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Cultural communities celebrate their heritage

India Day Celebrations



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Parc-Extension Greek Festival



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Pakistanis mark Independence Day



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GET READY FOR SCHOOL



Quebec tightens condo construction standards

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Rising costs in Montreal: Homeownership becoming elusive in traditionally affordable areas

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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In a city known for its diversity and cultural richness, some of Montreal's most cherished neighbourhoods are experiencing a dramatic shift in their real estate markets. Areas that were once seen as affordable havens for new immigrants and working-class families like Parc-Extension are now facing steep increases in property prices, making homeownership a challenging prospect.

The economic shift

In the past, neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension offered a more accessible entry point into the housing market, attracting a diverse mix of residents with its relatively low-cost housing options. However, the landscape is changing rapidly. As of July 2024, the average price for a home in these areas has surged to around \$533,100. This means that potential buyers now need an annual income of approximately \$109,170 to afford a property, taking into account a mortgage rate of 5.29% and a stress test rate of 7.29%.

This increase in the required income marks a significant departure from previous years, reflecting broader trends across Montreal, where rising property values and higher interest rates are creating barriers for those looking to buy a home.

Financial challenges and market dynamics

The calculations for buying a home in these evolving neighbourhoods assume a 20% down payment, a 25-year amortization period, and additional costs like property taxes and heat-

ing. For many residents, especially those in lower-income brackets or new to the country, meeting these financial demands is becoming increasingly difficult.

Furthermore, for buyers unable to make a 20% down payment, the overall cost of purchasing a home increases due to the need for mortgage insurance premiums. This additional expense raises the required income to secure a mortgage, placing homeownership even further out of reach for many.

These financial pressures are not only a challenge for new buyers but also for long-standing residents who may be feeling the effects of gentrification. As more affluent individuals move into these neighbourhoods, property values — and therefore property taxes — continue to rise, potentially displacing those who have lived there for years.

A citywide trend

What's happening in these neighbourhoods is part of a larger pattern affecting the entire city. Montreal, once known for its relatively affordable housing compared to other major Canadian cities, is now seeing price increases across multiple districts. This trend is pushing middle- and lower-income families further from the urban core, making it more difficult for them to stay in the city. While certain areas remain more affordable than Montreal's more upscale neighbourhoods, the difference in price is shrinking. The rise in housing costs in these traditionally more accessible areas is indicative of the broader economic pressures facing Montrealers.



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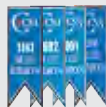


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OPINION & Editorial



Students scarred by COVID-19 policies may never catch up

We need to start addressing the severe "COVID hangover" that is endangering the future of an entire generation of students

Students are facing a brutal "COVID hangover" that continues to wreak havoc on their education and mental health. The pandemic didn't just disrupt classrooms temporarily – it left deep, lasting scars that have yet to heal. As grades plummeted, parents were left bewildered, teachers overwhelmed, and students struggling with shattered confidence and resilience. The impact stretches far beyond the classroom, and society, is paying the price.

The rapid shift to remote learning in early 2020 was a shock to the system. Schools closed almost overnight, forcing students and educators into virtual classrooms with little preparation. For students, this meant a sudden need for self-discipline and the ability to manage learning without the structure of a physical classroom. The challenges were immense, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The pandemic also exacerbated existing inequalities, exposing the harsh reality of the digital divide. Students from low-income families and rural areas faced limited access to the technology needed for online education, widening the gap in educational access and quality. This wasn't just a temporary setback – these disparities created long-lasting educational gaps that will take years to close.

Teachers, too, faced unprecedented challenges. Many had little to no experience with digital platforms and had to rapidly adjust their teaching methods. The lack of in-person interaction made it nearly impossible to gauge student understanding, provide real-time feedback, or maintain engagement. Add to this the blurring

of personal and professional boundaries, and it's no surprise that teacher burnout skyrocketed.

The damage to student learning has been profound, particularly for younger students. Studies show significant learning loss in core subjects like math and reading. But the impact goes beyond academics – students' social and emotional development has been severely affected. The isolation, anxiety, and uncertainty of the pandemic led to widespread mental health issues, which further hindered academic performance and deepened the overall decline in student well-being.

