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SPVM : entre bilan 2025 solide et nouvelles priorités 2026

NEWSFIRST MULTIMEDIA
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Le Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) a dressé ce matin son bilan annuel, un rendezvous devenu incontournable pour prendre le pouls de la sécurité publique dans la métropole. Entouré de ses directeurs adjoints, le directeur Fady Dagher a présenté une année 2025 marquée par des avancées majeures, tout en dévoilant des priorités 2026 qui témoignent d'un changement profond du paysage social montréalais.

Un 2025 placé sous le signe des grandes opérations

La lutte contre le crime organisé aura dominé l'année 2025. Le SPVM se félicite notamment de progrès significatifs réalisés dans plusieurs dossiers d'envergure. Les équipes d'enquête ont multiplié les frappes ciblées, contribuant à affaiblir des réseaux criminels actifs autant à Montréal qu'ailleurs au Québec.

Mais au-delà des opérations spectaculaires, c'est le taux de résolution des homicides qui retient l'attention : une performance remarquable ayant permis d'élucider une grande majorité des meurtres survenus sur l'île. Aux yeux de la direction, ces résultats confirment l'efficacité des nouvelles approches d'enquête adoptées au cours des dernières années.

Une présence policière repensée sur le terrain

Le SPVM a également profité de 2025 pour

revoir sa présence dans certains secteurs stratégiques. L'intégration des postes de quartier 21 et 22, au centre-ville, a donné lieu à une couverture accrue dans un secteur à forte densité d'activités sociales, économiques et touristiques. Cette proximité renforcée vise non seulement à répondre plus rapidement aux incidents, mais aussi à mieux comprendre les réalités propres aux différents milieux.

Dans le réseau du métro, la stratégie d'intervention préventive mise en place deux ans plus tôt continue de faire ses preuves. Les équipes spécialisées multiplient les interventions en amont, tissant des liens durables avec les usagers et les partenaires du transport collectif.

L'arrivée d'un comptoir mobile a quant à elle changé la dynamique de plusieurs interventions. Installé directement dans les lieux de passage, cet outil permet aux citoyens d'obtenir de l'information, de signaler des problèmes ou simplement de discuter avec les policiers — un contact humain que la direction souhaite de plus en plus placer au cœur de ses interventions.

La modernisation des outils : un virage technologique assumé

2025 aura aussi été l'année de la technologie. Le SPVM a déployé un logiciel d'analyse vidéo de nouvelle génération, capable de traiter d'importants volumes d'images en un temps réduit. L'objectif : accélérer les enquêtes, repérer plus rapidement des éléments clés et réduire la charge de travail des enquêteurs.

Parallèlement, un comité interne de vigie sur l'interpellation policière a été créé. Sa mission : analyser les pratiques sur le terrain et proposer des améliorations concrètes afin de renforcer la transparence et la confiance du public.

2026 : des défis qui exigent une vigilance accrue

Si le bilan 2025 apporte son lot de réussites, le regard du SPVM est désormais tourné vers 2026, une année que la direction aborde avec lucidité.

Les jeunes : une tendance préoccupante

L'une des principales priorités concerne la montée d'une criminalité impliquant des adolescents de plus en plus jeunes. Le phénomène, qui touche désormais des jeunes âgés de 12 à 14 ans, inquiète profondément Fady Dagher. Certains jouent déjà un rôle actif dans des réseaux criminels, parfois même en tant qu'intermédiaires ou organisateurs de tâches.

Le SPVM promet une réponse musclée, mais aussi davantage de prévention. Écoles, familles, organismes communautaires : la mobilisation devra être collective.

Itinérance et santé mentale : un « choc social »

Autre enjeu majeur : l'explosion de l'itinérance. Le SPVM observe une transforma-

tion du phénomène, marqué par l'arrivée de familles qui plongent dans la rue en raison de difficultés financières soudaines. À cela s'ajoutent des problématiques de santé mentale de plus en plus visibles.

Le corps policier affirme vouloir adapter ses interventions à cette nouvelle réalité, en collaboration avec les acteurs municipaux et sociaux. Le directeur n'hésite pas à parler d'un « tsunami » social qu'il faudra aborder avec empathie et rigueur.

