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Beating cancer
through faith,
science, and
determination

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Villalta with his grandchildren ringing the cancer-free bell at the McGill University Health Centre's Cedars Cancer Centre, marking the end of his treatment and the beginning of remission.

New high-
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\$386,407
for breast
cancer
care



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181st Saint-Théophile Scout Group



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Action Laval steps up pressure on city not to close Centre de la nature mini-farm

Petition asking Mayor Boyer to reverse decision now has more than 20,000 signatures

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
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Up to 100 supporters of a petition urging the Boyer administration not to shut the mini-farm at the Centre de la nature in Duvernay held a gathering outside the facility last Saturday, while preparing to make their voices loudly heard at the monthly city council meeting on Tuesday.

Major reaction to closure

The planned gradual closure of the petting zoo at the Centre de la nature, which is scheduled for June, has sparked a strong grassroots reaction, with a petition that now exceeds 20,000 signatures.

The city is standing by its decision, noting the facilities are outdated and worn out, and the reconstruction costs are estimated to be between \$15 and \$20 million. The building itself has an immediate need for a new roof, with an estimated cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Denis Fiévet, initiator of the petition, and Isabelle Piché, Saint-François city councillor for Action Laval, have been spearheading efforts to rally the support of residents from all over Laval, in the hopes of saving the small but cherished mini-farm which houses a range of domestic animals, including sheep, geese,



Photos: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia

Action Laval city councillor for Saint-François Isabelle Piché (seen here outside the mini-farm at the Centre de la nature during last Saturday's demo) has been helping to spearhead efforts to get the city to reverse its decision to close the facility by this June.

chickens and donkeys.

Fond memories of the farm

Their goal is to put pressure on Mayor Stéphane Boyer and the councillors who hold the majority of council seats to vote in favour of an Action Laval proposal to hold a public consultation on the matter. Among the residents of Laval who turned up in spite of the debilitating cold last Saturday was Yvan Paquette.

A retiree from Sainte-Rose where he has lived and raised a family since 1980, he said he had fond memories of bringing his children to the farm. He said he wanted to make sure his grandchildren would also be able to benefit from the same experience.

"We came here when they were younger and now they are 35 and 40 years old and coming with their kids to see the farm," Paquette said regarding his children. "I want to make sure they continue to have the opportunity to do this."



Some of the farm animals housed at the Centre de la nature's mini-farm.



to them," Piché said in a statement issued by Action Laval.

Citizens must be involved'

"It's worth remembering that the mayor announced the decision to close this iconic Laval attraction behind closed doors last December, without consulting citizens beforehand," she added. "No to the closure of the Centre de la nature farm. We believe citizens must be involved in the farm's future."

As one of two opposition parties in Laval city council, Action Laval has long been critical of the Mouvement lavallois administration's noted tendency to promote costly major projects, like the central library in Laval's downtown core.

Action Laval alleges the administration is neglecting smaller and more local projects and sees the closure of the mini-farm as an example. "We think this is mismanagement of funds," Piché said in an interview with The Laval News.

*see Letter to the Editor
written by children on this topic
on the following page*

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OPINION & Editorial

Reflection needed by schools and parents on best preparation for trips and excursions



Accountability lesson learned from Swiss tragedy

In 25 years of field work in education, I led teams of teachers that organized and carried out local, national, and international school trips. These excursions involving over 1500 students and dozens of supervising adults provided extensive knowledge and deep insight into how to bring about safety, security, and well-being for all participants.

With spring break approaching, school boards and organizations across Laval are urged to review safety measures and supervision before approving student trips. The call follows a recent tragedy in Switzerland that revealed how quickly celebration and adventure can turn deadly when oversight fails.

For Laval educators, the message is clear: conditions that led to the Swiss tragedy could exist anywhere if accountability lapses. Many local school trips share similar risk profile - remote venues, unpredictable developments and dependence on responsible supervision. Foreign tragedies aren't distant headlines, they're warnings. On every trip, checklists and inspections are defenses against disaster.

Accountability required

Parents are urged to engage actively in safety discussions. Before granting permission for school outings, they must ask specific questions about preparation: Has the trip undergone school-board safety-check approval? Have weather and travel conditions been assessed? Will trained personnel be on site? These inquiries could help prevent tragedy.

In Switzerland, mourning has turned into reform demands. Families are pressing for tighter regulations and greater accountability from organizers. Their grief has resonated internationally, proving that even rigorous administrative systems can collapse when vigilance fades.

For Laval and nearby regions, the connection is moral and practical. Each tragedy abroad becomes a test of local-readiness. If Switzerland, celebrated for precision, can't prevent such losses, then no community is immune. Safety must start before buses leave school parking

lots. Risk evaluation must be enforced, not assumed. Cooperation among educators and parents is critical.

At onset of many years of privileged work as Europe trip-group-leader, I learned it's not about fear, it's about foresight. Precautions were taken for next year's students to still have the chance to dream, travel, and come home.

Preparation and prevention

Ahead of trip-departures schools must confirm transportation maintenance, emergency-access and clear-communication-procedures. Trip leaders trips must monitor weather forecasts, ensure first-aid-readiness, and maintain appropriate adult-student-ratios. The goal is to strengthen prevention and accountability.

This heightened concern follows the Swiss Club Fire tragedy of New Year's eve 2026. Hundreds of young people, ages 14 to 20, gathered in a nightclub when a blaze broke out just after midnight. Fire spread rapidly through flammable decorations, trapping dozens inside.

Emergency crews fought to rescue victims, but locked exits worsened the crisis. By morning, scores had perished and many were injured. Investigators confirmed expired inspection records, unsafe materials, locked-security-exits, and occupancy violations.

Laval's schools face similar vulnerability if preparation for trips falters. Pre-trip measures must include proof of safety compliance at venues.

Administrators must promote refresher-training for teachers and group-leaders to ensure awareness. Safety-planning must be embedded into every stage of organization.

Prevention depends on shared responsibility. Teachers, principals, and travel companies must be vigilant before, during, and after travel. Transparent communication with parents strengthens oversight and reinforces trust. Parents must ask about safety preparations when giving consent for trips - verifying that school-board approvals are in place, risks have been considered, and trained supervisors will

be present.

Silence is not an option

As Europe-trip group leader from Laval, the strongest safeguard learned was that every precaution ensures students can travel, learn, and come home, safely. Measures must be taken to avoid the deplorable possibility of these excursions emphasizing fun and cultural experience while overlooking safety briefings and contingency planning.

The greatest tragedy would be silence. Governments must tighten enforcement. Fire codes exist for a reason, but too many establishments dodge inspections through bribery-or-bureaucracy.

Real change demands cultural transformation. Parents must ask questions without fear of seeming overprotective. Schools must prepare students with practical survival knowledge, inspectors must enforce rules without compromise. Communities must treat safety as shared moral responsibility, not administrative burden.

Beyond the Alps

This was not merely a Swiss tragedy; it was a human one. The heartbreak ripples far beyond the Swiss Alps, affecting anyone who sends a young person out into the world trusting that safety regulations are followed. Those 40 lives stand as painful symbols of systemic failure of taking things for granted.

Laval not exempt

The 40 young people lost in Crans-Montana cannot be brought back, but their memory can ignite reform that saves future lives. When we choose accountability over apathy and courage over convenience, tragedies like this one will become relics of a less vigilant past. The most meaningful tribute to those who died is not silence but sustained action for safer clubs, better schools, and a culture that values human life above profit and complacency.

Renata Isopo

Letter to the Editor



Please don't close our animal farm – children appeal

Dear editor,

This animal farm is not just a place where animals live. It is our first classroom, our first friendship, and a precious part of our childhood. The treasures of our memories live here.

My name is Neethian. I am eleven years old. My sister Aathira is nine. Since we were babies, our parents have brought us to this animal farm almost every week. My mother says she carried me here when I was only sixty days old. When she worked on weekends, our father pushed us in a stroller and brought us anyway. We ran through the farm singing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," full of excitement.

