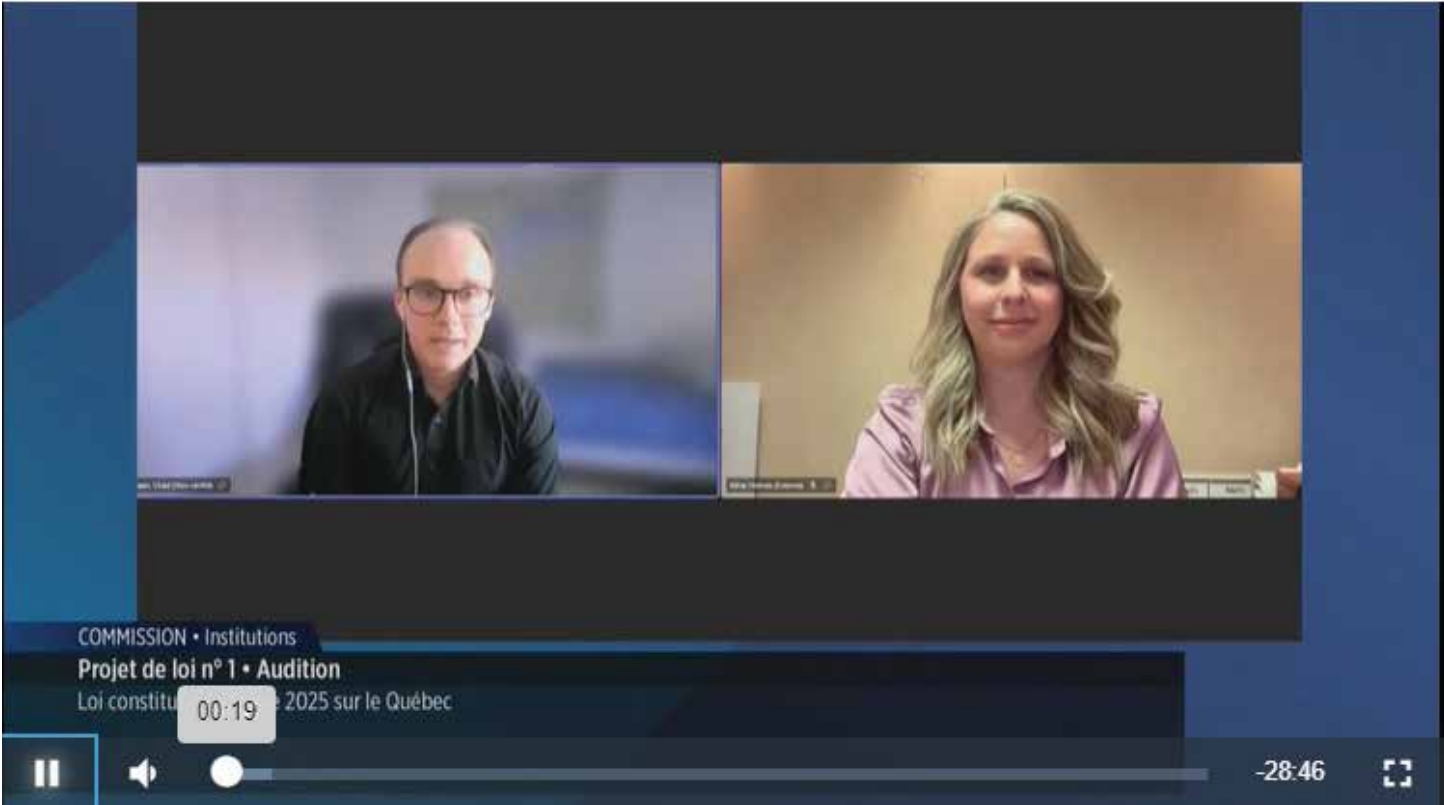


Regional association challenges gaps in Quebec Constitution Bill



Chad Bean and Alina Seguin-Holmes of the Regional Association of West Quebecers presented to the National Assembly on February 5, urging lawmakers to amend Bill 1 to better protect individual rights, minority communities, and essential public services. (TF)
PHOTO: SCREENSHOT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF QUEBEC, COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS HEARING ON BILL 1, FEBRUARY 5, 2026.

 **Tashi Farmilo**
LJI Reporter

The Regional Association of West Quebecers presented to the National Assembly's Commission on Institutions on February 5, voicing strong concerns about Bill 1, the proposed Quebec Constitution Act. Speaking for more than 60,000 English-speaking residents in the Outaouais, association president Chad Bean and executive director Alina Seguin-Holmes focused their remarks on what they see as serious gaps in the bill's protections for individual rights, government accountability, and access to essential services.

"We were pleased to have been one of the organizations asked to present in front of the committee," Seguin-Holmes said. "We believe that the process by which Bill 1 was developed was flawed and lacked public consultation before it was tabled." The association used its allotted time not to oppose the bill outright, but to push for changes aimed at strengthening inclusivity and democratic safeguards.

At the hearing, Bean and Seguin-Holmes called for the inclusion of clear, enforceable guarantees for healthcare, education, affordable housing, linguistic protections, and public safety. They warned that the bill's current structure risks prioritizing the collective rights of the "Quebec nation" over the rights of individual citizens, particularly members of minority and anglophone communities. "We chose to use our presentation time to focus on areas of the Bill that we believe should be modified to improve inclusivity for all Quebecers and accountability for the government," Seguin-Holmes told the commission.

Particular concern was raised over Section 17 of the bill, which gives the provincial government the power to direct institutions such as school boards and hospitals to refuse federal funding or withdraw from federal agreements. Bean warned this could jeopardize access to essential services across Quebec. "This section empowers the minister to order

organizations like school boards, universities, and hospitals to refuse federal money or suspend agreements, potentially disrupting critical sectors without broad consultation," he said.

During the exchange, commission members asked whether the group believed the bill's emphasis on secularism and French language protections could be considered discriminatory. Seguin-Holmes responded that the problem lies not in the wording of these provisions, but in the lack of constitutional safeguards to prevent future governments from implementing measures that could discriminate under the cover of collective rights.

