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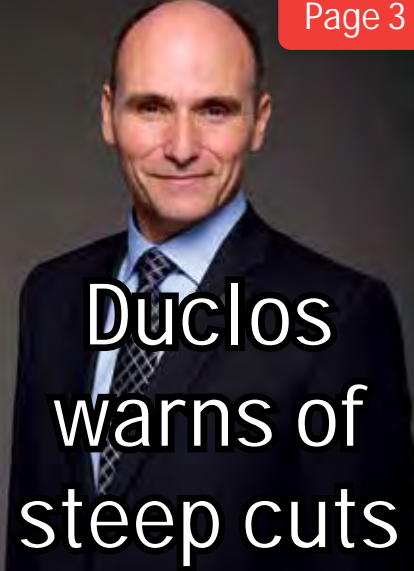
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Duclos warns of steep cuts

Laval en Blanc carnival



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The frozen pond at Laval's Centre de la Nature was picture postcard perfect for skating when the city held its annual Laval en Blanc winter carnival event January 24-25-26. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

A thank you note from Mayor Stephane Boyer



Since my announcement I've received an overwhelming outpouring of love and hundreds of messages of encouragement. Please know that I will be taking time to read all of them over the next few days.

In life, everyone has their own battle. This medical condition is mine. Not letting it define me and most importantly not letting it stop me. I am more determined than ever to continue the good work in Laval, a city that I love and that makes me proud, and to pursue my dreams in my personal life.

Thank you again for your kind words and support.

Pink in the City presents \$317,000 for breast cancer care



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Liberals' Duclos warns of steep cuts under a Poilievre government

Maintains dental coverage and affordable housing are threatened by Conservatives

MARTIN C. BARRY

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

With the prospect of an early federal election more certain by the week, Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Public Services in the outgoing Trudeau cabinet, is warning that a Conservative government under Pierre Poilievre would almost certainly make deep cuts to programs introduced by the Liberals in the past nine years – including national dental care and access to affordable housing.

“Pierre Poilievre wants to take away dental coverage for millions of Canadians and leave you and your family without the health care you need and deserve,” Duclos said in an interview with *Newsfirst Multimedia* during a recent stop in Laval to attend a multicultural gathering.

Dental plan threatened, he says

The Liberal government's Quebec Lieutenant said Poilievre has gone on record several times trying to discredit the Canadian Dental Care Plan, which was adopted by the Liberals largely at the urging of the NDP minority opposition in Canada's parliament.

“Any time someone has asked him why he is against, he has said it is because it doesn't exist,” Duclos said, maintaining that Poilievre, driven by right-wing ideology, has also been known to refer the dental plan as a “communist” policy.

“So, this is very strange obviously for any sensible person to understand that language,” said Duclos. “But then it's part of the fake news argument: he pretends that people shouldn't register because it doesn't exist, and then because it doesn't exist, he says we can do without it – which is obviously completely false.”

He said that, to date, more than 3.1 million dental program applications have been approved, with one million in Quebec alone. As well, he said more than 1.3 million Canadians have received dental care through the plan. “More than 95 per cent of all dentist here in Quebec have used the program,” said Duclos. “For now, it is seniors and people under the age of 18. But, in 2025, we are expected to open the program to everyone.”

On affordable housing

On affordable housing, Duclos, who was the minister responsible for the Liberal government's first national housing strategy, maintained that since 2015 when the Trudeau government first came into office, the Liberals managed to build more than 50,000 units of affordable housing, paid for largely by the federal government.

He claimed that Pierre Poilievre, as the cabinet minister responsible for housing in the former Harper Conservative government, “built six in total for his whole mandate across the entire country.”

On the Liberal leadership

Regarding the Liberal leadership race, Duclos declined to say whether at this point he is supporting any particular candidate.

However, an outline of his thinking on the matter, furnished to *Newsfirst Multimedia* by a Liberal administration staff member, noted that Duclos has “said time and time again that the next leader of the party needs to be bilingual



and have the interest of all Quebecers at heart.”

Duclos acknowledged that by this definition, the field of suitably bilingual candidates becomes somewhat narrower. Of the two most prominent ones – Mark Carney and Chrystia Freeland – he noted:

“They are not perfectly bilingual, just as I am not perfectly bilingual. Perfectly bilingual Canadians are rare. But what matters is whether you are able to engage with Canadians in whatever language they use. That is absolutely essential.”

Impact of Trump presidency

Duclos said the Liberal government had long been preparing for the eventuality that Donald Trump would be re-elected as president of the U.S. “I would say that people want to be reassured,” he said.

He said the Liberal government “started in late winter, early spring 2024, since at that time there was a high probability that President Trump would be re-elected, so it was possible. And then it became probable that he would be re-elected. So given that, we had to reactivate our engagement work in the United States.”

Dismisses deficit worries

On the country's growing annual operating deficit – which currently stands at more than \$60 billion for 2023-24, compared to \$35.3 billion in 2022-23 – Duclos, who has headed the economics faculty at Laval University and has a PhD from the London School of Economics – maintained that the government's debt is nothing to become alarmed about.

“It isn't only the debt that matters – it's also the size of the economy,” he said, noting that Canada's economy has been assessed by the International Monetary Fund to be the second-fastest growing economy in 2026-27 after the U.S.

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OPINION & Editorial



THAT'S WHAT I'M THINKING

Robert Vairo



Tariffs should get us thinking differently

Canada has been acting like a poor country for the last ten years. It's not an accident that we have been led by a government that has wanted Canadians to think small. Members of cabinet and would-be leaders are disciples, in fact, some are board members of the World Economic Forum. The WEF used to be an impartial international think tank but has veered extremely left. Today, some call it "the mafia elite of the super-rich." Its credo is a world without borders. Picture the former Soviet Union. The purpose is not the creation of wealth but its redistribution. Canadian Armed Forces Lt-Col David Redman sounds the alarm when he says "Canada finds itself in a far worse situation across all areas of national security than we did in 2015, with the purpose of destroying and dissolving our Canadian identity." The retired Redman says it's not by accident that government has allowed China to infiltrate and influence our three governing levels.

There is no one to thank more for this catastrophic erosion in our pride and identity than this most divisive federal government. It was the newly elected prime minister who declared that Canada is not a sovereign country. It was a stunning statement to the New York Times in 2015, but in line with his beliefs and those of the World Economic Forum. He said, "there is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada. We are a post national state." No premier, no other Canadian leader stood and spoke against this treasonous verbiage. Perhaps we were too enamoured and blinded by the young man with different hair styles every six months, flashing his family brand while fresh off a winning knockout punch in the boxing ring. Our judgment became clouded enough to not realize the 2015 election results were going to lead us to a social, political, and economical quagmire. We are now only individuals, living in different geographical regions, from Newfoundland to British Columbia. The east was told to hate Alberta, despite it being

Canada's biggest revenue generator. It is the 'have province' that finances Québec's social programs and sustains our medical system in Canada. It is the province that produces the largest percentage of Canada's exports. Shouldn't we be thankful and grateful that Alberta is part of our Confederation?

Despite our love and dedication, Canada means little or nothing to many of us anymore. We sing our National Anthem before hockey games with no emotion nor conviction. Yes, at least men remove their caps for the national anthem, but only because long time and revered Habs announcer Michel Lacroix says so. The only other time is when Ginette Reno leads us into belting out O Canada at The Bell. Otherwise, we may as well be lip-syncing. We allow our Canadian maple leaf flag, that we once saluted and honoured, to be burned and ripped apart on our streets by terrorists, while police stand by and never make an arrest. We glorify terrorists who destroy our flag! Canada's kindness is no excuse to break our laws. We offer a beacon of hope to the world, but we have permitted and tolerated the importation of international conflicts to our streets.

Never have I come close to even dreaming of this happening in my country. For the last ten years Canadians have been told that we should be ashamed because of how bad and evil history has shown us to be. No one in that government at any time, has given Canadians any reason to feel proud of who we are. Yet we have so much to be thankful and proud of in wearing our maple leaf.

The federal Liberal government has allowed repeat criminals, who laugh at our justice system and smirk in triumph at police as they are released the day after being arrested. Not once, but it happens time after time after time. Canada's crime rate is 14% higher than the United States (Fraser Institute).

Chronic repeat offenders have to be left in prison. As citizens of this country, we need

to be protected from repeat offenders, knife wielding sidewalk terrorists, gun totting car jackers, home invaders, and gang warfare where innocent bystanders are shot or injured. This is what Canada has become.

We have allowed border free entry not only to illegal migrants but to banned guns and deadly drugs. More fatal drugs, especially fentanyl, are allowed into this country as never before. Over 49 thousand Canadians have died of opioid related deaths in the last ten years, according to Canada.ca. Let that sink in. While refusing to accept diversity of opinion, this government trumpets diversity as the strength of Canada. In fact, allowing diversity to flood this country has meant the importation of every worldly ethnic conflict, and the disappearance of our values.

So, who will lead us back to the country we once loved and cherished? Who will secure our borders not because an American president tells us to but because we are proud Canadians who want to protect our traditions, principles, and sovereignty? Who will insist on a code of conduct before becoming a resident of this country, making it illegal to disrespect and not abide by our values and customs? The possibility of deportation should be an inevitable consequence of unlawful behavior. Destroying or stomping on the Canadian flag should be a punishable offence. Who will stop Chinese, Russian, and Indian interference in our democratic system in municipal provincial and federal governments? Who will stand at the laboratory door and filter those who participate in our research and development?

