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Fate of Nature Centre mini-farm in limbo, as city ponders next move

Animal-themed ‘activity’ proposed, but future of the farm building looks dim

MARTIN C. BARRY

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In a partial reversal of an earlier decision to close the mini-farm at the Centre de la nature in Duvernay, Mayor Stéphane Boyer announced during the February city council meeting that his administration has decided to postpone the move and consider alternatives before going further.

‘Difficult decisions,’ says mayor

In his opening remarks during the meeting, Mayor Boyer alluded to the targeted spending cuts the city made in its latest annual budget.

“It was also in that context that we had to make decisions that are often difficult – such as the one for the mini-farm at the Centre de la nature,” said Boyer, noting that a large number of opponents to the closure turned out for the council meeting.



Action Laval Saint-François city councillor Isabelle Piché’s motion for a public consultation on the future of the mini-farm was pushed aside during the February 3 city council meeting.
(Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

While upholding the rationale for the city’s decision – the mini-farm building needs from \$15-\$20 million in renovations to bring it up to current standards for sheltering animals – the mayor said there was also good news.

“We’ve heard the people,” he said. “We ran into many residents over the last few weeks and months, we received calls, we also saw people on social media talking about the petition.

‘Lemonade with lemons’

“We may be elected officials but we are also human who want to make good decisions, even if the choices aren’t always easy. And so what we’re going to try to do is to make lemonade with lemons.”

With that said, Action Laval city councillor for Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Annick Senghor tabled a motion later that evening calling on the city to provide support for an unspecified “activity” free of charge at the Centre de la nature where children and families would be able to interact with animals in a revised version of the current mini-farm.

In choosing to take that course of action, the mayor, supported by the Mouvement lavallois council majority, dismissed a motion brought forward by Action Laval opposition councillor Isabelle Piché to hold a public consultation on the mini-farm issue.

In a statement issued by Action Laval the following day, they said Action Laval “strongly deplores the decision by the mayor and his councillors to reject, during the adjournment of the February 3 city council meeting, the proposal tabled by Saint-François councillor Isabelle Piché.”

‘Justification untenable,’ says Action Laval

Noting that the mayor seemed to be trying to justify his decision by claiming that rebuilding the mini-farm would be too costly, Action Laval said, “This justification is untenable: the public deserves to be heard before closing the book on such a meaningful place.”

“Despite the presence of many citizens eager to save the farm and the numerous questions posed by the public to the council, the mayor and his team voted unanimously against holding a public consultation,” said Piché.

“This closure of democratic dialogue comes as a petition with 20,000 signatures, launched by Laval resident Dennis Fiévet, has been officially filed. When more than 20,000 citizens mobilize, a mayor has a moral obligation to listen.”

Action to hold its own consultation

Action Laval said it would organize its own public consultation, where residents would be able to express their views on the future of the mini-farm, propose solutions and participate in a collective reflection.

The Parti Laval opposition, in a statement of their own, accused the mayor of taking steps to “muzzle” the opposition “in order to impose a decision that goes against the will of the citizens, as expressed in the petition with over 20,000 signatures.”

“It is an attempt to avoid any real discussion on preserving the small farm, a preservation clearly demanded by the citizens,” they said. “When families, children and workers mobilize to defend a place they love, our responsibility as elected officials is to open the dialogue, not close it,” said Parti Laval city councillor for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin Louise Lortie.



Mayor Stéphane Boyer announced during the February city council meeting that his administration has decided to postpone the move and consider alternatives before proceeding further.
(Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

Questions over democratic debate

The Parti Laval said the mayor’s decision to push forward his own party’s motion while ignoring Councillor Piché’s “raised serious concerns about respect for democratic debate at city council.”

“What the opposition is denouncing is that the mayor and his majority allegedly forced the rushed adoption of their own proposal, even before the discussion on Ms. Piché’s opinion began, thus giving them a reason to avoid debating it,” they added.

Martin Vaillancourt, the Parti Laval city councillor for Fabreville-Sud, stated that he was left with the impression during the council meeting that a gag order was effectively being executed, albeit at the municipal level.

“Despite our objections, the mayor’s party forced the opposition parties to immediately debate its proposal, which was already destined to be adopted by Mayor Boyer and his elected officials, even though it doesn’t address the citizens’ main demand, namely the preservation of the farm,” he said.

Hellenic Community Heritage Month

During a period devoted to new business and statements from city councillors, Chomedey councillor Aglaia Revelakis tabled a proposal that Laval city council declare the month of March as Hellenic Community Heritage Month.

“This is about an opportunity to recognize and celebrate a community which for more than 120 years has been contributing to enrichment of our society through its customs, traditions and its commitment,” she said.

“I invite my colleagues sincerely to join me in supporting this meaningful recognition in honoring the legacy of the Hellenic community,” she said.

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OPINION & Editorial



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

THE QUÉBEC GOVERNMENT MUST CANCEL EXCESSIVE RECYCLING FEES FOR PRINT NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

An alliance of Québec newspapers and magazines is sounding the alarm about the unfair and ruinous effects of Québec's selective collection reform. Far from delivering the promised equity, these new rules pose yet another existential threat to print media in Québec.

Together, we reach millions of readers for whom print remains the medium of choice. It is to ensure that they can continue reading newspapers and magazines in their preferred format that we are joining forces. It's a matter of respect and generational fairness.

Drastic and disastrous increase

We are asking the Québec government to exempt us from the excessive fees imposed by the new collection system, and we call on Premier François Legault to resolve this issue before the end of his term.

The introduction of the new collection regime in January 2025 triggered a dramatic increase in these fees despite the steady decline in the quantities of paper declared and marketed. The situation will only worsen, with additional increases expected in the coming years.

Paradoxically, the less paper we use, the higher our recycling bill climbs. This clearly shows that the new system has replicated the flaws of the old system, which the government meant to correct.

The situation is untenable for us as we contend with profound structural challenges, including the relentless erosion of advertising revenues, declining circulation and the suffocating dominance of the web giants.

Content isn't packaging

To be clear, we understand the need for a recyclable materials collection system for "containers" such as the home delivery boxes used by foreign online vendors. However, a fundamental distinction must be made in the case of newspapers and magazines, where the content cannot be separated from the container. Taxing the paper on which they are printed is not the same as taxing packaging: it means taxing content that is of fundamental value to our society, produced by local professionals specifically for Québec readers. This distinction was made in the past when the Québec government exempted books from recycling collection fees.

That decision to support the diversity of cultural expression should logically be extended to our print media outlets, which are a bulwark against cultural globalization and a shield against misinformation. In a geopolitical landscape scarred by fake news and weakened institutions under stress from social media, the international digital behemoths and other pressures, preserving local print media should be a priority. Our media outlets form a comprehensive ecosystem that provides many direct and indirect jobs. Every dollar spent on local media stays in Québec's economy. And contrary to some perceptions, demand for print remains robust: millions of Quebecers continue to buy our print formats, which are indispensable for bridging the digital divide—especially in rural areas, among seniors, and in less connected households.

