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STL's new all-electric garage



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From the left, Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, Sainte-Rose CAQ MNA Christopher Skeete, Quebec Deputy Premier Geneviève Guilbault, Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer and STL general manager Guy Picard turn the first shovels of earth and gravel to mark the beginning of work on the transit agency's future all-electric garage. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

MNA Alice Abou-Khalil opens her office



The Laval News EXCLUSIVE

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Holiday section: pages 9-12

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ENVIRONMENT: the challenge of the 21st century

- › \$3.8M to boost electrical conversion of residential oil heating systems
- › Continue to acquire wetlands and forest lots of interest



Work begins on Société de transport de Laval's new all-electric garage

However, \$246 million bill may rise to \$308 million with inflated construction costs

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for The Laval News
marty@newsfirst.ca

Federal, provincial and municipal officials were on hand last week at the Société de transport de Laval's headquarters for the announcement of major new public transit funding, while at the same time turning the first shovels of gravel for the construction of the STL's new 100 per cent electric garage.

Quebec Deputy Premier Geneviève Guilbault, who is also the Minister of Transport, announced \$142 million in new funding to help the STL reach its goal of buying just electric-powered buses by the year 2025.



STL general manager Guy Picard (seen with Transport Minister Geneviève Guilbault) said the transit agency is facing steep construction cost increases because of economic problems that include inflation (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

A growing electric fleet

And since the electric fleet will need supporting infrastructure, the STL is expanding its garage area by 50 per cent, while adding a 20-megawatt electrical input said to be several times the electrical power used at Laval's Place Bell.

When completed, the all-electric garage will have the capacity to accommodate 145 electric buses. In all, the STL will be spending \$246 million on the project, a significant amount of which will come from other sources, including the federal government.

Inflationary challenges

In the meantime, the STL, like other public transit agencies in Quebec, is facing enormous increases in costs for development projects because of mounting challenges for the province's economy, such as astronomical inflation and overall instability in global finances.

"We are facing, just as with any other infrastructure project, cost increases," STL general manager Guy Picard told journalists during a question-and-answer session at the STL garage. He said the transit agency currently is dealing with 25 – 50 per cent increases in costs for the construction projects it undertakes, although he insisted the STL is managing to keep the situation under control.

Will open in 2025

According to Picard, the electric garage project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2025, is on schedule in spite of the anticipated cost hikes. He told journalists that the \$246 million originally set aside for the project may rise to \$308 million. While Quebec and Ottawa are footing most of the bill, the STL is committed to shouldering 15 per cent (at least



Quebec Transport Minister and Deputy Premier Geneviève Guilbault addresses guests and media last week at STL headquarters. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

\$18 million) of the eventual total cost.

In addition to the sums provided by Quebec, the federal government is also contributing to the project. "Mass transit plays an essential role in the attainment of our climate goals," said Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis who was accompanied by fellow Laval-area MPs Fayçal El-Khoury and Angelo Iacono.

Important step: Koutrakis



The federal government allotted more than \$85 million for the STL's garage expansion, noted Vimy MP Annie Koutrakis. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

"That is why I am pleased to be here today for the start of work on the enlargement of the Société de transport de Laval's garage, to which our government allotted more than \$85 million in federal funds," she added "This is an important step towards electrification of the city's bus fleet, which will help reduce its carbon footprint while encouraging sustainable development."

"What's important to see in the beginning of work on this garage is a vision for the development of Laval," said Mayor Stéphane Boyer. "Here, road transport contributes 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions on our territory. There is no doubt whatever that the future lies in the development of green, efficient and easily

accessible mass transit. I congratulate the STL for all the efforts it is making, and of course I thank the Quebec government for its generous financial participation."

Improved mobility: Skeete

"This project will allow for the modernization of infrastructures in order to offer to Laval residents better mobility," said Sainte-Rose CAQ MNA Christopher Skeete, who is Minister Responsible for the Laval Region in the Legault government.

"Electrification of transport is necessary to reach our ambitious goals to address the issue of climate change. I would like to point out the work done by the team at the STL, which is showing itself to be proactive and greener, while finding better solutions in mass transit."



Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer (left) said the STL's growth is a sign of ongoing progress towards developing a more prosperous City of Laval. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

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OPINION & Editorial



Let's put 'Holy' back into Christmas, out of respect for Christians who celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas Day

Everyone else can have their Holiday that they choose to celebrate

Nearly global change from wishing fellow Canadians "Merry Christmas" to wishing them "Happy Holidays" is a very significant development in Canadian life and around the world.

Advocates of "Happy Holidays" argue that it's no big deal at all, and that advocates of "Merry Christmas" are making a mountain out of a molehill, especially when advocates say that the substitution of "Happy Holidays" is part of a "war on Christianity." Oh! They mean "Holydays"! Semantics. But the "Happy Holidays" advocates want it both ways. They dismiss opponents as frantic while, at the same time, relentlessly pushing to rid us of "Merry Christmas."

So, then, which is it? Is the substitution of "Happy Holidays" for "Merry Christmas" important or not? The answer is obvious. It is very important. That's why the anti "Merry Christmas" crowd has worked so hard to make this greeting a thing of the past. And, it seems they have been extraordinarily successful.

I have been wished "Happy Holidays" by every waiter and waitress in every eatery I have dined; by young people who welcome me when I go into a school; by flight crew on every one of my flights; and by every individual I have dealt with on the phone. When I respond "Thank you. Merry Christmas," I sometimes sense that I have actually created some tension. While many of those to whom I wish "Merry Christmas" may actually be happy that someone felt free to utter the quasi-censored C-word, all the sensitivity training that they've had to undergo creates dissension or conflict.

"Christmas" has also been eliminated by many — probably the majority — of our elementary schools, high schools, and universities. Thus, for example, they no longer have a "Christmas vacation," but a "Winter vacation," or "Winter break."

The opponents of "Merry Christmas" and other

uses of the word "Christmas" or "Holyday" know exactly what they are doing. They are sly when they dismiss defenders of "Merry Christmas" as fabricating some "war on Christianity."

Of course, it's a war on Christianity — or, more precisely, a war on the religious nature of Canada. The secular movement in Canada, like that of Europe and elsewhere, wants to create a thoroughly non-religious society. Unfortunately, most people do not realize that the 'secularists' believes in secularism just as fervently as religious Christians believe in Christ.

That's why "Merry Christmas" so bothers the anti-religious brigade. It is perhaps the single most blatant reminder of just how religious Quebec and the rest of our country is, and it must, therefore, be removed from public discourse. Here's a safe prediction. Secular activists on the will eventually move to have Christmas removed as a national holiday. Now, that's a horrific thought for us Christians.

Secularism doesn't announce that its agenda is to thoroughly secularize Canada and the globe. Instead, activists offer the multiculturalist argument — that saying Christmas, as in "Merry Christmas," or "Christmas party," or "Christmas vacation" is not "inclusive." Give me a break! How phony!

This inclusiveness argument plays on Canadians' highly developed sense of decency. Most of us don't want to gratuitously offend others, so the inclusiveness argument has been effective.

But the argument is preposterous. Who exactly is being excluded when one wishes someone "Merry Christmas?" Non-Christians?

I am a Christian, a Catholic. Christmas is therefore as much a religious holy day for me as Ramadan is for Muslims. But I am a Canadian, and Christmas is a national holiday of this country. It is therefore my holy day, though

not my holiday, as much as it is for my fellow Canadians who are Christian. Remember "White Christmas"? Well, it was written by an American Jew, Irving Berlin as a celebration of an American holiday, his holiday.

