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# West Quebec Post

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Death Rattle  
of a Superpower?

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the Road

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## Gatineau joins global push to make urban rivers swimmable



Participants in the 1.5 km Riverkeeper Open Water Swim celebrate as they enter the Ottawa River from Parc des Cèdres on August 13, 2023. (AR)



Tashi Farmilo  
LJ Reporter

Gatineau will co-host the Swimmable Cities Summit 2027 on August 27 next year, bringing hundreds of international water and urban planning leaders to the banks of the Ottawa River to accelerate global investment in clean, swimmable urban waterways. The city was named alongside Ottawa and the National Capital Commission at the World Urban Forum in Baku, Azerbaijan on May 19, as part of a fast-growing movement that argues restoring rivers to public life is one of the most powerful tools a city has against climate change, urban heat and public health decline.

For Gatineau, a city whose identity is inseparable from the river at its edge, the hosting role carries particular weight. "The Ottawa River lies at the heart of our identity, our communities and our quality of life," said Mayor Maude Marquis-Bissonnette. "This summit is an opportunity to deepen

our collaboration, advance the protection of our waterways, and shape more resilient, vibrant and accessible waterfront spaces for future generations."

The case for doing so goes well beyond recreation. Swimmable rivers cool cities during heat waves, absorb storm surges and reduce pressure on public health systems. UN-Habitat Executive Director Anacláudia Rossbach, who announced the 2027 host city in Baku, put it directly: "When a river is swimmable, it tells you the sewage works, the pollution is controlled and the ecology is being restored," she said. "Swimmable waterways are neighbourhood infrastructure. They cool our cities, restore nature, carry culture, and give every person, regardless of income, a place to belong."

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Laura Reinsborough, CEO Riverkeeper, stands with Elizabeth Lacroix, Water Quality Assistant, to her right and Hannah Delion, River School Assistant, to her left, at this year's Riverkeeper Open Water Swim on August 13, 2023. "As an organization, we exist to protect and promote the ecological health of the Ottawa River watershed. The Riverkeeper Open Water Swim is an extension of this, and we are so excited that this year we were able to return to an interprovincial race. (In 2020, COVID-19 restrictions had limited the swim to the Ontario side.) It cannot be stressed enough how important it is that decision makers from both sides work collaboratively toward the best interests of this shared border so that it remains drinkable, fishable and swimmable," said Reinsborough. (AR)

PHOTOS: ALANA REPSTOCK

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# Child sexual exploitation: 23 men arrested and 4 million files seized

The West Quebec Post Team

A large-scale police operation conducted in several regions of Quebec between May 11 and 14, 2026—including Outaouais—led this week to the arrest of 23 men suspected of being involved in child pornography cases. Of the 23 men arrested, the Gatineau Police Service (SPVG) confirmed to the Post that two men from Gatineau were also arrested: Claude Léveillé, 48, of Gatineau, and François Paul, 63, of Gatineau.

The SPVG told the Post that as part of the joint operation with the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) to combat the sexual exploitation of children online, SPVG investigators conducted two searches on May 14, 2026, at around 4 am, at a residence in the Bellevue area and at a residence in the Aylmer area of Gatineau. During these operations, SPVG investigators arrested Claude Léveillé and François Paul, who were transported to the Gatineau police station in the Hull area to be interviewed by investigators. Both men appeared in court on May 14, and face charges related to the possession of child pornography.

## CHARGES

According to a press release from the Sûreté du Québec, the suspects, aged 26 to 73, all face charges related to the possession, distribution, and access to child

sexual abuse and exploitation material.

Authorities conducted 25 searches and seized more than four million computer files. So far, four victims have been identified, including two minors. More than 160 police officers from six police forces, including the Gatineau Police Service, participated in this coordinated crackdown between May 11 and 14, 2026.

The SQ also noted that the suspects were not necessarily part of an organized network. The investigations were initiated

based on various sources, including reports from citizens, tips from social media, and information provided by electronic service providers.

According to the SQ, other investigations are still ongoing, and further arrests may occur in the coming weeks.

The SQ also urges the public to report any instances of online sexual exploitation of minors to the following address: [www.cyberaide.ca](http://www.cyberaide.ca)

Gatineau Police remind the public to

contact them if you have information about a crime at the following number: 819-243-4636, option 5.

