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newsfirst

Vol. 32-03

9 février 2024 / February 9, 2024

450-978-9999

www.px-news.com

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Tuition hikes at McGill and Concordia

Indirect impacts on Park-Extension students

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The recent decision by Quebec's Higher Education Minister, Pascale Déry, to increase tuition fees by 33% for non-Quebec Canadian students at McGill and Concordia Universities has sparked a complex debate, extending its influence beyond the directly affected demographic. Students from the Park-Extension area, who predominantly attend these institutions, are facing an indirect yet significant impact from this policy change.

Although the tuition hike, raising fees from \$9,000 to \$12,000 annually, directly targets non-resident Quebec students, its ripple effects are felt among local students. One of the main concerns is the potential financial strain on these universities.

With The Globe and Mail reporting a substantial decrease in enrollment applications - 22% for McGill and 27% for Concordia - there's a growing anxiety about how this drop in enrollment could affect the financial health of these institutions.

For Park-Extension students, the prospect of their universities facing financial difficulties is worrisome. A reduction in revenue from tuition could lead to cutbacks in various services and resources essential for a quality educational experience. This might include scaling back on research opportunities, reducing funding for student-led initiatives, or even limiting the availability of certain courses or programs.

The Advisory Committee on Financial Accessibility to Studies, led by Éric Tessier, has voiced its disapproval of the new fee structure. The committee, in its unpublished report, questioned

the rationale behind setting the new fee at \$12,000 and suggested aligning it more closely with the Canadian average of \$7,800. This recommendation highlights the delicate balance between financing higher education and maintaining accessible, diverse educational environments.

The policy change also challenges the principle of the law aiming to limit the indexing of several government tariffs, including tuition fees, to 3% until 2026-2027. This raises broader concerns about the government's commitment to affordable education and the impact of such decisions on the overall educational landscape in Quebec.

Minister Déry's unwavering stance, despite the advisory committee's recommendations and procedural concerns regarding the timing of their advice, underscores a potential disconnect between policy decisions and community needs.



The current composition of the advisory committee, with only seven members and a single student representative, further emphasizes the need for more diverse and representative voices in such critical discussions.

For Park-Extension students, the situation is a stark reminder of the interconnectedness of educational policies. While they may not be directly affected by the tuition hike, the potential financial implications for their universities could significantly shape their academic journey. It highlights the importance of inclusive policy-making that considers the far-reaching impacts of decisions on all stakeholders in the educational ecosystem.

Celebrating diversity, education, and linguistic heritage

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The borough council of Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension, in its session on December 6th, 2023, took significant steps to honor and celebrate diversity, education, and cultural heritage, through the approval of several motions that reflect the community's commitment to these values.

Firstly, the council officially proclaimed February as "Black History Month" in alignment with the national celebration that has been observed since February 1995, following Dr. Augustine's motion in the House of Commons. This proclamation recognizes the contributions of the Black community to the Canadian society and particu-

larly in Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension. It marks a commitment to not only remembering the past but also promoting inclusivity and understanding of the diverse fabric that forms the Canadian societal tapestry. The celebration is an invitation to all citizens to participate in activities that highlight the achievements and history of the Black community, thereby enriching the city's cultural heritage.

In addition to this, the council declared the week of February 12-16, 2024, as the School Perseverance Days. This announcement comes on the 20th campaign of the event, emphasizing the theme "Persevering is in the Present!" This initiative recognizes the crucial role of community support in fostering students' academic success and the importance of educational success as

a collaborative effort. Municipal officials have shown their support for youth and the educational network, aligning with broader efforts like the Educational Success Movement. The School Perseverance Days serve as a call to action for the community to support students, highlighting the importance of perseverance in achieving educational goals.

Furthermore, the council proclaimed February 21, 2024, as International Mother Language Day, aligning with UNESCO's declaration since February 21, 2000. This day commemorates the 1952 Language Movement in Bangladesh and underlines the importance of linguistic rights. It's a day that not only remembers the past but also addresses the current challenges in linguistic diversity. By celebrating this day, Villeray-Saint-

Michel-Parc-Extension shows its dedication to preserving and promoting all languages and emphasizes the need for policies that support multilingualism and multiculturalism.

These proclamations by the Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough council demonstrate a profound commitment to embracing and celebrating diversity, education, and cultural heritage. These initiatives send a powerful message of unity, respect, and recognition of the diverse backgrounds and experiences that enrich the community. As the borough prepares to observe these significant events, it stands as a beacon of diversity, educational commitment, and linguistic heritage, fostering an environment of respect, understanding, and appreciation for all its inhabitants.

