

Héma-Québec calls for more plasma donors in the Outaouais



Héma-Québec is urging more Outaouais residents to donate plasma as demand for life-saving plasma-derived medications continues to rise and the province works toward greater self-sufficiency. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY

Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Héma-Québec is calling on residents of the Outaouais region to donate plasma in greater numbers as part of a province-wide effort to

increase self-sufficiency in plasma-derived medicines. Despite a steady rise in donations at the Gatineau Plasma Donor Centre, which recorded more than 16,000 donations in 2024 compared to around 14,000 in 2023, the total remains below the organization's target of 20,000 annual donations.

"This year, we are projecting just over 18,000 donations at the Gatineau centre, which is good progress, but we are still short of our goal," said Marc-Antoine Turcotte, spokesperson for Héma-Québec. "We need about 100 more donors every week to meet our targets and improve the province's overall plasma self-sufficiency."

Plasma is the liquid portion of blood that contains essential components such as antibodies, clotting factors, and proteins. These elements are used to produce critical medications for patients suffering from immune deficiencies, autoimmune disorders, neurological conditions, and severe burns or trauma. Plasma donations are processed into products like immunoglobulins and coagulation factors, which are often required for lifelong treatments.

"Plasma is still not as well known as blood donation," Turcotte noted. "But it

plays an equally vital role in helping patients who depend on it to stay healthy or to survive."

Plasma collected in Quebec is sent to pharmaceutical manufacturers that specialize in fractionating the plasma into therapeutic products. These medications are then returned to Quebec and distributed across hospitals based on demand. While the plasma donated in Gatineau may not be used locally, it contributes to a broader system that supports patients throughout the province.

"The reality is that we are still reliant on foreign sources, particularly the United States, to meet our needs," Turcotte explained. "By increasing local donations, we are taking steps toward being more independent and ensuring we have consistent access to these life-saving medications."

Continued on page 2

Medical mutiny: chief physicians resign in protest of Bill 2

Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

A wave of physician resignations in the Outaouais region has raised alarm about the future of local health care. Several Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de l'Outaouais (CISSO) physicians have resigned from administrative roles following the adoption of Bill 2, Quebec's controversial health reform law, exacerbating existing service shortages in the region.

Pushed through without debate (under closure) on October 25, Bill 2 introduces changes to physician compensation and oversight. It ties part of doctors'

income to patient access targets and increases government control over medical practice. The law also includes penalties for doctors who engage in collective action, like coordinated resignations or refusing to supervise trainees.

Because of these penalties, many physicians are reluctant to openly object. Jean Pigeon, spokesperson for the advocacy group SOS Outaouais, said this has created uncertainty about who plans to remain in the public health system. According to Pigeon, five physicians have resigned from management positions, though clinical intentions remain unclear in some cases.

Continued on page 2



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Héma-Québec calls for more plasma donors in the Outaouais

Continued from page 1

Unlike whole blood donations, plasma is collected through a process called plasma-phoresis. A machine separates the plasma from other blood components, which are then returned to the donor. The process takes about 70 minutes. Because plasma regenerates more quickly than other blood components, people can donate more often, up to once every six days.

"The experience is generally comfortable," said Turcotte. "Many donors come back regularly. In fact, we've seen that once someone starts donating plasma, they tend to stick with it. In Gatineau last year, we

had close to 3,000 donors, and on average, each gave plasma more than five times."

To be eligible, donors must be at least 18 years old, weigh over 50 kilograms, be in good general health, and meet travel and medication screening criteria. Héma-Québec offers an online questionnaire at hema-quebec.ca to help people determine if they qualify before booking an appointment.

"This is not just about meeting a quota," said Turcotte. "Each donation has a real, direct impact on the life of someone in need. Whether it's a child with a rare immune disorder or an adult recovering from a major injury, plasma is often part of what keeps them alive and thriving."

Medical mutiny: chief physicians resign in protest of Bill 2

Continued from page 1

Dr. Éric Bégin resigned from his administrative role as Chief of Surgery. Dr. Trevor Hennessey is leaving both his clinical and administrative duties as Chief of Anesthesiology and plans to move to Ontario. Dr. Shelly Sud stepped down as Chief of Oncology. Dr. Lionel Ange Pongui resigned as Chief of Obstetrics-Gynaecology but continues seeing patients. Dr. Mustapha Chelfi, a radiation oncologist and one of the founders of the Gatineau Cancer Centre, is taking early retirement, citing exhaustion and disillusionment with the direction of government policy.

During a press conference in Gatineau on November 10, Dr. Hennessey described the collapse of a system long under strain. "We've witnessed amputation after amputation [of health services] in the region," he said. "We lost thoracic surgery over 15 years ago, so we can't care for lung cancer patients locally. We lost obstetrical services in Shawville. This August, we lost our only vascular surgeon. There's really nothing left to amputate. The system here is dying."

He criticized government leadership for failing to address long-standing issues, stating the problem isn't lack of money, but poor governance and lack of responsiveness.

Pigeon echoed those concerns and accused Premier François Legault and Health Minister Christian Dubé of turning the crisis into a political dispute. "They've made doctors the scapegoats for government failures," Pigeon said. "Instead of listening, they're blaming the people trying to keep the system running."

In a public message, Santé Québec, the

province's newly established health-operations agency, acknowledged the law has caused anxiety in some areas and deteriorated work environments. It stated they're committed to ensuring continuity of services and minimizing impacts on patients. CISSSO declined to comment.

Dubé, who sponsored Bill 2, announced the government will suspend two of the law's more contentious provisions: one that tied compensation to access targets, and another requiring doctors to request permission before working outside the public system. He described these changes as an effort to reopen dialogue with the medical community.

