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Tamil Heritage Month celebrations

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YEAR IN REVIEW 2023



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Housing, living costs and health care are all on Koutrakis' 2024 agenda

MARTIN C. BARRY
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Looking ahead at the various actions and projects she expects to undertake over the course of 2024, Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis said in an interview with The Laval News that some of the most significant issues for her constituents will be bringing down the cost of living, building more housing and finding ways to improve the health care system.

Federal health spending

While health care is actually a provincial jurisdiction, Koutrakis pointed out that the federal government also plays a role by transferring billions of dollars each year to the provinces to be spent on their health care services.

"We need to make sure that we strengthen and support the health care that Canadians are looking for, because we are an aging population, although we also have young people and others who face affordability issues," said Koutrakis.

Business and employment

"That's something I want to focus on," she continued. "And I want to make sure that by creating well-paying jobs and helping small businesses, we can help the middle-class get ahead. As far as I'm concerned, when I look at

Vimy and I see all the entrepreneurship that happens in this riding, like a small little enterprise or a depanneur or a pharmacy, these are the engine of our economy.

"I mean sure, the super conglomerates have a lot of capital that's available to them to grow as multinational companies. But in Vimy we have a thriving community. And so, I want to make sure that the small businesses locally in Vimy that are having challenges can have extensions for things like the CEBA loans, because this is something I advocate for every day and I will continue doing so."

Hellenic Heritage

Koutrakis, who is parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Economic Development for Quebec, has been advocating to other MPs as well as to members of the Senate to adopt a motion she was instrumental in developing which would declare March as Hellenic Heritage Month.

The bill, which she helped write, has been passed in the Senate and she expects that at least two House of Commons MPs will agree to sponsor it. "Hopefully, we can have that introduced sooner rather than later, so that we can get it done once and for all this year," added Koutrakis, noting that she hoped it would demonstrate her support for her Hellenic origins.



Photo: Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis' plate will be full over the course of the year 2024.

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El-Khoury to focus on affordable housing and seniors' needs this year

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When asked earlier this week about his political intentions in the coming year, Laval-Les Îles Liberal MP Fayçal El-Khoury told The Laval News that, among other things, he will be focusing on providing additional affordable housing to constituents, while also working towards improving the living conditions of the senior citizens in Laval-Les Îles.

Focus on seniors

In an interview, El-Khoury said he is currently working on several legislative issues involving senior citizens.

"In most caucus meetings, I raise the issue of our senior citizens," he said, noting that Laval-Les Îles is home to an elevated number of seniors.

El-Khoury said he was among the first MPs to call upon the Trudeau government to create a new ministry to focus closely on senior citizens' issues.

He said his efforts continue to persuade the government to implement the Canada-wide dental coverage plan, announced last year, which begins with an initial phase for senior citizens this year.

"And I will continue to play a major role in order to finalize once and for all the dental plan for our seniors," added El-Khoury.

Students needed: El-Khoury

Another area the Laval-Les Îles MP said he

will be concentrating on over the coming year involves immigration generally, as well as the issue of visas granted to students coming from overseas into Canada to undertake academic studies.

"Because students when they come to Canada, they pay rent, they pay tuition fees and other expenses, and this helps to push our economy forward," he said.

At the same time, he noted that students whose skills and talents are developed at Canadian universities can often end up taking up permanent residency or citizenship here, thus contributing even further to the strengthening of the country's economy.

Visiting students issue

Last week, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marc Miller said he was looking at ways to rein in an international student system that has "gotten out of control."

Miller said that because of housing shortages and soaring rents, he would be looking at ways to reduce the number of international students, which has hit 800,000 students a year.

El-Khoury said the government's plans haven't been finalized and will be subject to fine-tuning in the coming year to ensure the issue is dealt with equitably.

While acknowledging that some incoming students may have abused the system and that better screening could be needed, he suggested it would be better to keep the door open to most foreign students, rather than enact policies that would place onerous restrictions on them.

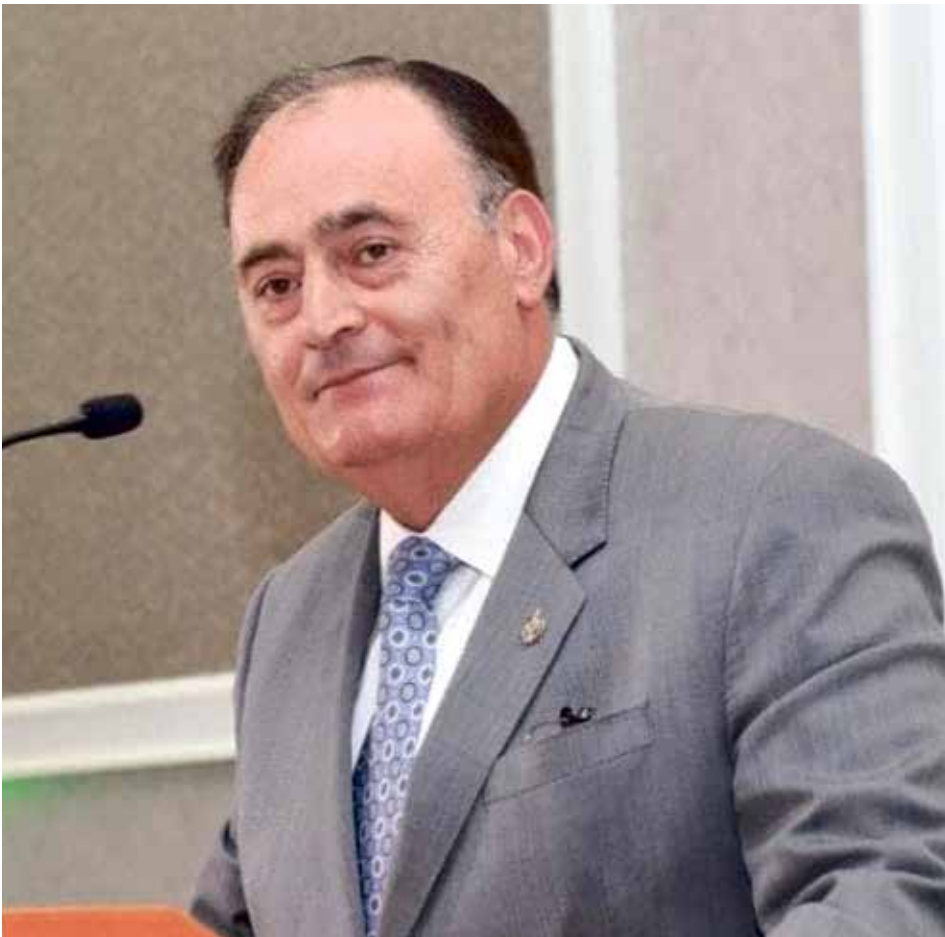


Photo: Laval-Les Îles Liberal MP Fayçal El-Khoury (seen here during an election event in 2019) is working on several key issues this year, including affordable housing and senior citizens's needs. (Photo: Martin C. Barry, Laval News)



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OPINION & Editorial



THAT'S WHAT I'M THINKING

Robert Vairo



Are Government Decisions in Our Best Interest?