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Pontiac in mourning: two snowmobilers lose their lives in head-on collision



Méliissa Gélinas
LJI Reporter

A snowmobile ride on Jim Lake Road in the Pontiac municipality of Mansfield-et-Pontefract turned into a tragedy for Charlie Frost (36) and Steve Morin (37). Emergency services were called on January 29 at around 11:30 p.m. to the scene when they found, for a still unknown reason, that the two snowmobiles had collided head-on, causing the immediate death of Steve Morin.

According to information provided by Marc Tessier, sergeant with the Sûreté du Québec (SQ), Charlie Frost, who had been transported the same evening to a hospital, succumbed to his injuries on the evening of February 2.

Moreover, they were not unknown. "These are people who knew each other, since they were in the same cottage," says Mr Tessier.

In order to elucidate the causes and circumstances of this fatal collision, the



Sûreté du Québec officer monitoring snowmobilers (January 26, 2026). MG

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE SÛRETÉ DU QUÉBEC

investigators have analysed the scene. In particular, blood samples were taken. The investigation is ongoing.

Community in mourning: Filicide in Kitigan Zibi



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

A man shot and killed his two children before taking his own life during the night of February 11 in Kitigan Zibi in the Outaouais.

Local police were called to a residence on Kichi Mikan Street at approximately 2:15 am. Upon arrival, officers discovered one person already deceased and two children with critical injuries. The victims were identified as the man's 12-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter. Both children were transported to hospital, where their deaths were confirmed.

Kitigan Zibi Police Chief Paul McDougall stated that the father was responsible for the fatal shootings before turning the weapon on himself. The Sûreté du Québec is leading the investigation through its crimes against persons division, working in collaboration with Kitigan Zibi police. As of February 11, the SQ had not released further details about the motive or any additional findings.

Premier François Legault offered condolences to the Anishinaabe Nation and to the families affected, expressing deep sorrow for the tragedy. Ian Lafrenière, Minister of Public Security and Minister Responsible for Relations with First Nations and Inuit, confirmed that provincial investigators are



A father in Kitigan Zibi shot and killed his two young children before taking his own life on the night of February 10, prompting an ongoing investigation by provincial and local police. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE SÛRETÉ DU QUÉBEC FACEBOOK PAGE

supporting the community and have offered assistance to its leadership.

Local elected officials also acknowledged the impact of the loss. Sophie Chatel, Member of Parliament for Pontiac—Kitigan Zibi, and André Fortin, Member of the National Assembly for Pontiac, both expressed sympathy to the families and the community.

Crisis and mental health resources have been made available following the incident. Support services include the Quebec suicide prevention line at 1 866 APPELLE and the national 988 suicide crisis helpline.

The investigation remains active as police continue to examine the circumstances surrounding the deaths.

Outaouais patients left waiting



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Santé Québec met with health advocates in Gatineau on February 3, to respond to growing concern that the Outaouais region is being left behind in Quebec's health care system. The meeting came after years of complaints about underfunding, long wait times, and patients being forced to travel outside the region to get basic care. Local group Action Santé Outaouais (ASO), which was at the meeting, said it appreciated the chance to speak directly with the new health agency, but warned that Outaouais still lacks a clear plan to fix the gaps that continue to put patients at risk.

To understand what is at stake, it helps to know how the system changed. In 2023, the Quebec government passed a new law to reorganize health care across the province. Referred to as, LGSSSS, this law created Santé Québec as a central agency in charge of hospitals and health services. While the

Ministry of Health still sets policies, Santé Québec is now responsible for managing operations. One section of the law, Article 115, says that health funding must be distributed fairly between regions. That includes looking at how healthy people are, how far they live from services, and what their local needs are, not just how many people live there. ASO says the government is not following this rule when it comes to Outaouais.

In 2025, the province announced a 90 million dollar cut to the region's health care budget. After pushback from local groups and mayors, the cut was reduced to 45 million dollars. But ASO says even that is a serious blow to a system already stretched too thin. Their research shows that Outaouais was short nearly 350 million dollars in health funding in 2023 compared to what similar regions would receive. On top of that, Quebec spent nearly 118 million dollars last year to send local patients to Ontario for care because services in Outaouais were not available. That cost has jumped by 25 percent since 2020.

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TALQ director says new commissioner should focus on building trust



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

As the federal government moves forward with the nomination of Kelly Burke to become Canada's next Commissioner of Official Languages, the head of a Quebec-based minority language advocacy group says English-speaking Quebecers are watching closely and hoping to be understood and respected within Canada's evolving language framework.

Sylvia Martin-Laforge, Director General of TALQ, said her organization will be looking to the next Commissioner to continue building on the work of outgoing Commissioner Raymond Th  berge, particularly when it comes to recognizing and defending Canada's largest official language minority community.

"For the last couple of years, he's been quite strong, fearless in his comments," Martin-Laforge said of Th  berge. "Even when outside of his direct jurisdiction, he really did try to explain that we're not the best treated minority in the world."

She expressed hope that Burke will carry that work forward while strengthening engagement with English-speaking Quebecers, a community whose rights, she noted, are not formally recognized under Quebec law.

Martin-Laforge emphasized that the Commissioner's central role is to ensure federal institutions meet their obligations under the Official Languages Act. "We would



Sylvia Martin-Laforge, Director General of TALQ, says English-speaking Quebecers expect Canada's next Commissioner of Official Languages to uphold their rights, understand their unique reality, and continue the outgoing commissioner's work in promoting linguistic duality and federal accountability. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TALQ'S FACEBOOK PAGE

hope that the Commissioner would really monitor that federal institutions take positive measures to enhance the vitality of the English-speaking community, support our development, and promote the full recognition of our status as a minority linguistic community," she said.

She also raised concerns about proposals for federal language funds to be transferred directly to the Quebec government, bypassing institutions that serve English-speaking Quebecers. "The federal government sees us as an official language minority community. The provincial government does not recognize our status," she said.

At the heart of her comments was a recognition of the unique tensions that exist around language in Quebec.

Martin-Laforge acknowledged that while French is seen as an asset in most of Canada, in Quebec it carries the weight of cultural survival. "In Quebec, the English language can be perceived as a threat, a threat to the survival of French identity and nationality," she said.