As schools gradually returned to in-person learning, the long-term consequences of the pandemic became more apparent. Learning losses won't recover quickly, especially for those already struggling. The gap between high- and low-achieving students has widened, raising serious concerns about the effectiveness of online education. Addressing these disparities must be a top priority for educators and policymakers.

To make matters worse, schools lowered achievement standards and inflated grades to account for the disruptions in learning. Remote instruction made it difficult for teachers to accurately assess student performance, resulting in grades that often didn't reflect the student's actual understanding. This has led to confusion and frustration among parents and students alike.

The toll of the COVID-19 policies on students' mental health has been severe. The isolation of remote learning weakened their confidence

and resilience, leaving many struggling to stay motivated. This has resulted in low self-esteem, poor academic performance, and increased behavioural issues. The absence of consistent, in-person learning has left lasting effects on students' social and emotional development, making it harder for them to cope with stress and challenges. Mental health support and rethinking traditional education models are crucial if we hope to prepare students for a post-pandemic world.

Addressing these widespread issues requires more than just patchwork solutions. Continuous monitoring of both cognitive and emotional progress is essential. Educators, parents, unions, and government must collaborate closely to rebuild an education system that meets students' needs as they recover from the pandemic. While Alberta has taken some steps with new achievement measures, far more is needed to create a truly intelligent and responsive education system.

COVID-19 has left an indelible mark on an entire generation of students, and its effects will ripple through society for years to come. The lack of resilience among recent graduates is already affecting universities and employers. Society must confront the serious "COVID hangover" that threatens the future of these students. Reform is urgently needed, and it must be a shared responsibility across all levels of the education system if we are to prevent a lost generation.

Dr. Perry Kinkaide

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A Bittersweet Return for Parc-Extension Students Amidst Montreal School Challenges

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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As students in Parc-Extension and across Montreal return to school, the air is filled with excitement and anticipation. However, beneath this joyful atmosphere lies the reality of ongoing staffing challenges that continue to affect schools citywide.

Excitement in the schoolyard

In one Montreal school, the schoolyard was buzzing with energy as students reunited with their friends after the summer break. This scene is likely similar in the schools of Parc-Extension, where children eagerly return to their classrooms, happy to be back in a familiar setting. Teachers share this enthusiasm, looking forward to a new academic year filled with opportunities for learning and growth.

Staffing shortages: a continuing concern

Despite the positive atmosphere, the return to school is not without its challenges. While some schools have been relatively unaffected by the widespread teacher shortages, others continue to struggle.

The school service centers reported that most teaching positions have been filled, but several positions remain vacant. This means some classrooms may be overseen by substitute teachers until permanent hires are made, potentially disrupting the learning experience.



Impact on students and teachers

For students in Montreal, the uncertainty surrounding teacher availability could lead to a less stable learning environment, especially in the early weeks of the school year. Teachers are also feeling the strain, as they may need to cover for missing colleagues, further stretching their resources.

Specialized staff, in particular, may face additional burdens as they are often required to

support and guide less experienced or under-qualified replacements. The workload can become heavy, especially when dealing with students in special education.

Looking ahead: hopes and challenges

As the school year progresses, students, teachers, and parents hope that the staffing issues will be resolved swiftly. The local school service center continues efforts to fill the remaining

positions, but the challenge is significant. In the meantime, the resilience and dedication of the school communities will be crucial in ensuring that students receive the quality education they deserve.

For now, the excitement of being back in school offers a welcome distraction from these challenges. As students settle into their routines, the hope is that the joy of learning and reconnecting with friends will outweigh the difficulties posed by the ongoing teacher shortages.



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GET READY FOR SCHOOL



Sleep schedule: strategies for transitioning from summer

Shifting from a relaxed summer sleep schedule to a structured school routine can be challenging for children and parents. Here are some strategies to make the transition smoother:

ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Regular exercise can help children fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper sleep. Encourage outdoor play or physical activities during the day, but avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.