[this only on the website version:::] It also recommends this link for advice on prevention and protection against sexual exploitation:

[https://www.gatineau.ca/portail/default.aspx?p=police/jeunes\\_securete\\_adultes\\_informes/crimes\\_emergents\\_conseils/auto\\_exploitation\\_sexuelle&ref=sous-navigation](https://www.gatineau.ca/portail/default.aspx?p=police/jeunes_securete_adultes_informes/crimes_emergents_conseils/auto_exploitation_sexuelle&ref=sous-navigation)

## Gatineau joins global push to make urban rivers swimmable

*Continued from page 1*

Gatineau has been working toward that standard for years. The city has been pursuing Blue Flag certification, an internationally recognized environmental standard for beaches, and the National Capital Commission has been investing in waterfront access on both sides of the river, including a new universally accessible dock at Dow's Lake and a park near the Kruger's Gatineau Complex expected to open later this year.

Swim Drink Fish Canada, the organization founded by waterway advocate and lawyer Mark Mattson, will serve as the Canadian partner for the summit. Registration opens on World Rivers Day, September 27, 2026.

Former federal environment minister Catherine McKenna, now a Swimmable Cities Ambassador, said the summit will bring political leaders, investors and experts from around the world to a region that already knows what is at stake. "Everyone knows I love swimming," she said, "but swimmable cities are about more than recreation. They are about equitable access to blue public spaces, improving people's quality of life, and creating thriving waterfronts."



Gatineau Mayor Maude Marquis-Bissonnette says the Ottawa River is at the heart of the city's identity as Gatineau and Ottawa announce they will co-host the 2027 Swimmable Cities Summit, joining a global movement to restore urban waterways to safe, swimmable public spaces. (TF)

PHOTO: TASHI FARMILLO



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# Quebec children are spending less time outside, Fondation Philanthropie Outaouais is trying to change that



**Tashi Farmilo**  
LJJ Reporter

Researchers say a generation of Canadian children is losing the simple freedom to play. Fondation Philanthropie Outaouais (FPO) announced this week that it will distribute \$473,000 in grants to eight Outaouais organizations to help give it back.

The numbers from Quebec alone are striking. According to a 2025 report from the Institut de la statistique du Québec, only one in five children and youth in the province is considered active in their free time. Outdoor play collapses in the colder months: while two in three toddlers play outside daily during a typical spring or summer week, that figure falls to roughly one in five once fall and winter arrive. Meanwhile, screen time is climbing. Nearly 59 per cent of toddlers aged two and a half watch shows, videos, or films at least once a day, up sharply from 39 per cent just a year earlier. The gap between income groups is particularly stark: toddlers in low-income families are nearly three times as likely to log more than two hours of daily screen time on weekdays as their more affluent peers.

The Canadian Paediatric Society made the stakes plain in a landmark 2024 position statement calling on physicians, families, and policymakers to fundamentally rethink how children spend their time. Free play, it said, is essential to children's physical, mental, and social development, and the opportunity for it has been shrinking for years. Its lead author,



**Fondation Philanthropie Outaouais has distributed \$473,000 to eight local organizations as part of the Free Play Fund, a national effort to reverse a documented decline in outdoor play among Canadian children. (TF)**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF CANADA FACEBOOK PAGE

Dr. Émilie Beaulieu, a Quebec City paediatrician, was direct: children should be kept as safe as necessary during play, not as safe as possible. Over-caution, she argued, had become its own kind of harm.

The same statement cited evidence linking high screen time

in early childhood to behavioural difficulties, speech delays, weakened executive function, and poorer academic outcomes. The Free Play Fund is a direct response to that reality. Operating through 22 community foundations across the country, it invests in projects that help children spend less time on screens and more time outside, moving, imagining, and connecting with one another. Funded projects can take nearly any shape, from nature-based programming and land-based learning rooted in Indigenous knowledge to the redesign of underused community spaces. The only fixed requirement is that children lead.