Act now!

Over the years, the Québec government has introduced significant measures to support print media. But this misguided reform flies in the face of public policies designed to revitalize the media sector.

The Québec government must swiftly rectify this situation by exempting print media from recycling fees. Must we wait for media outlets to shut down before action is taken?

A government that defends Québec's interests must champion an industry of such vital importance, not strangle it.

George Guzman and Le Journal de Montréal, Le Journal de Québec, Le Devoir, The Globe and Mail, The Gazette, L'Actualité and RICARDO; the print publications of TVA Publications, Pratico-Pratiques, KO Média, Bayard Presse Canada and Naître et grandir; and the Association québécoise des éditeurs de magazines (AQEM), RecycleMédias and Hebdos Québec.



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City agrees to study welcome tax payment in several installments

Parti Laval proposal supported by mayor's party passes unanimously

MARTIN C. BARRY

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Officials with the City of Laval are thinking of allowing new property owners to spread their payment of the welcome tax over several equal installments and without interest.

A proposal by the Parti Laval, the official opposition at Laval city hall, aimed at offering more flexibility to new homeowners, took a significant step forward during the city council meeting on February 3.

Expected in 2027 budget

Submitted by Parti Laval city councillor Louise Lortie who represents the district of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, the proposal requesting that the measure be studied by the city's senior management was unanimously adopted.

However, Lortie accepted an amendment proposed by Mouvement lavallois L'Orée-des-Bois city councillor Yannick Langlois, who is in charge of public finances on the executive committee, to ensure that a due analysis will be carried out "with a view to the 2027 budget year" rather than "as soon as possible."

"We have been saying this for a long time: when a family or couple buys a house, they already have to deal with the down payment, notary fees, moving costs and sometimes other unforeseen expenses, requiring, on top of that, a single payment of several thousand dollars, while other cities offer more flexibility, it adds unnecessary pressure at an already stressful time for many households," said Lortie.

A necessary measure

Since the easing of a provincial legal framework in 2023, several municipalities have offered more flexible payment options for transfer taxes to reduce the financial burden associated with purchasing a property. Lortie cited the examples of Saint-Jérôme, which now allows payment in two installments, as well as Quebec City, Sainte-Thérèse, Brossard and Salaberry-de-Valleyfield.

In Laval, however, payment is still required in a single lump sum, and the welcome tax rate was recently increased by Mayor Stéphane Boyer's party, reaching 3 per cent for transactions exceeding \$500,000. The Parti Laval sees this rigidity as increasingly difficult to justify and felt it was necessary to introduce a new measure to

better support buyers.

More payment flexibility

"In Laval, access to home ownership is becoming increasingly difficult for the middle class," said Claude Laroche, the Parti Laval's leader. "Offering more flexibility in the payment of the welcome tax is a concrete step we have long advocated.

"This measure, included in our platform, is reasonable, effective and already implemented elsewhere," he added. "It was time we agreed to study it seriously."

"It's a simple measure that can make a real difference for those settling in Laval," said Lortie. "The important thing now is to complete the analysis and deliver concrete solutions to new homeowners."

The 'taxe de bienvenue'

While the municipal welcome tax, officially known as the property or real estate transfer tax, was a measure first introduced in Quebec in 1976, the name itself can be misleading.

Although it would seem to suggest municipalities are welcoming new property buyers with a somewhat hefty payment, it actually comes

from a French nickname (taxe de bienvenue), which came from a motion in the National Assembly made by Quebec Liberal Party minister Jean Bienvenue.

According to information on real estate transfer rights on the City of Laval's web site, anyone who buys a property must pay registration fees as stated by provincial law for municipalities. Transfer taxes are payable in a single payment within 30 days of the invoice date.

Transfer tax exemptions

However, in Laval a new property owner can be exempt from transfer tax in certain situations. Cases of exemption:

Purchase of the property from a direct ascendant or descendant family member. For example, from father to son, or from grandmother to granddaughter. But the exemption does not apply between siblings.

Purchase of the property from a spouse. The exemption applies to married or cohabiting partners, provided they have lived together for the 12 months preceding the sale.

Purchase of the property by a legal entity (e.g., a company), at least 90 per cent of whose shares are owned by the seller, who is an individual.

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Laval council passes emergency motion calling on Quebec to review immigration policy

'Immigration decisions have a direct impact on our local economy,' says Mayor Stéphane Boyer

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
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Laval city council unanimously passed a resolution sponsored by Mayor Stéphane Boyer at the February 3 council meeting calling on the Quebec government to revise certain aspects of its immigration policy, which the mayor argues unfairly penalize Laval's economy and its competitiveness.

With the resolution, the City of Laval was following the lead of elected officials in the City of Montreal as well as in Quebec City.

They are specifically requesting the implementation of a grandfather clause for immigrants already established in Quebec under the Quebec Experience Program (PEQ), in order to avoid significant human and economic consequences.

Laval's resolution also calls on the government to recognize the city's distinct economic reality and its capacity to welcome immigrants as a major industrial and technological hub, while asking the government to refrain from taking measures that penalize Laval businesses when there are shortages of highly skilled labour.

"Immigration decisions have a direct impact on our local economy," Mayor Boyer said in a

statement. "In Laval, poorly adapted, uniform measures risk hindering the attraction of talent and investment, while also undermining the predictability our employers need."

"Behind these decisions are real people who have chosen to build their lives here and who contribute daily to the social and economic vitality of our city," said Laval city councillor for Saint-Martin Aline Dib, who is responsible for intercultural relations. "We must return to a more humane approach that better reflects our regional reality while strengthening our integration efforts," she added.

Here is the full text (translated from French) of the resolution asking for a revision of Quebec's immigration policy passed on February 3 by Laval city council:

Notice of proposal: Economic immigration and the reality of Laval

- WHEREAS the City of Laval is a strategic economic hub of Greater Montreal, characterized by major industrial zones, a strong manufacturing and technology presence and integrated value chains on a metropolitan scale;

- WHEREAS Laval businesses face persistent needs for skilled and specialized labour;

- WHEREAS the Government of Quebec, in its deliberations on multi-year immigration planning in Quebec, recently issued guidelines aimed at reducing the number of non-permanent residents for the period 2026-2029;

- WHEREAS the freeze on temporary immigration and the salary criteria applicable to Laval businesses do not take into account our distinct economic reality or our differentiated capacity to welcome immigrants;

- WHEREAS these policies are currently having negative impacts on businesses, economic development and workforce planning in Laval and the greater metropolitan area;

- WHEREAS this approach also undermines predictability for Laval employers and risks hindering the attraction of strategic investments and talent specifically to Laval;

- WHEREAS the abolition of the Quebec Experience Program (PEQ), without consideration for those already in the region who contribute to its social and economic life, has deplorable human consequences.



