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# City of Laval tables a \$1.23 billion operating budget for next year

*Mayor Boyer enacts a hiring freeze, but holds average tax hike to 1.9 per cent*

**MARTIN C. BARRY**  
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The average household property owner in Laval will be paying 1.9 per cent more in taxes next year, which is significantly less than the 4.8 per cent hike Mayor Stéphane Boyer's administration imposed around this time last year.

The 2025 budget includes \$1.23 billion in projected expenses. Around \$1.17 billion was allotted by the city last year. This year's tax increase is less than the anticipated 2025 rate of inflation.

The city says this year's increase is among the lowest among major cities in the province and was achieved partly by decreeing a freeze in the hiring of non-essential workers.

### Economy slowed in 2024

In a summary providing context and background information for the new budget, the city notes that economic growth in Laval slowed down in 2024, although the outlook for renewed

investment is positive with inflation receding and employment prospects rising.

However, the City of Laval's economic analysts are concerned about the potential fallout resulting from the recent election in the U.S. that returned Donald Trump to power, as well as the Canadian federal election set to take place before the end of next year.

Quoting economics experts at Desjardins, the city maintains that Laval's economy will grow by 3.5 per cent in 2025, after reaching 4.8 per cent in 2024. These levels of growth are being attributed to the fact that Laval's population is increasing faster than had been expected, even though employment isn't keeping up to the same pace.

### Financial pressures

"Faced with the financial pressures that the people of Laval have to contend with daily, we dealt with this in a responsible and efficient manner," Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer said in a statement issued when the budget was released. "This budgetary exercise was worked out with a specific goal in mind, which was to limit the

financial impact on all Laval residents, while also making sure every dollar would be used properly," he added.

"This was a real challenge that we are proud to have been able to meet with success. It's also thanks to our disciplined management of finances that the city remains in an excellent financial position, as attested by the AA+ credit score accorded by Standard and Poor's, which is the highest for a Quebec municipality."

### Savings made on expenses

According to the city, an overall increase in costs for goods and services forced the administration to rationalize some expenses, resulting in \$9.6 million in savings.

Savings were also achieved on employee salaries by capping the number of new hirings. The city also decided to pay \$43.3 million in cash up front for some expenses to reduce the impact of interest owed on long-term debts.

The city says it obtained \$13 million in additional savings through the application of innovative taxation methods. These included:

- Increased tax rates on vacant and un-serviced lots;
- Indexing of tariffs for the disposal of snow in the non-residential sector.

### More facts on Budget 2025

\$245.2 million of the budget has been allocated for public security, while \$130.1 million is set aside for culture and leisure.

As well, according to the city, sums will be invested to improve administrative conditions which contributed in the past to delays in the granting of construction and renovation permits by the urban planning department.

The city has also set aside \$2.4 million for the startup of the new Aquatic Complex and one other major infrastructure project that opened recently.

# Action Laval concerned city will be weighed down by growing debt

**MARTIN C. BARRY**  
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Two of the Action Laval city council opposition party's members reacted negatively to the city's latest budget, claiming it's a tactic typical of elections years, while also maintaining the Boyer administration is leading the city into a state of indebtedness with lasting impact.

City councillors Achille Cifelli (Val-des-Arbres) and David De Cotis (Saint-Bruno) called the city's budget situation "critical" and "a direct consequence of the bad choices by the mayor since the beginning of his mandate" nearly four years ago.

They also drew attention to their claim that for years Action Laval has been calling for the creation of a bi-lateral finance commission to oversee the city's finances.

### Local budget cuts

"Hiding behind this electoral budget is a worrisome situation," said Cifelli, maintaining that the Boyer administration is responsible for increasing the city's debt by 66 per cent for megaprojects, while now "they are cutting into local services to balance their budget."

He claims the Boyer team will be cutting widely into services, including library branches,

arenas and outdoor skating rinks, as well as STL bus service.

Action Laval says the 2025 budget is "a façade that leaves the impression that the mayor is taking care of sound financial management, although numerous costs don't make it into this budget." They said the city failed to say that the credit note issued by S&P Global placed Laval on a watch list.

### Rating the credit rating

The opposition party said the credit rating agency didn't take into consideration \$620 million the city will need to bring its water infrastructure up to grade, nor the funding necessary to restore the lustre to aging municipal buildings, as well as numerous collective agreements with municipal employees now being negotiated.

"The mayor is announcing 42,000 new housing units, but when you look at this budget there is no expense showing for new infrastructures," De Cotis said.

As 2025 will be an election year, Action Laval says that, once elected, it will immediately institute measures to reduce the City of Laval's debt by cancelling projects deemed to be unnecessary to the city's mission towards its citizens. They also say that projects paid in cash will be prioritized.

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# OPINION & Editorial



## Joy to the world in search of peace and goodwill to all

It's Christmas season. The spiritual and secu-  
lar traditions are in full swing, as songs and  
greeting cards ring out heartwarming messages  
of Peace, Joy, Love, and Goodwill towards all.  
Sorry to say – very sad, indeed – but surely, I'm  
not alone thinking that these are pretty empty  
words this year.

What peace? What joy? Within families, one  
can hope. Within communities, definitely  
possible. But the world-at-large isn't promo-  
ting peace and joy. The Earth's most powerful  
leaders don't seem to care for these sentiments.  
Meanwhile, we wallow in our version of chaos.  
A world-order based on cooperation, compas-  
sion, and compromise seems to be unraveling.

So, what can be done to restore credibility to  
messages of peace, love, joy, and goodwill-to-all?  
Start by nurturing ourselves? Concentrate on  
positives instead of despairing? Spread support-  
ive thoughts and deeds in our community? Our  
world is broken - increasing numbers turn from  
God; suicides, immorality, depression, addiction  
levels rise exponentially, and attacks explode,  
especially the corrosive hostility towards Jesus  
Christ and Christmas.

Our world is shattered? Nothing new.  
2700-years-ago the prophet Isaiah warned that  
humanity would turn this way: Going  
against the Word-of-God will bring darkness  
but inturning to God, there will be great hope  
and light.

Now, I wouldn't mind if non-believers opened  
The New Testament to read and think about  
the alternatives therein, honestly evaluated  
them and concluded "now I have made my  
careful decision, based on integrity." And then  
ask themselves truthfully - "Am I going against  
Christianity?" If this is their thinking, I would  
consider that a responsible decision – not a  
good decision but a responsible decision, with  
evidence weighed.

It's a very risky business. Isaiah of the Old

Testament, ignored and despised by most of  
his people, notched prediction-after-predic-  
tion. But I cringe at the most disappointing of  
all his optimistic prognostications - there will  
be a great peace – no more need for soldiers'  
uniforms.

Where is this peace? Battles everywhere! Wars,  
grievances, conflict, immeasurable human-gen-  
dered death-and-destruction. Christianity has  
had 2000 years to produce peace, so where is  
it? You-and-I will only be saved from darkness,  
disillusion, cynicism, skepticism and pessimism  
by listening to THE WISE ONE.

When we listen, Jesus Christ is not silent, not  
dumb, not dull. Again and again, the wisdom  
and beauty in the replies of the Son-of-God-  
Made-Man, completely confounded and  
continues to confound His critics while thrilling  
those who heeded and heed His invitation to  
Love God and Love Others.

The identity and truth of Jesus is crucial.  
Somebody who gets it all has come into our  
world. We would be crazy to turn our backs on  
Him, change subject and talk about anything  
else. No! we need His help urgently, now. The  
day of coming face- to-face with our Maker will  
come; our only hope is arriving forgiven. It will  
be lunacy to arrive unforgiven and have God ask  
"why are you here unforgiven?" You say 'I didn't  
think it mattered' and He says "I sent my Son so  
that you might face me safely." This is very big,  
isn't it? Isaiah promises: "the kingdom is going  
to get bigger and bigger because millions are  
responding every day." We can hope.

His kingdom will be a rule-of-love; of  
justice-and-Godliness, things that we long and  
look for, underwritten by the Promises of His  
Word and the Reach of His Eternal Power.

Let's ponder why do we do what we do, turn-  
ing up at our family's feast (that's great), then  
leaving. It's easier today to miss Christmas  
since there are other things the season comes

wrapped with. What a shame! But in deep  
humility, we gladly wish all Laval residents the  
very best gifts of all. Hope, goodwill and peace.

Hope in the Christmas Promise, fulfilled  
over centuries even when life seemed hope-  
less; hope living in local homes where families  
accept that events in our lives do occur for the  
best-of-reasons.

Hope that opens doors, shares goodwill, and  
celebrates, regardless of circumstances. That  
is as true today as it was during the wretched  
1840s when Charles Dickens spoke these  
thoughts in 'A Christmas Carol': 'What place is  
this?' asked Scrooge. 'A place where miners live,  
who labor in the bowels of the earth,' returned  
the Spirit. 'But they know me. A light shone  
from the window of a hut ... Passing through  
the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful  
company assembled round a glowing fire.'

