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Laval recovers \$60 million

Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer symbolically shredded files pertaining to the lawsuits against crooked contractors during the city's press conference. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

Action taken against car thefts

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Federal Treasury Board President Anita Anand launched a new initiative to promote the presence of Black public servants during the recent Black History Month.



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Laval English-speaking Senior Wellness Centre

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Ottawa invests in RNA Technologies & Therapeutics, boosting its expansion

Laval biotech startup gets \$200,000 loan, with assistance from Vimy MP Koutrakis

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Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis has announced a repayable loan of \$200,000 by the federal government to RNA Technologies & Therapeutics Inc., a startup biotech firm that was launched with help from Ottawa and the Laval-based Quebec Biotechnology Innovation Centre (CQIB).

Support from Canada Economic Development (CED) enabled RNA T&T to acquire automated equipment to streamline its productivity and increase its production capacity. CED is the key federal partner in Quebec's regional economic development.

Focused economic development

With its 12 regional business offices, CED accompanies businesses, supporting organizations and all regions across Quebec for their economic development. The funds were granted under CED's Regional Economic Growth through Innovation program.

The program targets entrepreneurs, leveraging innovation to grow their businesses and enhance their competitiveness, as well as regional economic stakeholders helping to create an entrepreneurial environment conducive to innovation and growth for all across all regions.

In Quebec, SMEs account for 99.7 per cent of the province's businesses and 50 per cent

of its GDP.

Messenger RNA production

Founded in July 2022, RNA T&T is an innovative business specializing in the design, production, and purification of intermediate carrier molecules called messenger RNAs (mRNAs). Incubated at the CQIB on Cartier Blvd., RNA T&T produces and sells intermediate mRNA molecules in small and large quantities, in addition to implementing a research program for its clients to develop new therapies, obtain regulatory approvals for them and ensure intellectual property protection.

RNA T&T's staff includes experts in the RNA field with combined experience totalling over three decades in *in vitro* transcription (IVT) therapeutic RNA synthesis.

Helping businesses grow

"The Government of Canada recognizes and supports innovative businesses and organizations that are a source of pride in their communities," CED said in a statement regarding its loan to RNA T&T.

"Our government is committed to investing to ensure our SMEs remain competitive and innovative," said Koutrakis, who is the parliamentary secretary to the minister responsible for CED.

"Helping a business grow and innovate so it can enable Canadians to benefit from an important technology is a priority for our government," added Koutrakis. "That is why we are supporting this promising project by RNA T&T, which is a wonderful example of



From the left, Perry Niro, CEO of the CQIB, Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis and RNA T&T CEO and president Claude LeDuc are seen here following the loan announcement made at the CQIB on Cartier Blvd. in Laval.



The Quebec Biotechnology Innovation Centre (CQIB) on Cartier Blvd. has helped to "incubate" many biotech startups, including RNA Technologies & Therapeutics.

success after two years of incubation at the CQIB."

Progress in just 18 months

"Thanks to the CQIB's incubation structure, RNA T&T has made significant advances over its first 18 months of existence," said Claude LeDuc, president and CEO of the firm.

With a 36-year track record of international experience and accomplishments in both private and Fortune 500 companies, LeDuc has been a key player in the success of various organizations, including many biotech startups.

He has led teams through various development stages, from early R&D and preclinical programs to successful market launches. The companies he has helped bring into being include BioSyntech, Skeltex Technologies, Axcellon Biopolymers, MRM Proteomics, RNA T&T and Ortho Regenerative Technologies.

Successful fundraising

At the same time, LeDuc has become known for his exceptional capital-gathering abilities. As the CEO of multiple start-ups, he raised more than \$70 million in equity and debenture notes in private and public settings.

"We want to highlight the importance of government assistance programs such as this one from CED, which play a crucial role in supporting and funding the rapid growth of technological SMEs such as RNA T&T," LeDuc said regarding this latest venture. "We express our deep gratitude for their ongoing support."

"This investment in one of the businesses accompanied by our incubator confirms the role the CQIB plays as a seedbed for life sciences businesses in Quebec," said Perry Niro, executive-director of the CQIB. "We are particularly pleased with RNA T&T's progress as it completes its incubation process."



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OPINION & Editorial



Trudeau/Singh pharmacare bill could slash prescription coverage

The Trudeau government's newly introduced pharmacare bill is under fire, with experts warning it could drastically reduce prescription drug coverage for millions across Canada. Montreal Economic Institute researcher Emmanuelle Faubert blasted the legislation as a potential federal takeover of drug insurance, endangering the quality of coverage for countless Canadians reliant on private plans.

"The New Democrats have been very clear about their intent with this legislation: they see it as a Trojan horse to implement a federal monopoly on drug insurance," Faubert said. "Unfortunately, as can be seen in every province, government-run prescription insurance plans cover only a fraction of what private plans do."

"There's a very decent chance that this federal pharmacare plan could lower coverage quality for the millions of Canadians who rely on private insurance plans for their prescription medication."

Should the proposed legislation pass, Faubert said, it would lead to the creation of a federal monopoly overseeing insurance coverage for key medications, including birth control and diabetes treatments. The legislation plans to set up the Canadian Drug Agency, responsible for formulating a national strategy for the bulk procurement of these drugs

and establishing a list of medications that will be reimbursed under the scheme. This development represents a major overhaul in the approach to prescription drug coverage in Canada.

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh has already hinted at plans to extend the range of drugs covered under this federal scheme even further. Historical data reveals a stark contrast in drug coverage, with private plans offering substantially more than public options between 2018 and 2021, particularly in Quebec, which has the broadest public coverage.

According to a recent MEI study, adopting a nationwide plan akin to Quebec's would still result in a downgrade for over 21 million Canadians. The study also highlights the probable delays in accessing new medications under the federal plan, a stark contrast to the more efficient private sector.

Alberta and Quebec are poised to reject the federal pharmacare program, insisting that healthcare falls strictly within provincial jurisdiction. The possibility for provinces to opt out of the program remains a contentious issue.

"Ottawa needs to start trusting provincial governments to take care of their own responsibilities rather than repeatedly overstepping into their jurisdiction," Faubert said.

Letters to the Editor



Park Pie-X: extreme make-over without consultation of the citizens!

Without consulting its tax payers, Laval is about to undertake a complete make-over of Park Pie-X and other drastic changes in that neighborhood. Not only the City wants to remodel the park, but wants to take back the full 30-foot wide municipal right-of-way along the alleys leading to the park. The City has allowed its citizens for more than 65 years to use and maintain the piece of land exceeding the current size of the alleys. So, what is different now? Unclear! Moreover, the City wants to apply a right of preemption on 4 residences adjoining the alleys and the park, which means that the City reserves itself the right to buy those properties over the next 10 years, demolish them after and "open" the park on the street. For as long as 10 years, those owners cannot consider improving their house (a permit would most likely be refused by the City) and no one knows how much money the City would offer them if the current owner would like to sell its property – most probably the City evaluation... not the Market value!

In response to this lack of consultation, a group of 16 owners in which I am part of has decided to have a petition circulate in the close vicinity of the parc. We collected 381 signees, all adults, tax payers. I presented this petition to City Hall on February 06, on behalf of the other owners. But mayor Boyer responded that "no other consultation was planned"

about this project, thus rejecting the petition without even having deigned to consult it.

No one has been informed that the project, initially estimated at 1,65 M\$ (for the reconstruction of the service building) is now worth close to 24 M\$... excluding all costs related to the purchase of the 4 properties in the future!

I consider that this serious breach in basic democracy contravenes the Quebec government regulation and even Laval's own policy about public consultation.

Let's be clear: the park and the alleys need to be fixed or improved, as they were neglected for decades. But I support the group of the 16 owners who objected to the notices from the City. We will continue to fight against such a project in which no adult has been consulted. If you want to add your name to the other 381 signees, please follow the link below. If you need more info, write to ProjetParcPieX@icloud.com.

