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September Lessons
from Infancy to the Workforce

West Quebec Post

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Gaza - Not So Much a
Genocide; More a Real Estate Opportunity

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Sod breaking with Gatineau Mayor Maude Marquis-Bissonnette, accompanied by Buckingham City Councillor Edmond Leclerc and the Forum group team (August 12, 2025). (MG)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF EDMOND LECLERC

New businesses will open in Buckingham



Mélissa Gélinas
LJI Reporter

The Forum Group's Buckingham Market commercial project officially began the second phase of its construction at the intersection of Maclaren and Lépine on August 12. For the occasion, a groundbreaking ceremony was held on the site by Gatineau Mayor Maude Marquis-Bissonnette, Buckingham City Councillor Edmond Leclerc, and the team from the real estate developer, the Forum Group.

Phase one of the project allowed for the construction of the Super C grocery store, which has attracted a large number of visitors. As for the second phase, the following establishments will be built by the end of winter 2026: a Familiprix pharmacy, a Desjardins Caisse, a National Bank, a Mondou pet store, and a beauty salon. The project will have a total of four phases, which could be completed by 2028.

According to Councillor Leclerc, this commercial development will be quite permissive in terms of services. "If we have entrepreneurs who are well invested in commercial banners, in commercial premises that will be leased by one service or another, I believe it's up to the market to determine what will be profitable [...]," he said.

According to him, this is a welcome commercial opportunity in the area. "The arrival of a new population base also brings a new service base with more diverse businesses," he explains.

Regarding Buckingham Avenue, Leclerc's mission for his next term would be to implement a specific urban plan like the one seen in the Old Aylmer area. "There may eventually be more oversight to create the right conditions for revitalization," he commented. "This is a street with a strong atmosphere that we want to revitalize more significantly."

Water report warns of mounting pressure on local ecosystems



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

The newly released Portrait global de l'eau 2025 offers a sobering look at the state of freshwater across Quebec, with several findings that resonate deeply in the Outaouais region. Published by the Ministry of the Environment, the report highlights declining water quality, biodiversity loss, and the growing impacts of climate change—all playing out in lakes, rivers, and wetlands that define much of life in the Pontiac and Outaouais.

One of the most concerning examples lies in the watersheds that flow into the Ottawa River. The Rivière Noire, which runs through Waltham, and the Petite Rivière Rouge, near Chénéville, both received poor ratings for water quality. According to the report, these rivers are heavily affected by agricultural activity—

namely, runoff containing phosphorus, nitrates, and faecal coliforms from corn and soya farming, livestock manure, and insufficiently protected streambanks. Both rivers are part of the larger Petite-Nation and Coulonge watershed groups, which the province lists among the sectors under "very high pressure" due to cumulative human activity.

The region's lakes aren't faring much better. Lac Simon, located in Duhamel, is flagged as one of the 16 lakes in Quebec with recurring cyanobacterial blooms. Sampling in the lake revealed high phosphorus concentrations during the summer months—levels that pose risks to both aquatic life and recreational use. Lac Leslie, in Otter Lake, is also cited as having poor water quality, particularly due to phosphorus enrichment tied to shoreline development and watershed disturbance.

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Public input guides debate over Wakefield's historic park



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Wakefield's turntable park, officially Parc Roquebrune, has been at the centre of community discussion this summer. The municipality of La Pêche launched an on-line consultation running from July 1 to September 5, which has so far gathered more than 2,300 votes, and feedback from 156 participants.

Alongside the digital platform, residents also had the opportunity to speak directly with municipal staff at a workshop on August 14 and at a kiosk in the park on August 16. Sylvain Henry, who attended both, said he appreciated the effort to reach people in person. "Many residents stopped to share their views, and I was pleased that every suggestion, including mine, was carefully noted," he said. "It is important to have these face-to-face consultations because not everyone will participate online."

The options presented ranged from ex-



Residents gathered at Parc Roquebrune on August 16 for a public consultation to share their ideas and concerns about the park's future (TF)

PHOTO: SCREENSHOT OF SYLVAIN HENRY'S VIDEO ON FACEBOOK

panded swimming areas and renovated washrooms to additional picnic space, a community stage for concerts, a tourism kiosk, and changes to parking. One of the most detailed proposals came from Stanley Britton, a local heritage advocate, who suggested a playground shaped like Wake-

field's steam engine and a deck built over the turntable to preserve it as a feature of the park.

The future of the railway tracks remains uncertain. Henry said he suspects the rails may be removed, but he urged caution. "I reminded municipal staff of the high

costs associated with removing the rails in Chelsea," he explained. "Such a decision here could be equally costly."

Mayor Guillaume Lamoureux has described Parc Roquebrune as one of La Pêche's most visited parks and emphasized the importance of ensuring it serves the needs of both residents and visitors. Council is expected to decide on the redesign in the first week of September, just before the municipal election. "I was told that four councillors will not be seeking re-election, which will create a significant change on council," said Henry.

Henry left the consultation with a sense of optimism. "What impressed me most was the seriousness with which ideas were gathered," he said. "Every comment was recorded, and it was encouraging to see how many people were engaged in shaping the future of the park."

Residents are invited to share their vision for the park at lapecheconsulte.ca until the end of the consultation period on September 5.