The eight recipients selected for Phase 1 were chosen to reflect the full geography of the Outaouais rather than concentrate resources in any single area. In Gatineau, grants will go to the Centre d'animation familiale de l'Outaouais, La Maison de l'Amitié de Hull, and Les Partenaires du Secteur Aylmer. CPE La Bottine de Maniwaki will receive support in the MRC de La Vallée-de-la-Gatineau. The Municipality of Campbell's Bay will carry the initiative into the MRC de Pontiac, while Carrefour familial Papineau represents the MRC de Papineau. Both the Municipality of Chelsea and Chelsea Cooperative Nursery School will serve the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais.

"FPO considers that a balanced representation of Outaouais territories is essential for ensuring a strong and inclusive regional impact," said Rock Poulin, the foundation's president. "The organizations selected reflect that."

## Violence in schools: union denounces the situation



**Drazen Seslija**

At a press conference on May 11 at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, the Union of School Support Staff at the Cœur-Des-Vallées School Board (SPSSCV-CSN) denounced the extreme violence its employees were experiencing. "The calls we are receiving demonstrate that there is extreme violence in our schools," said Jan-Mark Dufour, president of the Union.

To illustrate the experiences of support staff, including student supervisors, special education staff, and daycare workers, Dufour mentioned highly problematic behaviors such as foul language, death threats, physical blows, bites, attacks with objects of all kinds, unbearable shouting, and even sexual acts, including touching.

### SURVEY RESULTS

Dufour also highlighted the results of the most recent survey conducted by the Federation of Public Service Employees (FEESP-CSN), which aims to determine the presence of psychosocial risks, the different forms of workplace violence, and the signs and indicators of mental health. The data collected is striking and problematic. Of the approximately 260 SPSSCV-CSN members who responded to the survey, more

than half reported having been victims of physical violence or threats of physical violence. "About 40% of our members responded to the survey," said Dufour.

This violence faced by employees is even pushing some of them to consider leaving their jobs, with 27% of survey respondents stating they are thinking about quit-

ting, according to the union. Annie Charland, president of the FEESP's school support sector, is now calling on the government, particularly the Ministry of Education, "to act quickly and implement the workplace prevention mechanisms outlined in Bill 101 for the entire education sector."

## More victims of Gatineau Archdiocese sought: class action lawsuit underway



**Drazen Seslija**

On March 27, 2026, the law firms Bellemare Avocats and Lambert Avocats filed an application for authorization to institute a class action lawsuit against the Archdioceses of Gatineau and Ottawa-Cornwall in a case of sexual assaults committed against minors, the alleged acts of which reportedly occurred approximately 50 years ago by members of the Catholic Church, among others.

Contacted by the *West Quebec Post*, lawyer Marc Bellemare confirmed that the application for authorization to institute a class action lawsuit filed by Bellemare Avocats and Lambert Avocats against the Archdioceses of Gatineau and Ottawa-Cornwall is still awaiting a decision from the

Superior Court of Quebec.

The application seeks financial compensation for the victims. Bellemare maintains that "compensation can range from \$50,000 to \$250,000 depending on the severity of the acts committed against the victims." The application states that, if accepted, the class action would cover "all persons who have been sexually assaulted by a member of the clergy, an employee or volunteer, lay or religious, under the authority of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Gatineau and/or the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Ottawa." When asked about the number of victims who have contacted him so far, Bellemare indicated that about 50 had. He also added that he encourages victims of abuse to contact him at any time at 418-681-1227 or by filling out the form available on the organization's website, <https://bellemareavocats.ca/>, while specifying that the information would be completely confidential.

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# There are many forms of tourism



FRED Ryan

Tourism seems to be everyone's solution to our rural, isolated economies across the Outaouais. However, we've been around long enough to have seen that "tourism" just doesn't have the steam and pull to create the jobs and investment opportunities that people expect and need. And when we say the rural areas have problems, we largely mean infrastructure problems. But "infrastructure" has a huge meaning, running from asphalt and waste treatment to actual citizen attitudes and habits (citizenship infrastructure!).

One promising "infrastructure" initiative -- for tourism -- has been to set up tours to out-of-the-way localities with some relatively rare feature, or to link new entrepreneurs who offer new

adventures or experiences. Very quickly a region can gain a name for, say, white water rafting -- just as have we and our white-water neighbours have done -- by linking their promotion and educational offerings. None of this is as simple as it seems, as those who are already well into this process would no doubt confirm. . . white-water infrastructure, and it's working for them.