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Nouvelles PARC-EXTENSION News

9500
Copies

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Laval, QC H7V 1S1

Tel: 450-978-9999 • Fax: 450-687-6330

E-mail: editor@newsfirst.ca

www.px-news.com

Distribué dans le district
de Parc Extension.
Distribution in the
Park Extension area. H3N



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Layout: Media Trek

Distribution: TC. TRANSCONTINENTAL

Printing: TC. TRANSCONTINENTAL

National Representation:

 RÉSEAU SÉLECT
MÉDIAS PUBLIÉS
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Project funded in part by



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OPINION & Editorial



Canada's marketing boards a barrier to affordable food

*Governments can easily address high food prices by phasing out
marketing boards*

Rising food prices have taken centre stage in Canada, and at the core of this issue are the marketing boards, which hold considerable sway over our ability to buy affordable groceries.

While governments have acknowledged the importance of ensuring Canadian families have access to affordable food for their well-being, their approach to addressing the issue is misdirected.

Rather than addressing the root causes of rising prices, the Trudeau government's strategy is simply to blame supermarket chains and demand that they lower prices, backing their demand with the threat of increased taxes.

While large grocery retailers do have some control over pricing, their influence is not absolute. Competition abounds among the supermarket giants, smaller food vendors, and fast-food suppliers, all vying for consumer loyalty. This competition acts as a natural check on price hikes.

However, there's a critical aspect that grocery retailers cannot govern – the costs of essential inputs needed to keep their businesses running. Labour shortages are driving up staff wages, energy prices impact fuel costs for delivery trucks and other logistics, and most significantly, the supply of food itself has become scarcer and more costly due to external factors

such as wars and unpredictable weather events.

In light of these uncontrollable cost pressures, the government's tactic of threatening retailers with taxes, if they fail to reduce prices, is akin to attempting to quell a boiling pot without adjusting the heat.

One food industry segment that holds considerable monopoly power, resulting in prices significantly higher than market rates, is marketing boards. These boards allow producers to restrict supply, set prices above global market rates, and inhibit competition from more efficient suppliers.

Dairy, eggs, and poultry, staple components of the Canadian diet, fall under the purview of these marketing boards. The escalating prices for these essential items, like milk, place a strain on Canadian households, particularly young families.

We've long endured overpayment for these basic foodstuffs, even earning the moniker 'cheese heads' when we cross the U.S. border in search of more reasonably priced dairy products, free from the constraints of Canada's marketing boards.

The justifications for this monopolistic pricing revolve around safeguarding both farmers and the public. The argument asserts that farmers would struggle to survive without these

boards, and food security and safety would be compromised. However, this narrative doesn't hold up under scrutiny.

Even if Canada didn't produce dairy, eggs, and poultry domestically, we could import these foods at global market prices, often lower than our domestic rates. Are we to believe that food from countries like Australia or the U.S. is inherently unsafe?

In Canada, around 15,000 farmers benefit from the protection of marketing boards. With a population of 40 million, this means that approximately 2,700 consumers bear the burden of monopoly pricing for every protected farmer.

I have faith in the resilience of Canadian farmers and believe that they can thrive in a competitive market economy. New Zealand serves as a prime example, transitioning from a highly protected environment for its farmers to an open market. Faced with competition, their producers became more efficient and productive, resulting in lower food prices for New Zealanders and transforming the country into a major food exporter.

If the government genuinely aims to address the rising cost of food for all Canadians, it's high time that marketing boards are phased out.

Dr. Roslyn Kunin

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Medical assistance in dying

Quebec's urgent call for exceptional measures from Ottawa

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In a recent development that has resonated within the community of Park-Extension, the Quebec government has intensified its demands for the federal government to amend the Criminal Code. This amendment is crucial for Quebec to proceed with advanced requests for medical assistance in dying (MAID) as early as this fall.

The heart of the issue lies in Quebec's readiness to move forward with MAID for individuals with cognitive illnesses leading to incapacity, such as Alzheimer's disease. This move is proposed to happen almost a year earlier than initially planned. However, Quebec faces

a significant hurdle as the federal government shows reluctance to modify the Criminal Code accordingly.

This impasse has prompted Quebec ministers, including Sonia Bélanger (Health), Simon Jolin-Barrette (Justice), and Jean-François Roberge (Canadian Relations), to advocate for conditional legislation. This approach would allow the Criminal Code to enable advanced requests only in provinces like Quebec, where such a policy is desired. This strategy is like the regulatory framework governing lotteries in Canada, where the practice is forbidden unless a provincial government chooses to authorize it.

The urgency of this matter for the Quebec government is highlighted by their request for the federal Health Minister to amend a bill introduced last week. This bill aims to extend

the eligibility period for individuals with mental health disorders by three years and would include provisions for advanced requests.

This push by Quebec officials comes after a series of discussions with their federal counterparts, which reportedly showed no signs of willingness to accommodate Quebec's policy on advanced requests. Despite numerous attempts, the federal response has been seen as non-committal.

