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Interview with Ahmed Hussen

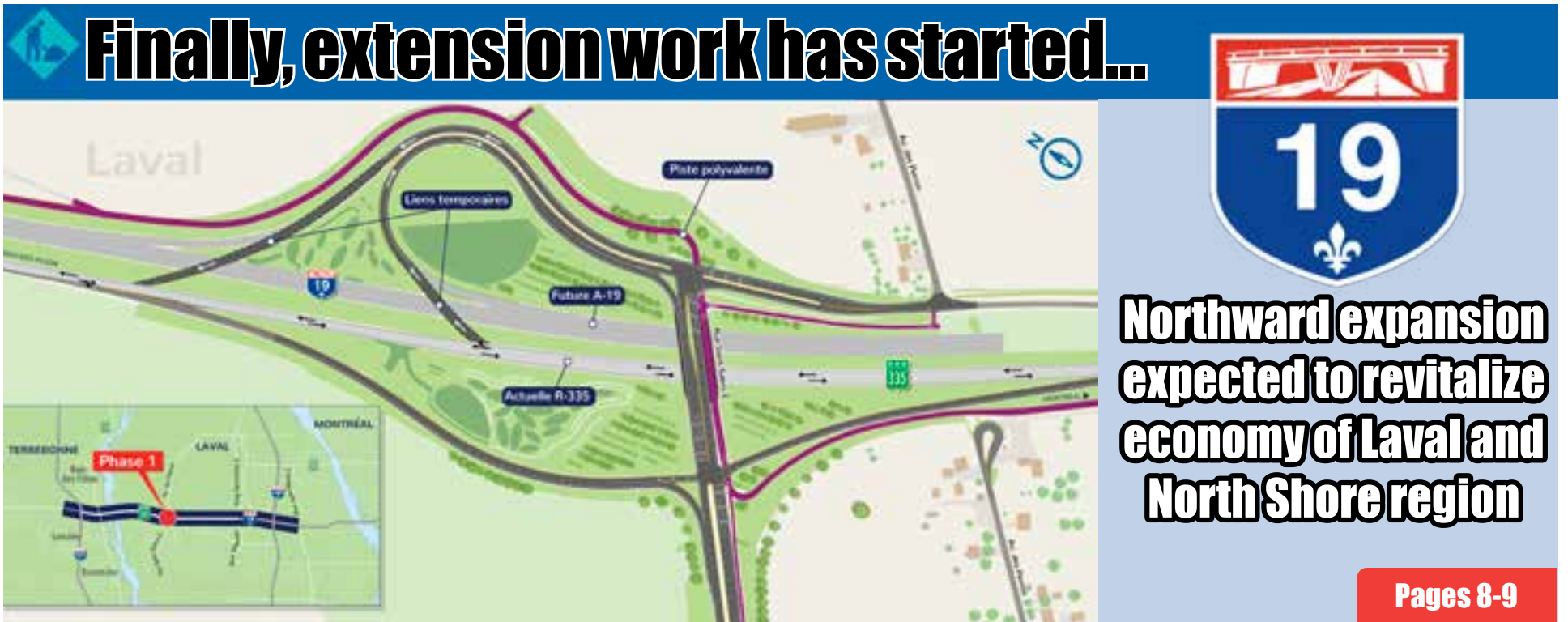
Re-elected Liberals offer new incentives and programs to deal with inflated housing market

The Laval News Exclusive

Federal Minister of Housing, Diversity and Inclusion Ahmed Hussen says Ottawa will be making good on election pledges to help home buyers with new incentives and programs. (File photo: Newsfirst Multimedia)

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Finally, extension work has started...



Northward expansion expected to revitalize economy of Laval and North Shore region

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Ottawa coming to the rescue of young home buyers, says Housing Minister Ahmed Hussen



MARTIN C. BARRY
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
For The Laval News
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Faced with skyrocketing real estate prices that are shutting an increasing number of house buyers out of the market, the Trudeau Liberal government's new Minister of Housing, Diversity and Inclusion says Ottawa will be coming to the rescue with new incentive programs aimed especially at potential young home buyers.

House prices soared

According to the Canadian Real Estate Association, the average price of a home in Canada has gone up more than 50 per cent in the last five years.

Nationally, the average home price in September – when Canadians went to the polls and elected a new Liberal government – was up 13.9 per cent over the same month the year before.

“The current election has made it very clear that housing is a top priority for Canadians,” Ahmed Hussen said in an interview with Newsfirst Multimedia. He noted that the government introduced a proposed housing plan during the election campaign that would build on a foundation based on an earlier Liberal housing policy.

Helping first-time buyers

In addition to provisions to build more affordable housing including rental units, the wide-ranging plan also includes new programs for “rent-to-own,” which “should give more first-time home buyers, especially young Canadians, the ability to buy their first home,” said Hussen.

“We’ll also be implementing a promise to introduce a first-time home buyer tax-free savings account,” he continued, noting that account holders will be able to put in up to \$40,000 tax-free as a down payment. At the same time, he said the federal government will be continuing a first-time home buyer incentive program to help with first-time home



Federal Minister of Housing, Diversity and Inclusion Ahmed Hussen says Ottawa will be coming to the rescue of home buyers beleaguered by inflated prices with new incentive programs. (File photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

purchases.

Funds for cities and towns

As well as these programs focused on families and individuals, Hussen said Liberal government programs introduced during the Covid pandemic are making significant sums available to towns and cities for “100 per cent federally-funded rapid housing solutions for the most vulnerable in our communities, including the City of Montreal, which got money to build over 312 new permanent affordable housing units for the most vulnerable residents of Montreal.”

One of the persistent problems that officials from certain municipalities like Montreal have expressed has been their inability to put together a “bank” of purchased properties to be developed into low-cost or social housing, because of the steep prices now being demanded in a very competitive real estate market.

Municipalities and housing

With this in mind, Hussen said his ministry

wants to set up a \$4 billion accelerator fund to “incentivize municipalities to build more affordable housing, to build more housing supply and to overcome some of the barriers to building more housing. That includes, for example, helping municipalities purchase land, overcoming some of the other hurdles.