GRADUALLY ADJUST BEDTIME

Adjust your child's bedtime and wake-up times about a week before school starts, shifting them earlier by 15 to 30 minutes each night until you reach the desired schedule. This gradual transition will help your child's body adjust to the new routine without feeling too abrupt.

Sticking to the same schedule on week-ends is essential to maintain a consistent

sleep pattern!

LIMIT SCREEN TIME BEFORE BED

Encourage your child to power down electronic devices at least an hour before bedtime to reduce exposure to blue light, which can disrupt sleep patterns. If your child must use electronic devices before bedtime, consider using blue light filters or adjusting the brightness settings to reduce the impact on sleep.

CREATE A CALMING BEDTIME ROUTINE

Establish a consistent bedtime routine to signal your child that it's time to wind down and prepare for sleep. This includes activities like reading, bathing or listening to soft music. Try to create a relaxing environment in your child's bedroom by adjusting the lighting and temperature to promote better sleep.

These tips can help your child ease into a new sleep schedule and start the school year feeling well-rested and ready to learn.



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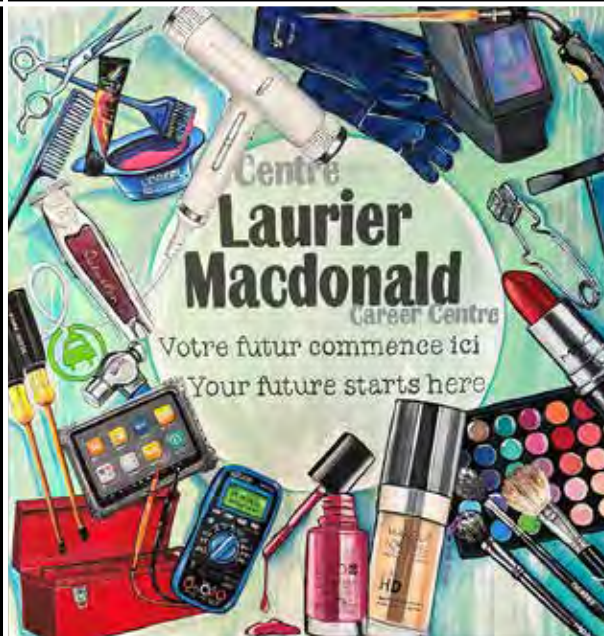
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GET READY FOR SCHOOL



Young Canadians should consider a career in skilled trades

Despite a diminishing supply of skilled trades workers, fewer young people than ever are pursuing these occupations in Canada. There remains a stigma around so-called blue-collar jobs, and young people are frequently unaware that professions in the trades can in fact be highly lucrative and rewarding. Skilled workers are in demand, and unlike many other types of employment, these jobs cannot be sent offshore. While no sector is impervious to economic downturns, many trade workers enjoy job security even during periods of great turmoil.

UNIVERSITY VS. TRADE SCHOOL

A streamlined path into a trade often involves completing a vocational program at a trade school. Unlike university programs, which require all students to take a variety of complementary (and often unrelated) classes, vocational programs focus entirely on preparing pupils for the reality of their chosen professions. In comparison to the four years it takes to complete an undergraduate degree, trade



programs can either be two-year associates degrees or even shorter certificate programs. This means trade school students can enter the workforce well ahead of their university-educated peers, and are also far more likely to find employment in a position related to their studies.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR SKILLED TRADES WORKERS

With an anticipated shortage of skilled workers looming on the horizon, young people who are proactive today have an excellent chance at finding themselves in high-earning, secure positions tomorrow. And thanks to government funding and incentives like the Apprentice Incentive Grant (AIG) and the Apprenticeship Completion Grant (ACG) – which can cover up to \$4,000 for tuition, books, travel and tools – trade schools are now as affordable as they are practical.

Skilled trades workers in high demand

The United States is currently seeing an increasing demand for skilled-trades workers. Currently, an estimated three million trade jobs remain vacant, and this number is expected to grow over the coming years. The combination of an aging workforce and a lack of qualified employees to ensure the replacement of those retiring continues to drive this growing need.