IT IS PROPOSED BY Stéphane Boyer:

- THAT the City of Laval request the Government of Quebec: 1. to explicitly recognize Laval's distinct economic reality and capacity to welcome newcomers in the application of immigration policies; 2. to ensure equitable treatment within Greater Montreal, without penalizing Laval businesses with poorly adapted, uniform measures.
- THAT the City of Laval supports maintaining programs that allow businesses access to skilled temporary foreign workers, as well as mechanisms that facilitate their transition to permanent residency;
- THAT the City of Laval requests that the government grant grandfathering rights to immigrants already established under the Quebec Experience Program (PEQ);
- THAT the City of Laval forward this resolution to the Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration, the Montreal Metropolitan Community and relevant economic partners.

A message from your elected officials

Thank you for your trust!

Anick Brunet

City councilor
of Duvernay
an.brunet@laval.ca

Nicholas Borne

City councilor
of Laval-les-Îles
n.borne@laval.ca



Stéphane Boyer
Mayor of Laval

**conseil
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Laval

Sona Lakhoyan Olivier cleared following PLQ inquiry into fake text messages

'The person who did it is getting away,' says Chomedey MNA, seeking a deeper investigation

MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
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Last Friday afternoon as officials with the Quebec Liberal Party were taking the last steps to acclaim Charles Milliard as the PLQ's new leader, Chomedey MNA Sona Lakhoyan Olivier was at her Samson Blvd. riding office contemplating the dramatic and cascading chain of events that briefly overturned her life and nearly overwhelmed the Liberals.

Following allegations of allegedly incriminating text messages exchanged during the leadership campaign of the Quebec Liberal Party, the PLQ launched an investigation whose conclusions were released by the party last week.

J de M published text messages

The PLQ mandated retired Quebec Superior Court judge Jacques Fournier to investigate after the Journal de Montréal published text messages last November suggesting that some PLQ members who had voted for Pablo Rodriguez in the party's leadership race might have received cash payments.

Rodriguez resigned following the debacle over Saint-Laurent PLQ MNA Marwah Rizqy's firing of her chief of staff. A report also in the Journal claimed that around 20 donors to Rodriguez's leadership campaign received envelopes containing \$500 in cash to reimburse their donations during a fundraising event in April.

Some of the media reports, discredited by the Fournier investigation's findings, implicated Lakhoyan Olivier, as well as Fabre CAQ MNA Alice Abou-Khalil, as having been the source of

the text messages. Some of the media reports speculated that Abou-Khalil was on the verge of crossing the National Assembly floor to the Liberals.

Texts fabricated, judge concluded

As a result of the doubts raised, Lakhoyan Olivier was expelled from the PLQ caucus last December, although the Fournier report's conclusions could lead to her being reintegrated into the party. The report concluded the text messages at the heart of the controversy did not come from Lakhoyan Olivier, nor from anyone associated with her.

The investigation established that the text messages were fabricated and manipulated, and that the analysis and electronic evidence clearly show that they did not originate from Lakhoyan Olivier's devices or those of her associates.

"The evidence confirms that there was no technical possibility of attributing these messages to the MNA or to individuals associated with her," reads a statement issued last week by Lakhoyan Olivier's office.

"The findings of the investigation also show that Ms. Lakhoyan Olivier, like other individuals who were associated with or targeted by the interpretation of the messages, were victims of malicious manipulation aimed at damaging their personal, professional and political reputations, as well as those of the institutions involved."

'They want us out,' she speculates

In spite of the ensuing province-wide media attention, Lakhoyan Olivier believes (on a purely speculative level) that the fake text messages probably originated locally. "These are people

who are involved in politics in Laval, Chomedey and Fabre, who have an eye on these seats – they want us out," she said in an interview late last week with The Laval News.

She said she still feels as if she's aboard the emotional roller coaster she was riding for months, until the release of Fournier's report last week. Still, she learned a very hard lesson about the life of a politician.

"I tell you, this is not fair, because it's a dirty political game," Lakhoyan Olivier said, her characteristic cheerfulness giving way momentarily to tearfulness.

"I did not expect to see this in Canada or the province of Quebec – not at all," added Lakhoyan Olivier who was born in Lebanon. However, what she wants to see now is a more thorough investigation leading to the individuals who created the fabricated text messages.

PLQ also dumped Ouellette

"They cleared my name and I was really relieved," she said. "But the person who did it is getting away with it right now."

The riding of Chomedey, which has been a Quebec Liberal bastion as long as anyone can remember, has seen its sitting Liberal MNA excluded from the PLQ caucus more than once in recent years.

Former Liberal MNA Guy Ouellette, was expelled from the Liberal caucus in 2018 after it was alleged he had leaked classified information to the Coalition Avenir Québec, who were then in opposition in the National Assembly.

Ouellette sat as an independent until the end of his last term in 2022. Lakhoyan Olivier said she fully understands that, for the good of



"I tell you, this is not fair, because it's a dirty political game," says Chomedey MNA Sona Lakhoyan Olivier.

(Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)

the Quebec Liberal Party, it was necessary to suspend her from the caucus until her name had been cleared. "It was protocol, which was fine with me," she said.

Wants to run again for Liberals

With the next provincial election tentatively scheduled for October 5, Lakhoyan Olivier, who was first elected in 2022, said she is interested in seeking a second term – preferably with the Quebec Liberals.

But in the meantime, UPAC (Unité permanente anticorruption) as well as the Quebec Director General of Elections (DGEQ) have opened investigations of their own and Lakhoyan Olivier is waiting before she announces her decision.

When asked whether she might consider running as an independent if she were unable to run for the Liberals, she replied without hesitation, "No, I don't see that at all. I'd love to be with the Liberal Party of Quebec."

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February 18 to March 19, 2026

Celebrate Ramadan!



Canadian Muslims celebrate Ramadan

The month of Ramadan is upon us once again. For Muslims in Canada and across the globe, these sacred few weeks represent a time dedicated to devotion, reflection, worshiping and the celebration of Allah's (SWT) mercy and love.

As the Islamic calendar is based around the lunar cycle, the Holy month of Ramadan rotates by approximately ten days each year. This upcoming Ramadan is expected to begin on Wednesday, February 18th, depending on the sighting of the moon.*

The annual observance of Ramadan is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam and lasts twenty-nine to thirty days, from one sighting of the crescent moon to the next. This time period offers Muslims an opportunity to commemorate Muhammad's first revelation.

Although rulings have been issued declaring that Muslims who live in regions with a midnight sun or polar night should follow the timetable of Mecca, it is common practice to follow the timetable of the closest country in which night can be distinguished from day.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community.

THE FOURTH PILLAR OF ISLAM: SAWM

The Fourth Pillar of Islam is Sawm, or fasting. Fasting takes place during the month of Ramadan, the holy month in the Islamic calendar.