Before we vote, Canadians must tolerate another demonstration of political arrogance, a leadership convention. Instead, an election should have been called on January 7th.

But for now, put aside the political bravado of a tariff war and fix our border. Tariffs should get us thinking differently.

We are so anxious and ready to elect true leadership when it is needed more than ever.

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Laval unveils action plan for juvenile delinquency and urban violence

During the October 14 Laval city council meeting, officials with the city announced the release of the new Action plan for Security and Collective Well-Being for the years 2024-2026. It was developed in partnership with a number of institutions and community groups in the region.

The plan is a more detailed version of a strategic plan for security and well-being, which was adopted by city council last June. The plan provides a framework for the City of Laval to be able to take means to deal with juvenile delinquency and violence among youths aged between 12 and 35 years.

“This action plan is the end-result of a collective and coordinated effort, denoting the City of Laval’s and its partners’ willingness to act on the issues involving juvenile delinquency and security,” said Mayor Stéphane Boyer.

A collective effort

“By uniting our strengths while working together, we will be able to achieve concrete

results that will make a significant impact in matters of prevention. I am proud of this action plan, which aims to make our neighborhoods safer, while allowing us to invest in the future of our youths and their families.”

The project, developed through the co-leadership of the City of Laval’s culture, leisure, sports and social development service and the Laval Police Dept. (SPL), outlines measures to be implemented by the city and its partners.

According to the city, the measures were developed following multiple meetings and workshops held with program partners in the community. The city relied on the partners’ expertise in working with youths over many years to identify what actions might be necessary to accomplish goals.

Measures to be taken

In all, 45 measures are decreed in the new plan, taking into account emerging issues. They include:

- Acting preventively, by advising youths and



their families beforehand on issues linked to cyberspace, like online harassment and intimidation.

- Providing support for programs and initiatives working towards reducing polarization and radicalization.
- Providing youths with opportunities to learn more about themselves through cultural and artistic workshops in things like hip-hop

music, as well as literary projects.

In addition to investments by the City of Laval, the Quebec Ministry of Public Security invested \$4.6 million in the plan.

As well, the federal government and the government of Quebec also provided financial support through a mutual program whose purpose is to help build more secure communities.



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During winter



Mayor Boyer confirms he's in for another term – despite health problem

MARTIN C. BARRY

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

Laval Mayor Stéphane Boyer says he'll be seeking a second term in the November 2 municipal elections, in spite of the fact he's facing a health issue which is impacting the quality of his life.

Boyer, who became Laval's youngest elected mayor in 2021 at the age of 33, made the announcement last week.

Spinal cord arthritis

The 37-year-old told journalists with several media that he was diagnosed more than a decade ago with ankylosing spondylitis, a type of arthritis that affects the spinal cord.

The condition can make it difficult to stand or walk for long periods. It is characterized by long-term inflammation of the joints of the spine, typically where the spine joins the pelvis.

He said wanted to go public about it in case anyone began to notice the symptoms. According to Boyer, it took two years for him to obtain a diagnosis for a disease he said he will have for the rest of his life.

Campaigning started

In interviews with journalists since making the announcement, Boyer suggested that some of the issues he wants to put forward in a second term as mayor would include building another major hospital in Laval, as well as expanding higher education, and providing more assistance to the homeless.



Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer (seen here during the January 14 city council meeting) says his name will be on the ballot in the November 2 municipal elections for a second term, in spite of a health problem. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

He also expressed a desire to continue initiatives for better economic development, more housing, stronger public security, and more access in Laval to arts and culture. In addition, he said he wanted to take measures to improve overall efficiency in government.

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Winter was put on pause for city's three-day 'Laval en Blanc'

Families enjoyed a respite from the weather at the Centre de la Nature



The Zip Line proved to be a popular with kids as ever during this year's Laval en Blanc. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

MARTIN C. BARRY

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The Rubino family from Laval's Duvernay district were among the thousands of moms, dads and children who converged on the Centre de la Nature on the weekend of January 24-25-26 for the city's Laval en Blanc winter carnival.

As it turned out, Sunday, the final day, was also the best, with bright sun and a moderate coolness just on the edge of warmth under the gentle mid-day sunlight.

"We try to get to different events throughout the year," said the family's father, adding that they find it pleasant and convenient to have access so close to home to a large green space like the Centre de la Nature, where they can get out and enjoy the fresh air while also getting some exercise.

Fun for everyone

There was snow sledding, ice skating, zip line riding, fireworks, obstacle course racing, snow sculpting, even some musical performances to be enjoyed by kids and their families in warmth inside a pavilion.

For some, the idea of having fun outdoors during the winter, in temperatures hovering around zero degrees Celsius, is a novel concept and a discovery in itself – although it's the very reason Laval en Blanc is organized each year by the City of Laval.



Volunteers and supporters of Les Jeux de la francophonie canadienne were on hand at Laval en Blanc to promote the event taking place this summer from July 15 – 19. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)



The Rubino family of Laval's Duvernay district enjoyed a mid-winter day in the sun at the Centre de la Nature during the city's Laval en Blanc festival. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)



Nothing hits the spot on a cold January weekend at the Centre de la Nature like maple taffy on snow. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

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One of the many fun outdoor activities that kids and adults indulged themselves in at the 2025 Laval en Blanc. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)



An attendant works on an ice castle on the grounds of the Centre de la Nature in Duvernay during Laval en Blanc. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

Two Laval Liberal MPs throw their weight behind Mark Carney for party leader

El-Khoury, Koutrakis praise former bank governor, downplaying bilingualism issue

MARTIN C. BARRY

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After several weeks of deliberation over the future of the Liberal Party of Canada following the resignation of Justin Trudeau as leader, two Laval-area MPs have announced their decision to support Mark Carney's bid to win the party's leadership.

In interviews earlier this week with *The Laval News*, Laval-Les Îles Liberal MP Fayçal El-Khoury and Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis confirmed their decision to support the former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor, whose chief rival for the leadership is former Liberal finance minister Chrystia Freeland.

'Good economic vision'

"He is a great economist," El-Khoury said, explaining why he decided to support Carney. "He is the right man. He has a good economic vision for the country, which is exactly what we need right now. If you look at his CV, he is the only man in the world who managed two major central banks. Which is unique."

El-Khoury noted that during the 2008 global financial crisis, Carney provided key advice to Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper. "So, he is very well known. He has made his mark," he said.

Although there is a longstanding if unspoken tradition within the Liberal Party of Canada that the leadership should alternate between French- and English-speaking chiefs, some also believe the person who heads the party should always be bilingual.

Carney's bilingualism

El-Khoury said he was impressed with Carney's fluency in both languages, while admitting that Carney (who was born in Canada's Northwest Territories and raised in Alberta) isn't perfectly adept in French. "Of course, he's not Victor Hugo," he said, alluding to the 19th century French author. "But he manages properly. I've heard him speak and it is very good."

Regarding some of the other candidates, El-Khoury said he would have supported a leadership bid by former Pierrefonds-Dollard MP Frank Baylis, whom he described as a very close friend. "But as far as I know, after discussing with many colleagues, he has no chance," said El-Khoury.

Regarding Chrystia Freeland, he said, "With all due respect, she is a good colleague. But my problem, based on my consultation with my constituents in Laval-Les-Îles and other places also, is that as minister of finance, she was related to all decisions taken by Trudeau and she cannot separate herself from that."

Carney was praised by Harper

Koutrakis explained why she also decided to support Mark Carney. Like El-Khoury, she noted that Stephen Harper had praised Carney's work at the Bank of Canada as having helped soften the impact on the country from the 2008-2009 recession. As well, she pointed out that Carney was the only non-British governor the Bank of England had since its founding in the late 17th century.

"Having met him [Carney] and having had extensive conversations with him, I think

he is the right leader and the right prime minister for Canada as we go through this very turbulent time," said Koutrakis.

Regarding Carney's linguistic proficiency, Koutrakis said she agreed that since Canada is an officially bilingual country, "the prime minister of Canada, and any federal party leader for that matter, should be bilingual." She said she had heard Carney speak in French.

Koutrakis for Carney

"Although it may not be perfect, he is quite proficient in the French language, and I know that he is continuing in that regard," said Koutrakis. "Obviously, he is an Anglophone. But I have every confidence that Mr. Carney will be able to master the language even better than he already speaks it."

She said she had "full respect for all the candidates who put their names out there to be the

leader."

However, with the economic threats the country is facing from its main trading partner (the U.S.), "I really believe that given Mr. Carney's overall demeanor, experience, educational background and reputation globally, he is the right person to be able to sit across the table from President Trump and his team to renegotiate and make sure that Canada's economy remains robust and healthy," said Koutrakis.

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Pink in the City presents \$317,000 to MUHC Foundation for breast cancer care

*Love, compassion and action at work, says
Pink president Denise Vourtzoumis*

MARTIN C. BARRY

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A check for \$317,000 was presented recently by officials with Pink in the City to the MUHC Foundation, representing funds raised by Pink last year for holistic care provided to breast cancer patients at the Montreal-based teaching hospital.

Denise Vourtzoumis, president of Pink in the City, took to the podium with heartfelt emotion.

