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Stranded amid Air Canada strike...

MATTHEW DALDALIAN

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Air Canada passengers across Canada and abroad were left scrambling last week after more than 10,000 of the airline's flight attendants took to the picket line. The strike, which lasted from Aug. 16 to 19, grounded flights at the peak of the summer travel season and affected nearly half a million people worldwide.

The walkout ended after a tentative deal was reached between Air Canada and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), but backlogs continued for days as travellers tried to make their way home.

"I can't even explain the emotional roller-coaster that we went through," said Quebec resident Rosy Trimboli, the uncertainty turned her family's first trip to Europe into a drawn-out ordeal. "It's been hell to say the least."

The flight

Trimboli's return flight to Montreal was scheduled for Sunday, Aug. 17. On the Thursday previous, she received an early notice warning of potential disruptions. Before she knew it, Air Canada flights were grounded, and her family's return was suddenly in question.

Attempts to reach Air Canada took hours, with spotty Wi-Fi connections and long waits on hold. When she finally connected with an agent, she was told her original flight was still technically intact—meaning the airline could not yet rebook her family onto a competitor. The only other option was to reschedule for later in the week.

"It was like a real-life gambling decision on the spot," she said, describing the pressure of deciding whether to rebook or hold onto her original flight.

Faced with uncertainty, Trimboli tested her luck: her eldest would fly alone on Thursday, while the rest of the family would follow Friday through Frankfurt. Hours later, news broke that a tentative agreement had been reached.

Under Canada's Air Passenger Protection Regulations, airlines are required to rebook customers on other carriers if flights are cancelled. But because strikes are considered beyond an airline's control, Air Canada is not obligated to cover additional costs like hotels or meals.

Still, the carrier expanded its policy, pledging to reimburse "reasonable" out-of-pocket expenses such as lodging and transport for travellers affected between Aug. 15 and 23.

For Trimboli's family, the uncertainty stretched over days. As they weighed their options, they also booked a separate set of refundable tickets at a steep cost.

"Hours of searching and thinking and how can we get out of here," Trimboli said. "We were just throwing money to get home."

Ultimately, the family cancelled those tickets, hoping the rebooked Air Canada flights would hold. The decision added to an exhausting stretch of second-guessing and mounting costs, including multiple Airbnbs and meals for the extra days.

Air Canada expects most delayed passengers to be rebooked by the end of the week, though it acknowledged that clearing the backlog will take time.

After a cruise

While Trimboli grappled with uncertainty overseas, other Quebec residents faced similar

challenges closer to home.

Christine, who asked that her full name not be published, had just disembarked from a cruise with her family of five when she discovered their return flight was cancelled the night before departure. With limited phone access on the ship, she scrambled for alternatives.

Flights back to Montreal quickly became unaffordable, so Christine cobbled together a patchwork itinerary through the northeastern United States. Her family eventually flew into Albany, New York, then drove across the border to Quebec.

"It was chaotic and stressful," she said, adding that a looming hurricane in Florida only heightened the pressure.

Part of her frustration came from how little information she could get from the airline while trying to make arrangements. She also questioned why action from authorities only came once flights were already grounded. "What's even more disappointing, to be honest, is that the government didn't get involved at all before this," she said.

Despite the disruption, Christine said she had no resentment toward the crews who formed the picket line. "I totally agree that these people should be paid from the moment they get on the plane and not just when they're in the air," she said. "I absolutely sympathize with the flight attendants."

Labour issues

The tentative agreement with CUPE includes annual raises over four years and, for the first time, pay for work done on the ground. Newer attendants would see a 12 per cent increase retroactive to April, while those with more seniority would receive eight per cent. Salaries would continue to rise gradually, with the cap moving from \$80,000 to \$88,000.

Ground pay would also be phased in, starting at half an hourly wage and rising to 70 per cent by the end of the contract. Union members are expected to vote on the deal between Aug. 27 and Sept. 6.

For Zareh Asparian, another Quebec resident, the strike meant turning a weekend trip to Edmonton into a cross-country road journey. He had travelled with his wife and daughter for a skating certification event, only to find return flights to Montreal repeatedly cancelled. After exploring connections through the country and even the U.S., he and his family were left without viable options.

Instead, they extended their car rental and drove the 3,700 kilometres back to Quebec over three days.

"There are worse things in life," he said. "But where I have a hard time is... you can't leave people stranded."

Asparian said he supports fair pay for flight attendants but called striking as a tactic "outdated." "I think things could be handled in a much more professional manner," he added.

Back to work

This summer's unrest is not the first time Air Canada passengers have found themselves caught in the middle of a labour dispute. In 2011, flight attendants and ground crews staged separate walkouts over pensions and wages, only to be forced back on the job through federal legislation. The following year, pilots protested imposed contracts with coordinated "sick-outs," disrupting hundreds of flights before Ottawa again stepped in.

Similar tensions have flared before, includ-



ing a nationwide strike in 1998 and repeated disputes after Air Canada's merger with Canadian Airlines in 2000. Labour unrest has been a recurring challenge for the country's flagship carrier.

The strike was the first since 2011 to defy a federal back-to-work order. Labour Minister Patty Hajdu invoked Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code, which grants the government power to intervene in work stoppages deemed disruptive to industrial peace. Critics say the measure undermines unions' bargaining leverage, while advocates argue it protects the travelling public.

For many passengers, the broader debates about contracts and labour law mattered less

than the immediate toll of being stuck far from home.

Trimboli said the hardest part was the lack of clarity. "I was just hoping for a bit more transparency as opposed to a little bit every day of like, here, you're cancelled, we don't know," she said.