I still remember being three years old, just learning to walk, watching a peacock spread its feathers. I tried crowing when the rooster crowed. I showed my sister the colorful chickens and their eggs. We quietly watched a sleeping rabbit. Stroking the ears of lambs gave us a happiness that words cannot explain. The tall horses, with their long flowing tails, amazed us

even frightened us at first.

We touched the noses of cows, and they licked our hands with their warm tongues. These simple moments shaped who we are. They taught us kindness, patience, and respect for living beings.

This animal farm was our first school, long before we entered a classroom. The smell of hay, the sounds of animals, and the closeness to nature helped us understand life in a way books never could. Even today, every summer, we come back to visit these animals who feel like childhood friends.

Recently, we learned that this animal farm may be closed. When we heard the news, my sister cried. At first, I could not believe it.

Our parents understand our feelings deeply. They grew up in villages, raising animals, drinking fresh milk, and caring for livestock as part of the family. For them, too, this farm is a place of comfort and memory. Sometimes, we see our father gently stroking the animals with great

affection.

Once, when I was four years old, I noticed dried tears in a cow's eyes. That night, I could not eat. I cried until morning. Only after my father brought me back to see the cow again did I feel calm. That is how deeply this place touches children's hearts.

Like us, thousands of children look forward to visiting this farm every year. Animals are not objects, they are our friends. There may be private farms far away, but a farm like this, located in the heart of the city near parks and playgrounds, is rare and special.

This animal farm is a free gift to the community and a proud symbol of our city. To close it would be like closing the world of children.

We respectfully ask city leaders to listen to us. Please consider the voices and feelings of children.

Please protect this animal farm—for us, and for the children yet to be born.

Neethian (11) and Aathira (9), Laval



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City warns motorists: snow removal ops are underway

With a cleanup underway for the Laval region's last significant snowfall, the city's public works department is advising residents to heed special parking rules during snow removal operations, while also exercising caution when heavy equipment is in use on Laval's many streets and roadways.

In an updated statement issued on Monday, the city said salt and abrasives continue to be spread on all streets and sidewalks, while snow removal is also taking place on sidewalks.

Work proceeds, unless more snow

In the meantime, snow blowing operations were taking place last Monday morning and were expected to finish Monday night, unless interrupted by more snow falls. In that case, a day off would be granted to personnel in accordance with provincial Law 430, which could affect the progress of the snow removal operations.



In all of this, where to park? As snow removal ops can last several days, the best solution is to find out if any operations are underway or planned and where to park, using the city's Info-Parking app (available on your cell phone on Google Play and the App Store).

The city also advises that priority should be given to parking restrictions posted on orange temporary signs or signs planted in the snow. The restrictions indicated on these signs should take precedence over those posted on permanent signs.

Dynamic parking signs

Over the last two winters, the City of Laval has been rolling out a new dynamic parking signage

with illuminated solar-powered signs indicating the parking periods, in order to comply with maintenance requirements.

The new signage is in service in Laval's most densely populated areas, which are Pont-Viau, Laval-des-Rapides, and Chomedey.

The way it works: Parking is prohibited on the side of the street where the illuminated sign is flashing. Periods when parking is prohibited: according to the period indicated, which in general is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., including weekends.

The signs are switched on several hours before the restriction comes into force to give residents time to move their vehicles. When the sign is switched off, no maintenance operations are in progress and parking is permitted on the side of the street where the sign is switched off.

ance operations are in progress and parking is permitted on the side of the street where the sign is switched off.

Tips to ease snow removal ops

Place your recycling bins correctly. Place the bins on your property, not in the street.

Clear snow from your property wisely. Don't throw snow into the street or onto sidewalks.

Install your car shelter correctly. Maintain a minimum distance of 60 cm (2 ft) from the sidewalk or curb. Or leave 1.2 m (4 ft) from the street if you don't have a sidewalk.

Keep fire hydrants clear. Make sure you don't bury fire hydrants under snow when clearing snow from your property. This is a matter of safety for everyone. If you hire a snow removal company, inform them of the importance of keeping fire hydrants and Metro blue hydrants clear.

Keep your emergency exits clear. Make sure all exits from your home are free of snow and ice. In an emergency, you must be able to evacuate quickly. If you own a multi-unit residential building, you are responsible for clearing snow from all your tenants' exits.

Adapt your driving. Equip your vehicle with winter tires between December 1 and March 15, as required by law.

Reduce your speed and increase your braking distance in winter conditions. Be patient and courteous to snowplow operators who are working for your safety.

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Alto high-speed electrified train station coming to Laval

A tunnel under the Rivière des Prairies is among the options being looked at

MARTIN C. BARRY

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Alto, the company mandated by Ottawa to build an electrified high-speed rail network between Toronto and Quebec City with stops in between, is contemplating digging a tunnel under the Rivière des Prairies to connect the line to an Alto station to be set up in Laval.

New tunnel possible

"We're talking about maybe tunneling from Laval to downtown Montreal under the Rivière des Prairies," Ben Bourdeau, an Alto spokesperson, told The Laval News during a public consultation session on the project held last week at the Laval Sheraton.

As things are now, a tunnel carrying the Société de transport de Montréal's underground Metro off the island of Montreal to the Cartier

and Montmorency stations in Laval passes through a tunnel under the river, passing near des Laurentides Blvd.

Link to downtown Montreal

"One of the options is a tunnel because it's less disruptive," Bourdeau said. "It's something that offers protection in case there's a snow storm. It would be basically under the Rivière des Prairies going straight downtown."

While a tunnel would present a few challenges, such as some additional cost, "we're building this for a hundred years," he continued. "So, in the long run, it would be much more beneficial."

Although the location for an Alto station that would serve passengers from Laval hasn't been chosen, a map displayed during last week's consultation indicated Alto wants to place it within a central area east of old Laval city hall (currently being renovated) and the downtown core. It would be somewhere in the vicinity of de la Concorde Blvd., Collège Montmorency and Place Bell.

Three-hour trip to Toronto

Alto, also known as Toronto–Quebec City High-Speed Rail Network, was announced around a year ago by then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. While a design phase has been projected to cost \$3.9 billion and last for up to five years, the total completion cost is \$80 to \$120 billion, with gradual opening of the system taking place between 2035 and 2044.

Trains on the dedicated 1,000-kilometre rail route would reach top speeds of up to 300 km/h, which is nearly double what Via Rail can currently offer now. Besides Toronto, Quebec City and Laval, there will also be stations in Peterborough, Ottawa, Montreal and Trois-Rivières.

When the line is completed, a transit between Montreal and Toronto would take around

Photos: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia



A purple area highlighted on this map during Alto's public information/consultation session at the Sheraton Laval last week shows where the electrified high-speed rail network's Laval station is likely to be located in central Laval.

3 hours (compared to 5 hours 30 minutes now on Via Rail), while the time on Alto from Montreal to Quebec City would be just under 1 hour and 30 minutes (compared to about 3 hours 17 minutes now on Via Rail). A transit to Ottawa would take around an hour.

A hub for Laval and North Shore

With a population that will soon be reaching 440,000 – a total of 1.2 million when you factor in the population of Montreal's North Shore – Laval is seen as the most logical location for an Alto station because of its strategic proximity to the northern suburbs, where the population also continues to expand.

"Everyone from the suburbs north of Laval will

come to Laval to take a train to go to Toronto, to go to Quebec City," said Bourdeau. "Laval will be a hub. They won't have to go down to Montreal's Central Station to take a train to go anywhere. It's going to be in Laval. This will be much more convenient for everyone. These people won't have to transit through Montreal."

While passenger trains continue to flourish in Europe and to some extent also in the U.S., critics of public transit in this country generally agree that Canada has lagged badly behind. "We don't have a train culture in Canada," said Bourdeau, noting that Via Rail has never been able to reach its potential because it operates on tracks owned by CN and CPKC, whose freight trains get scheduling priority.



"We're talking about maybe tunneling from Laval to downtown Montreal under the Rivière des Prairies," Ben Bourdeau, an Alto spokesperson, told The Laval News.

