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Plant distribution event



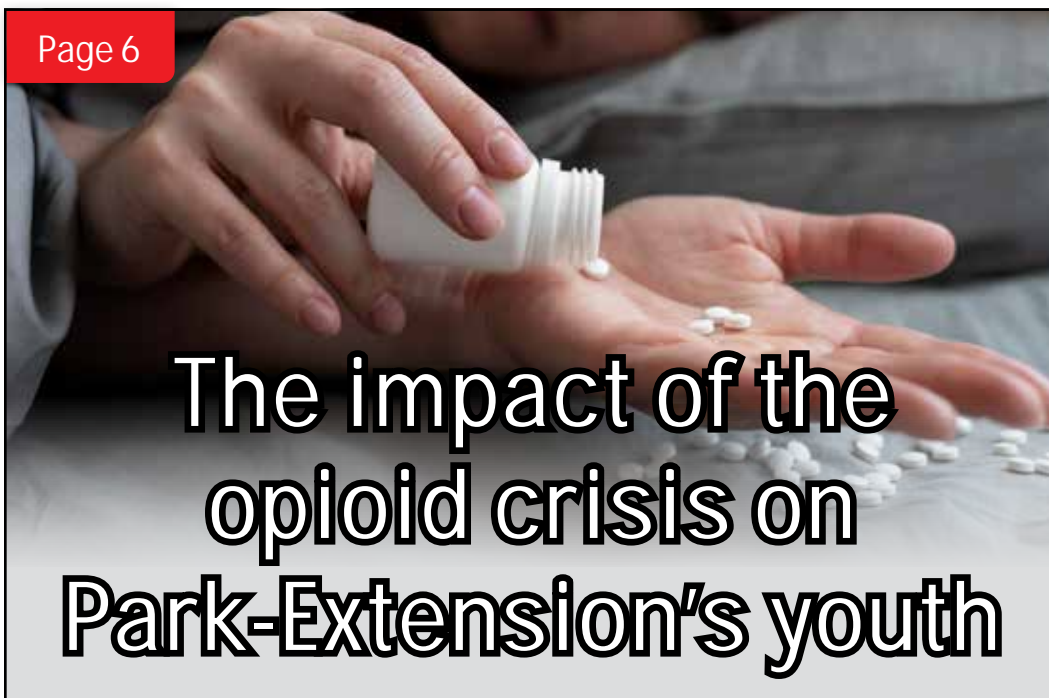
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Annual plant distribution event in Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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

Mark your calendars for May 18th when the borough of Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension (VSP) will host its annual distribution of flowers and vegetable plants. This popular event, which offers free plants to the residents, will require prior online registration due to limited spots. The distribution for eligible groups will take place a day earlier, on May 17th, also necessitating registration.

Registration Process

The event is organized in collaboration with the local environmental organization, Ville en Vert, which will manage all registrations. Residents can sign up using an online form available on the designated page starting from April 24th at noon. It's important to register early as spots are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

For eligible groups within VSP, which include nonprofits, daycare centers, community and green alley committees, senior residences, citizen groups, housing cooperatives, public housing projects, religious communities, and condominium syndicates, registration opens from April 2nd and runs until April 30th. These groups can sign up through a link sent by Ville en Vert, and new groups should reach out directly to Ville en Vert to express their interest.

Plants Available

Participants will be able to choose from a variety of plants including 'Classic' eggplants, 'Big Beef' tomatoes, purple basil, French thyme, Italian oregano, and an assortment of flowers like petunias, pentas, and digitalis. Attendees are reminded to bring a carry bag to transport their plants.

Compost and wood chips distribution

In addition to plants, compost and wood chips will be available for residents on the distribution days. These are provided by the



City of Montreal's Environmental Services. Participants should bring their own medium-sized container (approximately 30 liters) and a shovel. The compost should be mixed with soil in a 1:3 ratio to prevent excessive acidity, which can harm plant growth.

Important information

Proof of residency will be required to collect the plants, such as a utility bill, the Accès Montréal card, or a driver's license. The event will adhere to a strict schedule, and participants must

follow all onsite instructions to ensure a smooth process for everyone involved.

For additional information or queries, contact Ville en Vert at embellissement@villeenvert.ca. This event is a fantastic opportunity for residents and groups in VSP to beautify their spaces while engaging with the community and learning more about sustainable gardening practices. All participants are encouraged to cooperate and make the most of this community-enhancing initiative.

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Publishers:

George Bakoyannis
George S. Guzman

General Director:

George Bakoyannis

VP Sales & Marketing:

George S. Guzman
sales@newsfirst.ca

Graphic Design:

Lareine Zakhour
Elena Molter
Thomas Bakoyannis

Advertising:

Jean Paul Chamberland

Editorial Staff:

Martin C. Barry
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OPINION & Editorial



The world is getting fatter. And so is Canada.

Obesity is becoming a greater health concern than hunger

The global obesity epidemic is escalating at an alarming rate. According to a recent study in *The Lancet*, the number of people living with obesity surpassed one billion globally in 2022. Since 1990, obesity rates have more than doubled in adults and quadrupled in children and adolescents.

Moreover, the data indicate that 43 percent of adults were overweight in 2022. This report suggests that obesity is now recognized as a greater global health concern than hunger, signalling a paradigm shift in our collective concern toward overweight and obese populations.

The situation is projected to worsen. According to the World Obesity Federation's 2023 atlas, 51 percent of the global population, amounting to over four billion people, will be classified as obese or overweight by 2035. This shift in focus from hunger to obesity indicates that the world is not necessarily running out of food but is rather facing a complex issue of food distribution and consumption. Hunger has always been an issue of unequal distribution, while the rising global obesity risks suggest a more intricate problem.

Canada is not immune to this trend. The obesity rate in our country ranges between 30 and 33 percent depending on the source, with the overweight rate also exceeding 30 percent in many reports. Some studies even suggest that our obesity rate is now higher than that

of the U.S.

