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let's honour local women entrepreneurs!

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Wednesday, February 25, 2026
16 pages

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News from our Valley schools – pages 2, 6 and 14 • **Agriculture news** – page 9 and 10 • **Chateauguay Valley weather** – page 13

Hinchinbrooke issues building permit for water bottling plant

Sarah Rennie
LJI reporter

The municipality of Hinchinbrooke has issued a building permit for the construction of a controversial water bottling facility in Powerscourt despite loud opposition from concerned citizens.

Hinchinbrooke's director general, Adam Antonopoulos, confirmed that all the documents submitted by the project promoters, including property owner Germain Turpin, were thoroughly reviewed by the municipal inspector and were found to be in full compliance with the municipal bylaws in place.

"The municipality proceeded with the same due diligence applied to all permit applications," he said, noting the promoters presented the required permits from the Ministère de l'Environnement (MELCCFP), authorization from the Commission de Protection du Territoire Agricole du Québec (CPTAQ), proper zoning, and a building plan that respected all municipal regulations.

Antonopoulos reiterated that the project promoter committed to producing a hydrogeological study during the February 2 municipal council meeting, which was attended by over 40 residents. The promoters have since confirmed to the municipality that they will follow through on this commitment, he added.

Such promises are cold comfort to the citizens protesting the installation of the bottling plant, and they are pivoting their efforts towards the provincial level. Members of the Protect Our Water Source action group are now questioning the validity of both the environment ministry permit and CPTAQ authorization, given that both were awarded over 20 years ago.

Protect Our Water Source founder and spokesperson Bethany Lee explained that while the CPTAQ authorizations first granted in 2001 and 2003 refer to hydrogeological studies and short-term pumping tests, these reports are not included in publicly accessible files. She confirmed that information requests have been sent to the CPTAQ, the MELCCFP, and the Municipality of Hinchinbrooke, and a formal request will soon be submitted to the CPTAQ demanding the immediate administrative suspension of the non-agricultural authorizations and a reassessment of the files considering current scientific knowledge.

The scientific context has evolved

The group is questioning whether the original analyses accounted for the impacts of climate variability, long-term extraction from the existing bottling plant, and increased regional demand for water on the aquifer. "The scientific context has evolved significantly since then," said Lee, noting that "mandatory annual reports from major withdrawers now allow for a much more comprehensive cumulative analysis of the volumes extracted."

There is also more information available about the state of the Chateauguay watershed. According to the Société de Conservation et d'Aménagement des Bassins Versants de la Zone Châteauguay (SCABRIC), the catchment area is currently facing overconsumption. SCABRIC's president, Daniel Pilon, said the regional watershed organization was concerned about the prospect of a second bottling plant pulling water from the aquifer. "It's good that citizens have sounded the alarm," he added, noting that water issues are affecting more municipalities and sectors, including the region's farmers and market gardeners.

Legal questions

The CPTAQ is primarily guided in its decisions by the provincial Act respecting the preservation of agricultural land and activities, which was amended in 2025. The law now includes a clause stating that authorization is void if the permitted activities have not been started within five years.

Despite CPTAQ authorization, no work has been started at the site in Powerscourt. "After more than two decades of inactivity, it seems reasonable for the Commission to examine whether the current circumstances justify maintaining these authorizations," said Lee.

The Haut-Saint-Laurent syndicate of the Union des Producteurs Agricoles agrees. The local union unanimously passed a resolution during its biennial general meeting on February 19 that calls on the CPTAQ and MELCCFP to reassess the existing authorizations.

Along with a reference to the SCABRIC Water Master Plan, the resolution also notes that according to AgriClimat, climate change projections show summer water deficits can be expected by 2050. The resolution asserts that "groundwater is essential for crop irrigation and agricultural activities within a dynamic and cohesive agricultural sector," while echoing the concerns about recharge rates and long-term sustainability initially raised in 2003, when the UPA recommended the original request be denied by the CPTAQ.

See WATER PLANT, page 3

Olympic spirit brings colour to Heritage in Huntingdon

PHOTO Sarah Rennie

Students at Heritage Elementary collaborated with muralist Adele Reeves to create an Olympic-inspired mural at the Huntingdon-based school. The spectacular piece of work also pays tribute to the region's strong athletic heritage as well as local landscapes and Canadian wildlife. Please see the article written by Heritage Elementary students on Page 6. ***(SR)***

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ROYAL LEPAGE HERITAGE

Hemmingford Legion chicken BBQ dinner

On Saturday, February 28, the Hemmingford Legion will serve another delicious chicken dinner. Reserve yours with Lise Brown at 514-705-2192 by Friday, February 27. Get a large half-chicken, baked potato, gravy, coleslaw, dinner roll, and a delicious dessert for only a $23 donation. Takeout only; pickup is between 5 and 6 p.m. at the Legion Hall (486 Champlain Street).

Days for Girls

The next Days for Girls (Haut-Saint-Laurent) sewing day will take place on March 3 from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the Huntingdon United Church. Sewing days will now take place on the first Tuesday of every month. If you enjoy sewing and are interested in supporting this good cause, contact Teresa at haut-saint-laurentqc@daysforgirls.org.

Earth Day Forum

The fourth annual Earth Day Forum is coming up at CVR on Saturday, April 18. Nonprofit organizations and businesses offering sustainable products or services are invited to apply for kiosk space until March 6. New volunteers and suggestions for activities and services are also welcome. For more information, contact lorelei.coordinator@gmail.com.

Explore vanishing places

The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network in partnership with the Chateauguay Valley Historical Society presents Raising Spirits, a film festival featuring little-known historic places in the Valley, on Saturday, March 7, from 1 to 4 p.m. at Zion United Church (1831 Smallman, Dundee).

Brysonville (Sunday) School?

The Brysonville Schoolhouse has shifted gears and will meet musically on Sunday, March 8, at the Anglican Church in Ormstown. See Bruce's article on page 11!

Health Promotion day

The public is invited to a Health Promotion Day on Wednesday, March 11, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the Village Church in Ormstown. Nursing, paramedic, and dental students will be offering free checks like blood pressure, and glucose testing; there will be sleep and nutrition support, tips for navigating the system, refreshments, and more. It's free; to register, email kim@mwcn.ca or call 450-264-3596.

Helping cancer patients

Join Gleaner writer Yvonne Lewis Langlois for a winter walk through the woods on March 8 and help raise money for the Bell Fund comfort bags for cancer patients. The walk starts at 9 a.m. at 2206 Gore Road, Hinchinbrooke. A suggested donation amount is $5. You can contact Yvonne for details and to register at mylanglois@gmail.com or 450-829-2011.

AGM of HSL Users' Committee

This annual general meeting is on Thursday, March 12, at 7 p.m. at the Ormstown Town Hall. Guest speaker Philippe Besombes, former director general of the health and social services network, will be addressing the future of the Users' Committee, the mandatory, legally recognized body that protects users' rights and interests.

St. Patrick's Musical Afternoon
Sunday, March 15, 2026 - 1:00 pm
Royal Canadian Legion
8 Fairview Road, Huntingdon, QC
Tickets $12.00 at the door

Concern grows at English school boards over proposed constitution

Sarah Rennie
LJI reporter

The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), which represents the New Frontiers School Board (NFSB), has expressed grave concerns over the Quebec government's proposed constitution.

The association tabled a brief on Bill 1 at the National Assembly, and representatives appeared virtually at the general consultation on February 10 to express their opposition to sections of the bill that undermine English boards and their right to manage and control their schools.

"It is beyond bold," said NFSB's council of commissioners chair, John Ryan, of the proposed constitution. "It is so wrong in so many ways. We are doing everything we can to hopefully have it not survive, especially in its current format," he explained, noting that QESBA is far from alone in when it comes to those criticizing the bill's overreach.

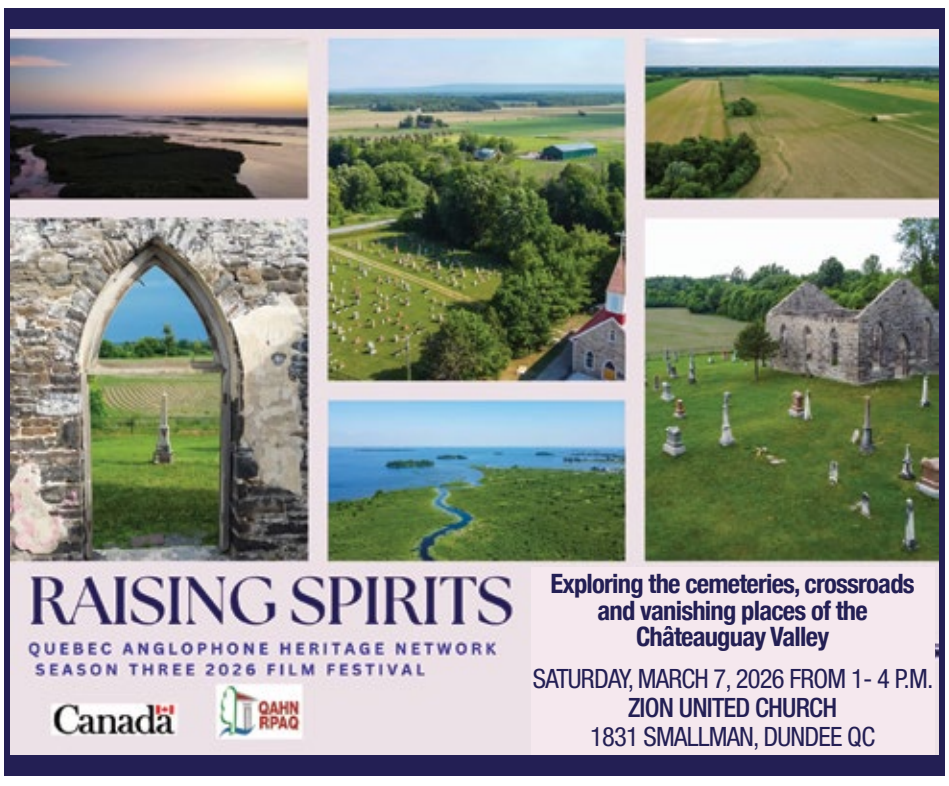
Legal and academic experts, as well as community groups, human rights organizations, and all opposition parties in Quebec, have asked for the bill to be withdrawn, citing a lack of public consultation and the violation of minority and Indigenous rights among other reasons.

Of critical concern to school boards is a clause that would prevent them from using public funds to legally challenge government-backed laws. "That's undemocratic, but I also think this is directed straight at the work that has been done by our boards," said Ryan, referring to the ongoing legal challenges against Bill 40, Bill 96 and Bill 22.

According to Ryan, Bill 1 will centralize decision-making, increase provincial oversight, and reduce the flexibility of local boards to set their own priorities. This will be especially felt within community-based boards such as the NFSB. "We do what we can with what we have to share in support of our community," he said, noting the Community Learning Centre concept as an example. "This would restrict some of that activity," he said, referring to efforts to welcome community members into the schools. "And that is our strength," he lamented.

