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Reflection on our
common humanity

West Quebec Post

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Afrikaner 'Refugees'

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Hydro-Québec Expo-Science Outaouais elementary school regional finals come to Aylmer



Winners in all categories at the 2025 Expo-Science Outaouais regional finals for elementary school students that took place on May 16 (SD)

PHOTO: SOPHIE DEMERS

Wakefield's BIG meeting blends local innovation with economic warning



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Pedro Antunes, chief economist of the Conference Board of Canada, delivered a sobering economic outlook at the Business Improvement & Growth (BIG) group meeting on May 26, warning that Canada could face severe instability should global trade tensions intensify. Yet, in a packed room at Centre Vorlage, a

cast of local entrepreneurs and community leaders offered a hopeful counterpoint—sharing bold, community-rooted projects grounded in sustainability, collaboration, and the circular economy.

Antunes warned that renewed U.S. tariffs under a potential second Trump presidency could strip up to \$35 billion from Canada's GDP and eliminate more than 130,000 jobs in a single quarter.

Continued on page 2



Sophie Demers
LJI Reporter

The 2025 Expo-Science Outaouais regional finals for elementary schools took place on May 16 at South Hull school. The large-scale science competition encourages young students to engage with the scientific process and conduct their own projects.

This event brought elementary schools from across the area whose

projects stood out in their local competition. Over 100 visitors, including parents, teachers and members of the public visited the science expo and had a chance to view the 35 student projects that were presented.

The day ended with the award ceremony where many students were awarded for their outstanding projects. Prizes and bursaries worth \$900 were distributed to the winners.

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Hydro-Québec Expo-Science Outaouais elementary school regional finals come to Aylmer

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The Hydro-Québec First Prize, awarded for the best project in the competition, went to École du Grand-Boisé students Charles Olsen and Gaspard Guérault Elliott for their project entitled “Le Blob c’est quoi au juste?” They also won the gold medal in the Juvénile 3 category.

The silver medal in the Juvénile 3 category went to Arthur Duperré and Xavier Beaulé from École du Grand-boisé for their “Nourrir

pour grandir!” project. The bronze medal went to Sunny-Ben Bourassa and Samuel Paquette from École Monseigneur Charbonneau for their “Bioluminescence” project.

In the Juvénile 2 category, the gold medal went to Clara Fournier and Alexia Lauzon Patry from École Monseigneur Charbonneau for their “Le Soleil” project. Silver was awarded to Hélène Bianchi and Cataleya Grandchamps-Medeiros from École Saint-Cœur-de-Marie for their “Les Fourmis”

project. The bronze medal was given for “Les Arbres” by Jolianne Bélisle and Saranna Bert from École Monseigneur Charbonneau.

There were three awards of distinction that were given for four projects:

- Nathaniel Michel and Samuel Thomasin from Trivium Academy for their “La programmation” project;
- “Les atomes” by Carla Nemes and Anna Patrutiu from Trivium Academy;
- Trivium Academy’s Sofia Rosario for her

project “Comment l’utilisation du téléphone intelligent affecte-t-elle les ados?”; • Zack Malboeuf from École Saint-Laurent for his project “Les eaux usées”.

Technoscience Outaouais is a non-profit organization that aims to promote science and technology among young people. The organization is a member of Réseau Technoscience, which offers a variety of programs for students in elementary school and high school.

Wakefield’s BIG meeting blends local innovation with economic warning

Continued from page 1

“We’re looking at real threats to our economic fabric,” he said. “What drives success in a knowledge economy is science, the rule of law, education, and innovation—not tariffs and isolation.” Upon reflecting on the event afterward, Antunes—who lives nearby in Chelsea—added, “It was a great opportunity for me to meet new folks and get a better sense of what entrepreneurs are doing in our community.”

The event, organised by BIG founder Sylvain Henry, showcased a grassroots response steeped in creative resilience. Charles Zave, a biologist and forensic analyst, presented plans for a hands-on educational park, where children would excavate fossils and ancient tools. “Kids would excavate ancient fire pits, mammoth bones with tool marks, and put together the story—how did people live? What tools did they use?” he said. “It’s hands-on biology, anthropology, and critical thinking.”