Fasting from dawn to sunset is obligatory for all adult Muslims who are not acutely or chronically ill, traveling, elderly, breastfeeding, diabetic, pregnant, or menstruating. The predawn meal is referred to as suhur, and the nightly feast that breaks the fast is called iftar.

The spiritual rewards of fasting are believed to be multiplied during Ramadan. Accordingly, during the hours of fasting, Muslims refrain not only from food and drink, but also abstain from drinking, tobacco products, sexual relations, immoral acts, anger, and sinful behaviours, devoting themselves instead to prayer and study of the Quran.

*The dates for Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr are provisional and will be confirmed upon the sighting of the new moon.



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February 18 to March 19, 2026

Celebrate Ramadan!



RAMADAN: Time of reflection and spiritual devotion

Healthy adult Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan from dawn until dusk. Other acts of worship such as prayer, reading the Quran, and charity are also encouraged during the holy month.

Ramadan lasts either 29 or 30 days, and the time during which it takes place varies every year, because the lunar calendar is roughly 10 or 11 days shorter than the commonly used Gregorian calendar.

This Holy month contains the most blessed of nights, also known as Laylatul Qadr, about which Allah asks:

"What will make you realize what the Night of Power is like?"

"The Night of Power is better than a thousand months."

Angels and the Spirit descend upon

it with their Lord's permission with every command;

"There is peace that night until the coming of dawn." [Quran: 97:1-5]

Practicing charity and prioritizing service to others during the month of Ramadan is important to Muslims, who consider it to be a special time for community. This act of generosity is characterized by a greater sense of forgiveness, sharing and caring for each other.



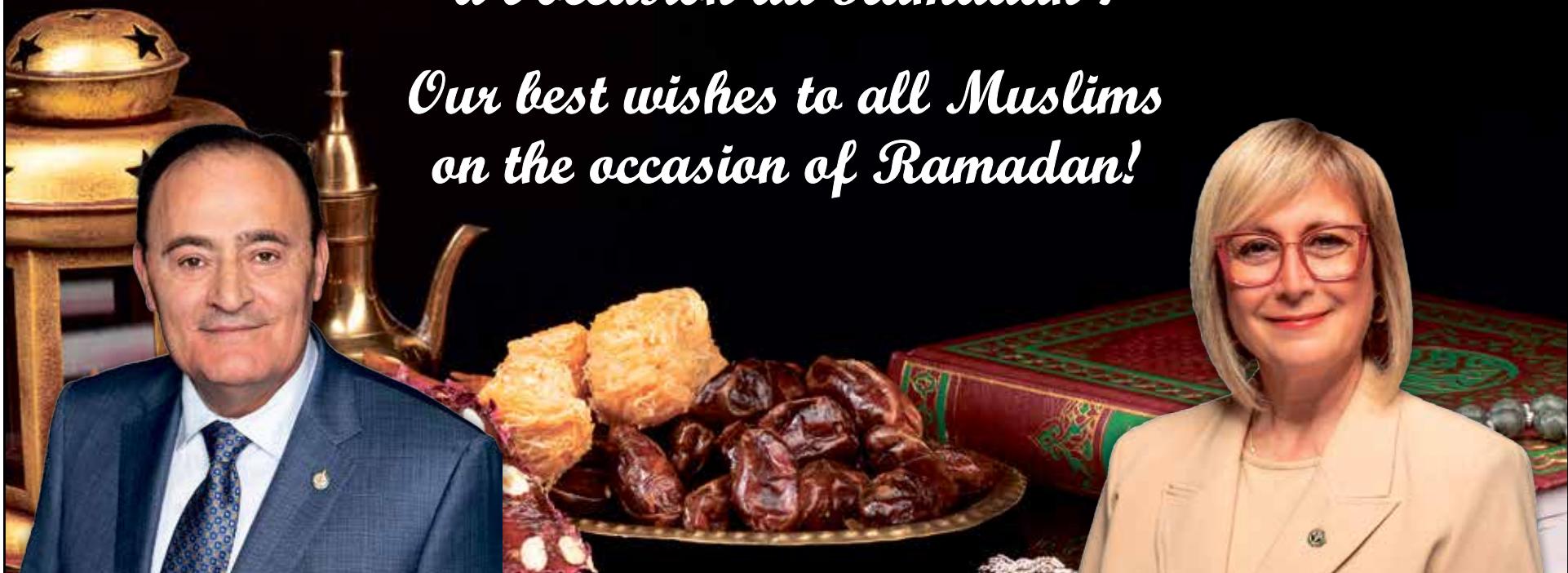
Muslims gather in homes, mosques and community centres to break their daily fast at the evening meal known as iftar.

During this Ramadan period, we recognize Canada's continuously growing Muslim population. While small overall, the proportion has more than doubled in 20 years, and continues to rise over time.

To all those observing, we wish you a Ramadan Mubarak!

*Nos vœux les plus chaleureux
à tous les musulmans
à l'occasion du Ramadan !*

*Our best wishes to all Muslims
on the occasion of Ramadan!*



**FAYÇAL
EL-KHOURY**
MP FOR LAVAL-LES ÎLES
faycal.el-khoury.c1@parl.gc.ca



**ANNIE
KOUTRAKIS**
MP FOR VIMY
annie.kourakis@parl.gc.ca

February 18 to March 19, 2026

Celebrate Ramadan!



Millions of Muslims celebrate Ramadan every year. Test your knowledge of this significant time by answering these five questions.

1. Why do the dates of Ramadan vary from country to country?
 - a) It depends on the year (leap year or not)
 - b) It's decided by a draw in Mecca
 - c) It depends on when the first crescent moon is sighted



2. What year did Ramadan start?
 - a) In 624
 - b) In 1299
 - c) In 365
3. What's the purpose of fasting during Ramadan?
 - a) To commemorate the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad
 - b) To celebrate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad
4. Who is exempt from fasting?
 - a) Children and pregnant or nursing mothers
 - b) The elderly and the sick
 - c) All of the above
5. What's the name of the evening meal taken after sunset during Ramadan?
 - a) Sahur
 - b) Asr
 - c) Iftar

1-C) In many parts of the world, Ramadan 2026 will begin on February 18. 2-a) This corresponds to year two of the Hegira, the Muslim era. 3-a) Sahur is the name of the pre-dawn meal, and Asr is the name of a prayer.

4-C) Travelers are also exempt. 5-C) This revelation occurred in 610 on the "Night of Power".

ANSWERS

Un message de votre élue

Ramadan Moubarak à la communauté musulmane. Que ce mois vous apporte calme, clarté et des beaux moments avec vos proches.

Ramadan Mubarak to the Muslim community. May this month bring you calm, clarity, and beautiful moments with your loved ones.