The NFSB's services to the local community are provided mainly in English, which could also become an issue if the bill is adopted in its present form. Ryan points out that the constitution lists French as the only official language of Quebec, and while the English-speaking community is referred to in the preamble, the bill does not guarantee or recognize linguistic minority rights. The rights of the First Nations and the Inuit community are also not acknowledged, said Ryan.

Ryan explained that it was especially important that school boards speak out now against the draft constitution. "We can't wind back the clock. It will be the future generations who will pay the price," he said.



Ormstown municipal library will stay put for now

Sarah Rennie

LJI reporter

The municipal library in Ormstown will not be moving – for the next five years, at least.

The municipal council adopted a resolution during its regular meeting on February 2 to allow the municipality to sign a new lease with the owners of the building that currently houses the library.

The previous lease, which expired at the end of last year, was central to a heated public consultation in September where over 100 residents gathered at Chateauguay Valley Regional High School to discuss the future of the library. The rent was too high and alternative scenarios, including relocation, were on the table.

This period coincided with the municipal election, and the resounding message from the consultation was to allow a newly elected council to renegotiate the lease.

In a statement issued on February 19, the municipality confirmed that comments gathered during the consultation had been carefully analyzed and contributed to the negotiations with HUOTCO Immobilier, which owns the building.

During the council meeting, Ormstown's mayor, Philippe Besombes, described the previous lease as being too expensive with outdated provisions that focused on the construction of the building. He said the building owner, Mathieu Huot, was willing to play ball and together they put everything on the table to reach a fair solution.

The new five-year agreement, which is retroactive to January 1, includes a significant reduction in rent, amounting to savings of approximately $3,000 per month, said Ormstown's director general, Daniel Leduc. Unlike the previous lease, which allowed for unpredictable increases due to inflation, the current lease is frozen over the five years, with a fixed increase of one per cent per year.

Also included in the negotiations was a request for dedicated parking for library users, and two spaces will now be reserved in the lot outside the building.

"I am very pleased with the positive outcome of this matter," added Leduc, noting the new agreement ensures the library's future while respecting citizen's ability to pay for it.

The resulting agreement is both a "responsible and visionary move," said Besombes. "It allows us to ensure the continuity of services at a lower cost, while beginning the process of considering a new permanent library project that is better suited to the needs of our community," he added.

"This forward-looking process will involve the broad participation of citizens, municipal employees, and elected officials," Besombes confirmed, having promised during the February meeting that a new citizen advisory committee focused on the library will be established in March.

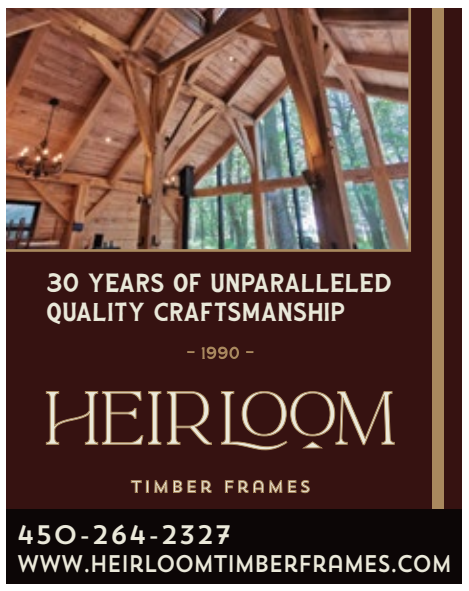
WATER PLANT

from page 1

"Our group is encouraged by their involvement," said Lee of the local union's actions. "Our region is the breadbasket of Quebec, and no one knows better than the farmers how vital it is to prevent aquifer depletion here."

Lee confirmed that Protect Our Water Source has been in contact with Huntingdon MNA Carole Mallette's office. The group can also now count on the support of the Table de Concertation en Environnement du Haut-Saint-Laurent. "We believe that collaboration among agricultural, environmental, and community stakeholders is essential to ensuring that decisions reflect current scientific knowledge and protect both the agricultural vocation of the land and the long-term sustainability of our groundwater resource," she said.

The group has also garnered widespread community support. An online petition demanding the government bodies cancel their authorizations and reassess their files has now been signed by over 940 individuals. More information, as well as a link to the petition, can be found on the group's website at protectourwatersource.ca.



Huntingdon adopts conservative budget, tax increase

Sarah Rennie

LJI reporter

The Huntingdon town council adopted a $7.29 million balanced budget for 2026 during a special council meeting on January 22.

"A municipal budget is not simply a matter of adding up numbers; it is first and foremost an exercise in prioritization that aims to meet the municipality's short-term needs, anticipate future needs, and ensure that financial resources are allocated in an optimal manner," said Mayor André Brunette.

The budget includes an increase of $791,556 over the last fiscal year, with around 67 per cent of the town's revenue stemming from municipal taxes. In a statement, Brunette noted that the housing and affordability crisis and the general rise in the cost of living has impacted the municipality and was taken into account when establishing tax rates.

"These realities require us to plan and innovate to ensure the financial stability necessary to act sustainably and guarantee quality of life for our citizens," Brunette said, noting the residential tax variation was increased for the first time in several years, but was limited to an average of 3.3 per cent.

"There have been a lot of expense increases that we have managed to absorb because of the new residences," said director general Johanne Hébert, but an average tax bill increase of $71 on a $251,900 home assessment was necessary.

Brunette confirmed that while the budget is conservative, several key projects will be prioritized this year in line with the town's ten-year sustainable development master plan. These include the implementation of a revitalization plan for the downtown area, an active transportation plan, and the establishment of a community centre to meet the population's social and recreational needs.

The budget also includes investments to modernize and maintain municipal infrastructure, including just over $1.77 million in spending in 2026, of which $913,000 will be financed through grants.

Projects include road maintenance, the purchase of breathing apparatuses for the fire department as well as a generator, and work to the replace the generator at the filtration plant and electrical system upgrades, which will be covered entirely by the Programme de Transfert pour les Infrastructures d'Eau et Collectives du Québec (TECQ) 2024-2028.

Around $356,600 in repair work at the town hall is planned for the doors, windows, and exterior wooden features, which will be paid for through the Programme Municipal en Restauration de Biens Patrimoniaux. The town is also investing in road infrastructure for the first phase of the Highland residential development project which is also scheduled to begin this year, along with drainage work in the ditch on a section of Ridge Road.

According to the triennial capital investment plan, the total spending on infrastructure over three years will be just under $6.77 million, including over $3.9 million in 2027 alone on the Highland residential project as well as significant work to replace water and sewer systems on Hunter Street.

Brunette said that while not included in the three-year plan, the town will be looking into the redevelopment of François-Cleyn Street. This will require a needs analysis to ensure the road is both functional and safe for all users as new businesses are expected to open along this already busy span.

The town is looking into possible grants to assist with these costs, but at a minimum, plans will involve the installation of a sidewalk and lighting, he confirmed.

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ADS must be reserved by the **Wednesday prior to the publication** date by emailing promotion@the-gleaner.com or calling 1.844.450.5055, ext. 712.

NOTICES (obituaries, cards of thanks, birth announcements, etc.) must be reserved by the **Thursday prior to publication** to pub@the-gleaner.com or by calling 1.844.450.5055, ext. 710.

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Fires burn two houses in Saint-Anicet and Sainte-Barbe

A residence on the Chemin Bord de l'Eau in Sainte-Barbe was badly damaged by a fire that started in the late afternoon on February 17.

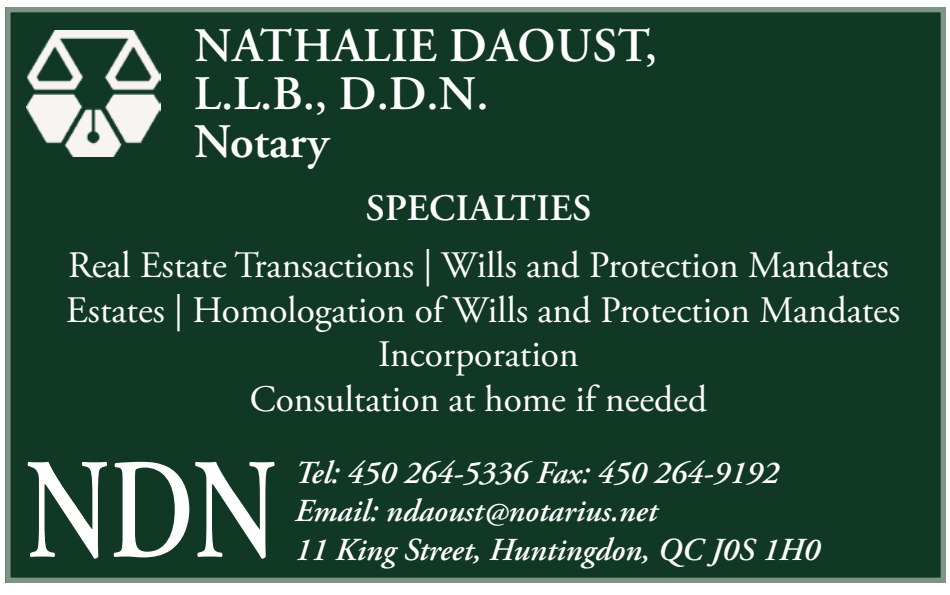
According to an article published by the Journal Saint-François, the home was known several decades ago as the Hôtel Bélair before it was converted to a residence. Numerous renovations meant the building had several junctions, which complicated the work by firefighters to control the blaze, said Joël Trudeau, the director of the Service de Securité Incendie et Civile de Sainte-Barbe.

The building was empty when firefighters arrived shortly after 4:50 p.m. The fire spread quickly and was especially intense at the back of the house. Firefighters took more than five hours to control the blaze, managing to save the annexes and garage.

The Sainte-Barbe fire department was joined by firefighters from Saint-Anicet, Hinchinbrooke, Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Saint-Étienne-de-Beauharnois, Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague, Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka, and Salaberry-de-Valleyfield. The Unité Communautaire des Mesures d'Urgence took part in the operation as well, alongside around 60 firefighters.

Firefighters from the Saint-Anicet fire department, as well as Sainte-Barbe, Huntingdon, and Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka were called earlier in the day to a house fire on Chemin Saint-Charles in Saint-Anicet.

According to the Journal Saint-François, the blaze originated on the second floor, which was most impacted by the fire, while the ground floor sustained water damage. A resident in her seventies managed to escape unharmed. *(SR)*



Opinion

Talking about it: Uncomfortable, but necessary

The 36th edition of Suicide Prevention Week took place across Quebec during the first week of February, under the theme "Lend a Hand, Foster Hope." This year's campaign emphasized the importance of supporting, showing kindness, and standing in solidarity with people in distress in our communities.

