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VSP councillors address citizens at monthly borough meeting


Photo by Dylan Adams Lemaçon, Newsfirst

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Recurring issues of street cleaning, parking, and safety take center stage at Parc-Extension town hall

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At this month's Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension borough meeting on November 5th, residents raised numerous local issues, from inadequate street cleaning to parking and neighbourhood safety concerns. The session, held at the Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension Townhall, was led by city councillor Sylvain Ouellet, standing in again for borough mayor Laurence Lavigne Lalonde, who remains on sick leave.



Councillor Sylvain Ouellet acts as deputy Mayor and leads the meeting as he sits in once again for current borough Mayor Laurence Lavigne Lalonde who's still away due to personal reasons. (Photo: Dylan Adams Lemaçon, Parc-Extension News)

Blue line construction and revitalization updates

Councillor Ouellet opened with updates on construction projects as the season wraps up, including the ongoing Blue Line extension and temporary closure of the Saint-Michel metro station. The borough mayor's temporary replacement assured residents that they are doing everything they can to quickly resolve this situation, also confirming that a shuttle bus service was now in place with the STM. He noted that the station's reopening would happen within weeks rather than months.

One familiar face, Mr. Fitzsimmons, revisited the council with complaints about noise and traffic disruptions stemming from the Blue Line construction near 24th Avenue and Pie IX boulevard. He voiced concerns that these disturbances are reducing property values in the area. Ouellet responded by highlighting the long-term benefits of the new metro station. "I personally believe the value of homes in that area will go up," he said, expressing confidence that the project will ultimately enhance the neighbourhood's appeal.

The borough also announced an upcoming consultation session for the revitalization of Villeray, which will include the "Bye Bye Béton" competition's second edition. This initiative, aimed at greening private property by replacing concrete with plants, continues to align with Montreal's broader ecological goals.

Social services facility sparks concerns over safety and public order

Several citizens voiced their unease over a nearby social services house near Metro d'Iberville, alleging it has become a hotspot for drug use and other disruptive behavior. "I'm all for social services like this, but people live across the street from all this..." one man said after presenting photos of the site to the council. Describing the situation as "really a free-for-all," he implored the council to take action. Ouellet acknowledged the seriousness of the complaints and committed to visiting the location to find a solution. "I'll go see it in person," he promised, expressing his concern over the images presented.

Another resident, echoing frustration, argued that the borough isn't doing enough to address social and public safety issues. "I never hear anyone here talking about the social and human problems in our neighbourhood!" she exclaimed, emphasizing the visible impact of drug use and mental health issues on local safety. Ouellet responded, acknowledging the crisis and attributing part of the responsibility to the provincial government. "There's a limit to what we can do on the municipal level, but we don't give up," he said, assuring residents that the borough is actively pressuring Quebec's government for more support in addressing social service and mental health crises.

Public safety concerns and street cleaning issues dominate resident questions

Ouellet emphasized road safety following a recent tragic accident in Mile End, urging drivers to exercise extreme caution, especially at night. "If you're driving at night, please be more careful rather than less," he implored, stressing the need to protect pedestrians in all boroughs. However, when the floor opened for questions, residents immediately voiced their concerns about inadequate street cleaning and sidewalk maintenance. Madame Rascofola, a longtime resident, presented photos as evidence of her street's persistent neglect. "I came here on July 2nd for the same issue, and nothing has changed," she said, frustrated at the lack of regular cleaning.

Another resident echoed her sentiment, noting that street sweepers had barely passed through this year. In response, Ouellet explained that the borough recently implemented changes in its cleaning system, calling this year a "transition period" but acknowledging room for improvement. City councillor Mary Deros pressed for a review of the sidewalk cleaning schedule, supporting residents' complaints that the streets need more frequent attention.

New cycling path raises frustrations over parking and community consultation

The borough's push for additional bike lanes has met resistance from some residents. Mr. Bricault, from the Journal de Saint-Michel, expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of public consultation regarding a new bike path on Rue de Louvain. He argued that he was promised a public consultation on the project's feasibility, but this never took place. Ouellet countered by saying that while the borough did announce the project a year ago, the intention was always to

implement the path, not to seek approval on whether it should be constructed.

Another resident voiced her displeasure over the same bike path, arguing that parking should take priority over additional cycling infrastructure. She grew visibly frustrated, questioning the council's communication efforts on cleaning and street changes. "What have you done to communicate with us?" she demanded, dissatisfied with responses that pointed to social media announcements and previous meetings.

Hospital workers demand parking exemptions

Parking concerns extended to local healthcare workers, as union representative Madame Pelrin brought attention to the challenges faced by employees at Hôpital Jean-Talon. Due to paid street parking regulations, many hospital staff incur monthly costs exceeding \$200. Pelrin requested if parking exemptions for healthcare workers of some sort could be a solution. Ouellet explained that while parking spaces are limited, public transit options remain viable. However, he encouraged hospital staff to consult with their employers for potential solutions, as the borough's resources for parking are stretched thin. "There's a lack of parking in the city, and we can't build any more," he noted, reiterating the borough's limited capacity to accommodate additional parking infrastructure.



Councillor Mary Deros smiles as she thanks police officers for their work during Diwali celebrations last week. (Photo: Dylan Adams Lemaçon, Parc-Extension News)

Looking forward: council promises further attention to public complaints

The next monthly town hall meeting is likely to revisit several of these issues, particularly as construction and cleanliness remain contentious topics in Parc-Extension.

In a lighter part of the meeting, Councillor Deros extended gratitude to local police for their presence during Diwali celebrations last week, noting the safety and order they provided during the festival's fireworks displays. Councillor Josué Corvil also reminded citizens that this month will feature National Child Day, celebrated on November 20th, as well as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25.