The Health Ministry said it's monitoring the Outaouais' situation closely and emphasized there's a difference between expressing the intention to resign and actually stepping down. It urged physicians to fully understand Bill 2 before making any decisions. The government added that it's maintaining regular dialogue with CISSSO administrators and physicians to find lasting solutions. Recent webinars were held to address concerns, and Minister Sonia Bédard visited the region on November 10 to meet directly with community groups.

André Fortin, Pontiac MNA, warned the region cannot lose any more doctors. "This law is counterproductive. It's not improving access to care—if anything, it's doing the opposite," Fortin said. "The government is blaming doctors for its own failures. Every time we lose a family physician, more than a thousand patients lose their doctor. Every time we lose a specialist, surgeries get delayed. It will take decades to rebuild what the CAQ is destroying in the Outaouais."

Shaw meets masks in Wakefield's wild new comedy



Tashi Farmilo

Theatre Wakefield's upcoming production of *Androcles and the Lion* opens November 21 at the Wakefield Community Centre, promising a comic and visually striking take on George Bernard Shaw's classic. Based on the old fable about a man who pulls a thorn from a lion's paw, only to meet the same lion later in the Roman Colosseum, Shaw's version takes sharp aim at religious and political hypocrisy, all while keeping the laughs coming.

This isn't your typical Shaw. Directed by Catherine Edwards, the show is performed in full *commedia dell'arte* style, with actors in handmade theatrical masks and big, exaggerated movements. "The characters are over-the-top, kind of like Monty Python meets ancient Rome," said Edwards. "We're using masks to really lean into the absurdity and satire Shaw was going for."

It is the first time Theatre Wakefield has produced a masked play. Thanks to a grant from Canadian Heritage, the company brought in professional mask-maker Clelia Scala from Kingston to help the cast design and build their own masks. They also hired Attila Clemann, a graduate of the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris, to coach the performers in mask and movement. Clemann currently teaches theatre at the University of Ottawa.



Theatre Wakefield debuts a bold, mask-driven production of Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, blending sharp satire with physical comedy and fresh local talent. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY

The prep began in the summer when Theatre Wakefield hosted mask workshops for both kids and adults. Participants were encouraged to try acting in mask, even if they didn't want to commit to being in the play. That low-pressure invitation brought in lots of first-time performers. "Half the cast had never acted before," said Edwards. "They came for the workshops and ended up loving it so much, they auditioned."

Paola De Rose, who plays Spintho, a scoundrel who tries to secure a last-minute ticket to heaven, said the role appealed to her love of physical activity and creativity. "I'm sporty, and I like doing hands-on things. This brought it all

together." Ten-year-old Francis, who joined the kids' workshop, noted one big difference from other plays. "You can't show your face, so you have to use your body to show how you feel. It's fun and kind of tricky."

Performances run November 21, 22, 28 and 29 at 7 pm, with a matinee on November 30 at 2 pm at the Wakefield Community Centre, 38 Riverside Drive. Tickets are available at www.theatrewakefield.ca.

"This play might be 100 years old, but it hits home," said Edwards. "Shaw asks tough questions about how we treat people who are different from us. It's clever, it's funny, and it makes you think. That's what great theatre should do."

Romie Lacasse brings star power to *Secondaire en spectacle*



Tashi Farmilo

Romie Lacasse, a Gatineau-born singer-songwriter and former participant in *Secondaire en spectacle* (SES), is returning to her roots as the newly named spokesperson for the 2025–2026 edition of the popular youth arts program in the Outaouais.

At only 20 years old, Lacasse is quickly making a name for herself in Quebec's music scene. Her journey began in her own living room, performing songs with her family, writing her first original composition at the age of eight, and later showcasing her voice on stages across the Outaouais. A graduate of Collège Saint-Joseph, she rose to local prominence in 2022 through her performance at the SES regional finals, earning a spot at the province-wide *Rendez-vous panquébécois*. That same performance opened doors to province-wide attention, including an invitation to audition for *La Voix*.

In 2025, Lacasse took her talents to Star Académie, where her gentle voice and grounded presence left a lasting impression, despite her early departure from the show. This fall, she released her debut single *Trop* on Oc-



Gatineau singer-songwriter Romie Lacasse has been named spokesperson for *Secondaire en spectacle* in the Outaouais, returning to the youth arts program that helped launch her musical journey. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY

tober 17, marking the beginning of her official career as a recording artist.

Now, she's coming full circle, this time as a mentor and motivator. As spokesperson for *Secondaire en spectacle*, Lacasse will support the next wave of student performers. Her role includes delivering video messages throughout the year to boost participation and morale, especially leading up to and following the regional finals. She will also serve as head of the jury during the regional competition.

The program, which is coordinated locally by Loisir sport Outaouais, expects to involve around 350 students from 16 participating secondary schools. Each school will host its own final between December and March, leading up to the regional finals at Salle Jean-Després from March 31 to April 2, 2026. Winners from that event will earn the chance to represent the Outaouais at the *Rendez-vous panquébécois*, held in Sept-Îles from May 28 to 31, 2026. The annual event is Quebec's largest gathering of high school artists, with more than 900 participants from across the province. The Outaouais will send 50 students to the showcase this year.

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“Governing by Promising”



FRED Ryan

When the CAQ became Quebec's ruling party many of us wondered what changes may be in store for us here in West Quebec, long ignored by Quebec's older political parties. Many suspected that the CAQ is aggressively francophone, no matter the constitutional guarantees given the Anglophone minority.

And, true enough, times have been tough for English-speakers across the province. Various adjustments made by the CAQ have made life more difficult ... perhaps a bit like the difficulties that francophones themselves suffered when the governments, federal and provincial, seemed 100% anglophone. So today are we dealing with a little revenge legislation? Or

is there actually an improvement in Quebec's government when the largest minority gets hit with a stick over and over by this 'new' government? I have heard neighbours insisting this is correct ... while also insisting Quebec's CAQ has no plan or agenda to topple the once-widespread use of English. Hmm?

