

## Surging cases in Canada and around the world



(Jan. 20, 2022) Quebec hospitalizations stabilize, but premier not lifting more COVID-19 measures

Quebec seems to have reached a peak in COVID-19 hospitalizations, but the province "can't afford" to lift any more measures aimed at slowing the spread of infections, Premier François Legault said Thursday.

"Today, finally, we had a net decrease of hospitalizations, so 14 fewer people in hospital ... [and] for the time being, things seem to be stabilizing at around 3,400 hospitalizations," he told reporters.

However, Legault noted that Quebec is still missing about 12,000 employees in its health-care network, who are absent due to COVID-19, so people in the province should "stand in solidarity," continue to follow measures, "stay prudent" and "think about hospital staff."

"I understand we are all tired, but lives are at stake," Legault said. "I'm currently under a lot of pressure to remove measures, but my duty is to be responsible, to protect the lives of

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Long line ups are common sights in Montreal as omicron variant infections increase everywhere.

## Fr. Roberto Ruben Elago, M.S.P. New Pastor for the Filipino Community

By: Alvin D. Veloso

The Notre Dame des Philippines Catholic Mission of Montreal welcomes the arrival of Fr. Roberto Ruben Elago from the Mission Society of the Philippines (MSP) to replace Fr. Francisco Alvarez, P.M.E., who officially retired last Nov. 30, 2021.

At age 75, and for health reasons, Fr. Frank has decided to return to the motherhouse of the Quebec Society of Foreign Mission Priests in Pont-Viau, Laval.

During his 25 years of stewardship, he witnessed the spiritual and religious growth of the community of faith and vigorously pursued the acquisition of St. Thomas the Apostle church to be the home of Notre Dame des Philippines Catholic Mission of Montreal.

Also retiring at the same time were Sister Luz Paderanga, O.P., archivist-fiscal, and Mel Villanueva, the church's bookkeeper. Both had worked for a long time and the community sincerely thanks them for their dedicated service.

The Mission Society of the

Philippines (MSP) sent Fr. Elago as Fr. Frank's replacement in response to the request by Fr. Pierangelo Paternieri, Director, Office for Cultural Communities of the Catholic Archdiocese of Montreal.

His arrival date was delayed due to the covid pandemic; nevertheless, he made it to preside the observance of simbang gabi. To the amusement of some, Fr. Elago conducted the entire liturgy in flawless Tagalog, the official language of Filipinos, a rather impressive show of versatility in world languages and a first in Notre Dame des Philippines' history.

Fr. Elago reflected upon his first experience with the community, as being positive. "It's my first time to celebrate simbang gabi mass," he said, and "I was impressed" by the display of talents in the choreography, which integrated the Christmas tableau into the mass.

He faces the formidable challenge to continue to build upon the 1989 mandate of the canonical

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**From the Publisher's desk**

**When can we expect the pandemic to end?**

**Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi**

After more than two years of the pandemic, everyone is feeling tired. Many people have different reactions - from anxiety, confusion, to anger and frustration. Along with this mixed emotions, we still have people not believing that the vaccines work and they are not ready to take the jab. Governments are determined to find a way to convince more people to be vaccinated - from imposing a health tax to requiring vaccine passports for entry to boxed stores. At one time, there was even a lottery to encourage people to be vaccinated.

Experts and observers have stated that the pandemic may become endemic in 2022. But this is just a possibility which is subject to many factors among which is the fact that there are people who are adamantly refusing to be vaccinated regardless of any scientific evidence and advice from health professionals. But what is surprising to know is that there are still 43% of the world population or 3.5 billion people who have not received their first dose because they live in poorer countries who cannot afford to manufacture their own vaccines. According to Ananya Banerjee, an epidemiologist at McGill University, the infections in poor countries allow the virus to mutate which contributes to the continuation of the pandemic. Hence, if we want the pandemic to end, she

recommends that Canada take the lead in helping poor countries get the vaccines.

The potential consequences of the disparity between poor and rich countries are obvious: New, globally problematic variants of the virus have all been first detected in places that experienced large, uncontrolled outbreaks where vaccine coverage was low -- Alpha in the UK last December, Delta in India in February, and Omicron in sub-Saharan Africa.

While few governments are coming around to the idea that Covid may be endemic like the flu, many experts are weighing the probability where Omicron might be the end of this pandemic. With the variant spreading like wildfire all across the globe, some experts have said that the widespread infection from Omicron could actually push Covid out of the pandemic phase. The theory behind this is that the mild infection which is caused by the Omicron variant may lead to widespread immunity, thus deeming it as a "natural vaccine."

It is quite reassuring to think that the pandemic may soon be over when we achieve the stage of "widespread immunity". For the time being, we must still follow the safety protocols which include vaccination and getting booster shots recommended for extra protection.

# Protective gene variant against COVID-19 identified

**PRESS RELEASE - FROM LADY DAVIS INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH (MCGILL)**

**An international metastudy conducted by researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, the Lady Davis Institute of the Jewish General Hospital in Canada and VA Boston Healthcare System in the U.S. has identified a specific gene variant that protects against severe COVID-19 infection. The researchers managed to pinpoint the variant by studying people of different ancestries; a feat they say highlights the importance of conducting clinical trials that include people of diverse descents.**

Montreal, January 13, 2022 -- In addition to old age and certain underlying diseases, genetics can influence whether we become severely affected or only suffer mild illness

from COVID-19. Previous studies on mainly people of European ancestry have found that individuals carrying a particular segment of DNA have a 20 percent lower risk of developing a critical COVID-19 infection. This DNA segment encodes genes in the immune system and is inherited from Neanderthals in about half of all people outside Africa.

This region of DNA is, however, packed with numerous genetic variants, which makes it challenging to disentangle the exact protective variant that could potentially serve as a target for medical treatment against severe COVID-19 infection.

To identify this specific gene variant, researchers in the current study looked for individuals carrying only parts of this DNA segment. Since the Neanderthal inheritance occurred after the ancient migration out of Africa, the researchers saw a potential in focusing on individuals with African ancestry who lack heritage from the Neanderthals and therefore also the majority of this DNA segment. A small piece of this DNA region is, however, the same in both people of African and European ancestries.

The researchers found that individuals of predominantly African ancestry had the same protection as those of European ancestry, which allowed them to pinpoint a specific gene variant of particular interest.

"The fact that individuals of African descent had the same protection allowed us to identify the unique variant in the DNA that actually protects from COVID-19 infection," says Jennifer Huffman, the first author of study and a researcher at the VA Boston Healthcare System in the U.S.

The analysis included a total of 2,787 hospitalized COVID-19 patients of African ancestry and 130,997 people in a control group from six cohort studies. Eighty percent of individuals of African ancestry carried the protective variant. The outcome was compared with a previous, larger metastudy of

individuals of European heritage.

According to the researchers, the protective gene variant (rs10774671-G) determines the length of the protein encoded by the gene OAS1. Prior studies have shown that the longer variant of the protein is more effective at breaking down SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing the disease COVID-19.

"That we are beginning to understand the genetic risk factors in detail is key to developing new drugs against COVID-19," says co-author Brent Richards, senior investigator at the Lady Davis Institute of the Jewish General Hospital and professor at McGill University in Canada.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred considerable collaboration among researchers in different parts of the world, which has made it possible to study genetic risk factors in a wider diversity of individuals than in many previous studies. Even so, the majority of all clinical research is still being done on individuals of predominantly European descent.

"This study shows how important it is to include individuals of different ancestries. If we had only studied one group, we would not have been successful in identifying the gene variant in this case," says the study's corresponding author Hugo Zeberg, assistant professor at the Department of Neuroscience at Karolinska Institutet.

Jennifer E. Huffman, Guillaume Butler-Laporte, Atlas Khan, Erola Pairo-Castineira, Theodore G. Drivas, Gina M. Peloso, Tomoko Nakanishi, COVID-19 Host Genetics Initiative, Andrea Ganna, Anurag Verma, J. Kenneth Baillie, Krzysztof Kiryluk, J. Brent Richards and Hugo Zeberg. Multi-ancestry fine mapping implicates OAS1 splicing in risk of severe COVID-19. Nature Genetics, online XX December 2022, doi: 10.1038/s41588-021-00996-8

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# Duterte wants unvaccinated jailed as COVID rate hits record high



The Philippines' 43.7 percent positivity rate on Saturday – an all-time high for the fourth straight day – has been driven by the Omicron variant.

(January 8, 2022) The Philippines has reported at least 21,819 new COVID-19 infections, raising the country's positivity rate to another all-time high of 40 percent out of 70,049 tests conducted, as President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the arrest of unvaccinated people who will violate stay-at-home orders aimed at curbing "galloping" cases driven by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

With the latest number of infections on Friday, the country hits a record-high positivity rate for the third straight day, while the total caseload since the pandemic approaches three million.

On Saturday, the health department also reported another 26,458 new cases, with a positivity rate of 43.7 percent – the fourth consecutive day that a new record high was set.

The more than 43 percent positivity rate in the country is well above the World Health Organization's five percent positivity threshold.

There are now 102,017 active cases officially recorded in the country as of Saturday. Meanwhile, 265 new fatalities were reported bringing the official death toll to 52,135, although the actual number of deaths could be higher.

The majority of the cases reported were from the capital, Manila, and its surrounding cities and suburbs, and 99 percent of the new cases were recorded between December 26 to January 8.

Health officials and independent experts have already warned that the infections were projected to increase further in the coming days and would peak by the end of the month.

The sudden rise in cases had prompted Duterte to order on Thursday the arrest of unvaccinated people who violate stay-at-home orders, raising questions about the legality of the order.

"Because it's a national emergency, it is my position that we can restrain" people who have not got their shots, Duterte said in a pre-recorded message.

"I am now giving orders to the [village chiefs] to look for those persons who are not vaccinated and just request them or order them, if you

may, to stay put."

"And if he refuses and goes out of the house and goes around in the community or maybe everywhere, he can be restrained. If he refuses then the [official] is empowered to arrest the recalcitrant persons," he added.

Coronavirus vaccinations are voluntary in the nation of 110 million people, and less than half the population have so far completed their jabs.

Duterte said he was "appalled" at the large numbers of Filipinos yet to be vaccinated.

"If you don't get a jab you put everybody in jeopardy," he said, with the virus "galloping in our community, in our country and in the world".

Duterte had previously threatened to arrest those who violated the country's lockdown measures, and warned those who refused to get vaccinated that they will go to jail amid the Delta variant last year.

The government loosened lockdowns in October last year, after coronavirus infections driven by the Delta variant peaked, in order to revive the battered economy.

New infections dwindled to a few hundred per day just before Christmas, but ramped up again as families and friends got together for the holidays.

Health experts say the new cases are driven by the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

Under the new tighter restrictions, in place until mid-January, unvaccinated residents have to stay at home unless buying essentials or exercising.

Restaurants, parks, churches and beauty salons will operate at lower capacity, while in-person classes and contact sports are suspended.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES



**Under the new tighter restrictions, in place until mid-January, unvaccinated residents have to stay at home unless buying essentials or exercising [AFP]**

# A Message from Marvin Rotrand, National Director, League for Human Rights, B'nai Brith Canada

January 7, 2022

Dear Friends,

Allow me to wish readers of this newsletter all the best for 2022 with my hopes that the year ahead will be a healthy, happy and prosperous one for you and your family.

