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Canada's economy bounces back at 85%

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No masks for students

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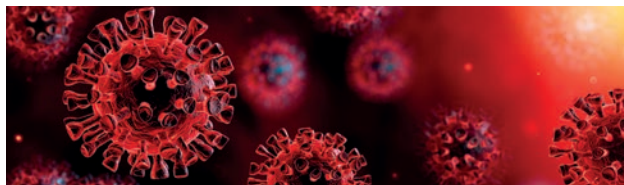


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When will life return to normal?

Health experts offer their best guesses



Maybe later this year, maybe never.

CBC News asked 170 health experts in Montreal to peer into their crystal balls and guess when they think life will return to a pre-pandemic normal. Their answers varied widely, reflecting the many unknowns of the disease, like the development of a vaccine and what the long-term effects will be.

Most respondents — 48 of the 128 who answered — declined to give a time range, saying it depends entirely on a vaccine. But a large portion (42 people) guessed that it would take at least one year, while an optimistic 26 thought that within a year things could resume their usual rhythm.

Only 19 people said that life would never return to normal, or that a “new normal” with more restrictions and cautions would settle in.

Below is a selection of responses that show the range in opinions.



Erica Moodie, professor of biostatistics, McGill University

“No, I don’t think it is possible [to return to normal]. But I think this brings advantages to the environment, to reduced burden of commuting, and greater family time.”



Benoit Barbeau, virologist and professor, UQAM

“Yes, but with changes in the management of basic sanitary measures in long-term care homes. A return to normal should take about two years.”



Erin Strumpf, associate professor of health economics, McGill University

“Even once a vaccine exists, there will be big challenges in getting a high enough rate of vaccine coverage (look at the problems we have getting the flu vaccine to those who are supposed to get it!). So I don’t think we will go back to the way things used to be for quite a long time.”



Hélène Carabin, professor of epidemiology, Université de Montréal

“I don’t believe that everything will return to ‘normal’. We learned a lot with the virus and I sincerely hope that the new normal will increase support and resources in public health, and that it will lead to a slightly less globalized world. I also hope that this experience will improve the conditions of seniors in long-term care homes and private residences.”



Dr. Nitika Pant Pai, professor of clinical epidemiology, McGill University

“I would like to say December 2020, but I think, today, I will pray for a return to normalcy by March 2021. We will observe the interplay of flu and Covid in the coming fall/winter season. I do hope that any effective vaccine against Covid-19 becomes available by early 2021. That’s a tall wish. But I will remain optimistic.”



Mireille Schnitzer, associate professor of biostatistics, Université de Montréal

“Either we accept that life is now far more dangerous than it used to be and accept that many around us will die, or we continue to take measures that interrupt our lives and the economy. Right now, it seems that individuals have diverse ways of dealing with the current situation, some being more careful and some being less.”

Some of this diversity is related to social and economic disparity; not everyone has the option to isolate. So it’s looking like without a vaccine, society is split by individualistic perspectives of risk and also socio-economic status.”



Dr. Jonathan Cooperman, emergency physician, Jewish General Hospital

“A return to normal is contingent on a successful vaccine or the development of an effective, long-lasting immune response post-infection. In the meantime, ‘normal’ will look very different across society. The workplace, school, retail, and even how we interact with each other in society will be somewhat different from place to place.”



Martin Olivier, professor of parasitology, McGill University

“Hopefully after the fall. It depends on the resilience of people globally. And, of course, if an effective vaccine can be used quickly.”



Lisa Koski, neuropsychologist, McGill University Health Centre

“If normal means like before, then only if we are able to develop a highly-effective vaccine, freely available, and a substantial proportion of the population takes it. Otherwise, we are looking at permanent changes to our behaviours in terms of mask-wearing, hand-washing and the ways we interact with others, which in time will begin to feel normal.”

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Canada's GDP bounced back in May, but it was still 15% below where it was before COVID-19

Construction, manufacturing and retail sectors led the charge higher



Bank of Montreal economist Benjamin Reitzes

(PXM-Dimitri Ilias) Canada's economy expanded by 4.5 per cent in May, a strong bounce back from the low hit in April, but still 15 per cent below the level it was at in February, before COVID-19 hit.

Statistics Canada reported that Canada's gross

domestic product — the total value, in dollars, of all the goods and services produced by the economy during the month — came in at a little more than \$1.7 trillion, annualized. That's up from April's annualized level of \$1.62 trillion, but still well shy of the \$1.99 trillion worth of economic activity the country churned out in February.

The data agency says 17 of the 20 sectors of the economy it tracks grew, but goods-producing industries bounced back especially strongly, up 8 per cent. The service sector's gain was comparatively lower, at 3.4 per cent.

The only parts of the economy that shrank again were management, public administration, and the arts and entertainment sector.

"The entertainment sector is going to be under ongoing pressure, though the restart of the NHL with both hubs in Canada should provide some support," Bank of Montreal economist Benjamin Reitzes noted after the data came out.

The construction industry posted the biggest gain, as activity came roaring back up 17.6 per cent after being shut down in March and April. Retail also boomed, with sales up 16.4 per cent. May was the biggest monthly expansion for both those industries since record-keeping began in 1961.

Economists had been expecting a rebound of about 3.5 per cent, so May's numbers were

better than expected. And the agency says preliminary data for June is even better, up five per cent from May's level.

But the numbers underline just how long the road back from COVID-19 is for Canada's economy. Output is still 15 per cent below where it was.

Reitzes noted that Statistics Canada's preliminary guess for May was 3 per cent, so the final number coming in at 4.5 per cent suggests the agency may be similarly short-changing its guess for June at just 5 per cent.

"StatsCan's estimate for June would put GDP at about 90 per cent of February levels, still leaving a big hole to climb out of," he said.