By not wishing me a Merry Christmas, you are not being inclusive. You are deliberately excluding me from one of my nation's national holidays. But even if Christmas weren't a national holiday, I would want businesses to have Christmas parties, schools to continue to have Christmas trees and Christmas vacations, and pilots to wish passengers "Merry Christmas" and not "Happy Holidays" for the sake of being "politically correct." Just because someone personally doesn't celebrate Christmas, why would I want to drop the word "Christmas" from public discourse, when Christmas is celebrated by a majority of my fellow Canadians?

It borders on the malevolent, not to mention mean-spirited, to want to deny nearly all of your fellow citizens the joy of having their Christmas parties called Christmas parties, or to force them to replace "Merry Christmas" with "Happy Holidays." A majority-Christian country that treats non-Christians so well deserves better on their 'Holydays.' Narcissism, egoism, meanness, and ingratitude. That's what the secularist ideologies against "Merry Christmas" and "Christmas parties," "Christmas Mass" boils down to. So, say "Merry Christmas," and "Christmas party," and "Holyday." If you don't, you're not "inclusive." You're letting the real-life grouches win.

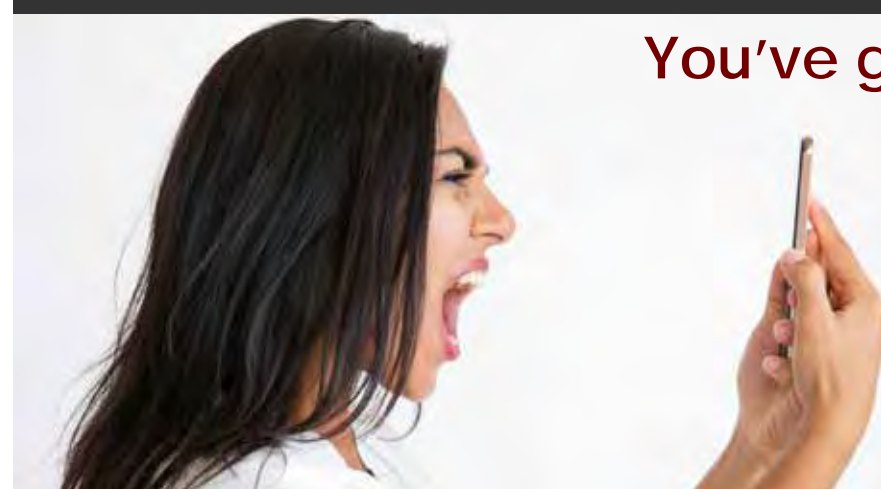
On behalf of The Laval News, I wish all our readers, community friends, staff, and families, a "Merry Holy Christmas" and a promising Healthy, Happy, and Prosperous 2023. Cheers.

Renata Isopo
renata@newsfirst.ca

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Alice Abou-Khalil welcomes constituents to her riding office

Newly-elected Fabre MNA's locale is in the heart of Sainte-Dorothée

MARTIN C. BARRY
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for The Laval News
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Newly-elected Member of the National Assembly for Fabre Alice Abou-Khalil finally got a chance to touch base with some of her provincial riding's constituents on the evening of Friday Dec. 16, when she held a pre-Christmas reception for the official opening of her new office.

In a way, it's not a new office – at least in the sense that Abou-Khalil opted to move into a locale at the corner of Principale and Hôtel de Ville in Sainte-Dorothée previously occupied by former MNA Monique Sauvé.

Official opening

In an interview with The Laval News, Abou-Khalil said she and her staff moved into the office around a month ago, but needed time to renovate a bit before inviting visitors in.

During the gathering, Abou-Khalil and her staff spent some time paying homage to the volunteers who helped with her political



Fabre MNA Alice Abou-Khalil welcomed all those, who despite winter road conditions, came to the inauguration of her office. Her colleague Saint-Rose MNA Christopher Skeete (left) was among her guests ,Friday December 16.

campaign leading up to the election last October. As well, representatives of local community groups dropped by. In all, around 120 people accepted the invitation.

"The message was very simple: to let them know that we're here for them, the office we have here is for them," she said.

Help available

"They can just make an appointment and come anytime from Monday to Friday," Abou-Khalil continued. "We can see how we can be of help because we are here to help them. After all, I

am their elected representative and they need to know that I am here.

"It's also to wish them a Merry Christmas and hope that the year 2023 is a lot better than the last two years when there was Covid and other things," she said.

Alice Abou-Khalil's constituency office is located at 538 rue Principale in Sainte-Dorothée (H7X 1C3). The office's phone is (450) 689-5516



HOLIDAY SEASON OPENING HOURS

The Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie wishes to inform merchants, shopping centre managers and consumers of the hours and days of operation of commercial establishments during the holiday season.

Saturday, December 24: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday 25 December: closed
Monday, December 26: 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Tuesday, December 27: 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Wednesday, December 28: 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Thursday, December 29: 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Friday, December 30: 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Saturday, December 31: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday, January 1 : Closed
Monday, January 2: 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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Laval retirees donate more than \$404,000 to Centraide

In their 24th annual campaign, retired City of Laval employees raised and donated more than \$400,000 for Centraide of Greater Montreal.

The money was gathered from employees, retirees and current City of Laval elected officials, as well as from corporate donations.

More than 25 Laval-based charitable groups will be receiving financial assistance from Centraide. According to the city, nearly \$3 million was given by Centraide to groups in Laval in 2021-2022.

"The City of Laval and Centraide have a history of productive collaboration since 1998," says Laval executive-committee member and city councillor for Duvernay-Pont-Viau Christine Poirier. "I am proud of the commitment of our teams towards the neediest. Such generosity will almost certainly make a difference for a great many organizations in Laval."



Photo: William Hupke, with Centraide du Grand Montréal; Stéphane Boyer, mayor of Laval; Christine Poirier, city councillor for Duvernay-Pont-Viau, and Tania Fonrose. (Photo: Vincent Girard)

City unveils list of projects chosen after budget consultation

After initiating the City of Laval's first consultative budget, municipal officials have announced 10 projects that were chosen and will be implemented over the coming years.

In a departure from the city's usual budget

allocation procedures, residents of Laval were invited in the past year to take part in the selection of community projects that would receive funding from the annual budget.

The selected projects involve sports, culture, as

well as social support and development. In all, according to the city, more than 5,200 residents voted from Aug. 22 until Sept. 30 for their favourite projects either online or at branches of the municipal library network.

"Our administration is proud to see this initiative in participative democracy become a reality, and we would like to thank everybody who took part," said Mayor Stéphane Boyer.

The 10 projects chosen were those which received the largest number of votes out of 21 project proposals. The projects' themes involve landscaping to help deal with urban heat islands, the development of public marketplaces, refurbishment of certain streets, additional lighting in parks, mini-public libraries, green alleyways and other ideas.

The 10 projects will be receiving a total of \$576,000, with an additional \$24,000 set aside for any cost overruns. According to the city, 4,444 votes were made online, while an additional 777 votes were received at library branches. It is estimated that 1.18 per cent of the city's population voted, with 1 per cent considered an acceptable rate by international best practice standards.



Stéphane Boyer
Mayor of Laval

Happy Holidays to One and All

As the year draws to a close, my team and I would like to offer you our best wishes for the holidays. Take advantage of this happy time of the year, dear Laval residents, to create beautiful memories with your families and loved ones.

I also invite you to exercise caution in order to protect the most vulnerable people in our society. In doing so, you will also be helping—in your own way—the employees in our health care system, who do outstanding work.

I wish you a very good 2023! May it be a happy one, filled with discoveries and, above all, may it be one of inclusion and openness to others. I also hope that in this New Year, and in the many others to come, all of us together will maintain an ever increasing number of environmentally-friendly habits.