Several months ago, I came aboard as the new National Director of the League for Human Rights. Many of you will remember me from my time as a City Councillor in Montreal. My first duty as the new National Director was taking the pulse of the Jewish community across Canada.

It became immediately clear that those outside Toronto, including here in Quebec, hoped to see a stronger more visible B'nai Brith presence in the regions. There was a desire that B'nai Brith's regional offices in Montreal, Winnipeg and Edmonton be strengthened and that a permanent base be opened in Vancouver.

In fact, that will be our game plan in 2022.

Indeed, we have already begun to heighten our profile in the regions. Here in Quebec, B'nai Brith hosted a forum on November 16 that saw over 20 community organizations representing many ethnic groups meet to endorse B'nai Brith's four-point action plan to combat antisemitism and to support the promises made by the Government of Canada at the Malmo Forum of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

That led to an Open Letter to Prime Minister Trudeau and Special Envoy Irwin Cotler signed by 112 dignitaries including former Members of Parliament, former and current Quebec National Assembly members, Councillors from five municipalities and leaders of most of Montreal's Black and Asian communities, all rallying for the B'nai Brith plan.

A successful follow up meeting was held with leaders of the Chinese, Filipino, Tamil, and Bangladeshi communities as well as City Councillors, to build a durable coalition that will build bridges between communities and speak with one voice against antisemitism and all forms of hate.

B'nai Brith also hosted a national event from the Or Shalom Synagogue in Dollard des Ormeaux. A large national audience joined us for our Jews from Arab Lands ceremony. The history of Jews from Arab lands and Iran is a compelling story of which too many are unaware.



Our CEO Michael Mostyn is committed to reinforcing B'nai Brith's presence in Quebec in 2022. We want to strengthen our outreach in French to better service the francophone Jewish community and to engage more regularly with the Government of Quebec on issues of concern to our community.

B'nai Brith offered a golf tournament last summer and together with NGO Monitor, co-hosted a major fundraiser in Montreal in November. Both events were tremendous successes. Matthew Ross, our Quebec Regional Associate Director, is already working on an expanded golf tournament for the summer of 2022 and while no major fundraiser has been decided upon for Quebec, B'nai Brith will be very visible augmenting its programs such as its food security drives and its Diverse Minds program for high school students.

Please count on us for a more visible presence in Quebec in 2022 and I invite you to consider volunteering your time. There is so much more that we could do with greater resources, and nothing is more precious than our volunteers.

Our core work however will continue to be focused on human rights work and combatting antisemitism. We will always be here to help should you need us.

Our expanded Quebec presence will mirror our efforts in western Canada. 2022 will see B'nai Brith grow nationally continuing a proud tradition of community service that dates from 1875.

Best regards,

Marvin Rotrand  
National Director - League for Human Rights B'nai Brith Canada

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installation as a "missio cum cura animarum" rooted in customs and traditions and respecting the needs and aspirations of Filipino Catholics. The apostolic work was started by his predecessors - Fathers Carmelo Gosioco and Frank Alvarez, P.M.E., who fostered a vibrant faith community as "light of the world" and "salt of the earth".

Fr. Elago's missionary experiences with Filipino migrants abroad should serve him well here in Montreal. The community is starting to gravitate to his pastoral style and is appreciative of his dynamic approach to spiritual and religious ministry.

He holds a Licentiate degree in theology from the Angelicum in

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Quebecers." Quebec on Thursday reported 3,411 hospitalizations, with 285 people in intensive care. The province's COVID-19 situation report, which is updated daily, showed 98 additional deaths. The province also reported 6,528 new lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19.

### Ontario to gradually lift restrictions

In neighbouring Ontario, Premier Doug Ford on Thursday announced a phased approach to lifting restrictions.



**With new omicron variant, cases 'likely will go much higher': Dr. Fauci. Jonathan Karl interviews Dr. Anthony Fauci on "This Week." Susan Walsh/AP, FILE**

Among the changes, restaurant dining rooms, gyms, cinemas, museums and zoos — which have been closed since early this month — will be allowed to reopen at 50 per cent capacity on Jan. 31.

Ford said there will be 21 days between each reopening step, noting that pauses are a possibility if health indicators aren't trending the right way.

"If trends remain stable or improve, Ontario will move to the next step on Feb. 21, and then March 14," he said.

The provincial COVID-19 dashboard on Thursday showed hospitalizations at 4,061, with 594 people in intensive care. The province also reported an additional 75 deaths, though health officials noted the number reflected a data catch-up.

Ontario also reported 7,757 lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19.

In Alberta, Premier Jason Kenney on Thursday said the province would only consider relaxing COVID-19 restrictions further if there is a

Rome and was a doctoral student in Formative Spirituality at the Gregorian University. His studies, however, were on hold by his appointment as superior general of the Mission Society of the Philippines and as seminary rector in Tagaytay.

Fr. Elago started his priestly formation at the San Jose de Mindanao College Seminary and obtained his bachelor's degree in philosophy from Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro. For theology, he went to Davao to study at the Saint Francis Xavier Regional Seminary run by the PME Society, but finished his studies at the Divine Word (SVD) Seminary in Tagaytay.

He was ordained priest in 1974 by the late archbishop Patrick

"sustained decline" in pressure on hospitals, which "would follow a sustained decline in new cases, of course."

"I think we can reasonably expect to see 1,500 or more COVID patients in non-ICU beds when we reach the hospitalization peak a little later in January," Kenney said at a news briefing.

COVID-19 hospitalizations in the province increased to 1,131 on Thursday, up by 30 from the previous day. Of those patients, 108 were in ICUs, a number unchanged from Wednesday. The province also

reported eight additional deaths and 3,527 lab-confirmed cases.

In Atlantic Canada, students in Newfoundland and Labrador will be back in the classroom as of next Tuesday, Premier Andrew Furey announced on Thursday.

Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, the province's chief medical officer of health, said at the same briefing that the number of people in hospital with COVID-19 had risen to 20 — the highest level of hospitalizations the province has seen in the pandemic. That figure includes four people in critical care, a statement from the province said.

The province also reported two additional deaths due to COVID-19 and 360 additional lab-confirmed cases.

Fitzgerald said school is important to children not just for their academic well-being — but also for their physical and emotional well-being.

"COVID is circulating in our communities, and we will see that

Cronin of Cagayan de Oro; co-pressed by the late Bishop Epifanio Surban of Dumaguete. Fr. Elago celebrated his first mass in his hometown plaza of Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental. His family was originally from Leyte where he was born in 1948.

He is a priest of the Mission Society of the Philippines, a "Society of Apostolic Life", established by the Philippine bishops in 1965 as a "living memorial of the church's gratitude for the gift of faith" and as the "chief missionary arm of the Catholic Church in the Philippines". The Mission Society received canonical status in 2009 from the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples.

He joined the Mission Society

in 1970 and received his first assignment to Indonesia for 5 years; New Zealand, 13 years and Australia, 9 years.

The Society has 2 bishops and 74 priests working in the Philippines and in 12 other countries and territories across the world. Their central office is located in Biñan, Laguna, a formation house in Tagaytay for students of theology and philosophy. New candidates go to Consolacion, Cebu to undergo missionary spirituality and formation. BIENVENUE, MALIPAYONG PAG - ABOT, MALIGAYANG PAGDALO, BENVENIDO, WELCOME TO YOUR NEW APOSTOLATE. AD JESUM PER MARIAM !



**Paramedics bring a person to a hospital in Montreal, Sunday, April 11, 2021, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues in Canada and around the world. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Graham Hughes**

reflected in schools," she said, noting that the province's system can withstand a rise in cases among a "very low-risk age group."

"At this time, the benefits of being in school for children outweigh the risks of COVID-19."

The province will stay in Alert Level 4 as kids head back to class, which means officials will continue to urge people to stay home as much as possible.

New Brunswick on Thursday reported a total of 112 people in hospital with COVID-19, down from a record high of 123 on Wednesday. Of those, 12 were in intensive care, up from 11 the previous day.

The province also reported 488 new lab-confirmed cases and three additional deaths.

"The rate of people hospitalized and in ICU continues to most greatly impact people who are unvaccinated and those who are over six months from their second dose," the New Brunswick health department said in a statement.

In Nova Scotia, health officials on Thursday reported three additional deaths. The number of hospitalizations related to COVID-19 rose by two to 85 patients. Twelve remained in ICU, a number unchanged from Wednesday.

The province also reported an additional 696 lab-confirmed cases.

Prince Edward Island on Thursday reported the number of people in hospital for treatment of COVID-19 remained at 10, with three patients in ICU, no change from the previous day.

There were also 294 additional cases of COVID-19, island officials said.

In the Prairie provinces,

Manitoba on Thursday reported a total of 665 people in hospital with COVID-19, with 50 in ICU. Health officials also reported seven additional COVID-19-related deaths and 851 lab-confirmed cases.

In Saskatchewan, the province said the total number of people in hospital with COVID-19 stood at 215, with 23 people in intensive care. The province, which had no additional deaths to report on Thursday, also saw an additional 1,158 lab-confirmed cases.

Across the North, Nunavut's Health Minister John Main on Thursday extended the territory's public health emergency until Feb. 3 as 35 new lab-confirmed cases were reported.

Health officials in the Northwest Territories on Wednesday reported the first intensive care admission of the current Omicron-driven wave.

In Yukon, a spokesperson for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board said that people who believe they contracted COVID-19 at work will need a PCR test to make a workplace claim.

In British Columbia, health officials on Thursday said hospitalizations decreased by four patients to 891, with 119 people in ICU, an increase of four from Wednesday. The daily COVID-19 brief from the province outlined an additional 15 deaths and 2,150 lab-confirmed cases.

What's happening around the world As of Thursday evening, more than 340.2 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, according to Johns Hopkins University's coronavirus tracker. The reported global death toll stood at

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## GMA Network Statement on Bongbong Marcos' Reason for not joining the Jessica Soho Presidential Interviews

(January 22, 2022) GMA Network takes exception to the statement of the camp of former senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. that Kapuso news

It is unfortunate that Mr. Marcos has chosen to decline the invitation extended by the network to participate in "The Jessica Soho Presidential Interviews,"



pillar Jessica Soho is supposedly biased against the Marcoses, the reason for the presidential candidate to decline participation on "The Jessica Soho Presidential Interviews."

Throughout her career, Ms. Soho has consistently been named the most trusted media personality in the Philippines by both local and foreign organizations, a testament to her embodying the GMA News and Public Affairs ethos: "Walang Kinikilingan, Walang Pinoprotektahan, Serbisyonng Totoo Lamang."

This same ethos has guided Ms. Soho and the whole GMA News and Public Affairs organization, which is the most trusted media organization in the Philippines, according to the University of Oxford/Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

even as four other aspirants — Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Manila Mayor Isko Moreno, Sen. Manny Pacquiao, and Vice President Leni Robredo — have chosen to participate and take the opportunity to explain their advocacies to the public.

In this must-see special, Ms. Soho boldly asks the presidential aspirants the questions that need to be asked – their intentions behind running for the position, the controversies thrown at them, their stand on pressing issues and their concrete plans should they be elected. The questions are tough because the job of the presidency is tough.

We believe that this is an important exercise to inform the public about the candidates seeking their votes in Eleksyon 2022, to help them make the best, most informed choice on their ballots.