Air Canada has encouraged passengers to submit claims for reimbursement. However, some travellers may face long waits for resolution as CBC reported that Canada's complaints backlog is already at more than 87,000 cases.

For Trimboli, the experience left a lasting impression. "People told me there are worse places to be stuck. But there's nowhere in the world that you want to be stuck when you just want to get home," she said.

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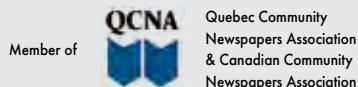
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OPINION & Editorial



It's parents who drive a child's academic success

Teachers guide, but it's parents who set the tone for how their children learn and grow

With a new school year just around the corner, it's up to parents to lay the foundation for their children's success by choosing the right school and staying engaged with teachers.

Obviously, everyone wants their kids to have a smooth transition back to school. For those who are attending a school for the first time, it's even more important to do some key things.

The first is to ensure that you choose the school that works best for your children. Most parents send their kids to the neighbourhood public school, and this is often a good choice. Other parents choose to enrol their children in an independent school, while some parents prefer to homeschool their children, either on their own or in cooperation with other home-schooling families.

Remember that when it comes to educating your children, you have more than one option available. There's nothing wrong with switching your children from public school to an independent school or vice versa. If your current school isn't working out for your children, never be afraid to explore other options.

Once you've decided where your children will attend, take advantage of every possible line of communication. School administrators are usually in the building at least a week before school starts. Feel free to call the school and ask to meet with the principal or vice-principal. Most administrators will welcome the opportunity to meet with you. It is a definite advantage for school administrators to know you and to recognize that you want to help teachers do

their best job.

If you haven't already done so, make sure you visit the school's website if it has one. This is a great way to learn the names of the teachers, review various school policies, find out about programs of study, and check out upcoming school events. The more information you have about your child's school, the better equipped you will be to handle sensitive issues that may arise during the year.

It's also important to meet with your child's teachers as soon as possible. Many schools host open houses at the beginning of the school year, providing a great opportunity to meet the teacher and visit your child's classroom. If you can't make it to the open house, email the teacher and ask whether you can stop by briefly either before or after school. Most teachers are happy to accommodate your schedule.

Tell the teacher that you are looking forward to having your child in their classroom. Also tell the teacher that you have told your child that your family supports them, and you want the teacher to know that.

One thing to watch out for is when teachers try to push their personal political views on their students. The good news is that most teachers will never do this and will simply want to ensure that the students receive the best education they can provide. Feel free to let the teacher know how important it is for the school personnel to respect your family's values. This is an excellent message for teachers to hear.

Be careful not to overreact if you discover that a teacher's personal or political beliefs differ

from your own. Just because a teacher expresses certain views on social media or volunteers with a political party during election campaigns doesn't necessarily mean they are pushing these views on students during class. Most teachers are aware of how important it is to stay impartial when teaching.

If you do run into problems with a teacher, don't escalate things unnecessarily. Posting your complaints about a teacher on social media might get you a reaction, but it's unlikely to help you resolve the underlying issue. Your child's teacher deserves to be treated with respect. So, go straight to the teacher and express your concerns directly in a confidential discussion. Most of the time you should be able to work out a solution without much fuss.

If speaking with the teacher doesn't resolve the issue, make an appointment with the school principal or vice-principal and express your concerns in a confidential meeting. If you are still unsatisfied, work your way up to the superintendent. Beyond that, you can contact your local trustees or possibly even your provincial MLA. The key thing is to exhaust all lower levels of communication before moving on to higher levels.

Sending your children to school should be a positive experience. By doing research first, communicating regularly with your children's teacher and following the proper channels when you want your concerns addressed, you will go a long way to give your children the best chance for a successful school year.

Michael Zwaagstra

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Back-to-school in Quebec

Budget tensions, new rules, and local impact in Parc-Extension

DIMITRIS ILIAS

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As thousands of Quebec students shoulder their backpacks for the first days of the new school year, the mood is a mix of anticipation and unease. In neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension, where schools already face high enrolment pressures, the province's shifting budget measures and new classroom rules are being closely watched.

The 2025 back-to-school period runs from August 25 to September and for many administrators and parents, financial concerns remain front and center.

New rules in place

One of the most talked-about measures this year is the complete ban on cellphones at school. What began last year with phones barred in classrooms has now expanded to recess and lunch. Devices must stay in lockers all day, or risk being confiscated. Teachers and staff are also expected to set the tone by limiting their

own use during school hours.

Another directive, the mandatory use of formal address (vouvoiement), will gradually come into force. Students from kindergarten through secondary five will be required to address staff as "monsieur" or "madame." Though officially set for January, some schools, including those in Montreal's north-end, are opting to apply the measure immediately.

At the same time, a pilot program in French is launching in about 60 classrooms province-wide. The new curriculum emphasizes Quebec culture, oral communication, grammar revisions, and updated vocabulary lists. Officials say it is part of a broader effort to strengthen language skills.

Budgets still under pressure

The financial backdrop of this rentrée is proving as complicated as the policy changes. After deep cuts announced in June and a partial reinvestment in July, school administrators say they are still short at least \$85 million.

"The situation is far from resolved," said Kathleen Legault, president of the

Montreal Association of School Administrators. She warned that schools may have to reduce spending on sports, cultural outings, mentoring for new teachers, and even library acquisitions.

In Parc-Extension, where school populations are dense and resources already stretched, these constraints are especially concerning.

Staffing and space remain issues

Recruitment continues to be a major hurdle, with about one in ten teachers lacking full certification. Schools are also facing record numbers of modular classrooms as the need for space outpaces permanent construction.