We have been told to do an electrification make over, enticed with tax payer incentives. For example, the government wants to see an overhaul of our current efficient and reliable heating system. It wants us to get rid of our perfectly operating oil or gas furnace, as well as many appliances. We are told to discard those ever so reliable back ups, the wood and gas burning stove and fireplace. Let's all go electric: electric heat pump, electric car, electric range and oven. Is that such a wise choice since at times our electricity grid can not handle our current consumption? One engineer suggests charging one EV at high speed is equivalent to electricity consumed by 106 homes in one hour.

Albertans received an emergency alert at 6:44 p.m. on Saturday, January 13th, from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, directing citizens to immediately reduce electricity consumption. Despite Artic-like temperatures in that province, residents were forced to reduce their electric heating, and not even plug in their vehicle's block heater. If you drive an EV in Alberta, the mandate went out to not recharge. Facing a shortfall of electricity, our western friends have had to import electricity from Saskatchewan, Montana and British Columbia. Saskatchewan was able to help Alberta thanks to its natural gas fired generators that produce electricity. That is the same natural gas some of our enviro-fanatic leaders in Ottawa are trying to shut down. Wind power and solar panels are nowhere near enough during these bone-chilling periods. And they will happen again and again. Fortunately, former Premier Robert Bourassa had the vision and foresight to dam James Bay in the mid 1970's so that today, Québec is a major hydro exporter, and has all the energy it will ever need, at least until the next ice storm.

Taking its cue from the all-powerful and controlling elitist World Economic Forum, the west has been told to electrify everything. We are encouraged to get rid of our perfectly running and dependable gas-powered vehicles and go EV. And the pressure

is on because this government has legislated the end of the internal combustion engine with different deadlines in force before ICE will be outlawed from manufacturing. Is the government's fanatic push for electric vehicles such a good idea? Hertz has been forced to sell its fleet of 20 thousand Teslas because they are too expensive to repair. The second largest rental company in the world, second only to Enterprise, has had to fill the gap. Hertz bought 20 thousand news gas-powered vehicles. Insurance companies will not repair an accidented electric vehicle with battery damage. It will 'write off' the entire car. As a result, are insurance rates higher for an EV? Absolutely.

The government is not getting it right. Consumers do not want to electrify at this time, and manufacturers are listening. Ford says it loses 36 thousand dollars on every EV manufactured. It has cut in half production of its highly touted F150 Lightning pick up. The Detroit automaker has also paused construction of its EV battery plants. General Motors is now delaying indefinitely its new electric models.

Yes, we will apparently all be going electric at some point, but to legislate a firm concocted schedule is a collision with reality. This is quite obvious today.

Some of you may remember the Urea Formaldehyde debacle, when government offered incentives to insulate your old or new house with it. Canadians in those homes were getting headaches and nausea; something was seriously wrong. Government misled us. Then came another round of incentives, to remove the poisonous insulation. It has now been banned under the Hazardous Products Act since December 1980. What a mess. Ask again whether government decisions are in your best interest.

Japan, Germany, other European countries have hastily embarked on the green environment wagon by closing its coal mines and nuclear energy plants and becoming almost wholly dependent on Russia for its energy.

Then Russia attacked Ukraine and reality hit. These same countries came running to Canada, begging to supply them with LNG, liquified natural gas. The Trudeau government said no to all of them. Europeans suffered as a result and are faring better this winter thanks to increased oil imports from Norway, Europe's largest oil producer, and the reopening of some coal plants as back up. How was this a smart environmental move by Canada?

Chasing the Votes

It's interesting to watch the Trudeau liberals first chase the Jewish, then the Muslim vote, over the terrorist group Hamas' attack on Israeli settlers. Canadian Jews make up only 1.4%, of Canada's population, mainly in Toronto and Montreal. Muslims are nearly 5% strong in Canada, primarily in Greater Toronto, Québec, Alberta and BC. Where do you think the Liberal support will fall? Following Israeli President Netanyahu's rebuke of Trudeau, one can argue where the Prime Minister's loyalty lies. In any event, the Trudeau Liberals do not want to be seen to be choosing sides. It would mean losing either the Jewish or Muslim vote. So, while mainstream media chronicles the Liberal caucus as split in its decision on whether to support a UN motion accusing Israel of genocide, reports indicate their leader has very craftily placed a group of MPs on one side and the rest on the other. Now the governing party is seen as supporting everyone and no one at the same time.

Welcome to More Taxes in 2024

As we welcome the new year, Canadians prepare for more federal government taxes as compiled by Canadian Taxpayers Federation. We'll be paying more in CPP contributions, (about \$350.00 more), paying still higher carbon taxes for everyone but Quebecers (about \$910.00 per family), and an extra 5% tax on all alcohol beverages.

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City takes another step implementing dynamic parking signage



Laval city council took an additional step recently towards expanding the use of “dynamic” signage along streets to better inform motorists and residents of parking restrictions whenever there is a need for this, such as during snow storms.

During a recent council meeting, the council members awarded a contract to Pierre Brossard (1981) Ltée to implement electronic parking regulation signage.

The signs, which are programmable remotely, will allow municipal employees to inform motorists and residents in “real time,” rather than with sandwich board signs which have been in usage for decades and must be set up one at a time manually on the side of the street.

“The implementation of dynamic signage will translate into an improved efficiency of the system thanks to real-time displays on the street indicating that operations are underday,” says Laval city councillor for Sainte-Dorothée Ray Khalil, the executive-committee member responsible for public works.

“It’s all with an eye on improving citizens’ experience, as well as the management of snow removal including cleaning the streets during the summer in some of Laval’s most densified sectors.”

The illuminated panels will be lit up when needed to display specific times when snow removal or street cleaning operations will be taking place, meaning that motorists and car owners must move their vehicles. The city decided to opt for the system following tests with several pilot projects on its territory over the past few years.

According to the city, residents were polled for their level of expected satisfaction with the system, as well as the public works department’s views on how it would improve their efficiency.

Widespread implementation of the system is expected to begin during the summer of 2024. It is expected to become functional in Chomedey beginning next winter, followed by Pont-Viau and Laval-des-Rapides during the summer of 2025.