Christian Veilleux
Laval - One of the 16 owners!

Link to the petition: https://www.petitionenligne.com/petition_de_sauvegarde_du_quartier_autour_du_parc_pie-x_english_version_to_follow

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Laying to rest Vaillancourt's ghost...

In ex-mayor's fading shadow, Laval takes back \$60 million in skimmed sums

Like a ghost who puts in appearances from time to time during the day, Gilles Vaillancourt is occasionally spotted enjoying a quick meal in the fast-food court at Carrefour Laval.

But even though current Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer admits he never actually ever met the former mayor, Vaillancourt's lingering presence is proving to be something not easily exorcised.

Gilles Vaillancourt's name was invoked repeatedly during a splashy press conference that officials with the City of Laval held at the interim city hall on Saint-Martin Blvd. late last month.

The purpose: to close the book on the legacy Vaillancourt left after he resigned from office in 2012, after nearly 40 years as mayor and as a city councillor before then.

Parti PRO got kickbacks

In the aftermath of evidence laid out by the Charbonneau Commission into public contracts corruption, the City of Laval filed a string of lawsuits against outside contractors over the past 10 years, to ultimately recover \$60 million in funds which had been systematically overpaid.

It was a scheme that saw a percentage kicked back to Vaillancourt's Parti PRO des Lavallois. The city undertook 18 civil cases, garnering 13 judgments in its favour. Cases still ongoing, if successful, would bring in an additional \$20

million.

After serving part of a six-year jail sentence, Vaillancourt agreed to forfeit to the city more than \$7 million in savings from Swiss and Bermuda bank accounts, as well as his luxurious condo on Île Paton in the Rivière des Prairies off Chomedey, and the \$36,000 annual retirement pension he would have received from the city.

As Boyer, 36, recounted to journalists, he was a university student living at home in Vimont with his parents in 2010, when former National Assembly member Vincent Auclair reported he had once been discreetly approached by Vaillancourt who offered an envelope of cash to be used in one of Auclair's election campaigns.

A change of culture

Boyer insisted that the culture of corruption that reigned in Laval over the 23 years Vaillancourt was mayor has been broken. "Laval really started over from zero in 2013," he told journalists, alluding to that year's election when a virtually completely new slate of councillors came onto city council.

"It took time and we had to rebuild the administration, revise our way of doing things, our procedures in our by-laws," he added. "But I think there was this renewal politically as well as administratively, which allowed us to say that the [old] system was done away with because



Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News

all the players were changed."

During a question-and-answer exchange, *The Laval News* pointed out that there remains a significant cluster of Laval residents who still speak admiringly of Vaillancourt, citing his accomplishments (the orange Metro line extension, the Cosmodôme, extensive residential, commercial and industrial development) while he was in office.

Vaillancourt/Trump comparison

"There's people in Laval who admire Trump: what can I do about it?" Boyer replied somewhat sardonically, while noting that it cost the relatively small sum of \$6 - \$7 million in total for legal fees to recover the \$60 million in stolen taxpayers' dollars.

As for money that continues to come in (there are five more cases against former contractors pending), the City of Laval created a special fund in 2017 (the Fonds Place-du-Souvenir),

which provides targeted financial support for youths from Laval up to age 17, who are regarded as being "at-risk."

Some of the clawed-back funds also go towards purchasing green and forested areas of Laval for permanent conservation, as well as for making cash payments for goods and services in order to avoid adding to the City of Laval's debts.

Opposition reaction

One of the City of Laval's two opposition parties, Action Laval, isn't altogether happy with how the city is spending the recuperated money. They believe it would have been better spent on tax relief.

"This year we got an increase of 4.8 per cent in our municipal taxes, and that's unacceptable," said Action Laval city councillor for Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Paolo Galati. "Especially with the fact that we just recuperated all this money, it could have been a way to balance the budget."



Left, Simon Tremblay, the City of Laval's director of legal services, led the city's legal efforts to recoup the \$60 million. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

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Quebec allots \$450,000 to counter sexual/domestic violence in Laval

Projects sponsored by CHOC men's collective and Collège Montmorency

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Acting on behalf of CAQ women's issues minister Martine Biron, Laval-des-Rapides MNA Céline Haytayan has announced a \$450,000 grant of money from the provincial government to support two local projects designed to raise awareness of sexual and domestic violence committed primarily against women.

Local CEGEP involved

The goal of the first project (*Le harcèlement sexuel, c'est NON!* [No! to sexual harassment]) sponsored by Collège Montmorency, is to raise awareness among the CEGEP college's faculty of 1,300 employees, as well as among members of the student body who may be in high-risk categories (i.e. LGBTQ).

Another goal of the program is awareness-raising and prevention in communities close to Collège Montmorency, with a focus on local.

Men's group sponsoring

The second project (*Soyez Influenceurs! (La violence conjugale... C'est l'Affaire de tous!)* [*Become an influencer – domestic violence is everyone's business*]) is sponsored by the male collective Carrefour d'hommes en changement (CHOC).

Its goal is to reach out to the partners of the perpetrators of domestic violence, while properly equipping them through a guide book offering safe ways to become proactive and contribute to the prevention and halting of

domestic violence. As with the previous project, this one also has goals over a larger region.

"These regional initiatives were retained [as finalists] as part of the 2023-2024 season of calls for projects for awareness-raising with regards to domestic and sexual violence," Haytayan's office said in a statement.

Gaining understanding

"They will contribute to a better understanding these types of violence, while assisting victims, the perpetrators of violence and others in their surroundings in Laval." In all, the CAQ government allotted \$4.8 million for a total of 29 similar projects across Quebec.

"The sums allotted for these two projects will help to counter domestic violence and sexual violence in Laval," said Haytayan. "My thanks to Collège Montmorency and to the Carrefour d'hommes en changement for their initiatives and their respective contributions."

'A priority,' says minister

"The fight against sexual and domestic violence is a priority of our government," said Biron. "Acting preventively is a key so that this phenomenon ceases. I would like to thank the organizations who are hard at work in the field on this issue."

"Everywhere in Quebec, women should be able to feel secure," added Isabelle Lecours, MNA for Lotbinière-Frontenac, who is also parliamentary assistant to the minister for women's issues. "I am proud that our government is devoting so much energy towards the prevention and struggle against sexual and domestic violence."



Revenu Québec provides details on the sending of notifications

Revenu Québec would like to inform citizens that it always uses secure means to communicate confidential information to taxpayers. They never ask for personal information by email or text message, and never offer refunds or transfers through these channels.

Like many large organizations, Revenu Québec considers a notification service to be an additional tool in the fight against digital fraud, which is now ubiquitous. Aware of phishing attempts and acting as a responsible organization, Revenu Québec prioritizes the protection of confidential information and considers it its duty, in order to reduce the risk of fraud to citizens, to set up services to inform individuals quickly, particularly when a change has been made to certain sensitive data in their file or when they have been affected by an incident.

Revenu Québec has set up a test project that allows citizens to receive, with their consent, a notification when certain events occur in their file.

As of today, as part of this project, which is in the test phase, 99 notifications have been sent to people who have carried out an operation in their file, including 6 by text message. Revenu Québec has contacted these individuals by telephone to obtain their comments and will continue its analyses to optimize its procedures. Revenu Québec intends to strictly comply with

the government's rules in this area. The goal is to quickly inform citizens when Revenu Québec detects a change that may seem abnormal in a file.

As for the 99 notifications sent by Revenu Québec, they are informative and always ask citizens to consult their message in My Account. Notifications from Revenu Québec never contain clickable links, amounts of money, personal information or attachments.