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OPINION & Editorial



We will remember them in thankful gratitude

Remembrance Day, an annual sacred moment in Our Home and Native Land, is graciously and respectfully observed from Sea to Shining Sea.

Born as Armistice Day, Canadians now pause every November 11th at 11:00 a.m. in memory of those who have given us gifts of freedom and liberty, too often paying with their lives.

First instituted to mark the end of hostilities of World War 1 in 1918, more than 106 years later, millions gather in hundreds, if not thousands, throughout the land to prayerfully and solemnly remember all who served in wars that have plagued the world for over a century.

In defense of freedom and liberty

Decades of yearly commemorations of peace won through personal sacrifice have not diminished the priceless contributions made by our veterans to freedom and liberty the world-over. In just three of the despicable armed conflicts of the 20th and 21st Centuries - the two world wars and Afghanistan - 110,000 Canadians paid the ultimate price, touch us deep enough to ensure that their legacy lives on.

History tries to explain wars, but the effort rarely leads to understanding of these vile acts of aggression between factions of the same country, between countries or between alliances.

Canadians, it seems, have a hard time understanding why people shed one another's blood. Any war is sickening and hateful. Does the quiet, simmering resentment in our souls have anything to do with the fact that we have often fought the wars of other people, as in WW 1, WW2, Korea, and, more recently, Afghanistan. Arguably, the Second World War is an exception for its indisputable moral clarity, if anything about war can be called moral. In the eyes of many, it truly was the good war.

Sgt. Christos Karigiannis, in memoriam

In Afghanistan, one of our own, 31-year-old Sgt. Christos Karigiannis, lost his life in a roadside attack June 20th, 2007. Montreal-born, Laval-raised, Chris served with the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry in Edmonton. He will certainly be remembered by members of Chomedey Polyvalent High School's Class of '91.

Families of Canadian veterans who have lost loved ones to the atrocities of war are often more-than-willing to express their feelings to their community. Peter Karigiannis, one of Chris's

two brothers, was candid about the family's grief over their loss, even now, after 17 years.

"Chris wanted to continue pilot's lessons when he returned from Afghanistan," Peter shared in a heart-felt telephone conversation. "A pilot of single-engine-planes, he loved skydiving, and open-cage-shark-diving. An adventurous world-citizen, he travelled solo by train to Sweden, Germany, Bulgaria, South Africa."

Showing closeness shared with his brother, Peter recounted that on one occasion, Chris called him from a payphone to tell him that he was in

Johannesburg. A true blue-and-red Canadian young man who liked to date, Chris had a girlfriend in Canada. "The family still keeps in touch with her," Peter was glad to say.

Nicky, a Silver Cross Mother

Nicky, the matriarch of the Karigiannis family, is invited yearly to be part of ceremonies held in Ottawa and in Laval. Proud of her recognition as a Silver Cross Mother, she will be attending 2024's Remembrance Day ceremony this coming Saturday, November 9, at city hall. She is grateful to Royal Canadian Legion 251 (Chomedey) for organizing the event at the cenotaph erected in honour of her son. The family is glad that the cenotaph is reasonably well-maintained and is proud that Chris is honored for his sacrifice, never to be forgotten.

Proud Lavalier, Peter expressed appreciation for Laval Liberty High School's Leadership program in keeping Sgt. Christos Karigiannis's memory alive. Under the motivation of spiritual animator Daniel Johnson, and guidance from principal Eric Ruggi, the school community rallied hundreds of students, families, staff and guests to a ceremony on the school grounds, November 11, 2008, at 11:00 a.m. The gathering of so many hearts, many of whom were moved to tears, witnessed the unveiling of a commemorative plaque and stone dedicated to the heroism of Sgt. Christos. The modest but genuinely inspirational monument still stands vigilant to the human weakness of war and the desire for peace.

Yearning for peace

Later, under the guidance of Johnson and principal Ruggi, students established a partnership with the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry, awarding \$1000 scholarships for community service. Since many years have passed, Peter isn't aware if the student involvement with the Infantry is still active at Laval Senior Academy, which now stands on the grounds formerly occupied by Laval Liberty High School.

"It's not easy to fight someone else's war," Peter told TLN. "However, although we have differences, we have a universal sense of community."

He was clear on the concept of involvement in foreign wars, affirming that "you don't want to get involved until you see the necessity of preventing the risk from reaching your shores. Not everyone has the ability to face a life-death situation. War is evil, but we don't live in fantasyland. We can't stop it. It's a fact of life, a fight that's never over."

Peter believes that enough is done at Remembrance Day ceremonies. "I'm satisfied with what I see and with what I've experienced. I value what the Legions are doing. They are important for Veterans. They should get more funding. It's a place for veterans to be in environments that only they understand. They feel they are brothers of special bond, it's astronomical. In many ways, they were more brothers to Chris than I was.

"Remembrance Day is for honoring soldiers giving up home and family for the betterment of everybody else. We remember what other people sacrificed for our own good, for the nation, for the world," Peter eloquently summed up.

Sensitizing young people

Peter thinks that World History should be compulsory in high school. "We need to know where we've been, how we got here. Social media spreads conspiracies, fabricating history for entertainment. There's evil in the world - dictatorship, genocide, murder - it's all wrong."

He was emphatic about wanting young people to know what happened, to be encouraged to learn of the causes of wars, without being judgmental. "There are values and challenges; why did it happen, what were the outcomes? Students need personal understanding and more knowledge, to form proper and intelligent opinions."

Remembering is easy. Forgetting is difficult in personal relationships as in a nation's collective response to the world. The task is not to ignore past events but to view them in proportion, to find some compromise between present and past. Throughout history, societies that manage to "let the dead bury their dead," have succeeded, moving forward. Those that cannot forget the past and drink at the rancid well of grievance, decay from within.