That perception, she explained, can strain relationships between communities. "The more fear that Francophones have around the loss of French, the more they fear us as a threat to their language. And the more they will be against us having rights. The relationship will not be one of equals. It will be permeated by fear."

Still, Martin-Laforge said that protecting French and upholding the rights of English-speaking Quebecers are not mutually exclusive. She believes the Commissioner's office

plays a vital role in helping federal institutions navigate these realities and uphold Canada's commitment to official language duality. "We're still in Canada, the last time I looked," she said.

TALQ, she added, will be paying close attention to Burke's upcoming testimony before parliamentary committees. "We'll be eager to see how she demonstrates her understanding of the unique challenges of the English-speaking community," Martin-Laforge said. "We will be relying on the new Commissioner to understand us and to support the English-speaking community of Quebec, as an ombudsman, as a promoter of linguistic duality, and as someone who truly understands our unique set of circumstances."

Investment in snowmobile trails to boost safety and support local economy



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

The Quebec government is awarding nearly \$266,000 to snowmobile clubs in Outaouais as part of a broader \$8.2 million initiative aimed at maintaining trails, improving safety, and supporting winter tourism for the 2025–26 season.

The funding, announced on February 10, is being delivered through the province's snowmobile support program, known as the Programme d'aide financi  re aux clubs de motoneigistes du Qu  bec (PACM). Seven local clubs will share \$265,966 to maintain trails across more than 2,200 kilometres of groomed routes. An additional \$2.6 million is being provided to the F  d  ration des clubs de motoneigistes du Qu  bec (FCMQ) to coordinate provincewide safety measures, including training for volunteers, improved signage, and patrol operations.

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Regional association challenges gaps in Quebec Constitution Bill

Continued from page 1

"It's written in a way that leaves room for discriminatory practices to be put in place," she said, emphasizing the need to embed protections for individual freedoms directly into the body of the bill, not just the preamble.

The association also recommended changes to the bill's amendment process to ensure greater public participation and accountability. While Bean and Seguin-Holmes expressed a preference for restarting the legislative process with proper consultation, they said that, given the current political context, the focus should now be on improving the bill before it becomes law.

"We support the idea of a Quebec constitution that prioritizes the well-being of its people," Seguin-Holmes said during the presentation. "To achieve this, we

encourage guarantees for social essentials, protection of individual rights, maintenance of judicial oversight, and preservation of federal collaborations and democratic amendment processes."

Bill 1 was introduced in October 2025 by the Coalition Avenir Quebec government. It remains under committee review. Framed by the government as a necessary step toward affirming Quebec's distinct status and constitutional autonomy, the bill has sparked sustained opposition from legal experts, minority organizations, and civil rights advocates, who argue it concentrates power and leaves minority groups more vulnerable.

"We urged the committee to carefully consider each recommendation to ensure the final bill is reflective of the needs of all Quebecers," Seguin-Holmes said. "This is an important issue for residents of the Outaouais."

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Health care cuts code for endorsing private health care?



LILY Ryan

What is the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) leadership thinking with health care cuts ahead of an election? The cuts announced in the fall and implemented this winter match the funding shortfall each region faces. Rather than addressing the gaps, Quebec City responded by cutting funding.

Outaouais's chronic underfunding has led to emergency room closures and overcrowded hospitals. Despite wait lists that stretch for years, the region is now cutting doctor and specialist positions.

This poses a serious threat to the public health care system. In Outaouais, there's

been a notable increase in private nursing and para-health services. These services offer convenience – having a nurse visit your home for blood work or prenatal care can ease the burden on busy families and high-risk pregnancies. As public care faces repeated cuts, more people are turning to these private options.

Pregnancy care, once exclusively within the public system, is now increasingly offered privately. New moms seeking care are often drawn to these faster and more accessible services. Newborn care and support for families have traditionally been part of public health care, but the trend toward privatization is changing that.

With cuts last fall and more expected this spring, the shift toward private health care

seems inevitable. Quebecers, across party lines, have consistently voiced their support for a strong public system. An informal poll conducted by this newsroom found that while many residents are willing to pay for urgent services like scans, blood tests, and emergency care, they firmly believe those services should remain part of the public system. Having access to private options may provide some security, but the consensus remains that fixing the public system should be the top priority.

Premier François Legault's recent cuts place more than just individual treatments at risk. The entire public health care system is in jeopardy. Whether by starving public funding or pursuing overt privatization, the outcome is the same – a weakened public system. Quebecers are left to wonder if these

cuts are quietly paving the way for privatization. What other conclusion can be drawn in the face of these reductions?

Quebecers have made it clear they value public health care and expect their leaders to prioritize strengthening it, not undermining it. The risk is far greater than delays for knee replacements or asthma treatment – it threatens the entire public system's future.

Publisher's note:

Readers consistently view dental care as part of overall health care. Expanding public coverage to include dental services is widely supported – further proof that Quebecers want more public care, not less.

LETTERS

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

Misguided thinking harms all of us

Immigrants to Canada are often scapegoated by people who think they'd be better off economically if immigrants were not allowed into Canada. This is often the misguided thinking of those on welfare and employment insurance.

In fact, immigrants provide much needed labour by farmers, manufacturing companies and service industries such as restaurants. The initial cost of immigrants is high but the long-term benefit to the Canadian economy is huge as immigrants contribute to the wealth of Canada. The Canadian government has not delivered on the necessary things like housing that increased immigration needs; this lack in social policy should not be blamed on immigrants who

have come to Canada to make a better life for themselves.

Supporting politicians who espouse anti-immigrant opinions will not make life better for those who are unemployed or living on welfare benefits. What they need is a better distribution of wealth and better opportunities to get into the economic mainstream. The profits of corporations, the pays of corporate CEOs, are more likely the cause of poorer benefits for the under privileged. It is well to keep in mind that the knee jerk reaction of blaming immigrants will not advance a better standard of living for many on the lower economic scale.