And do you, dear reader, see any value in these linguistic battles?

Forget for a moment, please, any old battles or insistences that one language deserves more widespread use -- and how do we show the CAQ leadership that we are not a tiny minority, with no allegiance to our province? To any province?

Instead of a government, fair-minded and equally-applied to everyone, instead of real language use, it might interest all Quebecers to learn that many French-speakers are also

excluded from the rewards of good government. What have we gotten from the CAQ so far?

Seems to many that the CAQ is “governing by promises” - promises made to everyone. Hasn't the CAQ promises a new municipal pool in Hull? Not to mention other promises: a new regional police headquarters, also in Hull, and, most important, Route 50's expansion, doubling up its lanes linking us to Quebec's big metropolitan zone. What else? Which other promises ... more schools, of course, including expansion to UQO? 352

“Governing by promising” is not a new thing, given that politicians seem to believe that a promise is equal to an action ... and we all know it isn't!

While I am pessimistic in looking at the CAQ's record here, and its likely options for

the future, we must not give up on the CAQ! It can become a democratic party (besides being elected, which is the foundation for good government.) -- it can if we can. The CAQ can become genuinely democratic -- think of Quebec's minorities! -- but we must, too. We can become more democratic ourselves by staying engaged with the political process ... and by insisting that our governing members take the democratic principles of government to heart.

When we look at the tragic actions today in Israel or the Ukraine, we realize we must insist of ourselves and our neighbours: we are engaged and struggling to make our ambitions real for a genuine life around us. Our goal is to reach everyone politically ... everyone.

Reprinted from the West Quebec Post, October, 2023

LETTERS

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

Should Outaouais vote Parti Québécois next fall?

It seems like the health care system is falling apart? Is it worse in the Outaouais than the rest of Quebec, or does it feel worse because we have been so under-funded for years. It could be, as the West Quebec Post editorialist warns (May 2025), a slide towards private health care by sheer neglect.

Or, it could be just the result of generations in opposition for the Outaouais. It looks to me like the CAQ deputies in Outaouais pay attention to the east end of our region, the francophone areas. Even if the minister responsible of Outaouais should

be caring for all of the area, it sure doesn't feel that way.

Polls are showing a lead for the Parti Québécois. It always feels like the Quebec Liberal Party gets press in our region, but as great as our local MNA is, voters outside Pontiac are leaning towards the PQ.

And maybe that's a good thing! I wonder when Outaouais local media will give us a more realistic picture of what is happening in Quebec politics.

Marianne Lemieux
Outaouais

Ford & Smith governments are un-Canadian

I want to thank the *West Quebec Post* for the column by David Suzuki & associates in your October 24 edition. It was heartening to see Suzuki back on your pages, even if only for that edition. The issue was the new Carney-era sweep-aside of our country's requirements for approving big projects which pose environmental and social damage. Suzuki makes the point that only by including all citizens and stakeholders will Canada's progress be effective and long-lasting (“durable”).

Suzuki revealed that the governments of Ontario and Alberta have asked to have legal guarantees to First Nation communities put aside in order to speed up approval of “big projects”. Apart from the overt racism of targetting only rights held by aboriginal communities, their request is plainly brainless: it will result in countless back-tracking

forced by the courts when these projects break the law or transgress on our national and international commitments.

“Can we make money from this project?” is not an intelligent nor just way to build our economy. “Because massive US firms will benefit” is not a reason to approve them! “This pipeline or port will add billions to our economy” is self-delusion if those billions go to corporations in the US or elsewhere -- they are nation-building only for the US, Britain, China, etc., not for Canadians, all Canadians.

“Grab it while you can”, is a disgusting economic policy. Ford and Smith's governments are robbing us blind with such requests. Thank you, Dr Suzuki -- and the *West Quebec Post*!

F. Daniels
Shawville

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

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Garvey's Flat



How I wish that I could exchange the slippers I'm wearing for the running shoes I wore as a boy. Those running shoes would be dismayed, no doubt, if they could speak. They might sadly murmur that they no longer can race up the stairs or run swiftly to catch a ball. Better, they might add, to stick with the slippers and hang them up on the wall.

If my footsteps fail to move me swiftly as they once did, my mind can race back to those halcyon days of youth. How very different it was back then. There were little villages and towns separated by trees or farmland. A paved two-lane road connected all of them, sometimes running straight through the town centre. In the larger towns, intersecting streets might also be paved. I will write about Buckingham where I grew up. As you read this, however, you may relate your own memories of the place where you were born. Places such as Quinville, East Templeton, West Templeton, Gatineau Mills, Silver Creek, Val-Tétreau, Cantley...

Buckingham's streets east of the Lièvre River were paved as far as the railway tracks. Our house on Church Street was but a two-minute walk to a sandy road past the cemetery. Then you were in the country. In the early forties, both Church and Dollard Streets were gravel roads. Pavement usually didn't extend beyond the town limits, except for the highway to Masson. Halfway to Masson was a restaurant that everyone knew as The Halfway. Many quarters and dimes played tunes from their jukebox.

The north end of Main Street became a gravel road. Mahoney's Hill was gravel, and a gravel pit was nearby. On the west ward of the town, the pavement ended at the Château Dairy. Then it was a gravel road to Beauchampville.

Joseph Street, running west-east, was paved from Main Street past the railway tracks. The pavement then became a gravel road to Mayo. I remember so well, as a ten-year-old, sitting in the back seat of our Scoutmaster Bill Lawlis's Model A Ford on the way to scout camp at the Blanche. He always pointed out the landmarks. Garvey's Flat was one.