Climate Change Adaptation

Laval takes a new step forward by appointing the first director of its Office of Social Innovation and Ecological Transition

The Mayor of Laval, Stéphane Boyer announced recently the appointment of Sophie Paradis, who becomes the first Director of the Office of Social Innovation and Ecological Transition.

The Office, which is scheduled to launch in early February, will be responsible for supporting the City’s administrative units in aligning the delivery of services to citizens with the principles of carbon neutrality and equity in the face of environmental issues. Climate change and the importance of biodiversity in Laval require better coordination at all levels within the municipal organization.

“I am very excited to welcome Ms. Paradis to the Director of the Office of Social Innovation and Ecological Transition. We have great ambitions in terms of sustainable development and one of our wishes was to have a cross-cutting vision to guide our decision-making. In the context of the deployment of our climate plan – Horizon 2035, the Office will allow us to ensure that the ecological transition is applied everywhere and in a systemic way.”



Laval council unanimously backs De Cotis motion calling for swimming lessons

Not an expense but an investment for city, according to Quebec Lifesaving Society

A motion tabled by Action Laval city councillor for the district of Saint-Bruno David De Cotis, asking his council colleagues to support a suggestion that Laval residents should receive free swimming lessons, was favourably received recently.

The motion, which has the backing of the Société de sauvetage du Québec (Lifesaving Society), received unanimous support. It also had the backing of Raynald Hawkins, the executive-director of the society.

De Cotis and the motion’s supporters agreed that as a municipality located entirely on an island surrounded on all sides by water, Laval is at a higher risk from hazards having to do with water-related incidents.

Laval at elevated risk

As well, supporters of the motion note that there are a large number of private and public pools in the City of Laval, and that many

residents, including immigrants, may never have had the opportunity to learn how to swim.

“We have 38,000 private pools on the city’s territory,” said De Cotis, while adding that there was a sharp increase in the number of drownings in Quebec last year compared to previous years and that “we must do something to find solutions.”

“A project like this brings back a lot more than just swimming lessons,” said Hawkins. “It’s also an important way of introducing newcomers to Laval. The elected officials shouldn’t look upon this proposal as an expense for the city, but rather as an investment for the security of our children.”

Swim lessons for kids

The Lifesaving Society is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote safe interactions with water to prevent drowning and other injuries. The society’s Swim to Survive



program (offered to 8+ year old students in the 3rd to 6th grades in elementary school) was created to prevent drowning.

It has been designed as an educational and active field trip. In addition to playing a key role in drowning prevention, the program gets children to move and gain self-confidence, and encourages them to visit aquatic facilities on a more regular basis.



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Happy Tamil Heritage Month

Tamil community celebrates Tamil Heritage Month

Justin Trudeau among officials expressing support for Tamil people's struggle

MARTIN C. BARRY
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Elected officials from the federal, provincial and municipal governments, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and representatives from the cities of Laval and Montreal, expressed support for the Tamil people during a major event for Tamil Heritage Month held at the Château Royal congress centre in Laval last Sunday which drew more than 1,000 persons of Tamil origin.

In a speech, Prime Minister Trudeau called out human rights violations against Sri Lanka's Tamil minority. "Canada has one of the largest Tamil diasporas in the world," said Trudeau, noting that Liberal government under his father in 1983 welcomed more than 1,800 Tamils who came to settle in Canada, starting a wave of further immigration to this country by the Tamil community.

Support from Trudeau

"Your contributions to this country are extraordinary," he continued. "We know that even as we celebrate rights and freedoms and diversity and culture identity here in Canada, there continues to be challenging situations in Sri



Lanka. And that's why Canada will continue to stand with the international community, including at the United Nations' human rights council, to call for accountability, call for justice, call for reconciliation."

Trudeau said Canada will "continue to stand with the Tamil community" and that he stood by Canada's decision last year to sanction several Sri Lankan state officials for gross and systematic violations of human rights during armed


conflict in Sri Lanka from 1983 to 2009. He said it is important "to demonstrate that nowhere around the world will we put up with the kinds of human rights abuses that we've seen. We will continue to stand with the Tamil community."




► Continued on page 8

*Wishing the Tamil Canadian community a very happy
Tamil Heritage Month*

Let us celebrate the rich Tamil history and culture



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Happy Tamil Heritage Month

◀ Continued from page 7

Celebrating the Tamils

First launched in 2010, Tamil Heritage Month celebrates the history of Canada's Tamil community and its contribution to the social, cultural, political and economic strength of Canada.

The federal government declared January Tamil Heritage Month in 2016, recognizing the importance of the Tamil community on a national basis. Last Sunday's celebration was Montreal's sixth Annual Tamil Heritage Month event, organized by more than 50 organizations from all over the region. While recognizing the Tamil community's accomplishments and tracing its roots, Tamil Heritage Month also provides opportunities to celebrate the Tamils' history in Canada.



Pongal festival month

The month of January was chosen as Tamil Heritage Month for a number of reasons. The Pongal festival, the most important and wide-



ly-celebrated festival amongst Tamils around the world, falls in the middle of the month. Pongal is both a time of thanksgiving for the blessings of a past year and a time to look forward to the start of a new year. The first month of the Tamil calendar, Thai, begins in the middle of January.

Throughout the morning and early afternoon, members of Tamil cultural and community groups performed musical numbers and folk-dance routines. Short documentary film presentations were also projected, providing background on the history of the Tamil people, as well as more recent developments in Sri Lanka where a civil war raged and came to an uneasy conclusion more than a decade ago.

Understanding the Tamils

Delivering a message on behalf of Conservative Party of Canada leader Pierre Poilievre, former Laval Tory candidate Agop Evereklian said that

as an Armenian, he identified strongly with the Tamils who endured tens of thousands of fatalities during the 26-year-long civil war between Tamil and Sinhalese forces.

"As a Canadian of Armenian origin, I really feel the history, the pain and the wounds of the Tamil people and I will always be a friend of the Tamil people," Evereklian said.

Laval city councillor for Chomedey Aglaia Revelakis, who tabled a resolution in June 2022 calling on the city to recognize the extreme violence committed against the Tamil people as a genocide, was presented by Montreal Tamil community representatives with a symbolic gift in thanks and recognition of her support.

