

The FORD(Q) Economic Update

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Editors : Léonel Plasse
Vincent Houle

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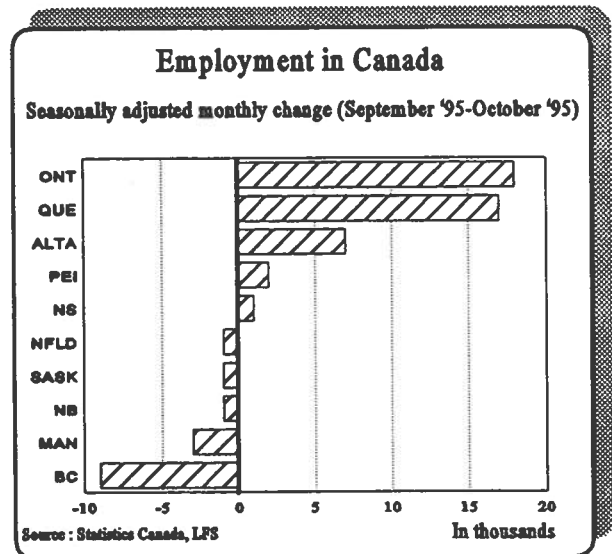
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*The labour market tables are not available
this month*

Growth slackens

- Between September and October, Canada's employment rose by 19,000, for the third straight time. This increase was fuelled by full-time jobs (+23,000), given that part-time employment fell by 4,000 compared to September 1995. Service industries also contributed to job growth, adding 38,000 new positions, while the goods-producing sector (-11,000) and construction (-9,000) posted losses. Employment in manufacturing barely changed in October, despite the 42,000 jobs chalked up since last year.

In October 1995, more than 17,000 positions were created in Quebec, accounting for 89% of national job creation. Since 1990, however, Quebec's employment has increased by a mere 32,000, which works out to just 1% in five years. Ontario recorded a loss of 13,000 jobs during the same period.



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Canada

The FORD-Q ECONOMIC UPDATE is a monthly publication whose purpose is to inform readers about the most recent economic developments affecting Quebec and its regions.

The information in this monthly report is taken from dailies and weeklies, magazines and other publications on the Quebec economy. Most of the statistical data come from Statistics Canada.

Readers' suggestions and comments are most welcome. To have your name added to our mailing list, write to the following address:

Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec
Planning and Assessment Division
Stock Exchange Tower
800 Square Victoria, PO Box 247
Montreal, Quebec H4Z 1E8

Telephone: (514) 283-2336
Fax: (514) 283-8429

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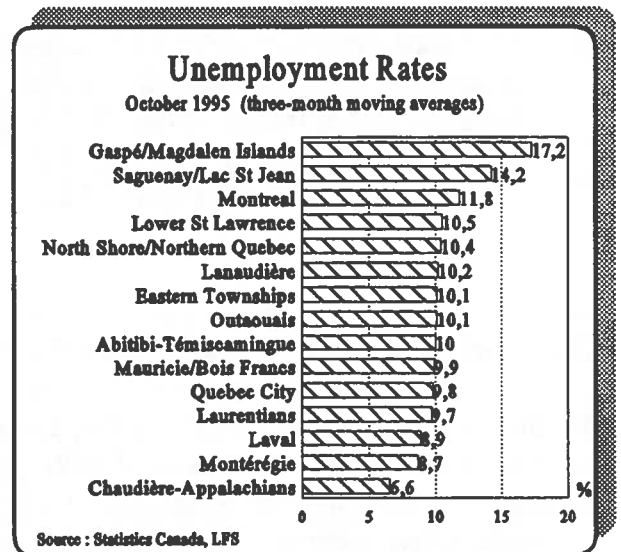
The editor is:

Léonel Plasse

Increase in the number of jobless

- According to seasonally adjusted data compiled by Statistics Canada, the national unemployment rate rose slightly between September and October, from 9.2 to 9.4%. Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland were the only provinces that registered a drop in the jobless rate during that period. In Quebec, the rate edged up 0.3 percentage points to 11.2%.

A total of 46,000 new unemployed entered the Canadian labour market in October. Quebec had 13,000 more jobless, followed by Ontario with 11,000.