“And we want to make sure there is more supply of housing in Canada so that we can meet the really high demand for housing. So, that \$4 billion fund will be application-based, and we will encourage municipalities to do everything that they can to bring forth measures that will encourage more housing supply fast.”

‘We need more housing’

Hussen said this measure and others currently being offered by the federal government will encourage “and really help municipalities overcome some of their challenges. We need more housing supply in Canada, we need more affordable housing.

“We also need more mixed housing and we

need more housing built around transit. All of those things encouraging more accessibility and energy-efficiency in housing projects are something we have supported in the past, but we will be able to even more with the commitments we made during the election.”

Foreign home investment ban

Hussen reiterated that the Liberal government plans to honour a pledge made by the Liberals prior to the September election that they would introduce a two-year ban on investment by non-Canadians in home ownership as one of several means to deal with the problem of housing affordability in Canada.

“We promised a two-year ban on foreign investment – not foreign ownership – moving forward,” he explained. The proposed restriction would be an attempt by Ottawa to calm the Canadian housing market, which soared during the Covid-19 pandemic and has yet to cool down, while inflation takes a toll on the stability of the country's economy.



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OPINION & Editorial



Despite abysmal voter turnout in municipal election, there's a silver lining to the cloud

Women will outnumber men on city council for first time in Laval's history

As far as recent history is concerned, voter turnout in most major Canadian cities, local elections can accurately be described as anemic. This past November 7th, in Laval, just 28% of registered voters went to the polls, giving

33 year-old Stéphane Boyer (Mouvement lavallois) a landslide victory in the city's mayoral election. Boyer added 14 of the 21 council seats to his roster of the city's administration for the next four years.

According to official returns, The 88,176 voters, out of a registered total of 311,562, who did turn out, did their civic duty, but the more unsettling fact is that a whopping 223,386 played hooky from voting school. The overall turnout reflects a drop of 8% from the 2017 election.

At final count, Boyer's 36,620 votes (41.5%) strongly outpaced his nearest rivals, Parti Laval's Michel Trottier at 22,188 (25.2%), and Action Laval's Sophie Trottier at 21,300 (24.2%) The support expressed at the ballot box for the other 5 mayoral candidates all descended into single digit returns of 4.7% for Michel Poissant, 2% for Pierre Anthian of Ma ville maintenant, and 1.1%, 0.9%, 0.4% for independents Nicole Lemire, Redouane Yahmi, Helene Goupil respectively.

New look of council

Of note, the make-up of Laval city council for the next four years will have a new face to showcase and a potentially fresh outlook, coming from a breakthrough for the women who took the plunge and ran for public office. Of the 21 seats, 11 will be occupied by women, a 52.4% majority, reflecting a first time that women will outnumber men around the decision-making table. Eight of these women will represent the newly minted Boyer administration. The new magistrate's eight women councilors represent nearly 60% of the 14 Mouvement lavallois candidates elected across the island.

For many observers, the election signaled a historic repudiation of the warm embrace that characterized the Vaillancourt/Demers era. But in a larger sense, it also proved that most Lavalers didn't care either way. The question of why municipal turnout is in such low numbers, in all sorts of elections, has become a perennial one: citizens caught up working longer hours and in thrall to handheld electronic distraction,

seem unconcerned about who runs their city.

In academia, turnout is a question mostly tackled by political scientists who look at factors that might encourage people to vote in greater numbers. Perhaps more campaign spending on behalf of and by challengers, shifting local elections to coincide with national contests, and making non-partisan elections partisan are all factors that could drive higher turnout.

But this is also partly erroneous because we saw tons of election publicity lining our streets from every angle and extensive coverage in local newspapers. Still, the decline in city voting appears to be real. The high and then precipitously declining percentage of registered voters in city elections who vote is wholly unlike the relatively steady trends that have prevailed in national elections, although there's room for improvement even there. And this fact is especially concerning because who turns out in local elections might actually matter more.

Does turnout matter?

As some political commentators have noted, voter turnout in municipal elections makes relatively little difference because the preferences of non-voters do not differ markedly from the preferences of voters, and there is little evidence to suggest that increasing or decreasing turnout would change who wins and losses.

But when it comes to local voting, turnout is uneven. And consequential. Low turnout locally is uneven in terms of race, class, age and education attainment. Citizens pay more attention to federal or provincial elections in part because the candidates represent opposing moral/ideological stances. The narrative matters, and voters are the protagonists. But local elections in recent years no longer emphatically ask voters to declare what sort of Lavaller by the way they vote. A problem no doubt exacerbated by the decline in local newspapers and television news.

Gender equality? When women do run, they win—but they do so “backwards and in high heels,” as the saying goes. Definitely a women's victory in this election.

Men are now lagging behind in Council. Let's assess a performance premium for women: Do women candidates have a quality advantage over their male competitors, especially in terms of prior political experience? And what about assessing candidate quality from public speak-

ing to personal integrity? Women who won scored high on the quality scale making a strong case that the candidate field is comprised of mostly high-quality women.

Groups supporting women candidates do matter in a candidate-centered system. They emphasize empowerment, combining “you can win” messages with reminders that women's voices improve outcomes—the same instrumental reasoning used by international policy-makers and philanthropists.

The future beckons

How the 11-woman majority on the governing council of Quebec's third largest city will pan out remains to be seen. As these women spring from the ideological base (if municipal politics can actually have one) of three different parties, will the measures enacted be the result of partisan conduct or can citizens look forward to a coalition of women from all three parties intent on advancing and promoting the needs of all Laval residents from a perspective different than that of men, perhaps ushering in a new approach to municipal governance.

Can it get any worse than what has been tried and often found wanting in Laval municipal politics for the last 56 years of male-dominated administrations? The next four years might shed sufficient light on all this. In the meantime, try not to fight city hall ... you can't win, but you can give the women of the day on council your reasonable support. Show up at council meetings once-in-a-while and let them know you care.