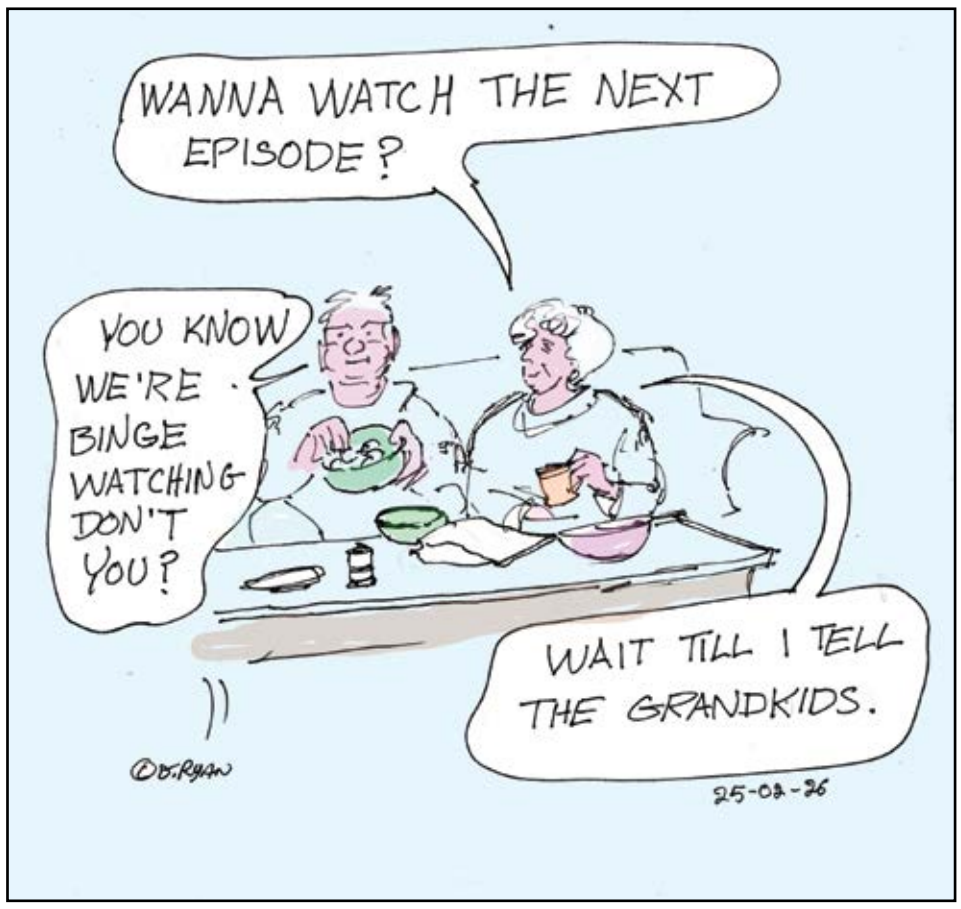
As part of the annual awareness campaign, the Haut-Saint-Laurent Social Distress Committee organized a series of activities in collaboration with Ancre et Ailes, the region's alternative mental health resource based in Ormstown, as well as the Résidence-Elle women's shelter, the Habitations des Tisserandes social housing organization, and Le Tournant, which provides crisis and suicide prevention services across the region. These activities included workshops, awareness-raising activities, an interactive card game, and a magic show for the area's network of gatekeepers. Following the awareness campaign, Ancre et Ailes director Valérie Taillefer said that given the positive response to some of the workshops and the needs identified during these gatherings, follow-up workshops may take place. This is a ray of sunshine in the dark: good news where it's most needed.

Overall, the suicide rate in Quebec is declining. The recently released Portrait of Suicidal Behaviour in Quebec 2026, which was issued by the Quebec Public Health Institute (INSPQ), reports that suicide rates fell from 17.9 to 11.9 suicides per 100,000 people between 2000 and 2023.

Men aged 50-64 had the highest suicide rate in 2023 at 28.4 deaths per 100,000 people, while women between the ages of 35 and 49 had the highest rate with 8.3 people per 100,000 completing suicides. The INSPQ report noted that while the overall rates are coming down, there were more than 3,780 hospitalizations in 2024 for suicide attempts. Of those, teenage girls aged 15 to 19 have the highest hospitalization rate, while the number of young girls aged 10 to 14 who attempted to take their own lives tripled between 2010 and 2024.

What these stats tell us is that raising awareness is more important than ever, even if it means talking about an admittedly uncomfortable subject. Thankfully, the local organizations mentioned above are doing great work, and they need us to come together to support them as they continue to play an essential role in supporting our community's mental health.

Sarah Rennie



From the *Gleaner* archives

150 years ago
March 2, 1876

HOWICK AGRICULTURAL WORKS. This well known establishment has gained another acquisition to its list of improvements by the addition of A FOUNDRY and will now be in a position to supply the public with all kinds of castings. The manufacture of Agricultural Implements such as Threshing machines, Rakes, Rollers, Grubbers, Fanning Mills, Circular and Drag Saws, Metal Ploughs for high lands, &c., will be carried on with the same dispatch and warranted to give the same satisfaction as they formerly have done. I would particularly call the attention of farmers having stony or gravelly land to our metal ploughs, as they are an article of the greatest utility. A supply of plough points constantly on hand. Repairs of all kinds done with neatness and dispatch. ROBERT MAW.

125 years ago
February 28, 1901

STE MARTINE – The exodus from this village has commenced earlier than usual this winter. Since the first of this month, three families have left this village for Montreal, and two have left the parish for the neighboring counties.

Valleyfield was treated to horseracing Friday and Saturday. There was the usual brawling, but only one serious accident took place – a young lad run over, who sustained a broken leg.

100 years ago
March 4, 1926

H'DON ELEC. CO. TO ERECT POLES AT REAR OF LOTS – The Maple Trees Which Are The Natural Beauties of Huntingdon Will Be Unmolested by Power Lines. … All townspeople feel pride in these trees and devote much care to their upkeep. Mr. Bowker is disposed to do the same, and in planning for the extension of his line, in response to popular demand, and in accordance with permission extended by town authorities with the approval of The Quebec Public Service Commision, he is guided entirely by the spirit of the favorite old poem, "Woodsman, Spare that Ree." He sees no need to disturb these trees in carrying out his future distribution system. He has already shown what can be done by putting his poles in the rear of the buildings in Lake street, where the line has been carried on for nearly a half-mile.

75 years ago
February 28, 1951

Chateauguay Valley to Observe Education Week… [excerpt] … In 1926, an American educator on a visit to Russia had occasion to talk with the Russian Minister of Education. "Have you any plans for Russian Education over the next twenty years?" he asked. "Yes," replied the Russian. "In the next twenty years we plan to transform the Russian mind."

"I smiled at the time," said the American, "but I no longer smile, for history has borne out his statement."

"If the old German Republic had poured as much money into education as Hitler is doing now," said the one-time head of the German Republican Youth Movement, "we should have saved the republic."

"Education," said Josef Stalin, "is a powerful weapon. Its effectiveness depends upon who holds it in his hand and at whom it is aimed."

Education Week reminds us that there is but one logical answer for Mr. Stalin. In Canada, education is everybody's business. We must fortify out educational armour against threatening ideologies which would destroy our way of life.

50 years ago
February 25, 1976

Early Valley railroads to be subject of meeting: … The guest speaker [will speak on] early railroads of the Chateauguay Valley … and will deal in considerable detail with the railway line which ran from Hemmingford to Caughnawaga and was probably the first of Valley railroads. … this line had a great deal to do with the progress of Hemmingford in the early days … Last fall he electrified an Ormstown audience with a colorful talk on the early days in the Valley, particularly as they were connected with the pioneer potash industry.

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Social economy business | Entreprise d'économie sociale

Heritage students beautify school with Olympics-themed mural

Alfred Morrissey and Fiona McKellar
Heritage Elementary

The second week of February was "I Love to Read Week" at Heritage Elementary School in Huntingdon. Students had time to read during the day, there were games, special guest readers, and a special literacy trivia night activity for students and their families. During the week, students also participated in a school-wide initiative to create an Olympic Games-inspired mural.

The mural also pays tribute to sports stars from the Valley, including national rugby player and school graduate Matt Heaton and hockey player Zachary L'Heureux.

Muralist Adele Reeves returned to the school for a third time to create a vibrant and inspiring masterpiece with the help of all students. The project was made possible with the support of the English Language Arts Network (ELAN) and an ArtistsInspire grant.

The mural includes Canadian animals wearing jerseys and playing sports such as rugby, hockey, and lacrosse. It pays homage to the Corinthian pillars in Greece, where the Olympics originated, by incorporating an existing pillar on the wall. The idea to use animals was also inspired by the stoats who were the mascots at the Milano Cortina Olympic Winter Games.

The students were included from the beginning as part of the design process and did most of the painting. "Children are great collaborators. They are just more free and have really good ideas. My favourite part is the creativity that comes from the group," said Reeves, who has been painting murals for eight years in different Quebec schools.

"I liked working with my friends to paint. I really enjoyed seeing how it turned out," said a student in Grade 5 who worked especially hard on a rugby-playing wolf.

"Other than painting, the most fun part about the mural was that I got to make decisions, like what number the animals wore and other things because I know it is going to last for years," said a Grade 6 student. The mural helps to spice up the mini gym, he added. "Our school is very bland. We need more to look at other than blank walls."

Principal James Furey agreed. "The last renovations were done in 1959, and so some of the painting choices back then still exist today. So, we've been trying to beautify different areas of the school," he said.

Celebrating literacy

February is "I Love to Read" month across Canada. Various activities took place at Heritage, including several fun interactive guessing games, special guest readers including published authors, and an exciting literacy trivia night on February 12.

"We wanted to do something different," said Emily Langevin, the teacher who organized the activities. "There is so much that the kids are doing all day long in class, and this is one chance to get the parents and families to come in and witness what they do and what they're exposed to," she explained, while talking about the trivia night.

The Montérégie West Community Network (MWCN) also partnered with the event to hold a book swap.

"It went very well. I think everyone enjoyed it," said one of four Cheetah Leaders who helped with the event. "The trivia was fun, and there were bonus questions that really tested our knowledge of our favourite kids' book characters."

**This article was written by students at Heritage Elementary School as part of a partnership between the New Frontiers School Board and The Gleaner, with support from the federal government.*

Perseverance takes root, bears fruit at CSSVT schools

This year's Journées de la Persévérance Scolaire took place across Quebec from February 16 to 20. The annual week to celebrate student perseverance provided an opportunity for schools in the Centre de Services Scolaire de la Vallée-des Tisserands (CSSVT) to offer a range of inspiring activities to their students.

Two guest speakers made a particular impression on the students, including entrepreneur Geneviève Everell, who shared her journey with its many childhood challenges and her resilience with students at the École Baie-Saint-François high school in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield and the École Secondaire des Patriotes-de-Beauharnois high school. Former strongman turned public speaker Hugo Girard visited the Centre de Formation Général des Adultes des Tisserands, where he talked about discipline, constant effort, and pushing oneself to new heights.