## To end the pandemic, Canada needs to lead vaccine efforts abroad: epidemiologist

Jeremiah Rodriguez  
CTV News.ca January 13, 2022

Canada must help lead vaccination efforts abroad in order to prevent the next dangerous variant and truly end the pandemic, one epidemiologist says.

"It's not going to be over for a long time unless wealthier nations, like

Latin America, she said.

Banerjee says more needs to be done to show Canadians that the lockdowns and restrictions they face here are directly tied to the virus being allowed to spread and mutate in other countries. She says huge hurdles to vaccination rates in lower-income countries include strict intellectual property rights




Canada, get your act together and realize that almost 3.3 billion people in this world have yet to receive their first vaccine," Ananya Banerjee, a professor at McGill University's epidemiology and biostatistics department, told CTVNews.ca in a video interview on Tuesday.

Some estimates have that figure set at upwards of 3.5 billion people, which would mean about 43 per cent of the world have not yet received their first dose. The majority of this population live in lower-income countries, including some African countries, parts of Asia and

obligations preventing these nations from affordably manufacturing their own mRNA vaccines, and their governments being unable to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for vaccine deliveries in the same way as wealthier countries.

While she says that front-line workers and vulnerable groups need a fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccines, Banerjee says more action is needed to get doses to countries which haven't received their first shot.



# Anthony Housefather


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# The poor die from COVID while the rich get richer, Oxfam warns

The coronavirus vaccine divide is costing lives and supercharging inequalities worldwide, a new report warns.

By Al Jazeera 17 Jan 2022

The wealth of the 10 richest men has doubled during the coronavirus pandemic, stoking inequality that contributes to the deaths of at least 21,300 people each day, according to a new report released on Monday from Oxfam International.

“We enter 2022 with unprecedented concern,” Oxfam’s Inequality Kills (to add link) report warns, arguing that the current global state of extreme inequality is a form of “economic violence” against the world’s poorest people and nations.

In this deeply unequal world, structural and systemic policy and political choices are skewed in favour of the richest and most powerful, resulting in harm to the majority of ordinary people around the world, said the report, which highlighted the COVID-19 vaccine divide as a prime example.

“Millions of people would still be alive today if they had had a vaccine — but they are dead, denied a chance while big pharmaceutical corporations continue to hold monopoly control of these technologies,” said Oxfam.

The report calculates that 252 men have more wealth than all one billion women and girls in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean combined. And 10 of the world’s richest men own more than the least affluent 3.1 billion people.

Moreover, while the rich got a whole lot richer during the pandemic, the incomes of 99 percent of humanity suffered.



**A group of 252 men have more wealth than all one billion women and girls in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean combined, a new report from Oxfam says [File: Angela Ponce/Reuters]**

Oxfam’s report is usually released prior to the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland – but the gathering of the world’s richest and most powerful has been postponed again this year due to the pandemic.

Last week, WEF released its Global Risks Report 2022 (PDF) warning that the lopsided economic recovery from the coronavirus, much of which has relied on the roll-out of vaccinations, has deepened divisions within and between nations.

It also stressed that growing inequality, made worse by the pandemic, is sure to cause additional tensions, resentments and further complicate nations’ responses to climate change, economic disparities and social instabilities.

What went wrong?

Despite efforts by the United Nations and governments over the last several decades to tackle poverty, and

more evenly distribute technology and access to education, the world has been heading towards severe inequality for decades.

“These present-day divides are directly linked to historical legacies of racism, including slavery and colonialism,” the Oxfam report said.

The report notes that since 1995, the world’s top one-percenters have captured nearly 20 times more of global wealth than the bottom 50 percent. And the pandemic has made things much worse.

Low interest rates and government stimulus designed to help economies recover from 2020’s COVID-19 blow have also stoked prices for stocks and other assets, making the wealthy even wealthier.

“The trillions poured into financial markets by central banks to save the economy have led to an explosion in billionaire wealth – it is the biggest increase in history – while the

pandemic has left ordinary people poorer than they would have been if it had never happened,” Gabriela Bucher, executive director of Oxfam, told Al Jazeera.

Wealth inequality does not just harm people. It hurts the planet as well. Twenty of the richest billionaires are estimated to be emitting as much as 8,000 times more carbon than the billion poorest people, according to Oxfam.

Vaccine equity & taxing the super-rich  
People who live in low-and-middle-income countries are around twice as likely to die from COVID-19 infection as people who live in rich countries, according to research cited by Oxfam.

In some countries, the poorest people are nearly four times more likely to die from COVID-19, Oxfam says.

“Many have lost their jobs and millions have lost their lives. Women, racialised groups and citizens of the Global South are hardest hit,” Bucher told Al Jazeera.

Oxfam argues that governments have the power to radically change course and blunt “economic violence” at its roots by laying the foundation for a more equal world.

A good start, it says, is to impose a one-off windfall tax on the COVID-19 gains of the 10 richest men, which would generate \$812bn, according to the report.

“We need to claw back this incredible billionaire bonanza with new wealth and capital taxes. It is simple, common sense: tax the super-rich and spend the money on nurses, on hospitals and on vaccines,” Bucher told Al Jazeera. Source: AL JAZEERA



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# B'nai Brith Pleased with its Canada-Wide Multicultural Forum Against Hate

(Montreal, January 20, 2022)

B'nai Brith Canada is delighted with the results of a national event it organized this week in which leaders from across the country met virtually for a multicultural forum that focused on combating hate with a united front.

The forum, held Wednesday night, attracted about 250 attendees, mostly human-rights activists from Canada's political, social, cultural, educational, and advocacy spheres. Representatives from Jamaican, Grenadian, Tamil, Bangladeshi, Filipino, Chinese, Hong Kong, Iranian, Azerbaijani and other minority Canadian communities shared insight and challenges they face.

Marvin Rotrand organized and moderated the forum on behalf of B'nai Brith Canada's advocacy arm, the League for Human Rights, of which he is National Director. Noted speakers included: Michael Mostyn, Chief Executive Office of B'nai Brith Canada; Ambassador of the Philippines to Canada Rodolfo Robles; Member of the National Assembly of Quebec David Birnbaum; Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi; Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown; Toronto Councillor James Pasternak; Winnipeg Councillor Kevin Klein, and Montreal Councillor Sonny Moroz.

"We are very pleased with the success of B'nai Brith's multicultural



forum," Rotrand said. "Our organization has now established a network of concerned community groups that we believe will inspire the Government to take action in eradicating hatred, particularly online.

"Canadians, no matter their background, should be able to interact

and operate in a society free from bigotry, racism, antisemitism and other prejudices. B'nai Brith is poised to work with partners from across civil society to make a more just Canada a reality."

"B'nai Brith will not rest until the objectives discussed at last night's

forum become reality," Mostyn said. "We look forward to hosting further forums in the future, including a French language one later this year, to galvanize support across Canadian communities for concrete action to address the scourge of hatred."

## World worse now due to COVID-19, climate, conflict: UN chief

Edith M. Lederer The Associated Press (Jan. 21, 2022)

UNITED NATIONS -- As he starts his second term as UN secretary-general, Antonio Guterres said Thursday the world is worse in many ways than it was five years ago because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and geopolitical tensions that have sparked conflicts everywhere -- but unlike U.S. President Joe Biden he thinks Russia will not invade Ukraine.

Guterres said in an interview with The Associated Press that the appeal for peace he issued on his first day in the UN's top job on Jan. 1, 2017 and his priorities in his first term of trying to prevent conflicts and tackle global inequalities, the COVID-19 crisis and a warming planet haven't changed.

"The secretary-general of the UN has no power," Guterres said. "We can have influence. I can persuade. I can mediate, but I have no power." Before he became UN chief, Guterres said he envisioned the post as being "a convener, a mediator, a bridge-builder and an honest broker to help find solutions that benefit everyone involved."

He said Thursday these are things "I need to do every day."

As an example, the secretary-general said this week he spoke to the African Union's envoy Olusegun Obasanjo, twice with Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, and once with Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed



**United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres speaks during interview at the UN headquarters on Jan. 20, 2022, in New York. (AP Photo/Robert Bumsted)**

in his attempt to get a cessation of hostilities in Ethiopia between the government and forces in the embattled Tigray region.

"I hope that we are in a situation in which it might become soon possible to have a cessation of hostilities and that is where I'm concentrating most of my efforts," Guterres said.

As another example, Guterres said he has also been on the phone to try to get Mali's military leaders who recently delayed elections scheduled for next month to 2026 to reduce the timetable. He said he spoke to Mali's military ruler, President Assimi Goita, three presidents from the 15-nation West African regional group ECOWAS, Algeria's prime minister and the African Union's leader about "how to make sure that in Mali, there is an acceptable calendar for the transition to a civilian government."

Guterres said he hopes Mali's military leaders will understand that

they need to accept "a reasonable period" before elections. The secretary-general believes voting should be held in "a relatively short amount of time," and said: "All my efforts have been in creating conditions for bridging this divide and for allowing ECOWAS and the government of Mali to come to a solution with an acceptable delay for the elections."

Guterres said the UN Security Council, which does have the power to uphold international peace and security including by imposing sanctions and ordering military action,

is divided, especially its five veto-wielding permanent members. Russia and China are often at odds with the U.S., Britain and France on key issues, including Thursday on new sanctions against North Korea.

On the issue on every country's front burner now -- whether Russia, which has massed 100,000 troops on Ukraine's border, will invade the former Soviet republic -- Guterres said, "I do not think Russia will invade Ukraine, and I hope that my belief is

See Page 12 World worse now

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# Two Filipino heritage organizations held joint Christmas celebration



By: Tony A. San Juan, OCT-Retired

Christmas is a significant annual rite ushering in the holiday season to many Christians throughout the world, especially for Filipinos. It's primarily the traditional time that we honour and celebrate the birth of the great Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, and have to realize His great love for us and the beauty of loving and sharing amongst people.

True to their established mandates and kindred goals of pursuing programs and projects in respect to the promotion, preservation, and celebration of the rich and vibrant heritage and culture of our beloved home land, on a historic collaboration, the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM) and the Filipino Heritage Council of Canada-Ontario (FHCC) have partnered and presented a Christmas virtual event on December 29, 2021 at 7:00 PM.

With their holiday theme of "Paskuhan Sa Canada" (Christmas in Canada), the 2 Philippine heritage-focused organizations in Quebec and Ontario have collaborated for the first time of pooling resources in terms of engaging musical talents, cultural expertise, and technical knowledge in their respective jurisdictions thus producing a 1-hour holiday show via YouTube and Facebook.

Among those who delivered their Christmas and holiday messages were the Philippine Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Rodolfo Robles, Provincial Premiers Doug Ford of Ontario, and Heather Stefanson of Manitoba, Members of Parliament Salma Zahid, Anthony Housefather, and Rechie Valdez, Montreal Councillor Stephanie Valenzuela, and TCDSB Trustee Garry Tanuan.

The virtual event was jointly headed by Al Abdon, Chairman of the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal,

who served as the show's executive producer & production designer, and Joseph Redoblado, President of the Filipino Heritage Council of Canada who acted as the production coordinator & scriptwriter, with Jeannete Perignon and Suzy Llanera as administrative and talent coordinators. They were supported and assisted by their respective Board Directors, Executive Officers, and members.