This symbolic moment-in-fiction, frozen in  
Christian timelessness, captures the meaning  
of goodwill and God Will. We are the cheerful  
company, gathered around the warmth-of-glow-  
ing-fire gifted by the Christ Child to humanity  
for all time.

And because we can agree on hope and  
goodwill, let's have peace with one another  
on Christmas Day 2024. It's not the dream of  
universal, permanent peace, but the type that  
each of us helps share because it was first shared  
with us. The effects of the Gift-of-Peace we can  
actually see, provided we don't let the wrappings  
get in the way. With these thoughts, on behalf  
of THE LAVAL NEWS, I wish you all a Merry  
Christmas and Happy New Year. My desire is  
that by this time next year – somehow, some  
way – the seasonal wishes of Peace, Joy, Love,  
and Goodwill-to-All will not seem as hollow  
as they do at this moment. May our hope be  
restored.

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# Laval's new Aquatics Complex opens in city centre

*\$125 million watersports facility welcomes first swimmers on December 21*



From the left, Eau Laval director Olivier Bertrand, Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, Mayor Stéphane Boyer, Vimont CAQ MNA Valérie Schmalzt, and City of Laval director-general Benoit Collette preside at the cutting of the opening ribbon for the new Aquatics Complex on Saturday December 14. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer was among the very first people to take a high-dive into the waters of the Olympic-size pool at the city's new Aquatics Complex last Saturday afternoon.

Although it was officially opened with a ribbon-cutting by dignitaries, residents will have to wait until December 21 when the pool and other facilities become fully accessible to the general public.

The opening of the modernistic building on Terry Fox Ave. next to the Cosmodôme brings to a close a chapter in the development of the

City of Laval's sports and recreation facilities dating back to the time when Gilles Vaillancourt was still mayor.

## Demers got it started

According to Laval News files, the controversial former mayor, who resigned from office in November 2012, was setting the wheels in motion for the construction of Place Bell, but even then was beginning to hint that the city's next big project would be a comprehensive aquatics complex.

While a new administration under newly-



Mayor Stéphane Boyer performed the backstroke after being one of the first three users to dive into the pool at Laval's new Aquatics Centre. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

elected mayor Marc Demers decided to proceed with the Aquatics Complex, the going was slow and an initial completion date in 2020 was not respected, while the estimated \$61.1 million cost grew to \$125 million in 2024 dollars.

## Missed the Jeux du Québec

Controversially, the building wasn't ready as had been planned when the City of Laval hosted finals for the summer games for the 55th Jeux du Québec in 2022.

Among other things, delays in getting the work underway raised questions about the soundness of the building's foundations which were exposed for a few years to the winter elements. Laval also cancelled an initial call for tenders after the lowest bids came in 46 per cent higher than the city wanted to pay.

Regardless, that was all history last Saturday when Mayor Boyer, Vimont MNA Valérie Schmalzt and Olivier Bertrand, executive-director of the non-profit Eau Laval water sports

promotion group, decided they were going to be the pool complex's first official users.

## A multipurpose complex

The Aquatics Complex has been built to accommodate 875 people, though not all as pool users. In addition to the pools, which are equipped with Olympic-class diving towers and are amenable to holding world-class watersport events, the building also has facilities for recreational swimming, as well as workout rooms and multipurpose activity and meeting areas.

The project was completed with significant financial assistance from the federal and provincial governments. Ottawa contributed \$10 million, while Quebec contributed an equal amount. Mouvement Desjardins contributed \$500,000 from a foundation operated by the Quebec-based financial services corporation for community projects.

## Adapted to many needs

"The opening of this aquatic complex is an important step for our city," said Boyer. "Not only does this project answer to the growing needs of our community, but it also is part of our vision of an inclusive and accessible society for all. Laval deserves modern, sustainable and adapted installations. And this complex is a great example."

"Quality sports and recreational meeting spaces are essential to building strong and healthy communities where it's great to live," said Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, Minister Responsible for Economic Development Canada Quebec in the Trudeau cabinet.

"That is why today I am proud to celebrate the official inauguration of the new Laval Aquatic Complex," she continued. "This modern and accessible infrastructure will encourage a healthy and active lifestyle within the community."

## A world stature facility

"On behalf of the current and future members of Eau Laval, I would like to underscore my deep gratitude to the parties concerned who made the CAL possible," said Eau Laval's Olivier Bertrand.

"This new aquatic infrastructure of international calibre will be indispensable for supporting our mission to develop aquatic sports on Laval's territory," he added. "This high-level installation will allow the development of aquatic disciplines and athletes to be pursued from initiation to excellence."

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# Laval federal Liberals speculate on prospects for an early election

*Koutrakis, El-Khoury see March budget potentially triggering a nationwide vote*



Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, Laval-les-Îles Liberal MP Fayçal El-Khoury and former Liberal MP and federal cabinet minister Eleni Bakopanos are seen with some of the guests at pre-Christmas gathering held at the Laval-les-Îles riding office last weekend. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

## MARTIN C. BARRY

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Laval-area Liberal MPs Annie Koutrakis (Vimy) and Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval-les-Îles) were in an upbeat mood late last week as they welcomed guests to a Christmas season gathering at El-Khoury's riding office in Sainte-Dorothée.

While the two expressed their best wishes to constituents between nibbles of snacks and sips of liquid refreshments, they shared some of their thoughts on the events of the past year with *The Laval News*, as well as some of the political developments likely to materialize in 2025.

El-Khoury said in an interview that he is anticipating the possibility of a federal election being called shortly after the next budget is tabled next March.

## Election predictions

"If not, it's going to go until October," he added, noting that the Liberal government has a mandate to govern up to the latter date.

Although critics of the Liberal government have raised red flags over the record amount of debt the Liberals have accumulated in the nearly 10 years since Justin Trudeau first became Prime Minister, El-Khoury noted that programs launched by the government – including pharmacare, dental care and access to low-cost child daycare services – were opposed by Conservative opposition leader Pierre Poilievre.

"Every single thing we do good for Canadians, Pierre Poilievre voted against," said El-Khoury.

## Doubts about Poilievre

And while acknowledging that he's become aware while speaking with constituents that they're unhappy with the current Liberal leadership and style of government, he said many also expressed a dislike for Poilievre, saying they would not vote for him.

El-Khoury didn't rule out the possibility that a

re-elected Liberal government could choose to institute austerity measures to deal with budget deficits. "I am not against the idea of cuts, but you have to cut in a logical way," he said, noting that Poilievre would likely make far more radical changes.

Koutrakis said she didn't expect an election to be called before the next budget in the spring, while qualifying what could happen after that. "Should the budget not pass, then obviously we would go into an earlier election," she said.

## Koutrakis says Liberals can win

Beyond that, Koutrakis said she feels confident the Liberals ultimately will prevail whenever Canadians go to the polls.

"Personally, I think we're going to win the next election," she said, suggesting the Conservatives are overconfident. "If I was Mr. Poilievre and his colleagues, I would not count my chicks before they hatch," she added.

She defended the Liberal government and the Prime Minister, despite both being up against the ropes. "There's a silent majority out there that almost feels intimidated a little bit or bullied, who are not coming out and saying they still have faith in the Prime Minister and the Liberal government," she said.

## Dismisses spillover from U.S.

Koutrakis said she doubted the type of government recently elected in the U.S. – heavy on rhetoric, platitudes and slogans – could also come to power in Canada. "Canadians are not Americans," she said.

While noting that the number of women actively involved in politics has diminished as the political climate has grown more intense and uglier, Koutrakis said that she and employees at her riding office had to deal with threats posted on social media.

She said it reached a climax in the summer of 2022 when her team was contacted by government security officials who advised them not to attend Hellenic summer festival events in Montreal's Parc Extension district unless accompanied by police protection.



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# Another safe shelter in Laval for 20 battered women and their children

Canada, Quebec and FTQ create more living space with Maison Marie-Marguerite

**MARTIN C. BARRY**  
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Abused women and children from the Laval region will soon have another place to turn for help with the announcement of a more than \$8 million project to transform a building in Laval into a shelter with enough living space for 20 victims of domestic violence.

The project, led by the non-profit Maison Marie-Marguerite, is being carried out in conjunction with the governments of Canada and Quebec, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, the City of Laval, Groupe Desjardins and Fondation J.A. DeSève.

The project's financing includes investments from the federal government through the third Canada-Quebec Rapid Housing Initiative Agreement (\$4.3 million), from the provincial government in the form of a grant provided through the Fonds de solidarité FTQ-Québec agreement (\$2 million), and from the City of Laval (\$813,000), the Fonds du Grand Mouvement Desjardins (\$483,000) and the Fondation J.A. DeSève (\$100,000).