The call to action by *The Lancet* is a serious one. Experts argue that the issue is closely related to the accessibility of ultra-processed foods. In response, the Trudeau government has implemented several measures since 2015, including new front-of-packaging regulations set to take effect in 2026, which will help consumers identify products high in fat, sugar, or sodium. Additionally, Bill C-252, currently in the Canadian Senate, aims to restrict food and beverage marketing directed at children. While it is too early to assess the impact of these measures on the obesity epidemic, they represent a step in the right direction.

However, many experts had high hopes for a significant change with the introduction of the new food guide. Despite being over five years old, the guide has not been able to reverse the trend of increasing obesity rates, while Canada's life expectancy has decreased for three consecutive years, from 82.3 years in 2019 to 81.3 in 2022. Although COVID-19 and other factors have contributed to this decline, obesity is a known risk factor for premature mortality and increased medical needs throughout life.

The complexity of obesity as an issue is evident. Factors such as poverty, education, access to healthcare, and lifestyle all play a role in determining an individual's risk. One emerging trend is the increasing use of GLP-1 drugs like Ozempic, originally designed for diabetes

management, for non-medical weight loss purposes in the Western world. The impact of obesity on COVID-19 mortality rates has also brought attention to these drugs as potential solutions for weight loss.

The recent departure of Oprah Winfrey from the WeightWatchers board, coupled with her admission of using a GLP-1 drug, led to a 20 percent drop in the company's shares. This news, along with the decreasing shares of snack food companies like Mondelez, PepsiCo, and Nestle, indicates a growing concern in the industry about the impact of these drugs on consumer behaviour.

With projections suggesting that nearly 25 million Americans will be using these drugs by 2032, the industry is closely monitoring the situation. While official numbers are unavailable in Canada, there was a shortage of Ozempic for a while, highlighting the growing demand.

Policy decisions will undoubtedly influence the demand for these novel drugs. The new Pharmacare bill introduced in Parliament this week did not include these drugs, but it will be interesting to see whether governments will view them as a solution to the obesity problem.

Our current approach to addressing obesity is not yielding the desired results. However, as with many other health challenges, the solution may once again emerge from Big Pharma.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois

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The opioid crisis and its impact on Park-Extension's youth: a closer look

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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

In recent years, the opioid crisis has escalated into a national emergency across Canada. A disturbing statistic reveals that a quarter of all young adult deaths in the country are attributable to opioids, with fentanyl from the illicit market being the leading cause. This crisis is particularly relevant to communities like Park-Extension with the economic challenges of its youthful population.

The growing epidemic

Between 2019 and 2021, Canada saw opioid-related deaths double, reaching a staggering 6,222 fatalities. This increase is mirrored in the premature mortality rate, especially among adults aged 20 to 39, where one in four deaths are opioid-related. The province of Quebec, although having one of the lower rates of opioid death per capita, still faces significant challenges, with fentanyl being a major player in these statistics.

Park-Extension could be facing its own significant challenges related to the opioid crisis, influenced by its youth population, common poverty, limited educational opportunities, and constrained healthcare resources. These conditions not only increase the risk of opioid misuse but also intensify the socioeconomic factors that contribute to substance abuse.

A comprehensive strategy to combat this includes improving harm reduction services such as supervised injection sites, broadening access to naloxone, and implementing educational programs about opioid risks and treatments. Local efforts also focus on raising awareness among youth, expanding naloxone availability with proper usage training, enhancing addiction treatment, counselling, and rehabilitation services that are culturally sensitive, and advocating for stronger drug control

policies and increased funding for recovery programs. These measures are designed to alleviate the immediate and broader issues of substance abuse.

Local health experts and community leaders emphasize the necessity of a compassionate approach that addresses the root causes of addiction. Dr. Marie-Ève Goyer, an expert in opioid addiction, advocates for comprehensive strategies that go

beyond the medical to include housing, education, and social equity to effectively combat the crisis.

As this crisis unfolds, the resilience and unity of communities like Park-Extension will be crucial in overcoming the challenges posed by the opioid epidemic. The path forward is fraught with difficulties, but with sustained effort and community solidarity, progress can be made in the fight against this devastating crisis.



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A case for spending restraint in Canada

How the federal government can balance the budget

GRADY MUNRO and JAKE FUSS

continued from previous edition

Plans to Achieve a Balanced Budget

While the current approach to government finances is concerning and existing plans promise more of the same, decisive action from the federal government can reverse course and avoid further deterioration of public finances. The following section presents a model demonstrating that, by exercising spending restraint starting in 2024/25, the federal government can—depending upon how much spending is restrained—balance the budget within one or two years.

Past history shows that spending restraint is an effective tool to reverse deteriorating government finances. In the early 1990s, nearly one third of federal spending was funded by debt and accumulated net federal debt amounted to 70.9% of GDP. Moreover, the cost of interest on this debt as a share of government revenues amounted to over 30% in 1993: roughly one in three dollars collected in revenue was spent on debt interest. Federal government debt threatened to spiral out of control yet, through a reexamination of federal spending that resulted in a 9.7% reduction, over two years along with limited spending growth in the third year, the Chrétien government was able to balance the budget and help usher in a period of strong economic growth and prosperity (Clemens, Lau, Palacios, and Veldhuis, 2017).

Multiple studies make the case for using spending reductions to balance a government's budget, rather than the alternative of raising taxes. Alesina and Ardagna (2010) examine a number of large fiscal adjustments in OECD countries from the 1970s until 2007, and find that adjustments based on spending reductions, with no tax increases, were more effective at stabilizing debt and avoiding a recession. More recently, Alesina, Favero, and Giavazzi (2018) examined the recent body of literature on the effects of multi-year fiscal plans for deficit reduction, and find that reductions based on spending cuts are far less economically costly than those based on tax adjustments. In some instances, spending reductions can even contribute to the expansion of the economy, with Alesina and colleagues (2018) pointing to Canada's efforts in the 1990s as an example where such action led to a faster growing economy.