Economic growth accelerates

- Canada's economy expanded for the second consecutive month in August, after contracting during the second quarter. The GDP at factor cost climbed 0.3% in August, following an increase of 0.1% in July. During the first half of the year, monthly production had dropped 0.1% on average. (Statistics Canada Daily, 31/10/95)
- In August, wholesalers boosted their sales in Canada by 0.9% to \$20.2 billion, the first upturn in six months. During the same period, strong growth in motor vehicle sales pushed retail sales up by 0.6%. These sales totalled \$17.8 billion, after declining 0.1% in July. Manufacturing exports jumped 2.9% to \$32.7 billion, the highest level since January. (Le Soleil, 18/10/95)
(Statistics Canada Daily, 20-23/10/95)
- In August and September, the national Consumer Price Index remained 2.3% higher than during the corresponding months in 1994, marking the sixth and seventh straight months that the CPI increase was 2% higher than in 1994. (Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics, 27/10/95)
- Average Canadian weekly earnings climbed 0.9% in August to \$574.88, more than offsetting the drop recorded in July. The help-wanted index continued to move downward, reaching 91 in October, a decrease of 2%. This decline was seen across Canada, except in the Atlantic region. (Statistics Canada Daily, 30/10/95-02/11/95)

Rise in average family income

- Thanks to the upturn in employment in 1994, average family income in Canada moved upward after falling for four years. According to Statistics Canada, average income stood at \$54,153 in 1994, up by nearly 2% (adjusted for inflation) over the previous year. (Le Journal de Montréal, 18/11/95)

Deficit lower than projected

- The federal deficit for 1994-95 was estimated at \$37.5 billion, which is \$2.2 billion lower than forecast in February 1994 and \$4.5 billion lower than the figure recorded last year. The deficit-to-GDP ratio slipped from 5.9% in 1993-94 to 5.0% in 1994-95. For the first six months of 1995-96, expenditures exceeded revenues by \$14.7 billion, down by \$1.3 billion from a year earlier.

(Annual Financial Report of the Government of Canada, Fiscal Year 1994-95)

(La Presse, 02/11/95)

(The Financial Post, 02/11/95)

(Le Journal de Montréal, 15/11/95)

Trade between Canada and Mexico on the rise

- Since the advent of NAFTA in 1994, Canadian exports to Mexico and sales of Mexican goods in Canada have risen by more than 10%. Trade between the two countries totalled \$5.5 billion in 1994, up 21% over the previous year. According to the World Trade Organization, international trade in goods expanded in volume by 8% from 1994 to 1995.

(Le Devoir, 07/11/95)

(La Presse, 15/11/95)

(Le Devoir, 15/11/95)

Funding to restore buildings owned by religious orders

- The Quebec government will invest close to \$40 million over five years to restore buildings owned by religious orders. This money will come from the **Programme d'aide à la restauration du patrimoine religieux (assistance program for restoring buildings of religious orders)**. Nearly 1,500 buildings in the province should be eligible for the program.

(Le Devoir, 20/10/95)

(Le Soleil, 20/10/95)

(Constructo, 24/10/95)

Prosperous summer for tourism

- Summer 1995 was Quebec's best tourism season in seven years. Foreign visits to the province jumped 10% compared to 1994 and, since the start of the year, monthly hotel occupancy has been 5 to 6% higher than in 1994. During the summer, foreign tourism generated \$774 million in revenue, or the equivalent of 13,772 year-round jobs (1,655 more jobs than last year).

(La Presse, 04/11/95)

(Le Journal de Montréal, 25/10/95)

CDPQ injects another \$1.3 billion into businesses

- Over the next two years, the Quebec government's investment arm, **Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec** will invest another \$1.3 billion in Quebec businesses. SMEs and corporations in all sectors and regions can benefit from this infusion of capital.