## Targeted help for needs

The project aims to serve the needs of women, with or without children, who have been the victims of various forms of violence against women (sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic or economic violence) and who are experiencing multiple difficulties. In addition

to being provided with a safe place to live, the women will benefit from support services related to their situation.

Persons who move into 10 of the planned units and are eligible may also benefit from the Société d'habitation du Québec's (SHQ) Rent Supplement Program, which would ensure that they don't spend more than 25 per cent of their income on housing. This financial assistance is covered by the SHQ (90 per cent) and the City of Laval (10 per cent).

## Project has wide support

Present for the announcement at Laval's interim city hall were Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, Laval-des-Rapides MNA Céline Haytayan (on behalf of Quebec Minister for Housing France-Élaine Duranceau, Laval city councillor for Souvenir-Labelle Sandra El-Helou (representing Mayor Stéphane Boyer), Isabelle Garon of Groupe Desjardins, and Marianne Duguay of Fonds immobilier de solidarité FTQ.

Founded in 2021, Maison Marie-Marguerite is one of fewer than a dozen resources in Laval providing services to women and children who are victims of domestic violence. However, it is the only resource with services specifically for women, with or without children, and whose multiple problems include substance abuse, mental health challenges and homelessness.

"There is no place for violence in Laval, and it is our duty to take care of the victims by providing them with all the support they need," said El-Helou who is responsible for dossiers

involving vulnerable persons, seniors, youth and the status of women on city council.



Laval city councillor Sandra El-Helou.  
(Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)



Laval-des-Rapides MNA Céline Haytayan.  
(Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

## Hope and a safe space

"This new shelter for vulnerable women is a concrete example of our common resolve to take action for the well-being of all Laval women, regardless of their origin," she said. "Maison Marie-Marguerite will provide women with a safe space, as well as hope and an opportunity to rebuild their lives in a caring environment."

"Our government is extremely proud to contribute to the construction of Laval's first shelter for women who are victims of various types of violence," said Haytayan.

"Every woman in Quebec deserves a safe and affordable place to call home, regardless of their situation," said Koutrakis. "The Government of Canada is proud to contribute to the creation

of 20 new shelter spaces for women fleeing violence here in Laval. This demonstrates our unwavering commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind."

## Violence against women

"Violence toward women is unfortunately constantly on the rise, and there's a lack of affordable housing," noted Claudianne Monette, who chairs the board of Maison Marie-Marguerite. "We are therefore proud to have the official groundbreaking for this project, which meets a real need in Laval."

"After several years of hard work in Laval, we are now very pleased to have reached this milestone, which is the beginning of work on Maison Marie-Marguerite," said Lise Beaudoin, executive-director of Maison Marie-Marguerite.

# Laval Unveils

## The ABCs of Snow Clearing

### Road maintenance in winter

At the start of winter, Ville de Laval's snow clearing crews are on the alert. With 4735 km of public roads in Laval, the crews literally inherit a mountain of work with every snowfall! To ensure that everything runs smoothly, Ville de Laval has put in place a snow clearing plan that prioritizes safety and efficiency.

### Prioritizing to better serve its residents

During snow clearing operations, our crews follow a pre-established prioritization of the road network:

1. Priority is given to roads intended for public transit.
2. At the same time, major boulevards such as Saint-Martin and Curé-Labelle are prioritized to facilitate access to hospitals and to ensure safety along bus routes.
3. The crews then clear secondary roads, including streets close to schools as well as slopes and sharp bends.
4. Lastly, operations focus on residential streets.

### The snow clearing procedure

#### As soon as the first snowflakes fall

Spreading ice melters and abrasives begins, adapting to priorities and the type of precipitation.

#### As soon as 2.5 cm of snow has accumulated on the ground

Snow ploughing gets under way according to a pre-determined order. It can take up to 6 hours for the snow to be ploughed a second time on the same street. Ploughing continues non-stop until the precipitation has ended. Meanwhile, other crews plough the snow or spread abrasives on most of the island's sidewalks.

#### When the amount of precipitation reaches 15 cm

The snow clearing operation gets under way. Depending on the street, the snow is either loaded onto trucks or blown onto the ground. The latter method is preferred, since it requires fewer trucks to come and go. It therefore saves on operating costs and is more environmentally friendly.

Of course, operations are sometimes complicated by the changing nature of the precipitation. Keep in mind that the crews are working tirelessly to clear the snow as fast as possible.

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December 18, 2024 • The Laval News • 9



# Filia founder presented National Assembly Medal by Chomedey MNA

*Joanna Tsoublekas 'is an example to follow,' says Sona Lakhoyan Olivier*

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

Chomedey Liberal MNA Sona Lakhoyan Olivier paid tribute recently to Joanna Tsoublekas, founder of the Filia Seniors' Association, for her outstanding dedication and unwavering commitment to the well-being of the elderly.

During the celebration of the association's 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary, Lakhoyan Olivier deemed it important to highlight the profound impact Tsoublekas has had on her community and beyond.

### Outstanding merits

She presented Tsoublekas with a Quebec National Assembly Medal, an honorary distinction that signifies official recognition for the exceptional work done by outstanding and

committed citizens.

In awarding the medal, Lakhoyan Olivier said her aim was to highlight the positive influence and lasting impact of Tsoublekas, "who, through her vision, dedication, and leadership, has made the Filia Seniors' Association a pillar of support and solidarity for the elderly," the MNA's office said in a statement.

### Service to community

Since its founding in February 1984, the Filia Seniors' Association has established itself as a symbol of support and hope, helping to combat isolation and promote the independence of seniors.

From its modest beginnings in the Parc Extension neighborhood of Montreal to its current location in Chomedey, the association embodies social commitment and the desire to create an environment where seniors feel heard,

supported and valued.

Through Tsoublekas's work, and with the support of the board of directors, volunteers, and members of the Filia Seniors' Association, a support network has developed to combat social isolation, encourage active participation, and provide assistance to seniors.

### High praise from MNA

"The 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Filia Seniors' Association honors its essential role in the lives of seniors," Sona Lakhoyan Olivier said in the statement her office issued.

The medal presented "underscores the remarkable impact Mrs. Tsoublekas has had on the seniors of her community," she continued.

"The exceptional dedication of Mrs. Joanna Tsoublekas is an example to follow, illustrating the power of altruism and devotion to one's community."





## CALENDRIER 2025

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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

## 4 gestures of love and sharing to brighten the Christmas of the less privileged

Are you aware of your privileges, such as good health and a good-paying job? Do you want to express your gratitude by bringing comfort to people less fortunate than you this holiday season? Use these four ideas as inspiration.

**1. Volunteer.** Plenty of organizations need "helping hands" in the run-up to the festive season. You can wrap toys for underprivileged children, cook meals in a community kitchen for financially vulnerable families or collect food for Christmas hampers. You're spoiled for choice when it comes to getting involved in your area!



**2. Visit someone in the hospital.** Spending Christmas in the hospital is tough. You could bring a little joy to someone in the hospital by visiting them on December 24 or 25. Bring them a greeting card, a few sweets or a gift. Take advantage of your visit to do an activity with them like walking down the corridor and chatting, playing cards or watching a Christmas movie.

**3. Lend a hand.** Do you have a few hours to spare in your busy schedule? Use your free time to spread happiness and gratitude around you. For example, you could show your generosity by clearing snow from an older person's driveway, helping someone with limited mobility put up their outdoor decorations or buying groceries for an exhausted caregiver — the possibilities are endless!

**4. Invite someone over for Christmas Eve.** For various reasons or circumstances, such as divorce, moving, illness and work, someone in your circle may be spending Christmas alone. Whether it's a family member, neighbour, colleague or friend, open your

arms and home to them. Invite them to celebrate Christmas Eve or Day with you. Your hospitality is sure to warm their hearts!

No matter how big, acts of mutual aid and solidarity can make

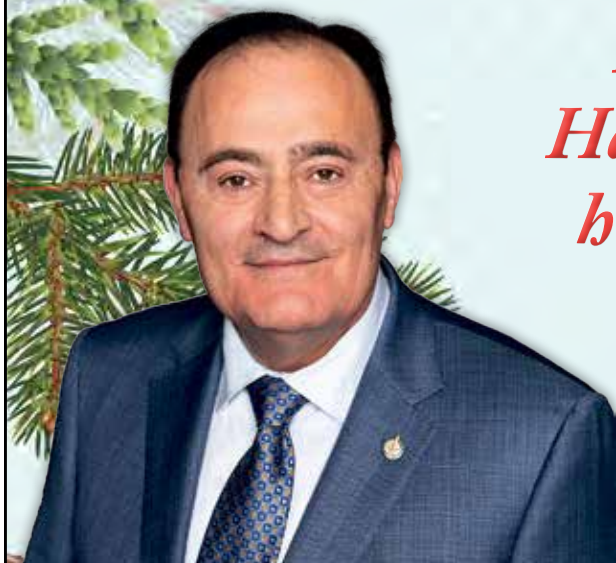
all the difference in making Christmas a happy time for those less fortunate. What kind gestures will you make this year?