To go further afield, the Japanese caught a lot of world attention not only by their concept of "forest bathing" but by their very well-organized linking of the various facilities used in forest bathing. A forest is no small thing to keep going. . . and that's one of its attractions. Each bather needs a lot of room to "bathe". The nature of forest bathing is as complex and as varied as is any experience in the forest -- and it needs its infrastructure. From furnished yurts to guide services, and all the rest.

Wouldn't it help immensely if we could offer an even newer attraction than forest bathing, but in the same environmentalist activity. "Silence Bathing" is one, a perfect example. By offering clients enough time immersed in a silence found only in forests we can offer to reach inside and calm our inner selves; our constant companion slowly quiets all its "roof-brain chatter".

"Well," one might reply, "this sounds very pleasant but what good does it actually do us?"

What good it does, many people believe, is it soaks right into our daily lives. If "we are what we eat" -- and what we listen to, what we watch, what we read or study, why not what we wish for, who we love, and what we dream at night? This is infrastructure! Take away the "noise" of modern life and we remove much of the stress-centres or stress concentrations in our lives. And

folks can find this forest-like experience, all of it well organized, in West Quebec.

We would miss something if we insisted that silence has no influence on our personalities and on our personal qualities, even on our health and our ability to enjoy life. It is difficult to point to exactly where and how "silence" affects us, but we mustn't conclude that silence is too much like the wind, its effects and influences too unquantifiable for straight talking.

Try it, silence bathing. In a woods, notice all that you see and hear -- and say -- in this forested environment of silence. Sort of Simon & Garfunkel ... they were singing about infrastructure, weren't they?

We should be, the whole of West Quebec, we could have the infrastructure ready for Silence Bathing -- one of the first regions to offer this unusual and healthy forms of tourism.

## LETTERS

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

### Critique of CREDDO's Brief on Bill S-229

We have prepared the Gatineau Park Protection Committee's critique concerning CREDDO's brief on Bill S-229.

In our view, the CREDDO submission illustrates a profound contradiction at the heart of the current debate surrounding Gatineau Park. While the brief speaks extensively about ecological integrity, biodiversity loss, fragmentation and climate resilience, it ultimately advances a governance philosophy rooted in permanent occupation, fragmented authority and "shared coexistence" with the very development pressures that have steadily eroded the park's ecological and territorial coherence for decades.

The contradiction is particularly striking because the brief's own ecological analysis undermines the model it seeks to defend. A document that repeatedly warns about fragmentation, ecological discontinuity and urban pressure nonetheless concludes that the solution lies in normalizing permanent occupation and diffused governance inside a protected area.

The critique also examines CREDDO's

invocation of France's regional natural park model, which we believe is highly misleading in the context of Gatineau Park. French regional natural parks were never designed as conservation-first protected areas comparable to national parks. They are inhabited planning territories intended to accommodate permanent settlement, economic activity and negotiated coexistence with development pressures.

More broadly, the analysis argues that the CREDDO approach reflects a significant retreat from longstanding conservation-law principles emphasizing ecological primacy, territorial coherence and limits on incompatible land uses in protected areas.

We respectfully submit this critique for the Committee's consideration as part of its ongoing study of Bill S-229. For readers who wish to read the critique, please contact us through the website: [www.gatineauparc.ca](http://www.gatineauparc.ca)

**Jean-Paul Murray**  
Secretary  
Gatineau Park Protection  
Committee

**CORRECTION NOTICE:** In Victor Laurin's column dated May 8, 2026, concerning Astronaut Steven MacLean and his second-grade teacher Nancy MacGregor, this photo was inadvertently left out. -- The Editor



Nancy MacGregor with Canadian astronaut Steven MacLean at the inauguration of a school named in his honour. Nancy was Steven's grade 2 teacher. A strong supporter of science literacy and child education, he has a Doctorate in Physics from York University, Toronto. Dr. MacLean was Chief Astronaut of the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) and President of the CSA from 2008-2013.

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## A Fork in the Road



Since what is written here is personal, I realize that it may alienate the reader from the outset. This isn't my favourite type of story to relate; I ask myself, will it appeal to the 'average' person? However, since there is no such 'average' person in existence, will those who read it see some relevance in what is written? Having concluded that it would, I put pen to paper.

