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Several members of the Trudeau family, including his mother Margaret, his wife Sophie and their son Xavier, are seen here with Parc Extension city councillor Mary Deros and the late Senator Marcel Prud'homme during a special event in 2008 at the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



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Packed council meeting in Parc-Extension

Arena parking, rats, and community investments take centre stage

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The April 1st borough council meeting for Villieray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension was a lively one, drawing a full house at the borough hall. With Mayor Laurence Lavigne absent, Sylvain Ouellet stepped in to lead the session. He kicked things off by mentioning Earth Day on April 22nd and reminding everyone that street cleaning had officially started again, along with the fines for those who don't follow the parking rules. He also announced that Rue De Castelnau will once again be a pedestrian-only street for the summer.

Big events and community investments

City councillor Mary Deros took a moment to reflect on the recent Greek Independence Day parade on Jean-Talon. "We had over 5,000 people show up. A big thank you to the police and public workers! We were ready to receive all the visitors that day," she said. She also highlighted an important milestone: Jarry Park's 100th anniversary. The borough is planning a summer full of events to celebrate one of Montreal's most iconic parks. Deros was also happy to announce a \$140,000 investment in new picnic tables, benches, and play equipment for kids. "Except for Jarry Park, there aren't many safe places for young children to play in our neighbourhood, so this investment is really important," she explained. Ouellet also added that the Montreal Games,

the city's biggest youth sports competition for kids aged 6-12, would be taking place from April 2-6.

Frustration over arena parking and accessibility

When the question period began, the main topic was clear: accessibility issues at the Howie Morenz Arena. Sylvain O'Reilly, president of minor hockey in Villieray, took the floor, hockey gear in hand,



Local resident Sylvain O'reilly kicks the question period off holding his son's hockey gear to talk about issues with parking and mobility around the Howie Morenz Arena, a big topic of discussion in this week's meeting. (Photo: Dylan Adams Lemaçon, Parc-Extension News)

to show how difficult it is to transport equipment to and from the arena. He pointed out that there's not enough parking, and public transit isn't always a great alternative when you're carrying a ton of gear. Christopher Bettinger, another resident, echoed his concerns. "We were never consulted about how the arena and community center would be upgraded. Why not ask us what we think?" The council acknowledged their concerns but pointed out that parking is limited due to how densely built Parc-Extension is. They said they're working on mobility solutions but didn't offer any specifics. This wasn't enough for some residents, who kept pushing for a better plan. One person summed up the frustration in the room: "It's not that we don't want a community center. We just want a way to make it work with parking so everyone benefits." So many people had questions about the issue that the council extended the discussion to let more residents speak. **Ongoing rat problem in Parc-Ex** Another hot topic was the rat problem, something that has come up at multiple meetings before. Several residents said it's only getting worse. The council assured everyone that they're launching a strategy this summer, including targeted cleanups and fines for people who leave trash out when they shouldn't. Councillor Deros, however, admitted that the current approach hasn't been working. "We

need to reevaluate our methods because, clearly, the rats aren't going anywhere. I really hope we can solve this problem soon."

Resolutions and proclamations

After the long question period, the council moved on to official business, approving all the points on the agenda. One of the highlights was Deros' speech about Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. It's an issue close to her heart, her father survived the genocide and fled to Greece to start over. Another interesting item was the approval of a new kids' bike and scooter path in Parc-Extension, called Parours des Pois-Plumes. By the end of the night, all proposals had been passed. But with the arena parking problem and rat infestations still unresolved, it's clear these issues will keep coming up at future meetings.



Councillor Mary Deros gives a heartfelt speech about her family's ties to the Armenian genocide.

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18 avril 2025 / April 18, 2025 • Nouvelles Parc-Extension News • 3

Nouvelles PARC-EXTENSION News

9500
Copies

3860, boul. Notre-Dame, # 304,
Laval, QC H7V 1S1

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E-mail: editor@newsfirst.ca

www.px-news.com

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



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Member of  Quebec Community Newspapers Association & Canadian Community Newspapers Association

Layout: Media Trek

Distribution: TC. TRANSCONTINENTAL

Printing: TC. TRANSCONTINENTAL

National Representation:

 RÉSEAU SÉLECT
PARTICIPANTS PUBLISSEURS
info@reseausselect.ca



Project funded in part by



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OPINION & Editorial



Canada's voters will choose a banker or a political professional as their next PM

Does a sophisticated banker, with well-established connections in the global realm of high-finance – yet with potential conflicts of interest over his personal investments – make for a good Prime Minister?

Or would Canadians perhaps be better off with a once obscure Parliamentary backbench politician, who had enough raw ambition to become leader of his party, yet embraced far-right political causes while scaling the political ladder?

As we approach Canada's April 28 election day, these are perhaps the only real choices voters will have. Especially taking into consideration that the NDP could be facing what is already being predicted as an electoral wipeout of historic proportions.

With the sudden and rather abrupt dumping of former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in January, followed by nearly as sudden arrival of Mark Carney, who had been lurking for years in the wings, we are reminded that this is certainly not the first time the Liberals have travelled down this road.

If there is a lesson even before election day, it is perhaps that initial appearances tend to be deceiving – especially in the realm of politics.

When Paul Martin during the early 2000s started stealthily to let the word go around that he might be interested in being eased into the position that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien

had no initial intention of vacating, the former finance minister could hardly have suspected that the Liberals would be so weakened they would open the door to a parliamentary defeat and a Conservative government.

Or then there was the case of Michael Ignatieff, establishing that a respected professional (be it a university academic, or a banker for that matter) isn't necessarily always cut out for politics.

After being drafted by the Liberals, who seemingly expected Ignatieff to duplicate what another intellectual, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, had done to raise the party's profile into the stratosphere, Ignatieff turned out to be a dud. After three years as leader of the Liberal opposition, the Liberals' supposed star simply vanished back into the exalted halls of academia.

As for Poilievre, what he may lack in charisma and cosmopolitan flair, he makes up in sheer brazenness. The kind that led him to embrace the participants in the February 2022 Freedom Convoy protests in Ottawa.

They disrupted the national capital's local economy and drove residents batty. And let's not forget the heated threats directed by Freedom Convoy participants at MPs as they tried to enter the Parliament buildings. After all, Poilievre was there among them.

It's notable that in keeping with what appears to be his obviously opportunistic nature, not a

word about the episode is being spoken during the current election (except perhaps for a few fleeting references by the Liberals). Nor does he seem any longer to show much enthusiasm for the underlying far-right.

Like Ignatieff, Carney may have international recognition. But at the same time, he may also know squat about politics. And for whatever it's worth, the latter talent (which might be compared to a chessmaster's natural skill) is something you can't necessarily learn at the University of Oxford.

