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# L'arrondissement VSP mise sur le logement social et protège ses artères commerciales

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info@newsfirst.ca

L'arrondissement de Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension (VSP) accélère ses actions en matière de logement social tout en renforçant la protection de ses rues commerçantes. Réunis en séance du conseil, les élus ont donné le feu vert à la construction d'un nouvel immeuble de logements sociaux et adopté des mesures pour freiner la conversion de commerces en unités d'habitation.

## Un nouveau bâtiment social au cœur de Parc-Extension

Le projet majeur de la séance : l'autorisation d'un immeuble résidentiel d'une vingtaine de logements sociaux au 7965, boulevard de l'Acadie. Le maire, Jean-François Lalonde, salue une avancée

essentielle pour le quartier :

« En misant sur la construction préfabriquée, on accélère la création de logements tout en explorant des solutions innovantes. C'est une réponse concrète aux besoins de la communauté de Parc-Extension. »

Les plans, approuvés par le conseil, prévoient un bâtiment de trois étages et 26 logements, piloté par la coopérative Monde Uni dans le cadre du Programme d'habitation abordable Québec. Le chantier devrait être complété d'ici la fin de 2026.

Le futur édifice comprendra principalement des studios, un rez-de-chaussée accessible aux personnes à mobilité réduite, un important aménagement paysager couvrant 68 % du terrain, ainsi que la plantation de six nouveaux arbres. L'objectif : offrir des logements de qualité, bien intégrés au tissu urbain, dans un secteur où les besoins sont criants.

## Un bouclier pour les commerces de proximité

Autre décision phare : une modification au Règlement de zonage pour interdire la conversion de commerces en logements sur plusieurs rues stratégiques. Cette mesure vise à préserver les commerces de proximité qui jouent un rôle central dans la vitalité des quartiers.

Le secteur Villeray Est, déjà fragilisé par la vacance commerciale et les transformations résidentielles, est particulièrement visé. L'interdiction s'étend aussi aux rues de Liège Ouest, Saint-Roch (Parc-Extension), Legendre Est et Émile-Journault (Saint-Michel), ainsi qu'à d'autres segments fréquentés mais jusque-là non protégés.

Les commerces déjà transformés en logements ne sont pas touchés, mais toute nouvelle conversion sera désormais interdite. L'arrondissement



souhaite ainsi maintenir des milieux de vie complets, favorables à l'économie locale et accessibles à pied.

## Une mesure transitoire en attendant une refonte plus large

Cette modification réglementaire est temporaire : elle restera en vigueur jusqu'aux résultats d'une étude de consolidation commerciale prévue en 2026. Cette analyse alimentera une réflexion plus large sur les usages du territoire et sur la manière de mieux soutenir l'activité commerciale de proximité.

MARTIN C. BARRY

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In his opening remarks during the February 3 meeting of the Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc Extension borough council, Mayor Jean-François Lalonde noted that the council was moving forward to authorize the construction of a new 26-unit social housing project in Parc Extension.

During the meeting, the councillors also adopted a proposed amendment to a zoning by-law to prevent the conversion of commercial spaces into housing on several streets within the borough.

## Black History Month

As well, Lalonde noted that the borough is holding a number of special activities in February to mark Black History Month.

He and other members of the borough council were wearing green ribbons on their lapels to underscore the fact that the annual Journées de la persévérance scolaire (Hooked on School Days) are taking place from February 16-20.

“The construction of social housing on Acadie Boulevard directly addresses the needs of the Parc-Extension community,” said Lalonde. “By focusing on prefabricated construction, this project allows us to explore innovative solutions and accelerate the creation of housing.”

## New social housing in Parc Ex

“We are proud to see a promising initiative developing in the neighbourhood that will facilitate access to social housing for our citizens,” he added.

# Borough moves forward with new social housing

## Youths from Centre Jeunesse Unie on Bloomfield seek funding for renovations

The borough council members approved plans for the construction of the three-storey building located at 7965 de l'Acadie Boulevard in Parc Extension. Led by the Monde Uni housing cooperative, the project is part of the Quebec Affordable Housing Program of the Société d'habitation du Québec and aims for completion by the end of this year.

The building, designed using prefabricated modules, will primarily consist of studios and will offer a ground floor accessible to people with reduced mobility. The project also includes significant landscaping, which will cover nearly 68 per cent of the site, as well as the planting of six new trees.

### Ground-floor conversions out

With careful planning, brick architecture and green spaces, the new building is designed to blend harmoniously into its surroundings and contribute to increasing the supply of quality social housing in Parc-Extension.

In keeping with the Montreal 2050 Urban Planning and Mobility Plan (PUM), the borough council authorized an amendment to the zoning bylaw to prohibit the conversion of ground-floor businesses into residential units on several commercial streets.

The measure aims to protect the supply of local businesses, particularly in the Villeray-East sector, located between Christophe Colomb

Avenue and Saint-Michel Boulevard, where vacant premises and conversions are prevalent.

According to the borough, residential developments have been weakening the commercial fabric of the area. The ban also applies to other streets in the borough, including Liège Street West and Saint-Roch Street in Parc-Extension, as well as Legendre Street East and Émile-Journault Avenue in Saint-Michel, in addition to several other sections frequented by residents which were previously unprotected.

The measure does not affect existing ground-floor residential units, but prevents any new conversions. The borough hopes to preserve spaces intended for businesses, while maintaining complete and accessible living environments and supporting the economic vitality of neighbourhoods.

It's worth noting that the regulatory change is considered a temporary measure, pending the results of a commercial consolidation study planned for 2026 and a more comprehensive review of land use in the borough.

### Parc Ex youths seek funding

Also during the February borough council meeting, youths age 15 to 17 from the Centre Jeunesse Unie in Parc-Extension presented a funding request for the renovation of the kitchen at the Bloomfield Centre – a space they use daily for meals, snacks and healthy cooking

workshops.

The kitchen has not been renovated for several decades and currently raises serious sanitation and functionality concerns due to its deteriorated condition. They maintained that their request drew attention to a striking contrast in the borough's budget planning.

“While the city is investing approximately \$460,000 in the renovation of the neighbouring park, the complete renovation of the kitchen – critical to the health and well-being of youth – would require an investment of roughly \$20,000,” Richard Vachon, executive-director of the centre, said in a statement submitted to Nouvelles Parc Extension News.

### A learning experience

Beyond the request itself, the CJU maintained that their initiative carried an underlying civic significance, as the youths chose to apply the principles of democracy, positive leadership and civic participation they learned at the centre by speaking directly before elected municipal officials in an institutional setting. For many of them, addressing the borough council was their first experience engaging in a formal political forum.

“We believe this initiative offers a compelling example of young people's capacity to reflect critically, organize collectively, and advocate for issues affecting their community and daily living environment,” Vachon added.