Interestingly, this issue is not unique to Quebec. As early as 2021, the Quebec Special Commission on MAID recommended that adults suffering from serious illnesses that will lead to incapacity be allowed to make advanced requests. A similar sentiment was echoed in Ottawa, where an independent joint committee on MAID supported the same idea a year ago.



Luc Thériault, a federal MP from the Bloc Québécois and vice-chair of the joint committee on MAID, expressed frustration over the Trudeau government's inaction. Despite a coast-to-coast consensus on advanced requests, only Conservative MPs have shown systematic reluctance. Thériault is urging the Liberal government to muster the courage to address this issue promptly, especially given the looming electoral deadline.

His concerns are amplified by the possibility that a Conservative government could indefinitely delay access to MAID, leaving many in unnecessary suffering. This sentiment resonates strongly in Park-Extension, a community known for its advocacy for compassionate and equitable healthcare access.

A policy to develop and supervise nightlife activities in Montreal

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Montreal, including vibrant neighbourhoods like Park-Extension, is taking a significant step towards enhancing its nightlife experience. With the objective of allowing both residents and tourists to enjoy the city during extended hours, Montreal has embarked on a nightlife policy project. This initiative seeks to create a dynamic, inclusive, and safe nightlife environment that adds to the city's identity and economic prosperity.

Montreal's nocturnal identity

Montreal's nocturnal scene has long been celebrated for its creativity and liveliness, contributing to the city's status as a cultural and economic hub. Recognizing this, the city aims to further enrich the nightlife experience, offering residents and visitors more opportunities to enjoy Montreal after sunset.

Development through collaboration

The development of this policy has been a collaborative effort, involving various stakeholders, pilot projects, and extensive research. The resulting draft policy is now open for public consultation, ensuring that the voices and



concerns of Montrealers are heard and integrated into the final framework.

Preserving residential peace

While expanding nightlife activities, the city is mindful of preserving the tranquility of residential neighborhoods. To achieve this balance, the project will be rolled out gradually in areas deemed suitable for evening and nighttime activities. These zones will be identified by individual boroughs, in collaboration with cultural, economic, and community partners, as well as input from the local population. Regulations will be tailored to each specific area to maintain the quality of life for Montrealers.

Three key objectives

The draft policy is organized into three main orientations:

- **Business Opportunities:** The policy seeks to provide new business opportunities and distribution channels for commercial and cultural partners, ensuring a harmonious coexistence between nighttime activities and the community's needs.
- **Dynamic and Safe Nightlife:** Montreal aims to offer a dynamic and secure nightlife scene, placing emphasis on entrepreneurship and the unique Montreal cultural experience.
- **Preservation and Growth:** The policy is designed to safeguard existing nighttime activities while also supporting the growth of emerging sectors within the city's nocturnal

landscape.

Understanding the nighttime period

Montreal's nighttime activities are categorized into three distinct time slots:

- **Evening:** 6 p.m. to 12 a.m.
- **Heart of the Night:** 12:00 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.
- **Early Morning:** 4:30 a.m. to 6 a.m.

These time slots offer unique dynamics and challenges, with nightlife activities occurring in various settings, including restaurants, bars, shops, cultural venues, and public spaces.

Engage in the public consultation

The city encourages its partners, including the Montreal population, to actively participate in the public consultation process. This provides an opportunity for individuals and organizations to voice their opinions, share suggestions, and define their desired roles in the implementation of this transformative policy.

Park-Ex borough and beyond

As the nightlife policy takes shape, each borough, including Park-Extension, will play a crucial role in defining the specific areas and regulations that align with the needs and desires of its residents. Together, Montreal is poised to create a nightlife experience that is not only exciting but also respectful of its diverse communities.



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Recognizing over 400 years African-Canadian history

Black Canadians have long strived to have their accomplishments and contributions recognized and to keep their often-untold history alive. In 1995 the Parliament of Canada officially recognized February as Black History Month. The motion was brought forward by the Honourable Jean Augustine, MP of Etobicoke-Lakeshore – and the first Canadian black woman elected to parliament – but there were antecedents for Black History Month from the 1950s onward.

The first black people in Canada arrived over 400 years ago. These first Africans were brought to Canada – as they were in the United States – as slaves. Though slavery was abolished in Upper Canada (now Ontario) in 1793, it was only in 1833 that the rest of Canada – and its fellow British colonies – followed suit under the British Imperial Act for the Abolition of Slavery. As a result of Upper Canada's progressiveness, many black slaves in America escaped to places like St. Catharine's, Windsor and Toronto via the Underground Railroad.