According to the CSSVT, student interactions with the two guest speakers allowed them to reflect on the stages of their own journeys and recognize the importance of perseverance in achieving their goals.

"These moments of inspiration show that with a network that believes in them, our students develop the strength they need to move forward," explained CSSVT director general Suzie Vranderick. "Because every experience, every exchange, reminds us that perseverance is built on support and trust. By valuing the progress made and the efforts put in, we support our young people in pursuing their ambitions."

While emphasizing the importance of collective support in promoting student success, area schools organized several themed activities to encourage motivation and highlight young people's strengths.

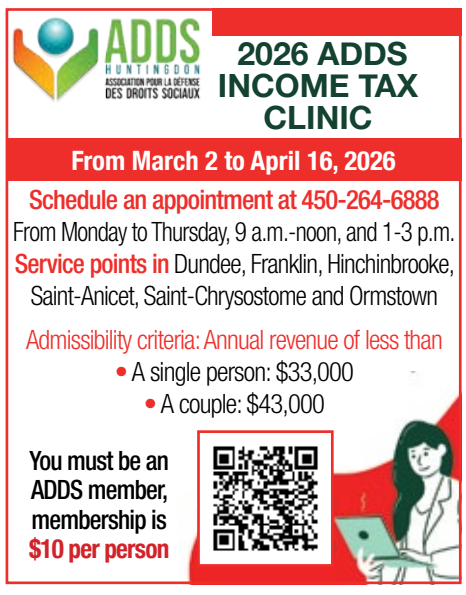
Some examples of activities included a Salon des Passions, where students presented what inspires them daily; positive affirmation workshops; and the creation of "perseverance trees" covered with messages of encouragement. One such tree took root at École Notre-Dame in Huntingdon, where students were encouraged to add hand-print leaves to their tree with handwritten notes. The tree will stay in the main hallway at the school as a source of inspiration for the remainder of the year.

As green is the symbolic colour for school perseverance, students were served green snacks and were encouraged along with staff members to wear green on the "Journée perséVERT" on February 19.

According to the CSSVT assistant director of student success, François Robichaud, the Journées de la Persévérance Scolaire provide an opportunity to recognize that daily efforts lead to success. "This annual celebration reminds us that perseverance goes beyond simple individual willpower and is supported by environments where every action contributes to building confidence and the desire to progress." *(SR)*

PHOTO CSSVT

Students at the École Notre-Dame elementary school in Huntingdon were visibly proud of their collaborative work, carried out as part of School Perseverance Week.



Ormstown calls on transport ministry to replace collapsed culvert

Sarah Rennie

LJI reporter

The municipality of Ormstown has raised an alarm with the Ministère des Transports et de la Mobilité durable (MTQ) over lengthy delays in addressing a collapsed culvert that has forced lengthy road closures in two municipalities.

The culvert, which gave way months ago, is situated at the five-kilometre point on the Lower Concession Road, right at the boundary with the municipality of Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague where the road continues as the Rang du Trois.

In an effort to expedite repairs, the Ormstown council adopted a resolution on February 2 to formally request that the MTQ fast-track and prioritize the replacement of the culvert.

"For over a year, the closure of the Rang du Trois on the Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague side, combined with the overall deterioration of culverts and pavement, has put the safety and accessibility of the Lower Concession Road at risk," said Ormstown mayor Philippe Besombes. He pointed out that beyond the inconvenience for residents and road users travelling east towards Montreal, the road closure restricts emergency vehicle access.

"What we want to convey to the ministry is that there are several other culverts on this road, and some are showing serious signs of deterioration and instability. For us, this represents a risk," Besombes explained. "This is a bit of a warning that we are issuing tonight," he continued, before noting the resolution also requests that the ministry conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the remaining culverts on the Lower Concession to assess their condition as quickly as possible to prevent further collapses.

The resolution also requests the MTQ demonstrate flexibility regarding its eligibility criteria for financial assistance programs, referring primarily to the annual average daily traffic metric, which is used by the ministry in funding programs such as the Programme d'Aide à la Voirie Locale (PAVL). Besombes noted this would be particularly helpful in this case, where the safety of citizens and accessibility to residences is at stake.

The municipality has received $3,704,749 through the PAVL program, which has been earmarked for road maintenance work on Route 138A, repairs to the 3e Rang, as well as the Chemin de la Rivière-Châteauguay and the Montée du Rocher.

A copy of the resolution was to have been sent to the transport ministry as well as to Huntingdon MNA Carole Mallette. Besombes said the municipality would be willing to work with the ministry to find both technical and financial solutions to allow for the safe reopening of the Lower Concession Road as quickly as possible.

PHOTO Sarah Rennie

The Ormstown municipal council passed a resolution calling on the ministry of transport to fast-track repairs to the collapsed culvert on the Lower Concession Road.

Vintage goods tell a story

Callan Forrester

Looking to spruce up the home? A vintage lamp or rug might be the right fit. Ateliers Brocante Bourgeon is a vintage shop in Huntingdon; it recently changed ownership but is still offering the same huge variety of vintage goods for all occasions.

A little while back, Jill Rankin told the former owner of the shop that once she was ready to retire, she wants to take over. About six months ago, Rankin took the reins and says that this job is "exactly what I needed and exactly what I wanted to do with the last 10 or 15 years of my professional life." She used to be a drug counselor but is appreciating the change of pace in this career shift. "I'm in love. This is not work. This is just fun. I come to 'fun' every day," she says.

Rankin's interest in vintage items is not new. She herself has been a collector over the years and says, "There's a friendliness… there's a nostalgia" being surrounded by vintage items. "I grew up in that type of household where everything had a purpose and everything had a use, but everything also had beauty," she adds.

The shop's products include a diverse array of vintage goods, from furniture to jewelry to knickknacks, furs, leather, and so much more. Rankin is always trying to find something new to feature, and if a customer is looking for something specific, she makes it her mission to find it for them.

Shoppers almost always come with a story. "It's fascinating to see what interests people," Rankin says. Running the shop has allowed her to learn more about different kinds of vintage and better understand why people like what they like. "I find that I'm becoming passionate about things that I didn't know, and that's pretty cool," she adds.

Being surrounded by vintage goods everyday has been a thrill for Rankin. She loves that each piece in her store comes with a history. "One of the parts that I love the most about it is the education. I get to learn every single day about why a saltshaker from a certain country is made in a certain way and what the difference in value is from one year's make to the next," she says. Vintage shopping also contributes to helping the environment. "I don't want to contribute to a landfill," she adds, and explains that even if she isn't sure something will sell, having it on display at her shop prevents it from being wasted.

The shop is open Wednesday to Sunday. Rankin is also working on a website to offer an online shopping option. She also hopes to collaborate more with local merchants and host community events soon. For now, keep up to date by following Ateliers Brocante Bourgeon on Facebook.

PHOTO Jill Rankin

Jill Rankin has taken over Ateliers Brocante Bourgeon in Huntingdon, and says running the shop while learning every day is exactly how she wants to spend her time right now.

MRC launches broad public consultations on strategic vision

Sarah Rennie

LJI reporter

The MRC du Haut-Saint-Laurent is holding seven public consultation meetings in different municipalities over the next month as part of the revision process for the region's land use and development plan.

The meetings will focus on the wording of a strategic vision statement that was approved by the regional council in November. The statement was drafted following an extensive consultation process aimed at involving the public in determining the region's cultural, economic, environmental, and social development over the coming years.

"The mobilization resulting from this reflection highlighted the concerns and values of the community at the beginning of the review process," said MRC project manager Claudia André. "The choice of targets, means, and courses of action in the land use and development plan can therefore be more consistent with the wishes of the population," she explained.

Through this co-construction approach, which included structured workshops, outreach tools, and active community participation, the MRC was able to identify key development issues, document territorial dynamics, and develop a collaborative strategic vision.

This new round of consultations will not repeat the work that has already been done. The goal instead is to clearly explain how the vision statement was developed, including the decisions that were made and the logic behind them, and to provide an opportunity for citizens to react, ask questions, express any concerns, and suggest adjustments. In a statement, the MRC explained that while this approach recognizes and respects the work that has already been done, it opens the door to critical and constructive validation before the statement is finalized.

The public consultations will take place in French; however, the MRC has confirmed that participation is open to all individuals, and participants may speak in their preferred language. "Comments, questions, and briefs submitted will be analyzed with the same attention and consideration, in accordance with the principles of citizen participation," said André, who notes the seven meetings were designed to reach local communities and promote inclusive participation.

"This approach allows the MRC to reconcile its duty to set an example in the use of French in its official communications with its fundamental values of inclusion, collaboration, and democratic participation, for the benefit of the harmonious development of the territory, in a spirit of listening, dialogue, and collaboration," André explained.

Two consultations have already taken place in Hinchinbrooke and Dundee. The next meetings will take place on March 5 at the Centre Communautaire Carole-Tremblay in Sainte-Barbe, on March 9 at the MRC du Haut-Saint-Laurent in Huntingdon, on March 10 at the Centre Culturel Dr. Marc Hétu in Saint-Chrysostome, on March 16 at the Saint-Anicet town hall, and on March 23 at the town hall in Ormstown. All five meetings will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Individuals and organizations who are unable to participate in the evening consultations may submit their comments to the MRC in writing before 4 p.m. on April 1.

Once the consultation period has ended, the regional council will adopt a finalized statement. The revision process for the land use and development plan will continue from there, said André, with the goal of submitting a first draft in 2027.

Conference focuses on forest management and protection

The conservation group Ambioterra is holding a free public conference entitled "Nos Forêts et Nos Arbres: Comment les Aménager et les Protéger?" on March 5 at the Salle Culturelle de Saint-Chrysostome.

"As deforestation accelerates in western Montérégie under pressure from urban, agricultural, and infrastructure development, it is becoming essential to better plan land use in order to preserve the remaining forest environments," said Ambioterra's president, Karel Ménard.

According to the community-based organization, land-use planning and development choices have a direct impact on habitat fragmentation, ecological connectivity, and our ecosystem's resilience to climate change. It is essential to maintain existing forests, but also to promote consistent development practices, responsible forest management in the private sector, and reforestation initiatives that are integrated into land-use planning.

With financial support from the Fonds de Solidarité FTQ and the Echo Foundation, the conference will feature guest speakers Stéphane Gingras of Ambioterra, as well as Isabelle Lapierre and Claudine Lajeunesse of the Agence Forestière de la Montérégie. Discussions will focus on tools for protecting forests, different projects, and regional issues related to climate change, forest environments, and management decisions.

The conference takes place at 7 p.m. Space is limited and reservations are recommended: contact Ambioterra by email at info@ambioterra.org, or by phone at 450-637-8585. *(SR)*

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Local UPA produces reference guide for area farmers

Sarah Rennie

LJI reporter

The Haut-Saint-Laurent syndicate of the Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA) launched a new reference guide for local producers during its biennial general meeting on February 19 in Ormstown.