Aglaia Revelakis

Conseillère municipale de Chomedey

 a.revelakis@laval.ca

514-242-5761

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**RAMADAN
KAREEM**

Laval breaks ground on 100 new affordable housing units for seniors

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info@newsfirst.ca

A major milestone in senior housing was reached this week as construction officially kicked off on a new 100-unit social and affordable residence for independent older adults. The project, located on Saint-Elzéar Ouest Boulevard, marks a key step in a provincewide effort to expand housing options for low-income seniors and address mounting affordability pressures.

The building is part of the second phase of a larger initiative led by Mission Unitainés, a charitable organization dedicated to creating modern, accessible living environments for seniors across Quebec. Over the next two years, the organization plans to deliver 600 additional affordable units in six municipalities, including Laval, Valleyfield, Québec, Victoriaville, Trois-Rivières and Saguenay.

The event was attended by Caroline Proulx, Quebec Minister Responsible for Housing and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women; Madeleine Chenette, Member of Parliament for Thérèse-De Blainville; Sandra El-Helou, City Councillor for the District of Souvenir-Labelle; Caroline Sauriol, President and CEO of Mission Unitainés; and Danielle Lavoie, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Office municipal d'habitation de Laval.

A \$32.5 million collaboration

The new Laval project is funded through a diverse and collaborative financial model totaling \$32.5 million. Nearly \$22.5 million comes from the federal and provincial governments through joint housing programs intended to accelerate construction and increase supply. The City of Laval is contributing close to \$9.6 million, combining a grant, land donation and tax credit. A philanthropic gift of \$500,000 from Luc Maurice, Chair of Mission Unitainés, completes the funding package.

Construction is set to begin within days, with completion

expected in winter 2027. Once built, the Office municipal d'habitation de Laval will assume responsibility for managing the residence and supporting tenants.

Expanding an innovative model

The Mission Unitainés approach is being hailed as an innovative model for creating affordable housing at scale. Its first phase, launched in 2024, committed to 1,100 new units across 11 cities, backed by significant government investment. The second phase builds on that momentum with an additional government commitment of more than \$135 million.

Under this model, Mission Unitainés oversees the design and construction of each building and then transfers it to a municipality or designated non-profit for a symbolic fee—free of debt and without a mortgage. Each residence also receives a dedicated reserve fund of \$500,000 from philanthropic donations, helping ensure long-term quality and financial stability. Additional community partners contribute funding and services aimed at enhancing residents' quality of life.

Officials note that economies of scale and the organization's streamlined processes make it possible to build significantly more units at a lower cost than traditional public-sector housing projects.

Designed for safety, comfort and community

The forthcoming building in Laval has been planned with accessibility and community living in mind. All 100 units will be adaptable for residents with reduced mobility. The design includes two elevators, sprinklers, an emergency generator, and dedicated scooter parking. Shared amenities will feature an air-conditioned multipurpose common room, outdoor patio spaces and landscaped areas intended to encourage social interaction.

The first tenants are expected to move in during the winter of 2027.



A broad coalition behind the project

The groundbreaking event brought together leaders from all levels of government, municipal officials and representatives from Mission Unitainés and the local housing office. Speakers emphasized that the project responds to a growing need for safe, stable housing options for seniors—a demographic particularly affected by rising rents and limited availability of affordable units.

Officials praised the collaboration as a model for future development, highlighting its ability to rapidly produce high-quality homes while keeping long-term costs manageable for residents. Several leaders underscored the importance of helping seniors age with dignity in their own communities, stressing that secure housing plays a crucial role in maintaining health, independence and social connections.

A new chapter for senior housing in Laval

With demand for affordable senior housing continuing to rise, Laval's new development represents both a practical solution and a symbol of renewed commitment to vulnerable residents. By combining public investment, municipal support and philanthropic contributions, the project aims to deliver a modern, welcoming home for more than 100 seniors—and serve as a blueprint for communities across the province.

Commission scolaire SIR-WILFRID-LAURIER – Élection scolaire du 22 mars 2026
AVIS public – Révision de la liste électorale

AVIS PUBLIC est par la présente donné aux électrices et électeurs de la Commission scolaire Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier par Lorraine Sperano Gauthier, présidente d'élection, que :

1. La liste électorale de la commission scolaire a été déposée au centre administratif de la commission scolaire le 9 février 2026.
2. La liste électorale de la circonscription 9 sera l'objet d'une révision.
3. Les conditions requises pour être une électrice ou un électeur et avoir le droit d'être inscrit(e) sur la liste électorale sont les suivantes :
Toute personne qui, le 22 mars 2026 :
 - est majeure (avoir 18 ans accomplis);
 - est de citoyenneté canadienne;
 - est domiciliée sur le territoire de la commission scolaire;
 - est domiciliée au Québec depuis au moins six (6) mois;
 - n'a pas perdu son droit de vote à cause d'une tutelle;
 - n'a pas été déclarée coupable, au cours des cinq dernières années, d'une infraction constituant une manœuvre électorale frauduleuse en matière électorale ou référendaire;
 - et
 - a un(e) enfant admis(e) aux services éducatifs de la commission scolaire anglophone qui dessert son domicile;
 - ou
 - n'a pas d'enfant admis(e) aux services éducatifs de la commission scolaire anglophone ou du centre de services scolaire francophone qui dessert son domicile. Cette personne a le droit de choisir d'être inscrite sur la liste électorale de la commission scolaire anglophone, ou de révoquer ce choix.
4. La liste électorale peut être consultée auprès d'une commission de révision, d'une personne désignée à cette fin ou de la présidente d'élection.
5. Les demandes d'inscription, de radiation et de correction, ainsi que les avis de choix d'exercer son droit de vote dans une commission scolaire anglophone, peuvent être présentés devant une commission de révision, une personne désignée à cette fin ou la présidente d'élection.
6. Lors d'une demande d'inscription, l'adresse précédente de la personne visée doit être indiquée. De plus, deux documents doivent être présentés : l'un mentionnant le nom et la date de naissance, et l'autre, le nom et l'adresse du domicile.
7. Les endroits, jours et heures pour consulter la liste électorale ou présenter une demande sont les suivants :

Commission de révision	Personnes désignées – 25 février	Bureau de la présidente d'élection
Centre administratif 235, Montée Lesage Rosemère (Québec) J7A 4Y6	École primaire Jules Verne 1701, rue de l'École Laval (Québec) H7G 1V5	Centre administratif 235, Montée Lesage Rosemère (Québec) J7A 4Y6 450 621-5600, poste 3420
23 février – 11 h à 17 h 24 février – 11 h à 17 h 26 février – 13 h à 19 h 3 mars – 17 h à 22 h	25 février – 16 h à 18 h	
	École primaire Saint-Vincent 3000, boul. de la Concorde Est, Laval (Québec) H7E 2B6	
	25 février – 16 h 30 à 19 h	

Donné à Rosemère, le 16 février 2026.
Lorraine Sperano Gauthier
Présidente d'élection

235, montée Lesage
Rosemère (Québec) J7A 4Y6
450 621-5600
www.sirl.ca

SIR WILFRID LAURIER School Board – School election on March 22, 2026
Public Notice – Revision of the List of Electors