Desmond Silva introduced the Gravine Project, a clean energy initiative centred on a unique mechanical generator powered by gravity. “The Gravine has the potential to solve a number of local energy needs using simple physics and sustainable mechanics,” Silva explained. Designed to run without

fuel, sunlight, wind, or water, the Gravine could offer decentralised, mobile electricity for rural areas and even off-grid production facilities. “It overcomes the limits of both fossil fuels and today’s green technologies,” he said. Silva is currently fundraising for a working prototype. More information is available at gravineproject.com.

Rail heritage took centre stage next, as Stanley Britton and Peter Smulders presented the Train Turntable Project, aimed at revitalising Wakefield’s historic rail yard. “Wakefield’s train station once brought 500 visitors at a time into the village,” Britton recalled. Smulders, who recently relocated his global attractions firm to the region, added: “This town deserves a destination-worthy public space that reflects its charm and history.”

Claude Giroux, La Pêche councillor and dark sky advocate, announced that Wakefield is set to become Canada’s 20th certified dark sky preserve. “This is the Ring Nebula,” he said, passing around an image taken from his driveway. “We’re sitting on prime astro-tourism real estate.”

Ben Chicoine and Sophie Abboud of Fab Structures showcased their prefabricated housing solutions. “We’re creating real solutions for real people,” Abboud

said, describing modular units designed for affordability, energy efficiency, and rapid deployment.

Lulu Ezeocha delivered a moving presentation on the loneliness facing rural seniors, and her efforts to counter it. “Too many seniors are isolated,” she said. “A simple visit, a shared story, can change everything.” Through her organisation, LuluAnoli Healthcare Solutions, she is also fostering intergenerational community connections. Her next public event, Exploring the Cultures of Canada: The Igbo Tribe, Nigeria West Africa, will be held on Saturday, June 7 from 11 - 4 at La Cabane en Bois, 331 Boulevard de la Cité-des-Jeunes, Gatineau. It will feature Nigerian pastry, music, storytelling, traditional attire, and artifact displays—all part of her wider mission to reduce isolation through culture.

Sylvain Viau spoke about the Esplanade Wakefield development, a mixed-use residential project designed to bring families into the village while retaining its forested character. “Growth should enhance a community, not overwhelm it,” he said.

Mariann Hegedus, a fibre artist and founder of Taltos Archery and Leather, brought a distinctive cultural depth to the

event with her intuitive archery workshops. Based in Bowman, Quebec, she offers a range of immersive experiences including ground archery rooted in instinctive shooting, leather and felting workshops, children’s camps, and day retreats on her 40-acre property. “It’s not just a skill—it’s a reconnection with focus, self-awareness, and nature,” she said. A Hungarian-born artisan with a background in traditional textile arts, Hegedus also creates custom handcrafted leather goods using centuries-old techniques. Her work and upcoming classes can be found via @Taltos Archery and Leather on Facebook and Instagram.

Rounding out the programme, Alex Gaboury, co-owner of Centre Vorlage, outlined his team’s work transforming the ski hill into a four-season destination. “We’re creating progression trails for biking and skiing,” he said. “We’ve got cabins and community events. Our goal is to be a basecamp for rural life.”

Henry closed the session by highlighting BIG’s ethos: “Everything we’re doing is about creating circular value—ideas that feed back into the community, generate resilience, and spark further innovation. None of it works if we don’t work together.”

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Volunteers invited to help restore the Dumoine Trail in Pontiac



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

CPAWS Ottawa Valley, in partnership with Friends of Dumoine and ZEC Dumoine, is organizing a volunteer cleanup of the Dumoine Tote Road Trail in Pontiac on Saturday, June 7. The event is part of a broader effort to maintain and protect this historically and ecologically significant route.

The cleanup will target an 8-kilometre stretch between Robinson Lake and Red Pine Rapids. Volunteers will work with hand tools to remove debris, trim back overgrowth, and restore the trail after the winter. The terrain is generally flat with a few gentle hills. Chainsaws and other mechanized equipment are not permitted, and large deadfall will be handled by professionals.