And one more thing. What will the city's executive committee, the prime mover behind most municipal measures and policies, reflect in its membership? Will the make-up respect the new reality of more women than men on council, and thus there should be more women than men on the committee? No word yet from mayor Boyer, as TLN's calls to his office enquiring on this issue were not answered at press time. Time will tell if the group that shapes most of Laval's municipal policies will have a majority of women in it, out of respect for a majority of women on council.

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ANGRY? FRUSTRATED? ANNOYED?



#NewsMatters:

The National Assembly Report

By Raquel Fletcher

COVID-19: An end in sight?

The Quebec government anticipates removing most COVID-19 health measures currently in place once 80 per cent of children aged 5 to 11 are fully vaccinated.

“When you add people between five and eleven years old, it changes the picture completely,” says Premier François Legault.

Health Canada approved the use of Pfizer-BioNTech’s pediatric vaccine last Friday. Quebec will unveil its plans this week to give children one dose of the vaccine by Christmas.

Approximately 88 per cent of the current eligible population of people 12 years old and over are fully vaccinated in Quebec. This week, the province will open up bookings for people 70 and over, as well as people who received two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, to receive a third booster shot.

The pandemic and the flu

Health Minister Christian Dubé is encouraging Quebecers who want to get a flu shot this year to make an appointment as soon as possible.

Due to a lack of volunteers to administer flu and COVID-19 shots during the Christmas holidays, availability for appointments might be limited, he says.

“With influenza and with kids that we’re going to vaccinate very soon (for COVID-19), I can tell you that in December, I will not have as many vaccinators that we did at the height of the crisis this summer,” the minister told reporters at the National Assembly.

Deflecting blame at coroner’s inquest

A lawyer representing families of COVID-19 victims in Quebec long-term homes slammed former health minister Danielle McCann for

deflecting blame at a coroner’s inquest looking into deaths during the first wave of the pandemic.

Last Thursday, McCann testified that the previous Liberal government cut hundreds of management positions in the province’s CHSLDs, leading to major communication breakdowns between the ministry and workers on the ground.

The families of victims are not satisfied with the minister’s testimony, said lawyer Patrick Martin-Menard, who represents the families of six victims. “It seems there is a shoveling of responsibility towards the establishments. And that is quite disturbing.”

The return of the Nordiques?

After announcing a plan to get more Quebec hockey players into the NHL, Premier François Legault says there might be a role for the government to play in bringing back the Nordiques to Quebec City.

The premier has already spoken to NHL commissioner, Gary Bettman. “I told him about our interest in a return of the Nordiques. He told me he was open to meeting with us,” Legault told reporters Friday.

He added that Finance Minister Eric Girard, still a fan of the Nordiques 25 years after the team moved to Colorado, would be speaking with possible investors, including Quebecor CEO Pierre Karl Peladeau.

Last week, Legault announced former NHL player Marc Denis will head a committee to study why young people are less interested in hockey than previous generations and why fewer Quebecers are playing in the sport’s biggest league.

Raquel Fletcher is Global News’ National Assembly Reporter

Daycare workers considering indefinite general strike if deal is not reached

Big headache for parents

Thousands of public daycare workers in Quebec walked off the job Monday for a four day strike till Thursday November 25th, after contract talks with the provincial government broke down last week.

“After a week of intensive negotiations, the representatives of [early childhood] employees ... and the employers’ party failed to come to an agreement and ended talks,” the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) union wrote in a Friday press release announcing the strike.

All the unions representing daycare workers in the province are going on strike to once again push for higher salaries, the main sticking point in the talks.

An indefinite general strike could also be called as early as this Wednesday for some of those employees.

No contract for more than year and a half

Public daycare workers in Quebec have been without a government contract for more than a year and a half and voted to start rolling strikes in September.

“The government stubbornly refuses to offer a salary catch-up for all employees, which we have been demanding from the very start of the negotiations,” said Lucie Longchamps, vice-president at the FSSS-CSN, in the statement.

On Monday, the government said it was willing to pay 20 per cent more to educators who work

32-36 hours a week. The pay increase jumps to 23 per cent if they agree to work 40 hours a week, bringing their hourly pay to more than \$30.

Right now, educators in Quebec start at \$19 an hour and can earn up to a maximum of \$25.18.

While the Treasury Board has agreed to give the same offer to specialized educators, it does not apply to other support staff, such as administrative, kitchen and maintenance workers.

Food staff in public daycares currently make a starting wage of \$17.56. Non-educator attendants make \$15.92 and teaching aids make \$16.16.

The government said it would increase their pay by nine per cent, but not more, saying it has to be fair to civil employees who do those same jobs in other sectors.

The CSQ says that is insufficient and is asking for 13 to 20 per cent raises for these workers.

Quebec’s family minister, Mathieu Lacombe, said last week that his government “really wants to solve” the issue, acknowledging that educators were not paid enough for their skills.

“The negotiation is not over. The unions have demands; the government has demands,” he said. “A negotiation is a conversation, and here we are in the middle of the race.”

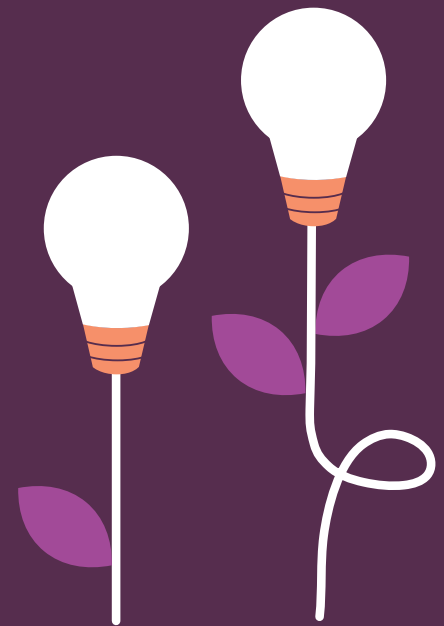
Meanwhile parents have been scrambling to find alternative arrangements for their children.