Consolider la lutte contre la violence armée

Les résultats obtenus depuis 2021 en matière de violence armée demeurent encourageants. Pour 2026, le SPVM compte renforcer ses stratégies d'enquête et poursuivre le travail collaboratif, afin de maintenir cette tendance à la baisse.

Une police en transformation

La conférence de presse confirme une chose : le SPVM est engagé dans une transformation profonde. Entre modernisation technologique, présence de terrain renouvelée et vision centrée sur la prévention, l'organisation trace une voie claire pour l'année à venir.

Fady Dagher résume ce virage en trois mots : proximité, efficacité et humanité. Trois piliers sur lesquels reposera l'action policière de 2026, dans une ville où les défis — tout comme les attentes — ne cessent d'évoluer.

SPVM: strong 2025 results and a clear roadmap for 2026

NEWSFIRST MULTIMEDIA
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The Montreal Police Service (SPVM) presented its annual outlook this morning, offering a detailed review of 2025 and setting the tone for the coming year. Surrounded by his deputy directors, SPVM Chief Fady Dagher outlined an ambitious vision, balancing firm operational achievements with a deeper understanding of emerging social challenges affecting the city.

A 2025 defined by major operations and strategic improvements

In 2025, the SPVM focused heavily on strengthening its investigative capabilities and refining its presence on the ground. According to the leadership team, the past year brought substantial progress in crimefighting, community engagement, and modernization.

Major investigations targeting organized crime

The year was punctuated by several high-impact operations targeting organized crime networks operating in Montreal and across Quebec. These coordinated strikes led to multiple arrests and helped dismantle structures tied to violent incidents. The SPVM considers these breakthroughs among the most significant of the last decade and credits improved coordination and intelligence-driven strategies.

Notable homicide resolution rate

The investigation teams also recorded an impressive homicide resolution rate in 2025, successfully solving a large majority of the cases reported throughout the year. This performance reflects enhanced investigative tools, stronger interunit collaboration, and a renewed focus on follow-through in complex cases.

A reimagined presence across the city

Beyond major investigations, 2025 also allowed the SPVM to rethink how officers are deployed in key sectors of the city.

Strengthened coverage in the downtown core

The integration of Neighbourhood Police

Stations 21 and 22 gave rise to an expanded police presence in downtown Montreal. This initiative aims not only to provide quicker responses to incidents but also to offer police officers a deeper understanding of the diverse social environment of the city's busiest districts.

Proactive policing in the metro

The preventive intervention model introduced in the metro network two years earlier continues to demonstrate effectiveness. Specialized teams work in close contact with local partners, prioritizing early intervention and long-term engagement with transit users.

A mobile public safety approach

A mobile service counter was added to the SPVM's toolbox, allowing officers to meet citizens directly in high-traffic areas. This initiative facilitates quick access to information, encourages dialogue, and strengthens trust between the police and the community.

A technological leap forward

The SPVM also pushed forward on modernization in 2025. A new, more advanced video-analysis software platform was deployed, significantly reducing the time needed to review footage and accelerating the workflow in ongoing investigations.

In parallel, the creation of an internal oversight committee dedicated to police stops reflects a growing emphasis on transparency and accountability. Its role is to review existing practices, identify potential improvements, and reinforce public confidence in the SPVM.

2026: A year marked by emerging social challenges

Looking ahead, Chief Dagher outlined several priorities that will shape the SPVM's approach in 2026. These priorities reflect evolving social dynamics, especially among youth and vulnerable populations.

Youth crime: a troubling trend

One of the most pressing concerns is the rise of criminal involvement among increasingly younger adolescents — sometimes as young as 12 to 14 years old. Some of these youths have already taken on roles typically seen in older

offenders, including organizing or relaying criminal tasks.

The SPVM intends to focus aggressively on prevention through strengthened partnerships with schools, families, community organizations, and social services.

Homelessness and mental health: a growing crisis

Another critical priority is the rapid increase in homelessness. The SPVM notes a shift in the profile of people affected: more families are falling into homelessness not because of mental health issues alone, but due to sudden financial instability. The service is working with municipal and community partners to adjust its approach, aiming for interventions that are both compassionate and effective.

Maintaining the decline in gun violence

Gun-related violence has declined signifi-

cantly in recent years, and the SPVM wants to sustain this progress in 2026. Continued targeted interventions, improved intelligence work, and interagency cooperation will form the backbone of this effort.

