're going to make sure these commitments are fulfilled," Mr. Lapointe continues.

The mayor of Gaspé and prefect of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC shares a similar view; he had hoped that Ms. Perry Mélançon would join the cabinet.

"She had everything it took to qualify. The Gaspé Peninsula is very well represented with Pascal Bérubé, Joël Arseneau, and Meggie Richard on the North Shore," comments Daniel Côté.

"We should make our position known. Programs should be better tailored to our realities. We'll make our voice heard more clearly. Ms. Perry Mélançon has been assigned two portfolios in areas we had identified as priorities," says the mayor, referring to daycare spots and the downtown arena project.

FORILLON: pipeline as a project of national interest—a project estimated to cost between $35 billion and $44 billion, financed primarily by public funds.

Cont'd from cover

This 1,250-kilometre project is intended to transport oil from Alberta to British Columbia.

The vice-president of the Union of National Employees, which represents Parks Canada workers among others, notes that the announced cuts are on an unprecedented scale.

Éric Drouin points out the far-reaching impacts on members and pledges to support them.

"That's all well and good, but if you're supposed to provide services to the public, and if we cut everyone in the park, who's going to maintain the buildings and serve the tourists who come to the park? Everything that's happening right now is unclear," he continues.

The union believes that the parks are a national treasure and must be preserved.

Worker representatives are in the dark and are seeking information from the employer, but it's coming in only sporadically.

Parks Canada did not respond to the SPEC following an email sent on October 16, even as rumours were already beginning to circulate about the possible effects of budget cuts.

Inquiries directed to Forillon were forwarded to national headquarters.

Condemned from all sides

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, condemns Parks Canada's blanket approach, which he finds deplorable and says is hurting this economic driver for Gaspé and the Gaspé Peninsula.

Over the past 10 years, tens of millions of dollars have been invested in infrastructure, and numerous partnerships have been established.

"If there are fewer employees, there will be fewer partnerships. This will be less effective for developing the community," says the elected official, who points out that Forillon—given its history of expropriations—must be treated differently.

Suspending user fees may not have been a good idea.

"It sounds nice, but who pays for it later? I get the impression that it's the employees who ultimately foot the bill. Right now, it's the employees, but eventually, it will be the services provided to the public," the mayor fears.

Another unpleasant memory

The Association of Expropriated Residents of Forillon and Their Descendants says it is reliving another unpleasant memory with the announcement of potential staff cuts.

Spokesperson Lynn-Ann Smith has noted a decline in the maintenance of the park's buildings due to budget constraints.

This is adding insult to injury after having endured expropriation in the early 1970s.

Collaboration at the local level has been very good, particularly since 2011.

"We work closely with the employees, who, like us, have put a tremendous amount of energy into developing commemorative projects. We were currently working on others as well. What will happen to all these projects?" asks Ms. Smith.

The group intends to support the employees. Just like the other stakeholders, the association considers the decision to make admission free an insult.

"They've lost that money, and I think they need to get it back. It's inconsistent management. It makes no sense," Ms. Smith says.

Santé Québec Gaspésie wants to protect its services

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – The Parti Québécois (PQ) has promised to abolish Santé Québec, which was only recently created by the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government to manage the day-to-day operations of the healthcare network. This latest restructuring must not affect the level of service in the Gaspé region.

"We must continue to be there for Gaspésie's patients and fulfill our role as watchdogs and advisors to Santé Québec, while acting as guardians of the Gaspésie's needs, realities, and unique characteristics," says Gilles Cormier, chair of the board of directors of Santé Québec Gaspésie.

"We expect that decisions won't be applied across the board and that regional specificities will be taken into account," he says in response to the proposed restructuring.

The president and chief executive officer, Martin Pelletier, is more cautious, given his responsibilities.

"We'll see how things play out. We're capable of adapting. We've shown that in the past. We'll see what direction this takes. We've had good momentum with Santé Québec so far. We'll see what the upcoming changes mean in the coming months and years," Mr. Pelletier says.

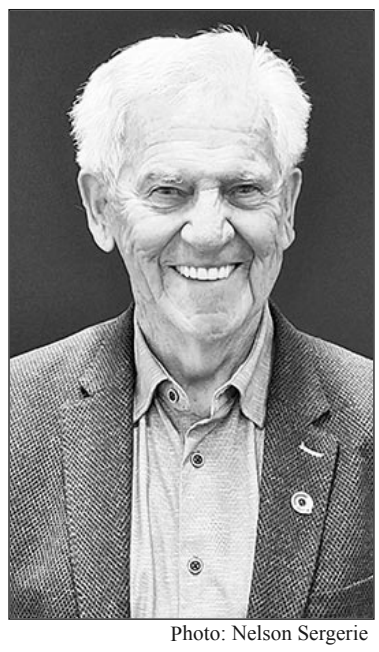


Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Gilles Cormier, chair of Santé Québec Gaspésie's board of directors.

During the election campaign, the Parti Québécois promised to abolish Santé Québec to combat bureaucracy, eliminate duplication with the Ministry of Health and Social Services, decentralize decision-making and return management to the local level. The PQ aims to save between $40 million and $100 million to reinvest in direct care.

Progress at Maria Hospital

Santé Québec Gaspésie's most significant infrastructure project is at Maria Hospital, where an initial planning meeting was held with the Société québécoise des infrastructures (Quebec's public infrastructure agency) to prepare for the construction of a wing that will house the future emergency department and intensive care unit.

"We're past the theoretical stage. There are on-site meetings. One has already taken place. Twenty-five participants—including emergency department staff, frontline workers, and professionals—are coming together to work on the concept," explains Mr. Pelletier, who headed technical services when the Gaspé integrated health and social services centre was created 10 years ago. The organization has since become Santé Québec Gaspésie.

The location of the new wing will be selected within the available grounds. The planning process is expected to take about two years.

"This will allow us to assess the costs. Afterward, the final plans and specifications phase will enable us to issue a call for bids."

Mr. Pelletier hopes construction will begin in 2032, with the project's preliminary cost estimated at $300 million.

Youth centre project in Gaspé back on the agenda

The project to build a new facility for youth centre services for the Côte-de-Gaspé area is back on the list of priorities. Originally proposed for construction in Haldimand in 2020, the new building — which will bring all services under one roof — may be relocated to the grounds of Gaspé Hospital. The potential site will be evaluated because of its proximity to clinical services.

"This isn't a project that will necessarily have to go through the Quebec Infrastructure Plan. It requires an affordable budget to carry out this project, which will be around $30 million," says Mr. Pelletier.

The current centres are the Rade and Rivage units, located in the Pavillon Cantin at the Gaspé hospital, and La Vigie, located in Wakeham.

The headquarter has responded positively to the proposal, as youth services appear to be a priority for Quebec.

"It seems they want to focus efforts on youth. Youth housing infrastructure is important. There are sectors that take priority over us, but I think we could be among the first projects to be implemented," he says.

Cases involving youth in residential care are becoming increasingly complex, highlighting the need to develop this project and work more closely with the hospital.

Exterior cladding to be replaced

A safety concern has led Santé Québec Gaspésie to plan to replace the exterior cladding at Chandler Hospital. Although the building envelope is relatively new, it has a design flaw.

"It's a relatively new building envelope. It's a design flaw that poses a fire safety risk. We have no choice," says Mr. Pelletier.

A call for bids is underway for the work. Next, the priority will be the building envelope at Gaspé Hospital, which has not been replaced since the building was completed in 1972.

The building envelope's airtightness is compromised, and adhesive tape is being used to block air leaks around some windows.

"We'll ensure safety, but we're keeping a very close eye on the current situation. It's an old structure that needs monitoring," says Pelletier. He wants to avoid having to resort to makeshift repairs, as has been the case at Montreal's Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital, which has experienced numerous problems due to its deteriorating condition.

A declining deficit… by accident

Santé Québec Gaspésie's projected deficit is estimated at $4.5 million for the current fiscal year, down from an initial estimate of $20 million. Patient services have not been affected, but budgetary discipline remains essential.

"We've made significant savings this year by reducing the number of hours worked. There are positions that are unfilled," Mr. Pelletier notes.

He cites staff shortages in obstetrics as an example of unintended savings. The shortage of workers is also affecting certain services.

"In preparation for the next budget, we must ensure that the savings projected for this year are not calculated as a net reduction for the next budget," he warns.

Last year, the organization finished with a balanced budget after initially projecting a $30-million deficit.

Annual vaccination campaign begins

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – With respiratory virus season approaching, Santé Québec has launched its annual vaccination campaign in the Gaspésie to help limit the spread of infections.

Appointments can now be booked through the Clic Santé portal, with vaccinations for the general public beginning October 20 at several locations across the Gaspé Peninsula.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available free of charge to people aged 65 and older, pregnant women, and individuals with diabetes, chronic illnesses, weakened immune systems or heart, lung or kidney disease.