Trevin Stratton, chief economist with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said the bounce back in May was good to see, but underlines just how long and slow the recovery is poised to be.

"The road to recovery begins now by focusing on the economic fundamentals that will bring back investment, stimulate demand and create new jobs," he said, noting that the data suggests Canada is on track to have plunged by 12 per cent in the second quarter, a much worse performance than the 9.5 per cent contraction seen in the U.S.

"Our economy is still only 90 per cent of the size it was in February and public sector spend-

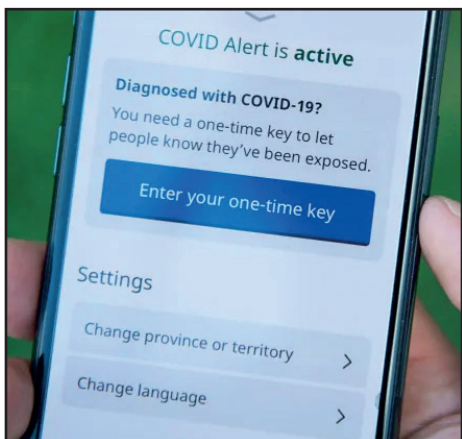


Trevin Stratton, chief economist with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce

ing will only get us so far," he said.

The road to recovery begins now by focusing on the economic fundamentals that will bring back investment, stimulate demand and create new jobs.

Mobile app for COVID-19 notification exposure



(PXM-Dimitri Ilias) Over the past several months, Canadians have been following public health advice and doing their part to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Now, as the government is taking steps to ease restrictions and safely restart the economy, it needs to continue to work with Canadians to contain the virus and keep Canadians safe and healthy.

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, and the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, announced recently that COVID Alert, a new national mobile app, is now available to Canadians for free download. The app, first developed in Ontario, helps notify users if they may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Use of COVID Alert is voluntary, and serves as another tool to help limit the spread of COVID-19. Once the app is fully functioning in their province or territory, users who test positive for COVID-19 will receive a one-time key from their health authority that they can enter into the app. When the key is entered, COVID Alert will notify other users who may have come in

close contact with that person for at least 15 minutes in the past 14 days, so they can contact their local public health authority for guidance.

To safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of all Canadians, the app uses strong measures to protect any data it collects, and does not track a user's location or collect personally identifiable information. The Privacy Commissioners of Canada and Ontario were consulted on the development of COVID Alert, to ensure the highest level of privacy for Canadians using the app.

An expert Advisory Council will ensure the app meets the highest standards in public health outcomes, privacy, and technology. The members of the Council reflect Canada's regional and cultural diversity, and cover a wide range of expertise, including health, privacy, data governance, science, and innovation. Their advice will inform the implementation and roll-out phases of the app.

The app has undergone a security assessment by BlackBerry and the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. All data provided to the app will be securely stored and protected.

The Government of Canada has taken extensive steps to ensure that citizens' privacy and data are protected. Given the importance the government assigns to these issues, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner has been consulted on this initiative.

COVID Alert is a collaboration between Health Canada, the Canadian Digital Service, the Province of Ontario, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. It builds upon an exposure notification solution developed by Shopify volunteers in coordination with the nonprofit Linux Foundation Public Health. It is also the work of a team of developers from across the country.

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OPINION & Editorial



CAQ comes through on campaign promise:

School taxes harmonized, drastically cut

While election campaign promises can be enticing, talk is cheap, and even leaders with the best intentions can have difficulty keeping them. What does it take to make campaign promises a reality? Candidates should make fewer promises, and only those they intend to keep.

However, most promises, if not all, are often used as persuasive sound-bites rather than actual commitments. Three of the most common campaign promises revolve around tax cuts, job creation, and healthcare.

Campaign promises may change slightly from election to election, but they are almost always related to current concerns on the minds of voters. Some may be ideological in nature, like "implementing governmental fiscal responsibility," or more specific, like proposing precise income tax or school tax cuts. Regardless of how they are proposed, there are promises that are credible and reasonable, and those that are simply shots in the dark. In honoring campaign promises, it looks like Premier François Legault, in full view of the light of day, is proving to

be credible, so far anyway.

Reforming and decentralizing the education system in Québec with the aim of reducing school taxes by 41 per cent was a major plank in the CAQ campaign platform. The first step was to remove the election of school commissioners, describing these elections as too expensive and not receiving enough interest from voters. In place of school boards, the CAQ proposed service centers, which would be responsible for the administration of local schools, overseen by a board of directors of parents, community representatives, and school staff members.

According to the campaign promises, the CAQ wished to give more money directly to schools, for the benefit of students, noting that too much money was lost on administration costs. From the CAQ's point of view, redundancy existed in too many aspects of public education. It was to be a huge housecleaning and with the CAQ's winning of the election, as many as 5,000 positions across the system were projected to be cut, mostly from retirements and reassignment of people to other positions.

Legault had long maintained that he wanted to lower and eventually eliminate school taxes as part of the CAQ plan to abolish school boards. He articulated these two intentions prior to and during the election campaign of 2018, and pledged, that if elected, he would act quickly on the matter. He promised as early as 2014 that he was committed to abolishing the school tax. At the time, he said he wanted to gradually reduce it, over four years, to 10 cents per \$100 of property assessment. As of the 2020-2021 assessment, a definitive end has been put to the inequities in school taxes by applying a single reduced rate across Québec.

