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In His Own Words

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Welcome to
'Uncharted Territory'

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Winter fun: get outside!!! Cantley to host winter carnival with free activities



The Municipality of Cantley will offer a day of free family-friendly activities, including indoor workshops, outdoor winter sports, and a complimentary spaghetti dinner, at its Winter Carnival. (TF)
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF CANTLEY

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Snowshoe enthusiasts invited to explore Gatineau Park's winter wonders



Two unique snowshoeing experiences are available in Gatineau Park: the NCC's daytime wildlife hike and the Friends of Gatineau Park's "Snowshoeing Under the Stars." (TF)
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE FRIENDS OF GATINEAU PARK

See page 6 for story

Showcase Minerals confirms uranium and rare earth potential at Pontiac Project



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Showcase Minerals is a Canadian mineral exploration company that is currently focused on its Pontiac Project, a promising mining site located near Fort Coulange. The Pontiac Project spans 3,461 hectares and is being explored for its mineral potential, with a specific focus on uranium and rare earth elements (REEs), which are critical for clean energy technologies and other modern industries. Showcase Minerals holds a 100% option on the property and is working to assess the site's resources with the goal of eventually developing it into a mining operation.

The company's exploration work at the Pontiac Project is still in its early stages, but the results so far have been encouraging. In the initial phase, Showcase Minerals has identified significant concentrations of uranium, with some samples containing up to 5,940 parts per million (ppm) of uranium, as well as high levels of rare earth elements, with total REE values reaching as high as 4,682.7 ppm. These elements, particularly uranium, are essential for nuclear energy production, while rare earth elements are used in technologies like electric vehicles, wind turbines, and smartphones. With the growing global demand for clean energy and advanced electronics, the Pontiac Project's potential to supply these materials could be very valuable.

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Former Gatineau mayor pens book *L'heureuse élue*: France Bélisle's bold take on politics, power and personal struggle



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

France Bélisle, the former mayor of Gatineau, has unveiled a new chapter in her life—a literary one. Her upcoming book, *L'heureuse élue*, set for release on February 12, offers an intimate reflection on her experiences in municipal politics, framed through the lens of personal struggle and the ethical battles that led to her resignation from office in February 2024. In her own words, the book is neither a dense political analysis nor a traditional memoir, but rather a candid narrative that blends testimony with a critical examination of the political landscape that shaped her tenure.

Bélisle's decision to write about her time in public office comes after a period of profound reflection. Having resigned as mayor amidst growing frustration with the political environment, including personal attacks and partisan-driven decision-making, Bélisle now seeks to share her story with the public. In a Facebook post, she spoke with passion about the process of crafting the book, noting the countless hours spent writing, researching, and reflecting on her own journey. "The book is a mix of my perspective on what I lived in politics, told through a deeply human lens," she explained.

Her account is not one of high-minded theory, but of lived experience, accessible to anyone interested in understanding the human cost of public service. Bélisle details her emotional and physical struggles, including the toll that constant stress and criticism took on her well-being. For Bélisle, the decision to leave office was not just political; it was personal. The long days and sleepless nights were punctuated by incidents that left deep scars, from the barrage of insults and even death threats to the overwhelming pressure of managing a city amid a divided political climate. "Political life takes its toll," she confessed in her resignation speech, and *L'heureuse élue* reveals just how much of a toll it took.

The book also serves as a critique of the broader political environment. Bélisle addresses, without restraint, the challenges of being a woman in a



France Bélisle's upcoming book, *L'heureuse élue*, offers a candid reflection on her time as mayor of Gatineau, exploring the personal and political challenges that led to her resignation and the toll of public service. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF FRANCE BÉLISLE'S FACEBOOK PAGE

high-powered political position and the emotional labour that often goes unacknowledged in political spheres. Her reflections will resonate with many who have grown disillusioned with the cynical side of politics. She presents the personal and professional difficulties of governance, pulling back the curtain on what often remains hidden from the public eye. In many ways, *L'heureuse élue* is a response to the disillusionment that so many residents feel, offering an insider's look at the machinery of local government, along with a call for more respect and professionalism in the way political leaders are treated.

The preface of the book is written by Michèle Audette, the Innu senator and human rights advocate, whose work Bélisle has long admired. Audette's contribution lends an additional layer of depth to the narrative, offering a perspective from someone who has navigated the political terrain with a clear commitment to Indigenous rights and social justice.

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Outaouais MRCs work together to create territorial climate plan



Sophie Demers
LJI Reporter

Propelled by the Conférence des préfets de l'Outaouais which gathered all the préfets from the region as well as the mayor of Gatineau, three MRCs have come together to address climate change on their territory. The MRCs of Collines-de-l'Outaouais, Papineau, and Pontiac created a working group to collaborate in the development of their respective climate plans. The efforts have been coordinated by the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais.

The goal of the collaboration is to create a common basis for action and a larger scope for action by joining forces to fight climate change.

The process is well underway, according to Marc Carrière, MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais préfet. An analysis of the current risks and environmental vulnerabilities and a study of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the area is underway. This information will guide the creation of a climate plan. In early December, a public webinar was held introducing key partners and the preliminary results of the studies.

"We've seen the effects of climate change in the region over the years with the flooding, and the storms. We have a responsibility to act for the future generation," said Carrière.

In 2022, the main emitter of greenhouse gases in MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais was road transportation which made up 62% of emissions. The next largest emitter was off-road transportation, making up 24%. In 2022, the emissions totaled 318,095 Metric



tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

The final climate plan is scheduled to be presented this fall. The creation of the climate plan is financially supported by the Fonds région et ruralité of the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation (MAMH), as well as the financial assistance program "Accelerating Local Climate Transition" (ATCL), launched in March 2024 by the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte aux changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP).

"We received 1.1 million per MRC from the Quebec government to finance our climate plan. And after that, if there is any money left, we will be able to use it for concrete actions against climate change. There are also more opportunities for funding these actions once the climate plan is complete. The first step is the climate plan, the next step is reducing our emissions," said Carrière.

Residents are able to provide their feedback for the climate change plan by filling out the public survey available on the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais website.

Former Gatineau mayor pens book *L'heureuse élue: France Bélisle's bold take on politics, power and personal struggle*

Continued from page 2

For Bélisle, Audette represents the kind of leadership that she herself aspires to, grounded in values and integrity. In fact, Bélisle credits her time in office with shaping her feminist views, a sentiment she explores in the chapter titled "La mairie m'a rendue féministe" ("The Mayor's Office Made Me a Feminist").

The book is a labour of love that emerges not just from a desire to share her story, but from a need to heal and make sense of her experiences. Bélisle's path to publication was grueling—countless hours of writing and

re-writing, research, and reflection on her time in office. Yet through all of this, she remains deeply proud of the work, viewing it as a way to engage with her city in a new form, one that transcends her previous role as mayor. As she reflects on her time in politics and her decision to step away, *L'heureuse élue* becomes more than just a book. It is a personal manifesto, a call for transparency, and a gift to the people of Gatineau who may have once supported her—and to those who, after reading her story, may come to understand the often painful and complex decisions that come with political leadership.