People aged 75 and older are also eligible for the free respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine, which can be administered at the same time as the flu and COVID-19 vaccines. Those aged 60 and older can receive the RSV vaccine for a fee.

Infants can also receive protection against RSV starting at birth, as they and older adults are among the groups most vulnerable to the virus. This protection is nearly 90 per cent effective.

The effectiveness of the flu vaccine varies from year to year because it is difficult to predict which strains will circulate during the season.

Vaccinations are already underway in long-term care facilities, intermediate care facilities and seniors' residences.

Season could begin early

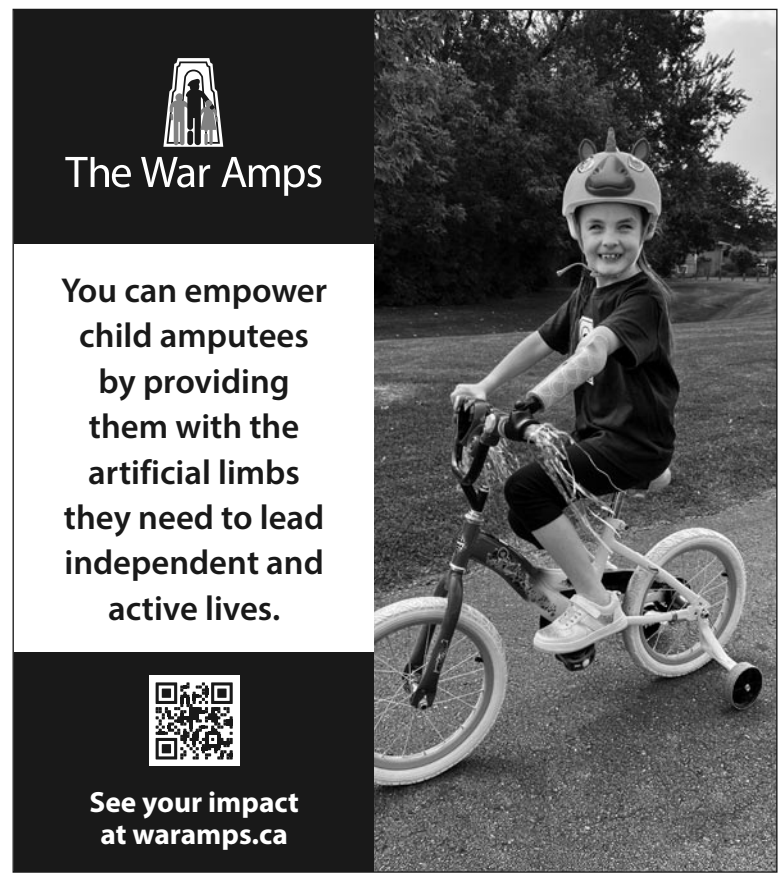
"We're seeing a slight increase in both influenza and COVID-19 cases. Is this the start of the season? It's too early to say at this point," says Dr. Jean-François Lefebvre of the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Public Health Department.

Last year, respiratory infections surged during the holiday season. "What's certain is that there will be a surge—whether at the end of this month, in November, December, or January—there will be a surge. The idea is to get vaccinated as soon as possible," the doctor says.

Approximately 20,000 flu shots were administered last year, a figure consistent with the average in recent years, excluding the pandemic period.

According to Dr. Lefebvre, there are sufficient vaccine supplies to meet public demand. "The goal is to vaccinate people before the wave hits," he says.

For those who do not qualify for free vaccination, the flu vaccine costs $48, the COVID-19 vaccine $143 and the RSV vaccine $265."



Alternative fuels at the Port Daniel cement plant: Éco baie des Chaleurs calls for public hearings

GILLES **GAGNÉ**

PORT DANIEL – The Éco baie des Chaleurs group is demanding that Saint-Marys Cement's project to use alternative fuels be subjected to a full environmental assessment process, including public hearings. The Quebec Ministry of the Environment does not consider this full procedure necessary because the company will not be increasing its production.

On September 17, Saint-Marys Cement announced its project to partially replace the fuel used in its kilns, specifically, highly polluting petroleum coke, with a mix of forest biomass, construction waste, and non-recyclable plastics.

The initiative would require an $80 million investment, and the goal is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions specifically attributable to the clinker division of the cement plant by 20%. This represents 520,000 tonnes of GHGs per year released specifically by clinker production, the first stage in cement production.

Jean-Marc Beaulieu, spokesperson for Éco baie des Chaleurs, believes that the Saint-Marys Cement project, as it has been publicly presented so far, will not lead to any reduction in atmospheric GHGs in the short, medium, or, to some extent, long term.

"The company wants to replace petroleum coke with low-carbon fuels. It will take more forest biomass to achieve the same heat output. It's greenwashing. It's illogical, with a cement plant; you need a fuel that releases a great deal of heat. It's not for nothing that they use petroleum coke; it's the fuel that produces the most heat," explains Mr. Beaulieu.

"According to a study made by the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, it takes 30 to 40 years for CO2 to be reabsorbed by nature. The idea that the reduction is immediate is a flawed calculation. The claim of a decrease in greenhouse gases is misleading. They aren't reabsorbed the moment they're generated. Whether GHGs come from plant matter or fossil fuels, the result is the same. Any reduction won't happen for 30 or 40 years—if not longer—and that's assuming there are no major forest fires! It's an overly optimistic narrative, a 'happy-go-lucky' outlook, that our governments too often swallow without asking any questions," Mr. Beaulieu continues.



Photo: Gilles Gagné

The initial version of Saint Marys Cement's application to amend its operating permit was rejected because the documents submitted by the company were incomplete.

Ministry to conduct assessment, but without public hearings

On September 11, during an information session, Saint-Marys Cement outlined its fuel-substitution project to the Ministry of the Environment.

"Based on the information provided to date, the introduction of alternative fuels into an existing cement plant, without increasing production capacity, constitutes a modification to an already authorized industrial process. Such a project therefore falls under the ministerial authorization regime," states Ghizlane Bedaoui, a spokesperson for the Ministry of the Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change, in a written response.

She adds that "replacing a fossil fuel with an alternative fuel for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions does not automatically subject a cement plant to the environmental impact assessment and review process." Based on the information available to the ministry, the project would not be subject to this assessment procedure.

It is this same evaluation process, which includes public hearings, that Jean-Marc Beaulieu is calling for; he wants the latest research on GHG reductions resulting from the combustion of forest biomass to be presented to the public.

Saint-Marys Cement presented its project to the regional press on September 17, and to the local community the following day.

An initial, incomplete submission

Three weeks after outlining its fuel-substitution project to the Ministry of the Environment on September 11, St. Marys Cement submitted an application to the same ministry, seeking authorization to include forest biomass, construction waste, and non-recyclable plastics in its fuel mix.

"The ministry received an application for authorization on October 2, 2026; however, it was deemed inadmissible because it was incomplete," states Ghizlane Bedaoui, in response to questions from the Gaspé SPEC.

Justin Meloche, of the public relations firm National, who is handling the Saint Marys Cement file, explains that the cement plant will submit new documentation to the Ministry of the Environment "within one to two weeks" to provide "certain information or documents that had not been taken into account."

Furthermore, Mr. Meloche noted that he has not seen the study by the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, which indicates that it would take at least 30 years before the industrial combustion of forest biomass results in a reduction of GHG emissions.

Operations to begin in early 2030

In September, the management of Saint Marys Cement indicated its intention to begin construction, under ideal conditions, on a new facility for drying alternative fuels, with work slated to start before the end of 2027.

The project will involve constructing the building, a conveyor system leading to the clinker production tower, and a duct to channel excess heat from that tower to dry the alternative fuels; this phase is expected to take just over a year. Following this, a few additional months will be required for testing the new infrastructure, with the goal of being fully prepared by the end of 2029 and launching the new complex in early 2030.

In September, Mathieu Heppell, director of human resources at St. Marys Cement, clarified that the company will not be using waste or rubber, including tires, as fuel for its new facilities.

The Port Daniel cement plant has an annual production capacity of 2 million tonnes of cement, though it currently produces approximately 1.6 million tonnes. This volume is expected to rise with the commissioning of a new cement-receiving terminal in Baltimore, United States.

Once the Port Daniel plant reaches its full annual production capacity of 2 million tonnes of cement, it is projected to consume 200,000 tonnes of petroleum coke. The plant's current annual output is 1.6 million tonnes of cement.

At a production level of 2 million tonnes, Saint Marys Cement plans to reduce its petroleum coke consumption, currently around 200,000 tonnes per year, by 40,000 tonnes. If it manages to cut this volume by 20%, it could reduce the 518,000 tonnes of GHGs generated by clinker production by the same proportion, that is, by a little over 100,000 tonnes, provided, of course, that the concerns raised by Éco baie des Chaleurs do not materialize.

