

## Freeland resigns, Dominic Leblanc becomes new Finance Minister

Dec. 16, 2024 - In a stunning move, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland announced her resignation from Justin Trudeau's cabinet on Monday, after the prime minister told her he no longer wanted her in the top economic post.

After hours of turmoil, longtime Trudeau ally and senior cabinet minister Dominic LeBlanc, was sworn-in as her replacement in the finance portfolio, in a ceremony held at Rideau Hall on Monday afternoon.

In Freeland's absence, Government House Leader Karina Gould tabled the government's long-anticipated fall economic statement in the House of Commons – on the second last day of the House of Commons fall sitting, without a speech. It showed a deficit of \$61.9-billion for 2023-24..

This major shakeup and the political uncertainty it prompted, has revived calls for Trudeau to resign,



**Chrystia Freeland served for nine years in Trudeau's cabinet resigned abruptly Monday, Dec. 26 before issuing economic statement. Dominic Leblanc inducted on the same day to be the new Finance Minister. (CBC News photo)**

both from other party leaders and within his own caucus. The prime minister, according to sources, is now said to be considering prorogation, as well as his options as leader. At



around 5:30 p.m. EST, Trudeau met with his caucus. He could be seen speaking, through a glass wall in the special room his MPs were gathered in, as reporters huddled outside.

It remains unclear what exactly Trudeau had to say, as he's yet to face reporter questions. Though, Trudeau finally addressed the tumultuous day while speaking at a holiday party for top Liberal donors on Monday night.

"It's obviously been an eventful day. It has not been an easy day, but I wanted to come here tonight and speak with you dedicated, devoted members of the Liberal Party, because you, not me or any other politician, are the beating heart of this movement," Trudeau said.

"It is the absolute privilege of my life to serve as your prime minister," he added, to cheers and applause.

Trudeau then implored the room of Liberal loyalists to enjoy their holidays and recharge so they can come back "ready to show Canadians we have a serious, positive vision for the future of this great country, that is

See Page 3 Freeland resigns

## St. Monica Church's future still unknown due to bike paths' impact on its revenue

(Montreal, Nov. 24 - By Z.F. Kharroubi)

A large turnout of people responded to the call to support the survival of St. Monica Church which is in its 75th year of existence in the same neighborhood but due to the re-installation of bike paths fronting the church, it suffered from a great reduction of its revenue because funerals, weddings, and rental of its hall are no longer possible. Church warden Paul Wong is worried that it may be their last in this location unless a solution can be found to the problems caused by the bicycle path

A free concert organized by a support committee held on Sunday, November 24, 2024 featured many artists and performers, namely, a popular band called Freddie James Project, Panday Tinig Choral Ensemble and Adiva Ross Estinozo, who dedicated their performances as a tribute to Montreal's Godfather (Bert Abiera),

Chan Dragon Dance, Clare Keyes who accompanied herself by playing the guitar, Mishael Eusebio, a Filipino-Canadian opera singer. Natasha Hall, a well-known radio host, was the emcee of the show. Several speakers expected to deliver their messages were: Dida Berku, City Councillor, City of Cote Saint Luc; Chelsea Craig, School Commissioner; Sharon Nelson, City Councillor; Al Abdon, President, Filipino Heritage Society; Joel DeBellefeuille, Chair, Joel DeBellefeuille Foundation; Gulnar Mousa, President, Lions Club of NDG; Luzviminda Mazzone, President, Federation of Filipino Canadian Associations of Quebec; Mark Henry, President, Jamaica Association of Montreal; Bryant Chang, Vice-President, Chinese Association of Montreal.

The concert lasted more than four hours and the audience seemed to

See Page 2 St. Monica Church



**The simple beauty of St. Monica's captured on an early Spring day. Photo by Robert Ganz. Church located on 6405 Terrebonne, NDG, Montreal**

**Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all our readers**  
**Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon 2025**

From Page 1 St. Monica Church

love every minute of it as the Freddie James Project band played and danced so well that people remained on their feet, swaying and dancing along with their music.

Many people gave envelopes of donations during the concert but it is not known how much this can help the church survive if the CDN-NDG Borough will not consider removing the bike paths at least during the winter time. A similar bicycle path had been installed four years ago, but was removed due to public outcry. This past summer it was reinstalled on both sides of the street, and the configuration of Terrebonne changed to one-way on either side of Cavendish.

The street outside the front of the church is a no-stopping zone, which means that seniors and people with mobility issues can no longer be dropped off out front. Bridal and funeral processions are also prevented parking out front. With a reduction in church attendance and donations, the church decided to write a letter to the city ombudsperson, Nadine Mailloux, asking her to intervene on their behalf. Joe Ortona, the newly elected chairman of the English Montreal School Board, wrote a letter to the Borough citing a recent accident that occurred between a parent's car and a school bus, but has not yet received a response. Both Stephanie Valenzuela and Sonny Moroz stated that a motion to consider removing the bike paths would be presented at the December council meeting, but the result of this move is



The Freddie James Project greatly entertained the audience



One of the two dragons is shown mingling with the audience

not known at press time.

Mr. Marvin Rotrand, former councillor for the Snowdon district for over 35 years, and the current chairman of United Against Hate Canada, is a member of St. Monica Church's support committee. Although he was unable to attend the free concert due to a family

affair, he has been greatly involved in sending various letters and information to all his networks, soliciting support for the church. He said that one does not have to be a member of the Catholic church to help in finding ways to save a community institution.

St. Monica Church had

appealed to the Borough for solutions at least for funerals, to no avail. As per tradition, caskets are carried out the front door, down the front steps, to a waiting hearse. It's dignified, say Wong and Father Joseph, and symbolic. But city officials won't allow it. Rather, they have suggested the church use either the side alleyway, or the pathway between the church and the rectory. Wong says neither would work; the side alleyway is not wide enough to afford a dignified exit from the church. And the path between the church and the rectory is not structurally strong enough to accommodate a vehicle due to the tunnel that passes between the buildings (there are actually barriers installed midway on the path to block vehicular passage). A request for financial assistance to do the work necessary to widen the side alleyway was refused, and the church can't afford to have the work done on their own means, especially since so many streams of revenue have been halted by the bike paths.

As many predicted, there is no mass of cyclists using the bike path. It's clear though that the winter bike path is more about favouring a handful of the bike zealots over the general public.

According to Father Jaison and the wardens, the Borough has not responded to the letter that Saint Monica tabled at the November Borough meeting. It appears that it is irresponsible of the Borough to ignore the access and safety issues that the English Montreal School Board and residents have brought to its attention. #



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**FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK**

**Year-end reflections where we have been and where we are going**

**Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi**

*The end of the year is always a good time to reflect on our spiritual progress. Whether you set goals at the beginning of this year or not, it is certainly good to ask where you have been this year and whether you are heading in the right direction.* – Christopher Perry

It seems like part of living a busy life to feel that time flies so fast that we do not realize until the year is over that we have not reached our goals we have set to achieve. Perhaps, many people feel the same way. But there is hope that these goals that were not achieved this year can be realized next year if we set our mind to do so.

A common reaction to unfulfilled dreams or goals is to feel disappointed or blame ourselves for our failures. But this apparently is not in our best interest to give up or not to try again as "quitters never win" and "winners never quit."

As everyone may still recall we

have been through two years of pandemic isolation and hardships but we managed to survive. Inflation and high interest rates have adversely affected us, and we have remained optimistic that things would get better soon. In fact, we are now starting to see the reduction of interest rates to 3.25%, the fifth time the Bank of Canada has decreased the rates. It is reported that we are on target to reduce inflation to the 2% stage.

Trump's threat to impose 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico is just another challenge, and we must keep our hopes high that everything will work out well in the end and trust our leaders to work together in finding the most effective ways to respond.

As we face 2025, it is necessary to be prepared for the further advancement of AI technology in the workplace. Needless to say, continuous learning is the only way not to be obsolete and keep ourselves relevant not only personally but also

socially, economically, and politically.

A writer about human resources development stated that "our goal should be to create workplaces that are both technologically advanced and profoundly human, where AI enhances our unique human qualities. This is what we call Human Kind Technology."

Time is gold, it flies, and we can always have time on our side, if we learn to value it as it is scarce and a priceless asset. Let us face the New Year with renewed aspirations for a

better future for all humanity and may there be peace on earth and goodwill to all mankind.

Happy holidays, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year to all our readers.



From Page 1 Freeland resigns worth fighting for."

Freeland says Trudeau offered her 'another position'

In a letter Freeland posted to social media on Monday morning, Freeland said her decision to leave her top ministerial portfolios came after Trudeau offered her "another position in Cabinet."

"Upon reflection, I have concluded that the only honest and viable path is for me to resign from the cabinet," Freeland said in the bombshell letter. "To be effective, a minister must speak on behalf of the prime minister and with his full confidence."

"In making your decision, you made clear that I no longer credibly enjoy that confidence," she added, addressing the prime minister directly.

The two have found themselves "at odds about the best path forward for Canada," she wrote, an assertion she's sought to downplay in recent days as reports of fraying

tensions between the two top Liberals re-emerged.

The latest round of frustration between their two offices was reportedly connected to disagreements over measures such as the two-month GST/HST pause and the in-limbo \$250 workers' benefit cheques, as well as the government's ability to abide by its fiscal anchors.

In the letter, Freeland notes the looming tariff threat from president-elect Donald Trump and makes the case for that being why Canada needs to keep its "fiscal powder dry," and why the government should be "eschewing costly political gimmicks, which we can ill afford and which make Canadians doubt that we recognize the gravity of the moment."

Freeland said she plans to stay on as a Liberal MP and is "committed" to running again in the next election.#

With files from CTV News' Spencer Van Dyk

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# Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with Trump on the tariff threat, convenes meeting with all premiers

On Friday evening, November 29, 2024, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau arrived at Mar-a-Lago for an unannounced dinner with Donald Trump after the president-elect threatened Canada with a hefty tariff. He is the first G7 leader to visit the resort since the U.S. election. Trudeau was accompanied by Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc who is in charge of border security.