I encourage you to continue to make a difference, particularly by giving priority to buying local, choosing public and active transportation and adopting a lifestyle based on sustainable development.

Peace, health and happiness



Laval signs with Quebec for historic and heritage studies

Members of the city's executive-committee last week approved the signing of an agreement with Quebec's Culture and Communications Ministry, which will allow the city to conduct studies on the historic roots of some neighbourhoods where documentation has been lacking.

Since the end of the 1950s, several inventories of buildings of potential heritage and historic interest were conducted. The city has gradually been enlarging its knowledge of its historic past, including architectural development, over the past few decades.

"We are pleased to have reached this agreement with the government of Quebec, which will allow the City of Laval to find on its territory the significant traces of heritage and history and land management in some of its neighbourhoods," says Pierre Brabant, the city councillor for Vimont who is responsible for dossiers involving heritage and history.



City's snow clearance crews ready for winter



Photo: Grande-Côte, now known as Avenue des Terrasses, in July 1948. (Photo: Archives City of Laval).

With the winter season now well underway, the City of Laval says its public works department is prepared for whatever Mother Nature sends this way.

Crews are standing ready with snow plows and snow removal trucks, as well as sidewalk tractors. Here's what you can do to help make snow removal as easy and efficient as possible when storms blow through:

- When possible, park in your driveway on snow removal days. If you must park on the street, park your car at least 30 centimetres from the sidewalk so snow plows have clearance, while making sure there's also room on the passenger side for police or emergency vehicles to pass by.
- Always shovel snow onto your own property, rather than onto the sidewalk or street.
- On recycling or trash pickup days, always place your bins on your property, rather than on the sidewalk or street.
- Always obey the instructions on parking signage.

STL news

December 2022

On the way to holiday celebrations!

We're carrying on the tradition of holiday season offers:

- Ride the bus for free December 24 and 31
- 360 shuttle bus free from December 17 to January 2 (except for December 25 and January 1)
- Low-cost family outings as children aged 11 and under ride for free

The STL team wishes you a very happy holiday season!

To learn more about these offers and the special schedules, go to STLaval.ca/holidays

Special holiday season schedules

Be sure to check the schedule that applies on the day of your trip

- **December 24 and 31:** Saturday schedule
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- **December 26 and January 2:** Saturday schedule

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New schedules in effect as of January 7

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STLaval.ca/january

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Canada Competition Bureau to study rumoured 'price fixing' in grocery sector

Some blame major retailers like Loblaw, Metro and IGA for 'greedflation' phenomenon

MARTIN C. BARRY

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With the New Year looming and some especially dark clouds hanging over the Canadian economy, the Competition Bureau of Canada as well as the country's Parliamentarians are proceeding in 2023 with in-depth investigations into whether Canada's leading grocery retailers have been colluding to fix food prices.

Who to blame?

Experts are attributing the rising costs of groceries (10.8 per cent in Canada over the past year, according to Statistics Canada) to a number of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting supply chain disruptions, severe weather from climate change, and higher costs for everything from labour to transportation.

And yet, two of Canada's three major grocery chains posted increased profits in their most recent financial statements. Loblaw reported a quarterly profit of \$387 million — an increase of \$12 million, or 3.2 per cent, over the same quarter last year.

The Big 3's profits up

In the meantime, Metro posted a \$275 million quarterly profit, up from \$252.4 million in the same quarter the year before. While Empire

(which runs IGA) reported an increased profit in June, its latest financial statement showed a slight decline in profits.

Although senior officials with the country's grocery retailers recently told the country's Parliamentarians they were not to blame for the soaring prices and were only passing on costs, it's notable that Loblaw (the largest of the three) announced in early October that it was freezing prices on its No Name products until the end of January.

A quick move

As noted by B.C.-based economist Jim Stanford in an October Toronto Star opinion piece, Loblaw's announcement was made on the same day that month when the House of Commons voted in favour of an NDP motion to open an investigation into the grocery chains' alleged "greedflation."

The Conservatives' newly-elected leader Pierre Poilievre, whom one might expect would normally be disposed to defend big business, actually sided with the motion, which received unanimous support from MPs. The resulting investigation into Food Price Inflation by the Commons' Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food is sure to be a focus of public attention over the coming year.

Working as one?

It's worth noting that within hours of Loblaw's

price freeze announcement, Metro announced a similar move. While some may attribute this gesture to natural competitiveness in an open economy, others see it as evidence of large corporations working in tandem and effectively being able to fix prices monolithically as suits them best.

Accusations of price fixing are not new in Canada's food production and retail industries. In 2018, federal business competition investigators opened an inquiry into whether the same three companies now facing scrutiny were colluding to fix the price of bread in the Canadian market. That investigation went nowhere, by the way, although it may now become appended to the larger one unfolding in the coming year.

For its part, the Ottawa-based Competition Bureau said in October that it is launching its study of grocery store competition in Canada in order to examine various issues "with the goal of recommending measures that governments can take" to help improve competition in the sector.

Purchase power down

"With inflation on the rise, Canadian consumers have seen their purchasing power decline," the bureau said in a statement. "This is especially true when buying groceries. In fact, grocery prices in Canada are increasing at the fastest rate seen in 40 years."

The bureau agrees with economic experts that

many factors are thought to have impacted the price of food, including extreme weather, higher input costs, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and supply chain disruptions, while leaving the open question, "Are competition factors also at work?" To find out, the bureau will study the issue until June 2023.

The study will examine three main questions: To what extent are higher grocery prices a result of changing competitive dynamics? What can we learn from steps that other countries have taken to increase competition in the sector? And how can governments lower barriers to entry and expansion to stimulate competition for consumers?

Limited powers only

The bureau cautions that the study will not be an investigation into specific allegations of wrongdoing. However, if they do find evidence that someone is or may be acting against the law, then they will investigate and take appropriate action. However, the bureau does not have formal investigative powers to compel information for the purpose of market studies.

Newsfirst Multimedia reached out to Vimy Liberal Member of Parliament Annie Koutrakis for her reaction to the launch of the two investigations. In a texted response, she declined to comment, referring our questions to the Competition Bureau of Canada's website (cb-bc.gc.ca).

Opposition wants city to seek electronic voting and postpone property taxes

MARTIN C. BARRY

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During the Dec. 5 session of Laval city council, Saint-Bruno city councillor David De Cotis tabled two resolutions aimed at supporting the development of soccer in Laval.

The first seeks to recognize soccer as a sport that is played year-around in Laval, while the second would impose certain conditions on the financial support provided to the Complex

multisport de Laval.

Along with his Action Laval council colleague, Val-des-Arbres city councillor Achille Cifelli, De Cotis and Cifelli reacted positively recently to news that the city has decided to go ahead with the two proposals, and without necessitating a debate in council over.

As everyone who has been watching the 2022 FIFA World Cup matches from Qatar over the past few weeks can attest, soccer is stronger than ever in popularity in Laval, and its growth

as a sport can only be expected to continue.

Last winter, according to De Cotis and Cifelli, soccer clubs and teams in Laval registered 3,500 players, while several other sports practiced during the winter, including hockey, figure skating, ringette, basketball, gymnastics and cheerleading, had far fewer registrations.

"Thanks to our proposals, soccer players will be able to play not only during the summer, but year-around," said De Cotis. This is yet another victory for Action Laval."

The opposition party thanked Mayor Stéphane Boyer's administration for its support, while noting that two resolutions that were drafted were withdrawn from the Dec. 5 council meeting agenda since the administration accepted them in principle.