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Laval and Montreal's Greeks launch year-long 120th anniversary celebration

Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal's roots date back officially to 1906

Photos:
Martin
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Constantine Milonopoulos, a Chomedey resident who served as an altar boy at the Church of the Holy Trinity during the 1950s, is seen here with one of two icons saved from the church, which is displayed in the basement of the Hotel 10 in downtown Montreal.

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Leading members of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal (HCGM) returned last week to a place closely associated with their community's 120 years of history.

The venue – now a downtown Montreal hotel – was chosen because of its profound symbolism, being the site where the first place of worship for Montreal's Orthodox Greeks, the Church of the Holy Trinity, once stood.

A lasting bond with the past

It's also where cherished memories of the former church – including at least one religious icon – remain as a reminder of the Montreal Hellenic community's hallowed bond with the past.

Almost exactly 40 years ago to the day, the Church of the Holy Trinity was destroyed by fire. It was an incident that made a lasting impact on Montreal's Greeks, many of whom were married and had children who were baptized in the church.

"The history of our community is a story of faith, hard work, devotion and progress," Basile Angelopoulos, president of the HCGM, stated during a press conference attended by guests who included the Consul General of the Republic of Greece, former HCGM presidents and loyal friends of the Greek community.

For future generations

"Today we return to the place where it all began, to honour those who paved the way and, above all, to reaffirm our commitment to continue with the same sense of responsibility toward our generations to come, our language, our culture, our faith and the society in which we live," said Angelopoulos.

"This anniversary is not merely a reflection

on the past; it is an invitation to the entire hospitable city of Montreal," noted Justine Frangouli-Argyris, chair of the 120th anniversary committee.

"With a clear and substantial events planning, we call upon the people of Montreal – Greek and non-Greek alike – to celebrate with us and to share the future we are building together for the generations to come," she added.

Since 1906, the HCGM has stood alongside the Greek diaspora, dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the Greek language, the Orthodox Christian faith, history and culture across many generations, while also contributing meaningfully to the economic, social and cultural life of Montreal and Quebec.

A large education network

The HCGM operates the largest network of private elementary schools in Quebec, with five campuses across greater Montreal and more than 1,000 students. It also has a secondary school campus, three supplementary education campuses, six churches and two community centres offering a wide range of services to its members.

With a rich and multifaceted program of events throughout the year, the anniversary celebrations begin in January with the annual Montreal Folklore Workshop Dimitri's Tzotzis dance. In February, the event "Our Roots, Our Journey" luncheon – dedicated to the founding families of the Hellenic Community of Montreal – will follow, along with the celebration of International Greek Language Day.

Many upcoming events

In March, which is the month of the Greek National Day, the program will include a reception at the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, an event for the Greek National Anniversary at ICAO headquarters in Montreal, and an official recognition by the City of Montreal with the opening of a photographic exhibition at Montreal City Hall.

The month of March will culminate with the National Anniversary Gala at the Château Royal in Laval, the annual parade on Jean Talon St. with a reception afterwards, as well as the formal recognition of the HCGM's historic milestone by the Quebec National Assembly. For more information, news updates and the full calendar of events, please visit 120.hcgm.org.



Justine Frangouli-Argyris, chair of the 120th anniversary committee and Basile Angelopoulos, president of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal.

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Pink in the City presents \$386,407 to MUHC Foundation for breast cancer care

It's all about gratitude, MUHC Foundation head tells fundraiser's supporters



Photos: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
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"Today is about gratitude, it's also about community, and most of all it's about celebrating an extraordinary group of people who continue showing us what is possible when compassion meets action," Marie-Hélène Laramée, president and CEO of the MUHC Foundation, said as she was about to unveil a cheque for \$386,407 – the latest annual fundraising donation from Pink in the City.

Championing breast wellness

The sum, nearly \$70,000 more than what Pink in the City donated last year, was presented on January 25 by officials with Pink in the City. It represented funds raised last year through several activities for holistic care provided to breast cancer patients at the Montreal-based teaching hospital.

Pink in the City has become synonymous with breast cancer care at the McGill University Health Centre. They have championed the MUHC's Breast Clinic Wellness Program through the MUHC Foundation and events like Raise Craze as well as an annual gala.

Tireless and concerted efforts

From breast cancer survivors to passionate high school students, Pink in the City has brought together a loyal following dedicated to the fight against breast cancer. Pink in the City's latest donation to the MUHC brought their total contributions to nearly \$2 million.

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

Another one of the fundraising highlights was the 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 did their part, raising more than \$20,000 in that campaign, showing how young people are getting involved in philanthropy.

Staff shortages at MUHC

On a somewhat more somber note, Dr. Sarkis Meterissian, director of the Breast Center at the MUHC, sounded a note of caution regarding the state of affairs at the MUHC. "It's been a very

tough year for medicine at the MUHC – there's no denying it," he said.

According to Dr. Meterissian, who is a professor of surgery and oncology in the McGill University Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, only six of the MUHC's 14 operating rooms are currently open. "That's because we don't have enough anaesthetists or nurses," he said, noting that some surgeries are now taking place at the Lachine General Hospital and the Ville-Marie Surgery Institute.

He said the money Pink in the City raises helps to promote women's health not only through the Breast Clinic Wellness Program, but also helps pay for other program necessities, including medical instruments to care for patients.

Thanks to Vourtzoumis family

"The Wellness Centre would never have happened without the Vourtzoumis family and the efforts put in over the past 10-12 years," Meterissian said. "It's providing a service that anybody who's gone to a physiotherapist, a sex therapist, a dietician, an exercise personal trainer, knows that it costs between \$100-\$150 an hour."

Thanks to the financial support provided by Pink in the City, many of these services are made available free of charge to patients. "I think that every doctor at the Breast Centre comes to me and says, 'my patient needs this, my patient needs that,' and we're able to provide it thanks to you. I wake up every day thanking you guys for everything you do."



Dora Tzavaros spoon feeds a dessert to Eleni, granddaughter of Pink in the City co-founder Denise Vourtzoumis (seen here with her husband Bobby, and other grandchildren) at the MUHC on January 25.

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FEBRUARY IS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

CELEBRATING BLACK EXCELLENCE



The Harlem Renaissance:

a cultural explosion in art, music and literature

Every February, Black History Month provides an opportunity to celebrate the achievements, resilience and creativity of Black communities. One of the most transformative periods in African American history was the Harlem Renaissance. This movement redefined art, music and literature.

WHAT SPARKED IT?

In the early 20th century, thousands of African Americans left the rural South and moved to northern cities in what became known as the Great Migration. The New York City borough of Harlem quickly emerged as a vibrant hub filled with Black-owned publishing houses, newspapers, music companies, playhouses, nightclubs and cabarets. It was an ideal setting for a cultural revolution.

WHAT WAS IT?

From the 1910s to the mid-1930s, the Harlem Renaissance ignited an extraordinary wave of creativity that challenged racial stereotypes and celebrated Black

identity. Jazz and blues defined the era. Legendary artists like Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Eubie Blake, Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington transformed music forever.

Through powerful poetry, fiction and essays, writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Effie Lee Newsome and Countee Cullen explored the complexity of Black life. Visual artists like Aaron Douglas and Augusta Savage brought bold, modernist esthetics to galleries, depicting African heritage and contemporary struggles through powerful imagery.

MUCH MORE THAN ART

The Harlem Renaissance wasn't just about creative expression; it reshaped how African Americans were perceived. It was also a declaration of self-worth and cultural pride.

This Black History Month, take a moment to reflect on the Harlem Renaissance as a reminder of the powerful role creativity plays in inspiring change and shaping history.



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FEBRUARY IS

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CELEBRATING BLACK EXCELLENCE



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 advan-

cing 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.