School leaders vow unity as 60,000 return to class



Sophie Demers
LJI Reporter

OUTAOUAIS – The directors of Outaouais' four French school service centres and the English Western Quebec School Board (WQSB) gathered on August 25 at École secondaire du Versant to speak with the media about the upcoming school year.

After the provincial government cut education budgets earlier this year, then restored part of the funding, administrators have spent the past months preparing for the return to school.

Student numbers continue to grow while budgets shrink. Each director stressed the importance of collaboration and sharing best practices to provide the highest quality education possible.

This fall, more than 60,000 students will



From left: George Singfield, Western Quebec School Board; Nadine Carpentier, Centre de services scolaire des Hauts-Bois-de-l'Outaouais; Daniel Bellemare, Centre de services scolaire au Cœur-des-Vallées; Manon Dufour, Centre de services scolaire des Draveurs; and Stéphane Lacasse, Centre de services scolaire des Portages-de-l'Outaouais. (SD)

attend the region's 150 plus schools. Every day, school buses cover nearly 50,000 km, and the combined education budget surpasses \$1 billion.

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Water report warns of mounting pressure on local ecosystems

Continued from page 1

Climate stress is no longer theoretical. The report documents summer water shortages in Shawville and Mansfield-et-Pontefract in 2020, 2021, and 2023. These shortages are linked to extended dry spells, more frequent heat waves, and aging water supply infrastructure. According to monitoring data, several small systems in the region are already approaching critical thresholds for availability during drought years.

Biodiversity trends are equally grim. The map turtle, which depends on undisturbed sandbanks along the Ottawa River, is listed as "vulnerable." The Hickorynut mussel, a species once abundant in the river, has seen sharp declines, attributed to damming and water pollution. The Outaouais is identified as one of the zones where aquatic biodiversity is under the most pressure, particularly from shoreline degradation, increased

water temperatures, and invasive species.

Yet not all news is bleak. The report highlights successful restoration efforts along the Coulonge River, coordinated by the watershed group OBV RPNS (Organisme de bassins versants des rivières du Pontiac, du Nord-Est et de la Serpent) in partnership with local community members. These initiatives have led to measurable improvements in riverbank stability and fish habitat. Through actions such as planting native vegetation, removing invasive species, and reinforcing vulnerable shorelines, the group has delivered what the Ministry calls a model for low-cost, community-driven watershed restoration.

What emerges from the Portrait global de l'eau 2025 is clear: local waters are in trouble, but recovery is within reach. As the report puts it, "The health of water in Quebec will depend on a collective ability to recognize its value and to act accordingly."

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Hooking kids to gambling addictions: Bravo, Quebec!



LILY Ryan

"Get 'em young" has been the motto of beer and cigarette sellers for decades. But Loto-Québec allowing sports betting companies to target children on social media is a new low.

When a new "player" opens a sports betting application for the first time, they must provide personal information, such as linking their bank account to the platform and agreeing to follow responsible gambling rules. The first happens without thinking, and the second is just as automatic.

From there, the player is presented with all kinds of sponsored advertisements during sporting events. Betting is portrayed as an exciting way to make favourite sports more interactive, with "Get in the game" messages featuring prominent athletes discussing

how a game can be improved. This type of paid sponsorship is becoming increasingly popular and can be found on streaming sites that broadcast favourite sporting events, often during mid-game. During these paid conversations, the celebrities discuss how the game could swing one way or the other, using gambling terminology.

Young people use these conversations, which include gambling-related language and concepts, to place bets while watching games – all on their smartphones.

The interactive nature of sports betting is designed to mimic video games that engage this same youth segment in brain-stimulating play intended to trigger dopamine release. The dopamine boost comes from increased betting amounts, in real dollars from real bank accounts, with real consequences.

All of this is part of Loto-Québec's approved sports gambling strategy, which

targets young minds. Children as young as six and seven have smartphones and access to social media, and they are quickly identified by algorithmic AI systems that scan through users to find potential sports gambling customers. Because the developing brains of pre-teens are highly responsive to "reward" and "punishment" learning modes, Quebec youngsters are especially vulnerable to being moulded into problem gamblers.

The number of teen addicts to online sports gambling is a new field of study. Canadian researchers found that sports gambling is put before pre-teens, enticing them with cues that seem nothing like advertising or official gambling outlets. Youth don't stand a chance against AI-propelled and celebrity-endorsed addictive habits like online gambling. The brain's release of feel-good hormones, such as dopamine,

is too strong a pull. Adults who protect children from physically walking into casinos or bars with slot machines simply cannot be asked to do the job that Quebec and Canada's gambling regulatory boards should do: protect the vulnerable from this recognized addiction.

Placing warnings ahead of online sports gambling ads is ineffective. They don't even look like ads; they appear to be two cool sports commentators analyzing a specific basketball play during a game, which makes it ridiculous as a prevention method.

Loto-Québec can do better: ban sports betting advertising, set limits on daily bets to a manageable amount, and implement reliable methods to verify the age of players. If the sports gambling programs are ultra savvy and targeting the province's youth, can't Loto-Québec match their savvy and cut its grip on our young people?

LETTERS

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

Web giants profiting from hard work of newspapers

I certainly appreciated reading the Post's July 18 editorial. I can only second Ms Ryan's view that it was our world-society's big mistake to let web giants create, own, and manipulate gigantic social networks which scooped up an infinite amount of information on all of us, our life, spending, even sleeping habits, which they then sold to the highest commercial bidder. The experiment she suggests is an eye-opener.