BREAKING STIGMA

Despite the fact that the trades most often provide lucrative and secure job conditions, these professions still carry a poor reputation in some circles. Trade work is sometimes perceived as being dirty and unrewarding, when in truth many such positions involve creativity and highly refined skills. Additionally, much of this work increasingly relies upon

the use of computers. Breaking down the stigma surrounding skilled trades is a necessary step towards fulfilling the need for these workers.

TRADE SCHOOL AN AFFORDABLE OPTION

Despite the fact that acquiring a college degree is a costly and time-consuming endeavor, higher education doesn't always lead to employment. Trade school – also called vocational or technical school – is a far more affordable option, and one that provides better overall job prospects. In addition, these programs are typically much shorter than college and can be completed within a year or two. In comparison, a typical undergraduate degree requires four full years of study. This means trade school graduates can start earning an income much more quickly and with much less debt than their university-educated peers. Many scholarships and grants are also available at both the state and federal level to offset costs. Private sector endowments via businesses and organizations are also a possible source of funding for trade school students.



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GET READY FOR SCHOOL



Four tips to help you choose a trade

If you look through the program offerings provided by trade schools, you'll quickly realize that there are dozens upon dozens of possible vocations you might pursue. Here are some tips to guide you as you explore your options.

1. LOOK TO YOUR HOBBIES FOR INSPIRATION

For many, the answer can be found in things they already love to do. Like to sew your own clothes? A fashion-related trade like pattern making or sewing machine operation might be a good fit. Or, if you already spend your weekends tinkering



under the hood of an old hot rod, a career as an automotive technician could very well be appropriate. Examine your hobbies, interests and skills for inspiration.

2. CONSIDER YOUR PREFERENCES AND AVERSIONS

Do you prefer routine or variety? Do you like to work alone, or do you prefer being part of a team? Are you comfortable with dirt and noise? How do you feel about heights? Depending on your likes and dislikes, certain trades may be more or less suited to your personality.

3. Determine market demand in your area

If you're planning on living in a particular locale, try to find out which industries are thriving in that area. Though the demand for skilled trade workers in Canada is high overall, individual communities have a greater or lesser need for specific skill-sets.

4. RESEARCH

The more informed you are, the better equipped you'll be to choose a trade that's well suited to your unique needs and desires. Consider pay scale, opportunities for advancement and daily duties performed for each of the vocations that pique your interest. Use the internet and your local library to gather information. Speaking to people who are currently employed in the trades you're looking into is another valuable way to glean real-life facts about the job.

Green skilled trades

Working with your hands every day has always been an honest way to earn a living, but when that work contributes to practices that protect the environment, it's downright honourable. Green trades are an up-and-coming field, and demand for workers is expected to rise in the coming years. Some eco-friendly trade jobs can be accessed via specific training, while others require a combination of more traditional trade skills and a hefty dose of ingenuity.

WIND TURBINE TECHNICIAN

Canada has the seventh largest fleet of wind turbines in the world, and while wind energy comprises only four per cent of the total national energy production, the demand is expected to grow. Wind turbine technicians are responsible for all aspects of repairing and maintaining wind turbines, including inspecting, cleaning, calibrating and correcting any malfunctions. A number of trade schools offer vocational programs for those interested in pursuing this green trade.

SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC TECHNICIAN

While the solar power industry isn't growing quite as quickly as the wind energy sector, it's still on the rise. By 2025, five per cent of Canada's energy is expected to be harvested from solar power. Solar photovoltaic techs install, maintain and repair solar panels at both a residential and commercial level. These workers are

often electricians who've taken additional training courses.

GREEN ROOF INSTALLER

Green roof initiatives are increasing in popularity in urban centres across the country. These rooftop gardens improve air quality, moderate the urban heat island effect and provide habitats for wildlife. In addition, they can substantially increase a building's energy efficiency. Green roof installation can become a specialization for roofing contractors, construction workers and landscapers.



Green skilled trades are on the rise in Canada.



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Parc Extension celebrates India Independence Day

Indo-Canadians show love and patriotism at Place de la Gare

At midnight on August 15 in 1947, India's independence was proclaimed



Photos: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News



India Canada Organization chairman Naseer Mehdi Khan spoke of the positive relations between Canada and the country of his birth during the celebrations.