If no progress is made in negotiations this week, unions say they will push for an unlimited general strike.

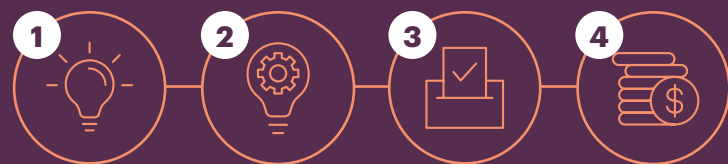
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Mayor Stéphane Boyer announces new executive-committee

Earlier this week, newly-elected Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer announced the four city councillors who will be sitting on the executive-committee (C.E.), a well as three others who will sit as associate executive-committee members.

"I am particularly proud of the quality of the people that we have been able to bring together," Mayor Boyer said in a statement issued on Monday. "I can assure you that our committee will always be listening to the needs of the population, while also delivering projects bringing people together for the Laval community."

Further executive-committee appointments will be announced in the coming weeks. According to the city, the appointments to the new executive-committee managed to achieve gender parity (four men and four women, including Mayor Boyer). See table .01:

In addition to this, Mayor Boyer announced two more changes to procedures at Laval city hall affecting city councillors. (However, the administration says the changes will be applied only on a case-by-case basis.)

The mayor's office will be holding meetings-of-the-whole,

Laval invites residents to submit ideas for upcoming budget

City of Laval's newly-elected administration invites all residents to submit their ideas as to how the city should be spending its money next year, or even how it might achieve better savings, as Laval prepares to table its 2022 budget at city hall.

A pilot project announced by the city last August now allows everyone who lives in Laval to participate in the formulation of the budget. The city is using \$600,000 from a surplus to facilitate the pre-budget consultation.

"With this citizen participation tool, Laval residents will be directly involved in the decision-making for projects that will be taking place near us," says newly-elected mayor Stéphane Boyer. "They have a chance to influence what will be taking place on the



territory while deciding on the use of public space.

"We feel certain that the knowledge of areas that the citizens have, will lead to inspiring and creative ideas. I feel that this will allow the population to feel involved in the decisions that we take for them, and henceforth also with them."

There are two ways to submit an idea: (1) Fill out a short form online from Nov. 18 to Jan. 30. (2) Register and participate in virtual idea workshops on Jan. 18, 24 and 26.

Projects that will be seriously considered are those in line with socially-responsible commitments subject to certain criteria. Additional information is available on the city's website.

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- Social development
- Citizen services

Sandra El-Helou, Associate member

Senior citizens

- Women
- Youth

Alexandre Warnet, Associate member

Ecological transition

- Citizen participation

Table .01



Volunteers and supporters celebrate FILIA Day after a two-year hiatus

Guests included St-Laurent MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos and Sen. Leo Housakos



MARTIN C. BARRY
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For The Laval News
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For the first time in two years, volunteers and supporters of the Park Extension Association of Senior Citizens – better known as FILIA – gathered at the Château Royal in Laval on the afternoon of Sunday Nov. 21 for a celebration that everyone associated with the group has come to know as FILIA Day.

As has been the case for so many other organizations, COVID-19 sanitary restrictions made it impossible to hold FILIA Day last year. In keeping with a Greek community tradition, the event is held annually close to or on the actual date (Nov. 21) of the Presentation of the Theotokos.

There was wine, a multi-course meal, some great Greek music provided by a DJ, and a great mood settled down upon all the FILIA supporters.

Honoured guests

Among the guests were Senator Leo Housakos, Liberal MP for Saint-Laurent Emmanuella Lambropoulos, Montreal city councillor for Park Extension Mary Deros and Laval city councillor for L'Abord-à-Plouffe Vasilios Karidogiannis. Although she was unable to attend, Laval city councillor for Souvenir-Labelle Sandra El-Helou sent a letter of greeting and praise for FILIA which was read out.

"We are starting again because we have to start not only to celebrate FILIA Day, but people have to get used to beginning normal life again, especially the seniors who are a little more hesitant because they are concerned about Covid," said FILIA executive-director Johanna Tsoublekas.

New beginning for FILIA

Although the organizers welcomed more than 100 guests, they were far fewer than would normally be the case because of the restrictions. "This is a new beginning," Tsoublekas added. "We are very satisfied with the turnout."

Senator Housakos presented Tsoublekas with a Senate of Canada certificate of recognition for her exemplary leadership and dedication to community service.

"Johanna has given forty years of her life to community service, volunteerism – she represents the best of the best in the Hellenic community and the greater Montreal and Quebec communities," Housakos said in an interview. "As a Hellene, I'm so proud of her and of the hard work she puts in and what she's accomplished with FILIA in the service of helping senior citizens. It's just outstanding."

A common mission

The afternoon's featured speaker, Shield of Athena executive-director Melpa Kamateros, gave a detailed presentation on some of the difficulties that non-profit community organizations encounter. FILIA and Shield of Athena have worked together for years for a common purpose.

Deros said she too felt very proud of Tsoublekas's organization which was founded and remains based in Park Extension, even though it has gradually been establishing new roots in Chomedey/Laval where growing numbers of Park Extension Greeks are migrating.

She said FILIA played a key role assisting senior citizens during the Covid pandemic.



Special guests at last Sunday's FILIA Day included (from the left) Saint-Laurent MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos, Laval city councillor for L'Abord-à-Plouffe Vasilios Karidogiannis and his spouse Sheyda, Senator Leo Housakos, and Montreal city councillor for Park Extension Mary Deros and her spouse Peter. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



During the FILIA Day event last Sunday, executive-director Johanna Tsoublekas was presented with a Senate of Canada certificate of recognition by Senator Leo Housakos. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

"Our seniors were isolated and couldn't see their grandchildren or their children," said Deros. "But Johanna provided that human touch on a weekly basis, keeping everybody in touch and making sure they knew that everything was alright. So, I congratulate her for everything she does for the seniors in Park Ex and in Laval."