However, this is hardly a "mistake"; it is the way our societies work -- our oligarchic-run societies. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the oligarchs there were caught standing with their hands in the national treasury. Very quickly we were told that this was only in Russia . . . until Bernie Sanders and AOC in the US launched their No Oligarchs Tour last year, catching everyone's eye. Like flies at a picnic, oligarchs are everywhere -- Russia to USA to Canada to you-name-it! Why should the web giants (oligarch-owned & run) profit

from everything they can get their hands on to?

It seems more than obvious that all our social goods, our socially important services and institutions should be run for the benefit of those whom they serve -- society as a whole. You might feel that they own X, Y & Z and so they can do what they wish with them. But, what if X, Y and Z are socially important services or the infrastructure of a society? Highways, police and fire services, as examples of social services -- should their "owners" be allowed to charge what they want and do what they wish? Is it because they haven't figured how to make a buck running them? I know I'm passing your letter-length policy, so I'll stop, but I'm sure you get the point. Pay the inventors, sure, but not forever and only on their terms! Let's start with the social networks.

Thanks for raising this.

**Frederick Daniels,
Shawville**

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September Lessons from Infancy to the Workforce



September ... ah, September. September's a transition month. Summer ends, back to school time ... that's September. You and I have known many Septembers. How many? Just subtract four or five years from your life, that's how many. From infancy, through the lullaby years, discovering your balance on two feet, exploring the great outdoors, we lived in the present. September had no meaning whatsoever in our lives. We were learning from our caregivers, our siblings and from Mother Nature's daily lessons. We turned over rocks or logs to discover the life beneath them, we marvelled at the fluffy clouds above verdant foliage of trees, listened to birdsong and the buzzing of bees and gazed wide-eyed at the intricate patterns of a butterfly's wings hovering over a blooming flower. Those halcyon days of freedom lasted until ...

... one day, hand in hand with our mother and siblings, we were led to a big building where hundreds of others like us were gathered in clusters. The clang of a large bell summoned us towards the entrance of that building where we were placed in rows of two staring up into the kind, smiling face of our first teacher. We entered a classroom where there were rows of desks, a larger one at the front behind which was a blackboard. We were assigned a desk of our own. The larger one was for our teacher. Thus began our formal school years. Silence was the rule, you raised your hand if you had something to say. You never, never chewed gum. When your teacher was speaking, you listened attentively. Should she (he) be imparting a relevant message as your eyes wandered toward a window as you listened to a bird song, your teacher swiftly recaptured your attention. Sometimes it was done in a kind manner; occasionally it wasn't. At this stage of our lives, September's meaning evolved. It was at that time that we discovered a contrast between Friday afternoons and Monday mornings. That contrast was embedded in our consciousness for a lifetime.

Some of us left the confines of the schoolroom to enter the workforce early. Others remained to acquire a variety of informative lessons. We learned about equations, about physics and chemistry experiments, about

Canadian and world history, the marvellous inventions of medical science and of the early explorers who founded our country. In later adult years, we became aware that not all of these explorers should be honoured. Some were sent by their rulers to colonize the land and those who inhabited it.

Some of us continued our academic studies after graduating from high school. Some more disciplined than others, who were highly motivated, would progress to postgraduate levels with the highest distinction. They became doctors of psychology, literature, medicine, law, theology or other disciplines. No matter their hard-earned accolades, they too would enter the workforce. That workforce would accordingly be classified as blue- and white-collared workers.

What started in the Septembers of our years evolved into the society we all know today. There are those who aspire to lead us while others prefer to be led. There are others who are governed, who have little desire to lead, but who are inclined to criticize policymakers. Provided that the criticism is appropriately expressed, this is how our cherished democracy works.

Therefore, I will add my personal opinion on this September day as I write. I retired from teaching in 1997. Computers were entering the scene at that time. Computers were to expand our knowledge to make our life easier. Along came Covid. Schools and offices were closed. We wore masks, distanced ourselves from others, while communicating with one another online. We discovered that the air became less polluted as fewer vehicles as well as airways were used.

Afterwards, many of us discovered that working from home was preferable to spending a couple of hours a day stalled on congested roads in heavy traffic. However, says the powers that be, you must get back to the workplace. It's better to be together to mentor each other. Never mind that you were just as productive at your home office as you were polluting the environment getting to work. Never mind that your nerves are more frayed in getting there. Forget that computers were to make your existence more pleasant. Ignore September messages from others like me who say these things. Get dressed and get back to the office or your place of work. Summer's over; it's September.



Gaza - Not So Much a Genocide; More a Real Estate Opportunity

by Gwynne DYER

AUTHOR, HISTORIAN & INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST

A motley band of greedy fantasists got together at the White House a week ago (27 August) and came up with a cunning plan to bring peace to the Middle East while lining their own pockets at the same time. It was 'leaked' within days, as it was clearly meant to be, and since then the sound of outraged clucking has been loud in the land.

It is "a Trumpian get-rich-quick scheme reliant on war crimes, AI and tourism," wrote the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

"It's a textbook case of international crimes on an unimaginable scale: forcible population transfer, demographic engineering and collective punishment," said Duncan Grant, head of Swiss-based human rights group Trial International.