"The work by our team has borne fruit," said Cifelli. "We are happy to see that conditions for soccer teams are improving and that youths will more easily be able to join up with these sports teams."

Electronic voting in 2025?

During the same council meeting, Action Laval also tabled a resolution calling on the city to submit its candidacy to the provincial government to become eligible to hold elections electronically in 2025.

The resolution notes that the City of Montreal has already expressed an interest in electronic balloting and that Élection Québec is considering the implementation of it in municipalities of 20,000 or more residents.

As well, the resolution says voter participation in the 2021 elections was 28 per cent, while maintaining that electronic voting might help improve participation in future elections.

Seeking tax bill deferral

And finally, Action Laval councillors tabled a resolution at the Dec. 5 meeting calling on the administration to postpone payment of municipal tax bills in 2023 so that property owners are given a break during these trying inflationary times.

"Inflation has a direct impact on the capacity to pay by Laval residents," it states, noting that the coming year could be very challenging financially for families and individuals living in Laval, and that soaring interest rates are making things even harder.

The resolution asks the city to postpone tax bill payments until June and September, whereas they are now due in March and June.

Wishing you a blessed holiday season and a new year filled with peace and happiness

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Happy Holidays

3 places to hang Christmas stockings

Christmas stockings are a classic holiday decoration. Here are three places to hang them in your home.

1. MANTEL

To give your living room a festive feel, affix your stockings to a mantel using discreet or ornate holders.

2. DOOR

Use metal Christmas wreath holders and place your stockings at eye level on one or several doors.

3. BANNISTER

Attach your stockings to the handrail on your staircase with string or self-locking fasteners.

If Santa is particularly resourceful, you can also hang your children's Christmas stockings in their rooms.



How to decorate the outside of your home for Christmas



If you want to decorate the outside of your home for the holiday season but

aren't sure where to begin, here are some ways to get started.

DECORATE YOUR TREES

Whether you have lush evergreens or bare deciduous trees in your yard, you can dress them up for the Christmas season with ornaments or outdoor string lights.

PUT UP A CHRISTMAS WREATH

Make a wreath or buy one from a local artisan. Hang it on your front door or lean it against a nearby wall to create a welcoming entranceway.

EMBELLISH YOUR STAIRWAY

If you have sufficient space, place one or more ornate flowerpots, lanterns, nutcrackers or other decorative elements at the top or bottom of your stairway. Wrap your railing in a garland for a festive flair.

FILL VACANT SPACES

If you have a large front yard, you can set up decorative structures. Inflatable figures and lighted characters will help bring holiday cheer to your home.

For more inspiration and to find great decorations, visit your local retailers.

5 holiday trends for your home

3. UPCYCLED

Turn used items into decorative pieces or shop for ornaments made from reclaimed materials. You can take this trend a step further by wrapping your gifts in fabric, flyers or newspapers.

4. DRIED FRUIT

Dried limes, oranges and lemons can be made into garlands and tree ornaments or displayed in glass jars. As a bonus, they smell great!

5. SHIMMER AND SHINE

Shiny decor is sure to put you in a festive mood. Use metallic items in shades like

blue and green or silver and gold that can be used year after year.

For more ideas, and to find everything you need, visit your local stores.



Your City Councillors
Wish You

Happy Holidays!



David De Cotis
SAINT-BRUNO

Paolo Galati
SAINT-VINCENT-DE-PAUL

Achille Cifelli
VAL-DES-ARBRES

Aglaia Revelakis
CHOMEDEY

Isabelle Piché
SAINT-FRANÇOIS

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and best wishes of health
and prosperity to all!*

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Happy Holidays



Driving under the influence: effects, detection and consequences

The holiday season is in full swing, and celebrations of all kinds abound. However, amidst the merriment and festivities, it's important to remember you should never get behind the wheel if you're intoxicated. Here's what you should know.

EFFECTS

Many of the skills required for safe driving, such as sound judgment, acute concentration, impeccable co-ordination, pronounced visual acuity and quick reflexes, are impacted by drug and alcohol use. Consequently, being under the influence can result in speeding, driving off the road, swerving into oncoming traffic and dozing behind the wheel.

DETECTION

Police officers use their training as well as what they see, hear and smell to determine if a driver has drugs or alcohol in their system. Plus, they can take a breath sample to determine a motorist's blood alcohol level. Police may also issue a standardized field sobriety test (SFST), which typically requires the driver to walk in a straight line, stand and turn or stand on one leg.

CONSEQUENCES

If you're caught driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you could have your licence suspended following your

arrest, even before being convicted.

Once convicted, the severity of your sentence will depend on your background and the circumstances surrounding your arrest. For instance, you could receive a hefty fine and jail time if you injured or killed someone.

To avoid collisions and other serious consequences of getting behind the wheel while under the influence, make sure you drive responsibly.



GET HOME SAFE

Instead of driving while impaired, do one of the following:

- Take public transit
- Call a cab
- Find a designated driver



This holiday season, drive merry, bright and sober!

How to prevent impaired driving over the holidays

The number of impaired driving collisions dramatically increases over the holiday season. Here are a few tips to make sure neither you nor the people you care about get behind the wheel while under the influence.

ATTENDING A PARTY

If you're attending a holiday shindig, make sure to choose someone to be a designated driver. If this person ends up consuming drugs or alcohol, play it safe by calling a cab or using a ride-sharing service. You could also plan to rent a room at a nearby hotel or sleep over at a friend's house to avoid getting behind the wheel.

HOSTING A PARTY

If you're hosting a holiday party, there are a few precautions you can take to make sure your guests don't drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. For example, serve plenty of food and provide alcohol-free beverages throughout the night. In addition, offer your spare bedroom or couch to anyone who wants to stay the night, or prearrange cab rides for



Arrive alive!
STAY SOBER
WHEN
YOU DRIVE.

those who need a lift.

TIPS FOR THE ROAD

When driving home from a holiday shindig, keep an eye out for the following warning signs that another driver might be under the influence of drugs or alcohol:

- They're making wide, abrupt or illegal turns
- They have a slow or delayed reaction time to traffic lights and signs
- They're driving unreasonably fast, slow or at an inconsistent speed
- They're continuously weaving, swerving or drifting out of their lane

If you suspect you're driving behind an impaired driver, slow down, stay behind them and, when it's safe to do so, pull over and call 911.

Additionally, impaired driving accidents that result in fatalities are more likely to happen very late at night or early in the morning. Therefore, try to avoid being on the road between midnight and 3 a.m.



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Happy Holidays

How to throw a hassle-free holiday brunch

Are you planning to host Christmas brunch this year? If so, here are a few ways to ensure the event goes well.

START PREPPING THE DAY BEFORE

Avoid making everything you need the morning of your brunch by doing some set up the night before. You could wash, cut and plate fresh fruit and prepare whipped cream and custards ahead of time. If you want to serve an easy dish that can be portioned out the day before, consider putting together small bowls of yogurt and berries with granola.

OPT FOR FRESH-BAKED GOODS

Visit your local bakery for bread, croissants, muffins and bagels to accompany your meal. Purchase a batch made the

morning of, or ask about frozen, ready-to-bake products. If they have a tempting specialty, don't hesitate to add it to your menu.



OFFER A VARIETY OF BEVERAGES

Spice up your brunch by serving mimosas, Bellinis, sparkling cider or white wine. You can also offer your guests coffee flavoured with a variety of liqueurs. For kids, hot chocolate and fresh fruit juice are great choices.

Finally, decorate your table with festive accessories the day before your event.

10 gift ideas for your Christmas exchange

Organizing a gift exchange is a great way to kick off the holidays. However, it can be difficult to buy the perfect gift when you don't know who will receive it. This is especially true if your group has folks of various ages. Here are a few things that will please most people.