*En ce Mois de l'histoire
des Noirs, nous honorons
la contribution de toutes les
personnes remarquables qui ont
marqué la société de leur empreinte
indélébile et qui méritent d'être célébrés.*

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



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Examining federal debt in Canada by prime ministers since Confederation

JAKE FUSS – FRASER INSTITUTE

Over the last century and a half, Canada's 24 prime ministers have helped shape the country in countless ways, leaving legacies that affect all Canadians. Each prime minister's legacy is ultimately influenced by whether he or she left the federal government more or less indebted than when taking office. Understanding the trajectory of debt is important because as the debt burden grows, tax dollars must be diverted from public programs to service the federal government's annual interest payments. High amounts of federal debt may also cause the government to raise taxes in future, which burdens future generations with the cost of past spending.

This bulletin examines the history of federal debt in Canada since Confederation and analyzes the impact that various prime ministers have had on debt accumulation throughout their tenures.¹ The bulletin has two main sections. The first describes the method used to measure the change in federal debt. The second provides a comprehensive overview of the changes in federal debt under each prime minister.

Measuring the change in federal debt

Debt legacies for the prime ministers are measured by calculating the change in debt during their respective tenures. The first step in the analysis is to allot the period(s) of tenure for each prime minister as listed in table 1.

We allocated years of tenure for every prime minister using the methodology of Fuss, Palacios, and Clemens (2019), who analyzed spending levels by prime minister since 1870. Transitional years—years of overlap in which prime ministers shifted power—are allocated to whichever prime minister was in office for the majority of the year. If a year was nearly evenly divided between two prime ministers, we assigned responsibility for that year to whichever prime minister delivered the year's federal budget, and we list the allocated tenures in table 2.²

There were three instances where prime ministers had non-continuous tenures. For example, William Lyon Mackenzie King served as Canada's prime minister from 1922 to 1930 but was defeated by R. B. Bennett, and then reassumed office in 1935 for his second tenure.

Sir John A. Macdonald also served twice (1867–1872 and 1878–1890), as did Pierre Trudeau (1968–1978 and 1980–1984). We chose to divide the time in office for these prime ministers into separate tenures to ensure the change in federal debt that happened under another prime minister was not allocated to these three prime ministers when they were out of office. This approach ensures, for instance, that R. B. Bennett's debt between 1931 and 1935 is not allocated to William Lyon Mackenzie King.

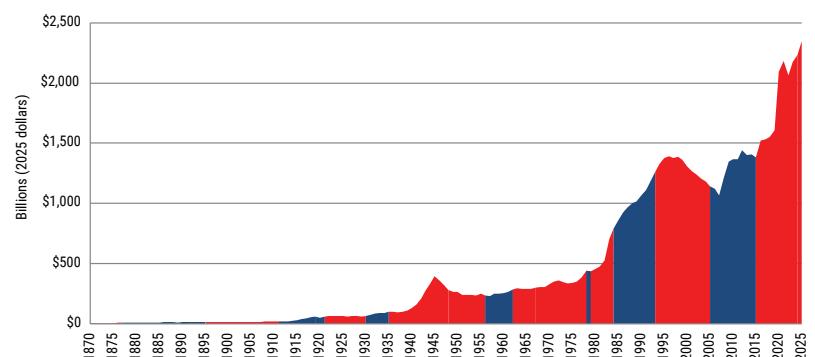
There are 21 prime ministers included in this analysis, as opposed to 24, because the tenures of three prime ministers were too short for us to allocate a budget year to them. Sir Charles Tupper was prime minister for two months, and Kim Campbell and John Turner each held office for three months. Notwithstanding the exclusion of these three prime ministers, table 2 lists 24 tenures because each of Macdonald, Mackenzie King, and Pierre Trudeau had multiple tenures.

For the 2015/16 fiscal year, Fuss et al. (2019) made an adjustment for the transition from Stephen Harper to Justin Trudeau. We have made a similar adjustment because Justin Trudeau increased government spending immediately upon taking office in 2015. The original 2015 budget, under Stephen Harper, planned for a surplus (\$1.4 billion), while the immediate spending increases introduced by Justin Trudeau ultimately led to a budget deficit (\$2.9 billion). These spending changes meant that more debt was amassed by Trudeau than was planned for under Harper (Canada, Department of Finance, 2015 and 2024).³ As a result, the cut-off period for debt accumulation under Harper was adjusted to reflect the debt projected in the original 2015 budget (\$1.4 trillion in 2025 dollars). The beginning point for the change in debt during Justin Trudeau's tenure is also the 2015 budget number.

Measuring federal debt

Collecting comparable data on federal debt is an important step in measuring the debt legacies of the prime ministers. Gross debt directly measures the degree to which the various prime ministers increased or decreased Canada's financial liabilities. It is defined as the federal government's total amount of financial liabilities including employee benefits (pensions), interest-bearing debt, and accounts

Figure 1: Federal Gross Debt, 1870–2025 (in \$2025)



Sources: Canada, Department of Finance (2015, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c); Statistics Canada (2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2025a); Altman (1992); Urquhart (1988); calculations by authors.

payable.

Net debt is gross debt less financial assets, the latter of which governments may sell when needed to meet liabilities. Hence, net debt might serve as a measure of a government's potential financial capacity. However, in this bulletin, we focus on gross debt as a measure of federal debt for two primary reasons. First, it might be difficult for the federal government to sell some financial assets, such as employee or public pension assets, in part due to liquidity issues; further, there may be valuation questions surrounding outstanding loans, equity investments, and advances, among instruments on the asset side of the balance sheet. Second, the interest that governments pay on liabilities is determined by gross debt rather than net debt. Significant research has found that high gross debt levels may harm economic performance through, for example, the potential for higher future taxes (see Reinhart and Rogoff, 2010; Chudik et al., 2015; and Lammam et al., 2017 for a review of this research).⁴

Data on federal gross debt come from different sources. The Canada Year Books for 1940, 1950, 1960, and 1967 were used to collect federal debt data from 1867 through 1966. Debt figures from 1967 to 2023 are drawn from the Fiscal References Tables published by the Department of Finance, and federal debt for 2024 and 2025 are based on Budget 2025 (Canada, Department of Finance, 2025).

Two adjustments were made to enable us to more easily compare changes in federal debt over a long time. As in Fuss et al., 2019, we account for changes in the general price level (inflation) using a GDP deflator. The starting year for the analysis of federal debt is 1870 since that is the first year for which the GDP deflator price index is available.⁵

Figure 1 exhibits federal gross debt (inflation adjusted) from 1870 to 2025. The colours in

the area graph are either red or blue, representing each prime minister's affiliated political party during their tenure. Areas in red indicate debt levels for Liberal prime ministers, while Conservative prime ministers are displayed in blue.

Figure 1 shows a clear pattern of increasing gross debt since 1870, though the dollar values were low through to 1940. However, during World War II, inflation-adjusted federal gross debt increased almost 300 percent, as it grew from \$99.2 billion in 1938, the year before the war, to \$395.6 billion in 1945. Notwithstanding the immediate fall in gross debt following the end of the war, post-war debt levels did not return to pre-war levels. Beginning in the 1950s, federal gross debt steadily increased until 1997.

In the mid-1990s, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien introduced important fiscal reforms, and gross debt began to decrease until the 2008 recession, when it again began to climb upward. In 2025, federal gross debt is expected to hit its highest point in Canadian history at \$2.35 trillion (inflation adjusted).

Although federal gross debt has mostly increased throughout Canadian history, the country's population has also grown. Canada's population has grown from 3.5 million people in 1867 to 41.7 million people in 2025 (Statistics Canada, 2025b; Urquhart, 1988). As the population grows, the debt burden is shared by more people, so we report inflation-adjusted gross debt per person.

Another way of measuring debt accumulation by prime minister would be to examine changes in the debt-to-GDP ratio, rather than debt per person. The debt-to-GDP ratio summarizes the ability of the government to sustain a given amount of debt based on the size of the economy, but it would produce misleading results

► **Continued on page 13**

1 This bulletin is based on and draws partly from work by Di Matteo (2017), Lammam and MacIntyre (2017), and Fuss et al. (2019).