It will take 80,000 tonnes of waste material to replace 40,000 tonnes of petroleum coke, given a combustion efficiency ratio of two to one, stated Philippe Marceau, director of the cement plant, in September.

The $80 million project is being carried out through a partnership with the Migmawei Mawiomi Business Corporation, which represents the three Mi'gmaq communities of the Gaspé Peninsula.



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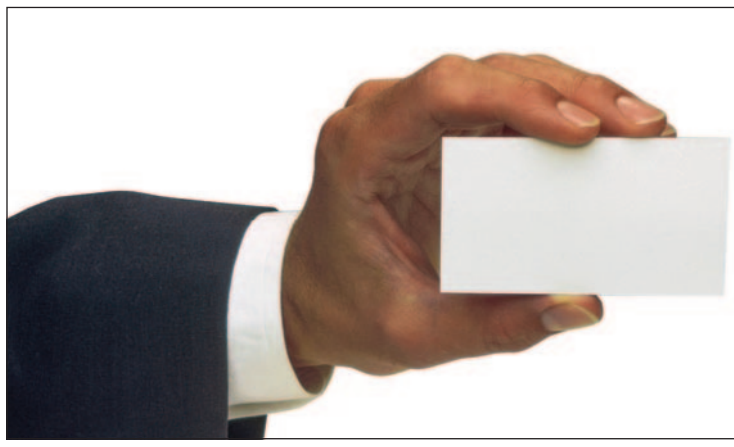
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Remembrance Day Schedule

Gaspé
10:15 a.m. Bus Leaving Legion.
10:45 a.m. Celebration at the Cenotaph.
12:00 noon Closing, return to Legion.
12 to 1 p.m. Free cocktail for Veterans at Legion
1 p.m. Lunch at the Legion with Veterans.

New Carlisle
10:30 a.m. Parade starts at the old New Carlisle High School.
10:45 a.m. Ceremony begins.
11 a.m. Moment of silence.
The community is invited after the ceremony to the Legion for a luncheon.

Cascapedia-Saint-Jules
10:45 a.m. Ceremony at the Cascapedia-Saint-Jules Cenotaph.
Followed by a lunch at the Community Centre in Cascapedia-St-Jules.

New Richmond
10:45 a.m. Ceremony at the New Richmond Cenotaph.
Followed by a lunch at the Community Centre in Cascapedia-St-Jules.





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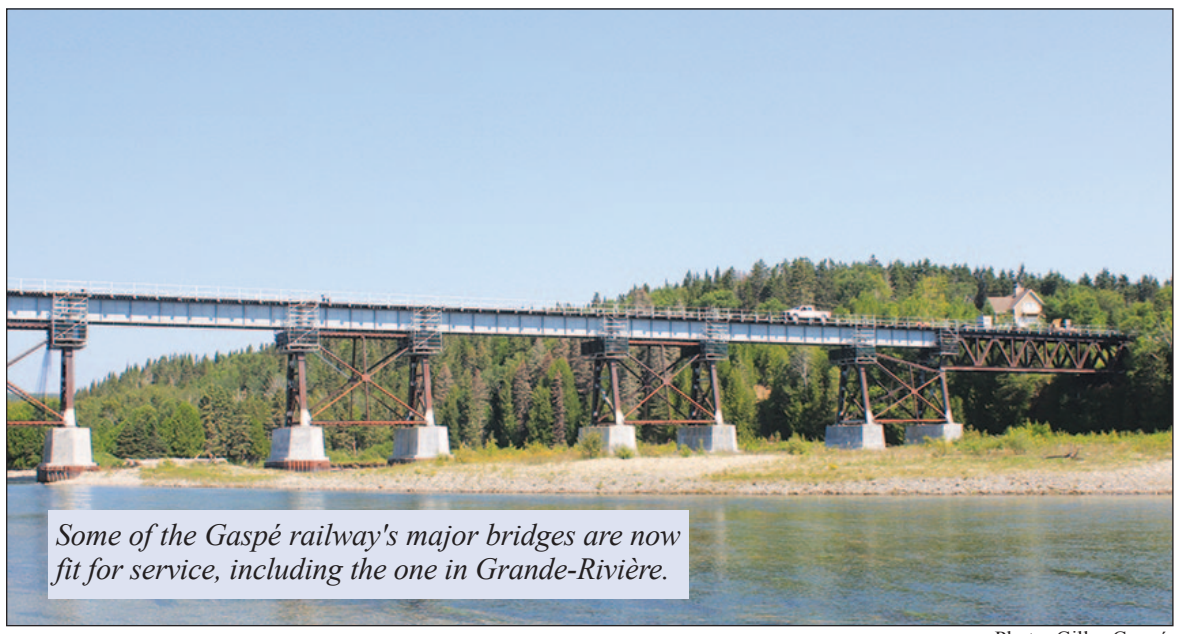
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Railroad repairs: SCFG to meet with Transports Québec officials during first half of November

GILLES **GAGNÉ**



Some of the Gaspé railway's major bridges are now fit for service, including the one in Grande-Rivière.

Photo: Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – Éric Dubé, président of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, and some members of his team are expected to meet representatives of Quebec's Ministry of Transport in the first half of November to plan the next steps in the refurbishment of the Port Daniel-Gaspé section of the region's line.

The election of a new government, led by the Parti Québécois (PQ), might imply new objectives on the ministry's part, considering that during the electoral campaign, commitments were made to increase the use of regional expertise.

"What will come next is supposed to be a big part of the upcoming meeting planned for the first part of November," explains Éric Dubé.

The upgrading of the Gaspé railroad has experienced a rather bumpy ride since March 2025. In fact, a bumpy ride has characterized the line since the mid-1970s, but the March 2025 decision made by the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government to send the whole file back to a planning stage, while the repairs seemed to have picked up pace, was heartily denounced by regional stakeholders.

At the beginning of May 2026, Transports Québec announced funding of $138.6 million over two years, with no further details provided. It followed a 14-month period during which no new calls for tenders were issued. The announcement came just hours after a visit to the Gaspé Peninsula by Mathieu Paquette, the president of VIA Rail Canada.

"We still need $300 million for the project to reach Gaspé. They (Transports Québec) already have a plan. There are still ten structures to repair or rebuild. There are several kilometres of riprap (rock armour) to lay out in order to protect the railroad," adds Éric Dubé.

Before voting day, Parti Québécois regional candidates Pier-Luc Bujold and Méganne Perry Mélançon pointed out on many occasions that local expertise, as in the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) and regional contractors, had to play a bigger role in the upcoming railroad work.

Éric Dubé agrees, but he thinks it might take a while to change old habits. "Realistically speaking, it's the kind of thing that sounds good during an election campaign. We see plenty of good intentions. However, the environmental standards and regulatory management remain and won't change overnight. We'll always be ready to help. We are already doing so. We will see if the ministry's regulatory management policy is modified. I'm worried a bit because I don't expect it to change for months, maybe a year," he specifies.

A day after the appointment of cabinet members, a report released by La Presse newspaper indicated that the new government has already ruled out carrying out, in the short or medium term, two major road projects that have made headlines for years: a bridge over the Saguenay River between the North Shore and Charlevoix, and the expansion of Highway 20 east of Trois-Pistoles. The reason given by Transports Québec is the necessity to upgrade the existing network, whose condition is worsening.

Éric Dubé is not too worried about the possibility of the same cancellation happening to the Gaspé railway between Port Daniel and Gaspé, the section where work is still required.

"We are talking about two projects that were not even certified on a drawing board, although the Highway 20 part was a little more advanced. Most of the plans are already drawn up in the case of the Gaspé Peninsula railroad and bridges," stresses Mr. Dubé.

Obstetrics: More service disruptions expected in Gaspé

NELSON **SERGERIE**
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

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

GASPÉ – After experiencing two service disruptions in October, the obstetrics department at Gaspé Hospital is expected to face further disruptions in the coming weeks. This is due to a severe labour shortage and difficulty hiring independent contractors.

"This is a problem we've been pointing out for several months now, and it continues. Year in and year out, we have people choosing to work elsewhere, particularly on the Côte-de-Gaspé. There are six positions currently unfilled. We manage to cover them every other week. This puts pressure on the rest of the staff," explains Martin Pelletier, president and chief executive officer of Santé Québec Gaspésie.

In this department, staff are required to work overtime and be on call.

"But it's exhausting. We're aware of the issue and are working to find people, but it's not easy," he adds.

The regional network relies on independent contractors, a dedicated provincial obstetrics team and Santé Québec's mobile team.

"But there are other needs across the province. We've submitted our requests. We haven't received a positive response, which is leading to staff shortages, service disruptions, and complete closures," laments Mr. Pelletier.