MARTIN C. BARRY
marty@newsfirst.ca

Park Extension's Place de la Gare resonated with joy and jubilation on the afternoon of Sunday Aug. 18 as people of Indian heritage from everywhere in the Montreal region gath-

ered to take part in joyful festivities to mark the day 78 years ago when India became a nation.

Big event for Parc Ex

For many elected officials from Parc Ex as well as throughout the Montreal region, the India Independence Day celebrations were just one of a lengthy series of events taking place all weekend as Montrealers were beginning to wind down after summer vacation.

Organized annually by the India-Canada Organization, India Independence Day is one of the largest public events in Parc Extension every year. Months of preparation take place leading up to it annually.

No parade this year

Although there was no India Independence Day parade along Querbes Ave. this year as there has been in most past years, India-Canada Organization chairman Naseer Mehdi Khan suggested in an interview with *Nouvelles Parc Extension News* that they haven't given up hope of holding a parade next year.

He said certain logistics, such as a lack of parking in Parc Extension (made worse by the recent elimination of many street parking spaces) and the limited availability of Howard Park where the celebration has usually taken place following the parade, needed to be resolved if the parade were to be held again.

Emerging global economy

In addition to the celebrations, India



Montreal city councillor for Parc Extension Mary Deros (right) is seen here with India Independence Day queen Barkha Dhiman.

Independence Day is also an occasion for the organizers to publicly speak about progress that's been made in the previous year in the home country and to focus on issues of concern



Young girls belonging to the Kavinnalay Indian dance troupe were among the performers on stage in Parc Extension's Place de la Gare during local India Independence Day celebrations held on Aug. 18.

there.

Since the early 1990s, India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in the developing world. This has been accompanied by increases in life expectancy, literacy rates and food security. India is now the world's fifth-largest economy by nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power parity.

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Up to 20,000 attended Montreal Greek Festival in the heart of Parc Ex

Corner of Saint Roch and Outremont was the place to party last week

MARTIN C. BARRY
marty@newsfirst.ca

Thousands of revelers gathered in the centre of Park Extension on Saturday Aug. 17 to talk, eat, dance and soak up the Hellenic ambience at the annual Montreal Greek Festival.

Held around the same date as the Greek Orthodox Church's Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, it was the culminating evening of a four-day celebration of all things Greek.

Dancing into the night

The largest event took up the intersection of Saint Roch and Outremont streets on Saturday evening, as hundreds of people of all ages – many of them Hellenic teens – formed circles and danced until late.

More than 20,000 attended the festival over the four days, according to George Kanelakis, who led the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal team that organized the festival. He emphasized the tremendous assistance they received from numerous volunteers.

"None of this would have been possible without their help," he said. "Thank god the weather has been on our side and has been of assistance for us to succeed over these four days."



Two of the volunteers who toiled at the grills to make souvlaki, sausage and other Hellenic delicacies during the Montreal Greek Festival this year.

Parking ticket complaints

The day might have been a perfect one, except for the occasional hitch.

Some of those attending, including Katerina Hulis, president of the Laval chapter of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, complained to *Nouvelles Parc Extension News* about the intolerance shown by City of Montreal parking agents who issued tickets indiscriminately, regardless of the fact there were several major events taking place in Parc Extension that day.

Courtesy lacking, says Hulis

She said a ticket was placed on a vehicle owned by a festival organizer, who had used the car as a barrier to improve pedestrian security. The agent alleged the vehicle was blocking a portion of a pedestrian crosswalk.

"I said I understand you're trying to do your job, but it's not very courteous during our community festival, especially when we're trying to ensure security," said Hulis.

Nouvelles Parc Extension News heard similar complaints about cars being ticketed a little earlier the same day around Saint Roch Park where members of the Pakistani community were attending an independence day celebration honouring their country.



From the left, Pierrefonds-Roxboro Borough Mayor Jim Beis, Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal vice-president Dr. Michael Tsoukas and Parc Extension city councillor Mary Deros were among the dignitaries who attended the Montreal Greek Festival on the evening of Aug. 17.