The Dumoine Tote Road Trail follows traditional Indigenous portages and the path of a 19th-century wagon road. At 26 kilometres in total, the trail lies entirely within the Dumoine Riv-



CPAWS Ottawa Valley is calling for volunteers to join a trail cleanup on the Dumoine Tote Road Trail in Pontiac on Saturday, June 7, to help maintain an ecologically protected and historically significant route. (TF)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FRIENDS OF DUMOINE RIVER

er Aquatic Reserve—a protected area CPAWS began securing in 2008. The

natural habitats and ensuring public access to an undeveloped wilderness corridor.

Participants will meet at the ZEC Rapides-des-Joachims parking lot at 8:30 am on Saturday, June 7, and begin work around 9:30. The cleanup will continue until approximately 5:00 pm. Volunteers should bring lunch, water, gloves, and tools such as loppers, rakes, or clippers if available. Equipment will be provided for those without their own, and water can be refilled along the trail at Grande Chute.

Camping is available nearby on Friday and Saturday nights for volunteers who wish to stay over, with several site options offered during registration. The event will proceed in rain or shine, barring severe weather.

Registration is required and must be completed by 10:00 am on June 6. Ride-sharing may be arranged for those who need transportation or can offer space. For details or to register, email ov-outreach@cpaws.org.

Gatineau police seize various substances, and make four arrests after conducting multiple drug raids



Sophie Demers
LJI Reporter

Gatineau police officers, along with the intervention group and the canine unit, executed eight search warrants on May 21. The warrants, granted under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, were for four homes and four cars. They were given after authorities received information from the public concerning the sale of cocaine.

Police arrested four individuals, all from Gatineau. The individuals were released on summons and

will have to appear in court at a later date for several drug related charges.

AT A RESIDENCE ON RUE MAIN POLICE SEIZED:

- Cell phones,
- Over 100 grams of cannabis
- Over 46 grams of cannabis edibles
- 10 unidentified pills
- 30 methamphetamine pills
- 10 Xanax pills
- 25 grams of cocaine
- Over 20 grams of psilocybin
- 10 grams of unidentified white

powder

- One gram of MDMA
- \$3,000 in Canadian currency

AT A RESIDENCE ON RUE ATMEC POLICE SEIZED:

- Equipment for the production and sale of narcotics
- 10 unidentified tablets
- 5 ml of unknown liquid
- Over 4 grams of crack cocaine
- Over 140 grams of unidentified white powder
- Over \$3,400 in Canadian currency

POLICE SEIZED THE FOLLOWING AT A RESIDENCE ON RUE GARNIER:

- Equipment used for the production and sale of narcotics
- Over 80 grams of cannabis
- Over 4 grams of cocaine
- Over \$29,000 in Canadian currency
- Brass knuckles and a pellet gun

AT THE RESIDENCE ON BOULEVARD SAINT-RENÉ OUEST, POLICE SEIZED

- Equipment for the production and sale of narcotics
- Over 95 grams of cocaine
- Over two grams of cannabis
- 15 grams of psilocybin
- pills
- Over 56 grams of powdered methamphetamine
- 97 grams of crystal meth powder

Police searched and seized four vehicles including a 2016 Acura MDX, a 2016 Ford Explorer, a 2018 GMC Sierra, and a 2013 Hyundai Elantra.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

U.S.: Ally or Adversary?



REUEL S. Amdur

There is some confusion as to what our relationship to the United States is. Canada's attitude and policies see the States as an ally, if somewhat problematic at this time. That is wrong. The United States is an adversary, not an ally. President Trump wants to destroy Canada and take it over. He makes no secret of this. He thinks it is unlikely to require military force to bring Canada to heel. Good to know that a military invasion is just a remote possibility.

Canadians think it was a great accomplishment that our prime minister managed to get out of the Oval Office, unscathed, not

like President Zelenskyy, but even though Carney left Trump smiling, he continues his economic warfare, with tariffs as his favorite weapon. Tariffs are already bringing him results. Automobile giants are pulling production from Canadian plants and redirecting it to factories in the United States. Our reciprocal tariffs and ban on American booze are not enough.