But ironically, it is something Justin Trudeau understood instinctively. Which is probably why he survived for almost a decade as Prime Minister. Significantly, politics is something Pierre Poilievre also instinctively seems to grasp closely, having apprenticed in it since he was a teenager.

If Carney wins (which many polls are predicting – along with a minority or majority Liberal government), the true test will be whether he has the mettle to persist with courage and conviction against the strong headwinds.

Otherwise, he may simply fade back to where he came from. A place where – like Ignatieff – he feels more comfortable.

Martin C. Barry

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Parc Extension News takes a look back at Justin Trudeau's time among us

Former PM and Papineau MP will be remembered for his global, but also local impact



Trudeau with former Montreal-area Liberal MP Irwin Cotler in April 2011 shortly before that year's federal election. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



Nouvelles Parc Extension News was on hand in December 2011 when Justin Trudeau, three years into his first term as the Member of Parliament for Papineau, celebrated his 40th birthday a few weeks early. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



Justin Trudeau with his daughter Ella-Grace at a community event in Montreal's Villeray district in 2011. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



Trudeau met constituents and supporters at a breakfast event held in the Villeray portion of the riding in 2011. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



Justin Trudeau with his daughter Ella-Grace at a community event in Montreal's Villeray district in 2011. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



Ali Nestor, the quiet but methodical chief boxing instructor at Académie Ness Martial on Crémazie Blvd., who guided and trained Trudeau to victory in his 2012 match against Senator Patrick Brazeau. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

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From the time back in early 2007 when Justin Trudeau aspired to snag the nomination to run for the Liberals in the riding of Papineau, Nouvelles Parc Extension News has followed and tracked the career of the country's former Prime Minister.

We were on hand at the William Hingston community centre in Parc Extension in 2012 when Trudeau announced his intention to run for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada.

In March that same year, we were there at ringside when Trudeau was preparing for a charity fundraising exhibition boxing match, in which he scored a technical knockout against Senator Patrick Brazeau.

With his career in federal politics now effectively over, Nouvelles Parc Extension News presents this pictorial retrospective of some chapters from Justin Trudeau's time spent in our community, where he made an historic impact.



Justin Trudeau, not yet leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, leads some supporters in the Papineau riding on a door-to-door vote canvassing tour in April 2011, around a month before that year's general election.



Justin Trudeau with his son Xavier and daughter Ella-Grace at a community event in 2011. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)



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The CMM submits its priorities to the federal parties in preparation for the election

(NEWSFIRST) - On the eve of the federal election, which will be held on April 28, the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) is submitting its priorities for the next legislature to the political parties. In line with its objectives and in order to respond to the main issues of the moment, the CMM is asking the federal parties to prioritize the ecological transition, housing, sustainable mobility and economic development.

In its brief, the CMM emphasizes that it is essential to ensure the prosperity, competitiveness and sustainability of Greater Montréal, Canada's second most populous metropolitan area, where some 4.3 million people live. It therefore invites the next government of Canada to work closely together and to engage meaningfully in the key areas identified.

"At a time when the climate crisis, the housing crisis and the homelessness crisis are combined with the funding issues of public transit and the economic consequences of American fares, the next Government of Canada will have a key role to play in supporting the vitality and development of Greater Montréal. We ask all parties to commit to funding, in line with the needs, the priority issues identified by the CMM. Close collaboration and adequate support will allow the metropolitan area to emerge stronger from the turbulent period we are going through, which will benefit not only the economic health of Quebec, but also the

entire country," said Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montréal and President of the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal.

Ecological transition and energy corridors

The MWC is very vigilant about the resurgence of energy corridor projects in the speeches of some federal parties. Recalling the significant concerns raised by the Energy East pipeline project in 2015, the MWC strongly reaffirms the need for a rigorous approach to any energy infrastructure initiative that crosses its territory. Thus, the CMM calls on the federal parties to focus their policies on the energy transition, social acceptability, environmental protection and respect for municipal autonomy.

The MWC would like to emphasize that the attraction of short-term economic benefits should not obscure the imperative to fight climate change, the consequences of which are broader and more long-lasting. The CMM is therefore calling for increased financial support from the next Government of Canada for the protection of natural environments and the adaptation of the territory to the consequences of climate change.

Dwelling

Faced with a housing crisis that directly affects the quality of life of the population and the competitiveness of the metropolitan

area, Greater Montréal is calling on the next government of Canada to increase the supply of social and non-market housing. The CMM points out that Greater Montreal accounts for 60% of the core housing needs in Quebec, an alarming statistic that underscores the urgency of taking action.

Among the requests submitted, the CMM invites the next government of Canada to sustain initiatives that support the construction of social and non-market housing, including the Reaching Home program, which aims to prevent homelessness. The CMM also hopes that the next government will quickly and unconditionally transfer the funds from the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund (CFLI) to the Government of Quebec in order to support municipalities in their development projects.

Sustainable mobility

An efficient public transit network is essential to the economic and environmental vitality of Greater Montréal. However, current deficits and underfunding threaten the sustainability of the service. The CMM urges the next government of Canada to significantly increase its funding for the operation and maintenance of public transit network assets. Stable and predictable funding is essential to avoid a deterioration in service, which would affect the quality of life of the population and the regional economy.

The CMM is also asking for the maintenance and acceleration of the transfer of funds from the Canada Public Transit Fund, which aims to finance the completion of structuring public transit projects, including the extension of the metro's orange line.

Economic development

While the trade war unleashed by the U.S. administration brings its share of uncertainty, the CMM believes that the next Canadian government will have to offer increased support to Greater Montreal to help it face the challenges it faces. Among the measures put forward in its brief, the CMM is calling for support for the diversification of export markets, transitional and targeted financial support, additional funding for Greater Montréal businesses and support for the attraction and retention of foreign direct investment.

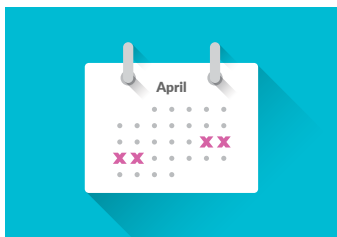
Greater Montréal is a key economic driver for Québec. Its diversified economy is based on key sectors such as finance, professional services, health and education, and is supported by a robust manufacturing sector, which includes aerospace and metal processing. This diversity, combined with a skilled workforce, renowned universities and an attractive quality of life, gives the metropolitan area a resilience and international appeal that the next government will need to build on.

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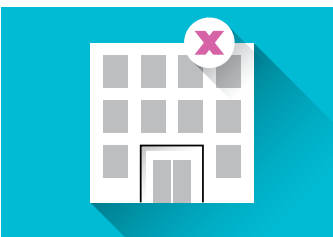
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Greening the neighbourhood: VSP's free plant distribution returns this spring



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In a gesture that blends environmental awareness with civic engagement, the borough of Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension (VSP) is once again inviting residents to roll up their sleeves and dig into community life—literally. The beloved annual distribution of flowers and edible plants returns this May, giving residents a chance to beautify their gardens and balconies while connecting with their neighbourhood and nature.