Here is an example of a notification sent by Revenu Québec as part of this test project: "Preventive notification from Revenu Québec: Your file has been modified. If you, or someone you designate, have not made a change, please contact us. For more details, see the communication that has been filed in My Account for Citizens on our website."

Every year, Revenu Québec conducts cybersecurity campaigns to raise awareness of the risks of fraud and to prevent phishing, particularly during tax season and at other times. In particular, they aim to educate citizens on the right behaviours to adopt and on tips to recognize the main traps set by fraudsters.

If you have any doubts about a message received, Revenu Québec always invites citizens to check their mailbox in My Account for Citizens, to visit the section specially designed for this purpose on justepourvous.ca or to contact it.

Spring floods: Our teams at work

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Reservoirs always help reduce the impact of spring flooding

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The majority of our facilities located in southern Québec are run-of-river generating stations. Since they have no reservoirs, they have no way of retaining water. During spring runoff, Hydro-Québec simply opens the gates to let the river flow through.

Our experts are hard at work

In both winter and spring, we measure the amount of snow on the ground to determine how much water it contains so that we can predict how the snowmelt will affect the rivers and lakes. Each day, our teams of meteorologists, engineers and hydrologists study weather forecasts and river behavior in order to plan what needs to be done.

How does climate change fit into all of this?

Climate change affects the scope, intensity and timing of spring runoff. We are therefore adapting our practices so that we can continue to do our utmost to limit the impact of spring flooding on communities.

Learn more about how we manage spring runoff on our website:

www.hydroquebec.com/generation/spring-runoff/



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Moderna to make Covid vaccines in Laval starting next year

New facility was hastily built to boost Canada's resilience against pandemics

MARTIN C. BARRY
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A new Covid vaccine manufacturing plant that has just been completed in Laval's Cité de la Biotech will be up and running by the fall next year, according to the company that built the facility.

The \$250-million plant, which officially opened on Feb. 23 with federal, provincial and municipal officials present, will eventually produce about 100 million doses of vaccines annually, which is enough for all of Canada, said Moderna officials.

Moderna chose Laval

"Our Cité de la biotech of Laval is expanding phenomenally today as construction of the Moderna manufacturing plant is completed," said Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer.

"The arrival of a major player in life sciences and health technologies in the Laval economic ecosystem is a sign of a dynamic city in action," he continued.

"Having a company of this magnitude on our territory is supporting our objective and vision of being a global leader where you can find quality facilities, vibrant living spaces and a qualified workforce."

"Completing the construction of our mRNA facility marks a groundbreaking moment for Moderna and Canada as we progress towards delivering a domestic mRNA vaccine supply chain," said Stefan Raos, general manager of



The new Moderna mRNA-based vaccine production facility in Laval's Cité de la Biotech industrial park.

Moderna Canada.

A 'centre of excellence'

"This building is a tangible example of concerted collaboration with the federal government, the government of Quebec, and the city of Laval, reflecting the lessons of the pandemic. We are proud to help drive Canada's reputation as an mRNA centre of excellence and contributor to global health initiatives."

The initiative will also generate and support high-skilled employment opportunities. The building of the facility was made possible in part by funding from the provincial Investissement Québec development agency.

Moderna currently has 45 therapeutic and vaccine programs in its pipeline across infectious diseases, immuno-oncology, rare diseases and autoimmune diseases, including nine in late-stage development.

Minimizing disease threats

"With infectious diseases continuing to pose a significant health challenge, our mRNA platform can play a pivotal role against current and future threats," said Stéphane Bancel, CEO of Moderna.

"Canada's role in global health is critical, and with this facility, Moderna is honoured to contribute to its robust scientific community and public health leadership in driving innovation and transformative medicine forward," Bancel added.

The factory will be able to do a lot more than make vaccines against COVID-19, said federal minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, François-Philippe Champagne.

"Moderna is not just about COVID-19," he said. "This is a range of vaccines that we will be able to produce at home. ... There are even vaccines potentially for cancer."

Reducing foreign dependence

Quebec's economy minister, Pierre Fitzgibbon, said the project makes it possible to reduce local dependence on foreign-produced vaccines. Fitzgibbon believes Moderna's project will also serve as a calling card to attract other pharmaceutical projects to Quebec.

"There are international pharmaceutical companies looking at what's going on, at the talent at McGill, at the Université de Montréal, among others," he said. "I think it's going to create a pretty significant momentum for the life sciences."

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Ottawa is acting against car thefts, says Treasury Board's Anita Anand

The Laval News
EXCLUSIVE

Vehicle theft is leaving its mark on thousands of Canadian and Quebec households

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for The Laval News
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With auto theft incidents across Quebec and Canada soaring as never before, federal Treasury Board President Anita Anand tells *Newsfirst Multimedia* that the Trudeau government is raising Canada Border Services Agency funding by \$28 million for more stolen vehicle investigations – including some that will be using artificial intelligence (AI).

Anand was one of the five Trudeau cabinet ministers who recently took part in the Liberal government's National Summit on Combatting Auto Theft in Ottawa.

The issue is impacting the portfolios of several Quebec-based cabinet ministers, including Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez, and Innovation, Science and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne.

Ministers' SUVs stolen

The *New York Times* reported last month in a piece looking at how Canada has become a "candy store" for car thieves that two government-issued Toyota Highlander SUVs were stolen three times in Ottawa from the current and previous justice ministers.

Auto theft is leaving its mark on thousands of Canadian households every year, particularly in urban centres. Discussions held at the summit focused on finding solutions to the growing challenge of auto theft in Canada.

Federal, provincial and municipal police have concluded that the car theft wave increasingly involves organized crime groups, who are using the proceeds of those thefts to fund other illegal activities.

In a press release, Public Safety Canada, which organized the national summit, said the gathering "advanced work to keep Canadians safe and prevent auto theft from happening, to recover vehicles that have been stolen, and to ensure the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice."

Significant gathering, says Anand



At the conclusion of the summit, participants endorsed a Statement of Intent, committing to work together to combat auto theft, and to finalize an action plan that will be released before the end of this winter.

"The auto theft summit was significant because it brought together stakeholders from across the country, industries, border services agents, frontline police, as well as the auto manufacturers, with federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments," said Anand.

"Never before have we had a conference like this to convene a conversation about how we can each do better to combat auto theft," she added, noting that 54 cars were recently intercepted by the Sûreté du Québec at the Port of Montreal before they could be clandestinely exported out of the country. "That just highlights how we are making progress, but there's much more



Anita Anand, Treasury Board President in the Trudeau cabinet, says the Liberal government is boosting police presence and effectiveness in order to combat the rising wave of car thefts across Quebec and the rest of Canada.

work to do – together and individually."

What Ottawa is doing

Recent immediate actions undertaken by the federal government to combat auto theft include:

- A \$28 million injection to the CBSA to conduct more investigations and examinations of stolen vehicles, as well as to enhance collaboration on investigations and intelligence sharing with partners across Canada and internationally. This would include exploring detection technology solutions, and exploring the use of advanced analytical tools, such as artificial intelligence.
- Pursuing all avenues to ban devices used to steal vehicles by copying the wireless signals for remote keyless entry, such as the Flipper Zero, which would allow for the removal of those devices from the Canadian marketplace through collaboration with law enforcement agencies.

More tools against car theft

Additionally, the government says it is using the following tools and authorities to further curb auto theft:

- Establishing a means of better information sharing between local police and railway police, including through the use of advanced data tools, to identify and find stolen cars before they get to ports.
- Public Safety Canada, the CBSA and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) will work with partners across Canada and internationally to increase collaboration and information sharing.
- Transport Canada will modernize the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards to ensure they consider technological advancements to deter and prevent auto theft. The department will also work with public safety partners to identify cargo handling vulnerabilities through targeted security assessments of port facilities.
- The Department of Justice Canada will examine potential amendments to the criminal code to further strengthen the

legal framework related to auto theft, including by reviewing existing offences and penalties.

- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) will work with Canadian companies, including the automotive industry, to develop innovative solutions to protect vehicles against theft.

Black public service initiative

In February during Black History Month, Anita Anand presided at the launch of a new Treasury Board of Canada initiative, an Action Plan to support Black public servants in federal government workplaces.

In Budget 2023, the Trudeau government committed an additional \$45.9 million to complement initial funding in Budget 2022 for a Black mental health fund.

As a result, nearly \$50 million is supporting the creation and development of the Action Plan for Black Public Servants, to establish career development programs and mental health supports for Black public servants.

Some specifics of the program:

- Health Canada is receiving funding for Black-centric enhancements to the Employee Assistance Program provided to more than 90 federal departments and agencies.
- The Canada School of Public Service is receiving funding to launch an executive leadership program for Black executives to support their career advancement.
- The Public Service Commission (PSC) is receiving funding to provide individualized assessment, counselling and coaching services to Black public servants.

"These and future investments will continue to be guided by the lived experiences of Black public servants," said Anand.

"We will keep working with Black public servants to address all forms of anti-Black racism and discrimination because a diverse, inclusive, safe, and rewarding public service not only benefits employees, but it also strengthens our organizations and improves our service delivery for Canadians."



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MARCH 8 International Women's Day



Invisible work that affects women more than men

Women, regardless of their marital or employment status, tend to carry a significant, invisible burden known as mental workload.

OVERLOAD OF RESPONSIBILITIES

This mental burden involves being responsible for managing, planning and completing all the household tasks, including:

- Housework, such as cleaning, making meals and yard work
- Shopping for groceries, clothes and school supplies
- Making appointments at the hairdresser, dentist and doctor
- Hosting, including buying gifts and

sending invitations

- Registering for school, day camps and more

Women are responsible for anticipating their family members' needs, finding solutions, making choices and following up. This exhausting job can greatly impact their physical and psychological health.

It's essential to continue discussing the unequal distribution of invisible tasks to work towards a more equal sharing of responsibilities. If you're a woman overwhelmed by your responsibilities, don't hesitate to seek resources to take off some of the pressure.

Seven ways to be an advocate for women's rights

Every year on March 8, countries around the globe mark International Women's Day. It's a time to both recognize women's achievements and acknowledge the challenges they continue to face in the pursuit of gender equality. Wondering how you can help promote gender equality in your daily life? Here are seven ways to make a difference.

1. RAISE YOUR VOICE

Whether it's in the workplace, among friends and family members or at a public event, speaking up on behalf of gender equality is an integral step in advancing women's rights and freedoms.

2. SUPPORT WOMEN

Supporting women can take many forms including listening to their stories, endorsing their businesses, offering counsel and providing resources that empower them to take charge of their own lives.

3. SHARE THE WORKLOAD

Women do as much as two-and-a-half times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. Divvying up these jobs equally between men and women allows everyone to pursue other types of meaningful work.

4. GET WOMEN INVOLVED IN POLITICS

Communities need women to assume leadership roles so that women's concerns and needs can be better addressed. Encourage women to run for leadership roles and vote for them when they do.

5. EDUCATE YOUTH

Both boys and girls should learn about the status of women's rights and how they themselves can become advocates of gender parity.

6. ENSURE WOMEN KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

Women need to understand the legal and civil rights they have and how to protect them at home, at work and in their communities.

7. JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Social media platforms are a place where advocates of women's rights can join forces to affect social change.

This year for International Women's Day, look for ways you can become a champion of women's rights. No matter how small, every voice counts and every step forward matters.



*Nos vœux les plus chaleureux à l'occasion
de la journée internationale des femmes !*

Our best wishes on the occasion of International Women's Day!



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International
Women's
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MARCH 8



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MARCH 8 International Women's Day



Employment: why are women penalized?

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), women face significant challenges in securing decent employment opportunities globally, placing them in a vulnerable position. Various factors contribute to this phenomenon, which, unfortunately, will unlikely improve any time soon.



MULTIPLE BARRIERS

Barriers to employment differ depending on whether the woman lives in a developing, emerging or developed country. The main reasons why millions of women aren't active in the labour force include:

- Being in a relationship with a man with a paid job while she looks after the

housework and children.

- Being the mother of a single-parent family. In Canada, most lone-parent households are headed by women.
- Having difficulty balancing family and work, including atypical working hours or caring for children with special needs.
- Not having a means of transport to get to work.
- Being at risk of harassment or sexual assault while travelling.
- Not having childcare resources nearby or enough money to pay for childcare.
- Living in a family where women's work is viewed negatively.
- Having a low level of education.

STUBBORN CONFORMITY

Even in 2024, traditional gender roles continue to persist in many countries. Men remain the breadwinners while women stay at home. Although women's work, such as preparing meals and looking after children, is undeniably essential, it's neither valued nor paid. What's more, according to the ILO, 20 per cent of men and 14 per cent of women worldwide consider it inappropriate or even unacceptable for a woman to work outside the home.



POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Although it's not easy to change attitudes, there are several strategies and solutions to promote women's access to decent employment. Offering flexible and affordable childcare, providing access to more generous parental leave, promoting shared domestic tasks, taking a serious look at equal pay and introducing meas-

ures against discrimination in recruitment, for example, can make a real difference.

March 8 is International Women's Day. Use this day as a reminder to fight for gender equality. By taking more concrete action and raising public awareness of injustice, you can help create a world where all women can choose a suitable, safe and well-paying job.



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Aglaia Revelakis

Municipal councillor
District of Chomedey

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MARCH 8 International Women's Day



Poverty: Major impacts on women's health

Women worldwide are disproportionately affected by poverty, which has a significant impact on their health.

Women living on low incomes face a range of challenges that can compromise their physical and mental well-being, regardless of where they live. These include:

- Being unable to afford fresh, healthy food, leading them to skip meals or turn

to junk food, which is often cheaper

- Living in poorly heated, poorly ventilated or unhealthy accommodations with mould or pests
- Constantly feeling anxious, stressed or having low self-esteem
- Using harmful substances, like alcohol, to try and alleviate stress
- Isolating themselves from others and depriving themselves of activities that

are beneficial to their health, such as hobbies and sports

In short, taking concrete action to tackle women's poverty through education, raising awareness and adopting new legislation is the only way society will see women's health improve.

This International Women's Day, spread the word and donate to an organization dedicated to women's health if you can.



Women's sports: gaps that need to be closed without delay

When you think about it, there are very few sports where women outshine men. Although female tennis stars may come to mind, this is an exception. Men's sports teams, such as football and hockey, and individual sports predominantly played by men, such as golf and motocross, generate the most revenue by far.

INVISIBLE WOMEN

The attention given to sportswomen and sportsmen in the media is anything but equal. According to UNESCO, barely four per cent of global media content was

devoted to women's sports in 2018. And that's not all! Only 12 per cent of sports news was about female athletes.

So, it's not surprising to learn that of the 100 highest-paid athletes in the world in 2021, there were only two women: tennis players Naomi Osaka and Serena Williams.

STUBBORN STEREOTYPES

Why are women so under-represented in the world of sports? There are several reasons. First, girls aren't encouraged

to get active and take risks in the same way as boys. As a result, boys tend to join sports teams and develop their potential at an early age.

Women are also the victims of persistent sexist stereotypes. For example, they're often described as less skillful and weak. In other words, they're less competent than men. This can discourage them from participating and excelling in sports.

On International Women's Day, do your part to ensure sportswomen get all the support and visibility they deserve.

Happy International Women's Day

On March 8, we celebrate women from all around the world as well as their many accomplishments, past, present, and future.