Deros proud of the Tamils

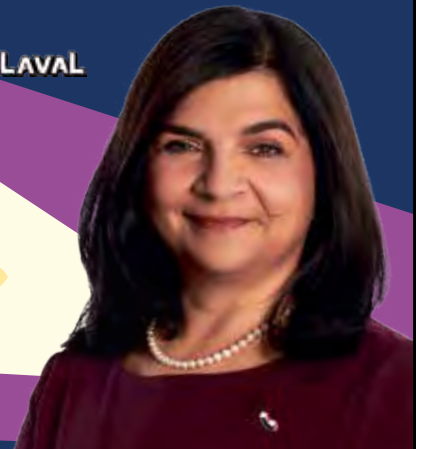
From the City of Montreal, city councillors

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Happy Heritage Month to the Tamil Community

Aglaia Revelakis

Municipal councillor • District of Chomedey • 514-242-5761 • a.revelakis@laval.ca



Happy Tamil Heritage Month

◀ Continued from page 8

from the governing Projet Montréal party, as well as from the opposition Ensemble Montréal, also came forward to express their solidarity with the Tamil community in Montreal.

“It is always a pleasure participating in your community’s events,” said Parc Extension city councillor Mary Deros, a leading member of the Ensemble Montréal caucus. Deros’s district is home to a large number of people of Tamil origin.

“I want you to know that I am extremely proud of your community,” she added. “Why? Because you continue to teach your culture, your language to your children. Your children are being educated in both English and French, but you still continue to teach them about their roots and I congratulate you for that.”



During this event, MP Faycal El-Khoury presented 47 certificates recognizing members of the Tamil community for their contribution to various non-profits organisations.



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My best wishes to the Tamil community on the occasion of Tamil Heritage Month


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YEAR IN REVIEW 2023



see previous edition for part 1

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July 2023 — Opposition parties agreed: New park needed in downtown Laval

In a relatively rare instance of agreement, Laval city council's two main opposition parties and a third political entity without council seats all agreed that a vacant lot owned by the city in Laval's rapidly growing downtown sector should be used for a badly-needed public park, rather than for a library as planned by the Boyer administration.

The lot, on Jacques Tétreault St. and a short distance from the Montmorency Metro, had been singled out by the city as the location for a new municipal library building with a cultural centre.

However, the three parties as well as some residents in the mixed commercial/residential area believed it would be wiser to establish a park because of a local lack of green space in an area over-saturated with asphalt and concrete.

Two local members of the Quebec National Assembly, two Laval city councillors and an eminent neurosurgeon met at a Laval-area park to throw their support behind a province-wide campaign to encourage all children and adults to wear protective helmets to safeguard against the devastating effects of head injuries.

"Although we are proud of the cutting-edge care that our entire team is able to offer to patients who have suffered a head injury, the best defence remains prevention," said Dr. Mathieu Laroche, a neurosurgeon at Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur in Cartierville.

While the crowds were somewhat thinner than usual, a steady downpour of rain during the late afternoon on Canada Day didn't deter some patriotic Laval and greater Montreal residents from celebrating the country's birthday, as they got back in touch with their cultural roots at the 2023 Laval Hellenic Summer Festival.

Suspected professional shoplifters believed to be connected to organized crime in Romania were arrested this month in connection with the theft of more than \$70,000 worth of merchandise in Quebec. Officers with the Laval Police made the arrests and were encouraging shopkeepers to report similar thefts that may also have been committed by the suspects.

August 2023 — Delayed sunshine made up for two days of rain at the Symposium de Ste-Rose

Although two days of rainfall put a dent in the usually strong attendance at the Symposium de Ste-Rose, abundant sunshine on the art exhibition's last day made up for the shortfall.

The annual three-day artists' gathering and exhibition drew thousands of appreciators of fine sculpture and exquisite art from all over Quebec as well as other parts of eastern Canada.

"I have to admit that things haven't been great over the past two days and I was a little discouraged," Oprina Felicia Dolea, the president of the Corporation Rose-Art which organizes the symposium, said in an interview with the Laval News on day two. "However, they are calling for sunshine tomorrow so let's hope," she added.

When Nathalie Seukpanya, whose two children attend Crestview Elementary School in Chomedey, saw that students with autism needed a new tool to help improve communications, she set out along with other parents to find a practical and affordable solution.

The one-of-a-kind bilingual communication board they came up with, made from a rigid durable material and weatherproof for Laval's challenging weather conditions, held the potential to transform

the way children with autism engage and communicate in their educational environment.

"Basically, the board helps them communicate with their educators and their peers," Seukpanya said in an interview with *The Laval News*.

In a bid to obtain financial aid from Ottawa's Housing Accelerator Fund, the City of Laval said it had made a formal application to the federal government for \$102 million in order to answer increasing housing needs here.

In a statement the city issued, it noted that funding from the Housing Accelerator Fund must pass through the Quebec government first before being transferred to municipalities and that the logistics of the transfer were yet to be announced.

Chomedey resident Jacob Abramson's son, Marc, also from the neighbourhood, sent *The Laval News* reports of his work as a "Helitack Crew Chief," fighting fires in Manitoba last summer. (Helitack stands for Helicopter Transport Initial Wildfire Attack.)

Large areas of Western Canada were engulfed in wildfires last year and Marc Abramson was at the front where all the action was. He was stationed in the Paint Lake region of North East Manitoba about 750 kilometres north of Winnipeg.

September 2023 — Canadian Forces parachuters drop in at Souvenir Elementary

Shortly after 8 am one day in early September last year, when the students would normally be arriving to begin their day, a phalanx of the Canadian Armed Forces Parachute Team – better known as the SkyHawks – jumped out of a small plane hovering around 2,500 feet over the Souvenir Elementary School yard and made a gradual parachute drop into the centre of the field – getting the academic year off to an exciting start.

The 17th annual FILIA Walk a Thon on Sept. 16, which was also the fourth held in Laval, drew a loyal following of FILIA supporters, as well as elected officials who have provided help to the organization over the years.

It was a good day for a refreshing walk in and around the streets surrounding St. Norbert Park in eastern Chomedey, in order to raise awareness of the needs of senior citizens – which includes regular physical exercise.

Laval city councillor for the district of Souvenir-Labelle Sandra El-Helou, an associate member of the executive-committee, said she was focusing increasingly on FILIA, as well as on how the group can help the city meet Laval senior citizens' needs.

"Every year I come to the walk to show my support for FILIA and also to thank them for the amazing job they do on the ground with our elderly population," she told *The Laval News*.

In her final report as the City of Laval's auditor-general before reaching the end of her 7-year mandate in December, Véronique Boily singled out the Laval Police Dept. for having insufficient controls over motor vehicle fuel purchases made with city credit cards, while taking into account the volume of purchases last year.

"The controls exercised by the Police Department are clearly insufficient for the volume of purchases, which amounted to \$1.5 million in 2022," Boily's department stated in a summary of her report.