Provincial premiers' reactions and ideas on the proper way to respond to Trump's tariff threat have been mixed, but appeared to be united in their intentions to have a collaborative approach to find a solution to convince Trump that the tariffs if imposed on Canada and Mexico would also be harmful to the citizens and businesses in the United States. Moreover, the USMCA that revised the NAFTA trade pact in 2020 is still in force until 2026. Experts believe that Trump maybe using the tariff threat as a negotiation window as currently, the pact allows free trade among Mexico, U.S. and Canada.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shared an "overview" of the federal government's plan to strengthen border security with Canada's premiers and discussed potential responses to tariffs threatened by U.S. president-elect Donald Trump during a meeting Wednesday (Dec. 11, 2024) federal officials said.

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc told reporters in Ottawa that the border plan was still being finalized, and would incorporate suggestions from the premiers during the meeting, the second one held since Trump's threat to impose 25 per cent tariffs on



**Pennsylvania Sen.-elect Dave McCormick posted a photo dining at the table with President-elect Donald Trump and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at Mar-a-Lago Friday night. Full table from Trump's right: Trump's national security adviser pick, Mike Waltz and his wife, Julia Neishwat; Trump's interior secretary pick, Doug Burgum, and his wife Kathryn; Dave McCormick and Dina Powell; Trudeau's chief of staff, Katie Telford; Trudeau's public safety minister, Dominic LeBlanc; Allison Lutnick and Howard Lutnick, Trump's pick for secretary of commerce. From Sen. Dave McCormick/X**

Canadian imports. He said details would be shared with the incoming Trump administration and Canadians "in the coming days."

"We shared the details of the border plan with premiers, and received positive feedback," he said following the meeting.

LeBlanc said several premiers offered their own provincial policing resources, including personnel and equipment, to work with RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) enforce the Canada-U.S. border. However, Danielle Smith, premier of Alberta, feared that Donald Trump's past behaviour towards Prime Minister Trudeau could be a negative

factor in the negotiations and suggested that someone else might be a better choice to do the job. Earlier this week, Trump took to his Truth Social platform to mock Trudeau, by referring to him as the "Governor" of the "Great State of Canada." But a Canadian lawyer, a NDP member of the House of Commons, Charlie Angus, slammed Trump's "idiotic" behaviour. He said in his Tuesday remarks that Canada has previously "stood up" to America despite the two nations being "neighbors." He stated that Trump is "seriously undermining the democratic process in the United States, and he thinks he can just push us around. He insults us.... We need to stand up to

Donald Trump. Not to be boasting like he boasts and not to be threatening like he threatens, but to stand for Canadian values. That, no, we will counter falsehood with truth. That we will be a good neighbor, that we will protect our border but that we will not be pushed around."

Angus also underscored the cultural difference between Canadian and American tradition by saying: "There's a tradition in Canada of not wanting to be openly confrontive, which is fair — I think that's who we are," he said. "But Donald Trump's a different kind of animal. He's playing for the rage algorithms, and I don't think we should allow him that free rein." Angus told Ben Meiselas of the MeidasTouch Network in reference to Trump.

"We're going to have tough negotiations, fair play. But this kind of dismissive, idiotic behavior? I mean, he's a juvenile,"

Contrary to what Donald Trump's policies of putting America first, experts have stated that the tariffs could intensify US trucking industry slump, would deal a blow to the \$1.7 trillion U.S. transportation industry and worsen a nearly three-year trucking recession. The industry that moves everything Americans make and buy is considered an economic bellwether, and will be among the first to signal any unintended consequences of trade policies that Trump says will help, not hurt, U.S. businesses.

More important developments about this tariff threat will surely be covered in the news for many days to come.

Sources: Yahoo Finance, Huff Post, CBC News, Financial Post, Reuters.

## CNN's 18th Annual Tribute to Heroes

NEW YORK, NY – (December 8, 2024) – Tonight at the 18th Annual CNN Heroes: An All-Star Tribute, Stephen Knight was named the 2024 CNN Hero of the Year. Hosted by CNN Anchors Anderson Cooper and Laura Coates, the global broadcast honored everyday people who are making extraordinary contributions to help improve the lives of others.

Knight's organization Dogs Matter provides foster care for pets

whose owners are seeking substance abuse treatment, covering animal expenses for the foster family and providing post-release services to help human participants succeed with their sobriety.

Each Top 5 CNN Hero will be awarded \$10,000 and Knight, as the CNN Hero of the Year, will receive \$100,000 to continue his life-changing work. Accepting the award, Knight said "This means everything. I represent so

much here. I represent the recovery community. The dog rescue community... This is going to be able to take us to the next level."

In its third year of collaboration with CNN Heroes, the Elevate Prize Foundation, a global nonprofit on a mission to Make Good Famous, committed to bringing visibility to the work of changemakers and inspiring the world, is awarding \$50,000 to Knight as the CNN Hero of the Year. All five honorees will also receive from the Elevate Prize Foundation organizational capacity-building and tailored resources to maximize their impact and will attend the foundation's annual Make Good Famous Summit in May of 2025.

Michael J. Fox was honored with the second annual CNN Heroes Legacy Award for his lifetime commitment to bringing hope to those diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Accepting the award, Fox said "I am humbled, I am grateful, and with gratitude, optimism is sustainable. We can get this done."

Notable guests joined CNN Heroes: An All-Star Tribute including Academy Award® nominee Bradley Cooper, Emmy® nominee Pedro Pascal, global media leader Oprah Winfrey,



ballet dancer Misty Copeland, Emmy® nominee and star of NBC's Brilliant Minds Zachary Quinto, Daytime Emmy® winner Kelly Ripa and award-winning actress and playwright Danai Gurira.

CNN has partnered with GoFundMe to enable donations to this year's Top 5 honorees. Supporters can make online donations to the Top 5 CNN Heroes' nonprofit organizations directly from CNNHeroes.com. The Elevate Prize Foundation is matching donations to all of the 2024 Top 5 CNN Heroes up to \$50,000 per hero through January 5, 2025.#



**Stephen Knight, CNN Hero of the Year**



**NEWS REPORTS**  
**By: Leo Lete**  
**Local Journalism Initiative (NEPMCC)**

# Canada Announces Tax Relief for Middle-Class and Working Canadians

In a move to address rising living costs, the Canadian government has introduced a significant tax relief initiative aimed at middle-class Canadians and those aspiring to join their ranks. This measure is part of a broader effort to ease financial burdens and promote economic equity.

### Key Points of the Initiative

**GST/HST Exemptions:** Starting December 14, 2024, a range of essential items, including children's clothing, prepared foods, and even

Canadians.

The initiative specifically supports middle-income Canadians and those striving to achieve financial stability. Measures ensure that the wealthiest Canadians do not disproportionately benefit, reinforcing the government's focus on economic equity and affordability. The broader goals include mitigating inflation's impact, fostering economic participation, and providing relief during a challenging economic period.



Christmas trees, will be tax-free until February 15, 2025. This aims to make everyday purchases more affordable, particularly during the holiday season. Families spending \$2,000 on these items could save approximately \$100 during the exemption period.

This new tax break will apply to:

- Children's clothing and footwear, car seats, and diapers
- Children's toys, such as board games, dolls, and video game consoles
- Prepared foods, including vegetable trays, pre-made meals and salads, and sandwiches
- Restaurant meals, whether dine-in, takeout, or delivery
- Snacks, including chips, candy, and granola bars
- Beer, wine, cider, and pre-mixed alcoholic beverages below seven percent ABV
- Books, print newspapers, and puzzles for all ages
- Christmas trees

### Working Canadians Rebate:

A \$250 rebate will be issued to Canadians who earned up to \$150,000 in 2023. Payments, either through direct deposit or cheque, will begin in early spring 2025. This rebate is expected to benefit 18.7 million

### Implementation and Broader Impact

Eligible Canadians need to have filed their 2023 tax returns to qualify for the rebate. Additionally, the government is urging Parliament to expedite legislation for these measures. The tax break aligns with Canada's fiscal trends, which have seen inflation drop to 2% and interest rates reduced four times in 2024, offering further relief to households and businesses.

Government officials have emphasized the initiative's potential to reduce holiday season stress and foster economic stability. Minister Steven Guilbeault remarked that these measures aim to help Canadians focus on family celebrations while easing financial pressures.

Canadians can learn more about the initiative and calculate potential savings through resources provided by the Canada Revenue Agency and other government portals.

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# Santé Québec eyes selective service reductions to tackle budget cuts

Amid growing financial pressures, Santé Québec is considering a selective reduction of healthcare services in an effort to address budget constraints. The proposed measures aim to reorganize or streamline non-essential services while safeguarding critical care areas such as emergency and urgent medical interventions.

The initiative involves reviewing and prioritizing healthcare services to focus resources on core medical needs. Santé Québec seeks to ensure the long-term sustainability of the healthcare system, which faces challenges like rising costs, workforce shortages, and infrastructure limitations. This strategy mirrors approaches taken by other provinces, where incremental service reconfiguration has yielded mixed outcomes.

### Implications and Concerns

If implemented, the proposed changes could impact access to elective and non-urgent healthcare services. Some experts fear that marginalized communities might face greater disparities in care. Healthcare professionals and advocacy groups have expressed concerns about service equity and the potential strain on remaining programs. There is also apprehension about whether such cuts will genuinely result in sustainable improvements without affecting patient outcomes.

Reactions to the proposal have been mixed. While some public officials argue that fiscal responsibility



**Quebec Health Minister Christian Dubé**

necessitates tough decisions, others urge exploring alternative cost-saving measures, such as enhanced efficiency in healthcare delivery and administrative reforms.

Consultations are planned to gauge community sentiment and refine the implementation strategy. This move is not unique to Quebec. Similar measures in Ontario and New Brunswick have shown the benefits of integrated service delivery models but also highlighted challenges in maintaining equitable care. Santé Québec's approach underscores the need for transparent communication and inclusive stakeholder engagement to mitigate public concerns.