Joyeuse journée internationale des femmes

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My best wishes on the occasion of the International Women's Day

Mes meilleurs vœux à l'occasion de la

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SONA LAKHOIAN OLIVIER

MNA for Chomedey

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MARCH 8 International Women's Day



A new approach to women and leadership

International Women's Day is an annual celebration of women's achievements and a reminder of where progress still needs to be made. In 2019, women across the globe held a greater number of senior management positions than ever. Unfortunately, of all such positions available, only 29 per cent were filled by women.

THE CORPORATE CLIMB

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles has long been attributed to the metaphorical glass ceiling, a systemic barrier preventing women from rising beyond a certain level of seniority. A recent large-scale study of American corporations, however, placed the primary barrier to women's professional advancement lower on the corporate ladder.



Research has identified a phenomenon called the "broken rung", which is a discrepancy in the advancement rates of men and women to first-level management roles. Since more women remain in entry-level positions, there are fewer to compete for promotions at subsequent levels of management.

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP

One way to encourage more women to strive for management roles and to promote the selection of women for these positions is to broaden the characterization of a good leader.

Traditionally, strong leadership has been equated with assertiveness, ambition and self-reliance — attributes typically associated with masculinity and often discouraged in women.

By contrast, inclusive leadership is a collaborative form of management that embraces diversity, empowerment and inclusivity. These leaders are humble, open-minded and committed to strengthening marginalized voices. Research shows that inclusive leaders directly enhance the quality of a team's performance

and decision-making.

GENDER DIVERSITY

Studies demonstrate that gender diversity in corporate settings increases productivity and innovation, leads to better products and decision-making and improves employee satisfaction and retention.

Though it's important that women continue to occupy more and more leadership roles, it's clear that gender parity at all levels of the workforce should be the goal.



Corporate ladder climb

Are you a woman vying for a management position in your company? Here are three tips to help you climb the corporate ladder and land a job that matches your ambitions:

- **Be inspired by the best.** Ignore preconceived notions, such as the belief that women can't hold management positions. Read biographies about inspiring businesswomen or attend women-led conferences to boost your confidence and motivation.
- **Network.** Take part in business networking events whenever possible. The more professional contacts you make, the greater your chances of climbing the corporate ladder.
- **Learn to delegate.** Concentrating on advancing your career is hard if you spend hours doing countless related tasks. See if other people or artificial intelligence software can free up valuable time in your schedule.

With determination, courage and kindness towards yourself, you'll manage to stand out from the crowd!



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Things to do



THIS MONTH

Looking for something to do? Here are some upcoming events happening in the Laval area.

<div>LAVAL ROCKET GAME <i>Sports</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>Friday, March 8 7 PM</p><p>Place Bell 1950 Claude-Gagné, Laval, H7N 5H9</p><p>Experience a live hockey game as the Rocket faces the Cleveland Monsters.</p><p><i>Tickets from \$24</i></p></div>	<div>SURTOUT ANAS <i>Comedy</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>Friday, March 8 8 PM</p><p>Théâtre des Muses 475 boul. de l'Avenir, Laval, H7N 5H9</p><p>Three comedians join forces to bring you a highly original show.</p><p><i>Tickets from \$32.10</i></p></div>	<div>COFFEE TALKS <i>Guided conversations</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>Saturday, March 9 9 – 11 AM</p><p>Centre de Solution Santé 965 Boulevard d'Auteuil, Laval, H7E 5J7</p><p>Deep conversation, connect with like-minded souls, share intuitive wisdom for a transformative spiritual gathering!</p><p><i>General Admission: \$50.51</i></p></div>	<div>JAY DU TEMPLE <i>Comedy</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>Saturday, March 9 8 PM</p><p>André Mathieu Hall 475 boul. de l'Avenir, Laval, H7N 5H9</p><p>Jay Du Temple presents his second show. A more intimate, more personal show.</p><p><i>Tickets from \$41.10</i></p></div>
<div>PAPA OURS <i>Theatre</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>Sunday, March 10 2 PM</p><p>Théâtre des Muses 475 boul. de l'Avenir, Laval, H7N 5H9</p><p>A storyteller's adaptation of a traditional tale set in the rivers and forests of Quebec.</p><p><i>Regular tickets from \$16</i></p></div>	<div>CHAMPIONNAT PROVINCIAL DE JUDO <i>Sports</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>March 23 and 24 8 AM – 5 PM</p><p>Carrefour Multisports 3095 A. Jean-Noël-Lavoie, Laval, H7P 4W5</p><p>See some impressive judo competition.</p><p><i>Admission: \$8</i></p></div>	<div>MANGER! L'EXPOSITION QUI NOURRIT <i>Museum</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>Every day until September 2, 2024 Opening hours: 10 AM – 5 PM</p><p>Musée de la santé Armand-Frappier 2150 Autoroute des Laurentides, Laval</p><p>This exhibition explores the link between well-being and food.</p><p><i>Regular tickets from \$13 to \$52</i></p></div>	<div>4, 3, 2, 1... SANTÉ! <i>Museum</i></div> <div></div> <div><p>Every day until September 6, 2032 Opening hours: 10 AM – 5 PM</p><p>Musée de la santé Armand-Frappier 2150 Autoroute des Laurentides, Laval</p><p>Discover four scales of human health: molecules and cells, individuals, populations and the planet.</p><p><i>Regular tickets from \$13 to \$52</i></p></div>

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Mercedes stolen from car lot in Laval recovered in Toronto

A Mercedes Benz reported as stolen in a spectacular vehicle theft incident at a Curé Labelle used car lot several weeks ago has been recovered by police in Toronto.

Working in conjunction with the Laval Police, the Ontario Provincial Police found the stolen Mercedes during the night of Feb. 15 to 16. According to car lot owner Marc Fournier, the OPP collared the thieves who were allegedly about to commit another theft at a Toronto business.

After recovering the car, the police reportedly

had a good deal of cleaning to do on its interior as the suspects left behind a lot of trash, including merchandise with security locks and seals, but also ignition keys apparently for other stolen cars.

The car lot owner reported that the returned vehicle had 3,000 additional kilometres on its odometer. The windows had also been tinted and the engine oil had been changed.

TVA Nouvelles identified a suspect arrested in Toronto as Mohammed Qasim Chowdhury. He faces charges of car theft, possession of stolen property, armed assault and dangerous driving.

SQ arrests Laval couple for alleged weapons and drug trafficking

A nearly three-year investigation by the Sûreté du Québec into a Laval couple's alleged involvement in drug and weapons trafficking culminated recently when the provincial police force arrested the pair.

Officers with the Montreal Police (SPVM), the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) provided assistance to the SQ

when they executed an arrest warrant issued for Maxime Gagne-Charet, 29, and Jenny Lachance-Valiquette, age 26.

The SQ recently announced that they were sending reinforcements to certain outlying regions of Quebec because of an upsurge of organized criminal activity there, including gang-related weapons and drug dealing.

Speeding at 200km/h+ on the A-15 nets a \$3,015 fine

A 23-year-old Laval man got slapped with a \$3,015 fine recently after being stopped by SQ officers who recorded his speed on southbound Autoroute 15 as being 209 km/h – more than twice the posted limit.

According to the SQ, officers locked onto the driver around 1:30 a.m. on a weeknight and it took them a while to finally catch up in Montreal

where he was pulled over along with a passenger.

An examination of the driver's license found that it was no longer valid, resulting in immediate seizure of the vehicle for 30 days and a fine of \$1,076. In addition, the ticket for exceeding the speed limit by more than 100 km/h came to \$1,939. The driver then had 24 demerit points slapped onto his record.

Five suspects arrested for alleged telecoms pirating

The Sûreté du Québec arrested five suspects recently in conjunction with a suspected telecommunications theft operation, including the suspected leader who is a resident of Laval.

The alleged leader of the operation, Éric Grenier, is listed in the provincial business registry database as the administrator of a numbered company which owns Arubox.TV, one of the telecom businesses alleged to have pirated signals from Bell and other major telecom service providers.