Over the past 17 years, under Liberal governments led by Jean Charest and Philippe Couillard, perpetuated by a brief interruption under Pauline Marois, school taxes had risen 113%, to about 1.2 billion dollars. Under Couillard alone, 2014-2018, the spike totalled 700 million dollars. To complicate matters, the Couillard Administration dangled an uneven drop in school taxes from one region to another. Throughout his tenure in opposition, Legault denounced the Liberal Policy on school taxes, arguing that reform was urgent. The taxes were too high, the assessment was not standardized, and he voiced specific concerns over how the uneven assessments could be justified to citizens of La Mauricie or Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean who would pay rates higher than those of citizens of other regions. For Legault, the Liberal solution was haphazard, unbalanced and inexplicably discriminatory and needed extensive revamping.

To work the CAQ went, promising a reduction of the tax over a period of 4 years, to the lowest current rate, 10.54 cents per \$100 of property assessment, a cut of 700 million dollars for Québec families. In doing so, the CAQ would reduce school taxes to levels before 2003, said the CAQ leader during the 2018 campaign.

Unlike the Liberals, who were opening the door in Bill 166 to further increases in school taxes in the aftermath of elections, the CAQ decreed a reduction followed by a freeze of school taxes for the duration of their mandate, if elected. They were elected, with a majority government, no less, and so we have major reforms in school taxes, as provided in Bill 3 – Québec Bill To Establish A Single Tax Rate.

In other reforms of the Education system, the CAQ platform included several other measures: free optional pre-school for four year-olds; creation of Service Centers run by parents, community members, staff representatives, and school directors; abolishing the traditional school boards; increasing elementary school recess periods to a minimum of two 20-minute periods a day; increasing high school extra-curricular activities per day; encourage schools to build an engineering/architecture competition; and to increasing human resources such as speech therapists, psychologists, and teachers. Most of these changes have been enshrined in part or in whole in Bill 40.

But let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. Bill 40's provision for abolishing school boards is under threat from a court challenge lodged by the English Montreal School Board and QESBA, the lobby group that often speaks and advocates for Québec's nine English School Boards.

PARLEZ-MOI D'HUMOUR

Alcide Borik



Le sait tout

Permettez moi, mesdames de vous
dédier ce mot d'août

Non, ce n'est pas un poème à 2 août,

Ni même un poème à quatre août

Arrêtez de prier votre saint août

Et découpez ce poème avec vos beaux 6 août

Car vous êtes avant tout, la femme qui 7 août!

Et qui, sans rien entendre, a déjà huit août.

Demain, allons au golf pratiquer le 9 trou

Avant le confinement que l'on voudrait 10 août.

Cherchez votre conjoint, dites-lui : allez 11 zôut?

S'il se montre intrépide, douze août, douze août,

...L'ami, il faut vous mon 13 août! avec moi...

Ainsi sera votre fête du quatorze au quinze août

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Rappelez-lui de vous fêter ce mau 17 août,

Et qu'il n'oublie jamais ton cad'août...

Dis, sweetoût, il y a encore 19 foûs.

Si on buvait un peu de vin d' août?

Ça coûte seulement vingt et un z'août!

Un verre de vin 7 août,

Avant que date ne passe au vin tweet,

Après, ce sera du vin neuf d'août

Et ce sera la fin de t'août !

► Continued on page 13

Park Extension expected to see surge in business when school starts up again come the fall

With the Université de Montréal campus, the Vanier College Continuing Education campus and the plethora of schools in the area, business should boom after trying times during Covid-19 – business owners are hopeful



DOMENIC MARINELLI
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
For The Parc-Extension News
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Local businesses are doing quite well despite a drop in sales and overall production. They have definitely suffered quite a bit and their overall earnings have taken more than a gradual dip, but they are moving right along.

But some feel that business should in fact pick up when school gets around to opening up again in the fall, especially the newly built college campuses on Beaumont. We spoke to some local businessmen and got an inside look at what should be expected if all goes as they expect.

Vanier College campus

Vanier College's main campus is nestled quite safely in Ville St. Laurent. It has schooled residents of the entire city and abroad since 1970. The school expanded and they opened a campus in Park Extension finding a home on Beaumont Avenue. It opened in 2019 and as we then reported, City Councilwoman Mary Deros was there for the inauguration ceremony. She stated then that "... The Université de Montréal is a French institution that will be providing higher education ... For our local people, Vanier

College will help them advance ... We have a lot of new immigrants who speak better English than French and it will be easier for them ... But Vanier will also be giving English and French-language courses, which is what they need to be able to get jobs, to integrate. I'm very excited about all this ..."

Of course all of this was before the dawn of Covid-19 and to say that the school suffered, as all institutions did, would be a grave understatement.

Université de Montréal campus

And just down the road from the Vanier campus lies one of Montreal's highly respected universities. Considered the first building on the MIL campus, the many departments held therein include: the Faculty of Arts and Science: chemistry, geography, and even the biological sciences.

It has been stated on the university website that they plan to open two new wings in the years to come. Intended departments to be housed include: computer sciences, mathematics and statistics and operations research.

The demographic of students that attend the school primarily range from early twenties and onward, so it's safe to assume that restaurants can be flooded as school commences in the fall.

Other schools

There are other schools that children and teens attend outside of the Park Extension borrow, but St. Raphael School and a plethora of others are right at the center of Park-Ex, and students from there may definitely be good for churning up some business for local vendors as mentioned earlier. For students attending schools outside of Park Ex, they too may be good for some business before and after school hours as well.

What local businesses have to say

And it isn't just restaurants, of course, that are expected to see a surge in business. We spoke to Ali Tokgoz, owner of Gold Scissor on St. Roch Street, and he said that he too is expecting to see business rise, and at least by 20%, which for him is quite positive. "There are a lot of students in the area; Park Ex has changed a lot in the last few years," he says.

They (as a barber shop) offer up-to-date styles that a younger clientele would be into, "so a lot of students come." He sounded quite hopeful. We reported on them in recent weeks and although they aren't suffering as much as other businesses, a surge would definitely do them some good.