Carl Hager

Stuporbowl half-life

Our present-day civilization takes pride in blowing things up to the point where they are meaningless, time and energy-wasting nonsense. Take football, for instance. I don't care a thing about it. I can't imagine why anyone would go out of their way to watch big muscle-bound millionaires slam into each other over a ball that isn't even round. That game may be fun for a couple dozen kids to play on a vacant lot, has been inflated to gargantuan proportions, and given significance beyond its actual entertainment/survival value. That's the Stuporbowl.

Now, that grandiose event has been interrupted by a lavish musical-theatrical extravaganza, where music is sacrificed along with athleticism to the idolatry of big-ism. I chose the option of not being there, and not watching it, and not really caring who was playing, who won, who was disrupting the proceedings with a parody

of music. I'm not in the majority with these views, I know. Thousands of people watched the spectacle on site, and millions watched it on tv. Good for them.

Along with the insult to sport and music, this event carried loads of artificial political conflict, because a Spanish-speaking superstar was the headliner. MAGAbots just can't handle that kind of rhythmic expression of life. Too bad, bots - this is everybody's world, and it is diverse in cultural expression. The internet was ablaze for weeks, with opinions flying off in all directions, cancel culture flailing, to no avail. The event happened, many were joyously entertained, and I was safely out of the way of it all. As stated by the band Timbuk 3, "It's the little things that make life such a big deal."

**Robert Wills,
Shawville and Thorne**

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On time and change



As I begin this writing, there are two words that float through my mind – ‘time’ and ‘change’. I reflected upon those words from the perspective of one whose interpretation of time and change has been altered over a lifetime. You and I have weathered many of life’s storms, yet are fortunate to be able to compare our status of where we once were with where we are today.

‘Time is of the essence’ you might hear someone say. Time is so important as we journey on our way. Yet have we not discovered that time is interpreted by others in different ways? When I was younger, its relevance had little meaning. I was seldom ‘pressed for time.’ That aged motto of ‘Do not put off until tomorrow what you can do today,’ became ‘Do not do today what you can put off until tomorrow.’ Alas, procrastination never offered any semblance of success. There was, after all, time to get on with the task at hand.

Today, as I reflect upon that inherent tendency of dragging my heels, I have some regret. Time, however, does change how every one of us sees the world we live in today. The expression, ‘Time goes by so swiftly’ is seldom uttered by those in their younger years. For both the young and the old, time marches at the same pace. That never changes but as we approach the end of our sojourn upon this planet, we are acutely aware that we have little time left to change anything. As we relish our accomplishments, we regret all those foolish directions we took along the way. It’s too late now, and there’s too little we can do, to correct the course.

Now let me express the meaning of time and change in a concrete way. Those of you who are of baby boomer vintage will recall the advent of those first television sets. The screens, about the size of our present small TV’s, showed images in black and white, and were enclosed in a brown box that weighed about a hundred pounds. Yes, but the magic of having ‘moving pictures’ right in our own living room was a moment of ecstasy back then. Do you remember the thrill of watching a meteorologist, Percy Saltzman, explaining the weather forecast while drawing the low and high pressures across a map of Canada? Saltzman was the first weatherman on Canadian TV. He explained in a very clear way the weather that we might expect. This

was in the 50’s and 60’s, when Percy Saltzman drew the weather patterns on the board with chalk. What a delight it was, as he concluded the forecast by tossing the chalk into the air...and catching it. There was always that eager anticipation that he would fail to catch the chalk on the way down. There were no notes, or teleprompter. That was in the early days of television.

Today, of course, there’s a whole channel devoted to weather forecasting. There’s also the weather forecast on regular news programs. Those forecasts are more vivid and creative than in bygone years. Sometimes, I envision them as ‘weather photo ops.’ A smiling personality, describing the weather, exhorts us to get out and enjoy ourselves as skaters dart by in the background. There’s hot chocolate and Beavertails, frivolity and great exercise. Turn to the Weather Channel and there’s an orange alert telling you to stay bundled up if you have to venture outdoors, because the windchill is -31°C. My, how the years have changed since Percy Saltzman tossed that chalk skywards.

Finally, here’s a personal story that I would like to share with you.

Four days a week, I turn left at one of those four-way intersections. At the curb, there is often a diminutive, whiskered gentleman begging for spare change. Every time that I’ve passed that place, that fellow’s happy smile makes my day. This day, as I rolled down the car window, he excitedly exclaimed that February 1st would be his 62nd birthday. Before I could retrieve my wallet to offer him a bill along with the change, the left turn signal flashed. I had no choice but to follow the others. The honking wrath of an impatient driver is quite unpleasant.

As that line-up of rolling living room vehicles moved onwards, a thought crossed my mind. I wondered if anybody would be singing ‘Happy Birthday’ to that chap on February 1st, or would he be standing at the intersection begging a handout that day? Time, like the slow-moving procession of vehicles, moves ever forward. One last glance in the rear-view mirror made me wish that I’d given him that bill in the first place. For I, the giver, am no more worthy or important than the one who asks for a little help. That is something that never, never changes.



One Danish Soldier

by Gwynne DYER

AUTHOR, HISTORIAN & INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST

In 1910 Henry Wilson, the British army officer charged with planning for a possible war with Germany, visited the French officer doing the same job in Paris, Ferdinand Foch. The Anglo-French alliance was still a tentative, semi-secret thing, so Wilson asked Foch “What is the smallest British military force that would be of any practical assistance to you?”

Foch replied: “Send a single British soldier—and we will see to it that he is killed.” He wasn’t being cruel. He just knew that if the German army killed even one British soldier then the whole British empire would be at war with Germany – which was what the French needed to see, given how skittish the British were being about their commitment to the alliance.

The story is only hearsay, because nobody writes this sort of thing down. However, if the United States invades Greenland the unwritten instructions of Maj. Gen. Søren Andersen, the commander of the 160 Danish soldiers who flew into Greenland on Monday and Tuesday, will be very similar: to get at least one of his Danish soldiers killed by American troops.

Ideally, the Americans would do this unprompted, and then the rest of Andersen’s troops could surrender: no need for a massacre. But if necessary the Danes would fire on the American invaders first. As the victims they would be well within their rights, and the whole political point of the exercise would be to get one of their own killed by return fire.