Giving out warm clothing to people without homes, sponsoring a newcomer family, sending greeting cards to nursing home residents, donating to a worthy cause and more. Whatever your way of giving, don't hesitate to encourage your loved ones to get in on the action!



*Best wishes to all for a very  
Merry Christmas and a  
Happy New Year filled with  
hope, peace and happiness!*

*From your Federal MPs.*



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**ANNIE**

**KOUTRAKIS**

**MP FOR VIMY**

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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



The right mix of tunes will set the tone and ensure everyone has a great time at your holiday get-together. Follow these tips to craft a playlist that hits all the right notes.

## Tips for making the *perfect playlist* for your festive gathering

### 1. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Consider the age range, music preferences and cultural backgrounds of your guests to ensure your playlist appeals to everyone. For a family gathering, you might want to include a mix of classic and contemporary hits. A more formal event might call for evergreen jazz or instrumental music.

### 2. PICK A THEME

Decide on the ambiance and vibe you

want for your gathering. Whether it's an elegant dinner party or a lively holiday celebration, tailor your playlist to match the mood and theme of the event.

### 3. MIX THINGS UP

Incorporate a variety of genres and tempos to keep the energy flowing throughout the gathering. Blend in some crowd-pleasers, classics and a few unexpected choices to surprise and delight

your guests.

### 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT APPS

Utilize music streaming platforms like Spotify, Apple Music or Pandora to create and share playlists with ease. These apps offer a wide selection of songs and allow for collaborative playlist creation, making it simple for guests to add their favourite tunes.

Happy playlist-making!



## 5 Christmas *wreath ideas* to make yourself or with your family

Creating Christmas wreaths is a wonderful way to bring festive cheer to your home while spending quality time with family. Bring your crafty loved ones together to try one of these wreath projects.

### 1. CLASSIC EVERGREEN WREATH

Gather fresh pine, fir or spruce branches to create a traditional evergreen wreath. Start with a wire frame and attach the branches using floral wire. Add pinecones, red berries and a bow to complete the classic look.

### 2. ORNAMENT WREATH

Recycle old tree ornaments to create a shiny, colourful wreath. Use a foam wreath form and hot glue to attach



those baubles and beads. Mix different sizes and shades for a vibrant display.

### 3. FELT TIE WREATH

Tie strips of green felt around a wire wreath frame, securing them with hot glue. Layer the ties to add dimension and texture. Embellish the wreath with buttons or bows for a whimsical touch.

### 4. POM-POM WREATH

Upcycle your unused yarn stash with a pom-pom wreath. Attach the pom-poms to a wire or foam wreath form with hot glue, ensuring they're tightly packed for a

lush look. Finish the look with decorative elements like ribbons or bells.

### 5. PAPER SNOWFLAKE WREATH

Cut out various snowflake designs from white paper and glue them to a cardboard ring. Layer the snowflakes to create depth and dimension. This simple, budget-friendly wreath adds a delicate, wintry touch to your decor.

Making Christmas wreaths with your family is a fun and festive activity that fosters creativity and brings everyone together.

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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

## Christmas gifts for the *mindful and meditative*

Do you know someone who is taking a mindfulness journey? This Christmas season, why not give them a present that helps them deepen their practice.

1. **Mindful breathing necklace.** This piece of jewelry has a grounding presence for someone who wants to bring awareness to their breath.
2. **Singing bowl set.** The resonating sound of a singing bowl can help create a peaceful environment and aid in meditation practice.
3. **Tabletop fountain.** This inspiring centrepiece creates a serene and relaxing atmosphere



for meditation or simply unwinding after a long day.

4. **Essential oils and diffuser.** A set of essential oils paired with a diffuser allows someone to enhance their mindfulness practice by customizing their meditation space with soothing scents.
5. **Meditation pillow or bench.** A good meditation cushion or bench can help maintain a healthy posture and facilitate longer, more focused meditation sessions.
6. **Chakra stones.** These stones can be used in meditation and energy work to help balance the body's energy centres. They make a meaningful and beautiful gift for anyone interested in holistic wellness.
7. **Guided meditation app or book.** Plenty of apps and books offer guided meditations to help that special someone explore different meditation techniques.

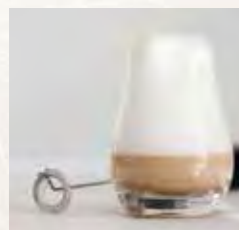
Check out your local shops to find the perfect gift to help your loved one improve their well-being and personal growth.

## Gift ideas for *coffee and tea lovers*

Searching for the perfect gifts for a coffee or tea lover in your life? Here are some suggestions that are sure to brew up some excitement.

### 1. TOP-NOTCH GADGETS

Elevate your giftee's at-home coffee experience with a new bean grinder or a milk frother. Freshly ground beans and perfectly foamy milk will take their homemade lattes and London fogs to the next level.



### 2. MUG WARMER

There's nothing worse than a lukewarm cup of coffee or tea. A sleek mug warmer will keep your giftee's favourite drink at the perfect temperature, ensuring every sip is as delightful as the first.

### 3. CREAM AND SUGAR CONTAINERS

Bring style and organization to your loved one's coffee or tea station with charming cream and sugar containers. These

elegant containers will add a touch of sophistication to their daily ritual.

### 4. TEAS AND COFFEES

Treat your friend or family member to a selection of high-quality, ethically sourced teas and coffees. Look for fair trade beans or locally blended teas to ensure that their brew isn't only delicious but also supports farmers and communities around the world.

### 5. PERSONALIZED COASTERS

Add a personal touch to your loved one's coffee table with custom coasters. Whether they're graced with initials, a meaningful quote or a fun pattern, personalized coasters are a thoughtful and practical gift.

Consider supporting local artisans by gifting a hand-made ceramic mug or knitted teapot cozy.



## Happy Holidays, Laval!



Stéphane Boyer  
Mayor of Laval

At this time of year, when the magic of the holidays lights up our hearts and brightens our homes, we are fortunate to come together, celebrate our achievements, and dream of an even brighter future.

2025 will be a magnificent year for Laval, marked by our 60th anniversary. We have planned a host of events, activities, and celebrations designed to appeal to all ages and tastes. The festivities will highlight the Laval of today and tomorrow, showcasing the energy, creativity, and diversity of our wonderful community.

I also invite you to take advantage of the new year to discover the Complexe aquatique de Laval, a modern and inclusive space that reflects our commitment to well-being and personal growth.

During this time of sharing, let us not forget those who need comfort and support. Let us cultivate generosity and multiply acts of solidarity, for every small gesture can brighten someone's life.

On behalf of the city council and our entire team, I wish you a holiday season filled with happiness and a 2025 full of discoveries, successes, and inspiring moments.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!







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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

## Fun winter *activities* to make the most of your Christmas vacation

The winter vacation season offers a unique opportunity to embrace the cold and enjoy some outdoor fun that cre-

ates lasting memories. Break up the monotony and infuse a little delight into your routine by adding a new activity to your

winter break.

### TRY ICE SKATING

Whether at a local rink or on a frozen

pond, ice skating is a classic winter pastime that brings joy to all ages. Many cities set up outdoor rinks with festive lights and music, creating a magical atmosphere.

### GO ON A SLEIGH RIDE

Experience the charm of a horse-drawn sleigh ride through snowy landscapes. This activity provides a serene and nostalgic way to enjoy the winter scenery while bundled up in warm blankets. Some sleigh rides even include stops for hot cocoa and bonfires!