Trump proclaims that the United States does not need anything that Canada has. They can do it all themselves. Well, we can show them that that is not so. We have things that America needs and that can be used to respond to his tariffs. Ontario Premier Doug Ford identified the fact that some states rely on electricity generated

in Ontario, but he chickened out on his promise to his voters that he would impose a 25% surcharge. However, that surcharge is still a possible tool. As well, the United States relies on water from the Columbia River. Another surcharge candidate.

The United States complains about the level of our expenditures for defense. It wants us to spend two percent of GDP, if not five percent. At the same time, they are trying to debase our economy by bringing pressure on companies to relocate to the United States. Trump wants us to spend more while he is striving to leave us with less.

There is a certain non sequitur in the situation. We have our American adversary telling us what we should spend on defense. This is because they see our

defense expenditures as their asset. We need to disillusion them. Both Trump and Canadian officialdom see the issue as one of North American defense. The United States has potential enemies around the world. For example, North Korea is developing a rocket capable of reaching its shores. Canada has no potential enemies, aside from Washington. Trump wants to spend untold billions on his golden dome. We should have none of it.

Since we are adversaries, not allies, we need to rethink our participation in the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Leave it to the Americans. As noted, no one is out to get Canada. Pulling out of NORAD will give us funds to help deal with the challenge posed by Trump's economic war against us.

LETTERS

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

Another June 1, another attack on anglophones

As Quebec marks another anniversary of the adoption of Bill 96, individuals and businesses in the province once again face new restrictions in their personal and professional lives.

It was three years ago, on June 1, 2022, the Quebec government enacted sweeping changes to the Charter of the French Language. These included the denial of government services in English, except for those classified as "historic anglophones." It circumscribed the ability of institutions and municipalities to use English, expanded enforcement powers for the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF); and placed caps on enrollment in English-language CEGEPs. It included the Notwithstanding Clause, allowing illegal search and seizure and shielding the law from constitutional challenges.

Since 2022, the legislation has targeted the 1.25 million English-speaking Quebec community. Now, in June 2025, new rules take effect: extreme regulations on signage and labelling and mandatory francization certification for businesses with more than 25 employees.

As we have no government funding, we rely on all Canadians to support our defence of the rights of our fellow citizens. What's happening in Quebec today is a constitutional crisis in slow motion. The application of the Notwithstanding Clause to cancel Charter rights should concern all Canadians.

The Supreme Court of Canada will soon hear appeals concerning Quebec's controversial Bill 21 on secularism, which included the Notwithstanding Clause. The Task Force has applied for intervenor status as one of the few grassroots organizations to do so. What is at issue is "As Canadians, do we have rights or not?"

Caddell points out Bill 84 (the "Quebec Culture Law"), has just been passed by the National Assembly, another attempt to define Quebec as an exclusively French "nation." This is a moment for Quebecers to take a stand, to speak up for bilingualism, diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect.

**Andrew Caddell, President
Task Force on Linguistic
Policy**

Regrettable choice, not racism

I take strong exception to Reuel Amdur's insinuation that I'm a racist (Post, March 28). While I acknowledge that the term "Voodoo" was a regrettable choice of words, it was born out of frustration over the municipality of Chelsea's systematic attempts to obstruct, deny and delay responses to my access requests—not racial animus.

For instance, Chelsea submitted a false sworn statement in response to a request for all offence reports sent to Meech Lake residents since 1998, claiming it had released all available documents. When I provided irrefutable proof to the Access to Information Commission that the statement was false, in March 2023, rather than addressing its wrongdoing, the municipality retaliated by sending me a cease-and-desist letter, speciously accusing me of having made a death threat "sometime in 2015." I've never been charged, tried, or sentenced. Such baseless claims only deflect attention from Chelsea's flouting the letter and spirit of the Access to Information Act.

So what's worse: using the word "Voodoo," or public officials defaming a citizen by falsely accusing him of making a death threat, concealing public documents, issuing a false sworn statement, etc.?