'A shared purpose'

"This achievement is a testament to what happens when a community comes together with a shared purpose," she said. "Pink in the City was founded on the belief that love, compassion and action can make a tangible difference in the lives of breast cancer patients. I salute every survivor in the room, you are the reason we are here."

Dr. Sarkis Meterissian, founder of the Breast Clinic Wellness Program at the MUHC, expressed his gratitude for the vital support that Pink in the City provides.

"This program was created to address the emotional, physical, and psychological well-being of breast cancer patients," he said. "Thanks to Pink in the City, the MUHC Foundation and their incredible donors, we can continue to offer holistic care that truly meets the needs of our patients."

Unwavering commitment

"Together, we are creating a future where every woman facing breast cancer feels supported and cared for," said Marie-Hélène Laramée, president and CEO of the MUHC Foundation.

"Pink in the City's unwavering commitment to this cause inspires us all to dream bigger and strive harder to ensure no more women face a future where breast cancer takes a life."

Pink in the City has become synonymous with breast cancer care at the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC). Since 2014, they have championed the MUHC's Breast Clinic Wellness Program through the MUHC Foundation and events like Raise Craze and their annual gala.

\$1.5 million raised to date

From breast cancer survivors to passionate high school students, Pink in the City never fails to unite their community in the fight against breast cancer. Pink in the City's 2024 donation to the MUHC brought their total contributions to over \$1.5 million.

The funds raised were the result of tireless efforts, which included an inspiring Pink in the Rink campaign last year led by the Concordia University Women's Hockey Team.

"Pink in the Rink is so much more than a hockey game," said Julie Chu, coach for the team. "For us, it's about standing in solidarity with those affected by cancer and showing that even the smallest efforts can create ripples of change. We're proud to contribute to such an important cause."

SWLSB's 'Raise Craze'

One of the highlights of the year is always Raise Craze, a much-loved event where people shave or dye their hair pink in support of the cause. Students from the Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board raised an incredible \$50,000, showing

▶ **Continued on page 11**



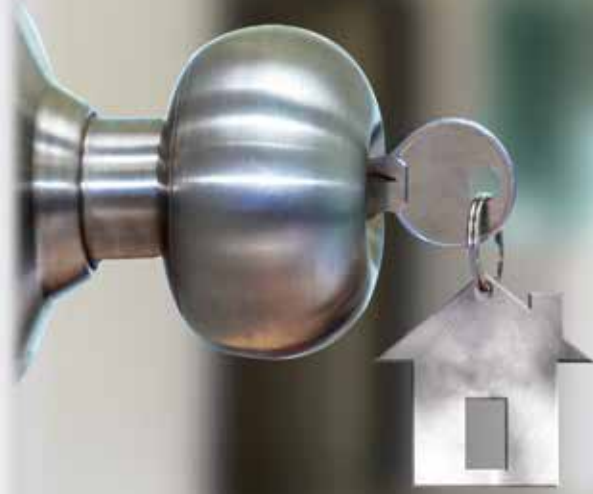
how young people are getting involved in philanthropy.
The Beat 92.5's co-hosts Lee Haberkorn and

Mark Bergman shaved their heads, while Claudia Marques and Kim Kieran dyed their hair pink during October's Breast Cancer

Awareness Month, raising \$98K for Raise Craze, which included a generous matching donation from La Vie en Rose.



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH



February is **BLACK** *History Month*

Black female leaders who will inspire you

February is Black History Month. It's the perfect opportunity to honor the remarkable contributions of Black women who are paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable America. Here are five leaders making waves today:

- 1. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson** is the first Black woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, appointed in 2022. An advocate for justice and equality, she has become a trailblazer in American law and given a powerful voice to underrepresented communities.
- 2. Ijeoma Oluo** is a celebrated American writer and the author of *So You Want to Talk About Race*, a New York Times best seller. Her work sparks crucial conversations on dismantling racial inequality and has helped many confront and understand systemic racism.
- 3. Cori Bush** is a former nurse and activist who has served on the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a vocal advocate for policies on police reform, healthcare reform and affordable

housing. Bush is dedicated to serving marginalized communities and advancing social justice through policy.

4. Dr. Sharon Knight is a race and social justice activist with expertise in culturally responsible leadership. Her work emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and equity in educational spaces and leadership roles.

5. Maya Manus is a community organizer and social justice advocate. She aims to promote policies that address housing, healthcare and racial equity. Manus is focused on amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and pushing for systemic changes.

This Black History Month, celebrating these leaders is an excellent reminder of the ongoing work for equality and the power of representation in creating a more just society.



Celebrating Black History Month



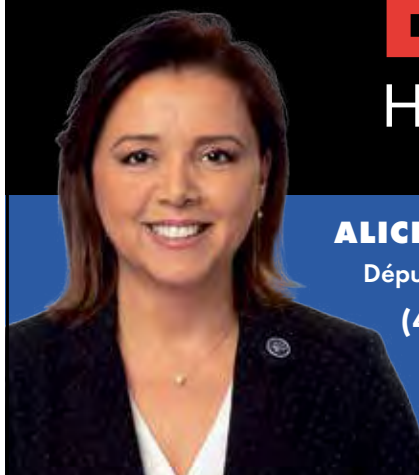
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remodeler l'avenir.*

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



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Statement by the Prime Minister on Black History Month

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, issued the following statement on Black History Month:

“Today marks the beginning of Black History Month – an opportunity to honour the culture, resilience, and achievements of Black Canadians.

“In communities across Canada, Black leaders, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and activists have shaped our country’s history and continue to inspire its future. From the Underground Railroad, which brought freedom seekers to Canada, to trailblazers like Jean Augustine and Lincoln Alexander, Black Canadians have led the way in the fight for justice, innovation, and progress.

“This year’s theme, ‘Black Legacy and Leadership: Celebrating Canadian History and Uplifting

Future Generations’, reminds us that the stories of Black Canadians keep being written every day. The advocate pushing for racial equity, the entrepreneur building a thriving business, the artist using their voice to drive change – these contributions continue to shape Canada for the better.

“Black Canadians have faced – and continue to face – too many barriers. That is why, last year, the Government of Canada extended its efforts under the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent until 2028 and welcomed the adoption of a second International Decade, which spans from January 2025 to December 2034. This extension allows us to further invest in Black-led programs, advance

racial justice, and create opportunities for Black Canadians.

“To date, we have committed over one billion dollars to Black-focused initiatives, including the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, which has supported over 2,700 projects to grow Black-led, Black-focused, and Black-serving charities and non-profit organizations. We developed Canada’s Black Justice Strategy to address systemic barriers and injustices by ending the overrepresentation of Black communities in the justice system. Through the Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund, we are supporting Black Canadians to develop more culturally focused knowledge, capacity,

and programs to improve mental health in their communities. And through the Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund and the Black Entrepreneurship Program, we are helping improve the social and economic outcomes of Black communities and helping Black-owned businesses grow and succeed now and into the future.

“On behalf of the Government of Canada, I encourage everyone to learn more about Black Canadian history and reflect on the challenges and accomplishments of Black Canadians. Let us recommit to building a country where every Canadian can succeed and have their voices heard.”

History is more than a story, it's a lesson.

Unsung heroes of Black history

Black history is rich with the contributions of remarkable individuals who've left an indelible mark on society. Although some trailblazers receive well-deserved recognition, the achievements of many unsung heroes remain relatively unknown. Here are three individuals who deserve to be celebrated.



Dr. Charles Drew

PHOTO: U.S. National Archives id. 559199

1. Dr. Charles Drew (1904 - 1950) was a brilliant phys-

ician and surgeon whose pioneering research revolutionized the field of blood banking. He developed techniques for storing and processing blood plasma, leading to the first large-scale blood bank during the Second World War. Dr. Drew also protested the practice of racial segregation in blood donation, as it has no basis in science.

2. Mary Jackson (1921 - 2005) was a trailblazing mathematician and aerospace engineer who made significant contributions to NASA's early space missions. As the first Black female engineer at NASA, she overcame racial and gender discrimination to become a leader in the

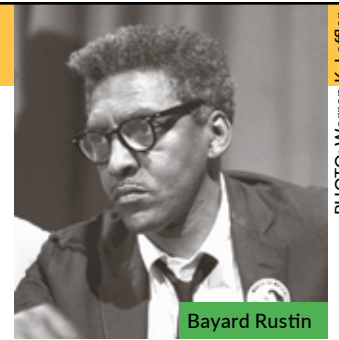
organization. Her work was instrumental in advancing aerospace engineering, and she contributed to the success of the United States space program.