"It's insane," said H.A. Hellyer of the Royal United Services Institute. They are right, so far as they go - but they only know the half of it. The other half is that this is an insane crime that could actually happen.

As you would expect at a meeting chaired by Donald Trump, half the participants were real estate developers by trade - himself, his ignorant 'Special Envoy for the Middle East' Steve Witkoff, and his son-in-law Jared Kushner. Marco Rubio was there as National Security Adviser, and former British prime minister Tony Blair to raise the tone a bit.

He can't raise it all that much, because he is a war criminal himself. (He has admitted that he would have invaded Iraq even if he had known that there were no 'weapons of mass destruction' there.) But he and his Tony Blair Institute (TBI) have spent the past nine years scrounging money from various Middle Eastern potentates and investors, so he has contacts.

The meeting was intended to flesh out the plan for 'cleansing' Gaza of its two million current residents that Trump first mooted early this year and replacing them with an unspecified but wealthy 'international' population who would turn it into 'the Riviera of the Middle East'. You know, like Saint-Tropez, Antibes and the Cinque Terre, only flatter and farther east.

The Palestinians who are living and dying in Gaza now would be 'relocated' to some other country while 40 million tonnes of rubble, unexploded ordnance and decomposed bodies are cleared away and a shiny new city is built on the ruins. Property owners will be given digital tokens that they can spend to resettle elsewhere or maybe even buy property in Gaza again.

The United States will govern Gaza as a 'trusteeship' for at least ten years, with no

information on what happens after that. The immense cost of clearing up the devastation and building a new 'Land of Oz' would be borne by private investors, who could expect a fourfold return on their capital in a decade. And everyone will live happily ever after.

There are different levels of self-deception operating among the various political and financial groups that may be inveigled into supporting this bizarre and illegal project. Most naive are those who believe this is a sincerely meant and viable plan. This may include Donald Trump, who is probably blinded by the ever-receding vision of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Then there are those who pride themselves on their cynicism and have worked out that it is just 'a cover story for ethnic cleansing', as the Washington Post put it. It gives Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu something to say while his troops drive the Palestinians into exile, and he can just 'change his mind' later about letting them return.

And then there are the true cynics, most of them Arabs, who know all of the above and still think that the Riviera of the Middle East may come to pass. They base this view on their conviction that the governing Arab elites have given up on the Palestinians and would accept Israeli annexation not only of the Gaza Strip but also of the West Bank.

Here's what Ragheda Dergham wrote on 31 August: "Trump and Kushner have calculated that Arab states, particularly in the Gulf, will not jeopardise their prized bilateral relationships with the Trump administration. Eventually, they believe, these countries will accept the new status quo in Gaza and, later, the West Bank, however bitterly..."

"Neither Arab states nor the Islamic Republic of Iran, nor Turkey or the broader Islamic world, will do more than protest—albeit in varying forms—against US support for Israeli plans to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank through either forced or "voluntary" displacement, in service of the biblical project to remake these territories into a singular Jewish state."

I'm afraid she may be right, in which case Israel may have 'King Bibi' forever. Of course, Ragheda Dergham lives in Lebanon. In most other countries of the Arab world, she'd be in jail.

Local history: New committee launched to provide schools with curriculum help

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The Local History Committee of the Western Quebec Region has been established to preserve English-speaking heritage, document local archives, and ensure anglophone contributions are reflected in Quebec's historical narrative and school curriculum. (TF)

PHOTO: SCREENSHOT OF THE LOCAL HISTORY COMMITTEE OF THE WESTERN QUEBEC REGION ZOOM MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2025



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

The newly formed Local History Committee of the Western Quebec Region has been established to preserve and promote the history of the region's English-speaking communities, with an emphasis on ensuring their contributions to Quebec are neither forgotten nor excluded from the public record.

Convened on September 3, the committee brought together historians, educators, journalists, community leaders, and residents from across the region. The formation was led by Linton Garner, chair of the Quebec Association of Local History Committees, and Brian Rock, vice chair of the same association and a longtime advocate for historical education.

At the heart of the initiative is a concern that anglophone contributions to the development of Quebec have been neglected in both public discourse and the provincial curriculum. The committee aims to address this by identifying local archives, cataloguing family and community records,

and working with schools to integrate English-speaking history into formal education.

"We're seeing too many examples of local archives being hidden away, forgotten, or scattered in private hands," Rock said during the meeting. "Our goal is to document, preserve, and share the stories that have shaped this region."

The Local History Committee of the Western Quebec Region plans to create a public directory of English-language historical records, encourage digitization efforts, and establish partnerships with educators and school boards. The long-term goal is to ensure the region's historical narrative reflects the communities that built it—including those whose stories have often been overlooked.

The committee was officially formed by unanimous vote, and a steering committee has been appointed to begin its work. Similar local committees are expected to follow in other regions under the umbrella of the Quebec Association of Local History Committees.

"We want this to be more than preservation," Garner said. "It's about cultural continuity, civic education, and asserting the rightful place of English-speaking Quebecers in the province's past and future."

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Gatineau's municipal election nomination period begins September 19



Sophie Demers
LJI Reporter

Gatineau's municipal elections are fast approaching. Residents will be casting their votes for mayor as well as their local councillor on November 2. All of Gatineau's 19 electoral districts as well as the mayor will

be on the ballot.