Taking place on Saturday, May 17, this large-

scale event provides a variety of vegetable plants and flowering species, free of charge, to all residents of VSP who register in advance. A special distribution for eligible community groups will be held the day prior, Friday, May 16. In both cases, advance registration is mandatory and places are limited.

The initiative, organized in partnership with local environmental organization *Ville en vert*, is more than a giveaway—it's a civic celebration of sustainability, shared responsibility, and green living. It also serves as a reminder that ecological well-being starts at home, with residents directly contributing to the urban biodiversity of their borough.

Civic engagement in bloom

Starting April 23 at noon, VSP residents can sign up via an online form managed by *Ville en vert*. Registration will close once all available spots are filled. Each participant must respect their assigned time slot and present proof of residence at the distribution site. Whether it's a utility bill, driver's license, or Accès Montréal card, documentation will be required to ensure fair access.

On the day of distribution, residents will be able to collect their plants at one of two parks: Parc François-Perrault or Parc Jarry, both locations positioned behind their respective public pools. The event will run from 9 a.m. to noon at François-Perrault and until 1 p.m. at Jarry. Participants are encouraged to bring reusable bags or boxes for transportation.

Planting seeds of solidarity

On May 16, from 2 to 3 p.m., the borough will welcome up to 130 eligible community groups—ranging from housing co-ops and green alley committees to seniors' residences and religious communities. These groups, many of whom have taken part in past years, will also need to register through *Ville en vert*. New participants must call 514-447-6226 ext. 256 to initiate the process.

Excluded from this year's distribution are schools, businesses, and public or private enterprises—an intentional move to focus the program on community-driven and non-commercial actors.

What's in the garden basket

Participants will receive a vibrant selection of

flowers and vegetables, including nasturtiums, salvia, Achillea Summer Berries, French thyme, chamomile, basil, red peppers, Pink Girl tomatoes, cherry tomatoes (Tumbler F1), and more. These varieties were chosen not only for their beauty or culinary value but also for their ability to thrive in local growing conditions.

In addition to the plant distribution, residents will have access to free compost and mulch, courtesy of the City of Montreal's Environmental Services. However, only those attending the May 17 resident event are eligible. Attendees are advised to bring a container of about 30 litres and a shovel. Organizers also offer a tip for success: mix one-third compost with two-thirds soil to prevent over-acidification, which can make plants more susceptible to pests and disease.

A shared effort, a shared reward

The event is not only about plants—it's about participation. Organizers are calling on everyone to respect site rules and the guidance of volunteers, whose hard work makes such a large operation possible. By following the instructions and contributing to a respectful atmosphere, residents help ensure the continued success of this annual tradition.

The free plant distribution in VSP is a vibrant example of what happens when local government, community organizations, and citizens come together. It fosters pride in public space, encourages eco-responsibility, and most importantly, plants the seeds of community involvement—one pot of basil at a time.

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After Trudeau, Marjorie Michel hopes to win Papineau for the Liberals

Former PM's assistant chief of staff in Ottawa steps into the political arena

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With former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau no longer in the picture for re-election as the Member of Parliament for Papineau, the person who hopes to succeed him on April 28 on behalf of the Liberals is Trudeau's former assistant chief of staff in Ottawa.

'Woman of action'

Marjorie Michel, according to a statement published on the Liberal Party of Canada's election website, is "passionate about people." She also holds a master's degree in social work, as well as organizational psychology from the University of Louvain in Belgium.

Described as "a woman of action, capable of mobilizing teams," the Liberals go on to say that "her creative mindset and keen analytical skills, along with her political acumen, enable her to support organizations in managing change and exploring innovative approaches that lead to success."

Economic inclusion focus

According to her party's description, Marjorie Michel's organizational talents, expertise in partnership strategies and work as general coordinator for the annual general assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1995 earned her a distinction from the United States government.

A strong advocate of sustainable networking, she has been actively involved with the Réseau des Femmes d'Affaires du Québec since 2005, making economic inclusion her primary focus. Her entry into politics began in the provincial riding of Viau, parts of which are within the federal riding of Papineau. In that capacity, she helped organize several local election campaigns at the provincial level.



Papineau Liberal candidate Marjorie Michel, who is running in the April 28 election, is seen here with former and longtime Papineau MP Justin Trudeau, who was also Canada's Prime Minister for almost a decade. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

An experienced organizer

In 2016, she joined the office of the federal Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development. In 2019, she became the first Black woman to be appointed a chief of staff in the federal government.

During the 2019 and 2021 election campaigns, she served as director of operations for the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec. After the October 2021 federal election, she was appointed deputy chief of staff to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa.

According to a recent profile published in the Montreal daily *La Presse*, Michel arrived in Canada from Haiti at age 17. She is the daughter of former Haitian prime minister Smarck Michel. Among her priorities as issues to be dealt with in the riding are the lack of affordable and social housing, as well as the high cost of living.

Papineau went once to the Bloc

Before Trudeau's arrival as MP in 2008 turned the riding into a bastion for the Liberals, Papineau had become a not entirely reliable riding for the party, with potential to swing under certain conditions.

It went to the Bloc Québécois in the 2006 election when Vivian Barbot scored on behalf of her party, imposing a humiliating defeat on incumbent Liberal cabinet minister Pierre Pettigrew in the process.



Papineau Liberal candidate Marjorie Michel (centre) is seen here with local South American folk musician Mavi Villada and outgoing Papineau MP Justin Trudeau, Canada's former Prime Minister. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia)

However, the separatist federal party's triumphalism was short-lived, as the Conservative government called an election in 2008, in which Justin Trudeau won the seat for the first time, going on easily to win four more terms in office.

She's well-positioned

Following in the wake left behind by the former prime minister (whose popularity was never in question in Papineau, in spite of the animosity elsewhere in Canada), Marjorie Michel could score 64 per cent support in the election, according to some online projections.

The Bloc Québécois, in contrast, would win just 10 per cent, while the NDP would do only a little better at 12 per cent. The Conservatives and the Greens would stand to win 10 and 3 per cent respectively in Papineau on April 28.





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Canadians want housing policy reform, highlighting the need for faster development and innovative financing

EDDIE SHEPPARD & DAVID COLETTA

Between November 6 and 18, Abacus Data conducted a national survey of 4,001 Canadian adults (18+) to explore public perceptions of the housing market. Commissioned by Mattamy Homes Canada, this study looks at how Canadians feel about housing affordability, accessibility, and the role of governments, developers, and other stakeholders in addressing the crisis.