- An insulated water bottle or coffee mug
- A locally made spirit, beer or wine
- 3A unisex toque or scarf in a neutral colour
- Nut-free chocolates
- A recently released board game
- A warm, cozy blanket
- A nice set of wine glasses
- A set of reusable straws that includes a cleaning brush
- A sturdy apron with several pockets
- A wrist or cell phone strap

If necessary, ask the gift exchange participants what they like so you can buy an item related to their common interests.

Useful gifts for practical people

If you're not sure what to buy your loved ones for Christmas, you may want to consider giving them something practical. Here are a few ideas to inspire you.

- Reusable containers, food wrap or sandwich bags
- A gas station gift card
- A firewood sling
- A set of quality bedsheets
- A bathtub tray



- A portable cell phone charger
- A gardening tote
- Heated gloves
- A bike repair kit
- Car storage accessories like a trunk or seat organizer
- Compact camping dishes such as a pot with a folding handle
- Warm socks

To find a host of gifts that will make your loved ones' lives easier, visit your local retailers.

Why serving chocolate at Christmas is a must

Chocolate is the perfect sweet treat for almost any occasion. Here are several great reasons to serve it at Christmas.

IT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER. Whether you opt for artisanal truffles or snack-size bars, chocolate is an easy, crowd-pleasing treat you can share with family members and guests.

IT COMES IN COUNTLESS VARIETIES. Although you can purchase chocolate cheaply, splurging on finely crafted brands with unique flavour combinations is a great way to mark the holiday festivities.

IT CAN BE CUSTOMIZED. Chocolate comes in a vast array of configurations. Whether

your loved ones enjoy nougat, fudge, nuts or berries, if you visit an artisanal chocolatier, you can select varieties that suit their tastes.

This holiday season, make sure to visit the chocolate shops in your area.



*The Members of Parliament would like
to wish all citizens of Laval a very*

*Merry
Christmas*

FAYÇAL

EL-KHOURY

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ANNIE

KOUTRAKIS

MP FOR VIMY

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Happy Holidays

4 WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY through the holidays

Enjoying good times and great food in the company of loved ones is what the holiday season is all about. Unfortunately, your usual fitness routine and eating habits are likely to be interrupted. To stay healthy during this festive time, do these four things.

1. MANAGE DIETARY CHOICES

While you may be tempted to sample every dish put in front of you, try to avoid overeating. Remember to chew slowly, and keep portion sizes reasonable. In addition, be sure to opt for fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains as much as possible.



2. AVOID FOOD GUILT

It's normal to indulge in desserts, cocktails and savory snacks during the holidays. Don't deny yourself the pleasure of enjoying the holiday foods and beverages you love.



3. GET UP AND MOVE

The virtues of exercise for the mind and body can't be overstated. Among other things it boosts your mood, reduces your risk of disease and helps with weight management. During the holidays, find fun ways to stay active like walking, dancing, skiing, ice skating and more.

4. TAKE A MOMENT TO RELAX

Remember to set aside time to recharge your batteries. The holidays can be exhausting, especially if you have to entertain guests. Fortunately, there are many simple ways to unwind like taking a bath, reading a novel and listening to music.

In addition, if you're worried about your health, schedule an appointment with your doctor.

For minor ailments and over-the-counter remedies, consult a pharmacist.

6 crowd-pleasing dishes to bring to a potluck

Do you plan to attend a potluck this holiday season? If so, it's a good idea to choose dishes that are easy to transport and can be prepared ahead of time. Here are some ideas.

1. SALADS

Potato, quinoa and couscous salads are easy to make in advance and don't need to be warmed up once you arrive.

2. MEATBALLS

Season ground pork, beef or chicken and roll it into balls. Then, bake them in the oven with your favourite sauce. When you arrive, simply reheat the meatballs in a microwave.

3. MARINATED SHRIMP

These crustaceans are quick to prepare, keep well for a couple days in the refrigerator and can be served with crackers, bread and various kinds of sauces.

4. RICE

White, brown and wild rice make great sides. To elevate this dish, add toasted nuts, herbs or dried fruit.

5. MACARONS

These sweet and light cookies can be made in a multitude of colours and flavours. To keep in the spirit of the season, opt for gingerbread, candy cane and egg-nog varieties.

6. NANAIMO BARS

This no-bake layered dessert is perfect for sharing. You can make it a few days ahead of time, and cut it into bars before serving.

To find all the ingredients you need, visit your local markets and grocery stores.



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New year, more taxes: Canadians' take-home income to drop by up to \$305 on January 1 due to EI, CPP hikes

MARTIN C. BARRY

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The upcoming 2023 increase in payroll taxes will mean every Canadian worker will see up to \$305 less in take-home income on January 1, unless their employer is able to make up the difference. And as employers face Employment Insurance (EI) and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) hikes of up to 6.7%, many will struggle to meet even their existing payroll budgets, warns the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

As of January 1, the CPP premiums alone will rise by up to 7.3% due to an increase in both the CPP rate and the Yearly Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE), costing workers and employers up to \$255 more in contributions per employee.

Also on January 1, Employment Insurance (EI) premiums for employers are set to increase by as much as 5.2% per employee. All together, the increases in CPP and EI could cost business owners up to \$325 more per employee — a 6.7% increase from 2022.

"The maximum additional amount that an employee will pay in EI and CPP contributions is \$304.71. It may not seem like a lot, but \$300 can cost one family a trip to the grocery store or



pay for their transportation or utility bills. Payroll tax increases will hit Canadians at a time when most are already seeing their cost of living quickly increase," said Dan Kelly, President at CFIB. "The hikes will also affect small businesses. With rising input costs, staggering labour shortages and a potential recession, the

economy is already in a bad shape. At minimum, government should be pressing pause until inflation is under control."

Few small employers can afford to raise wages to offset CPP and EI increases. Over half (52%) of small businesses across Canada have not returned to normal levels of revenue, according to the latest Small Business Recovery Dashboard. And over half (58%) are still carrying pandemic-related debt averaging over \$114,000.

"Some businesses are saying what they face these days is as bad, if not worse than during the pandemic. So now is not the time to raise taxes and drive more businesses into despair. Give them a break," said Corinne Pohlmann, Senior Vice-President of National Affairs at CFIB. "During the pandemic, the government froze EI premiums in 2021 and 2022. The same approach should be taken next year as well."

CFIB has sent a letter to Deputy Prime Minister Freeland calling on the federal government to do no harm and avoid burdening small businesses even further.

CFIB recommends Ottawa work with the provinces to freeze or offset the upcoming 2023 CPP hikes, freeze the 2023 EI increases or introduce a refundable credit, similar to the 2015-16 Small Business Job Credit, to offset the rate increases for small businesses.

Tax Tip - Not sure if it's the CRA calling? Here's how to find out!

The holidays are approaching, but scammers aren't taking any breaks from their attempts to trick you into handing over money or personal information. Scammers prey on the increased financial pressures that many of us face around the holidays, so it's important to be aware of how and when the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will contact you to distinguish legitimate communications from the CRA, and scams.

How to make sure the caller is a CRA employee and not a scammer

A legitimate CRA employee will identify themselves when they contact you, providing you with their name and phone number to call them back, if needed.

If you're suspicious, you can make sure the caller is a CRA employee **before** providing any information over the phone.

Here's how:

- Tell the caller you would like to first verify their identity.
- Request and make a note of their:
 - name
 - phone number
 - office location
- End the call. Then check that the information provided during the call was legitimate by contacting the CRA. Please do this before you give any information to the caller.