3. Bayard Rustin (1912 - 1987) was a prominent civil rights activist who played a vital role in organizing the historic March on Washington in 1963. Despite his influential role in the civil rights movement, Rustin's contributions were often overshadowed by the discrimination he received due to his sexual orientation. He



Mary Jackson

PHOTO: NASA



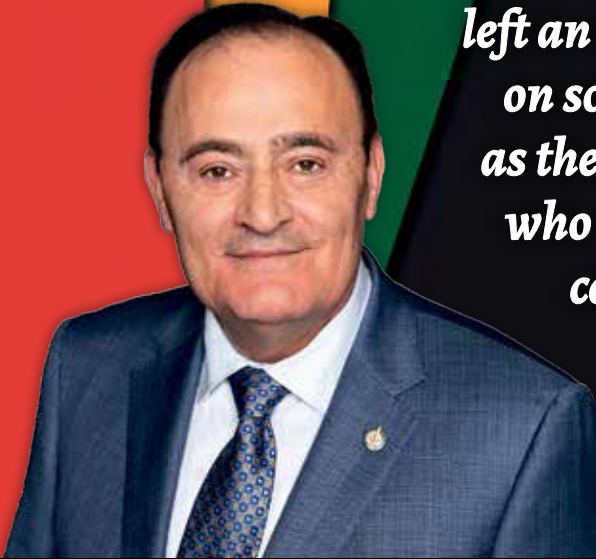
Bayard Rustin

PHOTO: Warren K. Leffler


worked tirelessly to promote non-violent protest and social change, advocating for the rights of African Americans and other marginalized communities.

As you celebrate Black History Month, take the time to recognize and honor these unsung heroes who have shaped the world through their dedication, brilliance and perseverance.

On this Black History Month, we remember and honour the contributions of all the remarkable individuals who have left an indelible mark on society, as well as the unsung heroes who deserve to be celebrated.



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Black HISTORY MONTH

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Laval's electronic snow-removal signage is a non-starter in Chomedey

Expected to be up and running this winter, city continues with old 'No-Parking' signs

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for The Laval News
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It's been around a year since the City of Laval announced, with a degree of fanfare, that it would be expanding its use of illuminated electronic signage along residential streets, to better keep motorists and residents informed of parking restrictions whenever snow removal ops are about to begin following snowfalls.

During the January city council meeting in 2024, the council members awarded a contract to Pierre Brossard (1981) Ltée to install electronic parking regulation signage on a range of streets in districts such as Chomedey in west end Laval.

New system not started yet

The signs, which are programmable remotely, allow municipal employees to inform motorists and residents in "real time," rather than with the age-old, manually-set up cardboard signs, which have been in usage for decades and must be placed by hand one-at-a-time in snow banks on street curbs.

When functioning, the new illuminated panels light up when needed to display specific times when snow removal (or street cleaning operations during the summer) are taking place. The city decided to opt for the system following tests with several pilot projects over the past few years on its territory.



As seen in the left foreground, the City of Laval is still using manually-placed no-parking signboards alongside Chenard St. in Chomedey when snow removal is scheduled, even though permanent electronic signage (upper right) has been installed but is not yet functional.

Cardboard signs for now

That said, however, now comes word from a homeowner on Chenard St. in Chomedey that the city is continuing to use cardboard signs on his street. This is in spite of the fact that some of the new electronic signs have been installed on Chenard, but appear to have been serving no useful purpose up to now.

Widespread implementation of the system began during the summer of 2024, and it was expected to become functional in Chomedey over the current winter period. This was to be followed by the installation and activation of a similar electronic signage system in Pont-Viau and Laval-des-Rapides over the coming summer months.

In an interview with *The Laval News*, Jason Hope of Chenard St. said he wasn't particularly put off that the city was still be using the old cardboard sign system, even though the new electronic signage has been in place (although inactive) for some time.

Residents want to know

He said he and a few of his neighbours were "just curious" about the city's intentions. It's worth noting that the City of Laval decided to adopt the new automated sign system as part of a package of amendments to its wintertime snow-removal strategy, which previously included a narrow and unpopular no parking policy following snowfalls.

"I had some discussion with my neighbours

who were wondering, you know, why they [the city] are still putting out those signboards," he said, adding that they'd gone online to the City of Laval's website to see if there was any information, only to see there was none.

"Nothing came up with regard to when they [the new signs] are actually going to be getting used," he continued. "It would be nice just to get a little guidance from the city – maybe just a little bit of communication as to when. Even though we didn't get much snow this year, it would just be nice to know when the city will be putting this into use."

Not yet up and running

The Laval News reached out to the City of Laval for some clarification as to when the new system will be functional.

Carolanne L. Gagnon, a spokesperson for the city's public affairs and marketing division, said the system is still being installed within an area of Laval's west end bounded by autoroutes 13, 15, 440 and the Rivière des Prairies.

However, there was no word from her on a precise or even approximate date when the system might be functional. "Before it becomes operational, an official notice will be sent to residents in the sectors which are affected to let them know the official date," she said.

Until then, she added, the city's existing methods of informing residents, as well as the portable cardboard no parking signs, will remain in use.



The City of Laval acknowledges that its electronic snow removal signs haven't yet been activated in an area of the city's west end bounded by autoroutes 13, 15, 440 and the Rivière des Prairies.

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Troubling diagnosis: Comparing Canada's healthcare with international peers

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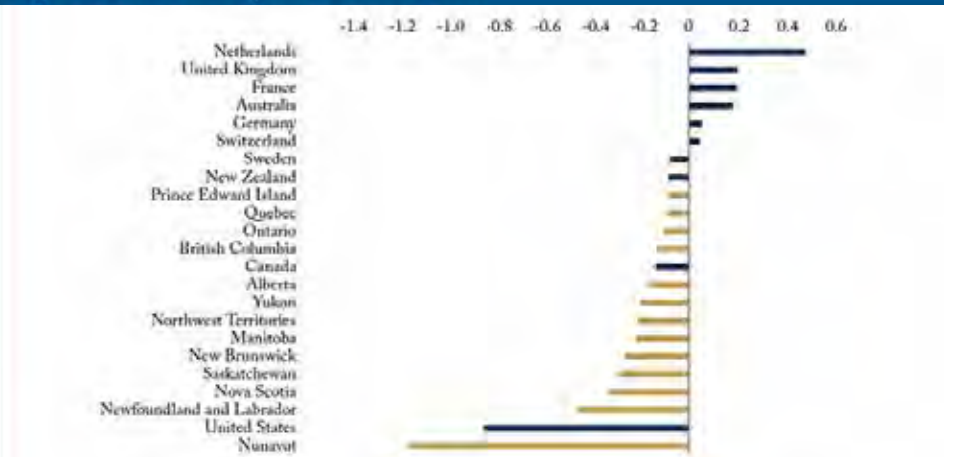
After the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare systems worldwide faced challenges ensuring access to care amid healthcare worker shortages, clinician burnout and growing administrative burdens. Canada was no exception. Today, many Canadians lack primary care providers, face long wait times for surgical and specialty care and struggle with access to needed mental health services, highlighting the system's vulnerabilities and the urgent need for change. Benchmarking Canada's healthcare systems against those in comparable wealthy nations can provide insights into Canada's relative performance and inform priorities for improvement. Provincial and territorial comparisons also enable us to explore which provinces excel compared to other advanced economies and which fall behind. This Commentary compares the health systems of 10 high-income countries, including Canada, and also examines how Canada's provinces and territories measure up on an international scale.

derived from the 2021, 2022 and 2023 CMWF surveys, with some statistics supplemented by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI).

The scope of the CMWF survey questions at the provincial level has expanded in recent years. This Commentary updates and improves a similar previous study by incorporating new indicators available since 2017, adding nuanced details to both international and provincial comparisons (Busby, Muthukumar and Jacobs 2018). (See online Appendix A1 for changes in measures between the 2018 report and the current analysis).

The latest CMWF surveys published between 2022 and 2024 rank Canada ninth out of the 10 countries. The analysis shows that Canada performed fairly well in the care-process category, but that the population faces persistent challenges accessing healthcare services due to long wait times and limited availability of care. In addition, Canada fared poorly in affordability, administrative

Figure 1: Overall Health System Performance Score



Note: Blue highlights represent comparator countries, while yellow represents provinces and territories.
 The author follows the Commonwealth Fund as well as Busby, Muthukumar and Jacobs (2018) to normalize the difference between the 10-country average (including the US) and a country's result for each measure to produce measure-specific scores (along the X-axis). This implies that the international average for all measures is precisely zero. Scores above zero indicate that a region performs above the international average and vice versa. See online Appendix A2 for a methods discussion.
 CIHI did not release provincial and territorial data for its 2022 physician survey due to data-quality concerns. To address the missing values and maintain comparability across provinces, territories and international benchmarks, the author used the national average to fill in these gaps.
 Source: Author's calculations from Commonwealth Fund data (CIHI 2022, 2023 and 2024), OECD and WHO statistics.

Box 1: Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Surveys

The Commonwealth Fund is a US-based foundation dedicated to improving healthcare systems. It gathers data from patients, physicians and the general public to ensure a holistic view of healthcare experiences and outcomes and provides data for international comparisons. The Commonwealth Fund uses rigorous survey methodologies, including well-designed questionnaires, randomized sampling and sophisticated statistical analyses. Funded by CIHI and regional health ministries, CMWF collects additional survey data to increase sample sizes and enable publication of sub-national estimates. By conducting these surveys annually, CMWF tracks changes and trends across different healthcare systems.

The annual Commonwealth Fund (CMWF) International Health Policy Surveys (see Box 1) conduct ongoing surveys of seniors, primary care physicians and the general public, shedding light on persistent gaps between Canada's healthcare system and those of nine other advanced economies. In addition to core topics, recent surveys included new questions on mental health, virtual care, care coordination and equity, which helped construct a more comprehensive analysis of Canada's healthcare system in comparison to international peers.