The findings reveal widespread concern: a significant majority of Canadians believe homeownership is becoming increasingly unattainable, housing affordability is worsening, and the pace of new development is too slow to meet demand. While many point to government inaction as a primary barrier, there is also strong support for innovative financing solutions and regulatory reforms to speed up construction.

As attention shifts to other economic issues, Canadians are clear – housing must stay a top priority in the federal election. Canadians want urgent action to increase supply, improve affordability, and cut barriers to progress.

Housing market concerns and affordability

Concerns about housing in Canada are loud and growing. Nine in ten Canadians (88%) are worried about affordability, especially those aged 30 to 44 (92%), 45 to 59 (91%), renters (93%), and urban residents (91%).

These worries extend beyond general sentiment to more specific, lived challenges: 74% say housing in their area is unaffordable, 70% report limited availability, and 89% believe homeownership is becoming increasingly out of reach.

The message is clear – without decisive action from policymakers, affordability will continue to decline, leaving more Canadians struggling to find stable, secure housing.

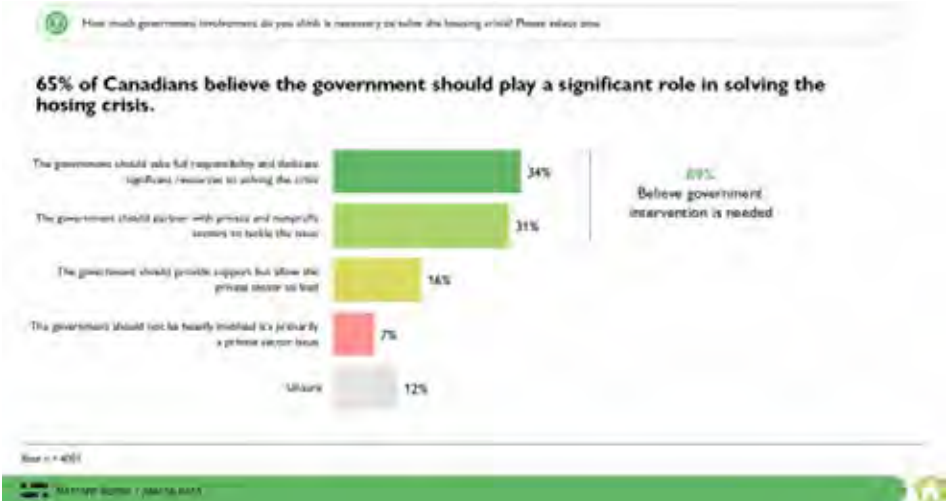
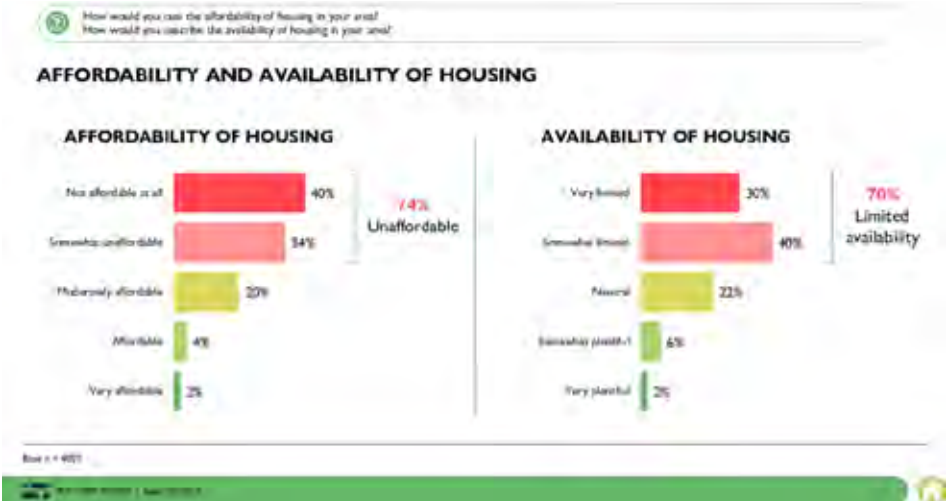
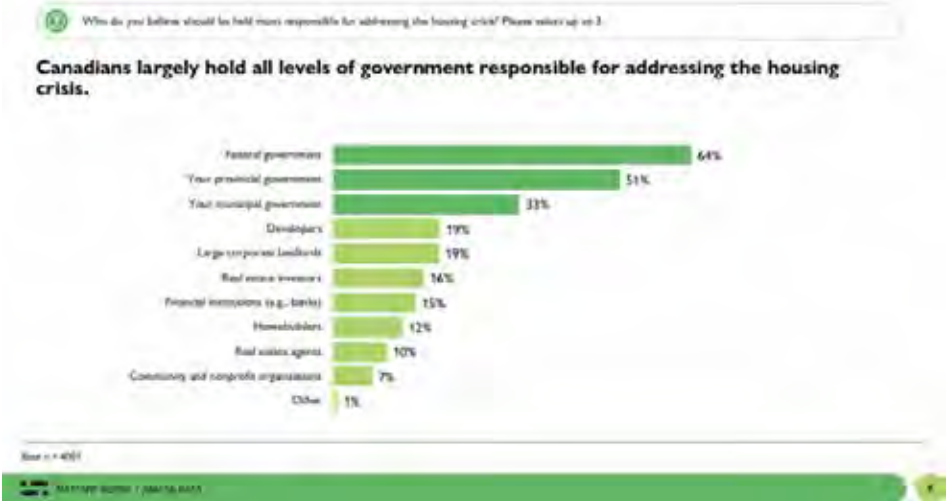
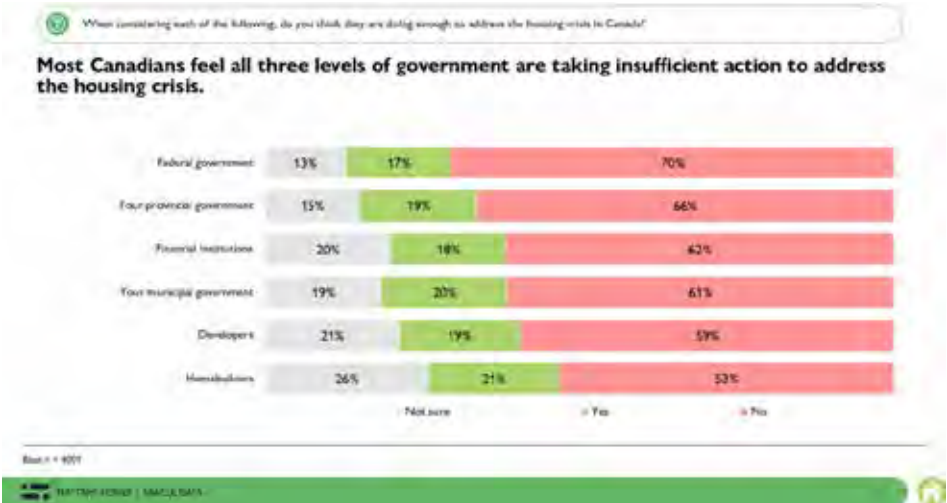
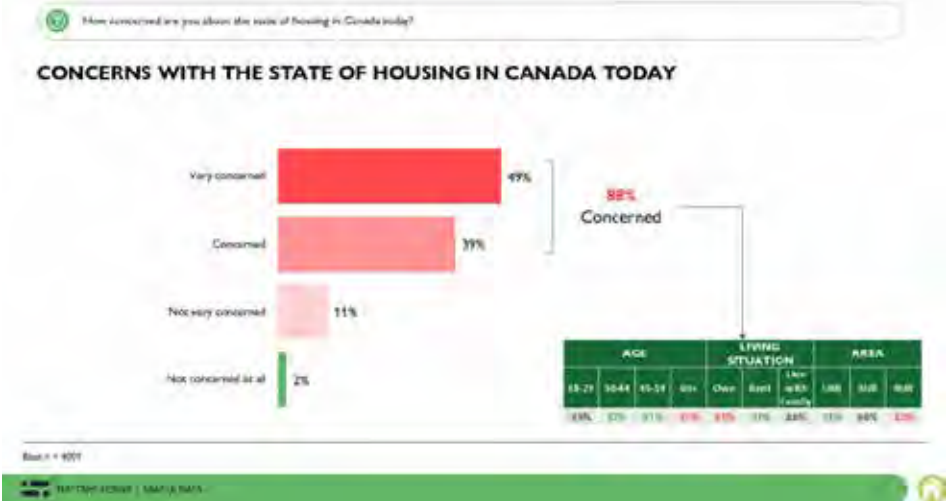
Who is responsible for the housing crisis?