In line with the literature, and past Canadian history, figures 7, 8, and 9 display a model of spending restraint by which the federal government can balance the budget by 2026/27. **Figure 7** displays currently planned federal program spending, overlaid with the adjusted nominal program spending, and **figure 8** shows the corresponding real per-person spending values. **Figure 9** displays planned budgetary balances compared with those resulting from the spending adjustments. The figures show that rather than cutting overall spending, the federal government would be able to balance the budget in 2026/27 by slowing growth in program spending to just 0.3% per year from 2024/25 to 2026/27.

In the slowed-growth scenario, nominal program spending would increase from \$469.4 billion in 2024/25 to \$472.3 billion in 2026/27 rather than the \$499.4 billion that is currently projected. Although total federal program spending will still increase in this scenario, real per-person spending will decrease as spending growth falls behind projected population growth and inflation. Specifically, real program spending per person will fall from \$11,448 in 2024/25 to \$10,777 in 2026/27. This is a 5.9% decline in inflation-adjusted per-person spending, as opposed to the current fiscal plan which projects a 0.5% decline. By slowing growth in program spending, the federal government would run

Figure 7: Planned federal program spending (\$ billions), nominal, and program spending adjusted to achieve a balanced budget by 2026/27

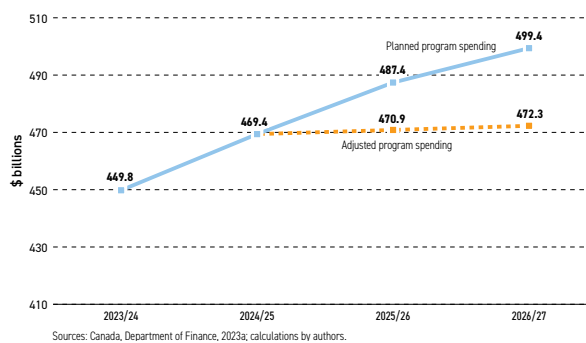


Figure 8: Planned federal per-person program spending (\$2023) and per-person program spending adjusted to achieve a balanced budget by 2026/27, inflation-adjusted

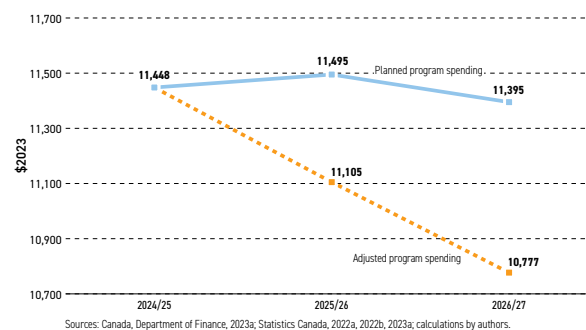
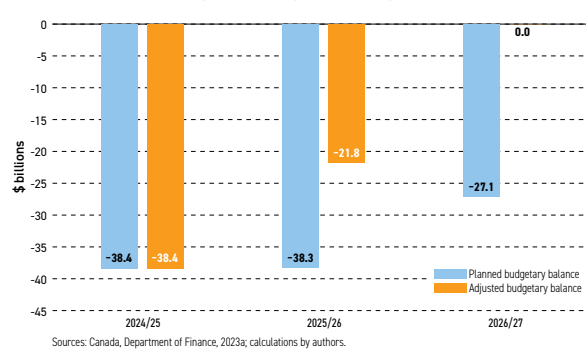


Figure 9: Planned budgetary balances (\$ billions) versus adjusted budgetary balances with slower growth in program spending, nominal, 2024/25-2026/27



a budget deficit in 2025/26 that is \$16.6 billion smaller than it currently plans to run, and would achieve a balanced budget in 2026/27 as opposed to a \$27.1 billion deficit.

The slowed-growth scenario represents a conservative approach to spending restraint and deficit reduction, which carries risks. For example, the Ontario Budget 2015 presented a fiscal plan that projected a return to balanced budgets by 2017/18, based on slower spending growth averaging 0.5% over three years (Ontario, Department of Finance, 2015). Following the budget's release, the province's own Financial Accountability Office highlighted the risks of this approach, namely that such a commitment came with no explicit plan on how to limit growth in spending, and hinged on overly optimistic revenue projections to achieve a balanced budget (Ontario, Financial Accountability Office, 2015). Indeed, history shows the province failed to achieve this goal and the Ontarian government ran uninterrupted deficits until 2021/22 (Canada, Department of Finance, 2023b). An approach

based on slowed growth by the federal government would carry similar risks. Therefore, figures 10 to 12 present an alternative path to a balanced budget, one that increases the likelihood of success by front-loading active spending reductions for a more deliberate approach to a balanced budget. Specifically, the figures illustrate spending reductions, starting in 2024/25, that would balance the budget within one year and result in a subsequent budgetary surplus in 2026/27.

Figure 10 displays currently planned federal program spending along with adjusted program spending. **Figure 11** shows the corresponding real per-person spending values, while **figure 12** displays planned budgetary balances compared with those resulting from the alternative spending plan that includes actual reductions in 2025/26. The figures show that, if nominal program spending is decreased by 4.3%, from \$469.4 billion in 2024/25 to \$449.1 billion in 2025/26, the federal government can move

Figure 10: Planned federal program spending (\$ billions), nominal, and program spending adjusted to achieve a balanced budget by 2025/26

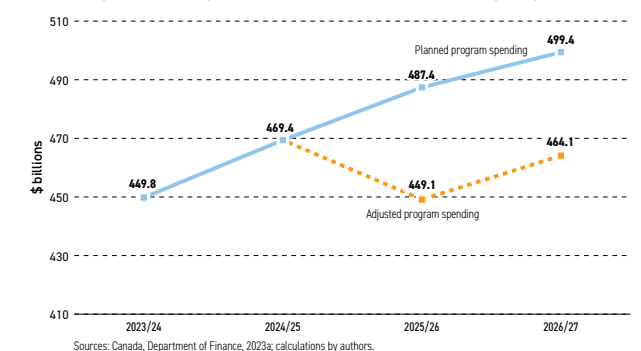


Figure 11: Planned federal per-person program spending (\$2023) and adjusted to achieve a balanced budget by 2025/26, inflation-adjusted