Showcase Minerals confirms uranium and rare earth potential at Pontiac Project

Continued from page 1

Kirk Reed, the CEO of Showcase Minerals, expressed his excitement about the findings: "We are excited by the results of our phase-I exploration program at the Pontiac Project. These findings not only validate the historical uranium mineralization, but also highlight the property's significant rare earth element potential. The discovery of additional strategic minerals, including niobium, molybdenum, and rubidium, underscores the polymetallic nature of this asset and its importance to the critical minerals supply chain."

The Pontiac Project is situated within the Grenville geological province, an area known for its rich geological formations, including pegmatites and granitoid intrusions. These formations are ideal for the presence of valuable minerals like uranium and rare earth elements. The project also benefits from nearby infrastructure, including access to Highway 148, which makes it easier to conduct exploration activities and, if the project progresses, could help reduce the costs associated with future mining operations.

The local community around Fort Coulange stands to benefit from the Pontiac Project if the exploration leads to a full-scale mining operation. Mining projects like this can bring new job opportunities, as well as investment into the local economy. Showcase Minerals is committed to developing the project sustainably, and the potential for long-term economic benefits is significant. "As global demand for clean energy technologies and strategic materials continues to grow, the Pontiac Project's potential as a multi-commodity exploration target aligns with our commitment to advancing projects that support a sustainable future," Reed added.

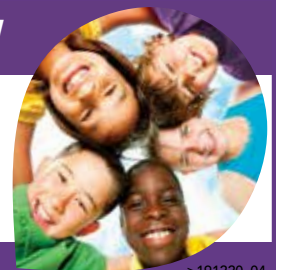
While Showcase Minerals' stock has faced challenges, with a year-over-year decrease of 88.61%, the promising results from the Pontiac Project could help turn things around. The demand for uranium and rare earth elements is only expected to increase, as countries around the world look to secure the materials needed for clean energy technologies. If the Pontiac Project continues to show strong potential in future exploration, it could become a key player in the global market for these critical minerals.

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Antidote to miss-information is journalism



LILY Ryan

Dear reader, we missed you. The team at the *West Quebec Post* made the difficult decision to not print during the Canada Post strike. Please know that your subscriptions are being extended for the period we didn't publish.

During that time, *West Quebec Post* journalists stayed on the job, making sure the news was covered—at least online—and ready for print.

The current state of news in Canada is a hot-button topic. Subscribers to this newspaper care about the future of democracy. The *West Quebec Post* is

published across the Outaouais. This region is lucky to have a large number of local newspapers. In contrast, many regions in Canada have just one, while others no longer have any.

But Outaouais has hard-working local newspaper families who are weathering the information storms. Readers, have you opened any social media feeds lately? How much is trustworthy? Videos can be fake without being noticeably constructed. Bots from foreign powers masquerade as neighbours with opinions on very local matters. Surveys and petitions that appear to come from community organizations are created by influence teams to sway public opinion, not to actually

lodge a petition.

What is the antidote to all this miss-information? Fact-checking! Actual local journalists operating as true professionals (verifying sources, keeping notes, being prepared to answer queries, correcting information, providing follow-ups to evolving topics, writing errata when an error is made). On social media, there are false stories circulating about political leaders making millions while in office and published as fake covers of reputable newspapers. Entirely fabricated stories that get shared, perpetuating the adage that a lie repeated becomes a truth.

And so, in comes the role newspaper subscribers play in this precarious fu-

ture. Thank you for subscribing to the *West Quebec Post*. Hopefully, reader, you are also subscribing to any number of the other five Outaouais local newspapers, any of the major dailies, and magazines. No one is claiming that print is more important than digital anymore. Just like radio isn't more important than TV – all the formats are valid. What counts is reader support for local news. Like any system, it is a “use-it-or-lose-it” situation. That goes for all the impacts of local newspapers, including, by most measures, the future of democracy.

On behalf of the team at the *West Quebec Post*, thank you.

LETTERS

to the **Editor** *Opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by the paper*

Defunding journalism

What can we do to help stop the terrifying trend to defund journalism? I read on your website that MP Sophie Chatel helped ensure there is federal funding for Canadian journalism. Working with Pascale St-Onge and others, I am watching what the current government is doing to get ready to a risky change in government. I listen and watch CBC and Radio-Canada daily. Journalists there work so hard to investigate background information on news. The incredible amount of news that comes through the CBC and Radio-Canada makes a real difference for the future of Canada.

Is there a way that regular citizens can help turn this crisis around? Will the Bloc and the NDP help preserve our democracy by protecting journalism? Can anyone look forward in their

minds to what our country will be without credible journalism? Think of any country where truth is a footnote, do we want that? I cannot understand why voters can be so fickle as to imagine that democracy is an automatic part of Canada. It takes a few fundamental social pillars to ensure a healthy democracy – including a public news service. And I mean public like what we have now, I don't mean government mouth-piece.

If the future of information here is left to radicals on tik tok, I will wish I had done something when there was still time. What can we do? What can the *West Quebec Post* do? And will you do your part?

Josée Thérien
Gatineau

GARAGE SALE

Did you know that for the modest sum of \$350,000 you can buy a political party? Indeed, the position of Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada is yours for this amount; within the reach of all rich people or those who say they are rich or think they are.

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the LPC before January 27, if you want to take advantage of this sale. The draw will take place on March 9. You will then have 15 days of worries before you get trusted by the Commons.

NOTICE TO CURRENT MPS AND MINISTERS “DO NOT RUN” unless you can explain where and how you were able to accumulate so much money in your pocket during your mandate.

Antoine L. Normand,
Gatineau

Letters to the Editor Guidelines:

To make sure your letter is published:

All letters must be signed with a phone number (not published). Any language is acceptable ... but be clear, civil, and not rude. All letters are edited for grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc, and for length. Expect your letter to be edited. No personal attacks, nor promotional pieces for political candidates or parties accepted.

The Editor

West Quebec Post

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When our words become actions



When the candles are blown out as Happy Birthday is sung, we can reasonably conclude that, at that moment, all who are gathered are experiencing happy feelings. As pyrotechnics colourfully explode at the midnight hour, we hug one another as we shout out, Happy New Year. Language has a way of expressing our shared humanity. However, we must also consider the context through which we convey our message. Wishing someone Happy Birthday is arguably different from wishing them Happy New Year.

Happy Birthday is directed toward the one celebrating the anniversary of the day they were born. Happy New Year is more universally expressed. How well we are aware that the New Year will never shower upon us 365 days of happiness. Out with the old and in with the new is aspirational. As I write these words on New Year's Day, for example, my happiness of this New Year's Day is shattered by the terrorist act of an individual ploughing down multiple revellers at a New Year's Eve celebration in New Orleans. Many were killed; many are maimed. Many begin 2025 mourning the loss of their loved ones.

This New Year, as all New Years, will bring moments of happiness. It will also bring moments that will bring us pain, tears and suffering. This we all know. During the Holiday Season, at Christmas time, you may have heard the bells ring as the Guignolée volunteers approached your home. Volunteers from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, continuing a long-standing tradition, collecting food and money for Christmas baskets to be distributed to the poor.

You may also be aware of Village Transition where the country's largest community of tiny homes is providing refuge to 100 homeless people. This replaces the tent city that opened last year in the parking lot of the Robert Guertin Arena in Hull.