A committee dedicated to finding solutions at the regional level and within the local health network was established several months ago. In Haute-Gaspésie, the local committee has yielded results, even if the situation remains fragile.

"We need to do the same thing on the Côte-de-Gaspé: set up a working committee involving community organizations, municipal authorities, internal staff, and unions to find solutions, but it always comes down to resources," notes Mr. Pelletier.

Birthing centre

The plan for a birthing centre at the Maison de la famille Parenfant remains on the table, even though Santé Québec Gaspésie was unable to secure funding for the project, which was proposed in 2024.

"We're still waiting for our budgets. We weren't able to do it this year. We'll see about next year. It's always tied to our other challenges. It's a priority project, and we want to see it through," says Mr. Pelletier.

The network is preparing its budget for next year and will assess its needs.

"We recall that last year, we ended up with a 4% budget cut. We didn't have the flexibility to meet this need," Mr. Pelletier notes.

At the Maison de la famille Parenfant, the project remains active.

"We're continuing our efforts and political advocacy for the expansion of the Maison de la famille," says coordinator, Marie-Andrée Nadeau.

In addition to the birthing room, the plan includes a waiting room and additional space for the organization, which would effectively double the size of the current facility.

"We hope to move the project forward this year with the arrival of a new government and a new member of the National Assembly; we'll see if we can't speed things up or get some support in the coming weeks," says Ms. Nadeau.

In 2024, the project was estimated to cost $1.2 million, to be funded by partners and a public fundraising campaign.

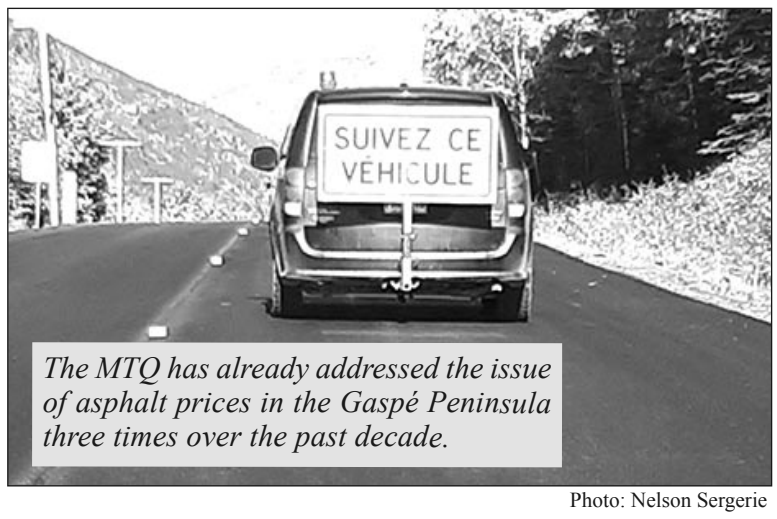
The MTQ has examined asphalt prices three times over the past 10 years

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – After elected officials in the Gaspé Peninsula repeatedly raised the issue in an effort to find a solution to high asphalt prices, the Ministry of Transport responded that the municipalities had not provided the full cooperation needed to find a lasting solution during various attempts over the past 10 years.

As early as 2015, the cost of asphalt in the Gaspé Peninsula was a concern for municipalities in the region. Following a request from Sylvain Roy, then the Parti Québécois member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Bonaventure, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the municipalities worked together to identify solutions to the problem.

A joint committee submitted an analysis report in April 2015. The report identified potential solutions that could lower the cost of municipal asphalt paving contracts, but these did not receive the necessary support from the municipalities to be implemented, as the municipalities lacked the resources and expertise required to carry them out.



The MTQ has already addressed the issue of asphalt prices in the Gaspé Peninsula three times over the past decade.

Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Second attempt

A second attempt was made in September 2019, again at the initiative of Sylvain Roy, who suggested at the time that the ministry negotiate asphalt prices on behalf of the municipalities, as they believed they were paying higher prices than the ministry.

An effort was launched in November 2019 with various municipalities in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Lower St. Lawrence regions to obtain paving contracts for a comparative analysis. Since the contracts could not be compared on an equivalent basis, the analysis did not yield conclusive results.

Another attempt in 2022

The ministry held two information sessions in March 2022 with municipal partners on preparing specifications for asphalt mixtures — one for the Gaspé Peninsula and the other for the Lower St. Lawrence region. Since then, the ministry has received no requests on this matter.

"Furthermore, the ministry does not intend to take further action, as it has no control over all the variables necessary for healthy competition (such as labour shortages, market overheating and market concentration,)" the ministry wrote in an email responding to our questions on this issue.

Since early October, the mayors of Chandler, Gaspé and Paspébiac have spoken out publicly to criticize the prices charged for asphalt in the region. Gaspé mayor Daniel Côté even singled out Eurovia, which he said holds a monopoly in the Gaspé Peninsula.

He recently pointed out that when there was competition, prices were 20 to 25 per cent lower.

Eurovia responds

Eurovia has responded to criticism regarding the rates charged for paving sections of streets and roads in the Gaspé Peninsula. In response to a request from Spec, the VINCI Construction subsidiary pointed to its presence throughout Quebec.

"We understand the concerns expressed by certain municipalities regarding the cost of paving work in the Gaspé Peninsula," communications director Céline Galophe wrote.

"The presence or absence of other bidders does not, on its own, determine the cost of the work. The prices submitted by Eurovia Québec are based on the specific conditions of each project, including volumes, transportation distances, raw material costs and applicable contractual terms."

The company stated that prices in the Gaspé Peninsula must be assessed in light of the specific characteristics of the regional market. A direct comparison with major urban centres, based solely on price per tonne, does not fully reflect these realities.

Among the factors cited by Eurovia are production volumes. An asphalt plant incurs significant fixed costs, particularly related to labour, maintenance, equipment and depreciation. When these costs are spread over a lower annual volume, their impact on the production cost per tonne is necessarily greater.

"The Gaspé market has seen low volumes in recent years. By way of comparison, some plants in the Greater Montreal area can produce more than 200,000 tonnes per year, while our Chandler plant barely reached 15,000 tonnes. This level of activity became insufficient to sustain operations, leading to its temporary closure," the company said. Chandler's mayor had highlighted the closure during the October municipal council meeting.

A second factor is geographical distance. Bitumen, a key component of asphalt mix, must be transported over longer distances to supply facilities in the Gaspé Peninsula. The associated logistics costs are therefore higher than in regions located near major supply centres.

Furthermore, transportation between the plant and the job site is subcontracted to independent truckers, meaning that transportation costs vary depending on the distance between the plant and the job site. A final factor is the fluctuation in the price of bitumen, which is not subject to an indexation mechanism. The producer must therefore bear the risk associated with fluctuations in the cost of this raw material.

"These various factors must be taken into account when comparing the cost of paving work in the Gaspé Peninsula to that in other regions of Quebec," concludes Eurovia.

High asphalt prices revive former MNA's proposal

Nelson Sergerie

ESCUMINAC – Comments by the mayor of Chandler, who believes that asphalt prices in his municipality are too high, have revived the debate over whether municipalities should purchase asphalt collectively rather than individually.

Former Bonaventure Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Sylvain Roy, who served from 2012 to 2022, had previously suggested that the Ministry of Transportation issue joint calls for tenders on behalf of municipalities. The goal was to consolidate purchases, achieve economies of scale and secure better prices. "With the oil crisis, it's a safe bet that the price of asphalt will rise significantly," says Sylvain Roy, who is now mayor of Escuminac.

At the time, some stakeholders opposed his proposal. "What we were told at the time was that the work wasn't planned properly and that moving the equipment cost a fortune. We had proposed a coordinated plan to carry out the work at a lower cost and avoid moving the equipment from the Matapedia Plateaux to Chandler, then back to Carleton-sur-Mer, and then on to Port-Daniel," recalls the former MNA.

Mr. Roy says discussions were held with the ministry about managing the process internally, but the proposal never moved forward. "We never received a response. At the time, we were a minority government, and we didn't quite have the legitimacy to push for major reforms. It fell through."

With municipalities facing the prospect of further increases in paving costs, Mr. Roy believes the proposal deserves renewed consideration.

"That would be ideal because, at the end of the day, it's the citizens who foot the bill. The Ministry of Transportation needs to take responsibility and give municipalities a chance to pay a reasonable price for paving. Once again, the lobbyists will be out in full force, and I'm not sure the ministry will take this under its wing. This should be a priority for our regional representatives," says the mayor of Escuminac.