Electoral Chair Véronique Denis has announced that the nomination period for all positions is open from September 19 to October 3. Nomination forms for all positions are available at the Office of the Electoral Chair, located at Maison du Citoyen, 25 rue Laurier, 5th floor. The office is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 am

to noon and from 1 pm to 4:30 pm. The nomination forms can also be found online on the City of Gatineau website, 2025 Municipal Election page.

The electoral chair has appointed Camille Doucet-Côté as electoral secretary. Both Doucet-Côté and assistant Caroline Payer will be gathering nomination forms from candidates.

For more information about candidate nomination forms and submitting candidacy, residents can contact the electoral chair by phone at (819) 931-2900 or by email at election@gatineau.ca.

The current city council will cease meetings 30 days before the elections but will remain in office until the newly elected members of the council are sworn in. The

last city council meeting before the election will be on October 2.

Those unable to get to a voting station for health reasons can request that the electoral chair allow you to vote in your residence or health care facility. This request must be communicated to the electoral office by October 17.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- Election day: Sunday, November 2 from 10 am to 8 pm
- Advance voting day: Sunday, October 26 from noon to 8 pm
- Voting day at the Office of the Electoral Chair: Friday, October 24, from noon to 8 pm

STO transit riders stuck mid-route without transfers



Concerns about the availability of paper transfer slips on STO buses have highlighted potential gaps in service for cash-paying riders, though the agency maintains that no formal complaints have been received and a system review is still underway. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE STO



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Concerns have been raised about the availability of paper transfer slips on Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) buses, particularly for passengers who pay with cash. According to an anonymous source who contacted the *Aylmer Bulletin*, at least four individuals, including teenagers, were reportedly unable to complete their commutes after being told by drivers that paper transfers were unavailable. In some instances, riders were left stranded late at night without a practical way to reach their destination.

The STO maintains that it has received no direct complaints from the public about such incidents. Yannick Boursier, public affairs officer at the STO, said it would be unusual for a teenager to be impacted by a lack of paper transfers, as all

youth in Gatineau between the ages of 12 and 17 are eligible for the Multi-jeunesse card. This card allows for unlimited travel across the network and includes transfers at no extra cost.

Boursier explained that only a small number of riders continue to request paper transfers, most of whom pay in cash. Drivers are expected to carry a sufficient supply of transfer slips for their shift. If they run out, they are instructed to request more from another driver or contact an inspector who can deliver additional slips en route.

While the STO has not made any immediate changes to its fare system, Boursier confirmed that a review is currently underway. Among the options being considered is the removal of paper transfers to simplify the rider experience. However, he noted that the project is still in its early stages and no decisions have been made.



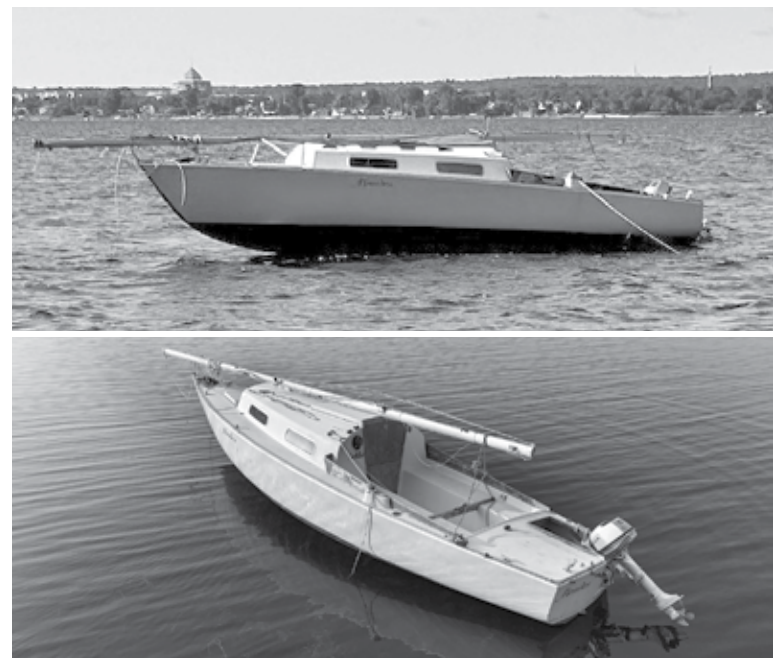
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Notice of intention to dismantle a vessel under section 36(a) of the *Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act*

A WRECK – a 27-foot blue sailboat (permit number 78E4516), located in Aylmer, is currently considered to be hazardous to the safety of the environment and the public.

This notice is issued in conformity with Part 2 of the *Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act* (WAHVA) and is official notice of the Minister of Fisheries' intention to dismantle this vessel after 30 days from which this notice was given.



Any person who has liens or other interest in this vessel, or any questions, should contact Canadian Coast Guard's Marine Environmental and Hazards Response Program no later than October 12, 2025, at: DFO.CCGCentralVOC-PNPPCentreGCC.MPO@DFO-MPO.GC.CA.

Marc Walter transforms Galerie Montcalm into an immersive forest



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Paris-born artist Marc Walter, who has made Wakefield his home for more than 30 years, is in the process of assembling a monumental land art installation that will completely reinvent the space of Galerie Montcalm. His upcoming exhibition, *Dialogue avec la Nature*, will run from August 23 to October 5, inviting visitors into a sensory journey at the intersection of art and nature.