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given to the electors of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board by Lorraine Sperano Gauthier, returning officer, that:

1. The school board's list of electors was filed at the administrative centre of the school board on February 9, 2026.
2. The list of electors for electoral division 9 is subject to revision.
3. The requirements to be met by a person to be an elector and to be entitled to be registered on the list of electors are the following:
Any person who, on March 22, 2026:
 - is at least 18 years of age;
 - is a Canadian citizen;
 - is domiciled in the territory of the school board;
 - Has been domiciled in Québec for at least six (6) months;
 - Has not lost the right to vote due to a tutelage;
 - Has not been convicted, within the last five years, of an offence constituting a corrupt electoral or referendum practice;
 - and
 - Has a child admitted to the educational services of the English-language school board serving their domicile;
 - or
 - Does not have a child admitted to the educational services of the English-language school board or the French school service centre serving their domicile. That person has the right to choose to be registered on the list of electors of the English-language school board, or to revoke that choice.
4. The list of electors may be consulted via a board of revisors, a person designated for this purpose, or the returning officer.
5. Applications for registration, removal, and correction, as well as notices of a choice to exercise the right to vote in an English-language school board may be made before a board of revisors, a person designated for this purpose or the returning officer.
6. When applying for registration, the previous address of the person concerned must be indicated. In addition, two documents must be submitted: one showing name and date of birth, and the other showing name and domiciliary address.
7. The places, days and times to view the list of electors or to present an application are the following:

Board of revisors	Designated persons	Office of the returning officer
Administrative Centre 235, Montée Lesage Rosemère (Québec) J7A 4Y6	Jules Verne Elementary School 1701, rue de l'École Laval (Québec), H7G 1V5	Administrative Centre 235, Montée Lesage Rosemère (Québec) J7A 4Y6 450 621-5600, ext. 3420
February 23 – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. February 24 – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. February 26 – 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. March 3 – 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.	February 25 – 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Saint-Vincent Elementary School 3000, boul. de la Concorde E. Laval (Québec), H7E 2B6	
		February 25 – 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Given at Rosemère on February 16, 2026.
Lorraine Sperano Gauthier
Returning Officer

235, montée Lesage
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Arson suspected in major fire at Casa Grecque restaurant

Around \$1 million in damage was caused to the Casa Grecque restaurant at the corner of Daniel Johnson and Saint Martin boulevards during the early morning hours of February 14 following a fire, suspected as arson.

The fire was first reported at 2:17 a.m. after a motion detector alarm alerted the owner. Police and 21 firefighters were dispatched with first units arriving at 2:26 a.m. A broken window, sprinkler activation and light smoke were found – indicative of criminal activity.

The fire was declared under control by 2:36 a.m. thanks to the building's suppression system. No arrests have been made, although an investigation has been transferred to the Laval Police (SPL).

The incident is seen as part of a broader rise in criminal acts targeting Laval restaurants in

recent months. Based on a verified report, the exact cause of the Casa Grecque fire has not yet been determined, but authorities have confirmed that it was intentionally set.

The blaze is officially described as "suspicious" and of a criminal nature. Evidence found at the scene included: a broken window, suggesting forced entry; a motion detector alarm triggered by suspicious movement before the fire; and sprinklers which had already been activated upon the firefighters' arrival.

Authorities have not released information as to whether there was a specific ignition method (e.g., accelerant, device, etc.). However, all indication is that it was deliberately set and is part of a pattern of recent criminal attacks on Laval restaurants.



Health officials warn about toxic syrup

Following a Laval Public Health notice in 2023 about a suspected pharmaceutical overdose death, the Montreal Regional Public Health Department (DRSP) is warning about the circulation of a psychoactive syrup containing a mixture of depressants in the Greater Montreal area.

According to the DRSP, users who ingest the substance could be unknowingly exposed to risks of overdose and death.

In Montreal, a purple liquid containing protonitazene (a toxic opioid) and bromazepam (a benzodiazepine) was recently found in a pharmaceutical-grade bottle of syrup labeled "Promethazine with codeine oral solution."

Over time, according to the DRSP, different mixtures have been identified in containers of identical appearance. A person consuming this product could be exposed to an unpredictable

and toxic mixture, the DRSP says.

"Our investigation revealed that a purple liquid containing a mixture of methonitazene, clonazepam and an antihistamine was consumed," Laval Public Health said in November 2023 at the time of the overdose death.

Nitazene, similar to the drug singled out by officials in Montreal, is consumed in liquid form, often by young adults for recreational purposes. Containing codeine syrup, it is often mixed illicitly with a soft drink and may be sold in a cough syrup bottle.

"Some nitazenes are estimated to be several times more toxic than fentanyl," Laval Public Health warned in 2023. The substance poses an increased risk of respiratory arrest and death. Nitazenes are not detected by fentanyl detection strips.

Recent fire calls

Following a house fire on 2nd Avenue in Fabreville last weekend, the Laval Fire Department is warning that candles should always be used with caution and on a stable surface away from materials likely to catch fire.

The Association des pompiers de Laval (the firemen's brotherhood) posted on their X account: "FEBRUARY 14 | 11:31 PM // Building fire on 2nd Avenue in the Fabreville sector. Residential building. Dense smoke visible on the first floor and in the basement. Fire contained to the basement. Code was 10-07, intervention required."

It was 11:23 PM when 911 was called. Upon arrival, the firefighters could see that thick black smoke was billowing from the basement and first floor of the home just east of Route 148.

The source of the fire was found to be a basement bedroom. The blaze was reported as being under control shortly after midnight. Damage to the house was estimated at \$100,000 for the building and a further \$40,000 for its furnish-

ings and other contents.

Lévesque Blvd. auto service centre goes up in flames

A major fire at an auto service center at 3153 Lévesque Boulevard West in Chomedey on the evening of February 6 caused an estimated \$400,000 in damages.

"FEBRUARY 6 | 6:17 PM // Building fire on Lévesque Boulevard West in the Chomedey sector. Commercial building. Visible flames. Code 10-07, intervention required," the APL reported on their X feed.

Although closed at the time, the building was filled with smoke upon the arrival of firefighters, who faced a complex firefighting task because of the nature of the business.

The blaze was finally brought under control 2 hours and 45 minutes after the start of the operation. Damage to the building was estimated at \$300,000, with a further \$100,000 in damages to equipment and other contents.

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Kids' corner



5 breathtakingly colourful natural phenomena

This great blue planet is full of magnificent landscapes and awe-inspiring natural wonders, such as rainbows. Here are five vibrant phenomena that are as surprising and delightful as they are colourful.

1. Pink lakes. Around the world, you'll find several candy-pink lakes, most notably in Australia, Mexico and Senegal. This astonishing hue comes from microscopic algae, bacteria, shrimp, salts or plankton. Travellers love to photograph them.