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# OPINION & Editorial



## Reflection needed by schools and parents on best preparation for trips and excursions

*Accountability lesson learned from Swiss tragedy*

In 25 years of field work in education, I led teams of teachers that organized and carried out local, national, and international school trips. These excursions involving over 1500 students and dozens of supervising adults provided extensive knowledge and deep insight into how to bring about safety, security, and well-being for all participants.

With spring break approaching, school boards and organizations are urged to review safety measures and supervision before approving student trips. The call follows a recent tragedy in Switzerland that revealed how quickly celebration and adventure can turn deadly when oversight fails.

For educators, the message is clear: conditions that led to the Swiss tragedy could exist anywhere if accountability lapses. Many local school trips share similar risk profile - remote venues, unpredictable developments and dependence on responsible supervision. Foreign tragedies aren't distant headlines, they're warnings. On every trip, checklists and inspections are defenses against disaster.

### Accountability required

Parents are urged to engage actively in safety discussions. Before granting permission for school outings, they must ask specific questions about preparation: Has the trip undergone school-board safety-check approval? Have weather and travel conditions been assessed? Will trained personnel be on site? These inquiries could help prevent tragedy.

In Switzerland, mourning has turned into reform demands. Families are pressing for tighter regulations and greater accountability from organizers. Their grief has resonated internationally, proving that even rigorous administrative systems can collapse when vigilance fades.

The connection is moral and practical. Each tragedy abroad becomes a test of local-readiness. If Switzerland, celebrated for precision, can't prevent such losses, then no community is immune. Safety must start before buses leave

school parking lots. Risk evaluation must be enforced, not assumed. Cooperation among educators and parents is critical.

At onset of many years of privileged work as Europe trip-group-leader, I learned it's not about fear, it's about foresight. Precautions were taken for next year's students to still have the chance to dream, travel, and come home.

### Preparation and prevention

Ahead of trip-departures schools must confirm transportation maintenance, emergency-access and clear-communication-procedures. Trip leaders trips must monitor weather forecasts, ensure first-aid-readiness, and maintain appropriate adult-student-ratios. The goal is to strengthen prevention and accountability.

This heightened concern follows the Swiss Club Fire tragedy of New Year's eve 2026. Hundreds of young people, ages 14 to 20, gathered in a nightclub when a blaze broke out just after midnight. Fire spread rapidly through flammable decorations, trapping dozens inside.

Emergency crews fought to rescue victims, but locked exits worsened the crisis. By morning, scores had perished and many were injured. Investigators confirmed expired inspection records, unsafe materials, locked-security-exits, and occupancy violations.

Schools face similar vulnerability if preparation for trips falters. Pre-trip measures must include proof of safety compliance at venues.

Administrators must promote refresher-training for teachers and group-leaders to ensure awareness. Safety-planning must be embedded into every stage of organization.

Prevention depends on shared responsibility. Teachers, principals, and travel companies must be vigilant before, during, and after travel. Transparent communication with parents strengthens oversight and reinforces trust. Parents must ask about safety preparations when giving consent for trips - verifying that school-board approvals are in place, risks have been considered, and trained supervisors will

be present.

### Silence is not an option

As a former Europe-trip group leader, the strongest safeguard learned was that every precaution ensures students can travel, learn, and come home, safely. Measures must be taken to avoid the deplorable possibility of these excursions emphasizing fun and cultural experience while overlooking safety briefings and contingency planning.

The greatest tragedy would be silence. Governments must tighten enforcement. Fire codes exist for a reason, but too many establishments dodge inspections through bribery-or-bureaucracy.

Real change demands cultural transformation. Parents must ask questions without fear of seeming overprotective. Schools must prepare students with practical survival knowledge, inspectors must enforce rules without compromise. Communities must treat safety as shared moral responsibility, not administrative burden.

### Beyond the Alps

This was not merely a Swiss tragedy; it was a human one. The heartbreak ripples far beyond the Swiss Alps, affecting anyone who sends a young person out into the world trusting that safety regulations are followed. Those 40 lives stand as painful symbols of systemic failure of taking things for granted.

### No one is exempt

The 40 young people lost in Crans-Montana cannot be brought back, but their memory can ignite reform that saves future lives. When we choose accountability over apathy and courage over convenience, tragedies like this one will become relics of a less vigilant past. The most meaningful tribute to those who died is not silence but sustained action for safer clubs, better schools, and a culture that values human life above profit and complacency.

Renata Isopo

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# Montreal and Laval's Greeks launch year-long 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

*Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal's roots date back officially to 1906*

Photos:  
Martin  
C. Barry,  
Newsfirst  
Multimedia



**Constantine Milonopoulos, a Chomedey resident who served as an altar boy at the Church of the Holy Trinity during the 1950s, is seen here with one of two icons saved from the church, which is displayed in the basement of the Hotel 10 in downtown Montreal.**

**MARTIN C. BARRY**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter  
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Leading members of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal (HCGM) returned last week to a place closely associated with their community's 120 years of history.

The venue – now a downtown Montreal hotel – was chosen because of its profound symbolism, being the site where the first place of worship for Montreal's Orthodox Greeks, the Church of the Holy Trinity, once stood.

## A lasting bond with the past

It's also where cherished memories of the former church – including at least one religious icon – remain as a reminder of the Montreal Hellenic community's hallowed bond with the past.

Almost exactly 40 years ago to the day, the Church of the Holy Trinity was destroyed by fire. It was an incident that made a lasting impact on Montreal's Greeks, many of whom were married and had children who were baptized in the church.

"The history of our community is a story of faith, hard work, devotion and progress," Basile Angelopoulos, president of the HCGM, stated during a press conference attended by guests who included the Consul General of the Republic of Greece, former HCGM presidents and loyal friends of the Greek community.

## For future generations

"Today we return to the place where it all began, to honour those who paved the way and, above all, to reaffirm our commitment to continue with the same sense of responsibility toward our generations to come, our language, our culture, our faith and the society in which we live," said Angelopoulos.

"This anniversary is not merely a reflection

on the past; it is an invitation to the entire hospitable city of Montreal," noted Justine Frangouli-Argyris, chair of the 120th anniversary committee.

"With a clear and substantial events planning, we call upon the people of Montreal – Greek and non-Greek alike – to celebrate with us and to share the future we are building together for the generations to come," she added.

Since 1906, the HCGM has stood alongside the Greek diaspora, dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the Greek language, the Orthodox Christian faith, history and culture across many generations, while also contributing meaningfully to the economic, social and cultural life of Montreal and Quebec.

## A large education network

The HCGM operates the largest network of private elementary schools in Quebec, with five campuses across greater Montreal and more than 1,000 students. It also has a secondary school campus, three supplementary education campuses, six churches and two community centres offering a wide range of services to its members.

With a rich and multifaceted program of events throughout the year, the anniversary celebrations begin in January with the annual Montreal Folklore Workshop Dimitri's Tzotzis dance. In February, the event "Our Roots, Our Journey" luncheon – dedicated to the founding families of the Hellenic Community of Montreal – will follow, along with the celebration of International Greek Language Day.