A police service in full transformation

This year's press conference makes one thing clear: the SPVM is undergoing a meaningful transformation. Between technological advancements, renewed community outreach, and a focus on early intervention, the service is positioning itself to address both the immediate and long-term needs of Montreal.

Chief Fady Dagher summarizes the approach in three guiding principles: proximity, efficiency, and humanity. These themes will shape the SPVM's work throughout 2026, as the city navigates evolving safety challenges and rising community expectations.



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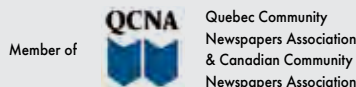
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Layout: Media Trek

Distribution: TC. TRANSCONTINENTAL

Printing: TC. TRANSCONTINENTAL

National Representation:



Project funded in part by

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OPINION & Editorial



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

THE QUÉBEC GOVERNMENT MUST CANCEL EXCESSIVE RECYCLING FEES FOR PRINT NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

An alliance of Québec newspapers and magazines is sounding the alarm about the unfair and ruinous effects of Québec's selective collection reform. Far from delivering the promised equity, these new rules pose yet another existential threat to print media in Québec.

Together, we reach millions of readers for whom print remains the medium of choice. It is to ensure that they can continue reading newspapers and magazines in their preferred format that we are joining forces. It's a matter of respect and generational fairness.

Drastic and disastrous increase

We are asking the Québec government to exempt us from the excessive fees imposed by the new collection system, and we call on Premier François Legault to resolve this issue before the end of his term.

The introduction of the new collection regime in January 2025 triggered a dramatic increase in these fees despite the steady decline in the quantities of paper declared and marketed. The situation will only worsen, with additional increases expected in the coming years.

Paradoxically, the less paper we use, the higher our recycling bill climbs. This clearly shows that the new system has replicated the flaws of the old system, which the government meant to correct.

The situation is untenable for us as we contend with profound structural challenges, including the relentless erosion of advertising revenues, declining circulation and the suffocating dominance of the web giants.

Content isn't packaging

To be clear, we understand the need for a recyclable materials collection system for "containers" such as the home delivery boxes used by foreign online vendors. However, a fundamental distinction must be made in the case of newspapers and magazines, where the content cannot be separated from the container. Taxing the paper on which they are printed is not the same as taxing packaging: it means taxing content that is of fundamental value to our society, produced by local professionals specifically for Québec readers. This distinction was made in the past when the Québec government exempted books from recycling collection fees.

That decision to support the diversity of cultural expression should logically be extended to our print media outlets, which are a bulwark against cultural globalization and a shield against misinformation. In a geopolitical landscape scarred by fake news and weakened institutions under stress from social media, the international digital behemoths and other pressures, preserving local print media should be a priority. Our media outlets form a compre-

hensive ecosystem that provides many direct and indirect jobs. Every dollar spent on local media stays in Québec's economy. And contrary to some perceptions, demand for print remains robust: millions of Quebecers continue to buy our print formats, which are indispensable for bridging the digital divide—especially in rural areas, among seniors, and in less connected households.

Act now!

Over the years, the Québec government has introduced significant measures to support print media. But this misguided reform flies in the face of public policies designed to revitalize the media sector.

The Québec government must swiftly rectify this situation by exempting print media from recycling fees. Must we wait for media outlets to shut down before action is taken?

A government that defends Québec's interests must champion an industry of such vital importance, not strangle it.

George Guzman and Le Journal de Montréal, Le Journal de Québec, Le Devoir, The Globe and Mail, The Gazette, L'Actualité and RICARDO; the print publications of TVA Publications, Pratico-Pratiques, KO Média, Bayard Presse Canada and Naître et grandir; and the Association québécoise des éditeurs de magazines (AQEM), RecycleMédias and Hebdo Québec.



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The Carney government in Ottawa has introduced a new bill, the Connected Care for Canadians Act, which is part of the Liberals' strategy to build up and protect the health care system while encouraging Canadians to take more control over their health.

Tabled in the House of Commons by Papineau Liberal MP Marjorie Michel who is the Health Minister in the Carney cabinet, the basic purpose of the legislation is to enable different medical information and data systems to connect.

"Timely and secure access to personal health information is critical to saving lives and improving care for Canadians," she said during a news conference in Ottawa earlier this month for the announcement.