Over the past two years, the municipality has gone to great lengths to obstruct my information requests regarding bylaw violations at Meech Lake. It has disrespected a judge's order, filed

a criminal harassment complaint against me (which the police immediately dismissed due to a lack of evidence), and engaged in other tactics designed to thwart transparency and accountability. My frustration stems from these deliberate attempts to circumvent oversight—not from any racial prejudice.

Thanks to my research, however, I've uncovered a pattern of systematic disregard for shoreline protection bylaws. For instance, in 2013–2015, I convinced Chelsea to conduct an inspection that revealed 119 structures had been built without permits at Meech Lake—79 of them on the lakebed. These findings underscore the municipality's failure to enforce regulations designed to protect this ecologically sensitive area.

Although my language may have been harsh at times, it's essential to consider the context: I've been fighting against public officials' contempt for the Access Act and faced municipal reprisals for my efforts. Implying racism diverts attention from these core issues and unfairly maligns my character. I remain a great admirer of civil rights leaders Frederick Douglass, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and John Lewis.

**Jean-Paul Murray
Chelsea**

Editor's note: the documents referenced in M Murray's letter have been included for review, although we are not publishing them.

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Reflection on our common humanity



You and I have much in common. Foremost, we are all hominoids with all the attributes that name implies. Each of us in our own time and space reveal our strengths as well as our weaknesses. None of us are infallible. Universally, we are brothers and sisters. Vicariously, we connect to events that occur in the lives of others, of our brothers and our sisters worldwide. As we rejoice in our achievements, so also, do we feel their anguish when man-made or natural disasters strike. These happenings are brought to us almost daily with today's advanced technology. Skilled and observant journalists, such as Gwynne Dyer, present insightful analysis surrounding these occurrences.

Frequently, we bring our own opinions to what journalists write or say. We, after all, want to have our own say, our own interpretations or feelings on the matter. Social media thrives on this. This is normal and healthy, provided we are accurate in our own commentary. Unfortunately, this is one area where we frequently fail the test.

Too often, it becomes our own viewpoint, the 'how I see it' versus the 'how we ought to see it.' It is those moments that our bias blinds us to a more objective analysis. It exposes our fallibility. It is why we need the guidance of trained journalists such as Gwynne Dyer and his peers. Although journalists themselves have their own subjective interpretations, they, at least, have researched and mulled over what they offer us.

In this process, without having all the facts and the nuances that accompany the factual interpretation, we can become estranged from others. That is when we sometimes refer to others with different viewpoints, both present and in other parts of the world,

as strangers. Our pomposity blinds us to the visions that others wish us to explore.

Where our world leaders should provide guidance and act in an exemplary way, they, through both their words and their actions, magnify our intolerance. There are, unfortunately, some world leaders who, through their quest for power, or greed, perpetuated by their egocentricity, lead others astray. By flouting well-established moral guidelines that have brought us to our present civilized status, they do us a disservice. It is noble to seek solutions; it is dishonourable to place self-interest or ambitions ahead of those whom they purport to serve.

Where then do we find direction to guide us on our life's journey? Do we find governance through religion or science? Should we shape our lives through faith, while simultaneously questioning life's purpose? Should we also gaze inward to try to ascertain where we, individually, should change little things in our lives that might help clarify our vision?

We are mind, body, and spirit. Each of us, with our genetic inheritance, both mental and physical, walk life's path. Coupled with these traits, we learn, or should learn, to adjust our behaviours within our own environments. This is the ultimate purpose of our own observations as well as through both formal and self-taught education. What, we ask ourselves, does science say about wisdom? Why, we wonder, are there so many religious denominations? Why, when there are so many devout practitioners, are there also those who decry, even persecute others, who do not adhere to their prescribed beliefs? Why, we cry out, yet we cannot seem to find the answers.

We humans are imperfect creatures. Next column, I will share with you a tragedy that recently occurred that brought home to me feelings of deep sadness. It will include a poem that I wrote to express that sadness that all of us feel at some time in our lives.



Afrikaner 'Refugees'

by Gwynne DYER

AUTHOR, HISTORIAN & INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST

As my flight landed in South Africa on Sunday, I looked in vain for the plane that was due to take off with the first 49 white, Afrikaans-speaking 'refugees' of the many thousands who are supposedly going to find safety from racist persecution in Donald Trump's United States.