Barclay school ... empty, like all schools for the moment, but soon students will be flooding the halls and potentially buying candy, chips and drinks at local vendors by the fall

High hopes

In the end, it remains to be seen exactly how business will do once school starts up again, but the projection looks quite positive thus far. It could go either of two ways: 1) children are told by parents not to attend local restaurants and corner stores for their food and snacks out of fear of contracting the Covid-19 virus, or 2) they are encouraged to trust and order from the many restaurants in the area, and purchase services and goods, supporting local business. It's a tossup really, and one that will be interesting to see how it turns out.

No masks for students, for now says Roberge

Quebec says it's sticking to its plan



Quebec Education Minister Jean-François Roberge released his back-to-school plan for the fall term on Tuesday morning

(PXN-Dimitri Ilias) Quebec's education ministry says it isn't currently planning to follow Ontario's lead and make masks mandatory in school for older students.

Ontario's back-to-school plan, will have elementary students returning to school full-time, and requires students in Grades 4 to 12 to wear masks all day.

In a statement sent Quebec's education ministry said the fall school plan it unveiled in June — which does not require students to wear face coverings — remains the plan.

"As the overall epidemiological situation in Quebec has improved, the physical presence of students at school is compulsory for the

start of the school year next September with the authorization of the public health department and health measures put in place," the statement says.

The Quebec plan does require face coverings for preschool teachers, special-needs teachers and vocational training teachers, as well as for staff during certain situations that require close contact.

The education ministry notes that the pandemic situation is evolving, and that the public health department may "adapt current recommendations if necessary."

▶ Continued on page 13

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The second wave is coming...

Here's what public health experts say we should expect

For many health specialists, a second wave of COVID-19 infections isn't a matter of if but when — and how bad it will be.

And some epidemiologists believe the second wave may already be underway.

The good news is that many of these experts also say the severity and duration of that wave can be kept under control and that it is not a foregone conclusion that Quebec will again fare worse than the rest of the country.

Those observations are based on the answers of more than one hundred medical doctors, epidemiologists, public health experts and medical researchers in an informal survey circulated earlier this month.

Of those who answered, two-thirds indicated that a second wave was "very likely." A further 24 per cent said it was "somewhat likely."

The concept of a second wave is contested and carries different meanings. It should be understood here at its most basic level: another sustained increase in infections.

Second wave is inevitable

Some experts believe a second wave is inevitable, based on the history of infectious diseases such as SARS, a respiratory illness caused by a virus that is genetically related to the coronavirus, which causes COVID-19.

"It's useful to understand that a second wave is not a discrete thing that happens or doesn't," said Dr. Cédric Yansouni, an infectious-disease physician at the McGill University Health Centre in Montreal. "There haven't been any pandemics



Tatiana Scorza, an immunologist at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

of respiratory diseases that had a single wave. "You will always have ongoing transmission for some time. It can last for months and up to a two-year period."

Another reason a second wave is likely is that not enough people were infected in the first wave to generate sufficient levels of immunity in the population at large.

"Second waves are expected for airborne transmitted viral infections for several reasons, the

principal being the existence of a large population of unexposed [non-immune] hosts," said Tatiana Scorza, an immunologist at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

A study by Canada's COVID-19 Immunity Task Force, which did not include blood samples from Quebec, estimated that less than one per cent of Canadians have had the virus. The results of a separate study of Quebec blood samples are expected next month.

What will it look like?

There have been some indications that a second wave could already be underway in Quebec.

After peaking in late April and early May, the rolling average of new cases in the province reached its lowest point in the final days of June.

But the average has climbed steadily since the start of the month, and now stands at more than 150 new cases per day.

"If it starts increasing and not coming down over the next two weeks, I would say we'd be into a second wave," said Mark Goldberg, an environmental epidemiologist and professor in the department of medicine at McGill University.

The Quebec government says despite the increase in cases, the public-health situation remains under control. It points to the low number of deaths and hospitalizations.

But Benoit Mâsse, a professor at the school of public health at Université de Montréal, cautioned that the increase in hospitalizations will likely come later.

He expects infections will increase for several more weeks. The danger, he said, is in September, when schools resume and the public begins to spend more time indoors, where the chances of infection are higher.

"We can expect a more substantial increase in infections with a rise in hospitalizations by the end of October, early November," Mâsse said in an email exchange.



Dr. Brian White-Guay, a public health and family medicine specialist who teaches at Université de Montréal.

enza. It is a different animal."

What should we do about it?

While experts maintain another round of infections is inevitable, they say its severity will depend on government policy and the willingness of the public to follow guidelines.

Not only do scientists know much more about COVID-19 than they did six months ago, but the public is better informed about hygiene measures and elected officials also have a wider range of policy tools at their disposal.

"I think everybody's learned a lot," said Dr. Brian White-Guay, a public health and family medicine specialist who teaches at Université de Montréal.

"It's likely that things would be handled differently in a second-wave setting."

He suggested that health authorities, for example, now have a better understanding of which segments of the population are more vulnerable to COVID-19 and how best to protect them from the disease.

As part of the survey CBC Montreal and Radio-Canada circulated to health experts in early July, we asked an open-ended question about what the Quebec government should do when a second wave of the virus hits.

The most popular response?

Make masks mandatory.

Though the province implemented province-wide mask requirements in indoor public spaces as of July 18, the answers to our survey suggest the government was late in catching up with the scientific consensus.

"It should have been done much earlier in the pandemic," said Dr. Eva Suarathana, a medical epidemiologist at Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur de Montréal.

Another popular response was to stress protecting elderly Quebecers, especially those living in long-term care centres, where the vast majority of deaths occurred during the first wave.