During my formative years, I never owned a tricycle. I did, however, have a four-wheeler, a wagon, on which I could pull, or be pulled along by another. My preference was to kneel with one leg on that wagon to propel myself forward with the free foot. Thus, that wagon, in my childhood mind, became a car. Steering accurately became problematic, however. The metal handle had to be kept in the desired direction, which required concentration and effort. I was limited in both.

One sunny day, while my car-wagon was speeding down the sidewalk, the front wheels turned and I tumbled onto the curbside. Apart from a scraped knee and a small chunk of flesh gouged from the back of my hand from the metal handle, I survived. Lesson learned? Some iodine and bandages were applied to the wounds by my mother with a cautionary: "You have to be more careful, or it will happen again." Out the door I ran, boarded my car-wagon and down that same sidewalk I raced. One might say 'more chutzpah than brains.'

As my life unfolded, I must admit that I have sped down many roads in absent-minded stupor. Many of those roads were in the wrong direction. Many were laden with risks. Many were simply dead ends. Poor decisions, numerous follies and mistake after mistake propelled me forward. The sorrow of repentance was the inevitable result. You can never change the past. You can only learn to balance the regret with some of the right

choices that you've made. There are many forks in the road of life.

What prompted this writing was one of those visits to my chiropractor, Dr. Kelly Norman, who adjusts my physique to keep me upright and mobile. I mentioned to her that my daughters were presenting me with a trike, a three-wheeler with a large rear basket and adjustable speeds, for my upcoming eighty-fifth birthday. That is something that I've been contemplating for some time. What better exercise to shop for groceries or simply pedal down a safe road or pathway? If I use what brains I still possess, it will be a safe option to getting into the behemoth of a car to get to a destination.

Dr. Norman smilingly replied that it was 'another fork-in-the-road.' Her words were the spark that ignited the words you have now read. Hopefully, you will understand that there is no such entity as an 'average' person. Surely, you'll be able to relate to some of your own fork-in-the-road experiences.

Finally, a little poem to conclude:

### FORKS IN THE ROAD

We can't change what's gone before us  
But we can alter our present situation

We can plan for what lies ahead of us  
Yet fate often trumps our ambition.

There are many forks on life's highway  
There are choices we make as we go  
The right ones we make are our laurels  
The wrong ones the regrets that we sow.

We toss and turn in our slumber  
As a boat lost on dark stormy sea  
With no light to guide us to harbour  
Will the dark depths be our destiny?

## Death Rattle of a Superpower?



by *Gwynne DYER*

AUTHOR, HISTORIAN & INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it because, if they don't, the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran." Familiarly genocidal threats from Donald Trump, with the trademark mobster-style "NO MORE MR NICE GUY" at the end. Amazing how fast you get used to it.

There may be another ceasefire by the time you read this, or 92 million Iranians may be learning to live with no electricity, little food and no water. (In other rants he threatens Iran's desalination plants and its bridges, crucial for getting food to the cities.) In either case, the regime's leaders, all survivors of his assassination attempts, remain unyielding.

Trump regularly has "good conversations" with the civilian and Islamic Revolutionary Guard leaders, many of them entirely imaginary. But just beneath the surface he's as frantic as a trapped rat, unable to understand why the Iranians won't give in although "they have no cards". (Wrong: they have weapons, patience, faith and, above all, favourable geography.)

He can't admit even to himself that Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu tricked him into this doomed enterprise, because that would be to admit he has been fooled. John Kennedy took the blame for the Bay of Pigs disaster and walked away. Trump cannot do either of those things, so he keeps reinforcing failure.

If this were just a personal and political disaster for Donald Trump and his associates, few people outside the United States would see it as a tragedy, and neither would about half of the American population. However, if it also involves a permanent decline in US power in the world, most Americans and many people elsewhere would see it as an unwelcome change.

The key word here is 'permanent'. In fact that collapse has already occurred, as witness the almost unanimous refusal of America's erstwhile allies to get involved in Trump and Netanyahu's 'war of choice' against Iran, but it is so recent that a recovery still seems possible. Maybe it is, and maybe not.