This Commentary examines 118 measures across five main categories – access to care, care process, administrative efficiency, equity and healthcare outcomes. The majority of these measures are

efficiency and equity. When it comes to overall healthcare performance, all Canadian provinces and territories fell below the international average. Even the top-performing provinces – Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Ontario – trail most international comparators, excluding the United States. At the other end of the spectrum, Newfoundland and Labrador, along with Nunavut, are the poorest performers, with Nunavut ranking below all comparator jurisdictions, including the United States.

Using a restricted set of measures from the most recent surveys to compare the findings to Busby, Muthukumar, and Jacobs (2018) shows Quebec moved up the ranking, from seventh among provinces to first. It is also the only province to meet the

international average in overall healthcare system performance with these measures. In contrast, Alberta saw the largest decline, falling from first to fifth, and dropped from above to below the international average.

Common challenges among Canadian jurisdictions include access to timely care, attaining after-hours care, and long wait times – issues that seem nearly universal in Canada. The performance gap between the top-performing Canadian jurisdictions and those lagging behind highlights the potential for interprovincial learning and knowledge sharing to improve healthcare delivery. However, domestic best practices alone may not suffice, as even Canada's top provinces still lag most international comparators. Countries like the Netherlands and the United Kingdom provide

valuable insights and best practices that could help Canadian jurisdictions surpass the international average and enhance healthcare outcomes.

To improve Canada's international standing in healthcare, some fundamental policy and organizational issues need to be addressed. Overall, improving access to care should be a priority across the country. While addressing access issues could bring some provincial health systems to the international average, others will need to do more to meet average performance. Specifically, enhancing timely access to care, expanding drug and dental access, improving the affordability of mental health and homecare could elevate Prince Edward Island,

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Table 1: Provincial Ranking of Healthcare Performance

Region	Overall Health Performance	Access to care	Care Process	Equity	Healthcare Outcomes
Newfoundland and Labrador	12*	13*	12	10*	11*
Prince Edward Island	1	7*	11	1*	3
Nova Scotia	11*	12*	10	7*	9
New Brunswick	9*	10*	7*	11*	8
Quebec	2	6*	9	2	2
Ontario	3	2*	4*	6	5
Manitoba	8*	4*	6*	12*	6
Saskatchewan	10*	5*	5*	8*	10*
Alberta	5*	8*	3*	3	7
British Columbia	4	11*	1*	9*	1
Yukon	6*	9*	8	13*	4
Northwest Territories	7*	1	2*	5	12*
Nunavut	13*	3*	13*	4	13*

Note: The gold highlight indicates a jurisdiction exceeds the international average and the blue highlight indicates the performance score is at the international average. The overall ranking is calculated as a weighted composite of results in Access to Care (0.25), Care Process (0.25), Quality and Health Outcomes (0.25) and Equity (0.25). It does not include administrative efficiency because provincial data from the 2022 CMWF survey were unavailable.
 * indicates the difference between provincial measures and the international average is statistically significant at p < 0.05 level.
 Source: Author's calculations from Commonwealth Fund data (CIHI 2022 and 2024), OECD and WHO statistics.

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◀ Continued from page 15

Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia above the international average. To further improve their international rankings, other provinces will also need to focus on reducing wait times, increasing patient engagement and promoting equity.

Overall Health System Performance

The top-performing countries in the most recent survey were the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Figure 1). The Netherlands ranked first in access to care and second in equity and healthcare outcomes. It demonstrates exceptional healthcare performance, particularly in affordability and care accessibility. Its universal healthcare coverage ensures minimal financial barriers, with only 0.5 percent of the population reporting unmet medical needs, according to the OECD (2023). An impressive 99 percent of survey respondents have a regular healthcare provider or place of care, and the country has the lowest rates of difficulty accessing after-hours care due to its robust primary care infrastructure. These achievements stem from a healthcare system designed to provide more patient and provider choice, more competition and cost-effective medical services with high patient satisfaction (Blomqvist 2022, Wittevrongel, Eder and Faubert 2024).

Canada ranked ninth overall despite its higher spending on healthcare as a percentage of GDP than the Netherlands (OECD 2023). Canada ranked second last on access to care, fourth on the care process category, sixth on administrative efficiency, seventh on equity and sixth on healthcare outcomes. It remains below the international average on many measures and ranked at the bottom for timeliness. Some readers may notice that my scores for international countries differ slightly from those published by the Commonwealth Fund. This is largely due to adding new measures and subcategories, adjustments in rounding and reweighting and the inclusion of the United States in calculating international averages.

All Canadian provinces and territories fell below the international average on overall healthcare performance (Figure 1), with Nunavut ranking last among all comparator jurisdictions. Notably, even Canada's best-performing province ranked below all comparator countries, excluding the United

Table 2: Care Process, Comparison to International Average

Region	Overall Care Process	Preventative Care	Safe Care	Engagement and Patient Preferences	Coordinated Care	Virtual Care
United States	1*	2*	18*	2*	5*	1*
Netherlands	2*	20*	20	1*	1*	5
British Columbia	3*	16	3*	8	4*	7
Northwest Territories	4*	1*	10*	15	15	16
New Zealand	5*	17*	17*	10	2*	4
Alberta	6*	5*	5*	5*	9	18
Ontario	7*	10*	8*	9	8	10
Saskatchewan	8*	13	4*	4*	12	14
Canada	9*	11*	7*	11	10	12
Manitoba	10*	4*	6*	17*	11	11
New Brunswick	11*	8*	12*	20*	7	9
Yukon	12	12	2*	19*	16	13
Quebec	13	9*	9*	14	14	17
Nova Scotia	14	7*	14*	12	18*	15
Prince Edward Island	15	15	13*	7	6*	20*
United Kingdom	16	14	21*	18*	17	2*
Australia	17	6*	22*	6*	21*	6
Newfoundland and Labrador	18	18*	15*	21*	13	8
France	19	19*	11*	16	23*	19*
Switzerland	20*	22*	16*	13	3*	22*
Sweden	21*	3*	23*	22*	22*	3*
Germany	22*	21*	19	3*	19*	23*
Nunavut	23*	23*	1*	23*	20*	21*

Note: The gold highlight indicates the performance score is higher than the international average and the blue highlight indicates the performance score is at the international average. * indicates the score's difference from the international average is statistically significant at p < 0.05 level.
Source: Author's calculations from Commonwealth Fund data (CIFI 2022 and 2024)

States. Considering the US's poor performance in several categories such as affordability, equity and healthcare outcomes, excluding it from the international average would further worsen the rankings of Canadian jurisdictions.

Among provinces and territories, PEI ranked first, driven mainly by its above-international-average performance in care process, equity and healthcare outcomes (Table 1). While most jurisdictions performed well in care-process areas like preventative care and safe care, their overall health results fell short of the international average. Access to

timely care, obtaining after-hours care and long wait times are nearly universal challenges. No province reported scores near the international average in these categories.

Similarly, most provinces underperformed when it came to equity. Meanwhile, Newfoundland and Labrador ranked below the international average across all categories and Nunavut ranked last on care process and healthcare outcomes. Saskatchewan also faced serious challenges, with scores significantly below the international average in three out of four categories.

Access to Care

Access to care includes two subcategories: affordability and timeliness. Canada ranked ninth among its international peers in this overall category. And when compared against international countries, all provinces and territories ranked below comparator countries except the United States (Figure 2). Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador ranked last.

Still, Canada's affordability of healthcare has improved slightly compared to past survey results (Busby, Muthukumaran and Jacobs 2018), moving from seventh to sixth place.

Clearly, a lack of financial protection can reduce patients' access to healthcare, undermine their health status and exacerbate health inequalities.

Healthcare in Canada operates under a mixed system of public and private spending, with the

proportion of private spending comparable to many other countries except the United States. In 2021, Canadian households spent 3.3 percent of final household consumption on healthcare goods and services, the same as the OECD average (OECD 2023). Most of Canadians' total out-of-pocket spending on healthcare was driven by pharmaceuticals (41 percent), long-term care (29 percent) and dental care (16 percent). In most comparator countries, public coverage for pharmaceuticals is more extensive, with more than half of these costs funded by government or compulsory insurance schemes (OECD 2023). For example, Germany offers the most generous coverage, with 82 percent of pharmaceutical costs covered through these mechanisms. In contrast, Canada covers less than 40 percent of pharmaceutical costs, and dental treatment is only provided for specific population groups as of 2023.