Adding further strain are new government limits on how many employees each service center can hire. Administrators say this may prevent schools from adding staff even when additional students arrive midyear — a scenario not uncommon in neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension, which regularly welcomes new

families throughout the year.

"Everyone wants a successful year"

Despite the uncertainty, school leaders stress their determination. "We're sticking together. It's not easy, but everyone wants this school year to be a success," Legault said.

Parents, too, are preparing for the unknown. "There is a lot of uncertainty, and parents are worried," said Sylvain Martel of the Regroupement des comités de parents autonomes du Québec. "We must remain vigilant because there will be impacts."

For Parc-Extension, where schools serve one of Montreal's most diverse and dynamic populations, the balance between fiscal restraint and student support will be closely watched as the year unfolds.



Montreal citizens challenge misleading road pace statistics of study

NEWSFIRST MULTIMEDIA

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A recent study from McGill University has ignited debate over how road space is allocated in Montreal, with citizens and experts accusing the report of distorting data to support political agendas.

The study claims that cars occupy 98% of road space, despite accounting for 95% of trips, while micromobility options—including bicycles, e-bikes, and scooters—make up 5% of trips but only 2% of the space.

However, critics argue that this framing omits key users like pedestrians and buses, skewing the results.

A 2021 analysis by Polytechnique Montréal offered a more inclusive breakdown: automobiles occupied 77.8% of street space, pedestrians 19.8%, bicycles 1.4%, and buses 1%.

"How can it be that after hundreds of kilo-

meters of new bike lanes and the removal of thousands of parking spaces, the car's share supposedly jumped from 78% to 98%?" asked Jean-François Thibault. "Simple: in 2025, McGill erased pedestrians and buses from the calculation. That's a fraud by omission."

Micromobility usage rising, but infrastructure lags

Despite limited infrastructure, micromobility is gaining traction. In boroughs like Plateau-Mont-Royal and Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie, micromobility accounts for up to 22% of all travel. Yet, bike lanes and related infrastructure still occupy just 2% of Montreal's street space.

Montreal's overall cycling mode share—the proportion of commuters using bicycles—is currently around 2.5%, far behind cities like Vancouver (3.8%) and Minneapolis (3.5%).

However, the city has set an ambitious goal to raise this to 15% by 2027, driven in part by the

expansion of the Réseau Express Vélo (REV), a high-capacity network of protected bike lanes.

Citizens demand accountability

Marc Perez, spokesperson for the Coalition for Democracy Montreal, criticized the selective use of data in city planning. "I've seen reports twisted to justify questionable decisions. One example: a report claimed synthetic grass absorbs water better than natural turf, used to replace a healthy soccer field in Côte-des-Neiges. Citizens aren't fooled when data is bent to fit a narrative."

Perez also emphasized the economic importance of automobiles. "If cars make up 95% of trips, they also drive a significant portion of the economy—delivering goods, enabling commerce, and providing essential mobility."

These aren't just numbers. Seniors struggling in winter, merchants losing customers, families with disabled members—these are real people being cut off from curb access."

The Coalition, currently fundraising for a lawsuit against the City, warns that selective statistics are being weaponized to silence residents and businesses affected by unilateral decisions. "We're not against bikes," the Coalition clarified. "We're against data manipulation and policies imposed without proper consultation. Democracy means giving all users—drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, businesses, seniors, and families—a real voice."

Call for transparency and inclusive planning

The Coalition insists that any future reallocation of street space must be based on transparent methodology, credible data, and genuine public engagement. With micromobility on the rise and infrastructure lagging behind, citizens are calling for a planning process that reflects the realities of all road users—not just the numbers on paper.



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What's changing this school year in Quebec

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The 2025 school year marks the beginning of several major changes introduced by Quebec's Minister of Education, Bernard Drainville. From a full cellphone ban to mandatory formal speech and new guidelines for artificial intelligence (AI), here's a quick guide to help you navigate what's new.

Full cellphone ban

Announced with much fanfare in May, the complete ban on cellphones in schools takes effect this fall for both elementary and high school students. Students will be prohibited from using electronic devices both inside school buildings and on school grounds.

While many school administrators and experts support the move, others argue that it must be paired with engaging alternatives to keep students interested and occupied. Each school will determine how the ban is enforced. Some have opted for escalating sanctions, including confiscation of devices for up to five days.

To ensure communication between students and parents, some school service centers will make the school's main office phone available for use.

Mandatory formal address

Starting January 1, 2026, all students in elementary and secondary schools will be required to address teachers using formal language—specifically “madame” or “monsieur”—and use the respectful “vous” form in French.

Schools have until the start of 2026 to define

the consequences for non-compliance, which may include “restorative actions” rather than traditional punishments. While some educators welcome the change as a step toward reinforcing respect, others question its necessity and the practicality of enforcement.

New AI guidelines

In higher education, the Quebec government is introducing a new guide for best practices in integrating artificial intelligence into academic settings. AI has raised concerns among educators due to the risk of plagiarism, but it also holds potential for enhancing research and creativity when used appropriately.

The government is encouraging institutions to establish clear boundaries and frameworks for AI use to ensure it supports learning rather than undermines it.

Budget concerns

The summer began with a directive from Minister Drainville for schools to implement \$500 million in budget cuts. This sparked one of the most signed petitions in the history of Quebec's National Assembly, with over 150,000 signatures urging the minister to reconsider.

In response, Drainville announced a reinvestment of \$540 million aimed at student services. However, the Federation of School Service Centers estimates that the net budget cuts still amount to \$85 million.