On Remembrance Day, let's honor the memory of the fallen, those who are still sacrificing, and promise to care for the living. We will always remember them with thanks and gratitude.

Renata Isopo

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One million Canadians have received care thanks to The Canadian Dental Care Plan

(NEWSFIRST) - The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) has reached a significant milestone, with over one million Canadians having received dental care through the program. This achievement marks a major step forward in improving access to oral health care across the country, particularly for those who previously faced barriers to receiving necessary treatments.

Background of the Canadian Dental Care Plan

The CDCP was introduced as part of the federal government's efforts to make dental care more accessible and affordable for Canadians. The plan aims to provide comprehensive dental coverage to individuals who do not have access to private dental insurance. This includes seniors, children, and adults with disabilities, among others. The program covers a wide range of dental services, from routine cleanings and check-ups to more complex procedures like fillings, crowns, and even life-saving screenings for oral cancers.

Milestone Achievement

"As of November 2024, more than one million Canadians have benefited from the CDCP. This milestone is a testament to the program's success in addressing the oral health needs of Canadians" said The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, highlighting the significance of this achievement during a recent announcement at a dental clinic. He emphasized that the program has not only improved access to dental care but also contributed to the overall health and well-being of Canadians.

Impact on Canadians

The CDCP has had a profound impact on the lives of many Canadians. For instance, the program has saved individuals an average of \$730 on dental care costs. This financial relief is particularly significant for low-income families and individuals who might otherwise forgo necessary dental treatments due to cost concerns.



By reducing the financial burden of dental care, the CDCP is helping to ensure that more Canadians can maintain good oral health, which is closely linked to overall health.

Expansion of Services

In addition to reaching this milestone, the CDCP is also expanding its services to include more comprehensive coverage. On November 1, 2024, the program began accepting requests for services that require preauthorization. This includes procedures such as the initial placement of partial dentures or crowns, as well as treatments for patients with particularly high needs or complex conditions. The expansion of services is expected to further enhance the accessibility and affordability of dental care for Canadians.

Provider Participation

The success of the CDCP can be attributed in part to the high level of participation from oral health providers across the country. As of now, 89% of active oral health providers in Canada are delivering care through the program. This widespread participation has been crucial in ensuring that Canadians have access to a broad network

of dental professionals who can provide the necessary treatments.

Government Support and Future Plans

The federal government has been instrumental in the implementation and expansion of the CDCP. Ministers from various departments have expressed their support for the program and its impact on Canadians. The Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health, noted that the CDCP is making a significant difference in the lives of Canadians by providing them with the dental care they need for a healthier life. Similarly, the Honourable Kamal Khera, Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, highlighted the program's role in helping families access affordable dental care.

Looking ahead, the government plans to continue expanding the CDCP to reach even more Canadians. By 2025, the program aims to provide coverage to up to nine million Canadian residents who currently do not have access to dental insurance. This ambitious goal underscores the government's commitment to improving oral health care for all Canadians.

Personal Stories

The impact of the CDCP is best illustrated through the personal stories of those who have benefited from the program. For many Canadians, the CDCP has been a lifeline, providing them with access to essential dental care that they might not have been able to afford otherwise. These stories highlight the transformative power of the program in improving not only oral health but also the overall quality of life for individuals and families across the country.

The milestone of one million Canadians receiving care through the Canadian Dental Care Plan is a significant achievement that reflects the program's success in making dental care more accessible and affordable. This milestone is not just a number; it represents one million stories of improved health, financial relief, and enhanced quality of life. As the program continues to grow, it will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping the future of oral health care in Canada.



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Joe Ortona re-elected as Chairman of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB)

(NEWSFIRST) - Joe Ortona's re-election as Chairman of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) on November 3, 2024, is a significant event for the English-speaking community in Quebec. Ortona, who has been a prominent figure in the EMSB since he first took over as chair in 2020, secured a decisive victory with 13,289 votes, more than double the 4,674 votes received by his opponent, Katherine Korakakis.



Election Overview

The election saw a voter turnout of 22%, which, while modest, reflects the ongoing engagement of the community in the governance of their educational institutions. Ortona's team managed to sweep all ten commissioner positions, demonstrating strong support across the board's various wards.

The Significance of Ortona's Victory

Ortona's re-election is not just a personal triumph but also a reaffirmation of the community's trust in his leadership and vision for the EMSB. His tenure has been marked by a commitment to maintaining the integrity and autonomy of English-language education in Quebec, particularly in the face of legislative challenges such as Bill 40 and Bill 96.

Bill 40, passed by the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government in 2020, aimed to abolish school boards across the province and replace them with school service centres. However, the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) successfully challenged the law, with a Superior Court ruling that it violated the constitutional rights of the province's English-speaking minority. This legal victory was a significant milestone for Ortona and the EMSB, reinforcing the importance of English school boards in Quebec.

Challenges and Achievements

During his tenure, Ortona has navigated numerous challenges, including the ongoing legal battles with the CAQ government over Bill 96, which seeks to strengthen the use of French in the province. The EMSB has been at the forefront of these challenges, advocating for the rights of English-speaking students and their families.

Ortona's leadership has also been characterized by efforts to improve the quality of education and resources available to students. Under his guidance, the EMSB has focused on enhancing vocational training programs, integrating technology into classrooms, and promoting inclusive education practices.

Community Support and Engagement

The sweeping victory of Ortona's team in all ten wards underscores the broad support he enjoys within the community. Each ward saw significant wins for his candidates, reflecting a unified endorsement of his policies and approach.