2. Multicoloured mountains. In countries like Peru, Iran and Argentina, you can see mountains or hills covered in colourful stripes. Each stripe contains different minerals and metals. For example, copper creates green hues, sulphur produces yellow, and iron gives off a red tint. It's a fascinating sight!

3. Northern lights. This stunning display, also called aurora borealis, occurs when electric particles from the sun collide with

gases in the atmosphere. You can witness this amazing light show in the northern hemisphere at night. The northern lights dance across the sky in shades of red, green, blue and purple.

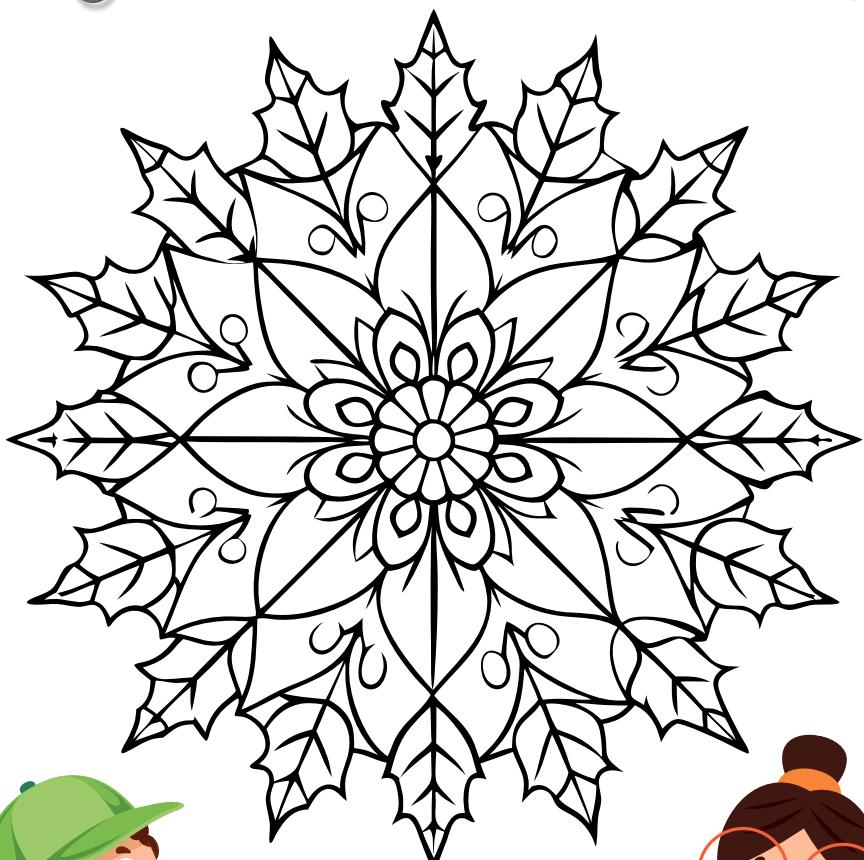


4. Giant blue flames. In Indonesia, there's a volcano that produces giant blue flames that can reach up to five metres high. This spectacular sight is caused by sulphur gas escaping from the lava and catching fire. If you want to see the flames clearly, you must wait until nightfall.

5. Light pillars. When the weather is cold, tiny ice crystals suspended in the atmosphere reflect light from various sources, creating the illusion of colourful pillars of light appearing above or below the moon or sun.

Which of these colourful phenomena would you like to experience?

Make a mandala



Being bored isn't bad!

Have you ever heard yourself saying "I'm bored" or unsure what to do? It's natural to feel this way, especially when you're not at school and your parents are busy. Even if you find this feeling unpleasant, being bored can actually be a good thing!

According to experts, bored children learn more about their interests and

develop their imagination. When there's no one telling you what to do, or if you're forbidden to look at screens, you can think of things you'd like to do.

After a few minutes or hours of twiddling your thumbs or sighing, you may even start to come up with some interesting and amazing ideas! Being

bored can also help you become more independent and boost your self-confidence because you can make your own choices.

So, even though your days may already be full, having some free time can be good for you. You never know, maybe one day you'll even enjoy spending more time alone.



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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

SECOND THOUGHTS

Q A young man I worked with asked me out. We had spent quite a bit of time together, and I may even have flirted. But deep down I didn't believe this could develop into a long-term relationship. I stated we were friends and colleagues, and I just wanted to remain friends.

The next day I reconsidered and thought I'd go on one date to be "nice," since he had the courage to ask. Thing is, the date never happened. This bothered me, or my ego, and I asked him about it months later. He said he didn't follow through because he wasn't sure he asked the right person. I was hurt.

Months passed and I kept my distance because I was embarrassed. But since we work together, I decided to start communicating again. After a bit of time, he said he wanted a second chance. He gave me gifts and kept calling and asking even when I turned down his physical advances.

I was in a state of tension as I had to work with him every day. Following more months of avoidance I convinced myself to give it a go. This time intimacy did occur, and it left me unhappy. He kept saying he loved me, and I could not respond as I couldn't say those words truthfully.

I've since left that job, and the distance has helped. I know now I need to keep physical intimacy to the confines of a proper commitment. Still I am left with guilt and question whether I need to explain myself to this man.

He still contacts me and says he loves me, and I still cannot respond. He's told mutual friends he has stayed in this town for me. He is a good man, but I don't know if I could be happy with him. I'm wondering if I'm the problem and if this would happen regardless of which man approached me.

Casey

A Casey, years ago there was a popular antismoking poster featuring the face of a cadaverous woman with a cigarette in her mouth. Under her head were the words "Smoking is very glamorous."

Do you think the tobacco companies were worried about that poster? Not at all. They know that extreme examples of health risks don't make people reform their behavior. Just the reverse. Because people can't identify with extreme examples, posters like that make smokers even more confident "it could never happen to me."

In the same way, if we painted a picture of a bickering couple whose marriage ends in divorce, you would not recognize yourself. But your picture could be on that poster, not because you are a cantankerous person, but because of a small error in your thinking.

From the beginning this man felt wrong to you. To be "nice" you overrode those feelings and ended up feeling snubbed. That snub led to embarrassment at work, physical intimacy, and now, a lack of belief in yourself and your own judgment.

A snub is like a scab we can't resist picking, but picking at a scab turns it into something worse. That is why pet owners put an Elizabethan collar on their dog or cat, so they can't bite or scratch the area which needs to heal. You have an area which needs to heal, and that is why you must stay away from this former coworker.

This whole chain of events started with an innocent decision to overrule your best instincts. But your instincts were correct. Deep down you know your desire for a relationship can never turn the wrong man into the right man. We get many letters from people who end up married to someone they didn't even want to date. It starts with one small step in the wrong direction.

Don't question yourself. Don't let second thoughts make you a poster child for unhappy marriages.