Throughout our country, record numbers struggle to make ends meet. Food banks are barely able to fulfill the demands. Homeless people sleep on lawn chairs at shelters to escape the winter cold.

To have happiness in our lives, we must have peace within ourselves. How difficult it is for us to experience joy when others around us are suffering. We are all brothers and sisters. Those of us who have must share with those who are in need. That should be our motivation throughout every New Year. As we meet our own needs, it always adds comfort to share with others in need.

Here is a poem that I wrote to summarize the above commentary:

STREET PEOPLE

You'll see them gathered at the doors of the Mission
Awaiting shelter or a warm meal to eat
You'll find them in tents in ravines by the Freeway
On sidewalks and in alcoves along a wide city street.
They are but a blur as traffic rolls by them
At a curbside one holds a cardboard sign
Some of us give spare change but most just ignore them
There are among us those who street people malign.
From the pulpit is spread a Biblical message
That we should love and care for each other
For the young, the old and for the downtrodden
For each one of them is a sister or brother.
Heeding these words there are those among us
Who within their hearts firmly believe
That in lending a hand to help a neighbour
It's as worthy to give as it is to receive.
'Our Father, who art in heaven'
With our palms turned upward, humbly we pray
Then what wonders we'll know when words become actions
As we transform the world that we live in today.



Welcome to 'Uncharted Territory'

by Gwynne DYER

AUTHOR, HISTORIAN & INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST

New Year is when we do the accounts for the year, and the bad news always gets top billing: how many wars are going on, how big were the natural disasters, etc.? Climate change now has its own slot in this annual accounting, and here is what the climate pundits will say.

First they will acknowledge that 2024 has been the hottest year since we began keeping records a few centuries ago. This will be accompanied by the usual clucking about how naughty we have all been, not cutting our greenhouse gas emissions fast enough.

The only remedy for this, they will explain, is make those cuts now, and very fast. Almost none will mention that we have never managed to cut our net global emissions at all, except once in the peak Covid year when everybody was locked down.

Only if you can "believe six impossible things before breakfast," like the White Queen in 'Alice Through the Looking Glass,' could you believe that we can voluntarily shift from growing our global emissions by about 1% a year to slashing them by 7% a year in the next five years, which is the minimum change needed to avoid a catastrophe.

Human beings in large numbers simply cannot react that fast even when the catastrophes begin. The Philippines were hit by six cyclones (hurricanes) in one month last autumn – utterly unprecedented – and still there's no big public demand there for a rapid switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

The second thing you will hear (if your media sources are reality-based) is that there was a big, unexplained leap in the warming in June 2023. The average global temperature jumped by three-tenths of a degree in one month. That is the amount had been predicted to occur over the next ten years.

This explains why we have seen a sudden upward lurch in wild weather all around the planet: bigger windstorms, fiercer forest fires, hotter, longer heat-waves, torrential rain causing floods and landslides, the lot.

And here's the thing. Because climate scientists did not know what was causing the acceleration, most of them kept quiet until they had something more to say than "I don't know." The unfortunate side-effect of that was that the general public does not share their sense of panic – and no panic means no dramatic responses either.

Only in the past two months has a likely explanation emerged for the surge in temperature. Scientists at NASA's Goddard In-

stitute for Space Studies (GISS) think the world's reflective cloud cover has shrunk in the past two decades by a small but significant amount. Therefore more sunlight is reaching the surface, which boosts global warming.

Unfortunately, the climate scientists still don't know if this is just a one-time jump, after which the old rate of warming will resume. It could just as easily be a new, higher rate of warming that persists or even accelerates further. The 'permanent emergency' has actually arrived – but still the reluctance to level with the public continues.

In almost every report, there is a reassuring note to say that we haven't really crossed any irreversible threshold yet. Yes, the average global temperature in 2024 has been higher than the 'aspirational' never-exceed warming of +1.5 degrees C, but don't despair: it will be many years before we must accept that we have broken through that boundary for good.

This is pure sophistry. Temperatures fluctuate, so meteorologists usually calculate the average temperature of a place by averaging the variations over twenty years. However, when the change is always upwards, as it has been for the past fifty years, then taking into account temperatures from cooler years now long past gives you an answer that is much too low.

In present circumstances, the relevant average global temperature is simply whatever it is right now, and people who offer you less alarming interpretations are either deluded or seeking to deceive you. "If the trend holds up, we're in trouble," said Bjorn Stevens of the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology. "We hope, hope it changes its direction tomorrow."

If it doesn't – if we are already "in uncharted territory," as Gavin Schmidt, the director of GISS, puts it – what do we do next? There is no realistic short-term way to double or triple our emissions cuts: even if the will were there, the alternative energy sources take much time to build.

What we could do more quickly is to deploy various climate engineering methods that would reflect more sunlight and directly cool the planet. We could start putting sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere in a couple of years. With a crash programme, thickening low-level marine clouds could be active on a large scale within five years.

In practice, of course, we'll probably spend that time arguing about it instead, while the heat-driven feedbacks cascade. Happy New Year.

Winter fun: get outside!!!

Cantley to host winter carnival with free activities



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

The Municipality of Cantley will host its annual Winter Carnival on Saturday, January 25, offering a day of free family-friendly activities from 10 - 4 pm. The event will take place at the Multi-functional Community Center, located at 6 Impasse des Étoiles, and at River Park, adjacent to the center.

Indoor activities will include a magic workshop, archery initiation, and a treasure hunt, as well as bingo and free gym activities. Children can also enjoy face painting while families relax at the Petit Café de Cantley. Outside, visitors can participate in snow sliding, with sleds available on-site, or try their



hand at winter sports like snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. An inflatable structure and songbook will also provide additional entertainment.

A free spaghetti dinner will be served from 11:30 -1:30 pm, offering a warm meal to attendees. All activities, including the dinner, are offered at no charge, making the event an accessible opportunity for families to enjoy a winter outing together.

In the event of inclement weather, the carnival will be moved indoors, ensuring that the festivities will continue regardless of conditions. Organisers encourage attendees to check the event website at cantley.ca/culture-et-loisirs/carnaval-de-cantley for any updates before the day of the carnival.

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Snowshoe enthusiasts invited to explore Gatineau Park's winter wonders



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Snowshoe enthusiasts have two distinct opportunities to immerse themselves in Gatineau Park's winter landscape this season. From following animal tracks during the day to exploring serene trails under the stars, these guided experiences showcase the park's natural beauty and resilience during its snow-covered months.

The National Capital Commission (NCC) presents "On Snowshoes, Following the Animal Trail," a guided hike offered every weekend from January 11 to March 9, 2025. Departing from the Gatineau Park Visitor Centre at 33 Scott Road in Chelsea, this two-hour program highlights how animals adapt to the harsh realities of winter. Participants are guided along Trail 60, following tracks in the snow and learning about wildlife survival strategies. Sessions are available in English and French: Saturdays at 10:30 am (French) and 1:30 pm (English), and Sundays at 10:30 am (English) and 1:30 pm (French). Snowshoes are provided, and the activity is open to individuals aged nine and older.