(La Presse, 17/10/95)

(Le Soleil, 17/10/95)

CP Rail cuts jobs

- Hundreds of management and administration positions will be chopped in the next round of downsizing at **CP Rail**, as the company seeks to pare \$100 million from its annual spending. The part of the railway system east of **Thunder Bay** may become an administrative division.
(Le Devoir, 07/11/95)

Private forest owners seeking compensation

- Quebec-based private forest associations are demanding that the federal government provide \$80 million in funding for private woodlot management, arguing that the government already allocates financial assistance for the Western grain industry, feed grains, and grain transportation to Eastern Canada.
(Le Soleil, 07/11/95)

Optimistic forecasts

- The **Conference Board** is predicting an increase of just over 2% in Canadian and Quebec employment and a drop in jobless rates over the next two years. After exhibiting only modest fluctuations in 1994, the consumer price indices for Canada and Quebec will climb above the 2% mark in 1995 and 1996.
(Technical Forecasting Seminar, 25/10/95)
- The **Bank of Montreal** has an optimistic outlook for 1996. Canada's and Quebec's GDP should grow by about 3%, and the weak Canadian dollar will stimulate exports. National employment growth of 2.5% should bring the jobless rate back down to 9%.
(La Presse, 08/11/95)
- **Mouvement Desjardins** has predicted that the Quebec economy will recover slightly in 1996. Quebec and Canada as a whole should benefit from the upswing in economic activity in the United States. For Quebec, the Desjardins expects the GDP to increase by a moderate 2% over the coming year, and the unemployment rate to stand at about 11%. (En Perspective, octobre 1995)
(Le Soleil, 14/11/95)

Domtar sells gypsum plant

- **Domtar** is selling its gypsum division to the US company **Georgia-Pacific** for US \$350 million. This transaction should generate a net profit of roughly US \$150 million. The company is also on the verge of selling its decorative panels division.
(La Presse, 10/11/95)

Bombardier heading for Sunshine State

- **Bombardier**, in conjunction with several partners, is bidding on a contract to bring high-speed train travel to Florida. A **Miami-Orlando-Tampa** line might be built at a cost of US \$4.8 billion. Construction might begin in 1999, allowing high-speed train service to start up sometime between 2004 and 2006.
(La Presse, 02/11/95)

REGIONAL REVIEW

Old districts to get new lease on life

- The Quebec government and the **City of Montreal** are going to allocate \$34 million to revitalize old neighborhoods in Montreal. This will be done under the *Rénovation des vieux quartiers* (Renovation of Old Neighbourhoods) and *Rénove* (Renovate) programs, generating economic spinoffs of nearly \$90 million and 1,200 new jobs
(Le Devoir, 20/10/95)
(Constructo, 24/10/95)
- As part of this same revitalization program, \$13 million will be invested in **Quebec City**, where the economic spinoffs will total \$30 million and more than 400 jobs will be created
(Le Soleil, 18/11/95)

METROPOLITAN MONTREAL

Jobs cut in the natural gas sector

- In order to remain competitive in the energy sector, **Gaz Métropolitain** has decided to trim its workforce of 1,400 by cutting about 100 jobs. This administrative reorganization, which will be staggered over several weeks, will affect mainly the Greater Montreal region.
(Les Affaires, 21/10/95)

Hospitals closing

- Seven hospitals in the Montreal region are slated to close between now and April 1997, as part of a plan that will allow the **Montreal Health Board** to cut its spending by \$190 million and allocate \$150 million for new priorities. More than 8,900 employees will be directly affected by this restructuring, which will take 2,000 beds out of service.
(Le Devoir, 10/11/95)
(Le Soleil, 10/11/95)
(The Gazette, 10/11/95)

ISLAND OF MONTREAL

Downturn in employment

- With a loss of 9,000 jobs in October, compared to September, the Island of Montreal turned in the worst showing among Quebec regions. The employment shortfall since October 1994 totals 34,000, despite a drop of 20,000 in the number of unemployed. The region posted its first rise in the jobless rate in seven months.

Paving the way for new jobs

- Repairs to the first section of **Henri Bourassa Boulevard** were completed at a cost of \$20 million, one sixth of the budget earmarked for this road. According to the Statistics Office, all the work planned for the boulevard could generate investment of \$800 million and support the creation of 10,800 jobs per year. (L'Édition commerciale, septembre 1995)

Saved at the last minute

- Just a few days after it looked like **Sidbec-Dosco's Ville Emard** plant would shut down, the directors announced that it would resume operations thanks to a capital infusion of \$10 million. The wire works will therefore keep its 135 workers and will probably hire another 25 within a short time. (Le Devoir, 17/10/95)

Construction of a business park

- The **Alexis-Nihon** business park, planned for **Anjou**, involves the construction of industrial/office buildings and associated facilities. This \$300 million project has already gotten under way. (Constructo, 17/10/95)