Aptly hosted jointly by Kimberly Gultia of FHSM, and Michele Serrano of FHCC, the online program remarkably showcased the singing talents of Filipino-Canadian performers belting popular and well-loved classical Christmas carols and the pictorials of holiday foods provided by Toronto's FV Foods and Barrio Fiesta.

Amongst the musical artists from Quebec who performed were Thea Cruz, Mark Simbulan, Kristiane

Mesina, Bella Caci, and Shenelle Boceta. The performers from Ontario were Josie De Leon, couple Rodney Ronquillo & Chyrell Samson, Danny Almodal Orbillo, mother & daughter Merlita Alo & Mischell Alo-Rosales, siblings Jeremy & Suzanne Tanuan, Ryan Orlanda, and the medley group of John V. Gabriel, Jose "Ding Mandac" Lopez, Maraja Regodon, Francis Jake Reyes, J. Hippie" Julien Mendoza, and Jasmine Buenafe.

Marami sa mga kababayan, kapamilya, kapuso, kapatid, at kaibigan natin na nanood at nagdiwang nitong Kapaskuhan! Many of our countrymates, family members, dearly beloved, brothers & sisters, and friends have watched the exciting event and wonderfully celebrated together this Christmastime! God bless everyone! Wishing One and All, "A Peaceful and Prosperous New Year Throughout!" (by: Tony A. San Juan, OCT-Retired)

## Before it's too late: Montreal Filipino community seeks help for youths facing challenges

Montreal, January 19, 2022 – In light of recent incidents of armed violence involving young people in Montreal, several members of the Filipino community are calling on government help for Filipino youths with unmet needs.

In a rare act to raise public awareness, the group is sounding the alarm on challenges facing many young people of Filipino background in terms of job opportunity, social integration and community safety.

Ramon Vicente, President of Filipino Family Services of Montreal, a charitable organization set up last year, stresses the multiple barriers facing Filipino youths in the city, particularly in the Côte Des Neiges district.

"These youths are English-speaking, Asian, and in many cases, from low-income families. Many came here from the Philippines to reunite with

their parents, mostly mothers, after several years of separation because of immigration delays, and have many needs as a result," Vicente said.

Lack of French fluency and access to local support in education, job training and sports are cited as some of the ongoing barriers facing these youths. As a result, some have been involved in situations that place them in conflict with the law, such as substance abuse.

"Like many Asians, we seldom speak out about these issues, but the recent spate of violent crimes affecting many Black and Arab youths in Montreal is a wake-up call for us in terms of engaging our youths and accessing violence prevention measures to set up programs for them," Vicente added.

Bryan Perona, a young man who runs a tattoo business, knows very well the challenges facing many of the

youths whom he regularly helps.

"Imagine being young, being Asian and not speaking French fluently, not having enough access to sports programs, not getting proper support in high schools and colleges, and not having a job with decent pay during summer or beyond, and you have a picture of alienation and stigmatization," he said.

Youths in conflict with the law is an issue familiar to Thelma Castro, Advisor for the Filipino Parents Association of Quebec, who used to work with youths in youth protection.

"Many Filipino youths are also caught up in youth protection, and when they come out, there is no community-based support for them", she stated.

"Let's not forget the eventual negative effects of Bill 96 on us, because we may not be deemed "historic" enough. We're thus caught between being English-speaking and being a visible minority," she added.

Many community members see hope in the election of the first Filipina to City Council last November, Stephanie Valenzuela, one of the youngest members of the present Council.

Valenzuela has undertaken steps to examine city funding for English-speaking community groups in the Côte Des Neiges - NDG borough, and the share of the multi-million dollar funds allocated for crime prevention that will go to community groups. She has also enquired into ways community groups can be included in the planning of the upcoming City Summit on armed violence.

"As a first generation Filipina Canadian, it is important for me to shine a light on the struggles my community and many other ethnic communities live



**Stephanie Valenzuela, City Councillor, Darlington**

on a daily basis due to the lack of accessibility to the resources provided by different levels of government", Valenzuela said.

"I hope, by addressing this lack of integration within our city's networks, that we will be able to create opportunities and give hope to our youth and future generations," she noted.

CRARR will work closely with the Filipino community and other English-speaking racialized communities to promote equitable access to youth and violence prevention measures.


According to recent official data, there are approximately 44,000 Montrealers of Filipino background, the second largest sub-group of Pacific Asians in Montreal. It is estimated that 59% of Filipino Montrealers are women, 35% are under 24 (compared to the Quebec average of 28%); and 69% are first generation Canadians. Almost 60% of Filipinos in Montreal are considered unilingual English-speakers.

Information: Ramon Vicente President, Filipino Family Service of Montreal: 514-823-2886  
Fo Niemi, Executive Director, CRARR: crarrservice@gmail.com

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# The Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal Moves Forward

By Editha Fedalizo

Now in its fourth year of existence, the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM) annually evaluates itself on how it accomplishes its programs and activities to realize its goals of promoting Filipino culture, heritage, and traditions.

Looking back to year 2021, the FHSM has gained considerable success in its programs and events which are worth pursuing as we move forward in realizing our goals.

We hope to obtain stronger collaboration and coordination among Filipino organizations in order to promote our rich heritage to the far corners of Montreal, Quebec and across Canada. Furthermore, we hope to reach the Filipino youth to educate and to encourage them to appreciate our culture and our heritage.

The first ever joint virtual Christmas Celebration titled "Paskuhan sa Canada" (Christmas in Canada) was held on December 29, 2021. This was a collaborative effort between the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM) and the Filipino Heritage Council of Canada (FHCC) in Ontario. It was an event with Christmas songs rendered by Filipino local and international talents, spiced with dignitaries' messages from Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

The FHSM's activities and events in 2021 were as follows: The "Third Anniversary of the Filipino Heritage Month" was held virtually on March 14, 2021 as the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak as a pandemic on March 11, 2020; hence, every Filipino Heritage activity/event was held virtually, as dictated by public health restrictions. On June 1, 2021, we had the "Kick-off of the



**Ambassador Rodolfo Robles and Mrs. Nora Robles join the officers of the Filipino Heritage Society Montreal, during the "Meet And Greet", August 28, 2021, Ruby Foo's Hotel, Montreal. L-R: Luzviminda Mazzone, Editha Fedalizo, Jeannette Pérignon, Mrs. Nora Robles, Ambassador Rodolfo D. Robles, Greg Marie Marino (First Secretary and Consul, Embassy of the Philippines, Ottawa), Ricardo Ribaya, Paul Imperial, Councillor Stephanie Valenzuela, and Alfonso Abdon.**

Philippino Heritage Month", again held virtually. To celebrate the birthday (June 19, 1861) of our great hero, Dr. José Rizal, the FHSM presented a "Celebration of the Literary Works of Dr. Jose Rizal", on June 20, 2021. A collection of talents from different groups and organizations participated in presenting the poems and songs written by Dr. José Rizal as well as monologues written for the characters of Maria Clara and Sisa, from Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere". There were also dances from that period in the Philippines, a fashion show of costumes worn during that era, etc. This was coordinated by Editha Fedalizo. On October 30, 2021, the FHSM celebrated, virtually, the adoption of M-155, declaring June as the Filipino Heritage Month all over Canada. Salma Zahid, MP, Scarborough Centre, Ontario, who tabled the Motion-155 was the special guest.

The FHSM Projects for 2021-2022 are the following: Computer Literacy Program - It is held every three

months, free for seniors, done virtually or in-person and taught by the FHSM chair, Alfonso Abdon, and funded by the New Horizons for Seniors Program. The Heritage Hour - done once a month, virtually, with a selected guest who is interviewed about Filipino culture and heritage by four panelists from the FHSM. The program is coordinated by Amelia Manon-og. The interviews can be viewed on FHSM's You Tube and Facebook page. Digital Storytelling Project - a joint project with Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS) where the participants' experiences here in Montreal and elsewhere in Canada are captured through storytelling. La Ville Extraordinaire Project is another one in which FHSM has partnered with Concordia University. Kimberly Gultia, FHSM's Outreach Director, assists Concordia University in seeking volunteers from the Filipino community. The project is now on its second year and it aims to have older Montrealers' memories exhibited at the Montréal Museum of Memories/Mémoires des Montréalais(es). Collection and Preservation of Periodicals started early last year and is still on-going. FHSM aims to collect, preserve, digitize, and facilitate free online access to old and current Filipino community newspapers such as Bulalakaw, Tamaraw, The North American Filipino Star, and The Filipino Forum. Another interesting project is the Digitization of old VHS tapes/slides for archives in cooperation with the Atwater Library in Montreal. Classes are taught

virtually by the director for this project, Eric Craven with five FHSM participants. This is on-going with Concordia University's Ville Extraordinaire Project.

The activities and services of the FHSM for 2021 included: (1) Knitting that started during the winter 2021 lockdown; classes which lasted three months were done virtually, guided by Jeannette Pérignon. There were eight senior participants (FHSM and SWIS members) who said that was the first time they have ever used a knitting needle. They accomplished making scarves, slippers, tuques, hats, bags, vests, and sweaters; (2) Baking/cooking: FSHM volunteers cooked and delivered meals to 15 seniors who were confined to their homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic; (3) Baking lessons: Virtual baking lessons were conducted by Jeannette Pérignon, guiding five participants in baking orange chiffon cake, French bread and pan de sal (Filipino bread). This was done in spring 2021; and (4) Bingo for Seniors: Virtual bingo, headed by Al Abdon with seven enthusiastic senior participants calling out numbers three evenings a week which is still going on.

Looking ahead to 2022, the FHSM will be pursuing the following projects: (1) Newspaper Preservation Project; (2) Virtual 4th Anniversary of Filipino Heritage Month in February or March 2022 and (3) Virtual Celebration of the Filipino Heritage Month in June 2022.

The current officers of the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal are: Alfonso Abdon, Chairman; Alberto Abiera, Vice-Chairman; Jeannette Pérignon, Secretary; Luzviminda Mazzone, Treasurer; Ricardo Ribaya, Assistant Treasurer; Paul Imperial, Auditor; Amelia Manon-og, Education Director; Editha Fedalizo, Communications Director; Dolores Belandres, Event Coordinator; Rebecca Aguilar, Logistics Officer; Elma Bulatao, Assistant Educational Director; Marvin Rotrand, Adviser. Administrators: Fely Bisares, Fely Rosales-Cariño, Eppie Gevero, Valent Lloyd-Hughes, Nancy Karidis, and Sylvia Lemaire.

From Page 20 Key Take aways statement.

Psaki continued by noting that the president "knows from long experience that the Russians have an

Earlier Wednesday: As part of a live press conference marking his first full year in office, Biden intimated that Western nations may not be fully aligned on how to react should Russia commit a lesser violation.

"It's one thing if it's a minor



**White House Press Secretary, Jen Psaki**

extensive playbook of aggression short of military action, including cyberattacks and paramilitary tactics."

Additionally, the statement continued with Psaki adding that Biden "affirmed today that those acts of Russian aggression will be met with a decisive, reciprocal, and united response."

incursion and we end up having to fight about what to do and not do," Biden told reporters at an East Room news conference. "But if they actually do what they're capable of doing with the forces amassed on the border, it is going to be a disaster for Russia if they further invade Ukraine."

Source: CNN

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## Cooking with love provides food for the soul.