Further details and reservations are available at <https://ccn-ncc.gc.ca/evenements/en-raquette-sur-la-trace-des-animaux> or by contacting an NCC information agent at 819-827-2020, option 1.

For those drawn to nighttime adventures, the Friends of Gatineau Park offer "Snowshoeing Under the Stars." Starting January 17, this event runs every Friday evening at 7:00 pm and alternates between trails in the Chelsea and Wakefield sectors of the park. Guided by an interpreter, participants learn how the park's flora and fauna withstand the winter season while surrounded by the stillness of the evening. Reservations include snowshoe rentals, trail access, and refreshments of hot chocolate and cookies. Additional information and reservations can be found at <https://www.friendsofgatineaupark.com/activiteacutes-agrave-venir.html>.

Whether uncovering animal tracks with the NCC or navigating starlit trails with the Friends of Gatineau Park, these experiences provide an engaging way to celebrate the season. Advanced reservations are recommended, as spaces are limited for both activities.

www.westquebecpost.com

Cantley launches fundraising campaign for pediatric palliative care home



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

Cantley's municipal officials and community leaders convened recently at the Cantley Community Centre for the launch of a significant initiative on National Child Palliative Care Day, on October 10. The event marked the beginning of a major fundraising campaign for *Maison Papillon Enfants et Familles*, the Outaouais region's first pediatric palliative care facility. Set to become only the third such home in Quebec and the ninth in Canada, the project is poised to offer essential services to families whose children face life-limiting illnesses.

The municipality donated a four-acre riverfront property valued at approximately \$500,000, accelerating the project's timeline. Construction of the planned facility, which will include eight rooms and two family suites, is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2025. Once completed, comprehensive, no-cost palliative care for children aged 0 to 18 will be provided, and families will be offered a peaceful, supportive environment.

Local residents Brigit Viens, Martin



Cantley officials and community leaders launched a major fundraising campaign for *Maison Papillon*, the region's first pediatric palliative care home, set to provide free, comprehensive services for children and families. (TF)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MAISON PAPILLON ENFANTS ET FAMILLES

Gascon, and Amanda Mayer, all founding members of the initiative, announced the campaign's \$10.9 million goal, with \$5.7

million already raised. Support has come from several major partners, including the Desjardins Foundation, which pledged

\$500,000, and the Ottawa Senators Community Foundation contributing \$1 million. The Choquette-Legault Foundation made the campaign's largest commitment with a donation of \$2 million.

Josianne T. Lavoie, the project's manager and a mother who lost her child to illness, stressed the critical need for the facility in the region. "*Maison Papillon* will be a sanctuary for families during the most challenging moments of their lives," she said. In addition to providing care, the facility is expected to offer respite services and serve as a training hub for medical professionals specializing in pediatric palliative care.

The establishment of *Maison Papillon* is seen as a transformative moment for the Outaouais region, one that promises to bring essential health care resources closer to home for families. The initiative reflects a growing commitment to supporting those navigating the complexities of pediatric illness, ensuring that care and comfort are available when they are needed most. (Please note that this article was ready for publication at the onset of the Canada Post strike, republished now)

Journey through history with Parcours 50



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

Starting January 17, residents and visitors of Val-des-Monts can embark on an exciting and educational journey through the municipality's historic landmarks with Parcours 50, a free, interactive experience designed to celebrate the region's rich history. This engaging adventure invites participants of all ages to explore significant sites while testing their knowledge and learning about the past.

The Municipality of Val-des-Monts is proud to celebrate its 50th anniversary this year. Parcours 50 marks the beginning of a year-long celebration, providing a unique way for everyone to connect with the area's heritage while enjoying a fun, family-friendly activity.

Parcours 50 is accessible both online

and in person, making it an ideal activity for the entire family. Whether participants prefer to drive around and visit the sites or enjoy the adventure from the comfort of their own home using a phone, tablet, or computer, the trail offers flexibility to suit all preferences.

The adventure begins with a series of fun, educational games that guide participants through Val-des-Monts' historic sites. As players answer questions, they unlock mystery letters, which will help them reveal a hidden word. Completing the entire trail and solving all the mysteries gives players the chance to submit their final answer and potentially win a 50th-anniversary gift basket.

To participate, visit the Municipality's website starting January 17. For more information, visit the official page: <https://www.val-des-monts.net/celebrons-nos-50-ans/>



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Housing crisis response

Despite delays, the containers project on Gatineau's Robert-Guertin site is on track



Jean-Pierre Poulin, President of Transitiôn Québec, and Nancy Martineau, Executive Director of Transitiôn Québec, answering questions from the media at the press scrum on 12 December 2024. MG PHOTO: SCREENSHOT



Mélissa Gélinas
LJI Reporter

With 2025 already upon us, what will happen to the installation of the 100 containers planned for the end of 2024 on the Robert-Guertin site? At the press scrum held on December 12, Jean-Pierre Poulin, President of Transitiôn Québec, and Nancy Martineau, General Manager of Transitiôn Québec, spoke about the project's progress.

By December 2024, a number of containers had already been installed on the site to house homeless people. Of the 100 containers planned, half have already been installed. It will not, however, house 50 people. "We have to wait for Hydro-Québec to arrive and we also want to have a solid team on

the ground," said Nancy Martineau. "I really wanted to welcome at least seven people before Christmas," she added.

The complexity of the project can explain the delay, as well as the changes in funding mechanisms that have enabled Transitiôn Québec to access government subsidies.

"By changing the financing method, we are giving them more flexibility and agility to meet government program criteria," said Maude Marquis-Bissonnette, Mayor of Gatineau. "When we adopted the emphyteutic lease and all the resolutions in September and October, we thought it was the right way to realize that, if we made certain adjustments, we would be able to make this project even more interesting," she continues.



The container project is scheduled for completion by April. "We'll have all 100 containers installed by then," said Jean-Pierre Poulin. At the same time, a service bureau, communal kitchens and a bicycle repair container will also be set up.

"The idea is that this will help people move on to other, more permanent solutions, while being supported by social services," explained Steve Moran, a local councillor in the Hull-Wright district. "I hope this

will take some pressure off the site."

Of the 89 people interviewed, 82 were selected to live in the containers. "We gave priority to people who are currently living in the camps," said Ms Martineau.

A public consultation on the future of the Transitiôn village is due to take place in the first few months of 2025.

Une consultation publique quant à l'avenir du village Transitiôn devra avoir lieu d'ici les prochains premiers mois de 2025.

Outaouais faces healthcare crisis after flying teams cut



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

The Quebec government's abrupt decision to dismantle its flying health teams has sent shockwaves through the Outaouais region, where shortages of healthcare personnel are chronic and acutely felt. The programme, designed to deploy staff to areas struggling with critical labour gaps, had been a lifeline for the region, offering temporary reinforcements to hospitals and clinics. Now, with little warning, that support has vanished, leaving local leaders grappling with what they describe as a deepening crisis.

For Alain Smolynecky, president of

the Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de la santé et des services sociaux de l'Outaouais-CSN, the end of the programme is both a blow to the public healthcare system and a sign of broader neglect. "The Outaouais already struggles to attract and retain workers," he said. "Removing these teams is not just a bad decision; it's one that risks leaving vulnerable patients without care."