Once you complete these three steps, you can call the CRA employee back to discuss the reason for their call.

Note that our individual tax, benefits, and business enquiries lines offer an automated callback service. When wait times reach a certain threshold, you have the option for a callback, rather than waiting on hold. If you opt for a callback, we will give you a randomized four-digit confirmation number. This number will be repeated back to you by the call centre agent at the time of the callback. This is to provide you with assurance that the call comes from a legitimate CRA employee.

When to be suspicious

Red flags that suggest a caller is a scammer include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The caller does not give you proof of working for the CRA. For example, their name and office location.
- The caller pressures you to act now, uses aggressive language, or issues threats of arrest or sending law enforcement.
- The caller asks you to pay with prepaid credit cards, gift cards, cryptocurrency, or some other unusual form of payment.
- The caller asks for information you would not enter on your return or that is not related to money you owe the CRA, for example, a credit card number.
- The caller recommends that you apply for benefits. Do not provide information to callers offering to apply for benefits on your behalf! You can apply for benefits directly on Government of Canada websites or by phone.

For more tips and helpful information, visit our Be Scam Smart page.

We may review your return

One reason we may contact you is if we are reviewing your income tax and benefit return. This could include reviewing your GST/HST, T4, or T5 information. You may receive a letter or a phone call telling you that the CRA is reviewing your return. If your correspondence preference is set to electronic mail, we will send you an email telling you that your letter is available in My Account.

Scammers are also trying to trick people into clicking links by sending fraudulent emails and text messages. To know what to expect when the CRA contacts you, what we may or will not ask for, as well as examples of recent CRA-related scams, visit the Scam prevention at the CRA page.

In most cases when we are reviewing a return, it is a routine check. Replying and sending all of the information requested as

soon as possible will help us review your file quickly and easily.

It's also important that you call the number printed in your letter for either of the following situations:

- You can't get the documents we're asking for
- You need more time to reply

By calling, we can give you more time to respond if you need it. We can also help you if you have any questions. If you don't reply, we may disallow a claim of yours and you could have a balance owing.

If you own a small business or are self-employed, we may call you or send you a letter to offer free tax help through our Liaison Officer service. We will only use email to contact you if you provide your email address and consent to the CRA.

Reporting a potential scam

You should report a scam if you suspect either of the following:

- you have been the victim of fraud
- a scammer has tricked you into giving personal or financial information

To report a scam, visit the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre page, follow the instructions on our Be Scam Smart page, or call 1-888-495-8501. If you think you may be the victim of fraud or you unknowingly provided personal or financial information, contact all of the following:

- your local police service
- your financial institution
- credit reporting agencies

You should contact the CRA if you:

- think your CRA user ID or password has been compromised
- want to disable online access to the CRA's sign-in services
- want to enable online access to CRA sign-in services after it has been disabled



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SWLSB prepares for surge in requests for English-language CEGEP attendance certificates

School board's enrollment is finally rising after years of decline, says chair Paolo Galati

MARTIN C. BARRY

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Before delivering the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board's annual report during the board's Dec. 14 public meeting, SWLSB chairman Paolo Galati said he wanted to provide additional information on the submission of eligibility certificates for students to attend English-language CEGEP beginning in the fall of 2023.

Since the enactment of Bill 96 to tighten up Quebec's previous Bill 101 language law, the Quebec Education Ministry informed the province's English school boards that the English education eligibility certificate will be required for students applying to CEGEPs and private colleges for next fall.

So, who qualifies?

In Quebec, a child qualifies for English education eligibility if he or she did the majority of elementary or secondary school studies in English in Canada. Children whose parents did most of their elementary studies in English anywhere in Canada can also qualify.

Students with English eligibility must submit their eligibility certificate when they apply to CEGEPs. The deadline for applications is next March 1. Students who don't have a certificate have until June 30 to submit it to the government.

"Following the adoption of Bill 96, to attend

an English CEGEP or an English private school, a student will need to provide a certificate of eligibility," said Galati.

Few requests so far, says Galati

"Any Secondary 5 student currently living in the Laval-Laurentides-Lanaudière regions can contact our school board to get their certificate of eligibility," he added. "They have until June 30 to provide proof to the CEGEP. So far, we have received about 20 requests."

In an interview with Newsfirst Multimedia, Galati said that out of an SWLSB student population of nearly 13,000 – of which nearly 5,000 are at high-school level – 20 requests for certificates was not a large amount.

However, he acknowledged that a significant number of parents may not yet be aware of the certificate requirement. "We think that once they start waking up, it'll become more known and people could be coming forth making requests and asking for certificates," he said.

Enrollment growth

In the annual report, the SWLSB noted that student enrollment at the board has risen for the first time after many years of steady decline. Galati attributed the higher enrollment to growth in the kindergarten sector.

"The Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board is one of the school boards in the province with the greatest growth in pre-kindergarten," stated the report. "When kindergarten for 4-year-olds

was first introduced in 2018-2019, there were five classes.

"This number has grown significantly since then and, in 2021-2022, reached 45 classes across all 26 elementary schools of the school board, representing an increase of 24 per cent from 2020-2021. This growth is excellent news for the English-speaking community and has a direct impact on student enrolment."

Graduation rate rising

As well, the annual report noted that the SWLSB's graduation and qualification rate is on the rise.

"We are extremely proud of the increase in our graduation and qualification rate, which currently stands at 88.1 per cent, ranking our school board first in Laval-Laurentides-Lanaudière and among the top ten in the province out of the 72 school boards/school service centres," said the report.

"This graduation rate is a testament to the efforts and creativity deployed by everyone at the school board in keeping our students engaged and focused on the important goal of graduating."

Students join governance

Over the past the year, the SWLSB also took the important step of encouraging direct student participation in the school board's governance.

According to the annual report, it was coun-



cil's wish to provide a platform for students to encourage them to be actively involved not only in the student life at their school or centre, but with the Council of Commissioners as well.

As such, Council created the Central Students' Committee allowing for student representation on the Council of Commissioners. In accordance with the Student Representation at the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board policy, two students and one substitute were appointed in November 2021. The committee members met four times during the 2021-2022 school year.

*May you be blessed
by the spirit of the season!*



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Fire heavily damages Saint-Martin Blvd. residential multiplex

During the early morning hours of Saturday Dec. 10, a fire caused extensive damage to a multi-storey residential condo building at the western end of Saint-Martin Blvd. in Sainte-Dorothée.

While the cause hasn't yet been determined, investigators know that a smoke detector system in the building was operational. In the meantime, it is believed the source of the fire was on the first floor.

The blaze required assistance from nine units from the Laval Fire Dept., for a total of 34 fire-

fighters. Help from the Laval Police, Hydro Quebec, the Société de transport de Laval (STL) and City of Laval public works was also requested.

An early estimate of the damage estimated it at \$300,000 for the building and \$100,000 for materials inside. Eight residents were looking for new lodgings following the blaze, and the investigation has been transferred to the Laval Police since arson hasn't been completely ruled out.



Arsonist targets Jaffa St. building linked to Accurso

A fire at a commercial building on Jaffa St. in Laval last week was one of two in the Montreal region which broke out at buildings owned by the spouse of the daughter of controversial public works contractor Tony Accurso.

Just before midnight, the Laval Police responded to a call about a fire at 1410 rue de Jaffa next to Autoroute 15. According to news sources, the office building is partly owned by companies belonging

to Karol Fortin, husband of Accurso's daughter.

At this fire, as well as at another in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu south of Montreal around the same time, investigators found traces of fire accelerants used by arsonists.