**Baked Orange Chicken Meatballs**

**FOR THE MEATBALLS:**

- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup Panko breadcrumbs
- 1 1/2 lbs ground chicken (See Kelly's Note)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
- 2 Tablespoons minced scallions
- 2 Tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

**FOR THE SAUCE:**

- 1 1/2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
- 1 1/2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes, or more to taste
- 3/4 cup orange marmalade

1/4 cup hoisin sauce

**Instructions:**

**Make the meatballs:**  
Preheat the oven to 500°F. Spray a mini-muffin pan or baking dish with cooking spray.  
In a small bowl, stir together the milk and Panko breadcrumbs and let sit for 5 minutes.  
In a large bowl, combine the ground chicken, garlic, ginger, scallions, soy sauce, salt, pepper and soaked breadcrumbs. Use your hands to thoroughly combine the meat mixture and then shape it into balls using 2 to 3 tablespoons of meat per meatball. Place the shaped meatballs into the prepared pan and bake for 12 to 15 minutes until the meatballs are fully cooked. While the meatballs are baking, prepare the sauce.  
**Make the sauce:**  
Add the sesame oil and olive oil to a small saucepot over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and ginger and cook, stirring, for about 2 minutes until golden brown.  
Add the red pepper flakes, orange marmalade and hoisin sauce, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes until the sauce has thickened slightly.  
Remove the meatballs from the oven and transfer them into a large bowl. Pour the sauce on top and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

**NOTE:**

If you can't find ground chicken at your local supermarket, feel free to use ground turkey, which is often easier to find.



**Salmon Patties**

**Ingredients**

- 1 lb fresh salmon filet\*
  - 3 Tbsp Olive oil, divided
  - 1 1/2 tsp Garlic salt, I used Lawry's Brand, to taste
  - 1/2 tsp Black pepper, or to taste
  - 1 medium yellow onion, 1 cup, finely diced
  - 1/2 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
  - 3 Tbsp unsalted butter, divided
  - 1 cup Panko bread crumbs
  - 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
  - 3 Tbsp mayonnaise
  - 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
  - 1/4 cup parsley, finely minced
- US Customary - Metric Instructions**

Preheat Oven to 425°F. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment or silicone liner. Place salmon in the center, skin-side-down, drizzle with olive oil and season with garlic salt and black pepper. Bake uncovered for 10-15 min (depending on thickness), or just until cooked through. Remove from oven, cover with foil and rest 10 min. Flake salmon with 2 forks discarding skin and any bones then set aside and cool to room temp. Heat a medium skillet over medium heat with 1 Tbsp olive oil and 1 Tbsp butter. Add diced onion and bell pepper and saute until golden and softened (7-9 minutes) then remove

from heat.

In a large mixing bowl, combined flaked salmon, sautéed pepper and onion, 1 cup bread crumbs, 2 beaten eggs, 3 Tbsp mayonnaise, 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce, 1 tsp garlic salt, 1/4 tsp black pepper and 1/4 cup chopped parsley. Stir to combine. Form into patties (about a heaping Tablespoonful each) and mold with your hands into 2" wide by 1/3 to 1/2" thick patties.\*\*

In a clean non-stick pan, heat 1 Tbsp oil and 1 Tbsp butter until hot then add salmon patties in a single layer. Saute 3 to 4 min per side or until golden brown and cooked through. If salmon patties brown too fast, reduce heat. Remove finished patties to a paper-towel lined plate and repeat with remaining oil, butter and salmon cakes.

**Recipe Notes**

\*Substituting Salmon: If desired, you can substitute the first 4 ingredients listed with 15 oz of well-drained canned salmon or salmon in packets. Leftover salmon from dinner can also be used if available.  
\*\*Cook's Tip: If salmon mixture is too dry to hold a patty shape, add an extra tablespoon of mayo and if it is too moist, add more bread crumbs.



From Page 7 The world worse now correct."

What makes him think Moscow won't invade when Biden and others believe Russian President Vladimir Putin will send troops into Ukraine?

"Because I do not believe in a military solution for the problems that exists, and I think that the most rational way to solve those problems is through diplomacy and through engagement in serious dialogue," Guterres said, stressing that an invasion would have "terrible consequences."

The secretary-general said "we have been in contact, of course" with top officials in Russia, though the UN is not directly engaged in the Ukraine crisis.

Guterres is scheduled to deliver a speech to the 193 UN member nations in the General Assembly on Friday on his priorities for 2022.

He singled out three immediate priorities that "are worrying me enormously": the lack of vaccinations in large parts of the world, especially in Africa; the need to reduce emissions by

45% in this decade to try to meet the international goal of trying to limit future global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit); and the "extremely unjust" financial situation in the world that favours rich countries.

Many developing countries have very few resources, high debts that are growing and they pay much higher interest rates than in Europe or North America, have no vaccines, and disproportionately "suffer the impacts of climate change," Guterres said.

"We need a deep reform in our international financial system in order to make sure that there is more justice in the way resources are available to allow for the recovery (from COVID-19) to be possible everywhere," he said.

On another major issue, Guterres stressed that the Afghan people can't be collectively punished for "wrong things that are done by the Taliban," so it is absolutely essential to massively increase humanitarian aid "because the Afghans are in a desperate situation with the risks of deaths by hunger" and disease in a frigid winter

with COVID-19.

"More than half the population is in desperate need of humanitarian aid," he said, and money needs to be injected into the economy to ensure Afghan banks operate and doctors, teachers, engineers and other workers are paid to prevent the country's economic collapse.

The issue of recognition of the Taliban government is up to member states, Guterres said, but the UN has been pressing the Taliban, which took power in August as U.S.-led NATO forces were departing after 20 years, to ensure human rights, especially women's rights to work and girls' education, and to make the government more inclusive and reflective of Afghanistan's diverse population.

The secretary-general said he will be attending the Beijing Olympics in February "which is not a political act" but "to be present when all the world comes together for good -- for a peaceful message."

**Flight 222 Instructions**

Good morning and welcome to Flight 2022!

We are prepared to take off into the New Year. Please make sure your **positive attitude** and **gratitude** are secured and locked in the upright position. All self-destruct devices: pity, anger, selfishness, pride, and resentment should be turned off at this time. All negativity, hurt, and discouragement should be put away. Should you lose your **positive attitude** under pressure during this flight, reach up and pull down a **prayer**. Prayers will automatically be activated by **faith**. Once your **faith** is activated, you can assist other passengers who are of little faith. There will be **no baggage** allowed on this flight. **God**, our **Captain**, has cleared us for take-off. Destination - **greatness!** Wishing you a New Year filled with new **hope**, new **joy**, and new **beginnings!** Stay blessed! And welcome in 2022.



**Social Tidbits  
Community News**

**Fely Rosales Cariño**

Here we are again; is there anything uplifting to say as yet? Our hands are tied, our hearts are broken, delta and omicron refuse to leave. At this time, what do we do? First, follow health regulations and be vaccinated. Second, there is hope! Let's not forget to raise our eyes to God. Pray as we've never prayed before. Pray for this pandemic to release its grip on our lives. Prayers are powerful and God listens to prayers of dependence on His power and His might. He is the only One who does miracles.

For those who want to feel as if you are in the Philippines listening to the sounds of Christmas, well, sit down and we will bring you the first virtual collaborative effort of both the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM) under Chairman Alfonso Abdon and Toronto's Filipino Heritage Council of Canada (FHCC) under President Joseph Redoblado. While waiting for the festivities to begin, the familiar sound of "Ang Pasko Ay Sumapit" played in the background. The program was ably hosted by Kimberly Gultia, the Outreach Director of FHSM and Michelle Serano, the Executive Vice President of FHCC.

The sights and sounds of Christmas began when husband and wife team of Rodney & Chyrell Ronquillo opened up with the song entitled "The First Noel." While listening to this, I remembered where I was and what occasion I was attending while in the Philippines. I became nostalgic and wished this song would never end.

And then His Excellency

Rodolfo Robles, Philippine Ambassador to Canada, exalted Philippine culture to inform the audience less they forget. He also encouraged the audience to praise God for all our blessings in the past and those that are yet to come. He also reminded us to pray for the frontliners as they go to work every day to help save lives.

Then came the beautiful songs. Jeremy and Susan blended their voices into sweet harmony. Mark Alvin Simbulan, one of Montreal's best, gave a touching rendition of "Mary, Did You Know?" in his rich baritone voice. The classic song that spoke of Jesus coming to save humanity, to heal, to calm storms, etc seems just the antidote to today's uncertainty. Other singers who offered their stirring Christmas tunes were Bella Caci (O Holy Night), Danny Ordillo (I'll Be Home for Christmas), Joy Messina (Christmas is Here), Josie de Leon (Sana Ngayong Pasko), Thea de la Cruz (Have a Merry Christmas), Shenelle Boceta (Someday at Christmas), and Michelle Alo (Do You Hear What I Hear?).

To continue in the mood of hope, various speakers came to share their inspirational messages. Honorable Heather Stefanson, Manitoba's Premier, gave a resounding report card of Filipino Manitobans. She said she was impressed about their show of compassion towards one another and the way they help others in times of need. Honorable Salma Zahid, MP of Scarborough Center, came next. She

is well known for initiating Bill M155, the bill that established June as the Heritage Month of Filipinos across Canada. Gary Tanauan, of Toronto's School Board, gave the good news that 1 in 3 of the 90,000 students are Filipinos. And our very own Stephanie Valenzuela, Councilor for Darlington District, invited the audience to work with the resources we have at hand and continue to move forward. And of course the very comforting and able Anthony Housefather, MP of Mount Royal, gave a thumbs up to both Al Abdon and Joseph Robledado and other officers for making this musical extravaganza a virtual reality.

Bravery and dedication during these pandemic times led the Knights of Rizal (KOR), Eastern Canada region, to honor our beloved Philippine hero, Dr. Jose Rizal. It is the 125th commemoration of his martyrdom. First on deck was the Parade of Colors with flag bearers Sir Jolan Bueno, Sir Stephane Morin, and Sir Francisco Bernabe. The anthems were performed by Sir Edmour Valdez and Lady Cora Calatin. Sir Dante Tabamo recited the Pledge of Allegiance while Sir Rey Balansi led the crowd with the Invocation. The wreath-laying were performed by Councilor Stephanie Valenzuela, Sir Dario Boco, Sir Hector Racuya, Sir Angelito Manuel, Sir Dante Tabamo, and Lady Esperanza Manaog (President of the Kababaihang Rizalista). Sir James de la Paz gave his welcome address, followed by Councilor Stephanie Valenzuela's uplifting message, and Gerry Danzil closed this first part of the program.

Now to the most noteworthy part, the Knighting Ceremonies. This began with the presentation and initiation of Ray Ucab and Edgar Guevero. Candidates for Elevation (2nd degree) were Sir Alfonso Abdon, Sir Romeo Remigio, Sir Edwin Rosete, Sir Rene Hizon, Sir Amado Lozano, Sir John Aquino, and Sir Jeffrey Buenafe. The candidates for Exaltation (3rd degree) were Sir Councilor Sonny Moroz and Sir Owen Kelly Florendo. Sir Rey Balansi inducted the officers of the

following: West Island Chapter, Notre-Dame-de-Grace Chapter and Cotes-des-Neiges Chapter. The Degree Team was composed of Area Commanders Sir James de la Paz, Sir Dario Boco, Sir Rey Balansi, Sir Bert Abiera, Sir Edmour Valdez, and Sir Gerry Danzil. Because of their unceasing service, three outstanding ladies were given an Award of Appreciation from the Knights of Rizal: Lady Erlinda Buluag, Lady Cherry Palmos, and Lady Annie Galang. Posthumous award was given to Sir Eduardo Dumandan. His wife Flor was there to receive the award.