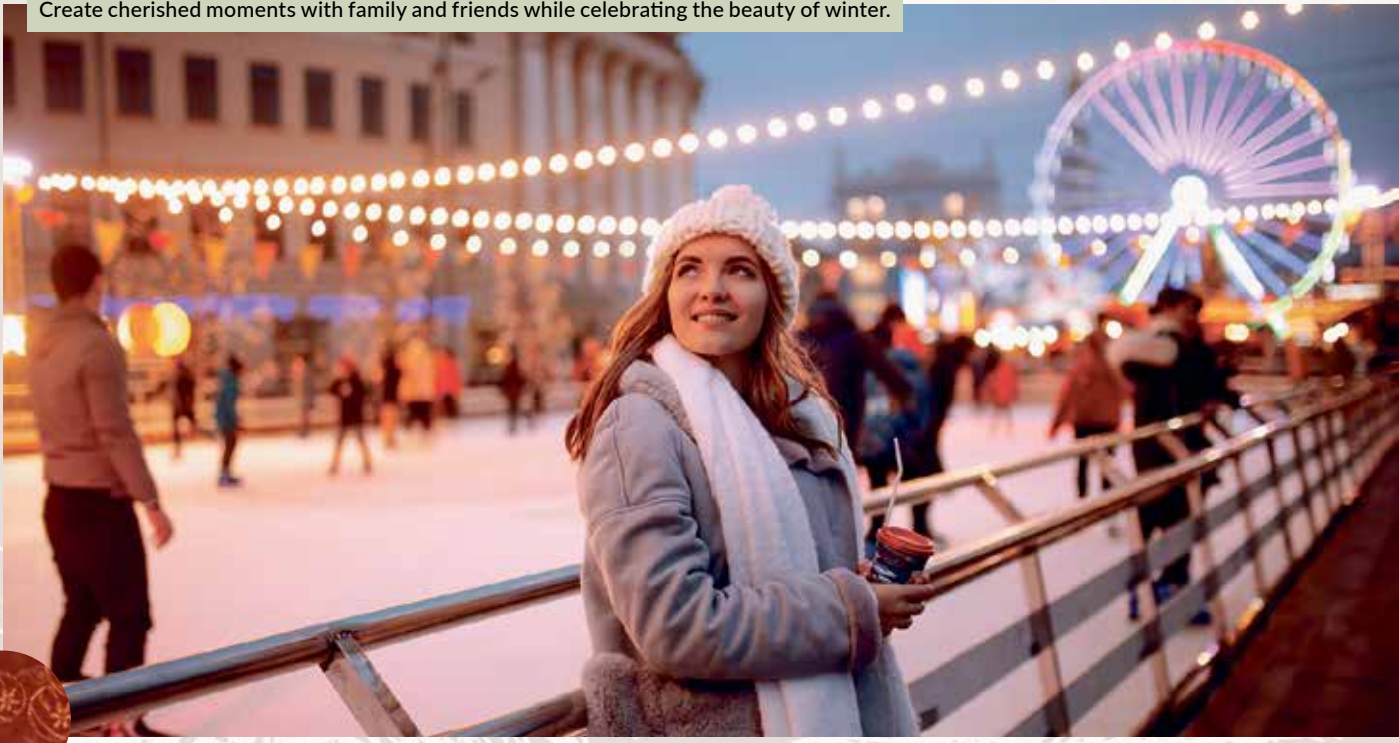
### BUILD A SNOWMAN OR FORT

Embrace your inner child by building snowmen, igloos or snow forts. This is a fun activity for families, encouraging creativity and teamwork. Don't forget to have a snowball fight for added fun.

### GO TO A WINTER FESTIVAL OR MARKET

Many towns and cities host winter festivals and holiday markets featuring local crafts, food and entertainment. These events are perfect for finding unique gifts, enjoying festive treats, and soaking in the holiday spirit.

Create cherished moments with family and friends while celebrating the beauty of winter.



Merry Christmas and HAPPY NEW YEAR

Virginie DUFOUR  
Députée de Mille-Îles

Sona Lakhoyan OLIVIER  
Députée de Chomedey

Happy Holidays!

The Christmas season is a special time for gathering with family and friends. As a Municipal Councillor of Laval, I would like to take this opportunity, to wish you and your families, a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous and Happy New Year!

Paolo GALATI  
Municipal Councillor district of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul  
514 945-7145  
p.galati@laval.ca



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

## Winter *decor* trends



As the winter season approaches, your home transforms into a cozy retreat adorned with festive and inviting decor. Watch for these 2024 winter decor trends.

- **Gemstone hues.** Deep shades like emerald green, sapphire blue, ruby red and amethyst purple are all the rage this Christmas. These colours bring opulence and warmth to your space. Pair them with metallic accents for a bold statement.
- **Alternative Christmas trees.** For a unique twist on the traditional Christ-

mas tree, try a wall-mounted tree shape made of fairy lights or stack books or wooden pallets into a pine-shaped pyramid. Let your imagination run wild!

- **Glass decor.** Fill vases and bowls with ornaments, lights or greenery for stunning centrepieces. Their transparency allows for versatile decoration options, enhancing your holiday decor.
- **Minimalist chic.** Embrace simple, clean lines with minimalistic decorations. Think sleek candle holders, understated wreaths and subtle tree ornaments that make a strong impact without overwhelming the space.
- **Handmade.** Support local artisans by incorporating handcrafted items into your holiday decor. These unique pieces often have a story behind them and make excellent conversation starters.

How will you create a stylish and inviting winter haven?

## How to care for your natural *Christmas tree*

Natural Christmas trees bring a festive touch to your home, but they require proper care to stay fresh throughout the holidays. Follow these tips to keep yours looking good the entire festive season:

- Before setting up your tree in its stand, make a fresh, straight cut three to five centimetres from the base of the trunk.
- Place your tree away from heat sources like radiators, fireplaces and direct sunlight to prevent it from drying out too quickly.
- Check the stand daily to ensure the water level doesn't go below the base of the tree.
- If you live in a dry climate, use a humidifier to keep the tree hydrated.
- Use LED string lights. They generate less heat, preventing the tree from drying out and reduce the risk of fire.
- Remove fallen needles from around the tree often to keep your space tidy and minimize the fire hazard.

Once your natural Christmas tree has served its purpose, consider recycling it. Many communities offer recycling programs for Christmas trees, where they're repurposed for mulch or other environmentally friendly uses.



# Happy Holidays!

We wish you a joyful holiday season filled with peace, happiness, and good health!



**Achille CIFELLI**  
City councillor  
District of Val-des-Arbres



**Aglaia REVELAKIS**  
City councillor  
District of Chomedey

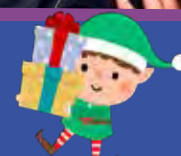


**David DE COTIS**  
City councillor  
District of Saint-Bruno



**Isabelle PICHÉ**  
City councillor  
District of Saint-François

Nous sommes À L'ÉCOUTE de nos citoyens !





# Happy Hanukkah!

May this Festival of Lights bring joy to your life, love to your heart and happiness to your home



## Chanukah 2024 : A Celebration of Light and Miracles

Chanukah, also known as Hanukkah, is a Jewish festival that commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the second century BCE. This year, Chanukah 2024 will begin at sunset on December 25th and end at nightfall on January 2nd, 2025. The festival lasts for eight days and nights, celebrating the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days in the temple's menorah, despite there being only enough oil for one day.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The story of Chanukah dates back to the time of the Maccabean Revolt against

the Seleucid Empire. In 168 BCE, King Antiochus IV Epiphanes outlawed Jewish religious practices and desecrated the Second Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing pigs. This led to a Jewish uprising led by Judah Maccabee and his brothers, known as the Maccabees. After a three-year struggle, the Maccabees successfully recaptured Jerusalem and rededicated the temple.

Upon entering the temple, they found only a small amount of oil left to light the menorah, which was supposed to burn continuously. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days, allowing time to prepare

and consecrate new oil. This event is celebrated as the miracle of Chanukah.

### TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

Chanukah is rich with traditions and customs that have been passed down through generations. Here are some of the key practices:

**Lighting the Menorah:** The central ritual of Chanukah is the lighting of the menorah, a nine-branched candelabrum. Each night, one additional candle is lit by the shamash (helper candle) until all eight candles are burning on the final night. The menorah is typically placed in a window

or doorway to publicize the miracle.

**Reciting Prayers and Blessings:** Special prayers and blessings are recited during the lighting of the menorah, including the Shehecheyanu, which thanks God for sustaining us and allowing us to reach this season. The Hallel, a series of Psalms of praise, is also recited during morning prayers throughout the festival.

**Playing Dreidel:** The dreidel is a four-sided spinning top with Hebrew letters on each side: Nun, Gimel, Hei, and Shin,

► Continued on page 19

*My best wishes to the Jewish community of Laval on the occasion of Hanukkah*



*Mes meilleurs vœux aux membres de la communauté juive de Laval à l'occasion de la fête de Hanukkah*



**ALICE ABOU-KHALIL**

Députée de Fabre

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Laval, QC H7X 1C8

*My best wishes to all members of the Jewish Community for a Happy Hanukkah!*



**SONA LAKHOIAN OLIVIER**

Députée de / MNA for Chomedey

450-686-0166 | Sona.LakhoyanOlivier.CHOM@assnat.qc.ca



# Happy Hanukkah!

May this Festival of Lights bring joy to your life, love to your heart and happiness to your home



## ◀ Continued from page 18

which stand for “Nes Gadol Haya Sham” (A great miracle happened there). In Israel, the letters are Nun, Gimel, Hei, and Pei, standing for “Nes Gadol Haya Po” (A great miracle happened here). The game is traditionally played with chocolate coins, nuts, or other small items.

**Eating Fried Foods:** To commemorate the miracle of the oil, it is customary to eat foods fried in oil. Popular Chanukah foods include latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly-filled doughnuts).