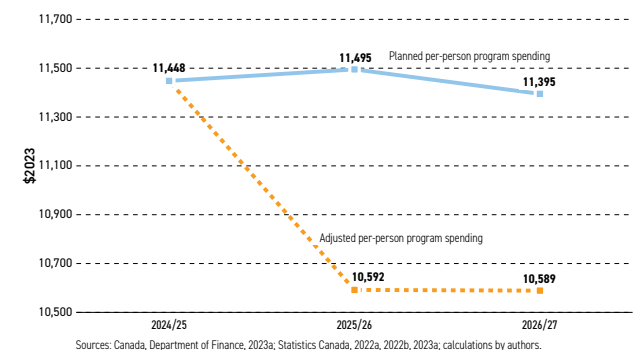
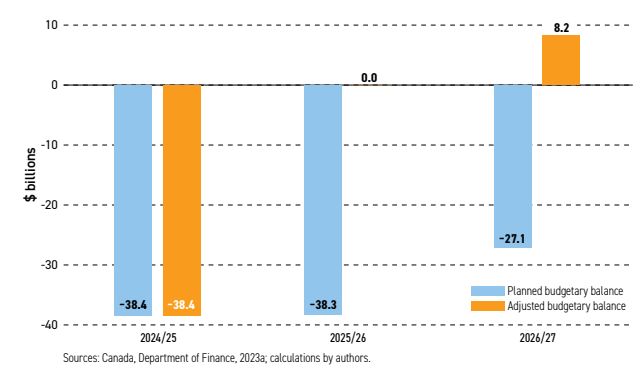


Figure 12: Planned budgetary balances (\$ billions) versus adjusted budgetary balances with spending reductions in 2025/26, nominal, 2024/25-2026/27





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from a \$38.4 billion deficit in 2024/25 to a balanced budget in 2025/26. Per person, the spending reduction becomes more substantial as real per-capita spending would fall 7.5% from 2024/25 to 2025/26. However, once the budget is balanced the federal government could resume increasing program spending at the same rate as population growth plus inflation (3.3%). This is higher than the 2.5% increase currently planned by the federal government in that year. Following the spending increase in 2026/27, the federal government would run a \$8.2 billion surplus in the spending-reduction scenario, as opposed to the \$27.1 billion deficit that is currently projected.

It is important to note that both balanced budget scenarios in this study represent modest fiscal adjustments relative to the reforms implemented by the Chrétien government in the 1990s. At that time, the federal government reduced overall program spending by 9.7% over two years, which translated to a 15.5% reduction in real per-person spending (Clemens, Lau, Palacios, and Veldhuis, 2017). For comparison, balancing the budget by 2026/27 allows for a 0.6% increase in federal program spending over two years, while per-person spending would fall 5.9%. To balance the budget in one year, by 2025/26, the federal government must reduce overall program spending by 4.3%, or 7.5% per person. Although the one-year balanced-budget scenario would require a more significant spending reduction than the two-year scenario, it is still less than half the reduction undertaken by the Chrétien government.

Slowing the growth of debt

Through efforts to restrain spending and balance the budget, the federal government would slow the growth in overall federal debt. **Table 1** displays planned gross debt levels from 2024/25 to 2026/27, along with gross debt that would be accumulated in each of the two balanced-budget scenarios. With planned spending and deficits, gross debt is forecast to increase 9.7% from 2024/25 to 2026/27. If the government balances the budget by 2026/27 gross debt would increase by 7.6% during that same period. If the federal government balances the budget in 2025/26, gross debt would increase by 6.2%.

In other words, a faster and more decisive move to balance the budget would enable Ottawa to accumulate less debt. By balancing the budget in two years the federal government would accumulate \$43.7 billion less debt than it currently plans. It would accumulate \$73.6 billion less than currently planned if it were to balance the budget in one year. This further illustrates an important trade-off between the two scenarios, whereby balancing the budget in one year would require stricter spending reform (that is, spending reductions as opposed to slowed growth) but allow the federal government to return to surpluses faster and accumulate less debt. However, both scenarios result in less debt accumulation, which would help slow the growth in the cost of interest on the debt and further improve the federal fiscal situation.

From the models presented in figures 7 to 12 and table 1, it is clear the federal government can quickly return to a balanced budget as long as it takes decisive action to control spending. Furthermore, both paths to a balanced budget are modest compared to the actions taken by the Chrétien government in the 1990s. An important caveat is that the federal government would likely need to decrease spending further, or at least be more aggressive in limiting year-over-year growth, than presented in this study to create the fiscal room to introduce meaningful tax relief, as was done by the Chrétien government following its success in balancing the budget (Clemens, Lau, Palacios, and Veldhuis, 2017).

Where are savings to be found?

The question now becomes how to implement spending reform and from which areas of government spending should savings be found? The Chrétien government sought to answer this question by systematically evaluating all federal government spending using the following metrics (Canada, Department of

Table 1: Accumulated federal gross debt (\$ billions), 2024/25-2026/27

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Gross debt with planned deficits	2,102.8	2,213.8	2,306.3
Gross debt with balanced budget by 2026/27	2,102.8	2,197.3	2,262.7
Gross debt with balanced budget by 2025/26	2,102.8	2,175.5	2,232.7

Sources: Canada, Department of Finance, 2023a; calculations by authors.

Finance, 1994):

- serves the public interest;
- necessity of government involvement;
- appropriate federal role;
- scope for public sector / private sector partnerships;
- scope for increasing efficiency;
- affordability.

The federal government could engage in a similar review process in 2024/25 to find targets for spending reforms, but it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss how these specific reforms could be implemented to achieve a balanced budget. However, research highlights a few general areas that could be targeted.