Gaspé mayor criticizes Eurovia over high asphalt prices

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – Following criticism from the mayor of Chandler, elected officials in Gaspé and Paspébiac are also speaking out against high asphalt prices, which they attribute to Eurovia's dominant position in the Gaspé Peninsula. "It's no surprise. It's too expensive when you compare prices in the Gaspé Peninsula with those elsewhere in Quebec. We're paying much more," says Gaspé mayor Daniel Côté, who argues that various explanations are repeatedly offered to justify the higher costs.

Mr. Côté says a similar situation exists in the concrete industry, where he claims Béton Provincial holds a monopoly.

He recalls a period when two companies were competing for contracts in the Gaspé Peninsula. "We had three years of competition. For bids estimated at $850,000, the final cost came in at $650,000. We saved 20% to 25% when there was competition," the mayor recalls.

Every time he has criticized the price of asphalt, Eurovia has complained. "Eurovia's lobbyist doesn't need to call me. I know their spiel, and they know mine. We don't need to talk to each other to know we don't see eye to eye," he says.

Mr. Côté suggests public organizations could explore solutions such as joint tendering to encourage competition and reduce costs.

"Nothing is wrong, but nothing is moving forward. I wonder if there isn't some excessive lobbying going on regarding this issue."

In Paspébiac, the municipality received only one bid, from Eurovia, to repave a 180-metre section of Day Street. The bid came in at $280,000. "That's very, very high. We're looking into why. We'll decide how to proceed: do we accept or reject it and reissue the call for bids in six months?" says Paspébiac mayor Jérémy Laplante. Before the bids were opened, municipal officials and elected representatives had estimated the project would cost slightly less than $200,000.

"With prices this high, it's no surprise that the maintenance backlog on road infrastructure isn't shrinking. With prices like this, we don't have the fiscal capacity to catch up," he says.

Approximately half of Paspébiac's 42 kilometres of municipal streets are expected to require repaving.

According to Mr. Laplante, the issue was expected to be raised with provincial authorities.

A wonderful Fall Festival

ELAINE **SEXTON**

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES - The Cascapedia–St-Jules Fall Festival started this year on Thursday, October 1, with music, bingo and the start of the third annual softball tournament.

The festival continued Friday, October 2, with more music, a dart tournament, a pumpkin carving display and the continuation of softball, with 10 teams competing for the Golden Glove Trophy. The silent auction was set up in the new Multicultural Centre.

Saturday, October 3, brought the annual farmers' market, where many local vendors showcased and sold their items. Line dancing took place on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

The crowd gathered for the soapbox derby, the very popular washers competition, children's activities, music and the softball semifinals. Saturday, October 3, was another night of music.

On Sunday, October 4, the Rotary Club served a delicious brunch and the crowd stayed afterwards to enjoy more music and the finals of the washers competition and softball tournament. Magician David Philippe entertained young and old with his many card tricks, and Madame Lulu was a hit with her balloon animals and face painting.



A variety of creatively carved pumpkins were on display during the Cascapedia–St-Jules Fall Festival, held October 1 to 4.



Photos: Elaine Sexton

Malcom (left), Loik and Riley smile for a photo in the pumpkin patch display at the Cascapedia–St-Jules Fall Festival.

The festival was made possible through the efforts of volunteers and sponsors, with support from those who attended.

Next year will mark the festival's 25th anniversary, with celebrations scheduled for September 30 and October 1, 2 and 3, 2027. The milestone will be celebrated with four days of activities, music and entertainment.

Pamela Rooney: Queen of country music in Atlantic Canada

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPE - The accolades keep piling up for Pamela Rooney, who received the Queen of Country in Atlantic Canada award on October 17. This honour comes just a few weeks after she received an honorary award at the Texas Sounds Festival in Marshall, Texas.

"I'm pretty proud," says the Douglastown native, who knew the pageant's organizer, Céline Ouellet.

"Five years ago, she asked me if I could host a benefit event to help her go to Las Vegas for a beauty pageant. I volunteered my time, and she's never forgotten that," the artist explains.

After being invited to the event in Edmundston, New Brunswick, she was told to bring a nice evening gown to take photos with the pageant contestants.

"I ordered a dress, and when it was time to present the crowns, the organizer said, 'Pamela Rooney.' She explained that even though I've made it on the international stage, I'm still kind to the people around me, and she gave me the crown. I'm pretty proud of that one," continues the singer, who has travelled 166,000 kilometres in two years.



Pamela Rooney.

Photo: Courtesy of Pamela Rooney

She has a single goal with her music: "I make music to touch people. I love music, and if I can put a smile on someone's face once a day… It's just like Dolly Parton," explains Pamela Rooney.

Her manager in the United States for the past year recently paid a heartfelt tribute to Pamela Rooney on social media.

"We've accomplished so much in the past year. I'm heading to Texas for photo and video shoots. The whole town is coming along with me. It's incredible how hard this guy works. We're recording with members of George Strait's band. I'm from the Gaspé Peninsula. Who would have thought it!" she says.

She has nothing but good things to say about her manager, Matthew Davis Lundgren.





Bees, so important to our food supply, are in sharp decline in part because of the use of neonicotinoid pesticides

Photo: Cynthia Dow

Sorry to bug you, but… insects need our help

When we were kids, my parents often took us to Port Daniel to visit our grandparents. During the warmer months, my dad would have to stop partway to clean all the "bug juice" off the windshield. Today, on the same trip, you might see the remains of one insect on your windshield, if any.

The "windscreen phenomenon" is being studied around the world, with serious outcomes. In Denmark, a 1997 to 2017 survey recorded an 80% to 97% decline in flying insects "…which mirrored a parallel drop in insect-eating birds like swallows and martins," according to the report.

Mention bugs and the first thing that comes to mind are those that bite and sting. But insects of all kinds are absolutely essential to healthy ecosystems. And they make up 90% of species on Earth.

Insects are at the base of the food chain on which we depend, and are eaten by our cherished songbirds, fish, amphibians, small mammals and bats. They play an essential role in agriculture, not only pollinating crops, but also eating pests. And they are the world's cleaning crew, eating carcasses and faeces that would otherwise cause disease.

"We wouldn't survive (in a world without insects) for very long," Oliver Milman told CBC's The Current during an interview in 2022. He wrote the book The Insect Crisis: The Fall of the Tiny Empires That Run the World. Insects are in sharp decline around the globe due to insecticide use, habitat loss, light pollution and climate change. These are all issues we can do something about.

Insecticide use needs to be sharply curtailed. Buy organic food whenever possible, and let your elected officials know that the widespread use of chemicals like neonicotinoids and glyphosate has no place in the food chain. You can also find environmentally friendly methods to deal with insects in your home: next spring I'll have ideas for you.

As for habitat loss, you can start in your own backyard. People love their velvety lawns, but mowing creates an environment where few species flourish. I turned my lawn into a wildflower oasis and found a lovely native orchid! Another thing to avoid is raking up leaves: many species spend the winter under cover. Leaving leaves is also better for your lawn, providing protection from frost and natural mulching.

And outdoor lighting? I cringe when I see so many houses with dozens of outdoor lights glaring through the night. Not only are they harmful to nocturnal insects, the lights disrupt tree growth and disturb many wildlife species. It's an easy fix to substitute a simple yellow "bug light."

I used to hate having to run through the gauntlet of dozens of June bugs sticking to my clothes and getting caught in my hair at the back door. Climatic conditions are obviously wreaking havoc on their life cycle: very few now appear, as early as May and as late as August. How many other species are experiencing the same?

Of all Earth's creatures, insects are among the most adaptable. So I'm hopeful that once we start to respect their needs, they will rebound, continuing to do their important tasks for the benefit of all.

SPEC's finances are now nearly balanced after three years of financial difficulties

GILLES **GAGNÉ**



Photo: Gilles Gagné

Publisher Holly Smith and members of The Gaspé Spec's board of directors gathered for the newspaper's annual general meeting on October 28 in New Carlisle.

NEW CARLISLE – Sea-Coast Publications, the publisher of SPEC, reported a slight deficit of $1,246 in 2025-2026, a sharp improvement over the situation of the last three years. In 2024-2025, the newspaper reported a $47,629 deficit, already a marked improvement compared to the $85,637 and $93,537 deficits of the two previous years.

The $1,246 deficit for the year that ended on March 31 represents a tad less than one-third of a percentage point of SPEC's expenses of $423,906, precisely 0.29%, which is very close to a balanced budget.

The improved results were largely attributable to a significant increase in advertising sales, from $76,900 in 2024-2025 to $116,348 last year, a $39,448 jump, or 51.3%. The $53,937 grant associated with SPEC's 50th anniversary also contributed significantly to the improvement in revenue.

In fact, total revenues went from $329,467 to $422,660 between two years ago and last year, a $93,193 increase.

The main expense reductions came in the form of salaries and benefits, where $13,532 was saved, and postage fees, where savings of $20,667 were made, largely due the fact that the newspaper has been published every second week since the spring of 2025.