Meanwhile, in the college system (CEGEPs), the union representing government professionals criticized the requirement for institutions to dip into their surpluses to meet \$151 million in budget reductions.

Montreal's anti-idling law

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In Montréal, the law is explicit: drivers may not leave their vehicle's engine running while stationary. The rule, enforced across all 19 boroughs, limits idling strictly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve urban air quality.

A gasoline-powered vehicle may idle for up to three minutes within any 60-minute period. Heavy diesel vehicles enjoy slightly longer leeway—allowed to idle for five minutes in the same timeframe, or even ten minutes if the outdoor temperature falls below zero degrees Celsius.

Notably, the borough that includes Park Extension (officially Villeray–Saint-Michel–ParcExtension) applies a stricter standard for heavy diesel vehicles: maximum idling of just three minutes per hour, regardless of temperature.

Certain exceptions are allowed, especially in cold conditions. Any vehicle may idle when the temperature is under -10°C if the engine is needed to heat the cabin while someone is inside, or if defrosting is required to ensure safe operation. Additional exemptions apply broadly in Montréal—for example, to emergency vehicles, taxis when carrying a passenger, refrigerated trucks, vehicles stuck in traffic, armored vehicles, electric/hybrid vehicles, and

heavy vehicles undergoing engine check.

However, specific information on fines or enforcement procedures in Montréal—such as dollar amounts—is not provided in the official municipal page and therefore remains unverified in this context.

Why this matters for Park Extension

Residents of Park Extension—a densely populated neighbourhood with lively street life and limited green space—feel the impact of idling firsthand. Delivery trucks, taxis, and service vehicles frequent the area, and even short bursts of idling can contribute to the hum of pollution at street level. The borough's tighter restriction on diesel vehicles recognizes the need for heightened protection in such urban settings.

Moreover, Montréal places enforcement responsibilities on the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM), though specifics about penalties are not detailed in public resources.

Looking ahead

As neighbourhoods like Park Extension grapple with air quality and livability concerns, the anti-idling policy plays a subtle but meaningful role. It underscores Montréal's broader commitment to cleaner transportation options and encourages behaviours aligned with environmental well-being.

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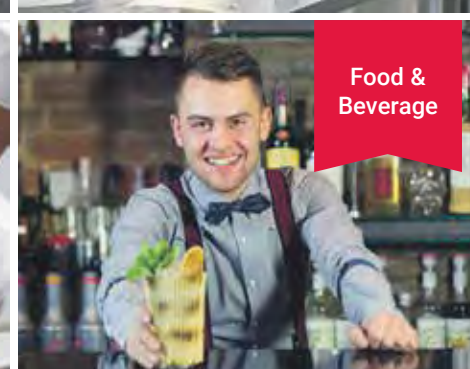
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Parc Exers gather to celebrate India Independence Day

Event organizers contemplate resuming Querbes Ave. parade next year

MARTIN C. BARRY

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Park Extension's Place de la Gare was filled with joy and jubilation on the afternoon of Sunday Aug. 17 as people of Indian heritage from everywhere in the Montreal region gathered to take part in joyful festivities marking the day 79 years ago when India became a nation.

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



Photos: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News



Parc Extension city councillor Mary Deros spoke of her admiration and respect for the Indian Canadian community represented in the district during India Independence Day celebrations held in Place de la Gare on August 17.

down after summer vacation.

One of Parc Ex's big events

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

Although there has not been an India Independence Day parade along Querbes Ave. for a number of years, India-Canada Organization chairman Naseer Mehdi Khan, as well as an event organizer from the Borough of VSMPE both suggested to Nouvelles Parc Extension News that they haven't given up hope of holding a parade next year if the conditions are right and there is willingness to go ahead with it.

Progress report on India

In addition to the celebrations, India Independence Day is also an occasion for the organizers to publicly speak about progress that's been made during the previous year in the home country and to focus on issues of concern there.

Since the early 1990s, India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in the developing world. This has been accompanied by increases in life expectancy, literacy rates

and food security. India is now one of the world's largest economies by nominal GDP, and third-largest by purchasing power parity.

Indian economy booming

During the local celebrations, an official representative from the Republic of India's high commission in Canada spoke optimistically of India's prospering economy, which ranks next to Germany, China and the United States (which is in first place).

He also spoke of significantly improved relations between India and Canada with the leadership of Prime Minister Mark Carney. Relations between Canada and India fell to an historic low during former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's time in office.



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

Saint Roch/Outremont intersection was the place to party Aug. 15-17



From the left, Chomedey city councillor Aglaia Revelakis, Parc Extension councillor Mary Deros and Chomedey MNA Sona Lakhoyan Olivier during this year's Montreal Greek Festival. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News)



Among the dignitaries on hand during the Sunday August 17 presentations at the Montreal Greek Festival were (from the far left) Ensemble Montréal's candidate for mayor in VSMPE Sylvain Gariépy, Parc Extension city councillor Mary Deros, Ensemble Montréal centre city mayoralty candidate Soraya Martinez Ferrada, Ahuntsic-Cartierville city councillor Effie Giannou and Saint-Laurent Borough Mayor Alan DeSousa. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News)

MARTIN C. BARRY
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Hundreds of people in a mood to party gathered in the centre of Parc Extension on the weekend of August 15 to 17 to talk, eat, dance and soak up the Hellenic ambience at the annual Montreal Greek Festival.

Held around the same time as the Greek Orthodox Church's Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, the last day, Sunday, was the culminating celebration of all things Greek.