Then I realised that they were probably taking a charter flight from a different terminal. It would have been a lot cheaper to buy them tickets on a scheduled commercial flight, but the notion of 'refugees' demands a certain amount of drama and this piece of theatre needed all the help it could get.

They aren't actually refugees. They are bit-players in a secular passion play staged by Trump, probably at the suggestion of his more-or-less-faithful sidekick Elon Musk, who grew up very rich in apartheid-era South Africa and shares Trump's belief in the 'Great Replacement' conspiracy theory.

Musk, of course, is also fighting his own private battle against the Great Replacement by having as many white babies as possible. You'd think the world's richest man would realise that his goal could be more efficiently achieved by artificial insemination (and a modest trust fund for every successful Musk baby), but it turns out that he prefers the human touch.

Another way to get up white numbers, especially in the United States, is white immigration, but that is quite tricky because white people in most other countries don't want to move to the United States. You can see why not, given the violence, the politics and the dreadful health care system, but it therefore puts a very high premium on white refugees.

Getting around Trump's ban on asylum for refugees was easy. The ban on refugees is really meant to keep out people from 'shithole countries', as Trump calls them. South Africa, despite some truly terrible 'black townships', is not a shithole at all.

The problem then becomes what to call these 'desirable' white immigrants. Even Trump can't simply say all 'white South Africans' are welcome, because to exclude others simply on the basis of colour is blatant racism. He might think it, but he can't say it.

Language is a less offensive distinction, but you can't just say Afrikaans-speakers or you will also get millions of non-whites: more than half of Afrikaans-speakers are 'Coloured' (mixed-race) or black (many rural blacks speak it as a second language).

That is why the presidential decree says

that only people "of Dutch and French descent" will be given refugee status (but exempted from the refugee ban). However, it still doesn't work. At least half the Coloureds have some Dutch or French ancestry if you go back far enough.

There will still not be an avalanche of white South Africans arriving in the United States, because the great majority of white South Africans live quite comfortable lives. Three decades after the end of apartheid the average white South African still has twenty times the wealth of the average black South African.

Two particular grievances drive South Africans arriving in the United States this week and those who may follow. One is the belief that whites, and especially white farmers living on isolated farmsteads, are being killed just because of their race. The other is an allegation that white-owned farms are being expropriated without compensation.

White South Africans on the far right and the MAGA hard right in the United States believe both those things, but they are both untrue. No farms have been expropriated without fair compensation. A new law makes expropriation without compensation possible in extreme circumstances, but it has not yet been used at all.

Whites are 7% of South Africa's population, but they are only 2% of the murder victims. Almost all of the farm murders occur in the context of armed robberies gone wrong, and black farmers are equally affected. Forty-nine white farmers were murdered in 2022-23, but bear in mind that most farmers are white: 85% of the country's farmland belongs to whites.

South Africa is burdened by a particularly bad history of oppression and inequality which it will take generations to alleviate. The great majority of its people try to behave well, but it has the usual case-load of exceptions: the feckless, the cruel and the greedy will always be with us.

I'll give the last word to an old friend, a white South African who shared the African National Congress's struggles in the old days. "If you had told me in 1984 (the height of apartheid) what South Africa would be like now," he said, "I would have been delighted. If you had told me the same thing in 1994 (the first free election), I would have wanted to cut my throat."

Same information, viewed from different time perspectives. They are doing the best they can.

\$2.2 million invested to strengthen immigrant services in Outaouais



Tashi Farmilo
LJ Reporter

Immigrant integration in the Outaouais is receiving a \$2,240,984 boost as of June 2, with funding distributed to eight local partners through Quebec's Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration's Programme d'appui aux collectivités (PAC) to support French-language services that help newcomers settle and participate in community life.

The City of Gatineau receives the larg-

est portion, \$1,278,200, to fund municipal initiatives designed to facilitate integration at the local level. Service Intégration Travail Outaouais (SITO), which focuses on employment access for immigrants, is allocated \$570,688. Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi du Pontiac will receive \$127,221 to assist young immigrants with employment and orientation, while Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi Vallée-de-la-Gatineau is granted \$63,515 for similar support in its area. Carrefour Emploi des Collines is awarded \$88,950 to continue its work with immigrant jobseekers in the Collines-de-l'Outaouais.