The Outaouais, long overshadowed by its neighbour, Ottawa, has faced persistent challenges in competing for medical professionals. With fewer resources and lower salaries than those offered across the provincial border, the region has become a revolving door for healthcare staff. The flying teams, while never a permanent

solution, had offered some relief, shoring up gaps in critical services. Without them, union representatives fear longer wait times for surgeries, postponed vaccinations, and reduced access to primary care.

Critics of the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government argue the decision reflects a pattern of prioritising cost-cutting over community needs. The government has not outlined an alternative plan to address staffing shortfalls, which has heightened concerns that private agencies will step into the breach. These agencies, already a significant presence in the Outaouais, charge steep fees that critics say drain public resources without offering long-term solutions. "When private agencies take over, the public system loses both

money and workers," Smolynecky said. "It's an expensive cycle, and it doesn't fix anything."

The loss of the flying teams has amplified fears that some services may simply disappear. Local leaders have warned of a ripple effect, with fewer staff available to reduce surgical backlogs or handle seasonal surges in demand. Union officials, who had initially raised concerns about the flying teams' implementation, say they had come to view the programme as a necessary stopgap. Their calls for structured, long-term strategies to recruit and retain staff in the region have gone unanswered, fuelling frustration with what many see as a piecemeal approach to healthcare policy.

Continued on page 13

Acting on policy: New person takes on job with city

Gatineau continues its commitment to the Algonquin Anishinabeg First Nations of Kitigan Zibi



MéliSSa Gélinas
LJJ Reporter

The new Indigenous partnership advisor was introduced to Gatineau at Gatineau's Quality of Life committee (Commission-du-vivre-ensemble) meeting, November 14. At the committee meeting, Roxanne Lauzon Rankin, Apitipi Anicinapek gave an outline of her role as Regional Indigenous Partnership Advisor, as well as the status of the Indigenous Initiative.

More specifically, the goal is to work towards reconciliation by developing various strategies to facilitate it. "My mandate is to develop and maintain partnerships between the regional Indigenous community," explains Lauzon Rankin. "This includes citizens, agencies, different organizations, partner institutions at the Pôle en enseignement supérieur de l'Outaouais (PESO) as well as with the Ville de Gatineau," she adds. "I help the various teams to work well on Indigenous issues by providing them with advice and support [...]."

A number of new organizations and projects are currently being set up on the city's territory. "It's important to consult the Indigenous communities and develop a relationship of trust with them," she says.

There are a huge number of files concerning Indigenous issues, services, committees, and projects. "We are currently working on a project with the President of Higher Education regarding bullying experienced by Indigenous students in schools," she points out. "The project should be presented at the end of Febru-



Roxanne Lauzon Rankin, Apitipi Anicinapek and Regional Indigenous Partnership Advisor (September 27, 2021). MG PHOTO: COURTESY

ary, as part of anti-bullying week," she continues.

"At the city level, we have an entire liaison for consultations with indigenous communities, whether in terms of urban planning, sustainable development, mobility services or citizen interaction," she says.

To coordinate everything properly, it's important to draw up a list of everyone's needs, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. "We have to ask ourselves what the needs of non-Indigenous are, in order to work well with these communities," she asks. "What do natives need?" she continues.

To this end, an action plan has been drawn up to identify the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing Indigenous peoples. This plan can be implemented both within the municipality and within PESO institutions. "Right now, one of the biggest issues is the nuclear plant at Chalk River (nuclear reactor incident in 1952, contaminating water and air)," says Lauzon Rankin.

"One of the main observations I've made is that there are no or very few policy procedures, formal written processes," she mentions. "We have to deal with a lot on a case-by-case basis," she adds. "Indigenous files are worked on, but not in a uniform or structured way. I have, however, seen a strong desire to work together.

According to Lauzon Rankin, optimizing resources and development will undoubtedly increase the visibility of concrete actions and enable them to be implemented more quickly. In particular, several PESO-led autochtonization committees are being set up in educational institutions such as UQO, Cégep de l'Outaouais and Collège Héritage. (Trans.: WP)

Les Feux sur Glace to illuminate Aylmer marina after three-year pause



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

Les Feux sur Glace festival will return to the Aylmer Marina in February, bringing fireworks, live music, and family entertainment back to the community after a three-year hiatus. The much-anticipated event, a winter highlight for the region, promises an even more dynamic program than in past years.

"The festival is back!" said Marie-Pier Lacroix, a member of the board responsible for organizing the event. "It was on pause because of COVID, but now we're ready to return in February at the Aylmer Marina." This year's festival will feature two music performances each night, with fireworks as a dazzling centerpiece.

On Friday night, the spotlight will be on nostalgia and Quebec hip-hop. "On the 21st, it's going to be a mix of 90s nostalgia, with music from MusiquePlus, and Dubmatique performing after the fireworks," said Lacroix. Saturday will shift to a country music fo-

cus, with headliners such as Phil G. Smith and Cindy Bédard, along with emerging local artists. "Saturday is all about country, with a lineup of artists and rising stars," she added.

The event will also cater to families with a dedicated zone offering activities for children, ice carving, and live mural painting. Food trucks and booths from local non-profits will round out the festival experience, providing visitors with a taste of the region's offerings.

The festival will run on February 21 and 22, from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm each evening, featuring nightly fireworks displays at 8:30 pm as the highlight of the program. Daily passes cost \$10 for children, \$20 for teens, and \$35 for adults, while weekend passes are \$15, \$35, and \$60, respectively. Tickets can be purchased at www.lumivalli.ca/feux-sur-glace or on the festival's Facebook page at facebook.com/lesfeuxsurglace.

With an estimated budget of \$250,000 and the support of the City of Gatineau, the festival is expected to draw a large crowd. "We'd love to see around 5,000 people join us," Lacroix said. "It's going to be a big celebration, and we can't wait to welcome everyone."



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\$8 Million initiative announced to boost northern Quebec's agri-food sector



Tashi Farmilo
LJ Reporter

The Quebec government has committed \$8 million to support the development of the agri-food sector in its vast northern territories. The funding, made possible through an agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (MAPAQ) and the Société du Plan Nord (SPN), will support the sustainable production, processing, and marketing of bio-food products in regions north of the 49th parallel and beyond the Saint Lawrence River and Gulf.

This initiative, which builds on a previous partnership that ran from 2020 to 2023, will extend until 2028. The funding is intended to stimulate innovation, diversify the local economy, and strengthen the region's food autonomy. The program targets projects that align with government goals to address the unique challenges faced by northern

communities, which are geographically isolated and subject to harsh environmental conditions.

The financial support is tailored to projects of varying scopes, with a minimum grant of \$10,000. Larger funding amounts are available for initiatives demonstrating significant potential impact, though additional approvals are required for grants exceeding \$300,000. All projects must be completed no later than March 2028, with applications accepted until October 2027. Eligible participants include Quebec residents or businesses operating in the province, provided their projects are in the designated northern territories.

André Lamontagne, Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, said the funding represents a critical investment in the province's food security and economic resilience. Speaking at the announcement, he highlighted the potential for northern regions to contribute to the province's culinary



The Quebec government has launched an \$8 million initiative to develop sustainable agri-food production, processing, and marketing in northern regions, aiming to bolster local economies, food autonomy, and environmental stewardship. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MAPAQ

and agricultural identity while fostering sustainable practices.