If that happened, then the rest of the NATO countries (except the US, of course) would be obliged to help both legally and in terms of public opinion when Denmark invoked Article 5 of the NATO founding treaty and asked them for military support. The others could still worm out of it if they chose, but only at the expense of publicly betraying their word.

Article 5 (‘one for all, and all for one’) has only been used once before, when the United States was attacked by foreign terrorists in September 2001. Most NATO nations sent troops to Afghanistan to help US forces, and over 1,200 died there. It is trickier when the US itself is the aggressor, of course, but Denmark aims to call on Article 5 and see what happens.

That is not to say that any number of Danish or indeed European Union (EU) troops could repel a full-scale American invasion of Greenland. Donald Trump said at the Davos meeting on Wednesday

that he will not use force to take Greenland, so all these preparations to resist an invasion may be completely unnecessary.

However, Trump changes his mind more often than he changes his socks, and the number of times he has said he will use force on Greenland is far greater than the times he has said he won’t. He also favours surprise attacks, and he often lures his targets into a false sense of safety just before attacking them.

If Trump’s advisers are brave enough to do their jobs, they will also have told him that force will be necessary because a huge majority of Greenlanders don’t want to be Americans. Without force, they would not obey.

So let us assume that a violent American invasion of Greenland remains a strong probability. What is the use of a few people dying to resist it, and then lots of other people suffering hardships because Trump imposes 200% or whatever tariffs on EU countries to punish them for backing Denmark’s resistance, when it’s all inevitable anyway?

It isn’t inevitable. It wouldn’t even be irreversible after it happened. Americans themselves might turn against Trump’s imperial adventures either before or after a conquest of Greenland. And losing Danish and Greenland soldier’s lives, activating Article 5, even waging a guerilla war are ways to keep your right to your homeland on the table.

Canadians might escape the same fate if the conquest of Greenland proves too expensive or just too embarrassing, whereas otherwise they are the next item on Trump’s menu. (Neither Greenlanders nor Canadians in the occupied territories could expect American citizenship, since giving them the vote would swing American political outcomes far to the left).

At the very least, a joint front against Trump on this issue would strengthen the European Union’s internal solidarity against American pressure. It will have to evolve very rapidly to build a credible common identity and both Trump and Putin will try to prevent that, but the Greenland crisis may even help on this count.

A successful resort to NATO’s Article 5 including a fairly peaceful parting with a post-Trump United States (he’s an old 79 and his stream-of-consciousness style is more and more repetitive) could be a start down that road. It’s going to be a rough ride, but the game is not over.

Black History Month in Gatineau: a month of celebrating Black history, culture and leadership



Sophie Demers
LJJ Reporter

The Black Community Council of Gatineau (CCNG) is hosting a wide variety of events this Black History Month. The organization aims to recognize and celebrate all aspects of the Black experience from the history, achievements, struggles, and contributions of the Black community here in Gatineau and in Canada.

This year's theme is "Bringing people together, innovating, and shining together". Information on each event will be posted on the Conseil de la Communauté noire de Gatineau: Facebook page.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **February 13:** From 5 pm to 7:30 pm at the Maison du Citoyen in Salle Gatineau, there will be a conference and panel discussion on Black women's health entitled "Let's talk about uterine fibroids" with Dr. Clémentine Buyoya and Dr. Lionel-Ange Pougui.
- **February 15:** Grande Celebration Day "Noire-Si-Sons" will take place from 11 am to 5 pm in the Maison du Citoyen in Salle Agora.
- **February 16:** Economic Mobilization 2026: Promoting and Structuring Black

Entrepreneurship Gatineau-Ottawa
from 5 pm to 7 pm.

- **February 17:** An event entitled "People from the Black community in the workplace" will take place from 5 pm to 7 pm.
- **February 20:** from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm, Cercle Elles evening: talking about menstrual pain among Black women and girls
- **February 21:** From 11 am to 1 pm, Health and well-being activities including Djamboola fitness and nutrition workshop
- **February 24:** From 5 pm to 8 pm, the

third edition of Black History Month Grand Conference at Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO). Heritage and Leadership: Learning from the Journeys of the Black Community

- **February 26:** From 5 pm to 8 pm, Black History Month Entrepreneurial Meeting: Entrepreneurs and economic partners in dialogue
- **February 28:** From 6 to 9:30 pm, Closing ceremony and recognition of the 24th edition of Black History Month in Gatineau

Car dealers ask Quebec to rethink EV rules after national reset



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

Quebec's network of car dealers is pressing the provincial government for changes to its electric vehicle policy following a major update from the federal government on February 5.

In a significant policy shift, the federal government is moving away from fixed electric vehicle sales quotas and adopting a system based on greenhouse gas emissions limits for new cars and trucks. This approach gives automakers more flexibility in how they achieve climate targets, allowing a broader mix of technologies. The new plan also restores purchase incentives of up to \$5,000 for electric vehicles and commits major funding to expand charging infrastructure nationwide.

Previously, the federal plan required that at least 20 percent of all new vehicles sold in Canada be zero-emission by 2026, increasing to 60 percent by 2030 and 100 percent by 2035. That roadmap has now been replaced by emissions-based performance standards.

Quebec has its own set of electric vehicle requirements. The province's zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) standard mandates that automakers generate credits by selling a minimum number of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles each year. Quebec's targets have also aimed for 100 percent of new vehicle sales to be electric by 2035.

In late 2025, Quebec adjusted this policy by softening the 2035 target. The new goal is 90 percent ZEV sales by that year, and the definition of qualifying vehicles was broadened to include more plug-in hybrids. These changes gave the industry slightly more breathing room but did not fully address concerns from dealers about operational challenges and shifting market demand.

Now, with the federal government stepping back from fixed EV quotas, Quebec's dealers are asking the province to suspend its own rules and carry out a full review. They say the current system no longer aligns with national direction and creates confusion for both the industry and consumers.