Photos: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News

Hellenic dancers from one of several Greek cultural organizations that performed during the Montreal Greek Festival are seen here at the corner of Saint Roch and Outremont streets.



Attendance was heavy during the Montreal Greek Festival.

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Montreal's Pakistanis celebrate their nation's independence



Photos: Martin C. Barry,
Nouvelles Parc Extension News

Major patriotic gathering held in Park Ex's Saint Roch Park

MARTIN C. BARRY
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Parc Extension city councillor Mary Deros spoke about her fondness for the local Pakistani community during the independence day celebration held for their country on Aug. 17 in Saint Roch Park.

Celebrations held on Saturday Aug. 17 in Park Extension's Saint Roch Park to mark the 77th annual Pakistan Independence Day attracted a sizeable crowd of patriotic Pakistanis who enjoyed singing, traditional dancing and stirring addresses.

A joyful gathering

The program, sponsored by the Himalaya Seniors of Quebec, included multi-cultural events and speeches by elected officials from local ridings and neighborhoods. There were also artists and singers who were invited to perform. Bazar and food concession operators also took part.

Prominent social and political dignitaries including MPs, MNAs, borough mayors, city counselors and representatives of different cultural communities who were invited to grace the occasion with their presence.

For some, a busy weekend

For some local elected officials, Pakistan Independence Day was just one of a series of commemorative events taking place over a single weekend, making it the busiest time

of the year.

"There are so many communities in Parc Ex that there are some events I cannot attend," local city councillor Mary Deros acknowledged to Nouvelles Parc Extension News, noting that Montreal's Armenians are another of the many communities which hold important gatherings at this time of year.

Every year, Pakistan's national independence day is celebrated all over Pakistan with flag raising ceremonies, tributes to the national heroes and fireworks taking place in the capital, Islamabad.

An independent Pakistan

The main celebration takes place in Islamabad, where the President and Prime Minister raise the national flag at the Presidential and Parliament buildings and deliver speeches that are televised live.

In the speech, the leaders highlight the achievements of the government, goals set for the future and (in the words of the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam), bring "Unity, Faith and Discipline" to the people.

The event, also known as Yaum-e-Azadi, is

officially observed on the anniversary of the day in 1947 when Pakistan became independent from British rule within what was then known as the British Raj.



Political attachés from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's constituency office in the riding of Papineau read out a message from Trudeau to Montreal's Pakistani community on the 78th anniversary of their country's independence.

Quebec tightens condo construction standards: A crucial step for Parc-Extension's urban growth

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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In recent developments, the Quebec government, led by Labor Minister Jean Boulet, is taking significant steps to address the persistent issue of poorly constructed condominiums, which have been a source of distress for many new homeowners. This move is particularly relevant for neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension in Montreal, where ongoing urban development and housing projects have raised concerns about construction quality and the protection of buyers.

The problem of substandard condo construction

In recent years, there have been numerous

reports of newly built condos in Quebec suffering from hidden defects, such as water infiltration, mold, and structural issues. These problems have often gone unnoticed during construction, only to emerge years later, leaving homeowners with costly repairs. The issue is exacerbated by the fact that many condo projects are developed by companies that quickly dissolve, leaving no recourse for the affected buyers other than lengthy and expensive legal battles.

Government intervention

To combat these issues, Minister Boulet announced plans to overhaul the building inspection system in Quebec. Currently, only new buildings with four stories or fewer are systematically inspected by the non-profit organization Garantie de construction résidentielle (GCR). High-rise condos, however, are not

subject to these mandatory inspections, leaving a significant gap in consumer protection.

The proposed changes, which will be outlined in a new bill expected this fall, aim to extend inspection requirements and improve the overall quality of construction. This initiative follows the recently passed Bill 51, which aimed to streamline various trades in the construction industry to enhance productivity. The new measures will focus specifically on the quality of construction work, the safety of residents, and the qualifications of contractors

Relevance to Parc-Extension

For neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension, which is currently experiencing a wave of urban redevelopment, these measures could provide much-needed safeguards for new homebuyers. As part of Montreal's broader Plan d'urbanisme et de mobilité 2050, Parc-Ex is set to see an



increase in housing density and new construction projects.