The guide, which is the first of its kind, was designed to address a frequent need among area producers who regularly reach out to the union for information and links to various programs or resources. The goal was to provide farmers with as much information as possible in a single, easy-to-use document.

"Farmers are often too busy to read everything or remember all the information they may be exposed to, but when something comes up, we need to be able to quickly find the name of a resource or program that can take care of it," said local president Éric Leboeuf.

The guide was produced in collaboration with the Fédération de l'UPA de la Montérégie and local syndicate advisors Catherine Turgeon and Anna Potapova.

"It is a living document," said Potapova, who explained that the 15-page guide will be updated continuously with the addition of new information or relevant links as programs are announced or evolve.

The document includes region-specific information on sources of grants and funding from different programs at all levels of government that are often overlooked, as well as consultation services and agricultural help initiatives like legal counseling, group insurance programs, and access to health and well-being services.

Information is also available on different agricultural and farm business management workshops and training programs, as well as specific references for issues involving waterway management, the environment, land use planning, road security and circulation, and the sharing of agricultural equipment.

Another section focuses on workforce management, including information on recruiting employees, human resources, training programs, and health and safety workshops. Important resources on Agri-environment issues, as well as climate change and wildlife are also included, as are links to succession support organizations such as Arterre, and information on the Agricultural social utility trust (FUSA), which preserves agricultural land.

The guide is available to producers in both English and French. Leboeuf said it was important to ensure the document would be accessible to all members. "Unlike other government information sources that are not allowed by law to provide information in English, we decided to make the guide bilingual," he explained.

Leboeuf confirmed that the local union hopes to nominate the innovative guide for an award at the annual Agristars Gala. The event is hosted annually by the federation in celebration of the region's local syndicates and their achievements and actions over the past year.

The guide can be accessed online at monteregie.upa.qc.ca/producteur/a-propos/haut-saint-laurent.

AGAO+ holds successful networking event

The Association des Gens d'Affaires d'Ormstown et des Environs (AGAO+) held its first networking event of 2026 under the leadership of its new president, Gabrielle Limoges.

The event, which included around 40 participants, took place on February 12 at Le Mangeoir, the Saint-Anicet-based table champêtre and bed and breakfast.

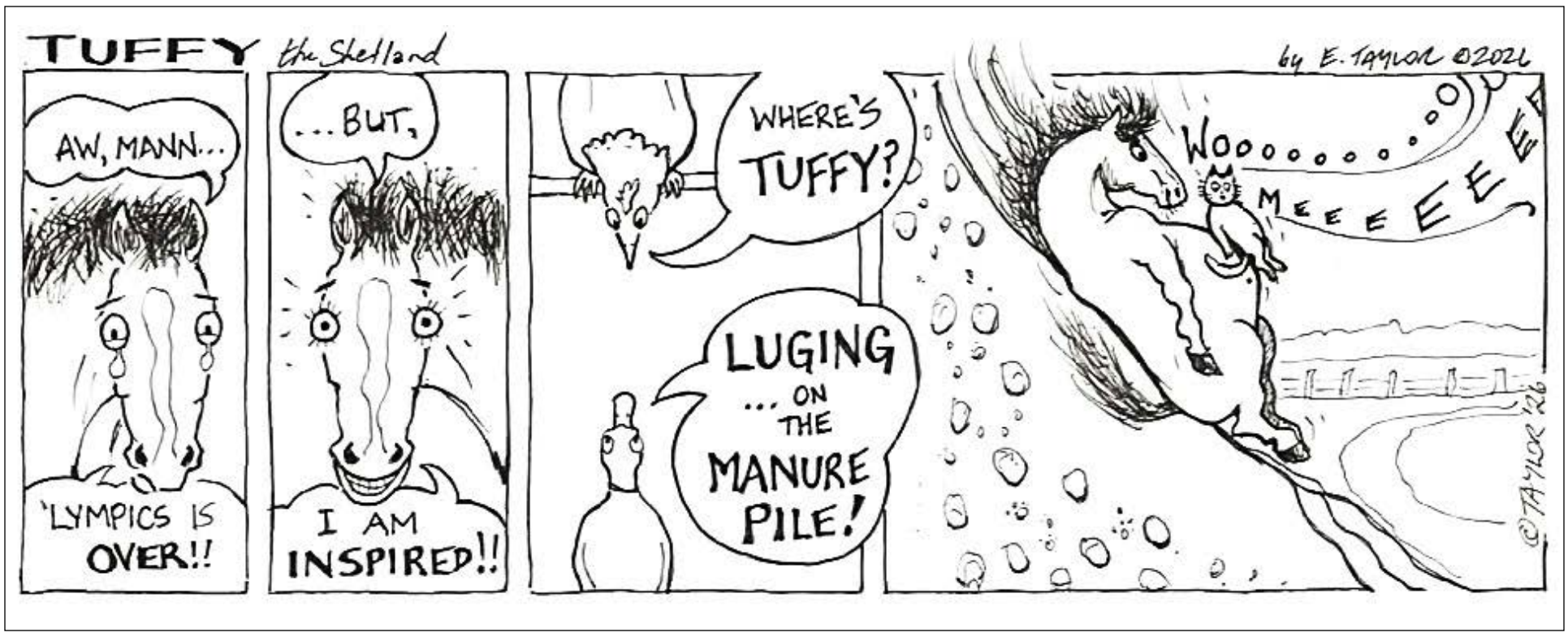
"The room was buzzing with solidarity, regional pride, and a genuine desire for collaboration," said Limoges. "Entrepreneurs, partners, financial institutions, including representatives from Desjardins, all came together with the shared goal of growing our business community," she added. This included several new members and individuals discovering the association for the first time. Also in attendance were several representatives for local government and elected officials, including Steve Hickey, the political attaché to Beauharnois-Salaberry-Soulanges-Huntingdon MP Claude DeBellefeuille; Sylvain Cazes for Huntingdon MNA Carole Mallette; Ormstown's mayor and former AGAO+ president, Philippe Besombes; business owner and Ormstown councillor, René Gauthier; and Saint-Anicet councillor and director of the CDC du Haut-Saint-Laurent, Marie-Rachel Charlebois.

In her opening speech, Limoges challenged participants to introduce themselves and speak with at least three new people they did not know, inviting each entrepreneur to introduce themselves and share the nature of their business. "The challenge was met with flying colors," said Limoges, noting the exchanges that stemmed from these introductions were "fluid, natural, and sincere."

The next event for the AGAO+ will be a conference/workshop activity on March 10 at the Agri-Culture Centre in Ormstown. Guest speakers include Huntingdon MNA Carole Mallette, who will be speaking about entrepreneurship, as well as Jérôme Matas, who will focus on leadership, growth, and organizational impact. *(SR)*

PHOTO AGAO+

Members of the AGAO+ gathered at Le Mangeoir in Saint-Anicet on February 12 for the association's first networking event of 2026.



ACFA helps farmers with mental health

Callan Forrester

LJI reporter

February 10 is Agriculture Day, which is a day to celebrate Canadian farmers, but also to highlight the struggles they frequently face. With many producers dealing with mental illness, it's important to highlight different resources that are here to help. Among these is Au Coeur des Familles Agricoles (ACFA), a Quebec-based organization that directly supports farmers and their families.

Lise Bates is a farmer and wellness worker for ACFA. She explains that the organization was created in 2003 and was inspired by the kinds of interventions that were happening in urban areas for mental illness and addiction crises. In rural areas, farmers were suffering from mental illness in silence, and there was a need for support.

Farmers can reach out to ACFA directly, and a representative will come to their farm. They also have a program where concerned friends and family can reach out on behalf of a farmer for a wellness check.

ACFA also runs a respite house for producers who may need a break from the stress of the farm. Bates explains that the house is strategically located outside of a rural setting so "They can get away from the farm and not feel the pressure of 'I'm not there working. I need to be working'." Here, they can rest and relax while talking with wellness workers to get the help they need.

Asking for help can be difficult, especially with the stigma around mental illness. Bates says that when it comes to farmers, "They're known for being hard workers, having that traditional masculinity about them where they figure things out themselves … They can do so many different things that when it comes to mental health, they tend to overlook it." ACFA hopes to get rid of that stigma and make mental health a bigger priority, especially since farmers tend to spend a lot of time alone.

It can be hard to see a loved one struggling and not know how to help. Bates says that reaching out is sometimes the easiest way to offer support. "Don't be afraid to talk to them … Having compassion, having empathy, listening without judgment, listening without necessarily trying to find a solution to their problem, opening the door to them asking for help – letting them know that it's not a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength," she says. Talking about it helps to further dismantle the stigma and shows that they are not alone.

This kind of work can be difficult, but also extremely rewarding. Bates says, "That's my pay. Knowing that these people have enough confidence and trust in me, that they'll let me into their homes, into their barns, into their workspaces, and they will open up to me into the most intimate areas of their life."

For more information about ACFA, or to ask for help, visit acfareseaux.qc.ca.

Gatekeepers save lives in the farming community

Sarah Rennie

LJI reporter

Agricultural producers face significantly higher rates of mental illness, including anxiety and depression, than the general population. Farmers may be especially vulnerable as they often have little control over external factors such as the weather or trade agreements, while managing financial pressures and isolation.

The Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA) recognized the growing mental health crisis among farmers years ago, along with the need for support programs and suicide prevention services. In response, the union began collaborating with the Association Québécoise de Prevention du Suicide (AQPS) to create a network of gatekeepers or sentinels who are trained to recognize signs of distress and identify people at risk within their communities.

Since then, the network has grown to include thousands of individuals, and new training workshops are regularly offered in French through the province's regional UPA federations.

After the Haut-Saint-Laurent syndicate pushed for more mental health services to be made available in English last year, two workshops have been held for the English-speaking farm community. Organized in collaboration with the Montreal Suicide Prevention Centre (MSPC), the workshops took place in Saint-Ignace-de-Stanbridge and in Ormstown.

The full-day training sessions were led by Pierre Rivard, a training specialist with the MSPC, who has been conducting these workshops in various sectors for around four years. The two sessions with the UPA were his first working directly with the agricultural community.

"I thought the people attending were probably going to be older farmers, but for the vast majority, it was women that showed up," he said, noting this was quite common. "What this tells us is that men, in general, are not comfortable opening up," Rivard suggested, before pointing out that 75 per cent of suicides in Quebec are completed by men.

Rivard said that according to estimates, at least 100,000 Quebecers experience suicidal thoughts each year. The suicide rate for the general population is around 11.4 deaths per 100,000 people. It more than doubles to 31.4 suicides per 100,000 people in the agricultural community.