However, freedom for black people was limited as many public places and insti-

tutions were deeply segregated. Black Canadians were systematically denied opportunities for growth, economic and otherwise, due to race. One of the few jobs black men were allowed to perform was that of railway porter. Consequently, this group of workers unified and played a massive role in the pursuit of black rights within Canada.

Despite its struggles, the African-Canadian community has made extraordinary contributions to this country. Black Canadians have saved lives as doctors, upheld the law as judges and lawyers, entertained us as actors and musicians, competed and won as athletes, and informed us as writers and journalists.



A brief but honest look at Black history in Canada

February is Black History Month and an opportunity to honour the legacy of Black people in this country. Unfortunately, when most Canadians are taught about Black history, Canada's involvement in the Underground Railroad takes centre stage, while slavery and racial segregation are framed as American issues. In order to build a more equitable future for all Canadians, it's important to take an honest look at the past.

TWO CENTURIES OF SLAVERY

The first African slaves arrived in New France in the early 1600s and, for the next 200 years or so, the territory that would become Canada participated in the transatlantic slave trade. Black (and Indigenous) people were bought, sold, traded and inherited as property and forced to work without compensation.

Since slaves didn't have basic rights in New France or British North America, many were treated cruelly by their owners, even tortured, sexually abused and killed. Black people resisted enslavement in various ways, sometimes fleeing to places like Vermont where slavery was banned in the late 18th century.

Although the practice had decreased significantly by the 1820s, slavery wasn't abolished in British North America until 1834, just 30 years before the United States.

A LONG ROAD TO EQUALITY

For more than a century after slavery was outlawed, ideas about racial inferiority persisted and were used to justify racial segregation across the country. Laws, court decisions and social norms denied Black Canadians equal access to opportunities and services ranging from employment and education to housing and health care. Theatres, restaurants and other commercial establishments enforced segregated seating policies well into the 20th century. The last segregated school in Canada didn't close until 1983.

This is just a glimpse of Black history in Canada. In order to truly honour the legacy of Black Canadians, make time to learn more this February. You could visit historical sites, museums and libraries in your community or watch documentaries, listen to podcasts and read research-based articles online.

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YEAR IN REVIEW 2023



JULY 2023

'Don't touch the parking!'

More than 150 Parc Extension residents, who had serious concerns about the Borough of VSMPE's plan to reduce parking spaces to create bike paths on Ball, De l'Épée and Querbes avenues, staged a noisy but peaceful march from Athena Park to the borough's Ogilvy Ave. administrative offices to table a petition demanding the strategy be withdrawn or put to a referendum.

According to an outline of the borough's bike path plans for 2023, 39 parking spaces were withdrawn on the south side of Ball Ave. between Stuart and Durocher as a result of the introduction of a bike route along that east/west street.



Borough council allocated millions to protect vulnerable individuals in VSP

Millions of dollars were allocated by the Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough council to protect the most vulnerable individuals in the community. Elected officials approved financial contributions amounting to nearly \$3 million to support 20 projects initiated by 17 community organizations within the VSP territory. These projects were part of the Montreal Prevention Program.

The focus of these initiatives was to assist children, people under 30, and their parents who are living in vulnerable situations or are at risk of exclusion. The projects aligned with the innovative approach of the Youth Crime Prevention Strategy of the borough and incorporated several recommendations from the local assessment on the safety of girls, women, and seniors in VSP.

By combining the Youth Crime Prevention Strategy and the local assessment, a comprehensive and detailed overview of the urban safety of the territory was achieved. The understanding of the specific challenges faced by each target group allowed for more effective intervention strategies.

AUGUST 2023

Ball Ave. became a one-way street

Motorists in Parc Ex long in the habit of driving eastward from l'Acadie Blvd. along Ball Ave. to reach Querbes Ave. can no longer use that route after a new westbound one-way rule came into effect last Monday Aug. 28 on Ball.

Under the new traffic directive, Ball becomes a westbound one-way between Stuart and Durocher.

According to local city councillor Mary Deros, the purpose of the change is to create more streetspace for all-season bicycle paths that are going to be implemented along the north and south sides of Ball.



Empowering Safety: VSP's important move for Girls, Women, and Seniors

The borough partnered with the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) to undertake an innovative initiative aimed at fostering safety and security for its diverse population. The collaboration marked the first time a Montreal borough embarked on such an endeavour.

Past undertakings, including the Youth Crime Prevention Strategy, often fell short in addressing the unique safety concerns of women, girls, and seniors within the borough. Recognizing these gaps, VSP turned to the ICPC to provide a comprehensive evaluation of security concerns.

Relocation of organizations from William-Hingston Complex

A cluster of about fifteen partner organizations, formerly housed within the William-Hingston complex in Parc-Extension, moved to new locations. The move was the result of collaborative efforts between these organizations, the City, and its allied partners.