Not to be forgotten are the newly elected officers of the Supreme Council of the KOR, 2021-2023: Sir Gerardo Calderon (Supreme Commander), Sir Reymundo del Rosario (Deputy Supreme Commander), Sir Armando Cazzola (Supreme Chancellor), Sir Emmanuel Calairo (Supreme Pursuivant), Sir Frisco San Juan Junior (Supreme Exchequer), Sir Danilo Peralta (Supreme Editor), Sir Ferdinand Suba (Supreme Archivist), Sir Rodel Abellana (Deputy Supreme Exchequer), and Sir Meliton Garraton (Deputy Supreme Pursuivant and Overseas Representative). This list came from KOR, Intramuros Chapter.

What a fun evening we had! Credit should be given to the official photographer of the night, Sir Jeffrey Buenafe. And I'm pleased to be in the delightful company of Lady Rose de la Paz and Stephanie Valenzuela as we enjoyed stories about the community.

Let's embrace the New Year with renewed hope and bright aspirations. And this is my prayer for us all: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:5,6).

See you next issue and God Bless !!!

**From Page 4 Surging cases more than 5.5 million.**

In Europe, Austria's parliament voted on Thursday to introduce a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for residents 18 and older, beginning Feb. 1, the first measure of its kind in Europe.

Enforcement will only begin in mid-March as police routinely check people's vaccination status. Exempted from the mandate are pregnant women, individuals who for medical reasons can't be vaccinated, and people who have recovered from a coronavirus infection in the past six months.

Meanwhile, France will ease work-from-home rules from early February and allow nightclubs to reopen two weeks later, Prime Minister Jean Castex said on Thursday.

Caps on the number of people allowed into sports and entertainment venues will also be lifted on Feb. 2, and masks will no longer be required outdoors from that date.



**Quebec Premier François Legault said Thursday the Health Ministry is confident it will not have to turn to 'Plan B' — radical measures to ease overcrowding in hospitals — but it is too soon to ease the latest pandemic restrictions. (Paul Chiasson/The Canadian Press)**

Infections continue to accelerate in the Americas, reaching new peaks, with 7.2 million new cases and more than 15,000 deaths in the last week, the Pan American Health Organization said.

Mexico registered a record daily increase of more than 60,000 new cases, as the country steps up testing

for the virus.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., the Biden administration is giving colleges and universities another \$198 million to help them curb COVID-19 and address student needs, such as housing and food, amid the ongoing pandemic, the U.S. Department of Education said.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Hong Kong will suspend face-to-face teaching in secondary schools from Monday until after the approaching Lunar New Year, authorities said, because of a rising number of coronavirus infections in several schools.

In Africa, top public health bodies called for donated vaccines to come with a shelf life of three to six months so countries could plan their rollouts and avoid a situation where doses expire.

Health officials in South Africa on Wednesday reported an additional 4,322 cases and 156 deaths, though officials noted there was a backlog of deaths.

Meanwhile, in Algeria, officials announced that elementary and secondary schools would be closed for a period of 10 days in the face of a wave of Omicron cases.

In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia reported two additional deaths and 5,591 additional cases of COVID-19. The country recently announced that as of Feb. 1, people will need to show proof of having a booster dose to get into certain public spaces, like malls and restaurants.

-From Reuters, The Associated Press and With files from CBC News, The Canadian Press and Reuters

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# FILIPINO STAR

## SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

### 1 on 1: Belle Mariano on navigating fame and her phenomenal breakthrough



**Actress and singer Belle Mariano**

Following a breakthrough year with a series, movie, and album each released to massive success, Belle Mariano is now widely seen as one of the budding superstars of her generation.

Mariano, 19, is admittedly still in disbelief over her meteoric rise to stardom, given her early start in showbiz. Her acting career spans nearly a decade, dating back to 2012.

After that long wait, Mariano is among the most visible and in-demand artists in local showbiz. She's set to headline her first major concert, "Daylight," on January 29, and will reprise her lead role in the sophomore season of "He's Into Her" opposite Donny Pangilinan.

Speaking with ABS-CBN News, Mariano opened up about how she has learned to navigate fame, and the expectations of both fans and critics that come with it.

"For me, it's all about balance — balancing everything in your life. It doesn't mean naman na you're in this industry, na wala kang life outside. Balance: you know where to put yourself, you have

time for your family, your friends, the people you love, the things you're passionate [about]. Doon ka lang magkakaroon ng magandang

pace. Even if I weren't in this platform, it's really important to save some for ourselves," she said.

In the age of social media



where opinions come in floods and feedback instant, Mariano has also come to understand that there's no one person who can please everyone.

"As much as possible I engage with the people who support me. But sometimes when I read, say, negative or hurtful comments, I just don't let them affect me. If I do, I take it as constructive criticism, something that will help me improve.

"I feel like hindi naman puwedeng lahat maganda lang ang comment sa 'yo. Kailangan din natin ng... Maybe that's their way of tough love," she said.

On days when demands may take a toll on her, Mariano fortunately has a firm grasp of how to regain her mental balance — primarily by turning to her family.

"The things and the people that keep me sane are my family, doing other hobbies as well, not just this. Sa downtime ko, I paint, I do other stuff, not just focus on one thing. Really, it's about your surroundings, too. I feel like iyon 'yung big factor na nakakaapekto sa atin," she said.

The same mindset, of anchoring herself to what's most important, has helped Mariano weather "down moments" throughout her decade-long career in the limelight.

Asked what achievement of hers she is most proud of, Mariano answered: "The fact na I never gave up on the things I love doing, I'm really proud of that. Despite down moments, na hindi naman talaga maiiwasan, I just go back to the reason why I'm doing this: because I'm passionate about it, and I love what I'm doing. I love entertaining, I love making other people smile. I just go back to my purpose — 'Why am I here?'"

That perseverance has certainly paid off, as Mariano marks another milestone with her concert. The show, to be livestreamed on KTX.ph, will feature Mariano's original tracks from her debut album "Daylight."

"I can't believe it's all happening," she said. "I'm out of words, honestly. I always pictured myself singing live, but I never really thought it would happen. Just being in that moment is just so amazing, and I'm so grateful it's happening."

# New Canadian comedy series showcases Filipino culture



**Son of a Critch' airs weekly on CBC Television**

A young Filipino Canadian made his acting debut on CBC's original comedy, 'Son of a Critch.' Mark Rivera plays one of the lead roles in this coming-of-age real life story of Canadian comedian, actor, and writer, Mark Critch, back in the 80s in St. John's Newfoundland.



**Mark Rivera**

"I didn't believe it at first. I thought I never got the role, but surprisingly, the production chose me. I portrayed the role of a Filipino boy named Ritche Perez. He is a painfully shy kid and he wants to fit in with the other kids at the school but he's being bullied because of his color and ethnicity. He is the second to the least favorite in the school with Mark Critch being the first least favorite in the school. Over time, he developed this deep friendship with Mark," Rivera said.

Rivera's parents also shared their excitement over their son's big break. "We [didn't] really

expect it. He doesn't really wanna be an actor because it's not his forte. He's a singer, he's a musician. But then we tried it. We submitted the self-tape video and then he got a call back. I told him probably they saw something in you that we haven't seen," Rivera's mother Marissa said.

Despite the lack of formal training, Rivera's natural acting ability and uncanny resemblance to the character he's portraying made a big impression on Mark Critch himself.

"I was delighted when I first saw Mark audition. He has a natural ease as an actor. He reminded me a lot of my friend Ritche Perez who he plays. Physically, he reminded me a lot of him, but also he has a very gentle, humble and wonderful way in which he carries himself. And after we had auditioned various people for the role, I was speaking to Benjamin who plays the young me. And I said, of all those people, who do you connect the most with and he said Mark. And after that it was a no brainer. I felt he was the right choice. Benjamin felt he was the right choice. And for the few times in my life, I was right," Critch shared.

While filming the show, Rivera not only discovered a lot of similarities with Ritche Perez but also picked up some new skills to play his role. "Playing the cello is one and another is moonwalking. It was pretty hard but I got it," Rivera admitted. "When I met the

real Ritche, we became close friends and we're into music. We jammed together. Ritche showed me some of his childhood photos and I actually looked like him when he was young,"

Rivera's parents are not only proud of their son's achievement but also the way the Filipino culture is showcased in some episodes. "It's family-oriented. Even in showing their Filipino culture, when there's

Filipino gathering, there's always food," Marissa Rivera noted.

As for Rivera's father Emerson, he said "they really got somebody who knows the Filipino culture. We're so thankful. We're so proud of this that our culture is being shown to this show and shared."

'Son of a Critch' airs weekly on CBC Television and on streaming platform, CBC Gem. ■

## 'May forever': 'Eat Bulaga' renews GMA-7 contract for 27th straight year



**Tito, Vic and Joey**

"Eat Bulaga" (EB), the longest-running noon time show in the country, officially renewed their contract with GMA-7 yesterday.

The renewal between the two marks their 27 years of working together.

GMA Network Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Atty. Felipe Gozon, President and Chief Operating Officer Gilberto Duavit Jr., GMA Executive Vice President and Chief Finance Officer Felipe S. Yalong, GMA Chairman Annette Gozon-Valdez, and TAPE Inc. President and CEO Mr. Antonio "Tony" Tuviera are all present at the virtual contract signing.

EB hosts also attended the virtual contract signing, including Senator Tito Sotto, "Bossing" Vic Sotto, Joey de Leon, Wally Bayola, Jose Manalo, Ryan Agoncillo, Pauleen Luna Sotto, Ryza Mae Dizon, Jimmy Santos,

Allan K., and Alden Richards.

"We, in GMA, are honored to be chosen once again by TAPE to be the home TV station of Eat Bulaga, a very popular TV program," Atty. Gozon said.

"Being the number one noontime TV program, it is only logical that Eat Bulaga is shown on GMA-7, the number one TV station in the Philippines," he added.

"And so we are looking forward to many more years of mutually beneficial and rewarding partnership with TAPE in airing Eat Bulaga in GMA-7."

Annette added, "Kung may forever mukhang ito na ito. Thank you Eat Bulaga for the trust."

Tito, Vic, and Joey are also grateful for the 27 fruitful years they've had with GMA-7, noting that the three of them have been loyal with the Kapuso Network even before "Eat Bulaga." ■

**Showbiz Gossip** *Continued from p.15*

## Alexa Ilacad turns past heartbreak into song

**Alexa Ilacad**

Both of them have moved on in their respective careers and relationships. After more than five years, young actress and singer Alexa Ilacad is ready to release the heartbreak song she penned for her erstwhile partner on and off-screen, Nash Aguas.

It was memorable because it was her first heartbreak, being only 16 years old at that time. Alexa dropped hints that it was her former ka-love team Nash when she said: "It happened in 2016, super long ago. People can just backtrack those days. Ayoko na rin banggitin ang pangalan para iwas issue."