Rivard explained that the gatekeeper workshops revolve around demystify suicide and ensuring participants are comfortable asking whether someone is considering ending their life. "Once you ask that question, that is when the healing starts," he said. "You are present with somebody who is suffering, you are a witness to what they are experiencing, and you are building a trusting bond with them by being very concerned, asking the right questions, and then guiding them toward the support that they deserve."

When asked whether there is data demonstrating the success of the gatekeeper program, Rivard responded that Quebec's suicide rate was around 1,900 per year around 25 years ago. The number has been reduced since then to approximately 1,100 deaths per year.

"That's 800 people less per year that are completing suicide. We love that number and we want to keep heading in the right direction," said Rivard.

MRC opens season with group show of regional artists

Sarah Rennie

LJI reporter

The MRC du Haut-Saint-Laurent is collaborating with Valédar, an association of visual artists based in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, to produce a group exhibition at the Salle Culturelle Alfred-Langevin in Huntingdon.

As part of its annual Expo Concours, Valédar members were invited to explore the themes of warmth and light as sources of inspiration, highlighting how these elements can evoke strong emotions while demonstrating the influential role of light in the creative process. The resulting exhibition, entitled *Chaleur et Lumière*, features around twenty member artists, including painters and sculptors, from across the region.

This is the first time the Expo Concours exhibition will travel to the Haut-Saint-Laurent, providing locals with special access to this exciting creative collective which has been supporting the region's artists for over 30 years. The vernissage will take place on Sunday, March 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. with many of the artists in attendance.

"We chose to include *Chaleur et Lumière* in the Salle Culturelle Alfred-Langevin's season because it is a rich, accessible exhibition rooted in our regional culture," said the MRC du Haut-Saint-Laurent's cultural development agent, Amanda L. Darveau.

She explained that of the 20 or so artists included in the exhibition, several are from the Haut-Saint-Laurent, and the exhibition offers visitors a unique opportunity to discover local creators and see their region through their eyes. For example, oil painter Nicole Daignault of Saint-Anicet, and Huntingdon-based acrylic and mixed media artist Noëlla Quesnel are both participating in the show.

"The theme of light is particularly resonant at this time of year and will bring some welcome warmth," added Darveau, before noting the exhibition stands out for the diversity of the works, the artistic quality, and the connection it weaves between the artists and the community. "It reflects exactly what we want to share: art that is alive, inspiring, and accessible for all," she said.

The collaboration with Valédar represents Darveau's first exhibition since joining the MRC earlier this year.

PHOTO MRC du Haut-Saint-Laurent

***Chaleur et Lumière*, the season-opening exhibition at the Salle Culturelle Alfred-Langevin, is a collaboration between the MRC du Haut-Saint-Laurent and the Valédar visual artist's association. The vernissage will take place on March 8 from 2 to 4 p.m.**

"It is essential for us to maintain high-quality exhibitions in collaboration with local artists," she remarked, suggesting these partnerships reinforce the MRC's commitment to promoting the region's cultural richness.

First established in 1991, Valédar has long played an essential role in developing the region's cultural landscape. The partnership with the MRC brings new visibility to this vibrant artistic community while inviting the public to enjoy an immersive artistic experience where feelings take centre stage.

The exhibition opens on March 8 and will continue until April 2. The gallery is open free of charge on weekends from 1 to 4 p.m. and on weekdays by reservation at 450-264-5411, ext. 237.

From Brysonville schoolhouse to Sunday school

Bruce Barr

Sunday, February 8, saw the rebirth of an old Valley event as folks gathered at the Ormstown Anglican Church after their monthly service, to share an afternoon of music and fun with Brysonville Schoolhouse – which may now be more appropriately called Brysonville Sunday School.

With ten performers and thirty-some spectators it made for a wonderfully warm event. The performers ranged in age from their twenties to their nineties, and since Valentine's Day was just around the corner, extra cookies and donuts were awarded to those who sang a love song.

There was even a contest to see who could "name that fiddle tune."

The next event will be held at the same place on March 8 at 1 p.m. Come share your sea shanties and Irish limericks in honour of St. Patrick's Day. All are welcome to join the church service in the morning as well.

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Vergers Blair Orchards takes home the Big Heart Award

Gleaner staff

The Blair family behind the Vergers Blair Orchards in Franklin have been named as the first recipients of The Gleaner's Big Heart Award.

Jeff and Cynthia Blair were on hand to receive the honour, which was presented during The Gleaner's fundraiser Valentine's Day dance at the LBA Agri-Culture Centre in Ormstown on February 14.

PHOTOS The Gleaner

Jeff and Cynthia Blair were presented with the first Big Heart Award from CVCIS chair Lynn McWhinnie and publisher Hugh Maynard. The honour, which will become an annual tradition, recognizes an individual or group in the Chateauguay Valley whose actions reflect commitment, service, and community spirit.

The award was launched by the team at The Gleaner to recognize an individual or group in the Chateauguay Valley whose actions reflect commitment, service, and community spirit. A call for nominations was issued in the newspaper, and the community was quick to respond with numerous exceptional suggestions.

The winning nomination was submitted by nearby neighbour Mary Stevenson of Verger Stevenson Orchard. "What makes Mary's nomination particularly special is that she nominated another apple-growing family in the Valley," said Lynn McWhinnie, the chair of the board of directors of the Chateauguay Valley Community Information Services which publishes The Gleaner.

"The Blairs have shown time and again what it means to 'be there' for our community," continued McWhinnie, noting Stevenson had nominated the family for their work preparing and delivering a free Christmas dinner to around 100 seniors across the region.

The Christmas dinner blitz started during the pandemic. The family began delivering large pots of homemade soup to seniors when isolation was at its worst. When things finally reopened, the Blairs didn't stop their food deliveries to seniors — instead, they expanded.

Big Heart Award recipients Jeff and Cynthia Blair with Mary and Bill Stevenson, who nominated the fellow apple-producing family for the award which was presented for the first time on February 14.

And their community involvement doesn't end there. For decades, the Blair family has supported Franklin Elementary School, preparing and providing food for children during special school events. They also welcome staff and students onto their land and have told the school to think of their orchards, forest, and maple bush as an extension of the schoolyard — giving students a space to learn outdoors and connect with nature.

"Franklin Elementary School is a better place because of the Blair family," said Principal Melanie Robidoux. For 60 years, three generations of the Blair family helped care for the school building itself. And today, Michelle Blair continues that connection as a teacher and coach at the school.

The inscription on the award, which was handcrafted by Howick's Studio Tolhurst, reads: To Vergers Blair Orchards: You lead with heart — and our community is grateful.

ADVERTORIAL CONTENT PROVIDED BY THE CHATEAUGUAY VALLEY COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICES

NEWS FROM THE CVCIS

The Chateauguay Valley Community Information Services is the community-owned social enterprise that publishes The Gleaner

FARM TO FOOD

CVCIS has been busy over the winter, in collaboration with The Gleaner, the LBA and Quinn Farm, producing a bi-weekly podcast called Farm to Food. You can listen to the nine episodes that have been produced so far, ranging in topics from the dairy industry to cash crops to mental wellbeing on the farm. The podcasts have been complemented with regular pages in The Gleaner on the agri-food sector in the region, and plans are underway to produce regular news briefs to further increase coverage of the Valley's largest economic sector – agriculture – and, of course, everyone eats every day (at least we hope so!) so there is always a lot of interest in all things 'food.'

Check out the Farm to Food show at www.farmtofood.ca.

EVEN MORE NEWS!

Following on from the model started in 2025 that has featured the Ormstown municipal bulletin, CVCIS has received approval for a project to further expand its role as a community information provider. The Ormstown page will continue in 2026, and it has been joined by Godmanchester on a trial basis; and, starting in April, CVCIS will collaborate with the CDC Haut-Saint-Laurent to publish stories about its member organizations.

The Gleaner will publish regular pages that will raise awareness about the wonderful work that these community groups carry out, give some recognition to the volunteers who are essential to making things happen, and feature stories on those who need and benefit from the programs and services provided. This collaboration with the CDC is a pilot project that CVCIS hopes will continue to expand. Using The Gleaner to distribute community information helps institutions and organizations with their communication programs and contributes to ensuring that Valley residents are well-informed.

MORE NEWS!

You might have noticed the increasing appearance of school logos next to the names of writers who are students at one of the schools in the Valley part of the New Frontiers School Board (NFSB). These bylines, and the accompanying content, are stories produced as part of the Youth News project that is being carried out at CVR High School and five elementary schools in the region. Funded by Canadian Heritage, the project provides resources for The Gleaner's news editor, Sarah Rennie, to give workshops to students on reporting and help them to prepare articles for The Gleaner and the website. The activity fits with the NFSB goal of improving literacy, the kids love the hands-on aspect of the program, and The Gleaner is engaging the much-needed next generation of readers – it's a win-win-win initiative!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As part of the marketing activities to make sure everyone knows that The Gleaner is more than just a newspaper, the staff and board members participate in 15 events across the Valley each year: kiosks at the fairs, a table at markets and bazaars throughout the year, and booths at various events such as car shows and the LBA Fall Fest.

It's a heavy lift for the same people to be at all the events, so we're looking to build a list of volunteers who can give a morning or afternoon a few times during the year to be at the booths to give out freebies and sign up and renew subscriptions. Many hands make light work, and you get to meet everyone in the Valley! Plus, you get your choice of a Gleaner T-shirt or cap as a thank-you for helping out.

INTERESTED?

Contact Dianna Chycki at promotion@the-gleaner.com or call 1-844-450-5055, ext. 712.

CVCIS – Inform. Inspire. Involve.

HUGH MAYNARD

Executive director, CVCIS, and publisher, The Gleaner

March 8 is International Women's Day!

Young baker sells cookies for a cause

Brooke Scoble was inspired to start her own fundraiser after hearing a radio advertisement late last year. The seven-year-old from Howick decided to sell cookies and donate all her proceeds to the region's food pantry, La Bouffe Additionnelle.

After baking up a storm, Scoble set up a table and sold boxes of her homemade treats during her municipality's annual Santa Claus Parade. She also went door-to-door with her cookies, before selling more at her school and to friends and family.

Once the oven had cooled and all the cookies were sold, she had raised a total of $630 which she hand delivered to La Bouffe Additionnelle director Marine Mailloux on February 20.

"It was a very emotional and meaningful moment for our team," said Mailloux in a social media post, where she referred to Scoble as an inspiring and bright young girl who already cares deeply about her community. "Brooke, we warmly congratulate you. Your gesture truly makes a difference and reminds us that generosity has no age," Mailloux added. *(SR)*

PHOTO La Bouffe Additionnelle – Facebook

Seven-year-old Brooke Scoble visited La Bouffe Additionnelle on February 20 after her cookie fundraiser raised $630 for the Huntingdon-based food pantry.