Four days of fun

It all took place at the intersection of Saint Roch and Outremont streets where hundreds of people of all ages – many of them Hellenic teens – formed circles and danced until late into the night. More than 20,000 attended the festival.

This was the first year newly-elected Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal president Basile Angelopoulos presided over the festivities.

"This is truly the beginning of a new era at the HCGM," said Angelopoulos, a longtime Laval resident, who was elected in June. While he grew up in Laval, his parents lived in Parc Extension for a number of years after first arriving from Greece.

A continuing tradition

"Welcome to all our friends and thank you for being here to share this wonderful occasion, a tradition that continues and one that we will ensure will continue in the future," he told the gathering prior to the beginning of a performance by Greek folk dancers.

Although she represents a Laval constituency, Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis spent an important part of her youth in Parc Extension.

Before moving to Chomedey at age 17 with her

parents, she attended Barclay School in Parc Ex and has fond memories of playing in the parks and on the streets of the area.

A 'homecoming' for some

"The Montreal Greek Festival is like a homecoming for me every year," she said in an interview with Nouvelles Parc Extension, reflecting a view held by many Greek Montrealers from all over the region who regard Parc Extension, with its many Greek Orthodox churches, as the spiritual centre of the Montreal Greek community.

A highlight of the evening on Sunday August 17 was the presentation by Chomedey Liberal MNA Sona Lakhoyan Olivier of a National Assembly Medal to longtime Parc Extension city councillor Mary Deros in recognition of Deros's many years of public service. Although she now lives in Laval, Lakhoyan Olivier grew up in Parc Extension.

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Photo: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News



Parc-Extension eyes 2026 for landmark community center

DIMITRIS ILIAS

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Parc-Extension News
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Parc-Extension, is inching closer to realizing a long-awaited dream: the construction of a new community center that promises to reshape local life.

The idea was born during a Neighbourhood Plan meeting in October 2019, when community representatives rallied around the vision of a major multi-purpose facility. Just two months later, a working group of 22 members was formed to begin laying the groundwork for what would become known as the New Community Center (NCC).

From the start, the NCC was envisioned not just as another public building, but as an accessible hub offering a wide range of services—an inclusive place where residents of all ages could meet, learn, exchange ideas, and participate in civic life.

From pause to renewal

Momentum slowed in 2020 when the

pandemic halted consultations. But by July 2022, discussions had resumed, and by December that year the project had reached the federal level. Representatives

met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office to explore funding through the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings (GICB) program.

The following January, with a tight deadline looming for the BCVI funding program, a new working group was created to move quickly. Tasks ranged from coordinating architectural and energy studies to drafting budgets, searching for financial partners, and keeping residents informed of progress. The application was filed on time, but the process also highlighted just how complex the project would be.

Broadening participation

By early 2023, the working group expanded to bring in more voices. Meetings with the borough opened discussions on land availability and additional funding streams. A technical and functional program was developed, along with a draft business plan.

On June 27, 2023, the Table de Quartier held a public assembly that brought nearly 60 stakeholders together. It was more than an update—it

was a collective reflection on what the NCC should represent. Participants debated the center's values, the activities it should host, and how it could best serve residents.

The shared vision that emerged was ambitious: by 2026, Parc-Extension would have a Carrefour de services diversifiés, a true crossroads of community life. This "multi-generational parents' home," as organizers described it, would be rooted in inclusion, civic engagement, and social development.

Green, accessible, and resilient

Plans for the three-storey building place sustainability and accessibility at the heart of the design. The NCC will meet carbon-neutral standards, using geothermal air conditioning and a roof designed to combat heat islands. Its concrete structure will help maintain interior temperatures during power outages, ensuring resilience in a changing climate.

Accessibility features are also central. The building will be designed for people with reduced mobility, visual impairments, and other disabilities, ensuring that all residents can benefit equally from its programs. Located near Howard Park and well served by public transit, the NCC aims to be an open and welcoming space for every corner of the neighbourhood.

Challenges ahead

Despite strong community momentum, the

road ahead remains complex. The project is still awaiting confirmation of federal funding, and additional financing opportunities must be secured. Finding an available site has been another challenge, given Parc-Extension's density and limited land options. At the same time, local organizations in need of relocation are looking to the NCC for solutions, creating a delicate balancing act between short-term needs and long-term planning.

Perhaps the greatest challenge, however, lies in coordinating the many players involved—residents, nonprofits, the borough, and potential funders—each with their own priorities. Yet the consultations so far have shown a willingness to compromise and collaborate in the interest of the greater good.

Looking ahead

The NCC is more than a building project; it represents a shift in how Parc-Extension sees itself. For a neighbourhood often defined by its challenges—crowded housing, limited green space, and economic hardship—the prospect of a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community hub is a statement of optimism.

If funding and land can be secured, construction could move forward in time to welcome residents by 2026. For now, the community continues to refine its vision, determined to turn the NCC from an ambitious plan into a cornerstone of neighbourhood life.

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Linguistic Policy Task Force gets Bill 21 intervener status at Supreme Court of Canada

'We want the Notwithstanding Clause to be properly defined,' says Task Force president Andrew Caddell

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The Task Force on Linguistic Policy, one of several interest groups challenging Quebec's Bill 21, has received word they will be permitted to intervene in the Supreme Court of Canada in the Bill 21 case involving the English Montreal School Board and the Quebec government.

Along with many other interveners, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Quebec Community Groups Network and the attorneys general of six Canadian provinces, the Task Force will be present at the Supreme Court hearing on Bill 21, at a date yet to be determined.

Define Notwithstanding

"The reason that we're doing this is we want the Notwithstanding Clause to be properly defined," Task Force president Andrew Caddell said in an interview with The Laval News.