Also in the expenses column, there was a sizeable increase in the Local Journalism Initiative item from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026, from $47,441 to $85,138. However, that grant was renewed for the current year.

The balance sheet of Sea-Coast Publications has also improved over the two years, thanks to a slightly better situation in the bank account, whose balance was $16,590 on March 31, roughly $2,200 more than a year earlier, and accounts receivable, which stood at $38,186 at the time, about $15,600 more than on the previous balance sheet. SPEC's assets amounted to $57,901, including fixed assets, as of March 31.

During SPEC's annual general meeting, held on October 28, board president Elaine Sexton welcomed Dawn Murray as a new board member. Ms. Murray is a well-known businesswoman based in the Cape Cove sector of Percé.

Greg Leblanc, a very active board member in helping save the newspaper over the last two years, stepped down from the board, but will remain a contributor when needed.

The board also thanked Louis Sexton for his considerable contribution. He has prepared the financial part of the newspaper's annual report over the last 25 years.

Despite the financial challenges of recent years, the board remains optimistic about the newspaper's future.

The improvement in advertising revenue, combined with efforts to reduce operating costs, has put SPEC in a more stable financial position. However, maintaining that stability will require continued efforts to increase revenues, control expenses and secure funding to ensure the newspaper can continue serving the English-speaking communities of the Gaspé Peninsula.

Forillon: Prefects' council expresses concern

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ – The prefects' council has expressed concern over reports of job losses at the two Parks Canada sites in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The organization adopted a resolution to that effect on October 27 during a meeting.

Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes notes that, according to the union, 87 out of 110 workers at Forillon National Park and eight at the Battle of the Restigouche site in Pointe-à-la-Croix are affected, which will have an impact on this important economic driver.

"Parks Canada is a major asset for the region. These are important jobs that generate economic spinoffs. The prefects are concerned," notes the council chair, Mathieu Lapointe.

"This infrastructure is essential. These are quality jobs. We're seeing less and less of the federal government—Canadian flags—in the region, aside from post offices and port facilities," he notes.

"It sends the signal that Ottawa wants to abandon these parks, which attract thousands of people."

The council had not taken a position on the former Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government's stance and its desire to return Forillon to the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq).

"What matters to us is that these parks remain well-maintained and that there are well-paying jobs. We don't have a firm position on whether it should be under federal or provincial jurisdiction," explains the chair.

$6 million to rebuild Bourg School in Carleton-sur-Mer

Nelson Sergerie

BONAVENTURE — Constructions Scandinaves, of Carleton-sur-Mer has been awarded the contract to rebuild the damaged section of Bourg School in Carleton-sur-Mer, which was affected by a fire in January.

The $5,699,000 contract was awarded on October 27 during a special meeting of the René-Lévesque School Service Centre.

The company submitted the lowest bid among the four firms that submitted proposals.

The first site meeting was held on October 28, and the contractor will submit its work plan shortly, with completion scheduled for July 30, 2027, to allow classes to resume at the school in the fall of 2027.

Wing A is to be demolished and rebuilt. In addition to this work, the contract calls for drainage and waterproofing of the building's foundations, replacement of plumbing, and interior finishing work throughout the building.

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An additional $30 to register your vehicle in certain MRCs

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – Faced with a financial impasse, the Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transportation Authority (RéGÎM) is asking the Quebec government to impose a $30 registration tax to secure additional funding for its operations.

A $300,000 cut to its base subsidy and a $100,000 annual reduction in revenue from the gas tax—due to the electrification of transportation—have led the agency to request this authority, which is permitted by Quebec.

The Avignon, Bonaventure and Côte-de-Gaspé MRCs will implement the measure, while discussions are still ongoing in Rocher-Percé and Haute-Gaspésie.

Meanwhile, the Maritime Community of the Îles-de-la-Madeleine must adapt, as current regulations do not allow it to impose a vehicle registration tax at this time.

To ensure fairness, these three entities will pay an additional share to the authority, equivalent to the projected amount of the registration tax.

"We've decided to move forward. We've been discussing this openly for months. For the past three years, we've faced financial challenges where revenues haven't kept pace with expenses. We can streamline expenses all we want. We still have to provide paratransit and public transit services, even as the public demands more, but we are no longer able to handle day-to-day operations," explains RéGÎM president Daniel Côté.

The agency has explored scenarios with the Quebec government, such as increasing the subsidy or raising the gas tax.

"Every time, the response was to turn to the vehicle registration tax. "You have the authority to do it. Other regions do it. Just do it," the president was told.

The new tax and additional contributions will generate $1.4 million.



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Vehicle registration fees in certain MRCs in the Gaspé Peninsula will increase by $30 starting in January 2027.

"A significant portion of that will go toward transportation costs. Transport providers are in the process of renewing their contracts. Their expenses have risen so much that we expect this to be reflected in the bill. We don't expect to make any major changes to service. If there's room for improvement, it will be in paratransit," says Mr. Côté.

Last February, RéGÎM had to reduce and adjust its service to stay afloat, which should allow it to end its 2026 fiscal year with a balanced budget.

"The indexation of transportation costs will serve as an indicator of whether we'll be able to offer additional services, maintain the cuts, or make an extra effort to streamline operations. Transportation contracts are RéGÎM's largest expense. We're planning for a certain buffer, but will it be enough? If the transit providers aren't too greedy, we might be able to improve service or reverse the cuts," he says.

The Haute-Gaspésie contract saw a significant increase, which affected the budget.

Quebec had announced a $50 reduction in vehicle registration fees; the authority will collect $30 of that amount.

The Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) will collect the amount when vehicle registration is renewed.

This revenue will then be transferred to RéGÎM.

Looking ahead, the president hopes that the $30 fee will be sufficient.

"We're hopeful it will be enough, but it's hard to predict because we don't know the transportation costs. Let's say the transit operators raise their rates by 100%; we won't have enough. If they aren't too greedy, maybe we'll have enough to do a little development."

The new Parti Québécois government made promises about public transit during the election campaign.

The president is eager to learn about the concrete measures for funding the service.

In 2025, RéGÎM surpassed the 100,000-passenger mark for the first time in its history.

That level of ridership will not be reached in 2026. "Service cuts and the lack of free transit for youth this summer have had an impact on ridership. We expect to see a certain decline in 2026. We've received complaints from people who experienced reduced service, both on regular bus routes and paratransit," the president notes cautiously.

The Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine Intermunicipal Transportation Authority submitted a proposed budget increase of $1 million, bringing the total to $5.8 million for 2026.

Transportation contracts account for $600,000 of the increase, and capital projects account for $400,000.

Comparison of vehicle registration fees in effect in Quebec (2026)

Municipality or MRC	Registration fee
La Rivière-du-Nord MRC	$37.70
Sherbrooke	$34.75 ($93.75 effective January 1, 2027)
Québec	$61.10 ($93 effective January 1, 2027)
Gatineau	$90
Montreal Metropolitan Community	$153.45
Val-Saint-François, des Sources and Coaticook MRCs	$35 effective January 1, 2027

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



Remember those who served support those who need us

A poppy pinned to your jacket is more than a symbol of remembrance. It is a promise to never forget the sacrifices made by those who served.

How can we accomplish that? By continuing to support veterans and their families today. Every donation placed in a poppy box helps to turn that promise into real assistance. All money raised during the Poppy Campaign goes to support local veterans, their families and community organizations.

This year, from October 24 to November 10, members of the Royal Canadian Legion will be out canvassing for the annual Poppy Campaign. Think of each poppy and how it respects both the service of our military and provides an opportunity to help someone who needs us now.

While Remembrance Day gives us an opportunity to honour those who served and those who never returned home, the Poppy Campaign also reminds us that our responsibility to veterans continues long after November 11 is over.

The money raised through the Poppy Trust Fund can help veterans and their families when they need a helping hand. Sometimes, that help comes in ways we might not immediately think of. It can be for needs that the veteran or their family cannot access. For someone struggling financially, this assistance can make an enormous difference to their quality of life, independence and, above all, personal dignity.

The fund also supports community organizations that provide valuable services and opportunities for others. In this way, the generosity shown through the Poppy Campaign reaches well beyond Remembrance Day.

That is something we can be proud of. Every donation, whether large or small, helps turn remembrance into meaningful action.

Of course, a campaign like this does not happen by itself. The Poppy Trust Fund relies on the dedication of Legion members and others who volunteer their time to canvas in our community.

As you see the volunteers, please consider supporting the campaign. Wear a poppy with pride and drop a donation into a collection box. The money you so generously donate could go to helping a veteran or supporting local Legion activities. The Poppy Trust Fund may also support seasonal gift baskets or Christmas gifts for children.

The poppy is more than a symbol of the past. It is a living promise to remember and to continue supporting those who have served. It reminds us that honouring veterans means not only remembering their sacrifices, but also looking after them and their families today, when they need us.