"I want to make the architecture disappear through a single monumental intervention," Walter explained. "I want to transform the gallery so completely that visitors forget where they are, that they no longer perceive it as an exhibition hall, but feel transported into an entirely organic world of curves and rediscovered sensations."

Inspired by the Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku* (forest bathing), Walter is covering the entire gallery with interwoven branches, reshaping the contours, atmosphere, and perception of the space. "My proposal offers an immersion into a completely redesigned environment, where a monumental chamber will invite visitors to discover multiple organic wonders," he said.

Rather than dispersing works throughout the venue, Walter's approach invests the whole of Galerie Montcalm, replacing its walls and edges with a flowing, natural form meant to evoke the therapeutic, meditative qualities of the forest.

The exhibition officially opens on August 23, the vernissage will be held on September 12, at 7 pm in the Agora of the Maison du Citoyen, 25 Laurier Street, Gatineau. Admission is free.



Marc Walter will present *Dialogue avec la Nature*, a monumental land art installation at Galerie Montcalm from August 23 to October 5, 2025, immersing visitors in an organic, forest-like environment inspired by the Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku*. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY

School leaders vow unity as 60,000 return to class

Continued from page 3

"It is a message we want to send not only to the public but to our staff — the importance of collaborating, not competing, and using everyone's strengths to help each other," said Manon Dufour, director of the Centre de services scolaire des Draveurs, noting the region's high school success rate is now 80%.

Daniel Bellemare, director of the Centre de services scolaire au Cœur-des-Vallées, emphasized efficiency: "Our administrative and management costs are below 5%. It is difficult to find lower costs than what we are able to maintain."

WQSB director George Singfield highlighted the shared commitment: "The challenges are large, but know that we are working together to improve the future of students, regardless of language."

WQSB DELAYS BUDGET AMID LEGAL CHALLENGE

Later that day, the WQSB postponed adoption of its 2025–2026 budget until September 23. Earlier in Au-

gust, the board voted to join a Quebec English School Board Association court challenge against provincial rules restricting the use of surpluses.

The government's rule prevents boards from using accumulated surpluses, which in the past served as a cushion during budget shortfalls. The WQSB has about \$15 million in its surplus account.

"We have the right of control and management of our funds," said WQSB chair Joanne Labadie. "We're not contesting the cuts. We understand we have to tighten our belts. But as minority-language right holders, we have the right to decide how to spend our money, including our surplus," she said, citing Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The proposed 2025–2026 budget totals nearly \$154 million with a deficit of just over \$380,000. The board delayed approval to see if the court will grant a stay, which would suspend the surplus restriction until a decision is made.

Labadie said the delay means the board can currently access only one-twelfth of its budget. While this covers salaries and bills, any unplanned expenses cannot be met with surplus funds.

Another Fatality on the Highway of Death



Mélissa Gélinas
LJI Reporter

The Guy-Lafleur Highway claimed another life on the night of August 26 in Lochaber. This time, a 46-year-old Gatineau man died when his sports utility vehicle (SUV) collided with a heavy goods vehicle in a section of the road where the lanes meet in the wrong direction. Details regarding the cause of the accident have not yet been released.

According to Thurso Mayor Mélanie Boyer, while the highway expansion is necessary, more temporary safety measures such as guardrails or cement blocks are needed to reduce the accident rate. "We need to find a way to prevent motorists from crossing the highway in the wrong direction," she commented. "It's starting to become an urgent situation," she continued. "One death is one too many on our roads."

Shortly after the accident, a woman arrived on the scene and was able to see the magnitude of the situation. "The highway was closed; there were ambulances and a patrol car," said Mélanie Plouffe. "I couldn't even identify the type of vehicle the victim was driving." Indeed, the jaws of life were needed to extract the man from the wreckage.

Plouffe says she regularly uses this highway to get to work, and she sees numerous accidents. "It's really a dangerous place," she emphasized.

According to Mayor Boyer, more pressure must be put on government authorities to improve the situation. "Things have to change!" she said. She believes it's important for the government to consider this highway a major issue and act quickly. "I can't wait for the Guy-Lafleur Highway to take its proper name and stop being called the Highway of Death."

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Quebec's community newspapers buck the national trend



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Quebec continues to stand out in Canada's newspaper world. According to the 2025 Snapshot report from News Media Canada, Quebec is home to 220 newspaper titles and prints around 8.7 million copies every week—more than any other province. Across the country, nearly 24 million newspaper copies are circulated weekly, with over 800 different titles.

A big reason Quebec's numbers are so strong is that many of its newspapers are delivered for free. Across Canada, about 55 per cent of newspapers are given out at no cost, while 45 per cent are sold. In Quebec, this free model plays an important role in helping local and community papers reach readers, whether through the mail or picked up in stores and cafes. It keeps readership steady, even as more people get their news online or skip subscriptions.

In 2025, Canada had 750 community newspaper titles, putting out 766 different editions each week. Most of these papers use the smaller, more convenient tabloid format, which is easier and cheaper to produce than the larger broadsheet style. Around 8.5 million copies of community newspapers are printed every week, and almost all are distributed free of charge.

Quebec's newspapers also tend to reach



At a time when many local papers across Canada are disappearing, Quebec's community newspapers continue to reach readers and keep neighbourhood stories alive. (TF)

PHOTO: TASHI FARMILO

more people per edition than those in many other parts of the country. That shows that readers are still strongly connected to their

local news sources, especially in smaller towns and bilingual areas where national media often doesn't cover local issues. The balance between

paid and free papers in Quebec seems to help maintain that connection.