## Many upcoming events

In March, which is the month of the Greek National Day, the program will include a reception at the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, an event for the Greek National Anniversary at ICAO headquarters in Montreal, and an official recognition by the City of Montreal with the opening of a photographic exhibition at Montreal City Hall.

The month of March will culminate with the National Anniversary Gala at the Château Royal in Laval, the annual parade on Jean Talon St. with a reception afterwards, as well as the formal recognition of the HCGM's historic milestone by the Quebec National Assembly. For more information, news updates and the full calendar of events, please visit 120.hcgm.org.



**Justine Frangouli-Argyris, chair of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee and Basile Angelopoulos, president of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal.**

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# Pink in the City presents \$386,407 to MUHC Foundation for breast cancer care

*It's all about gratitude, MUHC Foundation head tells fundraiser's supporters*



Photos: Martin C. Barry, Newsfirst Multimedia

## MARTIN C. BARRY

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter  
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"Today is about gratitude, it's also about community, and most of all it's about celebrating an extraordinary group of people who continue showing us what is possible when compassion meets action," Marie-Hélène Laramée, president and CEO of the MUHC Foundation, said as she was about to unveil a cheque for \$386,407 – the latest annual fundraising donation from Pink in the City.

## Championing breast wellness

The sum, nearly \$70,000 more than what Pink in the City donated last year, was presented on January 25 by officials with Pink in the City. It represented funds raised last year through several activities for holistic care provided to breast cancer patients at the Montreal-based teaching hospital.

Pink in the City has become synonymous with breast cancer care at the McGill University Health Centre. They have championed the MUHC's Breast Clinic Wellness Program through the MUHC Foundation and events like Raise Craze as well as an annual gala.

## Tireless and concerted efforts

From breast cancer survivors to passionate high school students, Pink in the City has brought together a loyal following dedicated to the fight against breast cancer. Pink in the City's latest donation to the MUHC brought their total contributions to nearly \$2 million.

The funds raised were the result of tireless efforts, which included an inspiring Pink in the Rink campaign led by the Concordia University Women's Hockey Team.

Another one of the fundraising highlights was the Raise Craze, a much-loved event where people shave or dye their hair pink in support of the cause. Students from the Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board did their part, raising more than \$20,000 in that campaign, showing how young people are getting involved in philanthropy.

## Staff shortages at MUHC

On a somewhat more somber note, Dr. Sarkis Meterissian, director of the Breast Center at the MUHC, sounded a note of caution regarding the state of affairs at the MUHC. "It's been a very

tough year for medicine at the MUHC – there's no denying it," he said.

According to Dr. Meterissian, who is a professor of surgery and oncology in the McGill University Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, only six of the MUHC's 14 operating rooms are currently open. "That's because we don't have enough anaesthetists or nurses," he said, noting that some surgeries are now taking place at the Lachine General Hospital and the Ville-Marie Surgery Institute.

He said the money Pink in the City raises helps to promote women's health not only through the Breast Clinic Wellness Program, but also helps pay for other program necessities, including medical instruments to care for patients.

## Thanks to Vourtzoumis family

"The Wellness Centre would never have happened without the Vourtzoumis family and the efforts put in over the past 10-12 years," Meterissian said. "It's providing a service that anybody who's gone to a physiotherapist, a sex therapist, a dietician, an exercise personal trainer, knows that it costs between \$100-\$150 an hour."

Thanks to the financial support provided by Pink in the City, many of these services are made available free of charge to patients. "I think that every doctor at the Breast Centre comes to me and says, 'my patient needs this, my patient needs that,' and we're able to provide it thanks to you. I wake up every day thanking you guys for everything you do."



Dora Tzavaros spoon feeds a dessert to Eleni, granddaughter of Pink in the City co-founder Denise Vourtzoumis (seen here with her husband Bobby, and other grandchildren) at the MUHC on January 25.

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# Brique par brique builds community anchors in Parc-Extension

DIMITRIS ILIAS  
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In Parc-Extension, Brique par brique has emerged as a key community anchor, offering programs that combine economic participation, social integration and neighbourhood engagement.

Operating out of its Beaumont Avenue community centre, Brique par brique serves immigrants, refugees and long-time residents through initiatives designed to respond to everyday realities, access to work, isolation, affordability and the challenge of navigating a new social and economic environment. The organization's approach emphasizes participation and skill recognition rather than one-time assistance.

## Building integration from the neighbourhood level

Parc-Extension is one of Montreal's most densely populated and culturally diverse areas, and community organizations play a central role in bridging gaps left by broader systems. Brique par brique's programming reflects that local focus, offering activities that are accessible, low-cost and rooted directly in the neighbourhood.

Rather than concentrating on a single service, the organization operates multiple programs that encourage residents to engage with one another, share skills and gradually take on more active roles within the community.

Volunteering, peer support and community-run activities are core elements of its model.

### Alter-Mode as a concrete example

One of Brique par brique's best-known initiatives is Alter-Mode, a monthly sewing and clothing-alteration program held at the Brique par brique community centre on the last Saturday of every month.

Alter-Mode brings together experienced seamstresses and tailors, many of them newcomers, with community members seeking affordable clothing repairs, alterations or upcycling. Participants bringing garments are asked to make a cash donation based on the time and materials required. Those donations are distributed directly to the seamstresses carrying out the work.

The program serves several functions at once. It offers low-cost services to residents, creates a modest revenue stream for participants and provides a public space where skills that often go unrecognized in the formal labour market are visibly valued.

### From participation to opportunity

Brique par brique places strong emphasis on creating pathways within its own organization. Participants often begin by attending activities or volunteering, then gradually assume greater responsibility. In some cases, sustained involvement has led to paid roles within the organization.

This internal progression reflects a broader



philosophy that integration is strengthened when newcomers are not only service recipients but active contributors and decision-makers. Programs such as Alter-Mode function not only as service points, but also as platforms for confidence-building and community visibility.

### Social and environmental dimensions

Alongside its social mission, Brique par brique incorporates environmental considerations into its programming. Initiatives like Alter-Mode include clothing swaps and upcycling, encouraging reuse and reduced textile waste at a time when fast fashion and rising living costs place pressure on households.

Organizers frame sustainability as a community issue rather than an abstract goal, linking

environmental responsibility with affordability and shared resources.

### A stabilizing presence in Parc-Extension

As demand for community-level services grows across Montreal, Brique par brique continues to adapt its programming to neighbourhood needs. Its presence in Parc-Extension highlights the role local organizations play in supporting newcomers while strengthening the broader social fabric.

Through initiatives like Alter-Mode and other community-led activities, Brique par brique demonstrates how practical, skill-based programs can contribute to economic inclusion, social connection and long-term integration, built steadily, one brick at a time.



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February is Black History Month. It's the perfect opportunity to honor the remarkable contributions of Black women who are paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable America. Here are five leaders making waves today:

1. **Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson** is the first Black woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, appointed in 2022.