CP closing in Côte St Luc

- **CP Rail** System announced the layoff of 52 employees at its eastern terminus, in **Côte St Luc**. This is part of a normal adjustment following a contraction of the workload, and other cuts may follow. The company also announced that it was moving its head office from Montreal to Calgary. (Le Devoir, 20/10/95)

Jobs created in the plastics processing sector

- Three plastics manufacturing firms in **East End Montreal** will spend \$15 million on expansion and recycling projects. The federal government is contributing \$3 million to these initiatives, which will create 76 jobs. (Flambeau de l'Est, 24/10/95)

RJR Macdonald slashes jobs

- The **RJR Macdonald Inc.** tobacco plant will be cutting 190 people from its workforce of 520 between now and June 1996. This rationalization, which consists largely of early retirement offers, has become necessary owing to tougher international competition. The remaining jobs will be consolidated. (The Gazette, 25/10/95)

A dream that may come true

- Under the \$50 million **Rêves sur Mer** housing project, 259 dwelling units will be built in **Pointe aux Trembles** and a marina expanded. Construction may begin in 1996. (Constructo, 27/10/95)

MUC to trim workforce

- The MUC's spending is set to decrease by 1% in 1996, which amounts to \$11 million out of a total budget of \$1.142 billion. It has announced that 242 jobs will be cut in order to remain within budget. (Le Journal de Montréal, 07/11/95)

Sprucing up Old Montreal

- The provincial government and the City of Montreal will spend \$42 million to promote cultural development. Old Montreal will receive the lion's share of this amount, with \$30 million to be invested over the next four years. (The Gazette, 24/10/95)
(Le Devoir, 24/10/95)
(Le Journal de Montréal, 24/10/95)

Budget cuts at the University of Montreal

- In order to pare \$45 million from its budget over the next two years, the University of Montreal plans to eliminate the positions of 190 professors and more than 700 non-teaching jobs. A number of university programs may disappear as well. (Le Devoir, 10-15/11/95)

Substantial investment in cosmetics

- *Cosmair Canada*, a subsidiary of the *L'Oreal Group*, will invest \$25 million to double the capacity of its *Ville St Laurent* plant and develop export markets. This infusion of capital will consolidate the 200 or so jobs at the plant. (La Presse, 17/11/95)

LAVAL

Labour market puts in good showing

- Laval added 2,000 jobs in October compared to the previous month and 16,000 on a year-over-year basis. Its unemployment rate of 8.9% is the third lowest among Quebec regions, and the employment-population ratio climbed 5.4 percentage points over the past year.

\$110 million worth of purification

- Construction of the *La Pinière* water purification plant might begin in May 1996. This \$110 million plant would serve three-quarters of Laval's population and come on stream in December 1998. (Constructo, 17/10/95)

CENTRAL REGIONS

CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHIANS

Drop in employment

- The number of jobs fell by 3,000 in October to 182,000, which is nonetheless 9,000 higher than in October 1994. Although the unemployment rate rose to 6.6% in October, the region still has the lowest rate among the administrative regions of Quebec.

EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

Increase in jobless rate

- In October, the job market was basically unchanged from September; however, there were 13,000 more positions than in October 1994. For the third straight month, the jobless rate rose both monthly and year over year.

C-Mac expanding plant

- *C-Mac Industries* will enlarge its main plant in Sherbrooke by one third, and create 50 jobs, using \$3.5 million from deals signed by the directors during a recent trip to Asia.

(La Tribune, 07/11/95)

LANAUDIÈRE

10% rise in employment

- Between September and October, the region's total employment increased by 1,000 to 173,000. Whereas the jobs added since October 1994 (+15,000) represent an increase of nearly 10%, the unemployment rate declined only slightly during this period.

Better trained employees in Terrebonne

- A vocational training centre might be set up in the Terrebonne industrial park. Construction of the building, to cost \$9 million, should begin in May 1996 and the centre is slated to open by September 1997.

(Constructo, 17/10/95)

Secondary school in Lavaltrie

- An \$8 million project to build a secondary school in Lavaltrie might get under way in 1996. The school, which will accommodate 750 students, may open in September 1997.