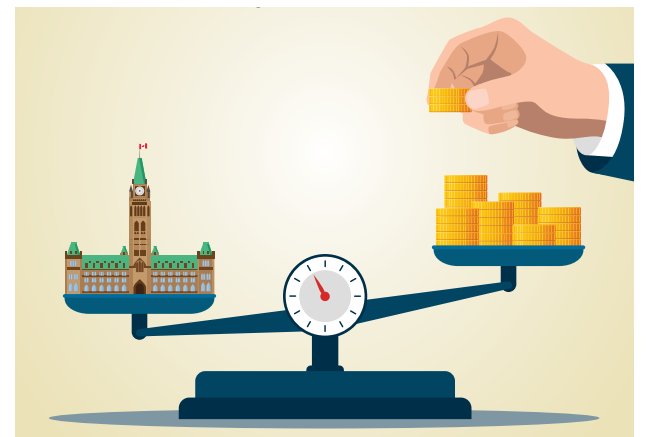
Business subsidies represent a significant expense for Canadian governments that produces little to no economic benefits for the broader economy. Hill and Emes (2023) explain that from 2007 to 2019, federal, provincial, and local governments spent roughly \$352.1 billion (inflation-adjusted) on business subsidies, more than the federal government spent on national defence (\$327.5 billion, inflation-adjusted) during the same period. Despite absorbing significant amounts of government resources, business subsidies generate little to no economic growth, and might actually have a negative economic impact as a result of the distortionary effects of governments' attempts to pick winners in the free market (Hill and Emes, 2023). Given the size of these expenditures, for little to no economic gain and potential for economic harm, business subsidies are a possible target for spending reform.

Another target for spending reform may be to align government-sector wages more closely with those in the private sector. A recent study showed that in 2021 government-sector workers in Canada enjoyed an 8.5% wage premium, on average, over their private-sector counterparts, even after controlling for a large number of relevant factors like sex, age, marital status, and education. In addition to higher wages on average, government-sector workers enjoyed more generous benefits and higher job security compared to their private-sector counterparts (Palacios, Li, and Eisen, 2023). Given the federal government currently employs over 350,000 workers (Canada, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2023), aligning government-sector wages more closely with the compensation provided to comparable private-sector workers might yield significant savings.

Finally, a third target is the general issue of government fiscal waste. Lammam, MacIntyre, Clemens, Palacios, and Veldhuis (2013) reviewed the Auditor General's reports from 1988 to 2013 and found more than 600 instances of government failure across multiple federal governments. There were many types of failures including, but not limited to, cost overruns, over-/under-payment of benefits, or failure to achieve stated objectives. The cumulative cost of these government failures was estimated to have been between \$158.3 billion and \$197.1 billion. Alternatively, Fuss and Hill (2023) estimated that during the COVID-19 pandemic the federal government wasted at minimum 25% (\$89.9 billion) of its total COVID spending. Taken

together, these studies point to billions of dollars in savings that could be found by the federal government if it engaged in a serious review of its own operations and sought to eliminate these inefficiencies.

Conclusion



Federal fiscal policy has included little to no restraint on spending for nearly a decade, which has resulted in a string of large deficits, a significant accumulation of debt, and rising costs for interest on the debt. This approach is economically harmful and imposes real costs on Canadian taxpayers, yet the federal government appears unwilling to take the necessary steps to change course. Instead, the current fiscal plan accumulates more debt and promises no return to balanced budgets for the foreseeable future. Despite government forecasts, however, a balanced budget is within grasp as long as the federal government commits to exercising genuine spending restraint.

As modeled in this study, the federal government has two options to balance the budget if it controls spending. The first option is a balanced budget in two years (by 2026/27), as long as growth in nominal program spending is limited to 0.3% each year. The second option is a balanced budget within one year (by 2025/26), as long as nominal program spending is reduced by 4.3% during that year. Each option comes with different benefits and drawbacks; however, both scenarios are modest compared to the spending reductions implemented by the Chrétien government during the 1990s. This study does not provide an in-depth analysis of how such savings should be found but three areas that could be targeted with spending reform are business subsidies, aligning government-sector wages with those in the private sector, and seeking to reduce government fiscal waste.

The federal government's challenges will not be solved overnight, and a balanced budget should be viewed as a starting point rather than the end goal of any fiscal reform. Therefore, in addition to the spending reform presented in this study, the federal government should pursue longer-term fiscal policies to help improve its finances.

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Sandro Mauro: a renaissance man of IndyCar racing

A look into the mind, heart and soul of the front-line lead-mechanic of the Dale Coyne Racing Team

RENATA ISOPO
renata@newsfirst.ca

Professional auto-racing is a high-octane world, a thrilling amalgamation of speed, skill, and strategy. It is a realm where split-second decisions can make the difference between victory and defeat, where the roar of engines and the screech of tires on asphalt form a symphony-of-sound that drives the heart to race as fast as the cars on the track.

In this insider's perspective, the layers are peeled back, giving a front-row seat to the exhilarating world of auto-racing. Strap in, prepare for a ride into the inspirational story of Sandro Mauro, multi-talented, 50-year-old entrepreneur, self-styled self-taught culinary chef, single dad, Montreal-born, Ste-Dorothee resident now in the front-row sideline as a crucial part of the pit-crew of Dale Coyne Racing.

Sandro is returning to his IndyCar Racing roots and passion as lead-mechanic, after a 25-year absence. In May, he will be in the pit at the historic shrine of car-racing -The Indianapolis 500, the world's biggest annual track event. The first test of 2024 for Coyne is The Firestone Grand-Prix of St. Petersburg, launching the IndyCar season Sunday, March 10 in Florida. Dale Coyne Racing were elated to have him back in the pit, enticing him with an impressive three-year contract.

Why now, after 25 years?

Sandro's story is from the heart, sealed with deep heartbreaking emotions. He recounts that a year ago, his best man, Peter, who worked for Aston Martin Aramco Cognizant, suffered a



Photo: Courtesy of Sandro Mauro.

heart-attack, stroke, seizure, fell into a coma, struck with paralysis. "That day changed my life beyond recognition," he reveals.

In London, England, at Peter's bedside, Sandro promised that his spirit would live on in racing. He proceeded to globally submit his candidature for Formula 1 and IndyCar teams. With much persistence, never giving up, after a year

of traveling to and from Europe and the US, making countless phone calls, on December 20, 2023, he received the much-awaited email. He was in! Teary-eyed and beyond emotion, he shared the excitement of the phenomenal news with his much-beloved and adored 17-year-old daughter, Senna.