The Corporation des concessionnaires automobiles du Québec (CCAQ), which represents nearly 900 dealers across the province, said the federal changes are a step



Sam Yue Chi, President and CEO of the CCAQ, is calling on the Quebec government to suspend and revise its electric vehicle mandate following a federal policy shift that replaces sales quotas with more flexible emissions standards. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SAM YUE CHI'S FACEBOOK PAGE

in the right direction. The organization highlighted the need for flexibility and realistic planning in the transition to cleaner transportation.

"This federal announcement changes its approach, and that's a good thing," said Ian P. Sam Yue Chi, President and CEO of the CCAQ. "It focuses on flexibility, encourages diversity of supply, and supports demand with incentives and infrastructure. It's an important signal for the industry."

"The patience of dealers has its limits when uncertainty becomes structural," he added. "Now, it is time for the Government of Quebec to move. We are calling for the immediate suspension of the Quebec ZEV standard and its complete revision. The government must take structural action, a realistic trajectory, and a framework that takes into account Quebecers' ability to adopt this technology. An ambitious transition is possible, but it must be executable."s transition is possible, but it must be executable," he said.

Outaouais patients left waiting

Continued from pge 2

ASO points to the effects of this underfunding on everyday people. Wait times in emergency rooms are longer than elsewhere in Quebec. Patients in Outaouais face a higher risk of dying from surgical complications. Life expectancy is lower in most of the region's counties. In some cases, women have had to leave the region just to give birth. More and more people are also paying out of pocket for surgeries or home care, something that goes against the promise of public health care.

At the meeting, ASO called on the government to commit to a real recovery plan. They are asking for a three-year reinvestment, starting with 150 million dollars this year and rising to more than 400 million dollars by 2028. They also want local voices to be part of the planning. Their proposals include hiring more staff, improving coordination between hospitals and

clinics, and creating services tailored to the realities of a region where many residents live far from major centres.

ASO also raised concerns about how funding is currently awarded. Right now, money is tied to how well a region performs and how many services it delivers. But Outaouais, they argue, does not have enough resources to compete with larger or better-equipped regions. That means it gets less money because it already has less to work with, a cycle that makes it even harder to catch up. ASO believes this approach directly contradicts the fairness promised in the LGSSSS law.

Santé Québec leaders said they are open to more conversations. But ASO says the region has had enough of empty talk. They want concrete action that finally puts Outaouais on equal footing with the rest of the province.

Home support plan for seniors raises both hope and concern



Quebec's new National Home Support Policy has been met with cautious support from advocacy groups who welcome its goals but warn that without sufficient funding, workforce investment, and regional equity, the promised shift toward aging at home may fall short. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE FADOQ FACEBOOK PAGE



Tashi Farmilo
LJ Reporter

As Quebec launches its National Home Support Policy, "Mieux chez soi," groups across the province are offering cautious support, lauding the government's recognition of aging in place as a right while underscoring that its success depends on full and fair implementation.

The policy, announced in January by Health Minister Sonia Bélanger, pledges more than \$107 million to reinforce home support services. It designates CLSCs as the central gateway to home care, expands eligibility for financial support including a Home Autonomy Allowance for caregivers, and seeks to modernize service delivery through public, private, and social economy partners. Framed as a major shift in care philosophy, the policy aims to ensure that older adults and people experiencing loss of autonomy can remain in their homes as long as possible.

FADOQ, Quebec's largest seniors' advocacy network, welcomed the framework, noting it places users and caregivers at the centre of the system. "FADOQ is pleased to see CLSCs fully assume their role as local services," said Yves Bouchard, president of the organization. "It is crucial to simplify the user journey for accessing home care and support services and to assist them in navigating the system more effectively."

But in the Outaouais, advocacy groups say the policy's success will be limited unless it is backed by structural reforms. Action Santé Outaouais and AQDR Outaouais warned that the region continues to suffer from chronic underfunding, estimated at \$350 million annually, and has one of the lowest rates of publicly funded home support hours in the province. Many residents rely on private providers or older mechanisms like the employment-services voucher system to fill the gap.

They also raised concerns that users who choose self-managed home support must still act as employers to receive services, often navigating complex administrative and legal responsibilities on their own. Without better support for caregivers and improved

training for service workers, they argue, the burden will remain unfairly placed on families.

The organizations pointed to the looming shortage in long-term care, with nearly 400 beds currently missing and up to 1,500 projected to be lacking by 2040, as a warning signal. In their view, home support and institutional care are closely linked, and failure to invest in one undermines the other.

FADOQ emphasized that expanding services will require far more than a policy document. The group is calling for annual home support funding to double from \$3 billion to \$6 billion to meet rising demand, which is expected to grow

sharply as those aged 65 and older approach one-quarter of the population by 2031. It also urged better public communication, noting that many older adults still struggle to understand or access available services.

While the policy includes promising pilot projects and new financial tools, advocates agree that success will require political will, staffing, and regional equity. As Bouchard put it, "FADOQ will closely monitor the implementation of this policy to ensure it results concretely in the care of all individuals awaiting their first home support service, as well as an increase in the number of service hours provided per provider."

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Jacobs-Webb revient sur la scène paralympique avec les yeux sur l'or



Tashi Farmilo

Anton Jacobs-Webb portera à nouveau la feuille d'érable. L'attaquant paralympique de 25 ans a été nommé dans l'équipe nationale du Canada pour les Jeux paralympiques d'hiver 2026 à Milan-Cortina, ont confirmé Hockey Canada et le Comité paralympique canadien le 20 janvier.

Jacobs-Webb, qui a fait ses débuts paralympiques à Pékin 2022, fait partie des 10 joueurs de retour issus de l'équipe médaillée d'argent. L'équipe de 17 athlètes, sélectionnée par l'entraîneur-chef Boris Rybalka et son personnel à l'issue d'un processus d'évaluation intensif, visera à mettre fin à une disette de 20 ans sans médailles d'or paralympiques.