SEPTEMBER 2023

Police eject Parc Ex bike path protesters from borough council meeting

In spite of bike path protesters' threats to vote the current Villeray/Saint-Michel/Parc Extension borough administration out of office, Borough Mayor Laurence Lavigne Lalonde had two especially noisy protesters ejected by police from the borough council's monthly meeting after warning them.

"We knew when we started to do this that it would impact the citizens and it would change the way we do things normally," she said, inciting an uproar of angry voices in the borough hall.

"Your answers are irrelevant," longtime Parc Ex resident Mario Di Chiaro, who helped organize the opposition, shot back. He was eventually escorted out by police "You don't care who pays the taxes," he continued. "You don't care that our driver's licenses pay a percentage to build your roads so you can make bike paths."

"We have a voice. We're allowed to do this," shouted Stella Baiakis, another Parc Exer, before she too was also asked to leave by police officers and ended up being accompanied out. "She doesn't understand and she doesn't listen and she's very condescending," she added, referring to the borough mayor.

Parc-Extension's battle over bike lanes leads to vandalism

The controversial move to eliminate 250 parking spots in favour of new bike lanes not only triggered growing dissent, but also resulted in acts of vandalism.



In September, the conflict escalated when vandals spread paint and oil on the roads and removed no-parking signs. The heart of the dispute was on the intersection of Querbes Avenue and d'Anvers Avenue, where dozens of protesters took to the streets. Their aim? To prevent workers from the Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough from continuing their bike lane development work. Police were on the scene to maintain order.

OCTOBER 2023

School violence epidemic

A wave of violence swept through Quebec schools, leaving parents increasingly concerned about the safety of their children. The incidents, including a large-scale brawl involving over 100 students at École Secondaire Antoine-Brossard and an alarming assault on a 65-year-old teacher in a Laval-area school, raised questions about the adequacy of safety measures within educational institutions.

The consequences of these incidents extended beyond the immediate physical harm caused to individuals; they posed a significant threat to the sense of security and well-being in Park-Extension, one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in Montreal.



Improving healthcare access

Quebec took strides to improve access and coordination of front-line services, promising a substantial impact on the residents of Park-Extension—a borough experiencing the shortcomings of the medical system, like other parts of Montreal.

Christian Dubé, the Minister of Health, introduced a new approach – the appointment of Michel Delamarre as Access Coordinator in order to respond more effectively to the health needs of the population and address challenges related to emergency and surgical delays.

The key focus of Delamarre's initial mandate was on the Front-Line Access Desk (GAP) as an alternative to the emergency room. This move aimed to streamline processes and make healthcare services more accessible to the population.



NOVEMBER 2023

Mary Deros presented Achievement Award



At The Palace convention centre in Laval, the Socrates Educational Foundation bestowed the longtime Montreal city councillor Mary Deros with their Achievement Award. It was also the 25th anniversary of her first election in 1998. To top things off, former Montreal mayor Pierre Bourque, who launched Deros's political career when he recruited her for his Vision Montreal team, attended the educational foundation's 11th annual fundraiser as an honoured guest.

For the last 15 years, the Socrates Educational Foundation (SEF) has raised funds to help those families who want to send their children to the Socrates-Demosthenes schools, but cannot do so due to financial constraints. More than \$500,000 were given in order to keep an average of 25 students a year enrolled in the Socrates-Demosthenes schools.

Fall economic statement left independent businesses needing urgent support

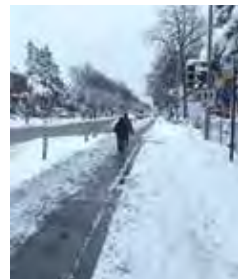
Parc-Extension is home to a diverse array of independent businesses, from cozy cafes to family-run shops. These small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been the backbone of our community, offering unique products and services while fostering a sense of connection. However, recent challenges left many Parc-Extension SMEs struggling to keep their doors open.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), the Federal Fall Economic Statement 2023 provided an opportunity for the government to announce measures aimed at supporting SMEs. Rising costs, driven by factors such as high-interest rates, pandemic-related debts, declining consumer demand, and labour shortages, created an uncertain future for many Parc-Extension businesses.

DECEMBER 2023

Pedestrians "trapped" in winter due to new bike paths

In an urgent appeal, Mary Deros, city councillor for Parc-Extension, contacted Parc-Extension News with cellphone photos highlighting the post-snowstorm scenario on December 12th. Deros criticized the city's snow-clearing priorities, pointing out that bike paths were cleared before sidewalks. "In Park-Ex, the bike paths have priority, not the sidewalks," she said.



This decision resulted in piled snow on cars and sidewalks, compelling residents to walk on bike paths for safety, as vividly depicted in her photos. Deros expressed dismay at the lack of consideration for local citizens, questioning the presence of cyclists in such weather, and emphasizing the need for pedestrian-friendly policies.