A spokesperson for the LPD confirmed that at the rue de Jaffa address, an incendiary device (a Molotov cocktail) was thrown at the building's front south-east window.

Laval Police bust a local stolen car ring

Investigators with the Laval Police Dept. have announced that on Dec. 15 they finally caught up and arrested several players involved in a Laval-based stolen car ring that was exporting hot vehicles to overseas destinations.

It's worth noting that car thefts in Laval rose a staggering 84 per cent in just the first nine first months of 2022.

In 2021, according to the LPD, 686 vehicles were stolen in Laval.

To date this year, the number has risen to 1,557, and that figure is considered conservative since the last three months of this year aren't taken into account.

If they haven't yet been shipped out of the country, the cars end up at clandestine garages in places surrounding the Laval and Montreal regions. Last week, LPD investigators executed search and seizure warrants in Sainte-Sophie, Saint-Calixte, Mont-Tremblant, Sainte-Julienne and Montreal.

Six suspects were arrested, while a dozen or so vehicles were impounded, including a Ram

pickup truck, a Jeep Sahara, a boat, six trailers, materials for disguising thefts, \$50,000 cash USD and CAD, and 53 tires with sport mags.

At one of the raided locations in Montreal, the investigators found shipping containers, leading them to believe that stolen vehicles were being prepared and loaded onto ships from there. Currently, the vehicles stolen most often in Laval are Honda CR-V, Acura RDX, Ram 1500, Jeep Wrangler and Dodge Durango.

The police believe the modus operandi of the perpetrators was typically to open the vehicles manually with a hand tool, cut the alarm, use an electronic device to clone a copy of the starter key, after which they started the engine and left the scene, all in just a few minutes with a minimum of damage.

The LPD released the following names of suspects who were arrested: Pascal Lafleur and Nicolas Dufour, who were freed on bail, while Frédéric Caron, Raymond Abdelshaheed and Alexandre Jalbert were detained pending further bail proceedings.

Two from Laval charged in 'grandparent scam' north of Toronto

Two men from Laval are part of a trio of suspects arrested by York Regional Police north of Toronto last week on suspicions they defrauded a 73-year-old woman out of \$5,000 as participants in a "grandparent scam."

Dikran Artin Khano, 22, and Kasson Roker, 19,

both from Laval, and Kaouane Rami, 21, of no fixed address, are charged with fraud over \$5,000, possession of property obtained by crime, and extortion.

Roker and Rami are also charged with failing to comply with a court order.



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Panagiotopoulos family donates Sensory Room to Souvenir Elementary

‘Her dedication was a labour of love,’ principal says of Mrs. Panagiotopoulos’ help



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

On November 29, an inauguration was held for a sensory room at Souvenir Elementary School. The sensory room was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Panagiotopoulos Family.

A sensory room is a therapeutic safe space with a variety of equipment that provides students with special needs or limited communication skills with personalized sensory input and helps them calm and focus themselves so they can be better prepared for learning and interacting with others.

The time children spend in a sensory room helps them improve their visual, auditory and tactile processing, as well as fine and gross motor skills. It also helps students manage negative thoughts and emotions.

Finding inner balance

Sensory rooms provide opportunities for engagement in prevention and crisis de-escalation strategies and promote self-care/self-nurturance, resilience and recovery. In a nutshell, sensory rooms help students find their inner-balance.

Mr. and Mrs. Panagiotopoulos met with the school principal, Ms. Kalipolidis, last year and informed her, that they wanted to leave a legacy in their son Bobby’s name for all the support, dedication and quality services he had been receiving during his journey at Souvenir Elementary School.

Everything was put in place so that the sensory room would be finished this year as Bobby is in grade six and moving on to high school next year. The school took care of getting the room ready with new flooring and fresh paint and the



Panagiotopoulos Family took care of the rest.

‘A labour of love’

Not only did they contribute financially to the sensory room, Mrs. Panagiotopoulos would also come by the school often and donate her time. To quote principal Kalipolidis, “Her dedication was a labour of love.”

According to SWLSB chairman Paolo Galati, council was so touched by the Panagiotopoulos family’s generosity that the commissioners wanted to recognize the couple during the Nov. 14 council meeting.

“Thank you so much for all you have done for the students of Souvenir Elementary School,” said Galati, while presenting them with a plaque in recognition of their help.



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Seen here are Demitra Panagiotopoulos next to her mom. Niko (her brother) and Mr. Ferentinos are not in the picture.



DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

LESSON LEARNED

Q I was involved with a man separated from his wife. We connected on an extremely emotional level and were building a future.

His wife left him and their two children to accept a job in another state and to experience a more unencumbered life. Prior to leaving, she cheated on him three times and was emotionally and physically unavailable to her children.

Unfortunately, I let myself get drawn into his life and his children's lives. I not only fell in love with him but also with the children. I was devastated when he accepted her back with no questions asked, but I accept responsibility for getting involved and for the consequences of my actions.

At the death of a loved one, when her family needed her most, she again abandoned her husband and children. As I predicted. He contacted me to let me know I was right. As much as I hoped that would bring satisfaction, it didn't. It brought only deep sadness.

There is nothing I can do to make him see her for who she is. How do I find peace knowing this cycle of coming and going will continue in his life? I want what is best for all of them. I know walking away is best for me, and I

guess I am looking for confirmation from an objective outside source.

Tia

A Tia, in "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, three ghosts come to Ebenezer Scrooge and alter the course of his life. For you, the ghost was your companion's wife.

There is a line Scrooge says which we have never forgotten. "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change." That is what the story is about. It is also the story of our lives.

With the holidays approaching, it will be hard for you not to think about what might have been. But with the holidays approaching, his wife may well reappear. Even if she doesn't, her specter will never be far off, and he will be open to her return.

Hard as it is to walk away, it shows you understand the lesson from Dickens' tale. Walking away opens the door to possibilities. It opens the door to your fulfillment and to the promise of the new year.

Wayne & Tamara

A LOVE STORY

Q My name is Winnie. I am 15 years old. I am in love. I know it has to be love! I spent the whole day yesterday with this guy I have liked for about a month. He is 16.

I know he likes me, too. Well, at least I hope so. He flirts with me all the time. I want to call and talk to him about my feelings, but I am not sure how to word it. Every time I see him, I get butterflies in my stomach, and every other problem in the world seems to go away. Can you please tell me what to do, or at least, what to say?

Winnie

A Winnie, every story has a beginning, a middle and an end. You're at the beginning of the story now, and it's such a good beginning you want to rush to the end, read the last chapter, and see how it turns out. At least you want to tell this boy how it should end.

But by skipping to the end and telling him your feelings, you will miss the middle part where things develop and the plot gets interesting. Let the story unfold in its own way.

If you've already spent a whole day with him, you don't have problems talking to each other. We're pretty sure he knows you like him a lot. That's enough for now. By letting things unfold in their own time, you won't spoil the ending.

Wayne & Tamara

WAYNE & TAMARA MITCHELL are the authors of YOUR OTHER HALF (www.yourotherhalf.com)

Send letters to: Direct Answers, PO 964 Springfield, MO 65801-0964

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Personalized funeral services

Traditional funeral services are still the standard for commemorating the passing of loved ones. Many take comfort in time-honoured traditions when a loved one has passed. However, these ceremonies have seen a shift from sober gatherings to occasions that celebrate and honour a life lived. As such, today's funeral homes are now offering a full range of personalized services to serve all tastes and budgets following a personal loss.