Wayne & Tamara

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

Send letters to: Direct Answers, PO 964 Springfield, MO 65801-0964
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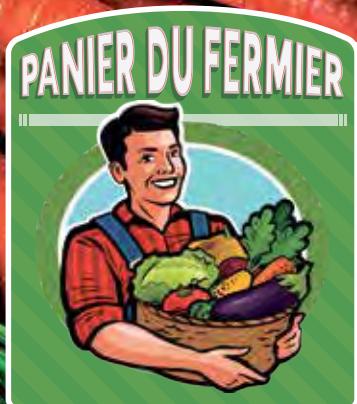
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Week of February 22 to 28, 2026

The luckiest signs this week:
LEO, VIRGO AND LIBRA



ARIES

A period of great dynamism is on the horizon. If you feel the urge to get away, now is the perfect time to revive those travel plans you had put on hold. Even a short solo getaway could inspire you and leave you with lasting memories.



TAURUS

You'll be overflowing with creativity this week, which could lead to a remarkable achievement, especially if you nurture your artistic side. If you align your lifestyle with your true aspirations, you'll find greater ease, and everything will naturally fall into place.



GEMINI

Take a break to regain your energy and find clarity. Let your creative or spiritual impulses flow freely. Getting involved in a charitable cause could also deeply nourish both your heart and mind.



CANCER

Invest more time in your social life, including social media, to expand your circle of friends. Joining a gym with friends to try a new sport will also open up new and exciting horizons for you.



LEO

Your joy and optimism will be contagious to everyone around you. You'll become more efficient at work, which will help you better support your colleagues. Your extra efforts won't go unnoticed, and you will soon be rewarded for them, reinforcing your motivation.



VIRGO

A spontaneous decision will push you to take a training course that will open the door to better career opportunities. A revelation will guide you toward fulfillment. However, you'll have to work hard to make this change a reality.



LIBRA

You may soon secure funding for a project close to your heart. A meeting with an advisor will help you consolidate your debts, bringing you financial stability and peace of mind for the future.



SCORPIO

Tidying up your home will help you clear your mind. Before you discuss a separation, speak openly with your partner to avoid making an impulsive decision that could lead to regrets.



SAGITTARIUS

At work, you must fine-tune your documents and proposals before presenting them; this will maximize their chances of approval. Your success will inspire you to refresh your wardrobe or treat yourself to a well-deserved reward.



CAPRICORN

You'll share exciting ideas with your friends this week and tap into a creative talent you're truly passionate about. Your growing self-confidence will pave the way for remarkable achievements that will soon fill you with pride.



AQUARIUS

You'll meet inspiring people who will expand your social circle and feed your spirituality. A professional or personal opportunity may even prompt you to consider moving soon.



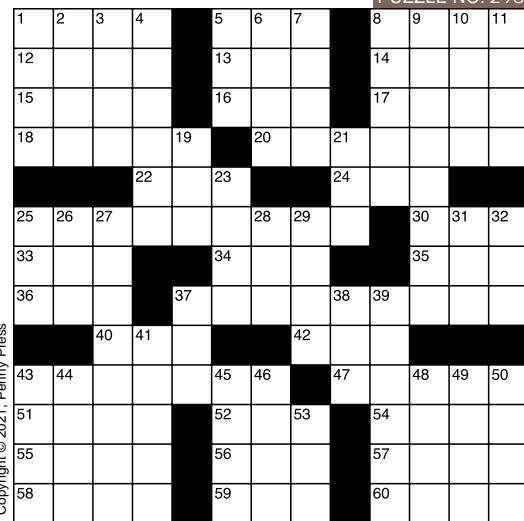
PISCES

You must show care and affection to prevent misunderstandings in your relationship. Open communication will lead to improvements. However, financial uncertainties could linger, so approach the situation with caution and honest dialogue.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 298

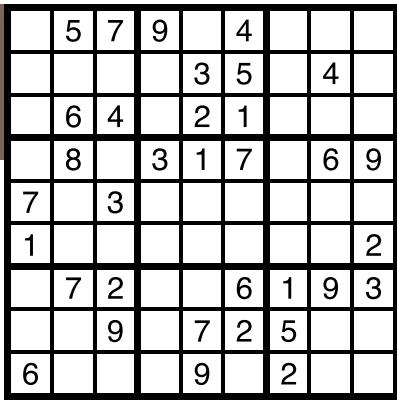


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ACROSS

- 1. Opposite of minus
- 5. Louse
- 8. Yodeler's feedback
- 12. Coarse file
- 13. Pub order
- 14. Without moisture
- 15. Completed
- 16. Afternoon brew
- 17. Moved, as merchandise
- 18. Teasdale and Gilbert
- 20. Results
- 22. Month segments: abbr.
- 24. Type
- 25. Alliance
- 30. Enjoy dinner
- 33. Night bird
- 34. Hospital ward: abbr.
- 35. Noah's number
- 36. Hairstyling goo
- 37. At this time
- 40. Before, in a poem
- 42. ___ close for comfort
- 43. Will-call
- 47. Indentation
- 51. Press clothes
- 52. Asian frying vessel
- 54. Hill's partner
- 55. Gambling machine
- 56. Dark bread
- 57. Untruthful person
- 58. Outdoes
- 59. Hither and ___
- 60. Stately trees
- 11. Gamblers' concerns
- 19. Go downhill on snow
- 21. Fish limb
- 23. Commotion
- 25. Wheel tooth
- 26. Be in arrears
- 27. Comic-strip cave man: 2 wds.
- 28. Frozen water
- 29. Eject
- 31. Puncturing tool
- 32. Santa's delivery
- 37. Sunday seat
- 38. Long period of time
- 39. Soup pasta
- 41. ___ and raves
- 43. Roster
- 44. Mr. Guthrie
- 45. Amiss
- 46. Child's plaything: hyph.
- 48. Dog's wagger
- 49. Kind of chowder
- 50. That girl's
- 53. Barbie's friend

PUZZLE NO. 991



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.

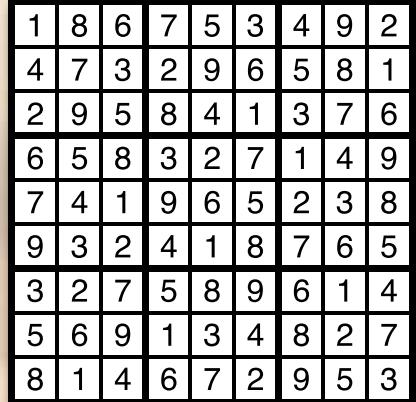
Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.

Last Issue's Answers

CROSSWORDS



Sudoku



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680, Jarry St East
Jarry Metro
514 490-0099

MONTREAL

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Place-des-Arts Metro
514 669-1880

Place du Quartier
(Chinatown)
1111, St-Urbain St
Place-des-Arts Metro
514 667-0077

Place Alexis Nihon
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Atwater Metro
514 939-5552

4257 Boul. St-Laurent
Mont-Royal Metro
514 439-9934

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