There are a few reasons Quebec's newspaper scene is holding on while others shrink. Ownership in the province is mixed between large companies and smaller independent publishers. That means readers get a wider range of perspectives and reporting styles. Quebec's mix of French, English, and bilingual communities also helps support a variety of local papers that speak directly to their readers.

Still, not everything is rosy. Like in the rest of Canada, many local newspapers have been closing, especially in smaller communities. Nearly three-quarters of the 571 local news outlets that shut down between 2008 and 2025 were community newspapers. Quebec has not been spared from this trend, and more areas are being left without local news coverage, what researchers call "news deserts."

In short, Quebec's newspapers are doing better than most. Strong circulation, smart distribution, and local ownership have kept many of the province's papers alive and well. But the steady loss of small-town newsrooms is a warning sign. If communities want to stay informed—community journalism will need continued support from readers, advertisers and government.

Residents asked to help shape new youth centre in the Plateau



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

A new youth centre may soon become a fixture in the Plateau, and the public is being asked to help shape its future. The initiative, spearheaded by the long-established community organization L'Avenue des jeunes, is featured on the Plateau Residents Association website, which is currently hosting the call for public input.

L'Avenue des jeunes has been working with youth for over 45 years, operating four youth centres for adolescents aged 12 to 17 and a shelter service, Héberge-Ados, for teens aged 13 to 17. The organization's mandate is to support young people in their development, learning, and autonomy by providing meaningful adult mentorship and safe environments tailored to the realities they face.

The idea for a new youth centre emerged from the Table des partenaires du Plateau, a working group created in 2023 to address social and community issues in the neighbourhood through coordinated, collaborative efforts. One of its key recommendations was to establish a dedicated youth facility as a preventive measure against delinquency and to embed permanent services for young people in the heart of the Plateau.

Youth across Quebec are facing mounting pressures, with mental health challenges becoming increasingly prevalent. According to the Institut national de santé publique du Québec,



A new youth centre is being proposed for the Plateau neighbourhood, and residents are invited to share their input through surveys posted on the Plateau Residents Association website. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY

symptoms of anxiety and depression have risen among adolescents in recent years, with girls reporting significantly higher rates. Suicide

remains the second leading cause of death among youth aged 15 to 24 in the province, as reported by the Government of Quebec.

Issues such as academic stress, social isolation, and a lack of accessible, safe recreational spaces continue to affect young people. These stressors can have lasting effects, particularly for those without strong support networks.

In this context, the proposed centre could provide more than just a physical space. It could serve as a stabilizing anchor for local youth, offering programming tailored to their needs, supportive adult presence, and opportunities to build social connections. By fostering engagement, learning, and a sense of belonging, it could help address some of the root causes of youth vulnerability in the community.

Funded by the City of Gatineau, the feasibility study currently underway aims to conceptualize and plan the launch of the new centre, including the development of relevant programming and community engagement strategies. As part of that process, L'Avenue des jeunes is inviting Plateau residents to provide feedback through two short surveys, one for adults and one for youth. Each takes less than ten minutes to complete and guarantees anonymity, particularly for minors.

Adults aged 18 and over are encouraged to share their perspectives on youth activities in the Plateau, and those in favour of the proposed centre can also sign a public letter of support. Youth under 18 are invited to participate in a separate survey focused on their interests and needs. For more information and to take part, visit the Plateau Residents Association website: residentsduplateau.com.

Hull Island's Mathieu Bélanger takes helm at CIMA+



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

CIMA+, one of Quebec's most prominent private consulting engineering firms, has appointed Hull Island resident Mathieu Bélanger as Vice-President of Environment and Earth Sciences. From the company's Gatineau office, he will lead more than 200 specialists in environmental services, geosciences, geotechnics and urban planning, whose work spans communities across Canada.

Founded in Montreal in 1990, CIMA+ has grown from a local engineering practice into a national firm with 40 offices and more than 3,500 employees, most of whom are shareholders. The company has been recognized for its workplace culture and for award-winning infrastructure and environmental projects.

Bélanger returns to CIMA+ with more than two decades of leadership in urban planning, real estate development, public policy and infrastructure. His career includes senior roles

Hull Island resident Mathieu Bélanger has been named Vice-President of Environment and Earth Sciences at CIMA+, bringing more than two decades of experience to lead the firm's national team from Gatineau. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE CITY OF GATINEAU



in the federal government, Executive Director of Policy and Public Affairs at the Federation

of Canadian Municipalities, and Director of Planning and Sustainable Development for

the City of Gatineau.

"What struck me most during my time in Gatineau was the quality, competence and dedication of municipal employees," he said. "They work with rigour and passion, often under great pressure, to support the city's growth while preserving its quality of life." That experience, he added, strengthened his ability to connect political vision with community needs and the realities of development.

Bélanger described his new post as both a professional challenge and a personal commitment. "This is much more than a return. It's a commitment to providing sustainable and innovative solutions to our public and private partners across the country."