"Paano" – sung and composed by Alexa – was launched last Dec. 21 in all digital streaming platforms like Spotify and Apple Music. It is being released under Off The Record, the company of her uncle, Ricky Ilacad.

Who knew that a heart in pain could inspire her to write a song for the first time? The 21-year-old Alexa recalls: "I was in a car ride at that time, and it was raining. I didn't know how to channel my emotions. I knew what I felt and wanted to write it all down. Then I

told my best friend Eunice (Jorge of Gracenote) to add a melody to the lyrics because I really wanted to make a song out of the pain I was feeling."

She says "Paano" is not your usual sappy love song because the rhythm is more electropop. We wanted a sound similar to my other singles "Love At First Sight" and "Stay Right Here."

The talented Alexa just ended her stint last December as a PBB housemate. While 'Paano' is the anthem to her first broken heart, she revealed that her last heartbreak was right inside PBB house itself.

"May napagdaanan din ako inside PBB, love-wise. Okay naman kami ng tao. We talked it out, we were able to settle everything. It just didn't take off sa loob ng bahay kasi we didnt want it na dala lang ng pressure, dala ng tukso ng ibang tao. We wanted it to come organically," Alexa noted.

The young star is currently being linked to her PBB batchmates Eian Rances, Benedix Ramos and KD Estrada. ■

## Nadine Lustre now literally a girl with the dragon tattoo

**Nadine Lustre (left) with Andrea Brillantes**

Nadine Lustre has turned herself into a real-life girl with a dragon tattoo as she got herself inked with the fierce creature on her arm.

The actress was spotted with the majestic mythical creature etched on the right side of her body, with its tail extending down her arm. The tattoo was made by Vimana Tattoo's Indygrain and shown by netizen Beth Barocaboc-Linga on her Facebook page yesterday, Jan. 20.

"Large piece for Miss Nadine Lustre. Salamat sa tiwala (Thank you for the trust)," she said.

Lustre sports various minimalist tattoos on her body, ranging from a lotus on her arm and a rose on her wrist. The dragon tattoo is reportedly Lustre's biggest visible tattoo yet.

Prior to getting the dragon tattoo, she got herself inked with the words "That's it. It is what it is" in June 2021.

The actress' father, Ulysses, also sports tattoos of his own. He has a semicolon and the words "Keep Going" etched on his right hand.

**Nadine's dragon tattoo**

Lustre popularized the statement "Keep Going" for her call to raise awareness on mental health and which is meant to inspire hope to prevent suicide.

Meanwhile, the semicolon has been used as a symbol for support to those struggling with mental illness. The American non-profit Project Semicolon launched the use of the punctuation mark for the said purpose. ■



# Dingdong Dantes on choosing whom to vote for



**Dingdong Dantes**

After watching “The Jessica Soho Presidential Interviews” over the weekend, seasoned actor Dingdong Dantes had some realization.

He shared this with fans.

“Last night’s Presidential interview highlighted how responsible journalism can help shape perspectives & present reality. It started with candidness and evolved into an in-depth scrutiny of complex issues that were made simpler and easier to digest for Filipinos. Diretso sa punto. Walang paligoy-ligoy. It didn’t fail to layout the real situation of our country: from Climate Change...to poverty & corruption...to our COVID response,” he wrote on Instagram.

“It was also a much needed forum to level off the playing field as it put out hard but very important questions for our presidential hopefuls. Lumitaw ‘yung may plano. Naging obvious kung sino ang pasok sa iyong kasalukuyang hinahanap.”

Having been born in the early 80s, Dingdong thinks this is one of the “most important” elections of his life.

He reiterated that whoever people choose will dictate how we would recover from the pandemic.

“Of course, I have my own preference. But this is a product of

a process that I’d like to share with young people today.”

Dingdong cited “plan,” “discern,” and act.”

According to him, before deciding who to vote for, people should do their research and make sure the integrity of the source of information.



“Hindi sapat na magsaliksik lang sa social media. Manood ng interviews kagaya na lang ng sa GMA. You have to go out there and search for what you think you and your country needs,” he pointed out.

He advised his followers to also do not look at “winnability or popularity.”

“Search for integrity, competence and commitment to the values of humanity. Be sensitive not only to your own circumstance, but also to the plight of your countrymen. Your generation and the next ones will depend on our decisions today,” Dingdong reiterated.

And lastly, he believes everyone should go out and exercise their rights.

“Claim your role as responsible citizens. You have a role in our society’s quest 4 genuine good governance,” he reminded.

“And while we wait for that big day, we should continue looking for helpful and valid resources such as what Jessica and her Team have delivered to us last night. We are what we consume. That’s why we have to be mindful of what we feed our mind. While everyone can be an agent of information dissemination in a highly globalized world, there are still institutions who are raising the bar for media and public service. Last night was a showcase of how it should be done.” ■

## Why did Andrea Brillantes, Francine Diaz unfollow each other?



**Andrea Brillantes (left) and Francine Diaz**

Gold Squad members Andrea Brillantes and Francine Diaz trended online after eagle-eyed social media users noticed that the two Kapamilya young stars unfollowed each other on Instagram.

Andrea and Francine were trending on Twitter today as fans speculated about the status of their friendship.

Photos of Andrea’s love team partner Seth Federlin with Francine and her family spending time together circulated online, which social media users believed to be the beginning of the rift between the two young stars.

Andrea also posted a cryptic video on her TikTok account where she used lyrics from Selena Gomez’s “Lose You To Love Me.”

“I gave my all and they all know it. You turned me down and now it’s showing. In two months, you replaced us. Like it was easy. Made me think I deserved it,” the lyrics stated.

Andrea, Francine and Seth, together with Kyle Echarri, are the original members of the Gold Squad which began during the hit teleserye “Kadenang Ginto” in 2018.

They were reunited in the primetime teleserye “Huwag Kang Mangamba” last year. ■

# Commentary: White, Poitier, Saget especially tough losses now

Joe Erwin | New York Daily News Jan 14, 2022

Betty White's death put the crummy capper on the rough year that was 2021. Sidney Poitier's passing showed 2022 might not be any better.

And then Bob Saget's death hit like a gut punch.

The last thing we need at this time — with omicron raging and people still getting into fights over mask-wearing after nearly two years — is having beloved entertainers die. White and Poitier had built up decades of goodwill for their performances and for who they were as people.

Everybody, it seemed, loved Betty White. She was on TV before TV was a thing, on a 1939 broadcast when the technology was in its infancy. She kept us laughing with impeccable work into her 90s, all the while displaying a love for people perhaps surpassed only by her advocacy for animals. In a country where almost everything is divided on party lines, White united the country.

Sidney Poitier blazed a trail that once seemed unimaginable, including becoming the first Black man to win the Best Actor Oscar. He did things that Black actors hadn't done on screen before. When his character in "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" fell in love with the daughter of Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, he pursued the then-taboo relationship. When a racist slapped him in "In the Heat of the Night," Poitier's Virgil Tibbs hit him right back.

It's hard to imagine someone making those things palatable to white audiences, but Poitier did it. and he was as big a force for change and



**Betty White**

**Born: January 17, 1922, Oak Park, Illinois, U.S.A.**

**Died: December 31, 2021, Brentwood, Los Angeles, CA**

progress off camera, winning a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009.

Saget didn't leave behind the impact of body of work that White or Poitier did, but his death at 65 on Sunday came as the type of shock a nonagenarian's never could. There are people who have only a vague memory of White on "The Golden Girls" — and none of her on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" — who grew up with Saget on "Full House." Some folks too young to truly appreciate how revolutionary Poitier's work was were watching "America's Funniest Home Videos" from the time they were toddlers.

The love for Saget was just as sincere. Late-night host Jimmy Kimmel had to give his tribute without his audience because he knew he would break down talking about his friend.



**Sidney Poitier**

**Born: February 20, 1927, Miami, Florida, United States**

**Died: January 6, 2022, Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.**

Whether you know Saget as the lovable dad in the sitcom "Full House," the genial home videos host or the raunchy comic who appeared in "The Aristocrats," the 2005 documentary about that dirty joke, and in his stage act, to know him was to love him, apparently.

Nothing is certain except death and taxes, and our heroes are not immune. In 2016, departures seemed to come one after another, with David Bowie, Prince, Muhammad Ali, Gene Wilder and Carrie Fisher among the many notables to leave this world.

But when we lost those greats we hadn't lost more than 800,000 of our fellow citizens to a virus. In 2016, the only time most people saw someone wearing a mask was when they were getting their teeth cleaned.



**Bob Saget**

**Born: May 17, 1956, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Died: January 9, 2022, The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes, Florida, U.S.A.**

In the before times, Sidney Poitier and Betty White would have been honored by a roomful of luminaries at the Golden Globe Awards. But with nominees boycotting due to lack of diversity in the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, there was no televised ceremony Sunday — and if there had been, omicron may have nixed it anyway.

The world is a different place in the pandemic and a lesser place without Betty White, Sidney Poitier and Bob Saget. With all the uncertainty now, we need our icons to stay with us more than ever.

Joe Erwin is the deputy national editor of the New York Daily News.

## NP Comment:

### Barbara Kay: What we don't know about unmarked graves at residential schools

Barbara Kay (National Post)  
Published January 17, 2022

Over the past month, three noteworthy events have presented as provocative grist to the groaning mill of Indigenous-"settler" relations.

First, acclaimed Cree playwright/novelist Tomson Highway's memoir, Permanent Astonishment, was published by Penguin-Random House. Highway's experiences at a residential school did not embitter him. On the contrary, he credited that nine-year stint for the foundational skills that led to creative self-realization. But saying so publicly, once permissible, has become a form of blasphemy in the chattering classes.

In his 2018 Quillette essay on Canada's "cult of the noble savage," which included remarks about his abrupt departure from editorship of The Walrus magazine, Jonathan Kay explained Highway's "problematic" stature amongst progressives. In 2015, Kay commissioned an article from Highway in anticipation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. Highway's submission was



**Hundreds of children's shoes remain in place at a memorial outside the Alberta Legislature building in Edmonton on Monday May 31, 2021. A vigil was held Sunday May 30, 2021 in memory of the 215 indigenous children whose remains were discovered on the grounds of a former Roman Catholic church residential school in Kamloops, B.C. PHOTO BY LARRY WONG/POSTMEDIA**

"brilliantly crafted," but "heretical." The piece was never published because, as a white colleague explained to Kay, it would upset "sensitive constituencies" — Indigenous groups and their non-Indigenous allies, as well as donors — who "had come to see our magazine as a reliable voice for the approved position on this issue." It was then, Kay realized, "that what I had entered was not a journalistic enterprise, but a sort of [religious] congregation."

Then, on Dec. 20 — perfect timing for news that drops stone-dead in minutes — Mount Royal University informed Frances Widdowson, a tenured professor in the Department of Economics, Justice and Policy Studies, that she was being fired for having contributed to a "toxic workplace environment," thereby "negatively impacting the mission and reputation of the university."

Widdowson's extensive scholarly research is not in question. Her bio says she "uses a political economy perspective in her research on Aboriginal and environmental

## China claims Canada the source for first Beijing Omicron case, sent via mail

Lynn Chaya (National Post)  
Publishing date: Jan 17, 2022

Tense diplomatic relations between China and Canada were further strained on Monday as China claimed that its first recorded case of the Omicron variant in Beijing could have been delivered via mail from Toronto, after traces of the variant were detected on a letter mailed from the Canadian city.