(Constructo, 27/10/95)

New market in Joliette

- A project is still under study for a new market, to cost between \$5 and 7 million, which may be built in downtown Joliette, providing a number of stores. (Constructo, 31/10/95)

LAURENTIANS

Little change in labour market

- Employment in the Laurentians region did not change in October. While the jobless rate rose from 9.2 to 9.7%, it remains well below the 11.0% mark, reached a year earlier.

Some 820 new jobs in the wastewater sector

- The municipalities of St Jérôme, St Antoine, Bellefeuille and Lafontaine are building a wastewater treatment facility at a total cost of \$63 million. This project, initiated under PADEM, the municipal wastewater treatment program, may create 820 year-round jobs and begin in summer 1996. (Constructo, 20/10/95)

MAURICIE/BOIS FRANCS

Steep drop in employment

- The employment level contracted sharply in the Mauricie/Bois Francs region, from 215,000 in September to 209,000 in October, marking the second biggest drop, after the Montreal region. The jobless rate held steady at 9.9% in October, but was lower than the year-earlier level.

New interpretation centre

- A project to create an agrifood interpretation centre in Baie du Fèbvre, near Nicolet, at an estimated cost of \$15 million is currently under study. It entails constructing some small buildings to serve as a platform for interpreting Quebec's agricultural activities.

Fire wipes out 30 jobs

- A fire completely destroyed the *Gestion S. Crête* planing mill in Proulxville, in the municipality of Mekinac, causing over \$1 million in property damage. The town, hard hit by the resultant layoff of 30 people, is hoping that the plant will reopen. (Le Nouvelliste, 12/10/95)

New inn near Lake Saccacomie

- A resort complex with one inn and ten cabins is to be built on Lake Saccacomie at St Alexis des Monts. The project, to cost between \$8 and 10 million, may begin soon. (Constructo, 31/10/95)

\$150 million modernization project completed

- Modernization of the *St Lawrence Paperboard* plant in **La Tuque** has been completed. Repairs to a paper machine required an outlay of \$100 million and provided employment for 1,000 skilled workers. In addition, \$50 million was invested to bring the facility into line with new environmental standards. (Le Nouvelliste, 17/10/95)

A little anthraquinone for what ails you?

- The electrochemical and electrotechnology laboratory (LTEE) of **Shawinigan** has wrapped up an important research program on a manufacturing process for anthraquinone. The new process for this substance, used in the dye and pulp and paper sectors, may spur the construction of a \$50 million plant in Quebec by the year 1998, generating 50 to 60 new jobs. (Le Soleil, 03/11/95)
(La Presse, 07/11/95)

MONTÉRÉGIE

Substantial year-over-year employment gain

- Between September and October, Montérégie's workforce shrank by 5,000; on a year-over year basis, however, the region posted an impressive increase of 32,000 positions. Despite little change in October, there were 7,000 fewer unemployed than in October 1994.

Water twice as clean or twice as much clean water?

- Expansion and renovation work will be carried out at the water purification plant serving **Brossard, Greenfield Park, Lemoyne and St Lambert**, at a cost of \$30.4 million. This undertaking, which might begin in spring 1996, will double the plant's capacity. (Constructo, 20/10/95)

Nearly 200 jobs to be created

- The regional job creation committee of Montérégie has approved 22 projects requiring \$584,000 in grants from the decentralized job creation fund. Altogether, these projects will require an investment of \$9.3 million and create 198 jobs in the region. (L'Information d'affaires Rive-Sud, October 1995)

Cheese firm moving into industrial park

- *Fromage Kingsey* will invest \$2.5 million to move to the **Boucherville** industrial park. This will enable the company, which has already been operating in the city for about 10 years, to expand its surface area fivefold and create some 60 jobs. (La Relève, 11/11/95)

Sprucing up senior's home

- Renovations are to be made to the *Centre Georges-Phaneuf* in St Jean sur Richelieu, with an investment of \$6 million. The work, divided into five phases, should begin in 1997.
(Constructo, 03/11/95)

OUTAOUAIS

Slight drop in employment

- The Outaouais job market posted a loss of 2,000 jobs and a slight increase in the number of unemployed in October. Although the jobless rate edged up to 10.1% in October, it was still lower than a year earlier.