An advocate for justice and equality, she has become a trailblazer in American law and given a powerful voice to underrepresented communities.

2. **Ijeoma Oluo** is a celebrated American writer and the author of *So You Want to Talk About Race*, a New York Times best seller. Her work sparks crucial conversations on dismantling racial

inequality and has helped many confront and understand systemic racism.

3. **Cori Bush** is a former nurse and activist who has served on the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a vocal advocate for policies on police reform, healthcare reform and affordable housing. Bush is dedicated to serving marginalized communities and advan-

cing social justice through policy.

4. **Dr. Sharon Knight** is a race and social justice activist with expertise in culturally responsible leadership. Her work emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and equity in educational spaces and leadership roles.

5. **Maya Manus** is a community organizer and social justice advocate. She aims to promote policies that address housing, healthcare and racial equity. Manus is focused on amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and pushing for systemic changes.



This Black History Month, celebrating these leaders is an excellent reminder of the ongoing work for equality and the power of representation in creating a more just society.

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# Examining federal debt in Canada by prime ministers since Confederation

JAKE FUSS – FRASER INSTITUTE

Over the last century and a half, Canada's 24 prime ministers have helped shape the country in countless ways, leaving legacies that affect all Canadians. Each prime minister's legacy is ultimately influenced by whether he or she left the federal government more or less indebted than when taking office. Understanding the trajectory of debt is important because as the debt burden grows, tax dollars must be diverted from public programs to service the federal government's annual interest payments. High amounts of federal debt may also cause the government to raise taxes in future, which burdens future generations with the cost of past spending.

This bulletin examines the history of federal debt in Canada since Confederation and analyzes the impact that various prime ministers have had on debt accumulation throughout their tenures.<sup>1</sup> The bulletin has two main sections. The first describes the method used to measure the change in federal debt. The second provides a comprehensive overview of the changes in federal debt under each prime minister.

## Measuring the change in federal debt

Debt legacies for the prime ministers are measured by calculating the change in debt during their respective tenures. The first step in the analysis is to allot the period(s) of tenure for each prime minister as listed in table 1.

We allocated years of tenure for every prime minister using the methodology of Fuss, Palacios, and Clemens (2019), who analyzed spending levels by prime minister since 1870. Transitional years—years of overlap in which prime ministers shifted power—are allocated to whichever prime minister was in office for the majority of the year. If a year was nearly evenly divided between two prime ministers, we assigned responsibility for that year to whichever prime minister delivered the year's federal budget, and we list the allocated tenures in table 2.<sup>2</sup>

There were three instances where prime ministers had non-continuous tenures. For example, William Lyon Mackenzie King served as Canada's prime minister from 1922 to 1930 but was defeated by R. B. Bennett, and then reassumed office in 1935 for his second tenure.

Sir John A. Macdonald also served twice (1867–1872 and 1878–1890), as did Pierre Trudeau (1968–1978 and 1980–1984). We chose to divide the time in office for these prime ministers into separate tenures to ensure the change in federal debt that happened under another prime minister was not allocated to these three prime ministers when they were out of office. This approach ensures, for instance, that R. B. Bennett's debt between 1931 and 1935 is not allocated to William Lyon Mackenzie King.

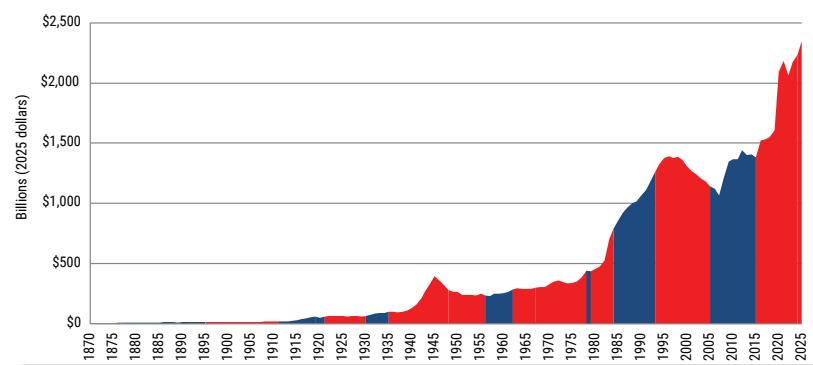
There are 21 prime ministers included in this analysis, as opposed to 24, because the tenures of three prime ministers were too short for us to allocate a budget year to them. Sir Charles Tupper was prime minister for two months, and Kim Campbell and John Turner each held office for three months. Notwithstanding the exclusion of these three prime ministers, table 2 lists 24 tenures because each of Macdonald, Mackenzie King, and Pierre Trudeau had multiple tenures.

For the 2015/16 fiscal year, Fuss et al. (2019) made an adjustment for the transition from Stephen Harper to Justin Trudeau. We have made a similar adjustment because Justin Trudeau increased government spending immediately upon taking office in 2015. The original 2015 budget, under Stephen Harper, planned for a surplus (\$1.4 billion), while the immediate spending increases introduced by Justin Trudeau ultimately led to a budget deficit (\$2.9 billion). These spending changes meant that more debt was amassed by Trudeau than was planned for under Harper (Canada, Department of Finance, 2015 and 2024).<sup>3</sup> As a result, the cut-off period for debt accumulation under Harper was adjusted to reflect the debt projected in the original 2015 budget (\$1.4 trillion in 2025 dollars). The beginning point for the change in debt during Justin Trudeau's tenure is also the 2015 budget number.

## Measuring federal debt

Collecting comparable data on federal debt is an important step in measuring the debt legacies of the prime ministers. Gross debt directly measures the degree to which the various prime ministers increased or decreased Canada's financial liabilities. It is defined as the federal government's total amount of financial liabilities including employee benefits (pensions), interest-bearing debt, and accounts

Figure 1: Federal Gross Debt, 1870–2025 (in \$2025)



Sources: Canada, Department of Finance (2015, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c); Statistics Canada (2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2025a); Altman (1992); Urquhart (1988); calculations by authors.

payable.

Net debt is gross debt less financial assets, the latter of which governments may sell when needed to meet liabilities. Hence, net debt might serve as a measure of a government's potential financial capacity. However, in this bulletin, we focus on gross debt as a measure of federal debt for two primary reasons. First, it might be difficult for the federal government to sell some financial assets, such as employee or public pension assets, in part due to liquidity issues; further, there may be valuation questions surrounding outstanding loans, equity investments, and advances, among instruments on the asset side of the balance sheet. Second, the interest that governments pay on liabilities is determined by gross debt rather than net debt. Significant research has found that high gross debt levels may harm economic performance through, for example, the potential for higher future taxes (see Reinhart and Rogoff, 2010; Chudik et al., 2015; and Lammam et al., 2017 for a review of this research).<sup>4</sup>

Data on federal gross debt come from different sources. The Canada Year Books for 1940, 1950, 1960, and 1967 were used to collect federal debt data from 1867 through 1966. Debt figures from 1967 to 2023 are drawn from the Fiscal References Tables published by the Department of Finance, and federal debt for 2024 and 2025 are based on Budget 2025 (Canada, Department of Finance, 2025).