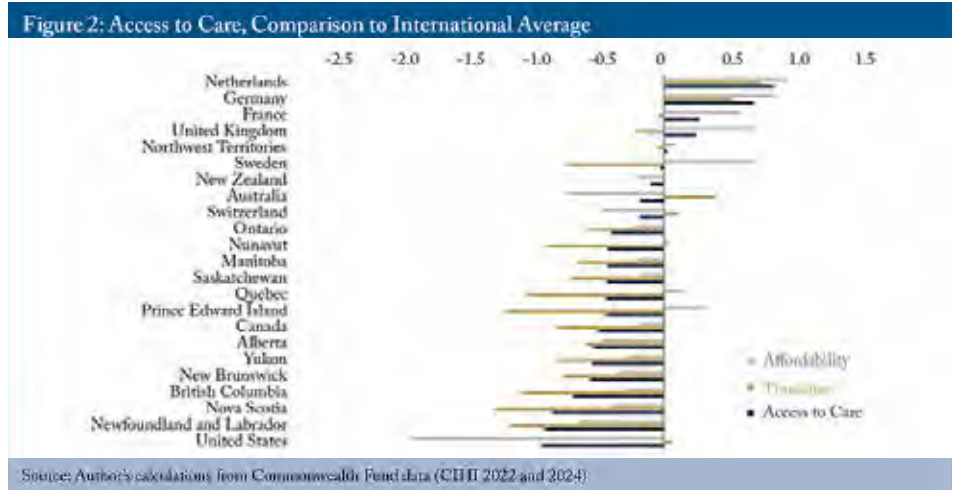
In 2023, nearly one-third (31 percent) of Canadians skipped dental care or dental checkups for cost reasons. In addition, a higher proportion of respondents in 2023 (24 percent) spent more than \$1,000 for out-of-pocket medical treatments compared to respondents in 2016 (15 percent). These costs disproportionately affect households with low incomes, people of colour and rural residents (Gunja et al. 2023). Nearly one-quarter of people with lower or average incomes in Canada reported at least one cost-related barrier to accessing healthcare in 2023, more than twice as many of those with higher incomes (12 percent) (Gunja et al. 2023). This suggests strongly that people with lower or average incomes may have forgone medical care or failed to follow care instructions as prescribed, potentially exacerbating their health issues.

Affordability continues to be a significant barrier in the Atlantic provinces (excluding PEI), Alberta, BC and Yukon, where a higher proportion of adults reported forgoing medications, needed mental health services or homecare due to cost concerns. PEI was the only province with an affordability score significantly higher than the international average. Compared to past survey results, PEI and Quebec showed the most improvement in this measurement.

Timeliness encompasses 10 measures, including access to a regular doctor or place of care, same or next-day care, urgent after-hours care and short wait times for specialist appointments or elective surgeries. It also includes measures related to mental health access and after-hours availability in physician practices.

Canada ranked worst (10th out of 10 countries) in timeliness. It placed at the bottom on four measures of timeliness: having a regular doctor or place (86 percent), saw a doctor or nurse on the same or next day (25 percent), waited two months or longer for specialist appointment (47 percent) and waited two months or longer for elective surgery (59 percent). All provinces ranked far below the international timeliness average, the same as in previous survey results. This confirms the ongoing challenge of timely access to care that Canadians have encountered for years.

Having a regular doctor or place of care is essential for preventative care, early-disease detection



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◀ Continued from page 16

and treatment, and chronic disease management. Canada ranked the lowest on this measure. Canadians with lower household-income levels, younger adults and males are less likely to have a regular doctor or designated place of care (CIHI 2024b, Gumas et al. 2024). Among Canadians without a regular primary care provider, 39 percent reported having at least one chronic condition and 29 percent were taking one or more prescription medications. This lack of access to primary care can exacerbate their chronic conditions.

Accessing after-hours care is also a significant issue in Canada. While more than three-quarters (77 percent) of Canadians reported difficulty in obtaining after-hours care, only 44 percent of adults in the Netherlands face similar challenges. The problem is even more severe in the Atlantic region, where 83-to-91 percent struggled with after-hours access. In the Netherlands, 88 percent of practices have after-hours care arrangements, while fewer than half of Canadian practices do the same. Expanding such access is crucial, especially for individuals whose work schedules limit their ability to seek care during regular business hours. Better access to after-hours care can also reduce reliance on emergency departments for non-urgent issues.

Enhancing Canadians' access to healthcare hinges on improving patients' attachment to care and after-hours care availability and reducing wait times. While recent years have seen some progress, affordability challenges persist in several provinces, particularly for prescriptions, dental care, mental health and homecare. Timeliness of care remains a consistent and pressing issue that requires focused attention.

Care Process

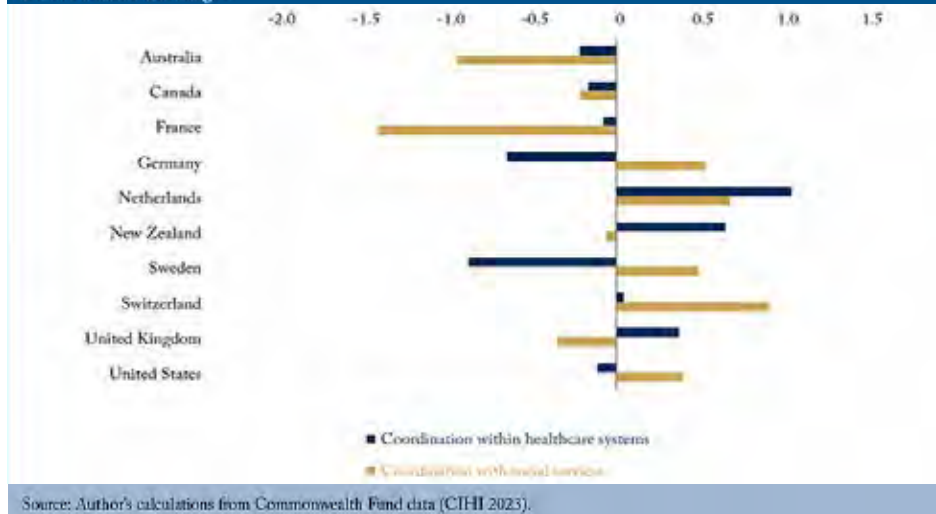
Care process is a composite measure covering preventative care, safe care, engagement and patient preferences, coordinated care and virtual care (Table 2). The US ranked first in this category, driven by its higher performance across each subcategory, followed by the Netherlands. Canada ranked ninth among all comparator jurisdictions, with most provinces ranking above the international average, except Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut.

The five sub-categories show some common successes for Canadian jurisdictions: most ranked above the international average on preventative care and safe care. However, Canada and more than half of the provinces and territories performed poorly on patient engagement and virtual care.

Preventative Care includes discussions with healthcare providers about smoking, alcohol, stress, diet or exercise. It also includes mammography screening, vaccination rates and avoidable hospital admissions for conditions such as diabetes, asthma and congestive heart failure.

In this subcategory, Canada ranked fourth among its international peers, with more than half of its provinces and territories scoring significantly above the international average. The Northwest Territories performed particularly well, ranking higher than the United States. In contrast, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut scored significantly below the international average. This suggests an opportunity for these regions to learn from other jurisdictions on improving the propor-

Figure 3: Physicians' Perspectives on Professional and Institutional Coordination, Comparison to International Average



tion of adults who discuss smoking, alcohol use and stressors with their healthcare providers.

Safe Care includes four survey items: routine review of medications, incidents of medical or lab mistakes, postoperative sepsis after abdominal surgery and pulmonary embolism in hip and knee replacements. Canada ranked second in this subcategory, with all provinces and territories scoring significantly above the international average. Since 2018, Canada's ranking has improved from fifth to second. Notably, all provinces have shown progress, with Manitoba and Nova Scotia improving significantly, moving from negative to positive scores.

Engagement and Patient Preferences includes 27 questions on whether patients feel confident managing their health and whether they feel informed, respected and involved in care decisions. The subcategory also includes measures on whether primary care physicians develop treatment plans, contact chronically ill patients between visits and monitor their conditions. The Netherlands achieved the highest performance in this subcategory, with adults reporting the highest continuity rates with the same doctor. Its robust primary care system also contributes to its strong performance in patient interactions and physicians' familiarity with personal situations (Blumenthal et al. 2024). Nearly all Dutch citizens (95 percent) choose and register with a general practitioner (GPs) and have the flexibility to switch GPs as needed.

Canada ranked sixth, placing close to the international average. Among Canadian jurisdictions, Saskatchewan and Alberta fared well, with scores significantly above the international average. However, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Yukon and Nunavut scored significantly below the international average. In Nunavut, just over one-half of respondents reported nurses always treated them with courtesy and respect during their hospital stay, and only 30 percent felt involved in their treatment plans – well below the Canadian average of more than 85 percent. Compared to previous survey results, Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick experienced significant declines, shifting from positive to negative scores, while Prince Edward Island experienced the opposite, showing marked improvement (Busby, Muthukumaran and Jacobs

2018). These shifts warrant further investigation into the underlying factors driving these changes. In addition, they highlight the potential for interprovincial learning and knowledge sharing.

Coordinated Care includes communication between specialists and regular doctors and coordination between doctor visits and follow-up care after hospital stays. Canada ranked fifth, with one-half of its jurisdictions scoring above the international average. However, Nunavut performed significantly worse than the national average. It particularly stands out for reports of poor communication between specialists and primary care physicians.

From the perspective of primary care physicians, Canada's performance in healthcare coordination fell below the international average (Figure 3). Canadian family doctors highlighted several challenges, including poor communication with hospitals upon patient discharge, inadequate communication with homecare providers and infrequent notifications when patients receive after-hours care. The gap is particularly significant in after-hours care notification with only 43 percent of Canadian physicians receiving these updates, compared to 99 percent in the Netherlands. This poor communication between care providers can lead to fragmented care, causing missed follow-ups and inconsistent treatment plans. It can also negatively impact patient outcomes, and increase risks of medical errors and delayed interventions.

International Average

Despite more than one-half of Canadian physicians' practices coordinating care with social services or community providers, several obstacles remain. Fifty-six percent of physicians reported inadequate staffing to manage referrals and care coordination, and 50 percent cited a lack of follow-up from social service organizations. These challenges also lead to delays, fragmented services and gaps in care, which can increase inefficiencies and healthcare costs and worsen patient outcomes.