2 Prime ministerial tenures range from a single year to 15 years, which means that some prime ministers were in office longer than others to either accumulate or reduce federal debt. However, longer tenures do not necessarily translate into larger total increases or decreases in debt. In fact, the correlation between length of tenure and the total increase in debt per person over that tenure (the measure used in this bulletin) is relatively weak ($p = 0.35$).

3 Notably, program spending was ultimately \$10.4 billion or 4.0 percent higher in 2015/16 than what was planned in the 2015 budget.

4 A previous version of this paper also used gross debt data as its measure. Converting gross debt to net debt was considered for the methodology in this paper, and ultimately rejected for viability and consistency concerns. In recent years, the definitions and dollar amounts assigned to federal financial assets have changed substantially (e.g., equity investments and loans, etc.). Concerns about asset valuations and liquidity are reiterated here. For further details, see Lammam et al. (2017).

5 Data coverage is more complete for a gross domestic product price deflator as opposed to a consumer price index, which guided our choice. We use a GDP deflator with sources as follows: for 1870 through 1930, Altman (1992), a GNP deflator; for 1931 through 1960, Urquhart (1988); for 1961 through 2024, Statistics Canada (2025a); and for 2025, Canada, Department of Finance (2025).

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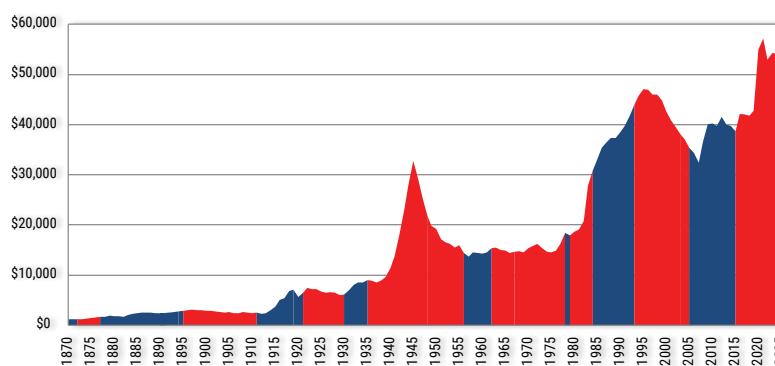
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Figure 2: Federal Gross Debt per Person, 1870-2025 (in \$2025)



Sources: Canada, Department of Finance (2015, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c); Statistics Canada (2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2025a, 2025b); Altman (1992); Urquhart (1988); calculations by authors.

⁶ The population in Canada grew at an average annual rate of 1.6 percent from 1867 to 2025. The standard deviation is 0.8 percentage points. The average annual change in inflation-adjusted GDP is 3.7 percent from 1871 to 2024.

◀ Continued from page 12

for changes in debt levels by prime minister for several reasons. For instance, the GDP growth rate is more variable, year-to-year, than is population, and is subject to factors outside the direct control of prime ministers, such as recessions or booms.

To focus on changes in the debt-to-GDP ratio would therefore penalize prime ministers who served during recessions and would benefit, by happenstance, prime ministers who served during periods of economic expansions. When recessions occur, the debt-to-GDP ratio tends to rise due to automatic increases in government spending (e.g., employment insurance), any stimulus spending, and the decrease in economic output. Conversely, prime ministers who preside over strongly positive economic growth may be more likely to record falling debt-to-GDP ratios.

As an example of how variations in economic growth can dominate results, consider the 8.1 percent growth in real GDP during R. B. Bennett's 1935 tenure. While debt as a share of GDP decreased by 1.1 percentage points that year, debt increased by 6.5 percent or \$5.9 billion in 2025 dollars; the decrease in debt-to-GDP was due to economic growth. Conversely, following the debt per person measure, debt increased by 5.5 percent in 1935. Moreover, because population growth is less variable over time than economic growth, as mentioned above, we believe population-adjusted debt is better than the debt-to-GDP ratio as a measure of debt accumulation by prime minister.⁶

Debt per person from 1870 to 2025

To provide historical context, figure 2 shows federal debt per person (in 2025 dollars) from 1870 to 2025: since Confederation, per-person federal debt levels have generally been rising. However, some periods are noteworthy for their sharp increases and declines. For example, federal debt per person rapidly increased during both World War I and World War II. Prior to World War I, in 1913, federal per-person debt amounted to \$2,426, but had grown to \$6,822 by war's end (1918). Similarly, with respect to World War II, debt per person rose from \$8,894 per person, in 1938, to \$32,772 in 1945 (all figures in 2025 dollars). Following each world war, federal debt per person in Canada declined, but did not in either case fall to prewar levels.

There was another general increase in federal debt per person from the mid-1960s until 1995.

tions in GDP occurred in 1931, 1932, and 1933, depression years during R. B. Bennett's tenure. The recession during 2020 due to COVID also represents a significant drop (5.2 percent) in economic output.

However, there are years where the overall growth rate was positive, but the economy nonetheless showed a downturn; such circumstances may have adverse effects on federal debt accumulation and we seek to account for this. For example, Canada experienced downturns, or recessions, during John Diefenbaker's tenure, in 1957–58 and in 1960–61, and during Pierre Trudeau's first tenure.

Percent change in federal debt per person by prime minister

Federal debt per person increased during 15 out of the 24 tenures that we examined; increases in federal debt per person coincided with a world war and/or an economic downturn in 12 out of the 15 cases. Sir Mackenzie Bowell emerges the largest debt accumulator (4.7 percent) of any prime minister who did not experience a world war or an economic downturn during his tenure, and Mark Carney (4.2 percent) came in second place on this measure. In contrast, five out of the eight prime ministers who did not experience a world war or economic downturn during their tenures successfully reduced federal debt per person. The list includes prime ministers Jean Chretien (-13.1 percent), Paul Martin (-7.2 percent), and Lester Pearson (-4.5 percent).

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Trudeau government increased federal debt per person to \$57,113 by 2021, an increase of 33.6% from the level in 2019. While federal debt per person is decreased in 2022 to \$52,904, per-person debt continued to increase near the end of Justin Trudeau's tenure and reached \$54,158 in 2024. Mark Carney has not been a prime minister for a full fiscal year yet, but projections from his first budget indicate federal per-person debt will again increase by 4.2% in 2025 and total \$56,432.

Federal debt per person grew 226 percent from 1966 (\$14,452) until the historic peak in 1995 (\$47,048). After the mid-1990s, debt reduction continued to be a focus for Jean Chretien, Paul Martin, and for the first two years of Stephen Harper's tenure.⁷ Federal per-person debt fell to \$32,395 in 2007, the lowest value since 1984. However, the 2008 financial crisis in the United States prompted a recession in Canada and federal debt began to sharply increase once again. Federal debt per person increased from \$36,598 in 2008 to \$42,746 in 2019.

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Trudeau government increased federal debt per person to \$57,113 by 2021, an increase of 33.6% from the level in 2019. While federal debt per person is decreased in 2022 to \$52,904, per-person debt continued to increase near the end of Justin Trudeau's tenure and reached \$54,158 in 2024. Mark Carney has not been a prime minister for a full fiscal year yet, but projections from his first budget indicate federal per-person debt will again increase by 4.2% in 2025 and total \$56,432.

Changes in federal debt per person by prime minister

When evaluating debt accumulation under the various prime ministers, historical context is an important consideration. Federal debt per person increased dramatically during each world war, as shown in figure 2. Sir Robert Borden and William Lyon Mackenzie King were the prime ministers during those wars, and each of them increased federal debt to finance Canada's war efforts, which plays a role in how we might understand their debt legacies.