This November 11, let us remember that the spirit of Remembrance Day lives on in the thoughtful kindness and generosity we show throughout the year. You can help to make a difference.

Lest we forget. Lest we forget.



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Announcements

In Memory



CHAPADOS: Rejean
April 10, 1951 - November 2, 2025.

In loving memory of a wonderful husband, father and grandfather.

I don't need a special day,
To bring you to my mind.
The days I don't think of you,
Are very hard to find.
Each morning when I wake up,
I know that you are gone.
And no one knows the heartache,
As I try to carry on.
My heart still aches with sadness,
And tears still flow.
What it meant to lose you,
No one will ever know.
My thoughts are always with you,
Your place no one can fill.
In life I loved you dearly,
In death I love you still.

From loving wife, Shirley; Children, Natalie (Danik), Patrick (Melissa) and Jason; grandchildren, Felix, Annael, Leanne, Clovis, Jade and Sophia.



DEVOUGE: Lorna Harrison

In memory of my loving wife, Lorna Harrison Devouge, who passed away November 8, 2021.

Sadly missed by Ivan and his sons Doug and Gord. Loved forever.



FLOWERS: Henry
April 1951 – October 28, 2016.

I loved you with all of my heart until the end of your life and I will still love and miss you until the end of mine.

Love, Val.

FLOWERS: Howard

In loving memory of a precious grandfather who passed away November 3, 1984.

Those special memories of you,
Will always bring a smile.
If only we could have you back,
For just a little while.
Then we could sit and talk again,
Just like we used to do.
You always meant so very much,
And always will too.
The fact that you're no longer here,
Will always cause us pain.
But you're forever in our hearts,
Until we meet again.

Lovingly remembered and cherished forever in our hearts by Carol and Richard Smollett.

FLOWERS: Oliver

In loving memory of a dear uncle who passed away suddenly on October 1, 1998.

In a quiet country graveyard,
Where the gentle breezes blow.
Lies an uncle we loved so dearly,
And lost twenty-eight years ago.
Sadly missed along life's way,
Quietly remembered every day.
No longer in our lives to share,
But in our hearts you are always there.

Forever loved and remembered by Carol and Richard Smollett.

Obituary: *150 words* - $50
150-250 words - $55 - *250+ words - quote will be provided*
In Memory: *150 words* - $35
150-250 words - $45

Funeral, Celebration of Life, Card of Thanks, Engagement, Birth, Prayer, Birthday - $35
Wedding - $55

Extra $10 for photo



LEGRAND: Evelyn
November 7, 1932 - November 6, 2018.

In loving memory of a wonderful wife, mother and grandmother.

So dearly loved and never forgotten.

Loved and remembered by the family.

RENOUF: Ernest

A dear father, grandfather and great-grandfather who passed away May 28, 1991, and

RENOUF: Annie Sawyer

A dear mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, who passed away November 15, 2007.

Down the path of memories,
We gently tread today.
Our loving thoughts are with you,
As life goes on its way.
We often think about you,
With love and sad regret.
For those who loved you dearly,
Never will forget.

Always remembered and sadly missed by daughter Pearl and granddaughters Joan and Brenda and their families.

SMOLLETT: Robert Milton

In loving memory of a very dear father who passed away October 12, 1984.

The special years will not return,
When we were all together.
But with the love within our hearts,
You will walk with us forever.
Time moves on but memories stay,
As near and dear as yesterday.
Even though it's 42 years,
Since you've been gone.
We will remember you,
No matter how long.

Always loved, remembered and sadly missed by son Richard and daughter-in-law Carol.

SIMON: Trafford

In loving memory of a dear father, grandfather and great-grandfather who passed away on October 30, 1988.

You left us beautiful memories,
Your love is still our guide.
Although we cannot see you,
You're always at our side.

Lovingly remembered by Dora, Sandra (Ivan), Duane (Hermeline), Laura (Real) and families.

COAST ROUND-UP

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

YORK:

Parish of Gaspé

November 21: 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. Entrance is $10 per person or $5 if you bring cookies (minimum 1 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 contacting forthaldimand @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 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.

NEW CARLISLE:

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 064

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 064 reminds members that it is time to renew their annual membership. The cost is $48. Members can stop by the New Carlisle Legion to renew or contact Kathy Gallon at 418-752-0854

Wreath Campaign: The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 064 is selling wreaths for $30 in honour of those who served. To purchase a wreath, please contact Tammy Chatterton at 418-752-8512, Cindy Carney at 418-751-4102, Carol Flowers Smollett at 905-987-3294 or Mary Woods at 418-752-2845.

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 172

Wednesdays: Dame de Pique beginning at 1 p.m.

Fridays: Darts beginning at 7 p.m.

November 8-9: Wreaths purchased for Remembrance Day may be picked up at the Legion from noon to 6 p.m. Cost: $50 per wreath. To purchase a wreath, contact Sylvie Boudreau at 418-392-6535.

November 11: The official Remembrance Day ceremony will take place at the Cascapedia–St-Jules Cenotaph, beginning at 10:45 a.m. A light lunch will be served afterwards. A ceremony will also take place at the New Richmond Cenotaph.

November 22: Sunday brunch will be held from 8 a.m. to noon. Cost: $15 for adults and $5 for children 12 and under.

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, November 8
Sunday, November 15
10 a.m. Service
both streaming from New Richmond

PARISH OF GASPÉ

Sunday, November 8
St. Pauls - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Communion

Sunday, November 15
St. Pauls - Gaspé
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist

UNITED CHURCH NEW RICHMOND

Sunday, November 8
10 a.m. Service
Sunday, November 15
10 a.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, November 8
New Carlisle
10 a.m. Armistice Service with Acts of Remembrance

Sunday, November 15
New Carlisle
10 a.m. Morning Prayer
Hope Town
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Shigawake
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist

A moment of silence, a lifetime of gratitude

At the cenotaph in New Carlisle and other cenotaphs throughout the Gaspé Peninsula, let's stand for two minutes at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month to honour those who fought for our country. Silence isn't empty; it's full of gratitude and respect.

We owe them our immeasurable debt of gratitude for helping to make Canada prosperous and free. Let us never forget that freedom comes at a price. November 11 is a day of remembrance, but our gratitude should last a lifetime.

Their unwavering courage and sacrifices they made helped shape the country we share today. We must never forget these young men and women, especially those who paid the ultimate price.

Ken Ross
New Carlisle, Quebec.



HOROSCOPES - November 1 to November 7

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
Aries, your energy levels are at 10, but all you need to get through the week is a 6. Conserve your energy for times when the demands on you are greater.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, comfort may be your strength this week, but don't let that transform you into a permanent couch potato. Figure out a way to get involved to stay busy.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
You probably want to clear out the clutter of information running through your brain, Gemini. Pick a topic and focus on it exclusively for now. Surprising news comes mid-week.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, your intuition is very sharp this week, so much so that you might start predicting others' behavior. Trust your gut on personal choices.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
The spotlight may be on you right now, Leo. Take the stage, but share the glory with someone else. Collaborating on a creative project will yield better results than going solo.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Resist the urge to judge a friend's life choices, Virgo. You might want to micro-manage things, but save that for your own schedule and needs. A small tweak to your routine is beneficial.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, make an effort to be more decisive this week. Don't ponder every decision for hours; pick the first option and stick with it. This will free up time.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
You are operating in full detective mode, Scorpio. Before you delve into a new mystery, focus on mastering a new skill or solving a work problem.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Sagittarius, your wanderlust is flaring up, even if your budget is more attuned to a walk around the neighborhood. Find a way to travel on the cheap this week.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Schedule some time on the calendar to for fun things, Capricorn. Resting is just as important as your amazing work ethic. Your efficiency will get a needed boost as a result.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, your wildest ideas may be your best ones this week. Write them all down before they drift away. Others may feel differently about your plan, and that's alright.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, you are prone to daydreaming lately, but be sure to anchor yourself in reality from time to time. Turn imaginative vibes into creative pursuits.

Another great loss for Gaspé with the death of Fabien Sinnett

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPÉ – Another pillar of Gaspé's history has passed away with the death of Fabien Sinnett on October 26, at the age of 94, in Warwick, in the Centre-du-Québec region.

The mayor of Gaspé reflects on approximately 20 years of friendship.

"He was a great builder of Gaspé, particularly in terms of its history. He was a very dedicated businessman. When his children were young, he was involved in hockey and baseball, and remained deeply involved until just a few years ago when he stepped down as president of Canada's Birthplace site," recalls Daniel Côté.

The mayor notes his unique way of weaving history—particularly military history—into people's daily lives from a young child's perspective.