Maité Blanchette Vézina, Minister of Natural Resources and Forests and Minister responsible for the Société du Plan Nord, emphasized the need to adapt to the unique social and economic realities of the north. She noted that the program seeks not only to support local economies but also to enhance environmental stewardship and promote agri-tourism in these remote areas.

Applicants are encouraged to develop projects that align with the program's

objectives, which include advancing sustainable agri-food practices, reducing environmental impact, and fostering local and regional market opportunities.

For comprehensive details, consult the Northern Action Plan 2023–2028, (www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/politiques-orientations/plan-action-nordique) and the MAPAQ's dedicated program page. For further questions or general information, applicants are encouraged to email entente.mapaq.spn@mapaq.gouv.qc.ca.

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A survey of Gatineau employees reveals surprising results



MéliSSa Gélinas
LJJ Reporter

The results of Gatineau's employee mobilization survey were revealed at the November 26 meeting of the Committee of the Whole. This is the very first survey since the city's merger.

According to Simon Rousseau, General Manager, the objective is to draw up an overall portrait of the organization.

The survey was carried out among more than 4,000 employees, with a participation rate of 43%. In particular, it is a tool that will enable us to prioritize actions to be implemented with a view to improving the employee engagement rate over the coming years.

Several themes were addressed in the survey. These included commitment, the relationship with the manager, the organization's strategy, professional development, the relationship with colleagues, personal well-being and much more.

In terms of the results obtained, a score of 6.4 out of 10 was obtained for



Simon Rousseau, General Manager giving a speech on the employee engagement survey at the November 26, 2024 Committee of the Whole. (MG)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF VILLE DE GATINEAU

the rate of engagement.

In addition, 20% of respondents would recommend Ville de Gatineau as an excellent place to work, and 38% agreed or were neutral on this question.

On the other hand, 72% of respondents felt that their immediate superior provided them with the support they needed to do their job.

What's more, 68% feel a sense of ac-

complishment most of the time, and 67% find that the job they hold allows them to learn and develop new skills.

On the other hand, 69% feel that Ville de Gatineau teams do not collaborate effectively. 64% do not feel that they can influence the way the city operates, and 62% feel that they are not sufficiently rewarded for their contribution at work.

In this respect, the strongest results are to be found in the area of welcome and integration. Indeed, it was possible to conclude that Gatineau welcomes and integrates its new employees well.

The weakest results were in the areas of compensation, rewards and workload. In fact, 5.2 out of 10 felt they were not well enough paid, 4.8 out of 10 felt they were not rewarded enough, and 5.4 out of 10 felt their workload was adequate.

It's a starting point," says Simon Rousseau, "and we want to be able to take an annual sounding board of our organization, so that we can see where we need to improve. "We're perfectly aware, as employers, that we can definitely do better," he adds. (Trans.: WP)

Coffee with Chelsea Mayor Pierre Guénard



REUEL S. Amdur

Chelsea Mayor Pierre Guénard has initiated a novel way of communicating with residents. He invites people to make coffee dates with him, giving them a half hour to discuss whatever is on their mind. We decided to try this out, so we arranged a session at 9:30 am on December 12. In our case, we substituted tea for coffee. He accompanied the beverages with biscuits.

Guénard began by talking about his cup. It was the handiwork of Carol Polansky Freimovitch, a local potter. We then talked about his experience with this initiative. "It is more relaxed than question period at Council meetings." He gave an example of one resident who told him he was shy, and this was a safe way to get his concerns expressed. It was clear that the mayor also found the format personally rewarding.

What do people want to discuss with him? Safety in active mobility is a biggie. People appreciate the lowering of the



Chelsea Mayor Pierre Guénard included the *West Quebec Post* in his 'Meet the mayor for tea' initiative. (LR)

PHOTO: REUEL S AMDUR

speed limit on Notch, Scott, and the 105. They also want to talk about the National Capital Commission's (NCC) refusal to

pay designated taxes.

Guénard commented that the NCC tax issue leaves Chelsea in the middle.

"We don't set the valuation. That is done by the MRC des Collines." But the NCC chooses to defy the valuation, leaving Chelsea in the lurch, being short-changed and not knowing what to expect. It's in court. He acknowledged that he had discussions on the situation with federal Deputy Sophie Chatel, but he was not free to reveal what became of their exchange.

Chelsea has carried out careful analyses of its financial situation, he explained, and it has chosen to adopt a fiscally conservative path. One must be the maintenance of infrastructure. It is a case of pay now or pay more later. While an increase of transfers from upper levels of government is needed, he does not see these as the whole answer. Chelsea, he believes, must diversify its revenue sources, and he expects that real progress will come from greater reliance on grants.

We wanted to get his thoughts on former Gatineau Mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin's advocacy of a municipal income tax, but Guénard found it difficult to get his head around the idea.

\$200 million in cuts to Quebec's public schools by March 2025: the Outaouais far from spared



MéliSSa Gélinas
LJ Reporter

In December 2024, the Quebec government announced a new budget cut of more than \$200 million in Quebec's education system for the period ending in March 2025. In the Outaouais, this cut represents a total of \$5.5 million for public schools. The announcement has provoked strong reactions in the region's education community.

Several school service centres in the Outaouais will have to make several budget cuts as a result. For example, the Centre de services scolaires des Portages-de-l'Outaouais (CSSPO) will have to reduce its spending by more than \$2,164,556.08, which represents 67% of its total budget.

The Centre de services scolaires des Hauts-Bois-de-l'Outaouais will have to cut \$324,303.39 by March 2025.

As for the Centre de services scolaires des Draveurs



(CSSD), a sum of \$2,187,808.57 will have to be saved.

The new government projects that were recently announced for schools, such as adding space, building new facilities, extending existing facilities and adding modular classrooms, will therefore have to be put on hold.

According to Kim Lafleur Lauriault, President of the Outaouais School Support Union, student services will be affected despite the government's assertion to the contrary. "We're beyond worried," she says. "We were already worried at the beginning of the school year because of the shortage, etc.," she continues. "Support staff are already in a state of emergency. We are cutting where there is nothing left to cut."

Bernard Drainville, Member of the National Assembly for Lévis, Minister of Education and Minister responsible for the Chaudière-Appalaches region (December 7, 2024) (MG)

PHOTO: FACEBOOK PAGE OF BERNARD DRAINVILLE, MNA FOR LÉVIS AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Young Quebecers will be able to get more out of their schoolyards thanks to a \$3.2 million investment



MéliSSa Gélinas
LJ Reporter

On December 2, 2024, the Minister of Education, Bernard Drainville, announced an investment of over \$3.2 million to improve school grounds in a number of Quebec schools.

From the Côte-Nord region to the Outaouais region, primary and secondary schools will benefit from the addition of playgrounds, play modules, pathways, outdoor classrooms and much more, with budgets ranging from \$10,459 to over \$100,000.