Detailed Voting Results by Ward

Here is a detailed breakdown of the voting results in each ward:

- **Ward 1 (Ahuntsic-Cartierville–Montréal-Nord):** Susan Perera (Team Ortona) received 916 votes, defeating Franco Mazzariello (Team Korakakis), who received 425 votes.
- **Ward 2 (Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce):** Chelsea Craig (Team Ortona) won with 1,102 votes against Howie Silbiger (Team Korakakis), who garnered 512 votes.
- **Ward 3 (Côte-Saint-Luc, Montreal West, Hampstead):** Paola Samuel (Team Ortona) secured 1,345 votes, while Samara Perez (Team Korakakis) received 678 votes.
- **Ward 4 (Mercier–Hochelaga-Maisonneuve–Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie–Plateau-Mont-Royal–Anjou–Montreal-Est):** Maria Corsi (Team Ortona) won with 1,789 votes against Viktoriya Grosko (Team Korakakis), who received 654 votes.
- **Ward 5 (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce):** Sharon Nelson (Team Ortona) received 1,056 votes, defeating Joseph Lalla (Team Korakakis), who received 489 votes.
- **Ward 6 (Rivière-des-Prairies–Pointe-aux-Trembles):** Pietro Mercuri (Team Ortona) won with 2,248 votes compared to Tony Aversano (Team Korakakis), who received 340 votes.
- **Ward 7 (Saint-Laurent):** James Kromida (Team Ortona) secured 1,567 votes, while Vicky Pololos (Team Korakakis) received 678 votes.
- **Ward 8 (Saint-Léonard):** Mario Pietrangelo (Team Ortona) received 1,234 votes, defeating Antonio Zaruso (Team Korakakis), who received 543 votes.
- **Ward 9 (Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension–Mont-Royal–Outremont):** Paula Kilian (Team Ortona) won with 1,678 votes against Joanne Charron (Team Korakakis), who received 789 votes.
- **Ward 10 (Westmount–Sud-Ouest–Ville-Marie):** Julien Feldman (Team Ortona) secured 1,890 votes, while Shalani Bel (Team Korakakis) received 765 votes.

Looking Ahead

As Ortona embarks on his new term, the focus will likely remain on defending the rights of the English-speaking community and ensuring that the EMSB continues to provide high-quality education. The board's ongoing legal battles with the provincial government will be a critical area of attention, as will efforts to adapt to the evolving educational landscape.

Ortona's re-election also signals continuity and stability for the EMSB. His experience and established relationships within the community and with other educational stakeholders will be invaluable as the board navigates future challenges. The emphasis on vocational training, technological integration, and inclusive education practices is expected to continue, aligning with Ortona's vision of a modern, responsive educational system.

Joe Ortona's decisive victory and the success of his team across all wards highlight a strong mandate to continue advocating for the rights and needs of English-speaking students in Quebec. As he steps into his new term, Ortona's focus will remain on defending the autonomy of English-language education and ensuring that the EMSB remains a beacon of quality and inclusivity in the province's educational landscape.



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Ralph Hodgson (1895-1948) lived by the motto inscribed on his tombstone: "It's not what you have lost that counts but what you have." These words defined his life's work, as he dedicated himself to ensuring that his fellow war amputee veterans could thrive despite their injuries.

Hodgson, a law student when the First World War began, quickly enlisted with Toronto's 24th Battalion. In April 1917, he was wounded during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, resulting in the amputation of his right leg below the knee.

Hodgson became a founding member of The War Amps, an organization established over a century ago by amputee veterans of the First

World War. Their mission was to unite, support and advocate for the rights of amputee veterans.

These First World War veterans played a pivotal role in welcoming and mentoring a new generation of amputees returning from the Second World War, helping them adapt and sharing their hard-earned wisdom.

Hodgson was perhaps best remembered for greeting hospital ships as they returned with injured soldiers from the Second World War. His presence offered encouragement to these young men, helping them come to terms with their amputations and motivating them to move forward.

Cliff Chadderton (1919-2013), a Second



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World War veteran who lost part of his right leg in Belgium in 1944, vividly recalled Hodgson's unforgettable impact. "Our joy at being home was mingled with a bit of apprehension," said Chadderton. "Then a strange and wonderful thing happened. Into the ward bounced Ralph Hodgson. Swinging between a thumb and a forefinger was a miniature artificial leg. Not only did Ralph walk, spin and dance, but he finished up by jumping off a waist-high table."

As The War Amps first Dominion Placement Officer, Hodgson travelled across Canada, tackling the challenge of unemployment for amputees from both world wars. "He kept plugging away until all amputees from the wars had found jobs, which Ralph thought should be rightfully theirs," Chadderton noted.

For his remarkable efforts, Hodgson was awarded the Order of the British Empire, a distinction given to civilians who contributed to the war effort by supporting veterans and their families.

"Mr. Hodgson showed other war amputee veterans that their amputations wouldn't hold them back from succeeding in life," says Rachel Quilty, a graduate of The War Amps Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program. "He's remembered not just for securing jobs for amputees, but for giving them the confidence and strength to persevere."

Today, Ralph Hodgson Memorial Park in Port Hope, Ontario, stands as a lasting tribute to his extraordinary commitment to Canada's war amputee veterans.

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Remembrance DAY November 11

A day to honour those who defended peace

November 11 marks Remembrance Day in Canada. Every year, Canadians come together to honour the courage and sacrifices of the men and women who serve or have served in the country's armed forces, and particularly those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Here's a look at this day of gathering and remembrance.

EVOCATIVE NUMBERS

It's important to remember the sacrifices made by the more than 2,300,000 individuals who have joined the armed forces in Canada's national history. Over 118,000 brave servicemen and women have given their lives to defend freedom. Remembrance Day honours the Canadian effort

in the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, the war in Afghanistan and all peacekeeping missions.