Frustration with government efforts to address the housing crisis is high across all levels. Seven in ten Canadians (70%) believe the federal government is not doing enough to improve the situation, while

two-thirds (66%) feel the same about their provincial government. Although slightly lower, a majority (61%) also believe their municipal government is falling short.

Despite growing concerns, Canadians agree that

▶ Continued on page 11



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government must take the lead on housing. Most hold all levels of government accountable, with 64% pointing to the federal government and 51% to provincial governments.

There is strong support for government intervention: 65% back active involvement – 34% want full government responsibility with major investments, while 31% prefer a public-private partnership. At the same time, Canadians acknowledge the important role of builders and developers (70%) and believe stronger incentives are needed to prioritize affordability (67%).

Together, these findings reflect a clear demand for leadership, accountability, and action. Canadians expect governments at all levels to step up with bold policies and meaningful investments, while also working with industry to deliver more – and more affordable – housing.

Homebuilders and developers: the role in increasing supply

Canadians see homebuilders and developers as key to solving the housing crisis but believe government policies often stand in the way. Three in four (72%) say regulations slow down housing projects, and the same proportion point to high development fees and taxes as major cost drivers. In addition to this, 71% believe current government policies are out of step with housing demand and no longer reflect the realities of today's housing market.

There is strong support for policy changes to remove these roadblocks and accelerate construction. Nearly 72% believe faster approvals are necessary to meet demand, while the same proportion point to development fees and taxes as key contributors to higher home prices. Red tape (71%) and restrictive zoning (65%) are also seen as major obstacles.

Many Canadians also support policies that accelerate development, including reducing development fees (42%), streamlining approval processes (41%), and offering tax breaks or subsidies to encourage new projects (37%).

For Canada to meet its housing needs, governments must work collaboratively with industry to remove barriers and speed up development. Creating a more efficient approval process and incentivizing new construction will help boost supply and improve affordability.

Canadians want bold policies and innovative financing solutions

Canadians strongly back bold, practical solutions to tackle the housing crisis – particularly those that make homeownership more attainable and which help bring down monthly costs. Seven in ten (70%) support promoting rent-to-own models to help renters transition into ownership, while 64% favour expanding access to 30-year mortgages to lower monthly payments. A majority also support reinvesting HST revenues from new home sales into housing infrastructure (61%) and allowing homebuilders to offer temporary mortgage rate buy-downs to ease costs for

new buyers (56%). Together, these measures reflect a growing appetite for innovative, flexible policies that reduce barriers to ownership and create a more accessible path to homeownership for Canadians.

At the time of the survey, awareness of existing government housing support was limited – only 24% of Canadians were familiar with the federal New Housing Rebate Program. However, 60% believe the program should be updated to better reflect the realities of today's housing costs.

Support is also growing for zoning and density reform. More than half (55%) believe higher-density developments can help ease housing shortages, and 50% support removing zoning restrictions to allow for greater density without drawn-out rezoning processes. Opposition to these changes remains limited, with just 14% opposed.

Ultimately, Canadians are calling for long-term, forward-thinking solutions that reduce affordability pressures and boost supply. Addressing financing barriers, modernizing zoning rules, and streamlining approvals are seen as critical steps toward a more responsive and inclusive housing market.

The upshot

As attention shifts to economic issues like trade and tariffs, Canadians remain clear: housing must remain front and centre in this election. Widespread concern over affordability and access to homeownership continues to dominate public sentiment, with many feeling that the dream of owning a home is slipping further out of reach. While political focus may waver,

the urgency to act on housing cannot. With housing affordability at crisis levels, Canadians are calling for swift, meaningful action to boost supply, lower costs, and remove policy barriers.