Two adjustments were made to enable us to more easily compare changes in federal debt over a long time. As in Fuss et al., 2019, we account for changes in the general price level (inflation) using a GDP deflator. The starting year for the analysis of federal debt is 1870 since that is the first year for which the GDP deflator price index is available.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1 exhibits federal gross debt (inflation adjusted) from 1870 to 2025. The colours in

the area graph are either red or blue, representing each prime minister's affiliated political party during their tenure. Areas in red indicate debt levels for Liberal prime ministers, while Conservative prime ministers are displayed in blue.

Figure 1 shows a clear pattern of increasing gross debt since 1870, though the dollar values were low through to 1940. However, during World War II, inflation-adjusted federal gross debt increased almost 300 percent, as it grew from \$99.2 billion in 1938, the year before the war, to \$395.6 billion in 1945. Notwithstanding the immediate fall in gross debt following the end of the war, post-war debt levels did not return to pre-war levels. Beginning in the 1950s, federal gross debt steadily increased until 1997.

In the mid-1990s, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien introduced important fiscal reforms, and gross debt began to decrease until the 2008 recession, when it again began to climb upward. In 2025, federal gross debt is expected to hit its highest point in Canadian history at \$2.35 trillion (inflation adjusted).

Although federal gross debt has mostly increased throughout Canadian history, the country's population has also grown. Canada's population has grown from 3.5 million people in 1867 to 41.7 million people in 2025 (Statistics Canada, 2025b; Urquhart, 1988). As the population grows, the debt burden is shared by more people, so we report inflation-adjusted gross debt per person.

Another way of measuring debt accumulation by prime minister would be to examine changes in the debt-to-GDP ratio, rather than debt per person. The debt-to-GDP ratio summarizes the ability of the government to sustain a given amount of debt based on the size of the economy, but it would produce misleading results

► **Continued on page 11**

1 This bulletin is based on and draws partly from work by Di Matteo (2017), Lammam and MacIntyre (2017), and Fuss et al. (2019).

2 Prime ministerial tenures range from a single year to 15 years, which means that some prime ministers were in office longer than others to either accumulate or reduce federal debt. However, longer tenures do not necessarily translate into larger total increases or decreases in debt. In fact, the correlation between length of tenure and the total increase in debt per person over that tenure (the measure used in this bulletin) is relatively weak ( $p = 0.35$ ).

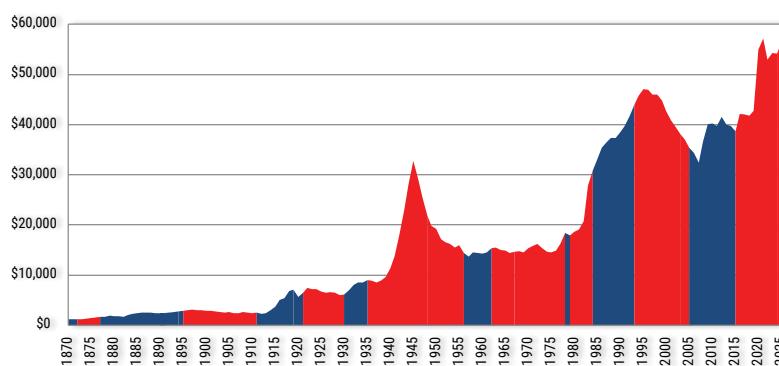
3 Notably, program spending was ultimately \$10.4 billion or 4.0 percent higher in 2015/16 than what was planned in the 2015 budget.

4 A previous version of this paper also used gross debt data as its measure. Converting gross debt to net debt was considered for the methodology in this paper, and ultimately rejected for viability and consistency concerns. In recent years, the definitions and dollar amounts assigned to federal financial assets have changed substantially (e.g., equity investments and loans, etc.). Concerns about asset valuations and liquidity are reiterated here. For further details, see Lammam et al. (2017).

5 Data coverage is more complete for a gross domestic product price deflator as opposed to a consumer price index, which guided our choice. We use a GDP deflator with sources as follows: for 1870 through 1930, Altman (1992), a GNP deflator; for 1931 through 1960, Urquhart (1988); for 1961 through 2024, Statistics Canada (2025a); and for 2025, Canada, Department of Finance (2025).



Figure 2: Federal Gross Debt per Person, 1870-2025 (in \$2025)



Sources: Canada, Department of Finance (2015, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c); Statistics Canada (2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2025a, 2025b); Altman (1992); Urquhart (1988); calculations by authors.

<sup>6</sup> The population in Canada grew at an average annual rate of 1.6 percent from 1867 to 2025. The standard deviation is 0.8 percentage points. The average annual change in inflation-adjusted GDP is 3.7 percent from 1871 to 2024.

## ◀ Continued from page 10

for changes in debt levels by prime minister for several reasons. For instance, the GDP growth rate is more variable, year-to-year, than is population, and is subject to factors outside the direct control of prime ministers, such as recessions or booms.

To focus on changes in the debt-to-GDP ratio would therefore penalize prime ministers who served during recessions and would benefit, by happenstance, prime ministers who served during periods of economic expansions. When recessions occur, the debt-to-GDP ratio tends to rise due to automatic increases in government spending (e.g., employment insurance), any stimulus spending, and the decrease in economic output. Conversely, prime ministers who preside over strongly positive economic growth may be more likely to record falling debt-to-GDP ratios.

As an example of how variations in economic growth can dominate results, consider the 8.1 percent growth in real GDP during R. B. Bennett's 1935 tenure. While debt as a share of GDP decreased by 1.1 percentage points that year, debt increased by 6.5 percent or \$5.9 billion in 2025 dollars; the decrease in debt-to-GDP was due to economic growth. Conversely, following the debt per person measure, debt increased by 5.5 percent in 1935. Moreover, because population growth is less variable over time than economic growth, as mentioned above, we believe population-adjusted debt is better than the debt-to-GDP ratio as a measure of debt accumulation by prime minister.<sup>6</sup>

## Debt per person from 1870 to 2025

To provide historical context, figure 2 shows federal debt per person (in 2025 dollars) from 1870 to 2025: since Confederation, per-person federal debt levels have generally been rising. However, some periods are noteworthy for their sharp increases and declines. For example, federal debt per person rapidly increased during both World War I and World War II. Prior to World War I, in 1913, federal per-person debt amounted to \$2,426, but had grown to \$6,822 by war's end (1918). Similarly, with respect to World War II, debt per person rose from \$8,894 per person, in 1938, to \$32,772 in 1945 (all figures in 2025 dollars). Following each world war, federal debt per person in Canada declined, but did not in either case fall to prewar levels.