**Giving Gifts and Gelt:** While gift-giving is not a traditional part of Chanukah, it has become more common in modern times,

especially in communities where Chanukah coincides with the Christmas season. Gelt, or money, is traditionally given to children, often in the form of chocolate coins.

### CHANUKAH 2024 CELEBRATIONS

In 2024, Chanukah will be celebrated with various events and activities around the world. Here are some ways people might observe the festival:

**Community Menorah Lightings:** Many cities and towns host public menorah lightings, often accompanied by music, dancing, and refreshments. These events are a way to bring the community together and share the joy of the festival.

**Chanukah Parties:** Families and friends

gather for Chanukah parties, where they light the menorah, play dreidel, exchange gifts, and enjoy festive foods. These gatherings are an opportunity to connect with loved ones and celebrate the holiday's traditions.

**Educational Programs:** Synagogues and Jewish community centers often offer educational programs about the history and significance of Chanukah. These programs may include lectures, workshops, and activities for children.

**Charitable Giving:** Chanukah is also a time for giving back to the community. Many people participate in charitable activities, such as donating to food banks, volunteering, or supporting organizations that help those in need.

### THE MEANING OF CHANUKAH

Chanukah is a time to reflect on themes of light, faith, and resilience. The festival reminds us of the power of hope and the importance of standing up for our beliefs. The menorah's light symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and the enduring spirit of the Jewish people.

As we celebrate Chanukah 2024, we can draw inspiration from the story of the Maccabees and the miracle of the oil. It is a time to come together with family and friends, to share in the joy of the season, and to spread light and kindness in our communities.



To all my Jewish Friends,  
wishing you that the Festival  
of Lights shines down upon  
you and your loved ones

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HANUKKAH

Aglaiia Revelakis  
Municipal councillor - Chomedey  
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Hanukkah



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# Saint Teresa of Calcutta honoured and remembered in Laval

*School Chaplain Father Alan Cox also recognized for community service*

**RENATA ISOPO**  
renata@newsfirst.ca

“It’s all about having great appreciation for her values of welfare and respect for all people regardless of religion and race,” former Laval Catholic High School student Louis Burri said of the recent unveiling of an interactive exhibit of Saint Teresa of Calcutta at Laval Junior Academy.

“Mainly, I also learned a lot about Father Cox’s journey enlightening and inspiring journey. I never knew that back in-the-day at school,” Louis added at the end of the ceremony commemorating the historical visit of Mother Teresa to Sacred Heart Middle School and Laval Catholic High School 35 years ago.

In memory of the visit of the future Saint who met with children and staff at the two schools on the invitation of Chaplain Father Alan Cox, Laval Junior Academy (LJA) recently unveiled an interactive exhibit celebrating and commemorating Mother Teresa’s stopover on the morning of September 15, 1988.



**Pietro Silvaggio demonstrating Father Alan Cox and Mother Teresa among the crowds of LCHS (Photo Sonia Mirarchi)**



**Gathered in honour of Mother Teresa, left to right: John Fasciano, teacher/photographer/reporter, on day of Mother Teresa’s visit; Saverio Mirarchi, LCHS principal in 1988; LJA Vice-Principal Leslie Aggrey-Finn (representing Principal Eric Ruggi; Pietro Silvaggio, Interactive-Exhibit-Coordinator; Barbara Barrasso, SWLSB Alternate-Vice-Chairperson; Thomas Mulcair; LJA Vice-Principal Gloria Cuccarolo; SWLSB Chairperson James Di Sano; LJA Assistant-Administrator Vince Silvaggio. (Photo courtesy of Sonia Mirarchi)**

## Sanctity, sacrifice, presence

LJA, presently administered by principal Eric Ruggi, under Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, is the fifth institution to grace the hallowed premises at 2323 Daniel-Johnson Blvd., following in the footsteps of Laval Catholic High School, Sacred Heart Middle School, Laurier Senior High School and the aptly-named Mother Teresa Junior High School.

The building, at 2323 Daniel-Johnson Blvd., was forever marked by the walk-about in its halls by the diminutive but powerful nun from Calcutta who left no one untouched by her sanctity, sacrifice, and presence not only to people in Laval but in all of humanity before her passing in 1997.

Those who knew of her said that she exemplifies the virtues needed for peace, for leaving no one behind, and for lifting the poor out of poverty. Father Alan Cox, who along with some grateful others was privileged to come face-to-face and heart-to-heart with her in Laval in 1988 exemplified the same characteristics in and out of Laval Catholic High School.

Following Mother Teresa’s visit, the dynamic priest who brought many hundreds of Laval students and families on spiritual retreats all over the world in 35 years of service to the community, helped pave the way for her eventual sanctification. For many years after her passing in 1997 Father Alan constantly lifted hearts to the understanding of the Calcutta nun’s 20th Century daily mission of being the human face of human hope.

War zones, natural disasters, famine, death, danger – nowhere is beyond the reach of her Missionaries of Charity. Not only a saint, she’s also an integral and permanent part of history. For Laval, thanks mostly to Father Alan Cox, Mother Teresa’s humble presence represents a historical moment for the schools inherited by SWLSB.

## Linking of generations

Many former students present at the unveiling shared pride in their connection to Mother Teresa through LCHS; being invited

in honoring her and Father Cox was an emotionally-charged moment. The guests included several generations of community members, some dating back to the opening of Laval Catholic High in 1969.

Notable for their presence were former NDP Leader and Leader of Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition Thomas Mulcair, a graduate of Laval Catholic High School, Class of 1971, and newly-elected SWLSB Chairperson James Di Sano, graduate of Laurier Senior High School, Class of 2014. These two current prominent community members represented the bridging of generations that sat at desks in schools of 2323 Daniel/Johnson Blvd.

Former principal Saverio Mirarchi, who hosted Mother Teresa in 1988, addressed the gathering in an instructive, edifying, factual and interpretive presentation of the ‘time-line-and-chronology’ of her memorable visit to Sacred Heart Middle School and Laval Catholic High School.

Thomas Mulcair praised the interactive exhibits effusively, especially in publicly acknowledging the presence of newly-elected Laurier Board Chairperson James Di Sano and alternate Vice-Chairperson Barbara Barrasso, emphasizing that their participation was reflective of their support for local public education in particular and English public education in general.

James Di Sano openly commended the merits of these kinds of special historical projects, expressing confidence that more schools of the Board would produce them, with encouragement and support of the Council of Commissioners.

Eavesdropping throughout the afternoon, it was revealing and emotional to witness the sharing of special moments among those who were with Mother Teresa September 15, 1988. Those who were not there on that memorable day, came Dec. 1, 2024, to share in the story of the Saint’s morning at the schools, and in the part played by Father Alan Cox in both the visit and of his time as a priest before, during, and after coming to serve as Chaplain of Sacred Heart Middle School and Laval Catholic High School.

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# Hellenics pay their respects to Greek-Canadian veterans at National Field of Honour

*More than 40 Canadian Forces heroes honoured during traditional ‘Trisagion’ ceremony*

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

A dozen or so families from the Montreal Hellenic community paid homage on Saturday Dec. 7 to more than 40 Greek-Canadian veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces whose remains lay buried at the National Field of Honour on Montreal’s West Island.

Hosted by Lac-Saint-Louis Liberal MP Francis Scarpaleggia and Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, the traditional Greek Orthodox “Trisagion” service honored the memory of 44 Greek-Canadian heroes.

### First time, but not the last

Although it was the first time a ceremony was held for Greek-Canadian veterans of Canada’s military at the National Field of Honour, the organizers have pledged to turn it into an annual event.

“Before today, we’ve never done a ceremony to recognize Greek veterans buried here,” Koutrakis said in an interview with *Newsfirst Multimedia*.

“And being of the Greek community, I thought what a wonderful way to pay our respects and let people know that there are 44 Greek veterans and family members buried here,” she added.

“I know that the families we reached out to are thrilled to be here,” said Koutrakis, noting that students from the Socrates-Demosthenes School were among those who turned up to pay their respects.

### Upkeeping the cemetery

Koutrakis and Scarpaleggia have been working closely with The Last Post Fund, a non-profit dedicated to ensuring no veteran is denied a dignified funeral and burial. It was while focusing on this task that the two MPs became aware of the Greek-Canadian veterans buried at the Field of Honour.



Lac-Saint-Louis Liberal MP Francis Scarpaleggia and Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis hosted the Trisagion ceremony in memory of Greek-Canadian veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)



From the left (foreground), Edouard Pahud, executive-director of The Last Post Fund, Lac-Saint-Louis Liberal MP Francis Scarpaleggia, Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis, are seen here with members of the Royal Canadian Legion and students from Socrates-Demosthenes School as commemorative candles are deposited on the grave of a Greek-Canadian veteran during the Trisagion service at the National Field of Honour on Montreal’s West Island on December 7. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

They want to help smooth the way for the federal government to take on more of the Last Post foundation’s responsibilities for upkeeping the military cemetery in Pointe Claire.