Economic downturns also contribute to the accumulation of debt by prime minister. During periods of recession and declining market incomes, the federal government receives less tax revenue and automatically increases spending owing to programs like Employment Insurance and the presence of incometested benefits.⁸ As a consequence, governments are likely to face declining budgetary balances during recessions; while the debt accumulated by prime ministers during downturns is not entirely out of their control, we also consider the state of the economy in evaluating debt legacies.⁹

There are different aspects to measuring economic downturns. One involves assessing the years in which economic output shrank in real terms. In Canadian history, there have been 24 years in which there was a year-over-year real decline in GDP (table 3). The largest reduc-

Table 3: Years and Amounts that (Real) Inflation-Adjusted GDP Declined, 1870-2024

Year	Percent Decrease	Sitting Prime Minister
1875	4.2%	Alexander Mackenzie
1876	1.7%	Alexander Mackenzie
1878	3.0%	Sir John A. Macdonald
1893	0.5%	Sir John Thompson
1894	0.4%	Sir John Thompson
1908	4.6%	Sir Wilfrid Laurier
1914	6.8%	Sir Robert Borden
1917	1.1%	Sir Robert Borden
1918	6.1%	Sir Robert Borden
1919	4.6%	Sir Robert Borden
1920	0.5%	Arthur Meighen
1921	3.5%	Arthur Meighen
1929	0.2%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1930	3.8%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1931	13.5%	R. B. Bennett
1932	9.2%	R. B. Bennett
1933	7.1%	R. B. Bennett
1945	3.1%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1946	1.0%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1954	0.7%	Louis St. Laurent
1982	3.2%	Pierre E. Trudeau
1991	2.1%	Brian Mulroney
2009	2.9%	Stephen Harper
2020	5.0%	Justin Trudeau

Sources: Statistics Canada (2025c); Altman (1992); Urquhart (1988); calculations by authors

Conclusion

Federal debt per person changed remarkably and in different ways during the tenures of each Canadian prime minister from 1870 to 2025. Mark Carney, Sir John Abbott and Sir Mackenzie Bowell, Canada's third and fifth prime ministers respectively, are the only prime ministers to increase federal per-person debt without experiencing a global conflict or an economic downturn. In 2025, federal debt per person was projected to be \$56,432, which is the second highest amount in Canadian history.

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⁶ The population in Canada grew at an average annual rate of 1.6 percent from 1867 to 2025. The standard deviation is 0.8 percentage points. The average annual change in inflation-adjusted GDP is 3.7 percent from 1871 to 2024.

⁷ For a discussion on fiscal reforms under Jean Chretien, see Clemens et al. (2017).

⁸ During a downturn, spending on Employment Insurance tends to go up as the newly jobless make claims and unemployment spells lengthen; if household incomes decline, the value of refundable credits and income-tested benefits are likely to increase. Such automatic stabilizers are distinct from the discretionary choices governments may make in response to a downturn.

⁹ Major government undertakings such as the construction of national railways under Sir John A. Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie, and the expansion of social programs under Pierre Trudeau, might provide economic context for increases in federal debt while remaining discretionary policy choices.

Alex Villalta beats cancer through faith, science and unrelenting determination

“God, and brilliant doctors guided me”

RENATA ISOPO
renataisopo@gmail.com

Laval resident and businessman Alex Villalta's world shattered in an instant back in October 2021. At 62, he was the picture of vitality running his own company with energy, staying active, and cherishing every precious moment with his two young grandchildren. His dream was simple yet profound: to take them to Disney World, creating magical memories that would last a lifetime.

But during a visit to his cardiologist, the physician noticed drastic, unexplained weight loss. Alarmed, Alex was sent for urgent tests at the Cedars Cancer Centre at the McGill University Health Centre. Just 18 days later, came the devastating verdict—a massive abdominal tumor, diagnosed as leiomyosarcoma, a rare and aggressive cancer that had already spread. His prognosis: 18 months to live.

Dying wasn't part of Alex's plan, he told *The Laval News*. Healthy, purposeful, and fueled by his grandchildren's laughter, he refused to surrender. That Disney World dream became his lifeline, his light in the darkest of times.

Alex's case was entrusted to a highly specialized medical team: surgical, medical, and radiation oncologists, along with interventional radiologists renowned for their sarcoma expertise.

What made this group exceptional was their willingness to defy convention and think beyond standard cancer protocols. Together, they built an aggressive, tailored treatment plan aimed at giving Alex more than hope at giving him time.

The war against cancer began with months of gruelling chemotherapy designed to shrink the tumour and delay its spread. Oddly, the side effects weren't brutal for Alex. He endured.

“Each chemo drip felt like poison fire through my veins,” he remembers. “Every surgery was a gamble with my life. But I

believed God was guiding me through these brilliant doctors at Cedars, helping me fight the monster inside me.”

The battle within

When surgery day finally came, the team removed a staggering 4.4-kilogram tumour—a mass so immense it bore silent testament to the battle within. But victory remained elusive. During the operation, surgeons discovered the cancer had metastasized to his liver, making full removal impossible. Instead of despair, innovation took over.

Dr. Sinziana Dumitra, Alex's surgical oncologist, refused to concede defeat. She proposed a bold, uncharted option, Yttrium-90 (Y-90) radioembolization, a targeted internal radiation typically used for advanced liver and colorectal-cancers, but never before applied to sarcoma metastases.

Undaunted, her colleague Dr. Tatiana Cabrera, an interventional radiologist, agreed to pioneer the approach. Alex was warned: this was experimental for his cancer type, with no guarantees. The risks were real, but so was the potential.

The gamble paid off. The Y-90 therapy obliterated every trace of cancer from the right side of his liver, while residual spots on the left were methodically destroyed with ablation. Today, four years after, at 66 years old, being told he had only 18 months to live, Alex Villalta stands cancer-free, a miracle shaped by faith, science, and unrelenting determination.

“As Alex never stopped fighting, neither did his team,” Dr. Dumitra publicly stated to various media. That long-promised trip to Disney World is now officially on the calendar. For Alex, it's more than a vacation, it's a symbol of survival and hope realized.

Deplorable inequity in access to health care

Yet beneath the joy lies a stark reminder of inequity in access to



Villalta and his family embraced surgical oncologist Dr. Sinziana Dumitra in gratitude at the Cedars Cancer Centre, celebrating his cancer-free diagnosis after experimental Y-90 radioembolization treatment.

care. Dr. Ali Bessisow, a hepatologist with more than ten years of experience using Y-90, explained that while the therapy has proven remarkably effective for certain liver cancers, its availability depends on geography, not medical need.

Ontario and British Columbia cover it for select indications, but in Quebec, public health insurance (RAMQ) provides no reimbursement. Patients must pay the full cost out of pocket. For Alex, that amounted to \$18,000, thankfully covered by the hospital foundation.

Some hospitals, such as the CHUM, occasionally finance Y-90 treatments through internal hospital budgets rather than government funds, an unsustainable workaround that highlights systemic gaps.

Despite years of discussion, Quebec's Ministry of Health has yet to approve a dedicated Y-90 funding envelope. “It's been on the table for a while,” Dr. Bessisow admitted, “but nothing has moved forward.”

Voices advocating for justice

For Alex, the lack of public coverage feels deeply unjust. The treatment that saved his life should not depend on area codes or private generosity. It's a sentiment echoed by his doctors, who continue to advocate for equitable access to life-saving therapies across Canada.

“From the depths of my heart,” Alex said, “I thank *The Laval News* for giving my story, and others like mine a voice.” In an era often clouded by bleak headlines, he believes stories of survival and medical innovation remind us of what's possible when courage, science, and community unite. His journey is more than one man's fight against cancer, it's a call to action, a testament to resilience, and proof that miracles happen when hope and expertise walk hand in hand.

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Laval man arrested by RCMP after being tracked to Mexico



A Laval resident who was sought by the RCMP in a cocaine trafficking investigation over the past three years led by the federal police force has been arrested in Mexico.

The RCMP's Montreal branch confirmed on Monday that Adham Haouili, 43, the son-in-law of Montreal mob boss Raynald Desjardins, 72, was arrested in Mexico where he had been planning to meet his wife.

Haouili is facing charges in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu south of Montreal of conspiracy and drug trafficking along with four other

suspects targeted in an investigation that was dubbed Project Camelot.

In Project Camelot, led by the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (CFSEU) in collaboration with the Longueuil police service, "the five accused allegedly conspired to transport cocaine from the Toronto and Montreal regions to St. John's, Newfoundland by seaplane," the RCMP stated in an earlier press release related to the case.