Modernization of Thurso plant

- The two modernization phases planned for the *James Maclaren Industries* plant in Thurso include work to boost the plant's capacity. This project, to cost a total of \$93 million, may start up in 1996.
(Constructo, 31/10/95)

QUEBEC CITY

Loss of 2,000 jobs

- The Quebec City region lost 2,000 jobs between September and October 1995 and still had a shortfall compared to October 1994, namely 8,000. The unemployment rate moved down slightly to 9.8%.

Marine industry being promoted

- *INITIATIVE*, an organization representing the marine industry, has conducted a study aimed at promoting this little-known sector. The industry is composed of 127 companies which generate an estimated \$350 million in economic spinoffs and employ some 6,500 full-time workers.
(Le Soleil, 17/10/95)

Beauport to take young people under its wing

- Three youth centres serving local teen-agers will be brought together in a new building to be constructed in Beauport. This merger, requiring an investment of over \$24 million, will create a more modern and spacious facility accommodating 132 adolescents, which should open in fall 1998.
(Constructo, 20/10/95)

300 jobs at the Port of Quebec City

- A project to build a \$100 million ore concentrator for Ungava will generate 300 new jobs over the next two years at the Port of Quebec City. This project was initiated by Falconbridge for its Raglan mining facility. (Le Soleil, 20/11/95)

RESOURCE REGIONS

ABITIBI-TEMISCAMINGUE

Unemployment rate in freefall

- Between September and October, the ranks of the jobless shrank by 2,000, whereas the job market stayed the same. The unemployment rate plunged 2.1 percentage points during this period to 10.0%, which is below the provincial average.

Wastewater treatment coming to Rouyn-Noranda...

- Under a \$22.3 million wastewater treatment project planned for Rouyn-Noranda, three aerated ponds, a pumping station and related facilities will be built, starting in spring 1996. (Constructo, 27/10/95)

...and to Malartic

- The town of Malartic will have a wastewater treatment plant up and running by the turn of the century, thanks to an initiative costing an estimated \$11.3 million. The provincial government will pick up 85% of the tab, by drawing funds from the PADEM program. (Constructo, 31/10/95)

LOWER ST LAWRENCE

Unemployment rate in holding pattern

- Despite a drop of 4,000 in employment between September and October, the jobless rate for the Lower St Lawrence region held steady at 10.5%. By contrast, the employment-population ratio reacted to the contraction in the job market, slipping two percentage points compared to September.

Wastewater treatment in Rivière du Loup

- The wastewater treatment project for the municipalities of Rivière du Loup and St Patrice de Rivière du Loup will involve the construction of a treatment plant, costing an estimated \$6 million. (Constructo, 10/11/95)

Canadelle shutting down

- The women's underwear plant run by *Canadelle* in *Matane* is set to close in February 1996, putting nearly 200 people, mostly seamstresses, out of work. (Le Soleil, 09/11/95)

NORTH SHORE/NORTHERN QUEBEC

Slight decline in employment

- While the number of jobs decreased by 1,000 on a monthly basis, the ranks of the unemployed expanded by the same number. As a result, the region's jobless rate rose from 9.2% in September to 10.4% in October, but stayed well below the level reached a year earlier (14.6%).

Baie Comeau industries demanding port facilities

- The major industries in *Baie Comeau*, backed by municipal authorities, are demanding responsibility for managing the federal port. At the same time, however, they want Ottawa to spend \$6 million to upgrade the port facilities. The government is to announce its position concerning management of Canadian ports by January. (Le Soleil, 18/10/95)

Chibougamau to process ore

- An ore processing plant will be built at the *Eastmain* mine in *Chibougamau* at a cost of \$6.3 million. Construction may begin in spring 1997. (Constructo, 03/11/95)

Investment in Baie Comeau

- *QUNO Corporation* will spend \$14 million to modernize its *Outardes Sawmill* Division in *Baie Comeau*, thereby doubling its sawtimber production capacity. Since 1991, more than \$85 million has been injected into the facility. (Le Soleil, 09/11/95)

GASPÉ/MAGDALEN ISLANDS

First drop in employment in seven months

- In October, the employment level stood at 34,000, down by 2,000 from the previous month. This was the first drop in the number of jobs in seven months. The jobless rate, at 17.2%, was slightly higher than in October 1994.