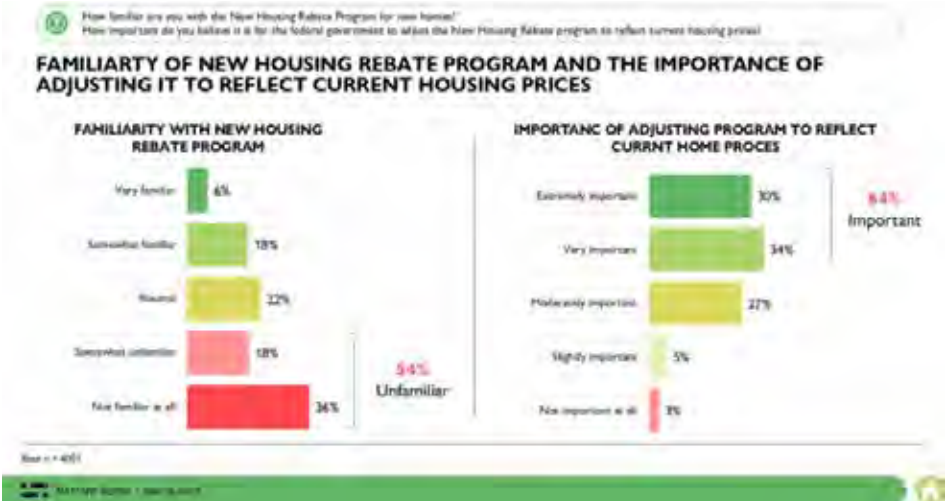
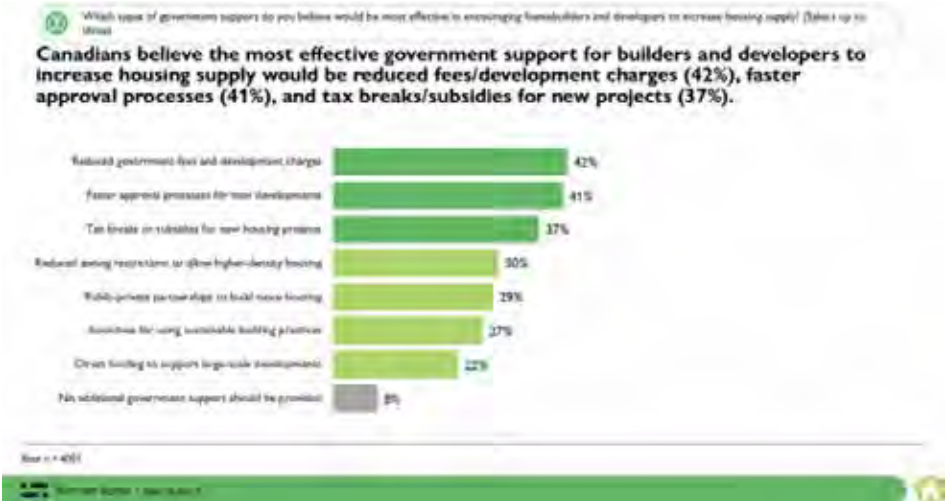
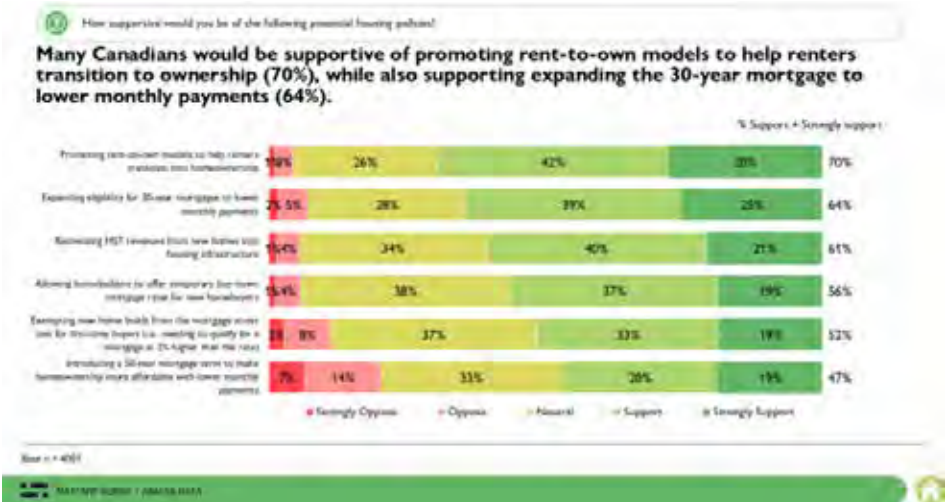
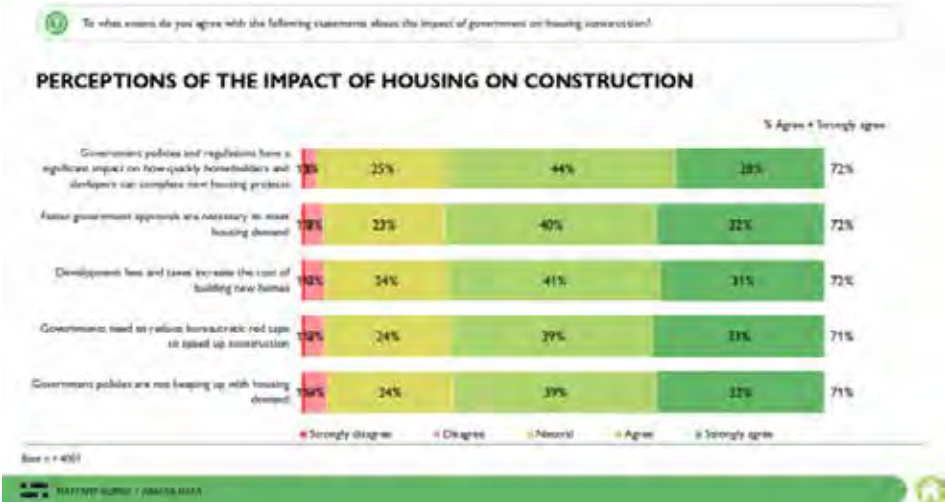
The path forward is clear. Canadians want to see homes built faster, red tape cut, and financing tools introduced that make homeownership more accessible. They also expect a skilled workforce capable of meeting demand.

Speed matters. Canadians overwhelmingly support accelerating construction by streamlining approval processes, reducing development fees, and eliminating unnecessary delays. Without urgent action, frustration with government inaction will only intensify.

Affordability is critical. With housing costs far outpacing incomes, many Canadians are open to creative solutions like longer mortgage terms, rent-to-own programs, and shared equity models to ease the financial burden and increase access to stable housing.

The debate should no longer about who is to blame, but who will lead. Housing has taken centre stage on the campaign trail this week, with parties unveiling a range of policies and proposals. While these announcements are a positive first step, real progress will be measured by how effectively these promises are delivered after the April 28th election.

Canadians are clear about what's needed: accelerate construction, eliminate barriers, and introduce innovative pathways to homeownership. The pressure is building, and public expectations are high. Housing must stay at the forefront – it's not just an election issue, it's a national priority.



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Despite unemployment, skilled worker shortage persists in Quebec

Local implications for Parc-Extension

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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

While Quebec continues to grapple with high unemployment numbers, businesses—particularly in the manufacturing sector—say they still can't find skilled workers. It's a paradox that hits close to home in places like Parc-Extension, where economic precarity, underemployment, and immigration converge in complex ways.

Quebec continues to face a critical shortage of skilled labour in key sectors such as manufacturing and engineering, even as more than 372,000 residents are currently receiving unemployment or social assistance.

Recent data reveals there are 248,770 active Employment Insurance recipients and 123,868 Quebecers receiving social assistance without severe constraints. In theory, these are individuals who are fit for work. And yet, companies across the province still struggle to recruit skilled workers like welders, mechanics, and

industrial engineers.