He said goodbye to his family on Christmas

Day to begin intense training and preparation for the 500 in May. Nothing prevented him from following his dream, proving the non-believers wrong, stating in a telephone interview from Miami, Florida that he will not tolerate negative people around him, whether family, colleagues, or friends. "No! Don't! Won't! Can't!" are absent in his vocabulary. He has cut off the non-believers who call him dreamer and non-realistic. "I would rather be alone than be surrounded by negative people who serve no purpose, except to criticize, discourage, and put you down."

Sandro is re-living his childhood dream to build race-cars, abandoning everything - a thriving business, family, friends. His only sadness is leaving behind his teenage daughter Senna, although he's committed to face-time her daily. She agreed that he had to follow his dream, setting an example, to be a role model to the world. "She gets it," he gladly concludes, "and she shares my ideals."

"This isn't a job, it's a vacation doing what I love to do for the next 10 months. "I'm blessed, Sandro says. "This is a fight for Peter, my best man, to fight back to good health, to be positive, and not to give up. If I can fight, so can he."

Of honest and humble strength

Sandro honestly, candidly, and humbly sees himself as a knowledgeable expert in the art, science, and technology of racing. In fast-paced lessons on the history of the sport, he explained how throughout the decades of the 20th/21st centuries, auto-racing evolved and expanded rapidly into forming professional associations able to establish iconic races such as the Indianapolis 500, which he is so proud

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Sandro Mauro, far left, lead mechanic of the Dale Coyne Racing Team, joins the pit crew, at Miami Homestead Speedway, preparing for the 2024 Indianapolis 500. At far right is team owner Dale Coyne.

to be part of.

Mechanical-engineer Sandro points out how technological advancements - introduction of hybrid-power-units and safety improvements like the HANS device, have revolutionized the sport, making it faster, safer, and more exciting than ever. The team examines every aspect of the car, dissecting it until it's proven near-perfect and safe to race on that irresistible track. "Each member of the team is important, contributing knowledge, experience, and expertise to team-success. We're in it together and we help each other as professionals. It's not competition against each other, quite the contrary."

Sandro's baby, IndyCar, is a prominent open-wheel auto-racing category. Best known for the prestigious Indianapolis 500, it encompasses oval tracks, road courses, and street circuits, each offering unique challenges to drivers.

The thrill-of-speed is an elemental part of auto-racing's appeal. The sheer velocity that professional drivers reach is a feat of modern engineering, testament to the power and precision of today's racing vehicles. In Formula 1, cars can reach speeds of 220mph, while in IndyCar, top speeds often exceed 380mph. The sensation is a mix of exhilaration and tension, a high-stakes-ballet where drivers balance their desire to push limits with need to maintain control. The rush of adrenaline, roaring engines, blurs of the world rushing past are the ingredients of the intoxicating allure of speed in professional auto-racing. Sandro knows this only too well and greedily devours it.

"Behind the scenes the atmosphere is a whirlwind," he states, excitement revving in his voice, adding that long before the drivers get into their cars, teams of engineers, mechanics, and strategists work tirelessly to perfect every detail. Cars are meticulously inspected and tuned, with adjustments made to enhance performance based on track conditions and weather predictions. Drivers participate in briefings to discuss strategies as they engage in mental preparations.

In the pit, the pendulum swings

"As race-time approaches, the pit-lane buzzes with anticipation," Sandro easily affirms. "Tire changes are rehearsed, fuel strategies finalized, and last-minute-checks are performed." This, of course, is the less-glamorous, yet equally critical side of auto-racing - a testament to the dedication, precision, and teamwork that forms the heartbeat of this exhilarating sport. "I'm part of every aspect and detail of the above. There's

absolutely no margin for error. Someone's life is at stake. Little or nothing is left to chance."

From Sandro emerges the reality that in modern-auto-racing, teams collect vast amounts of data during races and practice sessions, monitoring everything from tire temperature and pressure to engine performance and fuel consumption. This data is analyzed in real-time, helping teams make strategic decisions, such as when to pit for fresh tires or how to adjust the car-setup for optimal-performance. Additionally, post-race analysis of the data allows teams to gain insights and improve for future races. Evidently and unsurprisingly, there's much more than meets-the-eye in this fascinating sport.

Sandro is clear on the team's responsibility. "The safety of drivers has always been paramount. Among the most significant recent advancements is the introduction of the Halo in Formula 1 and IndyCar and the Aero-screen in IndyCar, devices designed to protect the driver's head from debris. These innovations, along with many others, have made auto racing safer than ever before.

Dominate or crash

Outspoken and opinionated, Sandro isn't very high on Québec, his home for the last 16 years. No love lost there: "I'm disgusted with the politics, language laws, language-police destroying businesses, high taxes, and lousy economy.

Waxing philosophically, Sandro admits that although you can't dominate every track and every road, if you don't dominate your own life first, you will crash. "Do what you love to do without fear, and always stay positive. That makes you a winner."

Summing up his commitment to IndyCar racing, while acknowledging both its risks and joys, Sandro says he deeply believes that people love motorsports because of the intense adrenaline rush that comes with Indy500 cars competing in front of 360,000 passionate fans, at 380k per hour.

"Nothing's more exciting than highly-trained drivers fighting intensely for leads of inches, with very high financial costs combusting up to \$8-10 million to run just one car." The average salary is \$150,000 times 25 people; travel, hotels, flights, fees, licenses and permits eat up tons more.

"Yes, the adrenaline rush also comes from the danger." Sandro readily confirms. Vehicles, racing at such high speeds, risk collisions or

getting into very dramatic, sometimes traumatic accidents. "Nobody wishes any driver to suffer that, of course, but the possibility that it could happen just adds to the overall excitement." Sandro quickly adds that if a car gets smashed, it's immediately disabled, every nut and bolt is checked. "It takes approximately an hour to change an engine, and 3 to 4 days to reassemble the car before the next race. Six mechanics per car is standard."

Graphically describing the crucial symbiotic relationship between driver and team, Sandro Mauro is cock-sure that the essence and substance of the craft of car-racing rests on the premise that "every driver must trust that those who built the car and those who maintain it are handing him or her a perfect machine. In the end, team and driver join forces to ensure that the fans also come out winners, because they get the drama they paid to see."