According to the Montreal daily webnews site *La Presse*, Grenier, who has been active in the adult entertainment business in Quebec, was

at one time a member of the Red Devils biker club, which is an affiliate of the Hells Angels.

Arubox.TV, and a second service known as Stocker IPTV, are alleged to have pirated television signals, according to a complaint filed by Bell Canada Enterprises, which is the lead complainant in a group of several telecom service providers who claim they were victimized.

Arubox.TV and Stocker IPTV were offering access to 3,500 TV channels in Quebec, Canada, the U.S.A. and around the world for a \$250 fee for a decoder box, followed by a \$25 per month charge.

Road closures for Laval as of March 8

The Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility is informing road users that there will be several closures starting March 8 in the Laval area to be aware of.

The Papineau-Leblanc bridge and a portion of Highway 19 will be completely closed from March 8 to 11, to replace the stays on the structure.

The closure will begin Friday at 10 p.m. and will end Monday at 4:30 a.m.

The roads will be closed going southbound between highway 440 (Jean-Noël-Lavoie) and Henri-Bourassa Blvd.

Additionally, there will be a closure going north between Henri-Bourassa and de la Concorde Blvd., but access to Saint-Martin Blvd. will be possible.

If you want to travel between Montreal and Laval, road users can take the Médéric-Martin bridge (A-15) or the Pie-IX bridge (R-125).

Industriel Blvd. ramp exit

Construction work on the Industriel Blvd. exit ramp will resume on March 11.

The closure will include Highway 15 (des Laurentides) and the 440 (Jean-Noël-Lavoie) in Laval, along with service roads and certain ramps.

The construction will be carried out mainly at night to reduce the impact on traffic.

Starting March 11, the left lane on the service road of Highway 15 going northbound towards Highway 440 will be closed.

Highway 15 going northbound, to exit no. 10 A-440 will be closed from at night from March 13 to 14.

The traffic will be diverted to the service roads.

From March 18 to 28, the entire service road of Highway 15 going northbound towards Highway 440 will be completely closed.

Additionally, the ramps on the interchange of highways 440 and 15 will be closed.

The Ministry reminds drivers that the speed limit in construction zones is reduced to 80 km/h on the expressways of highways 440 and 15 and to 50 km/h on the service roads.

The work could be postponed, extended, or cancelled due to weather conditions or operational constraints.

The Ministry recommends that drivers should prepare for a longer travel time if they're coming to the area because congestion is to be expected.

Detour routes will be marked with temporary signage.

Transport Ministry suggests consulting Québec 511 before you head out on the road.





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Local newspapers produce game-changing coverage

“We have boots on the ground, and often our stories get picked up by larger media.”

Nikki Mantell, publisher, Low Down to Hull and Back News

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS do a lot with a little. The result is game-changing coverage that not only informs the immediate regions they serve, but reflects the issues that contribute to the public conversations on a provincial and national scale.

While large media outlets were debating the possible ramifications of Bill 21, Quebec’s so-called secularism law that prohibits civil servants and other public-sector workers from wearing religious clothing or jewelry, the editor of *The Low Down to Hull and Back News* was interviewing Grade 3 teacher, Fatemeh Anvari, in the little town of Chelsea, Que., in the Outaouais region. She had just been fired for wearing a hijab.

“That’s one of the stories that wouldn’t get picked up if we wouldn’t do them,” said *The Low Down*’s publisher Nikki Mantell.

The story, broken by a newsroom with a staff of three, was picked up by the *Ottawa Citizen*, *The Globe and Mail*, the *National Post* and international outlets, including *Newsweek* and *The Guardian*.

It put a human face on Quebec’s often-virulent secularism debate. And, as Mantell put it, “changed the discourse.”

Mantell continued: “Before *The Low Down* published Ms. Fatemeh’s story, support for Bill 21 was hovering around 64 per cent. Following the story, which every major news outlet in Canada picked up, support for the bill dropped to 55 per cent.”

In another corner of the province, in the Vaudreuil-Soulanges region west of Montreal, when Bill 96 threatened to strip small bilingual towns of their dual-language status, the mayor of one of those tiny communities appeared set to let the deadline for the municipal council to affirm its will to keep the status expire. The local English-language paper in the region, *The 1019 Report*, questioned the mayor. On repeated occasions that spanned months, the mayor refused to commit whether council would vote on the needed resolution.

In response to the coverage, residents in the tiny town of 120 grew concerned. Two reporters with *The 1019 Report* started working the phones and going door to door. By the time they were done, the paper reported on the results of an exhaustive survey: a clear majority of residents of the island community of Île Cadieux wanted the town to keep its official bilingual status.

“Most of the residents credit the paper” when the resolution was finally renewed, said *The 1019 Report*’s editor Brenda O’Farrell, adding that large media outlets would never have bothered to do the legwork.

“We spread ourselves thin. We work really hard. And we’re good at stretching a buck,” said Mantell. “We put our hearts and souls into this.”

This is the type of journalism the Local Journalism Initiative helps produce. The federal funding program provides resources to hire journalists who produce civic content – coverage of health, education, rights, public policy and other essential issues.

It also ensures that members of Quebec’s English-speaking community continue to be informed. As Lily Ryan, publisher of *The Aylmer Bulletin* and the *West Quebec Post*, points out, as the province’s language of business and politics is French, English-language papers offer the minority community the opportunity to stay in touch with what is going on in their communities and government decisions.



BY THE NUMBERS	10,815	Number of LJI articles on civic issues produced at QCNA publications between April 2019 and February 2024. SOURCE: QCNA	4	Number of community newspapers launched in Quebec serving the English-speaking community since 2020. SOURCE: QCNA	518	Number of local news operations that closed between 2008 and Feb. 1, 2024 SOURCE: LOCAL NEWS RESEARCH PROJECT
					547	The number of job cuts announced by Quebec television network TVA in November 2023. SOURCE: TVA
					800	The number of job cuts announced by CBC in December 2023. SOURCE: CBC
					1269	Number of media jobs eliminated in Canada during first year of the COVID pandemic. SOURCE: LOCAL NEWS RESEARCH PROJECT
					4800	The number of job cuts announced by Bell Media in February 2024. SOURCE: BELL MEDIA



Community newspapers emerging as last journalistic soldiers standing

LAST MONTH, Bell Media announced its largest workforce restructuring in 30 years, laying off 4,800 workers.

In December, CBC/Radio-Canada announced plans to cut 800 jobs.

One month earlier, Quebec television network TVA cut 547 jobs.

Earlier in 2023, Postmedia, one of the largest media companies in Canada with a daily newspaper in almost every major city in the country, announced it was cutting 10 per cent of its staff, just the latest in a long string of downsizing moves that has spanned more than a decade. The cuts planned for Quebec went much deeper.

Almost every month, evidence of the continuing shift in the media landscape can be seen. And the result is fewer and fewer journalists reporting the stories that keep Canadians informed.

But in many communities a singular journalistic soldier remains standing: The community newspaper. These small, often privately-owned outlets are the last providers of reliable, professional local news.

“Community newspapers aren’t just filling the gap, they’re the whole fabric,”

said veteran journalist and president of the Quebec Community Newspaper Association Brenda O’Farrell.

That is why support for community newspapers is so important, O’Farrell says. As the media landscape continues to shift, the role these news outlets play is not only crucial, but gaining importance.

And they need to be supported by initiatives like the federal government’s Local Journalism Initiative, O’Farrell explains, referring to the funding program that helps qualified outlets hire reporters in communities across the country. But readers in these communities, have to do their part, too, she added, by subscribing to papers that offer that option, especially in Quebec where the minority-language community needs to maintain access to information in English.

Without programs like LJI and reader support, many community papers would struggle to survive.