Chateauguay Valley weather report

by Peter Finlayson,
Ormstown weatherman

February 15-21, 2026

The third week of February warmed up a little bit more, but it was still below normal. The average temperature for the first three weeks of the month was -9.5 degrees Celsius, up a degree and a half from the week before (-10.9 C) but still a degree and a half colder than the normal temperature for the month of -8.0 C. With below-normal temperatures forecast for the rest of the month, February will likely end up cooler than average.

There were 14 centimetres of snow in the last week, which melted down to 13 millimetres of water. This brings the month-to-date snowfall to 32 cm, and the same number for melted water (32 mm). Precipitation is about 60 per cent of normal, and with only small amounts of snow forecast for the remainder of the month, February will be drier than normal despite the snow cover.

DE FLEUR EN FILLE
Happy International Women's Day!
131 Châteauguay, H'don | 450 264-4844

INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
MARCH 8TH

International Women's Day is profoundly important to me. On this occasion, I want to acknowledge the strength and determination of the women who move our society forward every day.

Our experiences remind us of the importance of protecting our rights, ensuring fairness and equal access to justice, and taking meaningfull action so that every woman and every girl can grow freely and with dignity.

Let's continue working together toward a truly equal future.

Nathalie Provost
Member of Parliament
Châteauguay — Les Jardins-de-Napierville
Secretary of State (Nature)
450-691-8299
nathalie.provost@parl.gc.ca

ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE DU QUÉBEC

MARCH 8 MARKS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY.

A day to recognize progress, celebrate the achievements of women here and around the world, and remind ourselves that equality is built every day.

Together, let's continue to act for greater justice, rights, and parity — for all women and girls.

CAROLE MALLETTE
DÉPUTÉE DE HUNTINGDON
ADJOINTE PARLEMENTAIRE DU MINISTRE DU TRAVAIL
carole.mallette.hunt@assnat.qc.ca

SPARTAN TALK

Student life at Chateauguay Valley Regional High School

Charlie Jeuris and Hailey McAdam
Chateauguay Valley Regional HS

Choir is busily preparing for a host of events that are rapidly coming their way. Recently, a CBC interview took place where choir members got to show off their talents and their amazing teacher, Ms. Lynn Harper, who has been nominated for this year's Juno Awards! All students are very excited to see Ms. Harper's tireless efforts being rewarded.

Additionally, on February 19, steel drummer Anthony Roach visited the school for a jam session with the choir and Grade 10 and 11 music classes. This was a unique opportunity for students to engage in instrumental activities and have a good time.

Leadership students have recently concluded their weekly activity sessions with pupils at Ormstown Elementary. Ms. Barrette, who organized the activities with groups of Leadership students, says that she is immensely proud of all the Leaders who stepped up to make the sessions fun for the young children. Not only did the elementary students learn about taking initiative and being a team, but the Leaders also got to experience planning and executing those plans on a new level. The different age range made for quick adjustments and overall improved the leaders' skillsets.

In the days leading up to March Break, Leadership has planned exciting theme days like Vacation Attire, Twin Day, and PJ Day, along with lunchtime trivia to keep spirits high before a nice week off.

For the past couple of weeks, students have been cheering on Team Canada in the Olympics during lunch hours in the lobby where various events have been live-streamed. Enthusiastic cheers filled the halls as students and staff watched Canada take on the U.S. in women's hockey. Just this past week, students once again spent their lunch anxiously watching Canada battle Czechia in the hockey quarter finals. Students reluctantly returned to class, but some were lucky enough to have their teachers update them when Canada won the game in overtime. Many teachers have taken class time to view sports events, ranging from speed skating to luge, sparking inspiration and pride in students.

On February 16, the SSIAA basketball finals took place at Centennial Regional High School and Heritage Regional High School. The boys and girls cadet and senior teams all played well, and all took home a silver medal except for the senior boys who placed third . It has been a great season and as teams are entering the playoffs, CVR is wishing them luck! Congrats to our brilliant players!

+++NOTICE BY LES FERMES BEAUVAN INC.+++

SALE OF FARMLAND BY CALL FOR TENDER

Take notice that LES FERMES BEAUVAN INC., represented by Mark Beauchamp, is offering for sale, by sealed written call for tender, land belonging to him, under the following conditions:

1. Description of the Property
- Type of property: Agricultural land (no buildings)
- Location: Rang du Ruisseau-Norton Sud, in Saint-Chrysostome
- Lot numbers and surface area:

Lot 5 483 759 (surface area 6,495.6 m²)
Lot 5 483 761 (surface area 51,325.0 m²)
Lot 5 483 780 (surface area 214,349.8 m²)

(Note: The seller will reserve an additional area of approximately 5,000 m² on lot 5 483 761 under a 39-year lease.)

2. Terms of the tender
- Method of sale: Sealed written tender
- **IMPORTANT: You must use the Offer to Purchase form provided by Mark Beauchamp.**

3. Additional information
Visits will be possible starting from March 7th, 2026. Deadline to submit an offer is **March 20th, 2026.** Any interested party may obtain the Offer to Purchase form, obtain additional information, or schedule a visit with:

Mark Beauchamp
221, rang du Ruisseau-Norton Sud
Saint-Chrysostome, Qc
J0S 1R0
Tel: (514) 713-2104
Email: LesFermesBeauVan@hotmail.com

Young author inspires Howick Elementary students

PHOTO Howick Elementary School

Jacob Halliday, 11, signed copies of his book for fellow students at Howick Elementary School on February 11.

Jacob Halliday was nine years old when he was admitted to the Montreal Children's Hospital for a two-day stay. Looking for a diversion from the stressful situation, he asked his father if they could write a book.

The resulting story, entitled Robo-Komodo: Dawn of the Goat, features komodo dragons as the main characters because they are his favourite animals. The villains include a water buffalo, mouse, flying warthog, and a goat, which are all among the Komodo dragon's favourite prey.

Once completed, Halliday brought copies of his book to the hospital to share with his doctors. Now, two years later, he was invited to share his book with students at Howick Elementary as part of the school's activities during "I Love to Read Week."

"It was fun," he said, while admitting he was a little nervous at first. The students in Grades 2 and 2-3 enjoyed his unique characters and were inspired by his personal story as well.

Robo-Komodo: Rise of the Goat is a wonderfully fun read, and the hand-drawn illustrations add to its charm. Halliday's first book is available to purchase on Amazon. He said he hopes to complete his second book this summer. *(SR)*

Acknowledgement of Support – February 2026

The Chateauguay Valley Community Information Services (CVCIS), publisher of The Gleaner, would like to gratefully acknowledge the Government of Canada for the following support in 2025-2026:

Consortium of Official Language Minority Community Media (#CommunityMediaLO), through funds provided by Canadian Heritage:
- The "Farm & Food: Cultivating New Audiences" business planning project has been made possible by the Community Media Strategic Support Fund.
- The engagement of one intern has been provided through the Official Language Minority Community Media Internship Program.
- The engagement of a reporter through the Local Journalism Initiative (LJI).

Department of Canadian Heritage
- The Aid to Publishers program, funded by the Canadian Periodical Fund.
- The Canadian Journalism Collective (CJC), funded by Google LLC pursuant to the Online News Act.
- The "Voices of Tomorrow: Youth Engagement in Community (&) News" project, funded through the Development of Official-Language Communities Program, Dedicated Fund for the English-speaking Communities of Quebec Component.

Employment & Social Development Canada

The engagement of a summer student, funded by the Canada Summer Jobs program.

.CVCIS is also recognized as a Qualified Canadian Journalism Organization (QCJO) by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and has been approved as a Registered Journalism Organization (RJO) for issuing official donation receipts.

Funded by the Government of Canada | Canada

Acknowledgement of Support

February 2026

The Chateauguay Valley Community Information Services, owner of The Gleaner, would like to gratefully acknowledge the Gouvernement du Québec for the following support:

Through the Programme d'aide au fonctionnement pour les médias communautaire, the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications is providing The Gleaner with financial support for the publication's operation (2025-2026).

Québec

Locals venture to Italy for the Olympic Games

Sarah Rennie

Seeing the Olympics in person was a shared dream for Valley couple Leslie Rogers and Chad Leduc, stemming from a lifelong passion for the Games.

The pair travelled to Italy by way of Switzerland just days before the Milano-Cortina Olympic Winter Games began, with tickets for the opening ceremonies and five events at venues in Milan and Livigno.

They watched the Canadian women soar during the big air snowboard qualifications, flip and spin during slopestyle skiing, and outshoot the Finnish hockey team. They also saw Mickael Kingsbury attack the moguls course on his way to a silver medal, as well as several members of the short track speed skating team as they tore up the ice.

They posed in front of the Olympic flame in Milan and saw two medal ceremonies with Canadians on the podium in slopestyle skiing and speed skating.

When not at an event, they explored fan zones set up near the venues, merchandise stores, and some of the non-Olympic aspects of their host cities.

Rogers said the best part of the trip was meeting people from different countries and cheering for athletes from around the world. For example, they found themselves watching the big air event next to an Australian man whose daughter was competing in her third Olympic Games. "He still cries every time she jumps," she said. "It gave us goosebumps at the same time."

The pair would seek out other Canadians at events to add to the maple leaf contingent. "It's crazy how much it affects the athletes when there are people from their country coming to cheer them on," said Leduc. They met a freestyle skier from Quebec who placed 12th in the moguls event in her first Olympic experience who was grateful for the support.

Rogers explained that it is the people that make the Olympic Games so big, noting the speed skating venue in Milan seemed small until the crowd started cheering.

PHOTO Courtesy of Chad Leduc

Leslie Rogers and Chad Leduc traveled to Italy to cheer on Team Canada during the Milano-Cortina Olympic Winter Games.

Obituary

ARTHUR, John

YOU STOLE MY HEART WHEN WE WERE FIFTEEN AND NOW SIXTY SIX YEARS LATER YOU LEFT AND TOOK IT WITH YOU.

John Arthur passed away, February 10th, 2026.

Sadly missed by your wife of sixty-three years Shirley Kirnan, our three children Jim(Lucette) Tammy (Jean-Guy) and Terri (Jim), three granddaughters Jessie(Patrick) Alexa and Taryn, also two great-grandchildren Connor and Amelia.

John also leaves his Brother Guy (April) and Sister Lorraine (Alberto) and niece Alexandra and nephews Elliott, Marlon and Dario. No visitations as per decedent's request.

Family interment at a later date.

Funeral Entrusted to Rodrigue Montpetit et Fils Inc. 170 Châteauguay St., Huntingdon, Quebec J0S 1H0, 450-264-5331. Online condolences and tributes may be made at www.rodriguemontpetitfils.com.

Rodrigue Montpetit et Fils Inc.

Obituary

JOHNSON, Wayne

Passed away in Huntingdon, on Thursday, February 12, 2026, Mr. Wayne Johnson, aged 70 years. Beloved husband of Céline Carrière. Predeceased by his parents Sydney Johnson and Myrtle English. He leaves to mourn; his son Nicolas (Mélissa), his grandson Zack, his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, his nephews and nieces, also many relatives and friends.