"The Connected Care for Canadians Act is about empowering Canadians to securely access their own health data, so patients and those involved in their care have the information they need to make the right decisions at the right time," she said.

All about patient safety

"This legislation is a critical step towards a more connected health care system that supports all Canadians."

"At its core, Bill S-5 is about patient safety," the federal health ministry said in a statement. They said another purpose of the bill is to help

Canada keep pace with emerging international standards in digital health care in order to remain globally competitive.

The legislation would require all information technology (IT) companies providing digital health services in Canada to adopt common standards to support protected and secure information exchange across various platforms.

"Canadians should feel safe knowing that their medical records are secure and protected, for their own use, and for the use of their health care providers," the health ministry says. According to the ministry, health care is one of the fastest growing sectors in Canada's economy.

The government believes the legislation will establish the foundation needed for the health sector to benefit from AI innovations that can improve patient care, system efficiency and create economic opportunities for Canadian companies.

Secure sharing of health info

The federal government says it is collaborating with provincial and territorial partners in the development of regulations to ensure the protection and secure sharing of Canadians' personal health data, while improving patient outcomes and ensuring existing strict privacy legislation is respected.

The burden of disconnected systems falls heavily on health care providers, according to the health ministry, which notes that only 29 per cent of providers currently share electronic information securely and seamlessly outside of their offices.

Technology has also not kept up with the times, says the government, noting that fax machines are still commonly used by medical professionals. Canadians also have to walk around with printed copies of their health records, while other sectors moved to fully digital decades ago.

"When personal health information can travel freely and securely between patients, clinics, hospitals and labs, people will have better health outcomes and doctors will have more time to focus on care," said Dr. Margot Burnell, president of the Canadian Medical Association.

Missed benefits, says health CEO

Anderson Chuck, president and CEO of the Canadian Institute for Health Information, maintained that Canada's single payer system has created world class health data, even though its benefits are being missed.

"Canadians feel these effects every day in delayed care, missed insights and systems that cannot respond to their needs quickly enough," he said.

The Connected Care for Canadians Act recognizes that timely, secure access to health information is foundational to better care, said Michael Green, president and CEO of Canada Health Infoway.

"By supporting modern digital standards and trusted data sharing, the legislation helps ensure patients can access their health information, providers can coordinate care more effectively, and the health system can respond more efficiently to growing demands," said Green.

Country's nurses on board

The Canadian Nurses Association supports efforts to modernize the sharing and use of health information across Canada.

"Secure, timely access to personal health information is essential for nurse practitioners and nurses to deliver high-quality, coordinated care and improved patient outcomes," said Dr. Kimberly LeBlanc, president of the CNA.

Nurses across Canada seem poised to welcome the Connected Care for Canadians Act. "Fulsome access to patient health data gives nurses the information they need to make safe decisions and reduces unnecessary stress on frontline providers," said Linda Silas, president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

The country's family physicians are also on board. "Family doctors see every day how fragmented health information puts patients at risk," said Dr. Sarah Cook, president of the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

Accelerating standards adoption

According to the federal health ministry, nearly 60 per cent of physicians say that administrative burden contributes directly to worsening mental health. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are working together to set a path forward to connected care through common interoperability and data standards.

The federal health ministry maintains that Bill S-5 will accelerate adoption of these standards and prohibit data blocking, but would only apply in provinces and territories that do not have substantially similar legislation in place.

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BY THE GOVERNMENT

Progress shouldn't come at the expense of journalism.

Publishers are committed to recycling. But the dramatic and unsustainable scale of proposed new fees on newspapers and magazines raises concerns about the future viability of Quebec's news ecosystem and the communities that depend on it.



New social housing project approved as borough moves to protect commercial streets



DIMITRIS ILIAS
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The borough of Villieray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension has given the green light to a new social housing development in Parc-Extension, while simultaneously tightening zoning rules

to curb the loss of commercial space, signaling a dual approach to growth and neighbourhood stability.

At a recent borough council meeting, elected officials approved plans for a three-storey residential building at 7965 boulevard de l'Acadie. The project will deliver 26 units of social housing and is being led by the Monde-Uni housing cooperative. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

The development is part of Quebec's Affordable Housing Program administered by the Société d'habitation du Québec. According to borough documents, the building will be assembled using prefabricated modular components, a construction method increasingly used to accelerate delivery and control costs. Most of the units will be studio apartments, with the ground floor designed to be fully accessible for people with reduced mobility.