There was another general increase in federal debt per person from the mid-1960s until 1995.

tions in GDP occurred in 1931, 1932, and 1933, depression years during R. B. Bennett's tenure. The recession during 2020 due to COVID also represents a significant drop (5.2 percent) in economic output.

However, there are years where the overall growth rate was positive, but the economy nonetheless showed a downturn; such circumstances may have adverse effects on federal debt accumulation and we seek to account for this. For example, Canada experienced downturns, or recessions, during John Diefenbaker's tenure, in 1957–58 and in 1960–61, and during Pierre Trudeau's first tenure.

## Percent change in federal debt per person by prime minister

Federal debt per person increased during 15 out of the 24 tenures that we examined; increases in federal debt per person coincided with a world war and/or an economic downturn in 12 out of the 15 cases. Sir Mackenzie Bowell emerges the largest debt accumulator (4.7 percent) of any prime minister who did not experience a world war or an economic downturn during his tenure, and Mark Carney (4.2 percent) came in second place on this measure. In contrast, five out of the eight prime ministers who did not experience a world war or economic downturn during their tenures successfully reduced federal debt per person. The list includes prime ministers Jean Chretien (-13.1 percent), Paul Martin (-7.2 percent), and Lester Pearson (-4.5 percent).

The prime minister during World War I, Sir Robert Borden, oversaw by a wide margin the largest percentage increase in debt per person. Borden served from 1912 to 1919 and federal debt per person increased by 188.1 percent in that time. However, Borden's tenure coincided with a decline in economic growth in four out of the eight years that he was in office (1914, 1917, 1918, and 1919) in addition to fighting World War I.

Table 3: Years and Amounts that (Real) Inflation-Adjusted GDP Declined, 1870–2024

Year	Percent Decrease	Sitting Prime Minister
1875	4.2%	Alexander Mackenzie
1876	1.7%	Alexander Mackenzie
1878	3.0%	Sir John A. Macdonald
1893	0.5%	Sir John Thompson
1894	0.4%	Sir John Thompson
1908	4.6%	Sir Wilfrid Laurier
1914	6.8%	Sir Robert Borden
1917	1.1%	Sir Robert Borden
1918	6.1%	Sir Robert Borden
1919	4.6%	Sir Robert Borden
1920	0.5%	Arthur Meighen
1921	3.5%	Arthur Meighen
1929	0.2%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1930	3.8%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1931	13.5%	R. B. Bennett
1932	9.2%	R. B. Bennett
1933	7.1%	R. B. Bennett
1945	3.1%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1946	1.0%	William Lyon Mackenzie King
1954	0.7%	Louis St. Laurent
1982	3.2%	Pierre E. Trudeau
1991	2.1%	Brian Mulroney
2009	2.9%	Stephen Harper
2020	5.0%	Justin Trudeau

Sources: Statistics Canada (2025c); Altman (1992); Urquhart (1988); calculations by authors

## Conclusion

Federal debt per person changed remarkably and in different ways during the tenures of each Canadian prime minister from 1870 to 2025. Mark Carney, Sir John Abbott and Sir Mackenzie Bowell, Canada's third and fifth prime ministers respectively, are the only prime ministers to increase federal per-person debt without experiencing a global conflict or an economic downturn. In 2025, federal debt per person was projected to be \$56,432, which is the second highest amount in Canadian history.

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<sup>6</sup> The population in Canada grew at an average annual rate of 1.6 percent from 1867 to 2025. The standard deviation is 0.8 percentage points. The average annual change in inflation-adjusted GDP is 3.7 percent from 1871 to 2024.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion on fiscal reforms under Jean Chretien, see Clemens et al. (2017).

<sup>8</sup> During a downturn, spending on Employment Insurance tends to go up as the newly jobless make claims and unemployment spells lengthen; if household incomes decline, the value of refundable credits and income-tested benefits are likely to increase. Such automatic stabilizers are distinct from the discretionary choices governments may make in response to a downturn.

<sup>9</sup> Major government undertakings such as the construction of national railways under Sir John A. Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie, and the expansion of social programs under Pierre Trudeau, might provide economic context for increases in federal debt while remaining discretionary policy choices.

# Parc-Extension's rental market shows mixed signals as pressures persist

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Parc-Extension continues to reflect the contradictions shaping Montréal's housing market: rents that remain comparatively moderate by national standards, paired with persistent volatility and mounting pressure on local households.

According to recent rental market tracking by Zumper, the median monthly rent in Parc-Extension is approximately \$1,785. The figure, based on current asking prices across active listings, places the neighbourhood below the national average while aligning closely with rental levels seen across much of the island of Montréal.

A closer look at available units points to a wide spread in pricing. Roughly 18 percent of listings are priced below \$1,500 per month, while about two-thirds fall between \$1,500 and \$2,250. Higher-priced units remain in the minority, though they are becoming more

visible as renovated apartments re-enter the market.

Longer-term data suggests uneven momentum. On a year-over-year basis, advertised rents in Parc-Extension have declined by roughly eight percent, a rare softening at a time when many Montréal neighbourhoods continue to experience upward pressure. More recent figures, however, indicate a reversal, with month-to-month rents rising by about four percent, highlighting the market's sensitivity to short-term demand shifts.

By unit type, one-bedroom apartments average close to \$1,600, while two-bedroom units approach \$2,000 per month. Larger apartments command higher rents, reflecting both limited supply and sustained demand from families seeking multi-bedroom layouts.

In the broader Montréal context, Parc-Extension's rent levels are no longer markedly lower than the citywide norm. While averages vary by data source and methodology, current estimates across Montréal fall within a simi-

lar range. What differentiates Parc-Extension is less the asking price itself and more the economic profile of the households competing for those units.

The neighbourhood's high renter concentration, aging housing stock, and limited new construction continue to shape local dynamics. While some rent relief has appeared in older buildings, rising costs elsewhere in the city have redirected demand toward areas traditionally seen as more affordable, intensifying competition.

Housing advocates have consistently noted that moderate rents do not automatically equate to affordability, particularly where household incomes trail city averages. In such contexts, even modest rent increases can place significant strain on residents, especially when vacancy options are scarce.

Looking ahead, Parc-Extension is likely to remain a key indicator of Montréal's lower- and mid-range rental market. Its proximity to transit, educational institutions, and employment



centres continues to attract renters, even as availability tightens.

For policymakers, the message is increasingly clear. Stabilizing rents alone will not resolve affordability pressures. Long-term solutions will depend on expanding supply, preserving existing rental stock, and aligning housing policy with the economic realities of the residents most affected.

## Youth and community take center stage at Festival sportif de Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension

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Montreal's borough of Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension is preparing for a weekend of

sport, fun and community engagement as it hosts the Festival Sportif de Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension on Saturday, February 14 and Sunday, February 15, 2026. The annual event, now a fixture in the borough's winter

calendar, brings together young athletes and families for two days of physical activity, friendly competition and neighbourhood celebration.