"This way of telling history was unique. Fabien is the very embodiment of Canada's Birthplace, which gave a face to Old Gaspé—an area razed in the early 1970s to make way for so-called modernity, including a highway along the waterfront. He restored public access to the waterfront," says the mayor.

He also wrote a history book, Gaspé, Through the Ages, with historian Mario Mimeault and created a heritage trail featuring historical and military vignettes.



Photo: Courtesy of Daniel Côté

Fabien Sinnett and Daniel Côté.

"I can attest to the greatness of the man, to everything he did to help his town grow. It's incredible what he was able to accomplish," insists Mr. Côté.

Born in 1932, he was young during the Second World War—a fact he recounted on numerous occasions—and he owned artifacts from that time.

"He researched so thoroughly and asked everyone so many questions that he became something of an expert on the history of Gaspé, a town steeped in history. I learned the history of Gaspé from Fabien Sinnett himself, which has enabled me to engage in political activism focused on history and heritage. He instilled in me a passion for history, and Gaspé owes him a great deal."

Daniel Côté's last meeting with Mr. Sinnett was on October 21, during the unveiling of the cabinet of Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon's Parti Québécois (PQ) government.

"When I arrived at his seniors' residence, the TV was tuned to the announcement. We watched the swearing-in ceremony, and he was eager to see one of his protégés, Méganne Perry Mélançon, who had worked for him in the very early days of the Canada's Birthplace site. When Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon confirmed her appointment to the cabinet, it was a sight to see the man's eyes light up with pride at seeing his protégée join the cabinet. That was my last moment with Fabien," recalls Daniel Côté, who says Mr. Sinnett was still in good health at the time of that meeting.

His passing was sudden. "We had one last project to finish together. We'll see whether or not this final project moves forward, perhaps with a posthumous touch… In short, over the past 20 years, despite a few setbacks, we never gave up on each other—right up until the end."

Méganne Perry Mélançon responds

"It is with great sadness that I learned of the passing of Mr. Fabien Sinnett, a man who left a profound mark on the history of Gaspé," writes one of his protégés—now a member of the National Assembly (MNA) and minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula—Méganne Perry Mélançon, right at the outset.

The elected official highlights his passion for history and heritage and notes his boldness and vision, particularly with the "Canada's Birthplace" project.

"A project that speaks to his determination and his immense pride in our region," she says.

She had the opportunity to speak with him a few days before the announcement of his passing.

"I cherish the memory of that conversation, which reminded me just how deep his attachment to Gaspé was and how he possessed this natural ability to forge and nurture special bonds with the people of our community. I consider myself privileged to have been able to share that connection with him," Ms. Perry Mélançon says in a social media post.

Laurie Denis served as site manager for Canada's Birthplace for several years.

"In addition to being an exceptional person, Fabien also had another unique strength: his phenomenal memory. He had an ability to retain, recount, and pass on his knowledge like few others. His commitment to preserving Gaspé's history was central to his life. The list of his involvements and accomplishments speaks to this. Thanks to his writings, his meticulousness, his legacy, his research, and his testimonies, Gaspé will be able to remember—to recall important chapters of its history, but also to remember him and his invaluable contribution. In this way, Fabien will continue to live on with us," she writes on social media.

Details regarding the funeral service will be announced at a later date.

Two forest fires in October

NELSON **SERGERIE**

GASPE – A second forest fire broke out in the Gaspé region in October.

Residents started a fire on October 25 in the Montée de Corte-Real area of Gaspé.

The fire burned less than 0.1 hectares.

On October 19, another fire had broken out at the western edge of the Town of Gaspé, near Route 198.

That fire also burned less than 0.1 hectares.

Forest fires in October are becoming less and less unusual.

"Since 2020, we've noticed that our seasons tend to stretch out. We recall a fire in Mont-Saint-Pierre in November. The seasons are stretching out because winter is taking longer to set in, and there has been slightly more drought in recent weeks, which is causing fire indices to rise," explains Société de protection des forêts contre le feu (SOPFEU) spokesperson Isabelle Gariépy.



Photo: Metro Creative Graphics

Two small forest fires were reported in the Gaspé region in October, with both burning less than 0.1 hectares. Unusually dry conditions have increased the risk of forest fires extending later into the fall season.

That late-season Mont-Saint-Pierre fire was sparked by lightning on November 6, 2022, and burned 4.9 hectares.

"Our deciduous trees shed their leaves, which become dead leaves. If there's a period with less rain and slightly drier conditions, they turn into fuel that can catch fire quickly," notes the spokesperson, who reminds everyone that caution is still advised.

September was very dry in Gaspé, with only 38 millimetres of rain falling at Michel-Pouliot Airport, 42% of the normal 91 millimetres.

October was also very dry: as of October 28, only 31.7 millimetres of rain had fallen in Gaspé, compared to the normal of 130 millimetres, about one-quarter of the expected amount.

In 2025, two forest fires occurred in the region in October.

So far this season, there have been 18 fires, one more than the average over the past 10 years.

However, the total area affected is only 3.2 hectares, far below the average of 23.8 hectares over the past decade.

Masks make a comeback at Santé Québec Gaspésie

Nelson Sergerie

CHANDLER — Although flu season has not yet begun in the Gaspé Peninsula, various Santé Québec Gaspésie facilities are requiring masks due to circulating respiratory viruses.

Since October 17, staff members, visitors and family caregivers have been required to wear masks in the medical unit at Maria Hospital and in the acute care unit at Chandler Hospital on floors 200 and 300.

Masks have been mandatory since October 6 at the Mgr Ross long-term care facility in Gaspé, the Rivière-au-Renard seniors' centre and Villa Pabos in Chandler. The respiratory virus vaccination campaign began on October 20 in the Gaspé region.

Last year, the flu outbreak occurred during the holiday season. Some 20,000 flu shots were administered during the 2025–2026 flu season.



Scott Martin tries to get third consecutive term, against Chad Gedeon

GILLES **GAGNÉ**

LISTUGUJ – For the second consecutive election, Listuguj voters will witness an electoral battle on November 7 between incumbent Chief Scott Martin and former councillor Chad Gedeon.

In 2024, Scott Martin, who is trying to win a third consecutive term and his sixth one since 2004, won by 215 votes over Mr. Gedeon. At the time, four candidates were vying for the council's top position.

Chad Gedeon is no stranger to Listuguj politics either, as he has served six terms as a councillor, three between 2006 and 2012, and three more between 2018 and 2024. He was elected chief councillor, which means the councillor who received the highest number of votes, in at least one election. He works at the Alaqsite'w Gitpu School in Listuguj.

Scott Martin's first victory as chief dates back to 2004. He served two terms then, until 2008, one additional term from 2014 to 2016, and he held the position since 2022.

In 2024, Mr. Martin emphasized implementing better controls to deal with drug-related issues in Listuguj. The number of businesses selling cannabis has decreased since then, but he says there is still room for improvement.

He intends to pursue further development of the wind farm cluster if he is elected.

On his Facebook page, Chad Gedeon says he wants to implement training for Listuguj's elected officials to strengthen their understanding of their roles. He also commits to organizing a community meeting within the first 90 days of his term, ensuring that the voices of the community help shape the direction and guide the next steps forward.

Moreover, he aims to revise the Comprehensive Community Plan, a document used to plan the development of Listuguj and to establish an action plan to bring priority projects to fruition. He also pledges to provide feedback to the community within the first 300 days of his term.

Thirty-one candidates are vying for the 12 council positions, including incumbents Annette Barnaby, Christie Caplin, Gordon Isaac Jr., George Martin, Erwin Molley, Macy Metallic, Sky Metallic, Wendell Metallic and Chris Wysote.



Scott Martin.

Photo: G. Gagné



Photo: Jillian O'Connell

Repairs are now underway at Shigawake-Port Daniel School, nearly six months after heavy rainfall flooded the school's basement on May 1. The work is expected to take four months to complete.

SPDS repairs now underway

Gilles Gagné

PORT DANIEL – The repairs at the Shigawake-Port Daniel School (SPDS) are now underway. In fact, they began on October 26, close to six months after the school basement was flooded by the heavy rainfall of May 1.

The architectural work was awarded to Proulx et Savard, while WSP was selected for engineering.

According to the Eastern Shores School Board, assessments and evaluations were conducted between mid-May and mid-August 2026.

The tender was published on the Quebec government website on September 4. The bids were opened on October 2, and the lowest compliant bid was submitted by MFT et Fils Inc. for $533,200 plus taxes, an amount approved by the council of commissioners on October 6.

Four months are scheduled for the work. Based on the October 26 start date, the four-month schedule would place the anticipated completion of the repairs in late February 2027, barring any delays. In a note sent to the parents of children attending SPDS, the school board informed them that the next project meeting is scheduled for November 16. "We will continue to share updates as new information becomes available," wrote assistant director general Jane Bradbury.