The government is expected to outline a detailed timeline and criteria for the proposed changes, alongside discussions with healthcare workers and community organizations. Ensuring transparency and public trust remains a top priority as Quebec navigates this critical juncture in its healthcare system's evolution. #

# Montreal's historic Empress Theatre set for redevelopment

The Empress Theatre, an iconic nearly century-old landmark in Montreal's Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (NDG) neighborhood, is poised for a major transformation. Abandoned since a devastating fire in 1992, the city has announced its decision to sell

Theatre was once a vibrant cultural hub, hosting burlesque shows, dinner theatre performances, and films. Its unique Egyptian Revival architectural style sets it apart, adding historical and aesthetic value to the neighborhood. The theatre's decline began



**Montreal is preparing to sell the old Empress Theatre in NDG for mixed-use development, following years of efforts to preserve the 1920s Egyptian Revival-style building. Empress Theatre Photo by D. Benjamin Miller**

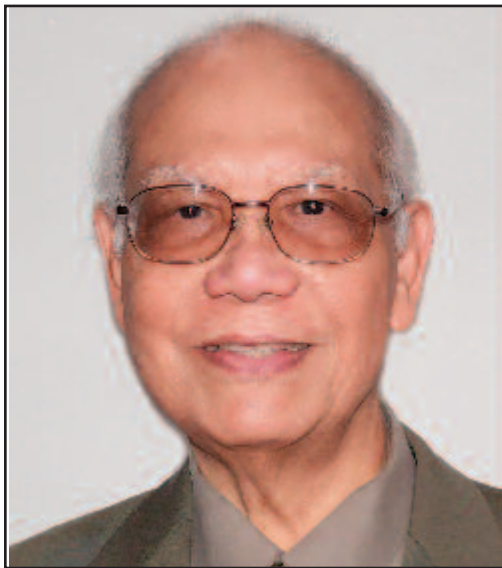
the property, paving the way for its redevelopment into a mixed-use space that will blend housing and commercial units.

Opened in 1927, the Empress

after a fire in 1992, leaving the building vacant for over 30 years.

Despite several proposals for

See Page 7 Empress Theater



## ONTARIO FILIPINO- CANADIAN COMMUNITY NEWS

Tony A. San Juan, OCT

### Fil-Can Community Groups Celebrate Asian Food and Cultural Festival

Two prominent Filipino-Canadian community organizations in the Greater Toronto Area have celebrated the "Asian Food and Cultural Festival" in a display of cooperation and collaboration. On November 23, 2024, the Philippine Independence Day Council (PIDC) and the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF), both notable non-profit and volunteer-run entities, purposefully joined the special event with great enthusiasm and solid admiration.

The 2024 Asian Multicultural event was held at the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto at 5183 Sheppard Avenue East, Scarborough. Presented by the Canadian Multicultural Council Asians in Ontario (CMCA-O), the celebration was well attended by the officers, members, families, and friends of the 18-member Asian organizations in the province. The event co-chairs were Mar Mar Cho and Mali Phiphat, assisted by the CCC Production Team.

CMCA-O is a "Toronto-based

Auditor Melinda Manlapaz led the PIDC contingent. Amongst the PIDC beauties present were Mrs. Philippines-PIDC 2014 Kathleen Ortiguero, and PIDC Alumni Ma. Sherry Tan, Margie Gevevo, MaryJean Puno, and Imelda Concepcion. On the one hand, the PCCF delegation was headed by its President, Rosemer Enverga and members of the PCCF Executive Directorate.

The 5-hour successful program was jointly emceed by PIDC's Rodney Ronquillo and Chyrell Samson. CMCA-O President Dr. Tulsi Dharel gave the welcome remarks while the Member of Parliament for Scarborough North Shaun Chen delivered his brief message. After Chyrell Samson sang the Canadian national anthem, the Asian ethnic culinary delights dinner ensued. True to their professional stature, R. Ronquillo, C. Samson, Lilac Cana, and Danny Orbillo fully entertained the guests and the multi-ethnic audience with beautiful and lively songs.



**PIDC Beauties**

non-profit, non-political organization of Asian Canadian Associations representing various Asian countries, ethnic regions, and cultures". Among the Asian nations represented in the 18-member association are: Burma, China, Indonesia, Japan, Khmer Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tamil, Taiwan, Tibet, and Vietnam.

PIDC President Tom Tan, Vice Presidents Agnes P. Miranda & Ben Corpuz, Executive Secretary Suzy Llanera, Public Relations Officers Leonor Abad & Danny Orbillo, and

Several culture-focused performances were presented by dancers, singers, and talents from the Asian organizations such as the Nepalese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Filipino-PCCF, Vietnamese, Filipino-PIDC, Burmese, Indonesian, and Laotian as well as an ethnic-oriented fashion show. It was a Saturday evening when Asian Canadians significantly showcased their kindred cultures and cuisines, and collective aspiration of solidarity, peace, and harmony in the Canadian landscape.

### Filipino Centre Toronto awards top ten Fil-Can students in Ontario

The Filipino Centre Toronto (FCT) held its "19th Annual Rosalinda C. Javier Outstanding Students Awards" event on November 17, 2024 (Sunday) at 2:00 pm at the FCT Social Hall, 4395 Sheppard Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario. RCJOSA is named in honour of the late Rosalinda Cerrudo Javier, the first FCT President & CEO, and a former Ontario schoolteacher.

The RCJOSA Awards is an annual academic recognition program of the Filipino Centre Toronto, a 25-year-old community-based, service-focused, and volunteer-run non-profit organization in Toronto, Canada. For the past 19 years, the established initiative has been in pursuance of the FCT's established mission and mandate to develop and offer programs and services impacting the community. Purposefully, the yearly competition encourages and challenges Filipino Canadian students to perform and achieve academic excellence and exemplary performance in their respective educational pursuits in Ontario.

The yearly event celebrates and recognizes honour student graduates in the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. Since 2005, 154 Filipino-Canadian Ontario student graduates have been given honours. This year, the 10 outstanding students who received the FCT Plaques of Recognition, Congratulatory Scrolls and cash prizes were Angelica Kaylee D. Tait, Andre Alampay, Roloves E. Mangante, & Carlos Santos in the Postsecondary category; the high school awardees were Anzle Marc Chavez, Aizzy Zaira De Vera & Emilio Javier Santos while the elementary graduate honourees were Gloriane Neverida Baricuatro, Jacob S. Lectura,

and Bianca Manlapaz.

Among the dignitaries and special guests were Philippine Consul General in Toronto Angelica C. Escalona who delivered the inspirational address, the Federal Members of Parliaments such as Minister of Small Business Rechie Valdez, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Ya'ara Saks, and MP for Scarborough Centre Salma Zahid, and Member of Provincial Parliament Aris Babikian. MP for Scarborough North Shaun Chen and MPP Raymond Cho were represented by their executive assistants, respectively. The other guests were TCDSB Trustee Garry Tanuan, the FCT BOD Chairman Efen De Villa, FCT President Mary Ann S. San Juan, Treasurer Wendy Arena, Board Members Frank Cruzet, Dr. Nnette De Villa, Jeannette Rosales, Office Manager Kit Garcia, and FCT staff & volunteers.

Emceed by FCT Vice-president Theresa Lumanlan, the 2-hour programme parts included the singing of Filipino and Canadian national anthems, land acknowledgement, invocation, welcome remarks, guest speaker introduction, inspirational address, vocal rendition, and closing remarks. Photo opportunities and light refreshments followed. The FCT-RCJOSA Awards Committee is headed by Tony A. San Juan, founder of the Filipino Heritage Council of Canada (Chairman), with Mary Ann S. San Juan-FCT President & CEO as Co-chair. Indeed the event was a memorable and meaningful gathering of exemplary Filipino Canadian student graduates, their loved ones, and special guests.



**PIDC Officers and Directors**



**Filipino contingent to CMC-AO event**

# Filipino Centre Toronto Opens Search for Outstanding Filipino Canadian Seniors in Ontario



By Tony A. San Juan, OCT

The Filipino Centre Toronto - FCT, a prominent Filipino Canadian community service hub in the Greater Toronto Area, proudly announces its search for Outstanding Filipino-Canadian Seniors for 2024-2025 commencing on December 15, 2024. The community-based entity is engaging purposefully to present a public tribute of recognizing, honouring, and appreciating Senior Citizen Achievers in the Filipino Canadian community in Ontario.

Specifically, the awards project is being initiated by the FCT -Filipino Centre Toronto to encourage, identify and reward seniors who have made outstanding service and valuable contributions to the life and well-being of the community by helping build a better community through their personal or professional endeavours. With their different backgrounds as community leaders, business & management executives, social-cause advocates & volunteers, public & non-governmental officials, service-oriented & faith-focused people, and art, health, sports & media practitioners, these still active individuals are serving or have served as role models and inspirations to students, youth & young adults and their fellow senior citizens.

The "Outstanding Filipino Canadian Seniors of the Year Awardees" will be selected from any of the following areas of the profession, discipline, service or community, namely: 1) Business and Entrepreneurship, 2) Certified Profession / Trade, 3) Public, Non-government, & Community Service, 4) Education, Health, Wellness, and Sports, 5) Arts, Media, and Public Relations. Every awardee or winner will be given a prize in the form of a "Plaque of Recognition", "Congratulatory Certificate", and "Cash Award" (the amount of which is to be determined by the FCT Board of Directors). Officers and directors of FCT and their immediate family members are ineligible to apply for the award. The search process is by invitation, nomination or self-application

General Requirements for Candidates. The Candidate must meet the following Requirements 1) Must complete and submit an Application or Nomination Form, with 2-coloured headshot photos. 2) Must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Ontario and Filipino heritage. 3) Must be at least 65 years or older, at the time of application (photocopy of a government-issued Senior Citizen Card is required). 4) May be nominated by a recognized professional/community-based organi-

nization or may directly apply on his/her own accord. 5) Must submit at least two (2) Recommendation/Reference Letters from a current or previous employer or a senior officer of a professional/community organization. 6) Must write in no more than 100 words the rationale or reason(s) for his/her application/nomination. Completed applications and requirements should be submitted in hard or photocopies to the Filipino Centre Toronto, c/o Tony A. San Juan (OFCSA Chair)

**Selection Process.** The selection of awardees will be based on the following Evaluation Criteria with the suggested weight of 100 %: 1) Demonstrated Skill or Performance in the area of Expertise or Professional Practice or Discipline (Licensure/ Practitioner/ Career Position) =20%; 2) Community Engagement and Involvement (participation in community projects and initiatives on a responsible capacity or position) = 30%; 3) Awards and Honours Received from an Organization or Recognized / Reputable award-giving bodies( professional/community award of distinction) = 20%; 4) Affiliation and Achievement as an Officer, Director or Member of a Recognized Organization ( membership with known community organizations) = 15%; 5) Assessed rating on the Candidate's reference or testimonial, i.e. credible community standing, and individual attributes, application rationale and personal current plan = 15%. There are no personal interviews for candidates, unless extremely necessary. The decision of the FCT Outstanding Seniors Award Committee is final and binding.