He succeeds Raymond McNamara, who is retiring after years of leadership but will remain as an advisor during the transition. "As a Gatineau resident and someone living on Hull Island, I want to keep getting involved in local initiatives that link environment, quality of life and local development," Bélanger said

Consultations begin in Outaouais on future protected areas



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

Regional stakeholders in the Outaouais are set to begin a consultation process that could

shape the future of conservation across the region's public lands.

The Conseil régional de l'environnement et du développement durable de l'Outaouais (CREDDO) has launched a year-and-a-half-long



A new round of closed-door consultations in the Outaouais will bring together regional stakeholders to evaluate 47 proposed protected areas, aiming to balance biodiversity conservation with local priorities as part of Quebec's Plan nature 2030. (TF) PHOTO: COURTESY OF QUEBEC'S PLAN NATURE 2030

under pressure from development, land-use change, and habitat fragmentation.

Among the 47 proposals under review, several areas have been publicly identified by regional conservation groups such as CPAWS-Outaouais for their ecological value and strategic importance. These include the Noire and Coulonge Rivers, Lac Brûlé, Lac Dumont, ZEC Saint-Patrice, the Poussière River, the eastern Coulonge River, Presqu'île du Lac à l'Indienne, and the rare alvar habitats in Bristol and Clarendon.

Unlike open public hearings, the consultations will take place in closed sessions. Invitations have been sent to municipalities, regional county municipalities (MRCs), Indigenous communities, and environmental groups. According to CREDDO, this format is designed to allow for constructive, respectful dialogue among those directly involved in land-use decisions.

The process began with an online information session on September 10. A series of working groups, referred to as tables de concertation, will begin meeting on October 1 and continue through spring 2026. Final recommendations will be submitted to Quebec's Ministry of the Environment in December 2026.

Environment Minister Benoit Charette has underscored the importance of regional knowledge in driving conservation efforts. "Several protected area projects are currently on the table. We need the knowledge of local and regional actors, municipalities, MRCs, and Indigenous communities to identify the initiatives that will be most beneficial for nature and local populations," he said. "We're asking people who live on this land to help us decide how to protect it, because when conservation is rooted in regional expertise, it becomes a tool for both environmental and community resilience."

initiative to evaluate 47 proposed protected areas. The consultations are part of Quebec's Plan nature 2030, which aims to protect 30 per cent of both terrestrial and marine territory by the end of the decade. Currently, Quebec protects approximately 16.7 per cent of its land and freshwater territory, while the Outaouais region remains at just over 10 per cent.

"This is a major moment for the Outaouais," said Benoit Delage, executive director of CREDDO. "These consultations are about building consensus and identifying natural areas that matter, not only for biodiversity, but for local communities as well."

With more than 78 per cent of its 30,000-square-kilometre territory covered in forest, the Outaouais plays a key role in maintaining ecological corridors and supporting species at risk. The region's rivers, wetlands, and old-growth forests also provide vital ecosystem services and cultural value, but are increasingly

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27 at 7 pm: Live music with "Arc of Fire". No cover charge. -Sept 30 at 10 am: Free Workshop "Effective Strategies for Aging in Place. Plan for the future you want!". Call 819-557-0615 to register. -Oct 14 at 10 am: Free workshop on "OLD AGE SECURITY" with special guest Lisa Gervais, Citizen Services Specialist, Service Canada. Refreshments will be served! It is free to attend but you have to register at 819-557-0615.

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LA GRANDE FRIPE IS BACK THIS FALL WITH A NEW SCHEDULE! For the first time, the event will be held on Friday AND Saturday. Two perfect opportunities to stock up on second-hand finds! Friday, October 3, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, October 4, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.,

at 425 Saint-Joseph Boulevard, Gatineau. It's the biggest second-hand clothing and accessories sale in the Outaouais! The Hall de la Grande Fripe will also be back with experiential and clothing partners who will make your shopping day more enjoyable than ever. Free admission and parking. Bring your reusable bag.

ON OCTOBER 5: JOIN US FOR THE INAUGURAL SYMPOSIUM ON SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT (SG1), a free networking event for residents and municipal election candidates from across the Western Quebec region. It's a great opportunity to share ideas and connect with fellow citizens, entrepreneurs, and some potential leaders. To reserve your seat and obtain the program, please email sylvain.henry@gmail.com or call 873-376-4680. More than networking, it's a chance to be part of something groundbreaking and fun in La Pêche!

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OUR 2ND ANNUAL WALK IN NATURE IS FAST APPROACHING, AND WE ARE BRINGING TWO "INSPIRING HOPE" EVENTS on

Saturday, Sept. 14. A book publishing celebration from 2-4 pm at the Jim Durrell Recreation Centre (1265 Walkley Road) and the Walking Together in the Landscape of Anishinaabe Territory, located behind the War Museum, close to the Chaudière Falls. The walk is from 5-8 pm to capture the sunset overlooking Chief William Commanda Bridge. A reminder that we are resuming our regular meetings on the first Tuesday of each month for our Rocking Chair Conversations on October 7, 2025, at the new time of 6-8 pm at the Deschenes Community Centre. Details on these events and how to obtain copies of Books can also be found on our website www.OutaouaisWellnessLearning.com.

SHOWTIME THURSDAY PRESENTS A LOCAL SINGER-SONGWRITER THIS-YEARSBRUCE! Pop, rock, and blues, plus original songs. September 18, 2025, at 7 p.m. at the Aylmer Legion located at 59 Bancroft Street, Gatineau (Aylmer).

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