Since 2012, journalist Marie-Ève Martel has tracked community news outlet closures across Quebec.

“For the moment, I’ve counted more than 80,” she reported late last year, af-

ter the abrupt shuttering of the Montreal daily *Metro* and its offshoots in several Montreal suburbs and Quebec City.

Each closure represents not only jobs lost, but “a hole in our social cement,” as Martel describes it.

Local media “makes us more informed, more aware and more likely to vote,” she said.

“CBC and the *Ottawa Citizen* aren’t going to cover a byelection in Chelsea,” said Nikki Mantell, the publisher of *The Low Down to Hull and Back News*, which covers the small towns in the Gatineau hills. “We have boots on the ground, and often our stories get picked up by larger media.”

“Local papers are where you hear about the most important things — health care, schools, getting your roads paved, the environment,” said Sharon McCully, publisher of *The Record* in Sherbrooke and the *Brome County News*, two papers that cover about 30 municipalities for the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships. “These are stories that impact people directly.”

“Community newspapers aren’t just filling the gap, they’re the whole fabric.”

Brenda O’Farrell, journalist and QCNA president

Do you lack self-confidence? If so, read this!

Are you always comparing yourself to others? Do you think you're never good enough? Do you stop yourself from doing things that interest you for fear of failing? The good news is that self-confidence can be learned.

MAKE A LIST

Start by making a list of your qualities and successes. Are you a good drawer? Does everyone tell you have a beautiful singing voice? Do you swim like a mermaid? Do you get good grades at school? Do you help others a lot? Write all this down on a piece of paper. Every time you doubt yourself, reread this list to remind yourself what an extraordinary person you are.

TRY THESE TIPS

Try these strategies to improve your self-confidence:

- Set yourself small challenges to get out of your comfort zone. For example, try signing up for an extra-curricular activity or talking to someone who seems to have something in common with you.
- Spend as much time as possible with people who love you and believe in you. Stay away from friends who make fun of you or criticize your choices.
- Don't try to be someone you're not just to gain acceptance and always express your feelings sincerely. In other words, be yourself.
- Repeat positive affirmations to encourage yourself. For example, you could say, "I'm capable" or "I can do it."

Are you paralyzed by your lack of self-confidence? Some specialists can help. Talk to your parents about making an appointment for you.

Don't play with your old toys anymore? Here's what you can do with them!

Do you have lots of stuffed toys, toy cars, animal figurines and dolls you don't play with anymore? Here are a few ways you can give them a second life.

- **Sell them.** Are your toys in great condition and look almost new? With your parent's permission, you can sell them online (on a classified ads site) or at a garage sale. You can keep the money to buy something else, like a skateboard or video game, or use it for something else, like travelling when you're older.
- **Donate them.** If your toys are clean and aren't broken, you can do a good deed by taking them to a local donation centre. They'll bring joy to the lives of children whose families don't have enough money to buy new toys.
- **Exchange them.** Organize a toy exchange with children of all ages, like your cousins. This way, everyone will

be able to score some new toys and get rid of the ones they no longer use. Great, isn't it?

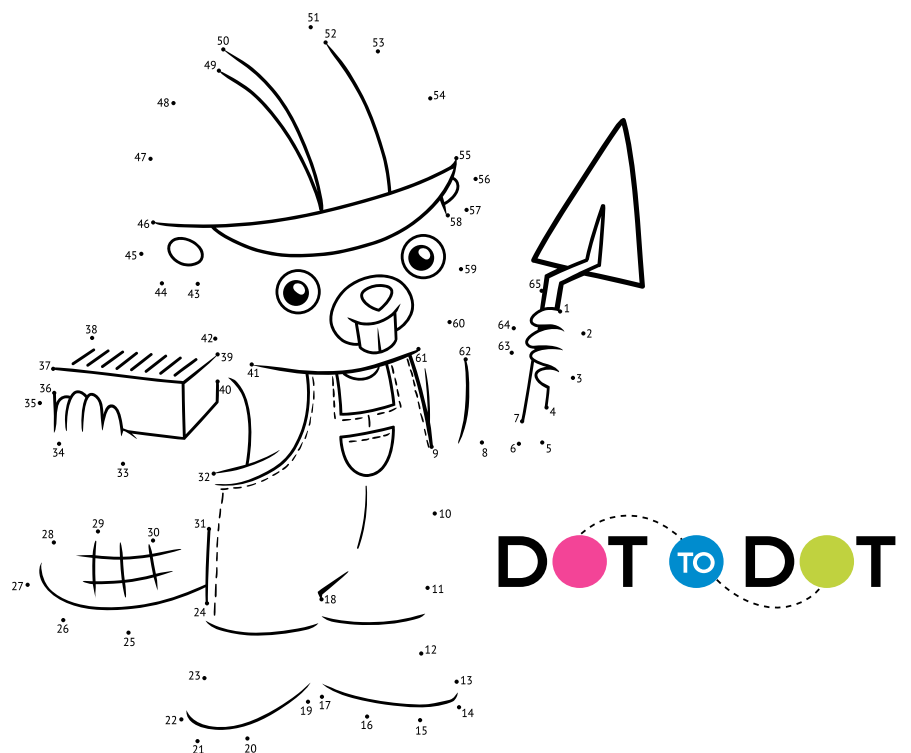
- **Transform them.** You can find lots of ideas for transforming your toys into works of art or practical objects online. For example, a dinosaur figurine can become a jewellery stand or a doll's head can be transformed into a planter. Use your imagination!

How will you keep your toys from ending up in the garbage?



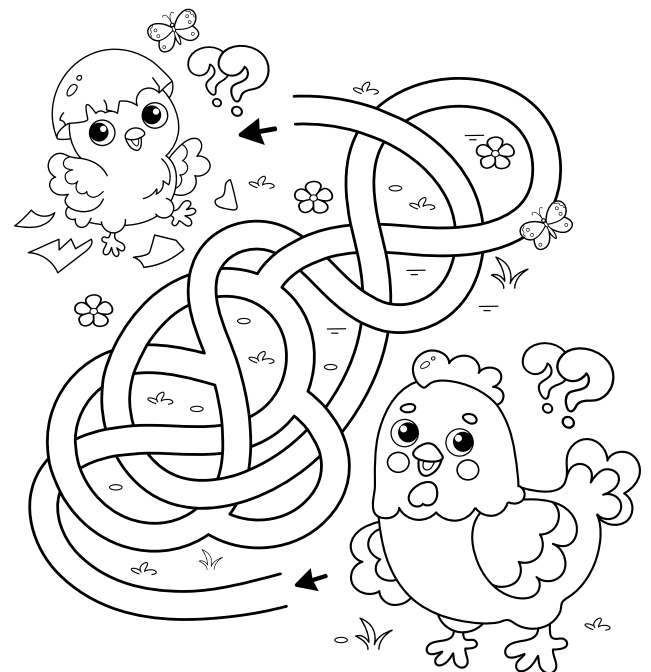
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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

LIKE FATHER

Q I was married for 21 years to a man who enjoyed strip clubs, drinking, and his buddies. These things became important to him after we married, and part of his job as an undercover cop. He often brought home pictures of himself with strippers to show me.

Throughout our marriage I took care of our two children, the household, and worked full-time without a contribution from him beside his paycheck. I tried to talk to him because we never spent time together, he did not support me as a wife and mother, and I needed more from him as his wife.

Things did not improve. They continued to deteriorate. Our marriage relationship ceased to exist. Months before I left him, I tried to talk one more time and told him, "If this is all there is, I don't want any more." All he said was, "Stop crying and come to bed."

Seven years ago, when our children were 20 and 17, I left him. I felt they were old enough now. They would better understand that we did not love each other and I stayed because of them. I was also tired of being verbally abused on a regular basis by my son.