When I first began writing this column, I had a lengthy conversation with Bob Garvey, whose tenor voice held you spellbound with his rendition of "Danny Boy." Bob was a great storyteller. "Remember," he'd say, "if you ever tell this, tell it exactly as I'm telling you now." He spoke of how country people always helped each other and gave a vivid description of a winter storm.

"There was so much snow," he said, "that we were snowbound. The Lavells up the hill knew that. When we were able to get out the front door, we saw that the Lavells had left a milk can at the door." He concluded by telling me, "If we didn't have enough food in the house, we'd at least have milk."

Knowing my love of poetry and song, Bob gave me a copy of his brother Bill's book *Pass It On*. At that time, I contacted Bill, who then lived in Collingwood, Ontario, to tell him how much I enjoyed reading his poems and songs. Bill Garvey was born in Mayo and attended the rural school #5 there. His work in later life took him elsewhere, to places like Pembroke, Brockville and Manitoulin Island. He spent 10 years in communications, 20 years in credit management and 10 years teaching high school.

I would have liked to speak to him once more before sharing one of his poems. However, he passed away in 2021 at the age of 88. Here is one of his poems from *Pass It On*. I am dedicating this writing to the good people of Mayo.

GOING BACK HOME

I went back to the place
Where I spent my youth.
My God!
Has it been fifty years?

No sign of the old house
And the buildings all gone.
I barely could hold back the tears.

It had held so much love
And such joy in its time,
How could this have all slipped away?

As I poked through the rubble
Of what used to be,
It seemed it was just yesterday.

I remembered the music
We all loved to play,
And I started singing a song.
And just for a moment
I was sure I could hear
Someone else singing along.

Home is a place
Where the taproot goes down
And you and the earth become one,
And the stronger the wind
That blows on your back,
The more it strengthens the bond.

So now I'll go back
In my memory instead,
And things will be
As they've been all along.
The old house, the buildings,
The music, the song,
And yes, even someone
To help sing along.



What Happened to Latin America?

by Gwynne DYER

AUTHOR, HISTORIAN & INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST

Javier Milei, the Elon Musk wannabe who became president of Argentina two years ago chainsaw in hand, is now in deep trouble with the voters, and the mid-term elections are due this month. He has the same political agenda as Donald Trump, give or take a folly or two, so he asked his populist big brother for help and Trump delivered.

Milei faces \$20 billion of foreign debt repayments next year and there was no money in the kitty, so Trump bailed Argentina out with a \$20 billion currency swap. But Argentines still seemed quite cross at Milei's huge cuts in jobs and public services and they needed a bigger incentive to vote for him.

Sitting in the White House with Milei last Tuesday, Trump told the Argentine people "You know, our approvals are somewhat subject to who wins the election. If [Milei] loses, we are not going to be generous with Argentina." Or as the real mafia used to put it: "Nice little country you've got here. It would be a shame if something happened to it."

Shamefully, Milei did not reject that blatant intervention in his country's elections. When Trump treated Brazil in a similar way, demanding that convicted ex-president Jair Bolsonaro not go to jail for his attempted coup and threatening to impose a 50% tariff on all the country's exports to the US, the Brazilians told him to go ahead and be damned.

There's an equally humiliating show going on off Venezuela's coast, where speedboats manned by a few young men are being destroyed from the air almost every week by the US Navy. Washington claims that they are carrying drugs and some of them may be, but killing the crews without warning is a deliberate demonstration of US contempt for Venezuela.

Those boats cannot carry enough fuel to get even halfway to the United States. They are not armed, and it would be easy to stop and search them instead. Venezuela is ruled by an unattractive regime, but it is so weak that it would dare not intervene in such stop-and-searches, which would take place outside its territorial waters.

Using missiles on these kids, who are probably getting paid a couple of hundred dollars for making the run, is just performative cruelty for the home audience. The Pentagon puts out video of each kill.

We have become inured to these American displays of contempt for Latin American countries and lives, but there is a bigger question here. Why are Latin American countries so weak, poor and

disrespected, with the partial exceptions of Brazil and Mexico?

By population, Latin America is more than one-third of the 'West'. The languages it speaks are all derived from Latin and in most cases are almost mutually comprehensible (Spanish and Portuguese). The great majority of the population everywhere is 'culturally Christian', regardless of their specific beliefs or lack of belief.

The natural resources available to these 600 million people are no less abundant per capita than those enjoyed by North Americans or other European-derived populations like Australia/New Zealand. Immigration was not later or less than it was to other 'Western' destinations in the originally non-European parts of the world.

Yet there is a history of economic and political failure in most Latin American countries that stretches back centuries and has left them weak and poor compared to the rest of the West. So much so that they scarcely figure in the discussion when the 'rest of the West' chooses its goals or considers its options.

Various people have claimed that the answer lies in the 'fact' that Latin American countries have bigger indigenous and ex-slave populations than those in other parts of the West, but this is simply wrong.

Two of the most economically successful countries in the region are Mexico (19% indigenous and 40% mixed race) and Brazil (10% black and 45% mixed race). By contrast, the most spectacular long-term political failure is Argentina – which is almost entirely white European by descent. You can't just play the race card here.

It is in Argentina that the debate about what went wrong historically is most intense, and I have heard most of those debates at one time or another because I have family connections in the country. I regret to inform you that they have reached no consensus on the answer either, although they are almost obsessed with the question.

Milei is Argentina at its worst and his gamble will very probably end in tears. It will be about the thirtieth time in the past century that an Argentine government has ended in tears. And while Latin America is not just Argentina writ large, the question remains unanswered: Why is per capita income in Europe at least twice as high as per capita income in Latin America?

Bringing joy to those too often forgotten



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

With the holiday season fast approaching, Aylmer residents are being called to action through two community-driven initiatives designed to uplift those who need it most. Spearheaded by local market organiser Tanya Leclair, the Adopt a Senior and Angel Tree programmes are set to bring meaningful cheer to both seniors and children in the area.