Following police raids in conjunction with those accusations, an aircraft was seized,

along with 10 kilograms of cocaine, three firearms and approximately \$32,000 in cash. Among those arrested were Benoit David, 55, taken in by Interpol in Santiago Chile, and William Thomas Webber, 44, in Mississauga, Ont.

According to court records, David, like Haouili, is also a resident of Laval, but has yet to be extradited to Canada. The trial of one of the accused, Michael Duguay Halle, 42, of nearby Terrebonne, is scheduled to begin next September.

Fire damages Souvenir Road home

A fire caused damage to an unoccupied home on Souvenir Road in Chomedey on Friday, January 30 just after 12 noon.

The Association des Pompiers de Laval posted on its social media feed, "Building fire on Chemin du Souvenir in the Chomedey sector. Two-story residential building. Visible smoke. The code was 10-12, second alarm."

According to the APL, a 9-1-1 call was placed

at 11:54 a.m. and the Laval Fire Department arrived on the scene five minutes later. Smoke was visible and an evacuation of the premises was confirmed to have taken place by fire department personnel.

The fire is believed to have started in the basement of the house and spread throughout the building. Cold weather is said to have complicated the work of the 34 firefighters and

9 units that were on site trying to confine the flames to one area of the building.

The firefighters were able to bring the blaze under control nearly two hours after the operation had begun. Several other emergency responders, including the Laval Police and Urgences-Santé were also on hand. Investigators initially believe the probable cause was a mechanical or electrical malfunction.



CO leak forces evacuation at Place Montmorency

Nearly 1,000 occupants in 500 residential units at the Espace Montmorency campus in central Laval were evacuated from apartments on the morning of Saturday, January 31 following a carbon monoxide leak.

Firefighters from the Laval Fire Department, using

CO detectors, found carbon monoxide concentrations reaching 60 ppm on several floors of towers No. 1 and No. 4, which was well above safe levels.

The maximum level of CO recommended by Health Canada is 10 ppm over a 24-hour period in a residential setting.

Other recent fires in Laval

JANUARY 21 | 7:46 AM // Building fire on Jeanne-le Ber Street in the Duvernay sector. Residential building. Flames visible. Code was 10-07, intervention required.

January 29 fire.



JANUARY 29 | 1:52 AM // Building fire on 7th Street in the Chomedey sector. Residential building. Flames visible in the basement and spreading to upper floors. Code was 10-14, fourth alarm.

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Polar vortex impacts attendance at city's 2026 'Laval en Blanc'

Cold puts a damper on celebration of winter at Centre de la Nature

Photos:
Martin
C. Barry,
Newsfirst
Multimedia

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
marty@newsfirst.ca

The City of Laval's Centre de la nature in Duvernay was definitely not the place to be on the weekend of January 23-24-25.

A polar vortex assailing the region had the obvious effect of discouraging many moms, dads and children – who are usually eager



Usually crowded with skaters during the annual Laval en Blanc winter festival, the frozen-over lake at the Centre de la nature was lonelier than usual this year in the midst of a polar vortex that dropped temperatures some days as low as -25 Celsius.

to get outdoors during the winter – from attending Laval's popular Laval en Blanc seasonal celebration.

A seasonal counterpoint

Every year in January, Laval en Blanc offers a counterpoint to the city's popular Fête de la Famille which takes place during at the end of summer.

The idea of having fun outdoors during the

winter, in temperatures that normally hover around zero degrees Celsius, is a novel concept and a discovery in itself.

However, this was not to be for Laval en Blanc this year, as the thermometer dipped as low as -25 Celsius on some days.

Attendance was way down

Even with the sun shining down on the Centre de la nature on Saturday, it wasn't enough to raise

the temperature more than a few degrees, the result being that only a fraction of the thousands of Laval residents who normally attend turned up.

For those who still felt up to the challenge of facing the rigors of a real Quebec winter, there was snow sledding, ice skating, obstacle course racing, snow sculpting, even some musical performances to be enjoyed by kids and their families in warmth inside an enclosed interior pavilion.



For those seeking a break from the cold outdoors at the Centre de la nature, there was entertainment for children at a heated indoor pavilion.



A few hardy families from Laval still managed to get out and have some outdoor fun in spite of the debilitating cold.



Some areas of the Centre de la nature, such as the food concessions seen here, were virtually deserted during this year's Laval en Blanc because of the deep freeze.

Fabre MNA Alice Abou-Khalil highlights the 181st Saint-Théophile Scout Group 60 years of commitment

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With great pride, the Member of the National Assembly for Fabre, Alice Abou-Khalil, highlighted the 60 years of commitment of the Scouting movement during an official ceremony marked by the presentation of a certificate of recognition to the 181st Saint-Théophile Scout Group.

For six decades, the 181st Saint-Théophile Scout Group has played a vital role in youth development by instilling fundamental values such as respect, solidarity, leadership, and a strong sense of community service. This lasting commitment has been made possible through the dedication of volunteers and Scout leaders,

as well as the continued support of families.

During the ceremony, special recognition was given to Mr. Pascal Larocque, Group Leader of the 181st Saint-Théophile Scout Group, and Ms. Valérie Lemieux, Assistant Group Leader, for their leadership, involvement, and significant contribution to promoting the Scouting movement within the community.

This official recognition highlights the exceptional contribution of the 181st Saint-Théophile Scout Group to community life in Fabre and its lasting impact on local youth. The honorary certificate presented by the MNA reflects the gratitude and esteem for a movement that, for 60 years, has actively contributed to building a more caring and engaged society.



"Congratulations on 60 years of remarkable impact, and thank you for continuing to inspire

our youth," said MNA for Fabre Alice Abou-Khalil during the ceremony.

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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

SELF-DEFENSE

Q I am one of a group of mothers with children in the same preschool. We share play dates together. At one play date with two other mothers at my house, one of them became angry with me. I couldn't think of a thing I did to offend her, so I asked the other mother. She couldn't think of anything either. She suggested confronting the first mother, but I decided against that, thinking if she was truly a friend she would approach me. But she didn't. She stayed angry. I think she is jealous of the rapport the second woman and I share because our children are the same age. The first woman has gone to extraordinary lengths to make me feel excluded when we are all together. She invites the other woman to events without extending the invitation to me and my daughter. I am finding it harder and harder to be in the group without her taking a passive stab at me. I no longer want to be friends with her, but that also means I have to give up my other friends and so does my daughter, which is not fair. Every time I try to turn down invitations from women in the group, they won't let me bow out gracefully. If you haven't guessed by now, I do not like confrontation. How can I back away without hurting feelings and making it more awkward?

Pat

A Pat, most of the lasting lessons we learn are from our parents, and often those lessons were never directly taught. If you are

passive, your daughter may learn to always give in to people who act badly. Solve this problem for yourself, and you are likely to solve it for her as well.

Reacting appropriately in each situation, instead of reacting the same way in all situations, is a valuable skill to possess. Though being passive works sometimes, if your only defense is avoidance, you will often find yourself defenseless.

Perhaps your life has been mostly calm water; perhaps you don't like confrontation because you have no experience with it. In that case, get a book or take a workshop on assertiveness training.

That would be one way to begin. Or you could think outside the box. Women often enroll a daughter in dance class, but few consider tae kwon do, judo, or another martial art. These methods of training are not the latest hip thing but approaches to life which have existed for centuries.

Martial arts develop self-confidence, poise, and restraint. They help people protect themselves emotionally as well as physically, and it is something you and your daughter could do together.

We are not trying to make either of you Bruce Lee, but this is one method of solving a problem without appearing to work on it. In addition, when your daughter is 18, she will have a safeguard dance class can never give her.

Wayne & Tamara

don't know how to leave. I am so ashamed of my part in this mess. My children will not involve themselves. What can I do?

Catherine

A Catherine, the answer today is what the answer has always been. You must act. A lawyer can tell you what you are entitled to. A women's shelter, and if need be the police, can help you exit the marriage. It is never too late to accept the challenges of life.