Pang Xinghuo, deputy director of

genome sequencing of the patient's sample, was similar to the one spreading in North America and in Singapore last month, though differed from the current one found in other parts of the country, the SCMP reported.

Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, a University of Ottawa China expert who spent more than three decades in the federal public service working on China issues, says it is ludicrous to suggest it



**A woman receives a throat swab to test for COVID-19 in Beijing. China's capital city has been put on high alert as it prepares to host the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics which open next month PHOTO BY NOEL CELIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES**

the Beijing Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, said the first patient to contract the variant in Beijing received a letter mailed from Canada on January 7, the South China Morning Post reported.

"We do not rule out the possibility that the person was infected through contacting an object from overseas," she said.

Locally-transmitted Omicron infections, however, have been detected in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong. The highly mutated strain has been detected in one out of every five provinces, while 14 of them have reported imported cases.

The Omicron strain, according to

could have survived on an envelope or a package that had travelled such a distance through international mail.

She says the Chinese allegation shows that its leadership is still targeting Canada after its long-running dispute over the arrest of high-tech executive Meng Wanzhou in 2018, an extradition case that was dropped late last year, which allowed her to return to China.

Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos says he may have his own opinion of why China was making that claim but that he deferred to experts on how COVID-19 can be spread.

forces students to actively valorize these "ways of knowing" as equal to science-based knowledge. Such coerced genuflection to other people's idols is just not on for her.

Widdowson is now engaged in research around the hot-potato issue of unmarked graves at Indian Residential Schools (IRS). Which brings us to the promised third event. Jacques Rouillard, professor emeritus in the Department of history at the Université de Montréal, has published an article in the *Dorchester Review*, titled "In Kamloops, Not One Body Has Been Found."

One of 2021's biggest stories was the "discovery" of unmarked children's graves in the grounds of Kamloops, B.C.'s, former industrial residential school (1890-1978), founded by Shuswap Chief Louis Clexlixqen, and run by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Sisters of St. Anne of Quebec.

The "discovery" meme arose from a scanning by ground-penetrating radar in a search for the remains of children already surmised to have been buried there. A preliminary report did not find bodies, but rather soil disruptions in a nearby apple orchard. No remains were exhumed, but First Nation Chief Rosanne Casimir stated that according to community "knowledge," the soil abnormalities were 215 "missing children," some as young as three.

## Ottawa boy, 8, saves man nearly buried in snow



**Clayton McGuire, showing where he spotted a man in the snow**

Ted Raymond & Peter Szperling  
CTV News, January 17, 2022

Ottawa paramedics are thanking an eight-year-old boy for saving an elderly man who was almost completely buried in snow during a blizzard Monday morning.

In a tweet, the Ottawa Paramedic Service said Clayton McGuire had spotted the man near his home and immediately told his parents, who called 911.

"The gentleman was almost all covered due to the huge snowfall when Clayton spotted him," the paramedic service said.

"A man, I saw him on the floor. Went to go my mom and dad straight away," Clayton told CTV News Ottawa, describing the scene.

Clayton's dad Joey McGuire said he checked on the man as soon as he was outside.

"I asked the man if he was okay. He seemed like he was hurt; he couldn't get up, he couldn't walk, he had no

The anthropologist who oversaw the scans cautiously theorized that there were likely 200 "probable burials" — not specifying age — based on the disturbances. But only excavation could provide further evidence of anything, and no excavation has yet been done. But the story was too good to fact-check, and went viral, often with the trope "mass graves" substituting for "unmarked graves," a distinction with an enormous difference, since "mass" graves are associated with genocide. Suddenly there was talk of "thousands" of "missing" Indigenous children whose parents had not been informed of their deaths. The Parliamentary flag was lowered to half-mast; China (of all nations) called for an investigation into Canada's human rights violations at the UN Human Rights Tribunal; Pope Francis expressed pain over the "shocking discovery in Canada of the remains of 215 children" at Kamloops.

Nobody in political authority — certainly not our instantly and abjectly apologetic prime minister — has to date pointed out that no actual remains have been found. Thus, Rouillard writes, "[G]overnments and the media are simply granting credence to what is really a thesis: the thesis of the 'disappearance' of children from residential schools." The consensus of "cultural genocide," endorsed by the TRC (but contested by many

strength at all," McGuire explained. "Looked like he had been down there for at least 20 minutes, maybe longer, because he was totally covered in snow."

McGuire says he and his wife brought the man up to their stairs, sat him down and got him a blanket. Clayton made him a hot chocolate while they waited for the ambulance to arrive.

The man was assessed at the scene but ultimately decided not to go to the hospital, according to paramedics.

A major snowstorm had dumped more than 40 cm of snow on Ottawa Monday, with rapid accumulation during the morning hours. Environment Canada said 12 cm fell between 8 and 9 a.m.

Ottawa mayor Jim Watson applauded Clayton's actions, calling him an "amazing and very kind person." Others are calling him a hero for his quick thinking and sharp eyes.

"I'm very proud of him," McGuire said of his son. "He's awesome."

accredited historians routinely cold-shouldered by uncritical mainstream media), has effectively been elevated to literal genocide, "a conclusion that the Commission explicitly rejects in its [TRC] report."

The bulk of the article details myth-busting evidence that should act as a cautionary tale against uncritical acceptance of feelings-based narratives over objective academic inquiry. Rouillard concludes, "It is hard to believe that a preliminary search for an alleged cemetery or mass grave in an apple orchard ... could have led to such a spiral of claims endorsed by the Canadian government and repeated by mass media all over the world ... Imaginary stories and emotion have outweighed the pursuit of truth."

Rouillard's essay then terminates in a well-considered question — one all Canadians should ponder — that could be applied with equal relevance to The Walrus's cancelling of Tomson Highway and MRU's firing of Frances Widdowson: "On the road to reconciliation, isn't the best way to seek and tell the whole truth rather than deliberately create sensational myths?"

National Post

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The big issues are far from settled. Sign up for the NP Comment newsletter, NP

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policy, as well as the politics of religion." But even the title of one paper, "The Political economy of 'Truth and Reconciliation': Neotribal Rentierism and the Creation of the Victim/Perpetrator Dichotomy," reveals why she is considered a blasphemer by Indigenous activists and their campus allies.

Widdowson never minces words. Her antagonists are particularly enraged by her needling trope "race hustler" to describe "a self-proclaimed spokesperson for a particular racial identity during a perceived incident of racial tension, so that the individual can exploit the situation to serve their own interests."

In September 2020, Widdowson's pointed criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM "has destroyed MRU") led to a colleagues-initiated petition to have her fired that garnered 6,000 signatures. But even before that, her fate was likely sealed in 2016 when she protested the plan to "indigenize" learning, an ideology-based plan to "embrace Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, to integrate Indigenous teachings and practices." Widdowson is happy to see Indigenous beliefs studied, objectively, as we do other belief systems like Christianity, but indigenized learning

# PM Justin Trudeau update on Covid 19 and Ukraine tensions

January 19, 2022 -Canada has enough supply of COVID-19 vaccines to offer booster doses to all who are eligible, though so far just 35 per cent of Canadians have received their third shot, according to the federal health minister.

"We must continue to accelerate our vaccination efforts to trend towards universal coverage," Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos said Wednesday, alongside Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during an update on the federal government's COVID-19 response.

Health Canada has authorized booster doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA vaccines to be offered to anyone 18 and older, at least six months after the primary vaccine course. As has been the case throughout the pandemic, decisions about the rollout and who has been given priority access to boosters is up to the provinces and territories.

Trudeau held a call with key ministers on the file on Tuesday evening, including Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly who is meeting with top officials in Ukraine this week.

He reiterated that Canada continues to support the Ukrainian armed forces and national guard in training exercises through Operation UNIFIER.

The mission is expected to expire in March 2022 and when asked if the government would announce an



Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos looks on as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau responds to a question during a news conference, Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022 in Ottawa. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wylde

extension, Trudeau said only that the operation is a "continued commitment."

The U.K. and the U.S. have begun sending defence weaponry to Ukraine in response to direct requests. The Canadian government has said they are very aware of needs and will make a decision about this level of support in a "timely manner."

The prime minister instead doubled down on Canada's diplomatic approach, working with allies to find a resolution.

"We're working with our international partners and colleagues to make it very, very clear that Russian aggression and further incursion into Ukraine is absolutely unacceptable. We

not be presenting a formal written response to Russia's demands when he meets on Friday with Russia's foreign minister.

Russia objects to Ukraine's desire to join NATO and is calling on members to reject new treaty membership.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has dismissed claims that enhanced military presence at the Ukrainian border indicates an imminent full-scale attack.

Joly is set to meet with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Thursday.

A handful of Liberal MPs penned a letter to Government House Leader Mark Holland requesting an urgent debate on the Ukraine situation as it would provide an opportunity for "members of Parliament of all parties to discuss Canada's and the international community's response to this crisis."

Holland responded saying he will prioritize the request when the House returns, which is scheduled for Jan. 31.

The Conservatives have criticized the Liberals for not taking a harder line with Russia, and have called on the government to send lethal weapons to Ukraine for defence purposes. Meanwhile, the NDP have endorsed a non-militarized approach.

With a file from The Associated Press

## Key take aways from Biden's remarks reflecting on his first year in office

January 19, 2022 - President Biden marked his first year in office with an address and news conference from the White House.

Biden highlighted his administration's accomplishments as well as the challenges that lie ahead as many priorities in his agenda remain stalled, including the Build Back Better Act and voting rights legislation.

The President said he thinks his report card going into the midterms is "pretty good," and is confident his administration will be able to sign into law "good chunks" of his agenda.

Biden took questions from reporters and spoke for more than 90 minutes.

Here are the key take aways:

### Build Back Better Act:

Biden signaled he's willing to break up the Build Back Better Act and pass sections of the law separately. "I think we can break the package up, get as much as we can now, come back and fight for the rest later," the President said. The economic package was stalled last month, when a deal with Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin could not be reached.

### Voting rights:

The President admitted that the current voting rights legislation will likely not pass. He added that it will be "difficult" to have fair elections if voting rights laws aren't passed. "It's going to be difficult. I make no bones about that, it's going to be difficult, but we're not there yet. We've not run out of options yet and we'll see how this moves," he said. The Senate is scheduled to vote on procedures later tonight in an effort to clear a path to pass voting rights legislation, but those efforts are expected to fail.

### Russia and Ukraine:

During his news conference, Biden suggested a "minor incursion" by Russia would elicit a lesser response than a full-scale invasion of the country.

### Inflation:

Biden acknowledged Americans are struggling with the high cost of living and threw his weight behind the Federal Reserve's efforts to fight inflation.

### Pandemic:

The President admitted that more should have been done in terms of Covid-19 testing availability. "Look, we're also increasing testing. Should



we have done more testing earlier? Yes. But we're doing more now," he said.

### White House clarifies Biden's comments on Russia

From CNN's Kevin Liptak

The White House has issued a high-level clarification following President Biden's remarks suggesting potential disunity within NATO over how to respond in the event of a "minor

incursion" by Russia into Ukraine.

"President Biden has been clear with the Russian President: If any Russian military forces move across the Ukrainian border, that's a renewed invasion, and it will be met with a swift, severe, and united response from the United States and our Allies," said press secretary Jen Psaki in a

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