Economic strength was always the key factor in any system of states, with military power mainly determined by a country's industrial production. By that traditional measure the United States has long been in relative decline (it produced more than half the manufactured goods in the world in 1945, but only 16% now.)

However, the United States has remained the foremost power because it spends a lot on a very high-tech military (eight times China's spending) and it continues to lead in science, in finance and in intellectual property. Those more or less intangible assets are more easily lost, however, and they are what is currently at risk because of Trump's presidency.

In the past five centuries there have been three transfers of dominance in the European state system, which expanded over that period to include the whole world: from Spain to France in about 1620 (the Thirty Years' War); from France to Britain in about 1800 (the Napoleonic Wars), and from Britain to the United States around 1940 (peacefully).

On the current assumption that China is the next obvious candidate, a hopefully gradual and non-violent transfer should occur in the next half-century, which would give both China and the rest of the world time to get used to the idea. But what if the United States falls out early?

Trump has already seriously damaged America's reputation as a potential ally or partner, and he's not finished yet. Several American experts are already talking about the possibility of a civil war, and Trump himself came close to endorsing a coup attempt in January 2021. Countries that are fighting civil wars automatically lose the crown.

At the same time, China's claim to be the inevitable successor to the role of First Among Equals is rapidly being undermined by the demographic collapse that is already getting under way in the country. It will halve the population by the end of the century, and the economic damage will probably be as grave as the demographic effects.

The dark horse in the race is India, whose population will still be around 1.5 billion in 2070 when China's has already fallen below one billion, heading down towards 730 million by 2100. But that would only give India the prize if it manages to duplicate China's feat of thirty years of high-speed economic growth (10%-plus annually), which is far from assured.

Let's face it. We cannot see even dimly that far into the future, and besides we should hope and work for a time when that kind of pecking order among the great powers is no longer major consideration in international affairs.

Post navigation

# Alliance Sport-Études Gala: Outaouais Athletes Shine



**Drazen Seslija**

The Alliance Sport-Études annual gala was held on April 30 at Bain Mathieu in Montreal. The Outaouais region distinguished itself with the recognition of six student-athletes from the region for their academic and athletic excellence.

The six recipients from the region were Jean-Nicolas de Broeck (biathlon), William Doyon-Verdon (fencing), Mya Fortin (artistic swimming), Xavier Lusignan (weightlifting), Maxime Thérien (rock climbing), and Gracelyn Xiao (golf).

During the evening, more than 100 student-athletes from across Quebec were recognized, and 110 national scholarships, each worth \$2,000, were awarded to recipients from more than 14 regions of Quebec. The Sport-Études Alliance, which awarded over \$250,000 in regional and national



Student-athlete award recipients at the 2026 Sport-Études Alliance annual gala (DS)

PHOTO: IRIS WEI

scholarships in 2026, is entering its fifth decade and is continuing its core mission of providing financial support to high-

level athletes pursuing college or university studies, thereby contributing to their academic success.

However, the Alliance offers much more than just financial support, explained Sébastien Fyfe, Executive Director of the Sport-Études Alliance. "There is also moral support, and numerous resources are available for student-athletes, including the presence of social work technicians and sports psychologists, among others," he said. "Training sessions and webinars are provided to Alliance team members to better understand and equip young athletes. Young people have access to school schedules that are adapted to their high-performance athlete schedules. This is a commitment between the Alliance and the schools to give them every chance to succeed both academically and athletically."

Four schools in the Outaouais region with high-performance athletes on their campuses are members of the Sport-Études Alliance: Cégep de l'Outaouais, Heritage College, Collège Universel, and Université du Québec en Outaouais.

## Plans for a dome at the Université du Québec en Outaouais have been pushed back to November 2027



**Jude Osmond**

A plan for the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) to have a cover, more commonly known as a dome, over the soccer field, has been pushed back for a third time. It was originally promised for the fall of 2025, then for November 2026, and now it's been pushed back again, with plans to open in November 2027.

City councillors officially approved of the UQO dome project during the city council meeting in Masson-Angers on May 12.

The project's initial funding was five million dollars, but it has now been raised to eight million, with an additional 2 million for locker rooms nearby, so 10 million in total. Gatineau initially had five million saved for the project, but with the increase, city council approved the project with the newly instated funding.