The FCT Outstanding Seniors Awards Committee is composed of: Agnes P. Miranda-WFG Senior Executive Vice Chair, Carol Banez-Clinical nurse specialist & SOSA president, Garry Tanuan- TCDSB Ward 8 trustee; Antonio Villarin, Ontario solicitor-barrister; Mary Ann San Juan, FCT President & CEO, Nitz Rejdik, SandBanks Cottages and Camp Rentals proprietor, and Tony A. San Juan, founder of the Filipino Heritage Council of Canada, as Chairman.

The winners will be presented and honoured at the FCT-OCSA event tentatively set for April 2025. Application / Nomination Forms are now available at the Filipino Toronto Centre, 4395 Sheppard Avenue East, Scarborough, Toronto, ON M1S 1T9 or by phone: 416- 335- 0485 or email at [filipinocentreinfo@gmail.com](mailto:filipinocentreinfo@gmail.com). The Deadline for submission of the completed application/nomination and requirements by hand or mail, is February 28, 2025, Friday.

From Page 5 Empress Theater

revival, none came to fruition, and the structure continued to deteriorate due to neglect and exposure to the elements.

### City's Redevelopment Plan

Montreal plans to redevelop the site into a mixed-use space combining residential and commercial uses. Notably, at least 20% of the housing units will be allocated as affordable, non-market housing. The city sees this initiative as a way to breathe the new life into the property while meeting community needs.

### Supportive Voices

Some NDG residents hope that the redevelopment will create a community-oriented space, such as a recreation center or entertainment venue. They believe such a project could strengthen the neighborhood's cultural fabric.

Others remain cautious. Longtime resident Howard McGillis expressed doubt about whether the redevelopment would progress, given the history of failed attempts. Similarly, Paul Scriver, reflecting on past efforts, voiced cautious optimism while acknowledging the challenges ahead. Heritage Montreal's Dinu Bumbaru has emphasized the urgency of addressing the Empress Theatre's dilapidated state. Years of rain infiltration and neglect have left the structure in critical condition, making immediate action essential to preserve this architectural and cultural treasure.

### Challenges and Opportunities

While the site's redevelopment faces hurdles, including skepticism from residents and the building's deteriorated condition, it also presents an opportunity. Revitalizing the theatre could provide much-needed affordable housing, foster local commerce, and preserve an essential piece of Montreal's heritage.

The Empress Theatre holds immense historical and cultural significance in Montreal. The city's plan to redevelop it as a mixed-use space represents a pivotal moment for NDG. Swift, effective action will be necessary to ensure the theatre's legacy is preserved and its potential fully realized.

# Montreal says no to water fluoridation

Montreal has decided to cease fluoridation at two water treatment plants serving the West Island by 2025, sparking intense debate among local officials, public health advocates, and suburban municipalities. The move, approved by the Montreal Agglomeration Council, was justified by cost savings of approximately \$100,000 annually, logistical challenges, and health risks associated with handling fluoridation chemicals. However, the decision has drawn criticism from suburban leaders and public health professionals.

### Background and City's Stance

Fluoridation began in Montreal's West Island in the 1950s, but today only 5% of the city's population receives fluoridated water. Montreal



Fluoridation photo by Montreal Gazette webpage

officials, including Lachine Mayor Maja Vodanovic, argue for consistency across the city and emphasize prioritizing water filtration quality. Vodanovic highlighted that only 1% of the city's treated water is consumed, questioning the necessity of fluoridation across the entire supply.

### Why discontinue fluoridation?

This conclusion was taken after an analysis conducted by experts from the Service de l'eau, who determined that:

- Fluoride is a very corrosive chemical that can harm our infrastructure in the long run.
- Wastewater treatment does not remove fluoride from the water. The water is released into the St. Lawrence River, and there have been few

See Page 17 Water fluoridation

## CAREGIVERS NEEDED

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Angela Lacuesta, Intern

### The late snow fall in Quebec may be a result of climate change

Quebec has faced significant changes in weather throughout the years. Recently, one of the main changes in weather patterns is the late snowfall. The fall weather has been relatively warm, as a result, some forecasters predict that, in comparison to the past winter, this year will be much cooler. This winter, however, is an improvement over the last winter which was extremely warmer than expected.

There have been many rapid shifts in precipitation patterns



### Internship Program

experienced.

During the last winter, areas like Ontario and Quebec were 6.3 degrees above the average baseline. This causes environmental tension and concerns of many organizations, government and people in Canada. Organizations such as Greenpeace, Climate Action network or Environmental and Climate Justice Montreal are raising awareness about this human-made issue in order to help create environmental laws or policies to ensure a healthier and safer planet.

Climate change has been a recurring issue since the year 1950 with the increasing amount of greenhouse

socially. Communities like arctic residents and other communities in the Northern areas of Canada may suffer from the negative impacts of climate change.

In 2022, the government of Canada introduced a climate plan to help make the country greener known as Canada's 2030 Emission Reduction Plan. This plan consisted of reducing emissions by 40-45% by 2030, building a stronger economy in terms of jobs and energy usage.

As a society, we can do several things to help reduce the harm to our environment such as saving energy at home, using public transport, walking or biking, recycling, being mindful about the money we spend in order to reduce consumer consumption and other measures which can help reduce environmental pollution.

Overall, climate change has caused a great deal of harm and dangerous changes to the normal weather. Reducing unsustainable human and industrial activities is necessary to benefit the present as well as future generations living on the same earth. #

### Government's attempt to reduce the homeless population in Quebec

Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, and France-Élaine Duranceau, Quebec Minister Responsible for Housing, made an announcement during a speech at the fourth États généraux de l'itinérance au Québec on November 29, 2024. Among the 22 projects selected, Quebec Minister Duranceau highlighted the upcoming construction of a 23-room building in Québec, a project undertaken by the John Howard Society of Quebec for people at risk of homelessness or experiencing residential instability.

mental, occupational and financial instabilities. The government of Quebec has created various programs which aid people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. A few of them are: PRISM, a mental health service for the homeless, Shelter Allowance Program, to aid those who have financial difficulties, and Programme de Logement Social, for low income housing. These programs provide homeless communities with the necessary services to improve their quality of life.

Homelessness may occur due to a multitude of issues, namely, the increase of housing costs, lack of housing construction, housing competition and other factors. The ability to gain affordable and proper housing is a struggle for many people. The financial aspect of homelessness also creates an issue of not being able to obtain the proper basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Economic factors such as inflation, job insecurity and limited support further cause financial instabilities. Mental instability is also a rising issue for this community as social isolation, addiction, familial situations, mental or physical disabilities can lead to homelessness without the necessary resources or social support. For these reasons, this social issue creates the risk of being without shelter and the government's action within the community is needed in these circumstances.

The construction of the housing project in Quebec would enable those who cannot afford housing costs to have access to proper shelter. The 23-room construction would allow a certain number of people in the low-income community to gain financial relief. The housing plan also encourages an improvement in the quality of life for the homeless as they are provided with shelter in order to



The first snow of the winter season in Montreal, Quebec came on December 5, 2024 as a flurry of white snow covering the ground. (Marco Bordignon, CityNews)

throughout the years as the a sign of the worsening climate change accumulated from the past into the present. The global change in climate has created a lot of problems which have lasting impacts on society's health and well-being.

While the shift feels insignificant, the accumulated impact is much bigger, thus action against climate change is recognized as a priority. Connections can be made between the upcoming colder temperatures and climate change as the weather is impacted by the warming of the earth. Due to the continuous exposure to fossil fuels and greenhouse gases, the earth continues to warm. While it may sound unimportant, many damaging impacts follow because of this warmth. The upcoming winter is said to be cooler in temperature and will have heavier snow storms, but it has improved from the last winter when the weather was warm and snowfall came much later.

Slowly increasing throughout the years, climate change has accumulated into an excessive heating of the Earth. According to researchers, the winter of 2023-2024 was the warmest winter that Canada had

gases that trap heat into the atmosphere which are caused by human activities that release the largest amounts of greenhouse gases. Actions such as the burning of fossil fuels, overconsumption and the use of transportation vehicles contribute to the growing levels of climate change. Moreover, emissions that large industries and companies release into the atmosphere cause more pollution of the environment because they produce large quantities of fossil fuels in manufacturing consumer goods or transporting the goods.

Human activities contribute to climate change in many ways: environmentally, economically and socially. Environmentally, the impacts are: the increasing number and intensity of forest fires endangering species who live in cooler areas, worsening heat waves, droughts, floods and other extreme weather pattern changes. Economically, climate change impacts areas like the infrastructure of buildings, loss of employment, decrease in the amount of produced goods and damages to the agriculture industry. Socially, many communities that live in cooler climates may be impacted culturally and/or



A typical scene showing a homeless man with his dog pushing a cart full of his belongings, and finding a place somewhere to sleep or beg.

With the increasing amount of the homeless population in Quebec, investing in housing units attempts to reduce these numbers. This appears to show the government's commitment to solve social issues and to help those in need of a shelter. From data in 2022, the homeless population was reported to be around 10,000 in Quebec. This number has increased due to the rise of housing costs, the housing crisis and

function as a community. Through the government's funding towards the construction of housing spaces, organizations, programs and other ways of improving the social situation, lowering the rates of homelessness may create a better future for the community.