My children could not understand my feelings. I was and still am seen as the villain for destroying their "family." Even though I was on my own at the time, my ex-husband told my children he caught me in bed with someone, which was very destructive of my relationship with my children. He also told them that my best friend and I were lesbians.

Neither story was true. To this day my son thinks I was unfaithful to his father and keeps inferring that is why I left and that his father had no fault in the divorce.

I eventually met a wonderful man, and we have been happily married for two years. I love him more than anything, and he loves and respects me like I've never been.

Rachael

A Rachael, Harry Chapin's song "Cat's in the Cradle" is about a son who follows his father's not-very-good example. One day, after the father talks on the phone with his son, the older man has a realization. He says, "As I hung up the phone it occurred to me, he'd grown up just like me. Yeah, my boy was just like me."

So you stayed for the children, and you wound up with a son like your husband. All blanket rules have exceptions, and the exception to "stay for the sake of the children" occurs when the other parent's example is a detriment to the child.

As a police officer, your former husband knows better than to destroy a mother's image in the eyes of her children. His lies reveal everything about who he is as a person. Unfortunately, staying bolstered your ex-husband's assertions. How bad a husband could he be if you stayed so long? That's his argument.

Your son's perceptions have been twisted by his father. He may be trying to win his dad's praise by torturing you, or he may be manipulating you into trying to win his love. Or perhaps he is simply acting out of defensiveness. He may think, if mom stayed with someone who abused her because of me, that makes me complicit. I'd rather believe dad's story.

When we do something we believe is wrong for the benefit of others, we cannot expect things to turn out well. A mother teaches a girl what kind of woman to be and what kind of wife to be. A father teaches a boy what kind of man to be and what kind of husband to be.

In Harry Chapin's tune, the son says, "I'm gonna be like you, Dad. You know I'm gonna be like you." That can have wonderful results or disastrous results depending on who we are as parents.

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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Week of MARCH 10 TO 16, 2024

The luckiest signs this week:
TAURUS, GEMINI AND CANCER



ARIES

It feels like time is flying. You love the finer things in life, which could lead you to explore high-end stores and restaurants for a touch of luxury. Take the opportunity to revitalize your wardrobe and adopt a new style.



TAURUS

You'll overcome your fears and apprehensions to pursue your passions. Your remarkable creativity will guide you in the right direction. This will allow you to create a masterpiece. You'll receive some form of compensation for it.



GEMINI

You'll be in high demand by everyone this week. Your popularity will reach new heights with work colleagues or those close to you. You'll expand your customer base and become the go-to person for any business because of your efficiency.



CANCER

After prolonged negotiations, you'll get the green light to buy a property or finance a project. Sort out some undesirable friendships. Any form of change will be beneficial to you.



LEO

You'll feel a deep need to recharge your batteries and take a step back from your worries. Take the time to reconnect with your inner child and contemplate the beauty of life so you can reignite your passion.



VIRGO

Adjusting your goals may help you reach your full potential. Whatever direction you choose, you'll put your heart and soul into achieving your goals. Your romantic side will come out in a couple's getaway.



LIBRA

If you're in a new relationship, it could cross your mind to get married to make your relationship official and put your mind at ease. At work, be careful not to let your emotions influence your negotiations. This will avoid any confusion.



SCORPIO

You'll have the opportunity to participate in a training course that will open new perspectives and bring about a better quality of life fairly quickly. You must break the monotony in your relationship. Taking a walk hand in hand could do you a world of good.



SAGITTARIUS

You'll perform a heroic act, such as saving someone from a delicate situation or lending a sympathetic ear. At work, you could find yourself leading a team without asking. This could lead you to become the pillar of the entire business.



CAPRICORN

You'll hear about a birth in the family. You'll discover a property opportunity that suits your needs and budget. At work, don't hesitate to embrace success. If you struggle with doing that, work on changing your mindset.



AQUARIUS

You'll feel the need to get a new vehicle. You could play the role of interpreter to decipher an unfamiliar message. You'll debate with people who don't have a good command of your native language. You'll be extremely curious this week.



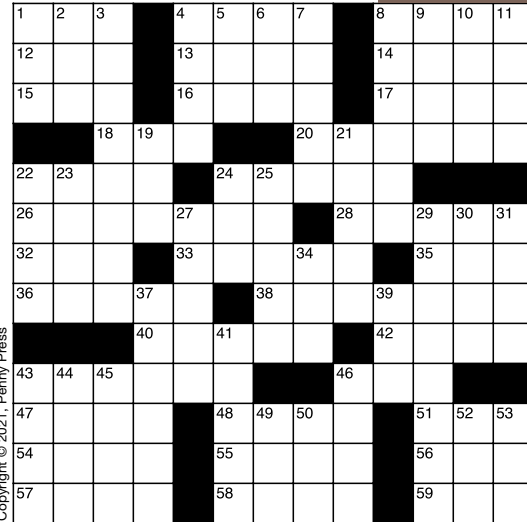
PISCES

Much to your surprise, you'll find the solutions to your financial and sentimental problems. A promotion with a substantial pay raise is on the horizon. This will bring you great joy.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 168



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ACROSS

1. Baby's smock
4. Depressions
8. Munitions
12. Yoko
13. False god
14. Double
15. "Which Way You Can"
16. Dish list
17. Tarzan's swing
18. Mug
20. Restrained
22. Dates
24. Daddies
26. Came in
28. Roosevelt's nickname
32. Portray
33. Gnaw away
35. Word of assent
36. Plant again
38. Cohort
40. Substantial

DOWN

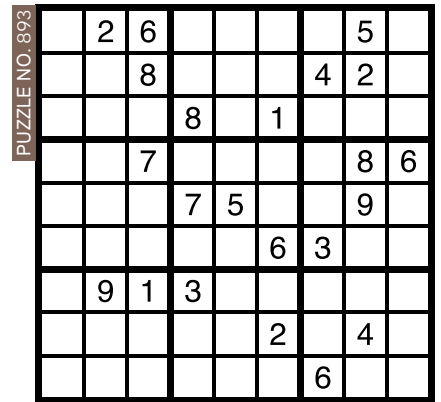
42. ____ off (prevent)
43. Tears up
46. Dad's better half
47. Sleet's kin
48. Soaring toy
51. Frosty
54. Strong desire
55. Ages
56. ____ good to be true
57. Bird abode
58. Yanks' foes
59. Long timespan
11. Santa's vehicle
19. Put into service
21. Diner customer
22. Corrode
23. "____ in a Lifetime"
24. Miles ____ hour
25. Take as one's own
27. Marry again
29. Blaster's need
30. Venison source
31. Lawn
34. Dawn to dusk
37. Brunch dish
39. Couple
41. Inquisitive one
43. Ignore
44. Bunny's kin
45. Semis
46. Clutter
49. Deep anger
50. Pocket flap
52. Pigeon's comment
53. Over there, poetically

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.

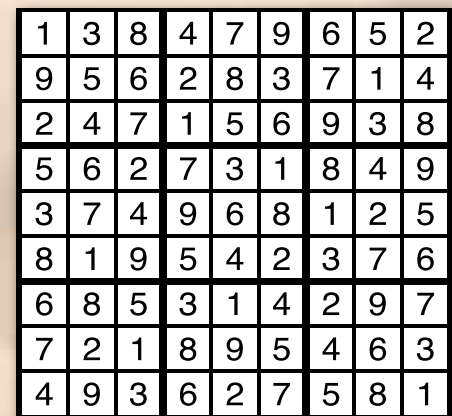


Last Issues' Answers

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Sudoku



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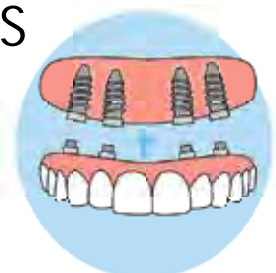
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