In the Outaouais region, 35 schools, including elementary and high schools, from Gatineau, Chapleau, Papineau, Pontiac and Hull, will also have their school grounds revitalized. At école secondaire du Versant, for example, an outdoor classroom will be built and trees planted, for a budget of \$89,944. At Pontiac's Arc-en-Ciel elementary school, an outdoor classroom will also be built, as well as a psychomotor course, to develop students' physical and motor skills, for a total budget of \$100,000.

The aim of these projects is to offer young people a variety of activities to promote a healthy, active lifestyle all year round.

"Like everyone else, I have unforgettable memories of playing in the schoolyard, but also, and above all, of the friendships that were born there," says Mathieu Lacombe, Member of Parliament for Papineau and Minister responsible for the Outaouais region. "I'm delighted to know that students from La Traversée (Sainte-Maria Goretti building), Saint-Coeur-de-Marie, J.M. Robert, Sainte-Famille / aux Trois-Chemins, Saint-Jean-de-Brébeuf, du Ruisseau, Saint-Michel (Gatineau) and du



From left: student, Suzanne Tremblay, Member of the National Assembly for Hull, Bernard Drainville, Minister of Education and Member of the National Assembly for Lévis, Mathieu Lévesque, Member of the National Assembly for Chapleau talking with a student in a schoolyard in the Outaouais region (September 13, 2024). MG.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Boisé schools in Papineau will have the chance to take part in a modern socializing space that I'm convinced will be lively and well-designed," he adds. "On behalf of

the children, I would like to thank all the partners who took part in the preliminary phases of these projects. (Trans.: WP)

Comets look to build momentum ahead of playoff action



Tashi Farmilo
LJ Reporter

The Pontiac Senior Comets are entering the final stretch of the regular season with strong performances behind them, and their eyes are set firmly on the upcoming postseason. With a solid record of 11 wins, 3 losses, and 1 overtime loss, the team is well-positioned in the Capital Division as they look to continue building momentum heading into the playoffs.

Recent results have seen the Comets experience some tough competition but demonstrate resilience. They were narrowly defeated 5-3 by the Arnprior Rivermen on January 4th and battled hard in a 9-8 overtime loss to the Manotick Mariners the following day on January 5th. However, the Comets' ability to compete at a high level, despite these setbacks, showcases their determination to finish strong.

The team has been a force offensively, averaging 4.4 goals per game. Their power play has been a work in progress at 20%, but their penalty kill at 83% has been one of their strengths, helping them stay competitive in tight matchups. While their goal differential of -20 is an area they aim to improve, the overall outlook remains strong.

Key players like forward Connor Romain, who has 14 points in just 6 games, and Darcy Findlay, with 13 points in 7 games, have been pivotal in the Comets' offensive attack. On the back end, Keyshawn Francis and Xavier Raby have consistently been contributors, while goaltenders Danick Boisvert and Chad Mosley have been keeping opponents at bay with solid performances in net.

As the team prepares for their upcoming games, including the final regular season game against the Pagan Falls Rapids this Sunday, January 12th, they remain focused on the bigger picture. The Comets will be looking to close out the regular season with a victory in their fourth and final meeting with the Rapids. Fans are encouraged to come out and support their team as they push toward the playoffs.

Looking ahead, the Comets are determined to enter the postseason with the confidence needed to make a deep run. With only a few games remaining in the regular season, the team is fine-tuning their play, building chemistry, and positioning themselves for the challenges the playoffs will bring.

Sebastien Bonnerot, co-owner, expressed his enthusiasm for the team's upcoming matches: "We have a strong line-up this weekend. We are now in playoff preparation mode, and we're looking forward to seeing 500 fans supporting us at home." With their strong leadership, dedicated players, and the unwavering support of their fans, the Pontiac Senior Comets are poised for an exciting playoff run.

Chelsea sweeps Estrie Biathlon



Lily Ryan

Chelsea biathlon stars swept the podium January 12 at the Estrie Biathlon competition. The two-day event was at the Club Plein-air in La Patrie, January 11-12. Some 78 athletes took part in two races over the weekend.

The weekend was part of the Coupe Quebec #1, Coupe Estrie #1 and Coupe Régionale de l'Est du Canada, as well as of the United States. Biathlon clubs from Quebec, Ontario and the USA competed for the races Saturday and Sunday.

Pictured are the three Chelsea Estrie Biathlon winners for the Sunday event: Matthew Ng, 2nd place; James Ivan McAvoy, 1st place with a time of 40:06:7; Andrew Liddiard, placing third. (LR)
PHOTO: SCOTT STEVENSON

Outaouais faces healthcare crisis after flying teams cut

Continued from page 8

"This decision feels like the government has given up on regions like ours," said Smolynecky. "It's hard not to see it as part of a broader shift towards privatisation."

The CAQ's track record on healthcare has come under scrutiny in recent months, as private clinics play an increasingly visible role in Quebec's system. While proponents of privatisation argue that such clinics offer quicker access to care, critics counter that they cherry-pick profitable procedures and leave public hospitals to manage complex, high-risk cases. In the Outaouais, where private agencies have already recruited many local healthcare workers, the effects are particularly stark. Public facilities are left to operate with skeletal crews, exacerbating existing delays and putting additional strain on remaining staff.

With no immediate solutions on the table, the region's residents and healthcare workers are left bracing for what comes next. "This isn't just a question of policy," Smolynecky said.



For Alain Smolynecky, president of the Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de la santé et des services sociaux de l'Outaouais-CSN, the abrupt end of Quebec's flying health teams is a devastating setback for a region already grappling with chronic staff shortages and mounting healthcare challenges. (TF)

PHOTO COURTESY OF CSN

"It's about the lives and health of the people who live here. And right now, they feel abandoned."

Bill 79: The Need to modernize municipal planning regulations



MéliSSa Gélinas
LJJ Reporter

On December 5, 2024, during the committee meeting at the National Assembly of Quebec, Nathalie Prudhomme, President of the Ordre des urbanistes du Québec (OUQ), and David Alfaro-Clark, Communications and Government Relations Advisor, spoke on Bill 79, which aims to modernize the contractual management framework of municipalities and reduce the administrative formalities affecting municipal organizations.

"The context of the housing crisis has largely been attributed to the regulatory burden in municipalities," said Prudhomme. "It is one of the causes, but not the only one."

According to Caroline Murray, municipal councillor for the district of Deschênes, cities play a front-line role as local governments. "Working so close to the ground means being directly confronted with concrete and complex issues, whether they are housing, transportation or the environment," she said. "It requires a unique ability to land projects and implement adapted solutions. That's why it's important for Quebec to recognize these challenges by adapting the laws to facilitate the work of municipalities."

Furthermore, the government's Bill 31 granted municipal councils the power to approve housing projects that do not comply with urban planning regulations, and this, through discretionary measures. Although the OUQ supports densification and redevelopment, it nevertheless calls for an overall vision where densification is considered, planned and ordered.

"In Bill 79, the power is expanded to explicitly authorize mixed projects, provided that they are predominantly residential," commented Nathalie Prudhomme. According to her, this expansion could be beneficial if it promotes local services for new resi-



Nathalie Prudhomme, President of the Ordre des urbanistes du Québec (OUQ), and David Alfaro-Clark, Communications and Government Relations Advisor, presenting Bill 79 at the National Assembly of Quebec (December 5, 2024) (MG)

PHOTO: SCREENSHOT

dents.