To aid those who need support

See Page 18 Homelessness



# Congratulations to Gilmore College International on its 35th anniversary.

**May the New Year bring peace and love to all.**



*We support the excellent journalism of  
the North American Filipino Star*

*Wishing readers warm holiday  
greetings and all the best for 2025.*



## HAPPY *Holidays*

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**Best wishes to you and your family for a safe and happy  
holiday season, filled with light, laughter, and  
happiness.**

**As we celebrate the holidays, we also recognize the  
remarkable 35th anniversary of Gilmore College  
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*Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon!*



**Frank Baylis**  
Executive Chairman  
Baylis Medical Technologies



# 35th Anniversary of Gilmore College International and Annual Christmas Fellowship Party, Dec. 8, 2024



Souvenir photo of Gilmore's alumni posing with the founder & director-general, Zenaida Ferry-Kharroubi (2nd from the left) Photo: From Janet M. Haydock FB)



Group photo of guests at the 35th anniversary and Christmas party. Present but not shown in photo: Michael Davantes, Derwin Collantes, Sofia, Minda & Nick Mazzone, Ricarte Contaoui, Jr., Janeth Mahilum Haydock and her brother. About 14 invited or confirmed guests did not come (it seems they have other more important engagements and most of them did not even send regrets.)



Prayer of thanksgiving led by Fely Rosales-Carino with students and their family or friends before the start of the buffet dinner.



Welcoming remarks and greetings for the holiday season, wishing everyone an enjoyable evening of dining, dancing, and camaraderie.

## Gilmore College is always committed to promote excellence in education & personal growth



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Gilmore College has helped me acquire skills to have a new career. Adele Lascano - PAB graduate



I learned a lot from Gilmore College and found a good job that I love. Ethel Tugna - PAB graduate

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- French - 2nd language
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- After school tutoring
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## Holiday dinner recipes



### Simple Christmas roast chicken

Servings 6

#### Ingredients

1 whole chicken approx 3.5 - 4kg  
4 tbsp butter  
1 head of garlic  
1 lemon  
1 tsp paprika  
Salt and pepper  
2 tbsp chopped fresh rosemary  
Simple Homemade Christmas Roast Chicken

#### Instructions

Zest the lemon and crush all of the garlic cloves from the head of garlic. Mix these together with the butter, lemon zest, paprika, rosemary and a good pinch of salt and pepper. Slide your hand between the skin and flesh of the bird and rub some of the butter mixture under the skin. Then rub the butter all over the breasts, legs and wings, as well as inside the cavity. Season well. Cut the lemon into quarters and pop into the cavity and then bind the legs with kitchen string. Tuck the wings into the leg joints. Heat the oven to 180C. Cook chicken in a casserole dish, breast side up, for 60-80 minutes or until the juices run clear when you cut into the thigh. Allow to rest for 10 minutes before carving.

Recipe serves 6 at approximately 200 calories per serve



### Cookie Christmas tree

#### Ingredients

Cookie Balls  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1/3 cup butter, melted  
1 tablespoon milk

2 teaspoons vanilla  
1 egg  
6 oz cream cheese, softened  
2 1/4 cups Gold Medal™ All Purpose Flour  
1/2 cup chopped pistachio nuts  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
Coating and Decorations  
3 cups green candy melts (from two 12-oz bags)  
1 square vanilla flavored candy-coating (from 14-oz package)  
1 teaspoon red, white and green candy sprinkles  
1 bar (1.55 oz) milk chocolate candy  
1 large yellow gumdrop

Make With  
Gold Medal Flour

#### Instructions

Step 1  
Heat oven to 350°F. In large bowl, beat sugar, butter, milk, vanilla, egg and 2 ounces of the cream cheese with electric mixer on medium speed 1 to 2 minutes or until well mixed. Stir in flour, pistachio nuts, baking powder, baking soda and salt until well mixed.

Step 2  
On large ungreased cookie sheets, drop dough by tablespoons 2 inches apart.

Step 3  
Bake 9 to 11 minutes or until edges are set. Cool 2 minutes; remove from cookie sheets to cooling racks. Cool completely, about 30 minutes.

Step 4  
Line large cookie sheets with waxed paper. In food processor bowl with metal blade, place one-third of the cookies. Cover; process to fine crumbs. Remove and set aside; continue to process remaining cookies to fine crumbs. Place all of cookie crumbs in food processor. Add remaining 4 ounces of the cream cheese. Process 3 to 4 minutes or until well mixed and can be pressed together. Roll rounded tablespoons of cookie mixture into 40 (1 1/4-inch) balls; place on cookie sheets. Cover loosely and refrigerate 15 minutes. or until firm.

Step 5  
In medium bowl, microwave green candy melts uncovered on High 1 to 2 minutes; stir. Continue microwaving and stirring every 15 seconds until melts are softened and can be stirred

smooth.

Step 6  
Remove one-fourth of the cookie balls from refrigerator. Using 2 forks, dip and roll cookie balls, one at a time, in green candy melts, shaking off excess melt. Place balls on waxed paper-lined cookie sheets. Continue with remaining candy melt and cookie balls. Let stand 15 minutes or until candy is set.

Step 7  
On serving tray, arrange 21 of the balls into a triangle shape, starting with 6 balls as the base of the triangle. Continue arranging descending rows until all balls have been used. Arrange another 10 balls in a second layer on top of balls on platter, starting with 4 balls as the base of the triangle and arranging descending rows until all 10 balls have been used. Reserve remaining balls for another use.

Step 8  
In small microwavable bowl, microwave vanilla-flavored candy coating uncovered on High 30 to 60 seconds, stirring once, or until coating is softened and can be stirred smooth. Spoon melted candy coating into a 1-quart resealable food storage bag. Cut a tiny corner from bag. Pipe onto balls for garland. Immediately sprinkle white coating with sprinkles.

Step 9  
Break candy bar into 4 equal pieces of 3 squares each. Stack and pace at base of tree to resemble tree trunk. Flatten gumdrop to 1/4-inch thickness. Using 1 1/4-inch star cookie cutter or paring knife, cut star from gumdrop. Insert one end of a toothpick into bottom edge of star. Press other end of toothpick into top ball of tree. Cover loosely and refrigerate until serving time.



### Pineapple honey glazed ham

#### Ingredients:

One 9- to 10-pound bone-in fully-cooked smoked ham (butt or shank half)  
1 tablespoon whole cloves, optional  
Two 20-ounce cans sliced pineapple  
20 maraschino cherries  
2 cups honey  
2 cups light brown sugar

#### Instructions:

Let the ham sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Trim off any skin from the ham. Use a sharp paring knife to score through the fat in a diagonal crosshatch pattern without cutting through to the meat. Push the cloves into the ham, if using, placing them at the intersections of the cuts. Put the ham, flat-side down, on a rack in a roasting pan.

Drain the pineapples, reserving the juice. Arrange the sliced pineapple all over the ham, securing with toothpicks. Add a maraschino cherry

to the center of each pineapple slice and secure with a toothpick. Pour 1/4 inch water in the bottom of the pan and tent the ham with foil. Roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the ham (avoiding bone) registers 130 degrees F, about 2 hours 30 minutes (or about 15 minutes per pound).

Meanwhile, combine the honey, brown sugar and reserved pineapple juice in a large saucepan set over medium heat. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened, syrupy and reduced to about 3 cups, 25 to 30 minutes. Set aside.

Increase the oven temperature to 425 degrees F. Uncover the pan and carefully brush a third of the glaze all over the ham. If the water in the roasting pan has evaporated, add more. Bake the ham for 15 minutes more. Brush with another third of the glaze and bake for 15 minutes more. Brush the remaining glaze over the ham and cook until the glaze is shiny and the skin is dark golden brown and crispy, about 15 minutes more. Let rest for 15 minutes.



### Classic Pork Crown Roast

#### Ingredients:

One 16- to 18-bone crown roast of pork (about 10 pounds) (see Cook's Note)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 teaspoons fennel seeds  
1 teaspoon whole allspice  
1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns  
1/2 teaspoon juniper berries  
1 small bay leaf  
1/4 cup olive oil  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage  
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped  
6 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and cut into 8 wedges each  
2 large red onions, peeled and cut into 8 wedges each  
1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted  
1 cup dry white wine  
2 cups apple cider

#### Instructions:

Put the pork on a rimmed baking sheet and sprinkle all over with 1 tablespoon salt and several grinds of pepper; set aside. Put the fennel, allspice, whole peppercorns and juniper berries in a small skillet over medium heat and cook until the fennel begins to turn slightly golden, about 5 minutes. Transfer the toasted spices to a blender, add the bay leaf and blend until coarsely ground. Add the olive oil and 1 tablespoon salt and process



**Social Tidbits**

**Montreal Community News**

**Fely Rosales Cariño**

**December tidbits**

Merry Christmas to my dear tidbits readers. Finally it's here – the snow, I mean. Some will be kept indoors by choice and by force like the sick and the elderly, but the young with all their energy will be wanting to be outside throwing snowballs. The teenagers will be looking forward to parties and other winter sports while the not so young will be looking forward to shopping and more shopping.

The first activity on my list is the bingo game held at the Zamboanga Restaurant held last week of November. This Filipino restaurant is at 6900 Decarie Blvd in Cote-Saint-Luc. Al Abdon is the caller. Everyone else seemed glued to their cards with anticipation of winning. The restaurant was full and chairs and tables had to be placed outside. This bingo game was a fundraiser for the "Masons" of which Cesar Manuel was in charge. It was a successful game gathering that even with increased price per card towards the end, some were still buying cards.

Who has witnessed a lighting

ceremony? If not, you should have attended the one that was held in the Community Hall at 5701 Decarie Boulevard, Montreal. It is a project of the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM) under the leadership of its chairman, Mr. Alfonso Abdon. This was attended by the guest speaker, MP for Mont Royal Anthony Housefather, and newly elected School Commissioner, Chelsea Craig.