Organized for children aged 6 to 12, the festival offers a chance for participants to compete across a range of sports disciplines. From speed skating and soccer to handball, karate and swimming, more than a dozen activities will take place at multiple sites throughout the territory. Free snacks, promotional giveaways, interactive entertainment and even "bike smoothie" animation stations are among the extras designed to make the festival an experience for all ages. A mascot named Frimousse will also be on hand to energize the young crowd, and medals will be awarded to all participants.

Participation in the Festival Sportif requires registration in one of the sports activities offered in the January session by local partner organizations, in collaboration with Loisirs Montréal.

Since its inception in 2007, the event has drawn more than 1,000 motivated young

athletes annually, giving children the opportunity not only to compete but to represent their communities within the framework of the preliminary competitions of the Jeux de Montréal.

Sport and recreation play a vital role in the borough's community life. Local facilities, parks and programs create opportunities for residents of all ages to stay active year-round. From soccer and ball hockey to community swim programs and neighbourhood fitness activities, recreational engagement is woven into the social fabric of the area.

Events like the Festival Sportif highlight this emphasis on community activity, offering not just competitive sport but a chance for families in Parc-Extension and neighbouring Villeray and Saint-Michel to connect, celebrate youth involvement and promote healthy lifestyles.

As Montreal continues to promote inclusive and accessible sport programming across its boroughs, festivals like this one demonstrate how local initiatives support both physical health and community cohesion during the winter months.

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# DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

## SELF-DEFENSE

**Q** I am one of a group of mothers with children in the same preschool. We share play dates together. At one play date with two other mothers at my house, one of them became angry with me. I couldn't think of a thing I did to offend her, so I asked the other mother. She couldn't think of anything either. She suggested confronting the first mother, but I decided against that, thinking if she was truly a friend she would approach me.

But she didn't. She stayed angry. I think she is jealous of the rapport the second woman and I share because our children are the same age. The first woman has gone to extraordinary lengths to make me feel excluded when we are all together. She invites the other woman to events without extending the invitation to me and my daughter.

I am finding it harder and harder to be in the group without her taking a passive stab at me. I no longer want to be friends with her, but that also means I have to give up my other friends and so does my daughter, which is not fair.

Every time I try to turn down invitations from women in the group, they won't let me bow out gracefully. If you haven't guessed by now, I do not like confrontation. How can I back away without hurting feelings and making it more awkward?

Pat

**A** Pat, most of the lasting lessons we learn are from our parents, and often those lessons were never directly taught. If you are

passive, your daughter may learn to always give in to people who act badly. Solve this problem for yourself, and you are likely to solve it for her as well.

Reacting appropriately in each situation, instead of reacting the same way in all situations, is a valuable skill to possess. Though being passive works sometimes, if your only defense is avoidance, you will often find yourself defenseless.

Perhaps your life has been mostly calm water; perhaps you don't like confrontation because you have no experience with it. In that case, get a book or take a workshop on assertiveness training.

That would be one way to begin. Or you could think outside the box. Women often enroll a daughter in dance class, but few consider tae kwon do, judo, or another martial art. These methods of training are not the latest hip thing but approaches to life which have existed for centuries.

Martial arts develop self-confidence, poise, and restraint. They help people protect themselves emotionally as well as physically, and it is something you and your daughter could do together.

We are not trying to make either of you Bruce Lee, but this is one method of solving a problem without appearing to work on it. In addition, when your daughter is 18, she will have a safeguard dance class can never give her.

Wayne & Tamara

## PLAN OF ATTACK

**Q** I can't begin to tell you the hopelessness I feel, so I'll spare all details. The summary is I stayed 40 years in an alcoholic marriage, watching helplessly as the environment destroyed my children and turned me into a sickly, fearful woman. I worked, cared for my children, and just kept going.

My husband is now retired, and I help care for my grandchildren while their divorced moms try to pick up the pieces of their own lives. I

don't know how to leave. I am so ashamed of my part in this mess. My children will not involve themselves. What can I do?

Catherine

**A** Catherine, the answer today is what the answer has always been. You must act. A lawyer can tell you what you are entitled to. A women's shelter, and if need be the police, can help you exit the marriage. It is never too late to accept the challenges of life.

Wayne & Tamara

WAYNE & TAMARA MITCHELL are the authors of YOUR OTHER HALF ([www.yourotherhalf.com](http://www.yourotherhalf.com))

Send letters to: Direct Answers, PO 964 Springfield, MO 65801-0964  
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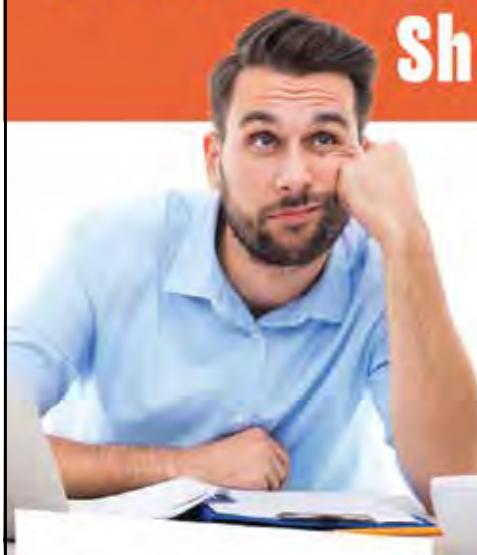
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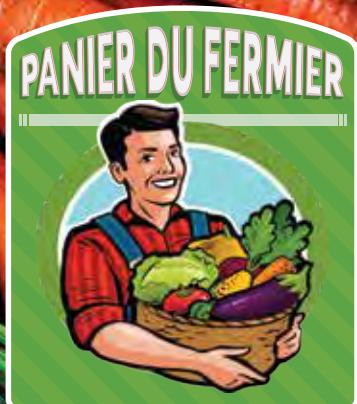
Thurs. and Fri. - 10am to 7:00pm

Saturday - Closed

Sunday - Closed



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BASKET OF

# Fruits and Vegetables

16 to 20 VARIETIES

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## **THIS WEEK'S BASKET:**

- Orange Cauliflower
- Black Grapes
- Honeydew Melon
- Pomelo Citrus
- Peppers (2-3)
- Cabbage
- Beets (bag)
- Lemons (2)
- Potatoes (~3lbs)
- Nectarines (3)
- Bananas (4)
- Romaine Lettuce
- Radishes
- Onions (~2lbs)
- Tomatoes (3)
- Garlic
- Cilantro
- Giant Avocados (2)

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**Pointe-aux-Trembles  
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12522 Sherbrooke Est, H1B 2Y7

**St-Michel  
(Dépanneur Les DS du coin)**  
3350 rue Belair, H2A 2A4

**MTL-Est (Action Sport Physio)**  
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**MTL-Ouest  
(Action Sport Physio)**  
14 Westminster Ave N,  
Local A, H4X 1Y9

**Rivière-des-Prairies  
(Boucherie la petite Italie)**  
8278 Maurice-Duplessis, H1E 3A3

## **2 EASY STEPS:**



Book your basket online or by phone  
from Monday to Thursday



Pickup Thursday, Friday or Saturday.  
Delivery available

**PANIERDUFERMIER.CA**

## HOROSCOPE

Week of February 8 to 14, 2026

The luckiest signs this week:  
AQUARIUS, PISCES AND ARIES



### ARIES

Emotions will be running high within your circle of friends this week. On a romantic level, you may need to re-evaluate your situation if you want to truly flourish. You'll no longer tolerate compromise, and this will prompt you to take a long, hard look at your relationship.