The report also pointed out that the city's fuel card management system "lacks rigor since there is no mechanism to ensure that active cards are associated with vehicles in service." The report noted that the city had not carried out monitoring activities or implemented appropriate corrective measures in light of the credit card issues.

The Al Sultan, a Middle Eastern-style restaurant familiar to many because of its strategic location on Curé Labelle Blvd. just north of the Cartierville bridge, became the focus of an arson investigation on Sept. 21 after an unidentified suspect tried to start a fire outside the establishment around 1:30 am. (The

restaurant was finally destroyed by fire after another arson attack later in the year.)

October 2023 — At work and play, meet Fabre MNA Alice Abou-Khalil

In a wide-ranging interview a year after first being elected to the Quebec National Assembly, CAQ MNA for Fabre Alice Abou-Khalil told *The Laval News* she was on the verge of persuading the Legault government to build at least one new high school in Fabre to meet the needs of an expanding population that included a large number of families.

"In Fabre there is no école secondaire – there is no high-school," Abou-Khalil pointed out. "I'm pushing for it," she said. "But I can't push if the student numbers are not there as required to build one. I'm not making any promises. But the discussions are there."

In the meantime, as far as Chomedey Liberal MNA Sona Lakhoyan Olivier was concerned, until you've actually served as a member of the Quebec National Assembly, you can't have a real idea of just how demanding the job is.

Lakhoyan Olivier was back in Laval one afternoon this month for the Thanksgiving long weekend, after spending the previous week in Quebec City working on National Assembly business.

In her role as MNA for Chomedey, Lakhoyan Olivier said she was worried about the riding's situation with regards especially to the rising number of homeless people, and the challenging security problems they are beginning to generate.

The federal government should build two new military bases in Canada's Arctic – including one with a deep-seawater port – to boost the country's presence in its farthest northern regions, while also honoring a commitment to help maintain global peace, former Quebec Liberal Premier Jean Charest suggested during a talk at Concordia University on Canada's prospects as a "middle-power."

"Sovereignty over the north and the Northwest Passage in particular for me is an emerging development and an emergency issue," said Charest, whose Liberal government launched the northern-Quebec-focused Plan Nord in 2008, with an eye to opening up the province's far northern reaches for industrial/ economic development.

A cooking fire in Chomedey left six families homeless. According to authorities, the blaze started around 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 19 in the basement unit of a six-unit apartment building on 80th Ave. near Perron Blvd. Other units in the building were damaged by smoke, and for that reason, occupants were not be able to return for several days.

November 2023 — Vimy Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis marked her fourth year in office

Four years after first being elected as the Member of Parliament for the Laval riding of Vimy, Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis was recollecting on the two mandates she received, as well as some of the crises she found herself facing.

"So many differences – the world is a different place from when I was first elected in 2019," she said in an interview with *The Laval News*. "It's a real honour to have been entrusted with the portfolio that I have been," added Koutrakis. "I have an amazing team of colleagues who are helping. We have an amazing staff."

Quebec public sector union workers who walked off the job in late September, announced three more strike days for Nov. 21 to 23, unless a deal could be reached before then with the provincial government. Around 420,000 public sector employees were on strike as part of a walkout to protest the Quebec government's latest contract offer.

The common front was demanding an increase of up to 20 per cent over the next three years. The impact of the strike was felt at public schools throughout the province, where teachers picketed and classes

could only start by late morning or by the afternoon. A tentative resolution to the labour conflict was finally announced early in the new year.

The Laval Police said they arrested a person under the age of 18 in connection with a stabbing that took place near École secondaire Curé-Antoine-Labelle in Laval's Sainte-Rose district. On the afternoon of Oct. 23, the LPD had rushed to Roi-du-Nord Park, in front of the high school, where a brawl between several people saw a teenager get stabbed. Although not life threatening, the victim's wounds were serious.

Although Laval mayor Stéphane Boyer previously announced the 2024 property tax rate while emphasizing that the hike is less than the rate of inflation, there was no getting around the fact it was a whopping 4.8 per cent increase, even though that would only translate into \$162 more on a house worth \$440,742

In order to make ends meet next year, some serious cost-cutting would lie ahead, according to a statement issued by the mayor's office. The mayor had already revealed that one way to keep expenses down next year would be to "greatly limit" new employee hirings,

December 2023 — Canada positioned to dodge the recession bullet, says federal minister

Pondering the economic outlook for the coming year during an interview with *Newsfirst Multimedia*, Hochelaga Liberal MP Soraya Martinez Ferrada (the federal minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency in Quebec) maintained that since the country isn't in a recession now, "that puts it in a good position" in terms of future investments, employment and economic renewal.

"Contrary to what some people might tell you or what Conservatives will tell you, that Canada is broke, Canada is not broken, Canada is in a good position," she said, while acknowledging that "these are difficult times and we're making sure that we will continue to support Canadians through this."

Asked whether the government agrees with some economists' forecasts that 2024 will see an economic downturn leading into a recession, Ferrada said, "Not at this moment. I think we're looking at that very closely. But our economy right now is in a very good position."

For the last 32 years, when many women and children have been in crisis in the greater Montreal region, they turned to the Shield of Athena for help. With that in mind, a cross-section of supporters from the community came together this month to raise \$150,000 to help fund Shield of Athena's biggest expansion to date: the Second Step Shelter, which is being built in Laval.

The Shield of Athena's Lilac Event, which was held at the Palace Convention Centre, celebrated the work the Shield and its staff conduct on a daily basis. Set to open in 2024, the Second Step shelter will have 17 apartments which will be able to house women and children for up to two years.

If you were hoping to get into the holiday spirit with Christmas less than three weeks away, there was still time to get over to Laval's Centre de la Nature in Duvernay for the city's 12th annual Marché de Noël.

Some fifty exhibitors will be offering their creations, including handmade crafts, jewellery, clothing, beauty products, decorations and delicacies. Some of Santa's helpers were even on hand, making their way around while entertaining the moms, dads and kids.

While soaring inflation and labour shortages are just two of the issues currently afflicting restaurant operators in Laval, Montreal and the rest of Quebec, the province's restaurateurs were cautiously optimistic about their prospects in the new year, although there were still problems to be worked out.

The Association Restauration Québec (ARQ) had serious concerns about labour shortages, as well as customers who don't show up after making table reservations, leading the RAQ to ask that they be penalized \$20 in instances like these.



LPD releases photos of grandparent scam suspect

The Laval Police have released photos of a man they say is a suspect in multiple fraud cases involving a “grandparent scam” perpetrated in Laval last summer.

In the scheme, a suspect called the victim claiming to be their son. The fraudster said he was in jail after causing an accident by using his cell phone while driving. He also claimed a pregnant woman was injured in the accident.