Market research on cement encouraging

- Market studies have confirmed that US demand for cement is strong enough to sustain a new cement plant in *Port Daniel*. Construction of the new plant, requiring an injection of \$310 million, may create 1,000 year-round jobs for three years. (Le Soleil, 26/10/95)

Renovation of hospital

- The *Hôpital des Monts* hospital in **St Anne des Monts** will be expanded and renovated under a \$5.9 million project, which may get started in spring 1997. (Constructo, 03/11/95)

Investment of \$25 million in New Richmond

- *Stone Container* will invest \$25 million at its paperboard plant in **New Richmond** to reduce emissions of polluting gases. This will enable the company to comply with the new environmental standards due to come into effect at the end of 1996. (Le Soleil, 10/11/95)

Miners will breathe more easily

- *Air Liquid Canada* is going to build a \$5 million plant that will supply 80 tonnes of oxygen a day to **Gaspé Mines**. Construction may begin in June 1996. (Le Journal de Québec, 17/10/95)

SAGUENAY/LAC ST JEAN

Slowdown in employment growth

- The Saguenay/Lac St Jean job market shrank slightly in October, when the number of jobs slipped by 3,000 and the jobless rate rose half a percentage point to 14.2%. Notwithstanding this flagging performance, the region still has 6,000 more workers than it did in October 1994.

\$160 million machine

- The pulp and paper division of *SNC-Lavalin* has landed a contract from *Alliance Forest Products* to convert a paper machine at the **Dolbeau** plant. This project will cost \$160 million. (Constructo, 17/10/95)

Li₂CO₃ in Jonquière

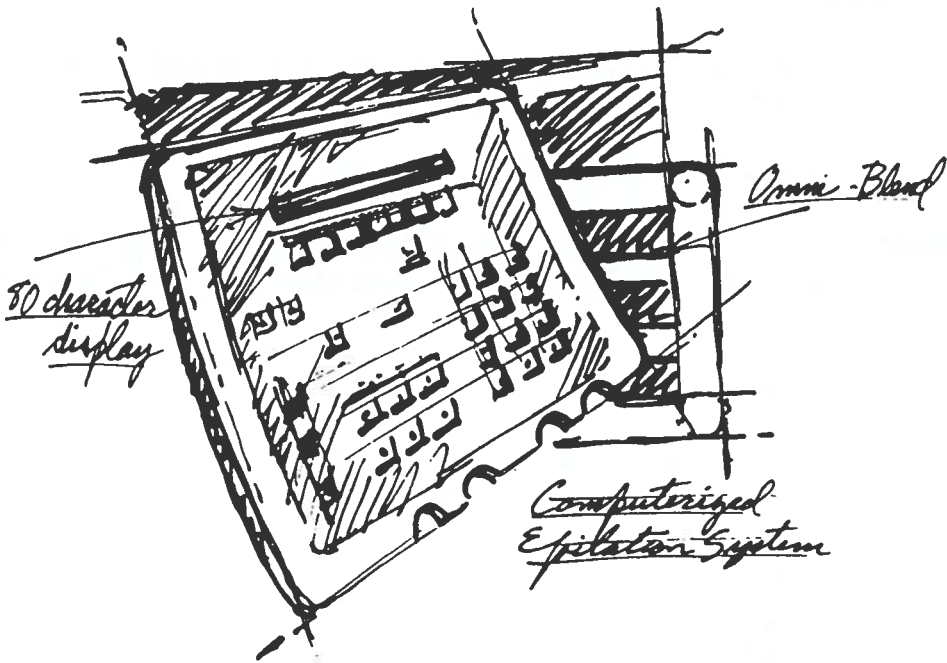
- A \$10 million project to establish a lithium carbonate manufacturing plant in **Jonquière** will require either constructing or refitting a building, and purchasing and installing equipment. Work may begin sometime in 1996. (Constructo, 17/10/95)

Modernization at Stone-Consolidated

- The *Stone-Consolidated* plant in **La Baie** will begin modernizing its grinder loading system in winter of 1996 at a cost of nearly \$35 million. (Constructo, 17/10/95)

Refit of buildings at Alma

- The *vocational training centre of Lac St Jean* in **Alma** may undergo a refit at a cost of \$8.5 million. As well, *the Hôtel-Dieu hospital of Alma* may be expanded and modernized as part of a \$7.4 million initiative. These projects may begin in 1996. (Constructo, 10/11/95)



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