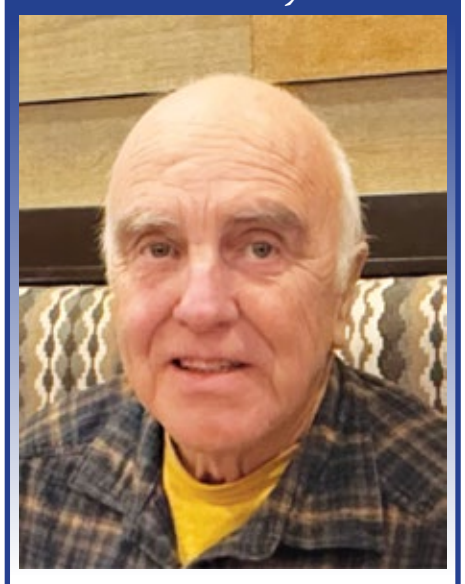
Visitations was held, Saturday, February 21, followed by a Celebration of Life in the Funeral home's Chapel.

Later burial at the Huntingdon Saint-Joseph's Cemetery.

Funeral entrusted to Rodrigue Montpetit et Fils Inc. 170 Châteauguay St., Huntingdon, Quebec J0S 1H0, 450-264-5331. Online condolences and tributes may be made at www.rodriguemontpetitfils.com.

Rodrigue Montpetit et Fils Inc.

Obituary



LANG, Patrick (Pat) Traynor

Patrick (Pat) Traynor Lang of Rockwood, Ontario, passed away February 15 at the age of 74.

A lifelong horseman, Pat's love of harness racing was constant and unwavering. He began grooming horses at a young age and went on to serve as Farm Manager at Glencoe Farms in Howick, QC, later becoming trainer and driver for Illusion Farms of Dewittville, which he owned and operated alongside his wife, Lise. Most recently he was Stallion Manager at Tara Hills in Port Perry, Ontario. Pat was widely respected for his knowledge, dedication, and willingness to share his experience with others.

Beyond the track, Pat had a deep love of music and found great joy in mentoring children, always offering encouragement and guidance to those who needed it most.

Pat is lovingly survived by his wife, Lise Pellerin Lang; his nephew Jason (Michelle), their children Emmanuel and Meghan; his sister-in-law Carole (Jim); nephew James and niece Lindsay.

He was predeceased by his son Jamie, his sister Penny and his brother Scott.

A service is to be held at the Christ Church Cemetery in Franklin, Quebec in the coming spring. Donations in memory of Pat to the Wellington Hospice in Guelph, Ontario would be greatly appreciated.

Obituary

McCAIG, Dorothy (née McNaughton)

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Dorothy (McNaughton) McCaig, age 98, on February 21, 2026, in Ormstown Qc. She was comforted in her final days by the constant love and support of her family.

Dorothy was the heart of her family, raising three children, Murray (Marilyn), Heather (Donnie), and Sue (Gordon). She was a loving grandmother to 11 cherished grandchildren and their spouses, and a proud great-grandmother to 24 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandson. She was predeceased by Donald, her husband of 62 years, sisters Helen, Shirley, and brother Douglas. She is survived by her sister-in-law Eleanor Lamb and many nieces and nephews.

A lifelong lover of country music and dance, Dorothy devoted over 25 years volunteering with the Tender Loving Care music therapy program at Huntington County Hospital. Her commitment to her community extended to the Dewittville Women's Institute and Huntington United Church, where she was a life member. At home, she was an avid gardener who took great pride in her flower beds, often spending her early mornings outside, admiring them. Her memory will forever be held in the hearts of those who loved her so dearly.

A Celebration of Life will be held at the Huntingdon United Church on February 23, 2026 with visitation at 1:00 pm followed by a service at 2:00 pm.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made to Tender Loving Care, Huntingdon County Hospital, or the Canadian Cancer Society.

McGerrigle Funeral Home Inc.
Cremation
Pre-arrangements
Owner: Ilse Laliberté
70 Lambton, Ormstown Qc • (450) 829-2214
www.mcgerrigle.com

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Huntingdon ~ Saint-Anicet

Do you have something to say? Why not write a letter to the editor?

Email: info@the-gleaner.com
By mail: The Gleaner, P.O. 1, Ormstown, Qc J0S 1K0

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

News from the municipalities of the MRC du Haut-Saint-Laurent

An initiative of the CVCIS

MUNICIPALITY OF ORMSTOWN

5 Gale Street, Ormstown
(450) 829-2625 | ormstown@ormstown.ca | www.ormstown.ca
Opening hours: Monday-Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Friday 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

A NOTE FROM THE MAYOR

Dear citizens of Ormstown,

Since taking office, I have had the privilege of meeting many of you and seeing first hand how dynamic and proud Ormstown is, and how deeply attached its residents are to their community. Being mayor means, above all, serving that collective pride by promoting transparency, collaboration, and the implementation of concrete projects.

In recent weeks, we have signed a new lease for our municipal library. This carefully negotiated agreement will save the municipality nearly $3,000 per month over the next five years. This is excellent news, giving us the time and flexibility we need to work together on a structuring and sustainable project for the future of our library.

Spring will also mark the start of several infrastructure projects. Pavement repairs are planned on Route 138A and 3e Rang. In addition, work to modernize the water, sewer, and storm drainage systems in the village center will finally get underway. Prince Albert Street will be the first to see these projects begin—an important step toward upgrading our municipal infrastructure.

We will also be creating several municipal committees, bringing together elected officials, employees, and citizens. These committees will be responsible for supporting the municipal council's deliberations on various issues and projects that affect community life in Ormstown. Interested citizens are invited to stay tuned in March and April, when we will be calling for applications. The goal is for the committees to begin their work before the summer.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank all citizens for their involvement and commitment to municipal life. I would also like to highlight the hard work of our municipal employees, particularly our snow removal team, who had to deal with a particularly challenging winter.

Ormstown is moving forward, calmly but resolutely, with the strength of the community and the desire to build a living environment that reflects who we are: welcoming, supportive, and future-oriented.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Philippe Besombes
Mayor of Ormstown

ORMSTOWN LIBRARY: UPCOMING ACTIVITIES AND EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBITION

Isabelle Doré's works, under the theme “In Praise of the Seasons,” will be on display in the Bell Room from March 3 to April 11.

WRITING WORKSHOP

Jacqueline Hainault Roch will lead a writing workshop in the Bell Room on Saturday, March 14, from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. To register, contact Amanda Darveau of the Haut-Saint-Laurent RCM at 450-264-5411, ext. 237. Space is limited, so sign up quickly!

EASTER EGG HUNT

The Easter egg hunt is back! From March 23 to April 5, find an Easter egg in the library and receive a chocolate Easter egg. Plus, if you borrow a book, you’ll be entered to win one of three chocolatey prizes.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

BRANCH COLLECTION

The first branch collection of the year will take place on April 14. Branches should be less than 6 centimeters (approximately 2 inches) in diameter and no longer than 120 centimeters (approximately 4 feet) in length, and should all be placed in the same direction. The collection may continue into the next day depending on weather conditions and the amount of branches to be collected.

LEAF COLLECTION

The first leaf collection in 2026 is on April 20. Leaves must be collected in paper bags and placed at the curb.

ECO-FRIENDLY TIP – LEAF COMPOSTING

Leaf mulching involves shredding dead leaves with a lawn mower and leaving them on the grass. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, this method nourishes the lawn, enriches the soil, and preserves moisture, making it easier to maintain your property. Try it, you'll love it!

REMINDER: CARPORTS AND OVERNIGHT PARKING

WINTER CAR SHELTERS

A friendly reminder that winter car shelters (tempo shelters) must be removed before April 1.

WINTER PARKING

The ban on parking on the street between midnight and 6 a.m. is in effect until May 15, regardless of whether there is snow on the ground.

FIVE STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL PERMIT APPLICATION!

Spring is just around the corner, and many people are already thinking about the construction and renovation projects they will undertake during the summer. The season brings a high volume of permit applications. Here are five simple steps to make your application easier:

1. Before starting a project, check the regulations in force. If in doubt, contact the Urban Planning Department.
2. Allow sufficient time, considering that it can take 30 business days to obtain a permit and that some applications require documents prepared by professionals.
3. Be sure to submit a complete application with all the required supporting documents (forms, photos, sketches, plans, etc.). It's better to provide too much than not enough!
4. Pay for and collect your permit. Display it prominently.
5. Notify the Urban Planning Department when the project is complete.

GREAT NEWS! WE GOT A GRANT!

The Municipality receives financial assistance from the Local Road Assistance Program of the Department of Transportation and Sustainable Mobility. This program helps municipalities plan, improve, and maintain local road infrastructure. Recently, the Municipality received confirmation of $3,704,749 in financial assistance. This sum will contribute to the completion of major work on Route 138A and repairs on 3e Rang, Chemin de la Rivière-Châteauguay, and Montée du Rocher. This work, which is part of the municipality's 2026-2028 three-year investment program, will ensure the safety of citizens and road users. All outreach communications will be carried out prior to the work once the timelines are known.

WHEN YOU CHANGE THE CLOCKS, CHANGE YOUR BATTERIES!

On the night of March 7 to 8, we will move our clocks forward. A change in time means a change in batteries! Time changes remind us to change the batteries in our smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and to test them. This simple action could save your life!

CITIZEN LIFE

EARTH DAY FORUM

It has now become a tradition: the Earth Day Forum at CVR! On April 18, the Municipality will take part in this forum, which promotes green practices and environmental initiatives. This year, at its booth, the Municipality will highlight the preservation of our blue gold, drinking water. Come talk with us and learn how you can make a difference.

CITIZENSHIP DAY

Every day, the administration and municipal council work on projects that shape the community and enhance your experience as a citizen. On April 11, the municipal team will welcome you to City Hall for Citizenship Day. This open house event will give you the opportunity to meet and talk with the heads of various municipal departments. On the agenda: presentations of services and various projects, meetings and discussions, and much more! The final details are being worked out and will be revealed shortly. Stay tuned!

ACTIVITIES THAT GET YOU MOVING!

In addition to sports clubs, the municipality offers activities that get you moving at the Recreation Center.

Cardio vitality classes: Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.
Line dancing classes: Thursday evenings at 7 p.m. (beginner) and 8 p.m. (novice).

The activities are open to everyone! All details are available on ormstown.ca.

DAY CAMP

Despite the snow on the ground, we are already preparing for summer for the children of Ormstown. For summer 2026, the day camp will be run by Académie Jeunesse. It's going to be a very active summer for our young people!

For more information, visit ormstown.ca/culture-and-recreation/recreation-and-community-life/day-camp.

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 2: Regular council meeting
March 8: Daylight Savings Time begins
April 3 and 6: Town Hall closed for Easter
April 13: Regular council meeting
April 14: Branch collection
April 20: Leaf collection

The original French version of this content is available on page 12 of the French section of this newspaper.