The National Field of Honour isn’t owned by the federal government, even though it is the largest military cemetery in Canada and the remains of thousands of Canadian war veterans are buried there.

### Canada’s largest vets’ cemetery

Since 1930, the Last Post Fund has been the exclusive operator of the National Field of Honour, although the federal government provides subsidies.

The Last Post Fund’s primary mandate is to deliver Veterans Affairs Canada’s Funeral and Burial Program which provides funeral, burial and grave marking benefits for eligible Canadian and Allied Veterans.

The Last Post Fund is supported financially by Veterans Affairs Canada and by private donations. The LPF’s Unmarked Grave Program provides military markers for unmarked Veterans’ graves.



Members of the Koutsimanis family were among the relatives of Greek-Canadian veterans who paid their respects on December 7 at the National Field of Honour on Montreal’s West Island. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)



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# Things to do



# UPCOMING

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

**CHRISTMAS MARKETS**

*Christmas activities*



**November 16 - December 23**

9 Christmas markets not to be missed!

Ferme Forget  
Marineau Farm  
Serres Cléroux  
Laval College  
Local Finds Market  
Mama Fiesta Ephemeral  
Ferme Jeunes au travail  
Nature Center  
Parc de la Rivière-des-Mille-Îles  
Vieux Ste-Rose

**SANTA CLAUS IN LAVAL**

*Christmas activities*



**November 15 - December 24**

**Multiple locations**

Visit [tourismelaval.com](http://tourismelaval.com)  
to find out more

HO HO HO! As the holiday season approaches, Santa Claus is making his rounds in Laval!

**NICOLAS NOËL**

*Christmas show*



**Friday, December 20**

**6:30 PM**

**Salle André-Mathieu**

475 boul. de l'Avenir, H7N 5H9

Listen to the authentic Santa Claus tell and sing his wonderful stories in a magical atmosphere!

*Starting at \$25.50*

**NOËL, UNE TRADITION  
EN CHANSON**

*Christmas concert*



**Monday, December 23**

**8:00 PM**

**Salle André-Mathieu**

475 boul. de l'Avenir, H7N 5H9

Cast: Barnev, Joe Bocan, Marie Michèle Desrosiers, Gabrielle Destroismaisons, Luce Dufault, Joël Legendre, and Lunou Zucchini.

*Starting at \$62*

**CHRISTMAS EVE  
AT THE PIAZZA**

*Christmas activity*



**Thursday, December 24**

**Sheraton Laval**

2440 Laurentian Autoroute, H7T 1X5

Come and celebrate Christmas Eve in good company, in a festive, musical atmosphere provided by a duo of musicians. An impressive buffet will be available to satisfy your taste buds!

**NEW YEAR'S EVE  
GOURMET DINNER**

*New Year's Eve activity*



**Thursday, December 31**

**Sheraton Laval**

2440 Laurentian Autoroute, H7T 1X5

On December 31, put on your glitter and come celebrate the New Year at the Sheraton Laval's Piazza. Wine, sparkling wine and gourmet buffet are on the menu!

**ROCKET DE LAVAL**

*Hockey game*



**October 11 - April 19, 2025**

**Afternoon or evening**

**Place Bell**

1950 Rue Claude-Gagné, H7N 5H9

Affiliated with the Montreal Canadiens, the Laval Rocket is a professional team playing in the American Hockey League.

*Visit Ticketmaster for tickets*

**VICTOIRE DE MONTRÉAL**

*Hockey game*



**November 30 - April 28, 2025**

**Afternoon or evening**

**Place Bell**

1950 Rue Claude-Gagné, H7N 5H9

For the 2024-2025 season, Montreal's *La Victoire* women's field hockey team will be playing its games in the heart of Laval.

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# LPD seeks help ID'ing sex assault on minors suspect

The Laval Police are seeking the public's help to identify a suspect recently arrested for alleged sexual assaults committed against minors.

According to the LPD, Steve Haddad, age 35, was taken into custody to be processed

following allegations of sex crimes committed over the past year.

The charges include child luring, sexual contact, incitement to sexual contact and sexual assault. The LPD believe there may be additional victims.

According to a statement issued last week by the LPD, Haddad, who was arraigned at the Laval Palais de Justice, made initial contact with adolescents through social media.

After gaining their trust, he allegedly would ask them to send him cell phone photos of

themselves in sexual poses. The victims were in various regions of Quebec.

Anyone who believes they may have been one of the victims is being by the LPD to call the police Info-Line at 450 662-INFO (4636), or 9-1-1. The file number is LVL 240903-049.

# Man sentenced to 30 months for smuggling fake citizen and resident IDs into Canada

A Terrebonne man charged nearly three years ago with attempted forgery and smuggling of counterfeit IDs from China into Canada was sentenced to 30 months in jail last month following a guilty plea at the Palais de Justice in Laval.

Jonghun Lee, 38, was attempting to smuggle more than 1,000 counterfeit pieces, including Canadian citizenship and resident status cards, as well as Alberta and British Columbia driver's licenses.

The Canada Border Services Agency intercepted a courier parcel he was due to receive from China in January 2022, according to the

CBSA.

The CBSA said that once opened at their Montréal-Mirabel International Airport office, the package was seen to contain 509 counterfeit blank Canada permanent residency cards and 506 counterfeit blank Alberta driver's licences.

A later search of his home by CBSA agents led to the discovery of document-forging equipment, partly finished counterfeit IDs, and close to \$140,000 in Canada and U.S. currency.

Also seized during the CBSA's search operation were printing presses used to counterfeit money, as well as computers and cellphones.



The CBSA said Lee was also convicted of forging documents, including work permits, with the intention they would be used or acted upon by users as genuine.

In a published report Dec. 3 on alleged child-labour violations at a meat processing facility in the U.S. state of Iowa, the New York Times cited

a former U.S. Labor Dept. division head who suggested the rising prevalence of false IDs is symptomatic of an underlying problem faced by employers.

"Individuals, including minors, obtaining jobs through their use of fraudulent identification documents," said Paul DeCamp.



A 44-year-old man from Laval is one of two individuals arrested in Louiseville 30 kilometres

# Laval man arrested near Trois-Rivières as suspect in banking card fraud scheme

west of Trois Rivières on suspicion of perpetrating a banking card fraud scheme.

The Sûreté du Québec were tipped off by victims who said the man, identified as Pierre Lefebvre by the Trois-Rivières daily Le

Nouvelliste, was making the rounds in villages and towns with an unidentified 62-year-old female accomplice from Saint-Jérôme.

It is alleged that up to 15 acts of fraud were committed by the pair since November 30.

Lefebvre was arraigned at the Trois-Rivières courthouse on a charge of fraud of less than \$5,000, as well as theft less than \$5,000.

He is also accused of being in possession of a counterfeit driver's license.

# Two Laval business owners convicted of tax evasion

Two business owners from Laval were recently sentenced to pay more than a half-million dollars in fines after being found guilty of evading payment of taxes owed to Revenu Québec, the province's tax collection agency.

Fadi Khoury and Maria Poroshina were found liable for more than \$500,641 in unpaid tax, with Khoury receiving an additional 12-month prison sentence.

Both ran an employment agency for factory

workers. Each will have to pay more than \$250,000.

The court found that Poroshina was acting as a front for Khoury who ran a business under a numbered company name.

She acknowledged having taken steps to avoid paying federal and provincial sales tax on products and services, while he admitted filing tax forms containing false or misleading information with federal and provincial tax authorities.



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## EXPERIMENT

### How to make a mini iceberg

Icebergs are large pieces of ice that break off from ice floes and glaciers. You can only see the tip of an iceberg because the rest is hidden underwater. Observe this phenomenon yourself by creating a miniature iceberg at home. Simple follow these seven steps.

1. Fill a recyclable plastic cup with tap water
2. Add a few drops of blue food dye

3. Put the cup in the freezer for about four hours or until the water is completely frozen
4. In the meantime, fill a large container, like a salad bowl, with warm water
5. Take the plastic cup out of the freezer and remove the ice
6. Place the miniature iceberg in the container of water
7. Watch what happens

#### EXPLANATION

The iceberg floats because of a phenomenon called buoyancy. When an object is immersed in water, it tends to rise to the surface. Since ice is less dense than water, the iceberg floats near the surface, while 90 per cent of its volume hides below the waterline.

If you want, you can repeat this experiment using another colour for the iceberg.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Real icebergs, like those near Newfoundland and Labrador, are over 10,000 years old.