Other recipients include Accueil-Parrainage Outaouais, which receives \$12,410 to continue offering welcome and pairing services between newcomers and local residents. Two regional county municipalities — the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais and the MRC de Pontiac — will receive \$25,000 and \$75,000 respectively, funding coordination and services in rural areas.

"It's the entire region, with each of its welcoming communities, that is mobilising to contribute to the successful integration of immigrants," said Jean-François Roberge, Minister of Immigration, Francisation

and Integration. "The Outaouais region is a great example."

The PAC programme is designed to allow communities to tailor their integration efforts to local needs, whether through job market access, civic orientation, or community-building. The projects funded under this announcement reflect that diversity, spanning urban, rural, youth-focused, and employment-based initiatives.

"These projects ensure that immigrants who settle here find a French-speaking environment where they can thrive and contribute," Roberge added.

Gatineau turns to artificial intelligence in municipal modernisation



Tashi Farmilo
LJ Reporter

The City of Gatineau is embracing artificial intelligence to enhance how it delivers services to residents, starting with a recently concluded pilot project that used AI-equipped vehicles to detect potholes. The trial, run in 2024, involved installing CityRover technology on a municipal truck to automatically identify road damage during routine drives. Data on pothole size and location was collected and used to determine the most efficient repair routes.

While the early results showed promise—improving both detection speed and operational planning—the city has noted that further development would be required before the system is fully integrated into daily operations. A more robust framework for both data collection and processing is being considered for any future rollout.

Beyond road maintenance, Gatineau is looking to AI as a broader tool for modernising municipal functions. Internally, city officials have acknowledged the transformative potential of AI in areas such as administrative workflows, resident interaction, and resource allocation. The aim is to not only boost efficiency but also to offer more responsive and personalised public services.

However, the city is approaching AI adoption with a deliberate and measured stance. Officials stress the importance of clear guidelines and ethical safeguards before any system is put into regular use. To that end, a municipal directive outlining the appropriate use of artificial intelligence has been developed and will soon be shared across departments.

In parallel with local efforts, Gatineau is also participating in wider collaborations. It has joined a research partnership led by the Urban Resilience and Innovation Institute, focusing on AI's role in climate

adaptation. The goal is to improve long-term infrastructure planning by using predictive data models to respond more effectively to environmental changes.

The city's wider AI roadmap includes potential upgrades to resident services like automated registration for recreational programmes, streamlined invoice processing, and a 24/7 digital assistant on the municipal website. The virtual assistant would offer residents on-demand access to frequently requested services and information, reducing reliance on office hours and manual responses.

Oversight of these efforts is being handled by a steering group formed late last year in collaboration with Gatineau's Scientific Council. This group is tasked with ensuring that each AI initiative aligns with both practical needs and ethical standards.

Gatineau isn't alone in this technological pivot. Municipalities across Canada—including Winnipeg, Victoria, and smaller centres like Nicolet and Saint-Lin-Laurentides—are

exploring AI for everything from smart lighting to permit automation. Yet while enthusiasm is widespread, many towns face hurdles such as upfront investment and limited in-house expertise.

To support these smaller jurisdictions, the Union des municipalités du Québec is hosting a conference in Drummondville this June. The event will give municipal teams a chance to share strategies, swap lessons learned, and explore how AI can meet their local challenges. Gatineau's AI lead, Ana Flavia Alves, is set to represent the city at a global summit in Dunkirk later this summer.

Throughout, officials have underscored one point: AI isn't about replacing human staff. Instead, it's a way to free up time and energy for tasks that require human judgment, empathy, and decision-making. The city also places strong emphasis on privacy and cybersecurity, favouring internal systems that reduce the risk of data exposure.



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LARGE GARAGE SALE IN PARK CHAMPLAIN! The neighbourhood garage sale will take place on Saturday, June 7 at 8 a.m. Several families and addresses will participate (Atholl- Doune, des Manoirs, de Brouage, etc. and at Saint Malo Park).

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