The Adopt a Senior programme is the cornerstone of this year's fourth annual Christmas Market at Chartwell's Aylmer Monastery. Leclair created the initiative out of a desire to make her monthly markets more than just shopping events.

"I wanted this year's market to mean something deeper," said Leclair. "The holidays can be incredibly isolating for some of our elders, many of whom do not have family nearby or anyone to celebrate with. This is a way for the



Holiday giving is taking centre stage at Aylmer's Christmas Market as two heartfelt initiatives, Adopt a Senior and the Angel Tree, bring joy to seniors and children who are too often forgotten during the holiday season. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY

community to say, 'You are not forgotten.'"

Participants can sign up to sponsor a senior and will be matched with a name, age, and simple wishlist. They are asked to purchase a gift, wrap it, and drop it off at the Christmas Market, taking place November 22 and 23 from 10 am - pm at 161 rue Principale.

Leclair's commitment to community care does not stop there. She has also launched an Angel Tree project in partnership with the Centre communautaire Entre-Nous, focused on providing holiday gifts for local children from low-income families.

"So the idea of the Angel Tree is simple,"

said Leclair. "People who come to our market will have the opportunity to pick an angel off the tree. Each angel represents a child in our community, listing their name, age, sex, and three of their interests."

Gifts purchased for the Angel Tree can be dropped off at Centre communautaire Entre-Nous, 61 rue du Couvent, by December 9. They will be distributed at a special holiday dinner and party hosted for the children.

"This is about making sure no one in our community is left behind," said Leclair. "Whether it is a senior who has not had a visitor in years or a child who might not otherwise get a gift, we have a chance to show up for one another. Times are tough, but that is exactly when community matters most."

The Christmas Market will also feature over 40 local vendors, free entry, food, and a visit from Santa, making it a festive gathering point for giving and connection.

To sponsor a senior, residents can register online at <https://forms.gle/LK5Vuged9EM8Hq349>

Holiday markets put local makers at centre stage



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

Local producers and artisans are fuelling the holiday spirit this season with festive markets offering handmade goods, gourmet treats, and one-of-a-kind gifts. Across the Outaouais, dozens of Christmas markets are inviting residents to buy local: supporting the entrepreneurs, farmers, and artists who give the region its flavour and character.

Noël dans le Vieux-Aylmer runs November 28 to December 7, transforming rue Principale into a pedestrian holiday village filled with more than 50 vendors, twinkling lights,



A festive lineup of Christmas markets across the Outaouais, from the lively streets of Vieux-Aylmer to artisan halls in the hills, invites residents to support local makers and discover handmade gifts, seasonal treats, and the warm spirit of community this holiday season. (TF)

From November 22 to December 24, the LPG Christmas Market at Les Promenades Gatineau features a rotating lineup of Outaouais food producers in the La Baie courtyard, including local maple farms, chocolatiers, and wineries. Regional gift boxes are available in limited quantities.

The Canadian Museum of History hosts its annual Marché de Noël from November 27 to 30, with nearly 100 exhibitors inside the Grand Hall and Douglas Cardinal Salon. Hours are 11 am to 8 pm Thursday and Friday, 9 am to 5 pm on the weekend. Entry is free.

Polyvalente le Carrefour opens its market on November 30 from 9 am to 4 pm at 75 boulevard des Hautes-Plaines, with more than 60 vendors selling preserves, prints, wood toys, winter gear, and artisan gifts.

December 7 offers two notable events: the Centre Meredith Christmas Market at 23 chemin Cecil in Chelsea from 10 am to 4 pm, and Marché de Noël du Village Rivière at École secondaire du Versant, 808 boulevard de la Cité, from 10 am to 3 pm.

The season closes in Wakefield on December 14, where the Fairbairn House outdoor market at 45 Wakefield Heights Road runs from 11 am to 4 pm with sleigh rides, hot drinks, and local goods under the open sky.

In every corner of the region, these markets reflect a growing shift toward community-based commerce. Each purchase not only supports a neighbour, it helps sustain the local economy, preserve craft traditions, and make the holidays more meaningful, one handmade gift at a time.

and seasonal entertainment. On November 29, the Santa Claus Parade brings over 30 illuminated floats down rue Principale, from Front to Wilfrid-Lavigne, in a community celebration of light and tradition.

Also November 29, the Lord Aylmer Christmas Bazaar at 116 avenue Frank-Robinson offers over 40 vendors and young entrepreneurs from 9 am to 2 pm, plus a pancake breakfast, chili lunch, bake sale, kids' crafts, raffles, and photos with Santa.

November 22 marks the Marché de Noël du Plateau at l'Agora, 35 allée de Hambourg, from 2 pm to 8 pm. Artisans showcase holiday decorations, jewellery, sweets, and more. At 6 pm, the 30-foot Christmas tree will light up to the sound of a choir and holiday music. Donations of non-perishable items for BASE are welcomed.

November 23 brings the Marché de Noël de Templeton to 159 rue Maple from 10 am to 4 pm, with local foods, artisan crafts, and family-friendly activities in a festive, community-first atmosphere.



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Samonix salmon farm still awaiting key approvals



Sophie Demers
LJI Reporter

Samonix, a salmon farm slated for the Pontiac Industrial Park, is still waiting on approvals from Hydro Quebec and Quebec's Environment Ministry's Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement.

According to Rémi Bertrand, Samonix' senior director of project development, they're hoping for answers in the next few weeks. Samonix may then be able to make important announcements about the project. The project isn't asking for any special considerations and is working within the parameters set by the provincial government.

The salmon farm construction, which requires between 80 and 100 acres of land, will include a water treatment facility and a 13-acre main building where about 12,000 metric tons of salmon will be farmed annually. Samonix aims to be the largest producer of Atlantic salmon in land-based aquaculture facilities in Eastern Canada, marketing to local and international markets.