A growing impact in Laval

Karidogiannis said, "The needs are here as well, and we're happy to have Johanna and her organization here and we support her a hundred per cent. My council colleague, Mme El-Helou, is a huge supporter of her. Johanna is one of the ladies I have come to admire. She says things as they are, she finds out what is needed and she gets it done. She is a true force of nature."

While noting that Ottawa is always ready to provide FILIA with support when necessary, Emmanuella Lambropoulos said, "For all these years, Johanna Tsoublekas has been leading an extraordinary organization that does very important work in the community. It's important for all community leaders and all organizations and all Greeks who can afford it to support this organization."

To all my
Jewish Friends, wishing
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Long-awaited extension of Autoroute 19 sees light of day

Northward expansion expected to revitalize economy of Laval and North Shore region



RENATA ISOPO
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
For The Laval News • renata@newsfirst.ca

From left: Québec Transport Minister and Minister François Bonnardel, Laval Mayor Stéphane Boyer and Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada Mr. David Lametti

Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada David Lametti, on behalf of federal Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities Domenic Leblanc, and Québec Transport Minister and Minister responsible for l'Estrie François Bonnardel, were joined by Laval Mayor Stéphane Boyer, at a November 19, 2021 press conference held in Laval to announce the extension of Autoroute 19 between Laval and Bois-des-Filion.

Dignitaries from all three levels of government, including ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of the National Assembly and mayors of municipalities directly or indirectly impacted by the much-awaited and highly-desired highway project were present in large numbers to mark this important historical moment heralding the addition of 10-km to Autoroute 19, also known as Autoroute Papineau, which crosses the Rivière des Prairies the Papineau-Leblanc Bridge connecting Montréal's Ahuntsic-Cartierville borough to Duvernay in Laval.

After numerous years on hold, the project, begun in Eastern Laval, will relieve congestion between Montréal and Bois-des-Filion by widening Route 335 to three lanes, a continuation of A-19 from Autoroute 440 to the Athanase-David Bridge, spanning Rivière

des Mille Îles. Currently, nearly 34,000-55,000 vehicles use the Athanase-David Bridge daily.

The lands reserved for the project were expropriated in 1973 in anticipation of a future extension of A-19. That extension is now a virtual reality.

The first phase will stretch the 19 between Laval and Bois-des-Filion. This initial stage covering the construction of the Saint-Saëns interchange in Laval, is scheduled to start immediately and run until 2023. Work on other segments of the extended highway will follow.

Québec and Ottawa funding

The federal government pledged \$260.4 million for the work in 2019, based on \$520.9 million in eligible project costs. The Government of Quebec has kicked in with \$360 million. The entire project is estimated at \$500-\$600 million. The additions propose a new bridge east of the Athanase-David link, as well as new interchanges at Dagenais, des Laurentides, Mille Îles, and Adolphe-Chapleau.

The re-development of Autoroute 640 interchange, a 690-space incentive parking lot, and a terminus in the northeast quadrant of expressways 640 and 19 are also on the roster. Route 335 will be widened to three lanes in each direction, lanes for buses, electric vehicles and carpooling over the 10 kms between St. Martin Blvd. and Industriel in Bois-des-Filion.

The project also provides for noise barriers, the redevelopment and extension of the multi-purpose path for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as refurbished roads between St. Martin Blvd. East and Autoroute 440.

With palpable enthusiasm reigning in the conference venue, David Lametti stated that he had never seen so many journalists and guests at a press conference, apparently well-impressed with the full house at the event. Amongst the many people present, he thanked Quebec Transport Minister Bonnardel, federal MPs Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan) and Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin), and various North Shore mayors.

Lametti stated that he's "proud of this first phase in the construction of efficient and safe roads and in contributing to the economy, and community life." An apparent fan of the world's most beautiful game, the minister pointed to soccer activities as an important part of community life that will be positively affected by the enhanced transport services the completed highway project will provide for residents of the region. "The outcome," he concluded, "will be good jobs and business opportunities."

Crucial role for Québec

Québec minister Bonnardel described the province's crucial role in this massive project. "It is with great pleasure that I confirm the exten-

sion (widening) of Highway 19 between Laval and Bois-des-Filion," he said. "Finally, we begin the work. It's been 30-40 years in the making. This first step testifies to our government's commitment to improve mobility in the suburbs of the metropolitan region, and to contribute to the region's economic recovery. I had told my team that we wouldn't hold a press conference until we had a site where you're going to see tractors and workers about to start the work."

In Laval, Auteuil will have a street reconstructed over a stretch of approximately 1.2 Km that will lead to the widening and reconstruction of the roadway structure, the addition of closed drainage and bicycle paths to be completed by 2023. It will also permit the construction of a section of the 19 northbound for 1.45 km, a multi-use path, west links for Saint-Saens East.

The bill for the Papineau Highway is \$600 million. As for the other phases, 2022 will tell, since a timeline will be established to complete the intended project, according to Bonnardel.

Without exception, Minister Bonnardel emphasized the carbon neutrality of the entire project. This first segment will begin 2021 and last until 2023. "There will also be a bus terminus (19 and 640), a bicycle lane and a sidewalk for pedestrians, and 1.2 kilometers of new street lights. This Phase 1 of the construction will cost \$60 million which will be completed



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Ministers and Members of Parliament huddled for the exciting and historic event. (Photo: RENATA ISOPO)



From left: Mr. David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Mr. Angelo Iacono, Member of Parliament (Alfred-Pellan), Mrs. Annie Koutrakis, Member of Parliament (Vimy). (Photo: RENATA ISOPO)

in 2023." Minister Bonnardel thanked and gave credit to past ministers and politicians who were actively involved in moving this dossier forward.

Laval, others, on board

Recently-elected Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer, concurred with the Ministers, saying he was clearly thrilled that the project is finally on its way. "It's been talked about for at least 40 years," he stated, joking that "I probably wasn't born yet (when it was first conceived). "Transport and congestion are a necessity that must be resolved

and the importance of public transit in carrying out the work (is evident). We are no longer in the days of only building highways. You have to consider public transit and safety. I'm delighted that we are now thinking about pedestrians and cyclists when we build highways."