"From our point of view, the Notwithstanding Clause doesn't really change the existence of rights. Rights exist in nature and everybody has rights. Because if they don't exist, then there's no point in having a Charter of Rights."

The Task Force on Linguistic Policy was founded in 2021 two years after Bill 21 was passed. It represents thousands of members and depends on volunteers for its operations and public donations for its court challenges.

Since its creation, the Task Force has organized public meetings and rallies, been active

in news media across Canada, and continues its legal challenge of Bill 96 (the CAQ government's update of the Charter of the French Language), as well as the Notwithstanding Clause.

Impact on Muslims

Bill 21 ('An act respecting the laicity of the State') was passed in 2019 by Premier François Legault's CAQ government. It most notably prohibited the wearing of religious symbols by public employees in positions of authority, with a particularly visible impact on Muslim women wearing head and facial coverings.

While Bill 21 was generally upheld in 2021 by the Superior Court of Quebec, the law was deemed to be violating freedom of expression and of religion, although the Quebec government got around this by invoking the Canadian constitution's Notwithstanding Clause.

The Task Force says it will be an intervener because this case affects its challenge to Bill 96, which was submitted to Quebec Superior Court on May 31, 2023. Its case focuses on the existence of rights prior to the drafting of the Charter of Rights in 1982.

An important legal moment

"This will be one of the most important, if not the most important, cases before the Supreme Court," says Task Force lawyer Michael Bergman. "This case will determine the definition, scope and application of the Notwithstanding Clause."

In May, the Task Force applied to intervene at the Supreme Court. The purpose of the intervention is to focus on the use of



"We want the Notwithstanding Clause to be properly defined," says Task Force on Linguistic Policy Andrew Caddell.

Section 33, the Notwithstanding Clause of the Canadian Constitution. The clause nullifies key sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms dealing with legal rights, equality rights, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

'Rights are rights are rights'

"Our case will challenge Section 33 in a way other interveners will not," maintains Caddell. "We argue that rights are rights are rights, and

were not nullified with the introduction of the Charter of Rights in 1982. The Charter codifies rights, but we insist it cannot take them away." Bergman pointed out that if the Notwithstanding Clause can arbitrarily cancel fundamental rights, "then what remains of the Charter is a mere skeleton," he said.

"The Task Force is concerned the Supreme Court will allow Section 33 to run roughshod over those rights," added Caddell. "Hence, we must be present in the Bill 21 case."



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SINCE 1971

Parc Ex's Pakistanis celebrate the start of their nation's 79th year of independence

A major patriotic Pakistani gathering took place in Saint Roch Park

MARTIN C. BARRY
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marty@newsfirst.ca



A Pakistani folk dancer was among many performers who set the mood for a Pakistan Independence Day celebration held in Saint-Roch Park on the afternoon of August 16. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News)

Celebrations held on Saturday Aug. 16 in Parc Extension's Saint Roch Park to mark the 79th annual Pakistan Independence Day attracted a good-size crowd of patriotic Pakistanis who enjoyed singing, traditional dancing and stirring addresses.

Some Mexican flair

While there is a 16,000-kilometre distance between Pakistan and Mexico, that didn't stand in the way for the organizers, the Himalaya Seniors of Quebec, to invite a small group of Mexican folkloric dancers based in Villaray to come and put on a good dance show.

There were also multi-cultural events and speeches by elected officials from local ridings and neighbourhoods. Various artists and singers from the Pakistani community were also invited to perform, while bazaar and food concession operators also took part.

A very busy weekend

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

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



Parc Ex city councillor Mary Deros (second from right) was among the dignitaries who expressed their congratulations to the district's residents of Pakistani origin on the occasion of the anniversary of their country's independence day. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News)

weekend, making it their busiest time of the year.

The other events in or near Parc Extension included India Independence Day, Armenian community celebrations, and the Montreal Greek Festival.

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

A big day in Pakistan

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

In the speech, the leaders highlight the achievements of the government, goals set for the future and (in the words of the father of the

nation, Quaid-e-Azam), bring "Unity, Faith and Discipline" to the people.

The event, also known as Yaum-e-Azadi, is officially observed on the anniversary of the day in 1947 when Pakistan became independent from British rule within what was then known as the British Raj.

Pakistan economy expanding

According to the English-language Pakistani news daily Express Tribune, Pakistan is presently undergoing an economic expansion phase, including the privatization of government corporations, aimed at attracting foreign investment and reducing budget deficits.

However, the country still has challenges to deal with, such as rapid population growth, widespread illiteracy, political instability, poor relations with other nations and heavy foreign debt.



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A boy band with a distinctive Pakistani flair livened up the celebrations in Saint-Roch Park for Pakistan Independence Day. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Nouvelles Parc Extension News)



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NO MR. DARCY

Q I will try to make this brief as I can. My husband and I separated over a lot of issues, the main one being I thought he was cheating.

Well, I think he may have been, because we were not even apart a month when I found out he is seeing his mother's chore worker. I was devastated. I loved him and wanted this marriage to work.

I called near divorce time to tell him where to send the papers. We had nothing but angry words to one another before that call. He was sweet. I told him I was so sorry our marriage ended, but thought of him often and still loved him. I just wanted to cleanse old wounds. One hour later he called back asking to come to my home to clear the air.

We both cried and talked about where we went wrong in the marriage. He asked me to give him time. He said this other woman did not want him; he barely ever saw her. But then he revealed her daughter and her daughter's husband are living with him. Just give him time to clean up this mess, he said.