Né en Nouvelle-Écosse et élevé à Gatineau dès l'âge de sept ans, Jacobs-Webb a découvert le hockey para-glisse après avoir découvert ce sport à 12 ans. N'ayant



Anton Jacobs-Webb de Gatineau a été nommé dans l'équipe canadienne de para-hockey sur glace pour les Jeux paralympiques d'hiver 2026, revenant pour un deuxième match avec une médaille d'or en vue après une entrée spectaculaire à Pékin et une victoire au championnat du monde en 2024. (TF)

PHOTO : AVEC COURTOISIE

pas d'équipe locale à Gatineau à ce moment-là, il s'est entraîné et a concouru avec Sledge Hockey of Eastern Ontario jusqu'à ce qu'il décroche une place dans l'équipe nationale senior du Canada à 19 ans. Depuis, il a participé à plusieurs championnats du monde, dont une médaille d'or en 2024, la première du Canada depuis 2017.

Maintenant en préparation pour ses deuxièmes Jeux paralympiques, Jacobs-Webb affirme s'appuyer sur les leçons de Pékin pour aborder Milan avec plus d'attention. « Ce sera mes deuxièmes Jeux, je sais à quoi m'attendre à Milan », a-t-il dit. « Toute cette nouveauté m'avait fait emporter par l'excitation à Pékin. Cette fois, je peux me préparer et faire tout ce que je peux pour être à mon meilleur. »

Le Canada est regroupé avec la Slovaquie, le Japon et la Tchèque au tour préliminaire. La meilleure équipe de chaque groupe accède directement aux demi-finales, les autres devant un parcours en quart de finale. Avec des foules attendues en pleine intensité après les restrictions de 2022, Jacobs-Webb attend particulièrement avec impatience l'ambiance.

« À Beijing, c'était en pleine pandémie, donc il n'y avait pas de fans dans l'aréna », a-t-il dit. « Je suis excité de jouer devant ma famille et les fans canadiens à Milan. »

Jacobs-Webb returns to paralympic stage with eyes on gold



Tashi Farmilo
LJI Reporter

Anton Jacobs-Webb will wear the maple leaf once again. The 25-year-old para ice hockey forward has been named to Canada's national team for the 2026 Winter Paralympic Games in Milan-Cortina, Hockey Canada and the Canadian Paralympic Committee confirmed on January 20.

Jacobs-Webb, who made his Paralympic debut at Beijing 2022, is one of 10 returning players from the silver-medal-winning squad. The team of 17 athletes, selected by head coach Boris Rybalka and staff following an intensive evaluation process, will aim to end a 20-year Paralympic gold medal drought.

Born in Nova Scotia and raised in Gatineau from the age of seven, Jacobs-Webb found his way into para ice hockey after discovering the sport at 12. With no local team in Gatineau at the time, he trained and competed with Sledge Hockey of Eastern Ontario until earning a spot on Canada's senior national team at 19. Since then, he's played in multiple world championships, including a gold medal win in 2024, Canada's first since 2017.

Now preparing for his second Paralympics, Jacobs-Webb says he's drawing on the lessons of Beijing to approach Milan with greater focus. "This will be my second Games, I know what to expect in Milan," he said. "All the novelty had made me get carried away with the excitement in Beijing. This time, I can prepare and do everything I can to be at my best."

Canada is grouped with Slovakia, Japan, and Czechia in the preliminary round. The top team from each group advances directly to the semifinals, with others facing a quarterfinal route. With crowds expected in full force after the restrictions of 2022, Jacobs-Webb is especially looking forward to the atmosphere.

"In Beijing, it was in the middle of the pandemic, so there were no fans in the arena," he said. "I'm excited to play in front of my family and Canadian fans in Milan."

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CDR and social enterprise for an enlightened economy



Tashi Farmilo
LJJ Reporter

A growing number of people across Quebec are exploring new ways to build businesses that do more than just make money. These are called social enterprises, and they're changing how we think about the economy, especially here in the Outaouais.

To help residents learn more, the Outaouais-Laurentides Regional Development Cooperative (CDR) hosted a free online session on February 2, called ABC de l'économie sociale. The event introduced the core ideas behind social enterprises and gave attendees a chance to ask questions, share ideas, and learn how to get involved in this growing movement.

A social enterprise is a business built around a social mission. It could be a cooperative daycare, a community-run grocery store, a housing initiative, or a non-profit cultural centre. What these enterprises have in common is that they sell goods or services like any business, but they reinvest their profits into their mission instead of paying private shareholders. They are governed democratically, managed transparently, and designed to respond to real needs in their



Jean-Sébastien Caron de Montigny, a Development Advisor at CDR, helped lead a recent session exploring how social enterprises, rooted in democratic values and community ownership, are reshaping Quebec's economy by offering residents practical tools to build businesses that serve the common good. (TF)

PHOTO: SCREENSHOT OF THE ZOOM SESSION CALLED ABC DE L'ÉCONOMIE SOCIALE

communities.

Quebec has a unique relationship with this model. It officially recognized the social economy as a distinct sector in 2013 through the Loi sur l'économie sociale, which acknowledges the importance of solidarity, participation, and

sustainability in economic life. The province also has a long history of cooperatives, mutual aid groups, and community-led initiatives that have helped shape this approach.

Jean-Sébastien Caron de Montigny, a Development Advisor at CDR, led the session from the Outaouais. He explained how social enterprises in Quebec are structured, what legal forms they can take such as non-profits (OBNLs) and cooperatives (COOPs), and how their governance models ensure accountability to their members and communities. He emphasized that these are independent organizations that generate income and operate efficiently, but always with a social purpose at the centre.

Participants at the session included a wide mix of residents: some looking to launch co-op cafés or education centres, others exploring arts-based or cultural initiatives, and several new board members wanting to better understand their roles. The discussion focused on how to get started, how to manage responsibilities, and how to align values with practice. The session reinforced that building a social enterprise is not only possible, it's already happening across the region.

According to the Quebec government's 2022 statistical report on the social economy, there are more than 11,200 social economy organizations across the province employing over 220,000 people. These enterprises represent more than 5 percent of all jobs in Quebec. In the Outaouais region, 460 such businesses support over 6,700

jobs and generate approximately \$422 million in annual revenue.

But the impact of social enterprises goes far beyond numbers. As outlined in a legal white paper by Langlois Lawyers, social enterprises represent a distinct legal model, one that merges entrepreneurial drive with a clearly defined social mission. Unlike traditional businesses, which are accountable primarily to shareholders, social enterprises are designed to prioritize collective interests, public benefit, and participatory governance.