Next on my list is the dinner dance Christmas party held at the Olympia by the Seniors of West Island and Suburbs (SWIS) last December 7, 2024 in Dollard des Ormeaux. Chairman Lolita Odulio saw to it that everything was just fine and dandy. This time, the dancing was packed. For this we should thank chairman Odulio who was supported by all the officers of the organization. Two performers graced the dance hall: the Panday Tinig with Editha Fedalizo on the piano and Paul Imperial conducting. They belted Tagalog songs. As each piece was on the ready, Editha explained what each song was all about. Another performer was Elvis Presley in the person of a guest impersonator. He had all the facial appearance, the

haircut, and the costume of Elvis Presley. Then he started singing some Elvis songs. He really did sound like Elvis. Plus stringing his guitar as a swinging prop made him all the more like the rock and roll performer. Encouraged by the throbbing dance music all the guests enjoyed dancing to his music. The guests didn't miss any Rock and Roll and line dancing music. It was just a great, great and enjoyable party. Towards the end the door prizes and the half and half raffles were done by Emy Bayan, Nora Arcalas, and Fely Bisares. Towards the end I recognized the past and present community leaders who were in attendance. First I acknowledged the past Filipino Association of Montreal and Suburbs (FAMAS) presidents: Cesar Manuel, Claro Bermudez and Cora Aberin. Also recognized for their efforts in making the party a very successful event where the adviser ex chairman of the association Roger Ajero. Standing near the door with unending smiles was the SWIS Chairwoman Lolita Odulio.

This year, we miss the presence of DDO Mayor Alex Boutasci whose father passed away a week ago before the SWIS party. Alex never missed any SWIS party before.

At this party, we missed the folk dance by the SWIS ladies led by Lolit Odulio. The dancers are Tina Oana, Maming Transfiguration, Nita Advincula, Myrna Recillo, Connie Fabro, Dorie Isada, Nila Hiwating, and Nerie Ajero. Some from the audience were asking about the SWIS dancers and I told them that they will do their Filipino Folk dance next SWIS events.

Gilmore College celebrated it's

35th anniversary jointly with its annual Christmas fellowship party last December 8, 2024. It was held at 7159 Cote des Neiges, Montreal. Everybody brought his/her potluck contribution. Some former students and three of the former MMTV crew (Michael Davantes, Derwin Collantes and Fely Rosales Carino) were present. This Christmas Party was livened by many rock and roll music. Some dance exhibitions were performed by former students led by Cristy Hunter and Nida Butaran, a Gilmore alumni who obtained A.E.C. (Attestation d'etudes collegiales) in Office Systems Technology during the 10th anniversary held at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel.

Dancing continued until just about eleven o'clock. What a significant milestone! Congratulations to Zeny Ferry Karroubi for all the work she puts in maintaining her school. I very much doubt if there is anybody who can do what she does in doing all the necessary requirements to maintain a school. Hats off to the owner of Gilmore College International and editor/publisher of the North American Filipino Star.

Last but not the least was the very memorable Christmas Party of the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal. It was held at the residence of Jack and Jeannette Perignon at 7 Willowdale, Baie d'Urfe. Every active member came. All ladies were clad in red. Edith Fedalizo accompanied the singers on the piano. Chairman Al Abdon sang a solo, yes. Really!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Years! See you in 2025!

From Page 12 Pork crown roast

until a coarse paste forms, about 1 minute. Spread the paste over the pork, making sure to get it into all the nooks and crannies; use a spatula to scrape up all the paste from the blender. Cover the pork with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 8 hours and up to 24 hours.

When ready to cook the pork, preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.

Put the pork on a rack set in a large roasting pan and cook for 20 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 350 degrees F and continue to cook until an instant-read thermometer registers 135 degrees F, about another 1 1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, combine the sugar, sage, thyme, apples, onions and 6 tablespoons of the butter in a large bowl until well coated. Heat a large skillet over high heat until very hot, about 3 minutes. Add half of the apple and onion mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, until the apples and onions are dark golden all over but the apples are still firm, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and spread into a single layer to cool, using a heatproof spatula to scrape all the remaining sugar from the skillet over the apples and onions. Repeat with the remaining apple and onion mixture.

Return the skillet to high heat and add the wine. Cook until syrupy and reduced to about 2 tablespoons, about 4 minutes. Add the cider and cook until thickened and glossy, about 8 minutes; you should have about 1/3 cup of glaze. Swirl in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter and set aside.

Once the pork reaches 135 degrees F, increase the oven temperature to 450 degrees F and brush the pork all over with half the glaze. Return to the oven and cook for 5 minutes. Brush with the remaining glaze and continue to cook until the internal temperature registers 145 degrees F, about another 5 minutes. Transfer to a serving platter and let rest for 30 minutes. Serve with the apples and onions.

**Cook's Note**

A crown roast is made up of 2 to 3 racks of bone-on pork loin that a butcher ties together end to end to create a large round roast. Make sure to order the roast from your local butcher a couple of days in advance so they have time to get the right size racks, clean the meat from the tips of the bones (called Frenching) and tie them together securely so it cooks evenly.

**Gourmet tours are planned for next year - Call 514-485-7861 if interested to join, leave a message with your name & tel. #**



**Chan's Dragons at St. Monica Church's free concert, November 24, 2024 standing by waiting for the beat of the drums before doing their dance routine. It's a different experience watching them in a hall from seeing them on the streets in Chinatown.**

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# FILIPINO STAR

## SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

### Why is Alex Gonzaga taking a break from showbiz



**Alex Gonzaga**

Actress and content creator Alex Gonzaga shared that her main priority at the moment is supporting her husband, Mikee Morada, in his political journey. Gonzaga revealed this at the Christmas party of the Society of Philippine Entertainment Editors (SPEED) on Dec. 2, held at Rampa Drag Club in Quezon City.

Accompanied by her husband, who is currently a councilor in Lipa City, Batangas, Alex expressed her pride in his candidacy for Vice Mayor of the city. "This is my first time to introduce my husband to SPEED, editors, press people. We got married during the pandemic," she said.

Currently taking a break from showbiz to focus on her husband's campaign, Gonzaga shared that she has been turning down offers in order to be more present in Mikee's political pursuits. "Of course I'm thankful," Mikee acknowledged, expressing his gratitude for his wife's support.

The couple is also focusing on starting a family. "My wife and I are trying to have a baby. I don't want to lose focus either... Family is our priority," Mikee added. Alex, too, recognized the challenges of building a family. "Starting a family, building a family is tough," she said.

Reflecting on her growth, Alex admitted she has mellowed down and is more behaved than in her younger years. "I'm done with my antics during my younger years,"

she shared. Mikee humorously added, "Alex will always be Alex... But she's more careful now."

Despite her lighter approach to life, Alex jokingly revealed, "It's only to him that I've been naughty."

Mikee also took a moment to

open to the possibility of entering politics in the future. However, Mikee prefers her to remain in showbiz. "I'm not saying it with finality... As of the moment, I enjoy supporting Mikee in his bid," Alex reiterated.

As for past controversies,



**Alex Gonzaga with her husband politician Mikee Morada**

express pride in his wife's success in vlogging. "Alex has consistently been one of the most followed and subscribed to vloggers, and still gaining more subscriptions," he noted. "I was there courting her when she started vlogging... She still edits and sits through them all by herself. Seeing her do that makes me proud of her."

While Alex enjoys her vlogging career and supporting Mikee's campaign, she remains

Alex has learned to rise above detractors. "It's part of the consequence of my being childish and immature then. What's important, my husband and family remind me — 'you know your mistakes and you're trying to improve, trying your best not to repeat them. And we see that you've changed for the better...'"

Alex concluded, "I feel I've matured... I can't forever be a teenager, forever a jerk." ■

### Kathryn Bernardo breaks social media hiatus



**Kathryn Bernardo**

Actress Kathryn Bernardo is back on social media after almost a month of being inactive due to her busy schedule promoting her blockbuster movie "Hello, Love, Again" with actor Alden Richards.

On Sunday, Bernardo finally said "hello again" to her 20 million followers on Instagram.

She accompanied her social media post with beautiful snaps of her taken from the recent ABS-CBN Christmas Special held at the Araneta Coliseum in Quezon City.

"Hello again, IG! Breaking my social media hiatus with some snaps from the ABS-CBN Christmas Special," Bernardo captioned her post.

She also shared a reel which shows her moments preparations and performance for the ABS-CBN Christmas Special 2024.

Last month, Bernardo and Richards were busy promoting "Hello, Love, Again," which made history as the first Filipino movie to gross over P1 billion at the box office worldwide.

In just 10 days since opening in theaters last November 13, "Hello, Love, Again" has become the highest-grossing Filipino film of all time.

Last December 13, after the record-breaking run of "Hello, Love, Again" in cinemas worldwide, Bernardo and Richards finally bade farewell to their characters Joy and Ethan, which they first portrayed in 2019.

Directed by Cathy Garcia-Sampana, "Hello, Love, Again" is the sequel to the 2019 blockbuster movie "Hello, Love, Goodbye." ■

## Rufa Mae Quinto denies scam allegations, vows to cooperate with authorities



**Rufa Mae Quinto**

Comedy actress Rufa Mae Quinto has addressed the allegations against her after her legal counsel confirmed that she is currently facing a warrant of arrest for alleged violations of the Securities Regulation Code.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Dec. 4, Rufa Mae denied the accusations and asserted her innocence regarding the scam allegations.

"I have no connection whatsoever to any fraudulent activity, and I categorically deny these baseless accusations. If anything, I am also a victim, and I am determined to seek justice," she stated.

The case is reportedly linked to the same company involved in the recent arrest of

actress and entrepreneur Neri Naig. However, Rufa Mae did not provide details about her alleged involvement or how she might have been victimized.

"It is disheartening to see my name being dragged through the mud, but I remain steadfast and confident that the truth will soon prevail," she added.

Meanwhile, Rufa Mae's lawyer, Atty. Mary Louise Reyes, confirmed that the actress plans to voluntarily surrender to authorities and post bail as part of her legal strategy.

"I will cooperate fully with the authorities and face this issue through the proper legal forum. Rest assured, I will fight for my name and reputation," Rufa Mae said in closing. ■

## The Voice USA champ Sofronio Vasquez talks about going back to the Philippines



The Voice USA Season 26 grand winner Sofronio Vasquez walked

down memory lane as he made a video call with "It's Showtime" hosts on Thursday, Dec. 12.

In a six-minute chat, Sofronio greeted the viewers of the popular noontime show, "What's up, madlang people!"