When he told the other woman I called, she came running back into his life. He still leads me on and tells me he wants to try. I am getting played the fool, but I am having the worst time letting him go. I try but I can't. He is the love of my life.

He sees me wanting out, then he spews out words to hook me again. I feel like a fish getting thrown in and tossed back time and again. I know she is not living with him, but she sees him two or three times a week. Then he gets cool and distant toward me. But if she stays away, he leads me down this cruel path.

I have prayed, remained faithful to him, and now I am at my wits' end. How could anyone do this to another for a second time? Help me let him go, please. I have always been a

strong woman, but this time I find no strength to be that woman.

Beatrice

A Beatrice, how could he do this to you for the second time? The same way he could do it to you for the first time. This mess is a mess made by him. It was his mess to make, and it was his mess to clean up. But he has made another choice.

He is not willing to do without a body in his bed. If she's not there warming his bed, he wants you to be there warming his bed, with not a care about how either of you is affected by this.

There is enough of the charmer, or the serpent, about this man that he can receive the benefit of having two of what he should only have one of, at a time. Someone you can spend your life with, share your bed with, share your deepest thoughts with—someone like that is someone not like this man.

In Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice" there is a clergyman named Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins is a bootlicker and dense as a board. But in the novel he says one wise thing. After Lizzy Bennet rejects his offer of marriage, Mr. Collins says, "I have often observed that resignation is never so perfect as when the blessing denied begins to lose somewhat of its value in our estimation."

This man is not the love of your life, though you want him to be. You wanted one wedding and one lifetime marriage. You cannot have that with him. You can never rest with an easy head or an easy heart. He won't stand by you. To free yourself, he has to lose some of his value in your estimation.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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Carney announces removal of retaliatory tariffs on CUSMA-compliant U.S. goods

CFIB wants retaliatory tariff revenue channelled back to smaller Canadian businesses

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After warning that nearly one in five small Canadian businesses impacted by tariffs couldn't last more than six months without intervention by the federal government, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business changed its tune late last week, saying it welcomed Ottawa's decision to drop retaliatory tariffs on a wide range of U.S. goods.

Damaging retaliation

"This is a step in the right direction and will take some of the pressure off Canadian small businesses as trade talks continue," said CFIB vice-president of advocacy Corinne Pohlmann.

However, she maintained that many small business owners had told the CFIB before then that Canada's retaliatory measures were almost as damaging as the U.S. tariffs themselves.

"While small firms were in favour of Canadian counter tariffs as the trade war began, their support has been falling since February," Pohlmann added.

While maintaining that the government's announcement provided some relief going forward, she said the CFIB still wants Ottawa to

immediately release tariff revenue to small businesses and work quickly to resolve small business requests still tied up in the remissions process.

Free trade is on again

In a statement issued by Prime Minister Marc Carney's office last week, Carney said that the Canadian government decided to match the United States by removing all of Canada's tariffs on U.S. goods, specifically those covered under the Canada-US-Mexico trade agreement.

The decision takes effect on September 1. "In short, Canada and the U.S. have now re-established free trade for the vast majority of our goods," Carney said.

However, Canada will retain tariffs on steel, aluminum and autos as it works intensively with the U.S. to resolve the issues there. The federal government underscored the fact that Canada is the second-largest foreign investor in the U.S.

Carney said that to address challenges in strategic sectors from agriculture to autos, the government will soon announce a new comprehensive industrial strategy that protects Canadian jobs, boosts Canadian competitiveness, buys Canadian goods, and diversifies Canadian exports.

Small business hit hardest

The CFIB said before the government's announcement that new data it obtained revealed small businesses were being hit hardest by U.S. and Canadian tariffs on steel and aluminum and Canada's own retaliatory tariffs on other U.S. goods. In addition, according to the CFIB, nearly one-third of Canadian SMEs would be negatively affected by the loss of the \$800 U.S. de minimis exemption.

U.S. President Donald Trump had signed an executive order on July 31, raising tariffs on some Canadian goods to 35 per cent. Canada might have been able to avoid the hike had it managed to strike a new trade deal with the U.S. by an August 1 deadline, although that didn't happen.

The Canadian government had imposed retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods three times since the trade war began, including counter-tariffs on \$60 billion worth of U.S. consumer goods and additional tariffs on U.S. autos.

Bad deal vs. lasting uncertainty

"Small businesses don't have a lot of runway left," Pohlmann warned last week before the federal government's latest announcement. She said the worst outcome for Canada in the trade war would be "a bad deal," but the second worst outcome would be the regularization of an uncertainty that small business owners had been contending with for the past six months.

"The federal government needs to provide some stability and return tariff revenue to help small businesses," she said. "We've suggested several options, including temporarily reducing

the federal small business tax rate to zero or a tariff rebate designed on earlier models, like the carbon tax rebate."

CFIB data indicates that nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of small businesses face higher expenses, while many are also seeing lower revenues (48 per cent), supply chain disruptions (41 per cent), and paused investments (36 per cent).

As well, nearly one in five (19 per cent) of small businesses dealing with extra tariff costs reported they would not be able to last more than six months if the tariff status quo remained, while nearly four in 10 (38 per cent) said they would last less than a year.

What happens to collected tariffs?

With Ottawa having collected billions in additional tariff revenue on U.S. imports, a strong majority (82 per cent) told the CFIB the government should ensure that any tariff revenue that is returned includes support for smaller businesses affected both directly and indirectly by trade disruptions.

"The trade war's impact on Canada's small businesses should be top of mind for the government as Canada continues its negotiations with the U.S. Canada can't fix its productivity crisis without empowering its entrepreneurs," according to Pohlmann.