Several experts said they were happy to see that provincial health authorities have already begun to implement tighter infection-control protocols and are training 10,000 new patient attendants for long-term care homes (CHSLDs).

But they also warned that delays in implementing these measures could come at a serious human cost.

"If we are not able to put in place proper measures to provide greater protection for [the] most vulnerable groups, there is reason to believe we would see a significant order of casualties, possibly up to the range of what we saw in the first wave," said White-Guay



Janusz Kaczorowski, professor and research director in the department of emergency and family medicine at Université de Montréal

Other experts are more reluctant to offer predictions. They stress that because the virus is new, there is a lack of data allowing them to anticipate infection patterns.

Janusz Kaczorowski, a professor and research director in the department of emergency and family medicine at Université de Montréal, pointed out that many of his colleagues initially expected infections to decrease over the summer months, much like the flu, another virus thought to be transmitted by airborne droplets.

"Look at what's happening now in the United States ... I mean the numbers are going through the roof," Kaczorowski said.

"It doesn't look like COVID is necessarily following the same pattern as the annual influ-

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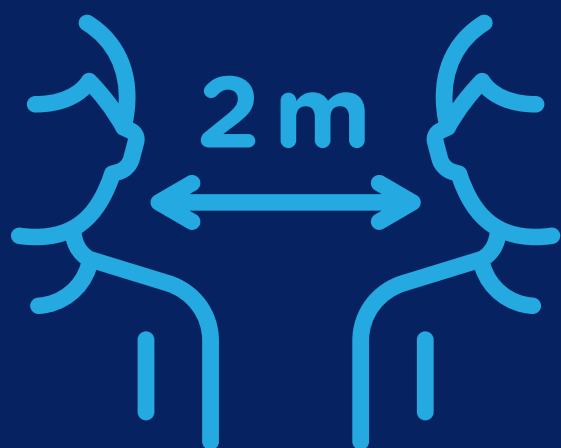
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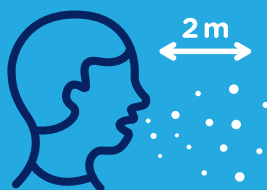
**Portez un
masque**



**Lavez
vos mains**



**Gardez vos
distances**



Le virus se transmet d'une personne à une autre par le contact avec les gouttelettes infectées qui sont projetées dans l'air quand une personne infectée parle, tousse ou éternue. Ces gouttelettes contaminées peuvent être projetées à une distance de deux mètres et atteindre des personnes qui sont à proximité.



Le virus peut aussi se transmettre par les surfaces ou les objets contaminés. Les gouttelettes projetées par une personne infectée peuvent se déposer sur des surfaces et le virus peut y survivre de quelques heures à quelques jours. Une personne infectée peut aussi contaminer ses mains en touchant son visage, augmentant ainsi le risque de contaminer les surfaces qu'elle touche. Les personnes qui toucheront ces surfaces ou ces objets contaminés pourront contaminer leurs mains. Et si elles les portent ensuite à leur visage, elles pourraient s'infecter.

En maintenant une distance de deux mètres avec les autres en tout temps, en lavant ses mains souvent et en portant le masque, on réduit le risque de contamination.

On continue de bien se protéger.

[Québec.ca/coronavirus](https://quebec.ca/coronavirus)

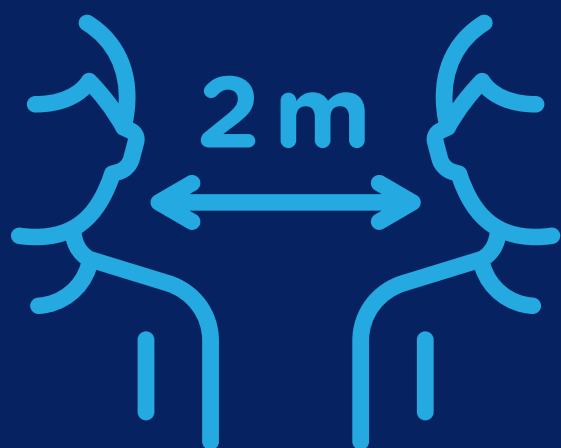
 1 877 644-4545



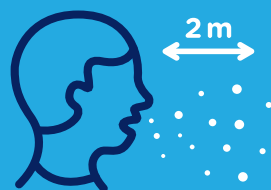
**Wear
a mask**



**Wash
your hands**



**Keep your
distance**



The virus is primarily transmitted from person to person by contact with contaminated droplets released into the air when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. These contaminated droplets can travel up to two metres and reach people nearby.



The virus can also be spread by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects. Droplets expelled by an infected person can land on surfaces, and the virus can survive there anywhere from several hours to several days. An infected person can also contaminate their hands by touching their face, thereby increasing the risk of contaminating surfaces they touch. Other people who touch these surfaces or objects can contaminate their hands. And if they then bring them to their face, they can infect themselves.

By staying two metres away from others at all times, washing your hands often and wearing a mask, we can reduce the risk of contamination.

Let's continue to protect ourselves.

[Québec.ca/coronavirus](https://quebec.ca/coronavirus)

 1 877 644-4545

Astor Candles - lighting the way through disaster

Astor has been around for 40 years – join us as we take a look back through the years & at how they're doing during Covid-19



DOMENIC MARINELLI
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
For The Parc-Extension News
dominic@newsfirst.ca

It is possible that in this fast-paced world of ours, the businesses that have been around for decades ... businesses that provide not only a service, but a product that can only be made or fabricated by expert hands have gone out of favor. Many would of course think so, but it is not the case.

It is in such businesses that have stood the test of time, that an individual that is intent on giving a finished product of supreme beauty and understanding all at once that that finished product means more to the recipient than anything else, that the old businesses thrive most.