Sofronio is the first Filipino and Asian to win the 13-year reality show The Voice USA.

Prior, he was a semifinalist at the Tawag Ng Tanghalan portion of It's Showtime in 2019. He is now based in New York where he works as a dental assistant.

Sofronio sat in disbelief as the announcement echoed in his ears, his heart racing with excitement. He could

hardly comprehend the reality of winning the highly competitive singing reality show that had captivated audiences for months.

Surrounded by the bright lights and cheers of the crowd, he reflected on the countless hours of practice, the emotional performances, and the fierce competition he had faced.

Winning this popular show, a dream he had nurtured for so long, felt surreal, and he was overwhelmed with gratitude and joy.

"Napaka-emotional ng journey ko ng panalo ko kagabi. Actually nanginginig pa rin ako dahil proud akoi na nagsimula sa Tawag ng Tanghalan kasi Tawag ng Tanghalan and It's Showtime and unang naniwala sa akin," Sofronio said.

The Visayan singer from Mindanao said his journey to The Voice began when he represented himself in the blind audition from Utica, New York where he is based.

However, the producers of the show suggested he represented the Philippines because The Voice USA never had any representatives from the

Philippines.

"Natuwa talaga ako dahil sa totoong pagmamahal ni Michael Buble para sa Pilipinas. Sinabi niya na may deep connection siya sa Pilipinas dahil kumpare raw niya sa Marti Nievera at meron siyang naka-date na kilala nating lahat na Dyosa sa atin," Sofronio said.

Sofronio, 32, shared his advice for aspiring singers.

"Siguro ang pinakamagandang advice na maibibigay ko is kahit ilang beses ka na-reject hindi talaga siya nagpapatunay na wala ka ng chance eh.

"Sino ba naman ako na Bisaya na galing sa Mindanao just trying his luck in music. Lahat ng auditions ko sinubukan ko tapos 10 years after naibigay siya sa akin. Huwag mo lang talagang titigilan," he added.

Sofronio stated that he does not know when he can visit the Philippines again, but he promised that he would prioritize visiting It's Showtime when he returns to the country. ■

## Andrea Brillantes on going to college: 'I really am planning'



**Andrea Brillantes**

Kapamilya actress Andrea Brillantes revealed that she wants to further her education and get a college degree in the future. She gave this answer in an ambush interview during the Game 2 of the UAAP Men's Basketball Finals where she was watching and came to support the UP Fighting Maroons earlier this week.

Andrea has always been vocal about finishing her studies.

When asked if given the chance to pursue a college degree, the Kapamilya star didn't hesitate to answer yes.

"Actually, gusto ko po talagang bigyan ng time yung pag-aaral ko so I think it's not just if given the possibility, I really am planning na makapag-college ako ng seryoso," she revealed.

Some of her friends from the industry such as Bea Borres and Awra Briguella are currently enrolled in Ateneo de Manila University and University of the East, respectively. Bea is a college student while Awra is finishing up her years in Senior High School.

The 21-year-old actress added that she hopes to study in a UAAP school

as well but didn't disclose her dream school just yet in hopes it wouldn't be jinxed. There are eight UAAP schools— De La Salle University, Ateneo de Manila University, University of the Philippines, University of Sto. Tomas, Far Eastern University, University of the East, National University, and Adamson University.

"Yes, nangangarap ako na makapasok ako sa UAAP school ayoko lang banggitin kung saan kasi baka majinx or nashshy ako baka asarin ako ng mga tao. Nangarap ako of course," she added.

While she isn't going to college any time soon due to her busy schedule, Andrea remains positive in getting her college degree in her dream university.

"Kumakayod pa ako eh," she humbly answered.

Previously, Andrea recalled how she had to stop schooling for her work, a decision she had to make for herself.

"Dati nag stop ako sa pag-aaral nung nag trabaho ako for Kadenang Ginto at napakalaking desisyon para sa akin. Mahirap yun para sa akin kasi ayoko naman talagang itigil yung pag-aaral ko pero sa buhay natin meron tayong kailangan harapin at piliin. Kailangan natin gumawa ng big decisions in life. Pinili ko mag focus muna sa pagtrabaho ko," she shared.

"Pero di ko pa rin kinalimutan ang pagaaral at binalikan ko pa rin ito dahil importante sa atin ang edukasyon... Wag rin tayo mapressure dahil lahat tayo may sari-sariling storya," she added. ■

Showbiz Gossip *Continued from p.15*

# BINI, Carlos Yulo lead Google's list of most-searched personalities in PH



**Carlos Yulo**

P-pop girl group BINI and world-class gymnast Carlos Yulo have emerged as the most-searched female and male personalities in the Philippines, according to Google's annual Year in Search.

The list highlights events, personalities, and cultural milestones that captured the attention of

Filipinos throughout the year—from historic athletic achievements to breakout music sensations.

Carlos Yulo, a two-time Olympic gold medalist, topped multiple categories following his historic triumph at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Yulo's exceptional performance solidified his reputation as the country's



**BINI**

most celebrated athlete, with his name appearing in four major search categories.

Meanwhile, BINI, often referred to as the "Nation's Girl Group," dominated online conversations and claimed the top spot on the list of most-searched female personalities. Additionally, member Mikha Lim secured the No. 10 position individually. Known

for their energetic performances, BINI's influence extended far beyond their dedicated fanbase.

The group's hit songs, "Salamin, Salamin" and "Pantropiko," also appeared on Google's list of most-searched songs and lyrics, ranking at No. 7 and No. 9, respectively. ■

## Daniel Padilla's first public appearance in a while draws thousands of fans



**Daniel Padilla during the Jag event in SM Mall of Asia**

Thousands of fans gathered to see Daniel Padilla in his first public appearance

in a while in SM Mall of Asia recently.

Sporting his "modern

mullet" hairstyle, Daniel was in for a fan meet for a Jag endorsement.'

He serenaded the crown with a full band, singing Rivermaya's "Elesi" and "Umaraw Umuulan," to name a few.

As one of the most sought-after actors of his generation, Daniel embodies the modern and stylish appeal of Jag BLK. The premium collection boasts of Hardcore Denim designs that highlight craftsmanship, durability, and comfort, handpicked and worn by Daniel himself.

The complete premium collection, from bottoms to tops, is crafted for true denim

enthusiasts who value durability and style. The collection features masculine textures for those seeking tough, versatile denim that doesn't compromise on style. The collection boasts of high-quality fabrics designed for long-lasting wear, including stretch fabric for all-day ease and comfort. The brand aims to transform one's looks with sleek, minimalist, and modern cuts that enhance attractiveness and confidence.

"I'm thrilled to represent (the brand)," Daniel said, adding that the brand "values quality, comfort, and style—things I always look for in whatever I wear." ■





Government of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Immigration, Population Growth and Skills  
Office of the Minister

COR-2024-00730-01  
COR/2024/03670

November 27, 2024

Marvin Rotrand  
Email: [manon-provost@hotmail.com](mailto:manon-provost@hotmail.com)

Dear Marvin Rotrand:

Thank you for the letter to the Honourable Dr Andrew Furey, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, requesting that Newfoundland and Labrador recognize June as Filipino Heritage Month. As the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, Premier Furey has asked that I respond on his behalf.


I am proud to recognize the economic and cultural impact the Filipino community has made in our province. Since 2015, more than 4,700 Filipinos have settled in Newfoundland and Labrador and have become permanent residents of Canada. Filipinos are living and thriving in communities throughout the province. This growth includes in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, where there is a vibrant Filipino community, whose contributions have been invaluable to the town's service and hospitality sectors, in particular.

The Filipino community has greatly grown in our province contributing both economically and socially by establishing businesses that have created employment, supporting our province's growing population, and organizing events that promote cross-cultural celebration and community spirit and belonging.


Thank you for your correspondence and for highlighting the need for and importance of promoting the month of June, as a Filipino Heritage Month. My department's calendar of Commemorative Days for Newfoundland and Labrador Communities already marks this important month. You can view this calendar here: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/immigration/diversitycalendar/>

It is a pleasure to read the letter from the Honorable Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills of Newfoundland Labrador as shown in this letter addressed to Mr. Marvin Rotrand which is self-explanatory.

More and more Canadian provinces, municipalities, may soon adopt June as Filipino Heritage Month and may also be interested in pursuing a twin city or sister city agreement, thereby promoting friendly and economic partnerships.



2



Newfoundland and Labrador is stronger and more vibrant through the diversity of skills and perspectives newcomers bring to the province. We will continue to work with the Filipino Community in the province to mark commemorative days as valued by them.

Sincerely,



**HON. SARAH STOODLEY, MHA**  
District of Mount Scio  
Minister

cc: The Honourable Andrew Furey, Premier

**From Page 7 Water fluoridation**

research on its effects on aquatic flora and animals.

- Except for Saint-Georges in Beauce, all municipalities in Quebec have discontinued fluoridation of their water supplies.
- Furthermore, fluoride is not the only way to encourage good tooth health.
- The city provides high-quality drinking water to its entire population, regardless of borough or neighbouring municipality.

**Public Health and Advocacy Concerns**

Public health authorities, including the regional health department and experts at McGill University, strongly oppose the decision. They cite fluoride's proven effectiveness in reducing dental decay, particularly among children in lower-income communities. Dr. Paul Allison, a dental health professor, expressed disappointment, noting the robust scientific evidence supporting fluoridation as a safe and effective public health measure.

**Quebec Will Not Lower Sales Tax Without Compensation, Finance Minister Says**

Quebec's Finance Minister, Eric Girard, recently confirmed the province's firm stance on not reducing its sales tax unless it receives federal compensation. This position comes amidst growing calls for tax relief to address economic pressures, but Quebec emphasizes fiscal responsibility and the need to maintain provincial revenue. Girard's announce-

ment highlights Quebec's broader financial strategy and its unique approach to managing its economy.

Mayors from affected municipalities like Dorval, Baie-D'Urfé, and Kirkland criticized the lack of consultation. Dorval Mayor Marc Doret called for transparency and greater public involvement, while Baie-D'Urfé Mayor Heidi Ektvedt deemed the process undemocratic. Suburban officials argue that their limited voting power on the council left them unable to influence the decision.