Ensuring that these developments are held to higher standards of inspection and construction quality will be crucial in maintaining the neighbourhood's livability and protecting residents from the potential pitfalls of poorly executed construction projects.

The Quebec government's move to tighten construction regulations is a welcome step for many, particularly in rapidly developing areas like Parc-Extension. These changes aim to protect homeowners from the financial and emotional toll of discovering hidden defects in their newly purchased properties, ensuring that urban growth does not come at the expense of quality and safety.



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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

MISADVENTURE

Q I am a male, 32, in a relationship with a nice girl for five years. Over the last half year we've discussed whether we are meant to be life mates, and we've even gone through counseling to solve some nagging issues. At this stage, though I love her dearly, I'm not feeling passion or convinced we are soul mates.

I was just back home visiting family. As I checked out at the local organic grocery store, the cashier and I agreed we looked familiar. In a brief exchange at the register we realized we went to school together. Later that day I remembered my huge crush on the girl who sat behind me.

She was so different than the other girls I knew, a brilliant combination of kindheartedness, intelligence, beauty and coolness. Even at that age she had direction and purpose in life. Anybody who knew her had the sense she was going to do good in this world someday.

That premonition was dead-on accurate. After finishing college she spent a few years in the Peace Corps and is now finishing nursing school. I tell you this to demonstrate what a tremendously gifted and kind person she is. That night I was flooded with emotions, remembering my big crush and falling in love with the idea of who she had become.

Next morning these emotions ruled every second of my being. Despite butterflies in my stomach and nervous adrenaline, I went back to the grocer. I said I was fascinated to hear more of her life and offered to buy her a cup of tea. She gave me her number, and we agreed to meet.

Unbeknownst to her, I postponed my departure on her account. I called hoping to see her that evening, but she said she'd got her days mixed-up and promised to visit her fiancé's parents. I don't believe she made the story up, but I was crushed. On the phone I was dumbstruck and couldn't find another time before my departure.

My life has been plagued by personal and

family misfortune, and I thought this chance meeting was no mere accident. It was fate. I thought finally in life I was catching a break and something great was about to happen.

Would it be appropriate to send her a letter? I want to tell her how remarkable she is, how amazing she is to help mankind, and, of course, how I had and have a crush on her. But then what purpose would it serve? Is it fair to disrupt her engagement considering I haven't seen her in 15 years? Or do I have an obligation to my own fate to connect with her?

Adam

A Adam, there are two ways of interpreting what happened. Let's call them the Tolkien theory and the law of parsimony. The Tolkien theory, named for the author of "The Lord of the Rings," suggests a mystical union of time and space brought you and your former classmate together. A thousand things came into play for this to happen, and like Frodo, you are now on a heroic quest upon which much depends.

The law of parsimony, however, suggests the simplest explanation is usually correct. Your former classmate crossed your path to show you what you didn't learn in counseling. You don't want to be with your girlfriend.

While we don't exclude the possibility of the miraculous, we're inclined to go with the obvious. When a cop pulls you over for speeding in a school zone, it doesn't mean you're supposed to become a policeman. It means you're not supposed to endanger schoolchildren.

You haven't dated this woman, slept with her, met her family or lived with her quirks. You cannot think "I'll straighten out my life if I get to have her." But you should think "I need to end sexual contact with my girlfriend and stop telling her 'I love you.'"

Wayne & Tamara

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

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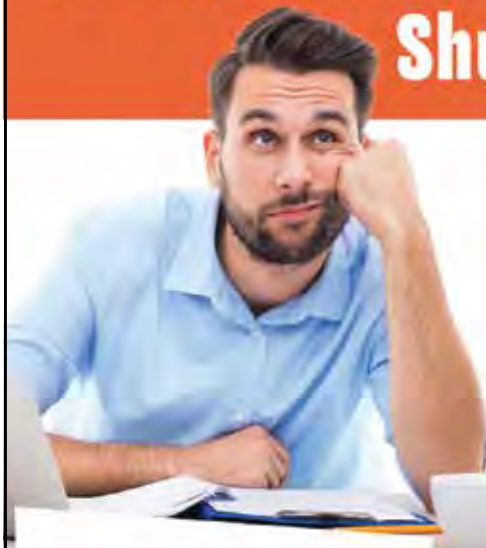
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- Cherry Tomatoes (Québec)
- Lettuce (Québec)
- Avocados (2)
- Parsley (Québec)
- Garlic (Espagne)
- Bananas (4)
- Mango
- Clementines (5-7)
- Apples (3) (Québec)