The site plan also emphasizes outdoor space. Nearly two-thirds of the property will be landscaped, including the planting of six new trees, a feature borough officials say aligns with broader objectives to improve urban greening and livability.

Alongside the housing approval, the borough adopted a temporary amendment to its zoning bylaw aimed at preserving local commercial activity. The new rule prohibits the conversion of commercial premises into residential units along several key corridors in Villieray-East and selected sectors of Parc-Extension and Saint-Michel.

Officials say the measure responds to growing concerns about storefront vacancies and the gradual erosion of neighbourhood-scale commerce, trends that can weaken local services and street-level vitality if left unchecked.

The restriction is intended as an interim safeguard. It will remain in force until the completion of a commercial consolidation study scheduled for 2026, which will inform longer-term planning decisions on land use and economic development across the borough.

The decisions were adopted under the authority of the Arrondissement de Villieray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension, one of the administrative divisions of Montréal, as part of its ongoing efforts to balance housing needs with commercial resilience.



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Ramadan: Time of reflection and spiritual devotion

Healthy adult Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan from dawn until dusk. Other acts of worship such as prayer, reading the Quran, and charity are also encouraged during the holy month.

Ramadan lasts either 29 or 30 days, and the time during which it takes place varies every year, because the lunar calendar is roughly 10 or 11 days shorter than the commonly used Gregorian calendar.

This Holy month contains the most blessed of nights, also known as Laylatul Qadr, about which Allah asks:

"What will make you realize what the Night of Power is like?"

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

Angels and the Spirit descend upon

it with their

Lord's permission with every command;

There is peace that night until the coming of dawn." [Quran: 97:1-5]

Practicing charity and prioritizing service to others during the month of Ramadan is important to Muslims, who consider it to be a special time for community. This act of generosity is characterized by a greater sense of forgiveness, sharing and caring for each other.



Muslims gather in homes, mosques and community centres to break their daily fast at the evening meal known as iftar.

During this Ramadan period, we recognize Canada's continuously growing Muslim population. While small overall, the proportion has more than doubled in 20 years, and continues to rise over time.

To all those observing, we wish you a Ramadan Mubarak!



*My best wishes
to the muslim
community on
the occasion
of Ramadan!*



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RAMADAN KAREEM

Monsoon Festival returns to Parc- Extension for second edition on June 24

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The Monsoon Festival will return to Parc-Extension on June 24, 2025, marking the second edition of a community-driven cultural event that brings together residents, artists, and organizations from across Montreal.

Organized by Brique par brique, the festival will take place from noon to 8 p.m. at Parc Dickie-Moore, directly across from the organization's cultural centre. Admission is free.

The inaugural Monsoon Festival was held on June 24, 2024, coinciding with Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day. Spread between Brique par brique's space and Parc Dickie-Moore, the first edition combined artistic programming with participatory activities, emphasizing collaboration across generations and cultural backgrounds.

According to organizers, the festival was conceived as a way to strengthen social connections through shared artistic experiences. Its multidisciplinary format encourages interaction not only among neighbourhood residents but also with visitors from elsewhere in Greater Montreal.

The 2025 edition will expand on that foundation with a full day of programming. Morning and early afternoon activities will include meditation sessions, poetry readings, acoustic music, film screenings, tarot and magic, as well as a guided walking tour highlighting Parc-Extension's urban and cultural landscape.

From mid-afternoon onward, the main stage will host live

music, dance, and spoken-word performances, while indoor spaces will be used for film screenings and community discussions. Public art workshops and family-oriented activities will run throughout the site.

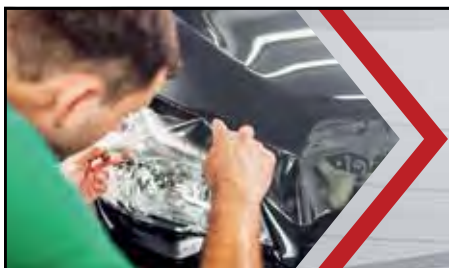
Evening programming, scheduled from 5 to 8 p.m., will feature drag, opera, and dance performances, followed by live music and a DJ set to close the festival. Food vendors, artisans, and community kiosks will be present throughout the day.