The company will use innovative technology to farm salmon in large pools. A Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) will recirculate water using an advanced filtration and water treatment system to ensure it's free of contaminants or bacteria.

Samonix is a majority Outaouais company that solicited expert partners to work on the project: Smart Salmon, a Norwegian com-



The salmon will be raised in pools like this Eastern Township trout farm operation.

PHOTO: LILY RYAN

pany with expertise in salmon raising; Smogenlax, a Swedish company specializing in the water treatment system they'll use; and Aquamaof, an Israeli company specializing in the technology needed for the operation.

"Quebec's goal of producing as close to a hundred percent of food within the province includes this type of fresh-water safe fish farms," explains one investor.

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Children's Food Drive with Dr. Bureau: For a Better Future



Mélissa Gélinas

The Gatineau Social Pediatrics Centre has launched its 17th annual Children's Food Drive with Dr. Bureau to further its mission: providing Gatineau children with the care and services they need to thrive and reach their full potential. Presented by Desjardins, the campaign runs from November 1, 2025 to January 15, 2026, with a fundraising goal of \$240,000.

According to Jihane Rizkallah, Communications Officer at the Gatineau Social Pediatrics Centre (CPSG), this fundraising target reflects the growing needs in the region. Indeed, the number of children living in vulnerable situations continues to rise each year. "In 2024, we supported over 1,100 children, and that number continues to grow," she explained. "Our teams intervene in complex situations that require specialized resources, time, and long-term follow-up."

With \$240,000, the CPSG will be able to:

- Offer comprehensive pediatric and psychosocial support to approximately 160 children
- Maintain art therapy and parenting support programs
- Strengthen services that prevent distress and exclusion in children

"The Children's Food Drive with Dr. Bureau is therefore much more than a fundraising campaign; it's a call for solidarity so that every child, regardless of their situation, can grow up with dignity, security, and love," Rizkallah emphasized. According to her, the generosity of Gatineau residents is always there. For her, community

support is vital not only during the annual food drive, but throughout the year. Although this initiative is the largest annual fundraiser, it cannot meet all the needs on its own. "Every donation, big or small, makes a real difference," she said.

More specifically, a \$20 donation covers the purchase of materials needed for a child's annual check-up, \$100 covers the essentials for a baby, \$200 covers the purchase of instruments for the Music Box program, and \$500 covers a full year of art therapy. The very first annual food drive for the Gatineau Social Pediatrics Centre took place in December 2009. This initiative was inspired by the Dr. Julien Foundation, established in 2007 to ensure the sustainability of social pediatrics in two underprivileged neighbourhoods of Montreal. A pediatrician for over 50 years, Dr. Gilles Julien has always been deeply committed to chil-



Children's Food Drive poster with Dr. Bureau (November 1, 2025) (MG)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE GATINEAU SOCIAL PEDIATRICS CENTRE

dren's well-being. In particular, he implemented the community-based social pediatrics model, which has since become known nationally and internationally.

Those wishing to donate to the Children's Food Drive can do so directly on

the CPSG website: www.pediatricsociale-gatineau.com or visit the Centre du Vieux Gatineau, located at 321 Notre-Dame Street, or the Centre du Vieux-Hull, located at 39 Frontenac Street. Please note that only cash and cheques will be accepted.

Montebello's merry market is in the making



Tashi Farmilo

The Montebello Christmas Market is set to make a joyful return for its fifth edition, transforming the village into a festive destination over two weekends: November 28 - 30 and December 5 - 7. This milestone year promises a vibrant celebration filled with local flavour, music, and holiday cheer.

More than 40 producers and artisans from the region will showcase their creations, alongside about a dozen shops along Montebello's main street. Visitors can expect a warm and welcoming atmosphere with free activities for all ages throughout

both weekends.

The entertainment lineup includes free evening concerts featuring L'Expédition with a tribute to Les Cowboys Fringants on Friday, November 28, Carotté on Saturday, November 29, Nicolas Pellerin et les Grands Hurleurs on Friday, December 5, and Le Rêve du Diable on Saturday, December 6. Each show begins at 7 pm.

Family-friendly attractions will include a visit from Santa Claus, face painting, choirs, alpacas and more, all offered at no cost to attendees. Organizers are encouraging locals and visitors alike to come experience the magic of the season in the heart of Montebello. For more information, visit www.noelmontebello.ca.



Montebello's beloved Christmas Market returns for its fifth edition with two weekends of free concerts, local artisans, festive activities, and holiday magic for the whole family. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE MONTEBELLO CHRISTMAS MARKET FACEBOOK PAGE

Some Outaouais and Pontiac schools fall behind while others surge ahead



Public high schools across the Outaouais and Pontiac continue to trail much of the province in academic performance, according to Quebec's newly released Bulletin des écoles secondaires 2025, published by the Fraser Institute. The annual report ranks 470 public and independent schools across the province using provincial exam results in French, English, science, and mathematics from the 2023–2024 academic year. While some schools in the area posted signs of improvement, the report highlights persistent disparities that continue to define much of the educational landscape.

Among English-language public schools in Outaouais, Hadley Junior and Philemon Wright High School in Gatineau remain the strongest performer. The school received a score of 6.3 out of 10, a slight decline from 6.5 last year. Its graduation rate, however, climbed to 74.9 per cent, up from 69.7, and its dropout rate is below the regional average at 8.8 per cent.



Outaouais and Pontiac high schools continue to underperform in Quebec's 2025 rankings, though École secondaire des Lacs in La Pêche stood out with one of the province's strongest gains. (TF)
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF LA PÊCHE

Valley High School in Wakefield posted one of the region's most notable improvements. With a 5.6 rating and an 83.3 per cent graduation rate, the school now outpaces many of its peers. It also recorded a zero per cent dropout rate, a rare achievement in the region. Just five years ago, the school had a significantly lower rating and has since become a model for local turnaround.