### TAURUS

Despite some tension at work, you'll be able to use your teamwork skills to move forward. In matters of love, starting a relationship will require you to overcome doubts so you can build a richer and more promising future together.



### GEMINI

In your professional life, your efforts will pay off, even if you're feeling worn out. You'll have to get more involved to expand your client base, and this will give you more durable financial stability for the years to come.



### CANCER

Your self-esteem needs a boost. Although you give generously to others, you need to devote more time and attention to yourself. This is especially true in the case of some people who tend to take your kindness for granted.



### LEO

Most of your energy will be focused on your family this week. In the short term, a move or major change in your personal or professional life may be necessary and could prove particularly beneficial.



### VIRGO

Your social circle will grow as you increase your presence on social media. Your skills and professional activities will gain visibility, bringing you greater recognition and financial benefits.



### LIBRA

You'll finally receive the green light to finance a project, and you'll take immediate action. The coming week is also the perfect time to settle some of your debt, marking a new beginning.



### SCORPIO

Expect big changes in your romantic, professional and personal spheres this week. You'll feel justifiable pride in your achievements while putting in the effort needed to ensure the success of your projects.



### SAGITTARIUS

It's time to recharge your batteries. Be present and get some rest. A loved one will need your support this week. If you're feeling creative, you'll draw inspiration from your intuition.



### CAPRICORN

You'll be responsible for a large-scale project involving several people around you. Despite some challenges in getting everyone on board, your determination and organizational skills will lead you to well-deserved success.



### AQUARIUS

You'll take on new responsibilities in both your professional and personal life. Your commitment won't go unnoticed. You could be rewarded with a promotion and a raise, giving you a good reason to celebrate.

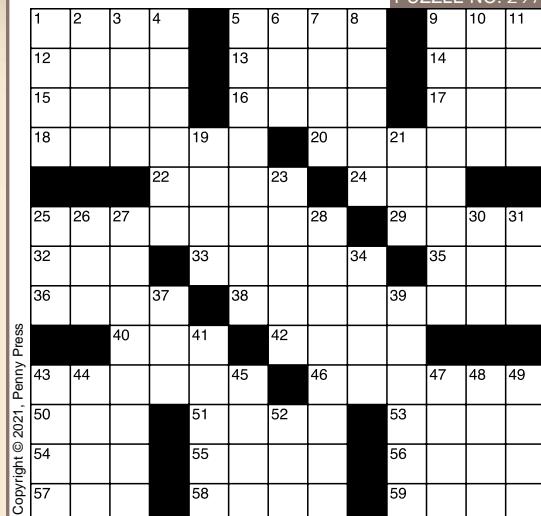


### PISCES

You'll feel inclined to embark on a pilgrimage. You must carefully prepare everything over several months if you want this adventure to become a source of deep inspiration that guides you on your search for meaning and fulfillment.

# CROSSWORDS

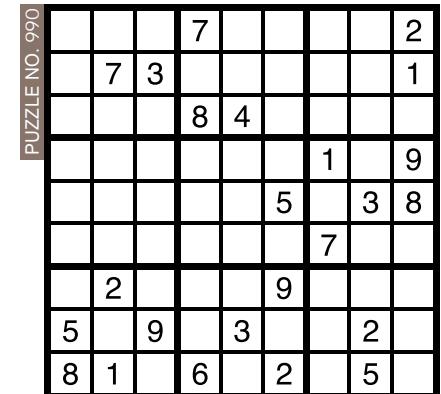
PUZZLE NO. 297



## ACROSS

- 1. Glass piece
- 42. Similar
- 5. Go through water
- 43. Blew a horn
- 9. Situate
- 46. Phantoms
- 12. Tavern treats
- 50. Coop product
- 13. 24th letters
- 51. Flounder or bass
- 14. "\_\_\_ Day Now"
- 53. Eroded
- 15. Bygone
- 54. Common ailment
- 16. Black and Bering
- 55. Step quickly
- 17. Small bite
- 56. Revise text
- 18. Say
- 57. Shirt style
- 20. Dedicate
- 58. Evergreen shrubs
- 22. Watched
- 59. Obstructs
- 24. \_\_\_ Francis Drake
- DOWN
- 25. Stewed
- 1. Dad
- 29. Doll's cry
- 2. Cry of woe
- 32. Master
- 3. Famous loch
- 33. Catch
- 4. Prize
- 35. Angry
- 5. Cowboy movies
- 36. "Wish You \_\_\_ Here"
- 6. Woodcutting tool
- 38. Toy racers: 2 wds.
- 7. The Grateful \_\_\_
- 40. Sick
- 9. Unobstructed view
- 41. Southpaw
- 43. Weight
- 44. Gape
- 45. Disastrous
- 47. Fizzy drink
- 48. In good shape
- 49. Matched collections
- 52. Female pig

# Sudoku



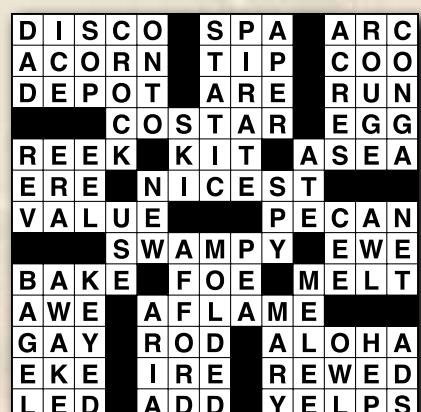
## HOW TO PLAY:

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

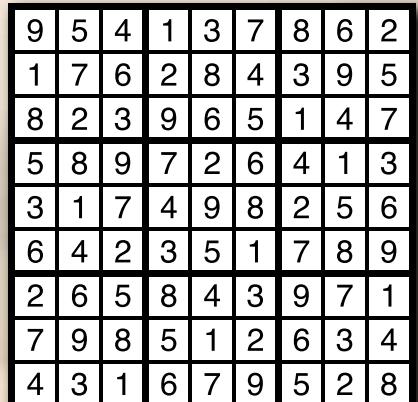
Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.

## Last Issue's Answers

### CROSSWORDS



# Sudoku



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514 272-2355

680, Jarry St East  
Jarry Metro  
514 490-0099

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Place-des-Arts Metro  
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