The festival is presented in collaboration with a broad network of cultural and community partners, including Arts in the

Margins, Learning Loop, Cinema Politica, the South Asian Film Festival of Montreal, Veils of Bollywood, and the Parc-Ex Curry Collective, among others.

Financial and institutional support for the 2025 edition comes from Andrés Fontecilla through the Soutien à l'action bénévole 2025-2026 program, as well as from the Borough of Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc-Extension and its mayor, Laurence Lavigne Lalonde.

Residents interested in volunteering or getting involved with future editions can contact the organizers directly.



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What Montreal's proposed housing bylaw changes could mean for Parc-Extension

DIMITRIS ILIAS
dimitri@newsfirst.ca

For residents of Parc-Extension, where housing pressure is felt daily in overcrowded apartments, rising rents, and aging buildings, the City of Montreal's proposed changes to its inclusionary housing rules may have consequences that go well beyond City Hall.

The Ville de Montréal has launched a public consultation process to amend the Règlement pour une métropole mixte, the city's main tool for requiring social and affordable housing in new residential developments. The consultation will take place on February 26 at Montreal City Hall.

While the proposed changes are presented as technical adjustments, they touch directly on how, where, and under what conditions new housing could be built in neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension.

Fewer projects subject to the rules

One of the key changes under consideration is raising the size threshold at which the regulation applies. If adopted, only residential projects larger than 18,000 square metres would be subject to the RMM.

In practical terms, this could mean that a greater number of mid-sized developments would no longer be required to include social or non-market housing. In dense neighbourhoods such as Parc-Extension, where large parcels of land are scarce and projects are often built lot by lot, this shift could significantly reduce the number of developments falling under the bylaw.

A single 20 percent requirement

The city is also proposing to simplify its housing obligations by replacing multiple requirements with a single rule: 20 percent non-market housing. This category would include both social housing and non-market affordable housing.

Under the current framework, developers

face distinct obligations for social housing and additional affordable housing. The proposed change would remove those layered requirements and merge them into one.

City officials argue this approach would make projects easier to finance and deliver. For residents and housing advocates in Parc-Extension, the question will be whether this simplification leads to more housing being built overall, or fewer deeply affordable units in areas already under strain.

Rolling back financial contributions

Another proposed measure would cancel the increase in financial contributions that came into effect on January 1, 2026, and freeze future indexation at 2025 levels.

These contributions are often used by the city to support off-site social and non-market housing projects. A rollback could reduce short-term costs for developers, but it may also affect the city's capacity to fund new housing initiatives elsewhere, including in central neighbourhoods like Parc-Extension.

Why the city is changing course

Montreal says the proposed amendments are intended as short-term relief measures. With construction costs high and housing starts slowing across the city, the administration is seeking to create conditions it believes will restart residential development and encourage partnerships between private developers and non-profit housing providers.

The city has made clear that this is not meant to be a permanent solution. A second phase is planned, during which Montreal will work with stakeholders to design a new incentive-based approach that would eventually replace the current RMM framework.

Residents invited to weigh in

Before any changes can be adopted, the city is required to hold a public consultation under



Quebec's land-use planning legislation.

That consultation will take place on February 26, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. in the Salle des Armoiries at Montreal City Hall, located at 275 Notre-Dame Street East, near the Champ-de-Mars metro station. City representatives will explain the proposed regulation and answer questions from the public.

For Parc-Extension residents, where housing affordability is not an abstract policy debate but a daily reality, the consultation offers a rare opportunity to question how these changes could shape the future of their neighbourhood.

Written comments can also be submitted through the city's official consultation form.

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FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

SECOND THOUGHTS

Q A young man I worked with asked me out. We had spent quite a bit of time together, and I may even have flirted. But deep down I didn't believe this could develop into a long-term relationship. I stated we were friends and colleagues, and I just wanted to remain friends.

The next day I reconsidered and thought I'd go on one date to be "nice," since he had the courage to ask. Thing is, the date never happened. This bothered me, or my ego, and I asked him about it months later. He said he didn't follow through because he wasn't sure he asked the right person. I was hurt.

Months passed and I kept my distance because I was embarrassed. But since we work together, I decided to start communicating again. After a bit of time, he said he wanted a second chance. He gave me gifts and kept calling and asking even when I turned down his physical advances.