Quebec teachers' strike continued

In the borough of Parc-Extension in Montreal, the impact of the teachers' strike was particularly palpable. Teachers affiliated with the FAE (Federation Autonome de l'Enseignement) in Quebec, including those in Parc-Extension's schools, had been absent from their classrooms for nearly a month. The situation arised as negotiations with the Quebec government continued at a frustratingly slow pace. Teachers were actively voicing their demands for improved working conditions on the streets. A critical concern was the current composition of classes, which were brimming with students who face various challenges.

This issue was especially significant in Parc-Extension, where the diverse student population often requires additional resources and support to thrive academically.





DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

COMMERCIAL BREAK

Q *My problem is my father-in-law. When we go over to visit him and my mother-in-law, I dread it. I feel he doesn't respect me. I know we have totally different value systems, and I know he comes from a different generation, but it doesn't help.*

His typical response is to chuckle and dismiss me when I voice an opinion. He has the attention span of a flea. This is nothing physical; we know that. Conversations about anything always come around to the same thing. He ends up giving a lecture about how to be better in business or how to be more successful. He is a broken record.

I am more of a people person and evaluate people on how kind and nice they are. My idea of a successful person is not based on money, importance, or power. My father-in-law looks more to the surface and how much money a person makes. If someone is successful or important, he hangs on their every word.

What I do is spend more time with my mother-in-law. My other strategy is, if he asks me a question, to answer with a yes or no since he tends to dismiss me when I talk. Last week I was just fuming after a visit.

This is frustrating. I don't have this reaction from anyone else I know except maybe my brother-in-law. Surprise, Surprise! Thank goodness my husband is like his mother.

Gretchen

A Gretchen, there is no point in talking back to the television or expressing your opinion to a dial

Wayne & Tamara

DREAMS

Q *I dated someone off and on for almost ten years with no hope for growth and love. Recently I turned a new leaf of life to find someone special, yet I wonder if I did the right thing.*

Trisha

A Trisha, in Virgil's epic poem about the founding of Rome, Aeneas enters a cave leading to the underworld, the place where the dead have gone. Just inside the cave is an enormous elm on whose branches hang the unfulfilled dreams of men.

You spent ten years with a man who could not fulfill your dreams. Don't look back now that you have taken the first steps.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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

or email: GetInTouch@WayneAndTamara.com

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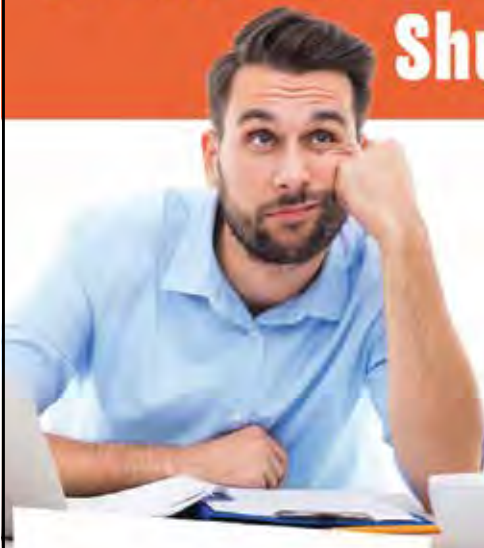
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Government of Canada takes Triple Crown for most absurd regulations

CFIB's 2024 Paper Weight Awards for the worst examples of red tape go to the CBSA, Health Canada, and Finance Canada

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) wins the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB)'s 2024 Paper Weight Award for its burdensome and unfair decision that's resulted in new, hefty import duty fees for a small costume business.

The Costume Shoppe in Calgary is facing potential closure and at least \$100,000 in import duty fees because the CBSA changed the classification on his imported themed costumes from "festive wear" to "fancy dress."

"Two word changes have created a regulatory and costly nightmare for this small business," said CFIB director Julie Kwiecinski. "The change essentially means that a Santa suit or a scary ghost mask are considered the same as regular clothing people wear every day. I think it's pretty clear to everyone but the CBSA that themed costumes are not intended for continuous wear, day in and day out."

The shop's owner, who has over 2,500 costumes in stock, must refile previous inventory, even if those goods are no longer being imported,

and he can't appeal the CBSA's decision unless he pays first.

"Sadly, it's all trick and no treat for The Costume Shoppe. The livelihood of this and other small businesses is at risk, yet there's precedence for big businesses being exempted from these duties. Doesn't the CBSA have bigger fish to fry than enforcing a silly, unreasonable rule?" Kwiecinski added.

The two other Paper Weight Award finalists this year include Health Canada and Finance Canada.