"If the government wants to build one Canadian economy, it needs to ensure small businesses are part of the solution and that includes providing them with tariff support during this very challenging time," she said.

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Canadian Federation of Independent Business executive vice-president for advocacy Corinne Pohlmann wants Ottawa to redirect retaliatory revenues taken in by Ottawa towards small Canadian businesses. (Photo: Courtesy of CFIB)

HOROSCOPE

Week of August 31 to September 6

The luckiest signs this week:
PISCES, ARIES AND TAURUS



ARIES

You'll take on new responsibilities at work that will push you beyond your current skill level. This experience will help you grow and may pave the way for a promotion. You'll also get the go-ahead on an innovative project.



TAURUS

You'll feel inspired to go back to school and work toward a degree, setting yourself up for a brighter future. A romantic getaway will revitalize your relationship and deepen your connection with your partner.



GEMINI

Work has become monotonous, and you need a change. You can steer your career toward exciting new opportunities with a solid plan and some preparation. Boldness will be the key to your success in long-term projects.



CANCER

It's often easier to get along with people with whom you have no emotional connection. You might face challenges regarding discipline with one of your children. Use your diplomacy skills to resolve any conflicts.



LEO

Every detail counts. You'll plan a large work event that will bring many people together. Communication may be difficult, so your patience and calmness will be essential to overcoming these obstacles.



VIRGO

Your leadership will shine, whether at work or in your personal life. You'll first have to overcome doubts or a lack of self-confidence. However, others will recognize your abilities once you do, and you'll earn praise for your achievements.



LIBRA

A loved one could slow you down as you rush to make all your appointments on time. It might be time to consider a change, such as moving out of the family home. The space has become too big since your children left.



SCORPIO

Expect a lot of travel for work or family commitments. Numerous details will be vying for your attention. A surprising secret could come to light. You could forge new friendships with people who live close to you.



SAGITTARIUS

You'll receive the green light for financing a project, like purchasing a property. The idea of starting a business with a family member could appeal to you. Let inspiration and intuition guide you.



CAPRICORN

Everything is changing quickly, but things may not be happening fast enough for your liking. You'll suggest interesting ideas to your partner, who will be impressed. You could win a sports competition.



AQUARIUS

Health issues could slow you down, but this break will allow you to take a step back and gain a fresh perspective on your professional and personal life. Lean into spirituality; you'll find it to be a source of peace and well-being.



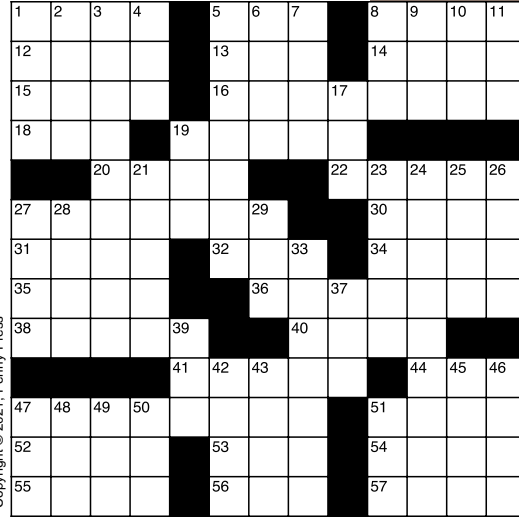
PISCES

You'll feel stressed this week, but it may also give you more energy and boost your efficiency. You can accomplish great things when you're in a time crunch. You could be struck by love at first sight. However, if you're in a relationship, it may lead to some confusion.

Coffee Break

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38. Gave medicine to
40. Etiquette maven
- Emily ____

DOWN

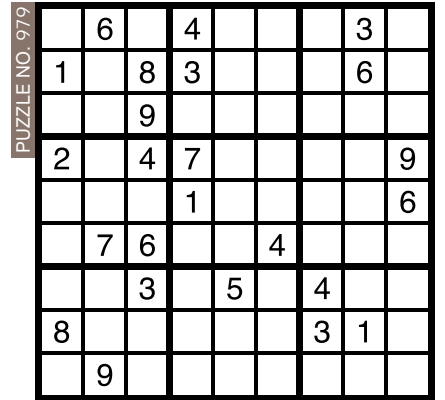
41. Annoyed
44. "Mary ____ a little lamb"
47. More crunchy
51. Infant
52. Word of pain
53. "____ How She Runs"
54. Needs aspirin
55. Conform
56. Finish
57. Difficult journey
11. Golf mound
17. New York ballplayer
19. Briny blue
21. Reason
23. Winding curves
24. Cat type
25. 8:01, e.g.
26. Accelerated
27. Trampled
28. Angel's hat
29. Rest
33. Covered decoratively
37. Pea's abode
39. Chip's companion
42. Stand up
43. Enthusiastic
45. Qualified
46. Schoolroom item
47. Dove's comment
48. Chafe
49. Polar sight
50. Timid
51. Baseball club

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY:

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

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

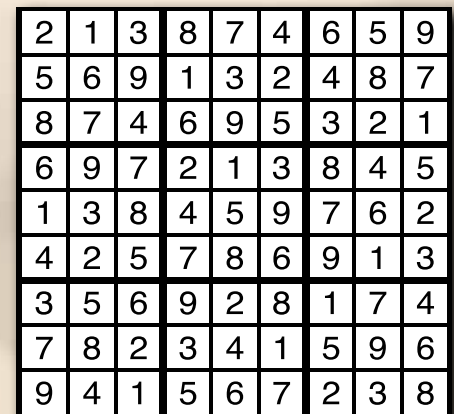


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