A second suspect then claimed to be a lawyer, took over the call, insisted the situation was very serious and there was an immediate need for about \$5,000 in bail money.

He also told the victim that a collection agent would show up at the victim’s home to collect the funds with a file bearing a special number for the case. The victim was also told they had to write their name and bank account number on the envelope and turn it over to the collection agent.

The suspect sought by the LPD is 25-30 years old, speaks French, stands 6’ 4” tall and weighs about 250 pounds. He has short dark hair, dark eyes and a tattoo on his right wrist that extends slightly to the top of the hand.

Anyone with any information that could further the investigation is urged to call the Laval police information line at 450-662-4636 or call 911 and mention file LVL-230704-066.



Suspect charged with murder after man fatally stabbed in Laval-des-Rapides

The Laval Police rushed to the scene of a stabbing incident last week on Place Robin in Laval-des-Rapides where they arrested a male suspect who allegedly attacked a 66-year-old man who died from his injuries.

Although the victim was taken by ambulance to hospital, he was pronounced dead upon arrival, according to the LPD.

An LPD spokesperson said the suspect and the victim knew each other, without providing further details. The *Journal de Montréal* identified the victim as Abdelhak Ajaba, the suspect’s father. The suspect, identified by Montreal media as Mohamed Reda

Ajaba, was charged at the Laval courthouse with second-degree murder.

According to *The Gazette*, Mohamed Reda Ajaba has a criminal record. In 2018, he was sentenced to an eight-month prison term and two years of probation after he pleaded guilty to armed robbery and the unauthorized possession of a restricted or prohibited firearm.

As well, according to the daily, he has a case pending at the Valleyfield courthouse where he is charged with possession of material obtained through a crime and possession of burglary tools.

Gunmen mistakenly target two homes in Chomedey

The Laval Police are investigating two separate targeted shootings on de Normandie Blvd. in Chomedey last week, committed by gunmen who apparently got the address wrong in both cases. Officers with the LPD were called to one of the addresses near the corner of d’Alençon Ave. around 5:30 am.

The owner, an 86-year-old man, complained that gunshots had been fired on the garage door of his residence, although there were no reported injuries and the perpetrators fled quickly. The

police said later that the man had no known connections to criminals and didn’t have a police record.

Nearly a week before, also around 5:30 am at a nearby house, near the corner of de Normandie and 100th Ave., gunshots were fired through a residence’s large front window into the living room, as well through a smaller window into a bedroom where a woman in her 20s was sleeping.

After interviewing the family, the police told them they were probably mistakenly targeted.

Man dies in house fire on Jarry Blvd. in Chomedey

The Laval Police have opened an investigation after a fire last week that left a 71-year-old man dead on Jarry Blvd. in Chomedey.

According to the LPD, a 9-1-1 call was received at about 11 p.m., reporting flames at a residence on Jarry. Firefighters who entered found a man unconscious inside. Although attempts to resuscitate him were made on the spot and he

was taken to hospital, he was later declared dead.

While a preliminary investigation suggests the fire was accidental, an on-site inspection of the residence’s kitchen found a smoke detector that had no battery. The Laval Police routinely opens an investigation into fires when the Laval Fire Dept. finds grounds to suspect arson or when there has been a fatality.

Guns were fired less often than usual in Laval last year, according to the LPD

In a report on criminal use of firearms in Laval in 2023, the Laval Police Dept. says the number of incidents leading to a firearm being discharged took a sharp decline last year compared to the year before.

According to the force, there were 13 events in 2023, compared with 24 the previous year and 43 in 2021.

Jean-François Rousselle, assistant director of

the force’s criminal investigation division, said a new strategy produced encouraging results.

The LPD attributes the decline to the success of Projet Paradoxe, which focuses on firearms-related events.

He said there had been a drop in gun-related incidents over the past two years.

In 2023, 57 firearms were seized by the LPD in Laval and 30 suspects were arrested.



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Calculation of rent adjustment in 2024

The Tribunal administratif du logement has established the applicable percentages for the calculation of rent adjustments in 2024 , in accordance with *the Regulation respecting rent-fixing criteria*. These percentages are used to determine the amounts allocated to each of the components of the calculation based on the actual expenses incurred for the building or dwelling in question.

In accordance with the *Regulation respecting rent-fixing criteria*, the following components of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Québec as a whole were used to determine the applicable percentages:

- Electricity: CPI Electricity
- Gas: IPC Gaz naturel
- Fuel oil and other energy sources: CPI Fuel oil and other fuels
- Maintenance Costs: IPC Owner's Maintenance and Repairs
- Building Service Fee: IPC Services
- Tenants' personal service fees: IPC Health Care Services
- Management Fee: CPI Rent
- Revenu net: IPC Loyer

For capital expenditures, the average administered interest rates of Canadian trust companies, during the reference period, on 5-year guaranteed investment certificates is increased by 1%. These rates are published in the Bank of Canada Review.

It is not until Statistics Canada has released the consumer price indexes for December that the Tribunal can proceed with the calculation of the applicable percentages. Indeed, the methodology provides for the 12 months of the previous year to be taken into account. Statistics Canada released data for December 2023 today.

unable to agree on an increase in rent (or any other change to the lease), the landlord must, within one month of the tenant's response to the refusal, apply to the Tribunal to amend the lease. It is important to note that in the case of a building that has been built for five years or less, a tenant who refuses a rent increase must vacate their unit at the end of the lease if Section F of the lease mentions this restriction (check box).

Available tools

To facilitate an agreement on the rent adjustment, the Tribunal is making a calculation tool available on its website (www.tal.gouv.qc.ca). In addition to this electronic form called Calculator 2024, a PDF version of the form can be printed from the website. These simplified calculation tools make it possible to establish the rent adjustment, taking into account the variation in municipal and school taxes, insurance, major improvements, as well as all the operating costs of the building.

It is important to note that the simplified calculation tools do not provide for certain specific situations that could be dealt with at a Tribunal hearing, such as the implementation of a service that results in new operating expenses, or the presence of an expense that does not benefit all the occupants of the building.

To understand the application of percentages

For example, the Tribunal presents a fictitious calculation scenario that provides a better understanding of the application of *the Rent Fixing Criteria Regulation*. **PLEASE NOTE:** This example does not take into account the specificities of each building and each dwelling.