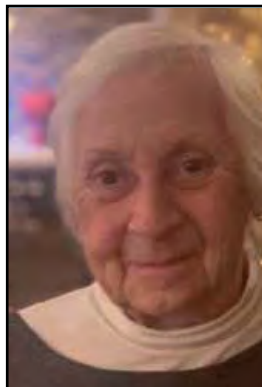
It's becoming increasingly common to hold individualized memorial services to highlight and celebrate the personality of the deceased. More and more funeral homes are displaying personal objects depicting the pastimes, passions and professions of the recently departed. Funeral directors can also display respectful videos or slideshows as a tribute to those who've passed. Music, decor, ambiance, buffets, even the releasing of balloons or doves; all these details can be arranged to provide family and friends the ideal setting to express their emotions.



The tribute paid to lost loved ones differs from person to person and family to family. From the religious procession to the memorial service, funeral homes offer a full range of services specifically tailored to honour the deceased.



Personalizing funeral services is a way to honour lost loved ones.



LABELLE, Estelle
1942 — 2022

On December 14, 2022 at 2 p.m., at the Cité de la Santé in Laval, as she had chosen, our dear Estelle left us, surrounded by Brigitte, Michel, Chanel and Maxime.

She also leaves behind the members of her family of Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts and of her chosen family; all her friends from Boisé-Notre-Dame.



ZEE, Ruth
1932 — 2022

In Laval, on December 13, 2022, at the age of 90, passed away Mrs. Ruth Zee, wife of the late Yvon Gagnon.

She is survived by her children and many friends.



ROULEAU, Claude
1949 — 2022

In Laval, surrounded by his family, on December 12, 2022, at the age of 73, passed away Mr. Claude Rouleau, husband of the last fifty years of Mrs. Diane Valiquette.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his children Nathalie, Robert and his daughter-in-law Annie. He was the adored grandfather of Léane and Lanka. He also leaves to mourn his little sister Danielle (Rhéal), his brothers René (Carole) and Normand (Claire), his sister-in-law Louise (Jean), his nephews and nieces, as well as other relatives and friends.



THEOFILIS, Emmanouel
1948 — 2022

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of beloved husband, cherished father, and devoted grandfather Emmanouel Theofilis on December 12, 2022 at the age of 74.

He will be deeply missed by his wife (Dimitra), children and their spouses (Jasmin + Nick & John + Sophia), as well as his grandchildren (Jake & Emmanuel), along with his extended family, relatives, and friends.

Contact us today to place an obituary or in memoriam in our next issue
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HOROSCOPE

Week of **DECEMBER 25 TO 31, 2022**

The luckiest signs this week:
PISCES, ARIES AND TAURUS



ARIES

You may have to entertain unexpectedly. You'll put your heart and soul into pleasing your loved ones. You may feel fatigued and come down with a cold.



TAURUS

You'll be helpful at upcoming parties. You'll throw an impressive party for your loved ones. Everyone will have fun if you get involved in the entertainment.



GEMINI

Go in on lottery tickets with your family; luck could be on your side. You may also complete an important project with the help of your loved ones. You may arrange a spontaneous trip.



CANCER

If there's tension between certain family members, you'll be able to calm them down by opening up or getting creative. Your organization skills will come in handy and will impress your family.



LEO

You'll bring together family and friends. You'll successfully unite two families and some people who don't always get along. You'll take care of all the details.



VIRGO

It's your turn to entertain and have your loved ones over for the holidays. Even when you're a guest, you'll offer to help serve and clean up because you need to feel useful.



LIBRA

You relish gatherings and enjoy any form of celebration, big or small. You'll make a spectacle of yourself with some crazy antics and an attention-grabbing speech.



SCORPIO

Someone from another country will attend your family get-together. You'll be eager to learn more about their culture and share yours. You'll enjoy new and exotic foods and music.



SAGITTARIUS

You'll be the life of the party and manage to keep people amused. The jokes will come thick and fast. Be careful when driving at night.



CAPRICORN

There are always extra expenses at this time of year. You'll be generous and warm the hearts of those in need even if you don't know them. You'll also treat yourself.



AQUARIUS

You won't miss a party. You need to move, dance, let go and, above all, be with your loved ones. You'll come up with fun and engaging games.



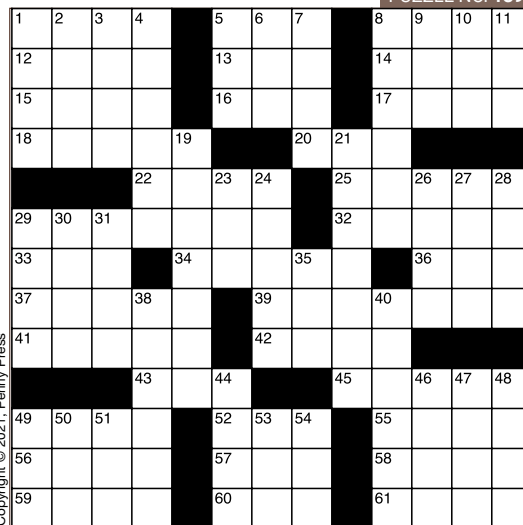
PISCES

Avoid staying up too late. Otherwise, you won't be able to stay up to welcome the New Year. You may have to catch up on a few hours of sleep or risk getting sick.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 139



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ACROSS

1. Pig's food
5. Research place
8. Spring event
12. Exec's car
13. Back in time
14. Convertible, e.g.
15. Squadron
16. Ink holder
17. Emit fumes
18. Patch the roof, again
20. Small mark
22. Ceramic slab
25. ___ the town red
29. Flashing lights
32. Internal
33. Fruity dessert
34. American buffalo
36. Toll
37. Boise's site
39. Occurrence
41. Hosiery fabric
42. Stash
43. Question

DOWN

45. Of the nose
49. Dolt
52. Conditions
55. Hubbub: hyph.
56. Has
57. Forty winks
58. Musical staff sign
59. Exultant joy
60. Desertlike
61. Give a party

DOWN

1. Defame
2. Phone wire
3. Skip
4. Mashed veggie
5. Child's seat
6. Time period
7. Join firmly
8. Kilt pattern
9. Tinge
10. Wolfed down
11. Chinese skillet
19. Satin strips
21. Belief
23. Flower wreath
24. Roadway hazards
26. Data
27. Requirement
28. Family ___
29. Rotate
30. In order
31. Authentic
35. Select
38. Raspy, as a voice
40. Fabric sample
44. Type
46. Alone
47. Lemon coolers
48. Storage area
49. Swamp
50. Night bird
51. ___ and all
53. Distant
54. Snoop

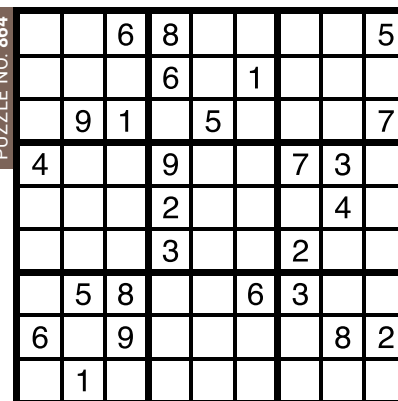
Sudoku

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. 864

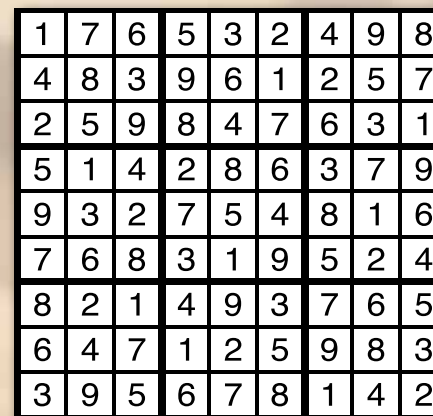


Last Issues' Answers

CROSSWORDS



Sudoku



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