Virtual Care includes 13 survey items assessing the use of web-based portals for health information, virtual consultations with primary care providers and satisfaction with these visits. It also includes primary care physicians' perspectives on video consultations and the use of web-based

portals for managing medical concerns, test results and patient summaries.

The US performed the best in this subcategory while Canada ranked seventh (Figure 4). Most provinces and territories scored below the international average, with Prince Edward Island and Nunavut the furthest behind.

Despite the expansion of virtual care during the pandemic, online access to health information in Canada remains limited. Only one-third of Canadians have used an online portal to view or download their health information, compared to 71 percent in the United States. Access varies widely across provinces and territories, with 47 percent of BC residents having online access to their health information such as visit summaries and laboratory results, but only one percent in Nunavut.

Figure 4: Virtual Care, Comparison to International Average



Note: Blue highlights represent comparator countries, while yellow represents provinces and territories. Source: Author's calculations from Commonwealth Fund data (CIHI 2022 and 2023).

Other survey results show that Canadians desire access to virtual care and those who have access to electronic health information feel more informed and better able to manage their health. Despite the benefits, a smaller proportion of Canadian physicians use telehealth or virtual appointments to serve patients than in comparator countries. Just 3 percent of Canadian physicians reported high telehealth use in 2022, compared to one in 10 in New Zealand and more than one-quarter in the UK (Gumas et al. 2024).

In 2022, nearly one-half of Canadian primary care physicians provided video consultations and allowed patients to communicate through email or secure websites regarding medical concerns, double the proportion in the 2019 CMWF physician survey. However, it remains below the international average. Primary care clinicians in the UK and the US were the most likely to report using video consultations, at 85 percent and 84 percent. Meanwhile, only close to one-quarter of Canadian primary care physicians allowed e-prescriptions, compared to 97 percent in Sweden. These areas require further improvements to bring Canada in line with its international peers.

In general, Canadian primary care physicians were more satisfied with practising telehealth than were their international peers (84 percent vs. 68 percent). They also found telehealth to be helpful and impactful. For example, 83 percent of Canadian physicians said it, at least to some extent, improved the timeliness of care.

continued next edition



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February 5, 2025 • The Level News • 17

Things to do

UPCOMING

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

ROCKET DE LAVAL

Sports



Until April 19

Afternoon or evening games

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

Sports



Until April 28

Afternoon or evening games

Place Bell

1950 Rue Claude-Gagné, H7N 5H9

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

[Visit Ticketmaster for tickets](#)

NBA G LEAGUE

Sports



January 24 - March 14

3 or 7 PM

Place Bell

1950 Rue Claude-Gagné, H7N 5H9

The Long Island Nets, an NBA G League club-school affiliated with the Brooklyn Nets, will play a six-game home series at Place Bell in Laval this season.

[Visit Ticketmaster for tickets](#)

LA TROISIÈME SOLITUDE

Show



February 15 - February 16

2 PM - 4 PM

Place Bell

1950 Rue Claude-Gagné, H7N 5H9

An exceptional immersive experience celebrating the history and contribution of Blacks to Quebec and Canada.

[From \\$16.50](#)

CŒURS ILLUMINÉS

Valentine's Day activity



February 7 - February 17

Espace Montmorency

Immerse yourself in a magical atmosphere at Espace Montmorency, with romantic installations perfect for capturing your love in photos.

Free

EXPOSITION DE FLOCONS

Outdoor activity



Until March 29

Bois de l'Équerre (CANOPÉE)

49 Rang de l'Équerre, H7L 6A3

Discover and learn about over 120 different types of snowflakes.

Free

RALLYES HIVERNAUX

Outdoor activity



Until March 29

Bois de la Source

705 18e Avenue, H7R 5G4

Explore the trails of the Bois de la Source and Sainte-Dorothée in search of posters and test your knowledge of Laval's nature.

Free

J BALVIN

Concert



April 7

8 PM

Place Bell

1950 Rue Claude-Gagné, H7N 5H9

Global superstar J Balvin sets stages ablaze with his 2025 "Back to the Rayo" highly anticipated tour.

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By Martin C. Barry

Suspects arraigned in Laval in province-wide crackdown on \$1 million phone scam

Several suspects arrested by the Sécurité du Québec in conjunction with a \$1 million province-wide fraud scheme targeting senior citizens were arraigned recently at the Palais de Justice in Laval.

Six out of a group of 16 suspects made court appearances in Laval as well as in Trois Rivières,

according to the SQ.

All were taken in to face charges related to 250 fraud cases involving 214 victims, with an average age in the late 70s, who were fleeced out of an estimated \$1 million.

The provincial police force alleges the suspects used telephone call-hosting software to modify

information displayed on phone screens, while posing as familiar institutions or sometimes as police officers, in order to cheat victims out of savings.

The arrests were the culmination of an investigation, involving more than 90 police, which began in 2022.

Ex-Laval drug dealer jailed 30 years in U.S. for selling fake Xanax on 'dark web'

A 37-year-old man who was first arrested in Laval a decade ago for selling counterfeit tranquilizers was sentenced by a U.S. court recently to 30 years imprisonment after being convicted of helping operate a major international drug trafficking operation on a hidden part of the internet.

Arden McCann was extradited from Canada to the U.S. in June 2022 to face charges laid by the Drug Enforcement Administration that he imported millions of counterfeit Xanax pills into the U.S.

A judge in the U.S. state of Georgia called McCann "one of the largest drug vendors" active on the "dark web," a sector of the internet frequented by criminals and safeguarded through encryption from law enforcers and other uninvited intruders.

When police first arrested McCann in 2015 (he was selling counterfeit Xanax from a base in Laval at that time), they seized millions of tablets, \$200,000 in cash, 15 firearms, as well as chemical ingredients for producing counterfeit Xanax – whose generic pharmaceutical name is alprazolam.

Another dark web drug lord, Ross Ulbricht, who was sentenced to life in prison in 2015 after founding and operating Silk Road, an unlisted online drug marketplace, was pardoned by U.S. president Donald Trump last week after spending about a decade behind bars.

Fire on 59th Ave. in L-D-R blamed on carelessness

Officials with the Laval Fire Dept. are blaming a Laval-des-Rapides home owner's failure to properly dispose of hot cinders for a resulting fire that left four persons temporarily homeless.

The blaze, which was reported on the Association des Pompiers de Laval's X feed, was on 59th Ave.

According to the APL, firefighters arriving

on the scene could see flames on the ground floor of the two-storey house, although they were spreading to the second storey.

According to the Laval Fire Dept., the fire was caused by cinders that hadn't been safely disposed of. Although the home sustained significant damage, their initial assessment was that it was not a complete loss.



Shots fired at Gatto Matto at Place Bell

An Italian restaurant located on the street level at Laval's Place Bell was the target of gunshots – although there were no reported injuries.

According to the Laval Police, a 9-1-1 call was received to report bullet holes found on the front

window of Gatto Matto on Claude-Gagné St.

The restaurant was closed at the time, there were no staff present, nor were there any witnesses to the shooting. The LPD said they have launched an investigation.

Montreal firefighter from Laval facing voyeurism charges

A Montreal West Island firefighter who is a resident of Laval is facing multiple charges of sexual voyeurism after a female tenant in a triplex he owns complained that he set up a hidden camera and recorded videos of her and a friend without their consent or knowledge.

Alexandre Bleau, age 38, was arrested at his workplace at the Service de sécurité incendie de Montréal's Station 57 in the Pierrefonds-

Roxboro borough and was arraigned in court later that day.

The complainant, a 21-year-old woman, alleges that a camera was installed in her bathroom after Bleau and an unidentified co-owner of the triplex had told her an inspection of the unit had to be done.

According to the Laval Police, an investigation into the origin of the video images started

in December 2024, although the allegations were made a year earlier.



Alexandre Bleau, a Montreal firefighter who lives in Laval, faces charges of voyeurism.



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5 ways to celebrate Valentine's Day with your family

Do you want to do something special for Valentine's Day? If so, here are some ideas that may inspire you.

1. DECORATE THE HOUSE

Purchase decorative items in pink, white and red. A bouquet of roses, assorted candles, sparkly confetti and heart-shaped napkins make great accents.

2. MAKE A DESSERT

Put on your apron and create a sweet Valentine's Day treat. Heart-shaped cookies, pink meringues and strawberries dipped in chocolate are sure to please.

3. HAND OUT CARDS

Write heartfelt notes to your loved ones. Consider including a few chocolates



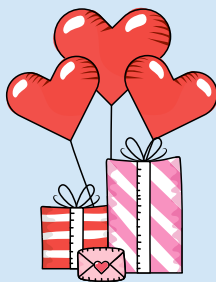
or cinnamon hearts with them.

4. ORGANIZE A SCAVENGER HUNT

Create clues with a Valentine's Day theme to help your family members find a hidden surprise.