Table 2: Mock Calculation Scenarios

Calculation examples		Monthly rent before calculation: \$1,000				
Type of accommodation	Estimation average Adjustment basic in %	New rent monthly after calculation from Adjustment basic	Estimation average Adjustment basic with add-on an increase Taxes Municipal	New rent monthly after calculation of the increase Taxes Municipal	New Rent monthly after calculating Major works Example: \$5,000 invested in the housing only (4,8 % = 4,00 \$ par \$1,000 so adding 20,00 \$)	Percentage Adjustment After Calculation taxes and of the works Major
Unheated accommodation	4,0 %	1 040 \$	4,6 %	1 046 \$	1 066 \$	6,6 %
Heated accommodation						
Electricity	4,0 %	1 040 \$	4,6 %	1 046 \$	1 066 \$	6,6 %
Gas	3,3 %	1 033 \$	3,9 %	1 039 \$	1 059 \$	5,9 %
Oil-fired	1,6 %	1 016 \$	2,2 %	1 022 \$	1 042 \$	4,2 %

The average baseline adjustment estimate is calculated from the proportions observed in 5,789 calculations made by the Tribunal in 2022 and 2023.

Court cases

From 2015 to 2023, the Tribunal granted an average rent adjustment of 3.4% in cases that were heard at hearings, taking into account the capital expenditures presented to it.

As of January 15, 2024 and December 31, 2023 for the inflation rate.

The years are the reference period for the calculation of the rent adjustment and not the year in which the calculation was made. The percentages granted take into account all components of the rent, including taxes (municipal and school) and insurance. However, the results without capital expenditures do not take into account major expenditures attributed to the building or dwelling unit in question. The number of decisions is the number of calculations used to determine the average rent adjustments granted for each of the reference years.

Table 1: Percentages Applicable to the Rent Adjustment Calculation

Components of Rent	Percentages applicable in 2024	ATTENTION These applicable percentages are not average estimates of increase.
Electricity	2,8 %	
Gas	-7,3 %	
Fuel oil and other energy sources	-10,0 %	
Maintenance Costs	7,5 %	
Service Fees	5,3 %	
Service Fee Attached to the Person even tenants (Private Seniors' Residence)	6,6 %	
Management Fees	5,6 %	
Net income	3,9 %	
Capital Expenditures	4,8 %	

Right to refuse

In Quebec, landlords and tenants are free to agree on a rent increase that everyone considers satisfactory. The tenant also has the right to refuse the rent increase submitted by the landlord. In the event that both parties are

Operating income and expenses for a building may warrant a rent change that is separate from this example calculation, especially if the building has undergone major renovations.

It is therefore important to note that the use of the online calculation tool is necessary to obtain a more accurate estimate of the fit.

Table 3: Average rent adjustments granted by the Tribunal from 2015 to 2023

YEAR	NO CAPITAL EXPENDITURE					ALL OF CASE WITH CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	Number of DECISIONS	INFLATION RATE
	HEATED ACCOMMODATION			UNHEATED ACCOMMODATION	ALL CASES			
	ELECTRICITY	GAS	FUEL OIL					
2015	1,6 %	2,6 %	2,4 %	1,8 %	2,2 %	3,5 %	2 831	1,1 %
2016	1,7 %	1,3 %	-1,9 %	1,7 %	1,5 %	2,6 %	2 062	0,7 %
2017	1,2 %	1,0 %	-1,6 %	1,4 %	1,2 %	2,3 %	1 184	1,1 %
2018	1,2 %	1,4 %	2,7 %	1,5 %	1,4 %	2,9 %	1 524	1,7 %
2019	1,0 %	1,1 %	4,2 %	1,2 %	1,2 %	2,8 %	1 412	2,1 %
2020	1,9 %	2,8 %	1,3 %	1,9 %	2,2 %	4,2 %	2 273	0,8 %
2021	1,0 %	0,9 %	-1,2 %	1,4 %	1,3 %	3,1 %	983	3,8 %
2022	2,4 %	3,4 %	5,0 %	2,8 %	2,9 %	3,7 %	2 737	6,7 %
2023	3,5 %	6,1 %	10,6 %	3,5 %	4,6 %	5,8 %	3 052	4,5 %



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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Q Fourteen years ago I was divorced from my second wife, her idea. I'll call her Kay. But I never lost my love for her. She married again and had two children. We always remained friends, however my new wife could not relate to that, so contact via any manner was limited.

Kay divorced again about four years ago, and my wife just passed away recently. Kay sent her condolences and that has led to a meeting for coffee in the near future. First, I feel guilt because my wife's passing is not even a month old, and my heart is buzzing for Kay. Second, my heart tells me I could live with Kay for the rest of my life, but my intellect tells me I would be a fool to now raise the two kids of the man she left me for.

I feel if I ever commit myself to Kay, I may regret the children, and our relationship would be ruined. I also feel if I don't commit myself to Kay, I may regret losing the woman I never stopped loving.

Keith

A Keith, a friend of ours is a superb horsewoman. A few years ago she acquired a stunningly beautiful, gray Paso Fino horse. She knew he had been mishandled and abused by a string of previous owners. This horse had the characteristic gait of the Paso Fino. When he walked slowly forward, his hooves beat the ground in a perfect

four beat rhythm like the rapid roll of a drum.

Our friend saw the potential in this horse, but no matter how much she worked with him, she could not make him achieve that potential. She experienced one more thing. This was a dangerous animal. A less accomplished rider might have been seriously injured. Finally, she had to admit the horse's flaws and let him go.

In your imagination there is something about Kay which allows you to deny the reality of her actions. You wooed Kay, you were engaged to Kay, you legally married Kay, and she left you for another man. You might call her children the children of another man, but they are her children. They came out of her body. The children are completely innocent.

Until you can get this turned around in your head, you need to consider whether to even meet Kay. The term which describes what you are doing is displacement. It means transferring emotion from the original object to a more acceptable substitute. The loathing you feel for Kay's children is really the loathing and anger you feel toward Kay for leaving you.

Put the blame where it belongs. It doesn't belong on the children, it belongs on Kay. Kay is looking out for Kay. Like our friend with the Paso Fino, you need to admit Kay's flaws and let her go.

Wayne & Tamara

HE LOVES ME NOT

Q Me and my boyfriend recently split up. It was amicable, but he turned nasty, said he hated me, and erased me from his phone. Then he decided he would like to be friends. To make matters worse, he keeps telling me he misses me and still loves me. I feel like he's messing with my head. Is there any advice you can give me in order to either get him back or to move on? I feel like he's playing games.

Alice

A Alice, your ex-boyfriend has you pulling petals from a daisy. With the first you say, "He loves me." With the second you say, "He loves me not." He has you wondering which answer the final petal will yield. He has you playing games.

With a true love the flower isn't destroyed. All the petals are intact. But when someone makes you play this game, know that the final petal always is, "He loves me not." Accept the answer and move on.