"However, we believe that this expansion should not be used to authorize major redevelopment projects with a strong commercial component," she emphasized. "In this sense, we should not give a fast track to projects that are up to 50% non-residential by invoking the housing crisis," she continued. According to Prudhomme, it would be recommended to reduce the non-residential proportion, by increasing the rate of the minimum residential threshold or by limiting non-residential uses to the ground floor only.

Beyond these changes, the government must pursue reforming the Land Use Planning and Development Act, which allows residents to participate in consultations on decision-making in land use planning and urban planning.

Concerning the reduction of time limits for gov-

ernment notices, the bill proposes a reduction in the legal time limits for submitting notices on compliance with government guidelines and at the level of metropolitan land use and development plans (PMAD). "The government would have 45 instead of 60 days to respond to changes to the PMAD plan," explained Prudhomme. "The Order welcomes this change, because one of the challenges of the Quebec land use planning system is the existence of different planning levels and the delays created by this reality," she added.

For these reasons, the OUQ wishes to make adjustments while proposing various amendments to the Land Use Planning and Development Act.

"However, for cities to fully play their role as partners in major national projects, it is urgent to resolve the underlying problem: municipal taxation," said Murray.

New resource directory for seniors in Outaouais



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

The Quebec Association for the Defence of the Rights of Retirees and Pre-Retirees of Outaouais (AQDR Outaouais) has launched a valuable new resource designed to improve the lives of seniors in the region. The association has unveiled the Répertoire des Ressources et Services pour les Personnes Aînées, a comprehensive directory that provides seniors and their families with easy access to a wide array of local services tailored to their specific needs.

This directory, available both in print and online, serves as a practical guide to navigating the often-complex landscape of senior services. It includes information on healthcare, social support networks, home care, and recreational activities, among other important services. The goal is to help seniors main-

tain their independence, stay informed about available resources, and access vital services in areas such as healthcare, housing, nutrition, and social engagement.

Developed in partnership with local organizations, the directory reflects AQDR Outaouais's ongoing commitment to addressing the growing demand for accessible and reliable information about senior services. AQDR Outaouais has long been dedicated to the defence of seniors' rights, and the directory is a tangible expression of that mission.

"Over the years, AQDR Outaouais has observed a growing need for clear, accessible information among seniors and their families," a statement from the association reads. The directory was created to meet these needs by providing a single, easy-to-use resource that brings together essential services, from healthcare institutions such as hospitals and long-term care homes to programs like meal delivery services and legal as-

sistance.

The directory covers a wide range of services, including health-related support, food security, transportation, and housing. It also highlights community-based initiatives such as "popote roulante," a meal delivery program for seniors, and local food banks that assist low-income individuals and families.

AQDR Outaouais encourages local residents to share the directory with others who may benefit from it. The guide is available to the public free of charge and is regularly updated to reflect any changes in services or new resources for seniors. The online version can be accessed directly via AQDR Outaouais's official website at <https://aqdroutaouais.org/> or online at <https://aqdroutaouais.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Version-finale-2024-Repertoire-des-ressources-et-services-pour-les-personnes-aines-8.5-x-11-in-1.pdf>.

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HELP WANTED

COLLECTION OF NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS AND HYGIENE PRODUCTS FOR THE AYLMEER FOOD CENTRE: People who want to make a difference and help our community can drop off their donations at the Aylmer Bulletin office, located in the Galeries Aylmer, from Monday to Friday during business hours (9 a.m.-5 p.m.). Thank you for your generosity!

JOB OFFERS

CHEZ PUTTERS IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A WAITER/WAITRESS. Position available immediately. Submit your resume in person at Chez Putters, located at 181 Rue Principale, Gatineau (Aylmer), QC, or by email at info@chezputters.ca.

A D V E R T I S I N G C O N S U L T A N T POSITION AVAILABLE. Help local businesses increase their visibility and sales. Interpersonal skills are essential. You must be bilingual and own a vehicle. Responsibilities: Offer innovative advertising solutions to local merchants, provide customer service to advertisers, apply different marketing strategies, and expand print and web sales. Send your résumé by email to the Aylmer Bulletin at pub@bulletinaylmer.com.



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BECAUSE WE HAVE YOUR ACTIVITIES AT HEART COMMUNITY EVENTS

ATLANTIC VOICES PRESENT: AT THE END OF A DOWN EAST DAY. Sunday, January 26, 2025, at 3 PM. Doors open for the Fumblin'fingers at 2:15 PM. Centretown United Church 507 Bank Street. Tickets are \$30 until January 25th and \$35 at the door. Free for children 12 and under. Tickets are available from choir members or through EventBrite. atlanticvoices.ca/concerts for more info.

AYLMER LEGION BRANCH 33: -Knitting Group "A humanitarian initiative" get-together on Mondays from 1 pm to 3 pm. -Euchre League on Monday evenings at 6:30 pm. -Dart League on Friday evenings at 7 pm. -January 18 at 1 pm: Euchre Tournament. -January 18 at 7 pm: Karaoke Night. -January 26 at 2 pm: Annual General Meeting for Branch 33 members followed by elections. Proof of 2025 membership in good standing will be required to participate in the General Meeting and the elections. -January 28 from 10 am to noon: "All You Need to Know about Old Age Security." This is a free workshop offered by Connexions at the Aylmer Legion and you must register in advance by calling 819 557-0615. -February 1 at 6 pm: Dinner Fundraiser organized by volunteers to help the Aylmer Legion. Get your tickets now

and enjoy a roast beef dinner followed by live music with Arc of Fire. Tickets \$30 pp. Call Denise at 613 614-7847 to get tickets. The Aylmer Legion is open on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 4 pm. All are welcome at the Aylmer Legion, located at 59 Bancroft Street, Gatineau (Aylmer sector), QC. Info: Aylmerlegion33@gmail.com.

BINGO AYDELU. 94, rue du Patrimoine, Gatineau (secteur d'Aylmer). Tous les mercredis soir / Every Wednesday night 18 h 45 / 6:45 p.m. Ouverture des portes 16 h / Doors open at 4 p.m. 3 800 \$ en prix / in prizes. 18 ans et plus / 18 years and older. Places limitées / Limited places. Nouveau programme / New program. Service de cantine / Canteen service. 819 684-7888 ou/ou 819 230-2240.

CHEVALIERS DE COLOMB AYLMEER 5281 Merci à toute la population pour son soutien à nos soupers de doré pour l'année 2024. À noter que les soupers reprendront le 25 avril 2025. Nous avons toujours notre grande salle disponible pour la location. Prix avantageux, stationnement et service au bar. Située au 78, rue Principale, Gatineau (Aylmer), QC. Pour plus d'information : 819-684-5552.

JOIN THE RAWQ ON JANUARY 15 AND JANUARY 23, 2025, from 6 to 8 p.m. for a fun and relaxed evening of multiple-choice trivia in their offices, located in the Galerie Aylmer. Whether you want to meet new people or practice for the upcoming Quiz Night, this will be a social event that allows you to learn something new! For more information or to register, please call 819-682-9602 or write to us at info@westquebecers.ca.

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