Health Canada takes second place in the red tape race for its plans to introduce a new cost recovery process for the natural health products (NHP) industry with paperwork challenges and excessive fees to get a product into the Canadian market. In addition, NHP businesses will soon have to navigate a standardized Product Facts Table and various other new, technical labelling requirements (e.g., a minimum type size, font types, and contrast), on top of existing labelling rules.

Finance Canada takes third spot for making payroll services subject to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act (PCMLTFA). This change means more paperwork for small businesses using payroll services and duplicates existing anti-money laundering controls used by banks. This regulatory burden, especially the requirement for some physical documentation, is discouraging small businesses from adopting digital payroll solutions.

"If the CBSA, Health Canada and Finance Canada had first considered how their new rules would impact small businesses, we wouldn't be in this regulatory mess. We're asking these government organizations to do the right thing and fix the fallout by applying our clear and simple solutions," Kwiecinski concluded.

The Government of Canada joins previous Paper Weight Award "honourees" including: Service Canada's passport mess (2023); the City of Toronto's business licence process (2020); the federal government's web of confusion and



The Costume Shoppe owner Ryan Schoel faces frustrating CBSA paperwork. (Photo: CNW Group/Canadian Federation of Independent Business)

near impossible to understand language on its websites (2019); and Smithers' infamous "side-walk to nowhere" in British Columbia (2018).

VSP Council awards \$8,300 to boost community projects

DIMITRIS ILIAS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Parc-Extension News
dimitri@newsfirst.ca

The borough council of Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension, in its session on December 6th, approved the allocation of \$8,300 in financial assistance to 14 local organizations. This deci-

sion, drawing from the council's discretionary budget for the 2024 financial year, underscores the council's commitment to supporting diverse community-driven activities within the borough.

The distribution of funds is targeted at a range of organizations, each contributing uniquely to the community's vibrancy and well-being. The Carrefour jeunesse emploi Mtl Centre-Nord, known for its efforts in youth employment and career guidance, has been granted \$1,500, reflecting the council's emphasis on youth career development.

Further contributions include \$250 each to the Centre d'orientation et de prévention d'alcoolisme et de toxicomanie pour les Latino-américains (COPATLA) and the Corporation d'Éducation Jeunesse. These organizations play crucial roles in addressing substance abuse issues and educational support, respectively. The Comité Civil Escadron 96 Alouettes, receiving \$700, is recognized for its involvement in civil and community services.

The council also allocated \$200 to Mon Resto Saint-Michel (for Action Saint-Michel Est), an initiative that contributes significantly to local food security and community well-being. Similarly, the Regroupement Jeunesse en Action and Saint-Michel Vie Sans Frontières, each receiving \$250 and \$700 respectively, are

acknowledged for their active roles in youth engagement and community development.

The arts and culture sector is also a beneficiary of this funding, with the Théâtre du Renard receiving \$250, and the Héritage Hispanique du Québec being granted a total of \$1,100, divided between two of its editions - \$300 for the 1st edition of l'Artiste junior and \$800 for the 2nd edition of Femme Hispanique. These funds will support cultural activities that enrich the local community's artistic landscape.

Villeray dans l'Est, an organization pivotal in community engagement in the eastern part of the borough, is set to receive \$1,500. This substantial support highlights the council's commitment to fostering vibrant community life across all areas of the borough.

Additionally, the Regroupement des magasins-partage de l'île de Montréal and Cuisines et vie collectives Saint-Roch, each receiving \$500, play essential roles in addressing food insecurity and promoting community kitchens, respectively. Small but impactful grants of \$300 each were allocated to Groupe des Bénévoles 1re et 2e Avenue and Entreprise Severine, recognizing their contributions to community volunteering and local enterprise development.



Photo: Cuisines et Vie Collectives Saint-Roch fosters community support and food security through collective kitchens, workshops, classes, food distribution, training, and social activities.



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Week of FEBRUARY 11 TO 17, 2024

The luckiest signs this week:
TAURUS, GEMINI AND CANCER



ARIES
Major changes are on the horizon in various areas of your life! You'll feel justifiably proud of your achievements and will make the necessary efforts to ensure your business runs smoothly.



TAURUS
It's time to rejuvenate yourself; bask in the present moment and relax. Someone close to you will require your help. If you're an artist, you'll find inspiration this week. Inner guidance is within your reach.



GEMINI
You'll manage a large-scale project. This will bring together various people around you. Despite the challenges of getting donations from those involved, you'll be incredibly efficient and receive praise for your success after some effort.



CANCER
Big responsibilities await you, both at work and at home. Your dedication will be noticed and could be rewarded with a promotion and a pay raise. There's plenty to celebrate!



LEO
The idea of embarking on a spiritual journey will take root in your mind. It will require several months of careful preparation to blossom and become a source of inspiration, ultimately allowing you to find profound meaning in your existence.