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED

On November 11, Canadians wear a poppy to pay tribute to veterans. The national ceremony in Ottawa, broadcast across the country, is held in the presence of government representatives. It includes a two-minute silence at 11 a.m., readings, songs and symbolic cannon shots.

As a Canadian citizen, join the veterans in your area in this collective duty of remembrance. Contact your local municipality to find out about Remembrance Day activities near you.



In honour of those who saved the world

*In life one man can seldom see
His impact in society
Our soldiers fight to blinded eyes
To allow us all to live our lives
Taking up arms against a foe
To save us from the pain they know
To give us all out liberty
They bear the brunt of misery
No greater duty can one bear
An act of courage few would dare
Endless sacrifices for 4 years
Keeping back our greatest fears
November 11th is a day of love
To remember those now up above
Men and women far too great
To be remembered upon one date
No words bring justice to their fight
But I will try with all my might
To bring them honour for the days
They fought to alay such evil ways
No act of love could be so grand
As one brave soldier's final stand
So now I will say at last
We must remember what has past
Those who have died and those who live
And all the thanks to them we give
They are all those who meet the call
Preserving good for one and all
So on this day I ask you pray
For heroes of our memory
Thank for your sacrifice
It was this act that gave us life.*



A poem by Mike, remembranceday.com

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fought and gave their
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Remembrance
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New musical 'The Adventures of Eva the Louse' enchants children as well as parents

Red carpet launch in Laval starred 175 students from English Montreal School Board

MARTIN C. BARRY
marty@newsfirst.ca



"Our ultimate goal is to inspire these young participants to fall in love with singing and music," said Dimitris Ilias, the project's co-artistic director.

Since most parents and school-age children these days can easily relate to something like an annoying infestation of head lice, it was only a matter of time before someone developed the idea into a musical production, with a symphony orchestra and an enchanting chorus of children's voices.

After eighteen months of auditions, rehearsals, recording and production, *The Adventures of Eva Louse* is the culmination of those efforts.

Unique musical journey

"It has been a unique educational journey, showing how literature and music can inspire and educate our children in remarkable ways," said Dimitris Ilias, who, along with his wife, Maria Diamantis, led the project from beginning to end as artistic directors.

"Our ultimate goal is to inspire these young participants to fall in love with singing and music," he said.

Under their guidance (their previous credits on the Chroma Musika label include *The Golden Touch* and *Time for Flowers Time for Snow*), *The Adventures of Eva Louse* is a labour of love, involving international orchestral recording sessions with the Sofia Session Orchestra in Bulgaria.

Red carpet treatment

Development of the massive, multi-level, educational and artistic project culminated in style on Oct. 30 at The Palace convention centre in Laval with a performance of highlights, as well as the official release of a children's picture/audio book.

The evening wasn't just a chance to see a performance – it was the culmination of a year and a half of dedication, teamwork and learning, highlighting the power of creativity in conjunction with community. The red-carpet affair was an event the young participants are sure to remember all their lives.

The Adventures of Eva the Louse follows the humorous and heartwarming journey of Eva, a tiny louse living on nine-year-old protagonist Paul's head. When Paul's aversion to soap and scissors reaches a crisis stage, Eva and her louse village must face reality: dreaded soap and a terrifying haircut.

A formula for success

The project, developed using a winning formula that contributed to Chroma Musika's previous successes, brought together the talents of 175 young choristers from 13 English Montreal School Board schools, as well as the imagination of illustrator Philippe Béha, and the musical brilliance of composer Giannis Georgantelis (both of whom collaborated on the earlier projects).

The EMSB Chorale, under the direction of Pat Abbott and Marie-Eve Arsenault, made a stunning contribution in their recording of *Sanctuary*, the finale of *Eva the Louse*, which guests had the chance to enjoy during the première.

A real group effort

Helping teach the choral parts was associate music director Kerry Roebuck, who was not only the rehearsal director of a Tuesday night

group at the EMSB's Royal Vale Elementary School in Montreal, but was also the orchestra conductor at the première.

Also providing musical direction were Veronica Graniero, a music teacher at Honoré Mercier School (she had a starring role as Paul's mother, Mrs. Goober), as well as Maria Alongi who teaches music at Pierre de Coubertin Elementary, and Yee Kit Lo, a music teacher at Elizabeth Ballantyne Elementary.

EMSB director-general Nick Katalifos, one of several dignitaries present as guests, called *The Adventures of Eva the Louse* "not just a musical performance; it represents a harmonious blend of our community's values –creativity, education, and resilience."

A shared musical vision

"I'd like to extend my deepest thanks to Dimitris Ilias and Maria Diamantis, whose dedication and artistry have transformed a simple idea into this magnificent celebration," said Katalifos. "Dimitri and Maria, we have journeyed through many musical endeavors together, and each time, I am reminded of the power of collaborative spirit and shared vision."

The evening was marked by the dramatic arrival of the 175 young choristers, making a grand entrance while arriving in stretch limousines. They walked the red carpet alongside Philippe Béha and Giannis Georgantelis.

After the performance, the young stars signed copies of the book, again alongside the illustrator and composer, bringing the magic of *Eva's* world to life.



Volunteers who helped make *The Adventures of Eva Louse* a reality.



The school principals were presented with copies of the published book.

Photography
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Park-Extension: Montreal's forgotten neighbourhood in crisis, report exposes widespread inequities

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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A new report has thrust Park-Extension, one of Montreal's most overlooked neighbourhoods, into the spotlight, revealing how urban design and public policy choices have left its residents ensnared in a cycle of hardship. Greater Montreal, home to over 4.1 million people, may be Quebec's most populous region, but its urban landscape reveals stark divides. Vulnerable areas like Park-Extension face layered inequities that are not only detrimental to health but hinder residents' quality of life in profound ways.