Astor Candles and the people behind the name definitely understand that, and even through the mess that Covid-19 brought along with it was extremely threatening, they delivered that product still, and still do as they have for all these years since their inception.

Because even in times of peril, there are certain needs that people can't do without: They need to eat, they need to mourn when it's called for (and perhaps even more in times like these), they need to look upon something as simple, but as beautiful as a wick burning through wax that is produced at the hands of an expert craftsman, and for whatever reason.

A brief history & family background



Yannis' Father / a blast from the long-gone past (from family's personal photo .collection)



Interior Astor Candles – Park Extension / Shelves and shelves lined with the family's extensive candle work

Astor Candles has been the quintessential place to purchase candles in Montréal since 1980. They have specialized in the manufacturing of personalized candles and candles of a religious persuasion since the business's inception and Yannis Hatzichristidis' own arrival to the city after emigrating here from Greece.

Their range of clients can go from the restaurant industry to any other branch of hospitality like reception halls, cafes, bistros, etc. They also cater to the community of churches across the city and Laval to the north. But of course their reach goes way beyond those regions as well. We'll get into this a little later in the article, but their work has been featured in Hollywood films as well; the intricacy of said work available to be seen in some of Tinsel Town's most dominant releases. In fact, they had recently worked on providing the candles for one specific film we cannot mention whose release was slated for 2020 but delayed because of Covid-19. I was privy to some of the work they did do for that film, and shown some of the candles when I visited the Park Extension location last week, and dare I say it, the items created were as beautiful as all the other work I saw strewn about the store, warehouse and workshop.

Their company website claims: "Whatever color, texture, height, width and decor specifications are required for your candles, we will meet them. Personalized candles are our business."

We have absolutely no doubt of this, as the intricacy of the works displayed in the store were extremely well-executed and showed a side of candle-making you can't really see in candles purchased at your local dollar store, I'm afraid.

It's a family run business. There are no outsiders involved, really. The primary members of the operation consist of Yannis himself and Elizabeth, one of his daughters, but other family members are also involved.

To go a little further in history to Yannis' father: he operated a business in Greece that had a hand in many products, so Yannis had a very good teacher, it can be said. Yannis claims that he learned the candle making trade back

there in Piraeus specifically, and he brought his knowledge here ... arriving in Montréal when he was 27 years old.

Of the family accolades he is especially proud of his brother, Professor Nikos Hatzichristidis, who has done extensive work in the chemical sciences, specifically, polymers and "novel model homopolymers, copolymers with well-defined complex macromolecular architectures" as per the KAUST website (King Abdullah University of Science & Technology).

Affects of Covid-19

The wedding industry—if it can in fact be called an industry—in and of itself was obviously hit quite hard during Covid-19, and thus they were hit at Astor.

Elizabeth, Yannis' daughter, had this to say about the virus and its effects on their business: "We are not functioning obviously as we used to be functioning, which is a given. But, you know ... we just keep going; our business is tied to industries that were more heavily hit. Restaurants, reception halls, churches ... which all involve gatherings of people—and they can't gather!"

When asked what kind of business was left



Owner of Astor Candles for the last 40 years, bringing light to the community

The film business in detail

As stated, the company has provided candles in the form of set décor for many Hollywood films. We were shown photographs of the work they did specifically for the production of *The Covenant*, directed by Renny Harlin (*Cliffhanger*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *Die Hard 2*, *12 Rounds*, and most recently, *The Misfits*). The



A look at the final product in film – production shot from the film *The Covenant*

after taking away all those aforementioned potential clientele, she said: "Right now, it's all about our store front. People were a little timid at first" She trailed off then, but we saw her meaning when we witnessed many clients coming in to purchase items in store and inquire about possible orders in the near future.

So essentially, they're taking it day by day, and as Yannis said himself: "It's not too bad."

Elizabeth decided to leave behind her previous career to have more of a role in the family business. She holds a criminology degree and a law degree but decided that the family business was "where it was at."

film starred Taylor Kitsch (*John Carter*, *Lone Survivor*), as well as other up and comers of the era (2006).

The work done for this film leans towards the gothic genre, as the film specifically called for this sort of work, as can be seen in the images shown.

The making of candles in general

The Roman's were making candles as early as 500 BC. In China as well, as early as 221-206

▶ Continued on page 13

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TARGET NUMBER ONE

PG-13 | Thriller | 2h15



NOW PLAYING

In 1989, a Canadian journalist investigates the circumstances surrounding the suspicious arrest of a heroin addict imprisoned in a Thai jail.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

G | Animation | 1h40



NOW PLAYING

Sonic and Tom join forces to try and stop the villainous Dr. Robotnik from capturing Sonic and using his immense powers for world domination.

PANDAS - THE IMAX EXPERIENCE

G | Documentary

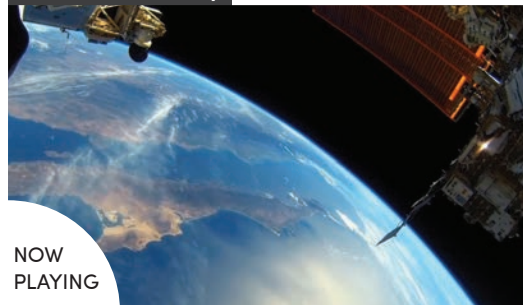


NOW PLAYING

An American biologist embarks on a life-changing journey to China to help scientists breed giant pandas and introduce the cubs into the wild.

A BEAUTIFUL PLANET

G | Documentary



NOW PLAYING

A Beautiful Planet is a breathtaking portrait of Earth from space, providing a unique perspective and increased understanding of our planet and galaxy as never seen before.

GREENLAND

PG-13 | Action | 1h59



COMING SOON

A family struggles for survival in the face of a cataclysmic natural disaster.