Julie White, President and CEO of Manufacturiers & Exportateurs du Québec, says the problem is as pressing as ever: "I don't know a single manufacturer who isn't looking for welders."

This contradiction is especially relevant in areas like Parc-Extension, where high unemployment intersects with a large immigrant population—many of whom hold international qualifications that often go unrecognized in the local labour market.

Simon Savard, economist and deputy director at the Institut du Québec, points out that while the overall labour shortage is easing since peaking in 2022, the specific shortage of qualified workers has barely improved. "A large number of people seeking work simply don't have the training required for available positions," he explains.

The gap has forced many employers to turn to Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs). However, following changes introduced in September



2024, the provincial government tightened rules for TFW eligibility—creating additional obstacles for companies in need of labour.

Even so, Premier François Legault indicated this week that he would support keeping 2,000 foreign workers in regional areas, acknowledging their crucial role in Quebec's economy.

Julie White emphasizes that hiring TFWs isn't an easy or cheap fix: "Employers need to handle training, lodging, and paperwork. They do it because they have to—not because they

prefer it."

According to White and Savard, another barrier is regional mobility. Workers are often unwilling to relocate within Quebec to where jobs are available, further compounding the issue.

With a high concentration of underemployed residents and new immigrants, Parc-Extension could become part of the solution—if proper credential recognition and training pathways are put in place.

Relief for Quebec's health sector as province reaches deal with resident doctors

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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dimitri@newsfirst.ca

After months of tension and the looming threat of a province-wide strike, Quebec has reached a long-awaited agreement with the Federation of Resident Physicians (FMRQ), offering a welcome sigh of relief for residents and healthcare institutions alike — including

those in under-served neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension.

The agreement, which quietly received the nod of approval from Quebec's Treasury Board, will cover approximately 400 resident physicians studying and training at the universities of Montreal, Laval, Sherbrooke, and McGill. It spans a seven-year period, retroactively effective from 2021 until 2028.

While the Federation itself has not yet



released an official statement, government officials, including Treasury Board President Sonia LeBel, have praised the deal for striking a balance between patient care and physician welfare. LeBel stated the agreement would "improve access to care across Quebec" while addressing the working conditions of the resident doctors — many of whom are responsible for frontline hospital coverage, night shifts, and follow-up consultations.

At the heart of the dispute were demands for more humane scheduling and better remuneration. One key point of contention was the lack of rest periods: resident doctors had been advocating for a mandatory day off after seven consecutive days of work. This demand, which garnered wide support within the medical community, highlighted longstanding concerns about burnout and mental health among early-career physicians.

Late last year, the Federation had warned it was prepared to initiate strike action if negotiations stalled. In February, the Administrative Labour Tribunal issued guidelines on what essential services must be maintained should a strike proceed — a rare move that underscored the seriousness of the dispute.

The resolution comes not a moment too soon for communities like Parc-Extension, where hospital wait times and access to family doctors remain chronic issues. Many local residents rely

on major university hospitals staffed by these very same resident doctors. A full-blown strike could have disrupted already fragile service delivery.

Though the details of the agreement have not been made public, insiders suggest it includes adjustments to work-hour regulations and a more gradual remuneration structure that aligns with national standards. If confirmed, it could signal a new era of respect for the resident workforce — one long treated as essential but undercompensated.

For Parc-Extension, where many new immigrants and lower-income families already face barriers in accessing healthcare, the agreement offers a glimmer of stability in a turbulent system. Community advocates have frequently raised concerns about how hospital staffing disputes disproportionately affect marginalized populations.

Still, the situation has exposed cracks in Quebec's medical infrastructure — ones that go far beyond salary negotiations. With recruitment shortages, a lack of family doctors, and aging hospital buildings (some not far from Parc-Ex), systemic reform will require more than a single agreement.

For now, however, Quebec's resident doctors can hang up their picket signs — and pick up their stethoscopes with a renewed sense of purpose.

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DOWN AND OUT

Q I've been in a relationship with a guy for two and a half years. From the start he would walk out and want to end the relationship over stupid stuff, saying, "If it's like this now, what's it going to be like in five years?"

I tried to reason with him. Everybody argues; it's a fact of life. It's how we deal with it. I thought over time he would settle into the relationship and make more of an effort rather than walking out each time. Sadly, over the years these episodes have continued. If it wasn't down to me fighting for our relationship, we would have split up long ago.

Over time he has gone from a chilled-out, loving guy to an egotistical and sometimes aggressive person. All of which I believe is the person he is. He just hid it. I am told to shut up if he doesn't like what I'm saying. I realize his priorities in life are not the same as mine.

Only two months ago he proposed to me. All my friends tell me how much he loves me, but how can that be when two months down the line he's walked out again? He has broken our trust in this relationship, but he never sees himself doing any wrong. Why do I love this guy? I'm so confused.

Colleen

A Colleen, when George Orwell was down and out in Paris, he washed dishes in a restaurant. One day the proprietor said to him, "What is restaurant work? You are carving a chicken and it falls on the floor. You apologize, you bow, you go out; and in five minutes you come back by another door—with the same chicken. That is restaurant work."

Why are you so confused about relationships? Let us give you a few hints.

In the bestselling relationship book of the last 40 years, the author says he pretends in his mind his wife is his most important client. He tries to give her the same attention he

would give a client. Apparently, pretense is his key to success.

Another couple, both Ph.Ds, observe quite correctly they are internationally regarded relationship experts. They are also authors of their own relationship system. Yet in one book they admit that after years of marriage they were on the verge of divorce. Even with a huge financial and professional stake in the outcome, they couldn't make their own system work.

As it turns out they did stay together—after reading a book on astrology and relationships! In the same book they quote a two-page letter of praise from a man who attended their workshop with his girlfriend. The man makes many appreciative comments, but the bottom line is he and his partner broke up anyway.

Then there's the woman who claims expertise in preventing divorce, yet in the smallest print in a book of hers, hidden away on the copyright page, she and her publisher disclaim all legal responsibility for the claims boldly made on the front cover. We could go on and on. So many books and so little wisdom.

As human beings we are easily swayed by what others say or tell us. That is why publishers print blurbs on the back of their books. Psychologist Lauren Slater mentions an experimenter who got others to do odd things—like touching their nose while walking backwards—simply by putting on a white lab coat. We are very suggestible.

There comes a point when we must trust our own experience. For three-quarters of a century experts have been telling us how to make unworkable relationships work, but it's no more than the same dropped chicken served up on another plate.