**Broader Implications**

The controversy mirrors debates in other cities, such as Calgary, which ended fluoridation in 2011 only to face higher dental health costs and later reconsider the practice. Environmental concerns about fluoride residue in water systems and economic considerations are also factors in the ongoing discussion.

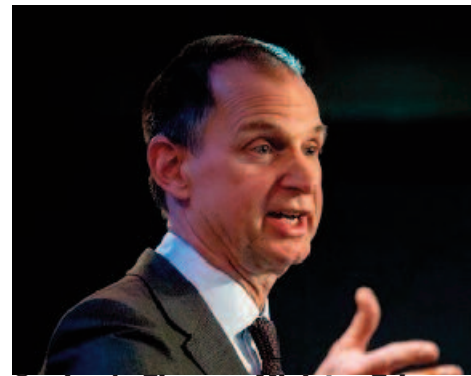
Montreal's decision underscores the polarization surrounding fluoridation, balancing cost and governance concerns against public health priorities. Suburban leaders push to revisit the decision the debate highlights.#

**A Brief Context**

In Canada, discussions about tax reductions have gained momentum due to inflation and economic challenges affecting households and businesses. The federal government has introduced measures like the

temporary suspension of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on new rental housing construction to ease financial burdens. However, Quebec has chosen not to align with such initiatives, prioritizing its fiscal stability.

The province's economic strategy focuses on balancing its budget, funding public services, and ensuring long-term growth, which



**Quebec's Finance Minister Eric Girard (Photo: Montreal Gazette)**

explains its cautious approach to tax policy.

Girard emphasized the importance of safeguarding Quebec's revenue streams, which rely significantly on provincial sales tax (PST) to fund essential services like healthcare and education. He argued that a reduction in sales tax without adequate federal compensation would lead to budgetary shortfalls, ultimately harming Quebec's ability to deliver critical programs. Girard highlighted that any decrease in revenue from tax cuts should be offset by federal transfers to ensure fiscal stability.

Quebec's position has sparked reactions from other provinces

grappling with similar fiscal challenges. While some provinces might sympathize with Quebec's cautious stance, others advocate for collaborative solutions to reduce tax burdens on citizens. Economically, Quebec's refusal to align with federal measures could lead to regional disparities in tax policy.

Quebec's firm approach reflects its commitment to financial independence and a pragmatic reliance on federal transfers. The province's demand for compensation underscores the delicate balance between maintaining autonomy and collaborating with the federal government. This stance raises questions about the sustainability of federal-provincial fiscal relations, especially as economic pressures test the resilience of current frameworks. For Quebec, the decision to retain its tax policy highlights its prioritization of long-term fiscal health over short-term political gains.

**Commitment to Fiscal Responsibility**

Finance Minister Girard's position reinforces Quebec's commitment to fiscal responsibility and maintaining provincial revenue. By tying any sales tax reduction to federal compensation, Quebec signals its focus on balancing autonomy with pragmatic collaboration. This stance not only influences Canadian tax policy but also sheds light on the evolving dynamics of federal-provincial cooperation in addressing economic challenges.#

## Lucien L'Allier Train Station Set to Reopen After Extensive Renovations

By Leo Lete, Local Journalism Initiative  
 Montreal commuters can look forward to the reopening of the Lucien L'Allier train station on December 21, just in time for the busy holiday season. Closed since April 1 for major renovations, the station has undergone significant updates aimed at improving passenger experience and modernizing its infrastructure.

for wheelchairs to board trains. This is the first major renovation to the station since Montreal hosted the Olympics in 1976. Before closure, approximately 7,000 trips were taken to or from Lucien-L'Allier station daily.

### Challenges Along the Way

The renovation project, initially slated for completion in the fall, encountered delays due to unforeseen



Lucien L'Allier metro station

Exo, the regional transit authority, announced that the project involved structural upgrades, enhanced accessibility features, and improved facilities. The station is a crucial hub for Montreal's commuter rail network, particularly for the Vaudreuil-Hudson, Candiac, and St-Jérôme lines.

### Renovation Highlights

The refurbishment focused on addressing wear and tear accumulated over decades of heavy use. The \$69-million project consists of:

- Rebuilding the station's four platforms, as they have reached the end of their life.
- Bringing the systems and infrastructures up to standard.
- Adding canopies above the platforms to improve client comfort.
- Adding two emergency exits at Argyle Ave. and De la Montagne St.
- Extending Track 6 to improve traffic flow and flexibility at the site.

Exo is aiming to make all its stations and trains accessible to people in wheelchairs, including those leaving from Lucien-L'Allier station. The station will be equipped with mechanized platforms, making it easier

structural challenges. Despite these setbacks, Exo confirmed that the reopening will proceed as planned, ensuring commuters have access to a safer and more comfortable travel hub.

### Impact on Commuters

Since its closure in April, passengers have had to navigate temporary disruptions, with alternative transit routes and increased congestion at other nearby stations. The reopening of Lucien L'Allier is expected to ease this burden and restore regular service for thousands of daily commuters.

Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante praised the reopening, emphasizing its importance to the city's transportation infrastructure. "This is a significant step forward in ensuring efficient and accessible transit for all Montrealers," she said.

The station's reopening is not just a return to normalcy but a step into the future, setting a new standard for transit hubs in Montreal. Commuters can expect a seamless and modern travel experience when they step back into Lucien L'Allier later this month. #

From Page 8 Homelessness

due to their risk of being homeless or are already without shelter, several homeless organizations and institutions have been created, namely, YMCA Quebec's homeless assistance, CAEH in Montreal, Resilience Montreal and Dans la Rue that help reduce and prevent homelessness. They provide assistance, shelter as well as financial, physical and mental aid to the needy. With the support of both the government, organizations, institutions and citizens, society may be able to facilitate decreasing the severity of this problem. Lionel Carmant, Quebec Minister Responsible for Social Services stated in the public announcement, "The 22 projects selected will provide housing for people experiencing homelessness. This is one more concrete step to help vulnerable people come in off the street and restore their dignity. Homelessness exists all across Quebec, and there is a growing need for help. It's time to turn things around. We must continue to combine our strengths and work together, especially on the issue of

access to housing." This demonstrates that the government sectors in charge of the housing project expect to protect this community through aid and support in their lives. The importance of resolving the homeless issue is significant. Providing necessary resources and support to those who require it leads to change that benefits a large community. The introduction of the government's housing plan for the homeless and at risk of being homeless initiates a plan for positive changes in all aspects of society.

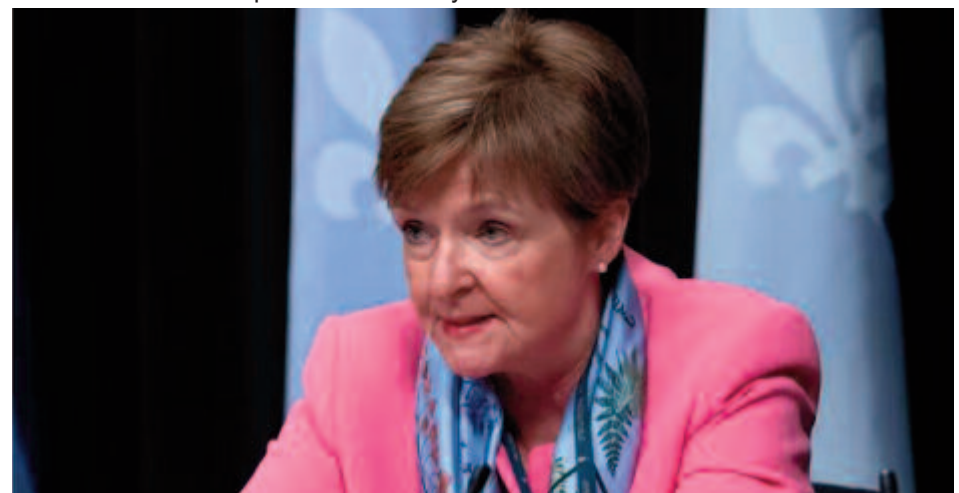
Since 2023, the governments of Canada and Quebec invested around two billion dollars in granting access to housing and constructing places to aid those who are in need. Reducing the homeless population in Quebec is a complex process, however, the development of support can regulate or diminish the homeless rates. Finding solutions to support this community is especially important as consumer goods and services such as basic requirements of living become less affordable for many people with very low income or without any income at all. #

## Finding solutions to educational gaps of Indigenous students in QC

In a report released on Wednesday, Nov. 20, 2024 by Quebec's Auditor General to the National Assembly of Quebec, it was revealed that both the Quebec government and its Ministry of Education had known about the Indigenous educational issues for 20 years but had not attempted to take the necessary steps and proactive measures to improve their transition to Quebec schools to enable them to succeed in obtaining their diplomas. According to Statistics Canada in 2021, 31.4% of Indigenous students did not obtain their diplomas while only

systems, placing measures to give all students the support needed, creating a community of staff members who will assist the students and training educational staff about Indigenous culture.

Quebec has several Indigenous support groups and organizations which can help and promote Indigenous schooling. Some examples are: The Quebec Native Friendship Centres, Native Montreal Educational Support, The First Nations Education Council and the Indigenous Student Alliance. These groups of people focus on providing Indigenous



Quebec Auditor General Guylaine Leclerc released a report Wednesday urging the Education Ministry to do more to improve the academic success rate of Indigenous students. (Jacques Boissinot/The Canadian Press (Posted Nov. 20, 2024)

9.3% among non-Indigenous students were unable to obtain them.

Quebec's auditor general, Madame Guylaine Leclerc, expressed her concerns and recommended some measures that should be taken to correct the situation of Indigenous students' education namely, funding schools to tend to the student's needs, integrating an Indigenous based curriculum to help with the changes, reassessing funding methods in school

academic aid to help their community facilitate the transition of Indigenous students into the Quebec school system.

The Auditor General's report on the status of Indigenous students' educational gaps reveals the need for the Quebec government and its Ministry of Education to adopt measures in the improvement of Indigenous education to enable them to have better academic success. #

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YOUR FEDERAL LIBERAL MPs WISH YOU A

# Happy Holiday Season

## and a Happy New Year!



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