VIRGO
Emotions are powerful around you. You may need to rethink your relationship to flourish. At the very least, you'll no longer accept compromises. You'll need to reflect deeply about your relationship.



LIBRA
Although there may be some tension, your strong teamwork skills will help you make great progress. If you're in a new relationship, you'll have to overcome concerns that challenge your commitment and define a better future between you.



SCORPIO
At work, you'll see the benefits of your work, even if it means feeling exhausted. As your customer base grows, you'll need to double down your efforts to solidify your financial future.



SAGITTARIUS
Your self-esteem needs a boost. You passionately devote yourself to others. However, it's important to direct some of that attention toward yourself. This is especially true if some people tend to take your kindness for granted and don't recognize your sacrifices.



CAPRICORN
You'll devote a substantial amount of your time to family this week. You may think about moving in the short term. At the very least, a significant change in your personal or professional environment will be beneficial.



AQUARIUS
You'll expand your social circle, thanks in large part to your increased presence on social media. Your talents and professional activities will become better known, improving your financial situation.

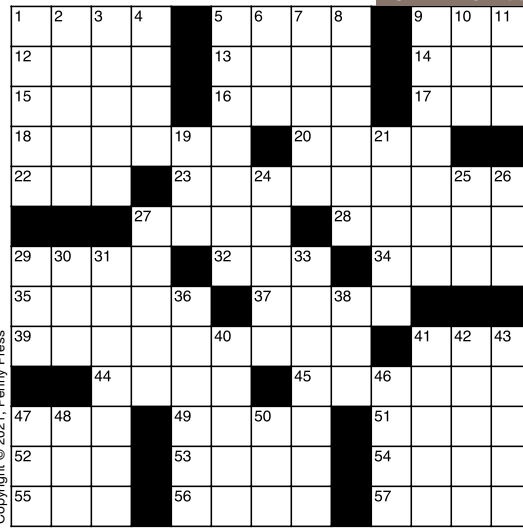


PISCES
You'll be given the green light to finance a project. Act now! This will be a good week to pay off some of your debt, making your financial situation more flexible. Think of it as a kind of fresh start.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 166



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ACROSS

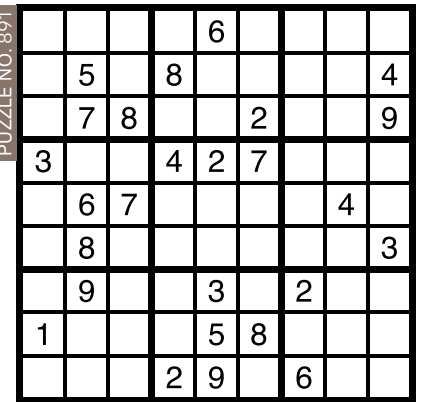
- Impresses
- Corn-ear cores
- Suet
- Silent actor
- Wagner or Powers on TV
- State falsely
- Piece of gossip
- Long way off
- Division of history
- Movie text
- Clamping tool
- Meek
- All ears
- Beef dish
- Heredity factors
- Kind of tub
- Tatter
- Lifetimes
- African shrubs
- Saturate
- Authentic

DOWN

- Wrong
- Sorceress
- _____ board (file)
- 18-wheeler
- Gab
- Clumsy one
- Heroic
- Shoelace
- Escaping
- "The ____ Up There"
- Steeped beverage
- Stroke
- Sirloin, e.g.
- Wring
- Geese formation
- Curvy turn
- Clam's case
- Obstruct
- Beer's cousin
- Raised a glass to
- Sharp
- Nap
- Top card
- Multitude
- Cereal stalk
- Skirt style: hyph.
- Affirmative answers
- Storage tower
- Fore's opposite
- Podded vegetable
- Luuu wreath

Sudoku

PUZZLE NO. 891



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.

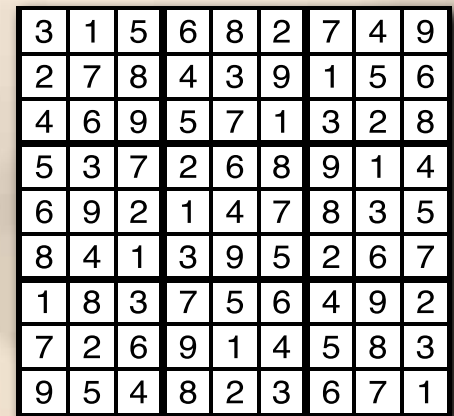
Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.

Last Issues' Answers

CROSSWORDS



Sudoku



Doctor Dan Munteanu

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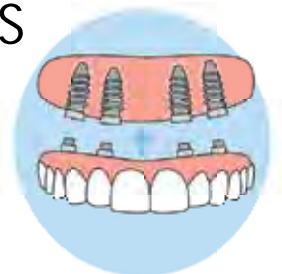
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