In an earlier press conference, federal MP Mario Laframboise added his view of the announced project: "We have listened to the people and we are delivering the goods. Highway 19 is moving ahead, finally. Our government is proud to carry out a project that will support economic vitality, improve travel,

reduce road congestion and thus give a better quality of life to the citizens of my region."

Other voices have also welcomed the good news of this highway project, among them Christopher Skeete, Member of the National Assembly for Sainte-Rose: "Today's announcement marks the start of a new chapter related to mobility in Laval and surroundings. It's with great pride that we welcome the unfolding of this project. The reconfiguration of the Saint-Saens interchange will improve the daily lives of people who use this very busy sector."

In order to execute the work, partial or

complete, there will be closures in the evening on Route 335, Saint-Saens Street East, and Perron Avenue in the upcoming weeks. The Quebec Ministry of Transport will advise in advance. Detour signposts, including a temporary intersection which will be built at the Route 335 intersection and Avenue des Perron.

This project was the subject of a commitment by the Government of Canada for a contribution of \$260 million through the New Building Canada Fund, Territorial Infrastructure Component - National and Regional Projects.

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Shield of Athena thanks Newsfirst for raising awareness of domestic abuse

In Quebec, one woman a month has been killed since the start of Covid pandemic



MARTIN C. BARRY
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
For The Laval News
marty@newsfirst.ca

Newsfirst Multimedia co-publisher George Guzman was one of 20 Montreal-area news media influencers who were presented with certificates of appreciation last week by officials from Shield of Athena in recognition of their efforts to raise awareness of domestic violence during the Covid pandemic.

Violence soared

As Shield of Athena executive-director Melpa Kamateros explained during an interview prior to the Victims and Survivors of Crime Week event held at Rotisserie Panama in Park Extension on Nov. 18, domestic violence against women increased in Quebec in the more than 18 months since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Underlining the reality, Shield of Athena compiled a list of the names of 24 women and girls who were killed since May 2020, two of whom were from Laval and seven from Montreal – including one in Park Extension.

Traumatic stories

“It’s one woman a month who has been killed,” said Kamateros. “With this terrible situation of Covid, it’s just reinforced everything and there have been many more murders.”

In a press release, Shield of Athena says, “Many victims have had traumatic experiences but it is only in the telling of their stories that we can raise awareness and prevention.”

According to the organization, during this period of global pandemic, access to services and support for many victims has become very difficult. And in cases of violence against women, there has been an upsurge, particularly during this period when victims have been more isolated and vulnerable.

Yet another statistic...

Shield of Athena acknowledges the role that various media in Montreal have played during the pandemic to raise awareness of domestic violence “and thanks them for their constant support to victims, especially during the pandemic,” they said. “Without their assistance, many could have died and become yet another statistic.”

Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, whose riding in Laval is home to a large number of the Montreal region’s Greeks, delivered a message sent by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who is the Member of Parliament for Papineau.



Seen here with Shield of Athena’s Melpa Kamateros and Chris Ann Nakis, Newsfirst Multimedia journalist Martin C. Barry (centre) accepted the group’s certificate of recognition on behalf of Newsfirst co-publisher George Guzman. (Photo: Newsfirst Multimedia)

Message from PM Trudeau

“He wanted to be here himself, because this is his riding,” she said. “And he’s also a great friend of Shield of Athena and the work they’ve been doing for many years. Unfortunately, he’s in the United States right now and he was unable to be here himself. And so, his office reached out to me and asked if I would be able to deliver his message on his behalf”

Koutrakis praised Shield of Athena, especially for its diversity. “They’ve hired front-line workers to be there for the women and children who flee violence,” she said, noting that the group has also gone to great lengths to make its services available in a wide range of languages.

“I’m really happy with the work that they’ve been doing. For our government to be able to partner with organizations such as Shield of Athena which take a leadership role means a lot not only to the Hellenic community, but also to women across all communities.”

‘A front-line role’

In his message, Prime Minister Trudeau said he felt honoured to be able to formally recognize the crucial role played by mainstream and ethnic media who supported Shield of Athena’s campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence against women during the pandemic.

“Shield of Athena is the perfect example of an organization playing a front-line role to help women, children and the communities to break the cycle of psychological, emotional, verbal and economic violence,” Trudeau said. “I would



Left, Shield of Athena board president Chris Ann Nakis speaks during the group’s event to thank Montreal-area media at Rotisserie Panama in Park Extension on Nov. 18. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



From the left, Shield of Athena board president Chris Ann Nakis, executive-director Melpa Kamateros, Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis and board member Eramelinda Boquer. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

like to take this opportunity to thank the ethnic media for their continued support and work to address violence against women, especially during the pandemic.

‘Ending gender-based violence’

“During Victims and Survivors of Crime Week, let us reaffirm our commitment to ending gender-based violence here in Canada and around the world,” he added. “I invite Canadians to consider what we can all do through our

words and actions to end gender-based violence and build a better future world.”

Québec solidaire MNA for Laurier-Dorion Andrés Fontecilla underscored the fact that one of the femicides was in Park Extension. On July 19 this year, Rajunder Prabheed Kaur, age 32, was murdered by her partner, leaving behind two orphaned children. “These women are killed because they are women,” he said, noting that media today are finally acknowledging this truth.



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By Martin C. Barry

Teen arrested following gunshot outside Laval high school

The Laval Police say they made an arrest recently in conjunction with an attempted kidnapping, firearms and assault incident outside a high school in Sainte-Rose.

Two teenagers were beaten as they were coming out of classes on Nov. 16 by a group of young people who fired a shot during the altercation, ultimately leading to a large police operation to arrest one of the suspects that evening.

According to Laval Police, it all started at 3:04 p.m. when a car stopped on the grounds of the Latour pavilion of Curé-Antoine-Labelle High School.

The suspects attacked two young men aged 17

years, including one who sought to intervene to defend his friend, said Stéphanie Beshara, spokeswoman for the Laval police.