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The luckiest signs this week:
SCORPIO, SAGITTARIUS AND CAPRICORN

- 
ARIES
 You'll have a lot of work and urgent details to sort out at home and work this week. Don't hesitate to ask your family for help. They'll be happy to lend a hand!
- 
TAURUS
 Well-meaning friends might invite you to exercise regularly to stay in shape over winter. This will help you feel good about yourself and stay healthy.
- 
GEMINI
 This week, you'll devote your time to your home and family. You'll also decorate your space how you like and be happy with the results. The New Moon will bring action into your life.
- 
CANCER
 You'll be on the go this week or play taxi driver for your nearest and dearest, which will take some time. You'll also spend time talking on the phone and being active on social media. You'll be curious and easy to talk to.
- 
LEO
 A mountain of files awaits you at work. This will cause some stress but bring in much-needed extra income, so you may need to double-check some invoices.
- 
VIRGO
 Your friends will want to go shopping with you. Although you'll suggest various activities, you may end up going on an adventure on your own. You could play a sport or do another fun activity.
- 
LIBRA
 Take a step back to relax and gain a better perspective. This will help you determine how to make your personal or professional life more interesting.
- 
SCORPIO
 Your friends may ask you to join them for a relaxing weekend retreat, or your partner could take you on a romantic getaway. Either way, you'll have fun in a rejuvenating atmosphere.
- 
SAGITTARIUS
 You might be given new responsibilities at work, requiring a few extra hours to complete your projects. However, this could lead to better job opportunities in the future.
- 
CAPRICORN
 A training course suggested by your boss will open doors to a more promising future, with possible advancement after graduation. A celebratory trip is in the cards. Lots of fun ahead!
- 
AQUARIUS
 September is a time for new beginnings — a new school year for students and a return to work for others. Take this opportunity to think about what you want to do with your life and start working toward it.
- 
PISCES
 You'll be responsible for organizing a big event despite feeling uncomfortable in crowds. This will show you that stepping outside your comfort zone can help you succeed and accomplish your goals.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 179

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13				14			
15			16				17			
18			19				20			
			21				22			
23	24	25			26			27	28	29
30				31				32		
33			34				35			
			36	37			38			
39	40				41			42	43	44
45					46			47		
48					49			50		
51					52			53		

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ACROSS

1. Saucepan
4. Manhandle
8. Celebrity
12. Wood chopper
13. And
14. Be sympathetic
15. Ballpoint, e.g.
16. Mementos
18. Responds
20. Fold
21. Rustic shelter
22. Modernize
23. Bird's noise
26. Failure
27. Oath
30. Mom's sister
31. Dense mist
32. Slangy assent
33. Through
34. Derby, e.g.
35. Catch ___ winks
36. Unlatch
38. Often-dried fruit

DOWN

1. Mama's spouse
2. Farm animals
3. Perfect scores
4. Cosmetics
5. Observant
6. Employs
7. Sever
8. Burn with hot water
9. Gain control: 2 wds.
10. Domain
11. Relax
17. Hastened
19. Hone
22. Floor covering
23. Beret, e.g.
24. Tinge
25. Registered
26. Speck
28. Type of bran
29. Common question
31. Loyal admirer
32. Type of exercise
34. Thyme, e.g.
35. Best
37. Pares
38. Deadly
39. Feel pain
40. "Since You've ___ Gone"
41. Naked
42. Nibbles
43. Opera feature
44. Garden starter
46. Game official, for short

Sudoku

PUZZLE NO. 904

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

HOW TO PLAY:

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

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

Last Issue's Answers

CROSSWORDS

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

Sudoku

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



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