THE KING'S MAN

R | Action



COMING SOON

In the early years of the 20th century, the Kingsman agency is formed to stand against a cabal plotting a war to wipe out millions.

THE NEW MUTANTS

PG-13 | Action | 1h38



COMING SOON

Five young mutants, just discovering their abilities while held in a secret facility against their will, fight to escape their past sins and save themselves.

MONSTER HUNTER

PG-13 | Action | Fantasy



COMING SOON

When Lt. Artemis and her loyal soldiers are transported to a new world, they engage in a desperate battle for survival against enormous enemies with incredible powers.

◀ **Continued from page 4**

As well, the proposed election of the boards of directors of the newly-created Service Centres, as applicable to the English school boards, slated for November 1, 2020 may well be jeopardized by the uncertainty of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

In both these scenarios, only time will tell where the educational reforms stipulated in Bill 40 will see the light of day as intended. For those opposed to Bill 40, this is a desired unfolding of the Québec public education universe. Those who view Bill 40 as a much-needed step

forward, the fingers are crossed that the delay is only temporary.

But as of now, the good news is that the tax standardization and reduction have pleased tax payers, especially the long-suffering ones who have been paying through the proverbial nose because they remained loyal to financially supporting English school boards whose tax rates were far higher than those of tax payers in French boards. It was about time, wasn't it?

Renata Isopo

◀ **Continued from page 5**

Heidi Yetman, the president of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers, which represents 8,000 English-language teachers, said she expects Quebec's plan to change before the school year begins.

Yetman said a directive for older students to wear masks while travelling, moving around in school hallways and in situations where a number of students are gathered together would likely be supported by teachers and parents.

"I don't think masks would be a problem at the high school level," Yetman said. "If they're distanced enough in the classroom, they could remove their masks once they're sitting at their desks. So it wouldn't be a constant 8 hours a day of mask wearing." "I think it's a bit too soon to go full-blast ahead. We have to be cautious, especially when the cold weather arrives in late October–November. That's when flu season starts, so I'm concerned."

Heading back to school

The government's plan to reopen schools was approved by public health officials given the decline in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks, said Education Minister Jean-François Roberge Tuesday.

Roberge said he's heard from pediatric specialists who say that while the virus is dangerous, not going to school is dangerous, too — for the success rate and for children's mental health.

"I think we should do all we can to prepare schools to accept almost all kids in school," he said.

Students in preschool up to Grade 9 will be back at their schools. Classes will respect the regular, pre-pandemic ratios, but there will be subgroups of up to six students who will not have to respect the usual two-metre physical-distancing rule.

The subgroups will have to stay one metre away from one another, and all students will have to stay two metres away from adults. The

students will have an assigned classroom, and the teachers will come to them.

For Grade 10 and 11 students, there are two options — they will either follow the same protocol as their younger peers, or they will attend school one day out of two.

They would have online classes and take-home work to do on the days they aren't physically at school.

CEGEP and university students will do a mix of in-school and at-home online learning, although several institutions of higher learning have already said they plan to hold the bulk of the fall semester online.

Classes will be mandatory

It has been optional for parents to send their kids back to school this spring, where classes have reopened, but it will be mandatory next year.

Roberge said parents should be reassured that there weren't many cases of COVID-19 when schools outside Montreal reopened, and most of the time, the students and teachers who came down with the virus didn't catch it at school.

"If the specialists of health care in Quebec say it's safe, I think we should have confidence in them. They know what they're doing," he said.

Covid-19 stats in schools

Between May 11 and May 31, 78 cases of COVID-19 were confirmed among students and staff across multiple schools in Quebec. As of June 12, there are 22 active cases — 10 students and 12 staff.

School boards and school centres will also have to come up with an emergency protocol to deal with a second wave of the pandemic or outbreaks in classrooms, schools or specific regions without interrupting studies, Roberge said.

Those plans would include gathering computer materials that would be lent out and figuring out how to accompany students with learning disabilities.

◀ **Continued from page 11**

BC. From ancient times to modern day times, the materials used have obviously changed to adapt from handmade to machinery made, a plethora of wax types used as well. The process has passed from generations to generations and has obviously seen many revolutions, no doubt.

A point of appropriate note here would be to say that the ancient Greeks associated the use of candles to honor goddess Artemis's birth, and this was specifically during lunar months on the sixth day specifically.

Of course, times have certainly moved on from just that.

When asked how he goes about making the candles, Yannis simply responded: "machinery." Elizabeth updated that it was up-to-date machinery. He elaborated a little in Greek and when his daughter Elizabeth translated for me, the only specific added to his statement was that they also do a lot of work by hand. I didn't press them further, as he didn't seem all that intent on releasing any tricks of the trade and I don't blame him, as a true artist never really talks about the artwork he unearths; he just unleashes it onto the world, very much like a sculptor.

Products

They have and offer custom candles ... any size. Some were quite large. Some that I was shown were over a meter in height and over 12 inches in diameter.

Right now they're open Monday to Friday, 9-7 and on the weekend from 10-5.

All candles are manufactured there; they also sell Icons—religious icons of equal beauty which are imported from Greece, France and Italy, but sold on the premises. Statues, busts, relics of the orthodox tradition—even mythology and the artists that brought us the most important of Greek myths are present and for sale. As I interviewed Yannis and his daughter, a small chrome statue of Homer, author of The Iliad and The Odyssey, stared down at me as I jotted down notes.

It was odd for me, because it didn't escape me that what Homer had created was built to last, and what this man that sat before me had built, and is still building, was made to whiter away in flame. Yet still somehow, it lasts for those that invest in his product, and in his own right, he is an artist and his work will live on through his daughters, family, the films his work has appeared in and in his legacy ... a man that sells in Park Extension, and serves the community in good times and in bad ... Yannis, the Chandler.