Wayne & Tamara

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

Send letters to: Direct Answers, PO 964 Springfield, MO 65801-0964
or email: GetInTouch@WayneAndTamara.com

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AVIS PUBLIC – Présentation publique du rapport annuel 2024-2025 de la Commission scolaire Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier

AVIS PUBLIC est par la présente donné qu'en vertu de l'article 220.1 de la *Loi sur l'instruction publique*, la Commission scolaire Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier présentera son rapport annuel pour l'année scolaire 2024-2025 à la séance ordinaire du conseil des commissaires le 25 février 2026 à 19 h 30.

Les réunions du conseil se tiennent dans la salle 32A du centre administratif situé au 235, montée Lesage, Rosemère (Québec) J7A 4Y6, et seront diffusées en ligne. Les membres du public peuvent assister aux réunions du conseil à distance sur le site Web suivant : <http://bit.ly/swlsbcouncil>. Les procédures pour poser des questions se trouvent sur le site Web de la Commission scolaire.

Fait à Rosemère (Québec), le 23 janvier 2026
M^e Anna Sollazzo, secrétaire générale

PUBLIC NOTICE – Public Presentation of the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that, in accordance with section 220.1 of the *Education Act*, the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board's 2024-2025 Annual Report will be presented on February 25, 2026, at 7:30 p.m., at the regular meeting of the Council of Commissioners.

The meetings of the Council are held in room 32A of the administration centre located at 235, montée Lesage, Rosemère (Québec) J7A 4Y6, and broadcast online. Members of the public can attend Council meetings at a distance on the following website: <http://bit.ly/swlsbcouncil>. The procedures for asking questions can be found on the school board's website.

Given at Rosemère (Québec), on January 23, 2026
M^e Anna Sollazzo, Secretary General

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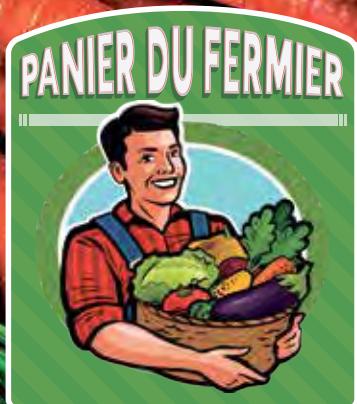
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Week of February 8 to 14, 2026

The luckiest signs this week:

ACQUARIUS, PISCES AND ARIES



ARIES

Emotions will be running high within your circle of friends this week. On a romantic level, you may need to re-evaluate your situation if you want to truly flourish. You'll no longer tolerate compromise, and this will prompt you to take a long, hard look at your relationship.



TAURUS

Despite some tension at work, you'll be able to use your teamwork skills to move forward. In matters of love, starting a relationship will require you to overcome doubts so you can build a richer and more promising future together.



GEMINI

In your professional life, your efforts will pay off, even if you're feeling worn out. You'll have to get more involved to expand your client base, and this will give you more durable financial stability for the years to come.



CANCER

Your self-esteem needs a boost. Although you give generously to others, you need to devote more time and attention to yourself. This is especially true in the case of some people who tend to take your kindness for granted.



LEO

Most of your energy will be focused on your family this week. In the short term, a move or major change in your personal or professional life may be necessary and could prove particularly beneficial.



VIRGO

Your social circle will grow as you increase your presence on social media. Your skills and professional activities will gain visibility, bringing you greater recognition and financial benefits.



LIBRA

You'll finally receive the green light to finance a project, and you'll take immediate action. The coming week is also the perfect time to settle some of your debt, marking a new beginning.



SCORPIO

Expect big changes in your romantic, professional and personal spheres this week. You'll feel justifiable pride in your achievements while putting in the effort needed to ensure the success of your projects.



SAGITTARIUS

It's time to recharge your batteries. Be present and get some rest. A loved one will need your support this week. If you're feeling creative, you'll draw inspiration from your intuition.



CAPRICORN

You'll be responsible for a large-scale project involving several people around you. Despite some challenges in getting everyone on board, your determination and organizational skills will lead you to well-deserved success.



AQUARIUS

You'll take on new responsibilities in both your professional and personal life. Your commitment won't go unnoticed. You could be rewarded with a promotion and a raise, giving you a good reason to celebrate.



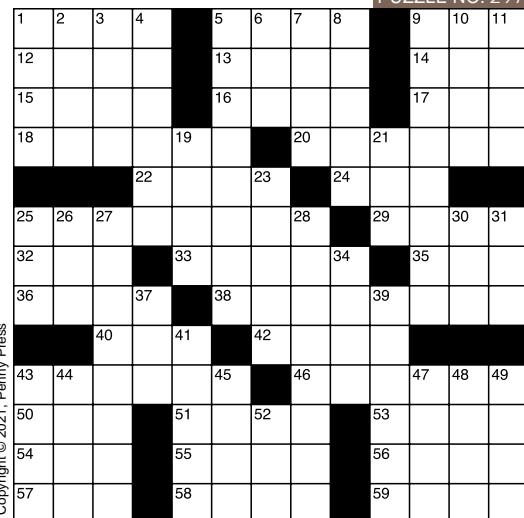
PISCES

You'll feel inclined to embark on a pilgrimage. You must carefully prepare everything over several months if you want this adventure to become a source of deep inspiration that guides you on your search for meaning and fulfillment.

Coffee Break

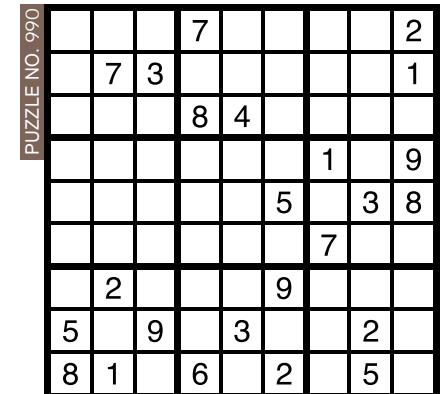
CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 297



ACROSS

- 1. Glass piece
- 42. Similar
- 5. Go through water
- 43. Blew a horn
- 9. Situate
- 46. Phantoms
- 12. Tavern treats
- 50. Coop product
- 13. 24th letters
- 51. Flounder or bass
- 14. "___ Day Now"
- 53. Eroded
- 15. Bygone
- 54. Common ailment
- 16. Black and Bering
- 55. Step quickly
- 17. Small bite
- 56. Revise text
- 18. Say
- 57. Shirt style
- 20. Dedicate
- 58. Evergreen shrubs
- 22. Watched
- 59. Obstructs
- 24. ___ Francis Drake
- DOWN
- 25. Stewed
- 1. Dad
- 29. Doll's cry
- 2. Cry of woe
- 32. Master
- 3. Famous loch
- 33. Catch
- 4. Prize
- 35. Angry
- 5. Cowboy movies
- 36. "Wish You ___ Here"
- 6. Woodcutting tool
- 38. Toy racers: 2 wds.
- 7. The Grateful ___
- 40. Sick
- 9. Unobstructed view
- 41. Southpaw
- 43. Weight
- 44. Gape
- 45. Disastrous
- 47. Fizzy drink
- 48. In good shape
- 49. Matched collections
- 52. Female pig



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.

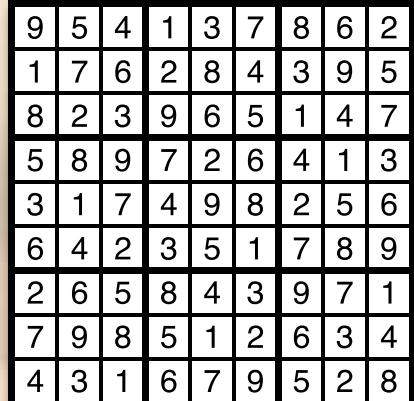
Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.

Last Issue's Answers

CROSSWORDS



Sudoku



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Place-des-Arts Metro
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Atwater Metro
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