The report, produced by the Foundation of Greater Montreal (FGM) and the advocacy group Vivre en Ville, underscores how city planning and infrastructure fall short for marginalized neighbourhoods. Park-Extension, along with areas like Montreal North, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, and Chomedey in Laval, are marked by limited access to essential services, poor environmental quality, and inadequate public transit. In these areas, residents navigate a daily reality that includes food deserts, scarce green spaces, and limited walkability, all of which compound existing social and economic challenges.

Environmental and transportation disparities

The report highlights that in Park-Extension, low-income residents are disproportionately affected by "heat islands," urban areas where concrete and asphalt dominate, absorbing and trapping heat. This phenomenon, combined with limited tree cover, places neighbourhoods like Park-Extension at a significant environmental disadvantage. Compared to more affluent areas, neighbourhoods facing socio-economic challenges experience three times as many heat islands, while cooler, greener spaces are five times less common. These heat-prone zones increase health risks, especially for seniors, young children, and those with pre-existing conditions.

Compounding these environmental issues, transportation access in Park-Extension is severely limited. Public transit options are sparse, and bike lanes and pedestrian-friendly streets are minimal. According to the report, only 6% of schools in economically challenged areas, including Park-Extension, are surrounded by safe, low-traffic environments, which increases the likelihood of

accidents. Karel Mayrand, CEO of FGM, emphasized the need for rapid improvements in transit, especially as car ownership has become essential for many, despite the financial strain. Residents who work outside typical business hours or lack convenient transit options often have no alternative but to rely on cars, trapping them in a cycle of financial burden.

Infrastructure gaps and housing shortages

Infrastructure gaps exacerbate the difficulties for Park-Extension residents. The report notes that about 45% of disadvantaged areas in Greater Montreal are within 150 meters of major roadways, where air quality and noise pollution are much higher. Such proximity not only worsens respiratory health risks but contributes to an overall lower quality of life for these communities.

Housing also emerges as a critical issue, with social and affordable housing representing only 4% of Greater Montreal's residential stock. In neighbourhoods like Park-Extension, where 72% of households are renters, affordable housing options are desperately needed. Jeanne Robin, director of Vivre en Ville, explained that a historical lack of investment in social housing has left low-income families vulnerable to rising rents and substandard living conditions.

The scarcity of affordable housing extends beyond Park-Extension to other vulnerable areas like Montreal North and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. In some regions outside the Montreal core, nearly a quarter of municipalities have no social housing at all. This absence of housing options pushes lower-income families into already congested neighbourhoods, increasing demand and driving up prices in the limited rental market.

Lack of services and the growing need for local investments

While Montreal boasts a thriving urban core, disadvantaged neighbourhoods like Park-Extension face significant service gaps. Public spaces, health facilities, and even basic grocery stores are scarce in these communities, creating "food deserts" where access to fresh produce and other essentials is limited. Mayrand argued that more services need to be accessible within walking distance, especially for seniors, who are often isolated. "If they try to venture outside their homes, they risk crossing six-lane streets where safety is compromised," he noted, underscoring

the urgent need for better local services.

The report sheds light on successful interventions in some parts of the city, which could serve as models for areas like Park-Extension. For example, a recent program providing free public transit for seniors in Montreal led to a 15-20% increase in transit usage among older adults in just six months, offering a blueprint for improving mobility without the economic strain of car ownership.

In Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension, efforts to green and redesign streets, such as the redevelopment of Saint-Roch Street near Boulevard de l'Acadie, aim to make these neighbourhoods safer and more sustainable. By creating pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets, these projects address both environmental concerns and safety issues, offering a glimpse into what a more equitable Park-Extension could look like.

A call for change across greater montreal

While Park-Extension stands out in the report, it's not alone. Neighbourhoods like Montreal

North and Chomedey in Laval experience similar challenges, highlighting a broader issue of systemic inequities across Greater Montreal. The authors call on all levels of government to address these inequalities holistically, proposing a coordinated approach that includes investments in public transit, green spaces, and social housing.

Karel Mayrand stressed that resolving these entrenched issues requires sustained commitment. "We must ensure investments are directed towards reducing the inequities facing our city's most vulnerable populations," he said, advocating for action across municipal, provincial, and federal levels to reshape Montreal into a more inclusive and sustainable metropolis.

For residents of Park-Extension and other disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the report serves as both a diagnosis and a rallying cry for change. Its authors hope that by addressing these interconnected challenges, Montreal can transform into a city where everyone, regardless of neighbourhood, enjoys equal access to health, safety, and opportunity.



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Parc-Extension housing crisis

Skyrocketing rents and gentrification threaten to uproot the heart of Montreal's immigrant community

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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Parc-Extension, has long been a landing spot for new immigrants. However, recent developments have significantly impacted its housing market, leading to concerns about affordability and displacement.

Rising property prices and rent increases

The Montreal housing market has experienced notable price increases across various property types. In the Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension area, the median price for single-family homes was \$585,000, reflecting a 4% decrease, while condos saw a 3% increase to \$475,000, and plexes experienced a 5% rise to \$793,000.

These rising property values have led to higher rents, making it increasingly challenging for long-term residents to afford

housing in the area. In the last year alone, rent in Montreal rose by 16.4%. The average monthly rent for a four-and-a-half apartment in Quebec went from \$1,222 in 2020 to \$1,504 in 2023.

Impact of gentrification

The arrival of the Université de Montréal campus in 2019 has been a significant factor in the neighbourhood's gentrification. This development attracted wealthier students and professionals, leading landlords to increase rents or repurpose properties to cater to this new demographic. Consequently, many long-standing residents, particularly from immigrant communities, have faced evictions or have been pressured to leave.