What the city thinks

Vincent Roy the Municipal councillor Aylmer district touched on the delays, saying the finances were never fully finalized, which was causing them. Still, he mentioned the new eight million dollar budget for the project is now finalized. He demonstrated confidence in the opening date, saying the details are more concrete than ever for this project.

Luc Chénier, Municipal Councillor for the Versant district, expressed confidence about the additional funding, stating that it is a



Outside of UQO soccer field on May 15 2026 (JO)

PHOTO: JUDE OSMOND

worthwhile investment for the city, especially as more residents engage in soccer and other sports. "If we look at the Branchaud-Brière complex, where people are able to play soccer and other sports year-round, even during the winter, we should aim for the same thing," he remarked.

The UQO field is mainly used for soccer in the spring and summer. Still, with the addition of the new dome, a new layer of year-round sports will be played, including flag football, rugby, and one of the biggest sports positively impacted by the dome, as Mayor Maude Marquis-Bissonnette mentioned, baseball. Baseball is one of the sports most played and, with the dome, players would have a chance to play in the winter.

"This is an infrastructure that is going to permit thousands of people to access new hours of enjoyment," Bissonnette said. "It's a winning project and the Quebec government is also going to contribute."

There will also be a service block built in phase two of the project.

## Twelve Outaouais festivals share \$1.17 million in provincial funding



**Tashi Farmilo**  
LJI Reporter

Twelve festivals and tourism events across the Outaouais will share \$1,169,000 in provincial funding this summer and fall, backing a regional calendar that spans hot-air balloons at dawn, international fireworks competitions, elite women's cycling, a professional rodeo, and acoustic folk music played in the living rooms of a small village.

The season opens with the Festival de l'Outaouais en Fête, which receives \$38,000 and runs June 19 to 24 at Parc des Cèdres in Aylmer. This year marks the festival's 50th edition, celebrated with a fully francophone programme of rock, pop, rap, trad, and country, alongside fireworks, an ecological parade, rides, and children's activities.

July belongs to the cowboys. The Saint-André-Avellin Western Festival, a professional rodeo in the Outaouais, takes home \$73,000 for its July 16 to 26 run in Saint-André-Avellin. More than 200 cowboys and cowgirls descend on the Papineau countryside for a ten-day event that extends well beyond the arena, with theatre, country music, equestrian competitions, and a family zone running with pony rides and inflatable games.

Festival Parasol, which receives \$59,000, also lights up July at the Hôtel-Casino Lac-Leamy site in Gatineau. It operated for more than a decade as the Festibière de Gatineau before rebranding and expanding into a multi-themed open-air event with evenings ranging from country nights to Latin fiestas to Picnic Électronique sessions.

Les Grands Feux du Casino Lac-Leamy receives \$152,000 for its July 29 to August 15 run at the Canadian Museum of History in

Gatineau. The event has lit up local summers since 1996, firing its shows from a barge on the Ottawa River on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, with teams from countries including Japan, Australia, Mexico, and Canada competing before a public that votes after each display.

In Saint-André-Avellin, the Twist Fibre Festival runs August 7 to 9 and receives \$30,000. Founded in 2012 by Amélie Blanchard, a former television producer turned goat farmer who found no worthy wool festival in Quebec and decided to build one. TWIST draws more than 20,000 visitors, with over 130 exhibitors and around 40 workshops conducted in both French and English. In a predominantly francophone corner of the province, Blanchard built a festival that draws enthusiasts from both linguistic communities around a shared passion for fibre arts.

The Petite Nation en Fête festival in Thurso, funded at \$44,000, runs August 12 to 15. Thurso happens to be the hometown of NHL legend Guy Lafleur, and the festival carries something of that same local pride, hosting several evenings of outdoor concerts featuring prominent Quebec artists alongside food trucks and a main stage set up in the heart of town.

September is the Outaouais's busiest festival month. It opens with the Gatineau Hot Air Balloon Festival, September 3 to 7 at Parc de la Baie in Gatineau, the single largest recipient at \$485,000. Now in its 38th year, the festival draws around 200,000 visitors over five days and generates an estimated \$15 million in economic spinoffs for the region. It launched in 1988 with one day, 47 balloons, and 34,000 attendees; the following year, Céline Dion performed on its stage.

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