We live in a sea of misinformation. Trust yourself and swim against the tide of bad advice telling you there is some way to make this bad relationship work.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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- Peppers (3) (Mexico)
- Zucchini (2) (Mexico)
- Eggplant (Mexico)
- Apples (3) (South Africa/Washington)
- Avocados (2) (Mexico/Peru)
- Lemons (2) (Mexico)
- Red Onions (2-3) (Mexico)
- Grapefruit (Mexico)
- Lettuce (Romaine) (Mexico)
- Cucumber (Canada)
- Tomatoes (3) (Canada)
- Bananas (4) (Costa Rica)
- Garlic (Argentina)
- Red Cabbage (Mexico)
- Corn on the Cob (3) (Mexico)

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Week of April 20 to 26, 2025

The luckiest signs this week:
ARIES, TAURUS AND GEMINI



ARIES

Embrace professional change without hesitation! Taking on new responsibilities will drive your progress and likely lead to a salary increase, even if time becomes an increasingly precious resource.



TAURUS

You may consider embarking on a journey or adventure that requires considerable preparation. Enrolling in a training course or diving into a new field of study could change how you see your future.



GEMINI

To reduce tensions, set aside some time for your loved ones. This time you spend together will help you open up to each other and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges each of you may be facing.



CANCER

You'll finally have time to spend with your partner. You must make minor adjustments to your relationship and free up time to do things with your better half. This will help you resolve many of the issues that have been bothering you.



LEO

You'll hear about a job opening that aligns with your professional goals. You'll need to invest time and work hard to adapt to your new responsibilities.



VIRGO

You'll be surprised to find yourself in the spotlight this week. Your presence will captivate those around you, and you'll receive applause for an impressive feat. You'll perform a heroic act that will boost your self-esteem.



LIBRA

Your family counts on your presence, so you may need to spend part of the week at home. Although your move is still a few months away, start preparing right away to stay ahead of the game.



SCORPIO

You'll know just what to say this week, and your words will resonate far and wide, especially on social media. Prepare for a series of enriching trips.



SAGITTARIUS

Indulge and spoil yourself this week. Take the opportunity to wander through stores and boutiques. You'll find useful items, and also a few goodies to brighten up your daily routine.



CAPRICORN

Prepare for a busy week ahead. Your enthusiasm and perseverance will set you apart. You're also likely to see a significant increase in your income, which will give rise to some wonderful celebrations.



AQUARIUS

Exhaustion is catching up with you, and a sleepless night could jeopardize your progress on certain projects. Embrace a new routine. A balanced diet and regular physical activity could work wonders for your energy levels.



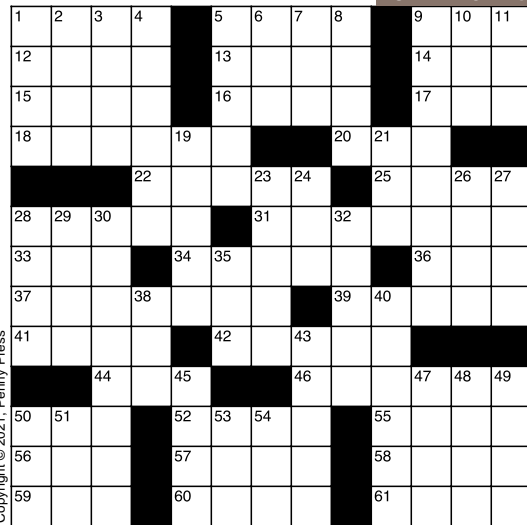
PISCES

You'll be tasked with organizing a large-scale meeting at work. Your social life will be buzzing with activity. You'll show empathy and innovation this week. Divine inspiration may guide you.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 278



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ACROSS

- Jest
- _____ bad to worse
- Entirely
- Spirited
- Phone wire
- Distinct period
- Drat!
- Grape drinks
- Hill-building insect
- Firstborn
- Pale gray
- Plant again
- Tramp
- Rub out
- Covered decoratively
- Atmosphere
- Fabric colorers
- In the dumps
- Misting device
- Imitators
- Golf-ball props
- Put on hold

- Use snow runners
- Come into view
- Speck
- Canaveral or Horn
- Jack's tote
- Have being
- Ogler
- Strays
- Rose plot
- Animals' lairs
- Take out, in printing
- DOWN
- Green mineral
- Almost round
- Nice
- Border trimmers
- Bad tires
- Stamp out
- _____ and only
- Small plateau
- Ocean stallion: 2 wds.
- Coffee container
- Gym pad

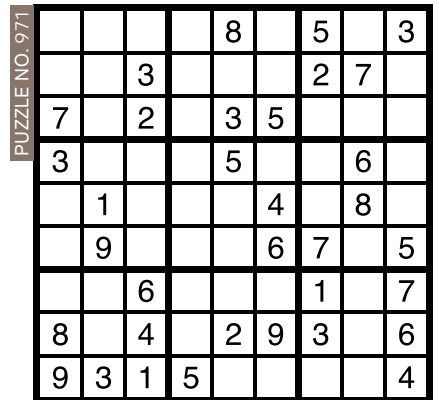
- Filthy
- "_____-Devil"
- Met musical
- Armed conflict
- Withstand
- Gambling numbers
- New England coast
- Mellow
- Detained
- Biblical song
- Up to this time
- Solicit
- Chirped
- Pilsner and lager
- Cooled
- Unusual
- Young lady
- You're something _____!
- Pat gently
- Crude copper
- Nautical response
- Cage

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY:

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

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

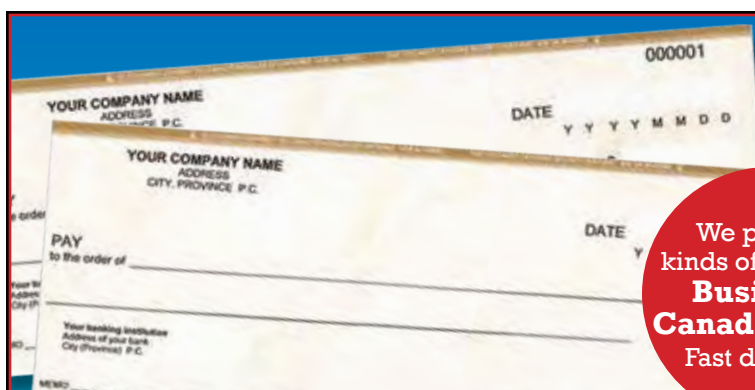
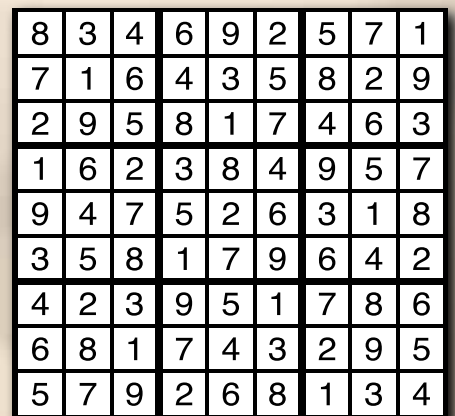


Last Issue's Answers

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Sudoku



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