I was in a state of tension as I had to work with him every day. Following more months of avoidance I convinced myself to give it a go. This time intimacy did occur, and it left me unhappy. He kept saying he loved me, and I could not respond as I couldn't say those words truthfully.

I've since left that job, and the distance has helped. I know now I need to keep physical intimacy to the confines of a proper commitment. Still I am left with guilt and question whether I need to explain myself to this man.

He still contacts me and says he loves me, and I still cannot respond. He's told mutual friends he has stayed in this town for me. He is a good man, but I don't know if I could be happy with him. I'm wondering if I'm the problem and if this would happen regardless of which man approached me.

Casey

A Casey, years ago there was a popular antismoking poster featuring the face of a cadaverous woman with a cigarette in her mouth. Under her head were the words "Smoking is very glamorous."

Do you think the tobacco companies were worried about that poster? Not at all. They know that extreme examples of health risks don't make people reform their behavior. Just the reverse. Because people can't identify with extreme examples, posters like that make smokers even more confident "it could never happen to me."

In the same way, if we painted a picture of a bickering couple whose marriage ends in divorce, you would not recognize yourself. But your picture could be on that poster, not because you are a cantankerous person, but because of a small error in your thinking.

From the beginning this man felt wrong to you. To be "nice" you overrode those feelings and ended up feeling snubbed. That snub led to embarrassment at work, physical intimacy, and now, a lack of belief in yourself and your own judgment.

A snub is like a scab we can't resist picking, but picking at a scab turns it into something worse. That is why pet owners put an Elizabethan collar on their dog or cat, so they can't bite or scratch the area which needs to heal. You have an area which needs to heal, and that is why you must stay away from this former coworker.

This whole chain of events started with an innocent decision to overrule your best instincts. But your instincts were correct. Deep down you know your desire for a relationship can never turn the wrong man into the right man. We get many letters from people who end up married to someone they didn't even want to date. It starts with one small step in the wrong direction.

Don't question yourself. Don't let second thoughts make you a poster child for unhappy marriages.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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| 4. Black grapes | 13. Mushrooms |
| 5. Brussels sprouts | 14. Clementines (5) |
| 6. Zucchini (2-3) | 15. Brown Bosc pears (3) |
| 7. Sweet potatoes (2) | 16. Bananas (4) |
| 8. Kiwis (3) | 17. Tomatoes (2) |
| 9. Spaghetti squash | 18. Mini onions (8) |
| | 19. Romaine lettuce |

SMALL BASKET (\$22)

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|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strawberries (Smucchies) | 6. Tomato |
| 2. Broccoli | 7. Pepper (Suntan) |
| 3. Black grapes | 8. Mini onions (8) |
| 4. Romaine lettuce | 9. Lemon |
| 5. Apples | 10. Brussels sprouts |

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Week of February 22 to 28, 2026

The luckiest signs this week:
LEO, VIRGO AND LIBRA



ARIES

A period of great dynamism is on the horizon. If you feel the urge to get away, now is the perfect time to revive those travel plans you had put on hold. Even a short solo getaway could inspire you and leave you with lasting memories.



TAURUS

You'll be overflowing with creativity this week, which could lead to a remarkable achievement, especially if you nurture your artistic side. If you align your lifestyle with your true aspirations, you'll find greater ease, and everything will naturally fall into place.



GEMINI

Take a break to regain your energy and find clarity. Let your creative or spiritual impulses flow freely. Getting involved in a charitable cause could also deeply nourish both your heart and mind.



CANCER

Invest more time in your social life, including social media, to expand your circle of friends. Joining a gym with friends to try a new sport will also open up new and exciting horizons for you.



LEO

Your joy and optimism will be contagious to everyone around you. You'll become more efficient at work, which will help you better support your colleagues. Your extra efforts won't go unnoticed, and you will soon be rewarded for them, reinforcing your motivation.



VIRGO

A spontaneous decision will push you to take a training course that will open the door to better career opportunities. A revelation will guide you toward fulfilment. However, you'll have to work hard to make this change a reality.



LIBRA

You may soon secure funding for a project close to your heart. A meeting with an advisor will help you consolidate your debts, bringing you financial stability and peace of mind for the future.