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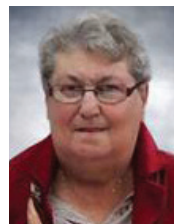
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DESAULNIERS (NOBERT), GISÈLE 1938 - 2020



In Montreal, on Thursday, July 30, 2020, Ms. Gisèle Nobert passed away at the age of 81. She is survived by her husband André Desaulniers, her sons Daniel (Carole), Leo (Johanne), Alain (Huguette), Mario (Linda), her grandchildren Valérie, Fanny, Krystel, Chanel, Audrey, Katherine, Bianca, her great-grandchildren, her brothers Romeo (Noella), Guy (Denise), (Fire Roland, Fernand, Edgar, Noel and Leo).

MULCAHY MOSGROVE, MARY PAULINE 1932 - 2020



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Mary "Marie" Pauline Mulcahy Mosgrove on August 2nd, 2020 at the age of 88 years, after a brief illness. Mary was predeceased by her adoptive parents, Joseph and Annie Mulcahy. Also, she was predeceased by her BFF, Rebecca Sumagaysay. She leaves to mourn, her two daughters, Roseann "Julie" (Pauline), and Deborah Marie.

JOHNNY (FRASCADORE), JEAN 1955 - 2020



In Montreal, on Thursday, July 30, 2020, Jean FRASCADORE, spouse of France Pelletier, passed away at the age of 64. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his son Jonathan Pelletier (Magali Durand), his daughter Julie Frascadore (Kevin Maheu), his grandchildren Allyson, Maelys, Lydia and Lohan, his brothers and sisters, his mother-in-law Françoise Cantin as well as several relatives and friends.

FARNESI, TOMMASO 1923 - 2020



In St. Leonard, Saturday, August 1, 2020, TOMMASO FARNESI passed away at the age of 96. Husband of the late Venanzina Vescovo. He is survived by his children Giuseppe (Nicole) and Leonardo (Imelda), his grandchildren Claudia and Carla, his great-grandson Luca, his sister Sandrina and his brother Giancarlo (Carole) as well as nephews and nieces, relatives and friends.



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HOROSCOPE

Week of **August 16 to August 23, 2020**

The luckiest signs this week:
LIBRA SCORPIO AND SAGITTARIUS



ARIES

It only takes a few small victories to boost your self-esteem. These successes will earn you the credibility you need to kick-start a project that's close to your heart.



TAURUS

You'll set up a workspace at home. Once you let go of your insecurities, your leadership traits will allow you to successfully develop your own business.



GEMINI

Your thoughts will be consumed by affairs of the heart this week. Subtle gestures and words of affection will make you realize the extent of your feelings for your partner.



CANCER

You may consider selling or purchasing a property. You'll find a way to reduce your expenses so you can improve your family's quality of life.



LEO

You'll have the chance to treat yourself, and you might even consider buying a new car. A few people will ask for your help, and you'll do so willingly, even if it requires a lot of running around.



VIRGO

A careful assessment of your budget will reveal that you have the means to pursue your goals. You'll have the money to accomplish one of your wildest dreams, and you'll find the courage to go for it.



LIBRA

You'll find yourself discouraged by all the tasks on your plate. Luckily, you'll realize you have what it takes to be successful. Afterwards, nothing will stand in your way.



SCORPIO

Sometimes you need to take a step back in order to gain a clearer perspective of what lies ahead. You'll set your sights on a career goal that matches your ambitions, but you'll need to climb the ladder one rung at a time.



SAGITTARIUS

Even though your vacation just ended, you'll start planning a trip with a group of friends. At work, you'll organize a meeting that'll turn out to be very important.



CAPRICORN

You're filled with a desire to elevate yourself intellectually and spiritually. You decide to follow a new career path or adopt a more enriching lifestyle. Don't be afraid of change.



AQUARIUS

You won't need much time to reflect before making significant decisions about your personal and professional future. During an important negotiation, you'll need to carefully weight the pros and cons



PISCES

The perfect compromise doesn't always exist, especially when a lot of people are involved. You'll need to use your imagination to create harmony and resolve conflicts.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

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ACROSS

1. Take it easy
5. Prepare a salad
9. Health haven
12. Bullets and bombs
13. Toward the center of
14. Chop down
15. Cat call
16. Strip
17. Rowing device
18. Sock type
20. Eagerly
22. Chalice
24. Sway
28. Wrongdoing
32. Ring of light
33. ___ Gawain
35. Unearth
36. World's fair, e.g.
37. Most compact
39. Shear

42. Blackboard cleaner
45. Dozen
50. British saloon
51. Florence's river
53. Ooze
54. Sick
55. Glide high
56. Long hair
57. Bee chaser
58. Work units
59. Moved quickly

DOWN

1. Shangri-La official
2. Sign
3. On a rampage
4. Chicken
5. Creeps
6. ___ at a time
7. Swipe
8. Clear up
9. Wearing boots
10. Chime
11. Crooked necessity
21. Details
23. Wedding-cake topper
24. "___ Wore a Yellow Ribbon"
25. Income or sales follower
26. European mountain
27. Blunders
29. Scramble (for)
30. ___ and outs
31. Said yes to
34. Ministers
38. Never used
40. Rental contract
41. Fallacy
42. Monumental story
43. Dominate
44. Adept
46. Graceful trees
47. Vault
48. Windmill blade
49. ___ out (barely earned)
52. Henpeck

Sudoku

PUZZLE NO. 718

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

HOW TO PLAY:

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

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

Last Issues' Answers

CROSSWORDS

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

Sudoku

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



Suggested presentation.



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