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« À toi la parole! »

A youth consultation space in Parc-Extension

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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

On Tuesday, April 30th, the district of Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension is set to host an engaging event tailored for its younger population, specifically those aged 12 to 17, at the Parc-Extension Library located at 421 Saint-Roch Street. Scheduled from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM, this event encourages the youth to voice their ideas and discuss issues that are important to them, thereby shaping the future of the Parc-Extension neighborhood.

The evening will kick off at 4:15 PM with a welcoming session for all attendees, followed by an icebreaker activity at 4:30 PM to warm up the environment. At 4:40 PM, there will be a presentation explaining the workings of the district council which aims to demystify the municipal processes for the youngsters. This will be an excellent opportunity for them to learn about local governance firsthand.

Following the presentation, at 4:50 PM, the participants will engage in “The Talking Walls” workshop, an interactive session where they can express their thoughts and opinions creatively. The next workshop, “My Neighborhood’s Publication,” starting

at 5:10 PM, will allow them to put forward ideas that could be featured in local publications, fostering a sense of community and involvement.

The arrival of the district’s elected officials at 5:50 PM will mark another highlight of the evening, providing an opportunity for direct interaction. The officials will start with a brief introduction and then participate in the “The Image of My Neighborhood” activity at 6:00 PM, which includes a meal. This activity is designed to facilitate a more relaxed and engaging discussion between the youth and their representatives.

The event will conclude with closing remarks by council members at 7:25 PM, summing up the insights and ideas shared throughout the evening. Additionally, the participants will benefit from free meal tokens and STM transit tickets (two-way) to ensure easy access and a comfortable experience. A raffle at the end of the event will also offer prizes, adding an element of excitement to the evening.

“À toi la parole!” is more than just an event; it’s part of a broader initiative aimed at creating a youth consultation space within the district. This project has seen various phases, including interactions with significant figures such as the district mayor Laurence Lavigne Lalonde in 2023, and city councilors from different districts sharing their insights with the local youth in February 2024. This continual engagement highlights the district’s commitment to incorporating the views and aspirations of its younger residents into its developmental plans and policies.

This event not only promises a platform for the youth to express and develop their ideas but also acts as a bridge between them and the municipal authorities, fostering a community-oriented approach to local governance. Through dynamic workshops, direct dialogues with elected officials, and various interactive activities, the “À toi la parole!” event on April 30th is set to be a cornerstone in empowering the youth of Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension and enhancing their role in the civic landscape.



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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

THE LONG WAY

Q I wrote you about four years ago, when my eight year marriage was ending in divorce. At that time you gave me some great advice about beginning again. After reading the recent letter from Linda and how she "settled" for the wrong man, I felt I had to write an update letter.

I can look back now and realize in too many ways, I "settled" in my first marriage. I reaped the results eight years later with a broken heart. After that marriage ended, I chose to live my life to the fullest, to take every opportunity to enjoy life and my friendships, and within reason, to never settle in anything.

I wanted children, a family with which to grow old together, and the white picket fence. But I couldn't focus on what I didn't have. I could only focus on what I did have, which was a lot of time and some great friends. Sure there were women who came and went during that time (mostly went), but I never settled.

Amazingly, I did meet a fantastic woman who is in every way my other half, as I am for her. We've been married now a little over a year and are happier now than when we were courting. We can't imagine life without the other now.

My point is not that I met my other half, but instead I want to mention the positive outlook on life and love we both originally had. Being the right person for the other would not have helped either of us if my wife and I had a 'wrong' attitude when we met. We would have simply walked right past the other.

Having the right attitude towards life, we ended up being like a huge magnet attracting steel. Anyway, thanks for the great advice and continue the great work! I never miss a week.

Scott

A Scott, sometimes we get things right only after we have made a mistake. Sometimes we get things right when someone

shows us the way. And sometimes we need a wake-up call to get things right.

In the book "Life Lessons" David Kessler wrote about Caroline, a woman with "the most genuine smile you will ever see." Not only was she happy, but to him she seemed to be one of those people who live a charmed life. When he told Caroline he thought she was lucky in love, she told him her story.

When she was in her early 40s, Caroline found a lump in her breast the doctors called suspicious. She waited three agonizing days to learn if cancer was spreading throughout her body. It wasn't. The lump was benign.

But Caroline resolved not to let those three days mean nothing. She had been single and desperately lonely. When she went to a party or event, she would quickly scan the room for Mr. Right. If he wasn't there, she'd go somewhere else searching for him, and always she went home more desperate than before.

Caroline decided to change her approach to life. Even if Mr. Right wasn't around her, other people were. She would talk with them and enjoy them, no matter what. At the end of each day she no longer felt lonely for she truly talked and smiled and laughed with others. The more she did this the more wonderful people she met and the closer she grew to her friends. She stopped being a desperately searching person.

She didn't meet Mr. Right the first year. Or the second. She met him four years later, and two years after that, they married. Being "lucky in love" has a lot to do with being ourselves and being fully engaged in life.

David Kessler wrote, "In our hearts we know we are destined to live fully, to love fully, and to have great adventures in life." Our task is figuring out how to do it.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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- Green Beans
- Corn (3)
- Mango
- Canteloupe
- Yellow Peppers (2)
- Green Peppers (2)
- Potatoes (~3lbs)
- Iceberg Lettuce (small)
- Cherry Tomatoes (pack)
- Minis Vine tomatoes (pack)
- Cucumber
- Oranges (3)
- Bananas (4)