St. Michael's High School in Low pre-

sented a more troubling picture. Its current rating stands at 4.9, with a graduation rate of 61.1 per cent and a dropout rate of 20 per cent. That figure is twice the average for Outaouais. Symmes Junior and D'Arcy McGee High School in Gatineau posted a rating of 5.9 and a graduation rate of 72.6 per cent. Though close to the provincial average of 81.9 percent, the school's performance has remained largely static.

In the Pontiac, two schools remain in the

lower end of the provincial rankings. Sieur-de-Coulonge in Mansfield-et-Pontefract earned a 4.7 rating, while Pontiac High School in Clarendon received a 4.6. Graduation rates for the two schools were 60.3 per cent and 65.3 per cent respectively, both trailing the provincial benchmark. Their dropout rates, at 8.6 per cent for Sieur-de-Coulonge and 6.9 percent for Pontiac High, are moderate but still reflect ongoing challenges in student retention.

One of the most remarkable success stories in the province came from École secondaire des Lacs in La Pêche. The school improved from a 3.7 rating in 2018 to 7.7 in 2024, despite 59.1 per cent of its students having special needs. That performance ranked it as the fastest-improving school in Quebec. Also in the Outaouais, École de la Cité étudiante de la Haute-Gatineau in Maniwaki posted significant gains, rising from a 2.7 rating in 2018 to 5.8.

"Our school rankings prove that improvements are possible across the province, in every kind of school that serves different types of students," said Yanick Labrie, a senior associate at the Fraser Institute.

Sophie Chatel breaks down what the federal budget means for the Pontiac



Canada's 2025 federal budget, tabled on November 4, arrives during a period of rising costs, slow growth and renewed global trade tensions. For Pontiac's Member of Parliament Sophie Chatel, the national plan holds significant local potential.

"This budget is about building," said Chatel. "We're investing in infrastructure, in homes, in people, and in doing it in a way that strengthens Canadian communities."

One of the largest spending areas is housing. The federal government is committing billions to build more homes, with a focus on affordability. Municipalities that present ready-to-go projects with essential services like water and sewage can access support. Pontiac towns, often limited by aging infrastructure, could benefit directly.

"If you want more homes in rural areas, you need to invest in infrastructure in small municipalities," Chatel said. "They just don't have the fiscal capacity to do that alone. That's why we're also looking at prefab partnerships. Bringing in ready-to-assemble homes can speed things up and make housing more affordable."

Clean energy projects are also a focus. Local solar initiatives, such as those proposed by the MRC, may qualify under new federal investment programs. "There are massive investments coming in clean energy," said Chatel. "If we

can bring prefab homes powered by solar to rural areas, we'll do it."

The budget prioritizes Canadian-made products. That includes lumber from local mills, which have been hit by ongoing softwood tariffs. "Everything we build will use Canadian wood, Canadian steel, Canadian workers," she said.

To support local food production, the budget includes a "super tax deduction" that lets businesses fully expense the cost of machinery and expansion in the year they invest.

"I bought a jar of pickles the other day. The cucumbers were grown in Ontario, but they were processed and packaged in Germany," Chatel said. "By manufacturing these foods ourselves, we create jobs and keep more value here in Canada."

She pointed to Pontiac's dairy and grain processors as examples of businesses ready to grow. "They just need the tools to make it viable, and this measure helps by cutting the upfront cost of scaling up," she said.

To help with rising household costs, the budget lowers the lowest federal income tax rate from 15 to 14 percent. The change is expected to save a two-income household up to \$840 per year. "It's a way to help people deal with food prices and the rising cost of living," said Chatel.

School meals are also part of the plan. The national food program will provide healthy lunches in participating schools. Chatel expects most Pontiac schools to qualify. "Kids will get

healthy meals; parents save money; and local farmers get more business. It's a win-win and it's a full-circle benefit."

Dental care coverage has also expanded. "That's 20,000 people in my riding who now have access to dental care," she said. "That's a real, tangible change."

On public service jobs, which many Pontiac residents rely on, Chatel said the government is avoiding harsh cuts. "Most workforce reduction will come through early retirement. It will be done with care and compassion."

The budget includes investments in digital tools and AI to improve public service deliv-

ery, while supporting younger workers and modernizing operations.

National defence spending, though less visible, could benefit local manufacturers. Companies in Quebec that produce boots, drones or other tech components may see new opportunities. "Defence is a big economy," said Chatel. "That kind of investment creates jobs here."

While the programs and funding are national, Chatel believes Pontiac is well positioned to take part if its communities and businesses are ready. "Everything that's in the budget was in our platform. We're doing what Canadians asked us to do," she said. "Now we just need to deliver."

 Commission scolaire Western Québec Western Québec School Board	
AVIS PUBLIC	PUBLIC NOTICE
AVIS est par la présente donné que l'état financier et le rapport du vérificateur externe pour l'année 2024-2025 seront soumis au conseil des commissaires de la Commission scolaire Western Québec lors de sa séance ordinaire, tenue le 25 novembre 2025 à 18 h 30, au centre administratif de la Commission scolaire Western Québec, 15 rue Katimavik, Gatineau.	NOTICE is hereby given that the financial statements and the external auditor's report for the 2024-2025 year will be submitted to the Council of Commissioners of the Western Québec School Board at its regular meeting to be held on November 25, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at the offices of the Western Québec School Board, 15 Katimavik Street, Gatineau.
Donné à Gatineau, Québec, le 12 novembre 2025 Eldon Keon, secrétaire général	Given at Gatineau, Québec, November 12, 2025 Eldon Keon, Secretary General



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FOOD DRIVE AT THE PROMENADES DE GATINEAU. During this time of year, marked by generosity and sharing, we are pleased to launch our second annual non-perishable food drive to help families and individuals in need during the holidays, in collaboration with Moisson Outaouais. Collection dates: November 15 to December 24, 2025. Food drop-off location: Customer service kiosk near the food court. Food items needed (suggestions): Baby food and products, snacks, and breakfast foods (granola bars,

fruit compotes, fruit salads, cereal, oatmeal, etc.). Filling, protein-rich foods: pasta, rice, canned tuna, etc. Hygiene products: sanitary napkins, diapers, shampoo, etc. Every contribution will have a big impact and help spread a little warmth and hope this holiday season. 1100 Maloney Boulevard West, Gatineau, QC.