Tenant challenges and advocacy

Tenants in Parc-Extension have reported various challenges, including substandard living conditions and pressure from landlords to vacate. In one case, a landlord was ordered to



pay over \$3,500 in compensation to an immigrant family for failing to maintain safe living conditions.

Community organizations like the Comité d'Action de Parc-Extension (CAPE) have been actively supporting residents by mapping evictions and advocating for more robust tenant protections. Their efforts aim to raise awareness about the effects of gentrification and to hold stakeholders accountable.

Calls for social housing

In response to the housing crisis, residents and advocates have been calling for increased investment in social housing. Providing for all low-income households in greater Montreal would require about 266,000 new subsidized housing units. However, the Greater Montreal Area has added about 1,400 social housing units a year since 1995, highlighting a significant gap between supply and demand.



Storm of reactions: Quebec requires new doctors to work in public health system

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The Quebec government has stirred strong reactions within the medical community with its plan to require new doctors to start their careers within the public healthcare system, a move that could significantly impact communities like Parc-Extension, where many residents rely heavily on public healthcare services (Montreal Gazette). Health Minister Christian Dubé announced that by the end of the parliamentary session, he will introduce a bill mandating that new family doctors and specialists work in the public network for the initial years of their practice rather than opting for private sector work. This move aims to improve healthcare

access for Quebec's citizens but has caused tensions in negotiations with doctors' unions.

The response was swift. The Collège des médecins, Quebec's official regulatory body for doctors, called for a halt to the expansion of the private healthcare sector, arguing that the migration of doctors to private practice worsens service access for citizens. They reinforced the argument against private healthcare, stating, "The private sector has not proven that it improves access to healthcare services."

Dubé expressed his disappointment over ongoing issues with access to primary care services and delays in surgeries. "Training a doctor costs Quebec taxpayers between \$435,000 and \$790,000, and losing doctors to the private sector is a loss for citizens in urgent need of healthcare services," he remarked. The

Quebec government appears ready to implement significant reforms to address these issues.

Potential consequences of the new bill

The proposed measure isn't without controversy. The Fédération des médecins résidents du Québec (Federation of Resident Doctors of Quebec) strongly opposed the plan, stating that new doctors shouldn't bear the full responsibility of revitalizing the public system. "It's unfair to place this burden solely on new doctors, especially when other healthcare professionals don't face similar restrictions," a representative from the Federation commented.

Moreover, the Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec (Federation of Medical Specialists of Quebec) argued that if this requirement is imposed on doctors, it should apply to all healthcare professionals, as many

also leave the public sector for private work. According to Ministry data, of Quebec's 22,479 practicing doctors, over 775 work solely in private practice — a 70% increase since 2020.

Departure of doctors from the public sector: an escalating issue

The trend of doctors leaving for the private sector concerns the government, as 40% of doctors who leave the public network for private practice do so within their first few years. This has led to challenges in service provision and longer waiting lists for surgeries. The Collège des médecins warns that this trend jeopardizes equitable healthcare access, recently adopting guidelines urging stricter regulation of private healthcare services and calling on the government to "freeze" further private sector expansion.



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LIAR, LIAR

Q I am wondering if this is fair? I work and my employment benefits include life insurance. My husband came to watch me sign him as beneficiary. He then took out family insurance through his bank and showed me a page of the insurance form stating if he dies I am his beneficiary.

Later I heard him on the phone with his daughter telling her she and her brother were his beneficiaries. They are grown and married, with well-paying jobs. Is this fair? When I asked him about this, he said it was not true. He said I heard wrong, which I did not.

He claims he lost all the paperwork, though he has not lost so much as an old hunting license in his life. I wonder if he mailed the papers to his daughter. When I asked to see the forms, he said he would just cancel the insurance, which is fine. But he did not cancel.

I do not care if he has insurance or not. I am not a taker. It is the principle of feeling loved,

cared for, and equal. His bank account is with his daughter also, not with me. I've bought him many things, make the truck and car payments, and pay the rent. I love him but wonder if he loves me or considers me an outsider.

Freda

A Freda, your husband hasn't lost so much as an old hunting license. Is he lying to you? Does a wild bear poop in the woods? Heck yes. You are sharing a bed with a man you don't share a bank account with. You must know where you stand if he dies. Will his children inherit everything, even the two vehicles you are making payments on?

If he doesn't come up with the information you need, at the very least change the beneficiary on your life insurance policy to someone else, even a second cousin twice removed. Forcing his hand will dictate your next move.

Wayne & Tamara

GETAWAY

Q I am a 30-year-old single mother of one. I've been dating a man, 40, for two years. He is a wonderful person, takes exceptional care of me, and is attentive to my needs. He is the best man I have ever dated, but I am in conflict about my feelings for this man for as long as we've dated.

Our problem lies with communication. I don't feel he understands how important communication is to our relationship. Often I feel left out of the loop because he doesn't communicate simple things I feel are important. Sometimes I feel it is because I am younger, and he views me as a child. Other times I feel he just doesn't get it.

Sometimes I don't know why I love him, or if I love him. Recently I wonder if I want to get married just because it is what you do after two years of dating, or if I really want to be married to this man.

Erin

A Erin, the car he drives, the clothes he wears, the way he folds his arms—all that expresses who he is. The way he communicates with you is who he is. He is who he is, and after two years you haven't fallen in love with who he is.

If you loved him, he would feel right. You wouldn't feel he is treating you like a child, you wouldn't feel out of the loop, and you wouldn't feel you are marrying him just to get married.