SCORPIO

Tidying up your home will help you clear your mind. Before you discuss a separation, speak openly with your partner to avoid making an impulsive decision that could lead to regrets.



SAGITTARIUS

At work, you must fine-tune your documents and proposals before presenting them; this will maximize their chances of approval. Your success will inspire you to refresh your wardrobe or treat yourself to a well-deserved reward.



CAPRICORN

You'll share exciting ideas with your friends this week and tap into a creative talent you're truly passionate about. Your growing self-confidence will pave the way for remarkable achievements that will soon fill you with pride.



AQUARIUS

You'll meet inspiring people who will expand your social circle and feed your spirituality. A professional or personal opportunity may even prompt you to consider moving soon.



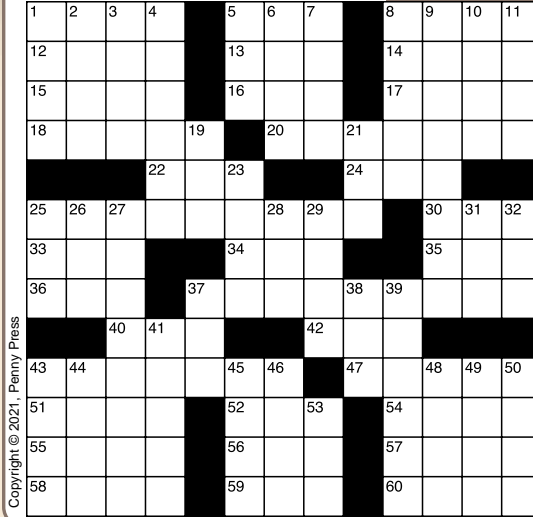
PISCES

You must show care and affection to prevent misunderstandings in your relationship. Open communication will lead to improvements. However, financial uncertainties could linger, so approach the situation with caution and honest dialogue.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 298



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ACROSS

- Opposite of minus
- Louse
- Yodeler's feedback
- Coarse file
- Pub order
- Without moisture
- Completed
- Afternoon brew
- Moved, as merchandise
- Teasdale and Gilbert
- Results
- Month segments: abbr.
- Type
- Alliance
- Enjoy dinner
- Night bird
- Hospital ward: abbr.
- Noah's number
- Hairstyling goo
- At this time
- Before, in a poem
- ___ close for comfort

DOWN

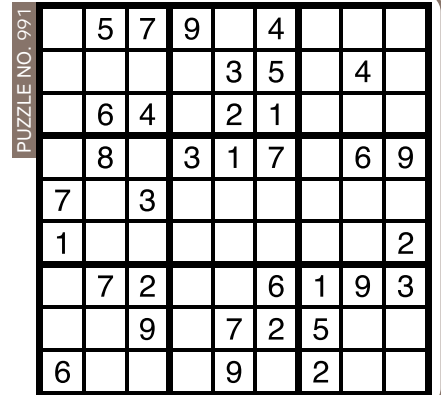
- Will-call
- Indentation
- Press clothes
- Asian frying vessel
- Hill's partner
- Gambling machine
- Dark bread
- Untruthful person
- Outdoes
- Hither and ____
- Stately trees
- Gamblers' concerns
- Go downhill on snow
- Fish limb
- Commotion
- Wheel tooth
- Be in arrears
- Comic-strip cave man: 2 wds.
- Frozen water
- Eject
- Puncturing tool
- Santa's delivery
- Sunday seat
- Long period of time
- Soup pasta
- ___ and raves
- Roster
- Mr. Guthrie
- Amass
- Child's plaything: hyph.
- Dog's waggle
- Kind of chowder
- That girl's
- Barbie's friend

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.

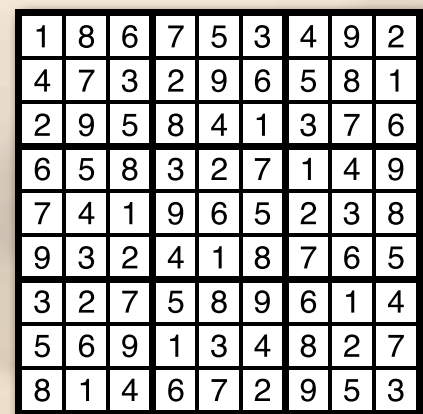


Last Issue's Answers

CROSSWORDS



Sudoku





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