This model supports a long-term vision of sustainability over short-term profit. The white paper emphasizes that social enterprises contribute to legal and economic pluralism by filling gaps left by public and private sectors. Their hybrid structure gives them flexibility to innovate, while their legal frameworks protect against mission drift. In doing so, they help redefine what responsible economic activity looks like.

The CDR continues to support residents across the Outaouais with services that include incorporation assistance, governance training, business planning, and community outreach. Upcoming sessions this spring will cover everything from the legal duties of board members to early-stage ideation and funding strategies like L'Ampli 101. To take part in building a fairer, more sustainable economy, social enterprises offer both a model and a movement. More information and event registration is available at cdrol.coop.

Gatineau withdraws poster amid accusations of racial stereotyping



Sophie Demers
LJJ Reporter

A City of Gatineau poster aimed at reducing disrespectful treatment of city workers was removed from all city establishments due to racial stereotyping. The image depicted a Black woman wearing a lizard mask, seemingly yelling at a young white male. This is one of five similar posters.

The first person to contact the city with concerns about the poster was Papa Ladjiké Diouf, a psychotherapist and director of clinical services at the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition. Diouf first saw the photo at the Donalda-Charron Library in the plateau. The Gatineau resident told other media outlets that he was disturbed by the poster and wanted to do something about it.

The Conseil de la Communauté noire de Gatineau released a statement denouncing the poster, calling it disturbing and stigmatizing. "Such a portrayal conveys deeply disturbing symbolism," the statement read, "suggesting an implicit link between the black woman depicted and bestial behaviour. This representative contributed to perpetuating degrading racialized stereotypes, historically used to dehumanize black people and legitimize their marginalization. The CCNG reiterates that public spaces and, more specifically, institutional communications campaigns must convey respectful, inclusive and

responsible messages."

The City's communication department provided a statement noting that the campaign was to combat a marked increase in rude and aggressive behavior from citizens in recent years. They confirmed that the poster was created by their internal teams and included five posters depicting "different situations" that were staged to represent the variety of circumstances experienced daily. Each scenario is inspired by real situations reported by employees and shows the escalation and overreaction to often mundane situations."

Regarding the image in question, Gatineau's communications team said, "Although the image is in no way intended to convey a discriminatory message, the City recognizes that, taken in isolation, it may nevertheless be open to interpretation and give rise to perceptions contrary to the values of inclusion and respect upheld by the Administration. In the interests of responsibility, consistency, and preventing any negative interpretations, it was deemed preferable to remove this image."

This is not the first time Gatineau has faced backlash for material distributed to the public. Residents may remember the 2011 guide for new immigrants that aimed to educate new citizens on local values. The guide was highly criticized for including discussions of cooking smelly foods, showing up to appointments on time, not bribing officials and how to properly treat your children.

Investment in snowmobile trails to boost safety and support local economy

Continued from page 3

The program is intended to sustain a snowmobile network that plays a central role in Quebec's winter economy. Snowmobiling generates over \$2 billion in annual economic benefits for the province, with much of that activity concentrated in small towns and rural communities where trails connect directly to restaurants, gas stations, and lodging.

Government officials emphasized that the initiative is as much about safety as it is about tourism. By supporting grooming, signage, and training, the program aims to reduce accidents on a network that sees thousands of riders each winter.

"The safety of snowmobilers is paramount, and I am proud of our government's support for these indispensable volunteers," said Jonatan Julien, Quebec's minister of transport and sustainable mobility. He added that the funding would help ensure that riders can enjoy the trails under better and safer conditions.

The PACM is divided into two streams: one supporting direct trail maintenance and the other funding province-level safety and



The Quebec government is investing nearly \$266,000 in Outaouais snowmobile clubs to support trail maintenance, improve rider safety, and strengthen winter tourism as part of a provincewide \$8.2 million initiative for the 2025-26 season. (TF)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE FCMQ FACEBOOK PAGE

coordination. The current program remains in effect through March 2027, ensuring support over multiple seasons.

Mathieu Lacombe, the minister responsible for Outaouais, called the investment essential to the area's winter vitality. "Our winter is more dynamic because of these clubs, which are an important draw for local riders and tourists alike," he said. "By ensuring they can keep operating, we are strengthening the regional economy."

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the food truck. Need equipment? Skate and helmet rentals are available with the Accès Gatineau+ card.

VALENTINE'S WORKSHOP SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14 from 11 am to 4 pm. Galeries Aylmer, in collaboration with École des beaux-arts Louart, invites you to a family Valentine's Day card design activity. Materials provided, artist on site, and you take your creation home! 181 Rue Principale, Gatineau, QC.

WE ARE THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THE VERY FIRST SEEDY SATURDAY AYLMEER EVENT COMING TO OUR COMMUNITY! 100% free seed swap! Saturday, February 28, 2026, from 10 am to 3 pm. Location: Robert-Middlemiss Pavilion, 1 rue Principale, Gatineau (Aylmer sector). The event is being piloted together with Partenaires du Secteur Aylmer, Pollinate / Polliniser Aylmer and Localeaf, with support from Seeds of Diversity Canada. The best part? Everything is absolutely FREE. What to Expect: Free Seeds!! Free Workshops!! Community links!! Got seeds? Bring them!! More details here: <https://localeaf.ca/seedy-saturday-aylmer/> OR shoot us an email at seedysaturdayaylmer@gmail.com.

EXCESSIVE CHARGES IMPOSED ON NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES BY THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT

Good intentions.

Serious

side

effects.

Publishers support sustainability. But dramatic and unsustainable increases in recycling costs for newspapers and magazines risk weakening the local newsrooms Quebec communities rely on every day. The consequences for local media warrant a second look.



POUR KATHINE

**EXCESSIVE CHARGES IMPOSED ON NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES
BY THE GOVERNMENT**

Progress shouldn't come at the expense of journalism.

Publishers are committed to recycling. But the dramatic and unsustainable scale of proposed new fees on newspapers and magazines raises concerns about the future viability of Quebec's news ecosystem and the communities that depend on it.