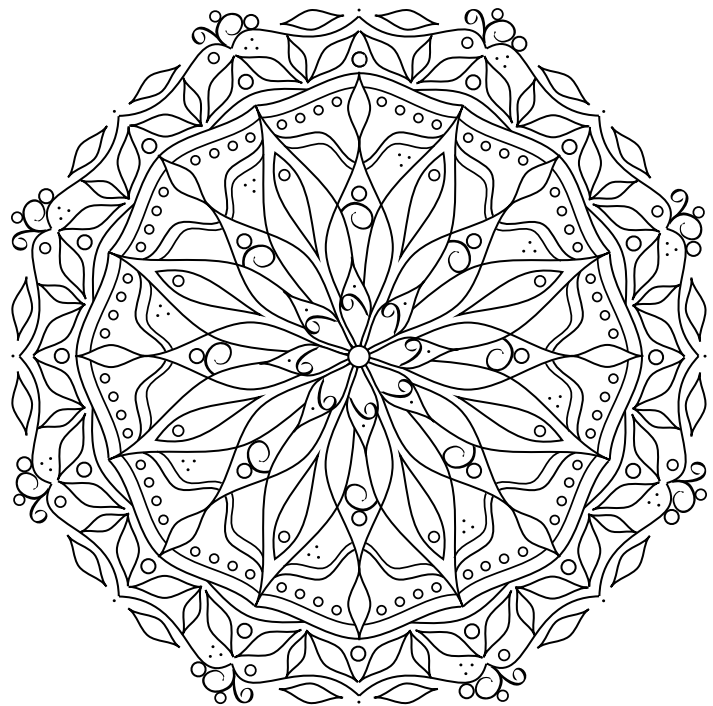
5. HAVE A PHOTO SHOOT

Dress up in Valentine's Day attire and pose in fun and creative ways. Laughter is sure to follow.



KIDZONLINE

Make a mandala



4 DIY Valentine's Day gifts

Want to spoil someone you love this Valentine's Day? Give them something you've lovingly made yourself! Here are four ideas to inspire you.

1. A friendship bracelet. Using small rubber bands, embroidery thread, ribbons, coloured plastic beads and buttons, you can create all sorts of unique bracelets to gift to your loved ones for Valentine's Day!

2. A greeting card. What better way to express your affection than with a handmade card? Depending on what you have at home, you can use cardboard, coloured pencils, glue, paint, glitter, photos and magazines to make an original Valentine's Day card.

3. A jar of sweets. Take an empty glass container, like a jam jar, and fill it with chocolates, caramels or cinnamon sweets. Cover the lid with a pretty piece of fabric held in place with a

rubber band or ribbon. For the finishing touch, apply a pretty label with the name of the person you're gifting it to. You could also include a sweet message!

4. A painted rock. Find a rock in a shape you like, then wash it and let it dry. Then, paint it in Valentine's Day colours, like red, pink and white. The rock can be used to decorate the recipient's bedroom or as a paperweight.

Happy Valentine's Day!



Sudoku 6 x 6

4					
	5	1			
5	2			6	
	1			4	2
			3	5	
					6

Complete each grid with numbers from 1 to 6, keeping in mind that:

- a number can only appear once per row
- a number can only appear once per column
- a number can only appear once in each box of 6 squares

9	2	4	5	3	1
1	5	3	2	4	6
2	4	5	6	1	3
3	6	1	4	2	5
4	3	6	1	5	2
5	2	1	3	4	6

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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

A LONG SHOT

Q My husband and I have been married for three years, together for eight. We met in college. We have a set of twins 15 months old, and they are too much for him to handle, even though they are not a handful. They are great. They are happy babies.

We, on the other hand, are miserable. We've been separated for a month. I just found out he's been having an affair with a coworker on and off for the last six months. We already had enough problems, and now she's possibly pregnant with my husband's baby.

I feel betrayed, disappointed, and broken-hearted. He keeps telling me he's sorry, but he is unreliable—a pathological liar who likes to party with his friends. When he tells me he wants to prove he can be the man I need, I tell him he should have thought about that before straying.

It may sound like I'm making excuses for him, but I hope I'm not. He has emotional baggage from childhood. His mother raised him. She is an alcoholic, and during his first 10 years she was also into drugs. His mother always had to be with some man, and I think she failed to attach to my so-called husband during the most crucial years, birth to age five.

According to him, he was a scapegoat because he reminded her of his father. That's what his mother would say while she smacked him around. I feel like I have paid for all his baggage.

Does it make a difference if he gets professional help? A couple of weeks ago he obtained a referral for individual counseling. I can't help but wonder, if he is able to get himself straight, wouldn't it be worth it to move forward together, because we would then have 50-plus years of a healthy relationship?

Lily

A Lily, it's almost as if you are asking us to handicap a horse race. You've given us past

performance, running style, and track conditions, and you want us to let you know where to place your bet.

We would not deny anything you said about your husband's background. In the first few critical years of life, his mother did not attach to him, and as you know, kids with that background are likely to struggle with relationships all of their lives. Everything else about his home life was a horror as well.

That's a given, and as you say, you are paying for his baggage.

But the empathy you have for him as another human being is not the best guide for what you should do. His behavior, character, and habits have been formed almost in the same way you form a statue by pouring plaster of Paris into a mold. They can be changed only with great difficulty.

It's hard to take the familiar away from someone. It works for them. Chances are he won't change, and where will you be if you wait for him? It's like using the lottery as your retirement plan. Some people do win the lottery, but nearly everyone else is better off putting a little money aside each paycheck.

Change is a long, slow process. With his past history, counseling may be just another ploy. If he sees your threat to leave as toothless, he may go back to his old ways. In short, things will revert to the pattern of settle-her-down, do what I want, settle-her-down, do what I want, etc.

The problem with waiting for someone else to change is that your good efforts are likely to reap no reward. Your children will grow up and see no matter how good mom is, it doesn't get her anything. The other problem with therapy is this: if he changed his basic patterns of life, would he still want to be with you?

We have to remind you that long shots don't usually win.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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- 2 Pickup Thursday, Friday or Saturday. Delivery available

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HOROSCOPE

Week of FEBRUARY 9 TO 15

The luckiest signs this week:
LIBRA, SCORPIO AND SAGITTARIUS

♈ ARIES
You may have to wait at home all day for something like a package delivery. It'll be the perfect opportunity to consider a stylish interior makeover.

♉ TAURUS
If you're going somewhere that's hard to find, precise directions will be essential to avoid wasting a lot of time. A GPS navigation app will be your best friend.

♊ GEMINI
Nobody likes feeling deprived, but it can motivate you to seek solutions. You'll be ready to act once you figure out how to gain financial freedom.

♋ CANCER
Exciting activities abound, bringing a whirlwind of commitments that will fill up your schedule. However, you'll skillfully organize all your tasks and meet all your deadlines.

♌ LEO
A cold is often your body's way of telling you it's time to slow down and recharge. If you're feeling stressed, take some time to unwind with relaxation and meditation.

♍ VIRGO
You'll be in a leadership role, and your team will look to you for guidance. You'll have plenty of opportunities to showcase your management skills. Embrace the position you've earned and assert your authority with confidence.

♎ LIBRA
As you juggle family and professional commitments, you won't have much spare time or any time to devote to your own activities. You'll also have to organize professional or social gatherings.

♏ SCORPIO
At work, your productivity will catch the attention of your superiors, who will feel compelled to offer you a raise to secure your longevity with the company. You'll have every reason to be proud!

♐ SAGITTARIUS
You may be faced with existential questions this week, which may prompt you to seek a more enlightened outlook on life. In your relationship, loyalty and dedication are highly valued.

♑ CAPRICORN
You'll find common ground with those around you after a conflict. Your wisdom will be crucial in this situation. Quick action will be needed to stop things from getting worse.

♒ AQUARIUS
This week will be full of professional challenges. Set realistic expectations to ensure your success matches your efforts. Keep an eye out for potential friction with colleagues who may be jealous of your achievements.

♓ PISCES
All the attention will be on you this week. You'll receive well-deserved praise for your amazing accomplishments. This will give your self-confidence a major boost.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 273

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13					14		
15			16					17		
18			19		20	21				
		22		23	24	25		26	27	28
29	30	31		32		33		34		
35			36					37		
38			39					40		
41			42		43	44				
		45		46		47		48	49	50
51	52	53		54	55	56		57		
58				59				60		
61				62				63		

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ACROSS

- State further
- Halt, to a horse
- Bear's home
- Misfortune
- Beard material
- Sad sigh
- Long, skinny fish
- Out of action
- Cozy places
- Float aimlessly
- Eroded
- Confederates, for short
- Articles
- Tooth trouble
- Body of knowledge
- Vote for
- Certain fast-food orders
- Serving of corn
- Was in the red
- Grape drinks
- rehearsal
- You _____ what you

DOWN

- Huck's friend
- Fellows
- Skillfully
- "_____ the Woods"
- Period of time
- Amtrak travel
- Part of speech
- Feel ill
- One of a pair
- Fidgety
- Youngster
- Provided at no charge
- Stadium part
- Huffed and puffed
- Grave
- Black-_____ Susan
- Insignificant
- Back talk
- Served perfectly
- Scorch
- This place
- Unmannered
- Mediocre: hyph.
- Ogle
- Method
- Pain
- Quarry
- Shipshape
- The Stooges, e.g.
- Season
- Chair part
- Sheep sound
- Kindled
- Agree wordlessly
- Yank

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY:

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

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

PUZZLE NO. 966

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

Last Issue's Answers

CROSSWORDS

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

Sudoku

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