Both victims were beaten, to the point where one of them had to be taken to hospital to treat injuries deemed minor. A shot was also fired in the air by one of the suspects during the altercation. Police say several witnesses described the suspect vehicle and license plate number.

They later tracked down the vehicle to Laval's Sainte-Dorothée neighbourhood, and the suspect was questioned overnight. To try to find out more about his role. Police said the incident was rooted in a conflict between those involved.



16-year-old Laval girl missing, and she could be in Montreal

The Laval Police are asking for the public's help to find 16-year-old Sabine Ghammouri, who has been reported missing for more than two weeks.

The LPD says Ghammouri made "worrying remarks about her safety" prior to going missing. She is 5'4" (1.65 metres) tall, has brown eyes, black and red hair, speaks French and wears several earrings in her ears.

She left her home on Oct. 31 and didn't return, according to the LPD, and may be in Montreal. Anyone with information about her whereabouts is urged to contact the LPD through its Info-Line at 450-662-INFO (4636) or at 911. The file number is LVL file 211031-073.



Laval Police discredit former officer's crime analysis comments

The Laval Police Department issued a statement last week discrediting comments made by a former LPD officer about a recent murder in Montreal, while also disassociating the force from the ex-LPD policeman at the same time.

Former LPD officer Daniel Cléroux had made the comments on a Montreal TV station's morning program, when he maintained that a 16-year-old youth who was shot to death in an incident in Montreal's Saint-Michel district didn't fit the profile of a gang member because of his race which was white.

Following the comments, a number of users of social media accused Cléroux of racism, saying he was stereotyping the situation. A spokesperson for the LPD said the force wished to distance itself from its former employee.

"In no way does the SPL advocate the comments made by Mr. Cléroux," the LPD said in a statement to the Montreal Francophone daily Le Devoir, adding that the comments "don't represent our values or our thinking."

According to the LPD, Daniel Cléroux retired from their ranks around 15 years ago to become a police and crime analyst, and "he no longer has anything to do with us."

Surveillance images show suspect in Laval daycare arson

The Laval Police are asking for the public's help to identify a suspect wanted in conjunction with an arson attack at the Les Soleils du monde daycare centre for children in Laval's Sainte-Dorothée neighbourhood.

Surveillance footage from Saturday Nov. 13 at 6:54 p.m. showed a suspect approaching the daycare and placing what looked like an incendiary item on the window.

According to police, the suspect quickly left the scene in the direction of a wooded area, between the CPE and Parc-école Pierre-Laporte.

The suspect is a Caucasian male. He was wearing a gray tuque, a gray hoodie under a dark blue coat and black sneakers with orange laces. The Laval Police noted that this was the third criminal incident to take place at this address recently. As well, there were fires in August and in October.

Anyone with information about the suspect or the arson incident is asked to call the LPD's Info-Line at 450 662 INFO (4636) or 911. The file number is LVL 211109-023.



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DIRECT? ANSWERS

From Wayne & Tamara

Old Habits

My boyfriend of one year and I moved in together. We are both 34. I am single, and he is divorced with a 7-year-old son (split custody).

The relationship between the three of us is fine, but now I'm worried about my relationship with my boyfriend. We're having a terrible time communicating.

Since I moved into his home, my boyfriend has stopped cleaning up the way he used to. Before I moved in we discussed finances and sharing responsibilities around the house. Now it's like he has completely forgotten those talks.

If I buy groceries, he eats half of everything within two days. There are soda cans lying around our bedroom, which will continue to sit there because I am not a maid. He likes a clean towel every day, so now I have seven to wash this week.

Two days ago his truck broke down and he rented one. I usually wake up at 6 a.m., but at 5:15 he flicked on the lights. He said he wanted me to drive him to the rental agency to drop off the truck. I asked why he didn't ask the night before. He said he was too tired. I don't mind doing favors for people, but this rude awakening got us off to a bad start. Now I'm the bad guy. He says he won't lift a finger next time I ask him for a favor.

I have been known in the past for spoiling boyfriends, so this time around I made sure I wouldn't do it. I do my fair share, but I'm also allowing him to make his own mistakes. I think he is resentful of this. His ex-wife waited on him hand and foot. His mom does the same.

I feel like I'm in a constant battle with him and it's tiring. When I moved in, we discussed how we would share. Now it looks like he is renegeing. Just how many more talks do I need to have with him? I thought we had settled this already!

He took me shopping for wedding rings two months ago and discussed his intentions with my parents. He introduces me to everyone as his fiancée. He told his ex-wife, who is getting

remarried this year, we will be getting hitched next year.

I don't think it's an example of shacking up or "why buy the cow." Or maybe now that I'm moved in, it is. You know what? With the way he's acting, I don't know if our wedding day will ever come because I'm sick and tired already!

Yvette

Yvette, your boyfriend's behavior is practically in his genes.

He was born to a woman who catered to him and showed him what to expect. He married a woman who filled the same role, at least for a while. He spotted you, a woman with a tendency to spoil boyfriends.

He can take care of himself. He was cleaning house before you moved in. Why has he stopped? Because the maid has arrived. He has done just enough to get things back to his old familiar pattern. Why should he change? He likes things this way, and it works for him. He doesn't have a problem, you do.

Why don't you have an engagement ring yet? He is waiting to see if you accept the role he has carved out for you. He is waiting to see if you accept the apron, like a horse trainer waiting to see if the horse will accept the bit. He is not going to argue with you, he will just wait to see if you fill the bill.

You've seen the future—years of arguing and struggle wasted on this issue. Before the wedding people are on their best behavior. If you accept a ring from this man, you won't just be signing a marriage license. You'll be signing a job contract.

Wayne & Tamara

Wayne & Tamara Mitchell are the authors of YOUR OTHER HALF (www.yourotherhalf.com)

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HOROSCOPE

Week of **NOVEMBER 28 TO DECEMBER 4, 2021**

The luckiest signs this week:

SAGITTARIUS, CAPRICORN AND AQUARIUS

ARIES
You'll be in an excellent position to lead some major projects. You'll also be inspired to make a few drastic changes at work. Your significant other will be incredibly thoughtful and romantic this week.