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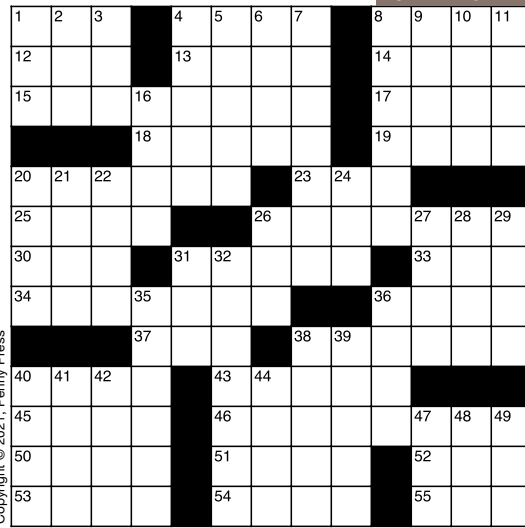
The luckiest signs this week:
SAGITTARIUS, CAPRICORN AND AQUARIUS

- ♈ ARIES**
Before making a decision that could influence your life and that of your loved ones, take the time to think about the long-term consequences. Your generosity will be inspiring, and you'll share your happiness with the people you love.
- ♉ TAURUS**
Making a few changes to your diet will improve your well-being. Having a deep conversation with your partner will help you avoid conflict and pave the way for a more serious commitment. Thoughtful gestures will be most appreciated.
- ♊ GEMINI**
You could perform a heroic act and save someone from a difficult situation. This will earn you the respect of everyone, even if you only lent a listening ear. Your presence could lighten the mood among your colleagues and your good nature will spread joy.
- ♋ CANCER**
If you plan to move, you'll start to take the necessary steps more seriously. This includes finding a home that's perfectly suited to your family, so you can feel more at ease in your own space.
- ♌ LEO**
You'll expertly express your feelings, demonstrating powerful strength of character. You won't hesitate to disagree in a direct manner, which will earn you respect at work. This will also increase your efficiency.
- ♍ VIRGO**
You must break free of routine and communicate more openly to deepen your relationship. You could also consider living together if you haven't already to take things a step further.
- ♎ LIBRA**
Your actions will make your life more exciting and fulfilling. You'll encounter new challenges at work and home. However, this will promote personal, spiritual and professional growth.
- ♏ SCORPIO**
Sometimes, you must take a step back. You'll regain your financial or love balance by taking the necessary steps to move in the right direction. The artist benefits from great inspiration.
- ♐ SAGITTARIUS**
Your professional life will see a significant boost, leading to a considerable increase in income. On the romantic front, your partner or someone interested in you will pleasantly surprise you with affectionate gestures.
- ♑ CAPRICORN**
Be on the lookout for a sudden moment of clarity that will guide you toward the path you need to follow to achieve your personal and professional goals. You could even initiate a project close to your heart, leading to something significant.
- ♒ AQUARIUS**
You'll broaden your personal and professional horizons by undertaking a transformative training course. This new step will bring a renewed passion for life, greatly enriching your prospects for the future.
- ♓ PISCES**
Your emotions will be running high this week and your excitement will be palpable. If you recently got into a new relationship, expect a clear sign of commitment from your partner. Any changes that occur will only lead to happiness.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 171



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ACROSS

1. Grab hold of
4. Harvest
8. Loud noise
12. Gaze at
13. Speak wildly
14. American Beauty, e.g.
15. High schooler
17. Unzip
18. Forewarnings
19. Bonds
20. Some sailboats
23. Decorate
25. Peddle
26. Separate
30. Shelley poem
31. Like tears
33. Promise
34. Crackpot
36. Christmas tree
37. Paul Bunyan's tool
38. Dwellings

DOWN

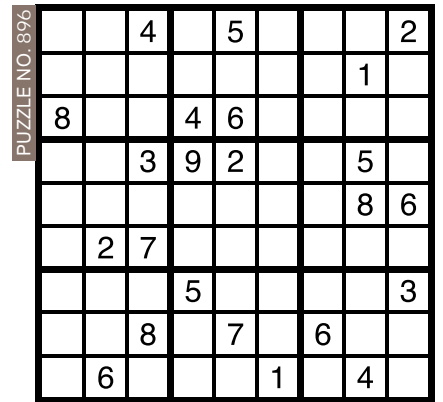
1. Butterfly trap
2. Nautical response
3. Honey insect
4. Confine
5. Fads
6. Baking need
7. Insist
8. Bricklayer's tool
9. Expectation
10. Previously owned
11. Hideouts
16. Cranny's pal
20. Scram!
21. Actor Alan ____
22. Felt obligated
24. Bashful
26. Feeling awful
27. Spirited
28. Musical pitch
29. Barnyard females
31. Clinton's horn
32. Cautioned
35. Brewer's grain
36. Harbor town
38. Meet the day
39. Defeats
40. Stairway unit
41. Contact
42. Besides
44. Gone
47. Noteworthy period
48. Trot
49. Messy dweller

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY:

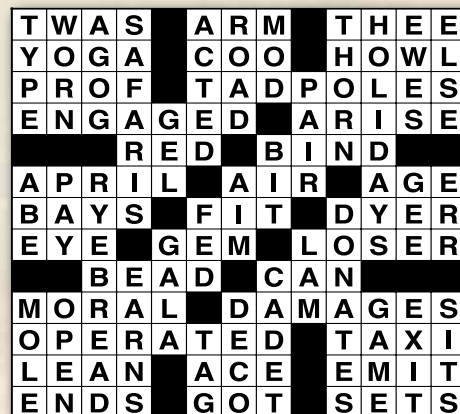
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once.

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

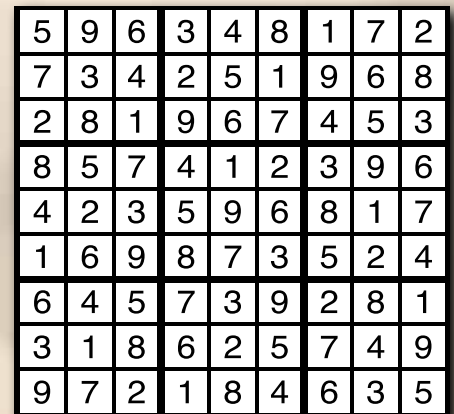


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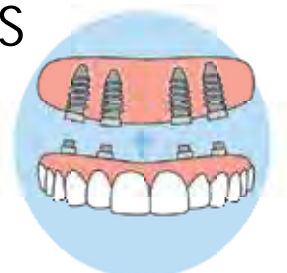
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