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OLD CHELSEA'S ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS NOVEMBER 28, 2025, starting at 5 p.m. at the Square Terrace, 248 Chemin Old Chelsea. Experience the magic of the holidays in Old Chelsea! Old Chelsea Square is transformed into a warm and festive Christmas village, where young and old alike are invited to celebrate together. At the heart of the Terrasse du Square, a magical atmosphere takes hold: children's laughter, Christmas music, the smell of hot chocolate, and twinkling lights. A festive, family-friendly, community event to kick off the most wonderful time of the year. **EVENING SCHEDULE:** 5 p.m. – Site opens. Central Bar: Hot chocolate & Picbois, mulled wine, beer. Food corner: Hot soup, raclette, caramel popcorn, doughnuts, s'mores. Little Elves Workshop: Crafts and letters to Santa Claus. Christmas market: 10 local artisans. 5:10 p.m. – Arrival of Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus. 6 p.m. – Christmas choir. 6:15 p.m. – Lighting of the big tree. 6:45 p.m. – Activities continue. Best dog costume contest, craft workshop for children. Free!

SEE SANTA CLAUS ON NOVEMBER 29 at the Christmas parade starting at 6 p.m. on Rue Principale, Aylmer sector. The float departs from the Marina and arrives at Galeries Aylmer. Dress warmly, find a spot on the sidewalk, and let yourself be carried away by the magic of the holiday season!

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OLD CHELSEA'S ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS NOVEMBER 28, 2025, starting at 5 p.m. at the Square Terrace, 248 Chemin Old Chelsea. Experience the magic of the holidays in Old Chelsea! Old Chelsea Square is transformed into a warm and festive Christmas village, where young and old alike are invited to celebrate together. At the heart of the Terrasse du Square, a magical atmosphere takes hold: children's laughter, Christmas music, the smell of hot chocolate, and twinkling lights. A festive, family-friendly, community event to kick off the most wonderful time of the year. **EVENING SCHEDULE:** 5 p.m. – Site opens. Central Bar: Hot chocolate & Picbois, mulled wine, beer. Food corner: Hot soup, raclette, caramel popcorn, doughnuts, s'mores. Little

Elves Workshop: Crafts and letters to Santa Claus. Christmas market: 10 local artisans. 5:10 p.m. – Arrival of Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus. 6 p.m. – Christmas choir. 6:15 p.m. – Lighting of the big tree. 6:45 p.m. – Activities continue. Best dog costume contest, craft workshop for children. Free!

OUTDOOR, EUROPEAN-INSPIRED HOLIDAY MARKET IN WAKEFIELD, QUÉBEC. Saturday, December 6, from 10 am to 4 pm at Centre Wakefield La Pêche, 38 Ch. De la Vallée de Wakefield, Wakefield, QC. More than 60 local vendors selling handmade, homemade arts, crafts and food. Again, this year, there will be more wonderful vendors, inside, in Gwen Shea Hall. Tickets are \$5 per person (12 years +), kids under 12 are free. All proceeds will go to local organizations. Don't forget to bring a non-perishable food item for the Wakefield Food Pantry!

THE CHRISTMAS MARKET AROUND THE WORLD IS BACK FOR ITS 4th EDITION! Saturday, November 29, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Galeries Aylmer – 181 Principale Street, Gatineau, QC. Free admission! Come experience the magic of the holidays and discover unique kiosks representing several countries! A true cultural and festive journey where the traditions, colors, and flavors of the world come together to celebrate Christmas. Exhibitors, entertainment, Santa Claus, children's workshops, food, games, and more! Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to find original gifts and enjoy a warm atmosphere with family or friends. We look forward to seeing you there! For more information: blueragardbleu@gmail.com

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STEVE'S TREE SERVICE AND PROPERTY MAINTENANCE Pruning, stump grinding, removals. Professional care of trees. 75 ft bucket truck with 18-inch chipper capacity. Fully insured, out-of-town service, free estimate. 819-684-4938, stevestreeservice@hotmail.ca.

TOWER TREE SERVICES Trimming, tree removal, tree planting, hedge trimming, disease detection, stump removal. Free estimate. 819-208-3331, www.towertree.ca.



OFFRE D'EMPLOI • HELP WANTED

Responsable des relations avec la communauté - Gatineau

Community Outreach for Gatineau

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TÂCHES PRINCIPALES :

- Saisir les occasions de réseautage dans la communauté
- Gérer un kiosque lors d'événements
- Promouvoir les ventes
- Concevoir des campagnes
- Améliorer la visibilité des organisations auprès des lecteurs
- Favoriser la croissance des entreprises

OBLIGATOIRE :

- Posséder un véhicule
- Être bilingue
- Prendre plaisir aux interactions en personne

PRIMARY DUTIES:

- Seek networking opportunities
- Manage a kiosk at events
- Promote sales
- Plan campaigns
- Assist organizations in connecting with readers
- Help businesses grow

MUST-HAVES:

- A car
- Bilingualism
- Enjoyment of face-to-face social interactions

info@bulletinaylmer

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