TAURUS
You'll receive some good news about your health or that of a loved one. You'll also see an unexpected increase in income. What's more, you'll likely improve your work-life balance.

GEMINI
You'll find yourself the focus of everyone's attention. You might also receive some form of recognition for your achievements. This will be a source of immense pride and give you a confidence boost.

CANCER
You should keep an eye on what you eat during the holiday season and drink alcohol in moderation. You might experience an upset stomach this week.

LEO
You'll have a lot of errands to run, and your phone won't stop ringing. You might find yourself shuttling people around more than once. Your loved ones will start inviting you to parties as plans get underway.

VIRGO
You'll have plenty of ideas for gifts and holiday parties. You'll need to prepare a budget to assess their feasibility, however, so that you're not tight on cash later. You'll undoubtedly be very generous.

LIBRA
You're a spontaneous person. When an idea comes to you, you can basically consider it done. You'll feel a strong urge to get out of the house and socialize with friends. You'll also get involved with a charitable cause.

SCORPIO
You might be annoyed by your work schedule this holiday season. With a bit of patience and determination, however, you'll manage to pull some strings. You'll also need to show that you're driven.

SAGITTARIUS
If you're feeling on the verge of a burnout, try to get some rest right away. If nothing else, this will give you a clearer picture of your future. You may want to embrace a more spiritual approach to life.

CAPRICORN
It's not always easy to balance family life and work. Time is in short supply, so you'll need to manage yours with great care. You'll also be faced with a variety of unforeseen situations.

AQUARIUS
You'll have the opportunity to plan a trip with loved ones. You'll want to do things differently for the holidays, so be sure to get started on the preparations. You'll finally discover your passion.

PISCES
You'll try to hide your sensitivity. However, your loved ones will be very supportive if you're not in the right state of mind. Don't be afraid to show your emotions if you need to. Any changes that arise will be for the better.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 104

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12				13			14				
15				16			17				
18				19	20		21				
			22	23			24	25	26		
27	28	29	30				31	32			
33						34					
35						36					
37				38	39						
			40				41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48			49		50		51		
52					53				54		
55					56				57		

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ACROSS

- Catcher's glove
- To's mate
- Milky gemstone
- Lobe's site
- Annoy
- Skeleton component
- Toupee
- Mellowed
- Wilier
- Sloop's cloth
- Looking at
- Convent denizen
- Knock down
- Big slipknot
- Decreases
- Extinguishes
- Sports center
- Sharpest
- Bunk
- Resound
- Broadway blinker

DOWN

- Crowds
- Worshiped one
- Actor Danza
- Ash or spruce
- "A ___ Good Men"
- Dried grape
- Church item
- Uttered
- ___ in a poke
- Bubbly beverage
- Was ahead
- Go back over
- Disregarded
- No problem!
- Have a ___ for news
- Applies
- Brood's home
- Loose flesh
- Folk tales
- Depend
- Make a boo-boo
- Thickens
- Number of fingers
- Baseball call
- Water obstruction
- Smaller
- Pony
- Not any
- Probability
- Deteriorated
- Rework text
- Trims
- Formal address
- Expert
- Hairstyling goo
- Duffer's goal

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once.

Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: **You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.**

PUZZLE NO. 829

				1			2	
			8	6			7	
			4				1	9
	6	4	7					
8						5		7
	9	5						
6	2			5				4
	4		1			2		
		1		9				8

Last Issues' Answers

CROSSWORDS

E	S	S		S	T	A	R		A	L	S	O
C	O	O		C	O	P	E		B	E	E	N
H	A	M		R	E	E	F		R	A	C	E
O	P	E	R	A		E	R	U	P	T	S	
			T	O	M			C	R	O	P	
A	R	I	D			H	E	A	T	E	R	S
R	U	M		C	R	I	E	D		Y	E	T
K	N	E	E	L	E	D			L	E	V	Y
				V	A	S	E		P	E	T	
S	A	L	A	M	I			R	I	O	T	S
P	R	O	D		S	E	M	I		O	R	E
A	C	N	E		T	R	E		T	U	X	
S	H	E	D		S	A	N	D		H	E	Y

Sudoku

3	5	7	4	1	2	6	9	8
9	4	8	7	6	5	1	2	3
1	2	6	3	9	8	4	7	5
6	1	4	8	3	9	7	5	2
8	7	5	2	4	1	3	6	9
2	3	9	5	7	6	8	1	4
4	6	3	9	5	7	2	8	1
5	8	1	6	2	3	9	4	7
7	9	2	1	8	4	5	3	6



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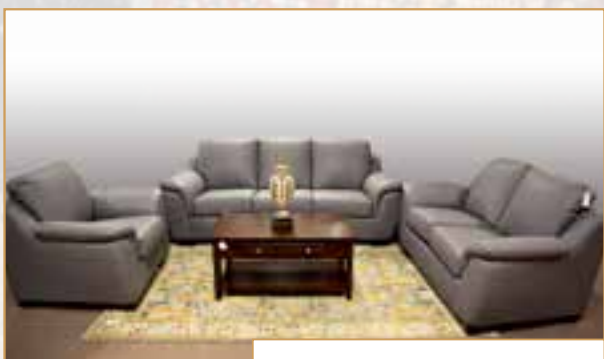


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Chair	\$875	Sale	\$595



Elegant Sofa & Loveseat

Sofa	\$1 485	Sale	\$995
Loveseat	\$1 325	Sale	\$895



Elegant Sofa & Loveseat

Sofa	\$1 599	Sale	\$1 299
Loveseat	\$1 399	Sale	\$1 099



Genuine Leather Tufted Sofa & Loveseat

Sofa	\$2 798	Sale	\$1 895
Loveseat	\$2 449	Sale	\$1 595



Available in Choice of Colours & Fabrics

Sofa	\$1 275	Sale	\$895
Loveseat	\$1 175	Sale	\$795
Chair	\$875	Sale	\$595



3 piece COFFEE & END TABLES

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