## Amazing maze



### JUST kidding

**Q:** Why should you take a pencil to bed?

**A:** To draw the curtains.



### JUST kidding

**Q:** Which month do soldiers hate most?

**A:** March.



### JUST kidding

**Q:** What did the blanket say to the bed?

**A:** Don't worry, I've got you covered.



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# DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

## COMMUNICATING A LIE

**Q** My girlfriend and I were madly in love when I packed up and moved to Las Vegas. She followed soon after. I knew when I left I didn't have anything to worry about. She came to Vegas, and we started our lives. Two years later we got married and bought a house. Two years after that her sister and husband came to Vegas on their vacation.

Before they arrived, out of the big blue sky my wife said, "Honey, I have something to tell you. On my last night before I moved here, I had a get-together with friends at my sister's house. We had a few drinks and after a few hours everyone left." So I say, "After four years you tell me this. Why?" She said, "I just wanted to be honest." I was thinking, Yeah, right.

So I said, "Who was there?" She mentioned some names. I said, "Is that all?" She said, "Yes, honey, I swear on my parents' graves." So I let it go and didn't think anything of it. Two years later she comes out and says, "Oh yeah, my ex-boyfriend was there, but nothing happened and I didn't sleep with him." I about dropped my drawers.

Here I felt I had the perfect lady, and now this. I asked her to explain to me the night's events step-by-step. She became defensive, angry, and told me it's in the past. Don't worry, she said. Well, why tell me six years after she hid it from me, when her story isn't consistent enough to believe?

I still haven't found out what I want to know. It always turns around on me. Why can't she come clean? What is she afraid of? She preaches to

me about communication but doesn't follow her own standards.

Karl

**A** Karl, your letter reminds us of the story about a monastery where monks take a vow of silence. Only once each year is a monk permitted to speak. One year a monk said rather harshly, "Pass the salt." The following year his brother monk replied, "I don't care for your tone of voice." The year after that their abbot scolded, "All this bickering has to stop!" Your wife tried to protect herself in case her sister spilled the beans. That didn't happen. Now your wife regrets mentioning the subject. In spite of herself, however, the truth keeps trying to pop out of her mouth.

Communication skills are sometimes said to be the key to good relationships. But rather than teach women to drink beer, poke each other in the ribs, and watch football on television—as men do—men are told to express themselves verbally as women do.

The evidence this strategy works is weak. In reality, people have different aims, and these different aims are the root of the problem. Your wife has a guilty secret. Perhaps she or her sister will tell you, or perhaps you will learn that good communication is what people want only when it serves their own interest.

Wayne & Tamara

## GETAWAY

**Q** I have a friend, actually an ex-girlfriend. We went out for three years and broke up a year ago. She goes to college, doesn't have a job, and her family doesn't help her out as much as I believe they should. So whatever her family doesn't do for her, I do. I pay for stuff like she's family.

Sometimes I feel she doesn't appreciate everything I do. She limits when she can hang out with me because of her boyfriend, and I get upset. Am

I pursuing something I shouldn't be?

Austin

**A** Austin, when you feel the wind whipping past your ears, when you see the scenery rushing by, when you feel the road bouncing beneath you, you are being taken for a ride. It's time to jump in the driver's seat and leave her in the rearview mirror.

Tamara

WAYNE & TAMARA MITCHELL are the authors of YOUR OTHER HALF ([www.yourotherhalf.com](http://www.yourotherhalf.com))

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

or email: [GetInTouch@WayneAndTamara.com](mailto:GetInTouch@WayneAndTamara.com)

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# HOROSCOPE

Week of DECEMBER 22 TO 28, 2024

The luckiest signs this week:  
SAGITTARIUS, CAPRICORN AND AQUARIUS



## ARIES

In romantic matters, you may receive a marriage proposal, either from someone you don't know or during a trip with your partner. This week holds surprises that will be good for you.



## TAURUS

You'll have a lot to do at work to finalize files before the holidays. However, everything will go according to plan. You'll finish off the year with a sense of accomplishment and leave with peace of mind.



## GEMINI

You'll put the finishing touches on your holiday decorations after finding out last minute that you'll be hosting an important gathering. Your desire to outdo yourself will push you to do everything in your power to stand out.



## CANCER

You'll find time to manage the household, take care of the children and serve as host for the get-togethers. You'll be involved in a community activity that will make you feel an extra burst of gratitude.



## LEO

You won't mince your words this week! You'll openly express what others are thinking. You may also need to dispel some nasty gossip to prevent it from complicating your relationships.



## VIRGO

You'll need to make more purchases, which will cause you to spend beyond your budget. However, the presents will be greatly appreciated, earning you warm thanks.



## LIBRA

You'll need to make last-minute arrangements at work or at home. At the office, you'll be the first to arrive and the last to leave. For this, you'll earn the trust of management for an upcoming promotion.



## SCORPIO

Be careful not to wear yourself out before the start of the holiday season. You'll have to take time to rest to get over a cold that's causing fatigue. There's nothing like an inspiring read at a time like this.



## SAGITTARIUS

Stress at work may make you feel like you're in turmoil. Fortunately, you'll regain your self-confidence just in time for Christmas. You won't leave your good friends alone for the holidays.



## CAPRICORN

You'll excel at work and in preparing for the holidays. You'll complete all your tasks on time. This will give you peace of mind during your time off.



## AQUARIUS

Your friends may invite you to travel with them. You'll accept the offer without hesitation. If not, you may take part in a multicultural celebration with your loved ones during the holidays.



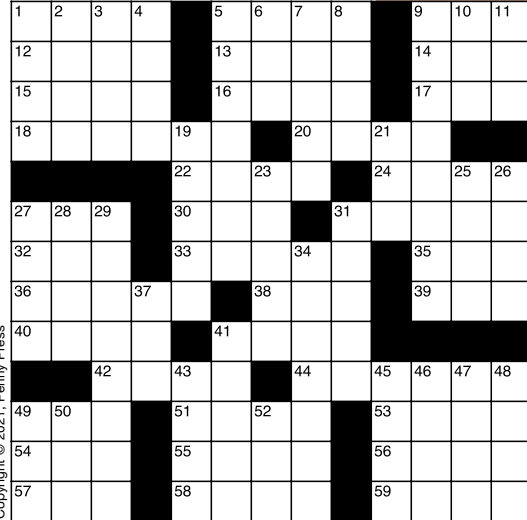
## PISCES

You may feel a mix of emotions as the holidays approach. This year's celebrations will be different, evoking a sense of nostalgia that may bring out your sensitive side.

# Coffee Break

## CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 187



### ACROSS

- Like
- "Little \_\_\_\_ of Horrors"
- Night flier
- Art \_\_\_\_
- Carry
- Back in time
- Not closed
- "The \_\_\_\_ of Night"
- Not old
- Walk leisurely
- Peddle
- Got down
- Notable periods of time
- Existed
- Unsatisfactory
- Hurricane or tornado
- Sternward
- Atlantic or Pacific
- Astrology sign
- Fewer
- High card
- Trail behind

### DOWN

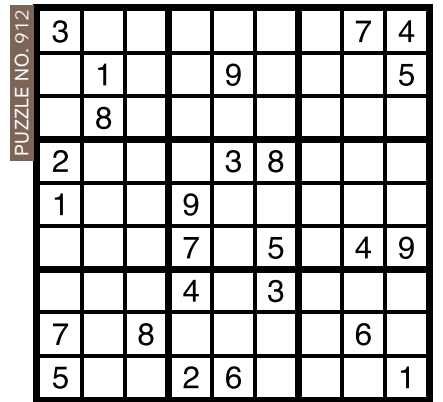
- Speak to God
- Sky color
- Within close range
- Small earthquake
- Tree-trunk section
- Devotion
- Italian money, once
- Dumbfound
- Work long and hard
- Thick piece of concrete
- For every
- All right!
- Pipe types
- Capitalize
- \_\_\_\_ before beauty
- Pull
- Work
- Quite moist
- Perfect example
- Field of study
- Air pollution
- Distort
- Off yonder
- Outsider
- Smirk
- Intensely
- Organ of vision
- Creek
- Voice range
- When all \_\_\_\_ fails . . .
- Factory
- \_\_\_\_ surgeon
- Confederate soldiers
- One trip around a track
- Be in hock
- By way of

## 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.

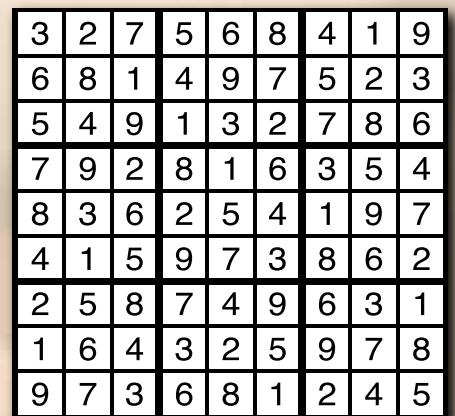


## Last Issue's Answers

### CROSSWORDS



### Sudoku



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