All signs suggest you should step away from this relationship. Have we communicated this clearly enough? Picture a police officer with a bullhorn. He brings the bullhorn to his mouth, the microphone crackles with static, and he roars, "Keep your hands to yourself, and step away from this relationship!"

Erin, you need to be available for a relationship you feel passionate about.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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All the pieces will fall into place to solve various problems. At work, you'll be motivated to achieve your goals. You're on the road to success and have a clear direction for your projects.



TAURUS

It's time to recharge your batteries! Transforming different areas of your life will improve your well-being. Inspiration guides you towards healthy changes, which will open the door to spirituality.



GEMINI

You'll plan a memorable activity for your group of friends. Your involvement will determine the results. You'll overcome your shyness with some effort. Perseverance will lead to success!



CANCER

You need a plan of action to manage your responsibilities. Get your priorities straight with the help of your loved ones. Family cooperation will be crucial to your success.



LEO

Going back to school will be hard. However, it's a rewarding decision that aligns with your values and goals. Perseverance is key. The support of your loved ones will help you succeed as you learn.



VIRGO

You must carefully analyze the situation before deciding. Joining a spiritual group can expand your horizons and enhance your quality of life. Pay attention to all aspects before committing.



LIBRA

You'll have an important decision to make that requires thoughtful consideration. Don't be swayed by outside pressure. Trust your intuition to find the right answer. Patience will be your friend as you come up with appropriate solutions.



SCORPIO

You must carefully prepare a negotiation to achieve a good outcome. You'll find solutions to your financial and professional problems by landing your dream job.



SAGITTARIUS

Treat yourself to a shopping spree in a high-end boutique. Taking care of your outward appearance will help you climb the ranks at work. Invest in your image to reap the rewards of success.



CAPRICORN

You'll enjoy the comforts of home and improve your efficiency by working remotely. You'll deep clean your home to create an environment that boosts productivity.



AQUARIUS

If there's a misunderstanding amongst your family members, don't prolong the situation. Clarify roles and decisions to clear up any vagueness. Open and direct communication is necessary to resolve misunderstandings.



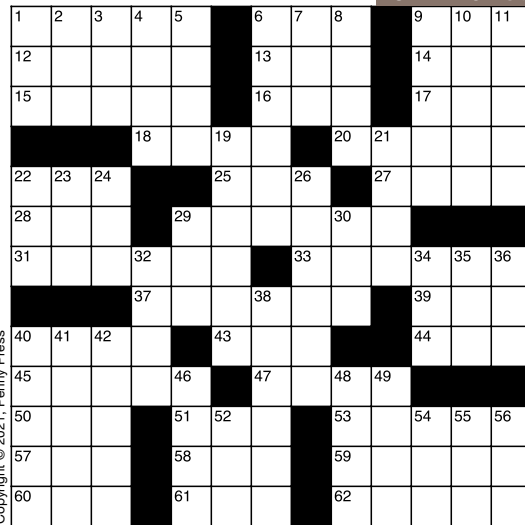
PISCES

An unexpected promotion or opportunity for advancement will present itself when a colleague quits. You'll be chosen to act as the interim manager during your boss's vacation. This will earn you a raise. Your hard work will be rewarded.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 184



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ACROSS

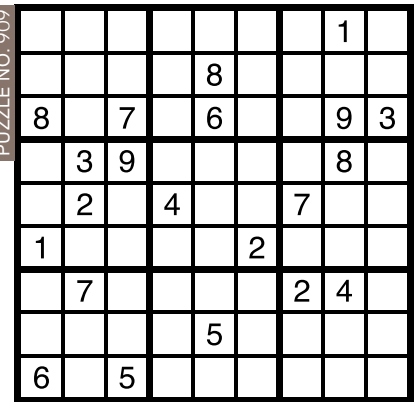
1. Multitude
6. Society gal
9. Many
12. Person receiving money
13. Bird that gives a hoot
14. Wilder's "___ Town"
15. Locales
16. Honolulu garland
17. Type of antelope
18. Beatle McCartney
20. Cost
22. Carrier for groceries
25. Flock leader
27. Cake decorator
28. "Look ___ ye leap"
29. Came to terms
31. First-class
33. Pact
37. Tenant
39. Bee's follower
40. Secluded valley
43. ___ close for comfort

DOWN

44. Beach shade
45. Kind of beef
47. Make ready
50. Inning ender
51. Stereo component
53. Canvas covers
57. Employ
58. Playmate
59. Oaf
60. Animal's cage
61. Gawk
62. Muscular
11. Nearer the facts
19. Crucial
21. Ferris wheel, e.g.
22. Slumber spot
23. "Car 54, Where ___ You?"
24. Hair spray alternative
26. Shooting star
29. Chopping tool
30. Blunder
32. Jars
34. Drama division
35. Beverage for two
36. Yearning
38. Overthrow
40. Bunch
41. ___ up (botch)
42. Corroded
46. Masking ___
48. Imprint with acid
49. Shave
52. Can
54. TKO caller
55. "___ Sematary"
56. Undercover agent

Sudoku

PUZZLE NO. 909



HOW TO PLAY:

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

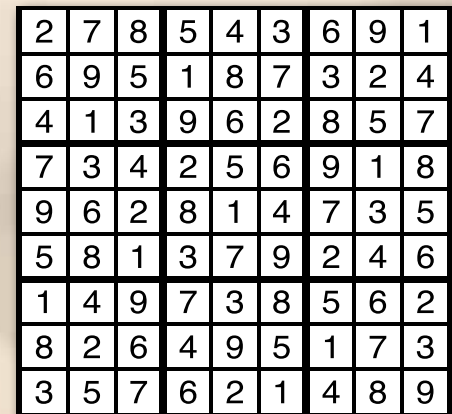
Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.

Last Issue's Answers

CROSSWORDS



Sudoku





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