Wayne & Tamara

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

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or email: GetInTouch@WayneAndTamara.com

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HOROSCOPE

Week of JANUARY 28 TO FEBRUARY 3, 2024

The luckiest signs this week:
SAGITTARIUS AND CAPRICORN



ARIES

This week will be marked by big responsibilities, both at work and at home. You'll strive to keep your space spotless, which will bring you great satisfaction. It will also help you be more efficient in your daily life.



TAURUS

You'll have a boost in self-confidence, which will pave the way for significant progress in your professional and personal life. You'll have the opportunity to stand out and be recognized in your community.



GEMINI

Whether you're single or in a relationship, you'll experience love at first sight and feel an unprecedented level of affection. You'll learn of a birth in the family, which will be a source of great joy.



CANCER

You'll expand your network of friends and professional contacts. Your great communication skills, at work or elsewhere, will enable you to establish fruitful agreements and resolve disagreements that were undermining the smooth running of activities.



LEO

Before making a major purchase, carefully assess your budget and determine if this expense is necessary. If you're patient, you'll be more satisfied and score a better price.



VIRGO

Get ready for an eventful week! A few unforeseen circumstances could arise. At work, you'll be delighted to get a promotion. This will help you feel more secure in your future or allow you to embark on a new life path.



LIBRA

Sometimes you must take a step back to see things from a new perspective and achieve a remarkable feat. The artist in you will be dazzlingly creative! You could also get involved in a charitable cause aimed at bettering society.



SCORPIO

Your friends will invite you to take part in a fun activity or trip. You'll have a brilliant idea, which will offer a partial solution to your financial problems, if you have any. Trust the experts in this field.



SAGITTARIUS

You'll organize an event that will attract many people. Both at work and at home, you'll successfully handle an urgent situation. You could have the opportunity to celebrate a success.



CAPRICORN

New knowledge will deeply inspire you and contribute to your transformation. You'll explore a new spiritual dimension or start a new ritual that brings great joy to your life.



AQUARIUS

Your emotions will be palpable this week. This could lead you to have deeper conversations with those closest to you. You'll experience a form of enlightenment that opens you up to new possibilities and gives you a unique experience.



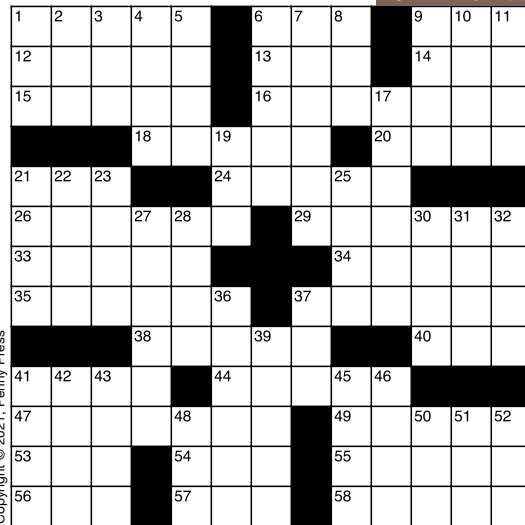
PISCES

You must take time to think before making a crucial decision. If you want to reach your professional goals, you must make changes to move in the direction you want and experience satisfaction.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORDS

PUZZLE NO. 165



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ACROSS

- Trophy, e.g.
- Fireplace dust
- Specialist
- Cowboy show
- Couple
- Congressional act
- Prepare to propose
- Perform surgery
- Signal light
- Watches carefully
- Not on
- Geeks
- Of formal attire
- Sheets of wood
- Passed out cards
- Winter forecast
- Weekly TV show
- Sewing implement
- "Hamlet," e.g.
- Drink daintily
- Out of danger
- Stationer's item

DOWN

- Biblical ship
- Succeeded
- Popular thirst-quencher
- Great Barrier
- Raggedy Ann, e.g.
- Love a lot
- Excellent
- Work in the garden
- Have fun
- Rank

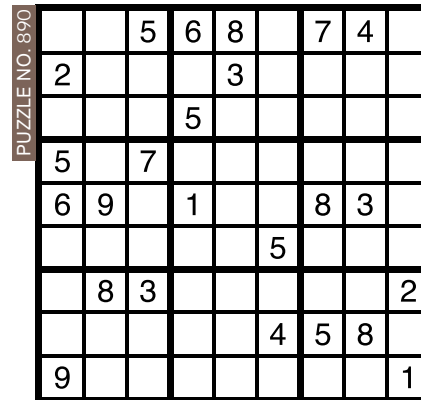
- Is indebted to
- Secondhand
- At least one
- Bettor's numbers
- Independent
- Have cold feet
- Medicine amount
- Pool chutes
- Night light
- Maroon and ruby
- Sandwich spot
- Dance movement
- Suit features
- Short rest
- Brands
- Went very fast
- Friendly nation
- Reputation
- Declines
- Seldom seen
- Casual top
- Boot tip
- Stashed
- Sneaky

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.

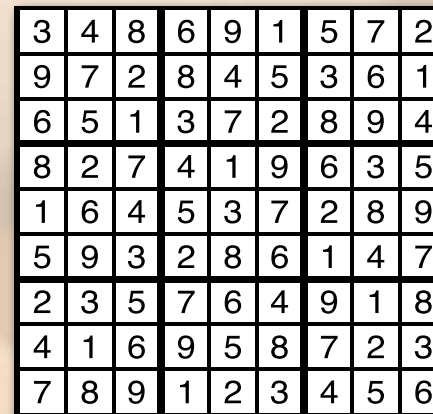


Last Issues' Answers

CROSSWORDS



Sudoku



Doctor Dan Munteanu

PROMOTION ON DENTAL FULL-ARCH IMPLANT-BORNE SOLUTIONS

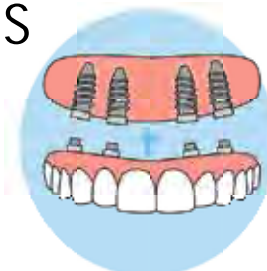
Upper or lower maxillary
Fixed in Zirconia (Pro-Arch)

Exceptional price: \$8464 and \$389/month for 24 months for a total of \$17800. Regular price \$28000.

*Included: Minimally invasive guided procedure, temporary restoration, Straumann implants, lab fees, final restoration in zirconia or porcelain on metal for fixed and milled acrylic for Snap-on. Not included: Extractions, Bone or gum grafts if necessary. Conditional to financing and case approval. Exceptional price ends May 5, 2024

Upper or lower maxillary
Snap-on removable (Novaloc)

Exceptional price: \$7800 and \$250/month for 12 months for a total of \$10,800. Regular price \$15000.



Dr. Dan Munteanu
DMD, General Dentist
More info at www.blancdentaire.ca





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